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Pomona Chamber of Commerce



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Thursday, March 27, 2025

State Senate Education Committee Chair calls dismantling of U.S. Department of Education unconstitutional, pledges to protect students

By Jeff Schenkel
Publisher, La Nueva Voz

The chair of California's State Senate Education Committee, speaking last week at an event in Rowland Heights the day after President Trump signed an executive order dismantling the U.S. Department of Education, called Trump's action "unconstitutional," "completely against the law" and said she will do "whatever we have to do to protect our students."

State Sen. Sasha Renee Perez (D - Pasadena), keynote speaker at a "Bridging the Gap Between Education and Em-

ployment" panel discussion at Rowland High School in Rowland Heights, told the group of nearly 100 educators, chamber of commerce members and elected officials that it takes an act of Congress to eliminate the Department of Education.

"That does not happen, you cannot do that with an executive order," she said.

And for school districts with diversity and equity programs concerned that they will be targeted by the federal administration, the former mayor of Alhambra added that California Attorney General Rob Bonta already has partnered with 19 oth-



State Sen. Sasha Renee Perez

er states to sue the federal administration for what they are doing.

And she said she is "very confident" a judge will rule in their favor.

"We will win that lawsuit," she said.

"California receives \$7.5 to \$8 billion in federal education funds," Perez said. "This money supports Title 1 (addressing the educational needs of students in schools with high

concentrations of low-income students), programs, it supports special education programs, it supports financial aid for our students to ensure they can access higher education, and this is going to be something that we're going to be needing to navigate at the state level."

"We're getting ready to do whatever we can, and I want you all to know that I am committed to doing whatever we have to do to protect our students," she said.

"And whether that be looking at the budget process, whether that be introducing policies, protecting our students, particularly our low-income students who desperately need resources, our special education students, ensuring that students still have resources in order to attend colleges and universities is top of mind for me," she said.

Perez said advisors of the Trump administration "have suggested allowing states to not fund special education programs, to not fund the needs of low-income students."

"And that is simply unacceptable," she said. "This is going to cause some challenges for us here on the budget end of the state because of the amount of money we depend on from the federal government."

"It is on each and every one of us to hold the line for our parents and for our students who are scared and uncertain about what will happen next," Perez said, adding that "just because they feel that there is discrimination does not mean that there is discrimination."

"These folks still have to prove in a court of law that these things happened, and our job is to continue to stand on the right side of history to protect

Arraignment set for suspect arrested in shooting death of Greg Estel

A 56-year-old Covina man is scheduled to appear in Pomona Superior Court next month for an arraignment and plea on charges alleging he shot and killed Greg Estel in December in front of Estel's home in Pomona.

Julious Ray Whiten was arrested by Pomona police officers on Thursday, March 6 during an 11:15 a.m. traffic stop while driving his personal vehicle in Pomona, according to Detective Sgt. Rick Aguiar. He said Whiten was alone in his car at the time. Additional officers and investigators



Greg Estel

were called to the scene and the suspect was taken into custody without incident.

He was booked at the Pomona Police Department jail. On Monday, March 10, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office filed felony charges against Whiten alleging homicide and being a felon in possession of a firearm, in this case allegedly a handgun, during the commission of a crime. In addition, a special allegation charged him with personal and intentional discharge of a firearm

Suspect arrested... pg. 6

Pledge to protect students... pg. 2



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Pledge to protect students... from pg. 1

our students, to protect parents, to protect low-income families who are depending on all of us to fight for them," she said.

"But I want you all to know that I will continue to be a partner with you, that we have to continue to hold the line here in California, that defending diversity, equity and inclusion is not just right . . . but it is good policy that is based on years of research," Perez said.

"Let's continue to do that good work, let's continue to deliver for our families and our students," she said, "because they are depending on us during these incredibly trying and difficult times."

Perez, an Alhambra native who was elected to the state senate last November, told the group she is "eager to work alongside you to strengthen and protect California's public schools."

"Education has always been deeply personal to me," she said, adding that she was the first in her family to earn a college degree.

"I ran for office because I believe that every student deserves

the opportunity to reach their full potential," she said. "California has made great strides in increasing education funding but there is still work to do to ensure that every school has the resources it needs."

"Our children are facing unprecedented challenges – from academic pressures to mental health struggles exacerbated by the pandemic and fear of immigration raids," she said. "I am committed to expanding access to school counselors, mental health professionals . . . to ensure that every child has the resources they need to succeed."

"We need to treat student mental health with the same urgency as academic achievement," she added. "It is foundational to learning. Every child regardless of their zip code deserves access to high quality education."

"I am committed to closing achievement gaps by ensuring our most under-resourced schools receive the funding and support that they need," Perez said. "We must provide more opportunities for high quality education such as career path-



POMONA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT RECOGNIZED AT REGIONAL CHAMBER EVENT -- Schools from Bassett, Hacienda La Puente, Pomona, Rowland and Walnut Valley Unified School Districts were honored for their academic achievement and preparing students with skills to succeed in the workforce last week at a San Gabriel Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce "Bridging the Gap between Education and Employment" event in Rowland Heights. Pomona Unified Supt. Darren Knowles participated in the panel discussion. Pictured, from left, are State Sen. Bob Archuleta, who presented the awards; Knowles; and Pomona Unified principals Ashley Hedrick, Ranch Hills Elementary School; Lacey Lemus, Pantera Elementary School; Dr. Camille Ramos-Beal, Village Academy High School; and Dr. Maria Franco-Madrigal, Cortez Math and Science Magnet School.

ways and dual enrollment programs to ensure that students from all backgrounds have a chance to succeed."

And on declining "ADA" (average daily attendance) state funding in the schools due to at-

tendance drops as families keep students home fearing immigration raids, she said Senate Bill 98, which she introduced, would require school districts to inform parents, students, teachers and staff if ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) is present on campus.

The measure is known as the "Sending Alerts to Families in Education (SAFE) Act" and was introduced after action by Trump rescinded policies making schools safe spaces from immigration raids.

Perez also said her district includes the area impacted by the recent Eaton Fire where Pasadena Unified School District and others currently are "navigating the fire recovery process."

"We've been able to ensure that they will be held harmless for any ADA loss for up to a year," she said, adding that Gov. Newsom has agreed to ensure the state will continue to "re-visit" their ADA every year for the next five years, allowing the state to assist in their recovery.

She said the state also has expedited the process of rebuilding physical school campuses that were lost in the fire.

The event was produced by the San Gabriel Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce, Rowland Unified School District and Educational Results Partnership.

Perez commended the group

for recognizing the value of collaborations between government, business and community organizations.

"The San Gabriel Valley (Regional) Chamber is a key player in driving economic partnerships, providing an opportunity to strengthen that partnership by focusing on education and work force development," she said.

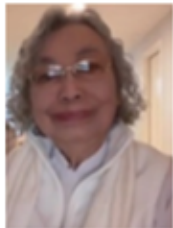
"Education is critical for sustaining the thriving industries in the San Gabriel Valley including education, healthcare, manufacturing, tourism and technology," she said.

Participants in a panel discussion at the event included State Sen. Bob Archuleta, Mt. San Antonio College President and CEO Dr. Martha Garcia, Suburban Water Systems President Craig Gott and Pomona Unified School District Supt. Darren Knowles.

A total of 15 schools from Bassett, Hacienda La Puente, Pomona, Rowland and Walnut Valley Unified School Districts received honors at the event for being added to the "Educational Results Partnership Honor Roll" for outstanding achievements and dedication to educational excellence and student success, helping close academic achievement and equity gaps, and preparing students with skills to succeed in the workforce.

Pledge to protect students... pg. 17

Sunday, March 30 Unity of Pomona Valley Presents



Dr. Rose Hong Bui

Author & World Teacher of the Cai Dai Faith

12:30 pm at Unity of Pomona Valley's Sunday Service

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Service and Meditation will be in the Chapel in the Middle Building.

