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# The Palmdale Journal

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Volume I, Issue VII

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## Red Flag Laws

By Franklin Castillo

In an attempt to combat recent school shootings, lawmakers rushed to put a bill on the President's desk that would add more infringements on the second amendment. Major news networks claim the bill passed with bi-partisan support, as it provides incentives for states to enact red flag laws. What are red flag laws and how do they affect us as Californians?

Red flag laws allow police, family members, roommates, co-workers or even doctors to petition a court to take away someone's firearms for up to a year if they feel that person is a threat to themselves or others. In most cases the petitioner needs to have regular contact and interaction with the targeted person. Nineteen states currently have some form of red flag laws on the books.

The current federal bill goes further. The legislation also aims to close the "boyfriend loophole" and restrict gun ownership for domestic violence offenders who are not married to their partners. Under the bill, states will receive grants to encourage red flag laws. It enhances the background checks for young adults between the ages of 18-21. The bill also provides funds for school safety and youth mental health programs. The original proposal would have banned assault-style rifles for people under 21 and barred certain high-capacity magazines, but had little chance of passing the senate and was removed from the bill.

Did the new federal gun bill create red flag laws in California, or did the state have them before the federal bill? California, being one of the most restrictive gun owner states, has had them since 2016. In keeping with its restrictive tradition, the state also has an interesting thing called a Gun Violence Restraining Order (GVRO). The GVRO can be used to further subject people to illegal seizure of their firearms. It is a mandate from a court that prohibits a person from possessing a firearm, ammunition, or cartridges. GVROs are not permanent. A temporary GVRO is good for 21 days, and permanent GVROs last for one year. When a temporary GVRO is issued, a hearing for a permanent ban is automatically scheduled.

According to *The Washington Post*, California's red flag law went basically unused for two years after its passage in 2016. Washington, D.C.'s law has gone entirely unused. Other states, such as Florida and Maryland, have gone the other direction, seizing hundreds of firearms from gun owners. After the Parkland school shooting, former president Trump started the Federal Commission on School Safety. The Commission wrote a report concluding they, "do not know whether [red flag laws] impact gun violence more generally, and it appears no studies have yet evaluated the more recent Extreme Risk Protection Order laws in other states." Basically, this is stating that with

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## EXTRA! EXTRA!

Erika Alverdi announces candidacy for new  
District 5 City Council seat

By Melissa Chavez



From left to right: Paul Marsh, Candidate for CA State Assembly District 39, Erika Alverdi, candidate for Palmdale, District 5 City Council, and Mike Garcia, U.S. Representative serving the 25th District

America, though she remains glorious and strong, has taken hits from domestic enemies; those in power continue their attempts to strip her history and overpower the voice of those who make up the beauty of this magnificent land.

Yet— there are homegrown patriots who seek to restore their neighbors by getting everything stolen back. Here is the story of one. A patriot in our backyard, the wonderful city of Palmdale, decided to take matters into her own hands by grabbing the hands of those in her community and saying, "We will win."

In April 2022, *The Palmdale Journal* informed you of the redistricting scheduled to take place. Palmdale City Council adopted a city map that created a 5th district in the city. An action that was done in hopes of bringing representation to a specific race. However, while instating representation to a race, they silenced the rest of their constituents. It is imperative for context to highlight: specific people groups did have representation in the city. The optics appear to be a grab for power from special interest groups and certain council members.

Adding insult to injury, the Council voted 4 to 1 in favor of a rotating mayoral seat. Mayor Steven Hofbauer gave the only dissenting voice. In just one night, they stripped the people's voice,

undermined the citizen's elected mayor, and created a new council seat.

Disgruntled citizens decided to take action. Among the people rose a familiar and almost obvious choice for the newly created District 5 seat, Erika Alverdi, the wife of Richard Alverdi, with whom she has a blended family of six children. Alverdi is known for magnifying and empowering the voice of the marginalized through her non-profit organization, The Vine Refuge. The Vine Refuge focuses on helping aged out foster youth and families at risk of losing their children to the system through mentorship and provision of resources such as housing and necessities. Her actions are not "one and done" transactions in which she drops off resources or alleviates the need for a day, making them unique. The non-profit focuses on empowering people to stand on their own two feet to get their family or themselves ahead.

*The Palmdale Journal* interviewed Erika Alverdi to give more insight into who she is. The interview is below:

**TPJ:** How long have you lived in District 5? What do you think is the greatest need and strength in that district?

**Alverdi:** I've lived in District 5 on and off for 20 years. I think the greatest need would be unity. For example, the Spanish

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## New SOS project to help foster youth in AV

By Dawn Hardesty

PALMDALE, CA- On July 13, The Palmdale City Council passed, approved, and adopted Resolution No. HA 2022-002 to authorize the executive director or their designee to execute the Affordable Housing Agreement with SOS Children's Villages California. Each SOS Children's Village townhome will house up to six children in foster care, allowing children from large families to live with their siblings. They will also receive care and support from a full-time, professionally trained foster parent. Case managers and support staff are also said to be on-site in community center offices. The plan includes building 12 townhomes for a max total of 72 foster youth. The project is at 30th Street East and adjacent to McAdam Park.

Kathryn Barger from the Board of Supervisors, attended the City Council

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## Respect for Marriage Act exposes election fears of liberal legislators

By Scot Sutherland

Washington, DC - The Respect for Marriage Act amended the Defense of Marriage Act by repealing the definition of marriage as being between one man and one woman. But it did not change the working definition of marriage enacted throughout the United States. The 2015 Obergefell vs. Hodges ruling by the Supreme Court not only legalized same sex marriage in all fifty states, but constitutionally protected it.

If the Respect for Marriage act failed to change anything for American citizens, why did liberal legislators push it through the House with such urgency? To weaken conservative candidates in the 2022 election.

Local representative, Congressman Mike Garcia, who faces a tight reelection race in November, feels the heat. "House majority leader Nancy Pelosi brought this up to weaken people like me in November."

Liberals know that marriage matters to conservatives, so they fashioned the bill to create a dilemma for defenders of the constitution. Garcia explains, "Equality under the Constitution mandated a 'Yes' vote. A 'No' vote would have been me saying I don't regard the Supreme Court or the laws of states."

The bill updated the definition of marriage in policy to align with the legal definition decided in the courts. "Gay marriage is Constitutional per the Supreme Court. Further, the plurality of states have already legalized it. The vote

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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.

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## New project sets out to keep siblings together

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meeting via Zoom. Barger commented, “Palmdale is specifically the best fit for SOS because the community has such a caring, compassionate and supportive commitment to foster and underserved youth in the region.” She continued, “It’s all about keeping families together... while DCFS investigates the problem.”

Councilmember Laura Bettencourt agrees with the SOS project but expressed concern about placing at-risk youth across the street from another project geared at at-risk adults. Barger responded, “We are going to work together because it should not be a concern. We work together to make sure to keep all communities safe."

During the meeting, Mayor Pro Tem Richard Loa, also showed concern for foster youth. He commented, "The fact that we have a disproportionate amount of foster children here in the Antelope Valley is very heartbreaking, and this is certainly moving in the right direction..." TPJ reached out to Loa for him to expand on this statement. He stated it was purely "Observational in nature," based on what he's seen in the courts.

A request sent to Amara Suarez, DCFS Public Affairs, asked, “Why are children in the Antelope Valley placed in foster homes at higher rates?” Suarez sent back this statement: “Contrary to the data you cited, the AV does not have the highest number of out-of-home placements in the county. The source of the data you cited appears to be school district information,

which may be skewed due to enrollments of youth in foster care who are placed in Antelope Valley resource homes but who derive from other parts of the county.”

The comparative data (See Charts A & B) for foster care percentages of the student population in neighboring schools comes from the California School Dashboard (most recent 2021).

The differences in percentage points regarding the percentage of foster youth in AV schools are significant. The school areas nearby do not have the high percentages as the AV. One local special education teacher feels that it is likely due to the affordable housing available here.

AVfosterfriends.org, states that nearly 100x a day, a child in CA places in foster care. Los Angeles County averages about 33,000 foster youth in care on any given day who have experienced abuse, neglect, or abandonment. According to the 2020 census, the AV has the third largest population in Los Angeles County.

