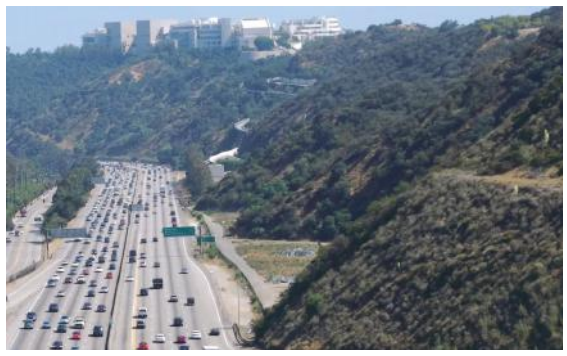
Nighttrek Report: What to See in the February Sky

See page 10



Metro Approves Subway Between Valley and Westside

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Valentine's is February 14 - Pamper Your Valentine at Burke Williams

See page 10

North Valley News

Serving Porter Ranch, Northridge, Granada Hills & Chatsworth

Volume 3, Number 25 February 6, 2026

News in Brief

Amazon Fresh Northridge Closing

Amazon corporate has announced it are closing all its Amazon Fresh and Amazon Go stores nationwide, including four here in the Valley. The Amazon Fresh at 19340 Rinaldi will close, as well Amazon Fresh stores in Encino, Woodland Hills and North Hollywood. "While we've seen encouraging signals in our Amazon-branded physical grocery stores, we haven't yet created a truly distinctive customer experience with the right economic model needed for large-scale expansion," reads a statement from Amazon. "After a careful evaluation of the business and how we can best serve customers, we've made the difficult decision to close our Amazon Go and Amazon Fresh physical stores, converting various locations into Whole Foods Market stores." The future of the Northridge Amazon Fresh is unclear, as there is already a Whole Foods Market at 20209 Rinaldi.

Nominations Open for Heroes in Education

Nominations are now open for the North Valley Regional Chamber's annual "Heroes in Education." Does your school have an educator who deserves recognition? A principal, teacher, special ed teacher, physical ed teacher, parent volunteer or staff can be honored. Nominations can be made by students, parents or colleagues. The deadline to submit applications is April 1, and the Heroes in Education celebration and gala will be held April 22. For a nomination form visit northridgechamber.org. For more information call (818) 349-5676.

Brad Sherman to Host Town Hall

Congressman Brad Sherman, at right, will host a Telephone Town Hall on Wednesday, February 11, at 7 pm. Sherman will make opening remarks and then answer questions on any issue facing Congress. To participate call (818) 214- 8555 any time during the Town Hall. To RSVP email bradsherman.house.gov/RSVP.

Sherman has served in the House of Representatives since 1997. He has held over 252 Town Hall meetings during his time in Congress.

After Another Aliso Canyon Gas Leak Brad Sherman Calls for Closure

The Aliso Canyon plant of Southern California Gas.

Southern California Gas Company reported that on January 27 at 7 am a safety valve on an aboveground pipeline at the Aliso Canyon natural gas facility activated, temporarily venting natural gas into the atmosphere.

The safety valve was activated by ice - called hydrates - in a pipeline at the facility.

The release of natural gas lasted approximately 25 minutes and was safely stopped by operators at the field.

Nearby residents reported to the Gas Company they smelled a natural gas odor which dissipated once the venting stopped.

Congressman Brad Sherman addressed the leak, saying, "I have been fighting to close this natural gas storage facility down. Southern California Gas Company has refused to even try to develop a natural gas delivery system that is not dependent upon Aliso Canyon.

The California Public Utilities Commission has refused to require the development of a plan to shut Aliso Canyon down while continuing to provide natural gas service to the residents of Los Angeles County.

We have no idea whether today's gas leak was more significant than described by Southern California Gas Company. But we know that today's gas leak shows that it is long past time to shut it down."

Sherman's concerns stem from the October 23, 2015 gas leak at the same facility.

"Southern California Gas Company has refused to even try to develop a natural gas delivery system that is not dependent upon Aliso Canyon."
Congressman Brad Sherman

It was the largest gas blowout in the history of the United States. It was estimated that 109,000 metric tons of methane was released from Aliso Canyon Well SS-25 until it was sealed 111 days later on February 11, 2016. So Cal Gas paid out over $2 billion in settlements and fines.

Operators at the plant are currently inspecting the impacted pipeline and will remove any remaining hydrates and make any needed repairs. No additional venting is anticipated.

The Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council will hold a special Town Hall on this latest gas leak on Thursday, January 29. For more information, time and link visit prnc.org.

ICE Arrests Man at North Hills Church

Church officials and members of North Hills United Methodist Church are accusing ICE agents of using heavily armed men to enter church grounds and arrest a "beloved" church member.

Pastor Ervin Aguilon said Carlos Chavez was taken in the parking lot during a food ministry. He criticized ICE agents for apprehending Chavez in front of children and other churchgoers. "For me, that is not just a parking lot," Aguilon said. "They did not enter through a parking lot, they entered a ground that I believe is holy."

Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin said that Chavez was an unathorized immigrant who was removed from the United States in 2016, and "U.S. Border Patrol did not target United Methodist Church or its parking lot." She claims that Chavez was spotted at Sepulveda and Rayen and then ran from the agents who gave chase.

Rev. Dr. Dottie Escobedo-Frank, Resident Bishop of the Los Angeles United Methodist Church, said, "Our safety has been violated inside our sacred space. They came in and terrorized a community of faith."

It is unknown at this time where Chavez is being held and on what charges.

COMMUNITY

Take an Aliso Canyon Disaster Health Study and Receive an Amazon Gift Card

The UCLA Aliso Canyon Disaster Health Research Study is offering a $35 Amazon e-gift card to those that participate in the confidential health survey.

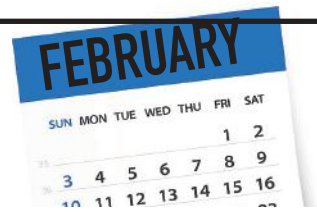
Those that lived in the area since the blowout that occurred from October 2015 to February 2016 can take the survey.

The study will help UCLA assess the short- and long-term impacts of the disaster on residents' physical health, mental health and overall well-being.

It will complement other analyses that measure the full impact of the blowout.

Funding for the survey came from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health , with agreement between the county, county counsel, the L.A. City Attorney, the California Attorney General and the California Air Resources Board with SoCal Gas.

If you do not receive an invitation in your mail from the UCLA Aliso Canyon Disaster Study visit alisostudy.ucla.edu/health-survey.



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

GRANADA HILLS: The Granada Hills Woman's Club is having its annual giant rummage sale on Friday, February 20, from 9 am to 5 pm, and Saturday, February 21, from 8 am to 2 pm. There are thousands of items from electronics, DVD's, household and decorative items to apparel and jewelry. The sale will be held at Granada Hills Woman's Club, 10666 White Oak Avenue.

PORTER RANCH: The Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council will hold a special in-person board meeting on Wednesday, February 11, at 6:15 pm. The meeting will be held in the Vineyards Shopping Center Community Room, 20065 Rinaldi. For more information visit prnc.org.

