



La Nueva Voz

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



Pomona Chamber of Commerce



Member

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Pomona council places 'Measure Z' on June ballot to keep youth programs, conserve city funding

By Jeff Schenkel
Publisher

Pomona city councilmembers last month voted unanimously to adopt a resolution to place a measure on the June primary election ballot that would amend the controversial "Measure Y," the original "Pomona Kids First" initiative, to dramatically reduce the measure's cost to the city.

The intent of the new Measure Z would be to make it possible for

the city to continue putting youth programs first but without having to weaken existing vital city services in areas ranging from public works and the library to the police department.

City staff members a year ago reported to councilmembers in its routine 10-year financial forecast that the continuing implementation of Measure Y would impose an "overwhelming and unsustainable impact" on the city's general fund.

City Finance Director Andrew Mowbray, as reported in La Nueva Voz, said at the time that Measure Y would result in an annual operating deficit of \$18.6 million, and the general fund balance would be \$89 million in the hole by fiscal year 2035.

Pomona City Manager Anita Scott told councilmembers last month that Pomona is the only city in Los Angeles County attempting to implement an initiative of this type.

Measure Y, which was approved by a 62 percent to 38 percent vote in the November 2024 election, went into effect in January 2025.

Supporters at the time touted the advantages of kids' programs to the community, and opponents have objected to the plan's method of budgeting by charter amendment and diverting public funding to private groups, backed by organizations outside of Pomona, without accountability.

The voter-approved ballot mea-

sure required amending the City Charter to allocate at least 10 percent of the city's general fund revenues to children and youth programs and services by fiscal year 2030-2031 "in addition to the current funding for children and youth programs."

"Measure Z: Kids First Funding Amendment," which now will appear on the June ballot, according to the city manager's staff report to the city council, "is intended to

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Eight Pomona City Council candidates running for three seats in June primary

Election time in Pomona seems to always find people – and issues – coming out of the woodwork, and this year's June 2 primary is no exception – a total of eight candidates filed papers to run for Pomona City Council before the deadline this month including three new faces, three familiar ones from the past, and two incumbents seeking to hold on to their offices.

Interestingly but perhaps not surprisingly, Measure Y, called the "Pomona Kids First" initiative when it was approved by voters in the November 2024 election, now is influencing the city council races.

(It is also a continuing topic at city council meetings, and councilmembers last month voted to place a new "Measure Z" on the June primary ballot in an attempt to tone down the measure's impact on city finances.)

Do we have your attention so far? In no particular order other than trying to help make some sense of all of this, over in District 3, Councilmember Nora Garcia is seeking reelection with two opponents on the ballot.

One of them, Rita Lopez, who identifies herself on the ballot as an insurance manager, told La Nueva Voz in a telephone interview she works for Kemper Insurance Products, which is mainly in the business of car and life insurance. She said she oversees a team of seven insurance adjusters and is in Pomona all day.

Her grandparents lived here, she has known Pomona her entire life and moved here in 2020.

Then why is she running?

"I see that we've got some financial dif-

Eight running for three seats ... pg. 6

CASA COLINA GALA --

Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare Board Chair Gary Cripe, at left, and Casa Colina CEO Kelly Linden pose with a new robotic exoskeleton at this month's annual "Tribute to Courage" fundraiser in Pomona. The equipment, produced by Ekso Bionics in San Rafael, is designed to be used in a rehabilitation setting to progress neuro-rehab patients so they can "walk out of the device and back into their communities." It is the first U.S. Food and Drug Administration-cleared device of its type for acquired brain injury, stroke, multiple sclerosis and spinal cord injury. It is used to "re-teach" the brain and muscles how to properly walk again. See story page 4.



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ANNUAL 'UNITY' WALK -- Participants in this year's fifth annual Harriet Tubman Unity Walk posed for a group photo this month in front of Downtown Pomona's African American Advisory Alliance before heading out on a mile-long walk to the Harriet Tubman statue in Pomona's Lincoln Park. The annual walk 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. Tubman, who was a 25-year-old slave at the time, walked hundreds of miles leading others to freedom.



POMONA ROTARY PICKS STUDENTS OF THE MONTH -- Members of Pomona Rotary announced their first "student of the month" of 2026 last month in ceremonies at the Youth and Family Club of Pomona Valley. Students selected "have demonstrated perseverance, leadership, and commitment to their future." Pictured, from left, are Rotarian Victor Caceres of The Club, Rotary President Monique Robles, "Student of the Month" Mattias Carney, of Pomona's School of Extended Educational Options, and his mom, Sarah Carney. Not pictured were winners Emmanuel Vargas of Garey High School, Kaiden Nguyen of Pomona High School, Estefania Deniz of the School of Arts and Enterprise, Natalie Zelaya of Diamond Ranch High School, Zahraa Harb, of the City of Knowledge, Jackie Martinez-Castro of Park West High School, and Estuardo Alexander Ross Samayoa, of Fremont Academy.



The Harriet Tubman statue as it appears in Pomona's Lincoln Park.

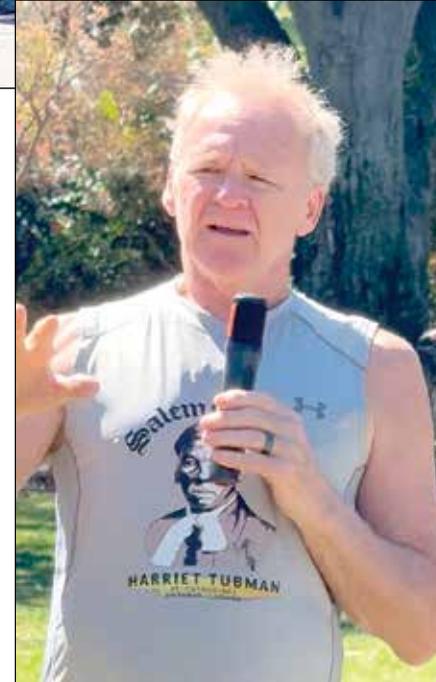


Photo courtesy of Nef Cortez
POMONA'S RAY ADAMYK -- Ray Adamyk, owner of Pomona's Spectra Company, collaborated with the City of Pomona to fund and produce the Harriet Tubman statue. Pictured is Adamyk speaking at the event.

Project Sister to hold community event during Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Project Sister Family Services is scheduled to host "Together in Teal: Step Up for Survivors," a community event next month in Rancho Cucamonga aimed at raising awareness during "Sexual Assault Awareness Month" about sexual violence, uplifting survivors and connecting community members with supportive resources.

The group also is seeking community partners and vendors interested in hosting a table at the event using interactive activities encouraging participation, conversation or reflection, such as crafts, educational games or guided discussion

prompts.

The event will be held from 9 a.m. to noon, Saturday, April 25, and a walk is set to begin at 10 a.m. in Central Park, 11200 Base Line Road, Rancho Cucamonga.

For more information, call (909) 623-1619, ext. 111, or visit the web site at www.projectsister.org.

Project Sister provides compassionate crisis intervention, counseling, prevention education, a 24-hour "Sexual Assault Crisis Hotline," and support services for survivors of sexual assault and abuse in Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties.



Pomona Unified School District is shining a spotlight on an extraordinary student whose drive, humility, and dedication are turning heads. Meet Anabelle—a standout scholar and student-athlete who has achieved the incredible, earning her high school diploma while also completing her Associate of Arts degree in Social Justice Studies at just 17 years old.

Anabelle's educational journey began in Pomona Unified, where she attended Arroyo Elementary School, Cortez Magnet School of Mathematics and Science, and now Ganesha High School. Throughout her years, she has consistently challenged herself academically while remaining grounded and focused on her goals. Her path to this achievement began early in high school when she joined the Upward Bound program as a freshman. The program introduced her to college readiness and opened the door to opportunities like dual enrollment and special admit courses at Mt. San Antonio College. Motivated by the opportunity to earn both high school and college credit, Anabelle embraced a rigorous schedule filled with Honors, AP, and college-level courses.

Driven by curiosity and a passion for understanding people, Anabelle chose to pursue Social Justice Studies, sparked by her interest in psychology and how the mind works. Balancing high school and college coursework was no easy task, often requiring long nights to complete assignments to the best of her ability. Outside of academics, Anabelle found balance and motivation on the softball field, where playing with her travel team helped her recharge and stay focused. Her commitment extends beyond the classroom, as she is also a key member of the Ganesha Varsity Softball team, demonstrating leadership, discipline, and teamwork both on and off the field.

Ganesha teacher and softball coach Trish Joines, who has known Anabelle for the past seven years, describes her as an exceptional student whose determination and integrity consistently stand out. She shares that Anabelle's ability to balance a demanding academic schedule while maintaining a positive, focused mindset speaks volumes about her character. Whether managing late nights of coursework or staying dedicated to practices and games, Anabelle continues to approach every challenge with maturity and purpose—an accomplishment that reflects her resilience and strong work ethic. Ganesha High School Principal Joseph Biagioni shared, "Anabelle is making history as the first student from PUSD to graduate high school with a college degree. Her dedication and success reflect not only her hard work but also the opportunities our Dual Enrollment and Early College programs provide for students to reach their full potential."