According to the data link provided by DCFS for April 1, 2021- March 31, 2022, the largest group for foster care placement: 6 - 10-year-olds had 3,737 neglect cases, and the 11-15-year-olds had 3,351 neglect cases. The data for sexual, physical, and other abuse is not in this comparison, which though wrong, is statistically lower.

It is important to note that unreported child maltreatment isn't captured in the data presented here. Closures of schools, child care centers, and fewer public places meant less contact with adults and mandated reporters who could witness

and report suspected maltreatment and neglect. Believing that the dip in reporting was due to less abuse would be misleading.

The data points to neglect as the prominent issue for placement in the foster care system. Neglect encompasses several areas, including not fulfilling a child's needs for food, a clean living environment, or emotional well-being, according to Verywellfamily.com. It is very difficult to prove emotional abuse, but it often plays a part in physical and sexual abuse.

Erika Alverdi runs a 501c3, The Vine Refuge, which focuses on mentorship of the aged out foster youth and families at risk of being separated. Alverdi notices all of the aged out foster youth that she has dealt with have the same story of neglect. She believes that, “We need centers that transform. Not more housing where youth stay the same." Other questions remain unanswered. Where will the aged out foster youth go if their siblings still reside in the SOS homes? Where will they get the foster parents to run this facility? Historically, there has always been a shortage of foster parents in the AV.

If you are interested in becoming a foster parent for Los Angeles County, go online to the DCFS website or call Foster and Adoption Recruitment at (888) 811-1121. DCFS partners closely with local Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) to ensure children who cannot remain safely in their homes have the highest quality caregivers. DCFS or any of our partner agencies can help.

## How is Palmdale adapting to the new school entry time?

By Oscar Juarez Jr.

Starting July 1st, 2022, middle and high schools in CA are “To begin no earlier than 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m,” as stated in Senate Bill 328, approved on October 13th, 2019. The legislature intends to avoid “...health, safety, and academic impact of sleep deprivation....” Affecting every student, parent, and teacher, locals speak on the new bill and provide views on the change, effects on the school day, and after-school activities.

John Johnston, social studies department chair and track coach at Highland High School, shared his thoughts on the entry time change; he said, “I think I can mirror this thought to almost every teacher I’ve talked to; nobody likes it.” He expressed how students who participate in after-school activities are getting home later with little time to do work, leading to a long day for students.

Jeff Smith, the freshman, JV, and varsity coach at Highland High School, said, “Students are complaining about going straight from school to practice with only a 20-minute break after getting out of school.” Freshmen games will begin at 3:00 p.m. while students are still in class, therefore adults will be on the school grounds. He expressed that “the logistics of the change need to be fixed.”

Local parent Victor Flores says the time change benefits his daughters who attend two different schools saying, “I think it’s good because they get more rest.” He also said that the time change makes it easier to pick up them up after work.

For Maria Garita, this is not the case. Teaching elementary school and having a son in high school, it is harder for her to see him. Many Quartz Hill and Highland high school students gave similar responses. Highland student, Yesselle Ortega, expressed, “ I like it to an extent. I feel more energized in the morning, but by the end of the day, I feel like we’re all ready to go home.” Ortega expressed enjoying the time change while adapting to it but confessed that getting home late leaves little if no time to spend with her family.

The bill supports the CDC’s recommendation that “teenagers aged 13–18 years should sleep 8–10 hours per 24 hours.” The new entry helps students to gain more rest throughout the school year. However, the multiple factors of the new entry time can pose a larger problem for after-school activities and family time.

### Chart A

School Districts in or near Antelope Valley

School District	% of Foster Youth
Palmdale Elementary	2.7%
Lancaster Elementary	3.4%
Keppel Union Elementary	1.7%
Westside Union Elementary	2.2%
Antelope Valley Union High	1.9%
Acton-Agua Dulce Unified	1.1%
Rosamond Elementary	1.6%
Newhall	0.3%
William S. Hart Union High	0.3%

### Chart B

Various School Districts in Southern California

School Districts	% of Foster Youth
Los Angeles Unified	0.8%
San Diego Unified	0.2%
Alhambra Unified	0.3%
Fontana Unified	0.7%
San Bernardino City Unified	0.8%
Anaheim Union High	0.5%
Victor Elementary	1.9%
Victor Valley Union High	1.7%
Hemet Unified	1.1%

## The Palmdale Journal

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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.

## Mike Garcia votes 'yes' on Respect for Marriage Act, avowing it was Constitutional choice

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this week wasn't about gay marriage alone. That has been settled by law and the courts. It was about the application of equal rights under the constitution and law and the reciprocity of those rights across state lines,” says Garcia.

Representatives must weigh the responsibility to represent constituents from across the political spectrum, despite potentially losing votes. Garcia not only sees his Yes vote as constitutional, but as supportive of all constituents, “I’m not in this office to overturn state laws and Supreme Court decisions or deprive Americans of rights because of their sexual preference.”

The Supreme Court already demonstrated willingness to overturn Roe vs. Wade, repealing federal abortion laws. Overturning Obergefell vs. Hodges could just as effectively repeal provisions in the Respect for Marriage Act. By amending the Defense of Marriage Act to reflect the current state of marriage liberal legislators hope to marginalize conservative candidates in tightly contested districts.

If a large number of conservative voters go to the polls in November, both the House and the Senate could significantly tilt in the conservative direction. As liberal legislators hoped, conservative pundits immediately criticized the forty-seven House Republicans who voted for Respect for Marriage. The results will measure the success of legislation designed to weaken conservative opponents in November. Expect more election-focused legislation in the coming months.

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## Newly created District 5 will soon have a filled City Council seat

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speaking community is united within their families but continues divided in their community due to a lack of governmental knowledge. My hope is to bring unity through information. How do you empower someone? You let them know of the power they hold. A good leader gives authority. A bad leader wants to keep it all to themselves.

I have seen organizations tell people what they should think and give them specific and easily manipulated information that advances their narratives and agenda. This information tends to limit the knowledge their members have. However, people should be free to make their own decisions and break out of cultural expectations. In addition to using information, my goal is to bring unity through conviction and freedom, not based on finding others that look like them.

**TPJ:** How have the trials and successes in your life prepared you for this moment, and how will that help you defeat your opponents?

**Alverdi:** That’s a hard one because I’ve lived many lifestyles. I was born into

money, but when my family and I moved to California, my parents had to rebuild their lives. I went from extravagance to a middle-class city in LA County: South Gate, where I joined a gang at 13. Then I got married and joined the welfare system, where I remained for years. For a long time, I felt as though my situation was only temporary and that the wealth my husband at the time and I were waiting for would soon come, until I realized that I couldn’t wait anymore and I had to start getting ahead.

I feel like that is what the government causes in people. It gives you a false promise of something that is to come, but they never deliver. I want to deliver for my District 5 neighbors. We deserve that.

All my experiences are what will help me defeat my opponents because my trials have made me relatable. To this day, I wear handed-down clothes, and I don’t care. I can attend a sophisticated gathering, rub elbows with key leaders, and I will not feel out of place. People are all valuable to me.

**TPJ:** What will you do differently from the Council we have presently? What is your plan?

**Alverdi:** ”Empowering the voice of the people.” That’s my plan and slogan. I’m willing to have tough conversations instead of just pretending that the issues don't exist. I'm willing to hear others' opinions, even when they disagree with mine. Justice and freedom are for everybody, not just the ones who happily endorse me and agree with me. The Bible says, “What good is it to love only those who love you?” You have to love everyone. You have to fight for everyone.

As it stands, Alverdi is running against other community members who, the majority of them, belong to special interest groups that heavily focus on race rather than “Liberty and Justice for all.” These special interest groups are the very ones that agreed with the rotating mayor and the adaptation of a map that was turned in after the deadline to submit maps. An action worth noting since other viable options followed the preset guidelines.

From a purely objective point of view, their run for the District 5 seat is seemingly the culmination of the chess pieces they have moved to checkmate freedom. District 5 currently holds a

unique opportunity to create a unified voice not led by special interest groups. The members of that district currently reside on a blank canvas, each voice revealing a part of the image that will soon reflect the beauty of its residents.