WOODLAND HILLS: The West Hills Neighborhood Council and Councilman John Lee are hosting a Valentine's Day Senior Dinner Dance on Saturday, February 14, from 7 to 9:30 pm. Doors open at 6:30 pm. Attendance is free but you must RSVP by February 12 to saif.mogri@westhillsnc.org with your name and the number of attendees. The dance will be held at El Camino Real High School's Anderson Hall, 5440 Valley Circle Blvd.

ENCINO: Southern California Garden Club, the oldest and largest garden club in the San Fernando Valley, will hold a Garden Club meeting featuring a program, "It's (Almost) Show Time," on Tuesday, February 17, at 11 am. In preparation for this year's Standard Flower Show ("A Night at the Movies," April 17-18), talented designer Rita Desilets and NGC Master Flower Show Judge Robin Pokorski will provide creative design ideas and horticulture tips for participating in the show. The meeting will be held at Sepulveda Garden Center, 16633 Magnolia Blvd. The program is preceded at 9:30 am by a plant market and country store and plant specimen display and business meeting at 10 am and a workshop, "Camellias for Every Garden," at 10:30 am, presented by club member Sarah Barkstelle. No admission charge for guests. All are welcome. For more information visit SouthernCaliforniaGardenClub.com

SYLMAR: L.A. County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath and Los Angeles Mission College will hold an emergency preparedness event on Saturday, February 7, from 9 am to 2 pm. Receive free emergency supplies, learn from experts, get a free food box and free vaccines. There will be a kids' corner as well. The event will be held at Mission College's Campus Center, 13356 Eldridge Avenue.

United Chambers Honors Our Firefighters

United Chambers of Commerce honored the LAFD at their 2026 Board Installation on January 26. Above, MC and UCC Vice President Dennis Zine of the West Valley Warner Center Chamber introduces Congressman Brad Sherman.

United Chambers of Commerce Board of Directors Chair Mike Stafford of the Winnetka Chamber with immediate past chair Annie Depomuceno of the Filipino-America Chamber of Greater L.A.

Los Angeles Fire Department's new Fire Chief Jaime Moore receives a flag that flew over our nation's capitol from Congressman Brad Sherman.

PHOTOS: Scott@StormLabs

The 2026 board of directors installed at the event: Front row L to R - Lois Klavir, Sherry Keowen, Diana Williams, Annie Nepomuceno, Florine Goodman and Jheri Heetland; Back row L to R: Horace Heidt, Vickie Bourdas Martinez, Cindy Cleghorn, Tammy Scher, Stephen Holzer, Carol Loweree, Dennis P. Zine, Andreas Farmakalidis, Mark Levinson, Marian Jocz, Bonnie Bursk, Richard Fisk, Allen Budzichowski, Adriana Gomez, Tom Ross and Mike Stafford.

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VIEWPOINT

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.

• This from my daughter's good friend: When I miss my parents I put 13 expired salad dressings and condiments in my fridge and it feels like home.

• "Doctor," the woman asked. "Every fortune teller I have met is either really depressing or overly enthusiastic." The doctor replied, "It's hard finding a happy medium."

• This from my favorite "church lady" Niki Budd. A poorly-worded announcement in the bulletin that read, "Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered."

• Never put off till tomorrow what you can get someone else in your office to do today.

• Who said "They couldn't shoot an elephant at this distance..." General John B. Sedgwick, a Union army officer who was killed instantly by a Confederate sharp shooter.

• Overheard at Lovi's Deli. "Our neighbor died yesterday."
"Who, Ray?"
"I really don't think cheering is appropriate, Kevin."

• What happened when Jack was jilted by a street cleaner's daughter? Why, he was going to sewer.

• A little boy eating candy was approached by an elderly man saying if the boy continued eating candy he wouldn't live to be 80 like the old man. To which the boy replied, "My grandfather is 91 and he got that way eating candy and minding his own business."

Guest Editorial:

Residents Should Pay More Attention to Wildfire Risk

On January 24th, Councilmember John Lee of District 12 hosted a Wildfire Education & Resource Fair at Porter Ranch Community Park. This park was officially dedicated in 2025 to Jane and Bert Boeckmann—I know this firsthand, as I attended the dedication ceremony.

However, without an exact address, it is difficult to locate the park by signage alone. Facing south, there is a sign that reads "Porter Ranch Community Park," but on the north side, there is only a blank wall. The park itself spans 50 acres and is located on 11930 Mason Avenue in Porter Ranch. It was named the "Jane and Bert Boeckmann Park" following a unanimous vote by the Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council in July 2024. Despite the dedication honoring the Boeckmanns' philanthropy and community contributions, signage reflecting their name is still missing.

Just over a year ago, many of us were deeply affected by the devastating wildfires. Countless individuals are still working hard to recover physically, mentally, and by rebuilding homes lost to the fires. Wildfire education is crucial for everyone living in fire-prone areas. Being proactive and seeking knowledge about wildfire prevention is essential for the safety and well-being of our entire community.

Joining Councilmember John Lee in his efforts to educate the public in Wildfire Education

(Continued to page 10)

Guest Editorial:

AI Shouldn't Replace the People Who Built This Country

Artificial Intelligence is moving faster than the government, faster than schools, faster than the job market—and honestly, faster than most families can keep up with.

But here's the truth: AI itself isn't the enemy.

AI is a tool. And like every tool in human history, it can be used to build opportunity—or to consolidate power.

Right now, we are standing at a crossroads.

AI has the potential to create something America hasn't seen in generations: a true leveling of the playing field. A student with a laptop, a creator with no budget, or a small business owner with limited resources could suddenly access capabilities once reserved for billion-dollar corporations and Hollywood studios. AI can help people produce professional-quality content, automate time-consuming tasks, and turn ideas into reality faster than ever before.

In other words, AI could be the greatest opportunity engine of our lifetime.

However, it could also become the greatest wealth-extraction machine we've ever seen.

Because without rules, without standards, and without accountability, AI won't empower everyday people. It will replace them. It will undercut them. It will exploit their work while giving them nothing in return.

We've already seen how this movie ends.

Big platforms promise "access," but then monetize attention while pushing workers to the margins. The gig economy promised flexibility, but often delivered instability. Social media promised community, but became a battleground of algorithms, addiction, and manipulation.

Now AI is being sold as another miracle.

But unless we establish guardrails, the profits will flow to the top—while the costs fall on everyone else: workers, artists, educators, small businesses, and families.

**AI is a tool.
And like every tool
in human history,
it can be used to
build opportunity—
or to consolidate power.**

We need to say something clearly: innovation should not come at the expense of human dignity.

That means we must protect the rights of the people whose labor and creativity make the economy run. If AI is trained on a person's work, they deserve to know. If their voice, face, writing, or art is used, they deserve consent. If companies profit from human-created content, the people who created it deserve a fair share—not crumbs.

And this isn't just about Hollywood or the tech industry. It's about every profession.

When AI gets used in hiring decisions, we need transparency and safeguards against discrimination.When AI enters classrooms, we need standards that protect learning, not weaken it.

When AI impacts public safety, we need accountability—because "the algorithm did it" is not an excuse.