At the heart of her journey is a strong support system, and she credits her family as her biggest source of encouragement through every challenge and success. This milestone represents not only academic success, but also a realization of her potential—proving that with determination and belief in oneself, anything is possible. Looking ahead, Anabelle plans to attend the University of La Verne, where she will major in Physics and continue her softball career as a committed student-athlete. With aspirations of becoming an engineer, she hopes to one day work with organizations like NASA or SpaceX, and may pursue a master's degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Her advice to other students is simple: believe in yourself, stay determined, and surround yourself with people who support and uplift you.

Her family shares immense pride in all she has accomplished—from perfect attendance to excelling in rigorous coursework—describing her as independent, determined, and continuously inspiring. Pomona Unified School District celebrates Anabelle for her outstanding achievement, resilience, and commitment to excellence. She is a shining example of what is possible when passion meets perseverance—and her journey is just getting started.



AMERICAN HEART HEALTH MONTH --

In recognition of American Heart Health Month last month, five cardiologists and specialist surgeons from Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center scooped ice cream at Bert & Rocky's Cream Co. in Claremont to raise awareness of heart disease, which remains the number one killer of American adults. Pictured from left are Eric Sechrist, DO, emergency medicine; Nitanth Vangala, MD, interventional cardiology; Kathy Soderlund, RN, cardiac surgery nurse; Michael LaTurner, NP, lung cancer nurse practitioner navigator; and Dongning Zhang, MD, thoracic surgery. A portion of the evening's proceeds were donated to the hospital's Stead Heart and Vascular Center through the Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center Foundation.



Photo courtesy of Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center

Casa Colina celebrates its past, plans for the future

If you ask Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare Board Chair Gary Cripe to rank the Pomona facility with others nationwide, he'll tell you he thinks "we're the best."

In an exclusive interview with La Nueva Voz before this month's annual "Tribute to Courage Gala" fundraiser at Pomona's Sheraton Fairplex Conference Center, he put it in perspective.

"I think we have no peers, in my judgment, west of the Mississippi," he said.

Cripe said Casa Colina is in the same category as Shirley Ryan AbilityLab, "which used to be the Chicago Rehabilitation Institute in Chicago," and with Craig Hospital, a center for neurorehabilitation in Colorado.

He based that evaluation on Casa Colina's research institute "and our translational research, which means we try not to just do academic research, we try to do research that will benefit our patients."

"And I think that's unique for a hospital our size," he added.

The theme of this year's "Tribute to Courage" was a celebration of the hospital's 90th anniversary, or a "90-year legacy of excellence in specialized medical and rehabilitation care."

Cripe, who has served on the board for the past 18 years and is in his third year as chairman, looked back on the milestone of that 90-year history.

"It means that this organization has evolved over the last 90 years from a center that treated polio and other crippling diseases to a place now where we treat primarily people with strokes, with traumatic brain injury, and we use the combination of science, compassion and courage to deliver terrific outcomes for these patients," he said.

And patients who are there for rehabilitation are required to do "at least three hours of real hard rehabilitative work every day."

"We have a full continuum of care that takes patients from moment of injury through hopefully their transition back to home and with a life they could live with terrific dignity," he added.

Cripe said Casa Colina offers a "transitional living center" that takes patients from a point of rehabilitation to the point where they are going to transition back home.

"And we actually have facilities to allow their families to work with them so that they can get back to as close to their life before their injury when they leave the hospital," he said. "We're very proud of what we're doing."

Casa Colina CEO Kelly Linden called the hospital's 90-year history an "incredible legacy, the patients that we've served, the physicians, our clinicians, all that have come together to provide really extraordinary care."

She told La Nueva Voz guests at the event would hear "some re-

markable stories."

"They're stories of perseverance, of courage, and it really is who we are," she added. "It's our ability to help people, to bring people hope and to really help them advance in their journey."

"We have a beautiful campus and we are providing services for inpatient rehabilitation, for outpatient therapies, we have a post-acute service and children's program," Linden said. "And just the programs that we provide for brain injury and spinal cord injury are exceptional."

"But we're really excited about our future because we will be expanding – we will be bringing new buildings onto the campus, we're actually going to be building a parking structure across the street with the ability to connect and have access for our patients and our staff and employees," she said, explaining that a "sky bridge" crossing the street was part of the plan.

"And we're going to be expanding out into the communities," she added. "So . . . a lot of exciting things (are) underway."

Linden said Casa Colina provides services for an orthopedic injury, an athletic injury, or a neurological injury.

"Individuals will come to our inpatient services – they may have

New Pomona Public Library Foundation executive director hits the ground running

When Megan Gearhart moved to Pomona, she said the first place she went was the Pomona Public Library.

"I found a book and a quiet corner and read for hours," she said.

And now, decades later, as introduced in last month's La Nueva Voz, she is the Pomona Public Library Foundation's first-ever part time executive director.

Also a former Pomona Public Library board of trustees president, she'll now work to help the foundation "meet institutional goals and . . .

protect its institutional memory," according to Foundation Board President Bree Devones Hsieh.

"The Pomona Library has met so many needs in my life – books



Megan Gearhart

for reading, access to computers for job searches and resumes, access to research materials, as well as peace and quiet, and now I get to take my son there," Gearhart said.

"Public places like the library are crucial for our well-being," she

said, adding that her new role "answers my question of how I might give back to this institution that has meant so much to me over the years."

Since stepping into her new role in January, she said she has already partnered with the Friends of the Pomona Public Library to add crochet classes, brought back the "Homework Club" with more than 70 tutors signed up to work with students, "gifted" books and snacks to "Ms. Crystal" in the children's library, and more, all with community support.

Looking ahead, she said the foundation has agreed to fundraise for a new cabin on the children's library patio, and the group is partnering with the Pomona Girl Scouts to build it. They project a total cost of \$10,000 to complete the work.

The foundation also is in the process of funding the "Patio Refresh Project," a \$100,000 project to properly refurbish the atrium patios with refinished floors, replacing the old "flashing" and providing new furniture and art to beautify all three patios.

And the group is continuing to raise funds to support the after-school homework club and the summer excursions, as well as investing in more technology upgrades and special collections.

Donations can be monthly, a special gift for a specific project, or a sponsorship at the group's June 4 gala.

For more information, call (909) 753-9768, e-mail pplfoundation@gmail.com, or visit the web site at pomonalibraryfoundation.org.



POLIO BRACES -- Pictured on display at the Casa Colina Hospital annual "Tribute to Courage" gala are a child's braces from the 1930s, illustrating Casa Colina's origins as a home for children with polio.

a stroke, they may have spinal cord injury, brain injury, or other debilitating injury or illness," she said. "So we are really here to provide those rehabilitation services that other organizations just don't have the complexity and the ability to deal with that type of complex need of our individuals that we serve."

Some 700 supporters attended the event. Proceeds support free and subsidized patient care at Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare.

Measure Z on June ballot... from pg. 1

stabilize funding levels, preserve the city's fiscal stability, clarify legal requirements and ensure continued investment in Pomona's children and youth."

The measure will require a simple majority for approval.

"I think the most important thing really comes down to the fact that . . . the funding mechanism that is set up currently by Measure Y is not sustainable," said Councilmember Steve Lustró. "It sends the city on a road to insolvency or bankruptcy if we don't change the funding mechanism."

"I've said it up here many times during my seven plus years on the council that I would never vote for something that would send the city down that road and affect people and affect services that are currently provided to the community," he added. "So, I believe that this is something that needs to be done."

Lustró pointed out that while it is true Measure Y was passed by 62 percent of the voters, "there was no information that was provided to the community during the campaign . . . which was a citizens' initiative, not a city initiative, that showed what impacts Measure Y was going to have on the city financially."

Mayor Tim Sandoval said he did not support Measure Y, but he called it "a healthy democracy where somebody has a view, a belief that we need to invest in children."

"Where the problem lies, in my

view, is that it did not take into consideration the impact on the entire organization," Sandoval said. "And as elected officials, while we certainly want to have a focus on children and families, the city government has multiple services that it provides in order to ensure . . . those both indirectly and directly impact children and families."

"Whether it's Y or Z, it's important that it's successful," Sandoval said. "It's important that it shows that by investing in children, we have better long-term social and economic outcomes. But if it fails, what message does that send to other cities who are even contemplating or even thinking about doing this?"

He cited Oakland as an example where residents approved a 10 percent measure, "and there were real impacts to the Oakland city budget – and voters went back and they actually changed it."

"You can be right and say, 'this is for the kids' – this is great, but if the city fails, we have all failed," he added.

"But if we can still find a pathway to support children and young people and still protect city services, that is a win," Sandoval said.

Councilmember Nora Garcia agreed.

"While I want to fund youth programming, while 'Kids First' is a noble endeavor, we cannot afford for the city to fail because if the city fails, Measure Y will fail," Garcia said. "And I will not

bankrupt the city . . . that has been my stance from the beginning."

"I also do not support Measure Y, to be perfectly frank," she added. "I don't like the idea of giving tax dollars to non-profits . . . I just want to make it very clear – while I support the idea of 'Kids First,' I cannot support something that may bankrupt the city."

She moved to adopt the resolution.

The city already has set aside more than \$9 million to the "Children and Youth Fund" required by Measure Y, according to the staff report.

And the funding of all of this under Measure Y initially required allocating 2 percent of general fund revenues by January 2025, a level that increased to 5 percent in fiscal year 2025-26 and would increase another 1 percent each year until it reaches 10 percent – a level that clearly "creates a substantial burden on the city's finances," the report said.

