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# La Nueva Voz

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



Issue No. 139  
Thursday, February 25, 2021

## LOOKING FOR NEW MEDICAL DIRECTOR?

### County providing room service marijuana, alcohol at Pomona's 'COVID hotel'?

By Jeff Schenkel  
Publisher

Nurses and other staff members at Pomona's own "COVID hotel" have been required to provide marijuana, "edibles," alcohol and "vapes" to patients or guests at the hotel in order to discourage them from leaving against medical advice – and employees have been disciplined if they refused to comply, according to allegations, the latest just this month, reported only to La Nueva Voz.

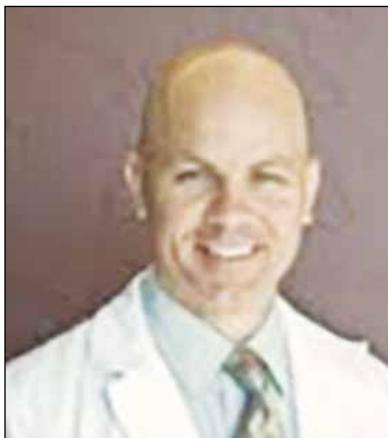
These practices and others inside the hotel – which has been closed to the public since March 2020 – have caused numerous employees to leave, sources have told La Nueva Voz.

### Pomona City Council unanimously approves local version of 'Breonna's Law'

Members of the Pomona City Council unanimously approved a resolution this month completely prohibiting under any circumstances the use of so-called "no-knock" warrants by Pomona police officers, following the lead of the Louisville, Kentucky, Metro Council and its own ordinance unanimously approved last June that became known as the original "Breonna's Law."

Just to put things in perspective, La Nueva Voz has reported for the past year that the hotel is the largest isolation facility for COVID in the county's system. But a well-placed employee

close to the operation reported it is, or at least when it opened was, the largest in the country – and possibly the world – and it handles the "sickest of the sick."



Dr. Kevin D. Burns



Dr. Heidi Behforouz

And in fairness, one nursing professional told La Nueva Voz administering small amounts of alcohol to prevent withdrawals which could lead to more serious medical complications is "nothing new," is considered acceptable practice and is common at many county medical facilities.

This source left her position at the hotel before seeing nurses regularly providing marijuana (when the practice started on her watch, staff switched patients over to "CBD" products, from the active ingredient in the marijuana plant), although she said a bigger problem surfaced in which some patients were ordering "crystal meth," a popular party drug, from outside

providers who delivered it in pizza boxes or sandwich bags to get past security.

Once that practice was discovered, staff was able to immediately prevent it from continuing. Pomona police reportedly were

involved at the time.

(One source told La Nueva Voz the county's "Housing for Health" program even routinely provides clean needles to heroin users for safety purposes during rehabilitation, although there was no mention of this practice at the hotel.)

Another source who was working on a Sunday night when meth allegedly was delivered in a hair dye box told La Nueva Voz the "charge nurse" discovered it and wanted to call police. Medical director Dr. Kevin D. Burns, however, reportedly told her not to do so and that he would "take care of it" Monday morning.

Another manager reportedly told the nurse not to hold on to the

drugs but to go ahead and call police.

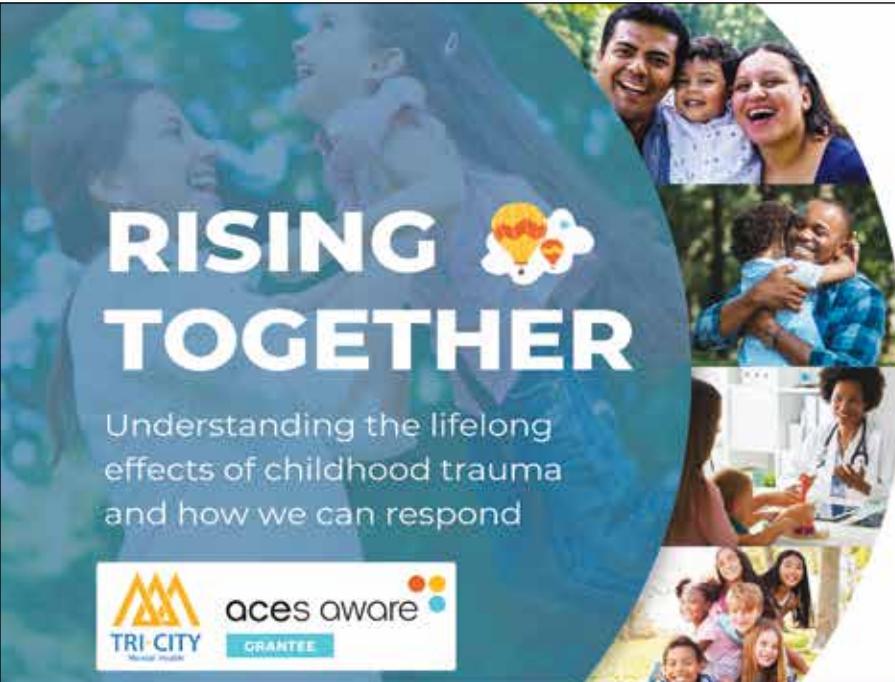
A security officer later told the source a delivery driver had just dropped off a supply of the medication Narcan, which is used for the emergency treatment of known or suspected opioid overdose.

The source was puzzled why that would be needed and how narcotics were making their way into the hotel when security officers searched patients on intake.

Pomona police confirmed in a telephone conversation the Sunday night methamphetamine incident based on the police department's Incident Number 20108343 on Sept. 27 in which police were dispatched to the scene. Because officers were unable to determine who delivered the illegal drugs and who the intended recipient was, they confiscated the drugs as "found property" and secured them in a police locker.

Police also told La Nueva Voz there have been 69 calls for service at the hotel in which officers responded in the last eight months, with most of the calls resulting from mental health issues, disturbing the peace, sexual assaults and the like.

Pomona's COVID hotel... pg. 4



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## Opening of Kaiser/Cal Poly COVID vaccine hub tarnished by an apparently unrelated death

The opening early this month of Pomona's second COVID-19 mass vaccination hub, this one at Cal Poly University Pomona, was overshadowed a week later by the death at the site of a 78-year-old woman shortly after receiving a first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech version of the vaccine.

However, both Kaiser Permanente and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health indicated the death did not appear to be related to the vaccine.

Dr. Michael Morris, physician director of Kaiser Permanente's Southern California vac-

cination program, said the patient was seated in the observation area after the injection when she complained of feeling discomfort and, while being evaluated by medical personnel, lost consciousness.

Paramedics on scene began CPR almost immediately but she was unable to be revived. Cause of death has not been determined, Morris said, but there were no signs of symptoms of a severe allergic or anaphylactic reaction.

Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Hilda Solis, Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval and Cal Poly President Soraya Coley to open the facility that would be able to handle 8,000 to 10,000 vaccines a day, depending on supply.



Senior V.P. Bill Caswell  
Kaiser Chief Operating Officer

### First doses arrived the day before opening

Kaiser's Chief Operating Officer and Senior Vice President Bill Caswell kicked off a news conference at the opening with the news that they received their first doses the day before.

"It arrived yesterday morning and so we are ready to go today," he said.

The first question at the news conference was from La Nueva



Dr. Derenik Gharibian, Kaiser Permanente's area pharmacy director, explains the COVID vaccination process during a tour on opening day at Kaiser's new COVID vaccination hub at Cal Poly Pomona. Pictured, from left, are Gharibian, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Hilda Solis, Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval, and Cal Poly President Dr. Soraya Coley.



Dr. Michael Morris  
Kaiser Permanente

Voices, trying to nail that down a little more as to how many doses were received.

### Focusing on getting shots in arms

"We're going to focus on getting as many shots in arms as we can," he said, adding that there are additional vaccine manufacturers coming online. "There is no question that this virus has a head start on us but we're going to catch up and we're going to win this race."

Caswell said the new location was on the "myturn.ca.gov" web portal.

"We received the vaccine at 10:30 (the previous day), the web site went live at 10:35 and the appointments were full through the weekend by 11 o'clock so clearly

people are figuring out how to access 'my turn,'" Caswell said.

For those who have no access to computers, various organizations are reaching out to help, plus Kaiser will be vaccinating within skilled nursing homes, churches and local communities – for both seniors and transportation-challenged people.

In addition, actual Kaiser facilities are vaccinating both Kaiser members and non-members alike.

"So, access is growing as we speak," he said, adding that Southern California will be "in a different place vaccine dependent over the next several weeks."

