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# La Nueva Voz

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



Pomona Chamber of Commerce



Member

Issue No. 187

Thursday, February 27, 2025

## Cal Poly's Soraya Coley to retire after receiving 'state's worst university audit' in five years

Exactly six weeks after she received a university payroll audit that officials called the state's worst in five years with issues discovered that could have cost the school millions of dollars, Cal Poly Pomona President Dr. Soraya Coley announced this month she will retire at the end of July.

The audit, conducted by the California state controller's office, showed payroll at Cal Poly allegedly was mishandled over a three-year period that, while only totaling a relatively small amount in actual dollars, was based on operating practices that if allowed to continue unchanged could have reached a

projected \$3.6 million in losses.

Coley took the position at Cal Poly 10 years ago in January 2015 as the sixth president of the university, becoming the first woman and the first African American to be appointed to the role.

While her accomplishments were many, her legacy more likely will be overshadowed by the memory of a tumultuous tenure including the surfacing well after the fact of a million-dollar embezzlement over a 10-year period inside the Cal Poly Foundation by an employee who actually served 16 months in a federal prison before the information became public.

The foundation operates independently of the university.

Allegations at the time, all reported in La Nueva Voz, claimed Coley attempted to cover up the details, allegations that came from within her own campus police force where a high-ranking official said Coley allegedly obstructed police investigations including preventing police from reporting a second embezzlement and other matters on campus to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office.

She also has been handed a "no confidence" vote at least twice in recent years – once by the Academic Senate and once by two



Dr. Soraya Coley

employee unions on campus.

On the current payroll problem, the latest salvo impacting her administration, Coley received the official state audit dated December 2024 with a cover letter dated Dec. 23 and signed by Kimberly Tarvin, a CPA and chief of the state controller's Division of Audits.

The audit covered the period March 1, 2017 (about two years after Coley's arrival on campus) through Feb. 29, 2020, and was conducted pursuant to California Government Code sections 12476 and 12410, according to the cover letter.

State's worst... pg. 15

## City Councilmember Elizabeth Ontiveros-Cole, in her latest FPPC campaign reporting fine, makes 'short list' of L.A. County officials

Pomona City Councilmember Elizabeth Ontiveros-Cole was one of only 22 public officials in Los Angeles County prosecuted and fined last year by the statewide California Fair Political Practices Commission for alleged campaign finance reporting law violations, according to FPPC documents.

Cole also received an earlier fine from the FPPC in 2021 for two violations labeled "campaign statement/late reporter" that occurred in two reporting periods in 2020, according to documents discovered on the FPPC web site.

While the latest fine itself really



Elizabeth Ontiveros-Cole

boiled down to only \$400, a fairly typical amount in FPPC cases, the story became complicated and included a couple of "would have" and "could have" scenarios in the twists and turns along the way.

For example, the case essentially was divided into two parts – Cole was fined for late filing of disclosures explaining where campaign contributions came from, and she was investigated because of allegations she received campaign contributions from a Limited Liability Company and later voted "on an item in which the party/participant had a financial

interest."

The conflict-of-interest investigation, however, essentially on a technicality, was closed "without further action" because of insufficient evidence, according to a "No Action Closure Letter" to Cole dated Oct. 22, 2024 and signed by Jenna Rinehart, senior commission counsel in the FPPC's Enforcement Division.

The alleged violation itself that resulted in a fine, for late filing of disclosures, was included in data accompanying a news release La Nueva Voz received last month along with detailed case informa-

tion from the FPPC, the state's leading governmental ethics and campaign finance enforcement agency, announcing its "2024 Annual Enforcement Heat Map," pinpointing locations of all cases prosecuted last year.

Case summary information is provided each year by the FPPC, which identifies itself as the state's "ethics watchdog," to underscore "the FPPC's unwavering commitment to transparency, accountability, and upholding the public trust," according to the news release.

Short list... pg. 6

Thrive in Mind

Green  
Ribbon  
Week

MARCH 17-21

### Promote mental health awareness during Green Ribbon Week!

Green Ribbon Week (GRW) is the stigma reduction campaign for Tri-City Mental Health's ongoing mental health movement in Pomona, Claremont and La Verne. Held annually during the third week of March, GRW enhances awareness of mental health needs and resources in our local community.

This year's theme, **#ThriveinMind**, invites everyone to take action—during GRW and beyond—by amplifying strength and resilience and prioritizing what makes you feel whole. Join others across the three cities in sharing how you build strength through self-care, seek support, and nurture your wellness journey. We all deserve to thrive, and that begins with reaching out for the support we need. You are your most powerful advocate. By promoting open discussions about mental health, you make it possible for the people you care about to get the care and resources they need to be well.

Join us for free community-wide activities and events, both in-person and online. Visit [www.tricitymhs.org](http://www.tricitymhs.org) to download our toolkit and find ways to support yourself and your loved ones. Follow us @TriCityMHS to get involved and spread the word!



## City staff calls Measure Y implementation ‘unsustainable’

Approval by voters last November of the controversial Measure Y, a City of Pomona charter amendment known as the “Pomona Kids First” initiative, has been continuing to create a lot of pencil dust in the city’s finance department, resulting in City Finance Director Andrew Mowbray reporting to city councilmembers that after implementing Measure Y, the city’s general fund will show an annual operating deficit of \$18.6 million and the general fund balance will be \$89 million in the hole by fiscal year 2035.

The city’s “fund balance policy” has been to include at least 17 percent of the general fund operational budget for general fund reserves, and the \$89 million deficit figure includes the 17 percent requirement.

The bleak picture came in the routine reporting of the city’s new 10-year financial forecast, presented at the Feb. 3 council meeting.

“The updated 10-year financial forecast reiterates the overwhelming and unsustainable impact implementation of Measure Y imposes on the general fund,” Mowbray said in his staff report.

Working with representatives of Urban Futures, Inc., the city’s financial advisor since 2017, Mow-

bray used the same forecast with a February 2024 “impact analysis report” on the possible effects of the then-proposed “Pomona Kids First” initiative and other issues in the past.

The “Pomona Kids First” initiative, approved by voters in a 62 percent to 38 percent outcome, went into effect last month. If it goes unchallenged in the courts, it is expected to have a far-reaching impact on the city’s budget for years to come.

The short version of a summary of the measure is that supporters touted the advantages of kids’ programs to the community, and opponents have objected to the plan’s method of budgeting by charter amendment and diverting public funding to private groups, backed by organizations outside of Pomona, without accountability.

According to the actual ballot explanation, it amends the city charter “to require that at least 10 percent of the city’s annual unrestricted general purpose revenues be allocated to children and youth programs and services by fiscal year 2030-2031” through a phase-in process.

In addition to current funding for children and youth services, the measure required establishing

a “city department of children and youth to administer funding for said programs and services.”

At this month’s meeting, councilmembers learned that the updated “baseline forecast” shows the fiscal outlook for the city’s general fund “as moving toward slightly precarious compared to the prior baseline forecast presented in March 2024.”

The staff report explained that the updated “baseline forecast” projected a persistent annual operating deficit for the general fund, while the year-old forecast projected a “slight but declining operating surplus.”

The “primary driver” of the annual operating deficit is an additional CalPERS “Unfunded Accrued Liability payment required for the general fund,” an investment fund helping support public employee pension plans.

That fund in fiscal year 2022 suffered historic losses with negative 6.2 percent returns. The city’s annual payment to CalPERS now includes the amortized cost of those losses, with an annual increase of about \$2.3 million.

Included in the forecast were two options for scenarios designed to help offset the deficit.

First was using existing “Section 115 Trust Funds” (funds set aside under Section 115 of the Internal Revenue Code to fund contributions for paying post-retirement employee benefits) to make two additional payments of \$1.9 million to CalPERS at the end of fiscal years 2025 and 2026, increasing annual savings reaching \$2.4 million in fiscal year 2031 “and continuing thereafter compared to the baseline forecast.”

A second option would be to make the projected annual transfers required by Measure Y from the general fund to the new “children and youth fund” and remove an annual \$2 million “youth funding commitment” to avoid duplication with Measure Y.

Under this option, the general fund is projected to have “significantly increasing and unsustainable operating deficits” that increase to \$18.5 million by fiscal year 2034, with existing fund balance and reserves estimated to be fully depleted by the end of fiscal year 2030.

“Compared to scenario forecast

#1, scenario forecast #2 moves the fiscal outlook for the general fund from generally stable to insolvent (unable to meet projected financial obligations),” the staff report said.

Breaking it all down, the numbers showed the baseline forecast 10 years out would result in an annual operating deficit by 2035 of \$2.2 million and a fund balance of \$30 million. Scenario forecast #1 would result in an operating surplus of \$316,000 and a fund balance of \$48.7 million. And scenario forecast #2 would result in an operating deficit of \$18.5 million with a fund balance of an \$89.4 million deficit (based on city policy of keeping 17 percent in reserves).

“While scenario forecast #1 shows the CalPERS UAL impact can be largely mitigated with the city’s prudent use of its Section 115 trust funds, scenario forecast #2 shows that restructuring of existing city services that result in significant, ongoing reduced operating costs will be required to implement the Measure Y and maintain solvency of the general fund,” the staff report concluded.

One more option to change what looks like a dismal outcome, also discussed at the meeting, would be to place a new initiative before the voters at the next election (in two years) essentially to attempt to reverse Measure Y with a required 50 percent plus one vote.

The problem with a legal challenge, according to wording included in Measure Y as approved by the voters, is that if the measure is challenged in court, the challenge would be “defended by the City of Pomona.”

The city’s budget-based financial forecast “is a dynamic model of the city’s forecasted labor costs, operating expenditures, and revenues for the general fund,” according to the report’s executive summary. “Every component of the model is driven by a set of assumptions and variables that are intended to make the forecast as highly predictive and useful in understanding the city’s future financial condition, based on present revenues and expenditures, expected changes to such revenues and expenditures, and the financial impact of various scenarios the city may consider addressing in its service needs, strategic objectives, and incorporating current fiscal sustainability poli-

cies.”

