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drills cause trauma?
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The Palmdale Journal

**FREE
Publication**

**Local News That
Directly Impacts
Our City**

Volume I, Issue V

Published by Michael and Carol Ross

June 2022



Disbursement of Measure AV tax revenue delayed amid conflict of interest concerns

By Amanda Palmer

PALMDALE – Disappointed community groups filed out of the June 1, 2022 City Council meeting, as the council failed to reach quorum and tabled distribution of Measure AV grant funding. The absence of Mayor Haufbauer and recusals by Council members Bishop and Loa delayed the vote. Palmdale citizens passed a county-wide $\frac{3}{4}$ cent sales tax. Voters approved a Measure AV to preserve the \$12 million in additional annual revenues for essential city and community services, including \$1.3 million in grant funding.

The city received eighty-four applications totalling \$5.56 million, approving twenty-nine. Three received half the requested funding, two of which support local immigrants.

Salva requested \$355 thousand, requesting more than any other group. Spokesperson, Ruth Sanchez summed up the main argument, “AV Measure was presented to all of us. Vote for this because the money is going back to the community. We pay for sales taxes, whether we are documented or undocumented. That’s our money.” Los Angeles based Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights also received half the

\$180 thousand they requested.

The president of AV Veterans Community Action Coalition discussed the need for staffing and other resources. The six veterans’ groups requested a total of \$532,000. Other groups, such as the AV Community Emergency Response Team, requested a mere \$21,000.

At the May 18 meeting, Mayor Hoffbauer called into question individual donations that the city distributed to some community groups. He requested an accounting of the checks cut to the organizations.

To the mayor’s scrutiny, Council member Carrillo responded, “It seems that we are looking at Measure AV in a negative way. There’s been a lot of discussion on how things were done and not done... Not only did we get more revenue than expected, we got 22 million dollars instead of 15 million. Those are reasons to celebrate and now we can see what we can do with what the voters passed.”

In rebuttal, Councilmember Loa expressed concerns that some organizations may not merit support, “It is not negative to protect the people’s

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A commemoration of freedom: Juneteenth

By Mario Presents

Many leaders, such as Elie Wiesel and Martin Luther King, Jr., echo the sentiment, “Until we are all free, we are none of us free,” mentioned by Emma Lazarus in 1883. Many Americans observe Juneteenth as an opportunity to rejoice for freedom. To honor Juneteenth, a history is provided.

The Civil War ended on April 9th, 1865, but news traveled slowly and it was not until June 18th, 1865, that General Gordon Granger rode into Galveston Texas. The following day he read the final decree granting freedom for all enslaved persons within the United States.

"The people of Texas are informed

that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.” **General Orders, No. 3. U.S. House, 54th Congress, 1st Session (H. Doc. 369, Part*

See JUNETEENTH on Page 2

Waste removal ordinance to cost property owners an additional \$1.85 million

By Scot Sutherland

LANCASTER - Lancaster residential property owners will pay fifty-one dollars more per year for waste removal. The City could not provide the exact number of properties affected, but conservative estimates place it at around 50,000. Discounting the automatic 3.5% recycling cost increase, the ordinance generates more than \$1.85 million in additional revenues. The city passed the ordinance to address Proposition 218, which requires Californians to separate out organic waste for removal. Who benefits from the windfall remains a mystery.

Beginning July 1, property owners must now add organic waste to the yard waste cart. Waste Management of Lancaster will continue to empty the same three bins, trash, recyclables and yard waste. Currently Waste Management bills customers four times per year. The new ordinance shifts collection to the County of Los Angeles who passes it on to the city. The city deducts the franchise fee before paying Waste Management. The City Clerk and Finance office personnel say they do not know the franchise fee amounts or whether the ordinance increases those fees. A call to

Public Works has yet to be returned.

Reports from elsewhere in California indicate that uncontained organic waste may spoil before retrieval. Organic waste decomposes quickly, producing mold, stench, worms and unhealthy spores, especially without mixing with yard waste. Property owners with drought resistant landscapes may not be able to contain these hazards easily.

A Waste Management customer service representative says, “Customers have been creative in dealing with organic waste. Some store it in buckets with wood chips, dumping it in right before pickup. Some put it in containers and store it in the refrigerator. Other customers have started compost piles in their gardens.”

Proposition 218 shifts another potentially hazardous part of waste processing to California citizens. Waste Management empties the same number of carts on the same service schedule without the cost of billing customers directly. None of which explains where the additional \$1.8 million windfall goes.

See ORDINANCE on Page 2

AV commuters face difficulty due to rising gas prices

By Franklin Castillo

Gas prices keep going up without an end in sight. Along with the notorious for the high cost of living in Los Angeles County, the cost of travel becomes challenging for Antelope Valley residents. California’s gas prices not only include the price of fuel but also taxes and other fees, thus affecting commuters tremendously - and there are nearly 70 thousand commuters in the AV.

While some residents may be able to afford the cost of a house in a higher-rent city, residents would not get as much for their money. For that reason alone, AV commuters commit to the drive. However, rising gas prices make this once worthwhile commitment an unaffordable task.

On June 9, 2022, the national average for regular gas was \$4.97/gal and diesel was \$5.74/gal– the highest ever recorded prices for fuel on this date. At the time of this publication, the prices will be much higher. New records are being set daily, records no one wants to see. These prices are up from May when regular gas was \$4.32/gal, which is significantly up from 1 year prior when prices were \$3.07/gal nationally. The average diesel price was \$3.20/gal nationally. Comparably, prices are lower because the price is averaged across all 50 states.

Meanwhile, on the aforementioned date, the average gas price in California

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Help Wanted

Currently everyone on staff is a volunteer. Our readership is growing and we need more volunteers to stay afloat until these positions can be paid. We welcome local writers, print layout designers, and website layout designers. Please consider joining our team!

All submissions to *The Palmdale Journal* are greatly appreciated and will be printed at the discretion of the editors. Submission of a piece grants the editors permission to edit and print it. The articles do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or owners. Thank you.

ThePalmdaleJournal@proton.me

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Civic education for an empowered public

By Denize Verduzco

Before a bill becomes law, it goes through a vigorous process. Whether to show support or opposition, every bill presented should be carefully analyzed by citizens. If citizens are concerned, early intervention can allow bills to be amended or defeated. The process outlined below, is presented using information from www.senate.ca.gov.

All bills or legislation begin with an idea. The idea, generated from a person or group, is brought to a Senator or assembly member to author the bill. Once an author is found, the legislator proposes

the idea and language for the bill to the Legislative Counsel. The Legislative Counsel then drafts the idea into a bill and sends it back to the legislator for introduction. Note, both Senators and Assembly Members are limited to introducing 40 bills per their two-year session.

The clerk, the first to read the bill, assigns it a number, a descriptive title, and ensures that the author's name is attached. Afterward, the clerk forwards a digital copy to the Office of State Publishing. The bill is printed and

remains in print for 30 calendar days before it can be acted upon. This allows the public to review the bill before legislative action. Note, some exemptions do exist that bypass the 30-day rule. You can go to legiscan.com, under the “Bill Tracking” tab, and filter new bills under “Introduced.”

After the 30 day wait, the bill is ready for its 1st hearing. The Senate or Assembly committees designate the bill to the appropriate policy committee, based on its subject area, who then determines the location of the hearing.

