Blood Cancer Breakthroughs Through Modern Technology

See Page 6

Set Sail in Crotia – See Page 9

Nighttrek: What to See in the October Sky

See Page 11

ENCINO ENTERPRISE

Volume 6, Issue 129 | A Compendious Source of Information | October 3, 2025

NEWS IN BRIEF

City Council Upholds Approval of Proposed Apartments Complex in Encino

The Los Angeles City Council recently voted to uphold the approval of a proposed mixed-use apartment complex in Encino. The site, 16610 W. Ventura Blvd., would consist of a five-story building with 45 studio, one-, and two-bedroom units above 3,4000 square feet of commercial space and a two-level, 57-car underground parking structure. In order to build a complex larger than the current zoning rules would allow, the Planning Commission asked for eight of the units to be set aside for affordable housing. The Encino project is being led by Benelisha Group, Inc. and designed by GA Engineering with plans for a contemporary podium-type building clad in wood veneer and painted stucco.

Woman Followed by "Bank Juggers" and Robbed at Reseda Car Wash

A college student was targeted and robbed in broad daylight last week after leaving a Wells Fargo branch. Surveillance footage shows the young woman drying her vehicle at Luv Car Wash in Reseda before a white SUV with tinted windows pulled into the space next to her. As she attempted to enter the her own vehicle, a passenger of the SUV reached in and grabbed the woman's purse. When she attempted to hold on to her belongings, the thief threw her to the ground before speeding off. Police believe it is the work of "bank juggers" or individuals who monitor banks and then follow individuals who they believe have recently made a cash withdrawal. According to the report, the license plates of the vehicle came back as fake and the primary suspect is an approximately 25-year-old Black male who was wearing a white shirt and black shorts.

Sherman Oaks Street Fair Set for Oct. 19

The 33rd annual Sherman Oaks Street Fair is back on Sunday, October 19, from 10 am to 6 pm. Attractions include two live stages, a cocktail lounge, carnival, food trucks, artists and local businesses, a pet zone, and more! The Sherman Oaks Encino Chamber of Commerce is inviting interested sponsors and vendors to take part in this community tradition that draws thousands of attendees. Whether you're a small business, artisan, nonprofit or a larger brand looking to make a local impact – the chamber has sponsorship packages and booth options to fit your goals and budget. For more details, visit ShermanOaksStreetFair.org.

Local Leaders Announce Runs for Office

Bob Blumenfield for Senate

Los Angeles City Councilmember Bob Blumenfield has confirmed to *Valley News Group* that he will run for the California State Senate's 27th district in 2028. The seat will be open as Senator Henry Stern is in his final term.

There are nearly one million residents of the 27th Senate District, which includes Calabasas, Woodland Hills, Tarzana, Encino, Canoga Park, West Hills, Moorpark, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, Newbury Park, North Hills, Sylmar, Porter Ranch, Granada Hills, Chatsworth, Sherman Oaks, Studio City, North Hollywood, Valley Glen, part of Van Nuys, part of Northridge and part of Santa Clarita.

The main responsibilities of a state senator include creating and voting on state laws, adopting the state's budget, representing the interests of their constituents, and confirming certain gubernatorial appointments.

Stern was first elected to the post in 2016, and his main priorities have been legislating

(continued to page 4)

Josh Sautter for Congress

As President of the Encino Neighborhood Council, I've learned that leadership begins with listening. During the fires that threatened to cross Mulholland, the official alerts failed. Confusion spread and fear set in. I didn't wait. I sent my phone number to every subscriber on our 10,000 member list, and soon my phone was ringing nonstop. Hundreds of neighbors reached out. Each time I said the same words: Evacuate now.

One of those calls came from a 95-year-old woman on oxygen. With her caregiver, we got her safely to her granddaughter's home in Valencia. That night I saw what true community means: people helping people, neighbors protecting neighbors. Leadership in that moment wasn't about politics or power. It was about action, compassion, and connection.

When the fire danger passed, the challenges didn't end. Families returned to homes with no electricity, no water, and trash in the streets. Once again, neighbors turned to me.

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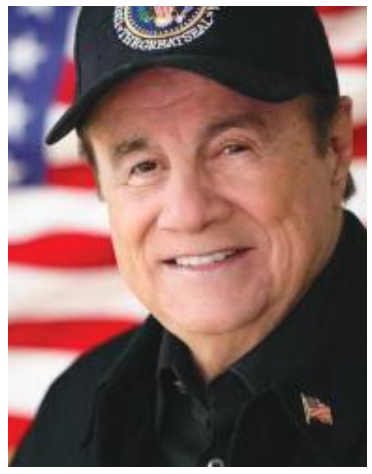


Larry Thompson for Congress

Larry Thompson, above, Republican candidate for California's 32nd Congressional District, has officially announced his candidacy for the U.S. House of Representatives.

Thompson is challenging 15-term, 30-year incumbent Brad Sherman (D), offering voters a modern, forward-looking vision for California and America's future.