“While the forecast is not intended as a replacement or substitute for careful monitoring and consideration of the city’s annual budget and financial statements, it is a tool for good financial planning, recommendations and decision-making by city leadership to help better secure the city’s financial stability and sustainability,” the report continued.

Yet another complication compounded by the passage of Measure Y that surfaced at the same council meeting is a new measure to repeal the city’s current 9 percent utility user tax on charges for using water service.

Mowbray told councilmembers the measure’s “notice of intent to circulate a petition and proposed initiative,” presented by Pomona resident John Mendoza, was submitted to the city last April, seven months before the approval of Measure Y.

Councilmembers received the city clerk’s “certificate of sufficiency of initiative petition” at their Jan. 6 meeting. The measure will appear on the June 2026 ballot.

Mowbray told councilmembers this month the Mendoza measure would result in the “permanent reduction of approximately \$3.2 million in annual revenue” to the city’s general fund.

Voter approval of the measure would create what the staff report on the Mendoza measure calls “an additional estimated impact of the proposed measure on the city’s finances in light of the fiscal transfers mandated by Measure Y.” It would bump up the city’s general fund annual operating deficit to \$25.4 million (including the impacts of Measure Y) and result in a fund balance deficit (and depletion of the city’s general fund reserves) of \$142.8 million – “requiring even deeper reductions in municipal services in order for the city to maintain a positive general fund position,” the report said.

“Voter approval of the proposed (Mendoza) measure will require further cuts to city services funded by the general fund including, but not limited to, police, fire, library, parks, recreation programs, certain public works operations, development services, city council, administration, city clerk, finance and human resources,” it added.



Photo courtesy of Eva Thiel-Maiz  
Office of Supervisor Hilda Solis

**NAACP HONORS LA NUEVA VOZ** – Renee Barbee of La Nueva Voz poses with California Attorney General Rob Bonta last week in Claremont as she accepted a Community Team Players award from the Pomona Valley Branch NAACP on behalf of La Nueva Voz at the “Sixth Annual Freedom Fund Program.” Bonta and Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Pro Tem Hilda Solis were speakers at the event on the theme “Moving Forward in a World in Discord.” A total of 10 community leaders and “team players” were honored.



# PBIS RECOGNITIONS



## PLATINUM

- Alcott
- Armstrong
- Arroyo
- Cortez (K-8)
- Decker
- Lexington (K-8)
- Pantera
- Park West HS
- Philadelphia
- Roosevelt
- Vejar (K-8)
- Washington

## GOLD

- Emerson MS
- Fremont Academy
- Golden Springs
- Harrison (K-8)
- Kellogg
- Kingsley
- Lorbeer MS
- Pomona HS
- Ranch Hills
- San Jose (K-8)
- Simons MS

## SILVER

- Allison
- Lincoln
- Lopez
- Madison
- Marshall MS
- Westmont

## BRONZE

- Barfield



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## Supervisor Solis holds ‘drive-through’ distribution for 2,500 families

An estimated 2,500 households from the San Gabriel Valley area impacted by a combination of power outages and wildfires received much-needed resources last month at a drive-through food distribution program in Irwindale hosted by Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Pro Tem Hilda Solis.

Residents also have been impacted by related challenges including job losses, food insecurity and the soaring cost of housing.

“As we continue to assess the full scope of assistance in the wake of these hardships, it’s essential that we come together to support those struggling,” Solis said. “This distribution is just one of many steps toward helping our neighbors recover and rebuild.”

And, she said in a brief interview with La Nueva Voz at the Saturday morning event, the need extends through Los Angeles County and “will be with us for a long time.”

Included in the three-hour give-away at the now-closed Irwindale Speedway – reminiscent



Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Pro Tem Hilda Solis loads oranges and other food items into the trunk of a car at last month's drive-through food distribution program in Irwindale as her husband, Sam Sayyad, at rear, gives her a hand. At left, Solis shows members of the news media some of the items residents were receiving -- from water to "Beyond Burger" and even frozen chickens.

of similar drive-throughs not too long ago during COVID – were food, water, diapers, pet food, essential items and masks, along with resource information “for those who have been impacted by the fires and tremendous winds that have in many ways impacted people here throughout the foothill areas and the San Gabriel Valley,” Solis said to volunteers and news media representatives just before the Jan. 25 event.

“It really does take a village for all of us to come together and put this on,” she said. “This was put together in less than two weeks.”

Solis thanked all of the volunteers for coming together and “for heeding the call.”

“And nobody said no when we called to ask for their help,” she said.

Some of the donors have participated at events organized by Solis going back to the COVID

give-aways, she said.

Her husband Sam Sayyad was on hand to help Solis personally load the cars throughout distribution.

The event was scheduled for 9 a.m. to noon – and it got under way pretty much right on time with volunteers skillfully aligned in three drive-through lanes, six “stations” in each lane, and volunteers serving four cars at a time in each lane. Cars were already lined up out into the street from

well before 7 a.m., according to one of some 130 volunteers.

Michael Flood, director of Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, supplier of most of the food supplies at the event, thanked Solis for organizing the event and said his organization worked with her during the pandemic.

He said the “circumstances today in response to the fires are different” but said the similarity is the example of how the community came together. **“Drive-through” distribution... pg. 5**



## WATER 101 AND MONEY SAVING TIPS

Did you know that many local retail water agencies and cities offer water saving incentive programs? Be sure to check with your local water supplier to see what is available for you to use. Many offer programs at little to no cost.

**Rebates:** Residential and commercial rebates offered can range from high efficiency appliances and irrigation systems to turf replacement programs. For more information visit [bewaterwise.com](http://bewaterwise.com)

**Conservation Kits:** Your city may offer conservation kits that include common household leak repair items such as toilet flaps and shower aerators. Be sure to check for guidelines and any other programs that may be offered.

**Landscape Evaluation Program:** Professionals can audit your current property and help identify water consumption and possible risks. After the evaluation you are advised on how you can tune up your current irrigation system.

## Assembly Speaker Rivas officiates at Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez 'community swearing in'

California Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas told a standing room only crowd in Chino this month that Pomona's new Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez "embodies the kind of leadership that we need more of right now."

Speaking to a crowd of nearly 300 supporters and friends of Rodriguez at a "community swearing in" her district office in Chino, Rivas said Michelle and her husband Freddie Rodriguez, who represented the 53rd Assembly District before her, "have always had my back."

...tive" in politics today.

"Michelle is grounded in humility and is driven by honesty," he said. "She doesn't just speak to her constituents . . . but she listens to all of you . . . she values your voices and reflects those hopes, the concerns in every decision that she has to make."

He added that Rodriguez leads with authenticity, "always putting people first, and is reminding us that real progress always comes from staying connected to the communities we serve."

"We have a lot of work to do and



Photo by Jeff Schenkel

**'COMMUNITY' SWEARING IN** -- California Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas, at right, administers the oath of office this month in a "community swearing in" for Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez, at left, as her husband, former Assemblymember Freddie Rodriguez, looks on. Their grandson Jacob Hernandez is pictured holding the Bible at the event in Chino.

He said that's why he appointed her to the position of assistant majority whip in Sacramento "because so many times when we have these really tough votes . . . we have to mobilize so many of our members to talk to other legislators to convince them why we need to support this bill."

Rivas said "things are so nega-

we know we can no longer settle for good intentions, we know that we have to measure ourselves by outcomes, by results, by fighting for the people who we represent... to ensure that we're making the lives of Californians better," Rivas said.

He said if legislators see policies that are "falling short," they have to

### "Drive-through" distribution... from pg. 4

munity comes together in times of need.

Volunteers from throughout the San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys included many from Pomona including both Athens Services and Valley Vista Services, each with nearly a dozen team members on hand to volunteer.

Valley Vista Services also provided breakfast burritos for the volunteers before the event,

NAACP of Pomona Valley was on hand to serve breakfast, God's Pantry of Pomona provided 11 volunteers, and Pomona's Kennedy Austin Foundation had a team of volunteers on hand, as well.

Representatives of more than five organizations from the Los Angeles County Employees Association, representing the county's 100,000 employees, were



Photo by Duane Smith

**POMONA CROWD TURNS OUT** -- Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez' 53rd Assembly District includes Pomona, Chino, Ontario, Upland and Montclair, but Pomona clearly was well-represented at her "community" swearing in this month, as evidenced in this "Pomona crowd" photo. Included were enough members of the Pomona City Council to convene an official meeting, State Sen. Susan Rubio (at far right), Pomona Chamber of Commerce Board Chair Nef Cortez, Benny Ayala of Fairplex, the Pomona Police Officers' Association and others.

"do everything we can to fix those policies."

"If resources aren't reaching the communities and those residents who need the most, then we have to do our best to redirect them," he said. "It's not just about assigning blame but it's about embracing our responsibility as legislators here in California, the greatest state on earth, to make a difference."

"The only way forward is not to just focus on Donald Trump and all the crazy things he does from day to day, but it's to acknowledge what can be done better here in California and do it better," he said before administering the oath of office. "I look forward to beginning this journey with Michelle with a lot of hope in our hearts and some purpose in our minds to do the best work we possibly can."

Rodriguez told her supporters

she's "ready to serve my community because I'm a fighter and when someone says I can't do it, I say watch me."

"I've had the privilege to live in the district my entire life," Rodriguez said, adding that she was born and raised in Ontario. "From the experience of my life I understand first hand the challenges faced by working families."

And, with her work in Sacramento already under way, she told her supporters she had just joined an effort "to sign a \$2.5 billion wildfire recovery package to assist in aiding building schools, homes and communities devastated by the fires."

She said that bill was personal to

her because her sons, a Los Angeles County sheriff's deputy and a firefighter, are out there on the front lines.

"I am committed to be the voice of public safety, equity, housing and working families in Sacramento," she said. "I look forward to the impact we will make for the residents of the 53rd Assembly District."

