

» CORONADO NEWS INVESTIGATION: THE TIJUANA SEWAGE CRISIS

Promises, Promises

Broken promises by U.S. and Mexico keep millions of gallons of raw sewage flowing into Pacific Ocean, Coronado, other beaches



Raw sewage flows from a Tijuana canal directly into the Pacific Ocean. Photo by Dennis Wagner.

By DENNIS WAGNER, CRAIG HARRIS, JULIETA SOTO and MADELINE YANG
The Coronado News

TIJUANA, Mexico

In the residential hills of Mexico's sixth-largest city, a place known as Anexa Miramar stands out — and not in a good way.

Despite a glorious view of the Pacific Ocean and coastline all the way to Coronado Shores, a nearby street leading into a barrio has the stench of sewage emanating from a gray torrent pouring out of a manhole and gushing down the middle of a street during a late January morning.

The sewer water spills into a trash-filled arroyo, makes its way to the Tijuana River and empties into the ocean.

It'll take a few days, but human waste and pathogens likely will ride ocean currents to the pristine beach at Coronado, where effluent meets the affluent.

The phenomenon occurs with mind-boggling frequency, especially every time it rains, and just last week a ruptured Mexico pipeline caused millions of gallons of raw sewage to gush into San Diego County.

Yet, the quandary is not new. Alarm bells have gone off from the United States and Mexican governments since at least 1934, when the two sides agreed to cooperate over the "Tijuana River sewage problem," records show.

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"It's disgusting water."

Brian Anderson, Coronado resident

"It's a persistent problem. We end up the victims, and we are not causing it."

Dave Gillingham, Coronado resident

Continuing coverage on TheCoronadoNews.com



A sign warns visitors of Silver Strand State Beach to not enter the Pacific Ocean because of sewage pollution. Photo by Craig Harris.

Equity Conference still a hot-button issue at CUSD board meeting

By JULIETA SOTO
The Coronado News

Equity training, a block schedule for Coronado High school students, and a new contract for teachers were the key issues at the Coronado School Board's monthly meeting on Thursday.

The meeting drew a handful of critics who addressed the board about the district's decision to send 25 educators to an equity conference that cost \$11,500. The district, which has battled racial issues the past two years, on Wednesday issued a two-page press release justifying the expense and training.

However, two people took aim at the board during public comment.

One person mirrored last month's request that the district disclose who the 25 CUSD employees were who attended an Equity Conference last month, and whether the information they learned is already implemented into classrooms.

Ann Sonne said the district has "refused to give the public a list of the staff that attended this conference."

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MOUNTAINEER BAILEY

Coronado Mayor Richard Bailey aiming to scale Mount Everest

By MADELINE YANG
The Coronado News



Coronado Mayor Richard Bailey stands with Mt. Aconcagua in the background. Photo courtesy of Richard Bailey.

There were no signs of human life on this mountain, except for two slow steams of breath appearing and vanishing, appearing and vanishing, appearing and vanishing, leaving the mountain feeling desolate and isolated for a few moments until another pair of breaths arrived.

Storm clouds formed at a distance, continuously rolling in and out. At an altitude of just over 19,000 feet, these clouds were common. The odd quietness of having the whole summit to the two mountaineers was broken by the crackling of the snow beneath their feet and the hissing of the ice as they trudged their way up the slope.

Knee deep in ice and fresh snow, and tied to his guide 30 feet in front of him, Coronado Mayor Richard Bailey felt the weight of survival on his mind. His eyes dimmed and his pupils widened as the light faded from the sky, trying to increase his visibility as much as he could. His headlamp helped, and good thing it did because just ahead was yet another ledge.

» Continued on page 10

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CORONADO

CORONADO LOVE LETTER

Phyl Sarber was a Kentucky girl whose dream came true



When I was growing up in Benton, Kentucky, my dream, when I got big, was to “live in a small town, by the water with perfect weather next to a big city.”

Before graduating college in Lexington, my two girlfriends and I were recruited to teach elementary school in a “fast-growing military town somewhere in Southern California.”

It was a leap of faith driving across the country, but when we arrived in 1956 by ferry to this enchanted, little island, I knew I had found my dream home that just keeps getting better and better.

Coronado’s isolated geography is unique, with its picturesque ambiance, mostly flat terrain, year-round mild, climate, and the best beach in the world.

The heart of Coronado has always been our community made up of a lot of overlapping social networks.

Because of the military, families were always moving, so it’s in our DNA to be a welcoming place for newcomers.

I have a soft spot in my heart for people new to Coronado and like to make sure they feel at home here.

For me, except for the traffic and certain crowded months, I don’t see a big difference in the seven decades that I have lived in Coronado.

The beach is still pristine, our neighborhoods warm and inviting, and we share a small-town ambiance that we love and protect.

Young Navy pilots, SEALS and locals still enjoy local watering holes, except now it’s Costa Azul, Danny’s



Phyl Sarber, center, with family members (L-R) Kelly, McKenzy, Emily and Molly Photo courtesy of the Sarber family

and McP’s instead of the Officers’ Club, Manhattan Room or Mexican Village – where I met my husband, John Sarber, (who was a Captain in the SEAL’s/UDT) after being introduced to him on a blind date.

We were married for almost 50 years before he died in 2006.

There is no place as special as Coronado to raise children. Like many young military families, John and I started having kids pretty quick so that by 1960, we had three kids under four years old — Kurt, Brant and

Kelly; Molly was born in 1969.

We bought our house on Tolita Avenue 1960, and I still live here. Life was idyllic when the kids were growing up; the schools terrific and children had a lot of independence due to safety and ease of biking or walking everywhere.

I am fortunate that my kids moved back to be close to me, although we are still mourning Brant’s death last February.

Covid actually was a positive because we spent so much time

together.

Luckily, I am also close to my grandkids – four girls, Grayson, Emily, Riley and McKenzy and a grandson, Michael.

Family time is so important, and we have fun together. I can’t seem to go anywhere without knowing someone, which is another reason I love Coronado.

When you live in a small town, it’s easy being spontaneous.

A lot of my relationships go back more than 60 years, and we still play bridge, go to restaurants, take walks and participate in Coronado centric activities.

One of my best decisions was to get into real estate. Work never felt like work because most clients became friends. When I announced I was going to retire, so many people said they still needed my help that I had to say that the news of my retirement was grossly exaggerated.

End result?

I still dabble in real estate and live vicariously when new people “discover” Coronado.

I love meeting new people and try to connect them to folks that they would have something in common. Every day I still feel grateful to be here and how lucky I am to love so many people.

As told to Kelly Sarber by Phyl Sarber

Coronado Love Letter will celebrate local residents and why they love Coronado. Contact craig@thecoronadonews.com if you want to submit a story.

this week

23 • thursday

Coronado High School girls beach volleyball at home against Mission Bay, 3:30 p.m.

The CoSA Digital Arts Conservatory presents CODE RED, a 3D exhibit, at Coronado High School’s Black Box, 6-8 p.m.

24 • friday

Bonnie Garmus, author of “Lessons in Chemistry,” will appear at the Performing Arts Theater at Coronado High School, 7 p.m. (A free ticket is required for admission. Go to cplevents.org)

Violinist Alicia Choi and pianist Futaba Niekawa will perform at the Coronado Public Library, 1 p.m.

