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ENCINO ENTERPRISE

Volume 7, Issue 142 | A Compendious Source of Information | April 16, 2026

NEWS IN BRIEF

Encino Tarzana Library to Host Spring Book Sale Before Closing for Maintenance

The Encino Tarzana Library will be holding their first book sale of the year on Friday, April 17 and Saturday, April 18. The sale kicks off with a members-only presale on Friday, from 9:30 am to 10:30 am before opening to the public until 4 pm. Attendees are welcome to join at the door for a $15 membership fee. The sale on Saturday will run from 10 am to 2 pm. Find great deals on gently used books, DVDs, CDs, and more. Starting on Monday, April 20, the Encino-Tarzana Library will close for scheduled facility maintenance and reopen on Monday, June 1. For any holds, the library suggests either suspending them until this location's reopening or changing the pick-up location to another LAPL. They will also not be receiving return books, so patrons are encouraged to return them to surrounding locations.

Encino Food and Wine Festival on Saturday, April 25

ONEgeneration will hold their annual Encino Food and Wine Festival on Saturday, April 25, from 1 to 4 pm at 17400 Victory Blvd. (between Balboa and White Oak.) Indulge in wine and brewery tastings, accompanied by delicious small bites from local eateries. There will also be live music, a silent auction and boutique. Vendors will include Anheuser-Busch, Soup du Jar, Parrish, Urban Plates, Dude's Lemonade, Justin, Valley 818, Mendocino Farms, Shadow Grove Brewing, Daou, Ubatuba Acai, Bertha Mae's Brownie Co., Benihaha, Fresh Brothers, San Simeon Wines, Flemings, Freda's Kitchen, Tobien James Cellars, Roseade, Freda's Fine Foods and Drinks, Peniman Springs Vineyard and Shake Shack. Tickets are $125 and each ticket includes a custom wine tasting glass and plate, open wine and brewery tastings, plus food tastings from various local restaurants. Parking is included. Must be over 21 to attend, no children or pets allowed. For tickets, visit eventbrite.com and seach term "2026 Encino Food & Wine Festival-ONEgeneration."

Preparing for the Misnomer that is "Fire Season"

While residents of the San Fernando Valley know that "fire season" is actually prevalent all year round, summer months bring hotter temperatures and drier conditions. With that comes the higher probability of brush fires and uncontrollable blazes that can start unexpectedly and grow quickly.

In a recent community Zoom from the Encino Property Owners Association, LA Fire Department Brush Clearance Inspector Warren Sutton gave advice for homeowners to keep brush at bay in their neighborhoods. Encino, especially the hillside areas, is subject to high fire risks as seen when the January 2025 fires came precariously close to homes.

As a homeowner, you are responsible to comply with Fire Code regulations that assist in protecting your property and your neighbors' surrounding property. This includes year-round maintenance on native brush, weeds, grass, trees and vegetation within 200 feet of any structure and within 10 feet of any combustible fence or driveway.

For those who missed the Encino Property Owners Association Zoom or want to learn more about fire safety prevention, MySafe:LA will be hosting a Virtual Wildfire Town Hall on Thursday, April 16, at 7 pm, as well as a Wildfire Resource & Education Fair on April 25. This town hall will cover a range of important and timely wildfire-related topics and share new information on soil contamination concerns that may affect residents living in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). Additionally, there will be updates on major reports and policy discussions shaping wildfire preparedness and recovery across the region.

According to CAL FIRE, wildfire risk now stretches through roughly 10.5 months out of the year. Fire models project above-normal large fire activity across California by mid-summer, with the Valley particularly vulnerable due to high grass loads and drying conditions.

Therefore, the best thing residents can do to prepare is to be proactive. Keep on top of clearance, have an emergency contingency plan and a "go-bag" of critical items if forced to evacuate.

String of Burglaries Hit Valley Within Week

A string of local burglaries continued this week, following a break-in over the weekend at a Sherman Oaks home. On Tuesday at 8:30 pm, officers were called to the 11000 block of Hesby St. in Valley Village after receiving an "alarm activation" call. Later that evening, in the 12000 block of Hatteras St. in Valley Glen at 9:15 pm, a second incident occurred. Then, on Wednesday, a forced entry was reported on Vanscoy Ave. in Valley Glen around 9:30 pm.

Officers have not disclosed what was stolen from each property, but in several of these incidents, the burglars smashed glass windows or doors to gain entry. In regards to the Sherman Oaks burglary over the weekend, the residents returned to their property on Saturday and quickly noticed broken glass. After reviewing security camera footage, they saw a masked individual ransacking the home the night prior. As of press time, no descriptions of the suspects are available and it is unclear if the break-ins are connected.