Rodriguez' official swearing in was on Dec. 2 in Sacramento. A Democrat, she won her seat with a 58 percent to 42 percent vote over Republican Nick Wilson in the November election.

The 53rd Assembly District includes Pomona, Chino, Ontario, Upland and Montclair.



### Huge Rummage Sale Gran Venta de Artículos Usados

**Saturday, April 5.**  
from 8 am to 1 pm  
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## Short list... from pg. 1

Cole and her campaign committee were included on a statewide listing of 1,054 cases involving elected officials, candidates, governmental employees and others required to submit FPPC filings. Last year's FPPC administrative fines totaled \$802,238 – the highest since 2017, officials said.

Cole's FPPC Case Number 2024-00224 "Stipulation, decision and order" was for "Campaign Statement/Report Late Reporter Violations" of California Government Code Section 84211, Regulation 18421.10 "Reporting contributions from Limited Liability Companies."

She and her "candidate controlled" campaign committee were fined \$400, or \$200 for each of two alleged violations related to the January through June, 2023 semi-annual reporting period and the July through December, 2023 semi-annual reporting period, according to the order.

"Respondents" to such FPPC actions are required to sign a statement acknowledging the violations, waive rights to contest the matter in a hearing, and acknowledge payment of the penalties.

The matter was on the FPPC agenda last October.

In Los Angeles County, to put this in perspective, the two successful FPPC prosecutions closest to Pomona were for alleged violations by the city manager of Rosemead (fined \$800, "statements of economic interest non-reporter") and an Alhambra planning commissioner (fined \$200, "statements of economic interest non-filer").

Fines for Los Angeles County officials totaled \$114,093, with the largest single penalty levied against former Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva for allegedly laundered campaign contributions in his 2018 campaign (fined \$57,500).

La Nueva Voz only by chance discovered the alleged "conflict of interest" investigation on the FPPC web site – the "No Action Closure Letter" was sent by the FPPC to Cole "in response to a sworn complaint alleging you violated Section 84308 of the (Political Reform) Act by receiving contributions from a party/participant and then voting on an item in which the party/participant had a financial interest."

"After completing our review of

the case, we are closing this matter as to this allegation without further action," Rinehart's letter continued.

"Our review determined that there is insufficient evidence to support a finding that you had reason to know the contributions from Sada Management LLC were required to be aggregated and attributed to Sharon and Doug Alvey," the letter explained.

Sada Management LLC's principal address, according to the California Secretary of State's web site, is 496 E. Holt Ave., Pomona, where A.J.'s Super Pawn is located. Sharon Alvey is listed as the LLC's agent. The LLC's initial filing date was Feb. 24, 2022.

"Neither Sharon nor Doug Alvey disclosed the contributions on the record at the Oct. 16, 2023 proceeding (and) Doug Alvey failed to disclose the contributions when the appeal application was submitted on Sept. 14, 2023," the letter continued, referring to a related Pomona Historic Preservation Commission proceeding.

"Your committee failed to timely disclose the name of the responsible officers on its campaign statements for the contributions received from Sada Management LLC, and there is no evidence to suggest that you had knowledge that the Sada Management LLC contributions must be aggregated and attributed to Sharon and Doug Alvey," Rinehart said in the letter.

"Therefore, there is insufficient evidence to support a finding that you violated Section 84308 of the Act," she said.

The letter stated that "even though we are closing our file on this allegation, please be advised of Section 84308 and the conflict-of-interest provisions of the Act in any future actions you may take in your capacity as a public official."

Rinehart sent yet another letter in the matter to Doug Alvey – this one a "warning letter" – after the FPPC's enforcement division found he filed an appeal of a City of Pomona Historic Preservation Commission action.

The short version of what happened leading up to this letter, determined after sorting through city documents and reviewing archived proceedings, is Sada Management LLC wanted to make changes to a house located on their property at 451 E. Center St., next to a park-

ing lot used by Catalyst Cannabis Dispensary and other businesses in the area. Doug and Sharon Alvey identified themselves as part owners of Catalyst at the store's ribbon cutting when it opened in December 2021.

City staff, in its recommendation, told commissioners the house did not meet the criteria for historic significance, commissioners disagreed, Sada Management appealed to the city council, and city councilmembers – including Cole – unanimously voted to uphold the appeal.

At issue were two checks during 2023 – each for \$249 – from Sada to the Cole campaign, and archived in reporting documents in the Pomona City Clerk's section of the city's web site.

Rinehart's letter to Alvey stated the FPPC found that the contributions to the Cole campaign were not disclosed either when filing the appeal of the Historic Preservation Commission's action or when the appeal came before the city council for a vote.

Those disclosures are required under California's Political Reform Act, according to the letter.

The letter said the FPPC enforcement division decided to close the case with only a warning letter because the contributions "were greater than the limit by less than \$250," it appeared Alvey was not familiar with provisions of the act, and he had no history of violating the act.

Even so, the letter said, failure to comply with provisions of the act in the future could result in penalties of up to \$5,000 for each violation.

La Nueva Voz reached out to Alvey for comment but received an e-mail response, instead, from Sharon Alvey, who summarized by saying "a finding was made that it was an honest mistake . . . which it was."

"The duplicate donation was returned," she added, explaining that she works with an attorney to make sure her contributions match up to her attorney's spreadsheet at the end of the reporting period.

"This ensures that there will never be such an error again," she said.

According to the archived video of the Oct. 16, 2023, Pomona City Council meeting, discussions touched on the "possibility" that

Sada Management was considering demolishing the Craftsman style bungalow in question to provide additional parking for the businesses facing Holt Avenue, although no application for demolition was pending at that time. Staff pointed out that the house on the site is surrounded by parking. Alvey did not comment on her specific plans in her response to La Nueva Voz.

Cole received a total of \$12,656 in campaign contributions during the 2023 calendar year. Sada Management was the only LLC on the list.

In Cole's previous fine from the FPPC in Case No. 2021-00023, she agreed to a \$327 penalty for late reporting. La Nueva Voz discovered the 2021 violations by chance during on-line research for her latest round of penalties.

The FPPC "Stipulation, Deci-

sion and Order" named both Cole and her campaign committee in connection with violations of Section 84211 of the California Government Code, which requires filings by candidates of both contributions and expenditures. Cole was identified as both "candidate and treasurer."

Specifically, the fine for "activity not timely reported" was for "pre-election" reporting of \$3,222 in campaign expenditures during the July 1 through Sept. 19, 2020 reporting period, for a fine of \$196, and reporting of \$1,047 in campaign expenditures during the Sept. 20 through Oct. 17, 2020 reporting period, for a fine of \$131, for a total of \$327.

The case was closed on June 4, 2021.

La Nueva Voz attempted over a period of several days to reach out

Short list... pg. 16

### La Nueva Voz

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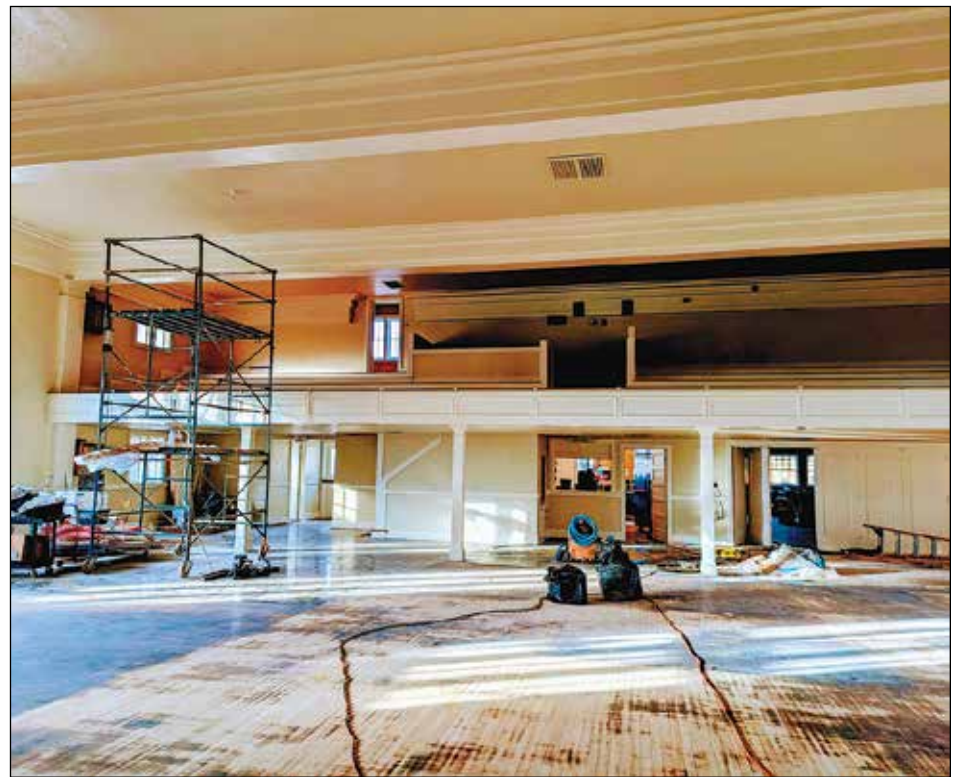


Photo by Renee Barbee

**PROGRESS AT POMONA'S EBELL** -- Historical Society of Pomona Valley Board members toured progress inside the Ebell Museum last month after a fire last year damaged part of the historic building right as remodeling was getting under way. And, as pictured in the ballroom above, work on everything is coming right along. Historical Society President Deborah Clifford told La Nueva Voz the cost of refurbishing and repairing is expected to be nearly \$4 million. Breaking it out, she said the cost of repairing fire damage should be about \$800,000.