25 • saturday

The Spoilers Book Club will meet to watch the movie “Hidden Figures” and discuss how it compares to the book at the Coronado Public Library, 2-5 p.m.

27 • monday

The Mystery Book Club will meet to discuss “The Bat” by Jo Nesbo at the Coronado Public Library, 2 p.m.

Coronado High School varsity at home against Eastlake, 3 p.m.

28 • tuesday

The Best of the Best Book Club will meet to discuss books that have won major awards at the Coronado Public Library, 11 a.m.

Coronado High School boys beach volleyball at home against Classical Academy, 3:45 p.m.

1 • wednesday

March 1 – Coronado High School varsity golf at home against Torrey Pines, 3:30 p.m.

STUDENT OF THE WEEK

Coronado Middle School sixth-grader Biparva is “ardent” in winning spelling bee

Aptin Biparva, a Coronado Middle School sixth grade student, clinched the school’s spelling bee title last week after seven rounds that took nearly one and a half hours.

The winning word?

Ardent, which means being enthusiastic or passionate.

Eighth-grader Brenden Price was runner-up.

The competition included 35 spellers in the annual CMS event on Thursday.

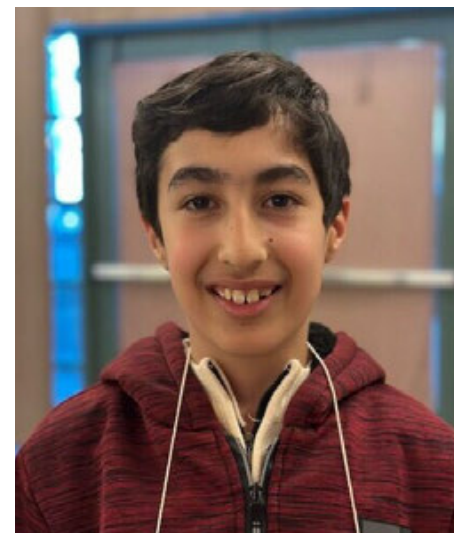
The competitors were a mix of sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students.

“Each English/Humanities class held a class spelling bee and then sent their winner to the school bee. The event was very competitive and Aptin was so excited when he won,” said teacher Kathy Cotten, who coordinated the event.

Biparva moves on to the San Diego County Spelling Bee on March 9, with that winner going to the state bee.

That champion will attend the national competition in Washington DC.

“We are so proud of Aptin and will be cheering him on at the next level,” said Principal Brooke Falar.



PET OF THE WEEK

Nominate your furry friend for Pet of the Week

One thing is clear when you stroll up and down Orange Avenue – just about everybody loves dogs.

The Coronado News also loves dogs. And cats. And birds. And all sorts of furry friends, and we want your submissions for Pet of the Week.

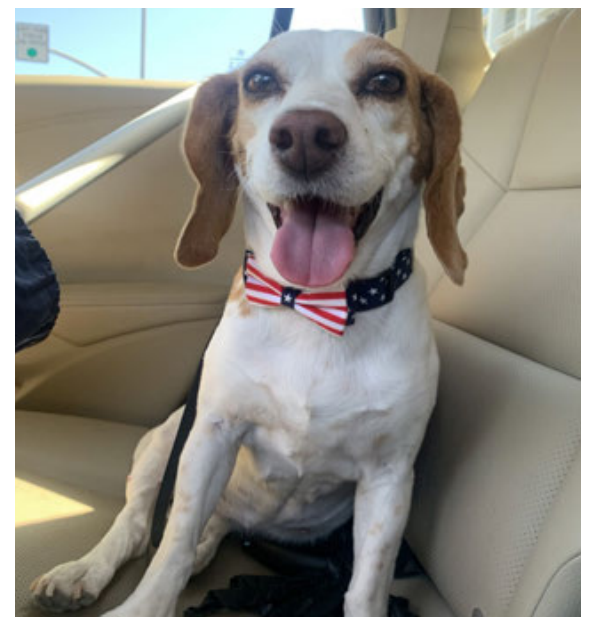
This will be a feature on page 2 in The Coronado News, and it also will be part of our Pets section on thecoronadonews.com, where you can read great stories from Parade Pets.

This week’s winner is Daisy the lemon beagle, who has her own Twitter account: @DaisyLemonBeag.

Daisy is a rescue beagle, and she turns 12 in May. She also loves to relax at the Coronado Dog Beach with her mom and pop, but she’s not much of a fan of other dogs.

Yes, she happens to be the canine of Editor Craig Harris, who promises this will be the only time he allows nepotism or nepawtism at the newspaper.

So, please send your nomination to craig@thecoronadonews.com. Include a picture and a short description of what makes your animal special, and why it should be Pet of the Week.



CONTACT US

For news tips, story submissions and letters to the editor, contact Editor Craig Harris at craig@thecoronadonews.com or 602-509-3613

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OPINION

Meet the editorial board of The Coronado News

So, why would yet another media publication want to come to Coronado?

Perhaps the better question may be: Why wouldn't The Coronado News want to come to a city with its storied history, pristine beaches and amazing people?

Yes, we know numerous outlets have come and gone over the years, but we ask that you give us an opportunity.

Since launching thecoronadonews.com at the end of January, we have profiled key players in the community like Mayor Richard Bailey and former Coronado teacher turned School Board President Renee Cavanaugh.

And, we have a dedicated, full-time reporter to cover City Hall and Coronado schools.

We will cover the U.S. Navy, businesses, community events and have a little fun with "Pet of the Week" and "Coronado Love Letter" on page 2 of our weekly paper.

And we strongly believe in a free press.

We fundamentally agree with a 2022 Northwestern Medill School of Journalism report that found communities without an independent news outlet often turn to social media for their information, resulting in a rise in the spread of misinformation and political polarization.

While our news coverage will be balanced, on this page our editorial board will be independent, and we invite you to send us op-eds and letters to the editor.

Further, we are thrilled that these pages will include editorial cartoonist Lisa Benson, a California native who is one of the few female syndicated editorial cartoonists in America, and Jack Ohman, a Pulitzer Prize winner and fellow Californian.

Currently, our editorial board has three members: Paul Huntsman, Amy Hall and Craig Harris. We are actively looking for another member who has Coronado roots to help us pen editorials for these pages.

Paul Huntsman

Huntsman joins the board with experience in local news. He is credited for saving the Salt Lake Tribune in 2016 during a time when small newspapers were dying out. A year later, the Tribune won a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage on the treatment of sexual assault victims at Brigham Young University.

"My involvement with the Salt Lake Tribune has taught me that good, high quality journalism leads to the betterment of communities," Huntsman said.

Now chairman of the Tribune's board of directors, Huntsman turned the paper into a nonprofit operation, the first metropolitan daily in the U.S. to do so.

He is also the president and CEO of Huntsman Family Investments, a private investment platform.

Prior to these roles, Huntsman

was the senior vice president at Huntsman Gay Global Capital and vice president at Huntsman Corporation. He received a Bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Utah and an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

His mother grew up in San Diego and many of his family members reside in Coronado.