During the hearing period, the public may testify in support or opposition of the bill with letters, calls, and visits to legislators. Once heard, the committee will either pass a bill, pass a bill as amended, amend and re-refer to another committee, or defeat a bill. Bills that require money must also be heard in the Fiscal Committee, the Senate, and Assembly Appropriations. A majority vote of the committee is required to pass a bill.

The passing of a bill in a committee signifies to the house that it is a

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Palmdale city council members protecting tax payers money

MEASURE AV from Page 1

money. We are charged with the responsibility to look out that the money is appropriately spent and that we are transparent and show where this money is going and why... it's an important function of the city council to be very wary and to be very vigilant and to be very protective. I know that some people just want to throw money around because we have it.”

Austin Bishop echoed, “Anytime we are dealing with taxpayer money there is a sensitivity involved and of course, we are trying to get the most amount of value out of the taxpayer dollar and provide as much service as possible.”

According to city officials, while the distribution of Measure AV funds requires citizen oversight, voters did not pass it primarily to fund grants. “In 2020 the city contemplated eliminating crime reduction services due to a \$1.9 million

deficit,” explained Mike Miller, Director of Neighborhood Services. “Measure AV arose out of a need to maintain public safety.”

Interim City Manager Rhonda Perez concurred, “The county assured the city that if we did not pass the tax, the revenues would go to the county, without local control.”

In November 2020 the voters passed the measure, which was framed as a question, “Shall an ordinance protecting Palmdale’s long-term financial stability; maintaining essential city services; repairing streets/potholes; addressing homelessness; maintaining 911 emergency response; keeping public areas safe/clean for all; retaining local businesses; protecting local water sources; maintaining veterans, senior, mental health, community programs; by establishing a ¾-cent sales tax, providing

approximately \$12,000,000 annually until ended by voters; requiring citizen oversight, public spending disclosures; all funds used locally in Palmdale, be adopted?”

From 2008 to 2018, LA County passed nine tax measures, with billions of dollars going down below, Palmdale contributing considerably. Previous to Measure AV, out of 9.5% of sales tax Palmdale generated, the State withheld 6%, the County received 2.5% with Palmdale receiving 1%. Additionally, the city collects only 7% of the 1% of property tax revenue.

“We could not survive on that alone,” said Perez.

A vote on the distribution of Measure AV Grant funding appeared on the June 15, 2022 agenda. On that evening, Palmdale residents alluded to the mishandling of grant funding and a desire

to further vet organizations that request grant money. Although most programs are considered non-profit, some comments implicated highly politicized underpinnings. Due to much public comment, the agenda item will be revisited on July 13, 2022.

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Lancaster homeowners must act soon to voice their protest on ordinance

ORDINANCE from Page 1

Other cities passed a similar ordinance to force the clean up of property during disputes between landlords and tenants. Landlords can currently require tenants to pay for waste services. The new billing measure will not only shift payment to property owners, but attach the bill to property tax and potential liens against the property.

Most landlords pay trash and water to protect the cleanliness and landscaping of the property. But tenant billing can occur in rent-to-own agreements and other business arrangements. Adding property services to government billing adds new limitations to these arrangements. Waste

removal will not affect apartment complexes and commercial buildings.

Some property owners question if the city should become an intermediary in the relationship between the customer and the service provider. Constitutional law reserves the settlement of accounts to the service provider and customer, placing responsibility of enforcement of code violations on the city. City code enforcement can already cite and monitor unkempt properties. The ordinance adds bill collection to the role of government.

As required by law, the City of Lancaster will hold a public hearing on July 12, at 5:00 PM in the City Council



Chambers at 44933 Fern Avenue in Lancaster. Written protests against the ordinance can be mailed, or delivered in person, to the City Clerk at the same address. All protests must be received before the hearing ends.

JUNETEENTH from Page 1

2). “General Order Number 3,” 1896. U.S. Documents Collection. Y 1.1/2: SERIAL 3437

Local groups and governments began to celebrate a day of freedom that became Juneteenth. Celebrations often began with prayer, inspirational messages, reading from the Emancipation Proclamation, and service to the community. As people moved from Texas to neighboring states, the celebration grew in recognition. By the 1970’s interest and participation in Juneteenth faded; however, in 1976 Texas House Bill 1016 recognized June 19th as “Emancipation Day” in Texas. Sometimes called America’s Second Birthday, the celebration of Juneteenth became an officially recognized National holiday on June 17, 2021.

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The Palmdale Journal is a town newsletter and entertainment periodical. It is a publication that offers an additional and distinct narrative, reporting and providing information on local politics, and how national, state, and county news impacts our city. The driving force is to provide a free flow of information that may sometimes be discluded or suppressed, providing a dissenting perspective on current events, an effort to get back to our own message. We hope to influence involvement by local residents, building up and sharing a common interest, relating together socially, and promoting truth and freedom in the process.

This is a record created by the community and for the community, the people of Palmdale. We hope that you will join us in this movement to tell our story.

The Legislative Process

CIVICS from Page 2

recommendation. After the bill passes the first hearing, it is placed in the Second Reading File, where the second reading happens in the house of origin. This point provides another critical opportunity for constituents to notify their position to their legislators. This transaction arranges three possible outcomes: One, the bill is read and if passed, it is sent to a third reading for a vote where the bill remains in the Second Reading File for one legislative day before moving into the Third Reading file. Two, it is read, amended, and reprinted for a second reading. Or three, it is read, amended, reprinted, and sent to a committee to be put on hold.

For the third reading of the bill, the author reads it in front of the entire house, Members openly discuss it, and then Members participate in a roll call vote. Bills that take effect immediately or require money, require a two-thirds vote in each house, 27 votes in the Senate and 54 in the Assembly. All other bills will require 21 votes in the Senate and 41 votes in the Assembly. Remember: Citizens are encouraged to continuously reach out to the members of the legislature to voice their support or opposition.

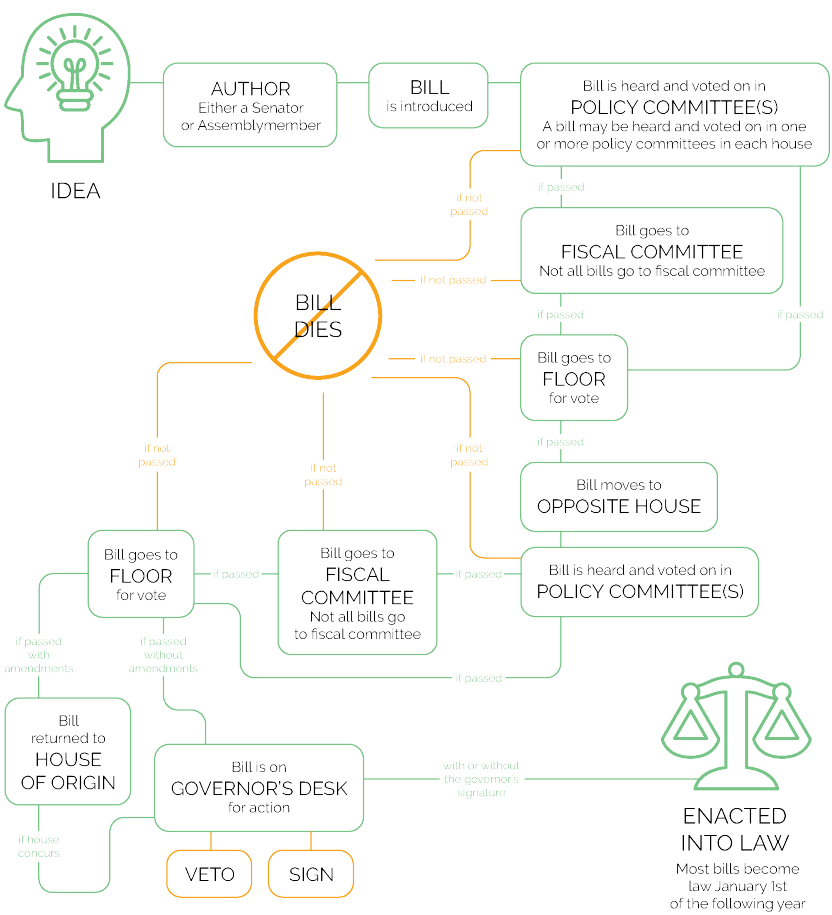
Once a bill is passed in its house of origin, it