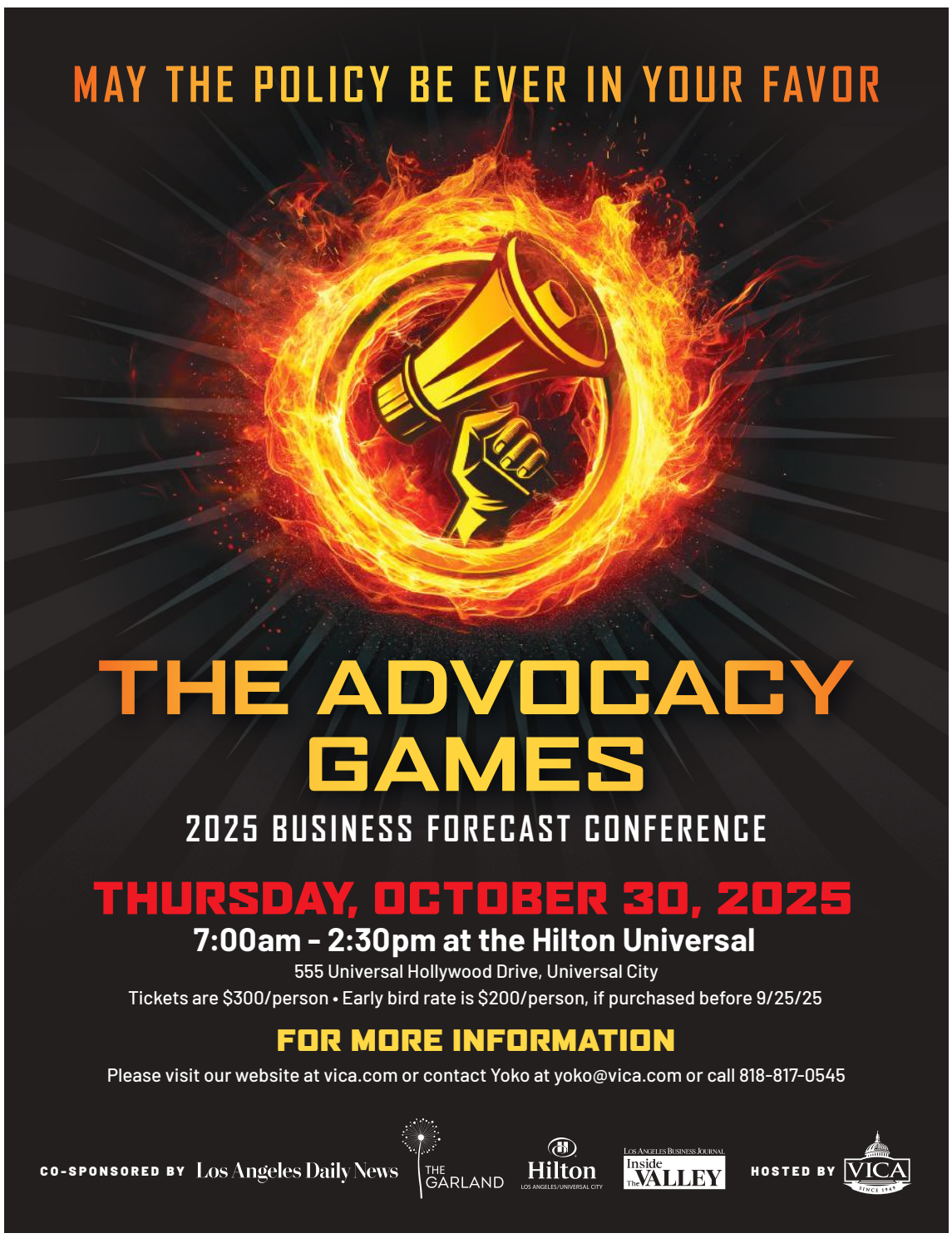
"California has always been the land of dreams," said Thompson. "But somewhere along the way, we lost that positive energy and promise. My campaign is about rekindling that vision—honoring our classic Hollywood legacy while launching bold, bipartisan solutions that no longer hold us down to the past 30 years status quo but launch us 30 years into the future."

Thompson's campaign will focus on uniting citizens of all political backgrounds around practical, future-driven solutions:

•Thompson unveiled an ambitious policy agenda to make the district more livable,

(continued to page 4)

CALENDAR



Community Calendar

* The Encino Neighborhood Council will be holding their Public Safety meeting on Monday, October 13, at 7 pm at the Encino Community Center (4935 Balboa Blvd). For the agenda, visit encinonc.org.

* The Sherman Oaks Encino Chamber of Commerce's Restaurant Group will hold their next in-person meeting on Monday, October 13, at 2 pm at Boneyard Bistro (13539 Ventura Blvd). The goal of the Restaurant Group is to provide marketing strategies, operational support, and to build a strong network of restaurant professionals. To RSVP, visit shermanoaksencinochamber.org.

* Join the West Valley Regional Library for a hands-on bug experience! On Saturday, October 4, at 2 pm, kids will get up close and personal with live insects, learning fascinating facts while touching, holding, and interacting with a variety of amazing bugs.

* The first Sunday of every month brings San Fernando Valley Audubon Society's Sepulveda Basin Bird Outing with the chance to see over 60 birds on a three-hour tour of the basin. This walk will take place on Sunday, October 5, from 8 to 11 am. For more details, including where to meet up, visit sfvaudubon.org.

* The Sherman Oaks 33rd annual Street Fair is only weeks away! On Sunday, October 19, from 10 am to 6 pm, dozens of booths will line Ventura Blvd., from Kester to Van Nuys Blvd. It will be a day of local flavor, live music, food, art, and community.

* Westfield Fashion Square, in partnership with the American Red Cross, will be holding a blood drive on Tuesday, October 14, from 10 am to 4 pm. To make a life-saving appointment, visit redcrossblood.org.

* Do you have a teen needing community service hours or looking for leadership opportunities? The Encino Tarzana Library is hosting a Teen Council on Tuesday, October 7, at 5 pm. Younger teens (ages 11-13) are eligible to assist with library art and display work, as well as participate and earn hours in clubs and programs like HAM radio and geocaching. Older teens (ages 14-18) may be eligible to volunteer as program assistants, Rising STAR readers, and library collection task assistants. Visit volunteer.lapl.org for details.

* The Reseda Neighborhood Council will hold their general board meeting on Monday, October 20, from 6:30 to 9:30 pm. For the agenda, visit resedacouncil.org.calendar.

* Valley Cultural Foundation and Councilmember Raman's office are sponsoring two upcoming concerts at the Van Nuys/Sherman Oaks Recreation Center. These free community concerts will take place from 3 to 6 pm with Adelaide Pilar playing Latin Top 40 on Sunday, October 12 and New Romantics: A Taylor Swift Tribute taking the stage on Sunday, October 26.

* The Encino Neighborhood Council will be holding their Planning and Land Use meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, October 14, at 7 pm. For the agenda and Zoom link, visit encinonc.org.

* Tarzana Community and Cultural Center will be hosting a Faery Hunt and Halloween party on Sunday, October 12, from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm. A Faery Hunt is a delightful outdoor children's theater musical experience for toddlers through elementary school ages. Tickets available at afaeryhunt.com/product/kids-activities-near-me.