To keep up with Erika Alverdi, visit her Facebook page at Facebook.com/wethepeopleofpalmdalematter

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## Are Red Flag Laws Legal?

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one state having these laws for 20 years and most states having them less than 1 year, there is not enough information to support the effectiveness of red flag laws.

There is a lot of debate over if these “red flag laws” are even legal. The constitution states that no one shall be deprived of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness without due process of the law. Many argue that these types of laws directly undermine due process. There has been no trial, no law broken and no arrest; but property has been seized by the county, state or federal government. This implies the Second Amendment is a privilege and not a right guaranteed by the constitution.

Red flag laws have their purpose, but without knowing the effectiveness of a rule or law there is no way of knowing if it is helping or hurting the situation. Gun enthusiasts do not like these laws because they infringe on protection rights granted to citizens. Gun control advocates prefer these laws and feel they remove guns from the hands of people who may do harm to themselves or others. Some argue that without effective studies, there is no way to know if the infringement is worth the loss of sovereign rights.

## It Hits the Fan for Waste Management Customers

By Larry Grooms

LANCASTER - Unless a potential legal challenge overturns it, a vote of the Lancaster City Council on July 26 will soon require all single-family home residents to separate food and organic waste, while higher rates for Waste Management service will be attached to the property taxes for each homeowner.

Vice Mayor Marvin Crist and council members Ken Mann and Raj Malhi cast the deciding votes after a procedurally disputed public hearing that began July 12, and was continued into the later meeting because Mayor R. Rex Parris, Malhi and council member Darryl Dorris were absent. After the first meeting it was revealed that Parris was hospitalized with COVID-19. He was reportedly released after 72 hours and still recovering at home during the second gathering.

As *The Palmdale Journal* reported early July, the public outcry mushroomed after low-key public notifications from Los Angeles County and Lancaster and Palmdale City Halls. Major media and even local media downplayed or ignored negative aspects of the statewide law, until citizens in Lancaster launched a protest.

The source of the controversy is SB

1383, an across-the-board environmental reform measure targeting livestock and dairy operations, restrictions on public landfill and imposing rules and penalties on how residential kitchens, restaurants, and cafeterias handle organic waste.

SB 1383 was narrowly passed by the CA Legislature in 2016, signed into law by then Gov. Jerry Brown, and timed not to take effect until Jan. 1, 2022. The law, in collaboration with Proposition 218, is intended to reduce the level of statewide organic waste disposal by 75% from the 2014 level by 2025.

The Legislative Counsel’s Digest for SB 1383 includes the boilerplate statement: “The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state; statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement. “This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.”

Protesters today point out, “the reasons, based on previous economic conditions, guesstimates about future growth, and emerging technology back in 2016, not even taking into account the

long term changes coming out of the state’s pandemic declines and the new recession, are so glaringly erroneous as to be laughable if the danger to our citizens were not so great.”

According to the records, the lawmakers in 2016 wildly overestimated the supposed economic benefits of their environmental visions, and significantly underestimated what the changes were going to cost the CA economy.

Despite the fiscal success and public/private cooperation lawmakers touted in the rosy cost/benefit forecast, writers enforced the mandates with heavy fines for public noncompliance and \$10,000/day penalties for local government failure to perform.

Crist and Mann first defended adoption of the solid waste law by citing the five-figure daily fine, and later also contended Lancaster residents should be comforted by understanding Lancaster negotiated a better deal with WM. “We’re actually the low guys on the totem pole,” Mann said, adding that Lancaster’s rate increase for WM was at a lower percentage increase than for neighboring Palmdale.

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# Features

## Not a Victim Column: The Resilient City

By Adriana Salcedo

Our city has a strength waiting to be discovered and a light ready to shine in, and through those willing to work out all the issues holding it back from its resilience.

According to Merriam Webster, resilience is the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress. This word defines the state of our city because of the challenges Palmdale faces.

Some of these challenges are homelessness, violent crimes up by 23.52 percent, and mental health issues on the rise. Right now is the time to have an offensive approach. It's time to be a city that is resilient through problem-solving. Where are those citizens who are not afraid of sweat and tears and not intimidated to bench press the heavy weight of darkness, corruption, and backroom deals out of our city?

Our city is desperately waiting for these ones to arise. But, we can't give what we don't have.

My favorite physical example of resiliency ties back to one of my many passions: working out. Anyone who knows me knows I have a strong passion for fitness and health. Sometimes, however, my busy life can stop me from doing what I love.


When I am out of the gym for a while, getting back to a fitness routine is very difficult. The breathing, sweating, and lack of endurance are

typically very intense on the first day back. I will never forget the time when I was fully committed and had a complete dedication to my health and fitness. I was meeting my fitness goals and maintaining my strict nutrition. Of course, my busy life got in the way of this.

After months of hard work, I, unfortunately, had to take a break and dreaded my first day back to the gym. I envisioned the sweat and tears unavoidably pouring out of me in cycling class. However, the complete opposite happened. I surprisingly found that I had built resiliency. It was as if I had never left the gym or my routine. My breathing kept controlled, and my endurance was as high as ever. I realized I built my body to be resilient due to my diligence.

I tell you this story to encourage you. We do not need to accept the bruises, pains, or in my case, lack of endurance that comes from our busyness and trials. Spiritual and physical resilience together allow the Light within us to overcome all darkness. So, let's build up that resiliency because what we can become, we can produce. Our city is waiting.

Sincerely,  
Adriana Salcedo  
Beauty for Ashes, International.



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## Overcoming Regret

A Parenting Column by Denize Verduzco

A parent continually confronts ample life choices that lead to a pathway of possibilities. The decisions that a parent makes on a day-to-day basis produce positive or negative consequences. These consequences, in turn, bring forth one of two emotions, satisfaction or regret. While it is easy to show and boast when a suitable decision produces satisfactory results, shame and guilt overwhelm a parent when there is regret. An unspoken truth in parenting is that parents find it difficult to speak about their failures. Yet, to move forward, grow and heal, those things need to be addressed.

Though regret has become a word and emotion with a negative connotation, perhaps, viewing it with a different lens can assist in the learning process. A parent is quick to associate a mistake with failure, which leads to a state of regret and condemnation that prevents a parent from moving forward. In the business world, millionaires and billionaires see failure as a learning tool, an opportunity for growth. They don't stay imprisoned to the mistake but find a solution to their problem. If more parents attributed the same mindset to their parenting, more time would be spent moving forward and finding solutions versus staying stuck in the past.

Living in a fast-paced society, full of pressures to be a certain way and fit in, it becomes easier to go with the current. In order to make life easy, parents make decisions that end up costing more in the long run, creating the perfect recipe for regret to come in. For instance, according to Caroline Miller from Child Mind Institute, giving into a child's tantrum can quickly become a habit for the child to act out to get what they want. While the initial response results in a quick resolution, continual behavior of that sort may lead to long-term issues.

While it's common to stay fixated on the problem and replay what could have gone differently, the better alternative is to see the problem for what it is. That constitutes addressing the root issue, finding the proper solution, and dealing with it quickly. Human nature is to feel shame, guilt, and condemnation when we make mistakes. It becomes easy to recluse oneself to avoid the problem and hurt. Yet, that only feeds and prolongs the problem furthermore. Handling the feeling of regret for what it is, an alert that something needs addressing helps to bring a resolution to the issue.

As life shows, the consequences felt within the family dynamic set the tone for the home environment. A positive consequence-- such as a reward for good behavior, is worth noting because it expands on the concept that a consequence isn't always negative. Thus, this leads to a feeling of satisfaction both in the parent and child, a goal parents strive to reach. If a parent remains mindful of counting the cost of their parenting decision, the overall consequence might differ from that of dealing with a decision impulsively. This practice can potentially create less work for a parent in the long run.

Overall, to deal with regret as an emotion requires action. Vulnerability and a change of heart are keys to setting the wrong thing right. When a child sees how a parent navigates a mistake, a failure, regret, condemnation, guilt, or shame, it sets a healthy foundation for the child to learn from and follow. Not all days may be good, but there is good in every day. Remember that. Till next time...

