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Pomona Chamber of Commerce



Member

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Non-profit works locally on 'national model' to align student skills with employer needs

By Jeff Schenkel, Publisher

The head of a Sacramento-based non-profit organization that applies data science to help improve student outcomes and career readiness told San Gabriel Valley educators and business leaders this month that the United States loses \$1.1 trillion in annual earnings each year from gaps in learning and career-transition pathways.

And the non-profit group is working to do something about it, beginning right here in the San Gabriel Valley making it what organizers call a "national model"

and the first regional coalition of its kind in the country to organize around a "skills currency" framework.

Alex Barrios, President and CEO of Educational Results Partnership (ERP), told 40 guests meeting on the Mt. San Antonio College campus in a roundtable discussion on the theme "Connecting Local Talent with Local Employers" that employers and educators "don't speak a common language."

"And so that's been the work of ERP over the past 25 years," Barrios said. "And we actually started



Alex Barrios

here in Los Angeles County doing that work."

He said his group partnered with the Regional Chamber of Commerce – San Gabriel Valley "because we realize we have to get employers and educators in the same room."

Barrios said employers may say "I need you to adjust your curriculum to my business needs" which, he acknowledged, is not how schools work.

"At the same time, if students aren't graduating with the skills that are necessary to be useful in the employment sector, then em-

ployers aren't benefiting either, so it's tricky," he added. "But we've learned a lot on how to bridge the gap over the years."

He said ERP started 25 years ago looking at data to see "what was working with students so that we can improve literacy."

The group collected more than 300 data sharing agreements throughout California, and the State of California "approached us and said can we hire you to match those data sets with the community college system statewide and with four-year universities across the state to see how many students get to and through the pathway?"

Many local school districts shared their own data with the group, he said.

More recently, he said he looked at U.S. Census data six years ago that showed that 53 percent of students here were not getting to and through college within 10 years of starting high school.

In one local school district which he did not name, only three out of 10 students were receiving a four-year degree or an associate's degree within 10 years.

He said national college education data was even worse.

"Because of that inefficiency, a report came out last year from

Aligning student skills... pg. 6

Pomona officials open new \$14.6 million 'all abilities' playground in civic center

Pomona city officials cut the ribbon last month to officially open a new \$14.6 million "Kids World Pomona Playground" park in the Pomona Civic Center said by one consultant to the project to be one of the biggest "all abilities" playgrounds in the county.

"This is for our children," said Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval at the grand opening. "Let's give a big hand for the parents and the guardians and the aunts and the grandmothers and the grandfathers who take care of our children."

"Projects like this would not be possible without our community



Photo by Renee Barbee

Kids World Pomona was all about the kids and so was the ribbon-cutting itself, as evidenced in this photo showing lots of smiling faces. Pictured cutting the ribbon is Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval with, back row from left, Pomona City Councilmembers Steve Lustro and Elizabeth Ontiveros-Cole, Pomona City Manager Anita Scott, Three Valleys Municipal Water District Director Carlos Goytia and City Councilmember Victor Preciado bringing up the rear. Pomona City Councilmembers Debra Martin and Lorraine Canales also participated.



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Community celebrates ‘National Night Out’ with police to help make neighborhoods better

Hundreds of kids, their parents and residents of Pomona stopping in just off the street participated in “National Night Out” activities this month as the Pomona Police Department, officials from Pomona City Hall and representatives of a dozen agencies and organizations filled a closed-off Park Avenue just outside police headquarters for an afternoon of fun, police K-9 demonstrations and more.

Master of Ceremonies for the event was Pomona Police Corporal Jeff Hayward, head of the department’s Community Service Unit which produces National Night Out each year.

“We encourage you to interact and mingle with everybody, learn and take an opportunity to find out who’s in your neighborhood (and) how to connect with resources,” Hayward said. “So take advantage of this and if you have any questions, ask any of the officers or anybody from the department what we



Pomona Police Officer Yasmin Rodriguez and “Athena,” a brindle Dutch Shepherd, “investigate” volunteer “suspect” Pomona Police Officer Cirilo Serrano in the protective suit.

can do to help make your neighborhood better.”

In one sense, this year’s National Night Out was “going to the dogs” since there were actually two K-9 dogs on hand to meet and greet members of the public – Athena, a brindle (tiger stripe) Dutch Shepherd, and her partner / handler Officer Yasmin Rodriguez and Walter, a trailing or “scent” bloodhound who tracks missing children and adults in non-criminal cases with civilian volunteer handler Margo Machen who told La Nueva Voz she has a total of three tracking dogs – one who recently retired, a Labrador and Walter, who she said will be certified at the end of the year.

Machen said Walter backs up the Pomona Police K-9 dogs when they are not available or when two dogs are needed.

Hayward explained that Athena was named after Athens Services which he said donated money to purchase the dog



Pomona Police Corporal Jeff Hayward, head of the department’s Community Services Unit, welcomes visitors to National Night Out.

Making neighborhoods better... pg. 21

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Photo by Renee Barbee Pomona Police Corporal Jeff Hayward, Rotarian Darren Krohn and Pomona Police Chief Mike Ellis pose for the La Nueva Voz camera at this month’s National Night Out.

Civilian volunteer handler Margo Machen poses with her scent dog Walter at National Night Out.



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New 'all abilities' playground... from pg. 1

asking us and telling us what they want to see in their community,” Sandoval said. “The seed was planted back in 2018 when I met with a group of parents and several of the parents had children with disabilities.”

“They said in Pomona we have no ‘all abilities’ playgrounds in our city,” he said, adding that the federal government provided funding for several projects during President Biden’s administration.

“The first million dollars, \$1.2 million I believe, came from former (state) Sen. Connie Leyva – that was the first dollars that were set aside specifically for this project,” he added, pointing out that “when you undertake a project . . . there’s a lot of coordination and cooperation that happens between city staff and the contractors and the designer in order for this to become possible.”

Pomona City Manager Anita Scott said the project took about five years to come to fruition.

“It took a village, Pomona Village, and we’re here today,” she said. “We could not be more excited.”

“This . . . stands out for Pomona in that this isn’t just a rehab of a park, which we have been very fortunate to do over the last year – we have multiple parks in the city,” she said. “This is an addition.”

“This is an expansion of park services within the City of Pomona, which is a huge investment for our children and our youth and our families,” she added. “And it speaks to me personally, working here in City Hall, being able to see the imagination with our kids – having that outdoor play is so critical for this age group to be able to grow and learn

New 'all abilities' playground... pg. 13



Photos by Renee Barbee
Some of the towers, slides, bridges and more can be seen in this photo of the new park equipment in Kids World Pomona Playground.

City of Pomona - Neighborhood Services

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One girl seemed to have no trouble getting the hang of the spiral slide on the new playground.