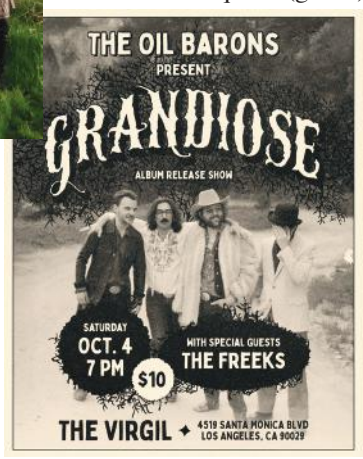
* Tapia Bros pumpkin patch (5251 Hayvenhurst Ave.) is officially open for the season! Grab the family to find the perfect pumpkin, explore their corn maze, enojy the petting zoo, ride the train and pick out fresh produce to take home. The patch is open Monday through Thursday, from 9 am to 6 pm and Friday through Sunday, from 9 am to 7 pm. Pony rides, petting zoo and the train ride are only open Saturdays and Sundays. The corn maze is closed on Mondays.

People in the News

San Fernando Valley rock outfit **The Oil Barons** recently released a new album, "Grandiose," on September 26.

Ahead of the full-length album, they also released a new single and video, "Wizard."

"Wizard" follows the release of the single and video for "Gloria," which showcased the band's melodic, sentimental side. With its towering riffs and heavier edge, "Wizard" leans hard into the band's stoner rock roots, embracing doom-tuned guitars and layers of distortion that raise the stakes for the forthcoming record.



The Oil Barons are Tarzana and Sherman Oaks residents Lou Aquiler (guitar), Andrew Huber (bass, lead vocals), Jake Hart (drums), and Matt Harting (organ, acoustic guitar) - a reprobate quartet forging their own volatile brand of 100-proof rock and roll laced with cosmic Americana, doom, and heavy psych.

The album "Grandiose" is fueled by love of amp worship and improvisation, pushing The Oil Barons into uncharted territory.

"We wanted to really lean into all the juicy, natural frequencies you can wring out of hot tubes," says Aquiler, "and introduced longer, less structured jams and instrumental breaks in major keys—something we just haven't really heard in this genre before. It created an entirely new flavor of heavy and psychedelic that felt untapped and ours for the plundering."

The band will play at The Virgil in Los Angeles on October 4.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass (above) spoke at the annual Mayors Lunch sponsored by the United Chambers of Commerce this past week.

She addressed the recovery from the recent wildfires, saying it was "on record for the fastest recovery" from a disaster ever in California.

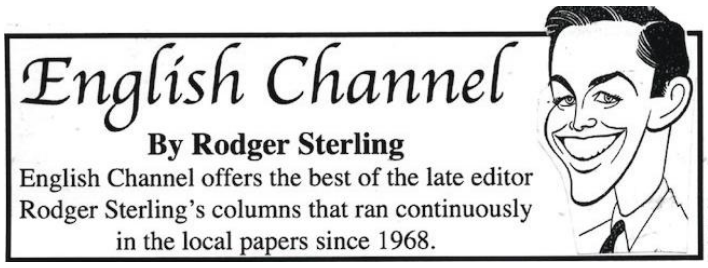
She also stated that the city remained unified despite the ongoing ICE raids.

Bass said that "Shine LA" continues to clean up the city, but more importantly, "It's about bringing our city together" and blamed policies from years ago for the sanitation and trash problems throughout Los Angeles.

Crime is down in record numbers, according to Bass, though she did say if you have been burglarized or your neighbor has been that that is hard to believe, and that she has made hiring more police a priority.

As to the homeless she said that a system is not in place to manage homelessness. "It's easy to get them off the street, but some people don't know they are sick, and some people should be hospitalized without their choice. Just putting someone in housing doesn't solve the problem."

PHOTO: ScottBogunia/ StormLabs.



• Booty and butt are synonyms. Call and dial are synonyms. But, a "booty call" and a "butt dial" are very different things!

• An astute librarian pointed out the fact that tablets were replaced by scrolls, scrolls were replaced by books and now, now we scroll through books on tablets.

• Middle age is when your age starts to show around your middle.

• Didja know that Google's name was derived from the term "Googol," coined by the mathematician Milton Sirotta to describe the number 1 followed by 100 zeros? Google founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin originally called their new search engine "Back Rub" after its ability to analyze the "back links" connecting to a website.

• Today at the bank, an old lady asked me to check her balance... so I pushed her over.

• The other day I bought a thesaurus, but when I got home and opened it, all the pages were blank...I have no words to describe how angry I am.

• A woman walks into a library and asks if they have any books about paranoia. The librarian says, "They're right behind you!"

• Sometimes your life is a 52 card pickup. Your day depends on which cards you choose to pick, and which you leave lying on the table.

• Another great word of wisdom: "Stop 'shoulding' yourself."

• Marriage means commitment. Of course, so does insanity.

• Our old pal Meghan Montoya tells the yuck-yuck that when the police pulled her over, and the officer came up to the window and said, "Papers?" she said, "Scissors, I win!" The cop wasn't amused...

LOCAL NEWS

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Blumenfield

(continued from page 1)
sustainable practices and protecting California's natural resources.

Bob Blumenfield served in the State Assembly from 2008-2013 and was elected three times to represent the West San Fernando Valley on the LA City Council for the third district, which covers Woodland Hills, Winnetka, Tarzana, Reseda and Canoga Park.

In September 2018, Blumenfield proposed an ordinance supported by animal rights organizations and activists to ban the sale and manufacture of new fur products in Los Angeles. The ordinance was approved by the City Council and Mayor Eric Garcetti in 2019, making Los Angeles at that point the largest city in the United States to have banned fur sales. The law went into effect in 2021.

In December 2024, amid a housing shortage in Los Angeles, Blumenfield voted against a proposal to allow mid-sized mixed-income and affordable housing apartment buildings near public transit stations in some neighborhoods exclusively zoned for single-family houses. He said, "I worry about the solutions that are proposed as being a little bit too one-size-fits-all." He opposed the construction of 220 affordable housing units in Reseda, arguing "large scale apartments should not be wedged in-between single family homes by right."