He said the site would begin with Pfizer but would be using whatever version of the vaccine they receive from the state.

Solis called the new site a "mi-



Katharyne Acuna, team member at the Kaiser Permanente COVID vaccination hub at Cal Poly Pomona and Kaiser's director of ambulatory clinical practice, at right, administers the first shot at the opening of the facility this month to Raquel Bobadilla, 74, of El Monte.

raculous opportunity for our residents here that have been so heavily impacted" by the pandemic, adding that more than 22,000 Pomona residents have tested positive for COVID in what she called the "epicenter."

Sandoval called it "an unprecedented time" and thanked Kaiser for their efforts.

"I have no doubt that our residents are going to benefit from this," he said, along with others throughout the region.

Coley said Cal Poly has served as an "anchor institution" for more than 80 years, and not only in the area of education.

"We also see ourselves as a partner in the social, economic and health well-being of our community," she said.

The site, which was referred to as a "mega pod," includes 16 check-in stations, four pods set up



Dr. Derenik Gharibian, Kaiser Permanente's area pharmacy director, prepares the first dose at Kaiser's new COVID vaccination hub that opened this month at Cal Poly University Pomona as Cal Poly President Soraya Coley, left rear, looks on.

Her family reported she had a history of heart-related illness.

Despite the tragedy, her husband of 57 years – who received his first shot at the same time – said he plans to return in a few weeks for his second dose.

Kaiser officials joined with Los

Morris said Kaiser received about 42,000 doses and planned to save half of that for the second dose.

He admitted, of course, that fu-

## PUSD schools ‘phased-in’ reopening dates still uncertain

Pomona Unified School Supt. Richard Martinez told his school board members last week that he has a phased-in back-to-school plan in mind for schools in the local district and, while he stopped short of giving his board a specific date to begin reopening schools, he told La Nueva Voz last Friday he expects that date to fall early in the last quarter of the school year which begins March 15.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health last week permitted elementary schools in the county to reopen for in-class instruction for students in grades TK through six, after the county reached the state guideline adjusted COVID-19 case rate of 25 per 100,000 for five consecutive days.

Schools first were required to submit and have approved plans for implementation of safety measures. And they were required to consult with labor, parent and community organizations regarding re-opening plans.

Martinez told La Nueva Voz the district will be inviting input from Associated Pomona Teachers (the teachers’ union) and the Califor-

nia School Employees Association (classified employees union), as well as principals, administrators and parents.

And he said the return to classes will be a “natural transition” from Zoom (on-line) meetings to a “hybrid” approach using both in-class and Zoom “because it’s going to be a combination at that point.”

Students initially will be given the option of continuing with on-line classes or returning to an actual classroom.

Martinez said he is reviewing the possibility of having individual school principals conduct surveys from the schools, beginning as early as this week, where staff already has a relationship with parents and may be better able to ensure a 100 percent response.

“They’re (the principals) going to get better results” because of those relationships with parents and staff, said Deputy Supt. Darren Knowles, who heads up the district’s human resources department.

Martinez said the district has already completed safety checks and has even added plexiglass at the tables to mitigate potential risk

for teachers or fellow students – something that is not even required under the state guidelines.

In his “COVID-19 update” to the school board, Martinez said the county’s announcement allows PUSD “to start this conversation and consult with our different groups.”

“I want to share with the community that reopening schools and returning the students to class, I’m not going to give you a date on that,” he said. “In Pomona, in our community, those rates that you hear are not as low as L.A. County.”

He said the district numbers should be reviewed before making the decision to reopen, although he added that “fortunately those numbers are dropping significantly and quickly.”

Martinez said that for now, school site staff members have been working to get the schools prepared.

And he said at this point, he is recommending the district reopen in phases by schools, by grade levels “and, of course, what’s being recommended to us from the county as we start with the lower

grade levels.”

The next step, he said, would be to continue conversations with the district’s employee associations, parents, and staff before setting a specific date to return to school.

“We are going to be submitting our plan, and that’s our safety plan, to the state once we have determined date, time, the conditions, and we need to make sure that all our schools are prepared,” he said. “And we’re doing a walk through this week with a third of our schools and we’ll continue that walk through for the next couple weeks and making sure that we have the appropriate signage, PPE’s, all the things that are needed and necessary for that.”

He said once the application is submitted to the state, it takes seven days to receive approval.

## Village Academy takes top honors in Pomona Optimist essay contest

Francisco Benavidez of Pomona’s Village Academy High School was this year’s winner of the Pomona Optimist Club essay contest, this year on the theme of “Reaching your Dreams by Choosing Optimism.”

Martinez told a virtual meeting of Compassionate Pomona early this month that the district was working to enlist area pharmacies in a plan to provide COVID vaccine for teachers and staff once teachers were included in the categories of those eligible for the shots.

At last week’s board meeting, he said it was his understanding the vaccine would be opened up to teachers on March 1.

Meanwhile, Martinez told La Nueva Voz the latest update revision of protocols for K-12 schools was released by the county just last week.

The result of the changes, he said, could be an ability to bring even more students back to class based on declining COVID case numbers.

Second place went to Onika Cardenas of Pomona High School, and third place went to Karla Hernandez of Village Academy High School.

All three winners are 12th-graders. **Top honors... pg. 9**



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## Pomona's COVID hotel... from pg. 1

There were also more calls for service per month at the hotel than police recorded before the facility was converted to a COVID isolation facility.

Despite all of this and perhaps because of all this, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services' Dr. Heidi Behforouz, who heads up the county's network of COVID-19 quarantine facilities, reportedly became concerned over an on-going La Nueva Voz investigation into the hotel. She reportedly was circling the wagons and just recently this month issued an e-mail reminding county employees to refer news media to the public information office as she attempted to determine, in the words of one source, how much La Nueva Voz knew and who reported the alleged practices to the newspaper.

Behforouz is medical director for the county's Housing for Health program. La Nueva Voz was able to catch up with her on her personal cell phone this month after she did not respond to voice mail or "pager" messages left on her office phone for three days.

Her response? The allegations are "unfounded." Asked which al-

legations she was referring to, she said "all of the ones you just mentioned."

And just when it appeared that activities at the hotel could not become any more bizarre, La Nueva Voz received reports in the middle of the investigation for this story that medical director Burns is stepping down from his position, effective March 5, according to sources who said employee texts and e-mails announcing his departure were circulating around the county.

One source said Burns officially was leaving because of "family issues" although he said it was a curious coincidence considering the timing of the announcement and numerous employee complaints filed with the county over the past six weeks.

However, another source said he was terminated because of all those employee complaints against Burns plus a federal complaint hanging over his head allegedly involving licensing concerns.

But Behforouz's initial reaction when La Nueva Voz asked her to confirm if Burns was leaving – and why – was to ask why this was im-

portant.

Only when La Nueva Voz explained the marijuana and alcohol allegations and the reports of numerous complaints from employees did she say she was unable to comment on personnel matters.

"I don't feel that I am at liberty to discuss these issues," she said, and she referred La Nueva Voz to the county's public information office, but only after saying she would not answer any future calls from La Nueva Voz to her personal cell phone.

She also declined to respond when La Nueva Voz asked her if she was responsible for the e-mails to county employees referring news media calls on the hotel to



**Photo courtesy of Los Angeles County**  
**FORMER HOTEL SITE MANAGER** -- Larry Dennis, at right, former Isolation Quarantine Site Director at Pomona's Sheraton Fairplex Hotel, speaks with a staff member in the hotel lobby last November. The lobby has been transformed to a "command post" headquarters for COVID-19 operations in the hotel. La Nueva Voz happened to meet Dennis last month at the Fairplex COVID "Mega POD" vaccination project which he was running at the time after being transferred out of the hotel. Dennis ran the hotel project from May to December. After briefly serving at the vaccine site, he has been transferred to his office in Norwalk where he works in information technology for Los Angeles County.

the county public information staff in an apparent attempt to further tighten up the information chain.

La Nueva Voz has covered progress at Pomona's Sheraton Fairplex Hotel since it was converted 11 months ago to exclusive use by Los Angeles County as a COVID isolation facility for those exposed to COVID and in need of a place to quarantine or those who have contracted the disease but with only mild symptoms not requiring full hospitalization.

The hotel – with its 244 rooms all leased to the county under a contract with Pomona's Fairplex – has continued month after

month to house significantly more COVID-related patients than any of the county's eight COVID isolation facilities (the number of facilities has fluctuated in the past 11 months) in the county network.