Most of all, we need leadership that understands both realities at once:

AI can be good. And AI can be dangerous.

The challenge isn't stopping the future. The challenge is shaping it so it works for people—not the other way around.

That's why this conversation can't be limited to corporate boardrooms or political insiders. The people most affected must have a voice: workers, creators, small business owners, educators, parents, and young people who are going to inherit whatever we choose to build.

This moment demands common sense and courage.

We can either build a future where AI increases opportunity for everyone—or we can sleepwalk into a world where power concentrates even further, while regular people are asked to adapt, accept less, and stay quiet.

I'm not interested in staying quiet.

The future is coming whether we're ready or not.

The question is: Will it be built for the people—or for the powerful?

Andreas Farmakalidis is the chair of the North Valley Regional Chamber, college professor, business owner and candidate for Assembly D40.

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BUSINESS

Avoid M&A Headaches with a Pre-LOI Checklist Most Teams Overlook

By Janice L. Miller, Esq.

Most mergers and acquisitions (M&A) stress doesn't come from the Letter of Intent (LOI) itself. It comes from everything you wish you had organized before the LOI ever showed up. When you prepare early, you keep leverage where it belongs. When you don't, buyers compensate for uncertainty with conservative assumptions: lower price, tougher terms, broader protections, more escrow, and a longer path to closing. Pre-LOI preparation is about protecting deal value. The following are a few pre-LOI tips for an easier transaction

If Your House Isn't In Order, Buyers Assume the Worst

Buyers want to confirm that the company is properly formed and governed. That means your entity documents should be complete and current, your ownership records should be clear, and major actions should be supported by the proper approvals and consents. ("A comprehensive guide to M&A due diligence with a 20-point checklist." Diligent, July 17, 2025.) The history and paper trail should be easy to follow. Any side arrangements need to be documented. Lack of proper documentation is one of the fastest ways deals get delayed.

Buyers are afraid of hidden risk. If there has been litigation, a threatened claim, a regulatory issue, or recurring customer disputes, those should be organized and understood in context. The way you handle disclosure is important.

Insurance tends to be a straightforward request, but it often catches sellers unprepared. A buyer will want to see current coverage, limits, exclusions, and any claims history. When insurance information is incomplete, it can raise questions about how the business manages operational risk.

If You Can't Explain the Numbers, Buyers Will Rewrite Them

Buyers are looking for the story behind the numbers. You need to be able to explain what drives your margins, what normal working capital is, and how cycles affect performance. If you anticipate adjustments, you should know what they are, why they're justified, and how you'd explain them in plain terms. When a seller can't clearly articulate these, buyers tend to assume the most conservative interpretation.

The Agreements That Quietly Control Your Leverage

Most companies have agreements that drive enterprise value: major customer contracts, vendor relationships, key partners, and any agreements tied closely to the founder's personal involvement. Before an LOI, you should know what your important contracts say and whether they allow the business to be sold without third-party permission. Change-of-control restrictions, assignment limitations, exclusivity provisions, or unusual termination rights can all become leverage points for a buyer if they're discovered late. The more you understand your own agreements, the more you can negotiate around them.

Leases tend to accumulate amendments, side letters, informal concessions, and operational assumptions that don't always make it into the official file. Before you reach the LOI stage, the lease package should be complete and easy to review. Buyers want to know what obligations exist and if there are any issues.

Ownership Gaps That Turn Into Deal Problems

Businesses should treat intellectual property and brand ownership as foundational. That means the trademarks you rely on, the creative assets you use, the domains and social handles you operate under, and the materials created by founders, employees, and contractors should all have clean ownership. ("Change of Control?" Sidley Austin LLP, July 2020.) If contractors created important work without assignment language, or if brand assets are scattered across personal accounts, that is the kind of issue that can create disproportionate concern in diligence. The goal is to eliminate doubt before it becomes a negotiating tool.

Buyers are afraid of hidden risk. The way you handle disclosure is important.

What Your Data Room Says About Your Company

A good virtual data storage shows a buyer that this company is organized, governed, and ready. Clean folders, consistent naming, a simple index, and a summary can reduce friction. A messy diligence process sends a message that the business may be just as messy behind the scenes. ("Guide to data room for investors: checklist and best practices." ShareFile, Aug. 7, 2024.)

The point of pre-LOI preparation is to keep momentum on your side and protect the economics of the deal. When you do this work early, you negotiate from a position of strength. If you want to approach M&A with fewer headaches and more control, this is where it starts. A pre-LOI readiness review can help identify the issues that are easiest to fix now.

Disclaimer: This article is not meant as legal advice. It is solely for educational purposes.

Janice L. Miller Esq. is the managing partner of Miller Haga Law Group, LLP in Calabasas, CA. She is a highly recognized legal advisor, published author, noted speaker, and panelist with over 25 years of experience as an innovative general counsel in business, real estate, entertainment, and intellectual property.

Local Community Foundation Gives 27 Grants

Individuals, families and businesses with Donor Advised Funds (DAFS) managed by the Community Foundation of the Valleys gave a record 27 grants to nonprofits in November and December 2025.

These grants went to a wide range of causes and nonprofit services: food pantries, educational support for students of all ages, case management, services for the unhoused, veterans, housing, job training, economic development, and more. Most of the grants were given to local agencies, but a handful of gifts went to charities in other parts of the US.

The mission of the Community Foundation of the Valleys (CFV) is to inspire, encourage and facilitate charitable giving for lasting impact on those who live or work in the San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys.

Community foundations solicit and manage donor advised funds, small family foundations, nonprofit reserves and endowments, and business charitable giving funds. Donors who have funds invested with Community Foundation of the Valleys can choose priority causes and nonprofits for their grantmaking, or CFV staff can provide grant recommendations if requested to do so.

For more information, contact CFV Executive Director Marianne Haver Hill, (818) 377-6386 or info@valleygiving.org

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VALLEY ENTERTAINMENT

West Valley Playhouse Presents Suspense Thriller

The West Valley Playhouse will present *Alibi*, a suspenseful thriller by Michael Morton, based on a book by Agatha Christie and edited by Joanne Zahorsky-Reeves.

The play follows Agatha Christie's iconic detective Hercule Poirot, in retirement, as he investigates the murder of his neighbor, Sir Roger Ackroyd, who was killed after learning a secret about a woman who had poisoned her first husband.

It is directed by Jon Berry and stars Robert Reeves, Alan Waserman, Diane Le Moine, John Alexenko, Tim Holtwick and Joanne Zahorsky-Reeves.

Performances will be held February 6 through March 1 on Fridays and Saturdays at 8 pm and Sundays at 2:30 pm. *Alibi* will be on stage at Harter Hall, Woodland Hills Community Church, 21338 Dumetz Road, Woodland Hills. For tickets visit wvplayhouse.com or call (818) 884-1907.