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Community Calendar

* The Los Angeles Youth Orchestra (LAYO), based out of Encino and made up of accomplished student musicians ages 8-18, honors the 1776 signing of the Declaration of Independence in April with an entire concert by American composers, under the batons of Russell Steinberg, Artistic Director, and Jorge Padron, Assistant Conductor. The LAYO concerts will take place at Barnum Hall in Santa Monica on Sunday, April 19, and Pasadena's Ambassador Auditorium on Monday, April 20. Tickets are available now for these concerts at losangelesyouthorchestra.org/concerts.

* The Encino Neighborhood Council will be holding their monthly general board meeting on Wednesday, April 22, at 7 pm. For the agenda and meeting info, visit encinonc.org.

* Get ready to sing, dance, and play! SnookNuk and Friends are visiting the Encino Tarzana Library on Thursday, April 16, at 4 pm with a high-energy show packed with music, movement, and fun props like scarves, drums, and parachutes. Kids and grown-ups will wiggle, giggle, and jam along to playful tunes with a splash of Motown.

* The Sherman Oaks Encino Chamber of Commerce will be holding their next "Mix & Mingle" networking event on Tuesday, April 28, from 5:30 to 7 pm. Meet business associates and build connections at Rocco's Tavern (12514 Ventura Blvd). The cost is $20 for members and $40 for guests. To RSVP, visit shermanoaksencinochamber.org.

* The San Fernando Valley Audubon Society is continuing to work with partners, the Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR) and the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) on the ongoing habitat restoration efforts in the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve (SBWR). The next community cleanup will take place on Saturday, April 18, from 8 to 11 am. For details on volunteering, visit sfvaudubon.org/event/sbwr-habitat-restoration-5/2026-04-18.

* Are you aware of Medicare fraud and how it could impact you? Want to learn how to protect yourself and safeguard your benefits? The West Valley Regional Library will be hosting a presentation entitled "Protect Yourself: Understanding and Preventing Medicare Fraud" on Tuesday, April 21, at 1 pm. The Center for Health Care Rights will talk about how to stop fraudsters from taking advantage of Medicare and ensure these vital benefits remain secure for those who need them most.

* The Tarzana Community and Cultural Center will be hosting a Songbird Nights LA Benefit Concert on Sunday, April 19, at 7 pm. Songbirds is a local group of women singer-songwriters who have banded together to support each other's work and bring a sense of community to their shared purpose in the art and craft of songwriting. As part of their group mission, they perform concerts for various charities throughout the year. Proceeds from this concert will go to the Rescue Mission Alliance/Valley Food Bank and to TCCC. Performers include: Dina Silver, Lisa Paschell, Lisa Martin, Karen Turner, Kelly Macleod, Claire Bloom, Annette Adler, and Mairéad. A $20 donation is requested per ticket and can be purchased at mytarzana.org.

* Join San Fernando Valley Community Photos, the new digital home on Facebook for everything that makes our Valley home special. Whether it's the neon glow of a classic diner, a hidden hiking trail in the hills, or the bustling energy of a local business, they want to see it! Share your story - post your favorite local landmarks and hidden gems. Discover and celebrate the small businesses that are the heart of the SFV. Boost your visibility and connect directly with your community. Visit Facebook: San Fernando Valley Community Photos.

* Westfield Fashion Square and the American Red Cross will be holding a blood drive on Tuesday, May 12, from 11 am to 3 pm. To schedule your appointment, visit redcrossblood.org.

People in the News

A Reseda resident is one step away from a $25,000 prize, a mentorship with Shark Tank's Daymond John, and a feature in *Entrepreneur Magazine*, and she needs your vote to get there.

Haley Fritz, above, is the founder of Breezys, a woman-owned wellness brand reimagining nasal strips as a bold, wearable accessory. Breezys' patterned, contoured nasal strips are designed to be worn visibly, on a mission to move nasal strips out of the medicine cabinet and into everyday life. Think of it as the Starface of nasal strips, turning a functional product into a statement piece that people actually want to show off.

Fritz built Breezys entirely from scratch while working full-time as an assistant editor in Hollywood's animation industry. With no investors and no prior business experience, she relied on nothing but an idea, relentless execution, and one year of nights and weekends to bring Breezys to life.

In that time, she designed the product, sourced manufacturing, built a fully operational website, led all marketing efforts, and secured placement on the shelves of Urban Outfitters, all within her first year.

She has now been nominated for the Entrepreneur of Impact award, a national recognition celebrating founders who have made a meaningful difference through their work. Voting is free and open to the public at entrepreneurofimpact.org/2026/ haley-fritz.

Local author **Edward Giron**, above, will host a book signing of his children's book on Saturday, April 25, from 1 to 3 pm at The Open Book at Topanga Village Woodland Hills.