2025 SERVICE AWARDS

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Photos by Renee Barbee
NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT AT POMONA'S JAYCEE PARK -- Pomona City Councilmembers, from left, Steve Lustro, Lorraine Canales, Elizabeth Ontiveros-Cole and Victor Preciado cut the ribbon last month to officially open new "all abilities" playground equipment at Pomona's Jaycee Park. The \$350,000 project was part of upgrades at a total of five parks using Los Angeles County Measure A funding for playgrounds through an annual allocation by the Los Angeles County Regional Parks and Open Space District. Measure A was approved by voters in 2016. Jaycee Park is located at 2000 N. San Antonio Ave., Pomona.

Pomona City Councilmember Steve Lustro performs a quick personal inspection of some of the new playground equipment at Pomona's Jaycee Park, one of the 29 parks in Pomona.



State Sen. Susan Rubio condemns cuts to U.S. Department of Education

Former classroom teacher State Sen. Susan Rubio, responding to sweeping cuts to the U.S. Department of Education, this month issued a sharp rebuke, warning that the reductions undermine critical support for students, families and educators.

"As a lifelong educator and advocate for California's students, I am deeply alarmed by the Trump administration's decision to eliminate over 1,300 positions, nearly half of the Department of Education's workforce, as a step toward dismantling the agency entirely," Rubio said in a news release.

"This reckless move threatens the very foundation of our educational system and jeopardizes essential services that support our students, families, and educators," she added. "The department plays a critical role in administering federal student loans, enforcing civil rights laws, and ensuring access to essential edu-

cation resources."

"Slashing education funding and gutting the agency meant to support our schools isn't just irresponsible – it's a direct attack on students, families, and the future of our country," Rubio said. "These cuts won't make education better – they will make it harder for families to afford college, harder for schools to meet students' unique needs, and harder for kids to succeed."

She said education should be a "path to opportunity, not a political punching bag."

Rubio called it a case of Washington turning its back on children and vowed to "keep fighting for our students, teachers and futures."

"Strong schools build strong communities and we're not backing down," she said.

Rubio spent 20 years as a classroom teacher before being elected to the State Senate in 2018.

BINGO

Let's Go to Bingo!!

Saturday, May 17, 2025

Join us for family Bingo night at Pilgrim Congregational Church on Saturday, May 17, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. at the church located at 600 N Garey Ave, Pomona, CA 91767. Admission is \$35 for adults and \$15 for children 12 and under. This event includes a Spaghetti dinner, salad, bread, drinks, & dessert, 20 bingo cards, the chance to win non-cash prizes, and a 50/50 drawing and raffle prizes. Additional cards can be purchased for \$2 each. A special kid's corner will be held in Pilgrim Hall with dinner and activities for children 12 and under.

Tickets are on sale now and can be purchased at the church. RSVP to the church office at 909-622-1373 as space is limited.

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Pomona Unified School District health career program wins Golden Bell Award

A Pomona Unified School District partnership with Pomona's Western University of Health Sciences was one of 70 programs statewide recognized by the California School Boards Association with a prestigious Golden Bell Award.

The program, a "Pomona Health Career Ladder," built a health sciences multi-tiered career pathway for grades pre-K through 12 in order to meet the on-going employment demands in the health care industry.

According to the CSBA program summary, what began as one sixth-grade class of 30 students now has become a sophisticated enterprise serving more than 400 participants, expanding beyond the City of Pomona, and resulting in multiple alumni becoming optometrists and nurses.

Part of the award criteria was based on family and community engagement – successful program candidates included programs that encourage or facilitate family involvement in their child's education, including innovative approaches to culturally competent outreach and ef-

fective involvement of families from diverse communities.

Award candidates also could include programs in which local educational agencies incorporate broader community engagement efforts such as community partnerships.

The Golden Bell Award, California's leading educational honor, is celebrating its 45th year. The latest round of awards was announced in December in Anaheim at CSBA's annual education conference and trade show.

"CSBA is proud to recognize innovative programs from local educational agencies around the state that make a difference in the lives of students," said CSBA CEO and Executive Director Vernon Billy. "The 2024 Golden Bell winners exemplify the creativity and performance our school districts and county offices of education can produce when given the flexibility to respond to local conditions and the needs of their unique student populations."

Programs submitted were required to be data-driven, have made a difference for students in



POMONA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT WINS 'GOLDEN BELL' AWARD FOR HEALTH CAREERS PROGRAM -- A Pomona Unified School District partnership with Pomona's Western University of Health Sciences resulted in another Golden Bell award for the local school district. The program, "Pomona Health Career Ladder," helps students working in conjunction with medical students from Western University get off on the right foot in their training for jobs in the health care industry such as optometrists and nurses. Pictured are middle school students wearing their professional medical white coats in a computer classroom working with student doctors at Western University.

their community, be innovative or exemplary, have concepts that can be replicated, be sustainable over time and be connected to the governance board's vision.

A record 256 programs were submitted for judging in 2024. An extensive judging process was completed by a 61-member judging panel.

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Photos by Renee Barbee
'HEALED WOMEN HEAL' PANELISTS AT WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT LUNCHEON
 -- Eva Thiel-Maiz presents certificates from Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Pro Tem Hilda Solis. The event at the Fuego by Metro Event Center in Downtown Pomona was on the theme "Empowering women and survivors of violence through male allyship and advocacy." Pictured, from left, are Frank Carrillo, owner of Pomona's On Time Photo Booth Rentals, Eva Thiel-Maiz, Athens Services Director of Government Affairs Brandon Stansell, and Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval. Carrillo uses his art skills to provide art therapy to Pomona's youth, and Sandoval has been a long-time supporter of Healed Women Heal's efforts to heal, empower and reduce violence.

Healed Women Heal founder Tracy Evanson Norwood speaks to the group this month at her "Women's Empowerment Luncheon" in Downtown Pomona. The event was designed to empower women through male allyship and advocacy. Proceeds from the event will go toward the group's women and youth programs and workshops.



GRAND RE-OPENING AT FIST OF GOLD -- Members of the Pomona Chamber of Commerce and city officials this month joined in helping Pomona's Fist of Gold Youth Center with an official ribbon cutting celebrating both their relocation to a new headquarters they have recently remodeled and their becoming members of the Pomona Chamber of Commerce. Fist of Gold has been serving Pomona for the past 30 years with founder and board president Jorge Castaneda at the helm until two years ago when he handed the top office off to Jason Patterson as executive director. Patterson, a middle school principal in San Bernardino, formerly boxed as a semi-professional and a member of the U.S. Army boxing team. From left are Chamber Board member Victor Caceres of Pomona's Youth and Family Club, Executive Board members Renee Barbee of La Nueva Voz and Jeff Johannsen of Pomona Hope, Chamber Ambassador Tracy Evanson Norwood, founder of Healed Women Heal, Fist of Gold Board members Dianna Gutierrez (a Fist of Gold Alumni and former 2005 national champion former Junior Olympic gold medalist) and Mari Castaneda, Lisa and Jorge Castaneda, Jason Patterson, Pomona City Councilmembers Victor Preciado and Lorraine Canales, Chamber Ambassadors Essence Guss of Healed Women Heal and Frank Carrillo of On Time Photo Booth Rentals, Chamber Board member Daniel Thomas of Forest Lawn, and Chamber President and CEO Monique Robles. Fist of Gold, which helps at-risk and underprivileged kids build self-esteem through fitness, boxing and community programs, is located at 400 N. Gibbs St. in Pomona.

Suspect arrested... from pg. 1

with great bodily injury which automatically imposes a 25-year-to-life prison sentence enhancement. He was being held in Los Angeles County men's central jail in Los Angeles without bail, according to court records.

Aguiar explained Whiten was on parole at the time of the alleged incident and bail is automatically denied because of allegations of violation of conditions of parole.

He added that Whiten has an "extensive criminal history" going back to the early 1990s and has previous "violent felonies" and resulting prison sentences on his record.

Whiten's initial arraignment and plea proceedings were held on March 10, but were bumped over to 8:30 a.m. April 10 in Department N of Pomona Superior Court. He is being represented by the Los Angeles County Public Defender's office.

The arrest came following an extensive investigation by the Pomona Police Department's Major Crimes Unit, working with a variety of law enforcement agencies including parole officers, leading to the arrest when he was spotted driving the vehicle they were looking for. Pomona Police Detectives David Estrada and Michael Rodriguez were lead investigators in the case, according to Aguiar.

