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The New Voice, a Bilingual (English/Spanish) Publication
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Pomona Chamber of Commerce



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Thursday, October 23, 2025

COUNTY FIRE COSTS TO INCREASE \$15 MILLION BY 2028

La Verne pulls plug on talks over fire services merger to bail out Pomona, leaving next steps unclear

By Jeff Schenkel, Publisher

Months of talks between Pomona and La Verne over a possible merger to provide fire services appear to be over, leaving Pomona without what appeared to be its preferred option to avoid the Los Angeles County Fire Department phasing in a 41 percent cost spike of \$15 million a year by 2028.

Pomona City Manager Anita Scott received a surprise letter by e-mail last week from La Verne City Manager Ken Domer indicating "the City of La Verne will stand down from the current discussions" about the proposed merger.

In an Oct. 14 letter obtained by La Nueva Voz from a source not affiliated with either city hall, Domer said "there are several political issues that have arisen that currently impact our ability to explore regional fire options."

He explained those issues "create an untenable situation for our labor union and potentially future cooperation between any regional partners in fire and emergency medical services."

"These circumstances have also

disrupted our ability to finalize a comprehensive review of the fiscal and operational considerations and, therefore, understanding the effects on the City of La Verne," he said.

Pomona Deputy City Manager Mark Gluba, who also serves as the city's public information officer, said simply "decline to comment" in a late-night e-mail last week when La Nueva Voz asked about the city's reaction and possible next steps after learning La Verne was pulling out.

He did, however, provide a link to a "fire services evaluation" update on the city's web site for those who read such things which, to a limited extent, explained the city's reaction without acknowledging the La Verne letter or its explanation.

The update was dated Oct. 14, the same date as the La Verne letter, and referenced a meeting of the "joint ad hoc committee" held

on Oct. 13, the day before the La Verne letter was e-mailed.

"In light of the newly evolved challenges to the establishment of a stand-alone District, joint ad-hoc committee members agreed to recommend suspension of the process to their respective city councils so that Pomona could refocus on fundamentally restructuring its service



Freddie Rodriguez
La Verne decision 'huge win for Pomona'

agreement with (the Los Angeles County Fire Department)," the city web site update reported.

"Due to significant political challenges surrounding regional collaboration efforts with the City of La Verne, Pomona city staff will move forward with recommending that the council support pursuing structural modifications to its current agreement with (Los Angeles County Fire Department)," the update said. "This approach will focus on ensuring that fire and EMS services remain both effective and financially sustainable for Pomona residents."

Requests for an actual comment sent to Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval and Scott received no response before press time.

But former Assemblymember Freddie Rodriguez, also a former long-time Pomona city councilmember, who opposed the merger, said La Verne dropping out of the

conversation "is a huge win for the citizens of Pomona."

"La Verne pulling out heads us back down the right path and maintaining the high quality service L.A. County Fire provides," Rodriguez said. "All the additional resources that come with contracting with L.A. County cannot be matched."

Deliberations have been continuing at Pomona City Hall after notification from the Los Angeles County Fire Department that the annual cost of services to the City of Pomona will see a phased-in increase from \$36.6 million in 2024-2025 to \$51.3 million in 2028-2029. But undercurrents in the community even before La Verne pulled out were suggesting that all options need to be on the table – and apparently, they were not.

For example, the city's team of consultants studying the program – costing the city \$95,000 to date with another \$94,000 available in the city's current general fund budget – had returned a recommendation of only three options staff told city councilmembers were "vi-

Plug pulled... pg. 5



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Development of the FY 26-27 Annual Action Plan

Desarrollo del plan de Acción Anual AF 26-27

In the summer, the City will begin developing the FY 2026-2027 Annual Action Plan, which outlines spending for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds on housing, human services, public infrastructure, and community development activities for low to moderate-income persons. Join us at one of the following Community Needs Meetings to learn more about the FY 2026-2027 Annual Action Plan development.

En el verano, la Ciudad estará en el proceso de desarrollar el Plan de Acción Anual 2026-2027 que describe los gastos para el Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) y los fondos del Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) en vivienda, servicios humanos, infraestructura pública y actividades de desarrollo comunitario para personas de bajo y moderado ingresos.

Survey Encuesta

Help shape the plan by sharing your thoughts on the City's needs and funding priorities for the CDBG, HOME, and ESG programs. The results will help identify the priorities for investing Federal funds and the activities to be undertaken. Please participate! We need your input!

Por favor, comparta sus pensamientos sobre las necesidades y prioridades de financiamiento de la Ciudad para los programas CDBG, HOME y ESG. Los resultados ayudarán a identificar las prioridades para invertir fondos federales y las actividades a realizar. ¡Por favor, participe! ¡Necesitamos su opinión!

The Community Needs Survey will be open from **June 2, 2025**, through **December 31, 2025**.

La Encuesta de Necesidades Comunitarias estará abierta desde el **2 de junio de 2025 hasta el 31 de diciembre de 2025**.

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Community Needs Meetings

Wed, October 15, 2025, at 6:30 P.M.
Ralph Welch Community Center
1000 Buena Vista Street

Wed, November 19, 2025, at 6:30 P.M.
Washington Community Center
865 E. Grand Avenue

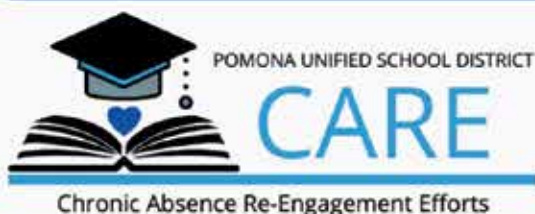
Wed, December 10, 2025, at 6:30 P.M.
Westmont Community Center
1808 W. 9th Street

Wed, December 17, 2025, at 6:30 P.M.
Zoom (virtual)
Join Link: <https://app.zoom.us/join>
Meeting ID: 851 3519 6356
Phone: (669) 444-9171

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September was Attendance Awareness Month, and Pomona Unified is committed to boosting student success by improving attendance in the 2025–26 school year. This year's chronic absenteeism rate started at 15%. Families can help by ensuring students attend school every day, arrive on time, and communicate with the school if challenges arise. Every day matters—when students show up, they succeed. Let's work together to make every school day count!



