Operation Gratitude: Valley Locals Give Back

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What Exactly Does Containment Mean?

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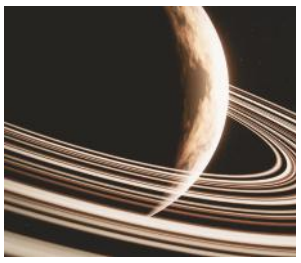
Nighttrek: What to See in the February Sky



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ENCINO ENTERPRISE

Volume 5, Issue 113 | A Compendious Source of Information | January 31, 2024

NEWS IN BRIEF

Together in LA Hosts Weekly Webinars for Recovery Resources

The recent wildfires have had a significant impact on various businesses in the region. Together for LA, hosted by Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, will be hosting various webinars to hear from experts and community leaders about the resources and support available to help businesses recover. Discover information on financial assistance programs, disaster relief initiatives and strategies for rebuilding and resilience. Webinars will be held every Friday at 11 am. To register and watch previous webinars, visit laedc.org/togetherforla.

11th Annual Inspirational Women Nominations Open

The United Chambers of Commerce will hold their 11th Annual Inspirational Women of the San Fernando Valley Awards on May 8, 2025. The event will recognize women who have inspired, achieved and made the San Fernando Valley a better place. Honorees will be selected from a wide array of industries, including, but not limited to, business, social services, health care and medicine, education, community advocacy, arts, government and non-profit, among others. All nominations, including self-nominations, must be submitted at form.jotform.com/243647414108051 by March 3.

Ways To Give Back Following the Wildfire Destruction

California Fire Foundation: CAFireFoundation.org
Pasadena Humane Society: pasadenahumane.org/give/donate
Watch Duty: app.watchduty.org
World Central Kitchen: wck.org/news/first-alert-ca-fires-jan25
Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation: supportlafd.org
LA Works: laworks.com/2025fires
Community Foundation's Wildfire Recovery Fund: calfund.org/funds.wildfire-recovery-fund
Volunteer County of Los Angeles: volunteer.lacounty.gov
Operation Gratitude: operationgratitude.com
Local Stations:
Station #83 - 4960 Balboa Blvd., Encino
Station #104 - 8349 Winnetka Avenue, Winnetka
Station #93 - 19059 Ventura Blvd., Tarzana
Station #73 - 7419 Reseda Blvd, Reseda
Station #88 - 5101 Sepulveda Blvd., Sherman Oaks
Station #99 - 14145 Mulholland Dr., Sherman Oaks
Station #102 - 13200 Burbank Blvd., Sherman Oaks

From left: Lucie Volotzky, Battalion Chief Jesus De La Cruz, EIT/Firefighter Julio Churchwell, Firefighter Paramedic Ray Covarrubias, Mark Levinson, Engineer Jaime Robles, Diana Duenas, Pat Bates, Firefighter Ernesto Narenjo, Su Du Brin, Fire Captain Will Jun, Fire Captain Justin Clayton, (Community Liason Officer Valley Bureau) Deputy Chief Jaime Moore, Operations Valley Bureau

Community Donors Give Thanks to Encino Station #83 With the Gift of Rest

After weeks of devastating fires and relentless measures from firefighters to protect neighborhoods, the community responded in kind. Local stations were inundated with donations, food drop-offs and handmade cards from kids giving thanks for their unrelenting efforts. At Encino Station #83, perhaps the biggest thanks for their tireless firefighting was the gift of rest.

Upon hearing that the mattresses at Station #83 were approximately 20 years old, a team of community members coordinated to refresh the station's sleeping quarters. After all, with unpredictable hours and rotating station assignments, the least of one's problems should be an uncomfortable bed.

Lucie Volotzky, owner of Blissful Sleep/Beds Unlimited, provided at cost 11 mattresses and a bundle of new pillows in a community effort supported by donors Waltona Manion of Manion and Associates, Diana Duenas of the Gelb Group, Rickey Gelb, Patricia Bates, Encino-based Honest Dermatology owners Melissa and Michael Brown, Sue DuBrin, Cowe Communications CEO Miri Rossitto, Fernando Foundation board member Mark Levinson and *Encino Enterprise* publisher Kathleen Sterling. Additionally, over two dozen new sheet sets donated by Sterling and a group of her friends were dropped off with the new mattresses.

Volotzky, center, provided at cost all of the new mattresses.

While approximately 97% of the LAFD budget covers salaries and benefits, only 3% is left for stations to utilize for essential equipment, repairs, station maintenance, etc. Much like teachers, firefighters often pay directly out of their own pockets when items need to be replaced, updated or repaired as an extremely tight budget doesn't leave a lot of funds left over. The donations thus far have been greatly appreciated, but

(contined to page 4)

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Of the San Fernando Valley

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Community Calendar

* Curious to know how you can get involved in your community? The Encino Neighborhood Council will be holding their Outreach Committee meeting on Monday, February 3, at 7 pm. For details, visit encinonc.org.

* The Encino Tarzana Library will be kicking off their 2025 HAM Radio Emergency Communications Club on Thursday, February 6, at 5 pm. This club is for beginners interested in training in emergency and recreational communication. In the first virtual meeting, you will meet the new members and plan what you will do in person for training. This club is for ages 11 to adult. Email ecalla@lapl.org for the Zoom link.