Gwen the Racehorse is a fictional story based on a real horse. Gwen loves to run but doesn't want to race. The young horse loves to run fast, so fast that her owners send her off to be trained as a racehorse. But when Gwen finds that she always needs to go faster and faster and that it's never enough, she realizes that she loves to run but hates to race. She finds that with desire, some luck, and the support of a community of people and other horses, no matter the obstacles that deterred her, it's possible to find home.

Giron said, "I believe in this story. I believe in Gwen. It's as much a story for adults as it is for children. Gwen might not have made it to her second life if people hadn't cared and wanted her to make it and have a good life. I hope you find Gwen and her community inspirational."

Giron is an equestrian, and has announced many of the hunter/jumper, dressage, and breed shows. He's also a theatre actor and co-hosts a weekly radio show. Illustrator Leighton Buxman has illustrated a number of fantasy and dark fantasy works but this is her first children's book.

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.

* My friend found out that her dog, a schnauzer, could barely hear, so she took it to a veterinarian who found that the problem was hair in the dog's ears. He cleaned both ears, and then proceeded to tell my friend that if she wanted to keep this from recurring, she could go to the store and get some Nair hair remover and rub it in the dog's ears once a month. So, my friend went to the store and bought the Nair hair remover. At the register, the pharmacist told her, "If you're going to use this under your arms, don't wear deodorant for a few days." She replied, "Oh, I won't be using it under my arms." "Well then, if you will be using it on your legs, refrain from using body lotion for a few days." "I won't be using it on my legs either," she said. "If you must know, I will be using it on my schnauzer." Well then," said the pharmacist. "Stay off your bicycle for a few days."

* Rose Goldwater tells this yuk-yuk. During a visit to a hospital for the mentally infirm, a visitor asked the director how he defined whether or not a patient should be institutionalized. The director said, "We fill up a bathtub, then offer a teaspoon, a teacup or a bucket to the patient and ask him or her to empty the tub." "Oh, I understand," said the visitor. "A normal person would use the bucket because it's bigger than the spoon or teacup." "No," said the director, "A normal person would pull the plug. Do you want a bed by the wall or near the window?"

* Harvey Branman observes "Only in America do banks leave both doors open and then chain pens to the counters."

* Here's a question for the ages? Why is it when they show TV ads for computers they show computers and when they show an auto ad they show cars but when they show a condom ad they show people playing tennis?

* This joke from the peanut gallery. It's about a hillbilly who was the subject of a shotgun wedding. Yes, it was a question of wife or death!

LOCAL NEWS

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Counsel with a Business Edge

by Danrochelle D. Yumul

Janice L. Miller

In the corporate legal world, Janice L. Miller has built a reputation for helping businesses think strategically. As managing partner of Miller Haga Law Group LLP, a boutique corporate business transactional law firm, she brings more than 25 years of experience as an Innovative General Counsel® and in the business strategy of Coopertition™, offering clients practical, cost-effective solutions designed to minimize risk and maximize results.

Miller's path began in Philadelphia, where early family loss shaped her sense of responsibility and drive. By age nine, she was helping raise her younger siblings while her mother, a role model she still credits as her greatest influence, worked multiple jobs. She went on to attend Temple University, earning her B.A. magna cum laude in just three years, followed by a J.D. from Temple University School of Law, graduating cum laude while attending night classes and working.

After moving to Los Angeles, she started her career in litigation before transitioning into entertainment law, with roles at Walt Disney Imagineering, Sega GameWorks, and MCA Recreations Services.

Her career reached a defining chapter at NBCUniversal, where she held senior leadership roles for more than two decades, including Vice President of Business Affairs for Universal Studios Hollywood and CityWalk. There, she played a key role in the billion-dollar expansion of the theme park and retail complex, overseeing real estate leasing, intellectual property matters, litigation, and major business deals.

That experience of managing legal strategy from inside a Fortune 100 company now shapes her work in private practice. At Miller Haga, she applies the perspective of someone who has "been the client," understanding both the value and inefficiencies of outside counsel. Her firm advises on corporate, real estate, employment, and regulatory matters, with a focus on aligning legal decisions with business goals.

She later earned an M.B.A. from the University of Redlands, graduating summa cum laude, further strengthening her ability to bridge legal insight with business strategy. Central to her approach is the concept of "Coopertition™," the notion that competitors can work together cooperatively for the benefit of her clients. She has been recognized as a Southern California Super Lawyer (2020-2026), a Legal Visionary by the *Los Angeles Times*, and among the Top Women Lawyers by the *Daily Journal*. She has also been named one of the Top 200 Most Influential Leaders by the *Los Angeles Business Journal*.