will move to the other house where the hearing and reading process is repeated. If a bill is amended, it will be sent to the house of origin for agreement of the amendments. If the bill cannot be agreed upon, there will be a two-house conference committee. This committee consists of three members of the Senate and three members of Assembly. Both need to come to a compromise and vote upon it.

When the bill passes through both houses, it is sent to the governor. Citizens still have the power to call or write to the governor regarding their view of the bill. The governor has 12 days to decide one of three things. First, he may sign the bill into law. Second, he may allow 12 days to pass, not sign, and the bill will still become law. Third, he may veto the bill. A governor’s veto can be overridden by a two-thirds vote in both houses. The only exception to the 12-day rule is during the annual winter recess when the governor is given 30 days to decide on a bill.

Once the passage of a bill concludes, the Secretary of State will assign it a number which is known as a chapter number. Bills with an urgency clause do take effect immediately granted that the governor signs off on it and it is chaptered by the Secretary of State. However, all other bills will take effect on January 1 of the next year.

With knowledge of the legislative process, citizens can now confidently fulfill their civic responsibilities and be part of the change.



Mark an 'x' in the CA legislative system where the public can get involved.
(Clue: Answers are in the article)

CA pays some of the highest taxes on fuel

AV COMMUTE from Page 1

was \$6.40/gal for regular gas and \$6.96/gal for diesel, prices that are also up from 1 year ago by at least \$2– an over 30% increase in 12 months. Still, LA County is leading the state in high gas prices as a closer view of the area shows an average price of \$6.42/gal for regular gas and \$6.96/gal for diesel fuel.

Californians pay some of the highest gas taxes of all the states. And although CA republicans recently callered for a suspension on gas taxes, relief has not been granted leaving residents to deal with the consequences. The current rate of tax on a gallon is seemingly inseparable since it is included in the price paid at the pump. Currently we pay 2.25% +\$.055 in sales tax and \$.511 in excise tax. If a gallon of gas cost \$5.00 without taxes, it would cost \$5.67/gal with taxes. Expectedly on July 1, 2022, gas taxes will increase again to a new rate of 2.25% + \$.09 sales tax and \$.539 excise tax. Using the same \$5.00 pre-taxed gas example, in July the price will be \$5.734/gal. While \$.07 seems insignificant, consider that these are only the state taxes. Federal taxes and other fees must also be paid.

The current federal excise tax is \$.184, the low carbon program is \$.22, the greenhouse gas program is \$.15 and the underground tank storage fee is \$.02. In July, once all the charges are set in place, that \$5.00/gal of gas will cost \$6.31. The next gas tax increase rate is expected to

bring an additional \$8.8 billion in tax revenue.

Measured by action, the Biden administration shows modest regard for everyday citizens, “When it comes to gas prices, we’re going through an incredible transition.” Shortly after he said, “God willing, when it is over, we’ll be stronger and the world will be stronger and less reliant on fossil fuels when it is over.” He said this while repealing the previous administration's actions to make drilling, refining, and selling gas cheaper, even though high gas prices disproportionately impact lower to middle class citizens.

The goal of the administration, in accordance with policy, is to entice the public to get rid of their gas-powered vehicles. However, the country and the world currently lack the infrastructure to use electric cars; battery technology is still costly and the minerals to make them are limited. Driving inexpensive hydrogen fuel-cell or compressed air-powered cars are advantageous, but these technologies are not ready to fix the problem at hand. If the problem of rising gas prices is not soon intercepted, the commute will cost more than what is earned.

There are already reports of gas prices at \$8.84/gal in some places in the state, making \$10/gal a possibility in the very near future. A state’s commerce will be difficult to sustain if labor is impeded due to transportation.

Palmdale Playhouse brings awareness to the community through art

By Melissa Chavez

West Coast Classical Concert and Symphonic Orchestras presented *The Happiest Concert on Earth* on the first weekend of June at the Palmdale Playhouse. Under one roof, the audience experienced an electrifying atmosphere while listening to classic tunes from some of the most beloved Disney classics such as *101 Dalmatians*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Aladdin*, and *The Lion King*. Overjoyed, Patricia Graham, the Conductor and President stated, “We were preparing the music at the beginning of 2020 and never got a chance to perform. So, here we are. Two years later, playing this very fun Disney music for you.” To the symphony, the audience remained visually mesmerized by the choreography of talented dancers. Kids dressed up as their favorite characters, and some adults, too.


Two years into the making, and perhaps the timing supernaturally ordained, the event evolved into a benefit concert. Concertgoers heard the story of a five-year-old girl, Natalie Lewis, who underwent surgery for a basic procedure but experienced complications. Due to a

punctured heart, it stopped beating for 15 minutes. After being successfully resuscitated, neurologists lost hope that her brain would function normally, but as the program states, “In answer to the prayers of her parents and so many others, God has been miraculously restoring her brain.” If you would like to know about her story or would like to donate, you can visit their crowdfunding site at gofund.me/20bcab84.

In addition to the show, *Inheritance: A Father/Son Exhibition* by John Zender Estrada and his son, Deon Zender Estrada, lined the walls of the Palmdale Playhouse for patrons to enjoy. The captivating and intricate art caused concertgoers to stop and study the beautiful pieces. Graciously, John Zender Estrada sat with *The Palmdale Journal* in a one-one interview where he discussed his journey as an artist. Anticipate this feature in the upcoming July issue. In the meantime, visit the Palmdale Playhouse 12 pm - 3 pm, where the exhibition remains until June 30, 2022.

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Snapshot: Vaccine Adverse Events Reports

By Dawn Hardesty

COVID VAERs report retrieved from: <https://openvaers.com/covid-data>

1,277,978 reports through May 20, 2022	1,151,448 reports through February 25, 2022
- 28,312 deaths	- 24,827 deaths
- 158,974 hospitalizations	- 135,783 hospitalizations
- 129,544 urgent care	- 121,670 urgent care
- 193,504 doctor’s office visits	- 178,014 doctor’s office visits
- 9,670 anaphylaxis	- 9,335 anaphylaxis
- 15,568 Bell’s palsy	- 12,364 Bell’s palsy
- 4,668 miscarriages	- 4,209 miscarriages
- 14,565 heart attacks	- 12,731 heart attacks
- 41,044 myocarditis and pericarditis	- 35,303 myocarditis and pericarditis
- 52,677 permanently disabled	- 45,615 permanently disabled

Youth and Education

Fathers Are Essential

A Parenting Column by Denize Verduzco

Fearful children faced with violence engage in deceitful acts as a cry for help. Faced with violent family situations, school shootings, and drug overdoses they hide, run away and lie to protect themselves. The danger often lurks in places considered to be safe, the home. To rescue these helpless victims, society must address the root of the problem.