The Ganesha High School cheerleaders were in perfect form as always at the opening of the new Pomona Civic Center park.

Pomona Rotary celebrates service with annual Hot August Night fundraiser

Pomona Rotary President Andy Quinones told about 200 Rotarians and guests at this month's Hot August Night fundraiser at The Derby Room that the local club has logged "125 years of giving of time, money, service, effort and resources" to the community.

Quinones said there are four or five service clubs in Pomona.

"Each one of them has been continuing to serve the greater good for many, many years," he added. "However, the numbers of membership seems to be decreasing every year. Young people don't seem to be as interested in spending time making a difference."

"There are clubs, there are different types," he said. "You want a barbecue? You've got the Kiwanis Club. If you're interested in helping people see better, our Lions Club, every year, they do this wonderful event where they give glasses to children and to families that need them."

"Of course, we have our Optimist Club that recognizes our police department, our military, our paramedics every year," he said. "So again, there are places for you guys to sign up to become members to serve for the greater good."

And Rotarians **Hot August Night fundraiser... pg. 8**



Walt and Sylvia Barkley, with Walt dressed as usual in an old police uniform to go with the classic police car, pose during the Hot August Night car show at The Derby Room.



Pomona Rotary President Andy Quinones poses with a surfer VW bug owned by Rotarian Victor Caceres.



Pomona Rotary President Andy Quinones welcomes Rotarians and guests this month to Rotary's signature "Hot August Night" event, held this year out back at The Derby Room at Pomona's Fairplex. Proceeds from the dinner, complete with live DJ and a car show, went to help Pomona Rotary support local youth and the Inland Valley Humane Society's "Humane Heroes" program.



Carl Miller poses at Hot August Night with his 1970 Corvette that he's had since 1971.



Bill and Susan Newton pose with their 1950 Mercury coupe at the Rotary Hot August Night car show. They've had the car since 1960.

City of Pomona - Neighborhood Services

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Aligning student skills... from pg. 1

Pearson (Pearson Assessments), which is the educational testing group, that found we're losing \$1.1 trillion in earnings every year because of the inefficiencies in helping people transition from education to employment," Barrios said. "So, think about how much tax money we invest or how many of your tax dollars you invest here in your local schools . . . that's not efficiently leading to employment."

"So enough about the problem – the reason we're here is because there is a solution," he said. "Some people call it coordination."

"We're not asking you to change what you're doing, and that's one of the reasons this partnership has evolved, because we're not saying you need to jump onto a new initiative, or you need to change what you're doing, you need to change your curriculum or now you need to start collecting this information," he said.

Barrios told the group there's already enough data.

"And we know this from working with the data for the last 12 years – there's enough data on students that if we translate that data more intelligently to what they (students) know and what they can do and map it to workforce demand and the skills needed in the labor market, we can have better intelligence on whether the population, the local population is leaving high school," he said.

The work, he added, needs to begin much sooner but in terms of when students are ready to enter the workforce, it is important to know by the time they leave high school what they can do.

"And we need to share that intelligence with employers and employers need to also give us feedback on what that intelligence means for them," he said.

Otherwise, students are making decisions without all of the information, he said.

"They have very little information to make decisions about career, which means more time, in many cases, a lot of lost time and money spent going into debt," Barrios said. "Employers (find it) harder to find the right talent."

"Taxpayers, we're spending all this money, but if it's not leading to employment and gainful employment and efficient transitions, then we're spending more and not



Aziz Amiri

getting the return on that investment," he said. "And for colleges and training programs, your persistence rates are impacted."

He explained if students enroll but then change their mind six months or a year later and drop out, that will hurt the colleges as well.

"But when we have shared intelligence, meaning earlier in the pipeline, students have the information they need to make better decisions, know their strengths," he said.

"So, if you're in education, the best thing you can do is build a student's confidence," Barrios said. "You start building that confidence by helping them see what they're good at, helping them understand what that can mean in terms of a career in earnings and economic mobility, and then have an employer on the other side that they can have access to to understand what those opportunities could mean for them in the local community."

"And that's what a shared intelligence system would do – we'd all be looking at the same data, we would be looking at it through the lens of skills and skill levels and whether the talent graduating from our schools has those foundational skills needed to match with an employer and their needs," he said.

ERP's program started in California because they already had much of the data and the data sharing agreements, and the non-profit partners with 28 chambers of commerce. Rowland Unified School District was the first in the region to implement its own program with ERP.

"The goal is not to say, well,



Lauren James

the students aren't graduating prepared, we're not blaming – this is a no-blaming initiative," he said. "We're also not asking for more money because there is not more money these days in the state budget. We're not creating new tests or new pathways, you will naturally do that in your course of work."

"We're not asking you to do more – no new initiatives . . . we're using existing data to already collect and use, we're translating that to identify students' skills gained in the classroom, and then we're empowering students with that information," Barrios said. "We're empowering students with information about themselves to help navigate what they're going to do next."

"What you're starting to organize yourselves around in this region with the chamber's leadership is a skills currency sequence . . . (starting) first with your skills" and then determining what your skills are a fit for and coordinating the path, he said.

"And that's actually how employment and hiring works," Barrios said, adding that in Rowland Unified the pilot results showed that a lot of students understood better what their skills were and where those skills would take them in terms of a career.

"And they felt more confident, as well," he said. "Three out of four said 'I'm much more confident now in my ability to engage in the workplace. And then we improve this over time.'"

La Nueva Voz reached out to ERP after the event asking if school district data is sold to third-party users including those in the business community and learned that the answer is no.

In fact, a spokesperson for ERP provided a copy of their four-page "memorandum of understanding," really a contract between ERP and participating school districts.

The first paragraph stipulates that any sharing of information would be "in a manner consistent with the (federal) Family Education Records Privacy Act of 1974," which, among other things, essentially prohibits a school or vendor from selling student information for profit or commercial gain.

In addition, the agreement requires that "all employees, contractors and agents . . . require and maintain an appropriate confidentiality agreement from each of its employees, contractors or agents with access to data received pursuant to this agreement."

School districts volunteer, it continues, "to participate in the project and there are no projected

costs for partner school districts."

Also, all opportunities "are intended to support students in building and demonstrating job-relevant skills" and "all such offerings are clearly identified as external opportunities and participation will be entirely optional for students."

Additional information obtained by La Nueva Voz through an internet search confirmed that ERP "does not monetize public student or school achievement data by charging third-party businesses to acquire it."

Unauthorized distribution or commercial resale of the data is prohibited.

Instead, data systems are maintained through a variety of state grants, contracts and partnerships with business coalitions to match talent to jobs.