Outside of work, Miller's focus remains on family. She and her husband of 28 years have two children: one a commercial airline pilot, and a Doctor of Behavioral Health specializing in athletic rehabilitation. In her free time, she enjoys fitness, pickleball, time with friends, and a good bottle of wine.

Her career reflects a clear philosophy: the most effective legal counsel helps businesses grow.

Join Miller as one of the featured speakers on May 2 from 8:30 am to 2:00 pm at "Yes! You Can Have It All!", an empowerment event for women business leaders. Organized by ReAcademic, LLC, the event brings together a powerhouse of women speakers including Jennifer Felten, Esq., Barbara Radke, Dr. Sarah Swan, and Martha Withers-Hall.

Register today at eventibrite.com and search for the event heading "Yes! You Can Have It All! Enjoy Success ...Without Burnout or Apology!"

Danrochelle D. Yumul is the Communications Manager at Cowe Communications. Follow @CoweOfficial or visit cowe.com.

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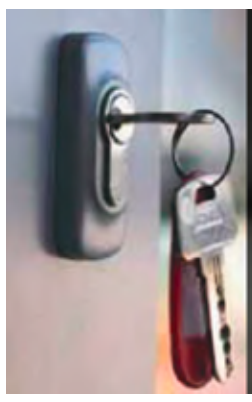

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HEALTH

Valley Native Coined the Viral Term "Hot Girl Walk"

Born and raised in the San Fernando Valley, Mia Lind is an author and Instagram content creator who became famous after coining the viral term "hot girl walk."

A "hot girl walk" is an outdoor, mindfulness walk where you only think about gratitude, goals and confidence. Started by Lind during the pandemic, she started going on "hot girl walks" as a way to cope with isolation and started sharing the walks on social media.

The phrase "hot girl walk" went immediately viral, and the hashtag #hotgirlwalk now has billions of views on Instagram and TikTok. Now, Lind has built a community on Instagram and encourages women to go on "hot girl walks," practice gratitude, and find their inner confidence.

After trademarking the phrase, she expanded it into the @hotgirlwalk movement, organizing walking groups for women across California and internationally. Through the Hot Girl Walk ambassador program, women in cities across the country get trained to lead walking meetups in their own communities, helping the movement grow to 39 U.S. cities and two additional countries.

On Instagram, Lind shares events, vlogs, and behind-the-scenes glimpses into her life as a creator and author. Lind also fosters a sense of community for those who can't attend in-person events by hosting "Treadmill Tuesdays" on Instagram Live, where she curates playlists and workouts for virtual participants.

"Hot Girl Walk isn't about how you look, it's about how you feel," Mia said. "It's taking time for yourself to reflect on what you're grateful for and reminding yourself that confidence is something you build from within."

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Can Too Much Turmeric Destroy Your Liver?

Fans of the medical drama *The Pitt* will be all too familiar with this question as it provided a bit of a conundrum in a recent episode. While attempting to diagnose a woman whose skin had turned unnaturally yellow and whose liver was failing, the doctors were able to come to the conclusion of an overabundance of turmeric consumption. Is such a side effect real? Is it possible to take too much of a natural spice?

Overconsumption of tumeric supplments lead to an ER visit in The Pitt (image: HBO Max).

Turmeric is a spice that has long been popular for its antioxidant properties. Whether in a capsule, a liquid or a powder, turmeric is known for its anti-inflammatory effects and could aid in digestion, supporting heart and brain health and managing one's metabolism.