Your Mommy-Friend,  
Denize Verduzco

## The Human Connection:

### Simple Solutions

By Sabeth Perry

With the rise of cancer, autoimmune diseases, mental illness, and obesity, it's no wonder the United States ranks as one of the top 10 most unhealthy countries. This is a puzzling fact because the U.S is also one of the top 20 countries with the best health care system. What's going on?

The push for the consumption of unhealthy food has been happening for decades. Just observe the never-ending commercials promoting the latest fast food craze or tasty snacks. Alongside those commercials, pharmaceutical companies sneak in the solutions to the latest health dilemmas via the newest prescription drugs for yet another ailment. Good health education is missing, and the pressure to take medications seems to be the popular solution today.

It's time consumers started taking responsibility and matters into their own hands for living a healthy lifestyle. Simple changes to everyday habits can truly be the difference between life and death. The phrase "you are what you eat" has been around for years. Most people would take it as a metaphor, but this statement has never been more true. Science proves that the food consumed by humans makes up the body. That means cells, mitochondria, skin, bones, tissue, and organs; every part of the body is affected by food. Here are some simple solutions to unhealthy habits:

Solution #1, eat nutrient-dense foods like those rich in Vitamin C like oranges, broccoli, grapefruit, cabbage, avocado, tomatoes, and bell peppers, to name a few. Foods like those can do more than boost the immune system. Vitamin C is a bio potentiator for building bones. It also assists in healthy skin and quality sleep. Be sure to shop the outside aisles of the grocery store to help add more nutrient-dense foods to the pantry.

Solution #2, avoid "fake" foods. A meme circulating the internet says, "You are what you eat, so do not be fast, cheap, easy, or fake." Studies show that fake processed foods affect basic metabolism and cellular communication. *The Journal of Food and Nutrition Research* conducted research on Real vs. Processed Foods. The goal? To find the difference between calories absorbed and calories burned. The outcome? The test subjects that consumed the processed food had a 50% reduction in calories burned.

The study showed participants' bodies held on to more of the caloric energy they consumed. The fat cells grabbed on to those calories; and were unable to communicate effectively due to the foreign substances floating around, thus, throwing off the body's ability to function appropriately.

So, the next time someone advises to simply "reduce calories" to get healthy or lose weight, stop and think about what kind of calories are needed to survive and thrive. Each food, whether processed or real, can have the same amount of calories, protein, carbs, and fat on paper, but people have several epicaloric controllers that decide how calories function in the body.

Solution #3, stay properly hydrated and drink water daily. Water is responsible to maintain our DNA, integrity of our blood plasma (which is over 90% water), moving nutrients and oxygen throughout the body, and assisting in waste removal. Water helps with the digestive tract functions and helps regulate the body's temperature.

The brain is approximately 85% water. Decreased hydration contributes to short-term memory loss, and brain cell shrinkage in size and mass, a condition common in many elderly who stay dehydrated for years. Lack of mental clarity or "brain fog," depression, and fatigue are also common side effects of dehydration.

Solution #4, exercise; "Move for vitality, not for vanity." When people think of exercise, many are motivated by losing weight and looking great. The goal of exercising should be to increase vitality and get metabolically healthier-- looking great and changes in body composition are just great side effects!

Exercise improves the assimilation of nutrients and the elimination of metabolic waste, and is required to be a healthy and functioning human being. Studies show that regular exercise can also positively benefit the gut and digestive health. Which exercise is best? Whichever one is done consistently and regularly. Just move.

Solution #5, sleep... like your life depended on it. According to the CDC, over 115 million Americans are regularly sleep deprived. Sleep impacts every single area of life, cognitively, physically, emotionally, and functionally. It also impact on cardiovascular health. Check out *The Palmdale Journal's* April edition of The Human Connection to get tips on getting good sleep. Start by taking small steps towards good, healthy habits and watch what happens.

# Valley Voices

## AB1797 Expert Witness’ Testimony

By Mario Presents

On August 1, 2022, Palmdale Freedom Coalition member, Mario Presents, spoke to the California State Finance Committee in Sacramento as an expert witness against AB1797, regarding the COVID-19 vaccinated persons registry bill. The speech is below:

“My name is Mario Presents, and I’m speaking as a member of the Palmdale Freedom Coalition and as a gay, hispanic man. Citing municipal authority, the City of Palmdale has crafted an ordinance to protect our citizen’s medical privacy with regard to COVID-19 and other similar health information sharing. We understand that medical privacy is not the business of the city, state, a merchant, or a school. California wants to create an immunization registry under the guise of public health, but how much will this cost?

It is not healthy for the community to expose our children to pedophiles by NOT updating the Megan’s Law registry? Keeping track of perverts is literally free but the state has stopped doing it. Would it be acceptable for my medical provider to share my HIV status with CalWorks, the Foster Care System, Schools, or WIC? It is not fiscally sound, or healthy, to create a

registry of people's COVID-19 vaccination status.

The California Constitution requires reimbursement of schools and agencies for costs mandated by the state. The fiscal impact that mandates have on businesses and cities can be seen in the boarded up windows and outflow of students. Los Angeles Unified School District just lost 20,000 students but they didn't lose them, they lost their MONEY. The state cannot afford this invasion of our medical privacy nor can our pocketbooks.

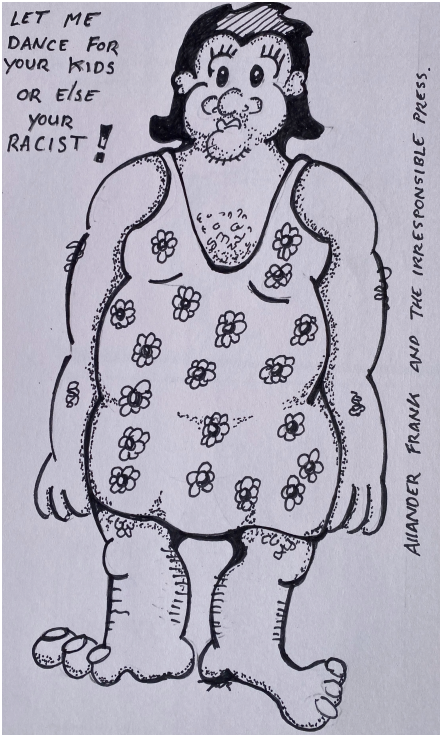
The state has no business in my, or anyone’s, medical records. Furthermore, including race and ethnicity as reported information is a gross invasion of privacy. Also included in the bill is keeping a current address, phone number, and in some cases, parent's information as part of your registry.

Having worked in the health care field for many years, and at the precipice of

HIPAA, I know that this registry is unnecessary. The cost of going digital in compliance with HIPAA requirements were astronomical and many doctors crumbled under the pressure and chose retirement, and in some cases, to leave the state. That's lost revenue, but hey, we'll make it up.

Permitting the sharing of personal medical data with food bank programs and state insurance has potentially disastrous consequences. Those receiving food assistance can’t be told what to eat, but the food bank can remind you to stay up to date on your vaccine? Or will they simply deny services to those who are overdue? The bill claims that maintaining updated information is necessary to locate and refer clients to healthcare providers for overdue inoculations, but my body, my choice right?

This bill is a gross violation of our medical privacy and should be aborted.”



## Letter to the Editor: Zelle Fraud

By Mikki Martinez

This is the story of how I became the victim of a Zelle scam. My name is Mikki Martinez. As a 42 year old teacher who is aware of how quickly scams can happen, I never thought I'd fall victim.

On a Saturday afternoon in 2021, a man called me from a toll-free number claiming he was from the Bank of America fraud department. He said he was verifying purchases on my account, including some made in Milwaukee. I told him that I recognized some of the purchases, but not the Milwaukee ones. So everything seemed legit. In hindsight, this is how he began to gain my trust.

He asked if I made a \$3,500 Zelle payment. I said, “No.” He said that the payment was “made” but had not been processed. They could stop it, and get the money returned to my account immediately. He needed to connect a representative from Chase bank to our call because that was where the money was sent. The Chase representative was named Kerven, he talked me through the steps he needed me to do using the Zelle

app to recover my money. He asked for the verification code the Zelle app sent to my email, and I gave it to him.