So, he considers the island, where he has part-time residence, his second home.

"I care deeply about what is going on and the future of the community," said Huntsman. "The best way to participate and help in that effort is to ensure that we have high quality journalism."

Huntsman is a lifelong Republican and has strong support for the military, especially the U.S. Navy. He strongly believes in a free-market economy, and wants to see small and large businesses thrive.



Amy Hall

Hall has led several fundraising efforts for nonprofits alongside her husband Derrick, both of whom are cancer survivors.

For the past 20 years, she has chaired academic, athletic and fundraising events through her children's school and club sport affiliations in California and Arizona.

One of her greatest passions has been working hand-in-hand with her children at over two dozen not-for-profit organizations.

Hall graduated from Arizona State University with a degree in Justice Studies and a minor in English. She is currently in her fourth year as a member of The Board of Visitors, Arizona's oldest women's charitable organization,

servicing the needs of women, children and the elderly.

She serves as secretary on the board of directors for JoyBus, a local nonprofit that assists individuals battling cancer by preparing and arranging the delivery of fresh and healthy meals to their homes.

Hall and her husband Derrick created the Pro-State Foundation to bring awareness to and provide support for those diagnosed with prostate cancer.

While a resident of Arizona, Hall first fell in love with San Diego while vacationing during her childhood. She now enjoys spending free time at her part-time home in Coronado with her husband, three adult children and two labs.



Craig Harris

Harris begins his 32nd year in journalism with the News, after most recently being an investigative business reporter for USA TODAY.

Huntsman said he picked the right person to run The Coronado News in Harris.

"I've become acquainted with Craig Harris through my involvement in journalism and have great respect for his talents and abilities, and we're extremely fortunate to

have someone of his caliber to lead our efforts," Huntsman said. "We look forward to engaging The Coronado News with the community."

For much of the past two decades, Harris has vacationed in Coronado and always told his family that it would be his dream to one day run a newspaper here.

He has journalism degrees from the University of Oregon and Arizona State University, and he's been a Republican for three decades. Yet, he's non-partisan when it comes to exposing wrongdoing.

An investigation he did in Arizona under a GOP governor on the wrongful firings of state workers who were mostly women, people of color and LGBTQ resulted in more than 40 getting their jobs back.

"This is a dream come true," Harris said of running the News. "I've been blessed with an amazing staff, and I appreciate so many people in Coronado who have welcomed us – and given us advice."

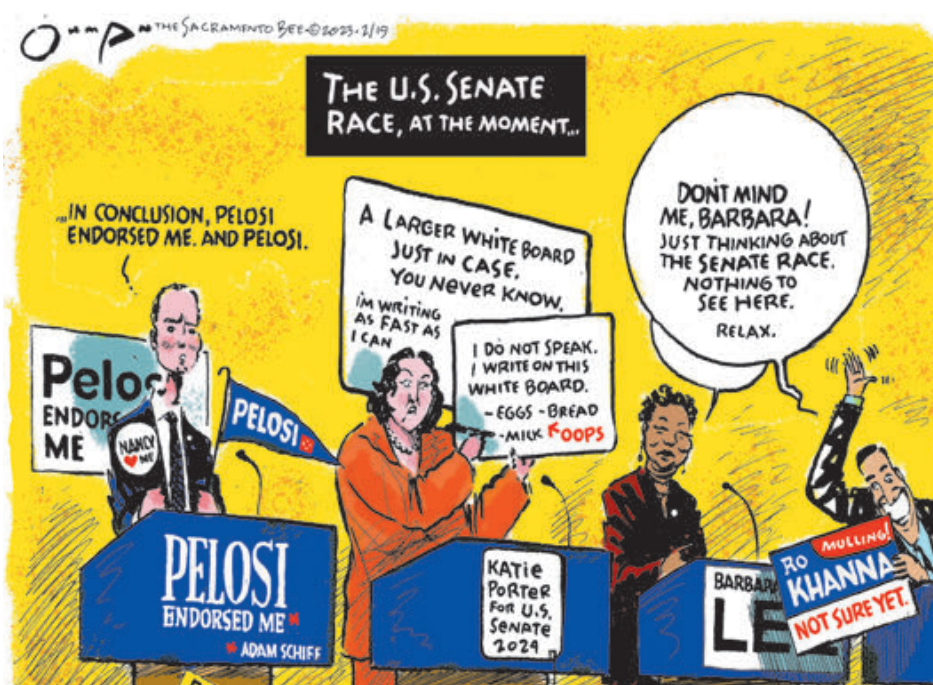
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LISA BENSON



JACK OHMAN



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Will rising interest rates impact Coronado's Hot Real Estate market?

As the housing market continues to experience fluctuations and interest rate hikes, one might think that the Coronado real estate market would be affected by these changes.

However, interest rates, unlike economic conditions or geopolitical events, don't matter as much in luxury real estate markets as they do in other areas of the housing market. Markets like Coronado are less affected by rising interest rates, as high-end buyers aren't as sensitive to these changes.

Instead, they are more motivated by lifestyle and location factors.

For many of these buyers, the ability to purchase a high-end property is not determined by whether interest rates are low or high, but rather by their personal financial situation.

This is because luxury homes are often purchased as second homes or investments, rather than primary residences.

Of course, rising interest rates may still have some impact on the Coronado housing market, but I believe the impact is often less significant in comparison to the broader market.

Also, real estate markets are complex and there are factors that can influence the demand for luxury properties.

Some things to consider as homebuyers are affordability.

I've worked with high-end buyers who have significant financial resources, and they are less affected by rising interest rates compared to first-time homebuyers or middle-class buyers.

A USA TODAY story recently said that a buyer would need to make at least \$100,000 to buy a home in 40% of all U.S. markets. However, Coronado doesn't fit that mold as Census records show the median household income on the island is \$114,559. In addition, buyers in the luxury market are typically less concerned with monthly payments and are more focused on the overall value of the property.



Hello Coronado!

Corey Simone here. Every Friday moving forward, I will be bringing you news, stats and information in the ever changing real estate market. Should you have a topic you want covered please email me at info@simonerealestategroup.com

In Coronado, there's a limited inventory of homes and luxury properties are often unique and difficult to replicate.

This scarcity can create a sense of urgency among buyers.

So, even if interest rates rise, buyers in Coronado are still willing to pay a premium to secure a desirable property.

Another factor is investment potential.

I've found high-end properties are often seen as a safe haven for investors looking to preserve their wealth and generate income, regardless of interest rates.

And luxury real estate is also often viewed as a tangible asset that can provide a hedge against inflation, making it a relatively stable and predictable investment.

Lastly, more than half the buyers in Coronado are cash buyers who do not need to rely on financing to purchase a property. Because of that, changes in interest rates are less relevant to their decision-making process.

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CORONADO

Longtime city librarian, film leader Esquevin now running Coronado Roundtable

By **PERRI SCHWARTZ**
The Coronado News

Christian Esquevin is no stranger to the Coronado community.

He served as director of the Coronado Public Library from 1988 to 2018 and was president of the Coronado Film Festival, of which he is still a board member.

He also became the newest president of the Coronado Roundtable, a monthly meeting that brings speakers to discuss the world and current affairs and local issues within the Coronado community.