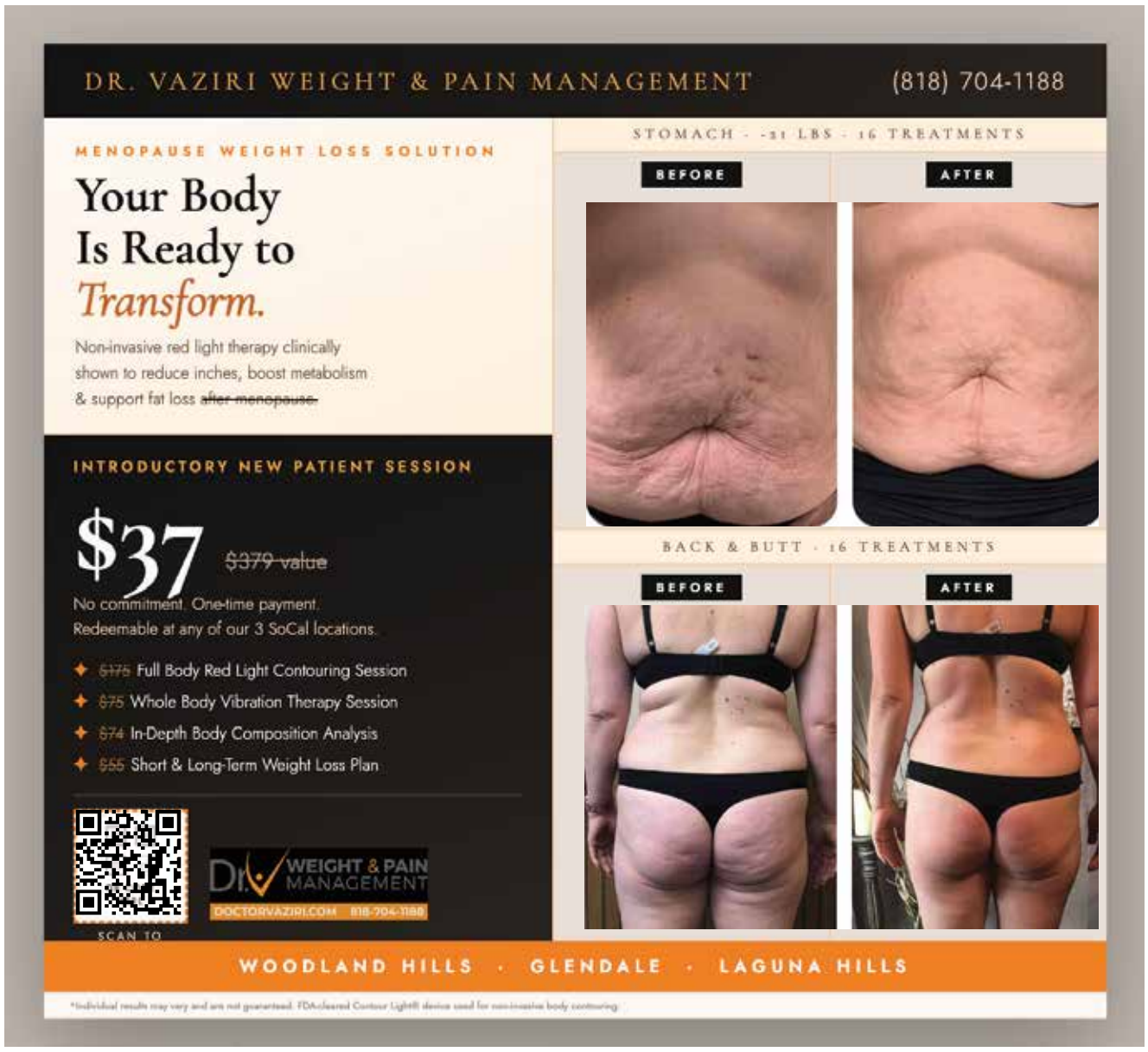
While turmeric consumption is generally safe, there is truth that high doses can cause drug-induced liver injury and jaundice (yellowing of the skin). While the incident on *The Pitt* made for a fun medical mystery, the situation is based on real documented cases; five which required hospitalization and one that lead to death.

While the spice is typically harmless, turmeric in supplements is often mixed with other ingredients to increase absorption. Piperline or black pepper extract is added to aid absorption and curcumin (the key compound in turmeric) is concentrated at far higher doses than the spice. When the supplements are taken at high doses (500 milligrams a day in the case of *The Pitt* woman), liver damage often occurs and doesn't show up until months after taking the supplements. Research suggests there may be a genetic link as 70% of people who developed a turmeric-induced liver injury carried a specific gene making them more susceptible.

While turmeric itself is beneficial to one's health, supplements are often underregulated and can contain ingredients that are not properly identified. Any side effects like jaundice or abdominal upset warrant immediate discontinuation. Patients are often able to recover after stopping a supplement, but it is advised to seek medical advice from one's doctors before introducing any supplements into your diet.

Our House Grief Support Center to Hold 5K in Encino

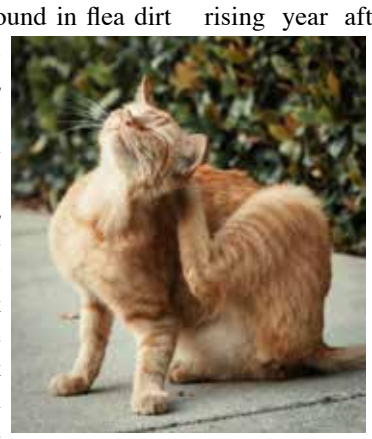
On Sunday, April 26, Our House Grief Support Center will host its annual Our House 5K Walk & Remember from 7:30 am to 12 pm at Woodley Park in Encino. The event brings together Valley families and community members to honor those who have died, while raising funds for grief support services available throughout the Valley. The morning includes a scenic walk around the park, remembrance ceremonies, kid-friendly activities, live music and resources focused on healing and connection. This is an inclusive event and proceeds support Our House programs that provide grief support groups and education for children, teens, adults, and families - all offered regardless of ability to pay. For more info, see secure.qgiv.com/event/ourhouse5kwalkremember2026.