* The San Fernando Valley Audubon Society will be hosting their monthly walk of the Sepulveda Basion on Sunday, February 2, from 8 to 11 am. This walk occurs on the first Sunday of each month to introduce walkers to the basin and the variety of wildlife that lives there. For details on parking and meeting up, visit sfvaudubon.org.

* The Tarzana Community & Cultural Center is hosting a Tarzana Music Night on Friday, January 31, at 7 pm. Special guest Lauren Lundeen will perform. Lundeen is a singer-songwriter born and raised in Los Angeles who grew up with the influences of Joni Mitchell, Jim Croce, and The Eagles. The performance will be held inside at 19130 Ventura Blvd. Donation is $5 per person. For more information visit mytarzana.org or call (818) 705-1286.

* Given the recent wildfires, safety has been top of mind for many in the community. Councilmember Nithya Raman will be hosting an Emergency Go Bag Workshop on Sunday, February 9, from 1 to 3 pm at the Van Nuys/Sherman Oaks Senior Center (5056 Van Nuys Blvd).

* The Sherman Oaks Encino Chamber of Commerce will hold their Health and Wellness committee on Thursday, February 6, at 12 pm at ONEgeneration (17400 Victory Blvd). Liem Hospice, a group of caring professionals dedicated to providing physical, psychological, spiritual and emotional comfort to patients and their loved ones, will be the sponsor of this meeting.

* The 2025 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count has been rescheduled for Tuesday, February 18, from 8 to 10 pm. Those looking to participate will meet at the Sherman Oaks Encino Chamber that evening and must register at count.lahsa.org/pages/volunteer-registration.

* The West Valley Regional Library will be hosting their Mystery Book Club on Wednesday, February 12, at 10:30 am. The book being discussed will be *The Plot* by Jean Hanff Korelitz.

* The West Valley Warner Center Chamber of Commerce will be hosting their monthly networking breakfast on Wednesday, February 5, at Pinstripes (21851 Victory Blvd). The sponsor of the meeting will be UCLA Health. Prepaid members and one-time guests are $32, walk-ins are $47. Register at woodlandhillscc.net.

* Join California State Senator Caroline Menjivar for a special Senior Townhall at ONEgeneration's Senior Enrichment Center on Saturday, February 1, from 10 to 11:30 am. Learn about existing state agencies that serve older adults and how to navigate their programs. RSVP at bit.ly/SD20SeniorTownHall or call 818-901-5588.

* Westfield Fashion Square and the American Red Cross are hosting a drive on Thursday, February 20, from 10 am to 4 pm. Sign up at redcrossblood.org.

COMMUNITY

People in the News

Joe Hess, a cherished Holocaust survivor, Encino philanthropist and community leader passed away on January 21, 2025 at the age of 92.

Born on June 25, 1932 in Fulda, Germany, Joe's incredible life story was one of resilience, determination, and dedication to making the world a better place.

Joe was just six years old when he and his sister, Ilse, bid farewell to their parents for the last time, escaping Nazi persecution via one of the last Kindertransports to England, where they lived with a foster family. In 1948, they immigrated to the United States, settling in Millville, New Jersey. After completing high school and beginning studies at Rutgers University, Joe joined the U.S. Air Force, where he began his distinguished career in aerospace and defense. While stationed in Boston, he met and married Margie (Z"L), his devoted wife of 68 years.

In 1954, Joe was joyfully reunited with his father, Max, whom he had believed perished during the Holocaust.

Professionally, Joe excelled as a government technical manager, international aerospace consultant, and United Nations volunteer. He worked at the Air Force Cambridge Research Labs in Massachusetts and, in 1968, moved to California to serve as Director of Space Division for the U.S. Department of Defense. Joe also developed workshops worldwide to help developing nations harness space technology for societal benefit. As Vice President of the International Arid Lands Consortium, he addressed critical issues in arid and semi-arid regions globally.

Joe's enduring legacy is deeply intertwined with his nearly 30-year partnership and leadership with Jewish National Fund-USA, where he served as National Campaign Chairman, Vice President of Zones and Regions, and President in Orange County before moving to Los Angeles. "If Israel had existed, my parents would have been saved," was a sentiment that fueled his tireless efforts. Joe's vision and leadership were instrumental in securing Israel's water future, contributing to the creation of over 250 water reservoirs and helping the organization achieve NGO status at the United Nations.

His contributions were recognized with Jewish National Fund-USA's prestigious Tree of Life® Award and Legacy Society Heritage Award. As a proud Century Council member, Joe inspired countless others to join him in ensuring a vibrant future for Israel and the Jewish people.

Joe was a cherished husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, and will be deeply missed by his family and numerous friends. His warmth, wisdom, and unwavering dedication will continue to inspire those who knew him.

To honor Joe Hess' memory and his enduring impact, contributions can be made to Jewish National Fund-USA at jnf.org/donate or a tree can be planted in Israel at jnf.org/tree or call 800.542.8733. For more information, contact Sharon Joy, JNF-USA National Campaign Director, at sjoy@jnf.org.

CD4 Field Deputy Ricky Angel (far left) joins former Encino Chamber president Mark Levinson and Gelb Group Office Manager Diana Duenas (far right) in presenting **Sue DuBrin** an honorary certificate from the City of Los Angeles recognizing her work in creating the San Fernando Senior Services Directory.