The continuing story took an uphill turn last month when La Nueva Voz reported in its Jan. 28 issue that it received by mail a package of file documents sent by a medical worker at the hotel who first brought to light allegations of 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," an employee said in one memo.

He also claimed that patients are being moved in the middle of the night from Pomona to Compton, where the county uses the Willow Tree Inn as part of its COVID isolation network, "so that when the local census is provided the next day, the numbers look very high and the funding keeps coming."

Even a security guard restricting vehicle access to the off-limits hotel told La Nueva Voz several months ago that ambulances with patients can be seen coming and going at all hours of the day and night.

Burns, who maintains a medical practice in Tucson but became licensed to practice in California in May, apparently came to Southern

Pomona's COVID hotel... pg. 12




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## Volunteers complete ninth year of P3's 'Project Sticker Shock' campaign

The Partnership for a Positive Pomona (P3), a drug-free communities coalition, conducted its annual "Project Sticker Shock" campaign in Pomona from Jan. 25 through Feb. 5 with volunteers placing "reminder" stickers in liquor stores and convenience markets that it is illegal for underage youth to obtain alcohol from adults 21 or older.

Participants place stickers on multipacks of alcohol and on refrigerator doors and floors with messages reminding customers and employees that there are legal consequences for providing alcohol to underage youth.

The coalition has conducted the program in Pomona each year since 2013. Some 18 alcohol retailers participated and



"Shawn," the cashier at Sunny Liquor, shows off his certificate of appreciation for the 2021 round of P3's "Project Sticker Shock." The store is located at 1083 E. Mission Blvd., Pomona.



Annette Durham, owner of Pomona's 7-Eleven on Murchison Avenue behind Fairplex Drive at the San Bernardino Freeway receives a certificate of appreciation from the 2021 Project Sticker Shock team after receiving this year's supply of stickers in her store. Pictured, from left, is an unidentified 7-Eleven employee, Durham and "Marcos," the Budweiser truck driver.



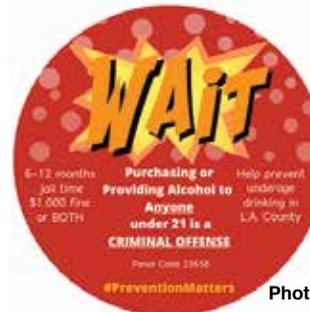
Carolina Somarriba of Nancy's Tortilleria at 350 S. Towne Ave. in Pomona receives her certificate of appreciation from P3 and the Project Sticker Shock 2021 team working to keep alcohol out of the hands of minors.

a total of 2,552 stickers, 112 refrigerator door decals and 68

floor decals were placed.

For more information, follow @PartnershipforaPositivePomona on Facebook and Instagram.

And to view a story on the program launch in the La Nueva Voz archives, visit the web site at [www.lanuevavoz.net](http://www.lanuevavoz.net), click on past issues, select the February 2013 issue and scroll down to page 2.



Photos courtesy of P3

Samples of the stickers used by P3 in Pomona's annual "Project Sticker Shock" program remind customers in both English and Spanish that it is illegal to provide alcohol to anyone under 21.



"Mike" the cashier at Pomona Wine Cellar #3 shows off his certificate of appreciation after the P3 team of volunteers placed this year's round of "Project Sticker Shock" stickers in the store at 870 W. Holt Ave., Pomona.



"Fernando," the cashier at Pomona Wine Cellar #2, displays his certificate of appreciation from P3 for participating in Project Sticker Shock. The store is located at 1146 W. Mission Blvd., Pomona.

The public service ad below is courtesy of La Nueva Voz and is part of an outreach program launched because of findings that Hispanics are about one and a half times more likely to have Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia than older white adults.

Este anuncio de servicio público es por cortesía de La Nueva Voz y forma parte de un programa de difusión lanzado debido a descubrimientos de que los Hispanos son alrededor de 1.5 veces más propensos en desarrollar Alzheimer's u otros tipos de demencia que adultos mayores blancos.



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La Nueva Voz publisher Jeff Schenkel, at left, receives his first dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine early this month at Pomona's East Valley Community Health Center (yes, he is old enough under the current priority schedule). He reported afterwards everything went very smoothly at East Valley -- his appointment was at 11 a.m., he was a few minutes early and he was out by exactly 11:11 a.m. And he said there was only the slightest bit of discomfort in his arm for a day or two. Administering the vaccine is medical assistant Jasmine Mariscal of East Valley.

## Pomona, Claremont receive funds for affordable housing

The cities of Pomona and Claremont have received \$2 million each in affordable housing construction funding in the form of \$1 million in state grant funds and matching funds from the newly established San Gabriel Valley Regional Housing Trust, according to a news release from the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments.

The funding will complete project budgets so the two housing developments can start construction on schedule this year.

“Providing housing to vulnerable families and individuals is essential to transforming lives and fostering brighter futures for those who struggle to afford housing,” said Claremont City Councilmember Jed Leano, board chair of the Regional Housing Trust. “We appreciate this award of state funds which proves strong regional collaboration is critical to securing funding support for affordable housing projects across the San Gabriel Valley.”

The Pomona project, West Mission Family Apartments, will become a 56-unit development located at 508 W. Mission Blvd.

Project cost is expected to be \$25.73 million, and the project budget gap was \$1.35 million.

In Claremont, a 15-unit “Permanent Supportive Housing Project” is planned for 956 Baseline Road. Project cost is \$5.437 million, and the budget gap was \$500,000.

The state funds were awarded by the California Department of Housing and Community Development from the Local Housing Trust Fund Program. Grant applications were submitted in August by the Regional Housing Trust, the formation of which was sponsored by the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments.

The Pomona project will be built on a 1.5-acre vacant lot, featuring 40 units of affordable housing for families, six units for veterans and 10 units for homeless households.

Two- and three-story contemporary buildings are envisioned to include a 5,400-square-foot community service center with a large multi-purpose room, offices and conference rooms.

Outdoor amenities will include a tot lot, community garden, fit-

ness area, dog park and a public plaza.

Construction will begin this spring.

“The City of Pomona is committed to providing affordable housing to families, veterans and the homeless,” said Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval. “We are pleased to partner with Jamboree Housing Corp. and the San Gabriel Valley Regional Housing Trust in delivering the West Mission Family Apartments.”

Jamboree President and CEO Laura Archuleta said that the project will include programs and services intended to support personal accomplishment among residents and “will deliver the power of community to bring hope to those starting out or starting over.”

The Claremont project will serve low-income and homeless senior citizens with at least eight units reserved for Tri-City Mental Health clients.

Construction is expected to begin this summer.

The Regional Housing Trust was established last year under state law sponsored by the San Gabriel Valley Council of Gov-

ernments. The joint powers authority focuses on funding and financing the planning and construction of extremely-low, very-low and low-income projects, as well as homeless shelters in the San Gabriel Valley.

The 21 San Gabriel Valley cities that are members of the Regional Housing Trust to date have identified additional low-income housing projects totaling more than 600 units which are in need of funding.

## Assemblymember Rodriguez introduces anti-human trafficking, labor exploitation bill

Assemblymember Freddie Rodriguez (D-Pomona) has introduced Assembly Bill 364 as part of Human Trafficking Awareness Month to bring comprehensive protections to temporary workers coming into California.

Necessary due to labor exploitation and human trafficking vulnerabilities, these protections will cover all 200,000 annual temporary workers coming into the state.



A screen shot from the Sunday television newscast “Meet the Press” shows an interesting comparison -- after the first shot of COVID-19 vaccine, Moderna is 80 percent effective while Pfizer is only 52 percent effective. Get yours from Pfizer? No worries, after the second shot, both are just about the same -- Pfizer is 95 percent effective and Moderna came in at 94.1 percent.

# THANK YOU!

You have done an excellent job conserving water these last few years. However, ongoing droughts create long-term impacts and they have a habit of returning.

Statewide reservoir levels are dropping. **We cannot forget about droughts and their lasting effects. Continue to use water wisely for our future!**



Using water wisely is a California Way of Life

### Three Valleys Municipal Water District's Areas Served:

Azusa, Boy Scouts of America-Firestone Reservation, California State Polytechnic University-Pomona, City of Industry, Claremont, Covina, Covina Irrigating Co., Diamond Bar, Glendora, Golden State Water Co., Hacienda Heights, La Puente, La Verne, Mount San Antonio College, Pomona, Pomona-Walnut-Rowland Joint Water Line Commission, Rowland Heights, Rowland Water District, San Dimas, Suburban Water Systems, Valencia Heights Water Co., Walnut, Walnut Valley Water District and West Covina



A worker with contractor Kiewit-Parsons sets up a road closure information sign in the northbound lane of Fulton Road on Feb. 1, the first day of the first road closure in Pomona due to the Gold Line construction project into the future North Pomona Gold Line station, which will be located just a couple of hundred yards to the east.