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PREPARING ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS -- The ACES program (architecture, construction, engineering and sustainability), a collaborative of Los Angeles County and the Southern California Regional Energy Network designed to expose underserved students to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) careers, recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary. The organization supports students through a combination of college courses, field trips, industry days, workshops and paid internships. Pictured with ACES officials are four students -- including one from Cal Poly Pomona -- who have advanced their studies thanks to ACES. From left are Wendy Angel, director, Emerald Cities Collaborative, a clean energy non-profit; Ross Guzman, a student at Cal State University Fullerton; Francisco Parra Guzman, ACES career pathways program director; Janelle La, a student at Cal Poly Pomona; Nathan Martinez, a student at Pasadena City College; Andrew Cueto, a student at Cal State University Los Angeles; and Veronica Soto, ACES founder.



STUDENTS OF THE MONTH FROM DECKER ELEMENTARY -- Members of the Pomona Optimist Club awarded "Students of the Month" certificates this month to four students from Pomona's Decker Elementary School. The event was held as a celebration of the students' achievement during an awards dinner and ceremony at Cachanilla's Chinese Restaurant in Pomona. Winners, from left, were Ileana Rendon, an August student of the month and a fourth grader, for her outstanding social skills; September winners Devin Treja, a third grader recognized for his leadership abilities, and Hannah Butag, a sixth grader recognized for her excellent academic skills; and Amiyah Poindexter, an August student of the month and a sixth grader, for her outstanding attendance -- perfect attendance for the last three years. At far left is Optimist Vice President Devyn Stein and at far right is Optimist President Sonia Molina.

Plug pulled... from pg. 1

able,” with the first on the list to stay with the county and bite the bullet over the increased cost (at a time the city is already struggling due to the impact of Measure Y, the “Pomona Kids First” initiative approved by voters last November).

(Measure Y, in essence, would mandate that 10 percent of the city’s annual unrestricted general-purpose revenues go to children’s programs.)

A second option would be to create a stand-alone City of Pomona Fire Department, and the third would be a regional collaboration with a neighboring fire agency or agencies (City of La Verne was the agency being considered and the two cities were already reviewing options through “ad hoc” city council committees).

The list of three options was presented to councilmembers in a staff report at a council meeting last month.

Rodriguez, in an exclusive hour-long interview with La Nueva Voz this month, sounded like he’s calling on his nearly 40-year-long public safety career as an emergency medical services first responder and recommending none of the above, but instead keeping all the options on the table.

Rodriguez, who said most of his legislation in Sacramento was EMS-related, also was appointed by then-Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon as vice chair of the state legislature’s Joint Committee on Emergency Management which included members of both the Senate and the Assembly. He later was appointed chair of the Assembly’s first-ever standing committee on emergency management for disaster planning response to fires and floods, where he served for more than three years.

He told La Nueva Voz that either of the “non-county” options – merging with La Verne or again creating a Pomona Fire Department – would require hiring – and being able to pay – new firefighters and support staff which in the current climate likely would mean drawing on new and inexperienced recruits not immediately qualified for some of the more difficult fire-fighting situations frequently seen in Pomona.

And even if the city was able to staff up, and despite assurances from county fire officials that they “may extend the option for the

city” to purchase used apparatus at fair market value, there’s no guarantee that they would make such an offer and, according to a report from CBS News last May, Rodriguez said, there’s a nationwide fire truck shortage with some departments ordering equipment as far back as 2022 and still not receiving delivery.

He said the simple and, perhaps, obvious solution is simply to shut down one existing Pomona fire station to get a service contract with the county that meets both the city’s safety requirements and budget capabilities.

Gluba, however, again well before La Verne pulled out, responded to questions in an e-mail from La Nueva Voz, saying that discussions between city staff and the fire department have reviewed a variety of options but that “any operational changes require agreement by both parties.”

“(Los Angeles County Fire Department) Chief (Anthony) Marrone has indicated that he is not amenable to considering reductions or realignment to fire department apparatus or personnel contracted within the city,” Gluba said. “The three options presented to city leaders reflect realistic paths forward that balance fiscal responsibility with the community’s expectations for reliable fire and EMS (emergency medical services) services.”

The City of Pomona, of course, is the customer in this relationship and, Rodriguez said, the size of the package of services obviously needs to be negotiated.

Meanwhile, that partnership with La Verne, now off the table, had its own issues in whether such a start-up collaboration could “deliver professional, innovative and fiscally sustainable fire unit services that meet or exceed” the needs of Pomona, Rodriguez said.

“It’s not going to happen – you’re not going to find the same or better standard of both communities,” Rodriguez said. “One of the stations in Pomona is one of the busiest stations in the county . . . (in the) top five stations.”

He pointed out that a similar merger plan in the 1980s known as the San Gabriel Valley Fire Authority was attempted unsuccessfully in Covina and West Covina because of financial challenges at the time.

“But look at it now – things aren’t cheaper now, things cost more –

salaries, the service, the equipment, the specialized training, I mean, where are you going to get all that from, when you’re trying to save money and create a new agency,” Rodriguez said. “Probably half of these guys, if not more, are going to be brand new right now. What type of experience are they going to bring? Where are you going to get them?”

Plus, he said county firefighters would not apply for positions here because the new collaborative would not have been able to pay county pay rates or above.

“You’re going to get a lot of brand-new people that really have no experience running the basic fire calls and medical calls, that’s one,” Rodriguez said. “But then we’re going to get the specialized hazardous materials, urban search and rescue teams that you have now with the county on top of the firefighters that are trained for wildfire fire-fighting. If Ganesha Hills catches on fire or Elephant Hill over here in Westmont, where are you going to get the personnel?”

He said Pomona’s downtown area has a high-rise, a lot of basements that are confined space rescues and other difficult response requirements.

“Guess who they’re going to call? County fire, because they have the specialized firefighters, they’ve got the campfire crews, they’ve got the air resources to come in,” he said.

And he added that with the proposed new collaborative with La Verne, the need might have arisen to call for mutual aid which would be county firefighters – something Pomona already has with the county contract.