For more than a decade, the directory has been the Valley's only annual guide to healthcare and social services for seniors and is used by thousands of seniors, families and medical professionals. It is distributed for free to doctors' offices, home health care and adult day care facilities, senior centers, local pharmacies, medical buildings and hospitals throughout the San Fernando Valley.

English Channel

By Rodger Sterling

English Channel offers the best of the late editor Rodger Sterling's columns that ran continuously in the local papers since 1968.

• Life is like a jar of jalapeno peppers - what you do today might burn your ass tomorrow.

• My friend Mel Perlitsch used to say, "Don't worry about old age - it doesn't last that long."

• Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday, lying in hospitals dying of nothing.

• All of us could take a lesson from the weather. It pays no attention to criticism.

• Lynn Homsy got a laugh with this one: While creating husbands, God promised women that good and ideal husbands would be found in all corners of the world. And then he made the earth round.

• Store these fun facts in your noggin for the next trivia night! Did you know...

-the rumbling of the stomach is actually called a wamble?

-the space between your eyebrows is called a glabella?

-when you combine an exclamation point and a question mark (!?), it's called an interrobang?

-illegible hand writing is called griffonage?

-the wired cage that holds the cork in a bottle of champagne is called an agraffe?

Operation Gratitude: Valley Locals Give Back

By Sharman Borncamp

The recent Palisades and Eaton fires have had a significant impact on Los Angeles. Many of us in Encino (including this writer) were under evacuation orders for over a week as brave firefighters held the line at Mulholland Drive, and law enforcement officers and the National Guard protected our homes.

While numerous organizations have stepped up to help and show their appreciation to first responders, Operation Gratitude (www.operationgratitude.com) has been at the forefront of saying "Thank You" for over 20 years.

Founder Carolyn Blashek started the organization in her Encino home in 2003 in response to the 9/11 attacks in New York. She realized that when men and women put themselves in the "line of fire," they need to know that someone cares. That's when Operation Gratitude was born.

Carolyn was one of the evacuees from the Encino Hills, as were many other Operation Gratitude volunteers, all extremely grateful for the first responders and the National Guard soldiers who fought so valiantly to protect their homes. Operation Gratitude immediately stepped into high gear, responding to the wildfires with collection drives of product and delivering needed energy drinks and snacks to the heroes on the frontlines as the wildfires raged.

Operation Gratitude now encompasses Americans all over the country working to ensure that all who serve feel appreciated. It is one of the largest and most impactful non-profits in the country for hands-on volunteerism in support of first responders, deployed military, military families and veterans.

Carolyn is on the Board of Operation Gratitude, and the mission continues to support "Those Who Serve." From a deep personal perspective, Carolyn is additionally grateful to the National Guard Armory in Van Nuys, which was Operation Gratitude's home for 13 years when the organization outgrew her living room.

Monday through Friday, and one weekend day a month, volunteers are working to assemble care packages to say "Thank You" to our first responders and military communities. Anyone over the age of 13 is welcome and encouraged to volunteer. Register and get more information by visiting operationgratitude.com. Financial support is also needed at this time. Show your appreciation and honor ALL first responders, now and throughout the year. Operation Gratitude is located at 19748 Dearborn St., Chatsworth.

LOCAL NEWS

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Clockwise from top: A snapshot of the hundreds of food donations, Waltona Manion and Encino Enterprise editor Katie Sterling with the dozens of donated sheets, the "83 Strong" t-shirts being sold for firefighter Lloyd and thank you cards from local kids.

Community Donors Give Thanks Cont'd

(continued from cover)

what Station #83 (as well as most local stations) need right now are monetary donations. Donating to the LAFD Foundation provides essential equipment, training supplies and station support to supplement scarce city resources. While food has been the main donation thus far, a monetary fund can continue to aid the station in months to come, especially if future emergencies arise.

The best way to support Station #83 is to visit supportlafd.kindful.com or scan the QR code on the cover. While the campaign is set to the general LAFD Wildfire Emergency Fund, you can scroll down to donate to a specific station. Whether it be a one-time or reoccurring donation, the funds will be properly channeled to spend in a manner that will best support your local station.

Additionally, Station #83 is selling one-of-a-kind t-shirts to raise funds for one of their own, Darren Lloyd. Despite having to evacuate his own home with his pregnant wife, Lloyd returned to action and fought tirelessly to save neighbors and homes, even volunteering at shelters long after his shift was over. His selflessness and courageous actions are only a small part of why Captain Jun is recommending Lloyd for the Presidential Medal of Valor. Anyone interested in purchasing the $20 t-shirt can acquire one at Station #83 (4960 Balboa Blvd.) during normal business hours.

For those that put their life on the line daily, and saved Encino from potential destruction, a donation is a small but meaningful way to give back. Supporting your local fire station means supporting your community and at times like these, connection is appreciated more than ever.

Letter from the Publisher

By Kathleen Sterling

In the past two issues we've applauded the efforts of our first responders, and community members who've stepped up to donate and help those impacted by the fires.

We aren't a major daily, so I can't comment on the lack of water in the reservoir or the number of firefighters sent to the Palisades, but I do have some observations (gripes) about how some of the fire protocols were handled. I'm not the only one who noticed these - social media, friends and family all commented on the following issues.