The foundation of a child’s life is built at home. Therefore, their behavior can be traced back to their upbringing and environment. History and statistics prove that actively present fathers in the home have healthier children. Currently, at least 1 in 4 children live in a fatherless home (US Census Bureau). The absence is felt nationwide. If fathers understood the importance of their role and engaged, it would have the potential to shift the nation.

According to Fatherhood.org, children who are raised in a “father-absent home,” are 4x greater risk of poverty, 7x more likely to become pregnant as a teen, and 2x more likely to suffer obesity. Also, they are more likely to have behavioral problems, abuse drugs and alcohol, go to prison, and more. The Grant Study, known as the longest longitudinal study ever done on the lives of men, notes that due to poor fathering, men are more likely to have poor marriages over their lifetime and have trouble allowing others to get close to them.

If those statistics aren’t unsettling, the following percentages found on Rochester Area Fatherhood Network, further highlight the issues at hand. Children of father-absent homes encompass 63% of suicides, 90% of homeless and runaway children, 71% of high school dropouts, and 80% of rapists. Additionally, 92% of women who were raised without a father are more likely to divorce.

On the contrary, when a father is present, children are healthier and more secure. For example, scientific evidence demonstrates how a father roughhousing with his children teaches them to be more resilient, smart, moral, and socially adept. While a mother’s nurturing traits; love, touch, and discipline are crucial, cross-cultural studies have found that fathers tend to roughhouse at a higher rate than mothers (artofmanliness.com).

Children yearn for stability. This is brought into the home with a loving father present. Although not always a

perfect science, the healthier the dynamic between a father-daughter and father-son relationship, the higher the rate of success for the child. Brett and Kate McKay on their website artofmanliness.com, provide studies outlining benefits. Some of these are that children are more likely to have a larger vocabulary, take risks and think independently, have an enhanced capacity to play, enjoy vacations more, use humor as a healthy coping mechanism, be more content after retirement, have less anxiety, and experience fewer physical and mental symptoms under stress in young adulthood.

Furthermore, fathers being essential resonates in the mere fact of how sought after they are. Fathers are looked upon to provide both emotional and physical support. They are looked for to provide affection, which in turn helps build a child’s social and cognitive development. Fathers have a way of setting the bar in reference to relationships. While mirror neurons are active in a child’s life, the way a father treats his wife, kids, and friends, will set a precedent for the rest of the child’s life. The way a father treats his daughter and wife will translate onto the way a daughter will seek her spouse. If a father lives a moral life, with love, respect, and integrity, a daughter will seek that in a husband. For a son, the way a father treats him will translate into the way the son seeks relationships with friends. To learn how to behave and survive in the world, boys tend to look for that example in fathers. If a father is absent, they will look for any male figure to fill that void, thus causing some to find the wrong role models.

Not all is lost, whether you are a biological father, adoptive father, or stepfather, know that you are essential. Several of the issues plaguing families and society today will be turned around and significantly reduced when fathers become fully involved. To be present is a start, but not enough. Fathers who will teach, train, discipline, listen, and lead morally and ethically are needed. Fathers who provide financially, mentally, and emotionally will bring about change. Fathers who know how to lead by example, in word, and in action, will reproduce themselves. Dr. Robert Enos quotes in his book, *A Time for Transition*, “You cannot change what you are reluctant to engage.” If you want to see a change, engage. Till next time...

Local activism against school policing

By Teresa Palmer, Youth Writer

There is an organization that is active in the community called Cancel the Contract. The people who run this claim to be a “coalition of community organizations and leaders from the Antelope Valley.” Their goal is to remove the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Departments from schools, starting with the AV. This would divert the money to provide more school counselors and emotional support workers for students.

You may be wondering “what benefits does this have?” They claim that taking cops out of school would end law enforcement violence in schools. Not only would it end law enforcement violence, but it would also end everything else cops do for our students.

According to cops.usdoj.gov they, “Promote safety in and around the school by addressing crime and the fear of crime... Beyond law enforcement, school resource officers (SROs) serve as educators, emergency managers, and informal counselors.”

In a Cancel the Contract video, Barron Gardner, a teacher at Antelope Valley High School stated, “It’s almost exploitive to be ready to arrest these students.”

Curious, I interviewed students from a local highschool, of varying backgrounds, about their experiences with on-campus law enforcement.

Gavin said, “That’s controversial because everyone either loves or hates cops. And to be honest, I just think that if something were to happen and he’s there then that’s a good thing.”

Another student Samantha remarked, “Personally I like having them there. I feel like it’s another layer of safety dedicated to just my area at any time needed. I feel like if they weren’t there it’d become more dangerous since that level of extreme security is gone and people are going to want to take advantage.”

Taino commented, “Personally I haven’t seen or experienced [racism] and I feel like the reason why is the officer we have is a Hispanic man so I feel like he relates to us more than if it were a white cop for example.”

Claire said, “It makes me feel a bit uneasy.” In reference to whether the sheriff is racist, she stated, “I don’t really know him personally, but probably. I’ve only ever seen him arrest people of color.”

I spoke to an officer from the AV and

he said, “I used to be an SRO... Our SROs are well equipped. They go through many types of training such as solo response to an active shooter, AR-15 training, and they even train with school staff... However, I don’t believe the schools should use them as their main source of discipline when a student gets in trouble. I have seen school officials push discipline to law enforcement.”

The local officer also mentioned, “I have had people get upset with me because of televised police incidents. They sometimes treat me like I was the one who caused the incident shown on TV. I do think there is a bad stigma due to the media. Some people tend to group cops as a whole, rather than individuals.”

Students’ and teachers’ views about school law enforcement are important but parents should also have a say in what they deem best for their children.

Maricel Reyes, mother of three girls stated, “It’s more secure and safe for the students and all the staff faculty.” “I don’t think they are racist, they’re there to protect and serve.”

Another mom, Evette Olvera says, “Having an officer at the school is necessary because it is better to be safe than sorry. If there is an incident that requires an officer to be involved for the safety of children it would be readily available instead of being delayed in case of an emergency. In high school we had security and a sheriff on campus. I never felt unsure of their motives or that they were unfair.”

I attempted to reach out to Christan D. Green, the campaign coordinator for Cancel the Contract to hear what he had to say but I never got a response.

I am not sure if taking police off campuses would be best, but from most of the people I spoke to about this topic they are not in agreement with it. Cancel the Contract makes it seem like the majority of people want the police out. They go to school board meetings and put together protests. They are loud and put their thoughts out there. If you don’t agree with what they are doing I encourage you to be louder. One student even shared, “Oooo I’m actually really excited for this. it’s such a walk on eggshells kinda topic so I’m glad someone’s finally writing some truth about it!”