Also, with no contract with the county, would county firefighters even be willing to provide mutual aid support to Pomona?

Rodriguez said that would remain to be seen.

Asked about the option to close one of Pomona’s existing fire stations, Rodriguez pointed out that Station 181 in the Pomona Civic Center was closed in 2012 in another cost-cutting move by the city. It was expected to save the city \$2.5 million per year.

He said it is possible that Chief Marrone, in light of that closure 13 years ago, is opposing any further closures because he doesn’t “want to go down this road.”

“And now we’re back here again but now it’s worse because now they want to just get rid of the whole department,” Rodriguez said.

Back on the La Verne merger option, Rodriguez said he did not see how that would work.

“I even heard from firefighters from La Verne,” he said. “They don’t want to come to Pomona because it’s too busy.”

Gluba, asked by La Nueva Voz about the merger effort, again well before La Verne’s announcement, said as part of the city’s evaluation, staff has reviewed “past regional efforts and other similar ventures.”

“Lessons learned from previous experiences highlight the importance of clear governance, equitable cost sharing, and long-term sustainability,” Gluba said. “We are applying those lessons as we analyze the feasibility of a regionalized model with La Verne.”

“Our focus is on whether a partnership with La Verne can deliver professional, innovative and fiscally sustainable fire and EMS services that meet or exceed industry standards for both communities,” he added. “While past models faced challenges, we believe that by addressing those governance and equity issues from the outset, this effort has the potential to be successful.”

He cited several successful consolidations in areas like Livermore/Pleasanton, Central Marin Fire Authority, San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department, Sonoma County Fire District, North County Fire Authority and Heartland Fire and Rescue.

Even so, Rodriguez said he was concerned the Pomona and La Verne merger was “being rushed.”

And he also pointed out that the reason Pomona went to the county in the first place was to save money because of operating costs and pension obligations. Pomona closed its own fire department and contracted with the county in 1994.

“If we’re going to put stuff on the table, we need to put everything on the table,” Rodriguez said. “(But) I think to me, everybody really needs to come together and see what we can do to continue to keep the service with the L.A. County Fire Department and put everything on the table.”

He added that “it has to come down to the will of the council and

the city manager . . . because if their heart isn’t in it, they’re not going to do it.”

Rodriguez said they’ll say the money isn’t there and “this is the only option we’re going to do.”

“And that’s the easiest thing to do,” he said. “I just think city staff and folks need to really look at this (through) a different lens and be more flexible at negotiating, and I don’t think they really are other than I think they already gave direction what they want to do.”

“How can you really tell what type of service you’re going to get with a brand-new formation of an agency,” he said, adding that fire protection is important. “It’s about saving people’s lives and property for a city.”

Rodriguez said he’s also concerned about how the city’s consultants on the project were selected.

“How were they chosen, were there any others in the running or how did we just pick,” he said.

Gluba explained the five-member consulting firm of Emergency Services Advisors (ESA), based in Windsor, California, and the law firm of Burke, Williams & Sorensen were hired by the city under the City of Pomona Purchasing Code, city manager authority, Section 2-993 (exceptions to the informal and formal procedures).

The law firm provides municipal and public law services, and has 10 locations around the state including Los Angeles and the Inland Empire (Riverside).

ESA co-founders are Mark Heine, a 41-year veteran of the fire service and past president of the California Fire Chiefs Association, and Bill Adams, an attorney for more than 30 years who represents public and private sector clients and serves as special counsel to the California Fire Chiefs Association.

Based on their own promotional materials, multi-agency consolidations appear to be one of their specialties.

La Nueva Voz reached out to ESA for comment over a period of about 10 days last month, sending two e-mails, sending a hard copy of one e-mail to the company’s post office box, leaving two voice mails at ESA’s telephone number on its web site, a text, and additional voice mails for Adams at Albany Tire Pros in Castro Valley, where he was listed as manager accord-

Plug pulled... pg. 16

Assemblymember Rodriguez brings Public Safety Standing Committee human trafficking hearing to Pomona

Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez, meeting last week in the Pomona City Council chambers, told members of the public, panelists and her colleagues that human trafficking “robs people of their dignity, safety and future in our neighborhoods.”

Her comments came during an informational hearing of the Assembly Standing Committee on Public Safety on sex work-related crimes and efforts to combat human trafficking.

“We see a devastating toll, especially on young women, who are exploited in plain sight,” Rodriguez said. “That is why I am grateful to this committee for shining a light on the problem and for working toward a real solution that will protect our most vulnerable and hold traffickers accountable.”

She said the hearing was a call to action not to identify a problem but to “advance policies that empower law enforcement, provide real support for our survivors and prevent this exploitation from happening in the first place.”

“The voices we hear today should guide us toward a stronger framework of prevention, intervention and justice,” she added. “By meeting in my district, you’re sending a powerful message that Sacramento is listening, that communities like ours matter, and California will not ignore this crisis.”

Committee Chair Assembly-

member Nick Schultz said by way of background that Senate Bill 357 repealed California’s loitering law in 2022. Before that time, it was a misdemeanor for a person to loiter with intent to purchase or sell sex.

He said SB 357 repealed that crime in large part based on the view that law enforcement led to discriminatory and harmful outcomes, particularly for people of color and members of the LG-BTQ+ community.

“Since that time, policymakers, stakeholders and the public have continued to wrestle with this issue,” he said. “Earlier this year, Assemblymember Stephanie Nguyen and I co-authored AB 379, which took the approach of targeting the buyers of sex rather than sex workers who oftentimes are victimized.”

Rodriguez also became a coauthor of the bill.

He said that bill has been signed into law by Gov. Newsom and, effective Jan. 1, it will once again be a misdemeanor to loiter with intent to purchase commercial sex.

He added that the hearing last week was designed to “continue the discussion on this important issue” through testimony to help determine what policymakers can do to prevent human trafficking and support the victims who survive it.