HEALTH

Flea-Borne Typhus Reaches All-Time High in LA

Flea-borne typhus is a disease that is spread from infected fleas to people via bacteria that is found in flea dirt (aka their feces). Commonly, inflected fleas are found on stray cats, rats and opossums, with the disease transferring when people pet or touch these animals that carry infected fleas. Flea-borne typhus is not spread from person to person, only from animal to person.



Pet owners are being urged to protect themselves and their animals as Los Angeles has recently seen a record number of cases of the illness. According to the Los Angeles County of Public Health, there were 220 cases identified in 2025, with nearly nine out of 10 people requiring hospitalization after infection.

Once infected, it typically takes 14 days for an individual to develop symptoms. Symptoms of flea-borne typhus include fever, chills, aches and rash.

"These cases have been rising year after year. They're occurring in all areas of our county," said Dr. Aiman Halai, Medical Epidemiologist at Public Health L.A. County.

The L.A. County of Public Health is urging pet owners to stay on top of flea medication and to keep them inside as much as possible. Avoid your pet encountering stray animals and refrain from petting them yourselves. While an infected animal may not show signs of infection, it's imperative to err on the side of caution.

With the hotter months, individuals and animals are flocking outside. Use EPA-registered insect repellent specifically labeled against fleas and monitor your pet's health, especially if their routine involves the outdoors.

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The Reel History of the Valley

By Martin M. Cooper

The Valley Culture: Cars and Cinema

Think back to the San Fernando Valley of the mid-20th century. What two cultural standouts come to mind? For many, the answer is simple: movies and cars.

The Valley's four studios – Universal, Warner Bros., Disney, and then-named Republic Studios – churned out comedies, westerns, and dramas at a dizzying pace, while Southern California became the headquarters of the booming car culture.

Beginning in the early 1950s, the car culture was reaching its zenith, particularly in the San Fernando Valley. Aficionados would deck, shave, lower, poke, tuck, chop, donk, pinstripe and otherwise customize their "rides." Car clubs traditionally cruised Van Nuys Boulevard on Wednesday nights, especially during the peak cruising era of the 1960s through the early 1980s.

And no one combined those two icons of the Southern California lifestyle better than a Greek-American named George Salapatas, better known as George Barris.

Barris customized more cars for motion pictures and TV and provided more unique automobiles for movie stars than anyone else. He would take (usually) Detroit-made cars and turn them into something totally new… not just with a paint job or an accessory, but creative new machines often bearing little resemblance to the original.

No doubt George Barris' best-known car, the Batmobile.

Born in Chicago in 1925, Barris moved to the Los Angeles area while in high school and began customizing cars. One of the first films Barris provided cars for was *High School Confidential* (1958). Its success led him into starting his own car customizing business. His first major film assignment was to make soft aluminum fenders for a police car that crashes into the rear of a Mercedes-Benz convertible in *North by Northwest* (1959).

The first film where one of Barris' creations is a major plot point is *It Started with a Kiss* (1959), where his modified 1955 Cadillac Eldorado Brougham with a bubble-style canopy roof and gold-planted exterior gave it the name of the "Golden Cadillac." The car is presented as a lavish prize, symbolizing extravagance and impracticality, won by the character played by Glenn Ford. It becomes a central comedic element of the storyline.

The classic George Barris–built 1929 Ford Model A roadster pickup, A la Kart. This car was built by Barris in the late 1950s and became one of the most awarded show cars in American hot rod history, with its cream-colored cab with the flowing "finned" bodywork, pickup bed with chrome stake rails, whitewall tires, and chromed suspension/exhaust detailing.

Some of the more notable films with vehicles customized by Barris include: *The Time Machine* (1960), *The Great Race* (1965), *Fireball 500* (1966), *Batman: The Movie* (1966), *Out of Sight* (1966), *The Silencers* (1966), *Thunder Alley* (1967), *The Car* (1977), *The Van* (1977), *National Lampoon's Vacation* (1983), *Jurassic Park* (1993), and *Race with Destiny* (1995).

Car shows and magazines often featured Barris' cars, including those created for feature films. Frequently Barris-designed cars were often cover subjects in *Hot Rod, Motor Trend, Rod & Custom,* and *Car Craft*. Barris and his creations were particularly prominent in the latter two publications.

Several iconic Barris builds appeared on covers or in major features. His A la Kart, which began life as a 1929 Ford roadster pickup, was one of the most famous custom cars ever, featured on numerous magazine covers and interior feature spreads. It won America's Most Beautiful Roadster Award twice. the A la Kart appears in the teen movie *Hot Rod Gang* in 1958, as well as other films.