Aligning student skills... pg. 8

La Nueva Voz

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Pomona Valley Hospital becomes one of first in re- gion to upgrade to latest robotic surgery technology

Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center unveiled its three new advanced Intuitive da Vinci 5 robotic surgical system units this month, making the hospital one of the first in the region to add the updated units to its operating rooms.

Pomona Valley acquired three of the new units and replaced its entire "fleet" of da Vinci Xi robots so that every patient undergoing robotic surgery now has access to the latest technology, according to a hospital spokesperson.

Designed to give surgeons an enhanced ability to feel and see during procedures, the new systems will support the hospital's team of more than 30 robotically trained surgeons specializing in urology, gynecology and obstetrics, thoracic surgery and general surgery.

The new technology incorporates more than 150 new design innovations and expands upon previous generation features, including "wristed" instruments (specialized surgical tools with multi-directional, mechanical joints that mimic the rotation, bending, and fine dexterity of a human wrist), 3D high-definition visualization, intuitive motion and an ergonomic design.

According to the spokesperson, the da Vinci 5 represents the culmination of more than a decade of research and development and is designed to allow surgeons to feel and see more than was previously possible.



POMONA VALLEY HOSPITAL UPGRADES ROBOTIC SURGERY SYSTEMS FOR OPERATING ROOMS -- Officials at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center rolled out its three new "Intuitive da Vinci 5" robotic surgical systems this month, introducing equipment expected to give surgeons improved "look and feel" during procedures. The hospital was one of the first in the region to upgrade to the new technology. Pictured are surgical staff members and guests exploring the new equipment by sitting at the console to experience how the new surgical system works.

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Hot August Night... from pg. 5

have done everything from building wells and micro-businesses for women in Africa and even sending non-medical volunteers to Madagascar to help with a cleft palate project.

He encouraged people with children and grandchildren to “point them out in the right direction.”

“But we need people just like you to step up to the plate so that we continue to make a great difference within our community,” he said.

Quinones, who is executive director of the Southern California Service Corps, told La Nueva Voz before the event that he hoped to bring awareness of service clubs “that do their best to make a difference in our community.”

In addition, he said the event was designed to raise funds to continue on-going programs like “Student of the Month” and others.

“For the most part, our funds will go towards youth leadership development,” he said.



Frank Carrillo, owner of Pomona's On Time Photo Booth Rentals, poses for his own photo holding a live auction item at Pomona Rotary's Hot August Night event this month at the Derby Room as his wife, Domenica, at right, looks on.

“I’ve only been president for a few months now, so I’m fresh,” he said. “Being president, it gives people the opportunity for personal leadership development, learning how to work as a team, how to accomplish things together. I couldn’t have done this at all by myself, and it takes a number of people to make things happen like this.”

He added it is really about

building relationships in the community and engaging the community.

This year’s Hot August Night theme was “creating a lasting impact” as it celebrated fellowship, community and service.

For more than a century, Rotary has united people of action dedicated to serving their communities and improving lives around the world.

Aligning student skills... from pg. 6

Aziz Amiri, CEO of the Regional Chamber, told La Nueva Voz before the meeting the program continues the chamber’s mission “Learn, Earn, Live and Thrive in the San Gabriel Valley.”

The chamber works with school districts in the region each year on a variety of levels including its “Honor Roll Schools Awards” program.

Amiri explained the ERP program will “track your student’s pathway and identify early on from ninth grade what is the future career pathway so the counselors can guide them.”

He said employers would have access early on to students in the pathway towards their industry and what they are looking for.

“And there’s no cost to this program, simply data sharing,” Amiri said, adding that Rowland Unified has been on board for about the past year.

In his introductory comments to the group, Amiri said the San

Gabriel Valley initiative is the first in California and the first in the country. And, he added, Rowland Unified is the first school district in the country to participate.

“So, you are experiencing the first of a kind event in this region and partnership,” he said. “Our economy is changing quickly, technology is changing faster, industries are changing and perhaps seeking new directions, and the skills employers need are changing along with those constantly shifting. That is why education and business must work together.”

“Our goal cannot simply be to help students graduate. We must help them prepare to compete, succeed and enter meaningful careers right here in the San Gabriel Valley,” he said.

Lauren James, Board Chair and President of the Regional Chamber, told the group the region is seeing people being laid off and watching schools close because of declining enrollment.

Voices from behind bars and out on Pomona’s streets: What does compassion mean to you?

By Rev. Nora Jacob, Member Compassionate Pomona

What does compassion mean to you?

Back in 2019, a group of Pomona’s community and faith leaders gathered for a conference we called “Pomona Reawakening.” Bringing together about 300 people concerned about the violence, indifference, and experiences of social isolation in our city, we shared the ways we wanted to promote greater positive connection to one another, and the ways we wanted to care for the most vulnerable children, youth, and adults in our community.

Fast forward to today, in 2026. These days I plan and lead restorative justice circles of support and accountability in the state prison at Chino. The incarcerated persons in those circles, in the prison yards where I serve, are mostly down for long-term or life sentences. They’ve done major harm, and they’re learning about the causes that led them to “that moment when . . .” they did that harm.

In circle, we often work on their insight into their actions. We provide education about trauma, the impact on our adult lives of our

early childhood years, and ways to replace negative with positive language and thinking. These new habits help to propel their insights into becoming changes for the better.

We often discuss accountability, and what they believe they need to do in order to take responsibility for the harm they’ve done . . . as well as to be accountable for the “ripple effects” of their criminal actions. And sometimes they dream together about what life could be like, if they are found suitable to return home to their families and communities.

At some point, I generally ask: “What does compassion mean to you?”

And they answer. Here are some of the recent responses I collected from a restorative circle of incarcerated people:

“It’s false to believe that punishment will lead to changes in people. Hurt people hurt people, but healed people heal people. Help us instead of throwing us into the hole (i.e., solitary confinement).”

“People on the outside think of us as all the same, and we’re all thought of as monsters. That’s just not true.”

“Incarcerated people have no

Compassion... pg. 20

ahead?”

She said the goal should be an economy where someone who grows up in the San Gabriel Valley can learn here, build a career here, start a business here and thrive here.

Pomona Unified School District Supt. Darren Knowles, asked by La Nueva Voz before the presentation to comment on the value of the program to local students, said “the more pathways that we create for our kids and opportunity, that’s equity for us, so equity means access.”

Then does it sound like something Pomona Unified would be able to participate in?

“That’s why we’re here,” he said, adding that the district is already placing an emphasis on its career technical education program, its adult education program, the San Antonio Regional Occupational Program and even the College, Career and Workforce Development Task Force that

meets monthly with the Pomona Chamber of Commerce and other local and regional agencies.

“Again, it’s about creating those pathways for our kids . . . so we continue to support this work and, again, it’s about networking and having those conversations and helping our kids,” he said.