Other elected officials participating in the half-day hear-



SEX TRAFFICKING HEARING IN POMONA -- Three members of the California Assembly including Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas joined Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez in a special informational hearing of the Assembly Standing Committee on Public Safety in the Pomona City Council chambers last week to review AB 379, a measure designed to help prevent human trafficking and support those who survive it. From left are Assembly Speaker Rivas, Rodriguez, Committee Chair Nick Schultz, and Andrew Ironside, chief counsel on public safety to the committee. Also present was Assemblymember Tom Lackey.

ing were Assemblymember Tom Lackey from the Lancaster/Palm-dale area and Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas.

Speakers in three panels touched on an overview of the sex work industry and human trafficking, a look at the policing of sex work and law enforcement’s efforts to combat human trafficking, and a review of sex work-related prosecutions and how they impact survivors.

Included were Professor Hannah Garry of the USC Gould School of Law, Tiffany Susz,

a supervising deputy attorney general from the California Attorney General’s office, Long Beach City Councilwoman Tunua Thrash-Ntuk, and Minouche Kandel, senior staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California.

Susz told participants that data collected by the California Department of Justice from 2019 to 2022 shows loitering with intent to commit prostitution decreased each year during that period.

As an example, she said, arrests of Black females from the age range of 18 to 25 totaled 793 in 2019, dropped to 424 in 2020 and 340 in 2021. There were only 279 arrests in this category in 2022.

Numbers of convictions similarly were decreasing, she said, from 172 in 2019, 38 in 2020 and, in 2021 and 2022, fewer than 10 convictions.

California small business advocate tells women in business they need access, opportunity and equity

Dr. Tara Lynn Gray, former director of the California Office of the Small Business Advocate, told 200 guests at a “Women Leading the Way” conference in Pomona last week that every business begins with a vision or “late night ideas that refuse to fade.”

“For millions of women across this nation, that dream is the foundation of their business, their livelihood, their community,” she said. “But dreams cannot grow in isolation. They need access, they need opportunity and they need equity.”

Gray, who was appointed by Gov. Newsom, represented 4.3 million small businesses and for four years directed nearly \$5.3 billion



Dr. Tara Lynn Gray

in resources to support small businesses, told the group at an event presented by the San Gabriel Valley

Regional Chamber of Commerce at Pomona’s Mountain Meadows Golf Course that women entrepreneurs are redefining what is possible.

“Yet even in 2025, too many still face invisible barriers to capital, to contracts, and to true equity,” she said. “Access . . . (is) economic strategy, it means ensuring that a woman with a vision whether in an urban tech hub or a rural town . . . can reach, actually touch the mentorship, the resources, the capital to make her vision possible.”

She said every year government agencies and major corporations collectively invest trillions.

“When local governments use **Women in business... pg. 15**

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Regional Chamber forms first-ever hospitality committee to 'bridge gap' between 2028 Olympics and businesses

Representatives of a start-up group of San Gabriel Valley area restaurants and hotels met in Pomona this month at the region's first-ever Hospitality and Tourism Committee formed by the San Gabriel Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce to "bridge the gap" between the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics Organizing Committee and the chamber.

Lauren James, Board President of the Regional Chamber and communications director of Suburban Water Systems, said the Olympics will bring a lot of opportunity to the entire region which so often gets "cut out."

The meeting, at Vita Italian Bar and Grill at the DoubleTree Hotel in Pomona, was part of the regional chamber's planning activities for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics where chamber CEO Aziz Amiri said numbers are esti-

mated to bring crowds seven times the size of the Super Bowl to the region each day.

James said the chamber is building now "so we can become a player," adding that it is important "to be proactive because all the contracts are going to L.A. businesses right now."

"We're working with the actual committee right now – we met with them today," James said. "We're going to just keep engaging

them, and they're going to have to sit down with the whole committee."

She said members of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass already are engaged with the Olympics organizing committee, and State

Senators Bob Archuleta and Susan Rubio just toured the Olympic facilities.

Amiri said the chamber is work-

ing with L.A. Metro and Metrolink to increase frequency of morning and afternoon trains to Olympics venues, and he said he's talking to Foothill Transit about providing "last mile" transportation from train stations to local hotels.

"This Olympic event is going to be a carless event," Amiri said. "They won't allow any cars to be parked in the venue."

He said Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis is funding Foothill Transit to make Valley Boulevard an expressway from Pomona to El Monte.

"We have the freeways, the Metro station, Ontario Airport," he added. "Ontario Airport is now getting flights from China, from Latin America."

And he told the hotel representatives they can become certified as an Olympic hotel. The chamber will be convening four weekly one-hour sessions with those who sign up to help with the application process.

Christine Garcia, general manager at DoubleTree in Pomona, said she's already working with other hotels in the local community.

"My first thing is if I have overflow for whatever reason, if it's the (LA County) Fair . . . whatever it is, I usually call the hotels that are closest to me," she said, in an effort she called giving back to the community. "We want (the community) to thrive. We want to book as much at our property as a hotel standalone property, and then we want to reach out to the next hotels in the area."

She said the committee approach of working together helps keep the business in the community "because the better that our community and our cities thrive, it comes back to us."

She added she likes "coming together and talking about this as a team."

Garcia said she already has had inquiries from other countries scouting the property as far back as a year ago.



Lauren James

"So that's direct, it's not through LA 28," she said, adding that she has attended LA 28 events.

"I know that all these moving parts are coming all the way out to Ontario and even further than that where they're building venues or bring-

ing in more event space for the Olympics," she said, suggesting that it would be important to have representatives on the committee from all of the local chambers of commerce.

Amiri confirmed his regional chamber is reaching out to all 20 local chambers in the area to share information.

Six Olympics game venues will be located in the San Gabriel Valley.

Others participating in the start-up committee meeting included Denise Bray, director of sales and

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Hospital trauma director tells ‘Peace Walk’ marchers summer gun violence is down

Dr. Michael Jimenez, trauma medical director at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center, told an estimated 100 marchers in the second annual Pomona Peace Walk that over the summer gun violence has gone down.

“Here in Pomona, we definitely see a lot more than I’d like to see, and the part that hurts the most with this is when you talk to a family, talk to a mother or father, you talk to a wife, to a husband, and let them know that their loved ones died, it’s the worst thing on the planet,” he said. “There’s only so much we could do.”

Jimenez said he’s proud of the highly qualified surgeons trained to take care of such devastating injuries.