You have to also know that I've been in the newspaper business 42 years. Been there, done that, seen it all. I'm not afraid to speak out - and have a forum to do so. There was a whole hell of a lot that was done right in this disaster, and some things that were egregiously wrong.

STOP THE GRANDSTANDING

As journalists we firmly believe in press conferences. But not four a day with random groups of people standing around for a photo op. During the Palisades and Kenneth Fires we were subject to numerous press briefings a day. Kathryn Barger and Lindsey Horvath did a good job relating important news. But all we really need to know is: Where is the fire? Where is it headed? Do I need to leave?

That takes two people at most - one from the Fire Department and one from the City. Not councilmembers standing around in the background; not a dozen people who never say a word. (Locally our Councilman Bob Blumenfield was out delivering supplies while these were going on). Why aren't they at their desks doing their job instead of jockeying for their five minutes of fame on television?

EDISON, HANG UP

We were all jumpy and nervous from the constant news coverage and the hourly Watch Duty alerts.We didn't need SoCal Edison calling us in the middle of the night to say our power was still off. I got three calls one night at 11 pm, 1 am and 3 am. Another night the call came in at 4 am. At that hour a phone call means something's bad or someone's dead. The last straw was the final call at 11:45 pm that told me my power was still on. Duh? This was after the fires were contained and I was back home.

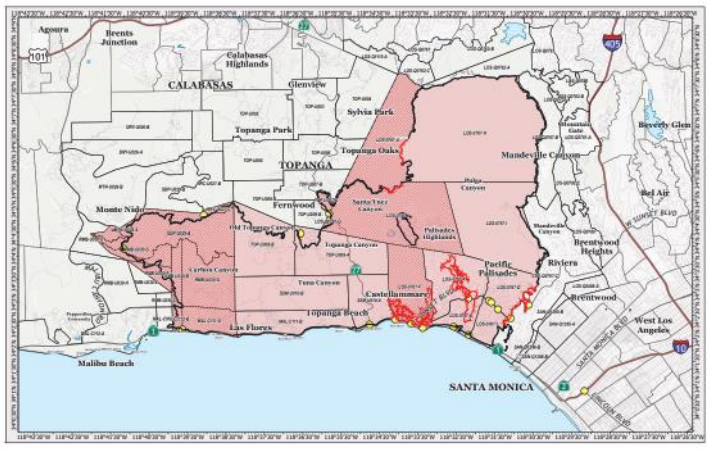
I put in a call to Edison's Public Relations Officer. No response. I'd like to put him on every spam caller's list.

WHERE WAS THE ENCINO CHAMBER?

We belong to five chambers of commerce. During fires we got regular updates from four of them - what resources were available, where to get help, where to get supplies, where the fire was headed, what the evacuation status was.

When the fire roared towards Encino, we got two emails from the Sherman Oaks/Encino chamber - one on the 10th with a community message and a link to resources on their website and one on the 14th essentially echoing the same thing. It's not nothing, but it certainly wasn't enough.

By contrast, the Encino Neighborhood Council was on it, with continuous updates for Encino. Evacuation updates, power outage updates, school closures, last-minute Zooms with City officials, reposting local leader's updates, etc. When crisis hits, the community needs this kind of info clearly laid out for them constantly and clearly. The chamber board should take note and take action.



Lines in black represent containment, while lines in red are still being tested for hot spots.

What Exactly Does Containment Mean?

At presstime, the Palisades Fire is reported to be 96% contained.

But what does that mean in fire parlance? There is no smoke, no obvious flame.

Containment in a fire refers to the percentage of a fire's perimeter that has been surrounded by a control line, creating a barrier so the fire can't spread further.

The Palisades Fire's 96% containment means that is how much of the fire they believe will not go beyond their defensive barriers, and how much firefighters believe they can stop the fire from expanding beyond that point.

That can be a natural obstacle such as a river or creek. More often, it's a line dug by firefighters removing vegetation with shovels, axes, bulldozers, chainsaws and more. We saw today in the Hughes Fire firefighters setting backfires to clear brush and create a barrier line.

Amanda Munsey, Palisades Incident Public Information Officer, told *Valley News Group* that the lines in red on the containment map above don't mean there's still a fire burning there.

"It means the area hasn't been wind-tested to make sure there are no hot spots. We want to make sure we have all the heat out. In some areas we can't say it's completely contained; the red lines are still addressing those areas," she explained.

Munsey said that just because the line is red doesn't mean firefighters haven't put in significant work on the area already. When creating a line break they have to tear out the vegetation down to the soil.

Obviously weather conditions can affect the effectiveness of containment; the ongoing Santa Ana winds can scoop up embers and reignite a fire.

A contained fire is not necessarily completely out; it can still be burning within the perimeter. Cal Fire's Ricardo Coronado said that the Palisades Fire's 96% containment means that is how much of the fire they believe will not go beyond their defensive barriers, and how much firefighters believe they can stop the fire from expanding beyond that point.

It can actually take months for a fire to reach 100% containment, depending on the weather, the size of the blaze and the area's topography.

When a fire is labeled controlled, it means that firefighters have established a containment line around the fire, extinguished any spot fires, and cooled down all hot spots within the perimeter, effectively stopping the fire's spread and ensuring it won't significantly expand beyond the control lines; essentially, the fire is considered under control and not actively spreading further.

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Do You Know Your Procrastination Type?

It's something that everyone is guilty of: putting things off or delaying work that needs to be done. But did you know there are different types of procrastinators?

