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# La Nueva Voz

The New Voice, a Bilingual (English/Spanish) Publication  
Pomona's *only* community newspaper!



Issue No. 138  
Thursday, January 28, 2021

## COVID-19 numbers in Pomona again reach new record levels . . .

Pomona's 244-room Sheraton Fairplex Hotel, now Pomona's "COVID" hotel, set a new all-time record again last month, for the first time maxing out with 254 patients on Dec. 24 making it necessary to "double up" in some of the hotel rooms – all amid claims reported to La Nueva Voz of alleged improprieties and mishandling of patients under cover of darkness.

"Patients who do not know each other are being assigned to share rooms for 14 days and many are homeless and not used to being in a room at all," according to the source who apparently worked inside the facility and mailed "hard copies" of his information to La Nueva Voz.

### . . . but how many in Pomona are really listening?

As COVID-19 numbers are reaching all-time highs in Pomona and throughout Los Angeles County, officials may be wondering if Pomona is really listening after Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies were called in to raid a "super spreader" New Year's Eve party at a local hotel and Pomona police were asked by Mayor Tim Sandoval to break up a rally early this month with hundreds of motorcyclists – complete with their own disc jockey – in a Po-

He also claimed that patients are being moved in the middle of the night from Pomona to Compton (Los Angeles County health officials use the Willow Tree Inn in Compton to house COVID-related patients) "so that when the local census is provided the next day, the numbers look very high and the funding keeps coming."

**See vaccine photo page 11.**

The source claimed complaints have been filed with the county's chain of command regarding allegations of improper use of funds, fraud and abuse of authority.

Los Angeles County Board of Pomona parking lot.

The New Year's Eve sheriff's round-up in four communities resulted in the arrests of a total of 90 adults who were cited for violation of the county's "Safer at Home" order (one adult was arrested for possession of narcotics and a loaded firearm), deputies reported.

And more than 900 people were warned and advised of the updated order.

Hundreds of detectives, patrol

**Really listening... pg. 3**

Supervisors Chair Hilda Solis, who announced in a news conference last March that the hotel would be used to house COVID-related patients either for quarantine purposes or because they had only mild symptoms and were not in need of actual hospitalization, responded to an e-mail request from La Nueva Voz for comment, commending the hotel for stepping up for the past 10 months "to address this humanitarian crisis."

"We are in the middle of a horrific surge and it is critical that we meet the moment to reduce transmission and exposure," Solis said. "ICU (intensive care unit) adjusted capacity for the South-

ern California region remains at zero percent. This reality is impacting not just those with COVID-19 but others who need urgent hospital care." She added that medical sheltering sites, such as the Fairplex



Photos courtesy of Los Angeles County Los Angeles County Internal Services Division employee Florida Hernandez, above, sprays disinfectant in outdoor common areas outside Pomona's Sheraton Fairplex Hotel, now used by the county as a COVID-19 medical shelter, in areas where patients are allowed twice a day. At right, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services Nurse Practitioner Kenisha Thomas, sporting one of several "Hotel COVID" t-shirts observed in the hotel, adjusts her face shield over her mask while making her rounds visiting patients.



Sheraton Hotel, have been a critical resource during this unprecedented pandemic.

"Many of our residents, especially those from low-income

**COVID-19 numbers... pg. 2**

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### Tri-City Mental Health to host February Community Mental Health Summit

Set against the backdrop of a tumultuous 2020, Tri-City Mental Health will host a three-day virtual conference on February 2 through February 4, 2021 with the theme "Discovering a Powerful Community." Tri-City has invited leaders from law enforcement, education, and healthcare as well as community organizations to the event that will focus on the past, present and future of the community's mental health needs and goals in the three-city region.

Established in 1960 as the exclusive public outpatient mental health agency for the cities of Pomona, Claremont and La Verne, Tri-City serves thousands of residents annually. Its expansive range of services to individuals, families, neighborhoods and organizations include psychotherapy, crisis support, clinical case management, medication support, peer support, linkage and referral, vocational training and support, socialization activities, community outreach and training.

"As we crossed the threshold of our 60th year, we thought gathering the community to help us define its mental health needs and goals was essential to ensuring we are there to support them," said Toni Navarro, LMFT, Tri-City's Executive Director. "But more than identifying today's needs, the conference will focus on the current actions we can take together to make the future of a powerful and resilient community a reality."

For more information about the conference, please contact Rimmi Hundal at (909) 643-9507.

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## COVID-19 numbers... from pg. 1

and communities of color like the San Gabriel Valley, are essential workers who live in multi-generational households,” Solis said. “Several of them do not have the space or comfort to safely isolate and quarantine in their own living situations.”

“I thank the Fairplex, Sheraton

**New photos just released show a ‘first look’ inside Pomona’s ‘COVID’ hotel!**

and the City of Pomona for responding to this crisis with courage and compassion,” she said.

Solis’ comments did not address the allegations of improprieties at the hotel.

Meanwhile, the county’s Department of Health Services’ Office of Communications responded to an e-mailed request from La Nueva Voz asking where the “extra” patients are being housed when the number reaches a level above the 244-room mark.

The answer is complicated, but

the short version is that patients are not being housed in meeting rooms or the grand ballroom of the hotel. (There were reports last month that Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital in South Los Angeles converted its gift shop and chapel into areas to treat patients due to COVID.)

(Actually, the Sheraton Fairplex Hotel grand ballroom – in happier times used for wedding receptions, galas and business meetings – has been converted to a huge warehouse and is being used to store food supplies, medical supplies and clothing and scrubs, according to just-released first-time photos of the operations inside the hotel. Some of the 102 official county photos taken



Photos courtesy of Los Angeles County Medical assistant Seth Alvarez gowns up to conduct a blood glucose check for a patient isolating in a room upstairs at the Sheraton Fairplex Hotel.

with the goal of providing those in need with a safe place to isolate and quarantine if they have been exposed to COVID-19, if they are experiencing symptoms or if they have tested positive for the virus.”

“The number of clients typically exceeds the number of occupied rooms because often families or couples are quarantined or isolated in the same room,” the statement continued. “Many of the hotel rooms have two beds and if demand for space is high, then two clients may share a room as approved by the onsite clinician.”

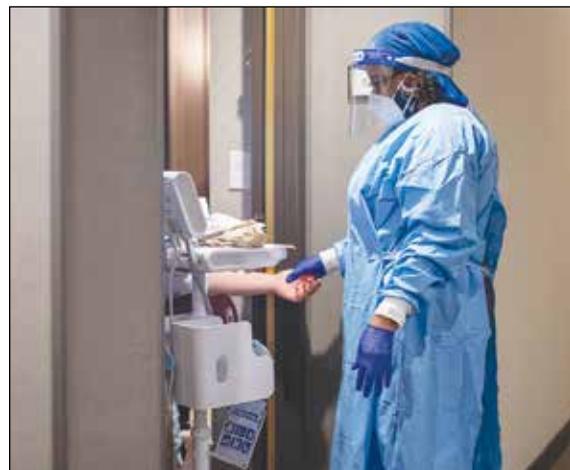
If a site is nearing capacity, then clients will be referred to other sites (although La Nueva Voz has noted for the past 10 months that the Pomona facility routinely houses far more patients than any of the other county COVID facilities).



Andrew Rios, LVN, takes vital signs while Marlena Douglas, RN, connects with a patient isolating at the Fairplex Sheraton Hotel medical shelter.