“But the best work, the work that I feel can be done, is what you guys are doing out in the community,” Jimenez said, adding that he was asked to serve as a board member with Pomona’s Project Hope, a non-profit that works with the challenges of reentry after incarceration.

He said it is organizations like Project Hope and Pomona’s House of Ruth and others who are the

“real heroes” doing “impactful work” in the community.

“I will tell you that I think we are making a dent,” he said.

Jimenez cited statistics showing that in Los Angeles County 200 people died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in 2022, and another 500 were shot and killed in gun-related incidents.

“What you guys are doing there, please don’t stop,” Jimenez said. “We need more awareness, we need more of us out there in the community really preaching peace, really preaching the fact that gun violence doesn’t do anything.”

“So bringing these youth and people of this community to see that there’s a better way of life, there’s a second chance and a third chance, and some of us here have grown up a little rough,” he said. “And now it’s your opportunity to really give back to this community.”

Pedro Payne, violence prevention manager for the City of Pomona and organizer of the event with House of Ruth and Pomona Valley Hospital, said a key goal of the march is to “send a clear message that violence won’t be tolerated.”



Pedro Payne

Pedro Payne, at far right, Pomona’s violence prevention manager, leads 100 marchers across the street this month as they begin the second annual Pomona Peace Walk, this year walking a mile and a half from Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center to Pomona’s House of Ruth.

“Our purpose is to raise awareness about preventing violence in our community,” he said.

Brookelynn Maddox, a team member of Project Hope and coalition manager for the Pomona Community Action for Peace Coalition, said that group is made up of more

than 30 non-profits, community members and other stakeholders all working to address violence prevention and healing across Pomona Valley.

She told participants the group meets monthly to address commu-

Peace Walk... pg. 16

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A little rearranging of the furniture in the lobby entrance to the Pomona Public Library during summer construction involved placing several racks right up front with everything readily available from books for sale from Pomona Friends of the Library to magazines and, of course, copies of the latest La Nueva Voz.



Photos by Renee Barbee
SUPERVISOR HILDA SOLIS PRESENTS CHECK TO POMONA LIBRARY -- Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis sent a check for \$130,000 to the public library at the library's re-opening reception this month. The library re-opened last month after being closed for construction for five months over the summer. Upgrades cost \$6.1 million for a new roof, new lighting, a new HVAC system and removal of an interior wall to allow an open floor plan in the children's room. Funding was from the California State Library and Solis. Pictured, from left, are Library Manager Anita Torres, Pomona Assistant City Manager Mark Gluba, Andrea Moreno representing Solis, and library Youth Services Supervisor Crystal Orosco. Moreno, a resident of Pomona, told guests that Solis wanted to emphasize that "any library is an important place to any child." And she pointed out that the library was hosting a county public hearing the very day of the check presentation, demonstrating the importance of the library to the entire community.



Pomona Planning Manager Ata Khan introduces Natalie Cole, library services bureau chief for the California State Library, who spoke at the Pomona Public Library's re-opening reception this month. Part of her work involves providing consulting services to public libraries and associated groups and organizations.

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Photo by Maricela Moreno

CHAMBER CORNHOLE TOSS AT DERBY ROOM -- About 40 members of the Pomona Chamber of Commerce and guests showed up this month for a "Toss for Success" cornhole tournament (you know, throwing those bean bags into the holes in those slant boards -- teams of two, one point for each bag that lands and stays on the board and three points for each bag that goes through the hole, first team to 21 points wins the round). We're not sure we want to admit what any of the scores were in these pages, but everybody had a good time at a fun, competitive fundraiser at The Derby Room at Pomona's Fairplex. Pictured, from left, are Ron Garner of Inland Empire Fence and Construction, chair of the chamber's ambassador committee and coordinator of the event; Pomona Chamber Board Chair Nef Cortez of Re/Max Galaxy in Diamond Bar; and Chamber Executive Board member Renee Barbee of La Nueva Voz.

PAUSING FOR A PHOTO BACK-DROP PHOTO

-- Taking time out for a photo at the Pomona Chamber's cornhole tournament "Toss for Success" are, from left, Pomona Chamber member and ambassador Maricela Moreno of Pomona's Golden Corral,



Chamber President and CEO Monique Robles, and Chamber Executive Board member Renee Barbee of La Nueva Voz.



CLAREMONT'S 13-YEAR-OLD AUTHOR APPEARS AT BOOK SIGNING -- Abigail Haughton, an eighth-grade student at El Roble Intermediate School in Claremont, signed copies of her book "Treacherous Waters: The Rouge Voyage" at this month's Pomona Valley Authors Meet and Greet at Pomona Public Library. She started working on the book when she was in the fourth grade. It is the story of a family of four who board the ill-fated Titanic and must protect themselves from all the tricks that their best friend plotted against them on board. The book is available on Amazon in both Kindle and paperback editions.

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Photos by Renee Barbee

STATE SEN. SUSAN RUBIO PRESENTS CERTIFICATES -- State Sen. Susan Rubio, at center, presents certificates at this month's Healed Women Heal gala in Pomona. "As a senator, I learn every single day from all of you," Rubio told the group's leaders and called their comments "powerful testimony of those that have gone through what I've gone through." She called their efforts "inspiring" and thanked Tracy Evanson, founder and executive director, for her work which she called "a model of compassion, innovation and resilience." From left are Alex Palmer, the group's program manager; Danni Ramos and Shandelle Carillo, volunteers; Yvonne Croil, Board member; Marriyan Hill, keynote speaker; Rubio, Tracy Evanson, executive director; Essence Guss, executive assistant; Essence LeAnne and LaTasha Jackson, participants and survivors who provided testimony.

THE MANY FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE -- Diamond Bar Women's Club First Vice President Marriyan Hill, keynote speaker at this month's seventh annual Healed Women Heal's gala on the theme "Journey to Freedom," told about 100 guests at Pomona's DoubleTree that domestic violence, and particularly abuse and trauma, "comes in many forms and ways that you don't really think about, including myself and in my own life, and what recovery looks like" even long after the abuse. She recently self-published a book of poetry titled "Life, Love and Loss: A Collection of Poetry," and she is presenting a free open mic the third Saturday each month in Diamond Bar that is open to all ages. Pictured is Kamille Hemsworth representing Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez, at left, presenting Hill with a certificate.



