North Valley News

Volume 3, Number 16 December 6, 2024

Serving Porter Ranch, Northridge, Granada Hills & Chatsworth

News in Brief

Winter Wonderland and Toy Drive December 7

The North Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce and Councilmember John Lee will host a Winter Wonderland and Toy Drive on Saturday, December 7. The free event will feature fun for the entire family, including pictures with Santa, pony rides and a petting zoo, carnival games and kids crafts, bounce houses and student performances from local schools. There will also be retail and craft vendors, a food, beer and wine garden and a toy drive for Foster Children's Resource Center and LAPD Devonshire PALS Youth Center. The event will be held at 9015 Wilbur Avenue from 11 am to 4 pm.

Granada Hills Tree Lighting Ceremony December 6

The Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council, Granada Hills Rotary and the Granada Hills Chamber of Commerce will host a tree lighting ceremony on Friday, December 6, at 6:30 pm. The event will honor Rita's Tree. In 1983, upon the suggestion of local Granada Hills business owner Rita Ciccarelli, the 65 foot Canary Island Pine Tree located at the "township " triangle intersection of Chatsworth Street and Zelzah Avenue became an annual community symbol of holiday season spirit and pride. The event will also feature a special visit from Santa Claus. It will be held at Zelzah Avenue and Chatsworth Street and will feature a special visit from Santa Claus.

Chatsworth Kiwanis Holiday Parade and Festival December 15

Chatsworth Kiwanis will present the 40th annual Holiday Parade and Festival on Sunday, December 15. The parade will begin at 1 pm at Devonshire and Topanga Canyon Blvd. The festival will take place on Canoga Avenue at Devonshire Street from noon to 5 pm. For more information visit chatsworthkiwanis.org.

Adopt a Senior This Holiday

'Tis the season of giving, and ONEgeneration is looking for volunteers to give a homebound senior a special holiday. Volunteers will be given a profile of a senior who receives delivered meals from ONEgeneration, along with a list of items they may need such as hand soap or slippers and some possible "luxury" items such as chocolate or books. ONEgeneration social workers will deliver the gifts and a blank thank you note for the senior to return with their meals and send on to you. To volunteer contact volunteer@ONEgeneration.org.

New Park Opens in Porter Ranch

Beau Boeckmann, above, spoke of his parents' dedication to the community.

Councilman John Lee, above center, cut the ceremonial ribbon opening the new park.

The park is named after Jane and Bert Boeckmann, above in poster, both now deceased.

Noli and Rudi Ortega of the Fernandeno Tatavian tribe performed a blessing of the ground.

By Jay A. Ross

The grand opening of the highly anticipated Jane and Bert Boeckmann Park in Porter Ranch, a stunning new 50-acre green space dedicated to community enjoyment and cultural heritage, was celebrated on November 24. The park was officially renamed in honor of the Boeckmann family for their longstanding contributions to the community.

In addition, the park's pavilion was dedicated as the Sesevenga Pavilion, a name meaning "the place of the sycamore woods" in the Fernandeño dialect. This dedication honors the rich cultural

(Continued to page 2)

Queen Nation performed Queen hits for the crowd at the new Sesevenga Pavilion.

Players used the new pickleball courts at the park.

Children loved the new playground equipment.

PHOTOS: JAYROSS

COMMUNITY

LIC # 197603296

FAIRWINDS
WEST HILLS

OPEN HOUSE THURSDAYS!

DECEMBER 5TH: Come learn about our PrimeFit Wellness program with PrimeFit instructor Michael McCallister. Healthy snacks provided.

DECEMBER 12TH: Come in to meet Fairwinds – West Hills renowned Chef Gustavo Mego for a special cooking demonstration.

DECEMBER 19TH: Meet our new Wellness Director, Adrian Mendez, who will inform you on assisted living health plans.

DECEMBER 26TH: Fairwinds – West Hills is having the official post-Christmas celebration. Come to enjoy a complimentary lunch and entertainment.

JANUARY 2ND: Come to Fairwinds to see our wonderful community. Enjoy a chef-prepared lunch and entertainment.

Call 818-713-0900 to RSVP.

Race in for savings!

1ST PLACE: Deposit by 12/5 and receive a $10,000 package
2ND PLACE: Deposit by 12/12 and receive a $7,000 package
3RD PLACE: Deposit by 12/19 and receive a $5,500 package

USE YOUR PACKAGE TO CUSTOMIZE YOUR SAVINGS:

Waived community fee
$1,000 towards furniture
$1,000 towards moving expenses
$1,000 off rent (up to 5 months)
A $500 gift card

8138 Woodlake Ave | West Hills, CA 91304 | 818-713-0900 | FairwindsWestHills.com

LEISURE CARE

Community Calendar

NORTHRIDGE: LAPD Devonshire PALS Youth Center is collecting new unwrapped toys now through December 12. Give children a Christmas to remember with your donation. Toys will be given away on December 14 at 9 am at 8721 Wilbur Avenue.

CHATSWORTH: Certified Covered California Enrollment Counselors will be at the Chatsworth Library on Thursday, December 12, at 2 pm to meet you face-to-face to discuss and explain your health coverage options. They can also help you select the best plan for your medical needs and budget. You can also find out if you qualify for low-cost or no-cost coverage through Medi-Cal or other services. The library is located at 21052 Devonshire St.