"The two detectives worked long and hard hours (following every single lead," Aguiar said, adding that they performed a "phenomenal job in this investigation."

"This was a very difficult investigation (with) a lot of pieces of the puzzle to put together, but detectives developed evidence and leads and led to the arrest," Aguiar said, adding that there was a lot of "good evidence" in the case.

While police declined to discuss possible motive in the case, a confidential source close to the investigation told La Nueva Voz Whiten was believed to be the boyfriend of a tenant living in a rental house Estel owned immediately behind his own residence.

Estel and Whiten allegedly had engaged in an argument prior to the shooting, according to the source.

"I am just so grateful to the Pomona Police Department," Estel's wife Laura Estel told La Nueva Voz after learning of the arrest. "I've been living in fear for almost three months. Pomona Police Department has been so amazing."

Aguiar declined to comment on whether Whiten had returned to the area since the shooting.

Estel, 65, a long-time Pomona resident, owner of Greg's Refrigeration, and community activist, was discovered at 7:13 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 15, when Pomona police responded to a shots fired call in the 600 block of Lincoln Avenue in Pomona.

Los Angeles County Fire Department responders found Estel inside his vehicle near his home suffering from multiple gunshot wounds. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Suspect arrested... pg. 11

La Nueva Voz

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'Legacy Garden' at Lopez Urban Farm dedicated to Ignacio Lopez

Elected officials, supporters and friends of Pomona's Lopez Urban Farm joined with members of the farm team last week for a ribbon-cutting officially opening a "Legacy Garden" on the farm – complete with plaque – dedicating the garden to the honor of the late Ignacio Lopez for whom the farm is named.

Farmer Stephen Yorba, who created the non-profit organization running the farm, told guests the multi-purpose facility is now at the four and a half year mark at 1034 W. Mission Blvd. near White Avenue just behind Lopez Elementary School which also was named in honor of Lopez, an early advocate for all ethnic groups in the community.

"We'd like to say that this farm is . . . community," Yorba told the group, adding that "participatory activism" is where the community comes together.

Lopez, a "hometown hero," was publisher of *El Espectador*, Pomona's community newspaper, a Spanish language newspaper that sold for five cents and published from 1933 to 1960.

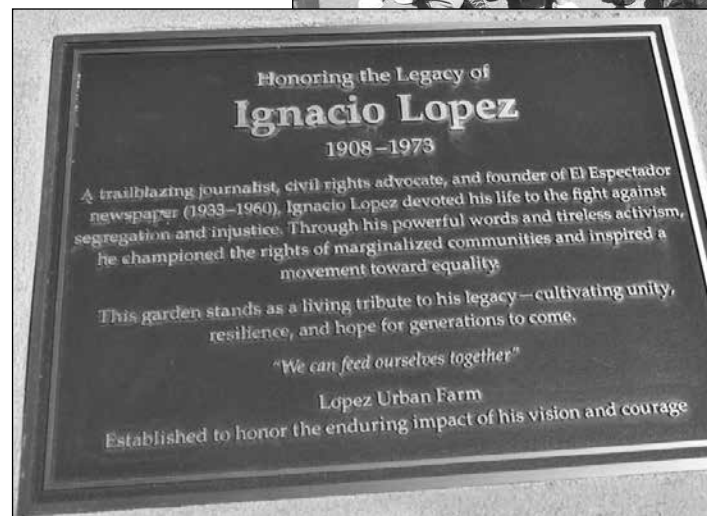
He was known for his civil

rights activism, his contributions to justice and his founding of the newspaper which was replaced by the old *La Voz*, which published from 1981 to 2009, when *La Nueva Voz* was formed.

The old *La Voz* was founded by Candelario Mendoza and Al



CUTTING THE RIBBON -- Officially dedicating the "Legacy Garden" at Lopez Urban Farm to the legacy of Pomona "hometown hero" Ignacio Lopez are, at left, Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval, City Councilmember Victor Preciado, and Pomona historian Jose Calderon. At center, from left, are Pomona Unified School District Board members Arturo Jimenez and Dr. Roberta Perlman, Farmer Stephen Yorba of Lopez Urban Farm, and Pomona Unified School Supt. Darren Knowles.



Pictured, at left, is the plaque that was dedicated last week honoring the legacy of Ignacio Lopez. At right are copies of *El Espectador*, the newspaper Lopez published.



Mayors, police chiefs support Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez' AB 63 to reinstate anti-loitering law as approach to curbing prostitution

A measure recently introduced by Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez to aid law enforcement in protecting victims of human trafficking and making it illegal to loiter with the intent to commit prostitution has received the support of public safety officials and two California mayors.

New amendments to Assembly Bill 63 reinstate a prohibition of loitering in a public place with the intent to commit prostitution.

"Assembly Bill 63 ensures we strengthen enforcement against human trafficking and allows us to give victims a voice," Rodriguez said in a news release. "While California recently decriminalized loitering, an unintended consequence of this legislation has emboldened traffickers who prey on vulnerable victims."

"Human trafficking is a horrific crime, and I am committed to ensuring California's law enforcement agencies have the necessary tools to protect and serve all Californians," she added.

Castro. Pomona historian Jose Calderon told the group last week that Mendoza was a regu-

lar contributing writer for *El Espectador* before forming his own newspaper years later.

San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria said San Diego has seen "a sharp increase in prostitution and human trafficking since the passage of Senate Bill 357, harming neighborhoods and local businesses where loitering is concentrated."

"AB 63 is a common-sense measure to restore law enforcement's ability to stop illegal activity while also helping victims escape exploitation," he said.

"A few years ago, California decriminalized loitering for prostitution," said Fresno Mayor Jerry Dyer, a former police chief. "While well meaning, this law unfortunately helped both prostitution and human trafficking flourish."

"AB 63 is a step towards righting this wrong by turning back that key part of the law and once again giving law enforcement a valuable tool to help deal with the human trafficking scourge," he added.

And Jason Salazar, President

of the California Police Chiefs Association and police chief in Visalia, said law enforcement has no desire to criminalize victims.

"But the reality is we have been experiencing significant challenges in intervening to stop these open-air prostitution markets that attract crime and put more people in jeopardy," he said. "AB 63 gives law enforcement the tools we need to address the public safety risks, while prioritizing fair policing and services for those in need."

AB 63, as amended, would reinstate existing law which, until Jan. 1, 2023, prohibited loitering in a public place with the intent to commit prostitution. The amendments would once again make that crime a misdemeanor.

The amendments would prohibit law enforcement from making an arrest solely based on the individual's gender identity or sexual preference.

The measure next goes to the Assembly Public Safety Committee.

Pomona Unified School District Board member Arturo Jimenez told the group the dedication ceremony was "not just to dedicate a garden but to honor a man whose courage in the courtroom changed the course of history – Ignacio Lopez was more than a journalist, he was a warrior for justice."

As an example, Jimenez explained he was instrumental in helping end segregation in Pomona public parks.

Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval linked the work of Lopez to today's news stories out of the White House.

"It's easy to forget why we have the freedoms that we do," he said, adding that it was "literally fought for."

He said while "you'd like to think" the country in 2025 is beyond a point in history that was rooted in division and hatred, "that's not where we're at at the moment."

Sandoval said spaces like Lopez Urban Farm can help bring people together to create new leadership, particularly from younger members of the community.

Calderon told the group

Lopez was born in Mexico on March 19, 1908, came to Pomona with his family, and his father founded the Mexican Congregational Church here.

He credited Lopez with being someone who "took on the power structure at a time when segregated schools, swimming schools and theaters were the norm."

And he applauded Yorba and others working on the farm because they are working "in the interests of our quality of life in the interests of our communities."

"In many ways, who Ignacio Lopez was is very much alive in all that you do," he said, adding that Lopez attended schools here including Pomona College and later graduated from UC Berkeley before returning to Pomona in 1933 "and began to use his knowledge, his skills and abilities in the interests of our communities."

He said Lopez died on July 4, 1973, after suffering a heart attack while visiting Pomona when he served in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Lopez is buried at Pomona Cemetery.

New date set for Optimist Club's 'Tea for the Soul' event

Pomona Optimist Club's annual "Tea for the Soul" event honoring young ladies graduating from high school and heading on to college, originally scheduled for March 27, will be held at 10 a.m. Thursday, April 10, at the Pomona Ebell Museum of History.