Kerven knew my address, phone number, email, and several of my purchases. He told me that I needed to enter MY email address into the Zelle app as the recipient of the \$3,500. I told him that it sounded weird. Why would I send it to myself? Then the app showed the name Kerven with my email address. The caller told me to remember that was the name of the Chase bank representative, and that this is the required process to stop the transfer. I told him it still sounded weird. He said, ”I’m calling you from the number on the back of your card.” I looked at the caller ID on my phone. It matched the number on the back of my card. I muted the call and had my niece call that number to verify it connected to my bank. It did.

The transfer was not going through. He said that it was because I made a Zelle payment earlier, exceeding the daily limit. I had sent money to a friend. He had me change the amount to \$3000. I saw the

money left my account, INSTANTLY. When I told him it was gone, he said “OK, let me check on that” and hung up. That was when I knew I had been scammed.

In hindsight, the email address the man had me enter was one of mine but not the one connected to my bank account. He knew so much about me, my transactions, and was urgent and professional.

After the hang up, I called my bank’s fraud department to file a claim. They locked my card and accounts. They stated that all communications regarding this claim would come by US mail. I was advised to file a police report. I changed the passwords on all of my accounts.

The representative told me that I would likely not get my money back because I authorized the Zelle payment. I made the police report and prayed to get my money back. I shared my story on Facebook and learned that friends of mine had similar experiences and never got their money back. I clung to hope, but it was lost when I received a letter in the mail a few weeks later stating that, “Unfortunately we were

unable to approve your recent claim.”

I was livid. The fraud representative recorded only basic information in my claim. I was never called for more details. I sent the bank a package with a detailed account of events, my police report, bank statement, emails (including the Zelle verification code email), and cell phone record showing the caller’s number matching the number on my card.

About a month later, I learned I would be returned ALL of my money! The rep told me she never sees that happen because victims give up. If you ever get scammed, communicate with your bank. don't give up hope. Write down every detail, include all important documents, and fight to get what is rightfully yours!

Soon after, I received even better news. Our Lancaster Sheriff station detective tracked down the criminal who scammed me all the way to FLORIDA!! He had scammed others too. Thanks to the sheriff, the scammer who caused me so much stress would be going to jail. Hopefully, for a long time.

## All Parents Matter: Fathers Matter

Written by Tony H. Starr

Are deadbeat dads real or just men labeled by a bitter ex? Probably both. The fact is men have no rights in family court when it comes to their children. It is possible that more fathers would be in their children's lives if the relationship with their ex was better. I see fathers give up because their ex, with family courts’ help, hinder their relationships with their children. I believe the system is designed to keep fathers out of the home.

The black community believes that welfare was the death of the black family because it encourages fatherless homes. [Note: Omarr K. Rambert, a black law school graduate, discusses this problem and its social consequences in his abstract, “The Absent Black Father: Race, The Welfare-Child Support System, and the Cyclical Nature of Fatherlessness” published in law student journal, *L.A. Law Review*, in May of 2021. This problem is also being noticed by people of other races. Ryan Wiseman wrote about it in his February 2021 article, “How Social Welfare Works Destroy the Black Family,” published on the Case for Conservatism website. Wiseman cited a Labor Department employee, Daniel

Patrick Moynihan, who provided Labor Department data that revealed evidence of black families’ suffering the effects of fatherlessness, as far back as 1965. In his report, “The Moynihan Report: The Negro Family, The Case for National Action,” Moynihan also provided solutions for the problem].

The lack of fathers’ rights regarding their children affects all ethnicities. A single mom gets more benefits without a man, encouraging some to have various "Baby daddy's." The government rewards this behavior in hopes of swaying votes.

Depression and loneliness were rampant during the pandemic. People were doing things out of their character, my son included. He had lost his job and his social life. One day at the park he met a young man, and they discovered that they attended the same high school. The man invited my son to his house for a party where my son reconnected with a high school friend. I will refer to her as "Ms. Thing." They started dating. She told my son that her tubes were tied, and he believed her. This was the only time I supported social distancing and masks!

My wife and I were concerned about

this relationship because Ms. Thing was pregnant with her fifth child at the age of 23. Each child had a different father, now including my son. We felt that her reputation was not a good influence on her daughters. Once, her eight year old son was watching all of his siblings running around. Ms. Thing told him, “I got my tubes tied.” He responded, “that's what you said last time.” Hmm, out of the mouths of babes...

Prior to my granddaughter’s birth, my son stepped in as a father to her kids. They even called him, “dad.” This made me uncomfortable because the kids had fathers. Ms. Thing did not let the fathers be in their children's lives. My son and her broke up when my granddaughter was six months old. We were celebrating inside but we still gave him sympathy, being his first relationship (seasoned parents can act with the best of them). They got back together then broke up again for good.

Ms. Thing let my son have his daughter every weekend. My son was able to provide everything his daughter needed, including medical insurance. Everything seemed to be fine until Ms.

Thing asked to borrow money from my son for a barbecue for one of the other fathers. He refused. Weekly she texted him, “No one is seeing your daughter this weekend.” After several weeks she texted, “If you want to see your daughter, take me to court.” So we did.

As many fathers experience, the judge did not read what was presented. If he had, he would have read about her missing mothering skills. Upon being served, she filed a report with the Sheriff stating that her daughter had revealed that my son had fondled her. The judge gave my son monitored visits.

Ms. Thing prevented my son from spending the first birthday and Father’s Day with his daughter. He can never get those days back. The system is so rigged. My son suffers instead of her. She has more children than she can handle. She puts them in harm's way and neglects them.

All parents and guardians matter and should be treated equally as long as they are looking out for the best interests of the children. The true welfare of the children should determine the court’s decisions.

# In the Eye of the Creator

The saying, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” comes from the idea that what one considers to be beautiful, another may not. Beauty is not objective, it comes from one’s own perspective, input, interpretations, and experiences.

This month, *The Palmdale Journal* slightly challenges this idea with the following images of Palmdale, taken by local photographer Scott Hammond.

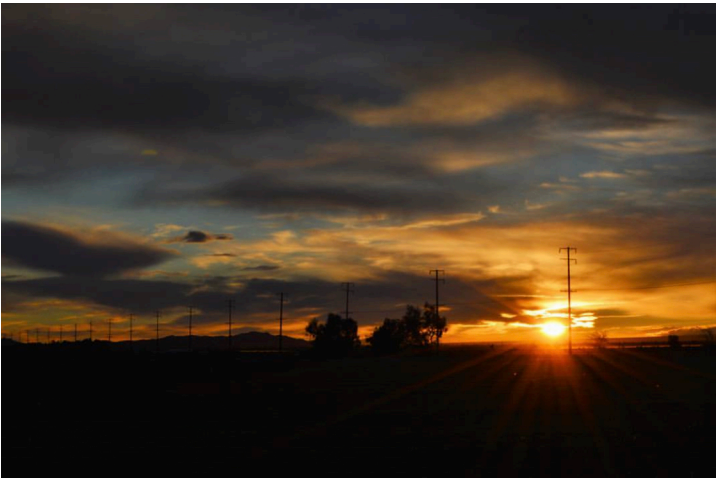
When most Palmdale citizens inform others of where they live, meaning the desert, more often than not, most would not picture a city of beauty and wonderful scenery. However, these images show that when Palmdale was created, the Creator was intentional in its design. Those who call this place home are tasked with first uncovering the beauty, then revealing it to the world. As you view these images of places you’ve likely visited, we hope you feel blessed to call this place home. We sure do!



Mustang Sunset

The Photos of Scott Hammond

Scottiehammond@gmail.com



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# Youth and Education

The SoCal Choppers - AV, a local 14U travel softball team, took 3rd place out of 20 teams at the NSA Pacific Coast World Series. The World Series event was hosted by the Best of the West in Palmdale July 27th through 30th. Through blood, sweat, and tears, these girls left everything on the field as they played eight games in three days in grueling 100 degree plus temperatures.

The World Series opened on Wednesday evening and all the players came together for a pin trading event. They walked onto the Palmdale Amphitheater stage for all to see, as the teams were announced. Many players made friends with their competition during this event, even coming together to make lively TikTok videos.