Photo shows Fulton Road looking north from just south of the existing tracks.



A week after the road closure, work crews were well under way with pavement removed and trenches dug for pipe relocation. Pictured is Fulton Road looking south with the tracks in the background.

### Top honors... from pg. 3

Students were given the opportunity to write about their own opinions regarding the world in which they live based on personal experience or the experiences of their city and country.

The top three winners receive money for college, and the winner moves on to compete at the district level for a \$2,500 college scholarship.

Other participants were Nicole Oliva, a student at Pomona's Diamond Ranch High School; and Drake Lucas and Kaitlyn Nguyen, both of Village Academy High School.

Coordinators of the competition were Lorraine Canales, club president, along with Sandy Christensen, Rebecca Santana, Claudia Kidmy and Renee Barbee.



Pictured is the new road closure for Foothill Gold Line construction looking north on Fulton Road from Arrow Highway.



Here's a photo looking south on Fulton Road with the existing tracks in the background.



Workers roll out a concrete cutter to go to work on relocating utilities in preparation for a new Foothill Gold Line crossing at Fulton Road just west of the North Pomona train station on Feb. 1, the first day of a 90-day road closure at the site. Pictured is a look to the north from just north of the existing tracks.

### E-mail us fast for the last of the Chick-fil-A new product gift cards!

La Nueva Voz friends at Chick-fil-A sent over a stack of gift cards good for a new spicy chicken sandwich and the cards went fast in a special social media contest on Facebook.

Four cards are still left and will go – two each – to the first two readers to e-mail reneebarbee7@gmail.com who ask for them and provide a mailing address for the cards.

The reviews were good, too – one happy winner said she and her husband enjoyed using them the very night she received them.

Chick-fil-A also said they were “fired up” over its newest offering, the first new sandwich on the menu

since the chargrilled chicken sandwich was introduced in 1989.

The spicy chicken sandwich is hand-breaded, seasoned with a fiery blend of several peppers, pressure-cooked in 100 percent refined peanut oil and served on a toasted buttered bun with dill pickle chips.

A deluxe version includes lettuce, tomato and “Pepper Jack” cheese.

The company press release said the sandwich “offers a unique, well-balanced and cravable spicy flavor” for a “memorable spicy taste experience.”

It even comes with a warning printed on the packaging that the

sandwich “may start mouth fires.”

The sandwich was market-tested in Florida, Maryland and California, and customers gave the sandwich a 4.4 out of 5 rating on overall taste.

And a year after testing, the sandwich continued to account for at least six percent of overall sales – about the same amount of kid’s meals the chain sells.

Chick-fil-A restaurants locally are in Glendora, Chino, Upland and the City of Industry.

Atlanta-based Chick-fil-A, Inc., is the nation’s second-largest quick-service chicken restaurant chain based on sales.



Photos by Renee Barbee  
Volunteers from the Pomona Chamber of Commerce joined this month with representatives of PPE Unite to distribute free personal protective equipment like face masks, hand sanitizers and face shields to business operators. Cars continued to line up from 10 a.m.

to 4 p.m. at First and Gibbs Streets in Pomona near Western University of Health Sciences. As many as 40 cars an hour drove through during the day. Pictured above is Chamber Ambassador Jo Ann Calmelat, of Kaleo Real Estate Co. in La Verne, loading a car with a free supply of PPE. Pictured, at right, taking a break for a photo are, from left, Pomona Chamber President and CEO Monique Manzanares and Chamber Board member Leo Arredondo of Uppercuts Barbershop, located at 681 E. Foothill Blvd., Pomona. Other volunteers during the afternoon included Chamber Board member Nef Cortez of Re/Max Realty in Diamond Bar, and Chamber Ambassador Sal Ayala, the chamber’s web design and marketing consultant, with UNIKO Media. PPE Unite is a public-private partnership creating access to personal protective equipment for small businesses across Los Angeles County to help work toward safely reopening the local economy.



Sonya Adams, CEO and founder of the award-winning organization "Celebrating a Vision," which provides "amazing experiences" to men, women and children who are cancer survivors, poses for the camera with a young survivor during a curbside drop-off of gifts during the holidays.

Pictured are nurses and social workers from Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center with some of the toys for the kids. "Celebrating a Vision" also provided toys for the kids at Childhood Cancer Foundation of Southern California in Loma Linda. TGI Friday's partnered with the group on both projects to collect more than 400 toys. For more information, e-mail [celebratingavision@gmail.com](mailto:celebratingavision@gmail.com).



Sonya Adams, CEO of "Celebrating a Vision," at left, poses with platinum recording artist Michel'le Toussant in the lobby of Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center recently while dropping off toys for kids in the Pediatric Unit (along with more toys for under the lobby Christmas tree). Pediatric staff received an edible fruit arrangement and volunteers all received gift bags.



### NITZI BARKER RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS ASSISTANCE LEAGUE AWARD

-- Pomona Unified School District nurse Nitzi Barker, a long time member of the Assistance League of Pomona Valley, was honored last month as the recipient of the prestigious Ada Laughlin Award at the League's monthly chapter meeting held via Zoom. First Vice President Cathy Harden presented the award, commending her for "her dedication and hard work . . . (and) her generosity of spirit." Barker founded Les Fleurs in 1988 as a League auxiliary for professional women, bringing many nurses from Pomona Unified and other area professionals into the organization. And when the League launched its signature "Operation School Bell" program in 1999 to provide needed clothing to children, Barker helped out by calling parents and other school nurses to get "bodies through the door" at the League headquarters to "shop" for clothes. Les Fleurs merged with the "active chapter" in 2013 and Barker and her late husband Keith took on additional responsibilities as "headquarters chair," working to build a new fence, resurface the parking lot and even hold monthly landscaping "parties." She has spearheaded the League's annual Vintage Valentine Tea fundraiser for more than 20 years. The Ada Laughlin Award, named after one of the two founders of the 100-year-old Assistance League, was created to recognize a member's extraordinary dedication and hard work for the chapter and the community. The Pomona Valley chapter has awarded the honor only 16 times since its inception in 1946.



## Opening of vaccine hub... from pg. 2

on day one to administer the vaccine, and a capacity to open up to six more pods and 48 vaccination stations with all the technology, computers, personal protective equipment, security and safety precautions for the staff, physicians and people who visit the location.

A half dozen additional health care organizations were providing support at the site, including Adventist Health, the California Medical Association, Common-Spirit, Dignity Health and Futuro Health, along with the Primary Care Association.

Caswell said organizers recognize there are underserved communities and those who need support with computers or even transportation to a vaccination site. "This is going to be a site for all," he said.

Morris acknowledged that Kaiser and all other medical providers have been working with the pandemic for a year.

"We've been dealing with the problem but now with the vaccine we have a solution," he said.

And he pointed out that Kaiser has already been offering the vaccine at their medical centers.

"But this is special, this is different, we get to bring that solution directly to the community," he said, pointing out that there is even a bus stop adjacent to the location. "You don't even have to own a car."

The new site is located in parking structure #2 at Cal Poly, along Temple Avenue behind the iPoly campus.

Pomona's original large-scale vaccination site is located on the Pomona Fairplex campus in the parking lot at Arrow Highway and White Avenue. It opened last month.

## COVID numbers in Pomona, mirroring county totals, continue to decline

COVID-19 numbers in Pomona appear to be on the decline this month as they are throughout the rest of Los Angeles County, where deaths, cases and testing positivity numbers are down.

In Pomona, La Nueva Voz over most of the past year has focused on occupancy rates at Pomona's Sheraton Fairplex Hotel, now used as a COVID isolation or quarantine facility, on the theory that those figures are as good an index of how COVID is doing in Pomona as any other available set of numbers.

To date, that assumption has held true and the "COVID hotel" index has consistently mirrored county-wide data. For example, in the past 30 days since deadline day before the Jan. 28 La Nueva Voz, the highest occupancy level at the hotel was 196 patients on Jan. 29 in the 244-room hotel, according to official Los Angeles County figures.

That figure bumped up a bit from Jan. 26 with 184, Jan. 27 with 191 and Jan. 28 with 189 patients in the hotel.