PORTER RANCH: Shepherd Church will present *Who Would Imagine a King: A Christmas Musical Experience* on Sunday, December 15, at 7 pm. A king is born. Not in a palace or halls of splendor. Nor with a crown or riches to wield. Born to a carpenter and his humble wife, Emmanuel, the Savior of the world, lying in a manger. Celebrate the greatest gift God has given us. This is a free event for the whole family. Shepherd is located at 19700 Rinaldi Street. Visit theshepherd.org.

WEST HILLS: Fairwinds West Hills is holding a series of "Open House Thursdays" and special deals during December. On December 12 meet renowned Chef Gustavo Mego for a special cooking demonstration. December 19 meet new fitness director Adrian Mendez to discuss assisted living plans. December 26 join the post-Christmas celebration with a complimentary lunch and entertainment, and January 2 come visit the community and enjoy a chef-prepared lunch and entertainment. Call (818) 713-0900 to RSVP. Looking to move in? Make a deposit by December 12 and receive a $7,000 package; deposit by December 19 and get a $5,500 package. Use your package to customize your savings with a waived community fee, $1,000 toward furniture, $1,000 towards moving expenses or $1,000 off rent up to five months and a $500 gift card. Fairwinds is located at 8139 Woodlake Ave. Visit fairwinds.com.

PORTER RANCH: The Porter Ranch Library will host an Ahoy Matey Pirate Puppet Show on Wednesday, December 18, at 10:30 am. Perfect for babies and toddlers! The library is located at 11371 Tampa Avenue.

WOODLAND HILLS: Car guru Dustin Troyan will again produce the 21st Motor 4 Toys charity car show and toy drive, presented by Porsche, on Sunday, December 8. The event will run from 6:30 am to noon. Admission is one or more new, unwrapped toy(s) valued at $20 or more. Motor 4 Toys will be held at Pierce College; enter at the Victory Blvd. and Mason Street entrance. Visit motor4toys.com.

Jane and Bert Boeckmann Park Opens

(Continued from page 1)

history of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, ensuring their legacy is celebrated for generations to come.

The opening event featured a variety of activities for all ages. In attendance were the City Councilmember John Lee, 12th District, and representatives of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, local community leaders and residents. Lee opened with a speech to thank all those present and provide a bit of history of the park development over the years. Jimmy Kim, General Manager of the Department of Recreation and Parks for the City of Los Angeles, also spoke.

Rudy Ortega, Jr., Tribal President of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, spoke and along with his son, Noli Ortega, performed the blessing of the grounds and the burning of sage to honor the land and its history.

Boeckmann family members were present and Beau Boeckmann represented them and acknowledged the community's choice of park naming with gratitude and said a few words. Then a ribbon cutting was held to make it all official.

Food trucks were present and offered delicious bites, and there were family-friendly activities, which included open court time for pickleball and basketball. Visitors got the opportunity to learn at the information booths about the park's amenities and future programming. Those present after the opening event were treated to a concert under the new pavilion, performed by Queen Nation Tribute Band with their authentic rendition of the original Queen performances. Valley Cultural Foundation (valleycultural.org) arranged the talent and sound at the park. Jane and Bert Boeckmann Park is located at 11930 Mason Avenue in Porter Ranch.

People in the News

The San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club will welcome author, story teller, editor, and writing coach, **Shawna Kenney**, at right, as the keynote speaker on Saturday, December ,7 at 1 p.m., with a Zoom presentation on the crucial information we all want to know: "How to Write a Winning Book Hook, Query an Agent and Find Your Place in the Publishing World."

During her presentation, which will also be shown live at CWC-SFV, Shawna will discuss how to approach agents and publishers with a completed manuscript, and whether they are even necessary for your particular project. She will teach how to leverage the heart of your story to get it into the world while also exploring today's plethora of publishing options.

Shawna has an MFA in creative writing. She is the author of four books, including the award-winning memoir *I Was a Teenage Dominatrix* and the oral history *Live at the Safari Club: A History of HarDCore Punk in the Nation's Capital 1988-1998*. Her arts journalism and personal essays have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Playboy, Ms., Pitchfork, Vice*

and more. She teaches creative writing with UCLA Extension, .

The in-person meeting will be held in the Saban Center at Motion Picture Television Fund, 23388 Mulholland Drive, Woodland Hills. In-person attendees do not need to register in advance. Members free. Guests pay $10 at the door. First visit free. Please arrive a few minutes early.

All members of the CWC-SFV will receive a Zoom invitation to this presentation. Members of other CWC branches should contact Zoom host, Anat Wenick, by noon on December 6 at SFV.CWC@gmail.com for an invitation to register. Zoom guests may purchase admission at www.cwc-sfv.org by noon on December 6.

New Police Chief Visits the Valley

New LAPD Chief Jim McDonnell made the rounds of the valley this week. The Valley Economic Alliance hosted him at a gathering whose title sponsor was Tim Gaspar of Gaspar Insurance.

The event was attended by community leaders, politicians and LAPD officers from all valley divisions.

McDonnell addressed the large group, saying, "Crime is our main business. Statistics don't reflect the pain and suffering it causes, but do reflect where we need to focus our efforts."

He explained that crime may be down, but "disorder" is not, such as the smash and grabs and random business robberies.

McDonnell said that, "Tonight the keyword is partnership. All of us see our job as public safety. Police put everything on the line - including their lives. And they can't do it alone. There has to be a partnership with the community and business community."