Los Angeles County Department of Health Services Charge Nurse Richard Sombillo, RN, at right, discusses patients with the medical team in the main lobby of Pomona’s Sheraton Fairplex Hotel.



Marlena Douglas, RN, reaches out to a patient isolating at the Sheraton Fairplex Hotel.



The main ballroom at Pomona’s Sheraton Fairplex Hotel, normally used for wedding receptions, galas and business meetings but now used exclusively as Pomona’s “COVID hotel,” is now a huge warehouse used to store food supplies, medical supplies and clothing. Pictured is a Los Angeles County Department of Health Services worker “sizing up” the situation as he decides what stack donated clothing goes in. Workers use the room to prepare food, snacks and other essentials for delivery to patients isolating in the hotel.



Andrew Rios, LVN, checks the temperature of a patient isolating at Pomona’s Fairplex Sheraton Hotel.

“The Department of Health Services is committed to preventing the spread of this deadly virus by offering this critical service to those in need,” the county statement said.

In a response to a follow-up question from La Nueva Voz, the county reported that the 244-room Sheraton Fairplex Hotel has 144 rooms with two beds in each room.

“Counting the number of beds doesn’t

always equal the number of people in each site,” a spokesperson told La Nueva Voz in an e-mail.

While the county’s statement indicated the county is operating eight medical shelter sites at this time, that number has fluctuated over the past 10 months. The Pomona hotel became the first in the county’s network of sheltering facilities – under a contract between the county and Fairplex – when it began accepting COVID patients on March 25.

Guests or patients at the facility have included everything from first responders to members of the region’s homeless population.

La Nueva Voz has used the occupancy rate at the hotel as an index of how COVID is really

## Really listening... from pg. 1

deputies and specialized response teams shut down two events in Los Angeles, along with events in Hawthorne, Malibu and Pomona.

Five handguns were recovered from the event in Hawthorne, according to sheriff's deputies.

The locations ranged from rented residences, vacant warehouses, hotels and shuttered businesses.

While the sheriff's information bureau did not respond to a La Nueva Voz request for specific information on the Pomona location, Pomona City Councilmember Steve Lustro mentioned during a Jan. 4 city council meeting, the first council meeting of the new year, that he was disappointed to hear the local target for a raid was allegedly the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, at 3101 W. Temple Ave., Pomona.

The numbers of arrests and citations, if any, and the numbers of "warnings" issued at the Pomona party were not provided by sheriff's deputies.

"It's clear that a lot of folks aren't taking the pandemic seriously," Lustro said at the virtual council meeting. "From a personal perspective, I've had one close friend and four family members diagnosed just in the last week."

"So, we're not out of the woods yet, and so I'm hoping that our community takes this very seriously, do what you need to do,

stay healthy because we all want to try to move forward and reduce the number as best we can," he added.

Sandoval added he received word that a group of between 400 and 500 apparent members of a motorcycle club were rallying the day before the council meeting near Dudley Street and Mission Boulevard.

He said he contacted the police department and officers immediately responded to the scene.

A Pomona police spokesperson told La Nueva Voz there were no arrests or citations connected with this incident, adding that when officers arrived on scene everyone dispersed without question. There were no issues.

"It's absolutely unacceptable," Sandoval said. "All of us are trying to do the absolute best that we can to try to stay safe, to try to stay healthy."

While he added that it was likely that many of the riders were not from Pomona, the crowd was large and many apparently were not wearing masks.

He said public gatherings and gatherings at private homes are not allowed.

"The message is clear – these public gatherings, these social gatherings, gatherings at home are not allowed and we're not going to get past this pandemic if folks

don't take the necessary precautions to ensure not just their health but also the health of their residents, their neighbors, and strangers and people in this community," Sandoval added.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva took a similar stance on violations.

"I have made it clear that we will seek out and take law enforcement action against all super-spreader events occurring anywhere within Los Angeles County," Villanueva said. "The goal of these enforcement actions is to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and the risk to our vulnerable populations."

Sheriff's information bureau deputies were unable to determine if Pomona police officers were involved in the local New Year's Eve raid.

However, the Pomona police spokesperson told La Nueva Voz deputies notified their office that deputies would be involved in the operation in Pomona, but that Pomona police assistance would not be required. The spokesperson added that all arrests and citations were handled by the sheriff's department.

Residents are urged to contact either a local sheriff's station or the Pomona Police Department with information on future "super-spreader" events.



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Christian D. Ligon Aviation Maintenance Administrationman Airman Selene A. Romero, a native of Pomona, receives a certificate from Capt. Matthew C. Paradise, commanding officer of Nimitz-class nuclear aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) during a recent ceremony on the ship's bridge during which she was recognized as "Sailor of the Day." Vinson currently is pier-side in its home port of San Diego.

## Sickle Cell carriers needed for study

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland, is conducting a genomics study of African-American Sickle Cell Trait carriers to attempt to discover genetic alleles associated with an increased risk of exertional events.

One-time remote participation is possible for carriers aged 18 to

80 who can call for a brief screening at (240) 479-9514 or e-mail SCTStudyggg@usuhs.edu.

Participants will need to complete a consent form and medical history form and visit any LabCorp location for a small blood draw.

The study pays all costs and participants receive a \$25 gift card, according to a news release.

## COVID-19 numbers... from pg. 2

doing in Pomona based on the assumption months ago that the hotel occupancy rate is as good as any other available figures.

Since the La Nueva Voz Dec. 24 issue, that Dec. 24 peak of 254 patients – above the hotel's capacity that would allow one per room in a 244-room hotel – remained the highest for the month.

However, the hotel logged five additional days during the month with occupancy levels above 200, including a day with 232 patients on Dec. 29.

All other reporting days in January (weekend totals are not provided by the county) were in the 160s, 170s, 180s and 190s with the exception of a "leveling off" period between Jan. 19 and deadline day for this month's issue, Jan. 22, with numbers last week ranging from 109 to 123.

As a point of comparison, during the previous month's report-



Los Angeles County Internal Services Department employee Florida Hernandez sprays disinfectant in the hallways of the Fairplex Sheraton Hotel and outside along a walkway in outdoor common areas where patients can get some fresh air twice a day while staying at the hotel. New patients arriving at the hotel are dropped off by ambulance behind that blue and white striped screen to keep them out of public view and protect their privacy.

ing period in this newspaper – from the end of November to the fourth Thursday in December – the hotel logged eight days above the 200-patient level, representing the first time numbers got above the 200 mark since COVID began.

The previous high had been 173 on Nov. 19.

Each month, the "COVID hotel index" has consistently mirrored countywide data as the numbers continue to climb.

According to official Los Angeles County update figures, Pomona



na has reported a total of 21,475 confirmed cases of COVID-19, up from last month's cumulative figure of 13,243 in this newspaper's monthly report. As a refer-

ence point, Pomona's total population is roughly 157,000. To date, Pomona has recorded 283 COVID-related deaths, up from last month's level of 187.

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**Pomona Valley Hospital's Darlene Scaffidi, promoted to executive vice president of patient care, reflects on four decades with 'community hospital'**

Darlene Scaffidi, MSN, RN, promoted this month to executive vice president of patient care services at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center, told La Nueva Voz that despite advancements in technology, resources and staffing during her more than 40 years at the facility, Pomona Valley has remained "the community hospital."

"(The hospital) started out as the community hospital, and the community has remained part of who we are," Scaffidi said in a response to an e-mailed set of questions focusing on her new position. "Our supportive community and the excellent quality care that we provide has remained the same throughout."