According to experts they include the perfectionist, the dreamer, the worrier, the crisis-maker, the defier and the over-doer.

Since procrastination is typically a behavior tied to an underlying feeling, the type of procrastinator you are can usually be tied to a primary human need like safety or love. While your procrastination type can be linked to your personality, they are not the same.

1.The Perfectionist – The procrastinator often struggles with their own standards and

According to experts they include the perfectionist, the dreamer, the worrier, the crisis-maker, the defier and the over-doer.

4.The Defier – As the name suggests, a defier doesn't want to be told what to do or how to do and thus, procrastinates their tasks. Oftentimes, this

thus, puts things off for fear of not achieving their goal and the subsequent self-criticism. This often looks like a person waiting until everything else is perfectly organized before they believe they can start a new task but never quite getting there.

To overcome this, setting clear deadlines can help perfectionist procrastinators as well as affirmations that completing a task is more important than perfecting it.

2.The Dreamer – The dreamer often becomes bored with tasks and tends to underestimate how long a task may take. While they have grand ideas, they don't have the motivation to start it or may become easily distracted mid project.

To overcome this, a dreamer needs realistic goals and to be held accountable for specific milestones along the goal to keep them on track and engaged.

3.The Worrier – The worrier procrastinates because they are fearful of failing and being judged. The worrier often struggles with imposter syndrome which can set them back because they believe if they don't start, they can't fail.

To overcome this, worriers need to think of the worst-case scenarios to realize

procrastinator comes from a place of anger and doesn't feel that the task is worth their time or energy. Defiers lack self-awareness and it's critical to ask yourself why you feel resistance for a particular task.

5.The Over-Doer – This procrastinator typically has too much on their plate because they take on too many commitments and struggle to juggle it all. They put things off because they are too overwhelmed with where to start.

Over-doers can overcome this by labeling a priority to every task and tackling them in order of importance. Over-doers are typically people pleasers and can thus, also benefit from working with others for support.

6.The Crisis Maker – This procrastinator is self-sabotaging in that they put off work until the very last minute since they find the adrenaline of last-minute work exhilarating. They typically work best under pressure, but by hustling at the end, they typically can't manage their time well.

A crisis maker can benefit from strategies that keep them on task when it's difficult to focus like setting specific time intervals for work and intervals

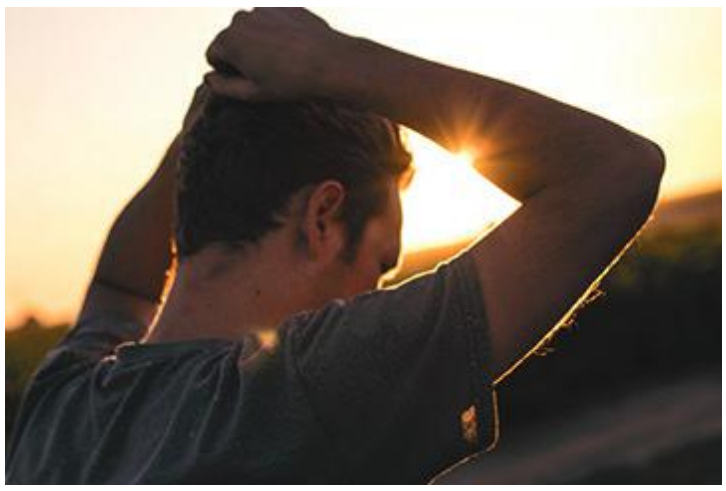
Coping After a Natural Disaster

By Dr. Sue Kapitanoff

Experiencing a fire or any major disaster is highly stressful. Our world is turned upside down, nothing seems normal and there may be serious danger to ourselves and our loved ones. After the acute stage of the disaster has passed, we are still left to deal with the aftermath. It is a challenge to feel normal again. There are many reactions we may feel but there are some things we can do to cope with them.

•Dealing with feelings: It is very common after such an intense experience that you also have intense feelings. After the initial fight or flight response and the shock of the experience, you may have many different kinds of feelings. Anger, anxiety, depression, and irritability are common. Sometimes it will be disbelief. You will need time to grieve. It is also common for these feelings to come and go. Sometimes, something in the environment, a sight, sound, a smell, may trigger a memory of the experience and you may feel upset all over again.

•Loss of control: Life in general may feel out of control and you may personally feel out of control. There is so much going through your mind, so many stimuli to deal with and so many new demands on you on top of daily living and working that it is hard to feel that there is anything normal around you. Recognize that this is a normal response to this type of intense situation. It may be helpful to keep a notepad with you to jot down things that you want to remember or make lists of things to do so you don't feel you have to keep all of this in your immediate consciousness as you work through many issues.



•Changes to memories, thinking, feelings and behaviors are likely to occur: Flashbacks are common and you may have a strong physical response to stimuli in the environment. It may be hard to concentrate and remember everything you need to do. This can affect your sense of control and your ability to make decisions at a time when you will be asked to make many decisions about things you have not had to deal with before.

•Stress often leads to physical symptoms: Heart racing, headaches, nervous stomach/nausea are common. Pre-existing conditions might be exacerbated.

•You may feel alone or isolated: It may be hard to reengage with everyday activities, social activities, work and family interactions. Because of the stress and general feelings of irritability, there may be difficult interactions with family, friends and co-workers. Try to realize that the source of this is a reaction to the situation, try to step back and realize what is happening and then reengage with others.