Before serving in public office, he worked for the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and was a longtime staffer to Congressman Howard Berman. For decades he also served on many non-profit boards including the Anti-Defamation League and the LA League of Conservation Voters.

Asked why he was running for the State Senate, Blumenfield said, "I think bringing a local approach to Sacramento will be invaluable as we continue to address affordability, homelessness and so many other critical issues."

Sautter

(continued from page 1)
I called the Mayor's office, our City Council office, CAL FIRE, and state representatives until basic services were restored. I had no budget or staff, only the determination to listen and act.

That is the kind of leadership I want to bring to Congress.

I've seen what's possible when a community comes together. I've been invited into people's homes after burglaries, hearing their fears face to face. I've walked the streets along Ballina Canyon Drive, where rust-colored water pours down one side of the road and trucks race through stop signs at the other, turning a quiet street into a dangerous thoroughfare. These are not abstract issues. They are the daily realities of my neighbors, and they are the problems I've fought to address.

We've also created moments of joy. We've held block parties and movie nights where hundreds of families gathered under the stars. At one event, a mother told me it was the first time in weeks she felt safe being out with her children. That's the power of connection. That's the spirit we need in Washington.

Our country faces real threats. Donald Trump and his enablers in Congress continue to divide us, weaken our institutions, and offer nothing but blame and chaos. They love to divide us, but the American people don't like what they see. They know this do-nothing Congress has failed to deliver on the basics: jobs, affordability, and safety. Families in the Valley feel it every day when the rent is due, when groceries cost too much, and when their kids struggle to find work.

Meanwhile, our current Congressman, Brad Sherman, has been in office for 30 years. Serving in Congress is an honorable act, and I respect his service. But three decades in Washington have not translated into the leadership we need now. It is time for the aging Democratic Party establishment, embodied by people like Congressman Sherman, to step aside and give way to a new generation of leaders. Leaders who listen closely, act decisively, and put our communities first.

We need to make sure this is a place where people can get jobs. Parents want their kids to be able to build careers and stay in the communities where they grew up. What has Congress done to make that possible? What has it done to make it easier for a family to afford a mortgage, groceries, or childcare? The cost of living is crushing families here in the Valley. I hear it every day, and I am fighting for solutions.

I'm not running to be the candidate of Washington insiders. I'm running to be your candidate. My campaign is about us, our families, our neighborhoods, and our shared future. I believe deeply in the Jewish principle of tikkun olam, repairing the world, and that is the spirit I will carry with me to Congress.

My vision is simple: stronger communities where kids ride bikes, families gather for Little League, neighbors share block parties, and people feel safe on their own streets. Communities where working families can afford to live, and where good jobs are not the exception but the rule. That's the life we deserve. That's the promise of America we must restore.

I'm grateful to the *Encino Enterprise* for giving me the opportunity to write op-eds here over the past two years. Through these columns, I've found my voice in local politics. And I plan to continue writing as I find my voice in national politics. I want to lead from the ground up because change begins closest to the people.

This will be a tough race. But when the message is right and the wind is at our back, candidates like me can and do win. I am the outsider candidate in this race, and I believe we can build a movement that brings real change to Washington.

This campaign is for us…For a change. Because if it's not about us, then what are we doing?

Thompson

(continued from page 1)
affordable, and safe.

•PreservingHollywood's Legacy – Supporting cultural and historical initiatives that honor our entertainment capital of the world while inspiring the next generation of dreamers and creators.

• Stars for America – Establishing a nonprofit organization that invites celebrities and influencers across the political spectrum to serve as ambassadors, freely supporting candidates and causes without fear of retaliation and connecting them directly with the Washington elect, ensuring Hollywood's role as a beacon of free expression.

• Embracing Financial Freedom – Actively promoting Bitcoin and cryptocurrencies as engines of economic opportunity.

•Next-Generation Transportation – Advocating for an above-the-ground rail transit system connecting the San Fernando Valley and West Los Angeles along the Sepulveda Corridor.

• Welcoming the LA28 Olympics

• Ending One-Party Rule – "One-party dominance, no matter which party, ultimately leads to stagnation and corruption," stated Thompson.

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Leading with Heart: Dr. Rebecca Lienhard's Journey at Tierra del Sol

by Danrochelle D. Yumul

When Dr. Rebecca Lienhard discusses her work at Tierra del Sol Foundation, she doesn't just view her role as CEO of an organization, supporting over 800 individuals with developmental disabilities across Southern California, she sees it as a lifelong calling.

Dr. Lienhard joined Tierra del Sol in 1990, driven by a passion for creating opportunities for people with disabilities who had too often been told "no" to their hopes and dreams. Over time, she took on nearly every role at the foundation, gaining firsthand experience in how each program affects lives. By the time she was appointed CEO in 2014, she had already built a career defined by persistence, creativity, and the belief that inclusion is non-negotiable.

"My favorites were those where I was either teaching our associates how to be successful in their jobs or teaching our staff how to be successful with their associates. I've always enjoyed listening to the people we serve and where they want to go with their lives. Then it becomes a challenge for me—making that a reality, not just a dream," she shares.

She knows firsthand the barriers her associates face: "The associates Tierra typically serves have usually been told 'no', their entire lives, to the point that they either stop believing it to be possible or stop dreaming altogether. Still, when the job finally opens up, there is no greater feeling than seeing someone find a home where they are valued for their unique contributions and strengths. Multiply that moment by 35 years and hundreds of people, and you will now know why it is hard to leave this amazing place."

What makes Tierra del Sol unique? For Dr. Lienhard, it's not just the programs: it's the philosophy.

"We believe that all people can work," she explains. "We champion inclusion and value for all people, regardless of disability, through creative pathways to employment. We listen, truly listen, to each person. We live through our values of person-centeredness, honesty, respect, passion, and full engagement. We are driven to make full lives happen for each person served."