She said what has changed is the facility has continued to grow as a hospital – adding beds, adding wings, adding technology, electronic medical records, becoming a trauma center, a stroke center and a "STEMI" center (ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction, or a type of classic heart attack).

And those electronic medical records are more than just an electronic filing system, she said.

"It is artificial intelligence – we

see it as an extension of the caregiver because with the health information, we have evidence-based care plans right at our fingertips," Scaffidi said.

"When I started working at PVHMC, we didn't even have a cardiac cath lab – and now we are nationally recognized in heart and vascular care," she said. "So I've seen us grow, but the heart of the hospital has remained unchanged – we are delivering state-of-the-art, high quality care close to home for residents in the Pomona Valley."

Scaffidi joined the hospital as a nurse in the medical/surgical unit in 1979. She also served in the telemetry, pediatric, intensive care and cardiovascular units, where she developed and honed her skills in nursing and patient care, according to a hospital news release.

She since has held several leadership roles including administrative director of the Regional Kidney Stone Center from 1993 to 2000 and director of surgical services from 2000 to 2006. She was promoted to vice president of nursing and patient care services in 2006.



**Darlene Scaffidi**

The COVID-19 pandemic, of course, has been the largest public health crisis Scaffidi has had to deal with in her career but she said she has been fortunate that the disease has not impacted anyone in her close family.

"I've had some friends that have had COVID and recovered, so it's been emotionally difficult dealing with it," she said. "The toll that it's taken on our staff and our patients and our community is the hardest

part."

"Our dedicated staff has put in countless hours of work caring for the community," she added. "It's been a team effort – not only the hospital, but the community – the entire community has supported us."

"The teamwork has been critical to make all of the pieces fall into place – whether it be securing PPE (personal protective equipment), putting up a safety divider, installing new medical equipment, or adding nurses, doctors, respiratory therapists and ventilators – the entire team and the community have come together to make sure we could care for an increasing number of patients with COVID-19," she said.

And on the rollout of the vaccine, Scaffidi said the hospital has put the community first.

"Our goal was to vaccinate our frontline healthcare workers, so that they can continue to do their job and get that needed immunity and safety for themselves," she said. "But once we had done that (see photo and caption of the hospital's first "associate" to receive the vaccine on page 3 of the December La Nueva Voz at www.lanuevavoz.net), and because we had the resources of a precious ultra-low temperature freezer and were able to store vaccines (and we had perfected the vaccine clinic process while immunizing our staff), we were able to be stewards of this precious commodity for our community."

Scaffidi said the hospital since has provided vaccines to others in the community who fall into group 1A doctors' offices, dental practices and hospice workers.

What is her opinion of what is happening nationally with the rollout?

"I would like to say that nationally we need more vaccines – get it in the hands of people who know how to administer the vaccinations," she said. "We know how to do it. We do these things every day."

She said the medical communities are good at making things happen.

"Get us the vaccine and we will do the right thing with it to get it to the people that need it most," she added.

Scaffidi said she viewed her promotion as a "recognition of my long tenure and leadership supporting the long-term strategic plan and vision for this hospital as we care for the communities we serve."

"Darlene has always exemplified living our values and is an outstanding advocate for high quality patient care, said hospital President and CEO Rich Yochum. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, she has worked tirelessly to ensure that we have been able to successfully meet every staff and patient care need thrust upon us."

He added that she has "fostered a culture of clinical excellence and patient- and family-centered care, and she is a trusted leader within our organization and community."



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## Martin Luther King, Jr. speaker

### Kiana Webb urges viewers to rise 'above the hate'

Webb Family Enterprises CEO Kiana Webb told a Martin Luther King, Jr., Day celebration last week that standing against injustice and rising against injustice means rising “above the hate” to achieve a success that is more important



Kiana Webb

than any experience of fear and hurt. Webb, this year’s keynote speaker at the 39th annual Pomona Inland Valley Martin Luther King, Jr., Project Celebration, this year a “virtu-

al” event, spoke on this year’s program theme “Let’s Rise Against Injustice.” She spoke of how conversations in her own home with her three pre-teen children include varying degrees of love, frustration and even hate.

“Recently . . . especially in this time of COVID I’m seeing a little less love and a lot more frustration and a lot more hate,” Webb said, adding that her children seem to be focusing more “on the things that are really most important to them as opposed to focusing on how to be successful as a family, as a community as a whole.”

And, she added, that same tendency is prevalent in society “where life for our world or the individual world is always more important than the collective world and the collective society.”

“We look at life like my way is better than your way or your way is not as good as my way, and the truth is we all exist in this bowl – whether you want to acknowledge that existence or not is your prerogative,” she said.

“However, you can’t change the fact that in this world what we are creating together has



L'Mio Edwards

more opportunities and more possibilities than what we create apart,” she said. “And for me with my children, these learned behaviors start at home.”

Webb said Dr. King spoke of that often – “standing for your group, standing for others, standing for our combined success.”

“And . . . any time that gets limited or controlled, any time it gets restricted, it does not

allow for the fullness of life to exist,” she said. “And the only way to move that forward is through the understanding and opportunity of love, that love is more powerful than anything that exists on this earth.”

“Dr. King also said that hate in response to hate only generates more hate,” she said, “so how can you create effective change if the only thing that we’re doing is standing against hate without love.”

“To stand against injustice and to rise against injustice for me means I have to rise above the hate and really love when it’s uncomfortable – when I don’t feel like it, I do it anyways,” she said.

“It requires something of us to actually be love in action, not just in talk – it requires us to say our emotions are healthy, they are part of the human experience, but that does not dictate my action when it causes harm,” Webb said.

She added that Dr. King spoke of forgiveness of others and forgiveness of self.

“In this human experience I’m not perfect, I’m not going to get it right 100 percent of the time, but I’m going to strive for continuous improvement to be that person who stands for you and stands for me and stands for everyone that exists in this world,” she said.

“In this world, we have the opportunity to create energy that is

loving or hateful, and hateful retracts us from the world – that was his (King’s) message,” she said.

Even so, she said, there will be moments of interruption “in which you experience difficulty and moments of opposition.”

“If we are going to create a world where our future for our grandchildren and our grandchildren’s grandchildren looks a lot different from the world that we are in today, then we have to be the change, the change that says not only am I going to rise against injustice, I’m going to rise above it, I’m going to love stronger than my fears,” she said.

“Love is a message . . . that creates unity, that creates possibilities . . . so that when we get ready to rise against injustice, to know that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere, that love speaks volumes and changes the path so that we are no longer on that cycle of momentary satisfaction with longevity of angst and anger, sadness and depres-