Commander Elaine Morales spoke at the meeting, echoing McDonnell's emphasis on partnership, saying that there are more civilian volunteers in the

Chief Jim McDonnell

Valley Bureau than in the rest of the city. She said that the Valley is the largest out of the seven LAPD Divisions, with 1,600 officers serving the San Fernando Valley.

McDonnell is the 59th Chief of the LAPD and was sworn in on November 8 at L.A. City Hall. He is the former head of the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, and previously served as Chief of Police in Long Beach. He has 43 years experience in law enforcement, and now oversees all of LAPD's operations, including those in the valley.

Gaspar said of the event, which had over 400 attendees, that it was an opportunity to show our respect for our officers, and that the Chief was "absolutely, positively, committed to this city."

The event was underwritten in part by St. Mary's Assyrian Church and supporting sponsors Steve and Nicole Fazio.

Sonya Blake, President and CEO of the Economic Alliance, noted that over three decades the Alliance has worked with the community and the LAPD, saying, "When we work together the possibilities are endless."

The Valley Economic Alliance is a strategic private-public collaboration made up of governments, corporations, small businesses, educational institutions, and community organizations whose mission is to engage and unite behind the principles, policies, and practices necessary for economic vitality and prosperity.

Winter Wonderland
WHEN: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7
WHERE: 9015 WILBUR AVENUE
TIME: 11 AM - 4 PM
COST: FREE ENTRY!
NORTH VALLEY REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
SERVING THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY SINCE 1917
JOHN LEE
LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCILMEMBER • DISTRICT 12
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CONTACT INFORMATION NVRCC.ORG 818-349-5676 CEO@NVRCC.ORG
All toys collected will be donated to local non-profits - Foster Children's Resource Center & LAPD Devonshire P.A.L.S. Youth Center- who support underpriveleged youth in our community.
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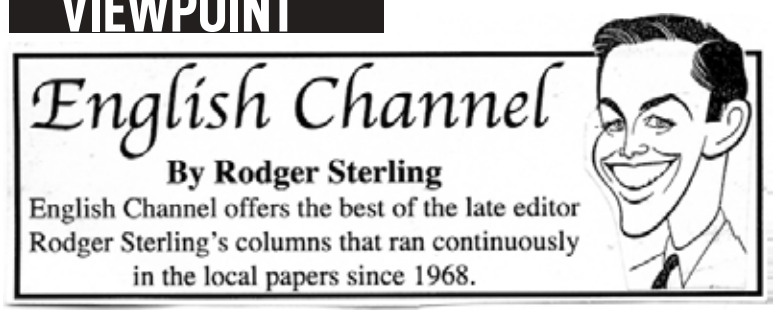

• Overheard at holiday time...a woman in the post office was buying stamps for her invites. "What denomination?" asked the postal clerk. "Oh, good heavens," she was heard to have uttered. "Has it come to this? Well, give me 50 Baptist and 50 Catholic ones."

• Did you hear one of Santa's reindeer now works for Proctor & Gamble? It's true. Comet cleans sinks.

• Why does Scrooge love all of the reindeer? Because every buck is dear to him!

• Which hand is best to light the menorah with? Neither, it's best to light it with a candle.

• Why is Christmas like a day at the office? You do all the work and the guy in the suit gets all the credit!

• How much Hanukkah gelt did the skunk get? One cent.

• A guy's mother gives him two sweaters for Hanukkah. The next time he visits her, he makes sure to wear one. As he walks into the house, his mother frowns and asks, "What – you didn't like the other one?"

• What's the difference between Hanukkah and a dragon? One lasts for eight nights, the other sometimes ate knights.

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Word on the Street

----------From Kathleen Sterling

'Tis the holiday season and all through the house ... I was the only one stirring, contemplating my message for the week.

December is the month we celebrate both Christmas and Chanukah. Both are holidays that celebrate light - Jesus is heralded as the light of the world and Chanukah is the festival of lights, symbolized by candles lit each night for eight nights.

After a contentious year of political upheaval, acrimony and vitriol over the election, it is lovely to think of so many of us celebrating new beginnings.

It would be wonderful if we could carry the joy of the season, and the message of two major religions at the holidays, into the new year - if we could put 2024 and its controversies behind us and start fresh.

I am reminded of the beautiful story of the Christmas truce in World War I. On the western front on Christmas Eve, French, British and Germans called an unofficial cease fire and ventured into each other's territory to exchange food and souvenirs. What a wonderful example of what the holidays are all about.

Christmas is a time of giving and Chanukah celebrates the oil that kept giving for eight days. Let us take these holidays as a chance to reflect on how we can give, not just to family and friends but to the community as well.

Giving doesn't have to be material. It can come from the heart. We can take the lesson from the Christmas truce and give the gift of forgiveness to someone who has wronged us, or the gift of time to someone we have neglected.

I always make New Year's resolutions, and start at this time of year to think of how I can be a better, more loving, more giving person.

It would be wonderful if we could put 2024 and its controversies behind us and start fresh.

Many of my resolutions focus on more time with those I love, those I perhaps have not given enough time to in the previous year. I get caught up in work responsibilities, activities, chores, and sometimes don't give the time I should to those I care about. It is not that I don't love them, it's just been easy to have other priorities ahead of them, and for that I am sorry.

I have several people I need to forgive for real or perceived insults, and some friends I have to apologize to for hurting them. The end of the year is also the beginning of a new year, a new season, and a new chance to do better.