**ASSISTANCE LEAGUE LIVES UP TO ITS NAME** -- Members of the Assistance League of Pomona Valley stepped up in the aftermath of the fires last month to provide, well, assistance to victims in the San Gabriel Valley. While members of the local chapter were safe, family and friends of members lost homes and belongings. Members gathered together supplies for distribution sites in Pasadena and, when they dropped them off and asked what else was needed, they were told hot meals for 40 people. They returned the following day with 57 hot meals that were dropped off at St. Philip the Apostle Church in Pasadena for firefighters, workers and displaced individuals. Interestingly, according to a news release, the Assistance League had its beginnings with the San Francisco earthquake and fire in 1906. "Thankfully, our members were able to come together (and) work quickly . . . to meet the needs of our greater community and our neighbors," said Pomona Valley President Suzanne Miller. Pictured is member Denise Delgado loading supplies in a car including hygiene kits, toiletries and more.





Photos by Renee Barbee

**DECEMBER, JANUARY OPTIMIST STUDENTS** -- Pomona Optimist Club "Students of the Month" for December and January received their recognitions last week in ceremonies at the Pomona Eagles. All are from Pantera Elementary School in Diamond Bar. Pictured, from left, are winners, all sixth graders, Sophia Caldera (December), Kaci Xie (January), Alexander Osornio (December) and Kydan Lam (January). Back row, from left, are Optimist members Fernando Meza, Darren Knowles, Arturo Jimenez, Optimist President Lorraine Canales, Dr. Roberta Perlman and Claudia Kidmy.



**OCTOBER, NOVEMBER OPTIMIST STUDENTS** -- Pomona Optimist Club "Students of the Month" for October and November received their recognitions last month in ceremonies at the Pomona Eagles. All are from Pomona's Arroyo Elementary School. Pictured, from left, are Sonia Molina, Optimist Vice President; Kamille Hemsworth, representing Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez; Lovette Hernandez and Felicia Borja (November winners); Sophia Jimenez and Enox Hernandez-Gochez (October winners); and Optimist Club President Lorraine Canales.



Photo by Tom Zasadzinski

**CAL POLY POMONA WINNING TEAM** -- Members of the Cal Poly Pomona women's soccer team, winners in December of the NCAA Division II national championship, stopped by a Pomona Chamber of Commerce "Coffee Connection" last month at the Chamber's Downtown Pomona office to say hello and meet the gang. Pictured, from left, are (front row) Karra Brunst (team manager), Aly Papka, Jaclyn Cuevas, Ryan Grace, Lizzy Northcott, Sabine Ramos, Kailey Powers; (middle row) Lindsay Sung, Lavinia Vaipulu, Kat Aguayo, Kiarra D'Arcangelo, Giselle Samayoa, Abria Smith, Marisa Salazar, Maddy Tjon, Haley Hong, Emilee Tominovich (assistant coach); (back row) Dan Richards (assistant coach), Auburn Burnett, Tara Oper, Jay Mason (head coach), Vanessa Cruz, Tatum Bowers, Angelina Rivas, Mikaela Marr, Jenna Tetrault, Bella Hara, Georgia Rink. It was the first national title in the team's history and the 15th team national title in Cal Poly Pomona athletics history. The team also was ranked number one in the nation for the first time ever at the end of the season, according to Cal Poly's Assistant Athletics Director-Communications Alex Kline. Tara Oper was named "National Player of the Year," Oper and Vanessa Cruz were named "First Team All-Americans," and head coach Jay Mason and the coaching staff were named "National Coaching Staff of the Year."

# 2025 CONCERT SERIES

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Organizers of the Optimist Club of Pomona's "Sip and Paint Day" fundraiser are, from left, Fernando Meza, Ruby Jung, President Lorraine Canales, Sonia Molina and M. Joyce Bakersmith. Photos by Renee Barbee



**OPTIMISTS HOLD 'SIP AND PAINT' DAY**  
-- Tracy Evanson, at left, and Essence Guss, second from right, both of Healed Women Heal, pose for the La Nueva Voz camera last month at a "Sip and Paint Day" fundraiser sponsored by the Optimist Club of Pomona at The dA Center for the Arts. Participants enjoyed lunch, mimosas and painting on canvas with a Valentine's Day theme. Did we mention there were raffle baskets involved?

Pomona Optimist Club member Paulette Young shows off her painting at the club's "Sip and Paint Day" fundraiser at the dA.



## 'Green Ribbon Week' ribbons available at Tri-City

Looking for those little green ribbons to pin on and celebrate the annual "Green Ribbon Week" and help promote mental health awareness?

You can pick them up for free – along with a variety of reference information, resource flyers, "toolkit" printouts and more – at Pomona's Tri-City Mental Health at several locations.

Just stop by Tri-City's adult clinic at 2008 N. Garey Ave., the children's clinic at 1900 Royalty Ave., and the Wellness Center at 1403 N. Garey Ave.

Supplies are limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Green Ribbon Week, celebrated each year during the third week of March, this year is March 17 through 21 on the theme "Thrive in Mind." It is officially recognized by the cities of Pomona, La Verne and Claremont to enhance public awareness of mental health to help end the stigma and to help people receive the care and resources they need to be well.

For more information, visit <http://www.tricitymhs.org>.



## FREE INCOME TAX PREPARATION



The Accounting Department of Cal Poly Pomona's College of Business Administration is offering free income tax preparation/assistance to eligible taxpayers. Our trained volunteers can help you navigate the tax process and ensure you get all the credits and deductions you're eligible for. Visit us at one of our locations and let us help you!

Walk-in tax preparation is available at:

<b>Baldwin Park Library</b> 4181 Baldwin Park Blvd March 1 & 29   11 am - 4 pm	<b>Duarte Library</b> 1301 Buena Vista St March 8 & April 5   11am - 4pm
<b>El Monte Library</b> 3224 Tyler Ave March 22   11 am - 4 pm	<b>Sunkist Library</b> 840 Puente Ave March 15 & April 12   11am - 4pm
<b>Pomona Public Library</b> 625 S. Garey Ave Every Saturday, March 1 - April 12   11 am - 4 pm	

### What To Bring:

- Proof of identification (photo ID)
  - For married filing jointly, both spouses must be present
- Social Security cards or Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITIN) documents for you, your spouse, and dependents (if any)
  - Can substitute with a 1099-SRA, IRS Transcript, or your past year's tax return done by Cal Poly Pomona VITA
- Birth dates for all on the tax return
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- Total paid to daycare provider and their tax ID number
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**Photos courtesy of Pomona Unified School District**  
**SCIENCE FAIR FIRST PLACE JUNIOR DIVISION** -- Diego Scott, a sixth grade student at Westmont Elementary School, shows off his entry in the Sarah Ross Science Fair this month. He won first place in the junior division (grades six through eight) for his project "Harnessing Light: A Truly Bright Project."



**SARAH ROSS SCIENCE FAIR WINNERS** -- Pomona Unified School District's annual Sarah Ross Science Fair was held this month at the Village at Indian Hill and showcased 79 projects created by 140 students in grades six through 12 from 19 PUSD schools. Students from Pomona's Western University of Health Sciences served as judges. Winners will go on to the Los Angeles County Science and Engineering Fair next month. Members of the Promoting Academic Achievement Committee of Pomona's Promise awarded scholarships to the winners. Pictured at right is first place senior division (grades nine through 12) winner Jennifer Mota, an 11th grade student at Ganesha High School, explaining her project "Art in Nature."



**HONORABLE MENTION** -- One of three honorable mentions in the senior division of the Sarah Ross Science Fair was the "Infinity Well," a project created by Hailey Rodriguez-Garcia, at left, and Camila Aguilar, both ninth graders at Pomona's Village Academy High School.



**COMMERCIAL BUILDING LEVELED** -- An early-morning fire in a vacant commercial structure on Jan. 31 in the 400 block of North Garey Avenue in Pomona destroyed much of the building as seen in the photo above. A Los Angeles County Fire Department spokesperson said the first units were dispatched at 5:24 a.m. and were on the scene at 5:28 a.m. They found heavy smoke coming from the single-story building, upgraded to a second alarm at 5:36 a.m. and knocked down the fire at 7:15 a.m. Nearly 70 firefighters were on the scene. There were no injuries and no indication of a cause. The fire was right across the street to the north of The Union, formerly Pomona's old YMCA.



**'UNPRESIDENT'S DAY' MARCH IN POMONA** -- Protestors calling for a halt to the "criminalization, detention and deportation of immigrants" staged a two-hour rally and march on Presidents' Day beginning at Main Street and Mission Boulevard in Downtown Pomona. Marchers in what they called a "Pro-Migrant Unpresident's Day" event -- with placards that said "ICE out of Pomona," "The Pilgrims were Immigrants" and other slogans -- reminded passers-by that Pomona is a "sanctuary city." The event was coordinated by a coalition consisting of members of the Latino and Latina Roundtable, the organization "ICE out of Pomona," and other groups and individuals. Pomona police officials said they received five police reports of graffiti-related vandalism -- at police headquarters and at the city council chambers -- believed to be related to the march.



**CAL FIRE CREWS PASSING THROUGH** -- La Nueva Voz saw several Cal Fire trucks lined up outside Jack in the Box on West Mission Boulevard in Pomona and stopped for a quick "photo op" while the firefighters were stopping for coffee during the recent fires late last month. A team member wasn't sure where they were heading next although he thought their orders might have been to head on down to the fires in the San Diego area. And on Valentine's Day, La Nueva Voz also spotted an entire Cal Fire encampment fenced off in the parking lot at Santa Anita Park racetrack in Arcadia where crew members were actually living in trailers while helping with the clean-up after the rains. Great job, guys!

## Tri City seeks public comment on Prop. 1 changes in mental health funding

Tri City Mental Health commissioners, governing board members, supporters and members of the public participated last month in a community forum in Claremont to receive, in many cases, a “first look” at what is on the horizon for public mental health services in California – essentially sweeping changes and dramatic expansion of services in the first major overhaul of mental health services in the state since voters passed the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63) in 2004.

The reworking of California’s mental health system was made possible by Propo-



Ontson Placide

osition 1, a state wide ballot measure approved by voters last year. Heading the list of changes, to give readers an idea of where everything is heading, is an update to the name of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) itself to what now will be known as California’s Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), reflecting a shift to include treatment of substance use disorders.