Rise above the hate... pg. 12

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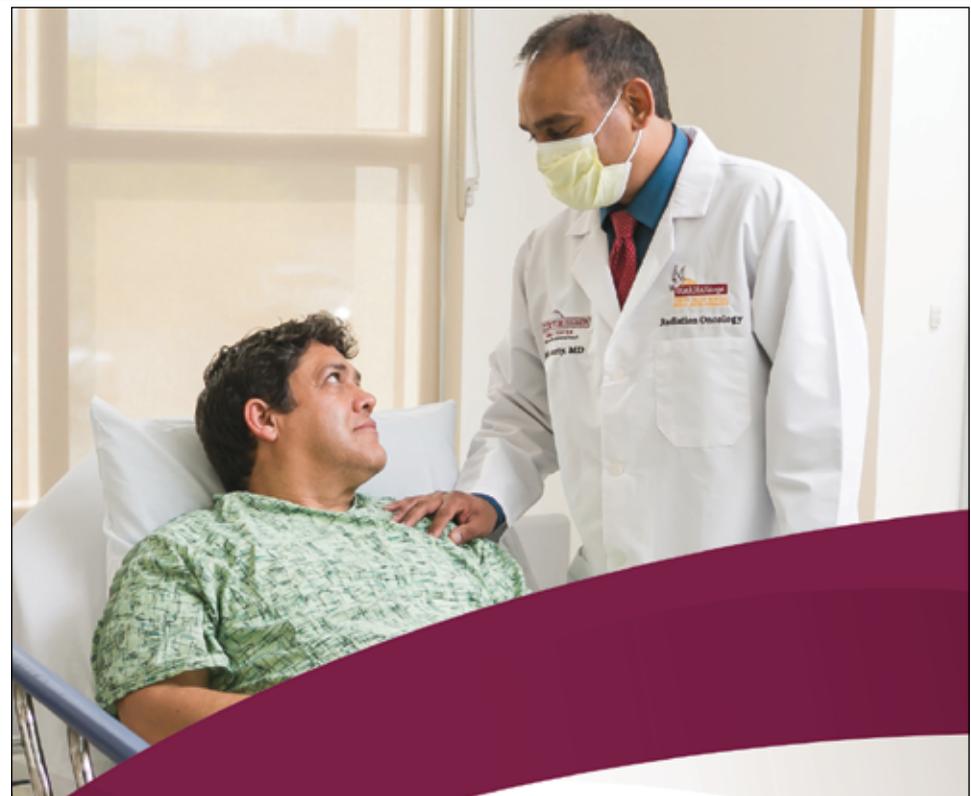
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## Day One receives CARES Act grant to distribute community food vouchers

The non-profit organization Day One has been selected by the California Community Foundation as a CARES Act recipient to aid in alleviating food insecurity in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the group has partnered with La Cachanilla, a Pomona grocery store, to go to work on the project.

“This program was very helpful for families who are struggling,” said Ehab Haifa, store owner. “We were happy to partner with Day One to help families in Pomona access food.”

“Families have lost jobs, loved ones and hope,” said Day One’s Executive Director Christy Zamani. “We are simply doing what

we can to make sure they can access the food they need during these challenging times.”

Alfredo Camacho, a resident of Pomona and director of healthy communities at Day One, said when families have one less expense to worry about, funds are available for other essential needs.

“This is very much about equity and taking care of our community,” he added.

Volunteers distributed \$100 grocery vouchers to families in need in the \$30,000 program.

Day One also partnered with God’s Pantry, Gente Organizada, the Pomona Economic Opportunity Center and other community members on the effort.

## L.A. County Supervisor Solis urges caution with first COVID-19 variant case discovered locally

The confirmation of the first case in Los Angeles County of the COVID-19 variant B.1.1.7, the same variant discovered in the United Kingdom, means the risk of contracting COVID here is increased, according to Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Hilda Solis.

“This more contagious variant makes it easier for COVID-19 to spread – any activity outside of one’s household carries more risk of exposure now than ever before,” she said.

Solis added that officials with the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta expect the variant to become the more dominant strain nationwide by March.

“To date, we’ve had over one million confirmed cases in Los Angeles County,” she said. “We cannot let another million people get this virus.”

## Cardenas Markets Foundation accepting scholarship applications

The Cardenas Markets Foundation will award a total of 60 scholarships totaling \$2,000 each for the 2021-2022 school year to students in areas where Cardenas Markets operates, according to a news release.

Recipients will be selected based on their academic qualifications, financial need, leadership attributes and commitment to serving their local community.

Scholarship applications... pg. 9



The Epsilon Eta Omega and Sigma Rho Chapters of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority hosted their 10th annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday Supper and Day of Service last week, patterning the event each year after the type of community suppers King himself held in local communities during the Civil Rights Movement in which people of diverse backgrounds would come together to discuss injustices of the day and create a plan for action. Nearly 50 members from throughout the Pomona Valley and across the country gathered to reflect on the legacy of Dr. King. Representatives of Pearls of Service, the group’s non-profit charitable arm, presented this year’s scholarships to Jaylen Barrios and Morgan Watson, both juniors at Etiwanda High School, Meisha Sharp, a junior at Chino High School, and Daysia Kee, a senior at Elsinore High School. Pictured are participants at the “virtual” Sunday Supper. Event chair Dr. Melissa Givens is pictured in the top row, second from left. AKA is the first historically African-American Greek-lettered sorority. It was founded in 1908 by nine college students at the historically black Howard University in Washington, D.C.

## Pomona Police to host ‘virtual’ nine-week community academy

Applications are due Feb. 9 for the Pomona Police Department’s “virtual” community academy, a program designed to develop relationships between the police department and the community while providing an overview of the department’s procedures and programs.

Topics included will be com-

munity outreach programs, human trafficking, homelessness, mental health, forensics investigations and more.

Access to the internet and a computer will be required for the nine-week course which will meet every Tuesday from Feb. 23 through April 20.

Registration is on-line at [https://](https://forms/gle/nmd8YLsSmcLj14Ky7)

[forms/gle/nmd8YLsSmcLj14Ky7](https://forms/gle/nmd8YLsSmcLj14Ky7) or e-mail [natalie\\_diaz@ci.pomona.ca.us](mailto:natalie_diaz@ci.pomona.ca.us) for an application.

The academy will be limited to the first 40 approved applicants who must be over 18, a Pomona resident (or work in the city) and a first-time participant.

For more information, call (909) 620-2377.



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## 82nd Airborne veteran Stephen Manzanares celebrates 92nd birthday with community

It was a 92nd birthday celebration last month for La Nueva Voz friend Stephen Manzanares, one of Pomona's favorite World War II veterans, and what a celebration it was!

First, it was on his actual birthday – Saturday, Dec. 26.

There were friends and family, all socially distanced, of course, outside Manzanares' house on 11th Street in Pomona.

Then there were invited guests from the community – including La Nueva Voz.

And on top of all of that, there were some 20 motorcycles – some with two on a bike – who rode over from Pomona's Post 30 American Legion in a drive-by (actually, more of a drive-up, since they stopped out front in the street).

One motorcycle rider in full leathers said he heard they were going to have cake.

Those motorcycles were from the American Legion Riders for

in the street as the group, forming a semi-circle in front of the guest of honor, were called to attention by their leader for a salute to Manzanares, who served as a member of the 82nd Airborne Division and has long been a member of the 82nd Airborne Division Association Honor Guard.

Not only was Manzanares a paratrooper but he also piloted an unpowered glider airplane released from a Douglas C-47 military transport aircraft on reconnaissance missions behind enemy lines, according to one of his friends at the celebration.

(Those missions got a little tricky, of course, because without power you never knew exactly where you were going to go down or what was going to be there waiting for you when you got there. Plus a lot of those slow-moving gliders were used for target practice by enemy soldiers.)

And if you've never seen nearly 30 U.S. veterans – men and wom-

County Veterans Resource Expo each year at Fairplex to Pomona's still relatively new Indigenous Peoples Day in Ganesha Park, organized by his daughter Dee Dee.

And he's just as likely to be sitting on a stage next to Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis, Congresswoman Norma Torres or another elected official as he is to be sitting in the audience in his military uniform.

But wherever he is sitting and whoever he is talking to, Manzanares is a modest and humble individual.

Unless, of course, he's talking about that time 20 years ago in San Diego when he made a parachute jump – at the age of 72 – with a group of fellow veterans. He also marched with the 82nd Airborne unit in Washington, D.C., "when they changed over the Air Force" (from the Army Air Corps – in 1947).