According to the ERP web site, the non-profit has accumulated the nation’s largest database on student achievement from kindergarten into the labor market, using data from all 50 states. It uses data science and predictive analytics to identify successful public education systems, practices, programs and policies that are delivering the best results for students.

“We are committed to closing equity gaps in education and the labor market . . . (and) improving academic and workforce outcomes for all, including students of color, foster youth and students in high-poverty regions,” the web site continued.

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Photo by Renee Barbee

SUMMER FOAM PARTY -- Pomona Public Library staff members and city officials turned on the bubble machines in the Pomona Civic Center for the second consecutive year this month for their "Summer Foam Party" as foam floated through the air and onto the pavement, all for a good time, lots of smiles and summer fun for all. About 300 kids and their parents participated.

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Federal funding delays impacting House of Ruth

By Pat Bell, CEO
House of Ruth, Inc.

I have a story to tell, and it begins almost 20 years ago. I came to House of Ruth not just because I needed a job, but because I knew, deep in my bones, what domestic violence does to a family. I grew up as a child of domestic violence. So when I found House of Ruth, it felt less like a career move and more like a calling. Their mission was already my mission. I left the corporate world for the nonprofit sector, and for the first time, my soul felt full. The work was hard, but it was meaningful. I loved advocating for survivors. I loved being part of a place where people came through the door frightened, exhausted, and unsure of what came next – and found safety, dignity, and a new beginning.

Over the years, I achieved a lifelong goal: I became the CEO. I had reached the pinnacle of my career. But what has stayed with me most is not a title – it is the faces and stories of survivors. I have watched people escape

situations most of us can hardly imagine. I have seen parents and children take their first breaths of freedom. I have had survivors come back years later to say thank you for work that changed the course of their lives. This year, House of Ruth celebrates 50 years of that work. I have been blessed to serve for nearly 20 of them.

And still, domestic violence is not going away. We hear the news stories of murder-suicides rooted in intimate partner violence. We complete annual shelter data surveys and see demand rising in our city, across our region, and around the country. We have celebrated progress when awareness campaigns helped reduce gun violence, only to face new and devastating increases in strangulation and stabbings. Survivors are reaching out for help, but shelters are full. Services have wait lists. The need is greater than the resources available. The supply simply does not meet the demand.

The people who do this work carry that weight every day. They sit with trauma, crisis, fear,



Pat Bell

and grief – and then they come back the next day to do it again. Vicarious trauma and secondary trauma are real. There is no denying it: this work is hard. Very hard. And yet I have never worked with a fiercer, more dedicated group of people in my entire career. We are all here for one reason: to help survivors and their children find safety, healing, and hope.

But now we face another kind of trauma. I call it organizational trauma. Yesterday, my CFO and I sat across from each other in

sheer exhaustion, staring at the same impossible questions: How will we cover payroll? How will we pay rising health insurance premiums? How will we keep rental subsidies flowing for families who are trying to rebuild their lives? How do we continue to say yes to survivors when the systems meant to support them keep forcing us to wait?

House of Ruth, like many domestic violence agencies, relies heavily on government funding. But the government has not upheld its promises in a way that allows agencies like ours to plan, breathe, or serve with stability. Federal funding has been erratic, inconsistent, delayed, and paused. Executive orders, funding freezes, delayed contracts, and legal battles ripple all the way down to a small agency in Pomona – and ultimately to the survivors we serve. We sign onto lawsuits. We raise our voices. We push back where

we can. But the uncertainty is crushing.

We are living in a constant state of anxiety: What happens next? Will the reimbursement arrive in time? Can we keep programs open? Can we keep people housed? Last month alone, we served 569 people across our programs. Each number represents a person, a family, a story, a moment when safety could not wait.

As CEO, I have had many sleepless nights. My executive management team and I live with the constant question of whether we have enough money in the bank to cover payroll every two weeks. We wait and hope that months of government reimbursements will finally be released so our cash flow can stabilize. We are not a wealthy agency. We have drained available cash reserves to cover rent for survivors, payroll for crisis workers, and the rising cost of keeping our doors open. I am exhausted. I am scared. None of us expected it would become this hard. Some sister agencies have