The proposed amendment in Measure Z would instead allocate an amount equal to 10 percent of the city's local "Bradley-Burns" sales and use tax revenues, rather than a percentage of general fund revenues.

City figures show general fund revenues of \$163.1 million for the 2025-26 fiscal year. As an example, 10 percent of that (as would be required in 2030) would be \$16.3 million under Measure Y.

Pomona received between \$22 and \$24 million in Bradley-Burns funds over the last three

years "actual" figures were available (2022-2023, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025), according to city figures. Under Measure Z, 10 percent of Bradley-Burns at roughly this same level would be about \$2.3 million.

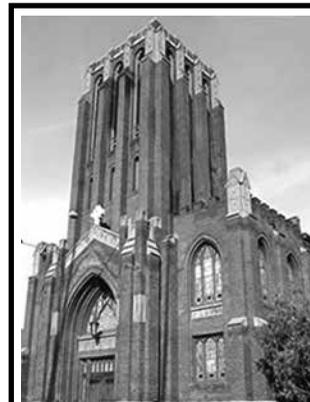
(The Bradley-Burns Uniform Local Sales and Use Tax Law, a cornerstone of California's tax system, was enacted in 1955 to standardize local sales tax collection across the state. It allows cities and counties to impose a tax on the sale or use of tangible personal property, which is collected by the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration and distributed to local governments.)

Scott told councilmembers last July that at that point, Measure Y impacts already in place included freezing 14 police officer positions (previously budgeted), along with a 3 to 5 percent budget cut across the board for all city departments. More recently, the impact of Measure Y has surfaced

in connection with the city's ongoing contract with the Los Angeles County Fire Department. The city has been reviewing options for alternative service providers because of its struggles in meeting a cost increase being proposed by the county in negotiations.

More than a dozen speakers lined up at the Feb. 23 council meeting, either supporting Measure Y or Measure Z. Most of the Measure Z supporters were city employees representing a variety of departments emphasizing the need to strike a balance between kids' programs and maintaining city services from adequate staffing at the counter in Pomona City Hall to safety measures like maintaining traffic signs and crosswalk re-painting to provide safety for pedestrians.

The vote by councilmembers to place the measure on the ballot came after a series of seven informational meetings throughout the city over a 45-day period.



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Eight running for three seats... from pg. 1

facilities ahead," she said. "If we don't pass Measure Z, we will be insolvent and my history is volunteering with non-profits."

She said she has been able to turn around non-profits financially and wants to apply those skills to the city council, adding that her three main interests are budget, safety and a beautiful city.

But she stopped short of taking a position for or against Measure Z, instead leaving it up to the voters. She did say, however, she was not in support of Measure Y the way it was written because it did not take into account infrastructure.

A name from the past running for council in District 3 is activist Veronica Cabrera, a regular speaker at Pomona City Council meetings and an unsuccessful candidate for mayor in the March 2024 primary.

Mayor Tim Sandoval received more than 50 percent of the vote that time around, so he did not have to compete in the November runoff. He had 7,858 votes and Cabrera had 1,716 votes in a four-candidate field.

"I want to bring a new city management, (a) people-centered approach based on austere and efficient public spending practices," she said when asked by La Nueva Voz to summarize why she is running.

Incumbent Garcia told La Nueva Voz she's running "because the job's not finished."

"I want to continue standing beside and in front of my community in today's political climate," she said. "For example, as part of the Immigrant Community Ad Hoc, I have advocated for our most vulnerable community members and I look forward to continuing the work."

Things look like they'll be warming up a bit down in District 2 where Councilmember Victor Preciado likely will be holding onto his hat. First, Jacky Elizalde, a former field representative

for Congresswoman Norma Torres, speaking of hats, has thrown hers into the ring.

Elizalde tried to unseat Preciado in the 2022 campaign, but lost in her attempt by 107 votes (1,216 to 1,109 was the final count).

Her Facebook page said her campaign is "about the families, workers, and neighbors who have too often been misrepresented and deserve to have a real voice at City Hall."

But there's more! Samantha Zavala-Angulo is also running for Preciado's seat. And while she hasn't been a familiar face openly in Pomona political circles, she's been around for a while.

For example, a quick internet search showed she graduated from Pomona's Fremont Academy of Engineering and Design in 2020, where she was a "Bright Prospect" student (Bright Prospect is a Pomona non-profit focusing on helping high school students getting into and graduating from college) and a Bright Prospect "crew leader."

Zavala-Angulo confirmed that information in an e-mail conversation with La Nueva Voz, and added she also was accepted into UC Berkeley where she studied political science and economics "before committing and focusing on family and work in Pomona."

She told La Nueva Voz she is "the daughter of an immigrant family that taught me the value of hard work, perseverance and community."

"I've spent years organizing alongside youth and families to strengthen our neighborhoods and bring real investment to Pomona," she added.

And she said she is running to expand affordable housing programs, increase investment in youth and families, strengthen community and public safety, and guarantee transparency and accountability at city hall.

She is listing her occupation on

the ballot statement as "youth advocate / organizer," and her own LinkedIn.com profile says she is a "general consultant at Pomona Kids First."

There's that "Measure Y" getting involved in the city council election again, since Measure Y on the November 2024 ballot was called the "Pomona Kids First" initiative.

And that committee name is still used in required periodic filings with the Pomona City Clerk's office disclosing financial receipts and expenditures.

She is also listed as a board member on the Gente Organizada web site. The local non-profit operates a youth center in Pomona and is involved in parent organizing and economic justice, according to the web site. Representatives of the group were proponents of Measure Y two years ago during the campaign.

But she stopped short of clarifying in the e-mail conversation whether she would be supporting or opposing Measure Z.

Preciado told La Nueva Voz that as a councilmember for the past eight years "we have brought District 2 the service and attention it deserves."

"We also have established the resources and systems to make the district and its residents thrive into the future," he added.

In District 5, City Councilmember Steve Lustro decided not to seek reelection to a third term after serving for nearly eight years.

He did, however, endorse Yvonne Cobarrubias for the position who, he said, has been a resident of Pomona for nearly 30 years.

Lustro said he is "impressed with Yvonne's energy level and her desire to make her neighborhood and our community better."

"She is not afraid to tackle challenging issues," he said.

Her campaign, according to her bio, is focused on areas including

enhancing community policing, improving neighborhood infrastructure, and promoting fiscal responsibility.

And one more familiar face will also be on the ballot in District 5 – Elliott Rothman, former councilmember and mayor, who identified himself on the ballot as "businessman / consultant."

Rothman served as mayor from 2008 to 2016 when Sandoval took over the gavel. He served as District 5 councilmember for 12 years before that.

"I'm running for city council to be the voice of working families of Pomona," he told La Nueva Voz. "Experience matters and I have the experience to get the job done."

In other endorsements, Mayor Sandoval told La Nueva Voz this month he is supporting Preciado, Garcia and Cobarrubias.

Sacramento and Washington
Pomona's Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez, a Democrat, is up for re-election this time with only one challenger, Rafaela Romero, a Republican and a resident of Ontario.

And State Sen. Susan Rubio, a Democrat, is running again in a contested race against two candidates – Mike Netter, a Republican, of Covina, identified on the ballot as a small business owner, and R.R. (Robert Rene) Jimenez, identified on the ballot only as "father" with no political party preference stated. He is a resident of West Covina.

Congresswoman Norma Torres, a Democrat, is running against small businessman and Republican Mike Cargile of Pomona and Democrat WH R. Lane, a resident of Ft. Irwin in San Bernardino County.

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Soroptimist fundraiser set for April in Claremont

Soroptimist of Pomona Claremont will hold "A Timeless Celebration: 80 Years of Making a Difference" fundraiser next month at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Claremont.

The event is scheduled for 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 7 at

the hotel, located at 555 W. Foothill Blvd., Claremont. "Opportunity" tickets and silent auction items will be available.

Proceeds will benefit local charities and provide awards for women and girls in the community.

Admission is \$50 per person and payment can be sent via Zelle to sipomona.claremont@soroptimist.net.

For information, contact Linda at (909) 510-0091 or visit the web site at sipomona-claremont.org.

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Athens Services

Compost, Community, and the Food Cycle

By Bianca Ustrell, Lopez Urban Farm

At Lopez Urban Farm in Pomona, we think a lot about what happens to food after we eat. Food does not just end at the plate; scraps, peels, leftovers, and yard waste all continue in a cycle that either becomes part of the problem or the solution. Through our partnership with Athens Services, we are working to shift that mindset and show what it looks like when a community takes responsibility for its organic waste and turns it back into something useful. This work is grounded in a simple idea: food should come full circle and what grows from the soil should return to it. Instead of sending organic waste to the landfill, where it creates harmful emissions, we can compost it and use it to rebuild healthy soil right here in our own neighborhoods. This is the sustainable cycle we are trying to make visible and accessible to the Pomona community every day.

Our approach to accomplishing this through our community partnership is through education. At the farm, we teach people how to properly separate their waste to ensure there is no contamination and green waste can turn into compost. Through programs like Junior Farmers, gardening classes, and our regular volunteer days, we walk participants through the basics, such as what goes in the green organics bin, what does not, and why it matters. These are small practices, but they add up. When people understand how to sort their waste at home, they become part of a much larger system that supports the environment and their community.