The Choppers began to play on Thursday, going undefeated in their first two games. They remained undefeated on Friday with their next two games. Sadly, Saturday morning, they endured their first loss to a team from Bakersfield that ended up taking first place. However, the Choppers battled on and won the next two games, which took them to the semi-finals. The girls fought until the very end, securing third place position.

This tournament was extra special to the Choppers. They are managed by Coach Jeovanie (Jeo) Young, and the rest of the coaching team consists of Marco Acosta, Ricky Byrd, and Michael Serrano. This



## SoCal AV Spirit Takes 3rd at the NSA Pacific Coast World Series

By Mikki Martinez

tournament will be the last they will play in their Choppers uniforms. The SoCal Choppers - AV was formed in 2019 by Coach Angel Arcos and is a branch of the main SoCal Choppers.

Coach Angel, Coach Jeo, and the other Choppers coaches are the definition of true heroes. They did not let the pandemic shutdowns stop them from keeping kids active during that trying time early in the pandemic. These coaches knew that kids should not be locked-in at home. They needed to be outside on the field with their teammates, not just for their physical health but also for mental health reasons. They did everything in their power to

assure their girls got what they needed, including finding unique locations to practice, as well as play games, and even traveling out of California to play in less restrictive states.

Coach Angel took all willing players, despite the fear the pandemic propaganda induced in people. At one time, Coach Angel ended up with a 16U team, a 14U team, and a 12U team. Players, coaches, and families truly bonded and were thankful to these brave coaches. The girl's mental health was truly cared for by the perseverance of the coaches. They helped them maintain contact with their friends and ensured they got to play the sport they

loved while the rest of the world was locked-down at home.

Third place out of 20 excellent teams is not too shabby as a last hurrah for these Choppers. As the last remaining team of the SoCal Choppers - AV section, Coach Jeo and staff have decided to withdraw from the SoCal Choppers franchise and form their own travel ball organization. They will return to play as a newly formed travel ball team, and have decided the name to be SoCAL Spirit AV. Same great coaches, same amazing players, just with a new look and their own name!!

Congratulations Choppers!! We look forward to watching the new AV Spirits make their debut appearance and represent our AV in their own unique style!



Kenzie Martinez and Coach Angel Arcos

## Local teen excels in the Junior Olympics

By Teresa Palmer, Youth Writer

In July, 13-year-old Gianna Corona, aka Gigi, training out of Lancaster, competed in the Junior Olympics, hosted in Kansas City, Missouri. She placed second in her division and age group. Gigi said that her experience at the Olympics was really fun. She met and fought new people many from different states.

She started boxing when she was 10 and never doubted her passion. Now, for USA Boxing, Gigi represents the number one girl in California in her division and age. She placed third for the nation.

Not only is Gigi an inspiration to girls but she also represents the Antelope Valley. I wanted to interview her to see what it takes to be where she is.

To prepare for the competition, Gigi

ran 6 miles every morning and trained with her coaches from 5 to 8 in the afternoon. Her mom, Ashley said, “She is nonstop; it's not like basketball where you have an offseason.” To find competitive sparring partners, she has to travel outside of the AV three times a week.

Not only did she put in the physical practice, but also made other sacrifices like giving up her phone and enrolling in independent studies for the final quarter of school. She said, “When I gave up my phone I would ask my little sister if I could use hers for music on my runs.” In regards to giving up in-person schooling, she said, “I learned to be alone.” To get through challenging workouts and runs, she said that music helped her.



View more pictures of Gigi online at: <https://www.dnursephotography.com/JrOlympicChampGiggi/>



She also had to get used to a new diet. There were times when she didn't even want to go into the kitchen because she didn't want to be tempted by other foods. She and her mom studied food nutrition for athletes. Gigi takes interest in it and her long-term goal is to go to school so she can teach other athletes how to feed themselves right, too.

This all sounds like so much work, stress, and determination so I asked Gigi how she was able to carry through it all, without giving up. She told me she couldn't have done it without her family, especially her mom. Gigi stated, “Yeah she's always there. Every sparring, every fight, everything. And if she's not there, she's on Facetime cheering me on.”

Her parents also picked up extra jobs to help pay for Gigi to go to the Olympics. For the Junior Olympics alone, the cost of travel was about \$5000. To help offset the toll, Gigi's grandma and mom hosted an event at the Palmdale Elks Lodge where people from

the community came in support of her.

Another admirable trait that Gigi possesses is being a good sport. She went in the ring and gave it her all. When she lost the narrow decision to her final opponent, she said, “When my hand didn’t get raised, I smiled through it. It was such a big step.” She hugged and exchanged words with her competition and never seemed defeated. “It was still a big accomplishment.”

Her message to other girls who are trying to reach their goals is “Don’t stop. It’s going to get hard before it gets easier.”

Although going to the Olympics is a great accomplishment, this is not the last time you will see Gigi. “I have decided to set a new goal for myself for a spot on the USA National Team in December.” For her long-term goal, “I want to go pro. I want to go pro in Mexico. There you can be pro at 16 and here it's 18. I'm trying to go as far as I can.”



Coach Lear



Brandon Johnson



Highland Team in Action

## High School Football Starting August 2022

By David Nurse

Fans, parents, and players: High school football is just around the corner. High schools began scrimmages on Friday, August 11th. Highland's first game is Friday, August 19, with another AV football powerhouse, Paraclete High School.

The weather in Antelope Valley will still be moderate, and it will be a great time to spend Friday night cheering on your favorite high school team.

The last year Golden League champions, the Highland Bulldogs, captured the crown for the past four seasons. Head football coach Richard Lear starts his 5th season with the Bulldogs and is looking to capture another crown and go deep in the CIF playoffs.

Highland struggled as a football team before Coach Lear and staff turned the football team into a winning program with his extensive experience. Coach Lear was the Eastside High School coach for ten seasons. After Eastside, Lear spent two seasons with Antelope Valley College football.

The pre-season Bulldog weekend conditioning displayed discipline and impressive response from his players. The Junior Varsity and the Freshmen groups had several players on each team. Some of the high- schools in the area find it difficult to fill their lower-level teams.

Senior Running Back Brandon Johnson will be looking to carry Highland to another successful season. Johnson has offers from Yale, Brown, and Arizona.

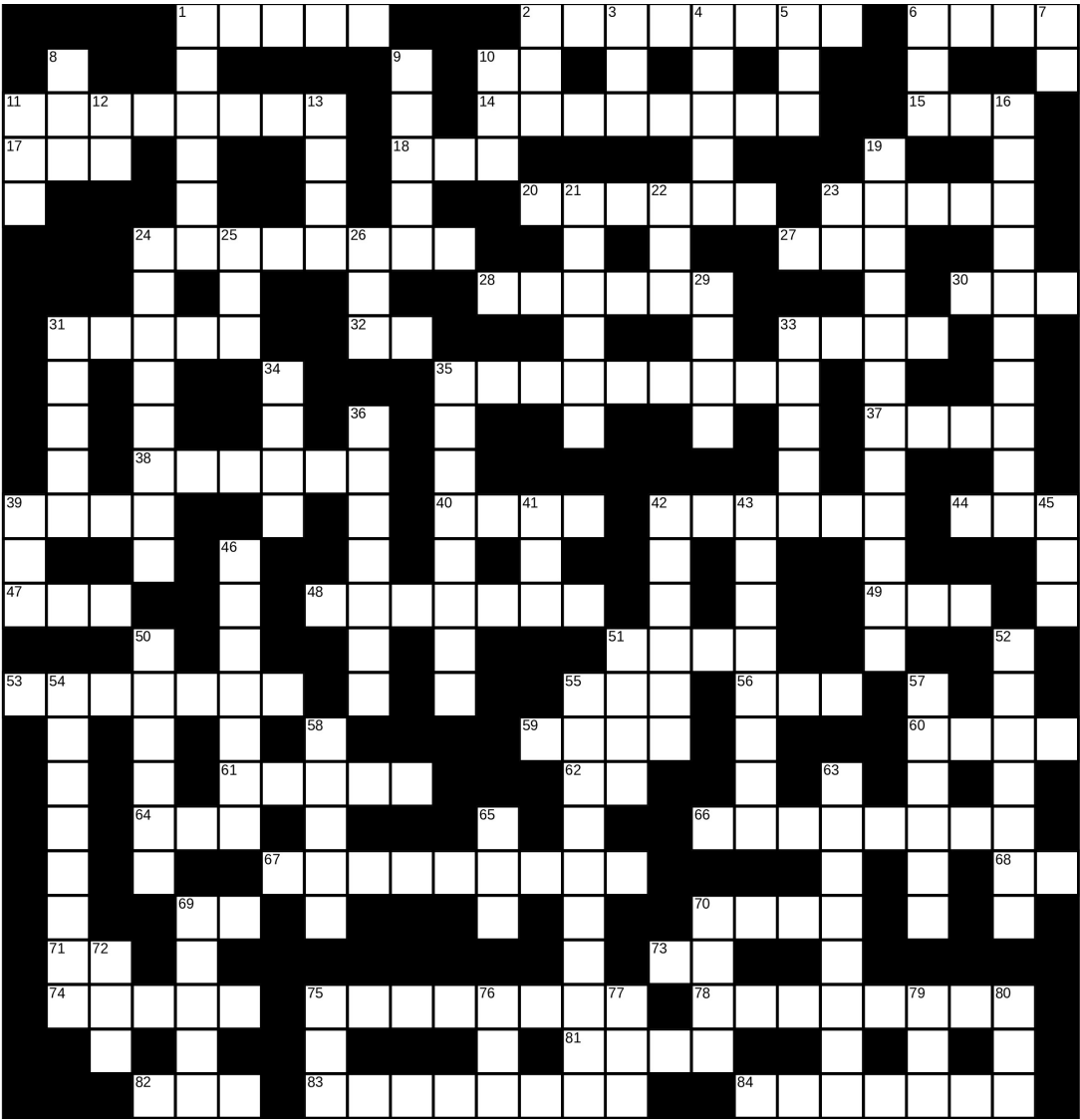
AV High and Palmdale High have several players who will continue to play college football and be a force again this season. Palmdale and Quartz Hill also had strong and successful programs in the past. Both have new coaches for their programs this season, so there is hope for a comeback. Anthony Coleman takes over the reins at Palmdale, and Russell Gordon leads the Royals of Quartz Hill.