Delays impact House of Ruth... pg. 20



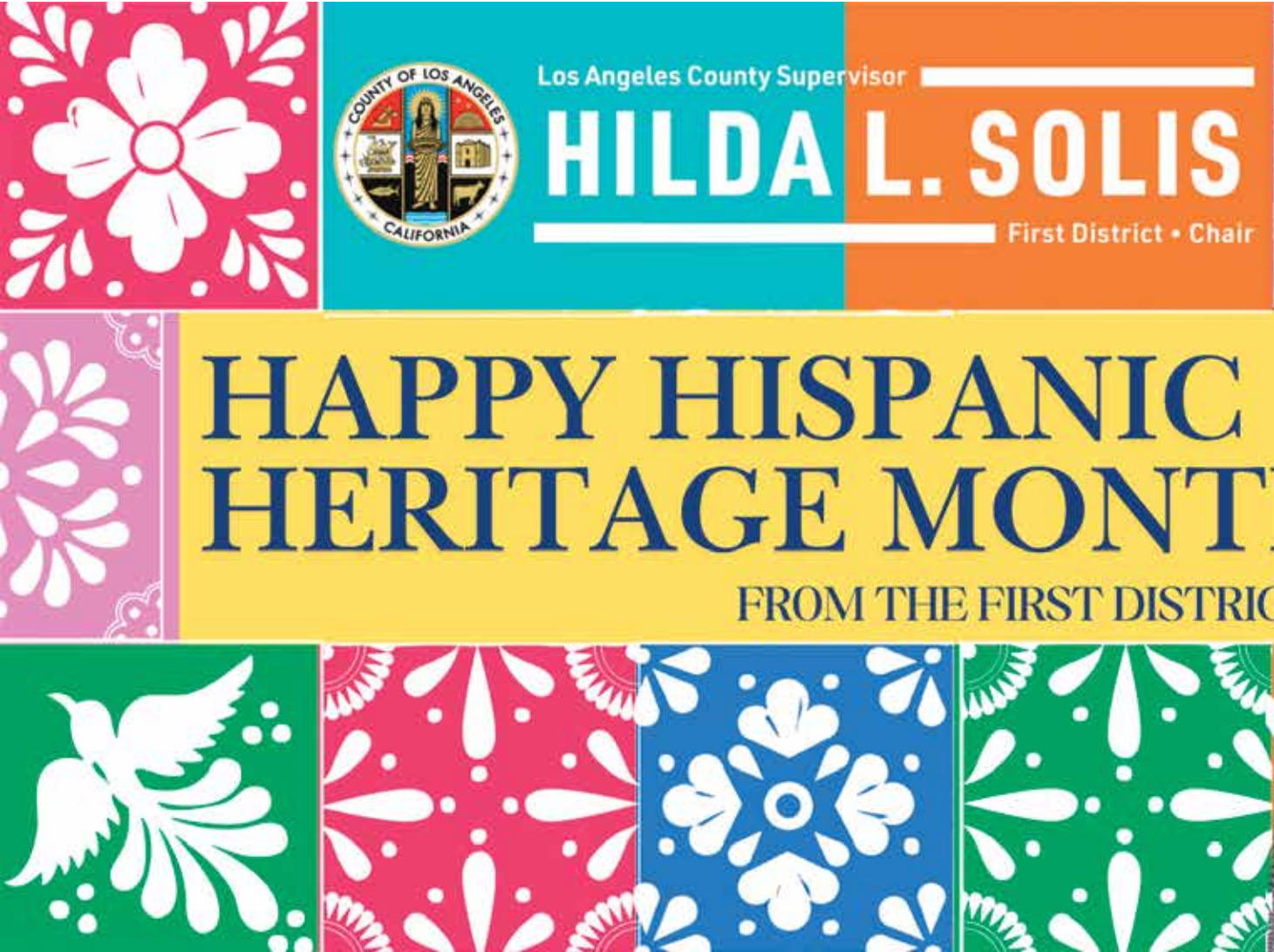
Los Angeles County Supervisor

HILDA L. SOLIS

First District • Chair

HAPPY HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

FROM THE FIRST DISTRICT





New 'all abilities' playground... from pg. 4

and become the next city leaders that will be working in City Hall.”

“That is truly exciting to me as a city manager, as a mom, seeing my kids excited to be playing with it as well, spark that imagination,” Scott said. “We strive for innovation and to push the envelope here in City Hall with our staff. And . . . what better example to see this right outside of City Hall doors.”

The park features a “destination playground” with an “all-inclusive play environment for everyone to enjoy,” according to city spokesperson Assistant City Manager Mark Gluba.

He said the playground features separate play features for “tots” in the 2 to 5 age group and school aged children in the 5 to 12 age group.

In addition to the playground itself, the project includes shaded seating and picnic opportunities, walkway lighting and more.

Eric Lewis, a park and playground consultant with RecWest Outdoor Products, Inc., said the playground is one of the largest “inclusive” playgrounds (providing play opportunities for kids of



Photo by Renee Barbee
The decorative fountain in the Pomona Civic Center was restored in time for the grand opening of the "Kids World Pomona Playground."

all abilities) in Los Angeles County and probably in California.

It has wheelchair-accessible equipment using ramps to the upper, outer decks of the tallest area, the “Cubic Tower,” that is 10 feet off the ground. And, he said, the spiral slide is accessed from two levels above that deck with an en-

trance 20 feet off the ground.

The Cubic Tower itself, with a height of 27 feet, makes the Pomona playground the tallest of more than a dozen inclusive playgrounds including parks in Griffith Park, Pasadena, Walnut, Glendale, Manhattan Beach and others.

He added that the design goal of the project team was to create a play space that matched the “New Formalist” style of the Pomona Civic Center, which was created in the 1960s by renowned architect Welton Becket.

Lewis said the largest “inclusive” playground in the world is Park Circle Playground in North Charleston, South Carolina, which covers a 55,000 square foot area.

RecWest acted as a liaison between playground equipment manufacturer Landscape Structures and the city, architectural and installation teams.

The playground includes five towers, five slides, five net climbers, eight steel climbers, six climbing “steppers,” a “clatter” bridge, 27 sensory-engaging activity panels and more.

And a ground-level play area for grade schoolers includes a wheelchair-accessible merry-go-round, an inclusive four-person see-saw, balance beams, a tunnel and many other features.

In addition to the park itself, the nearby decorative fountain in the Pomona Civic Center was re-

stored in time for the grand opening and in full operation for the first time in more than 40 years, according to city officials.

Price tag on that part of the project was \$2.3 million, an amount that was included in the \$14.6 million total.

Participating in the ceremonies were members of the Pomona Royals youth cheer squad, the “Mini Mariachis” from the dA Center for the Performing Arts and others, along with landscape architects, construction contractors, designers, engineers and construction managers on the project.

La Nueva Voz...

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Pomona ACTS

Pomona ACTS is supported by the California Strategic Growth Council's Transformative Climate Communities Program in partnership with the California Department of Conservation.





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Students disappointed after Delano school board votes to keep honoring César Chávez

By Amairani Hernandez
CALO News

LOUD For Tomorrow, a grass-roots youth-led organization based in Delano, is calling out the Delano Joint Union High School District's decision and expressing deep disappointment over the board of trustees' vote to rename César E. Chávez High School to Chávez Collegiate High School.

In early March, the sexual abuse and misconduct allegations against the activist and labor leader first became public. That same month, LOUD For Tomorrow launched its campaign to rename the school as students began speaking out about the accusations, with some saying they felt "disgusted" as the activist still remained the face of schools, streets and parks in their community.

The organization created a petition, which received more than 200 signatures on its first day. Since then, the petition has grown to more than 600 signatures. LOUD For Tomorrow then took the petition to the board of trustees, where members spoke directly to the board and submitted public comments in support of the proposed name change that reflects the students' position.

The board's decision did not



Delano school board votes to change name of César E. Chávez High School to Chávez Collegiate High School.

honor that request.

"It falls short of the values our community holds and the standard our students set," members of the organization said in a statement.

Several schools across California are named after César Chávez, including schools in Kern, Yolo, Orange, Los Angeles and Nevada counties. However, Delano is not the first community to consider renaming a school that bears his name.

About 35 miles from Delano, Bakersfield city officials also had announced on March 18 that they would not move forward with plans to rename one of the city's streets after labor leader César

Chávez.

But for Delano students, that wasn't the case. From the beginning of the campaign, students, faculty and community members made it clear that they did not want their school associated with the activist.

"Keeping 'Chávez' in the name, while stripping away everything except the surname, does not resolve that concern," said LOUD For Tomorrow. "Our young people asked the district to move beyond, and it asks survivors to keep seeing that name on their diplomas, their jerseys and their campus every day."

The organization shared that for

months, the district told the Delano community that the choice was limited to 10 names drawn from the school's 2002 survey, which included Mountain View, El Dorado, Millennium, Memorial, International, South Delano, Century, Unity, Harvest and Freedom.

The district's own committee reviewed those options and recommended Unity High School as the name that best reflected the identity of students, faculty and staff. According to LOUD For Tomorrow, Chávez Collegiate High School was not on the list that was showcased to them, and the community never had the chance to weigh in on the decision.

The community of Delano was constantly told that a \$100,000 fee was tied to the original land purchase agreement for the reason for choosing a name outside the ap-

proved list. Despite paying the fee, the district invented a name that still honors Chávez.