Two members of the American Legion Riders for California pose for a "photo op" with Stephen Manzanares during his birthday celebration in front of his house.

Manzanares... pg. 9



Pomona City Councilmember Robert Torres was on hand at Stephen Manzanares' 92nd birthday celebration last month to present a certificate of recognition.

California, something Pomona's Post 30 is now affiliated with, thanks to Post 30 Commander Roberto Arnold and Second Vice Commander Bob Radcliff, a long-time motorcycle rider and now President of Post 30's Legion Riders, who brought up the rear last month. (He's also Captain of the honor guard and color guard for both Post 30 and American Legion District 18.)

Once all the motorcycle engines were shut off and the side stands down, things started settling down

en – dressed for riding – standing in the street singing "Happy Birthday" to a fellow veteran on his 92nd birthday, well, you just kind of had to be there.

Of course, according to Manzanares' daughter, Dee Dee Manzanares Ybarra, it was all a surprise and she said he got a little emotional – and rightfully so.

Manzanares who worked at Pomona's Fairplex for 44 years as a labor supervisor, has been seen often at community events through the years – from the Los Angeles



It was a great celebration honoring Stephen Manzanares on his 92nd birthday where members of the American Legion Riders for California made a big entrance and were a big hit.



Guest of honor Stephen Manzanares was showing off a photograph taken 29 years ago in 1991 when he marched in a parade at the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor in Waikiki. He told La Nueva Voz that's him "right there," fourth row from the left and three back.

## Work on Gold Line reaches Pomona with first road closure set for Monday

Construction of the Foothill Gold Line to Pomona has finally made it to the city limits and the first road closure due to construction – the long-term closure of Fulton Road at the railroad crossing just west of the North Pomona train station – is expected to begin Monday (Feb. 1).

The work is part of the 9.1-mile Gold Line light rail extension project from Glendora to Pomona.

Gold Line Construction Authority officials said the closure is expected to continue for about three months and will include the temporary closure of the west entrance to the Metrolink station parking lot.

The construction activity will require what officials call a full closure of the street to vehicles and pedestrians, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, while crews relocate underground utilities, install a new safety and communication system, rebuild the street and the actual crossing and more.

Arrow Highway south of the construction and Bonita Avenue north of the work will remain open. Access to the train station will be available from the Garey Avenue side.

Officials said crews will be working double shifts from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. Overnight work and Sunday shifts also may be required.

Access to homes, businesses and churches on both sides of the railroad crossing will be maintained at all times.

Garey Avenue will serve as the main detour route during the closure.

Officials said noise from con-

### Scholarship applications... from pg. 7

“The Cardenas Markets Foundation is committed to helping students advance their educational goals,” said Marco Robles, executive director of the foundation. “We understand that educational costs continue to increase, and we are pleased to help defray some of these costs for our future leaders.

Applications are available at <https://cardenasmarkets.com/scholarships>.

struction equipment will be produced near the active work zones.

Some bus stops may be temporarily relocated.

The Foothill Gold Line Construction Authority was created in 1998 by the state legislature to plan, design and build the Metro Gold Line (now the “L Line”) light rail system from Union Station in Los Angeles to Montclair.

Work on the link to Pomona got under way in July and is expected to be completed in 2025.

Businesses and residents with project or construction-related questions can call 1-(626) 513-5788 or e-mail [communityrelations@kiewit-parsons.com](mailto:communityrelations@kiewit-parsons.com).

For general project questions, call 1-(626) 471-9050 or e-mail [publicaffairs@foothillgoldline.org](mailto:publicaffairs@foothillgoldline.org).

Or unless he’s talking about the time 30 years ago – right in front of his house – that he broke his leg on a skateboard (it wasn’t his fault – there was a little lip on the curb that caught him).

Or unless he’s talking about the time 29 years ago in 1991 when he marched in a parade at the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor in Waikiki “and I’m right there,” he told La Nueva Voz, pointing to the framed color photograph he had with him at last month’s celebration.

(He asked his daughter to bring



Photo by Renee Barbee

**POMONA GOLD LINE CONSTRUCTION ALL SET TO BEGIN** -- A lot of heavy equipment is in place just west of the North Pomona train station in Pomona in advance of Monday’s full closure of Fulton Road -- a 90-day closure which represents the first time work on the Gold Line extension reaches Pomona and the first road closure in Pomona associated with the project. A Gold Line Construction Authority spokesperson said that stack of old freight track rail was removed from the corridor in Glendora and cut to length using a specialized machine. They will later be used as guard rails alongside the main rails to prevent trains from derailing. In September, a special rail delivery train dropped off 50 1,600-foot long sticks of rail at various locations along the construction corridor, most for the freight track relocation but some for the light rail system. Two more rail delivery trains are anticipated for the project with the next one late this year.

### Manzanares... from pg. 8

out the photo and La Nueva Voz asked her if it was too big to bring out of the house to the street, but she said, “he takes it everywhere.” Oh, and the house itself? That’s the new one – he’s only lived there since the 1950s. He was born in the house two doors down – actually in the house itself since, Manzanara said with a smile, they didn’t have a hospital in Pomona back then.)

So, getting down to the hard questions, La Nueva Voz took the occasion to ask Manzanara for the secret of living to the young

age of 92. First, he credited his longevity with his service in the 82nd Airborne.

“You’ve got to eat a lot of beans, you have to go through the Depression, that’s where you learn how to eat everything,” he said. “Depression time, you had to eat what you had. Now everything all comes out of the can.”

And his daughter said he eats whatever he wants.

“We don’t limit him – we let him do what he wants to do,” she said. “We don’t control him. He lives his life.”

Of course, his life has had a few ups and downs. There was that little skateboard incident, for example, and there was a quadruple bypass 18 years ago, but it looks

like that one was just all about getting him back in the race.

Then what message does he have for the younger military veterans of today?

“The first thing, stay out of the dope,” he said. “And then when they go overseas make sure they leave good friends in charge of their wives.”

And that’s pretty much how the day went – from a birthday celebration and recognition of a veteran’s military service to a little history to friends and family and even sage advice from someone who’s been there.

But it definitely wasn’t just another sunny Saturday afternoon on 11th Street.

Happy birthday, good friend!



Members of the American Legion Riders for California honor 82nd Airborne veteran Stephen Manzanara (seated in foreground) during his birthday celebration last month.

Stephen Manzanara’s daughter Dee Dee Manzanara Ybarra, at left, chats with Pomona’s American Legion Post 30 Second Vice Commander Bob Radcliff at her dad’s 92nd birthday celebration last month.



Pomona’s American Legion Post 30 Second Vice Commander Bob Radcliff, at left, hangs out with Stephen Manzanara at the birthday celebration. Radcliff rode in with the American Legion Riders for California on one of his motorcycles and told La Nueva Voz that Post 30 is now part of the motorcycle veterans’ group and he is President of Post 30’s Legion Riders.

## Pomona's 'virtual' Kwanzaa celebration grows to become 'coast to coast' success

An estimated nearly 400 viewers – with participants both in Pomona and across the country – were online last month for the second annual Kwanzaa Joy Celebration with classic video of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the famous 1963 “March on Washington” and the music of “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” known as the Black national anthem.

Kwanzaa itself, an annual celebration of African-American culture held from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1, was first celebrated in 1966 as a way to combine the nation’s Civil Rights Movement and the “Black Power” movement. The second annual Pomona event was presented both as a Zoom conference and a live Facebook feed.