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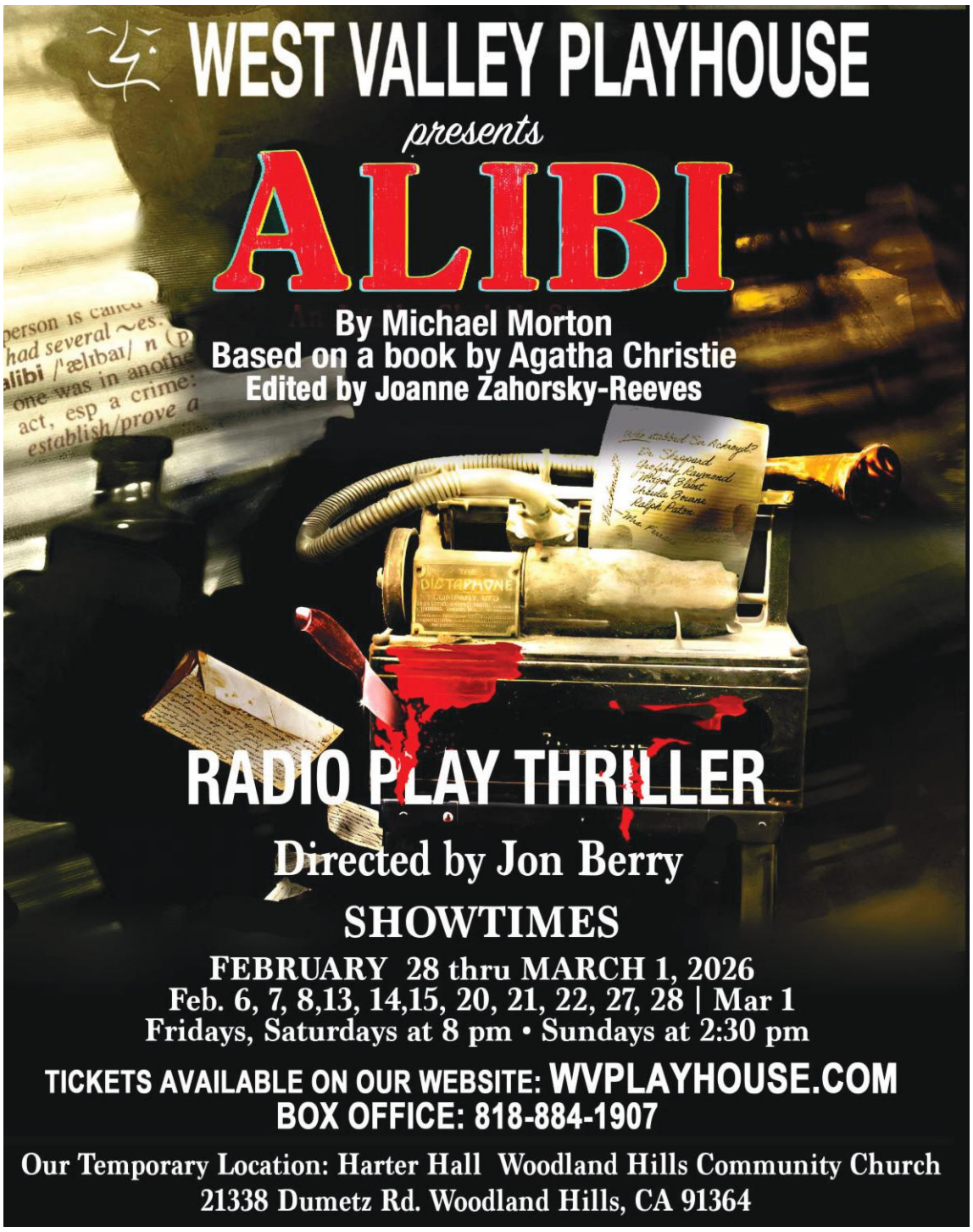

Hamnet is a Visceral Tale of Grief and the Importance of Art to Heal

By Katie Sterling

In a movie whose title references Shakespeare's most famous work, the narrative seemingly has very little focus on the playwright himself. Rather, it delves into the largely unknown story of his son, who died young, and a mother attempting to live after grief. *Hamnet*, based on the bestselling book by Maggie O'Farrell, is a tragic tale of loss and how a true-life tragedy served to beget the classic tragedy told on stage.

Academy Award-nominee Jessie Buckley (center).

William Shakespeare (Paul Mescal) is working as a village tutor when he meets and becomes quickly beguiled by Agnes (Jessie Buckley). As the daughter of a forest witch, she is a gifted healer who prefers to spend her time in the woods. It's her connection to nature that encapsulates the largely ethereal aesthetic of the film and for almost the entire first half, audiences feel as if they are watching a sort of fable play out on screen. It's a quiet introduction into this world, with director Chloe Zhao integrating long stretches of screen time solely focusing on the whistling wind in the trees or a lone hawk soaring through an expansive sky. It's at times enchanting, but also oddly eerie as you know the narrative will soon turn dark.

After a whirlwind romance, Agnes and Will have married and become parents to three children, a daughter named Susanna (Bodhi Rae Breathnach) and then subsequently twins, Hamnet (Jacobi Jupe) and Judith (Olivia Lynes). During this time, Will has become more focused on his playwriting, frequently spending time in London to get his plays on stage as his popularity is growing. Back home in the countryside, Agnes is installing her love of nature upon her children, her sense of mysticism seemingly rubbing off of them. After all, as twins, Hamnet and Judith have a sense of telepathy that only those who shared a womb can. They are exceptionally close and often disguising as each other in an attempt to trick those around them for a giggle that only eleven-year-olds can truly delight in. As the film climaxes to the inevitable death of Hamnet, it's apparent that the bliss this little family finds comfort in will soon shatter.

The death of the young boy is perhaps the most impactful moment of the movie, both beautifully filmed and exceptionally tragic. It presents itself in an almost dreamlike state until the moment is broken as Agnes comes to the realization of what has happened and lets out an animalistic howl that only a bereft mother could. The loss is all-encompassing, made even worse by the fact that Will is away in London when it occurs. Upon his return, he is shocked to discover the loss of his child and the shadows in which Agnes has retreated into.

As typical following the death of a child, the parents grow farther apart, each grappling with grief in their own ways. Agnes becomes angry and Will retreats into his work, a choice that infuriates Agnes since it seems to her that he is simply moving on with life. Little does she know that Will is using his playwriting as an outlet for his grief and that *Hamlet* (often interchangeable with the word Hamnet) is his way of making sense of his personal tragedy. At the film's climax, the message is clear that art can serve as a powerful tool for healing, something that Agnes begins to understand when she first witnesses his play.

This may be a film whose title is tied to Shakespeare, but make no mistake, this is Agnes' movie and Buckley seamlessly and beautifully portrays a mother crippled by loss.

Much like Shakespeare's works, *Hamnet* is not an easily digestible film on the surface, but one that is layered with meaning and interpretation. It is at times a story of love, of grief, of spirituality and of art. Jacobi Jupe as young Hamnet encompasses a sense of innocence so pure that when he selflessly tries to offer himself in replacement of his sick sister, you can't help but ache for him. Jessie Buckley transforms from a quiet wanderer of the woods to a mother so torn by grief, her performance as the narrative escalates is so impactful, audiences feel her anger and her sadness in their guts. This may be a film whose title is tied to Shakespeare, but make no mistake, this is Agnes' movie and Buckley seamlessly and beautifully portrays a mother crippled by loss. *Hamnet* is tragic in a myriad of ways, but it also serves as a gentle reminder that healing can be found in unexpected ways.