Since those peak figures, however, the trend essentially was downward gradually but consistently to only 100 on Feb. 15, 96 on Feb. 16, 84 on Feb. 17, 91 on Feb. 18 and, on deadline day last Friday, only 85 on Feb. 19.

The all-time high for an occupancy rate in the hotel – since the facility was converted to COVID use

last March – was 254 on Dec. 24.

That level of occupancy also was the only day medical staff members were required to "double up" their patients in some cases to two to a room based on the number of rooms.

However, La Nueva Voz has learned that "doubling up" in rooms may have been the practice in some instances even when all of the rooms were not occupied.

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

Patients are housed there either for quarantine purposes or because they had only mild symptoms and were not in need of actual hospitalization.

According to official Los Angeles County update figures, Pomona has reported a total of 23,589 confirmed cases of COVID-19, up from last month's cumulative figure of 21,475, an increase of roughly 2,000 cases for the month. As a point of comparison, rolling the clock back two months, the number of cumulative cases was only 13,243, which shows the rate of increase is dramatically slowing.

Pomona's total population is roughly 157,000.

To date, Pomona has recorded 350 COVID-related deaths, compared to a cumulative figure of 283 last month.



A parking lot full of television news crews and newspaper reporters and photographers was on hand this month for the opening of Kaiser Permanente's new COVID vaccination hub at Cal Poly Pomona.

Please visit our web site at [www.lanuevavoz.net](http://www.lanuevavoz.net) to see the latest issue of La Nueva Voz, past issues and more!



## Last chance to submit ‘wall of history’ suggestions!

Know anybody famous, past or present? Or just somebody in Pomona who should be remembered?

There’s still time to get information in on Pomona residents who deserve to be “memorialized” in a public art project at the future Pomona Gold Line Station in north Pomona.

The project, which is being developed by Stephen Farley, the city-selected artist, will highlight Pomona residents who served as inspirations in the community.

To date, a diverse range of nominations have been received for individuals from all walks of life and across ages, ethnicities, backgrounds, races, occupations, and generations.

Nearly 50 submissions have been received so far.

The deadline is March 31, and the Foothill Gold Line Construction Authority is looking for additional nominations.

“The stories of the individuals submitted so far are profoundly moving and attest to the power of people to make a difference,” Farley said. “Johnny Hwang tells the story of his son whose life was tragically cut short in 2017. Deon Edwards shares how Farrell Chiles inspired him to believe he could write a book and serve his community. Maria Elena Gonzalez introduces us to Mireya Escobar, who dedicates her life to helping new immigrants succeed.”

Farley, who grew up in the Pomona Valley, was selected by Pomona’s Station Design and Art Review Committee in 2005 to be the station artist. He has worked closely with the committee and the Pomona com-

munity to refine his station artwork plan before having it approved.

His upbringing in the region helped shape his artwork plan.

“As I grew older, I discovered that the power of Pomona was the people,” Farley said. “The more Pomonans I met, from all walks of life and backgrounds, the more I understood that it was their commitment to community that made Pomona magical.”

About 60 individuals will be chosen to be permanently part of the station artwork, with their portraits and power statements. They will be included in a series of 24-inch tile panels incorporated onto the railings and other elements around the future station.

Submissions not chosen for the outdoor permanent display will be included on a special web site.

To submit nominations or learn more about the station artwork project, visit [www.pomonapeoplepower.com](http://www.pomonapeoplepower.com).

Farley, based in Tucson, has created community-based public art projects across the country. He actually invented a new process for translating photographs to ceramic tile called tilography.

The Foothill Gold Line Construction Authority is an independent transportation planning and construction agency created in 1998 by the state legislature to plan, design and build the Metro Gold Line light rail system from Union Station in Los Angeles to Montclair.

Construction on the project from its current end in Glendora to Pomona just reached Fulton Road in Pomona this month. The Pomona station is expected to be completed and open to trains in 2025.

## Applications due next week for Roundtable Social Justice Scholarship

Deadline is March 5 for applications for this year’s Latino and Latina Roundtable’s 2021 Social Justice Scholarship, which will be presented at the 17th annual Cesar Chavez Virtual Breakfast Celebration next month.

The scholarship is open to graduating seniors and current college or community college students who live or go to school in the Inland Valley.

It was established with the goal of assisting students in pursuing higher education while continuing their social consciousness and activism.

Applications must include a two-page essay in which students describe what experiences have influenced them, how they are involved in the social justice movement and what problem they are attempting to change.

Essays may be submitted in either English or Spanish.

Applications also must be accompanied by two letters of recommendation from a teacher, counselor, mentor, Roundtable member or community leader along with contact information.

The Roundtable does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation or immigration status.

Presentation of the scholarship will be at the Cesar Chavez Virtual Breakfast, scheduled for 9 a.m. March 26.

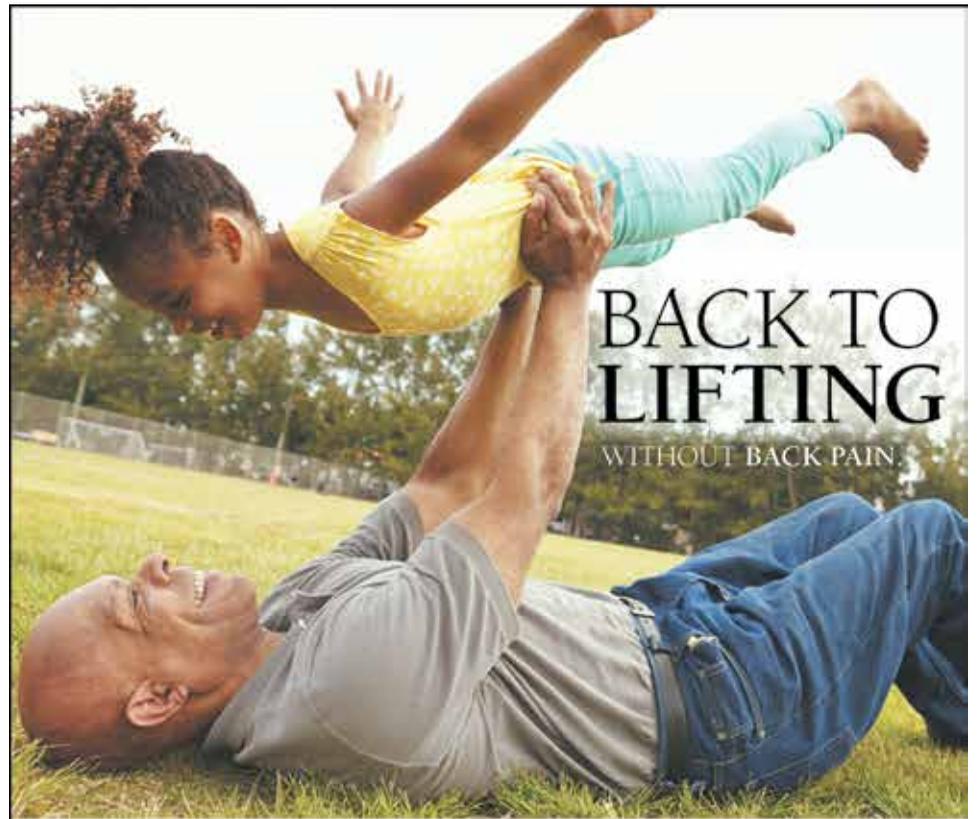
Scholarships range from \$250 to \$500.

For more information on the scholarship and applications, e-mail [scholarship@latino-latinaroundtable.org](mailto:scholarship@latino-latinaroundtable.org). For tickets to the Cesar Chavez breakfast, contact Lina Mira at (909) 480-6267.

The Latino and Latina Roundtable of the San Gabriel and Pomona Valley is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting education, civic engagement, advancing leadership and providing a proactive voice.

## NAACP fundraiser

The NAACP Pomona Valley Branch will hold its virtual 2nd Annual Freedom Fund Program from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 27, featuring guest speaker Betty Williams, new executive director for the NAACP’s California and Hawaii State Conference. Registration is at [naacp-pv.org](http://naacp-pv.org) or on Facebook (NAACP Pomona Valley Branch).



Has spine-related pain taken control of your life? The Spine Program at Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare offers a comprehensive team approach to assess and treat pain, weakness, or numbness caused by injury or disease of the spine, letting you get back to the activities you love.