Quartz Hill begins their season with a home game Friday, August 19th playing against Oxnard. Palmdale begins its season next Friday, August 26th, with a home game against Burroughs High School.

The student-athletes have been under many restrictions for the past two seasons. As they slowly ease, people are living again, and kids can continue having fun and growing their skills.

## August Crossword Puzzle

By Jennifer Maccarone



July '22 crossword puzzle answers can be found online at  
ThePalmdaleJournal.com

### Down

- 1 Canal that opened in August 1914, connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans

2 Run slowly

3 One run around a track

4 Tranquility, calmness

5 Macadamia, pistachio

6 \_\_\_ and hers

7 Former romantic partner

8 Star around which the earth orbits

9 44th U.S. President; implemented Affordable Care Act; born August 1961

10 You can't always \_\_\_ what you want.

11 Currently about \$6 per gallon

12 Identification, abbrev.

13 Black or brown organic material in which plants grow

16 Antibiotic substance; discovered by a Scottish physician born August 1871

19 Where 5 year olds can play and learn

21 August in Spanish and Italian

22 Female deer

23 Non, nee, nein

24 IBM released its first one of these for personal use in August 1981

25 A wild animal's lair

26 A system of rules

29 Baby Back, St. Louis, Spare, Short

31 Neighborhood in which riots occurred in Los Angeles in August 1965

33 MLK Jr. gave a famous speech about this at Lincoln Memorial in August 1963

34 Discontinued portable media player
- 35 Two pieces of bread with meat inside, invented August 1762

36 Gather crops

39 Frozen water

41 Self-esteem, self-importance

42 It's time for the kids to go back to \_\_\_

43 Leonardo Da Vinci's famous portrait, once stolen in August 1911

45 "An \_\_\_ for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

46 42nd U.S. President; played saxophone on Arsenio Hall Show; born August 1946

50 An inventor of the modern airplane, born August 1871

51 For or by one person alone

52 Home of reggae music; slavery was abolished here in August 1838

54 August is named after this Roman emperor

55 Round melon with orange flesh

57 Became 50th state in the U.S. in August 1959

58 The Magellan spacecraft arrived in this planet's orbit in August 1990

63 Hit his 500th career home run playing for the Yankees in August 1929

65 You reap what you \_\_\_

69 Establishment providing accommodations and meals

70 Swamp grass widely cultivated as food, especially in Asia

72 Opposite of stand

75 Small, carnivorous animal with soft fur and retractable claws

76 When Harry \_\_\_ Sally

77 International code signal of extreme distress

79 The wheels on the \_\_\_ go 'round and 'round!

80 Faster than a walk

### Across

- 1 Has juicy yellow flesh and downy skin

2 Pepper from Xalapa, Mexico

6 To want something to happen

10 Opposite of stop

11 Book of world records first published in August 1955

14 Purple vegetable

15 Small mouthful of liquid

17 Y, et, e

18 "A work of \_\_\_" (attractive, intricately detailed)

20 Small piece of ground used to grow plants

23 37th U.S. President; resigned in August 1974; Watergate

24 Motor company est. in August 1902; Eldorado

27 Past tense of win

28 31st U.S. President; dam spanning the Arizona-Nevada border; born August 1874

30 Playing card with a single spot on it
- 31 Allowed to vote under the 19th Amendment, adopted August 1920

32 Everybody, us

33 Habitual nourishment

35 Next month

37 Female child

38 Motor company est. in August 1937; Corolla

39 Small island

40 "Stupid is as stupid \_\_\_."

42 Current season

44 \_\_\_, two, three.

47 Ovum

48 Shimmering green August birthstone

49 The first woman, wife and mother

51 Carbonated water

53 Struck New Orleans in August 2005

55 Soft murmuring sound made by a baby or dove

56 Tell a \_\_\_ once and all your truths become questionable.

- 59 Next season

60 Military force equipped for fighting on land

61 American track and field athlete; 4 gold medals at Olympic Games in August 1936

62 Opposite of yes

64 Female chicken

66 In August 1945 the U.S. deployed first atomic bombs on Hiroshima and here

67 Most popular U.S. wrestler of the 1980s, born August 1953

68 California abbrev.

69 Hello

70 Long, loose outer garment

71 You and I

73 3.14159265359

74 August became the eight month of the year in 700 BC, but it used to be the \_\_\_

75 Set sail from Spain on the Niña, Pinta and Santa Maria in August 1492

78 Slice it to soothe your eyes, or make a pickle

- 81 Raw cubes of tuna commonly eaten with rice

82 Sick

83 Pulpulent fruits often eaten in salads

84 36th U.S. President; replaced JFK, born August 1908



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BUILDING LEADERS IN THE ANTELOPE VALLEY

# Youth and Education, Continued

## My Meeting with Mediocrity

By Richard Gallego

Mr. Marietti is new to his position; he is not a well-known commodity. Over time, one can find out much by attending school board meetings and observing, but that is a poor substitute for a conversation. Therefore, one of my goals was to give him the opportunity to clearly explain his positions on masking, COVID-19 vaccines and testing, the teaching of transgender issues, and critical race theory in our schools. Here’s what I learned.

Mr. Marietti has advanced degrees in history and education, one of which is a doctorate. He was cordial, even friendly. He spoke about how difficult the COVID-19 experience was for teachers, administrators, and students. I found it interesting that he mentioned teachers and administrators before students. And there was no mention of parents’ difficulties - at all!

Early on, he stated, “My top priority is doing what’s best for the kids.” I let the remark stand as if it was assumed to be true. After all, isn’t that what we should expect of a superintendent of a school district? He stated further that he believes a return to normalcy is just around the corner, citing as evidence the fact that unvaccinated employees will no longer be required to take weekly COVID-19 tests at school but could now take weekly home tests as long as they sign an affidavit promising to be truthful when reporting results. To him, this represented a giant leap toward the return to normalcy. At that point, I challenged him by asking, “Is that your idea of ‘normal’? A weekly report on one’s health to a government entity?” Certainly, that isn’t the America I grew up in, and it isn’t the America I want for my children! Only then did he acknowledge how disparate the previous and present realities are.