Hamnet is now playing in theatres.

Sydney Sweeney and Amanda Seyfried in The Housemaid.

The Housemaid is a Mindless Adaptation that Misses the Mark

By Katie Sterling

If *Hamnet* is a film adaptation of a novel, *The Housemaid* is a movie adaptation of a book. For some, this sentence is a complete review in and of itself. After all, films tend to engross you emotionally and intellectually, while movies tend to be watched with one eye on the screen and the other on your phone. At least in this day and age of limited attention spans, a story has to really grab you to hold your attention and sadly, *The Housemaid* accomplishes that goal more in a book format, than a movie one. The book is better than the movie?! Shocking!

However, "popcorn" movies aren't bad, don't read that the wrong way. They're simply presented differently; they're light, they're fun, they're possibly on the twelfth installment of the series and keep being made whether you want them to or not. "Popcorn" movies allow people to fall in love with the movies, as much as films can, and frankly, is the reason *F1* is up for Best Picture at the Oscars. While *The Housemaid*, on paper, is the ultimate "popcorn" movie, at the end of it, you're left with more kernels than buttery bites.

Adapted by the Frieda McFadden book of the same name, *The Housemaid* is a domestic thriller directed by Paul Feig *(A Simple Favor, Bridesmaids*). Past movies of his prove that "camp" is his genre of choice, but with this adaptation it feels as if there was a hesitation to go full crazy with it. The book was quite a rollercoaster read, but the movie feels like the ride that perpetually gets stuck at the theme park. With this type of story, you either have to go full-out or not at all.

Millie (Sydney Sweeney) is living in her car when she gets the unbelievable offer to become the live-in maid for the genial Nina Winchester (Amanda Seyfried). The Winchesters live in a home indistinguishable from those in designer magazines and present as a happy family straight from Stepford. It's only when Nina's husband Andrew (Brendan Sklenar) has to talk Nina down from a Bravo-level meltdown, does Millie start to notice the cracks in this family's façade. As Millie spends more time with Nina, tension escalates and mind games point to bigger, hidden issues at play.

Those who've read the book know a twist is coming, but first-time viewers of the movie might be wondering when exactly the narrative will turn thrilling. For the better part of the first half of the movie, it's a slow burn where Millie and Nina play off their class dichotomy, Millie tortured by Nina's antics but not in the financial position to leave. It's only after the first hour that the narrative leans into what you would expect and frankly, that's a bit too long to get to the much-anticipated twist.

Once the twist is revealed, the movie picks up a little, but not enough to make you forget the long journey to get there. Again, *The Housemaid* is not bad per se, it just feels as if it's missing something. Is this a detriment of the story being adapted from page to screen? Was it the choice to change the ending and putting too much effort into that climax and not the lead up?

The only one who seemed to truly get the absurdity memo was Amanda Seyfried, who plays both sides of her character no holds barred. Her switch into her various demeanors is so subtle and exactly the unhinged character you want in this storyline. Sweeney, however, can't match this energy and the relationship between the two women doesn't drive the narrative as much as it needs to. It's not great when a movie is unintentionally cheesy when it's meant to be thrilling.

Granted, the original book is polarizing between readers who either love the ridiculousness of it or think it's literary trash (fun fact: the author is actually a pseudonym for the woman whose daily job is that of a neurosurgeon). But much like the majority of movies in Hollywood, it doesn't matter if you love it or hate it, the sequel is already in the works.

The Housemaid is available on Amazon.

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Dignity Health Stops Human Trafficking in its Tracks

As January marks Human Trafficking Awareness Month in the U.S., Dignity Health is underscoring its unwavering commitment to combating human trafficking and supporting survivors with dignity and compassion across California, a state that consistently reports one of the highest rates of this pervasive issue.

Newly released data offers critical insights into the scope and dynamics of trafficking within the state and highlights Dignity Health's pivotal role in intervention.

Dignity Health's Impact:

Across its hospitals in Arizona, California, and Nevada, Dignity Health identified potential signs of human trafficking in nearly 30,000 patient screenings and social work assessments. This translates to over 80 potential victims identified daily. Crucially, more than three-quarters of these detections occurred in common hospital areas like emergency rooms, demonstrating that healthcare settings often serve as the only safe touchpoint for victims.

California's Enduring Challenge:

Between 2015 and 2021, California experienced a disproportionate rise in human trafficking cases. In 2015, the state accounted for a significant 18% of all trafficking cases and 15% of all trafficked individuals in the U.S. While the state's share of national cases has since decreased slightly, California continues to lead the U.S. in human trafficking reports.

Prevalence of Sex Trafficking:

The majority of trafficking in California (89% by 2021) is sex trafficking, frequently occurring in locations such as illicit massage parlors and hotels. Labor trafficking also persists, often in private residences, though these victims are even more challenging to identify and assist. From 2015 to 2021, the percentage of human trafficking cases involving sex trafficking increased from 87% to 89% in California.

Northridge Hospital actively participates in the 24/7 Sexual Assault Response Team and Center for Assault Treatment Services.

Dignity Health's comprehensive initiatives include specialized training for healthcare providers to recognize the subtle indicators of trafficking, strategic partnerships with local organizations to provide essential support services, and survivor-centered programs that prioritize holistic healing.

Dignity Health - Northridge Hospital Medical Center (NHMC) actively participates in the 24-hour/7-day per-week Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) program in the San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys, offering crucial support for sexually and domestically abused women and children through its Center for Assault Treatment Services (CATS).

The CATS program provides forensic medical evidentiary examinations and interviews in a safe and supportive environment and has assisted over 22,684 children and adults affected by interpersonal violence since 1997. Services are provided free of charge to victims 24/7 365 days a year.

"Guided by our mission of compassion and respect for human dignity, we are committed to supporting survivors with the care and resources they deserve," said Jeremy Zoch, President and CEO at NHMC.

Through these dedicated efforts, Dignity Health is actively contributing to building stronger, safer communities, reaffirming its commitment to treating every patient with respect and compassion.

For more information about Dignity Health's human trafficking programs and resources, please visit dignityhealth.org/northridge.

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Looking to pamper your Valentine? Or treat yourself? Burke Williams is ready to transform your Valentine's Day with limited time curated gift card packages to enhance any spa day. Spa guests can choose from the "Sweet Escape," "Purely Pampered," "Perfect Pair (For Two)", or "Cupid's Retreat."

Sweet Escape includes a 65-minute Pure Relaxation Massage or Spa Style Facial, one enhancement of choice and access to spa amenities during your visit. This package is $220 (gift card valued at $260).

Purely Pampered includes a 65-minute Pure Relaxation Massage, a 50-minute Spa Style Facial, one enhancement of choice and access to spa amenities during your visit. This package is $375 (gift card valued at $440).