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Women in business... from pg. 6

procurement strategically, an ordinary contract can become extraordinary," Gray said. "That catering deal supports not just one kitchen, but dozens of jobs. That software contract fuels a new tech sector led by women innovators."

She said procurement turns inclusion into local investment.

"And when women-owned businesses have a fair shot at those contracts, through intentional programming . . . communities prosper and jobs multiply," she said, adding that the 4.3 million small businesses in California contribute 7.5 million jobs to the economy.

"The latest (U.S. Small Business Administration) profile report says that 99 percent of the net new jobs created in our economy were created by small businesses," she said.



Lauren James

"Procurement opportunities slip quietly past underserved entrepreneurs. It's why you must get certified. It's why you must be in the databases of the corporations that have opportunities. It's why you must belong to your local chamber. It's why you must take advantage of the free resources that are available to you at your local small business development center or women's business center."

"Equity is about everyone getting what they need to compete fairly," she said, adding that small businesses export \$75 billion from California every year.

"Equity means every woman, no matter her background, can build, grow, and lead," she said. "It's about breaking the invisible ceilings of expectation. It's about reframing

risk as resilience and ensuring that women don't have to overprove what they already embody – excellence."

She said as business leaders get creative and continue to innovate, "those innovations benefit every community – and when we invest in access, we unlock hope . . . and ignite growth."

"To the women entrepreneurs in the room, walk through those doors unapologetically and bring others with you," she said. "Let us all agree to a future where no woman entrepreneur wonders if she'll get a seat at the table because she is building the darn table. Do what you know how to do (and) don't get ready, stay ready."

Another speaker, Anita Ron, president and sole owner of Brite-Works, Inc., a janitorial service provider based in Covina and serving Southern California, Arizona and New Mexico, started her business in 1996 with three vacuum cleaners and \$700.

She said she started the business out of necessity when she was laid off by Marriott Corporation when they were downsizing. She took an \$80,000 home equity line of credit

out on her house.

"Fast forward, I have over 190 employees now," she said. "I became very active in the local chamber, I became very active in every professional organization that I felt that I could affiliate with."

And today, she said she is doing everything from volunteering in the community and coaching others who want to become entrepreneurs.

Her contracts have included everything from the City of Los Angeles to the Super Bowl.

"You can do it, ladies, go for it," Ron said.

Regional Chamber Board President Lauren James, communications director at Suburban Water Systems, told guests she was installed as board president in June with one of her missions for the year focusing on uplifting every woman-owned business.

"Today we gather to celebrate

women who are shaping the future of business in the San Gabriel Valley and beyond," she said, "women who are not only breaking barriers but building bridges for others to cross. We're shattering the glass ceiling."

"As Los Angeles prepares to host a series of mega events, the World Cup, Super Bowl and the Olympics, we stand at a once-

in-a-generation moment of opportunity," she added. "These events will bring billions . . . of dollars in contracts, jobs, and community involvement to our region."

She said women-owned businesses still earn only 66 cents to every dollar earned by their male counterparts.

"So we're focused on closing that gap today," she said. "To all the women here today, you are the innovators, you are the visionaries, and the changemakers leading the way."



Anita Ron



NEW KIWANIS PRESIDENT -- Mitchell Stein, of Stein Team Realty, is introduced last month as the new president of the Pomona Kiwanis Club by outgoing Pomona President Diana Avila at a dinner and installation at the Eagles Lodge in Pomona. Stein was sworn in by Kiwanis Lt. Gov. Gino Elias.

POMONA'S GINO ELIAS INSTALLED AS KIWANIS DIVISION 15 LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR -- Pomona attorney Gino Elias was installed last month as the incoming lieutenant governor of the Cal-Nev-Ha District Division 15 of Kiwanis International in ceremonies at the Eagles Lodge in Pomona during Pomona Kiwanis installation of officers ceremonies. He was installed by Division 15 Secretary Bob Prior of Norco. Pictured presenting a certificate from the City of Pomona to Elias is Pomona City Councilmember Nora Garcia. Elias joined Pomona Kiwanis in 1981. He served as president of the local club from 1988 to 1989, 1990 to 1991, and 2019 to 2023. Kiwanis International is a global community of clubs, members and partners dedicated to improving the lives of children one community at a time.





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Pomona Valley Memorial Park is a nonprofit corporation.

Plug pulled... from pg. 5

ing to an internet search. La Nueva Voz also left a voice mail for Adams at his home in Windsor and sent an e-mail to the account listed for his practice of law.

While La Nueva Voz received no response from ESA by press time, Gluba said he was contacted by the consultant and informed that La Nueva Voz had been “reaching out with questions regarding the fire study.”

“The staff report is the city’s responsibility, and I will be the one to address any of your questions,” he said, adding that “it’s not his (Adams) responsibility to comment on our behalf.”

La Nueva Voz also reached out to Sandoval before the La Verne announcement. He referenced the list of three options in the staff report in a telephone conversation with La Nueva Voz.

“The City of Pomona continues to look at all options as it relates to fire services,” he said.

He declined to respond to questions regarding either the hiring of consultants without an open bidding process or a lack of response by the consulting team when La Nueva Voz attempted to reach out to the consultants directly with questions on their review process.

The city also denied a request from the county fire chief for “supporting documentation” from the city’s consulting team.

“These materials constitute consultant work product prepared for the city’s on-going contract negotiations with the (fire) district and are not publicly available,” City Manager Scott said in a letter to the fire chief dated Sept. 30 and obtained by La Nueva Voz. “As additional information becomes available through our on-going analysis, we will share appropriate information with the district in good faith to support productive discussions.”

She said in the letter the city values its long-standing partnership with county fire.

“While our fiscal challenges may differ, city leadership remains committed to an open and respectful process as we work to determine the most sustainable and equitable path forward for fire protection services in our community,” she added.

The City of Pomona and the Los Angeles County Fire Protection District are two years into a five-year extension of their ongoing

fire services contract that began in 1994.