Next, I asked what effect he thought the COVID-19 shutdowns had on students’ academic progress. His response? “It was terrible.” He lamented about the many kids who never adapted well to online learning and said he never thought students should be forced out of the classroom. He said some, specifically those of low-income families, may never recover because they lack the means to hire tutors direly needed to do so.

Mr. Marietti seemed genuinely troubled by this shutdown byproduct. I followed up by asking why, if it was such a harmful policy, did he implement it? He answered that as the superintendent, part of his job is to enforce rules, laws, and mandates. I circled back to his earlier remark about what’s best for the kids by asking, “Well, if you acknowledge that forcing kids to use online learning from home had a terrible effect on their educational progress, how can you claim that your top priority is doing what’s best for them? Clearly, their best interests are secondary, at best.” It was as if he had never considered this line of reasoning.

After a moment, he attempted to defend his actions by claiming he could not have known what impact the learn-at-home policy would have. Further, he stated he only followed the directives of his superiors. I asked him to consider the wisdom of blindly following the dictates of superiors whose past decisions prove to be profound failures. Again, he had clearly never considered that question.

Next, I shifted the conversation to the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines and masks to control the spread of the virus. I reminded him that not two months ago, I made the school board aware of a paper published in the June 15th edition of *The New England Journal of Medicine*, which concluded that fully vaccinated people are more likely to catch and transmit the current strain of COVID-19 than non-vaccinated people. I told him that in light of this data, and the fact that they still require testing from unvaccinated employees, they have actually been testing the wrong employees! I then explained in detail why masks DO NOT WORK in a public setting.

Again, I cited specific research from trustworthy sources. His response? He claimed that for every family who believes as I do, there is another who believes the opposite. And what is he to do? After all, he has to respect both sides, doesn’t he? He was noticeably surprised when I told him, “No. You don’t!” I persisted and said he was under no moral or ethical obligation to support positions that are a result of demonstrably false suppositions. Further, I maintained he only respected one side by implementing the school board’s COVID-19 rules, and it was the wrong side! Not because it wasn’t my side but because those rules ignored the massive amount of available scientific data and common sense supporting the cessation of testing and mask-wearing.

At this point, Mr. Marietti resorted to the “How can I know who is right? After all, I’m not a medical doctor.” Defense. He continued that earlier that day, in a call with several other superintendents and a physician who had been advising them for a prolonged period, the physician told them that masking is no longer considered a valid method for containing viral spread on school campuses. I asked if he or any other participant asked the physician why it took over two years to share that information. Mr. Marietti confirmed that no one asked that obvious question.

Though I intended to keep things civil in the meeting, at that point, I felt compelled to tell him that I found his complete lack of intellectual curiosity astounding! Reminding him of the many times during our discussion when he referred to himself as “an educator”, I asked how someone whose task it is to educate could blindly follow nonsensical rules from his superiors and public officials without ever doing any research of his own? His sheepish smile told me that, yet again, this was a concept he’d never considered.

In bringing up trans policy indoctrination, his response was largely the same. He told me he had to respect trans kids and their families. Curiously, the idea of not wanting biological males using the girls’ restrooms or competing on girls’ sports teams, automatically means there is no respect for trans kids. Worse, no compassion! I had to explain that was a preposterous leap from one extreme to another. I specified my belief that that small minority of kids should be afforded the same educational opportunities as every other student and treated with respect and dignity. But, I draw the line at being forced to participate in their delusion.

This is not the critical thinking I would hope for from a person of his position and authority. And critical race theory? He assured me he was not a proponent and did not believe it to be a part of the curriculum in Lancaster schools. Although, when pressed, he agreed he couldn’t know everything each teacher covered in their classrooms. There seemed to be no thought of how one might verify his belief.

In summary, I concluded that Superintendent Marietti, though a friendly and sincere man, lacks the necessary backbone and strength of character to lead any large organization. Further, he seems bereft of the intellectual curiosity that should be required of any educator. He repeatedly told me he is a “rule follower” who trusts the government and its various experts.

If you’re wondering what compelled me to share this with you, it’s because parents need to know just what kind of person is running the schools their children attend. He is a man who aimed for mediocrity and hit his mark.



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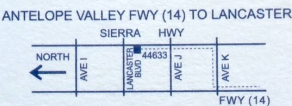
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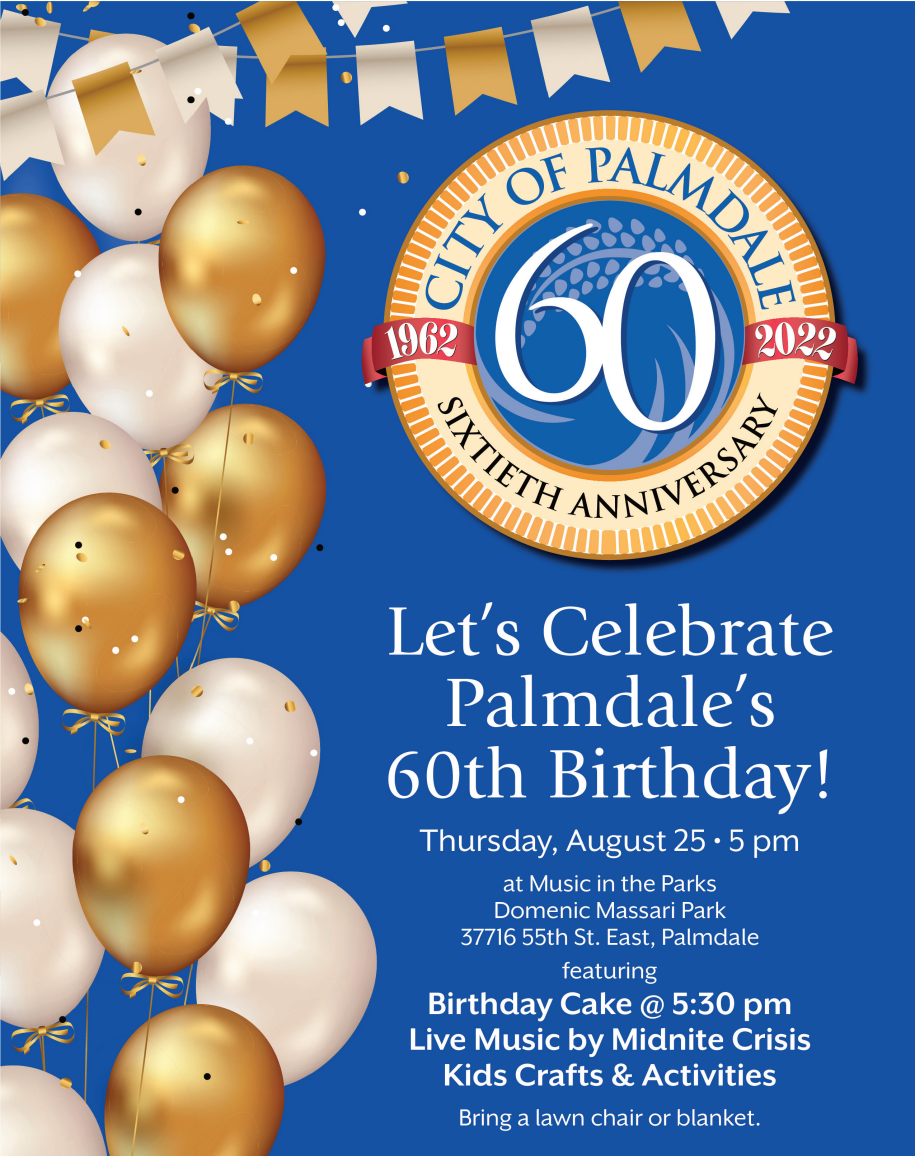
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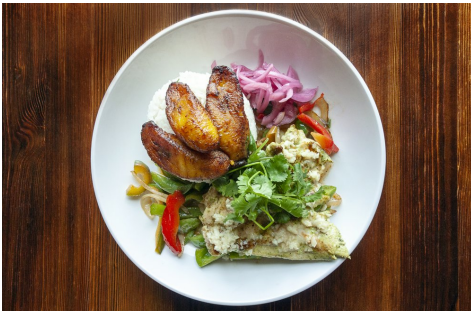
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