For film personalities he created customized golf cars, modified automobiles they owned, or created new ones. Among his clients were: Elvis Presley, John Wayne, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Tony Curtis, Ann-Margret, Jayne Mansfield, Glen Campbell, Elton John, and Zsa Gabor.

Given the Valley's prominence in both filmmaking and the car culture, it is no surprise that Barris Kustom Industries was located at 10811 Riverside Drive, in North Hollywood.

One of George Barris's early custom cars, a 1947 Hudson Super-6 convertible. It was chopped, channeled and sectioned, it has a removable hard top, 1952 Hudson Hornet 7X engine, GM 4 speed hydramatic transmission, and a 1950 Oldsmobile 336 rear end.

He produced automotive creations for more than 20 network television shows, including, *Batman, The Munsters, Mannix, The Monkees, The Dukes of Hazzard*, and *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

In 2005, *The New York Times* had Barris customize a Toyota Prius; he was the subject of the title story in writer Tom Wolfe's 1965 collection of essays, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*; and toy manufacturers Aurora, Revell, and AMT brought him fame among model builders.

Barris' cars increased in value over the years. For example, in 2013, the Batmobile created for the TV series of the same name, sold at auction for $4.6 million.

George Barris died in his Encino home on November 5, 2015, 15 days before his 90th birthday. At his memorial service, Barris's casket featured large black fins, an homage to his most famous creation, the Batmobile.

Martin Cooper, President of Cooper Communications, supervised public relations for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences for 10 years; held executive positions with Disney and Universal Studios; and was Board Chairman of the UCLA Film & Television Archive. He is a member of the Board of the British Film Institute in America. Cooper is a Fernando Award Honoree and Past Chairman of VICA. An award-winning author, he has written four books, two of them on the San Fernando Valley. His fifth book, The 'Reel' Hollywood: The San Fernando Valley, the history of motion pictures in the Valley, was published this month and available on Amazon.

ENTERTAINMENT

The cast of Shrinking making each other laugh at the PaleyFest 2026 panel.

Shrinking is the Best Mental Health Medicine One Can Get From Fake Therapy

By Katie Sterling

If you're not watching *Shrinking* on Apple TV, you're doing yourself a disservice. Not in a while has there been a show that so effortlessly blends humor with heartache, silliness with sincerity and solid advice from fake therapists. Plus, there's Harrison Ford. I mean, what more do you need?!

In its third season, *Shrinking* has hit its stride, unapologetically delivering 30 minutes of pure entertainment from a group of misfits you only wish you could be a part of. Created by Bill Lawrence, Brett Goldstein and Jason Segal, the show has come a long way from the initial storyline of therapist Jimmy (Segal) descending into a deep downward spiral after the death of his wife. Emotional well-being is still strongly at the forefront of the series, but one could argue it's more of a group therapy theme this season, rather than a "save Jimmy" theme. After all, when half of the friend group are therapists, you're going to talk about your feelings whether you want to or not. In *Shrinking* however, the therapy is far from conventional and pushing boundaries is the norm, not the exception. Is that the most ethical? No. Does it get the job done? Usually.

As in life, everyone on the show is facing their own battles. Jimmy is preparing for his daughter Alice (Lukita Maxwell) to head off to college. Given their relationship took a lot of TLC to recover after he essentially abandoned her after her mother's death, this milestone packs a bit more punch than usual. Patriarch and mentor of the group Paul (Harrison Ford) is reevaluating his future at the practice given his Parkinson's is steadily becoming more difficult to manage. Boundary-breaking neighbor Liz (Christa Miller) finally has her tough exterior cracked after her husband Derek (Ted McGinley) suffers a heart attack. And Gaby (Jessica Williams) isn't sure what her professional or personal life has in store when she's faced with not only the chance to take over the practice, but an opportunity to open her heart. Then, with the comedic breaks we've come to love, Brian (Michael Urie) is navigating new parenthood with priorities of baby's first brunch rather than say, tummy time. Through it all, they have each other to lean on.

At the core of the show is the idea that you can't really help someone unless they want to help themselves. You can nudge and you can advise, but the biggest breakthrough must come from their own "aha" moment. Conversely, it's also imperative to have a group of people that perhaps know you better than you know yourselves. They are just as much there for you to lean on as they are to push you outside of your comfort zone. Some may argue that *Shrinking* often leans into cliches, but cliches are just highlights of universal truths that society goes through. The truths of moving on, getting older, getting sick, grieving, new life, falling in love, etc.