- Initial evaluation by a physician board-certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation to determine a customized treatment plan
- Experienced clinical team that includes physiatrists, pain management specialists, physical therapists specializing in spine care, nurse navigator, and leading neurosurgeons
- Should you require surgery, our minimally invasive approach is designed to reduce post-operative pain and recovery time, and our surgical suites feature advanced technology like O-arm™ imaging. Our award-winning neurosurgical care puts Casa Colina Hospital among the top providers nationally for spine and back surgery.



For more information, visit [www.casacolina.org/spine](http://www.casacolina.org/spine), or call 866/724-4131

255 East Bonita Avenue, Pomona, CA 91767 • [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/casacolina) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/casacolina) [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/casacolina)

## Pomona's COVID hotel... from pg. 4

California in August specifically to serve as medical director for the hotel facility. He assumed that position beginning in September, a turning point in the hotel operation when numerous sources said employee complaints became part of the culture because of multiple changes in operating practices and controls.

Sources told this newspaper he previously had opened and operated a similar quarantine site in Maryland with a group of three other medical workers, although that was only a 60-bed facility compared with 244 rooms in Pomona (144 rooms have two beds in the room, according to county public information officers).

The county's eight medical shelter sites include a total of just over 800 beds, county officials said.

La Nueva Voz contacted Burns by telephone for a brief conversation this month, although he declined to comment on the allegations. But when La Nueva Voz asked him if he obtained his California license solely because of the county position, he said his professional qualifications were "complicated."

His response prompted a quick on-line review of his status, although he appeared to be in good standing with no disciplinary actions, judgments, or other red flags with medical boards in California, Arizona or Maryland.

He graduated in 2008 from the East Tennessee State University School of Medicine, was licensed to practice medicine in Arizona in 2012, and practices in areas of family medicine, addiction medicine, preventive medicine and urgent care.

Burns also has been licensed to practice in Maryland since May of 2014, where he apparently is still an associate on the teaching faculty at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in the Department of Health Policy and Management, according to the school web site.

And he is also listed as a visiting professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, although his primary practice is listed as the Kaiser Permanente Mid-Atlantic Group in Halethorpe, Maryland.

Burns simply told La Nueva Voz somebody would be in contact to respond to questions and that he could not comment on any of the

allegations "because you have to understand I work for the county."

La Nueva Voz e-mailed a list of 12 questions to the county's very busy joint emergency public information center handling media inquiries during the COVID pandemic for the county's Department of Health Services.

A response came five days later to questions which ranged from summaries of the allegations from former employees on improper handling of patients and a high rate of employee turnover to providing marijuana and alcohol – apparently purchased at taxpayer expense – to keep patients from leaving, all to "keep the numbers up."

The spokesperson, who did not identify himself in the e-mail, said the Department of Health Services has been "directly overseeing" the hotel site since last July, and that the facility is staffed by disaster service workers (DSWs), nurses and medical professionals.

"Given the nature of this crisis shelter – which was designed to respond to the pandemic – staffing operations are intended to be temporary, or a set rotation and overall flexible to the needs of the pandemic," the statement said.

"That way, operations account for the natural ebbs and flows of demand, and staff can be redeployed depending on the various assignments that require DSWs county-wide."

"Nurses and staff workers at the Sheraton Fairplex Hotel make informed decisions on how to best care for clients, which includes transferring clients to other sites if that is in their best interest," the statement continued. "Health Services does not comment on individual personnel or client matters."

The statement added that since last spring, the hotel has served approximately 2,400 clients, which is 50 percent of the total 4,800 clients served at the eight county medical shelter sites.

The county spokesperson did not respond to allegations that nurses were disciplined for refusing to follow the "norms" of what the county apparently calls "harm reduction" by supplying "clients" with marijuana and alcohol.

Then there are smaller issues, according to documents La Nueva Voz received from an employee at the isolation facility, like allegations of abuses involving a company called Brilliant Corners which

works to create access to housing for "vulnerable low-income people," according to their web site.

The documents claim, for example, that Brilliant Corners executives contracted by the county to work at the facility also are in charge of ordering and approving "inventory and site supplies" – directly from Brilliant Corners, in an apparent conflict of interest.

In addition, documents claim that all inventory directives and documentation have been removed and items are ordered and dispersed with no method in place to account for products, something that one observer told La Nueva Voz is a violation of county policy.

Other allegations claim patient care and census data is managed and shared "via Google" in violation of HIPAA (federal patient health information privacy act) regulations, a claim that was confirmed by another former employee who worked at the isolation facility.

Another observer pointed out that a company called JWCH Institute, a "registry" or, essentially, an employment agency, has become responsible for as much as 90 percent of the staff in the hotel that originally had been handled by county employees and support staff from East Valley Community Health Center.

JWCH claims in its promotional materials that its mission is to improve the health status and well-being of underserved segments of the population of the Los Angeles

area.

Two former employees questioned the practice of allowing one company to become responsible for that much of the staffing, although one of them theorized that there could be a control issue involved since county employees would be more reluctant to comply with orders for questionable practices or at the very least would consider it something that needed to be discussed at the employee union level.

La Nueva Voz began receiving additional information for this developing story after it first appeared in last month's issue.

For example, Nurse Practitioner Kenisha Thomas reached out to La Nueva Voz to report on the allegations of providing marijuana and alcohol to patients after she saw her photograph on page one of the January issue of La Nueva Voz.

She said she was concerned that her photo, which was taken inside the hotel by a Los Angeles County photographer and distributed to the news media in a computer file of 102 official county photos taken at the facility (the first photos released to the news media since the hotel was converted to COVID use), was still being used by the county since, she said, she left her position with the county because of concerns she had with the operation of the facility.

And she added she was known as "the tough provider" because she refused to order drugs and al-

**Pomona's COVID hotel... pg. 13**

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

**Feeding the Hungry,  
Sheltering the Homeless**  
Grocery Distribution at  
209 W. Pearl St.  
Pomona  
Volunteering: 909-622-3806  
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**  
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  
La Nueva Voz is a proud member of PUSD's Literacy Collaborative.

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

## Pomona's COVID hotel... from pg. 12

cohol and was repeatedly reported to site medical director Burns when she declined to “follow the norms.”

“As a nurse practitioner, my job is to prevent harm, advocate for patient, assess and treat accordingly,” said Thomas who operates her own practice in Nevada. “At the direction of the medical director, I was constantly targeted and bullied because I didn’t give in to their demands.”

Thomas told La Nueva Voz she worked at the hotel from June through December.

Meanwhile, a spokesperson for the Service Employees International Union Local 721, with more than 95,000 members making it the largest public sector union in Southern California, said last week that the majority of SEIU 721 member nurses working at the Sheraton Fairplex Hotel have been “pulled back” from that hotel and others in the county COVID system. The exception in Pomona, he said, is two members on site supervising “registry” staff (outside medical contract workers) as op-

erations are “ramping down.”

And on the issue of employee complaints involving the hotel, union spokesperson Mike Long, interim communications director, said the union has been “strongly addressing member concerns throughout the pandemic and will continue to do so.”

“Essential healthcare workers have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic since day one, and SEIU 721’s top priority is always the health and safety of our members and the communities they serve,” Long said.

La Nueva Voz has reached out to both the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Public Integrity Division and to the Pomona Police Department for a reaction to allegations of any additional criminal misconduct at the hotel but did not receive a response from either agency before the deadline for this month’s issue. Pomona police did indicate by e-mail they are reviewing the allegations.

The county’s contract with Fairplex for use of the hotel calls for payment of \$120 per night per each

of its 244 rooms, which works out to \$897,920 per month, plus an additional sum of \$89,792 per month for the 10 percent City of Pomona Transient Occupancy Tax.

The county also will be required to provide “appropriate public relations support” during the term of the agreement and for 45 days at the conclusion of the agreement “directed towards restoring the public’s perception and confidence regarding the safety of attending events and staying overnight in the hotel.”

Details of the contract were obtained by La Nueva Voz last fall after submitting a California Public Records Act request to the Office of County Counsel.

The county’s COVID public information team declined to respond to a La Nueva Voz request for specific numbers in terms of profits and/or commissions associated with purchasing and staffing agreements, revenue that most likely would go to the outside agencies contracting with the county for services related to the hotel operation.

## “Breonna’s Law”... from pg. 5

lution was introduced by Councilmember Nora Garcia and seconded by Councilmember Victor Preciado.

Ellis also told councilmembers that, while statistics on search warrants served in the city have not been kept in the past, as a result of community interest figures now will be tabulated and disclosed on the police department’s web site on a “transparency” page.