Check your local school district websites and advocate for your kids and the kids in our community.

Active shooter drills may negatively impact children

By Franklin Castillo

With the tragedy in Uvalde, Texas and its aftermath, it is important to stay away from politicizing or undermining the loss of life and the destruction of those impacted. The killer deserves no coverage in the press, with all the information still coming out. While there is no quick fix to the problem, a facet to consider is a psychological phenomena that children face because of active shooter drills.

Based on the timeline provided by the Texas Tribune, the children in the classrooms at Robb Elementary spent almost an hour and a half trapped in a room with the shooter. There is no amount of preparing children for this kind of event. The current standard for active shooter drills with the Los Angeles Union School District is one per semester. Currently, Westside Union, Palmdale, or Lancaster School Districts have nothing publicly published to implement a

schedule of active shooter drills. Local middle school students affirmed they have participated in this type of drill. *The Palmdale Journal* reached out to local school officials, but no one replied.

According to an article published by the Baylor College of Medicine in 2019, Dr. Laurel Williams, associate professor and Chief of Psychiatry at Texas Children’s Hospital wrote, “People must keep in mind the developmental age and how it connects to a young child’s emotional and cognitive abilities when considering and deploying these ‘preparedness drills.’” She goes on, “The younger the child, the less likely they are to understand that an act of violence is not occurring during the drill.” Exposure to these kinds of drills can change the way children perceive people as a whole.

Later in the article, Dr. Williams said, “If you’re constantly given the viewpoint

that the world is scary and unpreventable things happen, it pervasively makes us less secure as a society. We see everyone as suspicious, and it changes the way we act around people.” To understand better the long-term effects of active shooter drills we have to dig into the past.

The duck and cover drills of the 1950s were part of President Harry S. Truman’s Federal Civil Defense Administration’s program. Part of the education program featured “Bert the Turtle.” An animated character showed children how he dropped to the ground and retreated into his shell during a nuclear bombing. Designed to show kids to “duck” and “cover” by getting underneath furniture, teachers used the cartoon as a tool to prepare students in the event of a nuclear attack.

These drills later morphed into what we now have as earthquake drills. There is no substantial information whether the drills caused psychological trauma or damage to children later in life. Most available

accounts, provided by adults who experienced the bomb drills as children, indicate that they remember them as necessary at the time and consider them “silly” as they look back on them.

While changes need to be implemented to protect the future of schooling for children, it is unclear if active shooter drills are needed in elementary schools. Young children do not have the mental capacity to separate the fictitious practice from an actual event. Teachers at these grade school levels may need to do a form of training that does not incorporate the children. Schools may need to implement other measures, such as providing armed security, door jamming devices, and create escape measures for ease of exit from classrooms out of an alternate location, like a window. In addition, communities should assist the mentally ill and do so in a manner that helps stabilize them, forming solutions for dealing with the effects of their mental illness.

Features

Community Member Spotlight: Phu Thi

By Melissa Chavez



“I think what I want to get across is how thankful I am. What the United States is about. How the U.S. took care of me.”

As *The Palmdale Journal* expands, we continually meet ordinary people with extraordinary stories. This month’s Community Member Spotlight features Phu Thi, a member of the Palmdale Freedom Coalition (PFC) who got the fortunate chance to escape communism in Vietnam.

Phu Thi was born to parents with little to no education who worked on a coffee plantation. At three years old, Phu Thi developed a physical disability. Unable to work, the owners of the plantation found no use for her. After many failed attempts to restore her health, her parents sent her to an American Missionary-run Catholic boarding school that housed physically disabled children.

When she was 13, communism started to invade the city all around. Afraid of what could happen, the missionaries decided to evacuate the kids. “They may have killed us,” she reflects. “They have no use for people who cannot fend for themselves. If you cannot do labor, then they have no use for you.”

After making arrangements with an airline owner, the 30 kids were brought to San Francisco and housed in Army barracks. When we entered the country, they were very careful to isolate us. Not in a mean way. They vaccinated us and checked our health. That’s why it shocks me now- people flooding in without medical checks, nothing.”

“We were kids, we thought it was fun. We had no idea what was going on. That’s God’s protection.”

Eventually, all the kids were granted political asylum and put into the foster care system. After living with another family, Phu Thi was placed with the couple she now calls her parents. Now 60 years old, she informed us that at 55, they made their adoption official. "They always treated me like a daughter. I gave them four grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.”

She admitted that she didn’t know much about politics as a teen. However, one thing did stand out to her. She recounts the story like this:

“I was very self-centered. When I went to a junior college for a year, I received a \$100 voucher to go to the student store and buy anything I wanted and needed due to being a foster kid. Back in the 80s, that was a lot of money.

So I bought the top-of-the-line backpack and other great things. While my now-husband, having a tax-paying father, would get the worst of things. His parents would scrape money together to be able to afford things.

At the time, I didn’t think about it much. Now

I look back and wonder, ‘My goodness, how can they treat somebody that pays taxes like this? I would’ve rather had the lesser. I was treated much better than the person that paid taxes. His mother struggled, her person was horrible. She didn’t have a good purse, she washed her hair with the detergent that she washed her clothes with.’”

Phu Thi shared her sentiment on this type of partiality against citizens who do their best to carry their family forward on their own and how this creates resentment in a community. “God is a God of justice and that is not fair,” she exclaims, “My husband's family was paying taxes and they couldn’t get any help for college.”

What she describes is the effects of socialism on society. Socialism pins people against each other and gives them just enough to survive. This system played out in some of the lives of the 30 kids brought over from Vietnam.

“Out of 30 of us that came, three didn't do well. The rest are amazing. Taxpayers. Even though they are handicapped, they are doing excellent. Those that didn’t do well are still receiving from the government. They never got any better.”

Additionally, we talked about prejudice- something she admitted to acting upon after 9/11. She had an incident where she needed help; the only two people around were Arabs. Feeling convicted, she said, “Okay. God, I get it.” In the same way, she addresses how contemporary culture paints Caucasians to be the enemy when through experience, she states that White Americans have always been the first ones to help her.

" Patriotism is where my heart is at because I was given so much."

“We need to just treat people like people. The community shouldn’t label people based on race because the enemy wants to divide us. To deceive and divide,” reminiscent of her experience with socialism.

Phu Thi’s faith is an integral part of who she is and a major influence on her political activism.

“It’s like you take the first red pill and realize that the government is corrupt. I thought, ‘How can a government work against their own country?’ Then, you take the second red pill and you see who God is and who Jesus is, as a person, which is far from what you’ve been taught.”

Moreover, we discussed the political climate of our nation. Concerning the media, Phu Thi said, “Whatever they say, I believe the opposite. I tune in a little to keep up with happenings. Who to vote for and how to be involved in the community. If you listen to it day in and day out, then you push God out.

Propaganda in Vietnam was heavy. Even though American soldiers were there fighting with us, we learned to hate them. We found out that some of the people in the school were communists that had infiltrated.

Vocabulary is another tool they use. They make things sound pretty. That’s how they infiltrate. Look at the language that Planned Parenthood uses in its name. You are not a parent if you kill your child. But see how they use that language? How clever of them. The devil is smart and so sly. That’s why we need God.”