Our Junior Farmers program introduces young people to these ideas early on. Kids learn that food scraps are not trash, and how organic materials break down over time and turn into something that can help grow more food. In our gardening classes, we go deeper into soil health, and the role compost plays in supporting strong, productive plants. During volunteer days, community members get firsthand experience turning compost, working the soil, and seeing the process up close. It is not just theory, it is something you can touch, smell, and understand in a tangible way.

Athens Services supports this work by providing compost resources and trash source separation education that help us keep this cycle going. The compost we receive is used throughout the farm and shared with the community. It feeds our garden beds, supports our crops, and becomes a tool for education. People can see the difference that healthy soil makes and start to understand why composting is worth the effort. One of the most important parts of this partnership is how it connects directly to our neighbors and community. All the green waste and food scraps we dispose of in the green organics' containers are picked up by Athens Services and taken to their American Organics facility where all the green waste is churned into compost. Once it becomes compost, it is brought back to Pomona through Athens Services' Annual Compost Giveaways and

compost deliveries to our farm. This partnership is indeed full circle, beginning in our homes and making its way back to our community to help us grow food and plants.

On any given day, people from the Pomona community stop by the farm to drop off their food scraps. Over time, those materials break down into nutrient-rich compost that we can use to grow more food. What makes this special is that it is not a one-way system. People who contribute their food waste often return home with finished compost to use in their own gardens. Whether they are growing food in the backyard, a few pots, or a small community plot, they can take part in the full cycle. They see how their actions at home connect to something bigger and this direct exchange builds a stronger sense of ownership and care.

Compost is also a key part of regenerative farming. Instead of pulling nutrients out of the soil and leaving it depleted, we focus on building the soil up over time. Compost helps the soil hold water, supports beneficial microorganisms, and improves overall structure. This is especially important in urban environments where soil is often compacted or lacking nutrients. By adding compost back into the land, we are restoring its ability to support life. This approach is about working with the land, not against it. It is about recognizing that healthy soil is the foundation of a healthy food system. When we invest in the soil, we are investing in our ability to grow food, support biodiversity, and create more resilient communities.

The partnership between Lopez Urban Farm and Athens Services shows what is possible when systems and people come together. Waste management does not have to feel distant or disconnected, it can be local, visible, and community-driven.

When people understand their role in the process, they are more likely to participate and take responsibility for their impact.

As we move into Earth Month, this work feels especially important. It is easy to think of environmental issues as something far away or too big to tackle. But change can start with something as simple as separating your food scraps at home. It can start with showing up to a volunteer day, taking a class, or bringing your waste to a place where it can be reutilized for beneficial use.

At Lopez Urban Farm, we are building a system that reflects our values. We believe in taking care of the land, supporting our neighbors, and creating opportunities for people to learn and participate. With the support of Athens Services, we can turn everyday actions into something meaningful. Together, we are showing that even in a city, it is possible to create a living, working food cycle that gives back to the soil and to each other.





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Photo by Renee Barbee

BURLINGTON OPENS NEW STORE IN POMONA -- Burlington, a family favorite for everything from suits to suit cases and more, opened its new store in Pomona with a ribbon-cutting this month. The store also partnered with adoptaclassroom.org to present a \$5,000 donation to nearby Washington Elementary School in Pomona. Pictured cutting the ribbon is store manager Lareina Ibarra with Pomona City Councilmember Nora Garcia and, well, a whole lot of Pomona Police officers looking on. The off-price retailer, based in New Jersey, has more than 1,100 stores in 46 states and Puerto Rico. Burlington of Pomona is located at 606 E. Holt Ave.



POMONA'S MERCADO BROTHERS WIN GOLD MEDALS IN COLORADO -- Daniel Mercado, at left, and Damian Mercado both won gold medals last month at the 2026 USA Boxing International Open held Feb. 7 - 14 in Pueblo, CO. Daniel competed in the Elite Male division at 165 pounds, and Damian fought in the Intermediate Male division at 101 pounds. Damian was scheduled to compete late last month at the 2026 National Silver Gloves tournament in Independence, MO, representing California in his region. Daniel was headed to the 2026 California Men's Golden Gloves tournament in Pasadena earlier this month. Their dad, Ernesto "Tito" Mercado, is an undefeated American professional boxer himself with an 18-0 record with 17 knockouts. He signed with Eddie Hearn's (Matchroom Boxing), a global promoter based in the United Kingdom. The brothers represent G2G Boxing Club, 637 W. Holt Ave., Pomona.

First Latina president set to take the reins at Cal Poly Pomona

The California State University (CSU) Board of Trustees has appointed Cal State Monterey Bay President Vanya Quiñones to serve as president of California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, making her the eighth president of the Pomona campus and the first Latina to lead the institution.

“I am profoundly honored to be chosen to lead Cal Poly Pomona, become part of its long and impressive history and contribute to its future vision,” Quiñones said. “I am drawn to Cal Poly Pomona’s strong focus on measuring success by the opportunities it creates and the impact it has on students, families and the surrounding community. I welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with the campus community to support the continued success of the institution and advance its mission for years to come.”

“Dr. Quiñones is an innovative and data-driven decision maker who



Vanya Quiñones

aligns institutional priorities with student needs to support immediate progress and long-term stability,” said Diego Arambula, vice chair of the CSU Board of Trustees and chair of the Cal Poly Pomona Presidential Search Committee. “Under her leadership at Cal State Monterey Bay, the university has thrived, and the committee is confident that her record of success will continue in service to Cal Poly Pomona.”

Quiñones’ 30-year career in education as a scientist, researcher and academic administrator has been centered in student success and diversity in the arts and sciences.

As president of Cal State Monterey Bay since 2022, Quiñones has led the university through a period of growth, achieving a nearly 30 percent rise in enrollment growth after years of enrollment declines. She has supported and fostered that growth by expanding opportunities, guidance and clear pathways, including adding more experiential learning opportunities and implementing an institutional mentor program for all undergraduates. Under her leadership, the university also improved its budget outlook and increased research funding and philanthropic giving.

Prior to joining the California State University system, Quiñones was provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs at Pace University in New York, where she had oversight of all academic and student-related academic offices and personnel as well as information technology. She also held the rank of full professor in the Department of Psychology.

For 21 years at the City University of New York - Hunter College, she served as an assistant, associate and full professor in the Department of Psychology before being appointed to serve as the chair of the department. She was later promoted to the role of associate provost for student success and retention.

While there, she brought in more than \$25 million in funding from the National Institutes of Health, private foundations and the U.S. Department of Education, much of which was dedicated to supporting the work of underrepresented minorities.

A neurobiologist, biopsychologist and noted researcher who has published more than 70 peer-reviewed papers, Quiñones was one of a handful of research pioneers who described gender differences in the brain and helped change the course of future research in that area.

Quiñones earned a bachelor of science in biology and a master’s degree in cell biology from the University of Puerto Rico, and a doctorate in neurobiology and physiology from Rutgers University.

She will assume the university presidency on July 1.

House of Ruth sets ‘Stride to end the cycle’ 5k for May

Pomona’s House of Ruth, a non-profit domestic violence agency, will hold its “Stride to end the cycle: 5K and Fun Run” on Saturday, May 2, at Damien High School in La Verne.

The event, held during Mental Health Awareness Month, highlights the connection between mental wellness and domestic violence while raising critical funds to support House of Ruth’s emergency shelter and restorative services for survivors of domestic abuse and their families.

The event begins with registration at 7:30 a.m. and continues until 11 a.m. Participants of all ages are welcome and may walk or run at their own pace. Vendors, live music, a DJ and an “opportunity drawing” will be included.

For information, to register, or for sponsorship opportunities, visit www.houseofruthinc.org or e-mail development@houseofruthinc.org.



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Pantera Elementary one of three schools nationally recognized for ‘Say it Now’

By Joseph Shim, Jingtong Yang, Kaylee Gee and Vida Enriquez

Pantera Elementary School in Diamond Bar was one of three schools nationally recognized in December for its involvement in the "Say it Now" movement, founded by the late Walter Green, which promotes expressing gratitude immediately.

Sixth grade students at Pantera created special webpages to share gratitude with a chosen family member who made a difference in their lives. Jingtong, Kaylee, and Vida volunteered to share their work nationally to inspire others.

Vida Enriquez wrote her page for her dad, noting the positive emotional impact of sharing her gratitude. Kaylee Gee created her project for her mom, emphasizing the importance of showing thanks and planning to share it on Mother's Day. Jingtong Yang expressed gratitude for his three sisters – Nicole, Elsa, and Ella – highlighting their funny moments and happy memories.

Posted on "Say it Now's" official Instagram account (https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUYUtZmES8B/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet), they highlight the students' work to inspire others.

"Kids should always show gratitude to their loved ones because they have done so much for them. You should not only show gratitude on special days, but every day. I wrote this website for my dad because he has always been there for me, and I just wanted to share it."



SAY IT NOW! -- Three students from Pantera Elementary School in Diamond Bar were recognized by Pomona Unified School District Board members this month for receiving national honors working with the "Say it Now!" program. The students, pictured in front, from left, are Vida Enriquez, Kaylee Gee, and Jingtong Yang. At rear, from left, are PUSD Board member Arturo Jimenez, Pantera Principal Lacey Lemus, Board members Tamara Gonzalez, Board President Dr. Lisa Nashua, Patricia Tye, Dr. Roberta Perlman, Pantera teacher Joseph Shim, and PUSD Supt. Darren Knowles.