The fire department has determined that it must change the contract and increase the contract cost in order to secure additional cost recovery for fire services, according to the city’s staff report.

Fire officials gave the city a one-year notice of contract termination in a letter in April, although they agreed to extend the April 2026 deadline following talks with the city. Marrone said in an Aug. 27 letter the proposed new agreement would be for a period of one year effective July 1, 2026, and would include two six-month options to renew.

“This agreement would provide two and a half more months of grace and would establish a full cost recovery and allow the city to continue its fire service analysis during that period,” he said in the letter.

The staff report included in the city council’s Sept. 15 agenda package said the option of Pomona returning to its own fire department could result in savings of more than \$8 million over a 10-year period. The “regional model” with La Verne could yield more than \$35 million in savings over 10 years.

County fire officials first notified the City of Pomona “of its need for full cost recovery” on Nov. 28, 2023 – exactly one year before last year’s Pomona City Council elections at a time political campaigns were just getting under way.

Pomona councilmembers were told by city staff in February that implementation of Measure Y would create an annual general fund operating deficit of \$18.6 million and the general fund balance would be \$89 million in the hole by fiscal year 2035.

Scott told councilmembers in July that the impact of Measure Y was already being felt, with a \$5.5 million deficit in this year’s budget, in which 75 percent goes to public safety including police and fire.

Immediate effects, she said, included freezing 14 police officer positions and dealing with a 3 to 5 percent budget cut across the board for all city departments.

She updated councilmembers at a meeting this month on progress she called “productive” at the “joint ad hoc” group reviewing the option of collaborating with La Verne for fire services. She said that meeting

continued for several hours.

“I developed a shared vision for industry best practices and financial sustainability regarding fire and EMS services, and agreed to meet continually with one team and one vision,” she said.

Scott told councilmembers the group reviewed three options “with a focus on comprehensive review of financial and governance models” for a regionalized fire agency in comparison to projected costs for county fire.

She said at the time the meetings were expected to continue through the end of the year with “strong collaboration” with La Verne.

Each city’s ad hoc committee consisted of each city’s mayor and one additional city councilmember.

Interested in seeing more? The web site address for Emergency Services Advisors is esadvisors.org.

nity safety and organize events.

Kamille Hemsworth, a field representative for Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez, told the group the event was an effort to stand against domestic violence, gun violence and violence against children.

“These are not separate issues, they are deeply connected,” she said. “Domestic violence often leaves children traumatized. Gun violence amplifies the danger for survivors, making homes and neighborhoods less safe. And children who witness or experience violence carry scars that can last a lifetime.”

Peace Walk... from pg. 9

She said Rodriguez “knows this struggle personally, from listening to families across her district.”

“That’s why she’s fighting every day to strengthen protection for



Dr. Michael Jimenez

survivors, for children, and for communities that want nothing more than to live free of fear,” she said. “On behalf of Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez, thank you to the House of Ruth and to every single

one of you here today. Your voice and your footsteps are shaping a safer, more peaceful Pomona. To-

Peace Walk... pg. 17

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Peace Walk... from pg. 16

gether we will turn pain into policy, fear into safety and silence into solidarity.”

And Eva Thiel-Maiz, representing Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis, told the group it was Solis who in 2015 “was one of the great influencers to bring the trauma center here to the Pomona Valley Hospital” and who “championed the Office of Violence Prevention throughout the county.”

“And working together, like the supervisor says, it takes a village and we are the village, so we need to continue that fight to push that effort and to support healthy, safe environments for our communities,” she

added.

Marchers from a handful of organizations in Pomona – including God’s Pantry, Just Us 4 Youth, Parents Anonymous, Foundations of Change and others – walked for about half an hour along Garvey Avenue from Pomona Valley Hospital to House of Ruth, a distance of about a mile and a half, carrying signs and some pushing strollers, to find everything from a resource fair to a taco truck.

The City of Pomona created its new Office of Violence Prevention and Neighborhood Wellbeing two years ago under an initial \$5 million state grant.



Eva Thiel-Maiz



Brookelynn Maddox



Photo by Renee Barbee

Pomona Public Library Foundation President Bree Hsieh, at right, with the help of Lisa Snider, the Mayor's appointee to the Pomona Public Library Board of Trustees, signs copies of her books of poetry at this month's "Pomona Valley Authors Meet and Greet" at the Pomona Public Library, presented by the Pomona Public Library Board of Trustees and sponsored by the Pomona Public Library Foundation. Her book "Days Layers" includes poems delving into nature, its patterns and the breadth of seasons. A second book, "Poems at Half Past Three," explores artists and their works. Both are available at <http://www.bredevonshsieh.com> and proceeds benefit Johah's Superheroism Fund, a memorial scholarship fund for the superheroes of the Pomona Valley.



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RIBBON-CUTTING AT NEW HOME OF PROJECT SISTER -- It was ribbon-cutting time this month at a grand re-opening in new offices for Project Sister Family Services, where a huge crowd was on hand to support the agency that provides support services to victims of rape, child abuse and more. Pictured, fourth from right with the scissors, is Executive Director Michelle Cates. Pomona Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Monique Robles is at far left with Chamber ambassador committee chair Ron Garner of Inland Empire Fence and Construction. Helping with the ribbon, from left, are Pomona City Councilmembers Nora Garcia, Lorraine Canales and Debra Martin with State Sen. Susan Rubio. At far right (out of the picture) is Pomona Chamber Executive Board member Renee Barbee, of La Nueva Voz. The group's rape hotline can be reached at (909) 626-4357 and the child abuse hotline is (909) 622-4155. The group's motto is "You're not alone. It wasn't your fault. We're here to help." Project Sister's new address is 1902 Royalty drive, Suite 280, in Pomona or call (909) 623-1619. For more information, visit project-sister.org.

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Our Perales Family Westmont Memories

Since 1970, our family has been blessed to call the beautiful neighborhood of Westmont our home. In our home we raised three children, each filling the house with laughter, energy, and love. We loved it so much here that we bought our second home in Westmont.

Our backyard became a place of discovery, where little feet learned to swim and where the echoes of playful splashes became part of the soundtrack of our lives. Year after year, this home welcomed family and friends for Christmases, holiday gatherings, and lively Super Bowl celebrations.