There are a number of things we can do to help us deal with these challenges.

•Recognize that what you are feeling is a "normal" reaction to an intense experience.

•Give yourself time to grieve. There are many adjustments that need to be made. It takes time to work through your feelings and the tasks of physically dealing with the situation.

You may need to "go slow" taking things one step at a time.

•Don't listen to the news all of the time. Keep informed but hearing things over and over can be overwhelming and can act as a trigger for negative feelings.

•Talk. Researchers have found that social support from friends, family, and others who have experienced this situation is helpful. Sometimes working with a professional can help you work through your feelings and remind you that you are not alone.

•Think about what is still positive in your life. Try to appreciate things you enjoy, maybe a little at a time. In a while you may start to envision how you will be living in the future or start to imagine future goals.

You may want to reflect on how you have survived so far and think about your strengths and how to grow using those strengths.

•Keep healthy. Sleep is restorative. Eat as healthy a meal as you can. Exercise if you can. Try to do what helps you relax.

It helps to remember that you are not alone. Be patient. You will recover but it will take time.

Dr. Sue Kapitanoff is Chair of Psychology at American Jewish University.

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HEALTH

Teaching Students "History Through Art" With the David Labkovski Project

Holocaust Remembrance Day was this past Monday, reminding us of the horrors of WWII and the importance of fighting against hate.

Locally, the David Labkovski Project goes from school to school with artwork depicting life during the Holocaust, painted by David Labkovski about his life as a prisoner in Siberia.

In December, 8th grade students from the Multicultural Learning Center in Canoga Park were docents at the exhibit "Documenting History Through Art."

The David Labkovski Project spent a semester in the classroom educating these students about life before, during and after the Holocaust. The program addressed antisemitism and empowered students to educate their peers on the harm of prejudice and hatred.

The event at the Canoga Park Youth Art Center was attended by over 15 community leaders, city officials and LAPD officers. At the opening students read each other's poetry written in response to David Labkovski's art and acted as guides for the exhibit which they had curated.

Students in grades eight to 12 can join the David Labkovski Project's Student Docent and Leadership Program.

They complete seven one-hour virtual training sessions, engage with Labkovski's art and the historical context of the artwork, learn to critically read art from a historical and personal perspective, and collaborate with students from other schools.

Summer training registration is open; the application deadline is May 11 to participate in the training, offered for seven Sundays from 10 to 11 am.

Students interested in becoming docents, educating exhibit visitors about the Holocaust, curating an exhibit and earning community service hours should email Resa Nikol, DLP Education Diretor, at resa@davidlabkovskiproject.org.

This season, give the gift that matters most.

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LEISURE CARE

Mental Health Center Offers Wildfire Counseling

The San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center is available to support the community in the aftermath of the Los Angeles wildfire disaster.

As the second largest mental health agency in LA County, trauma experts are ready to provide care, guidance and resources needed to navigate this challenging time.

The center is working with other providers and is ready to provide support in the form of relief staff of case managers, therapeutic behavioral services workers, and therapists, as needed.

The wildfires have caused significant destruction and displacement, leaving countless individuals and families facing immense stress and trauma.

The Center boasts a team of highly skilled trauma specialists who are experienced in dealing with the psychological impacts of natural disasters. Their experts are equipped with the knowledge and techniques necessary to address a wide range of trauma-related issues, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and grief.

For more information and help visit movinglivesforward.org.

After a Wildfire, What Stays in the Air?

By Dr. Imran Shariaf

Wildfires significantly impact health by exposure to air pollution caused by smoke and release of harmful particulate matter and gases.