The group's first meeting of 2023 was Jan. 27, and the guest speaker was Scott Evans, CEO of Sharp Coronado, Chula Vista and Grossmont.

The Roundtable meets at 10 a.m. on the fourth Friday of every month in the Winn Room of the Coronado Library, 640 Orange Ave. Between 30 to 100 people typically attend, Esquevin said.

Esquevin has lived in Coronado since 1975, and has been retired since 2018. He previously worked for the San Diego County Library before coming to Coronado.



Christian Esquevin stands at the Coronado Public Library where he leads the Coronado Roundtable civic club.

Staff Photo by Willem Quigley

“Coronado is a better place because of Christian Esquevin.”

—Charles Martoglio, retired vice admiral, U.S. Navy

Making library “safe and welcoming”

During his time as director of the Coronado Public Library, Esquevin sought to ensure the library was a safe and welcoming place for individuals of all ages.

“When you are a librarian, you tend to do everything, especially when you get into library management,” he said.

He said his duties included fundraising, bringing artworks to the library, managing conflicts with library users, and architecture of the facility.

He oversaw the library’s expansion, which almost doubled the size of the library from 22,000 square feet to 40,000 square feet, and he has expanded services for military members, students, younger children, and other members of the Coronado community.

“Children’s services and services for teens and high schoolers were important. So as soon as we expanded our services, we made sure there was a space for teens to make sure they felt safe and secure,” said Esquevin.

He was president of the Coronado Island Film Festival the past two years, ending in December, and remains an active board member. Esquevin says that throughout the years, the Coronado Island Film Festival has introduced people to Coronado and its community, and it’s held annually around Veterans Day in November.

Featured speakers last year included Jacqueline Bisset, an international film star and Golden Globe Award winner, and Geena Davis, a two-time Academy Award winner who played in iconic movies “Thelma & Louise” and “A League of Their Own.”

‘Shaped policy’

Nowadays, Esquevin focuses on serving the community as president of the Coronado Roundtable.

This year marks the roundtable’s 40th year, and Esquevin hopes there will be an increase in attendance.

Charles Martoglio, a retired vice admiral for the

U.S. Navy who sits on the board of the Coronado Roundtable, praised Esquevin for his work at the library and his community service.

Martoglio said that Esquevin “has shaped policy at the Coronado Roundtable routinely ensuring relevant speakers” addressed key issues.

“He has advanced the Coronado Island Film Festival from inception, to development, to being a remarkably successful event in Coronado, San Diego, Southern California, and beyond,” Martoglio said.

He added that it was “no exaggeration to say Coronado is a better place because of Christian Esquevin.”

“His understanding of how to take an idea from inception to execution, no matter how complex, has resulted in the preservation of historic and local works of art, a library that serves the community from the very young to the more mature, community activities that generate enthusiasm among residents and revenue for Coronado businesses,” Martoglio said.



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CORONADO



The Coronado News staff pictured here includes (L-R) Sofie Fransen, Nick Hancock, Cade Cavin, Dennis Wagner, Anthony Le Calvez and Craig Harris. Madeline Yang and Julieta Soto are in front.

Meet the team bringing you the Coronado News

The Coronado News, a 24-hour news website and direct mail weekly newspaper, has come to the Crown City.

The free site, thecoronadonews.com, launched on Jan. 31, and will cover Coronado City Hall, schools, small businesses, tourism and the Navy.

In addition, the site will include the venerable Parade magazine and have state and national sports, entertainment and business coverage.

The Coronado News plans to deliver by mail a weekly broadsheet newspaper to all city residents and businesses by the end of February.

The newspaper is led by Craig Harris, who begins his 32nd year in journalism and most recently worked at USA TODAY as a business investigative reporter. Harris was the lead writer when The Arizona Republic of the USA TODAY Network was twice a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, journalism's most prestigious honor.

Joining The News is Dennis Wagner, who earned

a Pulitzer Prize while working for USA TODAY and The Arizona Republic. His career started 46 years ago with a job at the former Coronado Journal.

Staff writers include Julieta Soto and Madeline Yang.

Soto will cover education and some small business stories, and she's a graduate of UC Berkeley where she studied English, Spanish and Journalism. Yang will cover City Hall and the Navy, and she's a graduate of Point Loma Nazarene University.

The News also has a group of interns from Point Loma Nazarene University and San Diego State University who will cover sports, entertainment and do general assignment stories. They are Cade Cavin, Sofie Fransen, Nick Hancock, Anthony Le Calvez and Willem Quigley.

The News also will have an editorial board led by Paul Huntsman, the majority owner of The News, and Amy Hall, a cancer survivor who heads a non-profit that prepares for and arranges the delivery

of fresh and healthy meals to individuals battling cancer.

Huntsman and Hall have homes on Coronado.

The News will begin running editorials when its print edition begins, and it welcomes letters to the editor and guest columns.

Huntsman is credited for saving The Salt Lake Tribune, when he bought the financially struggling newspaper in 2016. A year later, the paper won the Pulitzer Prize. He then turned the paper into a non-profit operation, the first of its kind, and he currently is chairman of The Tribune's board of directors.

"We look forward to engaging the citizens, businesses, and institutions throughout Coronado, and bringing exceptional journalism to the island," Huntsman said. "My mother was born in San Diego, and together, my family has held close ties to Coronado for almost 60 years."

Letters, comments and questions can be sent to craig@thecoronadonews.com

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CORONADO

Hispanic enrollment now one in four Coronado students

By JULIETA SOTO
The Coronado News

The number of Hispanic students enrolled in Coronado schools has continued to increase during the past five years, mirroring a San Diego County trend, school officials told The Coronado News.

Coronado Unified School District in September reported in Student Demographics Assessments Results that it had 2,782 total students in its four schools. In this student body, 24.3% of students were Hispanic. That's a roughly 5 percentage point increase from 2016.

Across the district's four-schools, the percentage of Hispanic students ranged from 19.1% to 26.8% at each school, with Coronado High School leading with the largest number.

The growth in Hispanic students comes after Coronado High School made national news in 2021, when the boys basketball team was stripped of its regional championship title following a post-game tortilla-throwing incident against a largely Hispanic team from Orange Glen High School.

Two Hispanic high school students said that they have experienced racial tensions at Coronado High School, while one Hispanic mother said she believes the district has a safe, inclusive environment for her three children and the pandemic brought more Hispanics to Coronado.

Superintendent Karl Mueller expressed a commitment to upholding district-wide efforts that may ensure success for students coming from minority backgrounds.

"We are committed to connecting, challenging, and championing every child in our care, and are excited to expand and strengthen experiences which are purposefully designed to achieve our objectives," he said.

The Coronado School Board last June provided an update about student services that considered building minority students' sense of school connectedness and that participation in the school community was a space for growth.

This update came after a California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) reported that Hispanic and Latino students were twice as likely to experience and report harassment compared to their White student peers.

The student services statement referenced the district's commitment to a three-year plan to support positive student outcomes, or the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) that also emphasized "no tolerance for language, such as slurs, that target a student or group of people based on their identity."

Coronado Schools spokeswoman Maria Simon said the district resembles San Diego County, which saw the growth of Hispanic students grow from 30% to 34%.