The measure also expands services for which counties and the state can use funds, and it authorizes \$6.38 billion in bonds to build mental health treatment facilities for those with mental health and



Ron Vera

substance use challenges.

And Proposition 1 also helps provide housing for the homeless.

Funding will still come from what is called the “millionaire’s tax,” in which taxpayers making more than a million dollars a year in personal income are taxed an additional one percent.

Sara Rodriguez, Tri City’s MHSA projects manager, told the group they will see under the new plan an expansive opportunity to address public need while “we are going to see the state take a bigger percent off the top,” 10 percent compared to the current 5 percent under MHSA.

“This allows funds to be used for drug and alcohol treatment for people without mental illness,” she explained. “This also prioritizes housing” and “specifically the chronically homeless.”

Planning is already under way for when the act goes into effect on July 1, 2026, and Tri City is interested in receiving public input – both now and through additional community meetings as more information becomes finalized.

“The bottom line for this in terms of the transition is to really transform from more of the innovative side to treatment and services for housing and for the chronically mentally ill,” said Tri City Executive Director Ontson Placide. “So what that really means is how much money do we receive from MHSA on a pretty consistent annual basis and how would that be redistributed.”

Claremont City Councilmember Jed Leano, who serves as Tri City’s Board Chair,



Sara Rodriguez

Mental health funding... pg. 18





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## Free Community Seminars

# It's a New Year, Put Your Heart Into It!

**Tuesday, March 11 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.**

Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare, Loverso Education Center, Building 1E • 255 East Bonita Avenue, Pomona, CA 91767

### Join us to learn about:

- How diabetes affects your heart
- What is a “healthy fat”?
- Improve cholesterol with simple lifestyle changes
- Adding fiber for a healthy heart
- Question and answer session

# Cooking for a Healthier You

**Tuesday, March 25 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.**

Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare, Casa Colina Hospital Cafe, Building 2 • 255 East Bonita Avenue, Pomona, CA 91767

### Join us for a cooking demo and discussion:

- Crafting and sampling healthier meals and quick and easy snacks
- Making sense of food labels and ingredients on packaging
- Selecting nutritious food within your budget
- Tips for wholesome cooking
- Saving time by preparing meals in advance
- Question and answer session







**PRESENTED BY**

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Registered Dietitian with WesternU  
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- Call 866/724-4132
  - Online at [casacolina.org/communityevents](http://casacolina.org/communityevents)
  - Scan the QR code
- Refreshments will be served and space is limited.



[www.casacolina.org](http://www.casacolina.org) •    

## Cuentito for today: The big car wreck!!

By Susie Perales

The older we get the more doctor field trips we get to go to. Today was one of those trips. I hate driving in heavy traffic. I left 45 minutes early to make sure I arrived early to see my cardiologist. I couldn't believe how much traffic there was.

Unfortunately, I got there a little bit late. Luckily, they weren't very upset, because I was only about 10 minutes late. The waiting room was almost empty. They called me in right away. But, I waited for the doctor for about 30 minutes.

I was rushing to get there on time and he was later than I was! The doctor came in and said everything looked fine. But I learned that two of my medications cause weight gain! No wonder my blouses hiked up THREE sizes since last year! It's terrible.

These days I have a hard time putting my socks and shoes on. I always feel like I did an hour at the dang gym! But, on the bright side, I don't have to come back to see the cardiolo-

gist for another year. I saw the doctor for a whole FIVE minutes. But I was glad it was over. We were very happy to be out of there, because we were very hungry.

While we were on our way out to the parking lot, I clicked my car key to find our car. As we got closer to it, I spotted a dent and scratches on the back right side of our car. I tried opening the hatch and it wouldn't budge. I noticed another huge dent and crack on the keyhole area.

I was so upset that someone had wrecked our car and decided it was a good idea to take off! I was so angry I could spit bullets! I looked around the parking lot to see if the culprit who thrashed our car was still lurking around there. Then all of a sudden I burst into happy tears and laughter. I looked at the license plate and realized the car was not our car! But, it looked exactly like our girl, silver, Honda CRV! Ay, dios mío, que día tan chistoso! (OMG! What a hilarious day!) Y se acabó el cuentito.

## EPA fines Superior Grocers for illegal unregistered products

Superior Grocers has agreed to pay \$253,909 in fines for alleged violations in a settlement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency over claims of illegal distribution of unregistered disinfectant products through 47 stores through California, including the store in Pomona.

According to an EPA news release, the settlement with Superior Center Concepts, doing business as Superior Grocers, the alleged violations – involving two different products – occurred in 2020.

The company no longer distributes the disinfectants or offers them for sale.

A California Department of Pesticide Regulation inspection at Superior Grocers' Santa Ana location, followed by an EPA investigation, allegedly revealed the company had distributed "Home Line Antibacterial Wipes," an unregistered disinfectant that claimed it was "antibacterial" and "kills germs," to 47 stores throughout the state.

An EPA spokesperson confirmed to La Nueva Voz that one of the

stores was located in Pomona. The spokesperson said once the Santa Ana location was identified, the EPA investigated the distribution from the company's warehouses to stores to determine where the products could have been sold.

A second product, "Ha Ha Fu Sterilized Wet Wipes," allegedly was discovered being offered for sale at the company's Santa Ana store. According to the EPA news release, the product claimed "to kill 99 percent of germs and bacteria" and advertised "effectively elimi-

nating the Coronavirus and other germs."

Products claiming to kill or mitigate pests on surfaces, including microorganisms, must be registered with the EPA before being sold or distributed, according to the news release.

Registration ensures that products have been properly tested and meet federal safety standards. Neither of the two products underwent EPA's registration process to verify safety and efficacy claims, according to the EPA.

## Pomona Concert Band winter concert set for Friday

The Pomona Concert Band will present its annual winter concert "The Great USA" on Friday, Feb. 28, at Pomona's Palomares Park Community Center.

Sponsored by the City of Pomona, the free concert begins at 7:30 p.m.

Featured will be music written for different regions of the country, including "Midwest March" by J.J. Richards, "An American Elegy" by Frank Ticheli, "Folk Suite for

Concert Band" by William Grant Still, and "Savannah River Rhapsody," by Robert Sheldon.

Featured soloist will be bassoonist Carly Miller performing Mozart's "Concerto in B Flat Major."

The Pomona Concert Band was founded by former Pomona Mayor G. Stanton Selby in 1947 as part of a local Pomona American Legion Post.

For more information, visit [www.pomonaconcertband.org](http://www.pomonaconcertband.org).



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## The Art of Compassion

By Renee Barbee, Member  
Compassionate Pomona

*Compassion is a form of art. We see everything in the image of colors as a way of expressing ourselves.*

*The word Compassion to me means the following:*

- C: Calming
- O: Oceanic
- M: Majestic
- P: Powerful
- A: Artistic
- S: Serene
- S: Sharing
- I: Informative
- O: Others
- N: Nurturing



*Compassion is also kind, caring, loving, spiritual, and so much more! Today, Compassion in the world is needed more than ever. We must do our best to teach others how important acts of kindness and compassion are to our community and to the world.*

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!**

## Casa Colina 'casino night' fundraiser set

Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare will celebrate its courageous patients at a "Havana Casino Night" fundraiser featuring dinner, programs, dancing and entertainment beginning at 5:30 p.m. Saturday, March 29, at the Yanks Air Museum at Chino Airport.

Proceeds will benefit the hospital's "free and subsidized care" program and other community benefits.

For information, call (909) 596-7733, ext. 2237, or e-mail [events@casacolina.org](mailto:events@casacolina.org).

## Pomona Valley Pride forms advisory board

Pomona Valley Pride has created its inaugural advisory board made up of 20 community leaders to play a guiding role in the organization's strategic growth and community outreach efforts, according to a news release.

Members will report to Pomona Valley Pride Chief Executive Officer Frank Guzman and will help foster an inclusive and supportive environment for LGBTQ-IA+ individuals and allies in the region.

"Each member brings a unique perspective to our growing organization," Guzman said.

Two board members and three staff members will support the advisory group's activities.

"This new board represents an infusion of both lived experience and professional expertise into Pomona Valley Pride," said Board of Directors Chair Robert Munoz.

T.J. Adams-Falconer will serve as chair of the advisory board.

Community members are invited to the group's "Oscar Viewing Party Fundraiser" set for March 2. For information, visit [www.pomonavalleypride.org](http://www.pomonavalleypride.org).

## State's worst... from pg. 1

Because of the timing of Coley's retirement announcement coming so soon after the completion of the final audit, La Nueva Voz asked Coley's spokesperson if there was a connection between the audit and her decision to step down or if she was asked by the state chancellor to step down. Both Coley's spokesperson and the chancellor's spokesperson said the decision to retire was made independently.

La Nueva Voz reached out for comment to California State University Board Chair Jack Clarke, Jr., for comment but did not receive a response before press time.

La Nueva Voz also contacted Dr. Nicholas Von Glahn, a psychology professor at Cal Poly Pomona and Faculty Rights Chair of the local chapter of the California Faculty Association, who agreed payroll at the university "has been a persistent issue for years."

"Given both the duration and severity of the problems, accountability ultimately rests at the top," he said. "Employees have been overpaid, only to have the money clawed back long after the fact, sometimes with tax consequences."

"There have also been instances where employees were not paid on time or were paid incorrectly, creating serious financial hardships," he added.

"The university remains committed to financial stewardship and compliance and will continue to align its payroll operations with state regulations and best practices," the Cal Poly spokesperson said in response to a La Nueva Voz request for comment. "When overpayments are identified, we notify the employee and provide an opportunity to establish a mutually agreed-upon remittance plan."

A summary of the audit results indicated that the "net total dollar amount of projected improper costs and identified and projected unsupported costs" was \$3,625,282.

"To be specific, this is the largest (deficiency) in terms of payroll audits conducted at California State Universities since 2020," said Bismarck Obando, press secretary for State Controller Malia Cohen, in response to an inquiry from La Nueva Voz attempting to put it all in perspective.