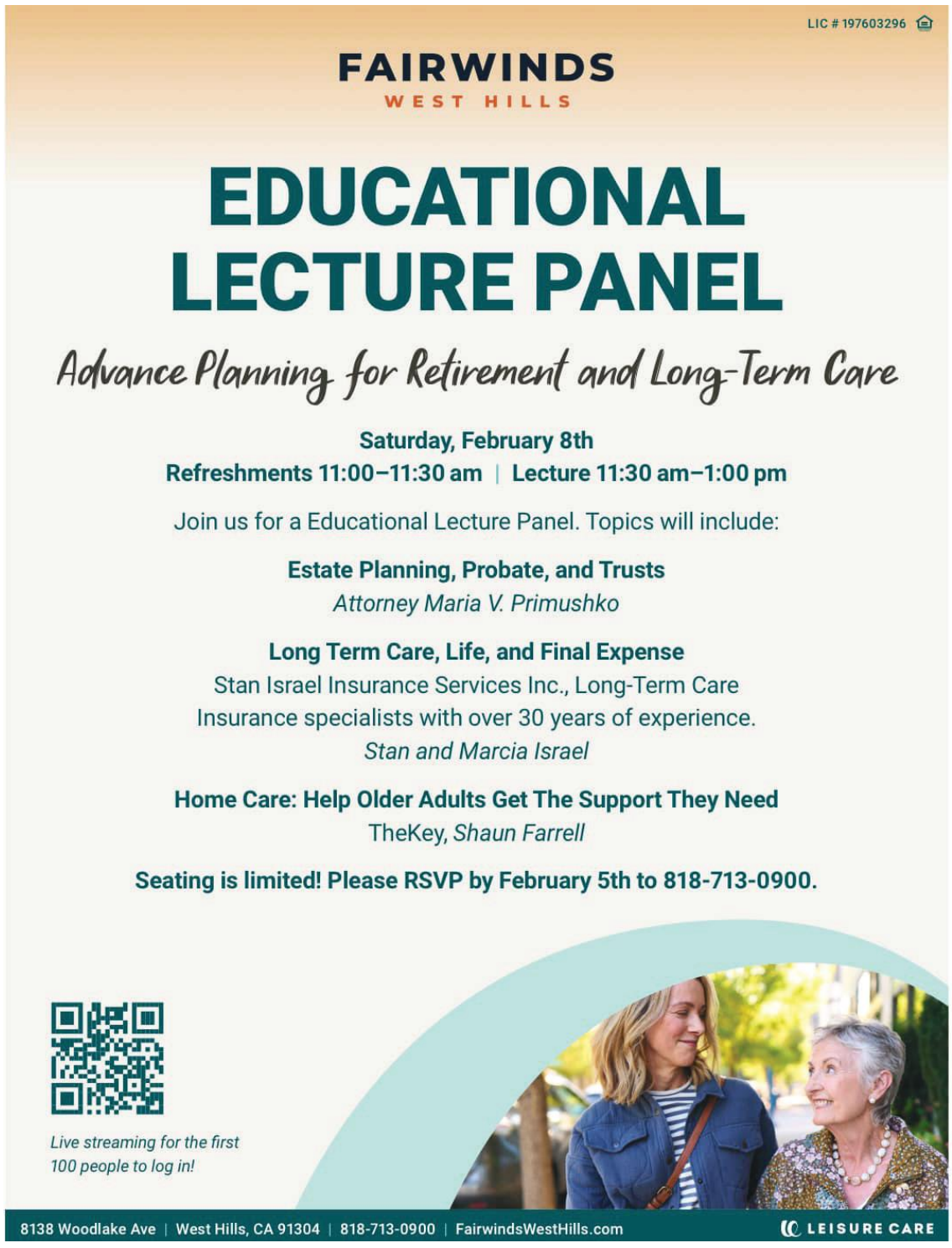
Fire smoke causes the release of a range of toxic compounds and gases, including carbon monoxide, hydrogen cyanide, volatile organic compounds, particulate matter, and acids like hydrochloric acid. Fire smoke also produces carcinogens.

Particulate matters in wildfires can irritate the lungs and cause breathing problems and worsen chronic conditions such as emphysema, asthma and pulmonary fibrosis.

Exposure to wildfires can also worsen cardiovascular diseases, cognitive impairment, increase emergency room visits, and can trigger autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis and systemic lupus erythmatosus.

You can protect your health during wildfires by keeping the windows closed, staying indoors, using air purifiers (HEPA), avoiding too much outdoor activity, wearing N-95 masks outdoors, keeping your home, cars and pets clean and monitoring the air quality index.

Dr. Imran Sharief MD, FCCP is a Specialist in Pulmonary Medicine and Critical Care Medicine at HelpUSleep Center.



ENTERTAINMENT

Harry Potter and the Cursed Child Weaves Magic at the Pantages

It's time to believe in magic!

Broadway's spellbinding spectacular *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* is coming to Los Angeles at the Hollywood Pantages Theater on February 15 and will run until June 22.

Join the next adventure and experience the wizarding world like never before at this record-breaking hit and winner of six Tony Awards including Best Play. "It's one of the most defining pop culture events of the decade" (*Forbes*).

When Harry Potter's head-strong son Albus befriends the son of his fiercest rival, Draco Malfoy, it sparks an unbelievable new journey for them all—with the power to change the past and future forever.

Prepare for a mind-blowing race through time, spectacular spells, and an epic battle, all brought to life with the most astonishing theatrical magic ever seen on stage. It's a "marvel of imagination" (*The New York Times*) that will "leave you wondering 'how'd they do that?' for days to come" (*People Magazine*).

Harry Potter and the Cursed Child is approximately two hours and 50 minutes including intermission.

The play is based on an original story by J.K. Rowling, Jack Thorne and John Tiffany. This is the first-ever North American tour of Harry Potter and the Cursed Child which will delight wizards, witches and muggles alike!

Tickets start at $60 and are available to purchase at broadwayinhollywood.com. Student and senior discounts available on select performances.

The Hollywood Pantages Theater is located at 6233 Hollywood Blvd. (half a block East of Hollywood & Vine).

For box office hours and questions, call (323) 468-1770

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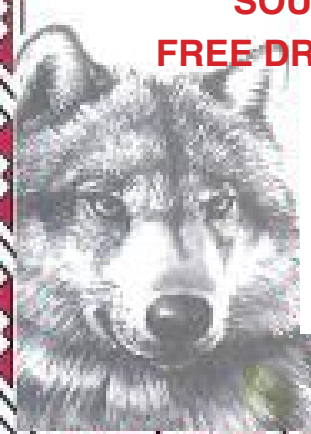

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A Real Pain is a Poignant Take on Grief, Identity and Family Connection

By Katie Sterling

It's a true joy when a movie manages to surprise you. Not in a plot twist kind of way, but in a way that has you thinking of the narrative long after the credits have rolled. In Jesse Eisenberg's directorial co-production with Poland, the story manages to tug at the heartstrings, while subtly encouraging the viewer to take a look at their own heritage and the role grief plays in it. It's at times humorous, uncomfortable, loving and reflective. *A Real Pain* manages to perfectly encapsulate what it means to be family and how understanding the past is critical to living in the present.