That commitment shows in the details. Tierra del Sol partners with more than 200 employers. The foundation's programs support not just employment but also careers in the arts, professional volunteering, and college-to-career transitions. Each initiative is grounded in the idea that a person's dreams, whether to be an artist, an office professional, or a student, are worth pursuing.

Dr. Lienhard's influence extends well beyond the organization's walls. She has become a leading voice in the national disability services field, shaping policies and practices that champion inclusion. Her service includes positions on the California Department of Developmental Services' Vendor Advisory Committee, Woodbury University's School of Business Advisory Board, and the State Council on Developmental Disabilities' Employment First Committee.

She has presented at numerous national and local conferences hosted by APSE, TASH, USC, and the Autism Society of Los Angeles, among others. Each time, she carries the same message: inclusion benefits everyone.

When asked what she loves most about Tierra del Sol, Dr. Lienhard doesn't hesitate: "All of it—all 800+ lives we serve. Their lives are so rich and complex. We can learn so much if we take the time. All of the staff—all 400+ of them! Their lives are also so complex. I am always amazed by how much they must sacrifice to work at Tierra, to do a job they love. It is a privilege to walk beside each of them daily. The honor is mine, and I can only hope they know that daily."

It's this blend of humility and admiration that defines her leadership style. Over the years, Dr. Lienhard has been recognized with awards such as the Los Angeles Times Inspirational Women of the Year (2021) and the United Chambers of Commerce Inspirational Women Award (2017). She has been named multiple times among the San Fernando Valley Business Journal's Top 200 Leaders.

And now, her work is about to be celebrated on a national stage. This season, Dr. Lienhard will be featured on the Hallmark Network's *Celebrations with Lacey Chabert*, a series that follows the actress as she honors individuals making a positive impact in their communities. She is one of just eight leaders from across the country chosen to be spotlighted. Viewers can expect laughs, tears, and a huge surprise as Tierra's mission and Dr. Lienhard's leadership are celebrated for audiences everywhere. The episode aired on September 22nd, but can be viewed on Hallmark+.

Yumul is the Communications Manager at Cowe Communications. Follow them on social @CoweOfficial or visit the website at cowe.com.

HEALTH

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Blood Cancer Breakthroughs Through Modern Technology

By Dr. Adam Braun

Blood cancers, like leukemia, lymphoma, or multiple myeloma, are among the most difficult diagnoses to receive. Recent advancements in both diagnosis and treatment of these cancers have empowered hematologists, or blood doctors, to treat previously incurable cancers and help patients achieve many years-long remissions.

Since these developments in science and medicine are increasingly common, it becomes more important than ever for patients to hear from experts when facing these diagnoses.

We rely less on invasive diagnostics like the bone marrow biopsy to diagnose and monitor these diseases. Modern technology like ctDNA, also known as "cell-free" DNA, may detect cancers weeks, months and occasionally years before historical tests would have. These tests are performed on peripheral blood, similar to testing cholesterol from the arm, and can often get results in days.

Detecting ctDNA is known as measurable residual disease, revealing lingering cancer cells. In leukemia and multiple myeloma, having this new data allows for personalized treatments that adapt to the amount of ctDNA detected. Blood cancers are similar to other cancers in that they are usually easier to treat when they are less advanced.

For example, if only ctDNA is detected, but the rest of the laboratory results are normal, this may allow for earlier treatment to eradicate the few remaining blood cancer cells. This has revolutionized treatment approaches that focus on ridding the body of those rare cells.

Many treatment breakthroughs in recent years have involved stimulating and altering the immune system to fight cancer. The ability to directly alter your own body's immune cells, usually with a biotechnology called chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cells, has enabled long-term remissions in some patients with leukemia, lymphoma, and multiple myeloma that were previously considered incurable.

This treatment is not applicable to everyone, and like almost any treatment can carry risk, but cancer centers across Los Angeles have this technology available with well-trained doctors, nurses, and pharmacists ready to administer this to the right patient. Especially in cases where ctDNA is the only evidence of ongoing cancer cells in the body, CAR T-cells have been highly effective in eliminating the remaining cancer cells.

Hematologist/oncologist Dr. Braun

Modern technology like ctDNA, also known as "cell-free" DNA, may detect cancers weeks, months and occasionally years before historical tests would have.

In addition to CAR technology is a similar strategy to augment antibodies. Antibodies are produced mostly by plasma cells in your body after natural events like infections or exposure to toxins. Usually, these are highly specific to one target like an infection or toxin.

Modern biotechnology has created human-like antibodies that are specific to multiple targets, known as bispecific for two targets, or trispecific for three targets. These, like CAR T-cells, increase your immune system's ability to fight cancer by directing your protecting immune cells to the cancer cells and stimulating them to attack.

Altogether, developments in cancer detection and treatment should bring hope and encouragement to patients with blood cancers and their friends and families.

Dr. Adam Braun is a hematologist/oncologist at UCLA Health Cancer Care in Porter Ranch, Santa Monica and Westwood. His areas of focus include cancer clinical trials, stem cell transplants, cancer immunotherapy, immune effector cell (iec) therapy, leukemia, lymphoma and multiple myeloma.

To make an appointment or learn more visit uclahealth.org/providers/adam-braun.

UCLA Health

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UCLA West Valley Medical Center

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HEALTH

News of Taking Tylenol During Pregnancy Causes Uproar

Tylenol has dominated the headlines lately after President Trump made remarks that the pain reliever is associated with an increased risk of autism. In response to his remarks, both doctors and drug makers have said that Tylenol is the safest drug to take during pregnancy. Medical professionals stressed that not treating a potentially high fever with Tylenol could be detrimental, while Trump suggested that a pregnant individual only reach for acetaminophen if they "can't tough it out."

While medical professionals have long steered women away from taking copious amounts of Tylenol during pregnancy, most concerns about the drug are observational, not scientific. There is no direct cause and effect of taking Tylenol and having a child with autism.

While the FDA is updating labels to include a potential warning of autism and ADHD with use of the drug, their recent press release also stated, "It is important to note that while an association between acetaminophen and neurological conditions has been described in many studies, a causal relationship has not been established and there are contrary studies in the scientific literature. It is also noted that acetaminophen is the only over-the-counter drug approved for use to treat fevers during pregnancy, and high fevers in pregnant women can pose a risk to their children."