Vida Enriquez, 6th grade

Vida's Reflection: "I gave my Gratitude page to my dad on Christmas. It made my dad very emotional. He was happy to have me as his daughter. I was glad to have a father who appreciates what I do for him and what he does for me. It made me happy to see him joyful."

"When there is someone you love who has done so much for you in your life, you would probably want to do something to show thanks. This gratitude project is to show that person how much they

mean to you. It's to help that person know that you are grateful for the things they did for you. My mom has been an important part of my life, so I want to show her how thankful I am. I think other people should share their gratitude to that one person that has been there for them."

Kaylee Gee, 6th grade

"There is a reason why people say things about gratitude – whether it is for Thanksgiving or a 'Say It Now' project. The reason we do this is to express our feelings to people about the good times. Think about

the times they made you laugh, or the memories you enjoyed. What were some things you liked about each other? A trio of people that I'm grateful for are Nicole, Elsa and Ella, who are my sisters. The reason I'm grateful for them is because they have funny moments, and happy memories. Send them to a park and they'll have fun. Although Ella and Elsa might look the

same, one of them might give you a sticker as a gift with the other two playing games together. Nicole can get silly when she least expects it. Just take a picture of a funny pose and she'll be sure to laugh with you."

Jingtong Yang, 6th grade

Published on YouTube, these students were recognized by Pomona Unified School District board members at their meeting this month. Walter Green's new book "The Gratitude Express" was gifted to classrooms across the country to inspire action.

The book follows the journey by train of Daniel, a young journalist on his way to visit his ailing grandfather, in what becomes a life-altering voyage.

The "Say It Now" movement was founded by Green, a former CEO who lived in San Diego. He once took a year-long journey throughout the U.S. to visit 44 people who significantly impacted his life.

His first book, "This is the Moment," stressed the importance of expressing feelings for others.

For more information, visit justsayitnow.org.

Editor's Note: Joseph Shim is a sixth grade teacher at Pantera Elementary School in Diamond Bar. His three co-authors are students in his class.



Youth Day was celebrated at Prince of Peace Church, I.C.I. in Pomona this month. The youth members of the church were recognized on this special day for their commitment and perseverance when it comes to outreach services. One of the many outreach programs they participate in is visiting with senior citizens in a recovery program. "We think we are bringing a little joy to the elderly, but in reality, it is us who end up feeling joyful and blessed to have spent time with them," says youth president Rebecca Arreguin, center. Prince of Peace Church, I.C.I. is located at 895 E. 7th St., Pomona. For information regarding the church's outreach program, call (909) 750-0331.

POMONA ROTARY PICKS THIS YEAR'S SPEECH CONTEST WINNERS

-- Winners were chosen this month in Pomona Rotary's annual Rotary District 5300 "four way test speech contest," this year on the theme "Unite for Good," as Rotary International's President Francesco Arezzo is calling on Rotary members to be a force for unity in a world increasingly divided by politics, geography and ideology. Speeches were six to eight minutes in length. Pictured from left are Aubriella Villalobos, third place winner; Aileen Ramirez, second place winner, and Amelia Huicochea, first place winner. All are students at iPoly in Pomona. Others competing included Edgar Garay, also a student at iPoly, and Arith Aceves, a student at Pomona High School.



Photo by Monique Robles



Photo courtesy of Virginia Villasenor, Delicious Freedom USA
WELL-KNOWN RESTAURANT LANDMARK BURNS TO GROUND -- Pomona's Tom's Burgers #12, an important part of Downtown Pomona and the entire community since it opened in 1984, burned to the ground last week in a fire of unknown origin. The restaurant, popular with the Pomona City Hall crowd, Downtown Pomona regulars and customers from throughout the community, was part of a chain that had its beginnings in East Los Angeles in 1956. Pictured are Los Angeles County firefighters pouring water on the fire before the sun went down on Sunday, March 15 at 282 E. Mission Blvd. in Pomona. Fire officials said the fire was reported at 5:27 p.m. as a commercial building fire and was upgraded to a second alarm fire with additional units on the scene. It was knocked down in a little more than an hour but crews remained on the scene until midnight working on hot spots and bulldozing the remains of the building because it was still smoldering. No other buildings were involved and no injuries were reported. A total of nine engines and four trucks responded to the scene. Cause was under investigation. Fire officials did not provide an estimated value of the loss, although local real estate sources told La Nueva Voz the 2,340 square foot structure, land and active business was worth an estimated \$950,000 to \$1.3 million. The building alone was worth between \$250,000 and \$350,000.



BINGO WITH THE OPTIMISTS -- Pomona Optimist Club President Sonia Molina shoots a selfie at the Pomona Eagles lodge with a packed house of BINGO winners smiling for her shot at the fundraiser. That's her husband Hugo Molina on stage calling the numbers. Proceeds went to support the Optimist Club's youth programs. To donate, call (626) 523-1831.

FREE COMMUNITY SEMINAR

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- Creative ways to make exercise more comfortable and sustainable
- Lowering blood sugar naturally through movement

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- Call 866/724-4132
- Scan the QR code



www.CasaColina.org



Century-long Pilgrim rummage sale resumes April 25

The latest edition of rummage sales now in their second century of operation will be held April 25 at Pilgrim Congregational Church, 600 N. Garey Ave., Pomona.

The rummage sales, now held twice a year, have been put on regularly since at least 1923. The sale runs from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The sale raises funds for the church by providing quality, gently used clothing and shoes for women, men and children, medical equipment, toys, kitchenware, linens, furniture, antiques, new and antique books, CDs, VHS and DVDs, garden plants, and many other items at prices affordable to local families. A popular element of the sale is the snack area featuring many homemade bakery goods.

The sale also will include an array of slightly used wheelchairs, walkers, potty chairs, crutches and canes. A special table also will offer a large number of collectible dolls for sale.

An additional and popular part of the sale will be the "Teachers' Room," a special room offering, at no cost, an array of donated educational materials. The educational materials include items such as children's books, resource books, workbooks, learning games, flash cards, math and reading manipulatives, instructional and motivational posters, art supplies, educational equipment and other learning materials.

"Our goal is to make these learning materials readily available to benefit students' learning," said



PREPARING FOR PILGRIM'S RUMMAGE SALE -- Pictured is Susan Newton helping sort some of the many items for the rummage sale planned for April 25 at Pomona's Pilgrim Congregational Church.

Sue Villa, a retired Pomona Unified School District teacher. "We are thankful to the many current and retired teachers who have supported this collaborative education project, giving these learning materials a second life."

During the sale, to enhance ap-

preciation of Pilgrim's past, Pilgrim's Senior Minister Rev. Dr. Patrick Horn will conduct an informative free tour of the church, highlighting its history.

For more information, contact Pilgrim Congregational Church at (909) 622-1373.

Diabetes 101

- Constant tiredness
- Blurry vision
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Getting diagnosed early is crucial to prevent bigger problems.

Diabetes Management: Managing diabetes means keeping blood sugar levels healthy. This involves:

- Checking blood sugar often (home monitor and HbA1c lab tests).
- Eating healthy: Focus on whole foods, lots of vegetables, and cut down on high fat and high sugar foods. Drink water instead of sugary drinks.
- Being active: Regular exercise helps, even walking.
- Insulin: People with Type 1, and many with Type 2, need insulin injections.

insulin-making cells. People with Type 1 must take daily insulin shots.

• Type 2 Diabetes: Most common type seen in adults and children. Linked to being overweight, inactivity, and family history. Your body doesn't make enough insulin or doesn't use it well.

• Gestational Diabetes: High blood sugar during pregnancy. Usually goes away after birth but increases the likelihood of both mom and baby getting Type 2 diabetes later.

Signs You Might Have Diabetes: Can be mild, but look out for:

- Feeling very thirsty
- Urinating a lot
- Unexplained weight loss
- Feeling very hungry

La centeneria venta de artículos usados de Pilgrim se reanuda el 25 de abril

La edición más reciente de estas ventas de artículos usados — que ya han cumplido su primer siglo de existencia — se llevará a cabo el 25 de abril en la Iglesia Congregacional Pilgrim, ubicada en el 600 N. Garey Ave., en Pomona.

Estas ventas, que actualmente se celebran dos veces al año, se han organizado de manera regular desde al menos 1923. El horario de la venta será de 8:00 a. m. a 1:00 p. m.

La venta recauda fondos para la iglesia ofreciendo ropa y calzado de calidad — en buen estado y con poco uso — para mujeres, hombres y niños; así como equipo médico, juguetes, artículos de cocina, ropa de cama, muebles, antigüedades, libros (tanto nuevos como antiguos), CD, cintas VHS y DVD, plantas de jardín y muchos otros artículos a precios asequibles para las familias de la localidad. Un atractivo muy popular de la venta es la zona de refrigerios, que ofrece una gran variedad de productos de repostería casera.

La venta también incluirá una selección de sillas de ruedas, andadores, sillas inodoro, muletas y bastones, todos ellos con poco uso. Asimismo, habrá una mesa especial donde se pondrá a la venta un gran número de muñecas de colección.