However, while Hispanics compose about one-fourth of all Coronado students, they make up 17% of Coronado's population, according to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau data.

Simon said that the term "Hispanic" entails a definition provided by the California Department of Education (CDE), which is "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race." The term, 'Spanish origin,' can be used in addition to 'Hispanic or Latino,' according to the state Department of Education.

"Someone who is Hispanic or Latino could see themselves as belonging to any one or more than one race," Simon said.

"If a respondent does not see a race group that applies after selecting Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, and after the definitions or other help has been provided, the respondent might leave the race part blank."

From 2016-2019, the number of Hispanic students in Coronado remained at 20%. However, the number increased to 23% in the 2020-21 school year, and has continued to grow to where nearly one in every four students is Hispanic.

When compared to other ethnic groups, the Hispanic percentage, about 25%, is significantly higher, with Asian, Black, and Filipino students composing 1% each of the student body. The district reported that 57% of its students were White in 2021-22.

"Tortilla incident" still a problem

Hannah Gutierrez, 15, is a sophomore in Digital Media at the Coronado School of the Arts (CoSA), a specialty school within Coronado High School.

She said that as an "off-island" student from Chula Vista, she has experienced some instances of discrimination.

"Freshman [year] kind of felt like all eyes kept on me, specifically after the tortilla incident," she said. "That kind of made me feel a little like pointed out."

Gutierrez began high school at CHS as a freshman in the fall after the tortilla controversy, and



"I think one of the biggest marks is the tortilla incident that everybody knows about."

-Coronado High student Lucia Reynoso Torres

she said more recently some kids at the high school have recently made use of a racial slur.

"It's making fun of Hispanics, the stereotype that they only eat beans," she said.

She added that during the summer of her freshman year, she experienced offensive comments by some freshmen and middle schoolers at the Coronado Public Library.

"They started following me around," she said. "They kept asking me, 'Hey, why are you here?' One of them actually said, 'go back to your country,'"

She said she told library officials about the harassment, and she said the students were forced to leave the library.

Gutierrez said she was shocked that other students would make racist remarks to her.

"Last year was a mess. Especially with the incident. Now things are slightly a little bit more calmer. The school's been treating me pretty nice," she said.

Gutierrez considers the school's inclusivity efforts as an area of growth.

"The teachers are actually really open about it and they talk about it, which is really nice," she said.

Lucia Reynoso Torres, 16, is a sophomore who shared that her experience as a Hispanic student at Coronado High School has been okay.

"I come from Tijuana, so like overall, even when I was little, like sometimes my speech patterns in English, I can mess up and get nervous," she said. "And sometimes, you know, people usually get laughed at bad if they have like a thick accent ... I notice that. ... Sometimes I do see insecurities of Hispanic students here."

Torres said a person's experience is greatly influenced by their friends and acquaintances.

"At the end of the day it's like, you know, we all have our experiences. We all eventually like face some sort of discomfort and peer comments," Torres said.

She added that some students are more accepting of others, but there are still racial tensions at the school and across the district.

"I think one of the biggest marks is the tortilla incident that everybody knows about," she said. "That's why we had, like, protest over here due to that situation and you know, what had happened."

A parent's experience

However, Cecilia Garcia, 45, said she's had a different experience as a Hispanic parent in Coronado.

She considers Coronado schools to have an "inclusive environment."

Since moving from Mexico City five years ago, Garcia's three children have attended Silver Strand Elementary and Coronado Middle schools. Garcia considers the growth in Hispanic students a result of the pandemic.

"A lot of families moved here during the pandemic," she said. "Many of us live here because it is a safer place to raise our kids, where they also have more freedom."

Apart from her role as Senior Director at Accenture, a leadership strategy consultancy, Garcia remains involved with her kids' education.

"I was a PTO Board member for Silver Strand for 2 years, and I still continue to participate as a PTO member," she said. "We have a chat of all Hispanic moms in 6th grade, and we make sure that when new Hispanic kids arrive to this community we support them and include them, although I am sure we could do more."

She added she was "incredibly grateful for the Hispanic community in the Cays and in Coronado."

"It is a very united and supporting community, and we help each other very much as we have this shared identity and culture," she said.

Navigating bilingual education with kids is another relevant aspect of their education, Garcia said.

"They speak Spanish at home," she said. "I wish the school could offer a full Spanish immersion program, since I have to personally teach them to better write and read in Spanish."

Garcia said her kids have received help through the English language support system, and they are actively involved in sports, school dances, and camp.

"All three absolutely love their school," she said. "They are performing really well, they are super involved in sports."

She said that neither she nor her children have experienced any discrimination and many of her daughter's non-Hispanic friends have told her daughter, "I wish I could speak Spanish."

CUSD's future plans

The district, meanwhile, is working towards building minority students' sense of school connectedness and participation in the community.

Simon, the spokeswoman, said the District English Language Advisory Committee is composed of parents, staff, and community members, and it's designated to advise a specific school on English Learner program services.

"Additionally, the district conducts educational experiences that promote cultural understanding, especially through the arts and music at all grade levels," she said. "Last year, Village Elementary School hosted 'Meet & Greets' during Visual and Performing Arts classes, where students met virtually with professional mariachi musicians through the Classics4Kids organization."

Simon shared that there are clubs at Coronado High School which are related to Hispanic culture and heritage.

Another achievement in the district is the number of students receiving the State Seal of Bilingualism, as it has increased throughout the last few years.

Coronado High School students who received the award rose from 27 students in 2017-18 to 42 students in 2022-23. However, recipients' racial data is not available, Simon said.

In considering the past with the Coronado High School boys basketball team, the district has implemented educational training.

Mueller, the superintendent, said teachers participated in training from the Bystander Challenge from National Conflict Resolution Center (NCRC).

Meanwhile, spring sports teams and CoSA students are participating in NCRC's The Art And Science Of High Performance Teams workshops, which are expected to be completed by the end of school year 23-24.

School Board Trustee Alexia Palacios-Peters, in a statement, said she is working to ensure that a diverse perspective remains at the governing board level in representation of students pertaining to the various subgroups across the district.

"I believe in the district vision of 'Every Student, Every Day,'" she said. "I believe that as a trustee, I bring a diverse perspective to the board as a parent of current students, military spouse, and Latina. Working with the board, we will look at data around our subgroups and allocate resources to support students with their academic achievement."

CORONADO



Coronado wants change with SANDAG regional government system that shuts out city's influence

By **MADLINE YANG**
The Coronado News

When it comes to doing the business of metropolitan planning at the San Diego Association of Governments or SANDAG, small cities like Coronado have a voice — but it's pretty small.

And that's rubbing some members of the Coronado City Council the wrong way.

A board of directors composed of mayors, council members and county supervisors from each San Diego County's local governments controls SANDAG, which addresses regional issues. It also is the metropolitan planning and regional transportation organization.

But a weighted voting system enacted in 2018 from a state law gives more power to San Diego County's larger government jurisdictions by giving them more votes. Coronado, one of the smaller cities, has just one vote in the weighted system, and council members want a change.

However, even though Coronado and other small cities in San Diego County like Imperial Beach and Del Mar would like it re-examined, if they voted on it, it would probably lose...because of the weighted vote.