The "dollar amount of population" for the period was \$512,390,209, including regular pay, overtime pay, salary advance,

separation lump-sum pay, emergency pay, and settlement pay.

And the "dollar amount of selections examined," based on the same audit areas tested, was \$2,122,958.

While Cal Poly's actual dollars lost ("net total dollar amount of identified improper costs" which Cal Poly reports it is currently is in the process of recovering) totaled only \$10,923, a similar period audited at Cal State University Los Angeles was only \$4,875 and "total dollar amount of known and likely issues" at Cal State University San Marcos was only \$6,227. A similar period reviewed at Cal State University Sacramento actually was a negative \$7,107.

Cal Poly processed 105,007 regular pay transactions during the period reviewed, according to the report.

"If not mitigated, the control deficiencies leave Cal Poly Pomona at risk of making improper payments for regular pay," the report continued.

"California State Polytechnic University, Pomona management is responsible for maintaining a system of internal control over the payroll process within its organization, and for ensuring compliance with various requirements under state laws and regulations regarding payroll and payroll-related expenditures," Tarvin told Coley in the letter.

While the cover letter showed copies were distributed to a dozen officials all around the state – including copies to half a dozen officials at Cal Poly, officials at the Cal State University system office and a couple in the state controller's office – the report, as far as could be determined by La Nueva Voz, was never released to the public, no news release was produced and distributed to the news media, and the report was seemingly tucked away in a file and archived on the internet.

A Cal Poly spokesperson said it is "usual practice" for audits of state entities to simply be made available on the state controller's web site.

A footnote in the report said the audit report was "solely for the information and use" of Cal Poly Pomona, the California State University and the state controller's office.

"This restriction is not intended to limit distribution of this audit report, which is a matter of public record and is available on the (state controller's office) web site at www.

sco.ca.gov," it said.

La Nueva Voz happened to stumble on the audit after learning of Coley's retirement announcement and conducting a little search on the internet looking into the status of what officials once indicated could turn into obstruction of justice charges (related to the campus police and Cal Poly Foundation matters) from either the FBI, the California Attorney General's office or the U.S. Department of Justice.

La Nueva Voz has remained in contact with all three of those agencies over the past two years, but authorities have continued to respond that they could "neither confirm nor deny" that an investigation was under way.

E-mails were sent again this month but no responses were received from officials before deadline for this issue.

The obstruction of justice allegations came to light two years ago in connection with a civil lawsuit filed in October 2022 in Los Angeles Superior Court by then-Cal Poly Police Sgt. Marcus Simpson against Cal Poly. La Nueva Voz has learned that civil lawsuit was dismissed in January 2024 "without prejudice."

Through it all, Coley consistently insisted in her responses to La Nueva Voz that she had done nothing wrong and that Cal Poly "at all times operated legally, ethically and transparently."

In their findings in the December report, auditors informed university officials that "Cal Poly Pomona lacked adequate segregation of duties within its payroll transactions unit to ensure that only valid and authorized payroll transactions were processed."

"Cal Poly Pomona also failed to implement other controls to compensate for this risk," the audit findings continued. "Our audit found that Cal Poly Pomona payroll transactions unit staff performed conflicting duties (and) . . . performed multiple steps in processing payroll transactions, including entering data into the state's payroll system, auditing employee timesheets, reconciling payroll . . . and processing adjustments."

"We found no indication that these functions were subjected to periodic supervisory review," the assessment continued.

The report stated it was the first audit by the controller's office of

Cal Poly's payroll process and transactions, although a Cal Poly spokesperson, in a response to La Nueva Voz, called it a "routine compliance review conducted by the state controller's office as part of its standard oversight responsibilities."

Meanwhile, in fairness, Cal Poly seems to have taken the 13-page audit report seriously – officials in the university's Office of the Vice President for Administrative Affairs told the state in a letter dated Oct. 18, 2024, after reviewing what was then a draft audit report, that they appreciated "the effort and guidance you and your staff have provided to indicate areas where our procedures or internal controls could be strengthened."

Cal Poly officials said they have already begun taking the necessary corrective actions to address the report's recommendations – and outlined a plan to accomplish that in the three-page letter.

They essentially indicated that they "concur" with half a dozen findings and recommendations in the report and outlined exactly how they planned to implement the corrective actions.

In the case of the "improper payments and missing timesheets for overtime pay" and "outstanding salary advances" categories, for example, Cal Poly indicated it has already begun a process of review and efforts to recover overpayments and advances made to employees.

### Assistance League 'Tea Party' fundraiser set

The Assistance League of Pomona will hold its 26th annual "Luck O' the Irish" tea party and fundraiser next month at Pomona's newly renovated Ebell Club.

The event is scheduled for 12:30 p.m. Saturday, March 15, at the Ebell, located at 585 E. Holt Ave., Pomona.

Tickets are \$60 (\$75 if purchased after March 7). Included will be

### Fist of Gold '911 Fight Night'

Fist of Gold Youth Center is seeking sponsors and participants for its "911 Fight Night" fundraiser scheduled for September in Downtown Pomona.

The 6 p.m. Sept. 20 event in Shaun Diamond Plaza, sanctioned by the California Athletic Commission, will showcase the talent

Coley, in her Feb. 4 letter to "campus community and supporters" obtained by La Nueva Voz, and a day later in a news release, announced her retirement and reflected on her 40 years with the California State University system, serving at Fullerton, Bakersfield and Cal Poly Pomona.

"I am filled with deep gratitude for having this opportunity to serve," she said, adding that she was proud of her work here. "Together we built and implemented a culture of excellence and a community that celebrates diversity and inclusiveness."

Cal State University Chancellor Mildred Garcia, in her own statement, said Coley "has served as a bold, purposeful and ethical leader," according to a news release. She added that Coley has been able to open "doors of opportunity to diverse and historically underserved communities across Southern California and beyond."

During her tenure, approximately 60,900 students have graduated, with the number of graduates rising from 4,654 for the Class of 2015 to 6,340 in the Class of 2024, according to the university news release announcing her retirement.

The university is among the largest public sector employers in Los Angeles County and the California State University system is the largest public university system in the United States.

"opportunity" baskets, a silent auction and mystery bags.

Funds raised will support underserved children and families in the Pomona Valley through philanthropic programs including "Operation School Bell," a free school clothing program that serves some 1,500 students of all ages each year.

For information, contact alp@alp.org.

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## Vision and aging eyes

By Valerie Quan, O.D., FFAO

Optometrist, Casa Colina Neuro-Optometry Clinic

Since turning 40, you've probably noticed changes in your ability to see up close – perhaps even started wearing glasses for reading. Glare while driving, dry eyes, and blurred vision may have also affected your pickleball game or golf score. Changes in vision are often a normal part of aging and should



Valerie Quan, O.D.

not stop you from living well into the "Golden Years." However, there is a higher risk of developing age-related eye diseases and conditions with advancing age.

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) remains the leading cause of blindness in people over 65. AMD is a progressive retinal disease, making activities like reading, driving, and recognizing faces difficult. There are two main forms of AMD, "dry" (more common, gradual vision loss), and "wet" (faster vision loss due to abnormal blood vessel growth). This visual impairment hinders everyday tasks like navigating, reading, and cooking.

Unfortunately, diagnosis of AMD has increased 25 percent over the last decade.

AMD can be slowed if diagnosed and treated early. Vision rehabilitation helps those with impairments maximize their remaining sight and maintain valued activities. Vision rehabilitation can include training on adaptive devices, daily living skills, and navigating around the home and in public.

To reduce the risk of macular de-

generation, you can:

- Stop smoking: Smoking can speed up the damage that leads to macular degeneration.
- Eat healthy foods: Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and fish. Leafy greens like kale and spinach are especially good for your eyes.
- Protect your eyes from the sun: Wear sunglasses that block 100 percent of ultraviolet rays and a significant amount of blue light.

• Exercise regularly: Physical activity can help lower the risk of macular degeneration.

• Maintain health checks: Controlling blood pressure and blood glucose, maintaining a healthy weight, and taking vitamin supplements can impact the risk of AMD. Consult your health care provider.

There is no guaranteed way to prevent macular degeneration, but healthy lifestyle choices can help delay its onset and reduce its severity. Getting regular eye exams is essential for detection.

*Editor's Note: Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare's physician specialty clinics offer outpatient medical care across a wide range of medical specialties. Physician specialists provide diagnosis, treatment, and care management for a variety of medical conditions including eye examinations and vision rehabilitation. For more information, call (909) 596-7733, ext. 3800.*

*Editor's Note: Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare's physician specialty clinics offer outpatient medical care across a wide range of medical specialties. Physician specialists provide diagnosis, treatment, and care management for a variety of medical conditions including eye examinations and vision rehabilitation. For more information, call (909) 596-7733, ext. 3800.*

## Short list... from pg. 6

to Cole for comment on all of this but she refused to respond to multiple e-mail and text requests, did not answer her cell phone, and her cell phone voice mail was full and could not accept new messages.

In an effort to give Cole every opportunity possible to respond, La Nueva Voz publisher Jeff Schenkel stopped by the Pomona City Council meeting on Feb. 3 and approached her before the opening of the meeting.

However, she refused to comment on the developments and, asked if she planned to provide a statement in the future, refused to answer.

Kyle Brown, who La Nueva Voz discovered was identified on the FPPC web site as the "complainant" in the 2024 action, was "cc'd" on both the "no action closure letter" and the "warning letter" to

Doug Alvey from the FPPC.

The FPPC's news media spokesperson in a series of e-mails had stopped short of identifying Brown as the complaining party. Published FPPC rules do not require the FPPC to disclose "sworn" complainants.

Brown identified himself to La Nueva Voz as Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval's campaign manager in e-mails unrelated to the FPPC action last year. Both Brown and Sandoval declined to respond to e-mails from La Nueva Voz requesting comment on the latest FPPC action and Sandoval provided a "no comment" response when La Nueva Voz reached out to him at an event this month in Chino.