Participants have written essays and winners of the competition will receive scholarships.

Ladies will be given pearl jewelry and a decorated spring hat to give the event a traditional tea party atmosphere, and servers – all men – will include officials from Pomona Unified School District, Los Angeles County Fire Department, and members of volunteer clubs in Pomona.

Female mentors will sit at each table to speak with the young women about their journey to becoming strong, independent women, according to a news release.

Donations requested are \$40 for individual tickets or \$280 for a table of eight, with checks payable to Optimist International Founda-

tion and "Club #15140 Youth Account" on the memo line.

Checks can be mailed to Optimist Club of Pomona, P.O. Box 24, Pomona, CA 91769.

For more information, contact President Lorraine Canales at pomonaoptimistclub@gmail.com or call (213) 509-4980.



Participants wearing official spring hats are pictured enjoying last year's Pomona Optimist Club's "Tea for the Soul" at the Ebell Club in Pomona.

Chino Valley, Montclair Hospital CEO makes industry list of 'leading women'

Gail Aviado, CEO of Prime Healthcare's Chino Valley Medical Center and Montclair Hospital Medical Center, was recognized this month by Modern Healthcare magazine as one of its "Leading Women for 2025."

Profiles of all the honorees were featured in the March 10 issue of the publication, considered one of the most trusted business news sources in the healthcare industry, according to a hospital news release.

The recognition program acknowledges and honors women executives from all sectors of the healthcare industry for their contributions to care delivery improvement,



Gail Aviado

health equity, policy, and gender equity in healthcare leadership.

"The roles held by the honorees on our 2025 list of 'Leading Women and Rising Stars' vary greatly but they all have one thing in common – a commitment to helping their organizations reach the clinical, operational and financial goals," said Mary Ellen Podmolik, editor-in-chief of the publication.

She said, "their leadership and achievements are propelling the industry forward, both in terms

of improving the patient experience and serving as mentors for other women in healthcare."

Aviado joined Prime Healthcare in 2005 as a charge nurse and rose through the ranks to become chief nursing officer, according to the release. Today, she holds the dual role of CEO of both the Chino Valley and Montclair hospitals.

She views healthcare as a lifeline of hope, compassion and quality care, the release continued, adding that her goal is to ensure more people in the Inland Empire experience longer and healthier lives.

And she has transformed hospital culture to empower all who work for her by promoting equality and justice within her healthcare systems, according to a hospital spokesperson.

Chino Valley Medical Center, a 112-bed community hospital, was established in 1972 and Montclair Hospital Medical Center, a 106-bed acute care hospital, was founded by a group of community physicians in 1973.

Uncomfortable in Pomona and Pomona Valley

By Richard Bunce, Member
Compassionate Pomona

Discomfort is a prime motivator for Compassionate Pomona, a group dedicated to instilling compassion in the workings of the city and the larger Pomona Valley region. In the words of a leading founder of the global compassion movement, Karen Armstrong, "A compassionate city is an uncomfortable city! A city that is uncomfortable when anyone is homeless or hungry. Uncomfortable if every child isn't loved and given rich opportunities to grow and thrive. Uncomfortable when as a city we can't treat our neighbors as we would wish to be treated."

The Rev. Jan Chase, minister of the local Unity Church and Compassionate Pomona convener, states the group's mission as "building an awareness of compassion and belonging through collaborative actions." She adds that "this mission is given urgency by the divisiveness of our times and the fact that the best chance for positive change is at the local level."

Rev. Chase has brought together a wide range of community people who are engaged in human services such as school personnel, city employees, mental health specialists, faith leaders, and an assortment of engaged residents. They gather twice a month to report, plan, and sustain projects that align with the guiding principle of compassion.

Before declaring Pomona a Compassionate City, Mayor Tim

Sandoval asked that the superintendent of schools and Pomona Unified School District board would also commit to the values of being a Compassionate City. After many meetings, Pomona's City Council voted unanimously in 2018 to officially declare itself a Compassionate City. This entailed signing on to the International Charter for Compassion, along with over 400 cities around the world. Several of Pomona's neighboring cities have since taken like action or are actively considering this.

Active is the operative word for Compassionate Pomona. Here's a partial list of accomplishments: summer enrichment programs for school children, two major conferences, a grant-funded program called "Character Champions" for promoting compassion among children, leadership training, plus initiating training in restorative practices for our police, mental health, and school district officials. The group also has initiated training for a skill called Sky Breathing, which is a relaxation technique for first responders. Add to this annual "kindness carnivals," compassion art projects, communitywide "random acts of kindness" programs, police-community dialogues, and more.

Visit the website (include Compassionate Pomona in your browser) or send an e-mail to Jan Chase (janhoshin@aol.com) if you'd like more information or to become involved. All are welcome to help promote compassion in our very conflicted world!

Assemblymember Blanca Rubio introduces landmark early literacy bill

Assemblymember Blanco Rubio (D-West Covina) last month introduced Assembly Bill 1121, a new early literacy bill, that is expected to create more equitable academic outcomes by bringing evidence-based reading instruction to every elementary school classroom in California.

The measure was co-sponsored by EdVoice, a non-profit education advocacy organization driving state policy change to transform California's public education system to prepare all children for opportunities in college, career and life.

According to an EdVoice news

release, reading is a civil right.

"But California's early childhood literacy gaps are some of the largest by race and income in the nation," the release said. "The problem is not that our children can't learn, but that many are not being provided with effective reading instruction and materials."

Other co-sponsors of the legislation were the organizations Decoding Dyslexia CA and Families in Schools.

The release said the legislation, once enacted, will ensure that all elementary students in

Literacy bill... pg. 18

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Photos by Renee Barbee
OPENING DAY AT TED GREENE LITTLE LEAGUE -- Some of the team members at Pomona's Ted Greene Little League, waiting for Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval to throw out the first pitch, take a moment to enjoy the opening day ceremonies for their first baseball game of the season at Pomona's Ted Greene Park.



A member of Ted Greene Little League tries out the new playground equipment at the ribbon cutting at Pomona's Ted Greene Park and, while he's at it, uses the opportunity to get warmed up for the big game on the league's opening day.

He wasn't actually throwing out the first pitch, but Pomona City Councilmember Victor Preciado seemed to be getting the hang of things with an oversized inflatable baseball at opening day ceremonies this month for Ted Greene Little League in Pomona's Ted Greene Park.

RIBBON CUTTING AT TED GREENE PARK -- Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval (at front right) and City Councilmember Victor Preciado (at rear) had a few helpers this month at an official city ribbon cutting ceremony to open new playground equipment provided by the city at Pomona's Ted Greene Park. The event was on opening day of Ted Greene Little League baseball season. Cost of the upgrade of the park's playground equipment was \$334,500, part of the city's parks upgrade program using Los Angeles County Measure A funding for playgrounds through an annual allocation by the Los Angeles County Regional Parks and Open Space District. The park is located at 2105 N. Orange Grove Ave., Pomona.

Pantera Elementary receives 2025 CABE Seal of Excellence award

Pomona Unified School District's Pantera Elementary School in Diamond Bar has been awarded the California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) 2025 Seal of Excellence honor, recognizing the school's persistent dedication in advancing "Dual Language Immersion" initiatives, including bilingualism, biliteracy, cultural appreciation and academic excellence.

Pantera Principal Dr. Lacey Lemus emphasized that the achievement is not just a reflection of academic proficiency but also a testament to the cooperation and assistance of its teachers, students and families.

"Receiving the School of Excellence Award from CABE is, of course, an honor," Lemus said. "I really feel that this award is an achievement that we all have collectively earned, and I feel that we can all collectively celebrate being honored in this way."

"Having taught here at Pantera for 10 years before transitioning to administration, I already had a deep understanding of the community," she said. "When I returned as principal, I was able to leverage my previous experiences to unite the staff and ensure we were all working together toward the common goal of benefiting our students, whether

they're in the dual immersion program or the traditional English strand."

School district statistics show academic growth over her tenure, with many English learners gaining proficiency in one to two years and students far exceeding grade-level standards in English, Mandarin, math and science.