Co-organizer Chara Swodeck told viewers the local celebration of the African-American community, specifically in Pomona Valley and surrounding areas, was created as a way “to celebrate us every day.”

“We selected Kwanzaa because



Chara Swodeck

of its rich principles, because of all seven days of Kwanzaa speaking into self-determination and the community and building each other up, and faith and purpose, creativity, all the things that really are our culture,” she said.

And, at the second annual event, viewers logged in across the country in Maryland, in Tennessee and in Colorado and even in Northern California, she added.

“It’s not just a small thing now,” she said. “It’s not just Pomona.”

The celebration actually was presented on day two of Kwanzaa, which was based on the principle of self-determination, although speakers were on hand for each of the first six principles.

Swodeck introduced Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval who, she said,



Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval



From left in a family screen shot are Chara, Jackson and Brooklyn Swodeck, and, at rear, Joshua Swodeck.



Khalif and Vikki Rasshan

in June formed Pomona’s new African-American Advisory Alliance.

“The people have been able to come together and share what we would like to see in our African-American community,” she said.

“It is so critical that the history and the traditions be passed on to the younger generations,” Sandoval said of the Kwanzaa celebration, adding that he was raised in a very diverse Pomona where many people had arrived after fleeing war in different parts of the world – something that he said enriched his life and his experience.

“We were brought here for the purpose of working, we lost our values, interests and principles, so this today and for the last 54 years we’ve been purposeful in repairing or becoming responsible for our own reparation at this point,”



Bill Cobbs

said Khalif Rasshan who, with his wife, Vikki, founded Pomona’s African-American Museum of Beginnings in 2011. He said Kwanzaa provides a way to give thanks to the ancestors.

Vikki Rasshan called the celebration “a way to connect us to Africa.”

The two retired from the Pomona Unified School District after 37 years of teaching.

Bill Cobbs, a local resident and actor who credits his start in acting to the African-American Performing Arts Center in Cleveland, Ohio, echoed the importance of honoring the elders in the community and seeking their participation in the celebration.

He said he was honored to be asked to speak on “unity,” the first Kwanzaa principle, because he said, “without unity, none of the others can be accomplished.”

Cobbs added that it is important “to strive for and maintain unity

but part of your life, your action plan and your work with other people,” Grigsby said.

The name Kwanzaa is derived from the phrase “matunda ya kwanza,” which means “first fruits” in Swahili. Each fam-



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

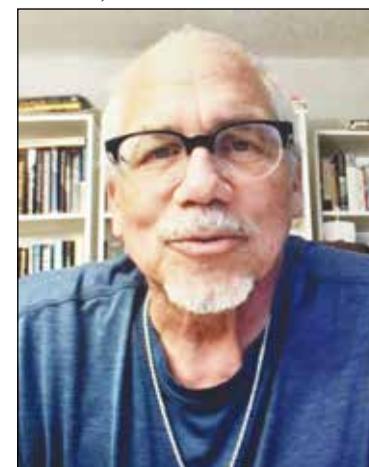
as a family, community, nation and race.”

Daryl Russell Grigsby, a native of Washington, D.C., and a Negro Leagues (baseball) historian and

ily celebrates Kwanzaa in its own way, but celebrations often include songs and dances, African drums, storytelling, poetry reading and a large traditional meal. On each of the seven nights, the family gathers and a child lights one of the candles on the Kinara, or candleholder, and one of the seven principles is discussed.

The principles (Nguzo Saba) include unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith.

Miss the presentation? The entire one hour and 11 minutes event can be viewed at [www.facebook.com/kwanzaajoy](http://www.facebook.com/kwanzaajoy) (scroll down to Dec. 27).



Daryl Russell Grigsby

community activist, recently retired as Public Works Director for the City of San Luis Obispo (he worked for the City of Pomona before that).

Speaking on the self-determination principle, he said it was his favorite – “to define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves,” adding that it is a fundamental principle of strength and pride and community.

And on the principles of Kwanzaa written in their original Swahili, he said pronouncing them properly is not a major concern.

“Most important . . . is to put them into practice and make them . . . not as part of your vocabulary

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## Pomona African-American Advisory Alliance joins MLK Jr. Day of Service

By Donna Houston

The African-American Advisory Alliance, spearheaded by Pomona residents Chara Swodeck, Eunice Russell and Ethel Gardner, brought together local organizations and volunteers on Martin Luther King, Jr., Day and National Day of Service to hand out more than 300 bags of groceries to the community.

In keeping with the civil rights leader's life, MLK Day of Service is a national day to encourage Americans to volunteer to improve their communities.

A stream of vehicles drove through The Village at Indian Hill, while more than 20 energetic volunteers wearing face coverings and practicing safe distancing placed groceries in the trunk of each car.

"Pomona has been hit extremely hard by the pandemic and this food drive is a small way we can help our fellow community members while advancing Dr. King's vision of service to one another," said Tamela

Hutchinson, Alliance member and former Pomona Community Life Commissioner.

The drive-through food distribution received pallets of food donations from Kennedy Austin Foundation, Abundant Living Family Church-Pomona, Pomona Valley Food Bank and Council of African-American Parents with additional supplies donated by Fairplex and Superior Grocers in North Pomona.

The Alliance was formed in June 2020 by Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval to lift and restore the community and solidify the importance of African-Ameri-

cans in Pomona. It is composed of advocates, artists, educators, faith-based leaders and youth in Pomona.

To learn more about the Alli-

ance and for details on upcoming Black History Month events, visit the Facebook page @ Pomona4As or [www.Pomona4As.org](http://www.Pomona4As.org).

*Editor's note:* Donna Houston is a member of the African-American Advisory Alliance and has been a resident of Pomona for more than 20 years.

Ethel Gardner, founder of the Kennedy Austin Foundation, chats with a guest at last month's toy give-away. She said some nearby residents received an invitation, but most called and asked to be placed on the list for toys. Gardner said a lot of people were "just getting in line and just coming through and we're giving it to them because we have it to give." She told La Nueva Voz toys were donated by Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Hilda Solis, State Sen. Connie Leyva, the Pomona Police Department and private donors.



Photo by Renee Barbee  
Volunteers for Pomona's African-American Advisory Alliance and the Kennedy Austin Foundation pose for the La Nueva Voz camera outside the Village at Indian Hill during a drive-through food distribution program on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day last week. Pictured on the tables are grocery bags packed and ready to go. Kennedy Austin founder Ethel Gardner is pictured at rear, fourth from the left.



Photo by Jeff Schenkel

First responders including representatives of area law enforcement agencies lined up in a parking lot last Tuesday (Jan. 19) on the first day of COVID-19 vaccines at Pomona's Fairplex (next to the Finish Line Sports Bar, pictured at rear). Thousands of residents received their Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine at Fairplex, many on a drive-through basis, in what one official told La Nueva Voz was turning out to be nearly an eight-hour day. Pictured are two area residents receiving the "shot in the arm" on day one. One off-duty law enforcement officer who was two back from the head of the line to be next told La Nueva Voz it took him an hour to get to that point. Seniors age 65 and older with appointments were scheduled to be next in line last week. Security officers and crews spent the day Monday setting up for the event. Los Angeles County public health officials opened a total of five new large-scale vaccination sites last week including The Forum, Cal State University Northridge, offices of the Los Angeles County Office of Education in Downey and Six Flags Magic Mountain in addition to Fairplex. The large-scale sites are in addition to more than 75 vaccination locations established throughout the county. As of last week, the county had administered nearly 348,000 vaccinations.