In the original news release from the FPPC, Commission Chair Adam Silver said the annual information is released to demon-

strate the agency's "commitment to enforce California's ethics laws and ensure accountability at every level of government."

"By providing clear, accessible data, we're empowering the public to see exactly how the FPPC is working to safeguard integrity across the state," he added.

The mission of the FPPC is to promote the integrity of state and local government in California through fair, impartial interpretation and enforcement of political campaign, lobbying and conflict of interest laws, the news release said.

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## Services held for AMOCA founder David Armstrong

Funeral services were held this month for long-time Claremont resident and Pomona entrepreneur David Armstrong, owner and founder of Pomona's American Museum of Ceramic Art (AMOCA). He was 84.

Armstrong died last month.

A native of McPherson, Kansas, Armstrong and his family moved to the Pomona Valley when he was 4. His father opened a furniture business.

Armstrong, a member of the first graduation class at Upland High School, attended Pomona High School and went on to Pomona College, where he met his wife of 62 years, Julianne. The two married three years later.

He also enrolled in his first ceramics class at Pomona College.

After graduation, he was commissioned by the U.S. Army and served as a military police officer. He created some of his first artwork while at Sandia Base, New Mexico.

Following his military service,

Armstrong returned to Pomona to work for and eventually own his father's furniture business, which he would later convert into an art and ceramics gallery.

Interestingly, he also represented comedian Red Skelton for 23 years as his agent.

In the mid-1990s, Armstrong became president of the Pomona Central Business District, where he played a key role in the transformation of Downtown Pomona.

And in 2004, he founded AMOCA, originally in a small building on Garey Avenue. It moved to its current location, the historic Pomona First Federal Savings and Loan building, at 399 N. Garey Ave., Pomona, in 2011.

Members of his family remembered him as hard working, dedi-



David Armstrong

cated, compassionate and a visionary.

"He created more than a museum – he built a vibrant community that continues to inspire and educate," said AMOCA Executive Director Beth Ann Gerstein.

He is survived by his wife, Julie; his children and their spouses, Liz and Brad Cornell, David S. and Pam Armstrong, and Christy Armstrong and Rodney Rincon.

He is also survived by his sister, Mary, and her spouse, Michael Rini, five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Services were held at Pomona's Pilgrim Congregational Church.

AMOCA's mission is to champion the art, history, creation and technology of ceramics through exhibitions, collections, outreach and studio programming.

## Rain floods Pomona undercrossings

A combination of a power line failure and drains clogged with debris during the rain resulted in brief closures of all four railroad undercrossings in Pomona this month.

The heavy rain resulted first in the closure of Garey Avenue between Monterey Avenue and Second Street, all due to a Southern California Edison failure of a power line to three built-in pumps, according to Pomona police officials.

While the water level appeared to be only several inches deep, officials continue to remind the public that it takes very little to cause a problem so the road was closed as a precaution.

Chris Diggs, the city's water resources director, told La Nueva Voz the city used a temporary portable pump to clear the roadway in the Feb. 13 flooding – a morning problem that also resulted in more con-

gestion than usual during early morning rush hour on all four freeways through Pomona.

SCE reportedly took an initial look at the power line issue but determined it would not be a "quick fix," Diggs said, adding that SCE was unable to provide an estimated time for the repair.

The power line problem was not related to the storm but was discovered when city crews were preparing for the storm.

That night, according to another police "Nixle" e-mail

report at 9:29 p.m., all four undercrossings – Garey, Towne and East End Avenues and Reservoir Street, all at First Street – were closed briefly due to flooding, prompting officials to arrange detours lasting several hours.

Diggs said the second round of flooding was due to debris clogging the drains and preventing water from flowing into the pumps.

He said city crews had been working "around the clock" to open the streets.



**DOWNPOUR CLOSURES GAREY** -- A Southern California Edison power line problem forced the early-morning closing of Garey Avenue between Second Street and Monterey Avenue during the rains this month. And later the same night, all of the undercrossings were closed -- Garey, Towne, Reservoir and East End -- as Pomona Public Works crews worked through the night to clear brush out of the drains.

## Pomona bilingual educator wins statewide honor

The California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) has designated Pomona Unified School District educator Mireya Jimenez as its 2025 "Teacher of the Year," according to a school district news release.

Jimenez, a sixth-grade Spanish dual-language immersion program teacher at Westmont Elementary School, is credited with cultivating an equitable and synergistic learning environment throughout her extensive 30-year tenure at the school.

"I'm somewhere between having high expectations and being a little fun and silly with (students)," Jimenez said. "It's not just about the subject matter, it's about making that connection with them, letting them know somebody cares about them."

Jimenez studied in Chile before joining Pomona Unified as a teacher in 1994 while continuing her education at Pomona College and Claremont Graduate University.

"She is deeply connected to her students and helps them take risks," said Juan Ortiz, the school district's director of English learner and multilingual student programs. "She is . . . unafraid to push her school site and colleagues – that takes a level of courage and commitment."

Jimenez will receive her award and a check for \$1,000 at CABE's 50th anniversary conference next month in Long Beach. The non-profit CABE, based in Walnut, advocates initiatives enhancing multilingual learning statewide.

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Photos by Renee Barbee

**POMONA ROTARY SPEECH CONTEST WINNERS** -- Pomona Rotary members held a "four way" test speech competition at Pomona's Youth and Family Club last month. Theme of the contest was "The Magic of Rotary" promoting high ethical standards. Winners, all 12th graders, from left, are Valentina Sandoval, Pomona Catholic High School, first place; Masuma Fatema, Pomona's City of Knowledge (pre-K through 12th grade preparatory school), second place; and Carimel Valenzuela Ibarra, Pomona's International Polytechnic High School, third place. Sandoval now has the opportunity to continue to compete in "group" level, regional level and districtwide competition.



**POMONA ROTARY STUDENTS OF THE MONTH** -- Pomona Rotary honored nine students as "Students of the Month" last month in a presentation at Pomona's Youth and Family Club. Pictured, from left, is Rotary member Darren Knowles, Mayferly Ruiz of Village Academy High School, Raeanne Subaih of Pomona's School of Arts and Enterprise, Mustafa Hakim of Diamond Ranch High School, Isabel Diana Mendez of Pomona High School, Skyleen Espinoza of Pomona's Park West High School, Cristina Finch of Garey High School, Masuma Fatema of Pomona's City of Knowledge, Aylin Hernandez-Carlos of Fremont Academy of Engineering and Design, and Sophia Castillo of Pomona Catholic High School. At rear, from left, are Rotary members Lorraine Canales, Victor Caceres, President Josh Landis, and Dr. Roberta Perlman.

## Fourth annual 'Harriet Tubman' walk set for March 8

Pomona's African American Advisory Alliance will hold its fourth annual "Harriet Tubman Walk" next month to honor the legacy of abolitionist Harriet Tubman, whose "Underground Railroad" liberated more than 750 enslaved people at the time of the nation's Civil War.

The rally begins at 10 a.m. Saturday, March 8, at the Alliance Community Cultural Center, 406 W. 2nd St. in Downtown Pomona. The mile-long walk begins at 10:30 a.m. and ends at Pomona's Harriet Tubman statue at Lincoln Park, 400 Lincoln Ave., Pomona.

A "post-walk" celebration will be held back at the Alliance Community Cultural Center.

Shuttle service will be provided by Pomona Valley Transit Authority.

The event is held each year to celebrate the legacy of freedom, justice and community, according to a news release.

For more information, contact Shante Hall at (909) 761-4813 or e-mail Pomona4As@gmail.com.

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## Mental health funding... from pg. 13

explained to La Nueva Voz before the meeting that the housing element was a direction Tri City was taking even before Proposition 1 – providing housing and offering mental health services in those low-income housing developments.

Then how does it all break down? Tri City receives about \$18 million each year from the state under MHSA. Under BHSA, housing will account for 30 percent, "full service partnership" programs (intensive services performed "in the community" ranging from clinicians, psychiatry and rehabilitation specialists) 35 percent and behavioral health services and support (Tri City's Wellness Center and other services they provide now) another 35 percent.

As an example of the budget's

redistribution, housing expenses currently budgeted total \$1.7 million, but will be required to increase to \$5.4 million under the new plan, according to a PowerPoint presentation.

Full service partnership, currently budgeted at \$1.96 million, will increase to \$6.3 million, and behavioral health services will drop from \$10 million to only \$6.3 million under the new plan.

"The percentages have significantly shifted," Rodriguez said, adding that this is happening to programs in every county of the state. "Our goal right now . . . is trying to figure out how can we maintain and sustain what we're doing now and carry as much as possible to continue what we're doing and really enhance it."

She said Tri City Board members have narrowed a list of about

three dozen priorities down to six and were interested in hearing the public's view of their relative importance – from various approaches to providing housing with on-site mental health services to the creation of a Tri City "homeless outreach multi-disciplinary team" and even staffing recruitment to create a "pipeline" for new support personnel in a clinical training program complete with internship, residency and training.

Placide broke it all down by explaining that Tri City receives a variety of funds to provide services and support in the community. He said with Proposition 1, Tri City is trying to "reimagine those services" in addition to adding services on the housing and "full service partnership" side.

"We're not receiving any additional money – we're reallocating

the money that we do receive," Placide said, adding that the goal is to avoid having any existing programs disappear.

"We are trying to take those programs and have them funded under a bucket that now they can be eligible for," he said.

Ron Vera, Claremont's outgoing community representative to the Tri City Board, added to that by explaining Tri City now will be required to spend the money it is receiving in different ways, so the Board is trying to figure out how to spend that money in an effective manner.

And, he said, the Board is looking for input from the public. He added that members of the mental health commission also were helpful in providing input to the Board.

He urged members of the audi-

ence, if they believe the current planning is moving in the wrong direction, to let them know so they can "reformulate" what they are trying to do.

Interested in seeing more? The entire PowerPoint – including the six priorities or "concepts" – is available on the La Nueva Voz web site at [www.lanuevavoz.net](http://www.lanuevavoz.net) (click on "Tri-City MHSA Community Forum" on the home page).