Written and directed by Eisenberg, *A Real Pain* follows two cousins as they reunite to visit their grandmother's hometown in Poland. David (Eisenberg) and Benji (Kieran Culkin) couldn't be more opposite – in their lifestyles, in their personalities and in the way they view their surroundings. David is the strait-laced, play-by-the-rules individual who has a steady job and a family waiting for him back home. Conversely, Benji is an emotional, live each day as it comes, free spirit living in someone else's basement. Naturally, they both want to be like each other but as their adventure unfolds, it becomes clear they never can be.

With the recent passing of their grandmother, the cousins decide to take the money left to them and travel to Poland to learn more about her legacy. While the cousins are so close in age they joke they could be brothers, it's Benji who had the strongest relationship with their grandma and is clearly struggling to understand what life now means without her in it. It's a heavy trip not only because of their recent loss, but because much of their grandmother's story centers on surviving the Holocaust. To truly understand their surroundings, the two join a tour group that includes the guide James (Will Sharpe) and four other travelers (Jennifer Grey, Kurt Egiywan, Liza Sadovy and Daniel Oreskes). Each has a personal reason for wanting to take this tour and while they start as strangers, it becomes almost inevitable that they start to bond over shared trauma.

As the tour unfolds, real conversations are had and raw emotions come to light largely through the complex character that is Benji. He's the type of guy that can befriend anyone, largely allowing his flaws to not necessarily go unnoticed, but not be troublesome. Therefore, when he has emotional outbursts regarding aspects of their tour, it's difficult for those around him to grapple with the extreme change in emotion. He's clearly a troubled individual who largely masks his pain with humor and the monologue David delivers trying to understand his cousin is one of the strongest moments of the film. After all, who doesn't have that family member that you just can't make sense of? The one who you love so much, but whose life is so drastically different than yours, the only thing you necessarily have in common is some shared DNA.

It's a heavy film, but presented in such a delicate manner. Poland is filmed beautifully, city shots set against delicate classical music almost in a complete foil to the complicated emotions each cousin is grappling with. Each give an amazing performance, but it's clear why Culkin is the frontrunner to win an Oscar in his category.

Pain is complex and grief can at times be so all-encompassing, those around might not even know you're struggling. *A Real Pain* perfectly encapsulates the complexity of this. As evident by their grandmother's story, grief is a large part of life and while you might not welcome it, it's a valuable component to connection. The focus on family, its complexities and the nature of understanding each other's struggles, is what makes *A Real Pain* a true joy to watch.

A Real Pain is currently streaming on Hulu.

Nighttrek: What to See in the February Sky

By Neill Simmons

The highlight of February comes on Wednesday night, February 5, when the Pleiades Star Cluster is covered by our Moon after sunset.

At that time, the Moon will move slowly in front of the these bright stars. After two hours the Moon will be on the other side of this star cluster. This event can be seen with the naked eye, however binoculars will make this more special. The Pleiades Star Cluster is located in the Taurus constellation. It actually contains over 1,000 stars but only six are visible to the naked eye.

Picture: SkySaraiAstronomy.com

On Saturday night, February 1, look west for the trio made up of the planet Venus, the thin beautiful crescent Moon, and the planet Saturn all together making a straight line in the west.

On February 25, the Moon will not be visible, but the planet Mercury will be next to Saturn that night. A rare event will happen this month when five planets will be visible with the naked eye. Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn will make up this "Planetary Parade." Venus is usually the easiest to spot because it is the brightest planet in the night sky.

On Saturday night, February 1, look west for the trio made up of the planet Venus, the thin beautiful crescent Moon, and the planet Saturn all together making a straight line in the west.

Mark your calendar for Thursday night, February 6, when the giant planet Jupiter and the Moon appear to be very near each other in the night sky. This is called a conjunction. Then on Sunday, the 9th, the Moon and the red planet Mars will be in a conjunction. These two events will be great sights.

February 12 brings one of the smallest full Moons of the year. This Moon is called the "Snow Moon." This micro Moon happens when the Moon is the farthest away from Earth by about an extra 15,000 miles. Fun Fact: The Moon moves its own width every hour.

The famous constellation Orion is at its best in the south after dark. Our astronomers are keeping a close eye on Orion's left shoulder star, better known as "Betelgeuse." Some are waiting for a supernova explosion which can happen in the next 100,000 years. If you can get away from the city lights, where it is very dark, a portion of the Milky Way can be seen in the Orion constellation.

Make sure to look below Orion to see the brightest star in the night, Sirius. Each night when it is low near the horizon, Sirius twinkles in three colors: white, red, and blue. This is fun to see. Astronomers say Sirius shifts through every color of the rainbow when the air is unstable or windy. Sirius is one of the six bright stars that make up the giant "Winter Hexagon."

Binocular Target: The planet Mars is at its closest to Earth now. Try to spot the two polar ice caps made of water, ice and dry ice.

Vandenberg SFB has been very active with rocket launches. Check their websites for updates as many rocket launches are changed at the last minute.

When not stargazing, 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 at neill.simmons@lpl.com.

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