In response to the government's declaration, Tylenol-maker Kenvue rebutted, stating, "We believe independent, sound science clearly shows that taking acetaminophen does not cause autism. We strongly disagree with any suggestion otherwise and are deeply concerned about the health risks and confusion this poses for expecting mothers and parents."

There is no direct cause and effect of taking Tylenol and having a child with autism.

The president of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists said that informing individuals that Tylenol use in pregnancy causes autism is "irresponsible when considering the harmful and confusing message they send to pregnant patients."

Those concerned about taking Tylenol during pregnancy should speak directly with their Obstetrician-Gynecologist who will offer medical advice based on one's specific health history.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Looking for an Amazing Vacation - There's Always Croatia!

By Katie Sterling

Emerald waters. Walled cities. Cobblestone corridors leading to ancient courtyards filled with tumbling flowers. Truffles and seafood. Brilliant days. Soft nights. This is Croatia.

While the mere mention of Croatia no doubt brings up this beautiful imagery, the experience of exploring the country far exceeded all my expectations. With an itinerary set to kick off in Sibenik, we decided to start our vacation a few days before our scheduled departure wandering and exploring. This charming town is the oldest city in Croatia, less crowded than other nearby cities and offers a beautiful, medieval atmosphere ideal for leisurely wandering.

Our Hotel Armerun backed up to the ancient ramparts and was filled with artifacts and architectural ruins, touching on its historic past while still offering any modern amenity a traveler could wish for. It faced the waterfront and we started each day with our complimentary breakfast (anything and more on the menu and the food was amazing) before setting off to explore. It is home to not one, but two UNESCO heritage sites, fortresses and nearby Krka National Park, a beautiful oasis of waterfalls that we hiked on one of our first days.

The old stone buildings were charming, and we loved getting lost in Sibenik's narrow passageways. Serendipity led us to old Byzantine churches, al fresco bars, tiny shops offering truffles and local wine, historic cathedrals and more. We spent an evening at a beachfront café, sipping the local Rakija, a fruit brandy, and watching the sun set. A slow evening that quickly became a highlight.

The next – and real focus of our trip – was boarding Always Croatia's MS San Antonio, a small cruise ship that would be our home for the next seven days, starting in Sibenik and sailing down the coast to end our journey in Dubrovnik. With only 18 cabins and recently refurbished, our family of 11 filled up most of them, so it was almost like having a private yacht. The intimacy of the ship not only allowed for access to smaller coves and off-the-beaten path excursions, but the chance to really get to know the crew on board. The sparkling San Antonio launched in 2018, and is one of two ships run by a local family. The crew of approximately 10 people were young, extremely friendly, always attentive and unbelievably accommodating to the little kids we had in our group.

The cabins themselves were compact and comfortable with surprisingly large bathrooms for a small ship and frankly, a cozy respite after a day in the sun. With three decks to lounge in, gather for drinks or just gaze out over the water to the islands, the MS San Antonio offers variety for whatever mood you may be in, whether it be a social cocktail hour or a quiet reading moment.

Onboard, the food was incredible – fresh seafood, truffle risotto (truffles are a big hit in Croatia), a large breakfast buffet, and a full bar. Everything but your alcohol was included in the price: cabin, breakfast and lunch daily, a welcome dinner, a Captain's dinner, daily tours, plus numerous swim stops, often in secluded coves where passengers could swim, paddle board, snorkel or simply float in the cool, clear, crystalline waters.

The ship meandered between Croatia's 1,000 islands and stopped at towns both large and small for historical walks, dinners and exploring. There were lectures on the deck and guided tours almost every day when we were in port, just two hours or so of historic and cultural information. Then we were free to wander on our own, shop and find a local, hidden gem of a restaurant or bar. As the ship sailed during the day and docked in port each night, we had a lot of free time allowing the itinerary to be a perfect blend of structure and exploring.

Croatia is a country of cobblestone alleyways and we took to getting lost as a way to explore, stumbling onto tiny trattorias tucked away between the walls, al fresco bars and even locals selling their homemade wine right out of their homes. We stopped one day at a stand offering olives and wine, and followed the backyard vintner into his basement where we saw his surprisingly large tanks and bottling. The red was more than decent, the white not so much – but it was an adventure and we'll always cheers to that!

We visited Croatia's many fortresses, castles and medieval sites, learning of the country's rich history. For *Game of Thrones* fans, Croatia is a mecca – as a lot of the show was shot there. There is a *Games of Thrones* museum tucked away on a side street in Split, and several stores dotted about selling themed merchandise.

But, while the included tours take you to the more tourist-famous spots, this itinerary ensures that travelers get a few tastes of Croatia's hidden gems as well.

The San Antonio crew took us to an amazing dinner in a lavender field in Stari Grad one night, and lunch at a family home where we got to help make Soparnik, a local Swiss chard pie, and dine on their homemade cheese, sausage, wine and delicious cherry brandy.

It's also a country known for its unique wines and the family took off twice to wine taste at local wineries. The Popic winery in Korcula overlooked a valley of vineyards, red-tiled roofs and small churches. Seeing as how they produce their own varietal named Grk, only found in this region, we bought several bottles as souvenirs and enjoyed our wine and charcuterie plates as workers crushed grapes right below us.

The people of Croatia are lovely, helpful and charming and the city itself is breathtaking. There is virtually no crime in the country, and everywhere we went we were greeted warmly.

I wouldn't suggest going in August as it was hot. Really hot. Trekking up the inevitable stairs was tough somedays – but worth it for the aerial views of the city. One highlight came after climbing quite a steep hill to get to the Buza Bar in Dubrovnik, a hidden spot with a literal hole-in-the-wall entrance to a bar carved out of and hanging over a cliff, with gorgeous views of the Adriatic Sea.

We reluctantly departed the ship in Dubrovnik on our eighth day, having loved the trip so much we talked about taking Always Croatia's Greek tour in a few years. Croatia exceeded our expectations and there's truly no better way to experience the history, culture and community of the cities than traveling by water.