It was here that seven wonderful grandchildren were raised, growing up surrounded by cousins, love, and the strong bonds of family. We shared countless dinners, unforgettable parties, and quiet, meaningful moments that made this house not just a home but the heart of our family.

Through the many seasons of life, we have known deep joy and also profound sorrow. The passing of our beloved Jennifer in July left a space that can never be filled. Her memory lives in every corner of this home, in every celebration, and in the hearts of all who loved her. Her spirit continues to remind us of the preciousness of family and the gift of each day together.

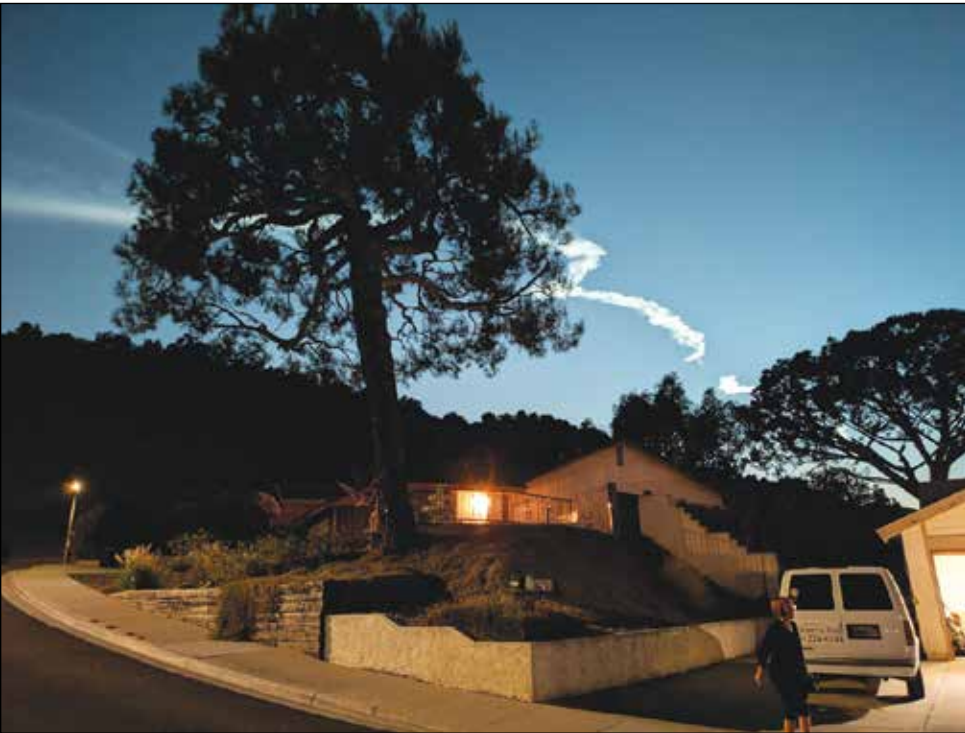
Now, with hearts full of gratitude and a touch of bittersweet emotion, we prepare to say goodbye to this cherished place. We are moving into a new home, carrying with us a lifetime of beautiful memories and the hope of making many more. We look forward to watching our great-grandchildren grow, sharing in their lives for as long as God allows.

We will miss Westmont and all the friends we made through the years.
Angel and Susie Perales



Photos by Stacy Schenkel

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS ACROSS THE COUNTRY -- It was Dia de los Muertos in North Carolina this month with an impressive display in Durham's Duke Chapel, which was built in the center of Duke University after James Buchanan Duke himself walked through a forest with a friend in 1925 and selected the site -- at the highest point -- where he said "it ought to be." La Nueva Voz roving reporter and photographer Stacy Schenkel (OK, she's really La Nueva Voz publisher Jeff Schenkel's oldest daughter) sent in the photos she took after driving half an hour from Chapel Hill on a road trip with her boyfriend, Alan Marcy. The two live outside of Chapel Hill where Stacy, an agriculture major who graduated from Cal Poly Pomona, works with the exotic laboratory animals at the University of North Carolina. The month-long exhibit is free and open to the public through Nov. 2 if anybody wants to book a quick flight back East. Duke University, a private research university, was founded by Methodists and Quakers in the present-day city of Trinity in 1838 and the school moved to Durham in 1892.



SPACEX OVER POMONA -- A SpaceX launch from Vandenberg Space Force Base was visible over Pomona last month as seen in this photo over Westmont of the rocket's exhaust or "contrail" (condensation trail). The Falcon 9 rocket launch on Sept. 29 was for a mission carrying 28 "Starlink" satellites into orbit. The rocket itself was visible -- but just for a moment -- as it soared over the water tank at the top of Westmont.

Upgrade construction under way at Pomona Hope's community garden

Pomona Hope Executive Director Jeff Johannsen told guests at his organization's annual fundraising gala last week that construction for upgrades of the Center Street Community Garden got under way this month and, once completed, will provide much needed urban green space for both plot holders and visitors.



Jeff Johannsen

Speaking at the event this year on the theme of "Roots of Hope," Johannsen said plans for the upgrade of the garden -- which was purchased by the City of Pomona to make it a permanent green space -- have been under way for the past two years with input from both stakeholders and members of the community.

"This new phase of Center Street Community Garden will retain the plot holder model, with plot holders having a choice of in-ground or raised bed gardening," he said. "There will also be a more publicly accessible area that will demonstrate water conservation techniques through water-

wise irrigation and plant selection."

"There will be places to sit and enjoy the garden, and solar lights to increase the hours of accessibility," he added.

Pomona Hope students will continue to have their weekly garden workshops there, learning about topics including the environment, conservation and nutrition.

Also during the past year, Pomona Hope's parent support group has continued to grow, encouraging both parents and community members to participate.

And a college success program has continued to support students, most of whom will be the first in their family to attend college.

Pomona Hope was founded 22 years ago to address the challenges of youth growing up in the city through after school programs, summer enrichment programs and more. It operates in Pomona's First Presbyterian Church. The community garden is located next door at 401 N. Gibbs St., Pomona.

For more information, visit www.pomona-hope.org.

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



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