May the spirit of Christmas and Chanukah be with you at this time, and I wish only love and happiness for you and yours in the coming year.

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Is the Newsletter Really Dead?

By Miri Rossitto

Social media, video content, and instant notifications dominate marketing and communication strategies today, so it's easy to assume that email newsletters are outdated. But, contrary to this notion, newsletters are alive and thriving - especially those that strike the right balance between great design, relevant content, and targeting an engaged audience. Many companies and organizations use newsletters to tailor their messaging and audience engagement, making them even more relevant and effective. Newsletters are still a strategic way to reach customers and clients because they provide:

Direct Access to an Audience: Newsletters offer direct access to an audience's inbox, a personal space that often feels more intimate than a social media feed. Unlike content shared through algorithms, emails are delivered directly to subscribers who have elected to receive them, creating an environment for increased engagement.

Higher ROI Than Social Media:

Studies consistently show that email marketing yields one of the highest ROIs among digital marketing channels, outperforming social media accounts—in most cases. According to Forbes, the estimated 2024 marketing revenue is $12.33B with 81% of companies using newsletters as part of their marketing strategy. By nurturing subscribers, newsletters convert leads into customers at a fraction of the cost of other channels, without competing for attention against every other brand vying for clicks and likes.

Flexibility and Customization:

Email platforms provide businesses with endless options for customization, allowing for unique branding and message delivery. A newsletter is versatile, serving as an educational resource, an entertainment hub, or a product catalog. Used strategically, it is an incredibly customizable marketing tool.

Creating a newsletter requires more than just sending updates. It's about crafting an experience subscribers look forward to. Newsletter content must be strategic and relevant, tailored to specific audiences.

Great Design Matters

Design is a crucial element for attracting and retaining subscribers. Eye-catching layouts, clean typography, and well-chosen images add to a professional feel that reflects a brand's identity. For newsletters, a mobile-responsive design is essential as the majority of emails are now read on mobile devices.

Curated, Valuable Content

Content remains king, even in email marketing. The most successful newsletters offer content that solves a problem, educates, inspires, or entertains. By understanding the needs and interests of your audience, you can create a newsletter they look forward to opening and engaging with. Aim for a mix of articles, product updates, tips, and industry news, and make sure it's personalized whenever possible.

A Targeted, Engaged Audience

A list of thousands of subscribers doesn't mean much if those subscribers are not engaged. The key to a healthy newsletter

Many companies and organizations use newsletters to tailor their messaging and audience engagement,

lies in audience segmentation and targeting. Regularly clean your email list to focus on subscribers actively engaged with your content. Segmenting your list based on interests or purchase history can also ensure each subscriber receives content relevant to them, increasing the likelihood of engagement.

Staying Ahead in a Crowded Market

With more companies rediscovering the power of newsletters, it's important to differentiate yours by delivering consistent, high-quality content that resonates with your audience. For companies and businesses, especially in niche markets like credit unions or specialized financial services, newsletters remain one of the most powerful ways to stay top-of-mind with members, providing timely insights and updates to create a meaningful connection.

Rather than being a relic of the past, newsletters are evolving into one of the most dynamic tools in a marketer's toolkit. When done right—with attention to design, valuable content, and an engaged audience—a newsletter can be a core part of a successful digital strategy.

Miri Rossitto is CEO of Cowe Communications. Follow them on all social @CoweOfficial or visit their website at cowe.com.

VALLEY ENTERTAINMENT

COME GET YOUR PICTURE WITH

Santa for only $25

I've had the joy of bringing Christmas magic to kids since 2013. I've been the Santa at the Westlake Promenade Mall for the last two years. I've done private parties, and I've been the Santa at Hidden Hills Community Center. This year I will be doing pictures at a Home in Woodland Hills. It has a major display with snow, lights to Music and a big screen TV in front of the house. Come out bring the whole family and get your picture with Santa. I am looking forward to seeing you.

Visit us on the web at specialtimewithsanta.com to see Santa's Availability.

MAKE SURE TO CHECK THE WEBSITE BEFORE YOU COME BECAUSE TIMES CAN CHANGE.

6034 El Canon Ave.
Woodland Hills, CA 91367
One Block East of Valley Circle

Lakecia Benjamin performs February 5 and 6 at The Soraya.

Soraya Announces "Jazz at Naz" Lineup

Long before the 2011 opening of The Soraya, CSUN Jazz Studies was a national standard bearer - winning awards and training the next generation of artists. Since opening its doors, The Soraya has furthered CSUN's profile with a nonstop procession of jazz greats performing in both The Soraya's Great Hall and its innovative Jazz Club.

Now, the annual Jazz at Naz festival has been recognized as one of the best winter jazz festivals on the West Coast as well as the jazz epicenter in Los Angeles. Jazz at Naz has showcased major debuts for emerging artists such as two-time Grammy winner Samara Joy and created a home for the world's jazz legends such as John Pizzarelli, Branford Marsalis, Dianne Reeves, Chucho Valdés, and Charles Lloyd, and turned the spotlight on influential crossover artists such as Bobby and Taylor McFerrin, Diana Krall, Jon Batiste, Gregory Porter, Herb Alpert and Lani Hall.

The Soraya's main stage with 1700 seats has become home to the Big Band sound with Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, Christian McBride, The Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra, Maria Schneider Orchestra, Vince Giordano & The Nighthawks, Buena Vista Social Club, and Delfeayo Marsalis' Uptown Orchestra.