"If preserving the CCHS initials was truly the goal, that could have been achieved without honoring César Chávez at all," members of the organization said. "The community was told the constraints were about cost and initials. The district's own actions show the priority was keeping the name."

They also shared that it was never about erasing the history of Chicanos or of the farmworker movement.

"That history is ours, and we carry it with pride. It was about refusing to let a name that dishonors survivors stand over the heads of the next generation, and about choosing someone who represents our community in a good light," they said.

LOUD For Tomorrow said it will continue advocating for its peers and calling on the Delano Joint Union High School District to revisit the decision.

"This change would honor and validate the experiences of those who have suffered and survived, ensuring that they know the community stands with them," the student statement added.

Editor's Note: Cesar Chavez moved to Delano in 1962 where he launched his original farmworker labor movement in the same community now continuing to debate use of his name as the name of a high school.

PUSD participates in national school lunch and school breakfast programs

All 32 schools in the Pomona Unified School District will continue to participate in the national school lunch and school breakfast programs called the "Community Eligibility Provision" for the 2026-2027 school year.

Students at all schools will be served lunch and breakfast at no

charge.

The federal program is provided through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

For additional information, contact the district's food and nutrition services office at 1460 E. Holt Ave., Suite 160, Pomona, or call (909) 397-4711, ext. 21100.



A week-long "Vacation Bible School" was held at Prince of Peace Church in Pomona last month, this year on the theme "Bible Explorers" where children learned about many geographical sites that Jesus and other heroes of faith spread the gospel. Activities also included prizes, a movie night and a water jumper. Prince of Peace Church is located at 895 E. 7th St., Pomona. Church services are Sundays at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at 7:30 p.m.

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

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

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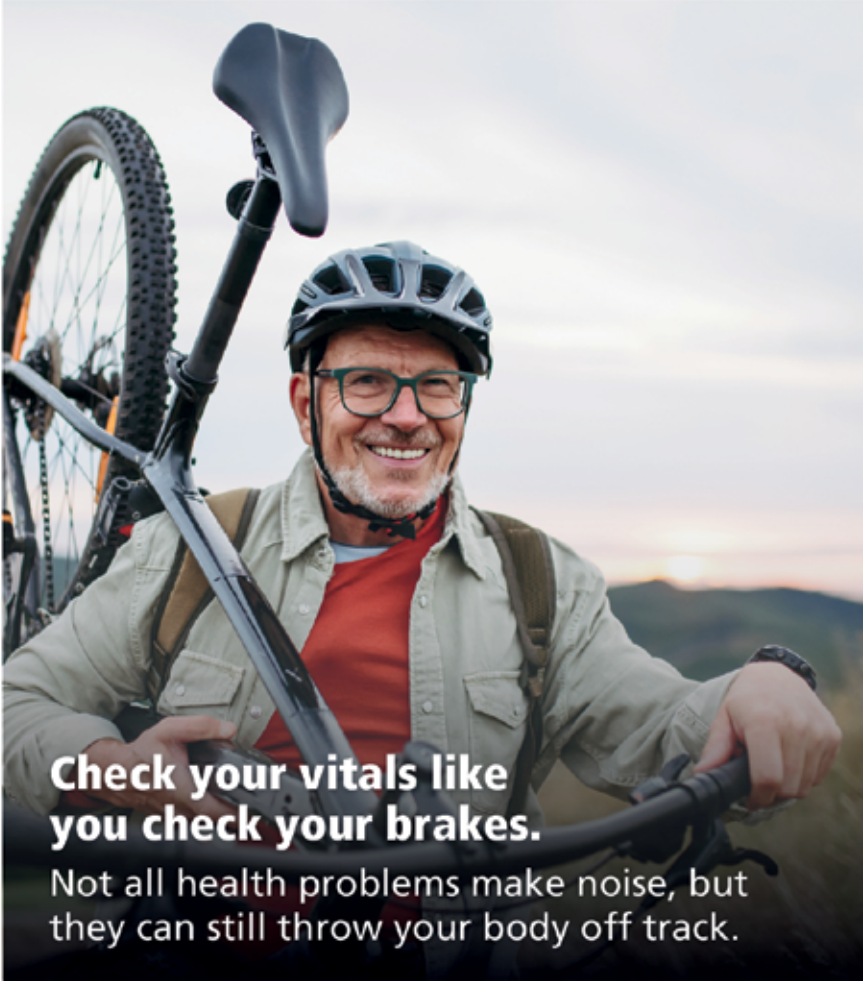


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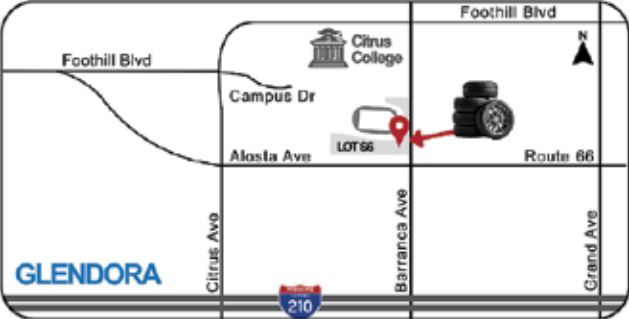
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Below is a useful guide on how to properly dispose of common household waste. Check out the complete guide by scanning the QR code.

La siguiente es una guía útil sobre cómo desechar adecuadamente los desechos domésticos comunes. Consulte la guía escaneando el código QR.