But what truly makes this show consistently work, and frankly only get stronger, is the undeniable chemistry between everyone on the cast. PaleyFest recently hosted the cast of *Shrinking* and the energy between them is as infectious as if you were watching an episode live. Moderated by Bill Lawrence, each actor was presented a question in turn, but not once were they not interrupted by a fellow actor praising them, lovingly mocking them or hyping them up. They say that life often imitates art and well, Ford is just as quippy with his dry humor, Urie is overexuberant with his deliveries and Miller is just as deliciously cutting with her sarcasm to name a few. It's evident that the love they have for their characters, as well as each other, is just as resonating in real life as it is on the screen.

But perhaps the strongest, and most emotional, moment of the evening was when Michael J. Fox made a guest appearance. (Never in my life have I seen a quicker standing ovation.) As Parkinson's is a strong storyline on the show, it seemed only fitting to have its strongest advocate be integrated into the storyline. No spoilers, but the manner in which Fox is weaved into the show is quite brilliant. As much as it is a devastating disease, it is also a delicate one, and Fox had nothing but praise for Ford's portrayal of its progression.

Shrinking isn't afraid to shy away from life's messiness and the importance of human connection, whatever form that may take. As the show continues to evolve, so too does its message of the importance of moving forward even when it may be harder to actually move on. It may be fake therapy, but viewers can come out of it with some real growth.

Shrinking is currently streaming on Apple TV.

United Chambers of Commerce Hosting Forum to Focus on CA Insurance Commissioner Candidates

With escalating insurance costs, mounting wildfire-related coverage controversies and regulatory uncertainty, the San Fernando Valley's United Chambers of Commerce (UCC), a coalition of 14 local chambers representing 160,000 Valley businesses, is convening a major debate forum for this year's state insurance commissioner candidates. Attendance is free.

The candidates' forum is slated for Friday, April 24, from 5 pm to 7 pm at Shepherd Church, 5901 De Soto Avenue in Woodland Hills. The event will be moderated by the California Chamber of Commerce senior vice president of communications and former *LA Times* Sacramento bureau chief John Myers.

"Right now, this is one of the most consequential statewide regulatory races – one that especially impacts Angeleno residents and businesses," said UCC chairman Mike Stafford. "The decision as to who will preside over state policy on insurance will be pivotal."

According to UCC Government Affairs Committee chairman David Phelps, historically, there have been few debate forums for insurance commissioner candidates as, in the past, the post was considered somewhat obscure.

"Today's combination of current economic factors, evolving environmental challenges and seismic shifts in the insurance industry has made the race for the state's insurance commissioner's job highly consequential," said Phelps. "This forum provides a timely opportunity for voters, business owners and community stakeholders to hear directly from candidates on their vision, policies, and priorities."

Stafford notes that California's insurance situation, especially in Los Angeles "isn't just a matter of insurance getting expensive. The California insurance market is seriously, structurally strained."

"This is a market stability crisis with real household and business consequences. The forum will provide a much-needed public discussion of the issues by the candidates," he explained. "Not only have insurance companies been canceling homeowner policies or refusing to write new ones but, since the 2025 fires, there have been multiple homeowner lawsuits against more than two dozen insurance companies alleging antitrust/collusion, systematic underinsurance and industry misconduct."

Following the fires, over 40,000 insurance claims have been filed. Over 13,000 claims involved standing homes, leading to accusations that insurers were failing to properly address smoke damage. The state's FAIR insurance program, which many consider to be a last resort, has seen a 146% increase in the number of policies since 2022."

With the highly-criticized incumbent Ricardo Lara term-limited and retiring from public office, there is a crowded field of candidates running in the top-two primary for insurance commissioner in June.

"Right now, this is one of the most consequential statewide regulatory races – one that especially impacts Angeleno residents and businesses," said UCC chairman Mike Stafford. "The decision as to who will preside over state policy on insurance will be pivotal."

Candidates include State Senator Ben Allen (D), former State Senator Steven Bradford (D), California Working Families Party executive director Jane Kim (D), insurance agent Stacy Korsgaden (R), Los Angeles school teacher/Peace & Freedom Party candidate Lalo Vargas, financial analyst Patrick Wolff (D), contractor Eric Thor Aarnio (R), financial services executive Sean Lee (R), Pacific Palisades homeowner and entertainment industry attorney Merritt Farren (R), American Independent insurance agent Keith Davis and cybersecurity company CEO Robert Howell (R).

California's primary is June 2 and the election will be November 3.

Confirmed candidates to date include Allen, Bradford, Farren, Korsgaden, Vargas and Wolff.

"UCC is committed to ensuring that the voices of our business community are part of critical statewide conversations," said Stafford. "The insurance commissioner plays a direct role in shaping the economic stability of our region from small businesses to homeowners. So, it's essential that our community has the opportunity to hear directly from these candidates and learn how they intend to address this very complex problem."

Register for this upcoming forum at form.jotform.com/260701161081141 or visit unitedchambers.org.

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