Its pioneering Jazz Club, a unique and intimate setting for jazz performances complete with food and drink, is built on The Soraya's main stage and has featured a wide breadth of talent, including Terence Blanchard, Gerald Clayton, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Luciana Souza, Antonio Sánchez, Lisa Fischer, Booker T. Jones, and Vijay Iyer.

Since the inception of the festival The Soraya's multi-camera live streaming expands availability for audiences around the world. The virtual streams feature behind-the-scenes content and backstage interviews with the artists, in addition to the complete concert.

The 2025 lineup kicks off Saturday, February 1, with Pacific Jazz Orchestra with Grammy Award-winning and two-time Tony nominated Broadway and West End star Eva Noblezada

Alto Saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin and her quartet Phoenix perform at the Jazz Club on Wednesday, February 5 and Thursday, February 6.

Revered master of the upright bass Christian McBride and Ursa Major take the stage on Friday, February 7, and Saturday, February 8.

Jason Moran, pianist, will return to The Soraya for the fourth time and will play Duke Ellington with the CSUN Jazz "A" Band on Thursday, February 13.

Vocalist Kurt Elling will celebrate modern jazz act Weather Report with original band member and special guest Peter Erskine on Saturday, February 15. The double feature will also showcase L.A.'s own Yellowjackets,

Iraker brings to The Soraya two of its original band members, Chucho Valdés and Arturo Sandoval on Thursday, February 20.

All performances take place at 8 pm at The Soraya's Jazz Club, 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, on the campus of CSUN.

For tickets to Jazz at Naz or other performances visit thesoraya.org or call (818) 677-3000.

Celebrate the Holidays at Universal Studios Hollywood

Universal Studios Hollywood unwraps holiday magic with exciting themed festivities taking place throughout the theme park this season! This includes a colorful holiday overlay at Super Nintendo World™ and the return of family favorites, "Grinchmas™" and "Christmas in The Wizarding World of Harry Potter.™" Holidays at Universal Studios Hollywood is included in the price of admission and starts on Friday, November 29, running daily through Monday, January 6, 2025.

Super Nintendo World will welcome guests to celebrate the holidays in the Mushroom Kingdom alongside Mario, Luigi, Princess Peach and Toad. A themed tree will greet guests for a memorable photo op and once inside the Mushroom Kingdom, the spirit of the holidays will shine bright with themed décor. Plus, for the first time ever, guests will be able to enjoy an array of holiday merchandise at select Super Nintendo World retail locations and seasonal treats at Toadstool Cafe.

Universal Plaza, located at the heart of Universal Studios Hollywood, brings its centerpiece Who-holiday festivities to life with the spirited "Grinchmas" Who-bilation. Who-cheer and Who-fun will come to life in the whimsically vibrant town of Who-ville, complete with colorful décor, lively entertainment and festive activities.

The sensational Who-inspired doo-wop singing quartet makes a grand return, bringing their legendary sounds and Who-liday cheer. Plus, a towering 65-foot-tall Grinchmas tree will stand whimsically at the heart of Who-ville, adorned with hundreds of vibrant ornaments and thousands of shimmering LED lights. This signature, topsy-turvy marvel will create a captivating focal point for the festivities as nightly tree-lighting ceremonies accompanied by a burst of cascading snow mark the evening.

Grinchmas activities will include photo opportunities with the Grinch™ and his faithful dog Max, story time with Cindy-Lou Who, who shares the story of "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" with guests young and old, and a visit to the Who-ville post office to mail a joyous postcard sharing three good deeds. A selection of themed Who-tacular sweet treats and Grinchmas gear will also be available for purchase.

Hogsmeade™ village rings in "Christmas in The Wizarding World of Harry Potter," with jubilant décor and the Frog Choir's traditional holiday a cappella performances. A stroll through Hogsmeade wouldn't be complete without a cup of Butterbeer™ that guests can enjoy in a choice of hot, cold or frozen or the chance to indulge in seasonal holiday fare at Three Broomsticks.™

As twilight settles each evening, "The Magic of Christmas at Hogwarts™ Castle" will illuminate a mesmerizing light projection show that bathes Hogwarts™ School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in a spellbinding display of color and radiance. Accompanied by a captivating medley of music from the Harry Potter film series, this immersive experience will infuse the air with a symphony of festive sounds, creating a truly magical atmosphere.The holiday celebrations extend to Universal CityWalk, as the iconic outdoor complex steps into the spirit and decks the halls with festive décor and a towering 40-foot-tall Christmas tree, adorned with over 200,000 sparkling LED lights. The excitement continues at 5 Towers with live bands, DJ performances and street performers bringing lively music on select nights, ensuring that the holiday spirit shines brightly throughout the season. Visit UniversalStudiosHollywood.com for more info and tickets.

VALLEY ENTERTAINMENT

Local Couple Wants to Take You Around the World

By Kathleen Sterling

They're very much a local family. They belong to St. Mel Parish. Their kids are in school here. Their offices are in Calabasas.

But this couple wants to take you around the world!

Going back to their roots, Rudi Schreiner and Kristin Karst, both born in Europe, founded AMA Waterways to cruise the four corners of the globe, from Europe to Egypt, Asia to Central America.