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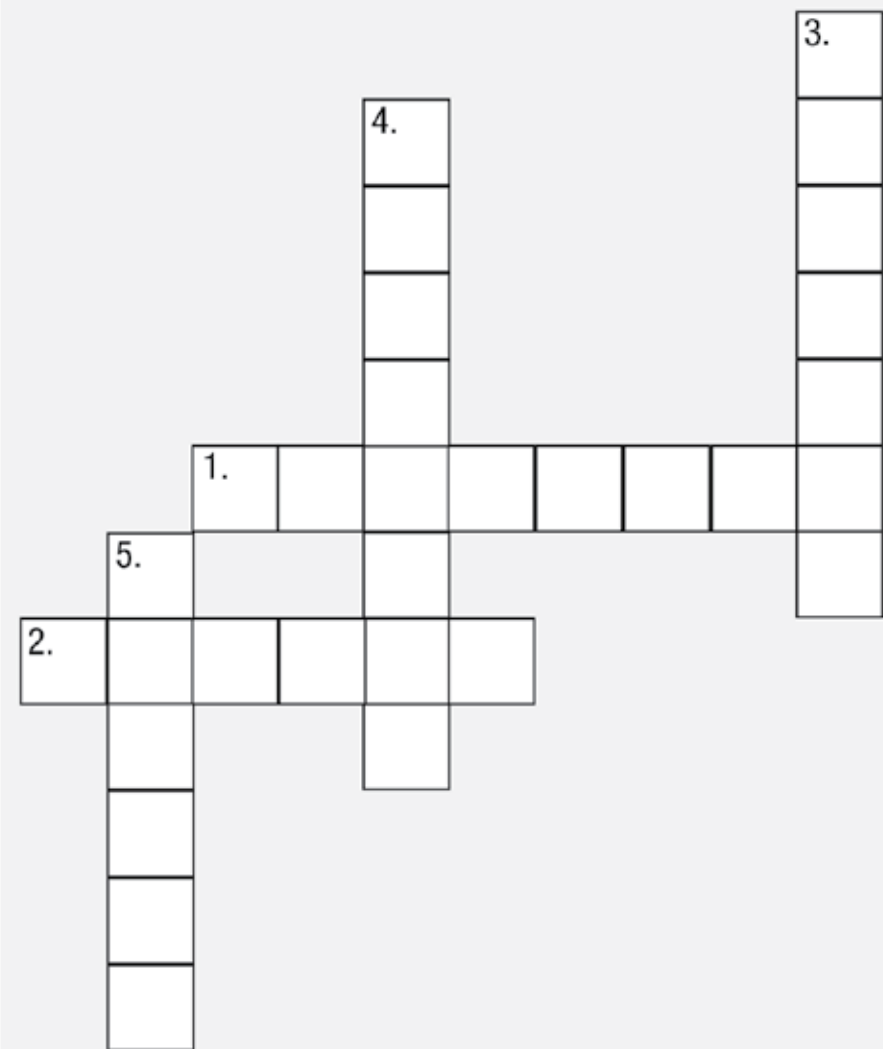
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5. You can _____ a glass bottle by making it into a vase.



Answers: 1. Landfill, 2. Reduce, 3. Recycle, 4. Organics, 5. Reuse

Delays impact House of Ruth... from pg. 12

already closed their doors. Many executive directors and CEOs have retired. This crisis is taking a toll on the domestic violence field, and I worry deeply about the next generation of leaders.

Our donors have been incredibly supportive, and we are grateful beyond words. But with more than \$2 million in unstable government funding, gratitude alone cannot keep every promise we have made to survivors. We need more help, and we need it now.

I know I am taking a risk by sharing these vulnerable thoughts so publicly. But I am willing to take that risk because I need people to understand what this work looks like right now – not in theory, but in real life, behind the doors of agencies trying to hold the line for survivors. House of Ruth has done good and necessary work for 50 years. I am proud of what we have accomplished. I believe we will survive this rough patch. But we cannot do it alone. Survivors and

their children are counting on us, and we are asking others to stand with us. We need help.

For further information about House of Ruth and to donate today visit www.houseofruthinc.org.

Editor's Note: *Federal funding delays from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Justice have impacted the government reimbursement of funds to nonprofits on the front line. Nonprofits have to front the money to deliver programs to those most vulnerable in the community only to wait for months to be reimbursed by the government. House of Ruth is dedicated to preventing domestic violence and ensuring the safety and well-being of those impacted by it. It regularly receives awards and recognitions from the community and elected officials at all levels and is often the subject of news stories, photos and captions in La Nueva Voz.*

Compassion... from pg. 8

bors, families, and a city together.

What does compassion mean to me?

It means the willingness to act to give justice-impacted people another chance to return home and contribute positively to our city. They're out there, and a notable number of them have gotten high-school and college educations or have pursued trades – but first we have to invite them.

For me, opening our hands and hearts to reconnect with others and empathizing with their expe-

riences has to happen first. Meanwhile, forgiving the past so as to make space in our lives for the future . . . that will be an ongoing journey in which compassion will be a valuable companion and guide.

This is how we may together awaken ourselves to forging a stronger, more caring and more compassionate Pomona.

Editor's Note: *Rev. Nora Jacob is the social justice minister for Covina Community Church (UCC).*

Need an income tax deduction? Donate your car!

Contact Pastor Doug Brissette, Greater New Foundation Fellowship Church, 841 S. Main St., Pomona, in a building designated a historic landmark by the Pomona City Council!

(The church building, constructed in 1922 and 1923, originally was the home of Pomona's Mount Zion Baptist Church, believed by historians to be the city's first Black church to hold on-going programs.)

Info: greaternewfoundfellchurch@gmail.com

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Making neighborhoods better... from pg. 2

three years ago. He told guests that police officers assigned to a K-9 train about a half an hour to an hour each day and go back to the kennel to get re-certified once a month.

“And then we’ll also have a training group where we work with different agencies once a week and we’ll visit those different cities – Chino, Ontario, Upland – and so when we go around we’ll go to different training sites,” he added.

Pomona Police Officer Cirilo Serrano, wearing a protective suit, served as the “suspect” in the K-9 demonstration.

Members of the Pomona Police Explorer Post 160 color guard opened the ceremonies as Pomona Police Dispatch Supervisor Kimberly Marquez sang the national anthem.

Police officers on hand represented everything from traffic units to SWAT teams.

National Night Out, observed by nearly 20,000 communities in all 50 states in an effort to build trust and strengthen the bond between law enforcement and the neighborhoods they serve, was first held in 1984 and originally included only 400 communities across the country.

Police officials view the event as an opportunity to show members of the public that public safety is a “team event.”



Bridgette Santiesteban, at right, and Juan Casteneda of Athens Services hand out information to a visitor at National Night Out this month.



Pictured is Staff Sgt. Kevin Gonzalez, recruiter for the U.S. Army National Guard in Pomona, posing with his Humvee at this month's National Night Out. The Humvee, short for High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle, is a four-wheel drive tactical truck. Introduced in 1985, it replaced the classic Jeep as the tactical backbone of the U.S. Armed Forces, serving as a troop carrier, weapon platform, and ambulance. Interested in signing up and, who knows, maybe driving one of these things in a parade or something? Contact Sgt. Gonzalez at the Pomona recruiting office at 1700 E. First St. Hours are 7 a.m. until late at night five days a week. Or contact him by e-mail at kevin.gonzalez10.mil@army.mil.



The SWAT vehicles are always popular at events, especially during National Night Out this month. Pictured is one father taking a photo of his daughter peeking out from the back of the vehicle.



Dr. Pedro Payne, violence prevention manager for the City of Pomona, was on hand to answer questions from the public at this month's National Night Out.



Pomona Rotarians Darren Krohn and Jill Dolan, at right, were on hand working the Rotary booth at this month's National Night Out, featuring free photos for everyone, complete with hats and glasses, taken by Pomona's On Time Photo Booth Rentals.