Otra sección adicional y muy popular de la venta será la "Sala de los Maestros" (*Teachers'

Room*), un espacio especial que ofrecerá, de forma totalmente gratuita, una variedad de materiales educativos donados. Estos materiales incluyen artículos tales como libros infantiles, libros de consulta, cuadernos de ejercicios, juegos didácticos, tarjetas didácticas (*flash cards*), materiales manipulativos para matemáticas y lectura, carteles instructivos y motivacionales, materiales de arte, equipo educativo y otros recursos de aprendizaje.

"Nuestro objetivo es poner estos materiales de aprendizaje fácilmente al alcance de todos para beneficiar el proceso educativo de los estudiantes", comentó Sue Villa, maestra jubilada del Distrito Escolar Unificado de Pomona. "Estamos muy agradecidos con los numerosos maestros — tanto en activo como jubilados — que han apoyado este proyecto educativo colaborativo, brindando una segunda vida a estos materiales de aprendizaje".

Durante la venta, y con el fin de fomentar el aprecio por el pasado de la institución, el Ministro Principal de Pilgrim, el Rev. Dr. Patrick Horn, ofrecerá un recorrido informativo y gratuito por la iglesia, destacando los aspectos más relevantes de su historia.

Para obtener más información, comuníquese con la Iglesia Congregacional Pilgrim llamando al (909) 622-1373.

By Guadalupe Castillo, RN, CDCES Diabetes Educator for Casa Colina and Centers for Healthcare's Limb Preservation Program

Diabetes is a medical condition where your body has too much sugar (blood glucose). This happens because your body doesn't make enough insulin or can't use the insulin it makes well. Insulin helps remove sugar from your bloodstream and turn it into energy. If blood sugar stays too high, it can cause health problems.

Types of Diabetes:

• Type 1 Diabetes: Usually found in children and young adults, this is an autoimmune condition where the body attacks

• Pills: Some with Type 2 take pills to help their body make or use insulin better.

What Happens if Diabetes Isn't Controlled? If blood sugar stays too high, it can damage parts of your body over time, like:

- Your heart (leading to heart attacks or strokes)
- Your kidneys (kidney failure, leading to dialysis)
- Your nerves (causing pain, numbness, or even limb loss)
- Your eyes (leading to blindness)

See your doctors regularly to



Guadalupe Castillo

check for these problems.

Living with diabetes means paying attention to your health daily. With good care and support, people with diabetes can live long, healthy, and happy lives. Knowing about diabetes, early di-

agnosis, and sticking to your treatment plan are the best ways to stay healthy.

Casa Colina is offering Diabetes Education classes in English and in Spanish. Visit <https://www.casacolina.org/programs-services/community-services/wellness-programs/>

Popular Tri City Wellness Center to remain open as agency adjusts to new state law

One of the most welcome announcements to come out of this month's "Behavioral Health Services Act" community forum presented by Tri City Mental Health was the news that the popular Tri City Wellness Center will be able to remain open for at least another two years.



Ontson Placide

The facility, located at 1403 N. Garey Ave., Pomona, which opened in November of 2011, offers a variety of free support groups and events in a community hub for activities that promote recovery, resiliency and wellness for people confronting mental health challenges.

The 8,000 square foot facility was originally entirely funded under California's Mental Health Services Act (MHSA).

That funding, because of California's Proposition 63 approved by voters in 2004, is available under something called the "millionaire's tax" – any individual in the state whose personal income is higher than \$1 million is taxed 1 percent, and the revenue trickles down to the counties for mental health needs in community services and supports, prevention, early intervention, capital facilities, training and more.

But in 2024, California voters passed Proposition 1, which mandated a shift from MHSA to the Behavioral Health Services Act, or BHSA.

BHSA builds on the foundation MHSA created, adding things like a greater emphasis on housing and even using funds for individuals with the primary diagnosis of a substance use disorder – something Tri City was not able to do under MHSA.

Tri City will be required to allocate a full 30 percent of their BHSA funding to housing for individuals with serious mental illness or substance use disorders alone. Behavioral health services will receive 35 percent of the funding, and the remaining 35 percent will go toward what is known as "full service partnership" or, in the words of Sara Rodriguez, Tri City's MHSA projects manager, "this can be considered our 'whatever it takes' bracket" covering comprehensive treatment services.

Projections call for \$6.3 million for full service partnership, behavioral health services also \$6.3 million, and \$5.4 million for hous-



Sara Rodriguez

ing in fiscal year 2026-2027, for a total of \$18.1 million.

What makes things complicated is while the scope of work is increasing, funding is remaining relatively unchanged, so there's a lot of reallocation going on.

BHSA goes into effect on July 1, so Tri City has been hard at work for the past two years planning and seeking input from the community to establish priorities and a plan.

The Wellness Center was one huge program that officials believed would need to be eliminated, although due to creative planning and fluctuations in funds available under the millionaire's tax, it will remain fully funded at least for the next two years while staff continues to look for additional funding sources going forward.

"I just really thank our leadership and everyone who was able to make that happen," Rodriguez said. "Stigma reduction is all about getting out there in the com-

munity, having conversations about mental health and wellness, destigmatizing the concept in general."

"If you destigmatize it, it's less of a mystery, it's less scary, people might reach out for help when needed," she added.

Tri City Executive Director Ontson Placide

said the state's requirement for a new integrated plan "is like a puzzle that has 2,000 pieces."

"And then they say that you can only have it in a certain bucket, and you can only charge a certain amount, and only receive a certain amount," he added, pointing out that a complex planning process is impacting mental health agencies throughout California.

He explained Proposition 1 was based on the need to provide services to "get homeless and unsheltered, unhoused folks into treat-



Gamaliel Polanco

ment." "I just wanted to say how thrilled I am to hear that you have received additional funding for the Wellness Center for two more years," said "Karina," a community partner.

"The Wellness Center facilitates so many things, including lifestyle change, encouragement, positive socialization, where else can one go to receive that type of community?" She said therapy is very important, but community "gives a person a reason to get up out of bed."

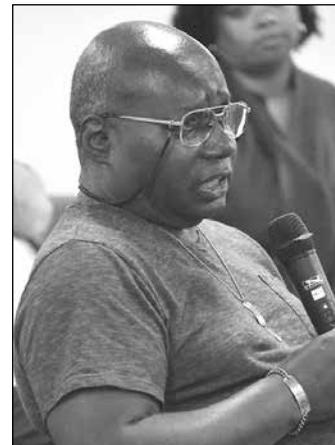
And "Austin," a resident of La Verne, also wel-

comed the news regarding the Wellness Center.

"We need to keep the Wellness Center funded and locally controlled through Tri City Mental Health Services," he said. "We also need to assure Tri City outpatient counseling resources are available for those exiting the full service partnership program. This matters because the Wellness Center is a big part of my mental health and keeping me out of the hospital."

"Nick," another supporter of the Wellness Center, said the facility is a place where "people have recovered and made a recovery throughout their time and their journey there."

"It's a place where it's very needed and it's something very valuable in our community and . . . it's a space where other spaces might not be able to offer," he added.



Mel Gibson

Tri City... pg. 17



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Are you the one?

By Victor Caceres
 Youth and Family Club of Pomona Valley
 Member, Compassionate Pomona

As a Pomona resident, I have the privilege of experiencing something special every day: this city leads with compassion. It is not something we advertise loudly, but something you feel in the way people show up for one another. It lives in everyday moments, in quiet gestures, and in the shared understanding that we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

I see it in our neighborhoods, where neighbors look out for each other without being asked. I see it in parents working tirelessly to create better opportunities for their children, and in young people who are already learning the importance of care, respect, and community. Compassion in Pomona is not reserved for moments of crisis. It is woven into our daily lives.

At the Youth and Family Club of Pomona Valley, I am fortunate to witness how compassion takes root in the next generation. Our young people practice it in real time, supporting one another,

building friendships across differences, and learning what it means to contribute to a community. We often talk about our CLUB values: Competency, Leadership, Usefulness, and Belonging. At the heart of each is compassion, guiding how our youth grow and connect.

But the truth is, this spirit is not unique to any one organization. It is present across Pomona. It shows up in our schools, in our local businesses, in our faith communities, and in the many individuals who give their time and energy to make this city better. Compassion is the thread that connects us, even when our paths and perspectives differ.

What stands out most is how natural it feels here. People in Pomona do not wait to be told to care. They act. They check in, they lend a hand, they make space for others. And sometimes, it only takes one person. One adult who listens. One mentor who shows up consistently. One moment of patience or encouragement. The question is, are you the one?

Pomona Valley Hospital doctor provides tips on avoiding colorectal cancer

According to Dr. Andrew Dam, gastroenterologist at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center, foods that are best for “gut health” include whole foods or those with the least amount of ingredients – whole grains, fish, colorful fruits and vegetables and beans.

“If you’re at the store and you have a choice between white bread and one that is multigrain, opt for the multigrain,” Dam said. “Or instead of a ready-made box of mac and cheese, make your own with a multigrain pasta, cheese and add in a vegetable like broccoli.”

“These small food swaps can have a big impact on your gut health,” he said.

His comments came during Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month during March, and he cited American Cancer Society statistics showing that excluding skin cancers, colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer diagnosed in both men and women in the United States.

And a new 2026 study, also

from the American Cancer Society, found that nearly half of all new colorectal cancer cases now occur in adults under 65, signaling a major shift in the demographics of the disease.