Following the council’s vote, Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval cited what he called some “lack of trust between police and the community.”

“There will certainly be more

## SCE helps Fairplex install 200 EV chargers

Southern California Edison recently completed the installation of 200 electric vehicle charging ports at Pomona’s Fairplex in the largest “Charge Ready” electric vehicle charging project to date.

In addition to the 150 chargers at the main lot at Fairplex, 30 were installed at the Sheraton Fairplex Hotel, 10 at the conference center and 10 more at the Finish Line Sports Bar and Grill.

“As a community partner of SCE’s, we are thrilled to have their largest EV charging project on our campus,” said Walter Marquez, Interim CEO of Fairplex. “Sustainability is one of our core values. Having the opportunity to provide

steps that we’ll take to try to bridge that . . . and . . . I know that the chief is committed to doing that,” he said.

Numerous cities around the country have already banned no-knock warrants, along with the entire states of Oregon and Virginia. They were prohibited in Florida by a 1994 state supreme court decision. And in Utah, a 2014 law prohibits no-knock warrants for cases involving only drug possession.

The action by the Pomona City Council does not apply to operations within Pomona city limits by federal, state or county law enforcement agencies.

charging stations to employees, guests and our neighbors fits in perfectly with our mission to be a community- and environment-benefit organization.”

According to a news release, the new charging stations will primarily serve customer, attendee and employee EV drivers but during the pandemic many are being used by medical personnel, since Fairplex is being used as a COVID-19 quarantine and isolation facility at the hotel and other medical workers are on site at a vaccination center.

SCE installs and maintains the stations for free and provides rebates to reduce charging station costs.

## Senator Leyva introduces bill to end unequal treatment of Girls State participants

In order to advance California’s goal of providing equitable educational and civic opportunities to girls, State Sen. Connie Leyva has introduced Senate Bill 363 that will allow the use of public resources in Sacramento for California Boys State – only if California Girls State participants receive similar treatment.

“As the chair of the Senate Education Committee and Chair Emeritus of the Legislative Women’s Caucus, I am absolutely committed to fighting for gender parity in civic education and leadership opportunities,” Leyva said in a news release. “SB 363 will ensure that if a program chooses to discriminate based on gender, they will not be allowed the use of the state Capitol or any public facilities in Sacramento.”

She pointed out that currently, Boys State applicants pay no fees to apply to their program while Girls

State applicants must pay a \$75 application fee.

In addition, Boys State previously has hosted a college night when young men had opportunities to meet directly with representatives from various colleges and career paths, while Girls State participants did not have similar access during their program week.

And the girls also had no direct access to government and law enforcement officials at their events.

Both programs are sponsored by the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary.

Hundreds of young men participate in the events each summer where they are able to participate in a mock legislative process and visit the state Capitol. The young women’s program is held at a college campus in Southern California hundreds of miles away from the center of California’s legislative process, according to a news release.

### Cuentito for Today

#### The little unexpected things in life can turn darkness and fear into laughter

By Susie Perales

*Editor’s note: Following is “Part 2,” and now “leftovers” from a Pomona holiday story from guest columnist Susie Perales.*

The other day we were watching a clip of the television series “It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia” and the family was having

on Super Bowl Sunday (last year). But we weren’t planning on having a food fight. Nope, not this family.

I am so grateful for these holidays even if they are a little different than they were in the past.

I’m not a big fan of turkey so, I told my husband, “I wonder who came up with the idea of eating turkey for Thanksgiving dinner.” He replied, “The penguins did. Don’t you remember when Columbus came over here?” “Isn’t he the one who sailed the seven seas?” We laughed for a while after that! I looked at him and said, “You scared me for a minute.” “On Monday I’m taking you in for a dementia test!”

Ha, ha! Ay, que mi Viejito...

It was moments like these that softened the cruel blow of the season of COVID-19 for us.

#### Our Christmas moment

We’ve been watching “Scrooge: The musical” since our kids were little. It became a tradition of the Perales Familia to watch it every year.

Tonight was the first night of our Christmas movie marathon ’til Christmas.

We absolutely love this movie. It’s the best Scrooge movie we’ve ever seen. We get very teary eyed and emotional no matter how many times we watch it. Tonight was no exception. It was even more so since we were watching it by ourselves. But you know me, I always find joy and laughter in my life from the simplest things.

I was videotaping a clip of the movie and my honey walked in front of the TV. His shadow killed my video moment, but it made me laugh, because it looked funny as he walked by. For a second I thought we were watching a 3D movie of “The Birds!” My honey’s shadow looked just like Alfred Hitchcock walking by in the middle of the scene.

My viejito said, “Are you laughing at your own jokes again?” “You must be in a great Christmas mood.”

I thought for sure he was going to be upset about the video, but nothing surprises him anymore. I showed him the video and we both got our usual laughing attack.

If you’ve never seen “Scrooge: The musical,” give yourselves a treat and watch it.



Susie Perales

this huge Thanksgiving food fight. It was funny and a little sad to see all that good food go to waste.

We were excited that our daughter, Annmarie and her hubby, Andy, were going to spend Thanksgiving this year with us. The last time we saw them was

### ‘Smaller, safer celebration’ planned for LA County Fair

The LA County Fair, which officials call the “flagship event” at Pomona’s Fairplex and which was canceled last year due to the pandemic, will return this year in the fall but only as a scaled down event so it can be presented as “a smaller, safer celebration of its annual spree of family, tradition, culture and community,” according to a Fairplex news release.

“With coronavirus cases unsteady, and the unpredictability of mutating strains and vaccine roll-outs to larger audiences, it would be fiscally unfeasible to plan a grand celebration, only to be told a Fair could not be held,” the release explained.

“To say we are heartbroken is an understatement,” said Fairplex interim CEO Walter Marquez. “But we, in good conscience, could not move forward with planning our big, campus wide Fair this year, not knowing where the pandemic would be, come summer.”

He said it would be both a public health and financial risk to do so.

Marquez explained that months

of planning go into the Fair and that to plan and invest funding, only to eventually have to cancel, was not feasible.

Los Angeles County Fair Association Chair Heidi Hanson said she is disappointed but that the decision was the right one.

“We know our guests will be just as sad as we are, but we do hope to have some celebration of the Fair in the fall,” she said. “It may be a much smaller version, but it will be big in spirit.”

Uncertainties of holding annual events is a challenge facing all theme parks and the entertainment industry.

Fairplex has cut 90 percent of its public events since March 2020 when the pandemic began. The drive-through Christmas show “Elf on the Shelf’s Magical Journey” was its first public event.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fairgrounds venue has been serving as a COVID-19 test site, a medical quarantine shelter at the Sheraton Fairplex Hotel, and now as a Mega POD for COVID-19 vaccines.

### Memorial services held for Carrie Baker, known as a true Pomona volunteer

Long-time community volunteer and activist Carrie Lynn Baker, who moved to California from her native New York in 1981 and became known in Pomona for her support and advocacy activities involving numerous organizations, died last month at Chino Valley Medical Center following a battle with esophageal cancer. She was 76.

Born in Long Island, Baker spent 34 years there before crossing the country to California where she earned a bachelor’s degree in sales and marketing from Cal Poly University Pomona.

She was perhaps best known for her work with Pomona’s old Community Engagement Group (now Pomona’s Promise and Community Engagement) activities (where she served as treasurer), local politics and the Pomona Police Department, especially involving programs for the kids, and she was always seen helping out at the police department’s “Great Campout” and the annual “Santa Cop” pancake fundraiser and toy give-away, among others.

She enjoyed traveling, reading and simply visiting with family and friends.

a time when crime was surging in the Angela-Chanslor area of south Pomona.

She said working with a “Weed & Seed” grant from the U.S. Department of Justice (weed out criminals and plant the seed of community programs), the city implemented the Pomona Neighborhood Revitalize Program (PNRP).

Madrigal said working with the “community oriented policing” model, a neighborhood watch group was formed in partnership with the Pomona Police Department.

“Carrie worked to get the residents involved in improving the area, (and) she helped plan a Christmas party at the PNRP center for the children in the neighborhood,” Madrigal said. “She encouraged her neighbors to report crimes and speak out on their concerns.”

Baker continued her involvement by serving on a committee under a second federal grant.

In other areas, Baker was the STOP team co-captain for the American Cancer Society’s Pomona Relay for Life, where she also served as accounting chair from 2012 to 2013.