Making neighborhoods better... pg. 23

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Claremont High graduate awarded PEARLS ‘renewable scholarship’

Claremont High School’s Christian Samuel Lewis was awarded the sixth P.E.A.R.L.S. of Service (Promoting Education And Reassuring Loyal Services) “renewable scholarship” grant at his school’s recent senior award ceremony.

Lewis has been accepted at Citrus College in Glendora majoring in automotive technology.

A four year “AVID” student, he received a “Stage Tech” certificate (for vocational training teaching “behind the scenes” skills needed to run live entertainment and media productions) through career technical education, completed OSHA (U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration) safety training, and was a participant in the organization’s essay competition for three years under funding through a Pomona Community Development Block Grant award.

In addition, he performed many volunteer hours at Pomona’s Purpose Church as lead for fifth and sixth grade children in the “Approved Workmen are Not Ashamed” program.

His first \$1,000 award will be presented in October when he shows proof of enrollment as a full-time student. The program awards \$1,000 each year up to four years. Recipients must have a commitment to pursuing higher education or a trade, maintain full-time status at a college or career school, and maintain a grade point average of 2.5.

According to a news release, Jaline Vencebi, a renewable scholarship recipient in her third year at UC Irvine studying public health science, said it was her \$4,000 scholarship that motivated her to “keep progressing in higher education.”

“The scholarship . . . opened doors for me and allowed me to be in a position where I don’t have to limit myself,” she said.

“On the Spot” essay participants were Christyna Armstrong, Christopher Armstrong, Jasmine Carrillo, Maylene Carrillo, Genesis Castillo, Titus Gladney, Reigne Holloway, Londyn January, Nardine Johnson, Christian Lewis, Casia Lottie, Patrick McKinnie, Aniyah Moore, Kaleigh Rojas, Matthew Sosa, Keilana

Claremont graduate awarded scholarship... pg. 23



Christian Samuel Lewis

MEETING WITH SEN. MARK KELLY -- Pomona's Donna Jackson-Houston, President and Founder of the Nogales (Arizona) Buffalo Soldiers Legacy Association, is pictured meeting with U.S. Sen. Mark Kelly (D - Arizona) in his Washington, D.C., office last month to commemorate National Buffalo Soldiers Day (July 28), the 160th anniversary of the Buffalo Soldier regiments and the significant contributions of Black soldiers to the nation's history. Houston's grandfather, Lucius Jackson, was a Buffalo Soldier in the U.S. Army's 25th Infantry. The Buffalo Soldiers were created in July 1866 following the Civil War, and Congress created six all-Black regiments, later reorganized into four regiments -- the 9th and 10th Calvaries and the 24th and 25th Infantry. From left wearing Buffalo Soldier uniforms are Leslie Keown, member of the San Diego Chapter of the 9th and 10th Cavalry Buffalo Soldiers, San Diego Chapter President Rachel Hilliard, Kelly and Houston, who also is a member of the San Diego Chapter.



Outgoing Pomona Rotary President Monique Robles hands over the official gavel to incoming President Andy Quinones at a regular Rotary meeting last month in Downtown Pomona.



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Making neighborhoods better... from pg. 21

After 40 years of service for a busy service club, the Pomona Kiwanis griddle needed to be rebuilt and, when put to the test, it started right up to continue the job at this month's National Night Out outside Pomona Police Department headquarters. Pictured, at left, making sure everything is working just right are Kiwanis members Rodney Tanaka and Gino Elias.



Sam Hancox, a resident of Pomona for the past 58 years, stops in at the first National Night Out he's ever attended this month where he receives a bag filled with resource material from Kamille Hemsworth representing the office of Assembly-member Michelle Rodriguez.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Regional partner sees World Cup 'Fan Zone' as model for future events

I read your coverage of the 2026 World Cup Fan Zone (July 2026 La Nueva Voz) and want to thank you for telling such an extensive and important story.

The Regional Chamber of Commerce – San Gabriel Valley (RCCSGV) served as a lead regional implementation partner, helping transform the Fan Zone from a community concept into a successful regional event.

Working with Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Los Angeles County representatives, and public-agency partners, RCCSGV supported a vision that extended beyond a free public soccer celebration. The event also became a platform for regional economic development, community engagement, transportation access, and meaningful opportunities for San Gabriel Valley businesses.

RCCSGV played an important small-business outreach role by promoting the Fan Zone throughout the region and connecting food and beverage operators, breweries, food trucks, artisans, merchants, vendors, and community organizations with opportunities to participate in the event and its surrounding economic activity.

The chamber also supported sponsorship and resource development by helping create sponsorship concepts and packages, identifying prospective partners, coordinating recognition opportunities, and working within county and FIFA-related branding requirements. These efforts helped bring together businesses, public agencies, transportation providers, community organizations, and residents around a shared regional celebration.

The Fan Zone's success reflected the collective work of Los Angeles County departments and agencies, public-safety and transportation partners, sponsors, vendors, volunteers, and community leaders. RCCSGV was proud to help ensure that San Gabriel Valley businesses and communities were represented throughout the planning, promotion, and implementation of the event.

More importantly, the experience helped position the San Gabriel Valley to participate in the larger sports economy surrounding the 2027 Super Bowl, the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup, and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

As RCCSGV continues its mission of enriching and strengthening our region, we intend to remain at the forefront of these emerging economic opportunities. Our Board Chair and President, Lauren James, now serves as an Official Super Bowl 2027 Source Advisory Council member, further connecting our region to this growing sports economy.

RCCSGV also extends its sincere gratitude to our regional sponsors and supporters: American Medical Response (AMR), Valley Vista Services, Foothill Transit, Walnut Valley Water District, Suburban Water Systems, Northgate González Market, the City of Montebello, City of El Monte, City of Industry, Ten Ren/Ten Fu Tea Brands, El Proyecto del Barrio, and EoS Fitness. Their partnership helped make this regional effort possible.

I hope this additional background is useful as you continue telling the story of the 2026 World Cup Fan Zone, the collaboration behind its success, and its lasting regional impact.

Aziz Amiri, CEO
Regional Chamber of Commerce
info@regionalchambersgv.com
www.rccsgv.com

Claremont Graduate awarded scholarship... from pg. 22

Taylor, Dakota Tottress-Clemmons, and Davonis Tottress.

Winners of the competition were scheduled to be announced next week.

Essays focus on career goals, volunteering experience, and thoughts on justice. All participants received a certificate and a \$50 award. Awards will be presented Dec. 5 at the group's annual scholarship event scheduled to be held at The Union in Pomona.

The mission of the non-profit P.E.A.R.L.S. of Service is to make a positive impact on the communities it serves by offering programs and services that will enrich the lives and well-being of local residents. The organization was established in 2018.

For more information, contact info.pearlsofservice@gmail.com.



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Dr. Roberta Perlman

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