Additional comments from the public will be encouraged once an actual plan is posted next month.

Tri City is the public mental health authority providing since 1960 outpatient services for residents of Pomona, Claremont and La Verne. It has a staff of more than 200 employees and an annual operating budget of about \$40 million.

## Pomona Chamber's 'Principal for a Day' meets PUSD's first-ever 5.0 GPA student at Fremont

There were so many stories at last week's Pomona Chamber of Commerce annual "Principal for a Day" program but perhaps topping the list was the news that Pomona's Fremont Academy of Engineering and Design's valedictorian in June will have achieved Pomona Unified School District's first-ever 5.0 Grade Point Average when she walks across the stage to receive her diploma.

Aylin Hernandez, who is already studying college level English at Fremont in a "dual enrollment" class where students receive college credit, told La Nueva Voz she hopes to enroll in USC in the fall and plans to work toward becoming an entertainment executive.

Principal Roger Fasting explained that "straight A's" in the core classes is a 4.0 GPA, although grades in honors classes, college weighted, college unweighted and others now are figured into the GPA calculation making a 5.0 possible –

not easy, of course, but possible.

Fasting also gave his students and staff credit for winning the district's attendance trophy.

"We have the highest participation for Saturday school of all the schools of Pomona Unified, even though we only have 600 students, and then we also have the highest attendance rate for the month of January compared to all the other high schools in Pomona," he said.

Saturday school, he explained, is no longer a "punitive" requirement but at Fremont is more of an invitation to learn and complete homework assignments.

Fasting said it also is a place where Fremont's 11th and 12th grade students make tutoring appointments with "newcomer program" students who are "brand new" to the country.

He said a typical Saturday attracts between 60 and 100 students.

But there's more – the school even offers an advanced graphics

design class that is available to local businesses and organizations to give the students some real world experience as they connect with the community.

P o m o n a C h a m b e r A m b a s s a d o r Jocelyn Ruiz, of Statewide Funding in Newport Beach, was Fremont's "Principal for

a Day," where chamber members have an opportunity to see first-hand what is happening in education today and, at the same time, where the school district has an opportunity to continue to make a connection with the business community.

"This is like an eye-opener for me," she told Fasting while touring the school.

About 150 participants from the chamber and the schools gathered for lunch at the Village at Indian Hill after visiting the schools to describe what they saw at the individual school sites.

Ruiz called Fasting a "visionary" and called Fremont an "amazing, amazing school" where the principal's leadership "extends throughout the entire organization."

"The way he manages the school, the school is clean, safe and fun," she added.

And on the work that graphics design class is doing, she said it is "on par with all the branding graphics companies out there."

Fasting told the group the class is part of the school's career technical education program.

"We have all the industry level software," he said.

"So if anybody wants to rebrand or you are starting a new business and you want to create some stickers, flyers, graphic designs, we'd be happy to help and partner with you and get our students connected with the business community," he added.

Across town at Pomona's Kingsley Elementary School, Lisha Lett representing Chamber member National Council of Negro Women, was "Principal for a Day" shadowing Jose Balvanera, the "real" principal there.

Lett was really on familiar turf learned how best to protect California's immigrant communities and their contributions to the state economy.

Only days earlier California Assembly Democrats voted to approve \$25 million in funding for legal assistance for Californians and immigrant communities, supporting pro bono legal services for especially vulnerable Californians including immigrant veterans, people with disabilities and unhoused youths.

Assemblywoman Celeste Rodriguez said they are standing "committed to safeguarding Cali-

– a grandmother of eight, she served as PTA president at Kingsley – and most of the other board offices, as well – when her children were attending school there years ago. And her grandson was in her class last week.

"I was very impressed with the landscaping where the school used to flood," she said, adding that new trees and shrubbery is now helping prevent flooding when it rains.

She added that students often stopped to shake hands with or "high five" the principal.

"As a parent, we make a difference when we are at the school," she said. "The kids just lit up."

And she said many of the kids were both observant and articulate.

"Those are the kind of kids that



Photo by Renee Barbee  
"Principal for a Day" Lisha Lett plays a little baritone uke with the students during her visit to Pomona's Kingsley Elementary School last week.

grow up to be people like the people that are in this room," she said. "I applaud the Chamber of Commerce."

"(And) I applaud you," she said, addressing Balvanera, "for taking care of Kingsley, our kids and our future, and you did a wonderful job."



Staff members at Fremont Academy show off the school's PUSD attendance trophy during Principal for a Day activities last week. Pictured, from left, are Fremont Principal Roger Fasting, "Principal for a Day" and Pomona Chamber of Commerce Ambassador Jocelyn Ruiz, Fremont's "Saturday School" program leader Tiffany Dennis, Jesse Altamirano, of PUSD's pupil and community services office, and Maria Heinrich, who heads up Fremont's attendance office.



Fremont Academy Principal Roger Fasting, at right, poses for the camera in front of the school with Aylin Hernandez, this year's valedictorian at Fremont and Pomona Unified School District's first-ever 5.0 GPA student.

## Speaker Rivas calls for fighting back against 'chaotic deportation agenda'

California Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas told Los Angeles-area community immigration leaders this month that California is "up against a chaotic deportation agenda" and "must work together to fight back."

He said actions by the White House and Republicans in Congress will "harm California's economy."

"This President's radical policy of fear threatens our immigrant workers, who pay billions in taxes each year and are the backbone of so many industries," Rivas said, adding that it also "jeopardizes

our immigrant children, students and families."

"Here in Los Angeles, I stand with the groups and leaders on the front lines, and we will defend our immigrant communities and their incredible contributions to California," he said.

Rivas and Assemblywoman Celeste Rodriguez co-hosted a community discussion meeting in Pacoima with representatives of more than two dozen business and labor groups, immigrant advocacy nonprofits and other organizations serving the region where they both listened and

fornia's immigrant families from the Trump administration's executive orders that are aggressively targeting our community."

"We must continue to diligently seek solutions to make it safe for immigrant families to work, go to school and seek assistance," she said. "California will only be successful in this fight if we partner with community-based organizations."

A spokesperson for Rivas said that California immigrants pay nearly \$130 billion annually in state and federal taxes; 88 percent of farmworkers in California, or

880,000 people, are immigrants and about half are undocumented; immigrants hold one-third of all tourism and hospitality jobs in California; and, at a time that an increase in affordable housing is essential, immigrants make up 41 percent of the construction workforce.

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## Half million dollar upgrade at MLK Park complete

City officials held a grand opening and ribbon cutting last month for a nearly half million dollar new playground area at Pomona's Martin Luther King Jr. Park that Mayor Tim Sandoval called "part of a larger effort to activate our parks."

The \$454,598 upgrade of a 6,300 square foot space replaced previous playground equipment at MLK Park with everything from swings and a bridge to rubberized safety surfaces on the ground.

"As a father of a four-year-old, I know how important it is for our children to have safe places to play, and that includes the equipment where they're playing," Sandoval said. "It's important they have a chance to do what people call free play, to be able to connect with other children, it's all part of their socialization process."

He added that "the other piece

"We took that framework and we brought it here – we said we need community members' input, we need surveys, we need conversations with staff," Preciado said, adding that the input from neighbors across the street "was critical and very much important."

He said there's still a new mural in the works that the planning department and members of the Cultural Arts Commission are involved in, an aging gazebo will be removed, the skate park will be expanded with new ramps, new restrooms will be added near the new playground equipment, and plans call for a new lighting project to make the park accessible throughout the day and evening.

Danny Whaley, the city's parks and facilities manager, said planning, funding and three months of construction of the project took a total of about 18 months and is one

of five efforts under way using Los Angeles County Measure A funding for playgrounds provided in an annual allocation by the Los Angeles County Regional Parks



The real "stars of the show" at last month's ribbon cutting for new playground equipment at Martin Luther King, Jr., Park were the kids who were already busy figuring out how best to play on what is now an extension of their own backyard.

and Open Space District.

Contractor on the project was Miracle Recreation.

A city spokesperson said Measure A was approved by voters in 2016 authorizing dedicated local funding for new park, recreation and open space projects and their maintenance through an annual special tax of 1.5 cents per square foot of building floor area on all taxable real property in the county.

He said the other Measure A-funded parks still in the works are Jaycee Park, Ted Greene Park, Washington Park and the Country

Crossing Park in Phillips Ranch. All are expected to be completed by the end of March.

Whaley said MLK Park is an "all abilities park."

"All of the new (parks) will have ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), special needs, everything has something here," he said. "That's why it is designed the way it is."

He pointed out that Hamilton Park and work nearly completed at Pomona's Ralph Welch Park were not part of the Measure A effort.

Whaley said the city has 29 parks altogether.

Martin Luther King Jr. Park is located at West Lexington Avenue and South White Avenue.

The Ralph Welch Park playground upgrade, which was expected to be completed this month, is a 4,500 square foot project with playground equipment with a \$35,126 price tag and \$177,300 for its professional installation.

The modern American Ninja Warrior-style obstacle course playground is the first of its kind in Pomona.



Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval, at right, and City Councilmember Victor Preciado "tag team" their comments to neighbors and other residents at a ribbon cutting for upgrades at Martin Luther King, Jr., Park.

of it is the family . . . not everybody has the privilege of having a yard."

"In fact, many of our kids sometimes when they live in apartment complexes the yards are just concrete," Sandoval said. "And so they need places to go and to express themselves and so this is really a testament to the effort on the part of the City of Pomona to continuously provide excellent play areas for our children."

Pomona City Councilmember Victor Preciado thanked the staff for their work on the park.

"It takes a whole team, team effort," he said, adding that staff and residents looked at the community effort resulting in the re-opening of Hamilton Park just over a year ago.



Pomona city officials and neighbors cut the ribbon last month for a nearly half million dollar upgrade to playground equipment at Pomona's Martin Luther King, Jr., Park at White and Lexington Avenues.