Karst grew up in Dresden when it was still part of East Germany. Despite the travel restrictions at the time, her parents took her on wonderful trips, some of them river cruises. She worked part-time in a travel agency and used to dream about visiting the far off places they booked. She got a Master's in international tourism management which opened many doors and led her to Los Angeles - and Schreiner.

He grew up in Vienna, at the heart of the Danube. He traveled to South America in 1975 and designed what would be his first ship - a raft to take him up and down the Amazon. Soon thereafter, he began working in the travel industry.

Their third partner, now deceased, was Jimmy Murphy who founded Brendan Tours.

AMA was founded in 2002 with their goal of creating a river cruise company, "we ourselves would enjoy," said Karst.

That means the highest quality, locally sourced food and wine, elegant appointments, and a crew who go above and beyond, treating every guest like they are part of their family.

Kristin Karst and Rudi Schreiner, at left, are a local couple whose AMA Waterways will take you to the four corners of the globe.

Combining the travel background of all three partners, AMA has become a world leader in river cruises. One of the things that makes it so special is that the itineraries are personally designed by the original founders .

Schreiner designed a new itinerary for 2025, Best of Danube, celebrating the rich culture and musical history of his birthplace.

Karst's favorite itinerary through her home country of Germany takes guests down the enchanting castle-laden Rhine Gorge, but also down Germany's less-traveled Moselle River, with the steepest vineyards in Europe, picturesque German villages and historic castles.

With their love of water, it made sense for the couple to settle in Westlake Village as their home base.

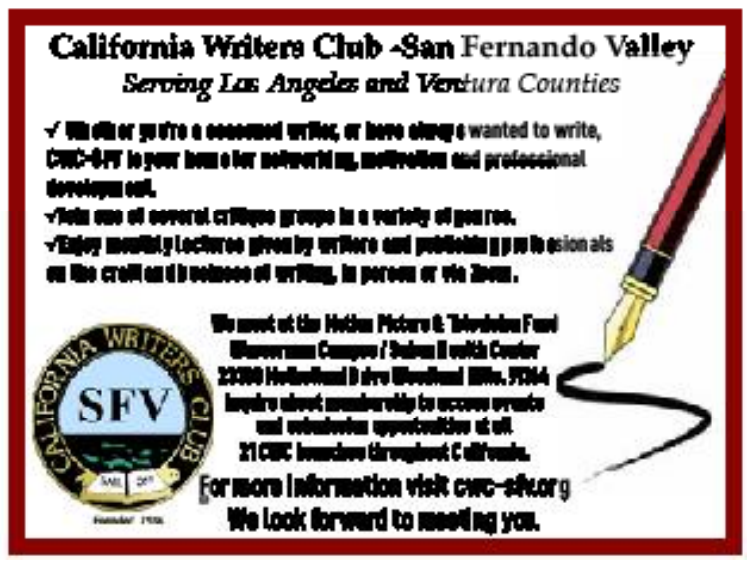
"Westlake Village offered the perfect blend of natural beauty and community spirit," explained Karst.

They are very involved in the community and support local initiatives and the arts, contributing to organizations like the Calabasas Film Festival, Tiny Porch Concerts, Los Angeles Master Chorale, YMCA, Cal Lutheran Business School and more.

Their first love, however, is travel and the company they built from the ground up.

For more information on AMA Waterways and their itineraries visit amawaterways.com.

Book before December 31, 2024 and receive either summer triple savings and a stateroom upgrade, up to 20% cruise savings for 2026 or up to 20% savings and reduced airfare.



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VALLEY ENTERTAINMENT

Festive Fun is Back at Holiday Road

Holiday Road is officially open for the festive season!

From the same team that brought you Nights of the Jack, Holiday Road transforms King Gillette Ranch into a winter wonderland walking experience filled with holiday cheer! There will be larger-than-life holiday displays, lights galore, carolers, countless candy canes, and appearances from Santa, Mrs. Claus and their elves.

New this year are lantern art installations with two massive scenes that you can stand in for a perfect holiday photo! Gather the family for a seasonal stroll and indulge in a night of merriment, festive cocktails and food!

Holiday Road runs now until December 28. Doors open at 4:30 pm and close at 9:30 pm. Designated time slots for entry start at 5 pm for every 30 minutes and end at 8 pm.

Advanced ticket purchase is required, as well as parking passes. The entrance to the parking lot will close at 9 pm, with the entrance to the trail closing at 9:15 pm and food trucks and bars closing service at 9 pm. Prices start at $24.99 and increase depending on the date.

With a holiday market, face painting, a myriad of food and beverage options, live carolers and more, there is something for everyone!

For further details and tickets, visit holidayroadusa.com.

Once Upon a Mattress Bounces Into Ahmanson December 10

On the heels of its critically acclaimed return to Broadway, *Once Upon a Mattress* makes its West Coast premiere in a new adaptation by Emmy Award winner Amy Sherman-Palladino (*The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel, Gilmore Girls*), directed by Tony Award nominee and Drama League Award winner Lear deBessonet (*Into The Woods*) at Center Theatre Group's Ahmanson Theatre December 10 to January 5, 2025.

Two-time Tony Award winner Sutton Foster (*Anything Goes, The Music Man)* leads the Los Angeles cast, reprising her acclaimed Broadway performance as Winnifred the Woebegone, hailed by *The New York Times a*s "perfectly goofy, and imprinted with an ebullient, joyful relish in the very act of performance."