A recent study by “Journal of the American Medical Association Oncology” found that, in a group of 29,105 women younger than 50, those who ate ultra-processed foods had a significant 45 percent higher odds of early-onset colorectal abnormalities than those who consumed less ultra-processed foods.

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Photo by Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez field rep Kamille Hemsworth
TOUCHDOWN PEST CONTROL JOINS POMONA CHAMBER, EXTENDS SERVICE TO INLAND EMPIRE
 -- Members of the Pomona Chamber of Commerce welcomed representatives of West Covina-based TouchDown Pest Control into their office, into the Pomona Chamber and into Pomona last month with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the occasion. Pictured, from left, are Pomona Chamber Board Chair Daniel Thomas of Pomona Rotary, Chamber Board member Daniela Franco, of Metro Event Center, TouchDown Pest Control president and "head coach" Tevan Daniels and Rick Camacho, TouchDown's technician or "pest defensive specialist" who covers the San Gabriel Valley, Chamber Executive Board members Jill Dolan of Mt. SAC and Renee Barbee of La Nueva Voz, and Chamber Ambassadors Frank and Domenica Carrillo of On Time Photo Booth Rentals. Not pictured, at far left, is Pomona Chamber President and CEO Monique Robles. For information on TouchDown, call (626) 966-5600, e-mail info@touchdownpestcontrol.com, or visit the web site at <http://www.touchdownpestcontrol.com>.

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En Pomona, el Miedo No Es Seguridad: El Impacto Real de las Redadas Migratorias en Nuestras Familias

Por Luis Tobar

En Pomona, muchas familias trabajadoras comienzan su día antes de que salga el sol. Llevan a sus hijos a la escuela, toman el autobús al trabajo y abren pequeños negocios que sostienen nuestra economía local. Pero en los últimos meses, ese ritmo cotidiano se ha visto interrumpido por el miedo. La presencia y actividad de agentes federales de inmigración en la ciudad ha generado una sensación constante de incertidumbre que está afectando profundamente a nuestra comunidad latina.

Como estudiante de maestría en trabajo social que ha estudiado las dinámicas comunitarias de Pomona, he visto cómo la seguridad pública va más allá de la aplicación de la ley. Seguridad significa que una madre pueda llevar a su hijo al médico sin temor. Significa que un padre pueda ir a trabajar sin preguntarse si regresará a casa esa noche. Hoy, para muchas familias inmigrantes — incluso aquellas con estatus mixto — esa sensación básica de seguridad no existe.

Durante 2025 se reportaron operativos dirigidos a jornaleros y trabajadores en Pomona, incluyendo actividad en el Centro de Jornaleros y en negocios locales. Miembros de la comunidad presenciaron detenciones en espacios públicos. Más recientemente, se ha informado sobre presencia de agentes en áreas residenciales y cerca de paradas de autobús. Estos eventos no solo impactan a quienes son detenidos, sino a toda la comunidad que observa y vive con el temor de ser la siguiente.

El impacto económico es evidente. Comerciantes locales han reportado menos clientes. Familias evitan salir a espacios públicos. Algunos trabajadores faltan a sus empleos por miedo, y otras personas han cancelado citas médicas importantes. Cuando una comunidad tiene miedo de participar en la vida diaria, la economía local sufre y la estabilidad familiar se debilita.

Desde una perspectiva de trabajo social, también debemos hablar del impacto emocional. El miedo constante genera ansiedad, estrés tóxico y trauma, especialmente en niños. Los hijos sienten la preocupación de sus padres. Escuchan conversaciones sobre redadas y deportaciones. Viven con la incertidumbre. Este tipo de estrés prolongado puede afectar su rendimiento escolar, su desarrollo emocional y su sentido de pertenencia.

Pomona es una ciudad mayoritariamente latina, con una historia profunda de trabajo, esfuerzo y contribución inmigrante. Muchas familias son de estatus mixto: algunos miembros son ciudadanos, otros residentes permanentes y otros indocumentados. Cuando se intensifican los operativos migratorios, el impacto no distingue estatus — afecta a hogares completos.

Las autoridades locales han tomado algunas medidas, incluyendo acciones legales para limitar ciertas prácticas y declaraciones públicas afirmando que la policía local no participa en redadas federales. Estos pasos son importantes. Sin embargo, necesitamos hacer más como comunidad.

Es fundamental ampliar la educación de 'Conozca Sus Derechos' en escuelas, iglesias y centros comunitarios. Las organizaciones locales deben fortalecer planes de emergencia para familias que enfrentan detenciones repentinas. Y es urgente invertir en servicios de salud mental culturalmente sensibles y enfocados en el trauma para apoyar a niños y padres afectados.

La seguridad pública no debe construirse a costa del bienestar comunitario. Cuando las personas tienen miedo de denunciar un crimen o buscar ayuda médica, toda la ciudad se vuelve menos segura. La confianza entre la comunidad y las instituciones se deteriora. El miedo no fortalece ciudades; la estabilidad y el respeto sí.

Pomona — y el sur de California en general — merece políticas que protejan la dignidad humana y la estabilidad familiar. Podemos abordar los desafíos migratorios sin generar trauma colectivo. Podemos promover el orden sin sembrar miedo.

Hoy más que nunca, debemos preguntarnos qué tipo de comunidad queremos dejar a nuestros hijos. ¿Una marcada por la desconfianza y el temor, o una basada en la solidaridad, la salud y la justicia? La respuesta requiere acción — de líderes locales, organizaciones y de todos nosotros como miembros comprometidos de nuestra comunidad.

Nota del editor: Luis Tobar es estudiante de posgrado en la USC y cursa una maestría en Trabajo Social. Como parte de sus estudios, está escribiendo sobre algunos de los problemas migratorios que afectan a su comunidad en Pomona. Su objetivo es llamar la atención sobre estos temas y resaltar la importancia de apoyar a las familias inmigrantes y promover la justicia social.



Photo by Renee Barbee

OPTIMISTS NAME DECEMBER, JANUARY STUDENTS OF MONTH -- Members of the Pomona Optimists awarded certificates to their December and January "students of the month," all students at Pomona's Lopez Elementary School, in ceremonies last month at the Village at Indian Hill. Pictured, from left, are January recipient Emma Naranjo, a sixth grader, Optimists M. Joyce Bakersmith and Arturo Jimenez, January recipient Fidel Rodarte, a fifth grader, December recipients Emilio Perez, a second grader, and Isabel Correa, a first grader, Optimist President Sonia Molina, Lopez Principal Marlo Aubert, and Optimist Darren Knowles.

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Mel Gibson, who said he has worked for more than 22 years with the Tri City peer mentor program, asked if that program was expected to lose funding in the transition.

Rodriguez confirmed the program was among those receiving the two-year extension.

And "Lily" read comments from her peers at the Wellness Center on how they have been impacted — everything from help with the grief of losing friends and family to a women's depression group to another who is actually working to fulfill requirements to have her psychiatric technician license reinstated.

She said she is there daily and finds the facilitators both helpful and professional.

"On behalf of my peers, I'd like to say thank you to the staff, volunteers, and everyone who works so hard to make the Wellness Center a welcoming and uplifting place," she said. "Your dedication is helping build a healthier and stronger community for all of us."

Manager of the Wellness Center since it opened is Gamaliel Polanco, who was in the audience at the forum.

Tri City staff presented two ses-

sions of this month's community forum — one via Zoom and the other "live" at Tri City's MHSA administrative office in Pomona.

In all, a total of 14 informational presentations on the transition to BHSA have been held since January 2025, in addition to circulating a survey between January and June 2025, resulting in several hundred responses with additional feedback.

Tri City even hosted focus groups last March.

Most public mental health service programs in California are provided by the 58 counties in the state. Only two regions essentially dropped out of that network — the City of Berkeley and Tri City, which is a joint powers authority created in 1960 and serving Claremont, La Verne and Pomona as the public mental health authority and primary provider of outpatient services.

Tri City's 156-page draft integrated plan for transitioning to BHSA was submitted to the state last month. Comments are still being accepted and a public hearing on the plan will be scheduled in the future before the deadline for submitting a final plan by the end of June.

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Pomona councilmembers ‘punt,’ postpone fire services decision for another three years

Members of the Pomona City Council voted unanimously this month to kick the can down the road for three years on making a decision on what to do to maintain fire protection services after already receiving notice from the Los Angeles County Fire Department to terminate the present agreement.

The action came based on a recommendation from city staff to approve a “proposed three-year transitional agreement with county fire, and authorize the city manager to execute the agreement upon approval by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

According to the executive summary of the staff report, the city and the fire department have been working for several years “to develop an interim agreement that addresses service cost concerns while allowing additional time to evaluate a longer-term solution.”

The latest figures, presented in this month’s staff report, show city contract amounts for fire services rising from \$37.8 million in 2025-26 to estimates of \$40.8 million in 2026-27, \$45.5 million in 2027-28 and \$49 million in 2028-29.

Those numbers represent increases of \$1.7 million in 2025-26, \$3 million in 2026-27, \$4.7 million in 2027-28 and \$3.4 million in 2028-29.

“When compared to the prior six fiscal years, during which annual increases to the fire services con-

tract averaged approximately \$1.5 million, the fire district’s proposed cost increase represents a significant and unsustainable departure from historical trends,” the staff report said.