While the official tourism slogan of the country is "Croatia, full of life," our experience with the people both on and off the ship seems to be more in line with a cultural saying of theirs, "Dok je srca, bit će i Kroacije." It's only apropos that it translates to "As long as there is heart, there will be Croatia" because we all left with a little piece of it in ours.

ENTERTAINMENT

Les Mis Returns to L.A. at Pantages

One of the world's most popular musicals returns to Los Angeles at the Hollywood Pantages Theatre in Hollywood October 7 to 19.

Cameron Mackintosh presents the acclaimed production of Boublil and Schönberg's Tony Award-winning musical phenomenon, *Les Misérables*.

This brilliant staging has taken the world by storm and has been hailed as "a reborn dream of a production" (*Daily Telegraph*).

Set against the backdrop of 19th century France, Les Misérables tells an enthralling story of broken dreams and unrequited love, passion, sacrifice and redemption–a timeless testament to the survival of the human spirit. The story centers on Jean Valjean, a prisoner released after 19 years for stealing bread, who struggles to find a place in a society unwilling to forgive him. It is based on Victor Hugo's 1962 novel, *Les Misérables*.

With music by Claude-Michel Schonberg, book by Schonberg and Alain Boublil and lyrics by Boublil and Jean-Marc Natel, the magnificent score of *Les Misérables* includes the songs "I Dreamed a Dream," "On My Own," "Bring Him Home," "One Day More" and many more.

Upcoming productions of Broadway in Hollywood's fall season include *Hadestown* October 21 to November 2, *Moulin Rouge the Musical* November 4 to 16, *Suffs* November 18 to December 7 and *Stereophonic* December 9 to January 2.

The Pantages Theatre is located at 6233 Hollywood Blvd. For complete schedule and tickets visit broadwayinhollywood.com.

The California Writers Club – Valley to Host Shakespeare Descendant

The California Writers Club, San Fernando Valley branch, serving Los Angeles and Ventura counties, is proud to announce that prolific children's book writer Rebecca Langston George, right, will give a Zoom presentation entitled "How to Break into Kid Lit" at 1 pm on Saturday, October 4.

Langston-George is the author of 19 children's books and believed to be a descendant of William Shakespeare.

Her presentation can be viewed on a very large screen at the Motion Picture & Television Fund' Saban Center, 23388 Mulholland Drive in Woodland Hills. Delicious snacks, replenishing beverages, an exciting raffle and parking are free.

For the Right to Learn: Malala Yousafzai's Story is one of her many notable books. Upcoming books include her first historical fiction middle grade novel, *One Fine Voice* (January 2026) and her first fiction picture book *Rover Roll Over* (March 2026).

Traditional publishing, education/work-for-hire publishing and self or hybrid publishing, as well as age group categories, will be among the topics she will discuss, accompanied by handouts.

As a child, Langston-George was not inspired by Shakespeare, but by the many Nancy Drew mystery books she read. A retired teacher and board member of the California Reading Association, Langston-George is the regional advisor for the Central Coastal chapter of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI CenCal), helping other writers learn the craft.

Author and speaker Rebecca Langston-George

Traditional publishing, education/work-for-hire publishing and self or hybrid publishing will be among the topics she will discuss.

The California Reading Association honored her with the Armin R. Schultz Award for writing in social justice in 2016.

In-person attendees do not need to register in advance. CWCSFC Members are free and guests pay $10 at the door. However, your first visit is free.

Zoom guests may purchase admission at cwc-sfv.org by noon on October 3. After purchasing admission, guests will receive a Zoom invitation. Late requests cannot be accommodated.

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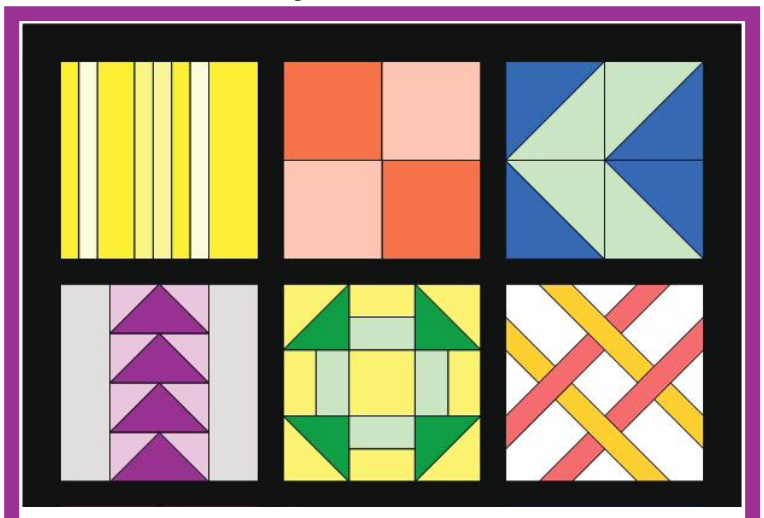

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Nighttrek: What to See in the October Sky

By Neill Simmons

The highlight of October is the Orionid meteor shower which peaks on the nights of the 20th and 21st. These meteors are fast moving and leave a glowing trail. Sometimes, if you are lucky, there will be a fireball lasting over four seconds.

The Orionid meteor shower is caused by Earth's passage through the debris stream left behind by the famous Halley's Comet. Halley's Comet was last visible in 1986 and will return in 2061. Find a location far from the city and street lights for best viewing and give your eyes time to adjust.

The full moon on Monday, October 6, is known as the Harvest Moon and the Hunter's Moon. This event is special because it will be the year's first Super Moon appearing larger and brighter than other full moons. A Super Moon occurs when it coincides with perigee — the closest point that the Moon comes to the Earth in its orbit. The full moons of November and December will also be Super Moons.

Mission Specialist Christina Koch, the first woman planned to go to the Moon.

Big news out of NASA: A planned Moon mission with four astronauts is scheduled on February 5, 2026. On board will be the first woman to go to the Moon, Mission Specialist Christina Koch. This mission will be the first cleared flight to circle the Moon since the Apollo program's final launch in 1972.