An uproarious update of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Princess and the Pea, Once Upon a Mattress* sets an unapologetic free spirit loose in a repressed kingdom, where Winnifred the Woebegone charms, delights, and dances her way to the top… of a stack of mattresses.

Full of gloriously catchy melodies like "Shy" and "In a Little While," the musical first premiered in 1959.

SAG Award nominee Michael Urie (*Spamalot, Shrinking*) in the role of Prince Dauntless also stars in the LA production direct from the Broadway revival, alongside Ana Gasteyer *(Saturday Night Live, Wicked*) as Queen Aggravain.

Tickets start at $51.75 and the performance length is two hours and 15 minutes with a 15-minute intermission. For information and to purchase tickets, visit CenterTheatreGroup.org.

Holiday

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HEALTH & BEAUTY

Give the Gift of Blood Donation This Holiday

Give the most precious gift of all - life! The American Red Cross will be holding a Blood Drive on Monday, December 16, from 11 am to 5 pm. The drive will be held at the First Presbyterian Church of Granada Hills, 10400 Zelzah, Northridge. For more information and to make a reservation visit redcrossblood.org.

California Continues to Monitor Bird Flu Outbreak

As of early November, there have been approximately 21 human cases of bird flu in California. While health officials have been equipping farmers with masks, gloves and goggles, this outbreak has proven difficult to accurately track. Bird flu was first detected in April, and while coordination was attempted with local health officials, the flu has spread to more than 270 dairies within the state and wastewater samples in LA County.

Thanks to COVID, the state is better equipped to handle a health emergency such as this, but California still struggles on how to accurately handle this type of outbreak. Public risk does remain low and there has been no evidence that the flu has spread between humans. If the bird flu does spread from human to human, it could present California with a worst-case scenario for a new pandemic.

While a legislative analysis stated that "It is difficult to overstate the level of unpreparedness exhibited by hospitals both in and outside of California in dealing with the 2020 outbreak of COVID-19," California Hospital Association spokesperson Jan Emerson-Shea said hospitals "continuously prepare to respond to all types of disasters, including outbreaks of transmissible viruses."

According to the Department of Finance, California cut approximately one-third of their funding for personal protective equipment and is cutting $40 million over the next four years from its $175 million disaster stockpile budget.

This respiratory disease has caused a multi-state outbreak in wild birds, poultry and other animals. While the flu has been mainly mild in humans, one teenager did find themselves in critical condition. Fifty-two people have been infected by the H5N1 virus, with dairy cattle being the source for 30 of those cases and poultry for 21. Twenty-six cases have been identified in California, all related to exposure to infected cows.What is cause for concern is the fact that the bird flu has been found for the first time in pigs. Pigs are animals that are also susceptible to the human flu, which could cause potential for the two viruses to co-mix, mutate and potentially pose more of a threat to humans. While there is no evidence of this as of yet, it is giving health officials reason to take this outbreak more seriously than usual.

Symptoms of bird flu may include fever, cough, sore throat, eye redness, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches and headaches. According to the CDC website, "CDC is watching this situation closely and taking routine preparedness and prevention measures in case this virus changes to pose a greater human health risk." Bird flu is not a food-borne illness, so you cannot contract it from properly cooked food.

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LEISURE CARE

The "Little Treat" Mentality is Good for You!

Life, whether it be personally, professionally or globally, can be overwhelming even at the best of times. Schedules are hectic, stress builds and our outlook on things can turn a bit bleak. Enter the solution of the "little treat" culture. For those unfamiliar with the term, the idea behind a "little treat" is focusing on something small or inexpensive that can make a big impact on our overall mood. Whether it be treating yourself to a latte in the midst of a packed calendar or buying that lipstick you've been eyeing for a while, it's a small gift to yourself to pepper in some joy.

While this may sound like just another internet trend, scientists have backed up this idea with proof that these miniscule moments of pleasure can aid in resilience and boost joy!

"We enjoy good feelings when we treat ourselves," explains therapist Rhian Kivits. "It's akin to the feelings we had as a child when we were treated by a parent or caregiver; we felt noticed, valued and rewarded. When we treat ourselves as adults, we're reconnecting with those feelings, and indulging the part of ourselves that wants to feel special."

These "treats" are not only a method of escapism, but also serve as a shot of dopamine. It aids in mental health by elevating one's mood and engaging in a manner of self-care – something that a lot of individuals take for granted when life gets hectic. "Giving ourselves a treat can be a positive way of affirming our self-worth," says Kivits. "It's not about the monetary value of the treat but more about the experience of delight we have when we enjoy an 'extra'.

So the next time you're feeling overwhelmed or low, remember to treat yourself!

Free Seminar on Protection From Senior Scams

The Foundation for Senior Services and Q4 Active will present a free seminar on how to protect yourself from senior scams, fraud and identity theft on Friday, December 6, from 1 to 2 pm.

Join SSG Specialist Evan Press, a Financial Advisor, as he shares best practices to keep you 'senior-safe and cyber-secure.' Stay protected and in control—don't miss this essential session!

The seminar will be held at Q4 Active, 6200 Variel Avenue, Suite 2A, in Woodland Hills. Call (855) 836-0807 for more inforamtion. Register at foundationforseniorservices. org.

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REAL ESTATE

CSUN Hosts Indian Powwow as Part of Native American Heritage Month

By Jay Ross

California State University, Northridge (CSUN) has acknowledged that the land on which the university is located originally belonged to the Sesevitam people, who called the area Sesevenga. The Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, one of the tribes that continues to inhabit the region, is the primary Indigenous group associated with this land. Like many other institutions, CSUN's land acknowledgment is a statement of respect and recognition for the Indigenous communities whose history and presence continue to shape the land.