During the council meeting, City Manager Anita Scott went a step further, pointing out that this month’s action “lifts” the county’s termination agreement.

“I also wanted to just underscore the importance of the long-term financial stability,” she said. “We do have some more work to go ... the mutual goal is to be a fully benefited district city and to both stabilize our fire bill and stabilize the revenue sources to fund that fire bill and continue the long-term partnership with L.A. County Fire.”

City Councilmember Steve Lustro added that the staff report showed estimated numbers three years down the road of a nearly \$12 million increase.

“It’s not sustainable, so while I’m appreciative that we’re where we are tonight, the work isn’t done,” Lustro said. “I’m hoping that both parties will continue to have worthwhile discussions about how we can get to a point where we have a contract with L.A. County Fire that is fiscally sustainable for both agencies.”

That whole “kicking the can” action accomplishes several things whether they were discussed at the council meeting or not – for one, it postpones any action on what is

already a controversial topic until after this year’s city council elections.

Two, it gives the city an opportunity to wait until after this year’s elections to see what voters decide on Measure Z, a “replacement” initiative for Measure Y, the “Pomona Kids First” initiative, approved by voters two years ago but already creating financial planning nightmares and budget freezes throughout all city departments.

Three, just in case all of this wasn’t interesting or confusing enough, all of this comes after the city hired – and paid nearly \$200,000 for – a high-powered consulting firm headed by Mark Heine, a former president of the California Fire Chiefs Association and Bill Adams, an attorney who serves as the association’s special counsel.

Nobody from the consulting team, Emergency Services Advisors based in Windsor, California, has ever replied to numerous attempts to contact them for comment over a period of 10 days during September.

And four, for those who have not been keeping up on previous versions of this story, apparently the main reason that consulting firm was brought in was because they specialized in bailing out cities who urgently needed to contract for fire protection after being dropped by their existing provider.

The plan was to explore how

Pomona might be able to team up with La Verne Fire Department for fire protection here.

But in this case, as La Nueva Voz learned at the time, it turned out La Verne wasn’t interested. A real nice letter obtained by La Nueva Voz and not publicly distributed – from the La Verne city manager – said, essentially, it really wasn’t going to work out after all and La Verne was going to have to pull out of the talks.

The real reason, it appeared at the time, was that the La Verne Fire Department employees union turned thumbs down on the project. It was not clear if the issue was working more hours, covering a larger area, having to work for too many bosses or a combination of all three.

Just to make sure our readers are still paying attention, La Nueva Voz learned that La Verne Fire Chief Chris Nigg stepped down from his post in January to become fire chief for Fountain Valley.

His work on the Pomona merger project was not mentioned on the City of La Verne web site listing his accomplishments.

Last October’s La Nueva Voz page one headline was “La Verne pulls plug on talks over fire services merger to bail out Pomona, leaving next steps unclear.”

Talks with La Verne were initiated after county fire officials notified Pomona their contract rate

would increase \$15 million by 2028.

County Fire Chief Anthony Marone later informed La Nueva Voz – by certified mail after the original story appeared – that the phrasing at the time should be “The District has proposed a three-year phased-in approach to full cost recovery beginning in Fiscal Year 2026-27.”

He said this results in an incremental increase of \$3.5 million in 2026-27, \$5.2 million in 2027-28, and \$3.8 million in 2028-29.

And he said the actual overall increase would be \$12.5 million, not \$15 million at all.

(The original numbers published in La Nueva Voz were taken from a city staff report that referenced a \$14.7 million increase, and La Nueva Voz – just like newspapers everywhere – rounded it off to \$15 million.)

In that surprise letter from La Verne City Manager Ken Domer, he told Pomona City Manager Scott that “the City of La Verne will stand down from the current discussions” about the proposed merger.

“There are several political issues that have arisen that currently impact our ability to explore regional fire options,” he continued, adding that those issues “create an untenable situation for our labor union and potentially future cooperation between any regional partners in fire and emergency medical services.”

The City of Pomona and the Los Angeles County Fire Protection District are two and a half years into a five-year extension of their ongoing fire services contract that began in 1994.

But 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 at the time.

Fire officials gave the city a one-year notice of contract termination last April but at the time agreed to extend the April 2026 deadline following talks with the city.

Interestingly, county fire officials first notified the City of Pomona “of its need for full cost recovery” on Nov. 28, 2023 – exactly one year before the November 2024 Pomona City Council elections at a time political campaigns were just getting under way.



Pomona’s Prince of Peace Church, I.C.I. celebrated its 28th anniversary last month with members past and present reuniting to remember its beginnings. The church site was inaugurated in 1998, although the congregation of the Interdenominational Christian Church was established in the mid-1970s. The church is located at 895 E. 7th St. and all are welcome for Sunday school, family services and teachings focused on youth. Call (909) 750-0331 if you would like further information about church services at our Pomona location or Interdenominational Christian Churches in other cities throughout California.

Annual 'Principal for a Day' event gives business, community a look inside today's schools

Daniel Martinez of Athens Services, who sat in as "Principal for a Day" last month at Pomona's Arroyo Elementary School, told a room full of business and community leaders last month that he went away with a better understanding of "the good work that all the teachers are doing."

Martinez, who "shadowed" Principal Ryann Mora all morning, said his "real" principal handled everything from a student returning from a suspension to a meeting with parents discussing attendance issues.

He added that he was impressed with "how interactive the classrooms are now compared to when I used to go to school – it's just upgraded a lot."

"I think Arroyo is doing an amazing job with their students and especially with their special needs students," he said.

That's really the reaction the annual "Principal for a Day" event is going for. Organized by the Pomona Chamber

of Commerce and the Pomona Unified School District, the idea is to provide an opportunity for members of the community to go back to school for one morning, connect with educators and stu-

dents and then convene at the Village at Indian Hill for a lunch and tell others what they saw.

Schools throughout Pomona Unified School District participate in the program.

Principal Lacey Lemus, Principal at Pantera Elementary School in Diamond Bar, said her "Principal for a Day" was Edgar Torres.

She said Torres sat in on a Friday staff meeting before visiting several classrooms.

"We have a Mandarin dual immersion program at our school, and so he was able to see kindergartners and first graders doing some lessons in both English and Mandarin," she added. "It's pretty amazing."

And he even had a chance to do some "recess" duty with her on the playground.

"I feel like we connected as one, and one thing that really touched my heart (was the) . . . inclusion of Mandarin – it has broadened up my eyes," Torres said, adding that he is bilingual in English and



Daniel Martinez of Athens Services describes his experiences at "Principal for a Day."



Pomona's Village Academy High School Principal Roger Fasting introduces his "Principals for a Day" and describes both the school and how the morning went for everyone. Pictured, from left, are Fasting, Jamie Lindsay, President of the National Council of Negro Women, Pomona Valley Section, and Camille Hemsworth of Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez' office.

students for four years after they reclassify."

The two were accompanied by a Simons student who had been asking Noelte if she could be a "Principal for a Day," so the student accompanied them on their rounds.

"I think the best experience of this day was just getting to see Mrs. Noelte . . . have such a great communication with all the students – she has such great relationships with everybody . . . every classroom we went into," Reyes said.

Camille Hemsworth of Assemblymember Michelle Rodriguez' office "shadowed" Village Academy High School Principal Roger Fasting for the morning.

Fasting explained to Hemsworth during the morning that Village Academy isn't for every student.

"(But) if you're interested in being a content creator of arts, you like rock and roll music, culinary pathway, film production, and we have a medical



Pomona Unified School District Board members Dr. Roberta Perlman and Arturo Jimenez take a look at changes in education today in their comments at last month's "Principal for a Day."

ogy. A lot of those things get overlooked."

"It was a 10 out of 10 experience," she added.

Principal Tara Noelte of Pomona's Simons Middle School said she started off the day with her "principal" Lisette Reyes, an engagement director at Pomona Valley Pride, "learning how we monitor our EL (English learner)

pathway also, along with just exceptional students (and teachers), art is happening all day," he said.

"We had a great time," Hemsworth said. "It's a tight knit community, it's like a family. So all of the students are really affectionate towards their teachers, they respect them, and there's a good relationship there, which fosters good education."



Supt. Darren Knowles welcomes guests to the annual "Principal for a Day" community event, sponsored each year by the Pomona Chamber of Commerce and the Pomona Unified School District.



Pomona Chamber of Commerce Board Chair Daniel Thomas explains the purpose of the annual "Principal for a Day" event in opening the schools to the community.



Students from Garey High School performed dragon and lion dances last month during a celebration of the Lunar New Year at Pomona Public Library. Warm-up acts for the dancers were story time readers and crafts. Participants were asked to wear red or gold for "good fortune."

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Los Angeles County Supervisor

HILDA L. SOLIS

First District • Chair

Following reports of sexual abuse allegations involving Cesar Chavez, Los Angeles County Chair and First District Supervisor Hilda L. Solis introduced two motions to review County recognitions bearing his name and to rename the holiday as Farmworkers Day.

Los Angeles County has a responsibility to ensure that public recognitions reflect the values of justice, dignity, and respect. All County assets named for Chavez will undergo a renaming process guided by and centered on the voices of impacted communities.

The legacy of the farmworker movement extends far beyond any one individual, and Chair Solis remains committed to honoring its full history and contributions.



    @hildasolis