The City Council on February 7 discussed the problem, and it's not the first time Coronado and these other smaller cities have expressed their dissatisfaction.

San Diego County and the city of San Diego are allotted a total of 57 votes out of 100. That gives those government entities a majority, regardless of the votes in cities like Coronado, Imperial Beach and Del Mar, which also have one vote each. That means small cities have very little input over SANDAG's plans and agendas.

In January, the San Diego Union Tribune reported that Republicans and more than a half dozen cities stormed out of a public SANDAG meeting after Democrat leaders voted to install two high-profile elected officials to oversee the agency.

Coronado City Council member John Duncan said all the smaller cities and medium cities felt like they weren't being heard or having the chance to discuss issues at SANDAG because every weighted vote shuts down those communities.

Duncan said if a question or concern was brought up at SANDAG, a weighted vote was called, and SANDAG was able to shut down the request for comments.

"I'm hoping for a change," Duncan says. John Kirk, general counsel at SANDAG, could not be reached.

Mayor Richard Bailey directed city staff to work with lawmakers to return to the previous voting system, which included a tally-vote to include the input from all cities within the region as well as a weighted vote on matters that affected a broader, county population.

The council voted to keep this issue on its goals for 2023, along with improving beach water quality and increasing the supply and affordability of housing while retaining local decision-making.

Meanwhile, the issue of affordable housing was one of the more recent legal matters that had been overturned by this weighted voting system.

Late last year, Coronado asked to lower its state-mandated affordable housing obligations due to lack of space and other federal restrictions imposed on the city, home to Naval Base Coronado, but this discussion at SANDAG never happened.

This resulted in a new requirement of affordable housing jumping from 50 units to 912 units.

In regards to the issue of the weighted vote, Council member Casey Tanaka advised to proceed with caution.

"I very much support what Mayor Bailey is saying," Tanaka said. "But there are other nuances as to why other cities support or oppose the weighted vote...[it's to] make sure that we're not tilting at windmills or that we're not making our status amongst the other cities in the county or the state worse."

The weighted vote continues to spark dissatisfaction among Coronado and other smaller cities, but making sure that a more diverse coalition of groups is formed is important in order to move forward on regional governmental issues, says council member Tanaka.

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Coronado Mayor Richard Bailey aiming to scale Mount Everest

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About two boots wide, blocks of ice to his right and a steep slope to his left with nowhere to go except forward, Bailey remembers this being the first time in his adult life that he felt scared. He realized he was just a speck of dust on this massive mountain.

This was Cotopaxi, the second highest peak in Ecuador and the first mountain he ever summited in 2022. Cotopaxi is just the beginning for him. Bailey just finished hiking his second mountain, Mt. Aconcagua, in January.

"I remember getting to the top and just being, like, 'why am I so tired?' I was shot," he says in an interview with The Coronado News.

"Mayor" Bailey

Bailey, a tall and lean 36-year-old with a shaved head, is not on the peak of a snowy mountain in Ecuador anymore.

On this wet, early January morning, he's in his mayoral chair in his office at Coronado City Hall, idly playing with a fidget toy in his hands.

He clicks it every few moments. "MAYOR" is labeled outside his door, and he glances at his phone every time the screen lights up. When his blue eyes pull away, he seems to stare off miles into the distance as if he's back reliving those fearful moments on Cotopaxi – even though he's only looking at his desk, and his desk is less than a foot away from him.

"It didn't occur to me until, like, a day or two later when I was reflecting back on it, that the reason I was so tired wasn't because of the physical challenges, it was because of all the other environmental conditions that I wasn't accustomed to," he says.

Between making sure he or his guide weren't plummeting into crevasses that lined the mountain and sliding past ledges a foot wide, he said his fear took a toll on him mentally

and wore him down – manifesting in his physical weariness.

Bailey, first elected as Coronado mayor in 2016 at the age of 30 (making him the youngest ever to hold the post in the city's history), isn't a stranger to physical challenges.

Growing up in San Diego, he played baseball and basketball making it on the varsity teams in high school and in college at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo he ran his very first marathon. Several years later, he ran his first ultramarathon, runs that are classified as at least 100 miles long. And, he's run four of them ever since.

"That was also a real humbling experience," said Bailey, describing the first ultramarathon he had run.

Those six days of ultramarathoning consisted of 120 miles of trail running over the Colorado Rockies. Bailey had never run on a trail before this, much less roughly the distance from Coronado to Los Angeles.

This was something in common with Cotopaxi being the first mountain he had accomplished: a heightened sense of ability or knowledge, he thinks, tentatively, that was quickly humbled by the reality of pushing his body and his mind to places they had never been before.

Mountaineering Plans

Mt. Aconcagua was his next challenge.

But this time, Bailey says he's ready for the mental game he has to play in order to summit 23,000 feet, the highest peak in the Americas.

"It's an absolute mental grind. The weather conditions are pretty rough," he says.

Around 3,500 people attempt to hike this mountain every year but only about 60% of them make it to the top, according to a travel group known as Kandoo Adventures. The tallest mountain outside of Asia, Bailey believes that Aconcagua will most likely test his mental capabilities more so than his physical capabilities.



Mayor Bailey and his team on top of Mt. Aconcagua. Photo courtesy of Richard Bailey.

Now that this mountain is accomplished, the next is Mt. Everest in May; a typically two-month long hike that involves extensive training, altitude adjustments and climbing an elevation of 29,000 feet. "That's the thing about mountaineering, it's not fun in the moment – at all," Bailey says with a small dry laugh. "A lot of people do it because it's that sense of accomplishment, and that whole idea of not conquering the mountain but conquering yourself to get there."

Accomplishment.
Satisfaction.
Fulfillment.

Being the mayor of Coronado and an athlete, Bailey feels all those things, but they are brief. He says he wants to live in pursuit of these traits,

because as the old saying goes, all glory is fleeting.

Whether it's a yearning for self fulfillment by pushing himself to do something he's never done before, or fulfillment coming from being mayor and being able to benefit the community, Bailey says that the greatest fulfillment does come from helping others.

And also, maybe, hiking Mt. Everest.

"I think [fulfillment] is about, I think it's a combination of finding your own personal limits and then applying your own skill sets to be in service to others. But if you don't feel personally fulfilled, it's really hard to be of service to others for very long," he says, nodding slowly.

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Equity Conference remains hot-button issue at CUSD board meeting

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The district in its press release disclosed the names of a few educators who went.

Another audience member questioned why the district spent \$20,000 for an Equality and Excellence Audit from the SDSU Research Foundation, but Trustee Scot Youngblood defended the expenditure.

“The goal here is to try to get someone to come in and review our educational practices and if there’s a chance that they can help with that... then I think that it is a worthy undertaking based on what I’ve been informed,” he said. “However, I do think we need to continue to be vigilant about what it might contain.”

4X4 Committee

While the board didn’t publicly discuss the equity conference, it did focus on the 4x4 Committee, which is to perform a comprehensive evaluation of the new block bell schedule at the high school.

The committee’s purpose is to assess the impact on student achievement and opportunity for academic growth with an aim toward identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement under the block schedule.