CSUN is committed to honoring and supporting Indigenous heritage, and part of this effort includes recognizing Native American Heritage Month each November. During this month, the university organizes a variety of activities and educational programs that highlight Indigenous cultures, histories, and contributions. The month concluded with the 39th Annual CSUN Powwow, a celebration of Native traditions and cultural expression.

The CSUN Powwow is an annual event where dancers wearing traditional regalia gather to perform. These regalia, often handmade and adorned with beads, feathers, and porcupine quills, hold deep cultural significance for the Native communities represented. Eagle feathers, in particular, are an important symbol in many Indigenous cultures and are commonly seen in the regalia worn during powwows.

Dancers perform in traditional regalia.

The powwow featured a Grand Entry dance, accompanied by cultural songs played on the drums, which are central to the ceremony. These songs, along with the ceremonial dances, make the event a unique and meaningful gathering for participants and attendees alike.

In addition to the dances and performances, the powwow also included vendors selling a variety of goods. Popular items included frybread, a traditional Native American food, as well as handmade arts and crafts from local Indigenous artists. Attendees could also find booths offering various Native American items, including clothing, soaps, jewelry, and arrowheads.

PHOTO: JAYROSS

The owwow serves as an opportunity for the CSUN community and the broader public to engage with and learn about the rich cultural heritage of Native peoples, while also supporting Indigenous artists and traditions.

Audubon Society Free Beginner Walk

The San Fernando Valley Audubon Society will be holding their monthly free beginner walk at the Sepulveda Basin on Saturday, December 14, from 9 to 11 am.

This walk is perfect for beginning birdwatchers, families with school-age children and people who want to visit the wildlife reserve. For details on the meet-up, visit sfvaudubon. org/event/free-beginner-walks-at-sepulveda-basin-2/2024-12-14.

REAL ESTATE

Nighttrek Report: What to See in the December Sky

By Neill Simmons

The highlight of December is the planet Jupiter which will be at its brightest for the year. Jupiter rises after dark in the east. It is in the constellation Taurus the Bull. Make sure to look on Saturday the 7th, when it will be at its brightest. Jupiter is up all night long and sets in the west before the Sun comes up. Binoculars will reveal Jupiter's four biggest Moons - Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto.

Mark the 4th of December. This is when the beautiful, thin, crescent Moon will shine just after sunset in the west. The moon will be joined by the planet Venus. Venus is bright and getting brighter with each night. Venus is the second planet from the Sun and is the hottest at 867 degrees F.

The ring planet Saturn is in the south each night of December. On Sunday night, December 8, the Moon will be in the same area as Saturn. Saturn is a gas giant. Its many bright rings are composed of mainly ice particles with a small amount of rocks and dust. Saturn has at least 146 moon but only 63 have official names. The Romans named the seventh day of the week, Saturday, for the planet Saturn.

Tuesday the 24th, Mercury is at its highest point in the west. Near this planet will be a bright red-orange star to help spot the little planet. Mercury is only slightly larger than Earth's Moon. Despite being the closest planet to the Sun, Mercury's surface temperature varies from -270 degrees as a low at night to 790 degrees during sunlight. Mercury has no moons.

December brings back a very popular constellation, Orion the Hunter. When night falls, Orion is in the east laying on its side. Very quickly it rises to an upright position and becomes the mighty Hunter. Many people are waiting to see the star that makes up the left shoulder which is named Betelgeuse. Betelgeuse is a stunning orange-red star that you can spot with the naked eye. There is a chance it could go supernova in our lifetime, but that's just a possibility, and the exact date is unknown. This massive red giant star is 700 times the diameter of our Sun! Meanwhile, the belt of Orion is the three identical

December brings back a very popular constellation, Orion the Hunter.

stars of the same brightness all in a line. Below the belt is a fuzzy patch we can see even from our city lights which is the sword. This patch is called M42 or the "Great Orion Nebula."

The Ursid meteor shower is an annual meteor shower that peaks on December 22-23. The Ursids are named for the constellation Ursa Minor, also known as the Little Dipper. Most of the meteors appear to come from this area. Make sure to bundle up since December 21 is the Winter Solstice which is the shortest and darkest day of the year.

Come to the FREE astronomy show about the Winter Night Sky on Thursday, December 19, at 6:00 pm. Many interesting topics will be covered included famous winter constellations, how to spot the planets, NASA updates and much more. This event will be held at the Woodland Hills Library at 22200 Ventura Blvd. Call 818-226-0017 for more info.

When not star-gazing, Neill Simmons is a Wealth Advisor with LPL Financial in Woodland Hills. If you have any astronomy or financial questions, he may be reached at 818-936-2626 or neill.simmons@lpl.com.

Neighborhood Council Meetings

Northridge West Neighborhood Council will hold their December meeting on Tuesday, December 10, at 6:15 pm. For agenda and Zoom link visit northridgewest.org.

Northridge East Neighborhood Council will hold their December meeting on Wednesday, December 18, at 7 pm. For agenda and Zoom link visit nenc-la.org.

Northridge South Neighborhood Council will hold their December meeting on Thursday, December 12, at 7 pm at Northridge Middle School Library, 17960 Chase Street.

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