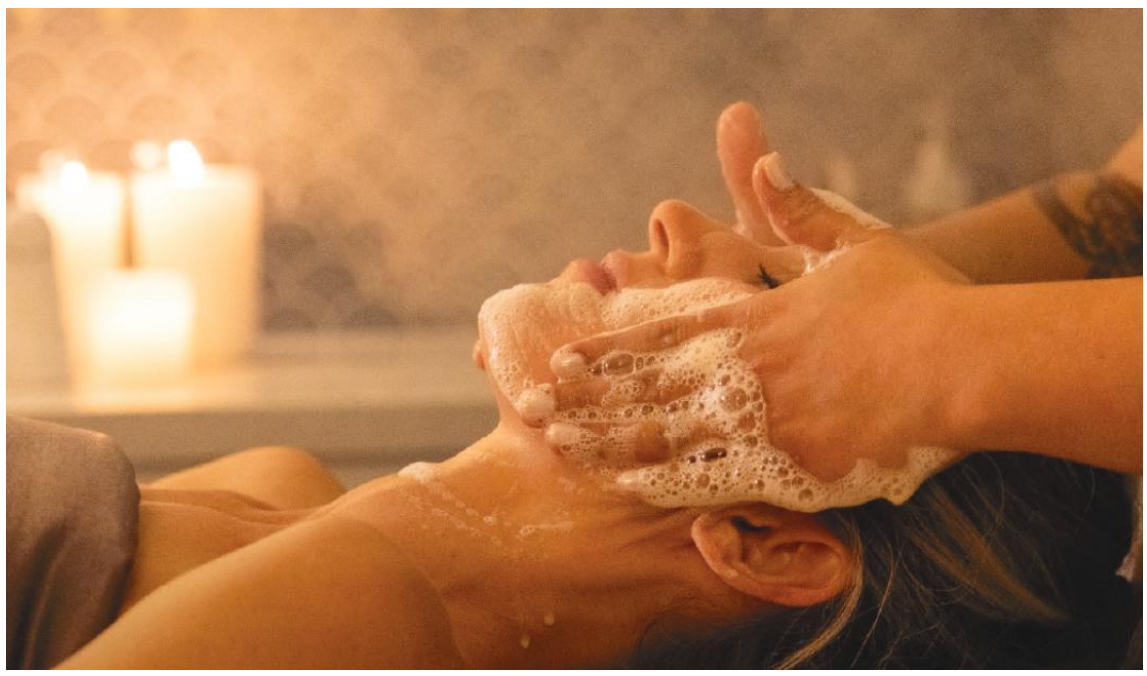
Perfect Pair (For Two) includes two 80-minute Pure Relaxation Massages, two enhancements of choice and access to spa amenities during your visit. This package is $475 (gift card valued at $570).

Cupid's Retreat includes a 90-minute Burke Williams Experience, an 80-minute Nourishing or Radiance Facial, a 20-minute Spa Bath and access to spa amenities during your visit. This package is $600 (gift card valued at $700).

Enhancement offers exclude CBD and Advanced Eye-Lift where not specified. Enhancement must be redeemed in combination with a service.

Locations closest to the Valley include Woodland Hills in Topanga Village (6256 Topanga Canyon Blvd.) and Sherman Oaks in the Galleria (15301 Ventura Boulevard, Unit 4).

Call 1-866-239-6635 or visit burkewilliams.com to purchase these Valentine's-themed packages.



Cantina General Store Valentine's Sale

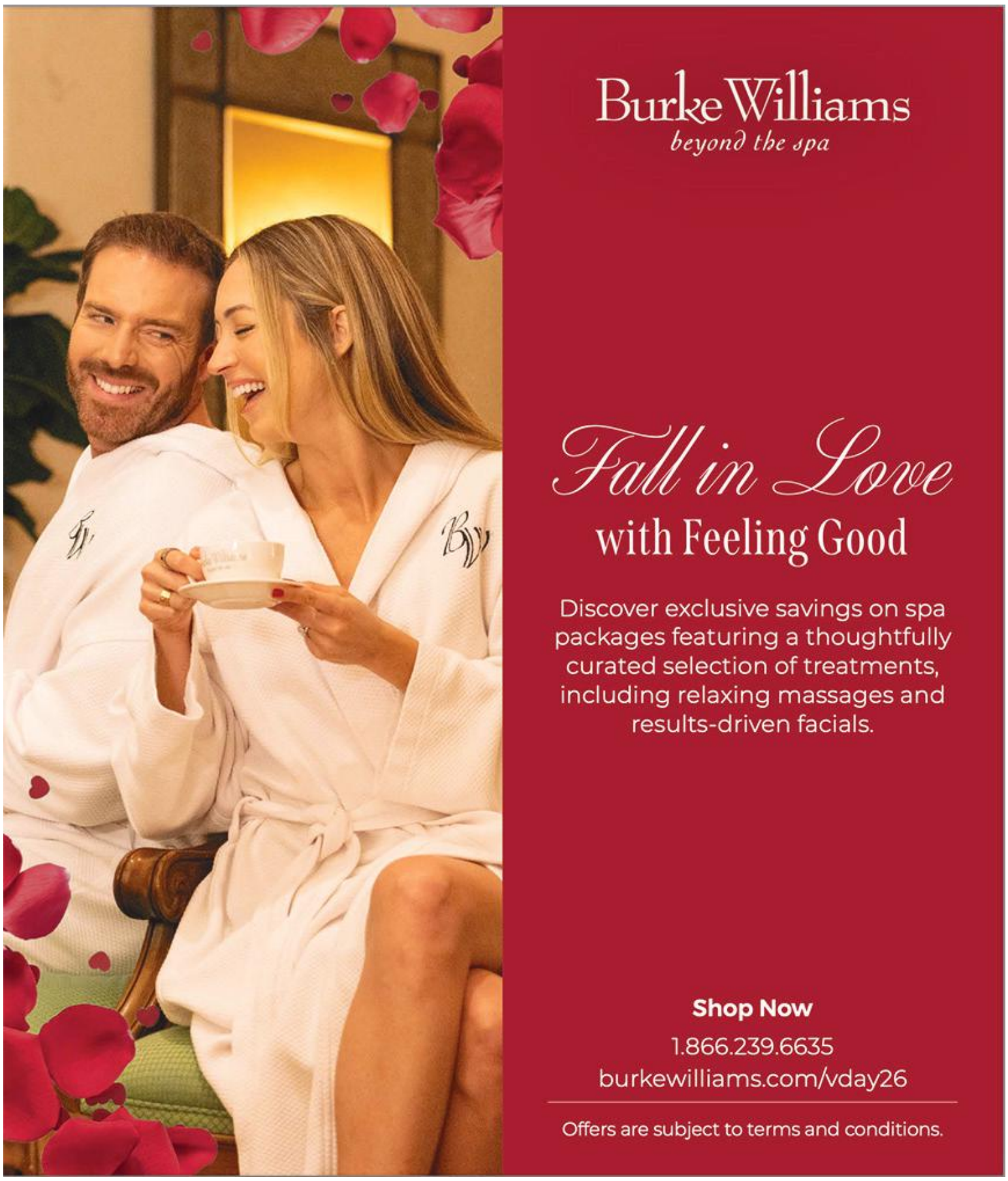
The General Store at the Sagebrush Cantina is full of gift items, food stuff, Cantina merchandise and more.