A volunteer for Pomona's Kennedy Austin Foundation carries toys to a car during a holiday toy give-away last month at the Village at Indian Hill. Foundation founder Ethel Gardner told La Nueva Voz the event started at 11 a.m. and was going to continue until they ran out of toys. "Everybody got a toy, we didn't care where they lived, didn't matter," she said, adding that there were 256 people on the advance list and after 90 minutes 200 people had already lined up.

## Mayor Sandoval to represent San Gabriel Valley on Metro board

Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval became the newest board member of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority on Monday when the Los Angeles County City Selection Committee unanimously ratified his appointment to fill the unexpired term of long-time member and former Duarte Mayor John Fasana.

The appointment expires Jan. 1, 2023. Full terms on the Metro board are for four years.

Fasana did not seek reelection in November after serving as Mayor and City Councilmember in Duarte for the past 33 years. He also served as board chairman of Metro.

Sandoval was nominated to the Metro position by members of the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments and will represent the San Gabriel Valley sector on the Metro board.

The county's City Selection Committee is made up of mayors or delegates from all 88 cities in Los Angeles County.

Sandoval was expected to attend his first Metro board meeting today (Jan. 28).

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Hilda Solis, who also serves as first vice chair of the Metro board, congratulated Sandoval on his appointment.

"Los Angeles County needs strong, experienced leaders to guide the region through recovery and to help those most impacted by the pandemic," Solis said in a prepared statement. "Mayor Sandoval will ensure that the priorities of the San Gabriel Valley are championed to support economic recovery and resiliency within the region."

"He possesses the experience and expertise needed to ensure that the San Gabriel Valley's priorities are championed at Metro," she added.

Sandoval was reelected in November to a second four-year term as mayor.

He also serves as chair of both the Foothill Gold Line Construction Authority and the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments Capital Projects and Construction Committee (formerly known as the Alameda Corridor East Con-

Metro board... pg. 14

## Pomona NAACP to call on city councilmembers to ban 'no-knock' warrants

Representatives of the NAACP Pomona Valley Branch are calling on members of the community to join with them at the Monday, Feb. 1, Pomona City Council meeting to urge councilmembers to ban "no-knock" warrants in Pomona.

The organization is proposing the city adopt and implement a version of "Breonna's Law" in Pomona "for the safety of our neighbors and local law enforcement and to prevent any future and unnecessary community tragedies."

Breonna Taylor, 26, was killed when she was shot eight times by Louisville police last March after officers armed with a no-knock warrant forced their way inside her home and exchanged shots with her boyfriend in an attempted drug sting operation.

Louisville's metro council in June unanimously voted to pass the original "Breonna's Law" banning the use of no-knock warrants.

The NAACP proposal, outlined in an e-mail, is that "no Pomona Police Department police officer,

or any other Pomona law enforcement or public safety official, shall seek, execute or participate in the execution of a no-knock warrant at any location within the boundaries of the City of Pomona."

Representatives of the clergy and community members are joining the NAACP in their effort.

The council meeting is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. For information on addressing the city council, contact the office of the Pomona City Clerk at (909) 620-2341.

The "virtual" meeting can be accessed through the City of Pomona web site at [www.ci.pomona.ca.us](http://www.ci.pomona.ca.us).

For more information, contact the NAACP Pomona Valley Branch at (909) 620-0433 or by e-mail at [president@NAACP-Pomona-Valley.org](mailto:president@NAACP-Pomona-Valley.org).

sion," Webb said.

Webb Family Enterprises, created by Webb's parents Reggie and Rene Webb, owns and operates 16 McDonald's restaurant

The following public service ads are courtesy of La Nueva Voz

**Project Sister Family Services**  
Sexual Assault and  
Child Abuse Services  
909-626-4357  
or 626-966-4155  
[www.projectsister.org](http://www.projectsister.org)

**Feeding the Hungry,  
Sheltering the Homeless**  
Grocery Distribution at  
209 W. Pearl St.  
Pomona  
Volunteering: 909-622-3806  
[www.inlandvalleyhopepartners.org](http://www.inlandvalleyhopepartners.org)

**HOUSE OF RUTH**  
Abused by your partner  
and need help?  
24-hour hotline:  
**(909) 988-5559 or toll  
free at (877) 988-5559**

**Pomona Public Library Hours**  
Mon., Tues., Wed. Thurs.:  
1 to 7 p.m.  
Sat.:  
Noon to 5 p.m.  
Fri., Sun.:  
Closed

**Info on student group programs at AGRIsCAPES:**

**[www.agriscapes.cpp.edu](http://www.agriscapes.cpp.edu)**

**4102 S. University Drive, Pomona (next to the Farm Store)**

**Sign up for Pomona Unified School District's**

Free 'Early Learning Literacy' App!

It's a fun way to improve reading skills.

Register at [www.myf2b.com/register/pomona](http://www.myf2b.com/register/pomona)

[footsteps2brilliance](http://footsteps2brilliance)

La Nueva Voz is a proud member of PUSD's Literacy Collaborative.

## Hope & Hurdles

By Evy Schuman



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** "Hope & Hurdles," an on-going feature appearing in La Nueva Voz, was created by artist Evy Schuman as an attempt to "poke fun" at the little things that trouble us all from time to time. Evy, who is also a published writer on the subject, created the cartoon series to show her work at a creative writing class she has co-facilitated at Pomona's Tri-City Wellness Center.

## Rise above the hate... from pg. 5

franchises in Southern California.

### Scholarship winners

This year's Martin Luther King, Jr., Youth Social Justice Award winners were L'Mio Edwards, a freshman at Diamond Bar High School, and Evelyn Aguilar-Andrade, a senior at Pomona's Fremont Academy of Engineering and Design.

Edwards, a nationally ranked track star, ran a 5K for 30 days to raise more than \$10,000 for those impacted by COVID-19.

Andrade is a member of the Pomona Youth Prevention Council, the youth action council of Partnership for a Positive Pomona, a coalition of Pomona residents and community leaders working together to prevent substance abuse in the community. She has been empowering youth to develop ideas to create positive change in their schools and communities.

Both are members of their school superintendents' student advisory councils.

### APERTURAS DE EMPLEO INMEDIATAS PRODUCTION WORKERS & PACKERS

La empresa de procesamiento de aves de corral ubicada en Chino, CA, tiene vacantes inmediatas para trabajadores de producción y envasadores. Buscando estudiantes confiables y rápidos, con capacidad para trabajar horas extras y algunos fines de semana. La compañía entrenará.

Los candidatos interesados pueden presentar su solicitud en persona  
Aceptación de Solicitudes  
M-F 8am-2pm

**Wing Lee Farms**  
13625 Yorba Avenue  
Chino, CA 91710  
(909) 628-9808

### IMMEDIATE JOB OPENINGS PRODUCTION WORKERS & PACKERS

Poultry processing company located in Chino, CA, has immediate job openings for production workers and packers. Seeking reliable, fast learners, with ability to work overtime and some weekends. Company will train.

Interested candidates may apply in person  
Accepting Applications  
M-F 8am-2pm

**Wing Lee Farms**  
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(909) 628-9808



A new fountain was constructed late last year in front of the administrative offices of Pomona's Sacred Heart Church. The fountain, along with a garden-like area surrounding it with concrete work, landscaping and accent lighting, was built by Juan Jimenez and his crew of Casa Blanca Landscape in El Monte and was completed just before the Christmas holiday. For more information, call (626) 222-1431 or (626) 202-6671.