The 4x4 committee has met twice and unanimously decided to have weekly closed meetings and produce a report by May 18.

The group will publish its calendar of meetings online and keep input and data confidential.

For any communication, the community may reach out to Trustees Alexia Palacios-Peters and Youngblood.

Board President Renee Cavanaugh encouraged the audience to reach out to both trustees to ensure everyone’s opinion is heard and considered.

However, this did not sit well with Sonne, who shared two public comments.

“At the January board meeting, Ms. Cavanaugh insisted that two board members serve as non-voting members on a 4x4 committee charged with evaluating the schedule after a year and a half of implementation,” she said. “The motion pass clearly stated that these meetings are to be open to the public. It didn’t say that the first meeting could be closed and I understand now that there’ve been two closed meetings.”

She added several community members were turned away from the first meeting.

Other issues

In other matters:

The district and teachers union are set to have



Coronado Schools Superintendent Karl Mueller reported at the February school board meeting that all four district schools received a prestigious award. Staff photo by Willem Quigley.

“multiple opportunities for public input” on a new contract, according to Deputy Superintendent Donnie Salamanca. He noted that salaries and benefits for school employees are over 80% of the district’s budget. He said negotiations with the teachers union will begin after the March school board meeting.

The Village Elementary School choir, about 20 students, performed “A Salute to our presidents” and “All in.” Concluding this spotlight presentation, they thanked boosters for funding a field trip to the Museum of Making Music in Carlsbad next month.

Safe Harbor, a 25-year-old organization, presented its low-cost counseling services to the Coronado community.

Trustees shared their school visits for the month, with Malachy Sandie learning about CoSA’s digital arts and Palacios-Peters observing classrooms and learning about seating arrangements at Silver Strand Elementary School.

Cavanaugh and Superintendent Karl Mueller also attended Rocky Herron’s presentation about the dangers of fentanyl use at Coronado Middle School in late January. Mueller is looking at potential dates for Herron to return in the spring.

Mueller also reported that all four of the district’s schools received the prestigious purple star designation, which seeks to reduce the burden on military connected students and their families.

The program signals which schools are the most committed and best equipped to meet unique

needs, he said.

In another item, Cavanaugh thanked three donors for donating \$15,550 to support Coronado USD students.

The board moved onto nominating Antrim, Delia Dominguez Cervantes (Chula Vista ESD), and Rhea Stewart (Cardiff ESD) for the 2023 California School Boards Association Delegate Assembly Representatives. The CSBA Delegate Assembly is the “primary policy making body of CSBA” and representatives are nominated by member boards in subregions.

During the Approval for 2023 Governance Protocols, the board discussed the implementation for future action items from public comments. Although Cavanaugh aimed to integrate a method requiring a written request to allow public comments to become action items, the board decided to abide by existing practices.

This means that it remains the trustees’ responsibility to consider public comments and solicit a second trustee for support in bringing forward topics for future discussions as agenda items.

College Board request

Another item was to approve a letter to the College Board.

This letter asked the College Board trustees to offer flexible options for Advanced Placement (AP) Exams.

At the January meeting, Sandie said that the block schedule helps CHS students by allowing them to take more classes.

However, the students who take AP courses during the fall, must wait until the Spring semester to take respective AP exams.


The letter considers that “once-a-year testing time, while perhaps easier to administer and manage, does not necessarily promote meaningful assessment, efficiency and equity in education.” For this reason, the district wants “equitable opportunity for students whose only option is to take a fall term AP course.”

However, no action was taken during this meeting, as Antrim and Palacios-Peters will revise a letter to be “more aggressive” while “keeping the nice stuff” to ensure that change can come from this request, they said.

During the ACT Report by union president Jennifer Landry, she shared that 32 new educators have been hired by the district since August, a rise from the usual 10.

However, the lack of instructional aides has impacted the classrooms because students know they need help but do not have a comfort level with other educators or substitutes who they may not know too well, she said.

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» CORONADO NEWS INVESTIGATION: THE TIJUANA SEWAGE CRISIS

Broken promises by U.S., Mexico keep millions of gallons of raw sewage flowing into Pacific Ocean — and Coronado

» Continued from page 1

Decades later, effluvium from overtaxed and outdated Mexican sewer systems has continued to surge onto San Diego County shores.

By 1988, according to a San Diego Reader article that year, experts warned that unmitigated releases of raw sewage would exceed 100 million gallons per day by the turn of the century, rendering San Diego County's shoreline unusable from the border to Coronado.

Then, in 2017, a monstrous spill dumped more than 143 million gallons of raw sewage into the Tijuana River, polluting the ocean and creeping into Coronado.

Today, bright yellow “SEWAGE CONTAMINATED WATER” signs pepper the beaches of Coronado, closing access to locals and hurting tourism for a city that hosts 2 million visitors annually.

Even worse, the sewage-related pathogens sicken hundreds of people each summer day.

According to a computer simulation conducted by Falk Feddersen, an oceanography professor at UC San Diego's Scripps Institute, some 34,300 people each year are likely sickened by the contamination at Imperial Beach alone.

Those affected include not just lifeguards and recreationists, but U.S. Border Patrol agents working in the Tijuana River and Navy SEAL trainees along the coast.

“It affects everyone,” said Chris Harris, a former U.S. Border Patrol agent who was hospitalized with large red splotches on his body from sewer contamination prior to retiring in June 2018. “And, it's still bad.”

Harris said he became gravely ill from coming into contact with brown effluent while arresting two illegal immigrants, and that there are “big chunks of the year” the SEALs can't train off their base in Coronado because the water is polluted.

David Gibson, who leads the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board, said Navy officials have expressed frustration for more than a decade in stakeholder meetings about the sewage altering or postponing SEAL training.

Kevin Dixon, a Navy spokesman, did not respond to several requests for comment.

Simple answer?

With this problem reoccurring for decades, one would think there's a simple answer: Just fix Tijuana's sewage infrastructure.

But, after nearly a century of political rhetoric, international negotiations and litigation, the contamination only has worsened.

Finally, last year, civil settlements were reached in a trio of environmental lawsuits against the International Boundary and Water Commission, an entity formed in 1889 for applying boundary and water treaties between the U.S. and Mexico.

Authorities on both sides of the border announced a grand plan: American and Mexican taxpayers would be spending a half-billion dollars or more to rehabilitate public works projects in Tijuana and to renovate the strained 75-acre South Bay International Wastewater Treatment plan just north of the border by San Ysidro.

However, what wasn't clearly spelled out is noteworthy: It will take at least 3 years to break ground on the new plant, officials told The Coronado News, and the price tag may be much higher than amounts publicly disclosed.

Further, so far, only a portion of the required funding has been allocated, and political gamesmanship in Congress delayed by two years the transfer in December of \$300 million from the Environmental Protection Agency to the IBWC to begin wastewater work in the Tijuana River Valley.

Meanwhile, in Anexa Miramar, the simplicity that seems commonsensical is, in fact, complicated.

Single water hose for 29 families

In Coronado, and nearly every other American city, residents expect a steady stream of clean water to instantly flow from the tap.

They also expect toilets to flush into wastewater lines leading to a treatment system.