This season, it's packed with Valentine goodies - from candy and figurines to jewelry, slippers, socks, plush items, candles, love vouchers and more.

Stop by the store at 23537 Calabasas Road and check out the selection of Valentine and other merchandise - including Sagebrush Cantina sweatshirts, hats, glasses and salsa. Packaged food items from the Cantina and Ye Old Kings Head Pub are also on sale.

The General Store is open Sunday to Thursday 11 am to 4 pm and Friday and Saturday from 11 am to 9 pm.

The Sagebrush Cantina is located at 23537 Calabasas Road in the heart of Old Town Calabasas.



REAL ESTATE

Nighttrek Report: What to See in the February Sky

By Neill Simmons

The highlight of February is on the 18th and 19th when the planet Mercury is at its highest in the west after sunset.

The Romans named the planet after the swift Roman messenger god, Mercury, because it moves across the sky faster than any other planet. It takes 88 days to orbit the sun. Mercury is the smallest planet in our solar system but has one of the largest temperature ranges; between a day high of 790 F degrees and a night low of -270 F degrees. That's over a 1,000 degree difference from day to night!

February 1st brings the full moon known as the Snow Moon. A fitting name because currently much of North America is pummeled by snow during this time of the year. February is often the snowiest month for the Northeast and Midwest. This sure makes us appreciate living in Southern California!

NASA is planning a manned rocket launch on February 6 from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. The Artemis II rocket will carry four astronauts on a 10-day test flight around the Moon and back to Earth. This flight will go farther than any manned rocket in history. The three men and one woman astronauts have been in quarantine since January 23 to prepare for this mission. The goal is to set up for a Moon landing with Artemis III's astronauts, who are not yet named.

The next relatively bright comet visible from Earth is C/2024 E1. Around February 17, look in the west with binoculars to see if you can spot it. A comet's center is made of ice but isn't like frozen water. A comet's ice is super cold methane, ammonia, and carbon dioxide. Comets lose mass each time they get close to the sun. After many years of circling the sun, a comet will eventually break apart. The most famous is Halley's Comet which visited us in 1985 and is estimated to appear again in July of 2061.

On February 27 (my wife's birthday) look up to see the Moon and Jupiter appearing to be near each other. Jupiter is a brilliant point of light in the east. It is the fifth planet from the sun and the most massive one in our solar system. If Earth was the size of a grape, then Jupiter would be a basketball.

This gas giant has 79 known moons and the four biggest can been seen with binoculars – Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto. Jupiter is the third brightest object in the sky after Venus and our Moon and can be easily seen with the naked eye.

If you are planning a trip to Europe this summer, there will be a total solar eclipse starting in Greenland and traveling south through Portugal and Spain. It will be the first time in 27 years since a total solar eclipse happened in Europe.

Looking ahead, there will be a total lunar eclipse on March 2. A total lunar eclipse takes place when the Earth comes between the Sun and the Moon and its shadow covers the Moon. Eclipse watchers can see the Moon turn red when the eclipse reaches totality between 3:04 and 3:33 am on March 3. This is known as a "Blood Moon."

On Saturday, February 21, the Griffith Observatory will be hosting a FREE public star party from 2 to 9:45 pm. There will be a chance for the whole family to look at the Sun, Moon, visible planets, and other objects, to try out a variety of telescopes, and to talk to knowledgeable amateur astronomers about the sky and their equipment.

When not stargazing, Neill Simmons is an Investment Executive with LPL Financial in the San Fernando Valley. 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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Editorial: Wildfire Awareness

(Continued from page 4)

& Resources were; MySafe:LA, LA City Fire Dept., LA Police Dept., Emergency Management Dept., Dept. of Water & Power, LA CERT Team, CA Dept. of Insurance, Park Rangers and many more.

Being prepared for a crisis can mean the difference between loss and survival. For example, people who have emergency kits and evacuation plans are more likely to escape safely during hurricanes, floods, or wildfires. Early warning systems and disaster drills help communities respond quickly to earthquakes or wildfires, reducing injuries and deaths. These examples show that preparation gives people the tools and time they need to protect their lives during disasters.

Preparation can limit or even prevent certain disasters by reducing their impact before they happen. For example, building homes with earthquake-resistant designs can prevent buildings from collapsing during earthquakes. Emergency drills and early warning systems for high winds or fires help people evacuate safely and avoid injuries or loss of life. These examples show that while disasters cannot always be avoided, proper planning and preparation can greatly reduce the damage they cause.

Preparation can reduce fears by helping people feel more confident and in control of uncertain situations. For example, studying for an exam lowers anxiety because students know they are ready. Practicing emergency drills at school or work helps people stay calm during real emergencies. Even simple preparation, such as planning ahead for a trip, can reduce worry by preventing problems. Let's not forget knowing and supporting your neighbors can be a valuable asset in an emergency. These examples show that being prepared often replaces fear with confidence and peace of mind.

Jay Ross, Community Event Photojournalist

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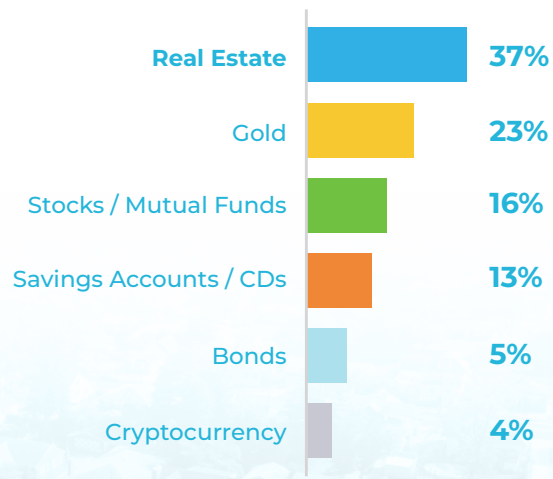

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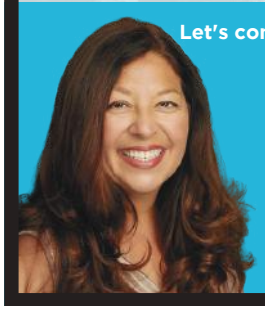

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Metro Approves Subway Between Valley and Westside

The LA Metro board last week approved a heavy rail subway line for the Sepulveda Corridor, targeting the congested traffic corridor along the 405 freeway. The new line will run from Van Nuys to the Expo/Sepulveda Station, cutting travel from up to 80 minutes by car to under 20 minutes.

The subway will cover 13 miles, with tunnels reaching depths of 500 feet beneath the mountains. It promises a direct connection from the Valley to the Westside through Sherman Oaks, Bel-Air, and UCLA.

This plan from Metro's planning and programming committee last week, would go from Van Nuys to Sherman Oaks, pass under the mountains and Bel-Air, stop at UCLA and ultimately end at the E Line's Expo/Sepulveda Station.

The Sepulveda Pass and plans to improve traffic have been under discussion for decades, *The Times'* Colleen Shalby wrote. Ethan Elkind, a rail expert and director of the climate program at the Center for Law, Energy and the Environment at UC Berkeley, told her that a variety of political and logistical factors have slowed the project's progress: a focus on downtown transit, opposition to high-capacity transit in the San Fernando Valley and geological challenges in the Sepulveda Pass.