### Getting phone calls? Your payment is not late and SCE is not cutting your power!

Receiving any of those calls claiming to be from Southern California Edison lately, threatening to turn off your electricity unless you pay an overdue balance right away over the phone?

Well, since this is a family newspaper, we'll just say you can, as they say in New York, fuhgeddaboutit!

Yep, it's a scam for sure, actually a form of "spoofing."

La Nueva Voz called SCE's fraud team after receiving the first of two recent such calls and learned apparently we were in good company – a 37-year veteran of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department got the same call, checked his account on line and saw that his latest payment was received.

He called the number (after first checking the number on his SCE bill and noticed it didn't look like the company's telephone line) and told them he knew SCE didn't take payments over the phone. They hung up.

La Nueva Voz called back, too, but didn't take such a polite approach in the conversation. They hung up again.

Neither the sheriff's veteran or La Nueva Voz came even close to

handing over any money.

And, of course, neither should any readers of La Nueva Voz.

A spokesperson for SCE said their customers have reported being victimized by utility bill phone scams totaling about \$426,000 last year alone. And, of course, every victim doesn't bother to report the problem.

And that sheriff's veteran? He lives in San Bernardino, one of the 10 cities in SCE's service area that most frequently report utility bill phone scams.

While it is nothing to be proud of, Pomona was well-placed on that list, as well, ranking number 24 of the top 25 cities last year with 159 complaints (eight people paid amounts totaling more than \$3,000).

SCE recorded 17,000 customer complaints in 2019 and more than 15,682 complaints in 2020 (2,000 of those were to commercial accounts and the rest residential customers).

Of those complaints last year, the total amount requested was \$3.19 million. But only 625 customers actually sent in that \$426,000.

(The SCE spokesperson said ap-

parently because of COVID-19, the number is lower this year – the scammers stopped using the SCE ploy in March and April, possibly trying out a new COVID scam, although the SCE routine picked up again after that.)

According to SCE, the scammers tend to target the elderly, English learners or both, and smaller businesses such as hair salons and auto mechanics, many of which have been struggling since the start of the pandemic.

Oh, and one more thing, because of COVID-19 policy changes, SCE is not disconnecting now at all, plus they would never demand credit card information over the telephone and will not remove your electric meter. And the company will not send employees out to demand or accept payment in the field.

(Another potential new scam involves imposters passing out postcards with SCE and California Public Utilities Commission logos about a so-called COVID-19 relief program. Short version – just don't allow a "representative" to arrange an in-person meeting to discuss eligibility for six months of relief on

Phone calls... pg. 14



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Sky9 "screen shot" photo, KCAL9 television Mt. Baldy was covered with snow on New Year's Day and La Nueva Voz gave some thought to driving up the hill for a look. But before even getting to the Shinn Road cutoff near the bottom, traffic was literally at a standstill mid-afternoon so La Nueva Voz pulled over to chat with a CHP officer out of the Baldwin Park office who just drove down after cruising to the top. He said it was pretty much bumper to bumper all the way up which translated to a seven-mile 90-minute ride to the top -- and he said there was no parking once you got there. La Nueva Voz decided to wait in line at Starbucks instead (that wait was only about 45 minutes) and later grabbed a screen shot of snow on the mountain, courtesy of KCAL9's helicopter.

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**Cobb Institute of Claremont launches 'starting your own garden' series tonight**

The Cobb Institute in Claremont is partnering with the Pomona Sustainable Food Alliance, Urban Mission Community Partners, EcoFarm and Myra House to present a four-class series on starting your own garden.

The series, which begins tonight, will be held at 6 p.m. on Thursdays through Feb. 18.

To learn about the process of gardening and how to create a food-producing garden, register by visiting the web site at <https://cobb.institute/event/process-of-gardening>.

**Phone calls... from pg. 13**

SCE bills, and don't allow the impostor to take down your information, review your utility statements or access a copy of your credit report. And, for one of our favorites here at La Nueva Voz, SCE does not sell energy-related home improvement products door to door.)

The company doesn't even have a disconnection department in the first place.

So whatever you do, don't run down to Walgreen's and buy a pre-paid charge card or a pre-paid gift card. And give SCE a call -- they'll take the number that called you and the call-back number and have a third-party service remove those numbers from the system -- if nothing else, it will make it a little more difficult for the scammers -- believed to be offshore -- from continuing the fraud.

SCE has been able to "shake down" more than 924 scammer numbers so far but, unfortunately, law enforcement officials haven't caught anybody yet.

The number is (800) 655-4555. You can also e-mail SCE at [csin-fogov@sce.com](mailto:csin-fogov@sce.com) or complete an online fraud form at [www.sce.com/scamalert](http://www.sce.com/scamalert).

**Metro board... from pg. 12**

struction Authority).

Fasana's last board meeting at Metro was on Dec. 3. According to Metro spokesperson Brian Haas, Fasana was Metro's longest-serving board member and was sworn in at the first Metro board meeting in 1993.

The Metro board, which is made up of 14 members chaired by Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and includes all five Los Angeles County Supervisors, meets the third Thursday of the month with the exception of August, when there is no meeting. The November and December meetings are

combined.

Board members, who guide Metro's priorities, projects and activities, oversee an agency with a budget of more than \$6 billion.

Metro is a multimodal transportation agency that transports about 1.3 million passengers daily on a fleet of 2,200 clean air buses and six rail lines.

The agency also oversees bus, rail, highway and other mobility-related building projects and leads transportation planning and programming for Los Angeles County.

**Happy holidays, neighbors.**

We wish all our neighbors a safe and happy holiday season and the very best in the New Year. It's a true joy to be part of such a wonderful community.

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no blame.  
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**N**ewborns can be safely given up at the emergency room of Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center -- or at any Los Angeles County hospital emergency room or fire station -- under the California Safely Surrendered Baby Law. The law allows the safe surrender of an unwanted infant within three days of birth with no fear of arrest or prosecution for abandonment as long as the baby has not been abused or neglected.

**T**he baby will be placed in a pre-adoptive home while the adoption process gets under way.

**M**ore than 100 infants have been surrendered in Los Angeles County and have had a second chance at life since the program began in 2001.



This message sponsored by La Nueva Voz.  
To help sponsor this message, contact Renee Barbee at (909) 762-1446.

**A new La Nueva Voz publishes each month on the fourth Thursday of the month.**

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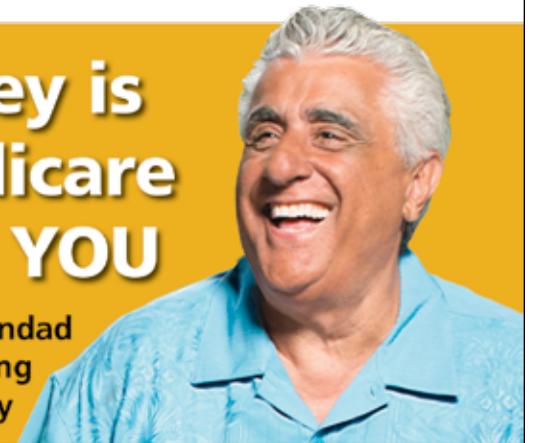
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- Downtown Pomona Owners Association, 119 W. 2nd St., Pomona
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- Western University of Health Sciences Patient Care Center
- Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center maternity lobby, outpatient services, emergency room
- Gold Strike Market Carniceria, 412 N. Park Ave., Pomona
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