In addition, the school's standardized test and equitable representation scores also have reached elite marks compared to other schools in California.

And the school's parent volunteer group with 172 participants organizes a variety of engaging activities for students – both during and after school hours – to foster community bonding.

According to the district's news release, the school also engages in partnerships with local colleges to cultivate the next generation of Mandarin educators, fortifies career pathways for students, and actively solicits feedback to bolster educational results.

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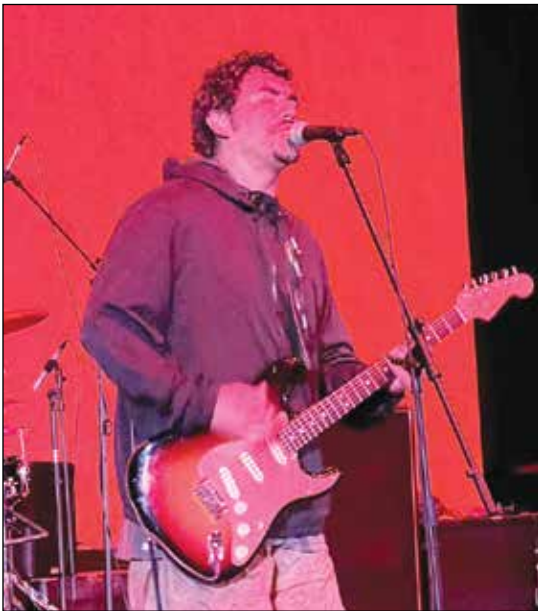
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RIBBON CUTTING AT THE UNION -- City of Pomona and Pomona Chamber of Commerce officials gathered for a ribbon cutting this month to mark the official opening of The Cathedral Pomona, a new entertainment, meeting and event venue located inside The Union. The opening was followed by a free community concert by Alejandro Aranda, Pomona's runner-up in American Idol's 17th season in 2019, and four other bands. Cutting the ribbon, from left, are Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval, Michelle and Ray Adamyk, owners of The Union, and City Councilmembers Elizabeth Ontiveros-Cole and Victor Preciado (third from right). Adamyk's Spectra Company, a leading historic preservation and restoration company, renovated Pomona's 100-year-old YMCA into The Union, which houses a variety of retail and commercial companies, including his own, along with non-profit offices and even a church. The Cathedral Pomona became a transformed version of what originally was the YMCA's main basketball gymnasium and elevated running track. Adamyk purchased the 59,000 square foot three-story building on a two-acre site in 2017 for \$2.65 million. The Union is located at 350 N. Garey Ave., Pomona.



PERFORMANCES BEGIN AT UNION'S 'THE CATHEDRAL POMONA' -- Performers began cranking the volume up this month immediately after a ribbon cutting opened "The Cathedral Pomona," a new entertainment and event venue located inside The Union, Pomona's old YMCA, which opened its doors earlier this year after extensive renovations. The Cathedral Pomona offers historically alluring details like stained glass windows, wood rafters and vintage wood court floors. And it now features a 32 by 20 foot stage, state-of-the-art sound, visuals, LED screens, professional lighting, three adjacent venues, three "green" rooms, "VIP" areas and more. Pictured is The Cathedral Pomona just before the grand opening showcasing the balcony above (formerly a YMCA track), the stage, screen and floor seating below, stage lights and chandeliers hanging from the ceiling, and original stained glass windows along the walls.

Photo by Laura Canon-Mensendiek
Pomona's own Alejandro Aranda, runner-up in American Idol in 2019, performs during a free concert this month in The Cathedral Pomona following the grand opening of the new event venue inside The Union.

Suspect arrested... from pg. 6

Estel in recent years became known for his community and political activism, and appeared frequently speaking at meetings of the Pomona City Council and advocating for a variety of causes ranging from combatting homelessness, drug abuse and traffic

violations to his opposition to rent control. The investigation is continuing and anyone with information is encouraged to contact the Pomona Police Department at (909) 622-1241 or, to remain anonymous, call "Crime Stoppers" at (800) 222-TIPS (8477).



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Pomona Police Department K9 "facility dog" Tucker and his handler, Community Services Officer Courtney Louie, were on hand to meet visitors this month at the police department's "Public Safety Fair" in the street outside the Pomona Police Department. Included were motor officers, SWAT, K9 demonstrations, community partners and more.

Photos by Renee Barbee
Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval and his son Roy, at left, and Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez visited with Pomona Police Chief Mike Ellis during this month's "Public Safety Fair."



A Pomona Police Department SWAT truck was on hand, along with a little bit of everything else, at this month's "Public Safety Fair" at the Pomona Police Department.



Photo by Renee Barbee

LAST OF THE GIRL SCOUT COOKIES -- But there's always next year! Pictured this month in front of Stater Bros. in Pomona selling the popular snacks are, from left, Pomona Girl Scout Chara Swodeck, "Ruby," a Daisy Girl Scout, who was salesperson of the day, and helper Vanessa Williams. Swodeck is a troop leader of the new Pomona Girl Scouts Troop 5623 that meets at Pomona's African American Advisory Alliance.

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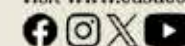
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Photos by Diana Archundia
FOURTH ANNUAL HARRIET TUBMAN UNITY WALK
 -- Marchers walked from Pomona's African American Advisory Alliance (AAAA) to the Harriet Tubman statue in Pomona's Lincoln Park this month in their fourth annual Harriet Tubman Unity Walk. Members of the Pomona High School Drumline led the way as only a drumline can do and marchers carried a AAAA banner. The annual walk of about 23 blocks honors the legacy of abolitionist Harriet Tubman, whose "Underground Railroad" liberated more than 750 enslaved people at the time of the nation's Civil War. Marchers heard speeches in the park and returned to a "post-walk" celebration at the Alliance Community Cultural Center. Pictured, from far left, are Jamie Lindsay, President of the local chapter of the National Council of Negro Women, and Chara Swodeck, a founder of AAAA.



Members of the Pomona High School Drumline pose for a photo after the Harriet Tubman Unity Walk this month in front of the Harriet Tubman statue in Pomona's Lincoln Park.



Photos by Renee Barbee
 Assistance League Second Vice President (Philanthropic) Denise Crandall Delgado, at right, chats with a friend during Assistance League of Pomona Valley's 26th annual "Tea Party Fundraiser." The event offered everything from "opportunity" baskets and a silent auction to mystery bags. The organization is dedicated to improving the lives and well-being of children and families in the community. Programs include Operation School Bell, which provides books and clothing to as many as 1,600 children each year.



Pictured in the Ebell Club kitchen is everybody's favorite part of the event -- the desserts -- as Historical Society of Pomona Valley President Deborah Clifford checks in to see how everything is going.

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Assistance League of Pomona Valley President Suzanne Miller addresses about 150 guests at the Assistance League fundraiser this month.

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Photos by Renee Barbee

NEW PLAYGROUND AT RALPH WELCH PARK -- Cutting the ribbon this month for new playground equipment at Pomona's Ralph Welch Park are, from left, Pomona City Manager Anita Scott, City Councilmember Steve Lustro, Mayor Tim Sandoval and City Councilmember Victor Preciado. The state-of-the-art playground spans about 4,500 square feet and features rubberized surfacing to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for children of all ages. Project cost was \$35,126 for the playground equipment and \$177,300 for its professional installation. The modern, "American Ninja Warrior-style" obstacle course playground is the first of its kind in Pomona. City staff made the project even more cost-effective by purchasing the equipment during the California Park and Recreation Society Conference and Expo. The Ralph Welch upgrade project was completed without Los Angeles County Measure A funding which was used for five other parks recently upgraded in Pomona. The park is located at 1000 Buena Vista Ave., Pomona.

THE ULTIMATE TEST? -- If you want to make sure your new playground equipment really works just the way it was supposed to, you get some really tough inspectors out there to check it all out. Pictured doing just that are, from left, Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval and City Councilmember Victor Preciado.



A neighborhood resident tries out some of the new playground equipment at Pomona's Ralph Welch Park to find out first-hand, well, just how good all of this really is.

Seal of Excellence... from pg. 10

"We're always looking for new ways to motivate and incentivize our students for all of their hard work and working with our community to continue providing this high-performing learning environment," Lemus said.