In closing, we discussed PFC and what led her to join. She said, “I thought it was good. People get together and work for a common good which is freedom. Our freedoms are attacked even more now. They are being chipped away. But you know, the way they can do this is by making us busy.”

With this in mind, we encourage Palmdale citizens and those of the surrounding cities to make time to fight for freedom. Like Phu Thi, you can join PFC Wednesdays at 6:30p at Butlers Coffee Shop.

The Human Connection: Sun Screen

By Sabeth Perry

Back in the day, the beginning of summer meant morning hikes in the back hills, homemade bike jumps, afternoon sprinkler runs, and late-night hide and seek. One wouldn’t dare go back home before the street lights went on. Even then, all the kids would wait for their parents to call them in-- but they had to find them first! Today, when youngsters tell what plans they have for their summer days, they say how much they’re looking forward to playing video games, binge-watch their favorite Netflix shows, and endlessly scrolling through the trending TikTok videos. What happened to the good old days?

The average person checks their smartphone over 100 times a day. The human brain, nervous system, and endocrine systems weren’t meant to adapt to this habitual behavior. Even worse, children pick up those same habits that can harm their development. Studies reveal that forty percent of children spend at least 30 hours per week on their cell phones. That’s nearly two days worth of screen time per week. The summer months are sure to show a spike.

Realistically speaking, who can be without a cell phone these days? Practically nobody. With that in mind, teaching youth to use smartphone technology responsibly is extremely important. If not taken seriously, the negative effects can far outweigh the positive. Here is a look at both.

First, smartphone technology is beneficial for research, education, and communication. Therefore, the goal is not to revoke access but to teach self-discipline. With the guidance of a trusted adult, children can be self-sufficient by understanding how to regulate time spent on their phones; this can help them create healthy self-awareness and reflection practices that will better prepare them for their future.

Another positive effect is digital literacy. Children can develop knowledge to navigate resources online that help bridge the digital divide between families of different income levels. Equally imperative, children should learn how to access emergency services, which can give both children and parents a sense of security that enables growth.

Next, let’s look at the negative effects. Since social media platforms seem to be the obsession with our youth, we’ll start there. A quick internet search will show multiple case studies on children and social media/phone time. For example, The American Journal of Epidemiology conducted a study that assessed over 5000 test subjects and found that regular use of social media harmed an individual's well-being. The negative impacts include increased irritability, stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and poor body image. One study even discovered children developing tic-like attacks.

Aside from digital dangers such as cyberbullying, online predators, oversharing, false marketing, and dangerous viral trends, the amount of screen time can also take a toll physically and cognitively. The National Library of Medicine published an article about research that focused on the effects of children’s duration on a mobile device. Additionally, they considered the content children see, their after-dark-use, and the media type. In the article, they stated that physically speaking, “excessive screen-time is associated with poor sleep and risk factors for cardiovascular diseases such as high blood pressure, obesity, low HDL cholesterol, poor stress regulation, and Insulin Resistance.” Other consequences include impaired vision and reduced bone density. Psychological symptoms include depression, suicidal thoughts, ADHD-related, and antisocial behavior. Psychoneurological effects include addictive screen time use that decreases social coping and exasperates craving behavior, similar to substance dependence.

With excessive heat approaching, it’s easy to opt to stay indoors and lock onto that screen. Therefore, regulating digital habits is a must. Parents can find helpful parental control apps for all devices that track how children spend their screen time and what apps they’re on. These helpful apps can also regulate the content and time allowed.

More helpful than this, however, are the plenty of alternatives one can do to use free time wisely. For example, one can read physical books; go to the library, or dig deep in that dusty bookshelf. Reading a fun book aloud can be educational and exciting for the kids. Additionally, board or card games are a fantastic way to spend time together. There’s nothing like a little healthy competition. Families can also spend time learning new arts and crafts techniques. An unusual choice can be throwing a family dance party to show off the cool moves. By the way, kids today think “oldies” is music from the 80’s... ouch! At cooler times in the day, spend time outdoors, walking, throwing the ball, running through the sprinklers, etc. Find a delicious recipe and cook together.

Whatever you find to do, be intentional. These are the memories children will remember and cherish. So, set the phones down and get moving.

Not a Victim: Storms Produce Rainbows

A Column by Adriana Salcedo

We live in a historical time where the storm appears to be raging. Crime is up, inflation is rising, gas prices are crazy, the homeless population is increasing, and mental health is an epidemic. It appears as though there is no regard for human life. However, don't be fooled by what is happening in our society. In the eye of the storm, there is a rainbow forming.

Did you know that in ancient Hebrew, rainbow means war bow? I believe this meaning is incredibly timely because our city is in a war. It seems as though a bow and an arrow are facing our city with one attack after another. But the image of a war bow also has the solution. The bow is a picture of peace. This peace comes when we confront the problems in our city to discover solutions.

It is not time to back down and shrink back. It is time to take back our city and

be bold. As a community, we must raise our standards and show up to the movement of change; only then will we be able to watch that war bow turn into a city where crime diminishes and homelessness is under control. It is time to hold our city leaders accountable. We should partner with them.

Voting for the right people on a state and local level is critical for the health of our city. As a community, we need to be engaged in creating resources within our local churches and after-school programs to help families that struggle with mental health issues. We are the city with the solution in the storm, the rainbow that symbolizes new beginnings, hope, mercy, and forgiveness. We are the city with a promise.

Sincerely,
Adriana Salcedo
Beauty for Ashes International



Our Mission: Out of the Ashes, Beauty Arises

Women around the world struggle daily to find their beauty and self-worth. Beauty for Ashes, International emerged out of a pursuit to empower women so that their confidence is not washed away when the day is over; rather, their self-worth be their permanent state of being. Established in 2017, our mission is to empower women's self worth from the inside out through our community-based programs, organic beauty products, and health and wellness activism. We strive to bring God's light into the dark beauty industry to help women exchange their ashes for beauty. Want to hear more or partner with us? We are located inside Butler's Coffee and would love to chat with you.

Palmdale History, Part 3

By Franklin Castillo

Many inventions and commodities one benefits from today go through a development process. This process consists of trials and errors. If not for those failures, there wouldn't be products or projects that saw the light of perfection. Likewise, Palmdale owes its success to the rise and fall of our previously mentioned towns, Harold and Palmenthal.

Although Palmenthal suffered many problems, it was those failures that helped to create solutions. When the town formed, there were stable amounts of rainfall and water for farming. As the years went on, the water became scarce. Therefore, the crops began to fail. Another major factor that caused its downfall was the necessary upgrade of the railroad system established. As trains were getting longer to deliver supplies to the south, they needed a larger area of flat land to build up speed to get over the mountains. As a result, the railroad moved its station from Palmenthal and Harold down to the valley floor in order to get the speed needed to get over the pass. These relocations eventually created the makeup of the area now known as Downtown Palmdale.