Upcoming crewed missions include NASA's Artemis program, with Artemis III planned to return humans to the lunar surface in 2027. The focus of this mission will be to study the Lunar South Pole. Each year, NASA adds 10 new recruits who will be trained to be future astronauts. These 10 are chosen from over 8,000 applicants. Six women and four men were added this year.

Last bit of NASA news: It was recently announced that over 6,000 exoplanets have been discovered to date. An exoplanet is essentially a planet, but one that orbits a star other than our own Sun.

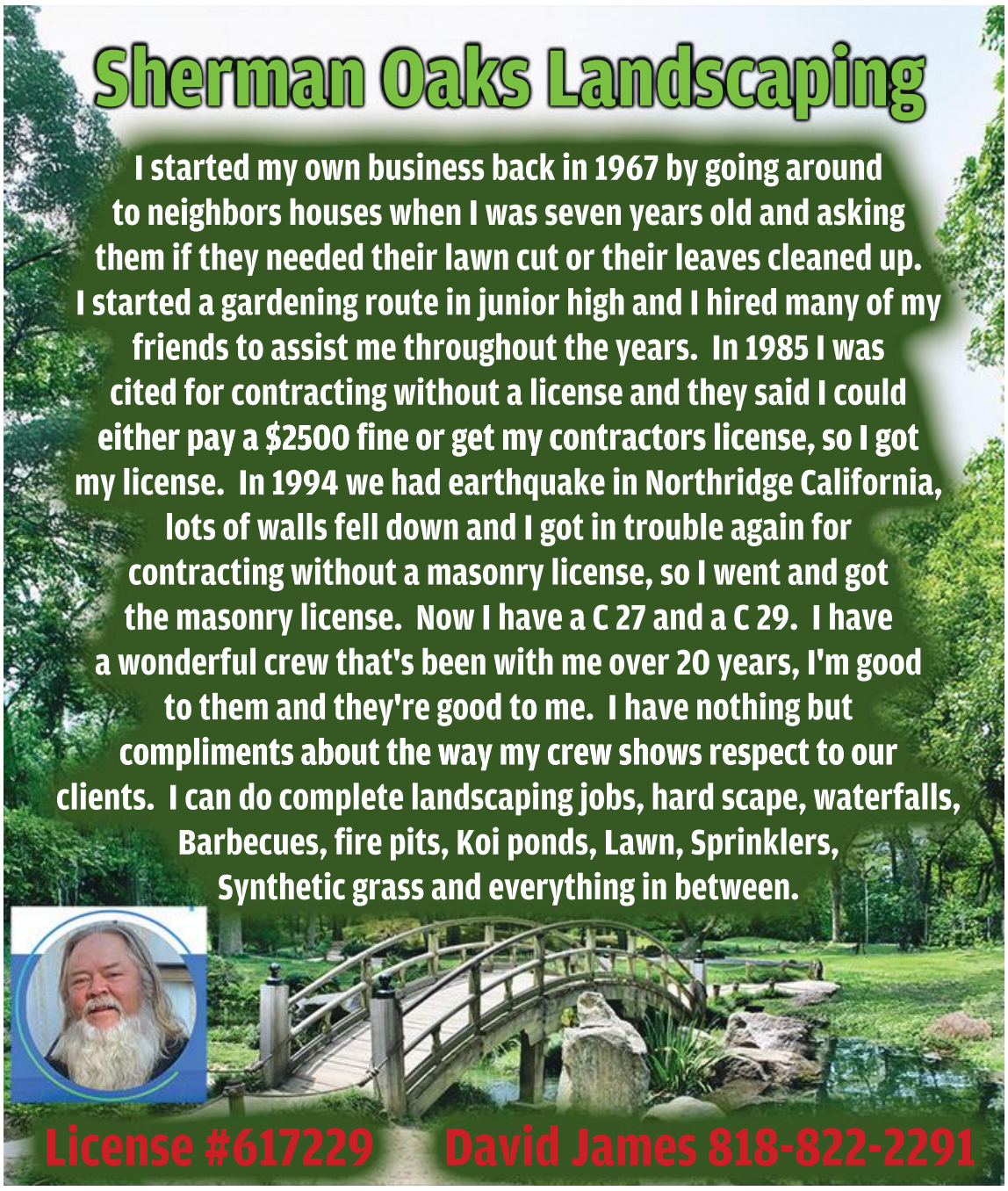
The constellation of Cassiopeia, the Queen, is visible this month in the northeast sky. Cassiopeia was one of the 48 constellations detailed by the Greek astronomer Ptolemy in the 2nd century CE. The constellation is most notable because of its W shape, which is said to represent the Queen sitting on her throne.

Look to the west, near the sunset direction, to find Mercury shortly after dark. Mercury will be near Mars with the two planets being closest on October 20th and 21st. Due to its lack of atmosphere and proximity to the Sun, Mercury experiences the most extreme temperature fluctuations in the solar system, with daytime temperatures reaching up to 800°F and nighttime temperatures dropping to -300°F.

If you are planning a trip to Rome, Italy, an unique and interesting place to visit is the Vatican Observatory located at the papal summer residence in Castel Gandolfo, just outside of Rome. It is one of the oldest active astronomical observatories in the world, with its roots going back to 1582. The Vatican Observatory and the Vatican Museums have developed a visitors' center and now offer tours to the telescopes atop the Papal Palace as an option for those touring the Palace and Secret Garden. If you can't make it to Rome, there is a Vatican Observatory located in Safford, Arizona. Advanced reservations are required. For more information, check the website: vaticanobservatory.org.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, October 4 at Paramount Ranch in Agoura Hills. There will be an "International Observe the Moon Star" party at 7 pm. Many telescopes will be available for viewing the night sky. Nights are starting to cool so dress accordingly. Observing area is gravel and dirt. Comfortable shoes are a must. This is a FREE event!

When not stargazing, Simmons, is an Investment Executive with LPL Financial. If you have any astronomy or financial questions, he may be reached at (818) 936-2626 or neill.simmons@lpl.com.



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