Just last month, the school dis-

trict reported that the same organization designated Westmont Elementary School sixth-grade Spanish dual-language immersion program teacher Mireya Jimenez as the CABA "Teacher of the Year" for 2025 based on her work in enhancing multilingual learning.

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Pomona Rotary recognizes 'Students of the Month'

High school students from 10 local schools who have overcome challenges to “beat the odds” were recognized last month as “Students of the Month” by members of Pomona Rotary at a dinner program at the Youth and Family Club of Pomona Valley.

Each student spoke briefly to the group of parents, educators and Rotarians on how they were able to overcome obstacles, what their plans for the future were, who has been the most influential person in their life, and what activities have been the most important in terms of their personal growth.

Winners recognized at the event were Brandon Barrera, Pomona’s Village Academy High School; Da’Marrion Bridges, Pomona High School; Lenny Hernandez Diaz, Pomona’s Fremont Academy of Engineering and Design; Angelina Estrada, Pomona’s Ganesha High School; and Sophia Gameros, Pomona’s Garey High School.

Others were Aidan Lopez, of Pomona’s Park West High School; Cierra Molinar, Pomona’s School of Extended Educational Options; Alexandra Nieves, of The School of Arts and Enterprise in Pomona; Ollie Siriburana, of Pomona’s Diamond Ranch High School; and Zahraa Abdul Sater, of City of Knowledge School in Pomona.



Brandon Barrera
Village Academy High School



Da’Marrion Bridges
Pomona High School



Lenny Hernandez Diaz
Fremont Academy of Engineering and Design



Angelina Estrada
Ganesha High School



Sophia Gameros
Garey High School



Aidan Lopez
Park West High School



Cierra Molinar
School of Extended Educational Options



Alexandra Nieves
The School of Arts and Enterprise

Photos by Renee Barbee



Zahraa Abdul Sater
City of Knowledge School



Ollie Siriburana
Diamond Ranch High School

Pledge to protect students... from pg. 2

San Gabriel Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce CEO Aziz Amiri, in his closing remarks at the first of its kind event, said the group plans to continue the conversation on an annual basis

to help make education more meaningful.

Sponsors of the event were Valley Vista Services, Athens Services, Suburban Water Systems and Mt. SAC.

Galan Cultural Center to present play about Cesar Chavez

“Si Se Puede . . . A Play About Cesar Chavez” will be presented by the Galan Cultural Center in its debut performance on Sunday, March 30 at the Pomona Unified School District auditorium in Pomona.

The play, called by program coordinators a “community-driven initiative aimed at fostering cultural appreciation among Spanish-speaking families,” highlights the “life and legacy” of Cesar Chavez,

the Mexican-American leader who fought for farmworkers’ rights.

Written by Carmela Ceballos, Angela Miranda and Carmen Martinez, and adapted by Blanca Soto, the play offers a powerful and inspiring look at Chavez’ journey as a civil rights activist.

It also showcases the Teatro en Español program, which empowers students through emotional expression, improvisation and cultural understanding.

Casa Colina ‘casino night’ location changed

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 Pomona’s Sheraton Fairplex Conference Center.

The location, originally set for

the Yanks Air Museum at Chino Airport, was changed after publication of last month’s La Nueva Voz.

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.

Doors open at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday for the 5 p.m. event at the Pomona Unified School District auditorium, 800 S. Garey Ave., Pomona. Tickets in advance are \$12.51 and may be purchased on eventbrite.com. Tickets also are available in advance at Galan Cultural Center, at 2243 N. Garey Ave., Pomona, or at the event for suggested donations of \$5 to \$10.

For more information, call (626) 483-0303.

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Willpower Institute grand opening

The Willpower Institute USA will hold a grand opening ceremony featuring a ribbon cutting, brief presentation and facility tour next month in Pomona.

Ceremonies get under way at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 5, at 1567 S. Reservoir St., Pomona.

A complimentary lunch of authentic Thai food and desserts will be served at noon.

The Willpower Institute USA is a nonprofit nondenominational meditation center that originated in 1997 in Thailand. A second center opened that same year in Edmonton, Canada, and the Los Angeles Center opened in 2015 and recently moved to the Pomona location.

A tranquil space is provided by the organization for individu-



Participants practice their meditation at Pomona's new Willpower Institute USA.

als to find peace, cultivate mindfulness and enhance their well-being.

For information or to RSVP, contact carolyndorcy52@gmail.com or (323) 810-0737.



ROTARY DROPS OFF COOKIES FOR HOSPITAL'S ER TEAM -- Pomona Rotary members this week dropped off more than 100 individually packed bags of freshly made -- and still warm -- chocolate chip cookies for the hard-working team members of the emergency department at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center. Included were handwritten notes from students at Pomona Catholic. From left are Rotarian Daniel Thomas; Catalina H., registered nurse; Noene V., and Destiny I., emergency department associates; Rotarian Carol Wilt; Eric Sechrist, D.O., emergency medicine physician; Nina B., clinical nurse supervisor; and Rotarian Jim Dale, the hospital's vice president of development.

Literacy bill... from pg. 8

the state receive reading instruction aligned with the latest scientific research on how the brain learns to read.

"Teaching kids to read is the most important responsibility of public schools because reading is the foundation for all future learning and opportunities," said Marshall Tuck, CEO of EdVoice. "Assemblymember Rubio's leadership on AB 1121 will help ensure that every child, regardless of background, has the opportunity to succeed in school and beyond."

According to the news release, California currently is facing a reading crisis with only four in 10 third graders reading at grade level – a number that drops to three in 10 for low-income Latino students and two in 10 for students with disabilities, English learners and low-income Black students.

And, it continued, the rates have remained mostly "flat" over the past decade.

"While California has implemented certain early literacy policy changes . . . more must be

done as the state currently ranks 33rd in the nation for fourth-grade reading achievement," the release said.

"As a former teacher, I've witnessed the challenges, the emotional strain and stress our students face when being taught to read by teachers left without the right training and materials to be successful," said Rubio, lead author of the bill. "California teachers are deeply committed to their students. AB 1121 will provide California teachers with high-quality professional development and resources so that they have the support they deserve, while setting students up for lifelong success."

The measure will move from "state guidance" to "action" by focusing on teacher training in the form of paid professional development and on instructional materials with local education agencies required to adopt materials from the state list, although they can request a waiver.

The bill heads to the Assembly Education Committee this spring.

Deadline is next month for annual 'eastside' grant applications for visual and performing arts

Artists and arts organizations from throughout the Eastern Los Angeles County region are encouraged to apply for grants through the Eastside Arts Initiative, a grantmaking program aimed at furthering the visual and performing arts.

Grants range from \$2,500 to \$25,000 and involve a competitive process based on the initiative's funding priorities. Deadline for applications is April 15.

Applicants are encouraged to

attend a virtual orientation meeting about the grant guidelines, application and funding priorities. To register and to access the grant application, visit www.eastsideartsinitiative.org.

The Eastside Arts Initiative is a grant-making program in partnership with LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes (LA Plaza) supporting arts initiatives and fostering collaborations for furthering the arts in Eastern Los Angeles County.

Services to continue during

Pomona Public Library's summer closure

The Pomona Public Library will be temporarily closed for a construction and renovation program from April through August, according to library officials.

Modified services will be available to the public during that time and the library will be hosting events and programs both at the Pomona Civic Center and throughout the community.

Repairs to the library will include upgrades to the roof, the library's air conditioning and

heating system and landscaping on the Garey Avenue side of the building.

Drop-off and pick-up book services will be implemented during the closure, and on-line materials still will be available.

The library's Homework Club will continue at a temporary off-site location with details pending.

For more information, contact the library at (909) 620-2043 or e-mail library@pomona.ca.gov.

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Executive Board Member, Pomona Chamber of Commerce



Photos by Renee Barbee

Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis, at center, presents certificates to participants in last week's fourth annual Los Angeles Veterans Resource Expo in Building 4 at Pomona's Fairplex. Pictured fifth from right is Fairplex President and CEO Walter Marquez, fourth from right Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval, and third from right Pomona City Councilmember Victor Preciado, all speakers at the event held to provide much needed support to area veterans. Marquez welcomed the group to Fairplex, and Sandoval and Preciado thanked the veterans for their service.