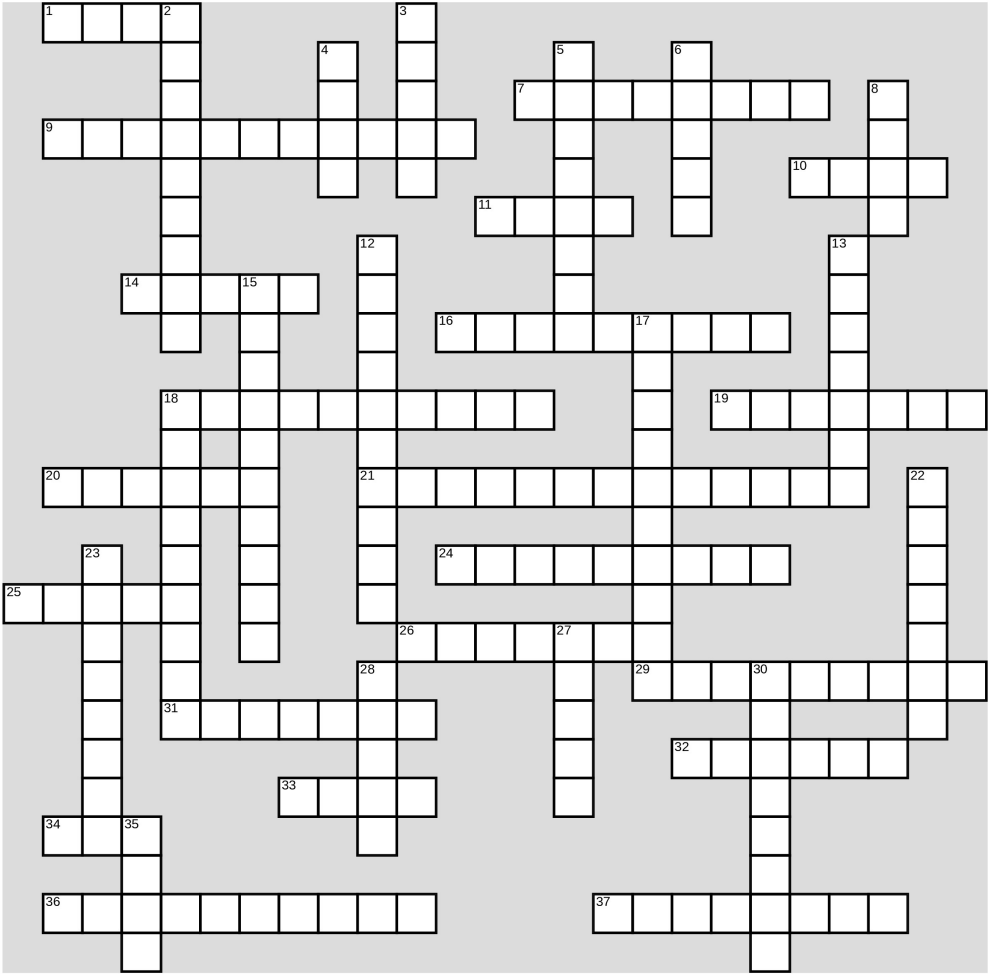
William Mulholland, Picture Courtesy of Wikidata.org

Palmenthal and Harold combined to give Palmdale the strength of a larger community. The water resources grew abundant for farming since the natural water paths follow the low-lying areas. Being at a lower level gave better access to water from wells. The town became a natural stopping point for travelers coming over the southern mountains as they trekked toward the desolate Mojave Desert. Water was made even more stable by the advent of the aqueduct system in 1913. William Mulholland designed a system to bring water from the Owens Valley south into Los Angeles. The system benefited the Antelope Valley and surrounding areas as well.

In 1921 the first completed major roadway into the area was called Mint Canyon. Further north it was called Lancaster Road. Much of the original route placement became incorporated into what is now the 14 freeway. The remaining portions of these roads exist as Sierra Highway and as portions of highway 395.

The history of Palmdale is rich with captivating stories. To know more about the City of Palmdale, start with www.cityofpalmdale.org and read through the local history section. The Los Angeles County Library website (www.lacountylibrary.org) also has an Antelope Valley history section.

June Crossword Puzzle By Jennifer Maccarone



Across

- Bandmate to John, George and Ringo; born June 1942
- Renowned American football coach and NFL executive who led the Green Bay Packers to win Super Bowls I and II, born June 1913
- First blind-deaf person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree, June 1904
- A June birth flower, fragrant with a prickly stem
- Fly one on a windy day
- 45th U.S. President who endeavored to "make America great again," born June 1946
- Young diarist and victim of Nazi Holocaust, born June 1929 in Germany
- Commemorates the end of slavery in the U.S.
- June is considered a great month for committed couples to have one of these
- Eat outside
- Suffragette fined for illegally voting in 1872
- Internationally renowned English tennis tournament
- A June birthstone, originating from the sea
- Flying beetle found during May and June in the U.S.
- SPF
- Hollywood starlet born in June 1926 as Norma Jean
- Number of days in June
- Swimming hole
- Morgan Freeman (born June 1973) in "Shawshank Redemption"

- A June ceremony
- Make this when life gives you lemons

Down

- Rescuer at the beach
- Granted the right to vote under new Amendment to the U.S. Constitution passed by Congress in June 1919
- Next month
- The start of summer in the Northern Hemisphere
- Academy award winning Hattie McDaniel (born June 1889) in "Gone with the Wind"
- "Read my lips: no new taxes!" 41st U.S. President, born June 1924
- Celebrates and honors men who have embraced an essential role
- Honors the U.S. flag and commemorates the approval of its design
- This "great charter" was the first document to establish that everyone is subject to the law, even the king; established June 1215
- Couple found guilty of providing information on atomic bomb to the Soviet Union
- California term for a weather pattern that results in cloudy, overcast skies during late spring/early summer
- Flying disc
- Cook outside
- Coastal hotspot during the summer months
- Holds the record as youngest boxer to ever win a heavyweight title, born June 1966
- Self-propulsion of a person through water
- Term used for the landing at the beaches of Normandy during WWII in June 1944

Valley Voices

Trans in Female Spaces

By Mario Presents

Some regard the recent spike in anti-trans sentiment as a reflection of racism or transphobia rather than focusing on personal dignity. On July 1, 2017, Obama signed into law the Healthcare Facilities Act, allowing transgender people restroom and locker room access based upon gender identity. Multiple reports of sexual violations of biological females by self identified transgenders in single sex spaces breaches public trust. Abuse of these laws jeopardizes the protection of biological modesty, particularly in young adults still growing into their bodies.

Multi-generational Wi Spa mired itself in controversy, July 2021, when several patrons complained about a person behaving inappropriately in the women’s locker room. Staff dismissed the claim. Frustrated patrons, who then took their story to the internet, sparked weeks of protests, national headlines, and injury. The Los Angeles Police Department obtained a warrant to arrest Darren Merager, 52, on five felony counts of indecent exposure. Merager and the family refuse to cooperate with authorities and their whereabouts remain unknown.

Not only confined to city life, similar reports continue to surface locally. Parents from Lancaster and Littlerock

High Schools recently stepped forward on behalf of their students who feel uncomfortable with the behavior displayed by trans (non-binary) peers in female only spaces. Students understand that it is one thing to change into your gym clothes, street clothes, or uniform, but it is a whole separate complaint when a person behaves vulgarly, or in a profane way in the locker room environment. Suggestive posturing, or obscene innuendos in the bathroom are not hallmarks of well adjusted adults.

Forced sexual contact is also being reported on campuses as far as Virginia. A Loudoun County judge convicted a 15-year old trans-female of sexual assault stemming from an incident in October 2021. That same student is also accused of assaulting another female at a second school when officials failed to address the policy, opting to move the offender instead to another campus.