She volunteered for the Pomona Public Library’s after school homework program, served on the Pomona Unified School District’s Mea-

Her close friend Virginia Madrigal, also very active in the community, said Baker’s interest in working to improve her community began in 1996 at



Carrie Lynn Baker

sure PS Oversight Committee, and volunteered for the AARP tax preparation program at the Glendora Senior Center.

“Volunteerism was her middle name,” Madrigal said. “You asked, she came, Pomona PD Open House, GREAT Pomona Youth

Campout, GREAT dances and swim parties, National Night Out, various 5K runs for charity and so many more.”

“Up until her passing she continued to voice her concerns for the community she loved,” Madrigal said.

Survivors include her long-time partner Ted Baker, also a regular participant at Pomona events, in addition to her niece, Faith Sterling, a nephew, Freddie Erhardt, and a brother-in-law Fred Erhardt, all of New York.

Following a cremation, a “Zoom” memorial service was held this month.

The Pomona City Council adjourned in her memory early this month.

“Carrie took pride in being a civic activist and spoke at many city council and planning commission meetings,” Madrigal added. “Carrie will be greatly missed, but she will always be in our hearts.”

### Pomona Rotary announces speech competition winners

A student at Pomona’s Village Academy High School won first place this month in the annual Pomona Rotary Club speech competition, this year on the topic “Rotary Opens Opportunities,” according to a news release.

The top prize went to Karla Hernandez

with second place going to Francisco Benavidez, also a student at Village Academy.

Third place went to Mercedes Vega of Pomona High School and fourth place went to Guadalupe Hernandez of Pomona’s SEEO High School. **Pomona Rotary... pg. 15**

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Each Office is Independently Owned and Operated

## Pomona native Britney Young, on staff at McKesson in Texas, receives recognition from marketing software company

Britney Young, who was born and raised in Pomona and who now works for the McKesson Corp. medical supplies and pharmaceuticals company in Texas, was selected as one of the 2021 Marketo Engage Champions, according to a news release.



Britney Young

Young, now a resident of Cedar Hill, Texas,

graduated from Cal State University Fullerton with a bachelor's degree in marketing and advertising and in ethnic studies. She earned her master's degree in marketing from the Walden University.

She works at McKesson's corporate headquarters in Las Colinas, Texas, where she is on the digital marketing team in the company's marketing department, serving as a Marketo administrator helping in the management of four e-mail databases for her team.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Marketo awards program, which recognizes and celebrates the most passionate,

### Pomona Rotary... from pg. 14

All four winners were 12th-grade students.

In the "Zoom" competition, called a four-way test speech contest, each topic must be subjected to the Rotary four-way test – is it the truth, is it fair to all concerned, will it build goodwill and better friendships, and

knowledgeable Marketo Engage users across the globe.

Each member is a Marketo Engage expert and avid Marketo Engage ambassador, focused on actively sharing their knowledge and expertise with fellow users.

They have demonstrated outstanding leadership and are loyal advocates who

consistently go above and beyond to support others on their journey with Marketo Engage.

Marketo is a software company providing market automation software for account-based marketing and other marketing services. Its software is used by large companies as well as fast-growing smaller businesses.

The company was purchased by Adobe in 2018.

Young is the daughter of Pomona volunteer and community activist Paulette Young, who said her daughter "is a true go-getter and enjoys marketing and advertising."

McKesson is number seven on the Fortune 500 list.

will it be beneficial to all concerned.

Contest coordinators were Lorraine Canales, Sandy Christensen and Christina Vera, working with Pomona Rotary President Ron Vera. Hernandez will go on to compete in the regional level and the district level. Winners at each level win scholarship money for college.

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

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- Downtown Pomona Owners Association, 119 W. 2nd St., Pomona
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- Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center maternity lobby, outpatient services, emergency room
- Gold Strike Market Carniceria, 412 N. Park Ave., Pomona
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- American Legion Post #30, 239 E. Holt Ave., Pomona
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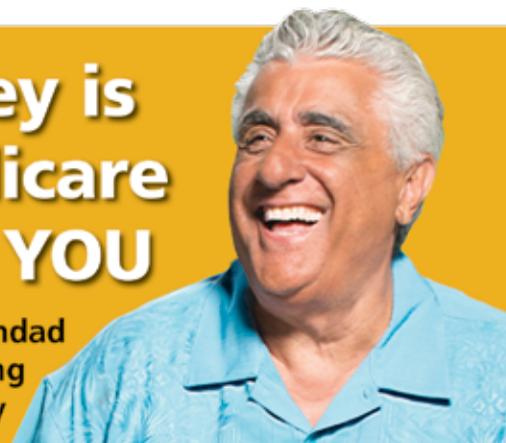


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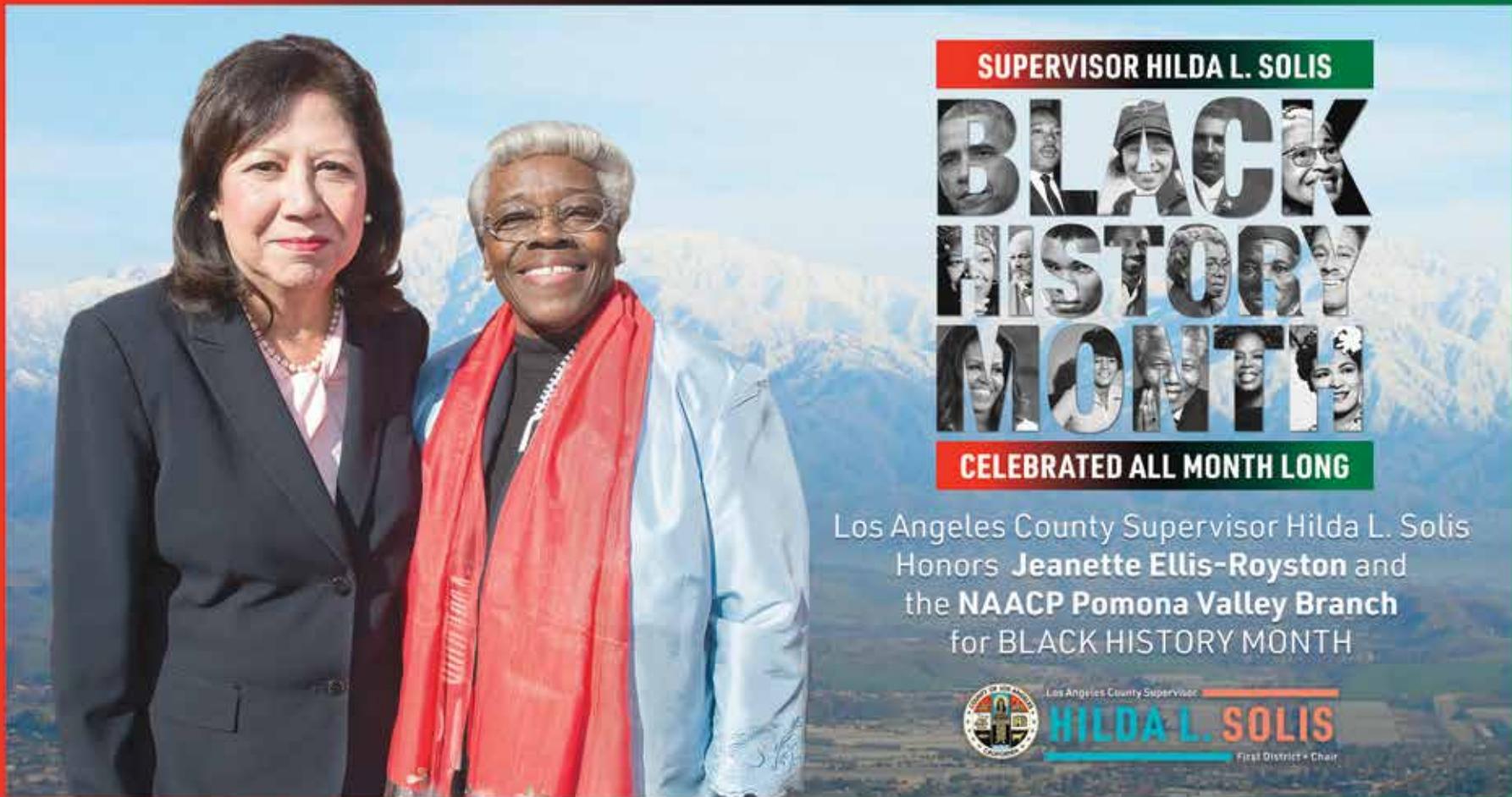
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