Representatives of the California Highway Patrol were on hand at the fourth annual Los Angeles Veterans Resource Expo to help veterans find employment in law enforcement. Numerous other groups at the event were hiring including the County of Los Angeles. Speaking to the group, Solis called the event a celebration of the service and sacrifice of the veterans and their families. She thanked employees of the Los Angeles County Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and numerous other county departments for participating at the event and said there were more than 100 exhibitors -- both public and private partners -- representing employment opportunities, healthcare services and career counseling. "There is something here for everybody," she said.



Veterans in wheelchairs, using walkers and accompanied by service dogs were on hand at Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis' fourth annual veterans' event learning about services of all types available to them.

Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman marks 100 days in office

Nathan Hochman, Los Angeles County's new district attorney, marked his first 100 days in office this month with a listing of his key accomplishments, placing his assembling of a 40-plus member management team at the top of the list.

He said all were seasoned prosecutors selected from within the district attorney's office.

"Today, March 13, is my 100th day in office," Hochman said in a news release, adding that his office is working to restore trust, enhance public safety and ensure justice is served.

"I want to further thank the amazing men and women of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office for their fantastic commitment, experience and dedication to the mission of justice."

Second on his list was imple-

menting a "balanced approach to justice," in which he rescinded previous special directives that "hindered the prosecution of certain crimes," opting instead for what he called a "hard middle approach."

He explained this philosophy "rejects both extreme decarceration and mass incarceration, focusing on individualized case

Asian American advocacy group cites surge in hate since President Trump took office

New research by Stop AAPI Hate shows a surge in online hate against Asian Americans since President Trump won the 2024 election, the group said in a recent news release.

"Our research suggests this is no coincidence," a spokesperson said.

According to the data, January

assessments" considering the defendant's background, crime and impact on victims.

Other key accomplishments included taking action in the wake of devastating wildfires, combating human trafficking, launching a fentanyl task force, rebuilding partnerships with law enforcement, implementing race-blind charging procedures and freeing

2025 saw the highest number of anti-Asian slurs by month since monitoring began in August 2022, with a majority directed toward South Asian communities.

In addition, the group claimed stories received through the group's reporting center found "bad actors" have become emboldened in their threats since the election.

the wrongfully convicted.

"These first 100 days have been an incredible journey," Hochman said. "We've taken significant steps toward a safer, more just

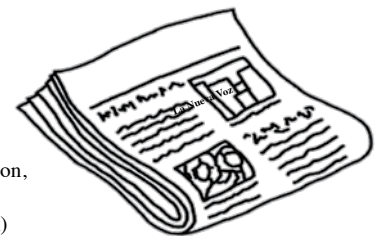
Los Angeles County. But this is just the beginning."

"I look forward to continuing this critical work in the days, months and years ahead," he said.

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

Pick up your free copy of La Nueva Voz at these locations and dozens more:

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- Western University of Health Sciences Patient Care Center
- Gold Strike Market Carniceria, 412 N. Park Ave., Pomona
- Fairplex Chevron, Fairplex Drive and San Bernardino Freeway, Pomona
- Discount Market, Philadelphia Street and Towne Avenue, Pomona
- LaundryLand Coin Op Laundry, 744 E. Holt Ave., Pomona
- Pomona Eagles, 854 W. Mission Blvd., Pomona



Love pickleball and other similar sports?

Don't be sidelined with an injury!

By Benjamin Kamel, DPM, FACFAS
Garey Orthopedics

Pickleball, tennis, and paddle sports are more popular than ever, uniting people of all ages for friendly competition and exercise. These sports offer great physical and social benefits but also come with the risk of foot and ankle injuries. Fortunately, with proper precautions, you can keep playing the sports you love.

Quick movements, lateral shifts, and sudden stops involved in pickleball and similar sports put strain on the lower body, especially the feet and ankles. Common injuries include:

- **Ankle sprains** – A misstep or a sudden pivot can cause painful ligament damage.
 - **Achilles tendonitis or ruptures** – Repetitive stress or a sudden burst of movement can inflame or tear the Achilles tendon.
 - **Plantar fasciitis** – Frequent stops and starts can lead to heel pain from inflammation.
 - **Stress fractures** – Overuse or high-impact movements can result in small fractures.
 - **Tendonitis and overuse injuries** – Repetitive play without proper rest can lead to chronic pain and stiffness.
- Many sports-related foot and ankle injuries can be prevented. Consider these tips:
- **Wear proper footwear** – In-



Benjamin Kamel, DPM, FACFAS

vest in court shoes with good lateral support and cushioning to reduce impact on your feet and ankles.

- **Warm up and stretch** – Stretching your calves, Achilles tendon, and plantar fascia before and after playing can reduce strain and improve flexibility.
- **Strengthen your lower body** – Exercises that build ankle stability and leg strength can help absorb shock and prevent falls.
- **Use an ankle brace or support** – If you have a history of ankle injuries, protective gear can reduce your risk of re-injury.
- **Listen to your body** – Don't ignore persistent pain or discomfort. Taking breaks and getting treatment early can prevent more serious conditions.

If you experience persistent pain or an injury, seek treatment. Foot and ankle specialists provide customized care through physical therapy, bracing, or advanced treatments like injections or surgical intervention. With the right approach, you can heal faster and return to the game stronger.

Take the proper steps to protect your feet and ankles, so you can enjoy the sports you love for years to come!

Editor's Note: Dr. Kamel sees patients at Garey Orthopedics, located on the campus of Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare in Pomona. To schedule an appointment, call (909) 593-7437.



Photo by Renee Barbee

OPTIMISTS LET THE (BINGO) GAMES BEGIN AT EAGLES -- Members of the Pomona Optimist Club held a bingo fundraiser this month at the Eagles lodge in Pomona. The room was filled with friends and supporters for the successful event. Pictured is one of the tables with veteran bingo player Vernon Price, at far right, obviously an experienced player, holding down four cards. At rear are raffle prize baskets all lined up for viewing.

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



FIRST RESPONDERS NIGHT AT GOLDEN CORRAL -- Golden Corral's throughout California, including the Pomona location, invited first responders throughout the area to come in and enjoy a complimentary "thank you" buffet and beverage this month as their way of responding to the devastating fires across the state and saying thanks to the local heroes who risk their lives every day. "Golden Corral has always been committed to supporting the heroes who dedicate their lives to protecting and serving our communities," said Golden Corral CEO Lance Trenary. He especially thanked the company's California franchisees and restaurant teams for their support in preparing and delivering meals to the front lines during the fires. The event was open to first responders including firefighters, law enforcement officers and emergency medical services personnel. Pictured, from left, in front of a "Thank You First Responders" backdrop at the Pomona restaurant are Golden Corral's Southern California Marketing Director Maricela Moreno, and Pomona Police Sgt. Edgar Padilla. Golden Corral, founded in 1973 and based in Raleigh, N.C., is the nation's largest grill-buffet restaurant chain.

Visits to community health clinics drop as fears of ICE raids escalate

Visits to community health clinics are dropping as fears escalate of Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids, but Dr Jose Perez, chief medical officer of the South Central Family Health Center said ICE cannot conduct random dragnet sweeps.

"We've been hearing all these rumors that there will be an increased ICE presence in Los Angeles," Perez said. "So clearly it has rattled the community – that's what's preventing folks from coming in . . . and so rather than risk it, they just don't come into the clinic."

Speaking in an interview with Ethnic Media Services, he said

such fears are not unfounded, noting that there were reports of ICE vans last month parked outside a health clinic in Adelanto.

"Though agents did not go into the facility, the tacit threat was enough to keep many clients away," he said, adding that the reality is that patients who avoid coming into the clinic "just forego medical care altogether."

He said his clinic is doing everything it can to educate patients as to what their rights are and what the government can and cannot do.

"My biggest fear is that folks are going to go without care," he said.

Please visit our web site at www.lanuevavoz.net to see the latest issue of La Nueva Voz, past issues and more!