"It's a lot of land," Elkind said. "And the more land you have to go through, the more expensive it is, the more logistically challenging it is."

Lindsey Horvath, L.A. County supervisor and Metro board member, said the project would be a historic development for the Los Angeles region, affecting drivers who commute through the Sepulveda Pass along the 405.

Los Angeles City Councilmember Nithya Raman, whose 4th District covers parts of Encino and Sherman Oaks, said that construction for the project would create hundreds of thousands of jobs and that revenue from ridership would help local businesses.

"We don't have to accept sitting in traffic as our only choice," she said, "and this is our pathway forward."

The Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association, which previously rejected earlier proposals, supported this new route and design.

The association's vice president Bob Anderson has expressed concerns over funding of the project, as billions of dollars still need to be sourced.

"We still have not heard from Metro how they're going to pay for this thing," Anderson told *The Times*. "We don't need to know every financial detail, but we do need to know where they're going to get the funding stream that feeds it and how much the financing is going to cost us."

The approved subway will span 13 miles, including tunnels reaching depths of 500 feet beneath the mountains.

The estimated cost of the project has ballooned since 2016, when Los Angeles County voters approved transit improvements between the Valley and the Westside under Measure M. The subway was originally projected to cost $6 billion, which then turned into $9.4 billion with current estimates as high as $13.8 billion.

Construction of the entire line was originally estimated to be completed in 2033. Metro does not have a timeline for this new proposal, or a date that construction would start.

Metro cited the need for reliance on state, local and federal funding to fill the shortfall and has raised the idea of private-public partnerships — similar to proposals for the state's controversial high-speed rail project.

Currently there is no specific plan for funding what has been approved.

Community Information Meeting

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Community Meeting at

Bright Star Schools, 9034 Burnet Ave, North Hills, CA

Monday, March 16, 2026, 6:30PM

Project Sponsor-Abbey Road, Inc. Funding recommended by Los Angeles County Development Authority. Written comments may be submitted to Project sponsor for a period of two weeks following the meeting. Info@abbey-road.org. 818-892-3423

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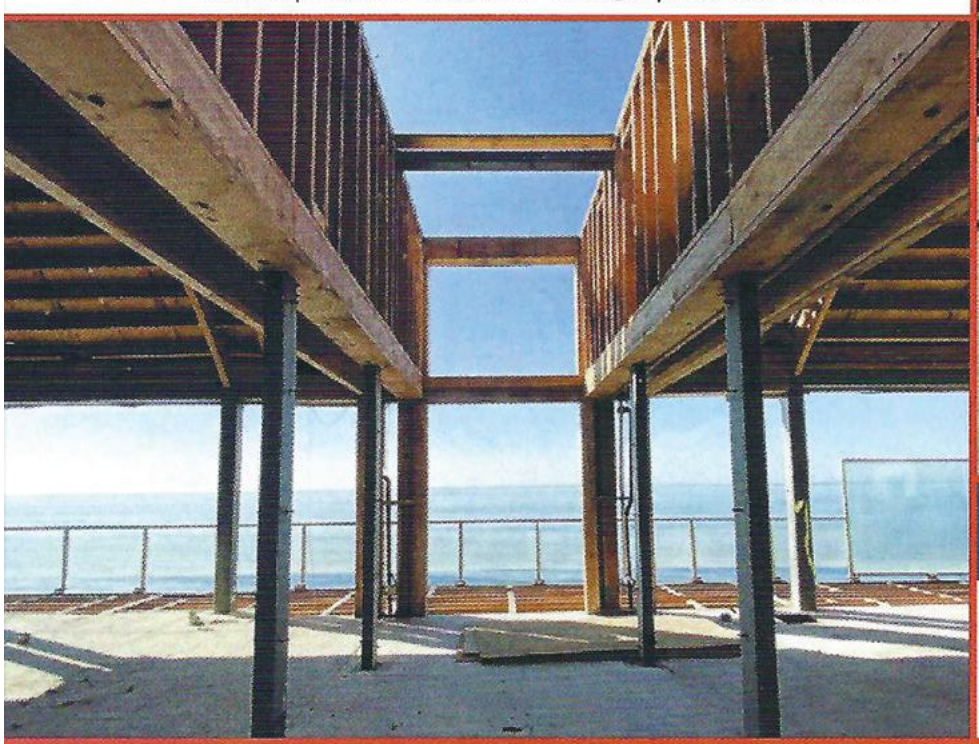

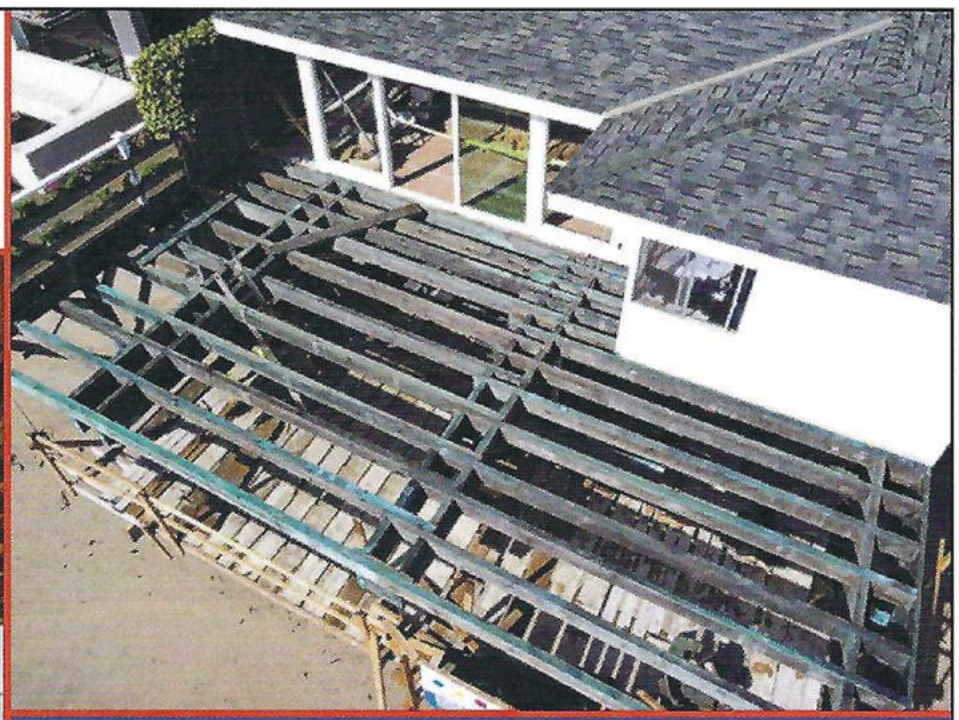

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THU FEB 12 8PM
Anat Cohen Quartetinho
Featuring Vitor Gonçalves, Tal Mashiach, and James Shipp
ONSTAGE JAZZ CLUB

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Valentine's Day With Veronica Swift
Featuring Pacific Jazz Orchestra
Chris Walden, conductor

WED FEB 18 8PM
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