Aberrations or differences create enough distress in our youth, but what was a distant tale or rare event is now being reported on local High School campuses. Injured parties should immediately notify the authorities, contact school administration, and attend a school board meeting to voice their personal accounts thereby documenting them on the public record.

Speech at May Day Rally

By Mario Presents

On Saturday, May 21st, 2022, the Palmdale Freedom Coalition held an event with the theme, "The Future of Freedom." Mario Presents delivered a informative and inspirational speech to our spanish speaking community:

Estamos aquí disfrutando nuestra libertad garantizada con la declaración de independencia. Hemos trabajado horas sin cuento para pasar una ordenanza protegiendo nuestra privacidad. Ningún restaurante, cafetero, ni negocio tiene el derecho de saber tu estado de la vacuna o cualquier infeccion te afecta hoy. Ordenanza 1577 es el primer paso contra la discriminacion que vemos en la ciudad de los angeles, y nuestras familias.

El grupo de Palmdale Freedom Coalition se ha hecho menos como grupo, y más como una familia. Hemos celebrado el Dia de Gracias, Navidad, Pascua, y en seguido un año juntos. Publicamos un periodico nuevo cuando el papel “Valley Press” describió este grupo, ustedes, extremistas. Nos apoyamos el uno al otro porque cuando una mamá llega llorando que sus hijos fueron discriminados en la escuela por los maestros y ayudantes, todos llegan a la escuela, hablan al director, mandan letras electrónicas, y vocalizan las desagregaciones al consejo escolar cuando se juntan.

Luchamos por los derechos de todos porque lo que le afecta a uno, en poco tiempo les afecta a todos. Yo que no tengo hijos hablo en frente del consejo escolar por los daños que veo. Tus hijos buscan la protección de adultos porque sienten la discriminacion en nuestro mundo. Ojalá que lis llantos no caigan en oídos sordos. Estamos hoy juntos para darles la herramienta necesaria para proteger a su criatura y la libertad de todos.

En el grupo de Palmdale Freedom Coalition, los curiosos, desafectados, y

aislados, encuentran que no están solos. Símbolos como una cara libre, una bandera americana, se hacen como un faro para encontrar hermanos y hermanas nuevas. Miembros me han contado que pasaron la navidad solos porque la familia no quería sentarse con una persona sin la vacuna. Este tipo de separación me da tanta tristeza porqué el amor de la sangre no debe de tener condiciones.

Queremos que todos sean invertidos en esta lucha y entendemos que a veces no hay suficiente horas en un día. La libertad es una de esas cosas que no pasamos a nuestros hijos como color de pelo o altura. Hay fuerzas opresivas que nos empujan a buscar una vida nueva en otro país. Arriesgamos a veces todo para ser libres, o dar la oportunidad a la criatura. La oscuridad siempre nos sigue porque donde hay luz, hay sombra. Hasta que la luz se enfoque en los espectros directamente, nuestro brillo estará empañado. Estamos unido en esta lucha para el futuro de nuestra comunidad y te invitamos. Hispano con Negro, Chino con Arabe, vecino con vecino.

Una hora de tu día, una letra electrónica, una llamada al consejo o representante del estado de California sin duda es la cosa más poderosa que uno puede hacer. Nuestros representantes deben de representar nuestra comunidad, pero muchas veces llegan a su posición y se les olvida su juramento. En vez de preguntarle a la gente cuando hay dudas, hacen lo que sienten al contrario de la comunidad y apoyan su posición con, “Yo soy el que ganó la elección.” Esa actitud destruye la confianza de la gente porque al principio piensan que tiene los sentimientos de la gente en su corazón, pero de verdad lo alzan en la bolsa con el dinero de organizaciones políticas.

No somos mudos, tenemos una voz. Unidos, cambiamos el clima de la ciudad, unidos salvamos nuestro futuro.

Happy 30th Anniversary to Our Publishers!



Forever Love

By Carol Ross for Michael on their 1st anniversary

They say love is forever; now I know it to be true.
It all began the moment I gave my heart to you.
The tender bud of love blossomed into a fragrant flower,
Growing still as your affection rains down a gentle shower.
When I gaze upon your face, it’s my beloved that I see.
When I look into your eyes, love smiles back at me.
I’m caressed by your tenderness, embraced by your devotion.
My heart leaps out to sing to you, drenched in sweet emotion.
I cherish the day we united as one;
A truly romantic endeavor,
A romance to last a lifetime.
Because love really is forever!

Letter to the Editor: Response to Enos

By Steven Hutson

I read with interest Rob Enos’ article,” Churches Fail to Stand Against Tyranny,” in the May issue of *The Palmdale Journal*. As a libertarian, I have long believed that our governments (at all levels) have already seized far too much power for themselves. And they can never get enough. After all, our founding fathers envisioned a small government with limited powers.

Our recent experience with the COVID-19 pandemic is an excellent example of this lust for power. With all of the lockdowns, school closures, and the mandates for masks and vaccines, our leaders continually tested the limits of their legitimate authority. But is this, in fact, tyranny? This commentator votes no.

In our constitutional republic, we have many checks and balances on executive authority. When the president can’t get enough votes in Congress, his initiatives fail. The courts have held him back, as well. And when investigative journalists reveal things done in secret, heads can roll.

Sure, I hate wearing a mask. I can’t stand to remain confined at home, for more than a day. I’m no fan of Governor Newsom or of President Biden. But to compare them to Nazis? Nah. It helps no one, when you overstate your case. And it shows a poor understanding of our history.

But more than any of this, I’m intrigued by Mr. Enos’ assertion that most of us had no access to prayer or encouragement because the churches were closed. Really? No American government official or agency holds the ability to command anything of the kind. Can they break up large gatherings? Sure. Such offenses are easily observable and punishable. But a “church” is not a building with doors that can be locked.

All over this valley, and our nation, faithful Christians continued to meet in their homes. They held online meetings, spoke by phone, and engaged in all manner of outdoor activities. They prayed, sang, broke bread, evangelized, baptized, visited the sick, aided the widows, fed the hungry, and everything else. Even in normal times, this is where about 95% of all Christian ministry takes place anyway. Not in some official meeting place and not on Sunday morning. If any churches closed, it wasn’t due to any politician or pathogen. It was because the individuals gave up.

Make no mistake, I applaud Mr. Enos’ zeal. But when he resorts to exaggeration and name-calling, many people (including myself) will be tempted to stop listening. Even in the darkest days of the pandemic, the work of God continued unabated. At least, among the willing.

I don’t require anyone to wear a mask in my home. But if you ask me to do so in yours, or at your place of business, I won’t argue. If you feel vulnerable, I will do what’s in my power to help you feel secure. For me, this is one manifestation of how I love my neighbor. Now is the wrong time to go about asserting “I’ve got my rights.”

As we fight for justice, let us not forget that the science behind COVID is far from settled. Nobody really knows how to formulate the right vaccine. Or the best treatment. Or the ideal daily routine to keep yourself safe. Even so, I can appreciate the work of those scientists and bureaucrats who labor to find those answers, and our public health officials who desperately try to keep up with that constantly moving target. Even when they turn out to be wrong. In most cases, they’re just trying to do the right thing. Let us extend grace, and gratitude, for their efforts. Even when we disagree.

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