Photo by Renee Barbee

POMONA OPTIMISTS STUDENTS OF THE MONTH -- Four sixth grade students from Pomona's Ranch Hills Elementary School were recognized last week as "students of the month" by members of the Pomona Optimists during a presentation at the Eagles lodge in Pomona. Pictured, from left, are Optimist members Ruby Jung and M. Joyce Bakersmith, February winners Landen Garth and Izabella Lopez, March winners Leilanie Cardenas and Ezra Johnson, Optimist Club President Lorraine Canales, Ranch Hills Principal Ashley Hedrick, and Anthony Moreno, representing State Sen. Susan Rubio.

Fundraising car, bike show set for next month

A "First Annual Show and Shine for Shelter," a car and bike fundraiser, will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, April 5, at Ganesha High School in Pomona.

Registration fee for cars is \$20 and registration for bikes is \$15. The vendor fee is \$50. Participants must register and pay in advance, all cars and bikes are welcome, and

trophies will be awarded.

The event, which will offer music, food, raffles and community resources, benefits Total Restoration Ministries and RESTOREher Place.

Total Restoration Ministries, a non-profit, faith-based organization, is a church that offers a transitional living program and com-

munity outreaches throughout the year.

For information, call Angie Fierro, (626) 523-0651. To register, e-mail mrsangiefierro@yahoo.com.

Contact us today!

909-629-2292

Nondenominational Meditation Center now open in Pomona!

Grand opening begins at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 5.

'A tranquil space for individuals to find peace, cultivate mindfulness and enhance their well-being!'

For more information or to RSVP for ribbon-cutting and open house, contact carolyndorcy52@gmail.com or (323) 810-0737.

Hours of operation from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. and again from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday.

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A Tale of Cancer and Recovery

By Traci Asher

When I was a girl in high school it was easy to buy a pack of cigarettes at a local store. I started smoking pretty young after reading an article written by a favorite movie director calling on readers to be rebellious and, “smoke one cigarette a week.” The idea of being a “rebel” appealed to my best friend and me. I can’t help but think, if I never started smoking in the first place I may have avoided a very long battle with several types of cancer. My name is Traci Asher, and this is my story.

I was first diagnosed with Stage III breast cancer on July 31, 2014, at the age of 39. I found myself at the doctor’s office receiving the results of a few tests/biopsies he had ordered. “There is definitely a suspicious mass on your breast that I’m afraid is malignant.” Instantly, my mind started spinning. I felt my body heat up with anxiety as my hand trembled toward my phone. I silently wanted to look up the word malignant, but I was too nervous to spell it, so instead I typed benign. The shock of a cancer diagnosis finally hit me, and I cried.

Three years after my initial diagnosis, I was diagnosed with Stage IV metastatic breast cancer which appeared in the vertebrae of my neck. Two years later I was diagnosed with my third tumor, Stage IV metastatic breast cancer on the left side of my brain’s cerebellum. There is a normalcy intertwined with the chaotic stress involved in being a cancer patient. Receiving every diagnosis was heart-breaking. Looking toward the future seems a monumental task. Over 10 years, I have endured the emotional and physical pain that comes with cancer. Could I have avoided this nightmare if I had never tried that first cigarette?

Eight years later, I self-published “1 Cancer Patient,” a unique photo journal to guide difficult cancer conversations (1CancerPatient.com).

My husband and I had found our forever home in Pomona and began reaching out to local support groups we thought my book would benefit. Eventually, we learned of Day One’s mission to protect youth from tobacco use initiation through youth engagement and advancing public health. I was disappointed to find out that one-in-three tobacco retailers in Los Angeles County are still willing to illegally sell tobacco products to individuals under 21 years old.

This is the life of one person who started smoking in high school. I finally quit smoking 17 years later. Since

then, I’ve learned that over 67 percent of current and former adult smokers start by age 18 and almost 100 percent start by age 26. My story is a warning of the consequences of these facts.

I have experienced the scary reality of tumors erupting in my breast, then in my spine, and then in my brain. Now, once again, it’s all over, but that sentiment only temporarily masks the unanswered questions, what if it comes back? And what if I had never bought my first pack of cigarettes? Cancer and I have, for the moment, declared an uneasy truce. The good news is that balancing on the tightrope between wild optimism and crushing despair has honed me into a cancer thriver.

It is my hope that by telling my story and advocating for tobacco retailer policies that restrict youth access to tobacco products and monitor sales in Pomona and surrounding cities will help to prevent youth and young adults from trying their first vape or cigarette. A public opinion survey conducted by Day One found that 97 percent of residents interviewed support requiring retailers that sell tobacco to pay a license fee to cover retailer monitoring. Public health policies that limit youth experimentation with vapes and other tobacco products lessen the likelihood of suffering the consequences that may come down the line.

To learn more about Day One and their tobacco prevention work in Pomona, contact Alisha Lopez via e-mail at Alisha@GoDayOne.org.

Final thoughts – ‘In remission’ doesn’t mean it’s over

Across my three cancer diagnoses, I’ve healed from numerous surgeries, completed radiation, chemotherapy, and immunotherapy treatments, finished prescriptions, and never missed a doctor’s appointment.

All of my scans since have been clear of active disease. I could say I’m in remission, but for now, my oncologist saying, “Schedule our next appointment,” is what “it’s over” sounds like for me.

Vigilance and self-advocacy are key for looking ahead to a bright, cancer free life. It’s often human nature to focus on outcomes as a measures of success, but I believe the real win is getting in the ring and putting up your dukes for the fight. Now, what I feel most often is...VICTORIOUS!





Members and board members of the Pomona Chamber of Commerce pose for the camera after this month's networking luncheon at Golden Corral Pomona.

Social Security officials 'correct the record' about Social Security direct deposit and telephone services

Social Security Administration officials issued a news release this month to clarify recent news media reports regarding plans to eliminate telephone services.

"SSA is increasing its protection for America's seniors and other beneficiaries by eliminating the risk of fraud associated with changing bank account information by telephone," the release said.

The release pointed out that SSA continuously investigates and analyzes potential threats to strengthen and secure programs

and protect people who receive benefits.

About 40 percent of Social Security direct deposit fraud is associated with someone calling SSA to change direct deposit bank information, the release continued.

To change bank account information, recipients will need to use two-factor authentication with SSA's "My Social Security" service or visit a local Social Security office to prove their identity.

All other SSA telephone services remain unchanged.



COFFEE CONNECTIONS AT GOLDEN CORRAL -- Members, ambassadors, executive board members and board members of the Pomona Chamber of Commerce ventured out of Downtown Pomona last month for an early morning "Coffee Connections" at Pomona's Golden Corral at 2037 Rancho Valley Drive. At left is Chamber President and CEO Monique Robles, executive board members front row, fourth from left, Renee Barbee of La Nueva Voz and, back row, center, Jeff Johannsen of Pomona Hope, and second from right, board member Frank Guzman, of Pomona Valley Pride. And La Nueva Voz heard nothing but good reviews on the breakfast.

Photo by Renee Barbee

GOLDEN CORRAL POMONA UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT -- The Pomona Chamber of Commerce held its monthly networking luncheon this month at Pomona's Golden Corral, in Pomona since April of 2017 and now under new management. General Manager Rafael Soriano, pictured, who operates the family buffet-style restaurant for Vasquez Hospitality, told chamber members they are open every day and the banquet room is always available to groups on a reservation basis at no additional cost. Vasquez Hospitality operates more than 24 Golden Corral locations nationwide. The Pomona location, with 400 seats and always offering more than 150 choices, is at 2037 Rancho Valley Drive, Pomona.



The Prince of Peace Church youth group held their monthly visit to Pomona Vista Care Center. "It is our hope that through songs of worship and a moment of fellowship with the residents, we can encourage each other to always look ahead with optimism," said youth leader Evelyn Flores. Prince of Peace Church is located at 895 E. 7th St., Pomona. For information regarding the church's outreach program, call (909) 750-0331.

Interested in who has been arrested by Pomona Police in Pomona?

Please check our weekly listing at <http://www.lanuevavoz.net> and click on "Arrest Logs" on our home page.

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This Cesar Chavez Day let's stand in solidarity with the workers who have fought for dignity, fair wages, and equality. Let's honor the spirit of "***Sí, se puede!***" and continue his mission for a fairer, stronger future. Together, we can create lasting change.



Los Angeles County Supervisor

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