But that hasn't happened in Anexa Miramar, roughly 24 miles south of Coronado, since 2015, when part of the barrio was cut off after a hillside gave way, hinting at the city's sketchy planning and regulation.

At least 19 houses tumbled into a canyon. The mudslide severed utility lines and wiped out garbage truck access.

Today, residents from 29 homes share water from a single, black, garden-style hose.

Further, some have no trash service, which explains why the canyon resembles a giant dumpster. And crime in the area is such a concern that Mexican National Guard troops patrol nearby.

“It is a big problem, because since the landslide we have had no water pressure,” said 70-year-old Guadalupe Hernandez Ovalle, speaking in Spanish. “They (city officials) do not solve anything.”

Hernandez Ovalle and others say they have pleaded with municipal leaders for improved public services, but nothing happens.

Government officials say they don't have money or manpower to meet the burgeoning needs in an urban center that according to MacroTrends, a U.S.



data research firm, has more than doubled its population since 1996 to more than 2.2 million.

San Diego, by comparison, is America's eighth largest city with nearly 1.4 million people.

Stench “becomes unbearable”

Hernandez Ovalle is originally from the Mexican state of Sinaloa, and has lived in Colonia Anexa Miramar for 43 years.

She and her husband built their home in this neighborhood from the ground up.

Hernandez Ovalle said that there are two visible hose pipes that lie right outside her entrance door.

The green one is for sewage that runs through the neighborhood from the top of the mountain, and the black one is meant to supply water for her and 28 other families.

The damaged pipes have affected her livelihood because when water fails to run or the stench from the sewage hose becomes unbearable, she almost immediately calls the “local office” in Tijuana.

But, Tijuana officials only use a band aid approach, she said, fixing the tubes but nothing else.

Hernandez Ovalle said because there is no sewage system, the neighborhood has been forced to live in the same manner as four decades ago.

“When we came here, there was no water, there was no electricity, there was nothing,” she said.

In the late 1980s, she said water was put in, but eventually the underground pipes broke in 2015, and there's been no effort to repair or replace them.

“I have put up with a lot, that the hose should be underground,” she said.

Hernandez Ovalle remains hopeful that change will come from Proyecto Fronterizo de Educación Ambiental, a grassroots environmental organization that works to protect Tijuana's ocean, streams, and coasts.

She said the group is working to convert the trash-filled canyon into a local park.

Until these changes begin, however, the hoses highlight the city's failure to meet the residents' health and living needs.

Colonia Anexa Miramar cannot expect the pipes to be repaired any time soon, according to a joint statement from two Mexican officials.

Secretary for Water Management, Treatment and Protection Agency for the State of Baja California (SEPROA) José Armando Fernández Samaniego and Director of Tijuana State Public Services Commission (CESPT) Victor Daniel Amador Barragán said the 2015 landslide compromised the community.

Further, they said, “various setbacks of the Tijuana City Council” have delayed in getting the area repaired.

Decaying and leaking pipelines

Tijuana's growth was spurred by immigrants stymied while striving to get into the United States, and by a proliferation of maquiladoras that pay as little as \$12 a day to assemble and export goods.

The population boom, in turn, spawned housing shortages that led developers to go on building binges – often with minimal oversight.

So, consider: With more than 2 million people living in Tijuana's metro area, multiply that by the number of times each toilet is used and the magnitude of the problem becomes clearer.

Especially when Baja California officials say 10% of the city's households do not even have sewage hookups, according to a 2022 San Diego Union-Tribune report.

On top of that, Tijuana's pipelines are decaying and leaking, the factories are emptying toxic wastes into the system, and existing treatment plants, pumps and holding ponds cannot handle the volume, said local environmental leader Margarita Diaz.

Thus, most of the contaminated water that arrives on Coronado's shoreline occurs mainly in two different seasons:

In summer, north-moving ocean currents carry untreated human wastes – along with bacteria, viruses and other pathogens – up the coast from a defunct sewage treatment facility at a place called Punta Bandera, six miles south of Tijuana.

The overtaxed San Antonio de los Buenos plant discharges an estimated 55 million gallons per day.

In the wintertime, when rains swell the Tijuana River and adjacent arroyos, sewage infrastructure gets swamped.

The South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant near San Ysidro is designed to handle an average of 25 million gallons of sewage a day, but it cannot cope with the volume.

Therefore, according to the EPA, an average 109 million gallons of sewage mixed with storm runoff flow into the ocean each day during wet weather, contaminating beaches.

Exasperation growing

Count Coronado residents Brian Anderson and Dave Gillingham among those exasperated with the ongoing problem.

Anderson, who served nine years in the Marines and lives near the Hotel del Coronado, said he refuses to go into the ocean after rain storms.

“It's disgusting water,” said Anderson, walking his black Border Collie-Labrador mix, Sierra, near the beach after a mid-December downpour.

“And you don't want to take your dog to the dog beach and get sick.”

Gillingham runs Coronado Island Realty and has lived on the island on and off since 1966.

He said the problem is “just awful.”

“It's a persistent problem. We end up the victims, and we are not causing it,” Gillingham said. “The beaches have been closed more (in 2022) than in the past. ... If they need to go over and help build the plant, it's to our benefit.”

Complex problem

The unsatisfying answer is that this is more than just an engineering problem, and attempts to fix it invariably get drowned in a cesspool of collateral issues.

For roughly 100 years, complications of international law, public health, funding, politics, environ-

mental regulation, water rights, urban planning and culture have stymied or stalled almost every effort.

The obstacles are like a Gordian knot, interconnected and seemingly impossible to untangle.

Just one example: A decades-long flow of migrants to the border, coupled with poverty and housing shortages, has made the normally dry Tijuana River channel a haven for the homeless, especially beneath bridges.

On a recent visit in Tijuana, Diaz, the environmentalist leader and director of Proyecto Fronterizo de Educacion Ambiental, watched birds swoop and land in the gray water before muttering ruefully, “When you see the seagulls, you know it's poop.” Diaz, whose organization works to protect Tijuana's ocean streams, said the homeless rely on river water for bathing, but also add to the human waste.

Because many of them struggle with drug addiction, diseases such as hepatitis proliferate. And, when rains transform the river into a sewage torrent, pathogens are swept into ocean currents heading north.

Reaching goals “seem simple”

Still, of all the obstacles, bureaucratic inertia appears to be the most intransigent.

Tijuana's sewage mess is a binational problem between sovereign nations.

The river not only divides countries, but swerves in and out of each. That means every proposed remedy must survive a double-whammy of treaties, laws, government agencies, regulations and funding requirements.

On the U.S. side, a partial list of key players includes Congress, the State Department, the EPA, IBWC, Army Corps of Engineers, Fish and Game Department, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, the cities of San Diego, Coronado and others as well as a plethora of other agencies.

Beyond those are so-called environmental stakeholders such as the Sierra Club, Surfrider Foundation and construction companies.

Most of those major players have mirror agencies



Raw sewage from a Tijuana canal pours straight into the Pacific Ocean. Photo by Madeline Yang.



Sewage problems are so bad in Tijuana that raw sewage flows into the streets of one neighborhood. Photo by Dennis Wagner.



(Far left) A landslide in Tijuana neighborhood is being used as a dumpsite. Photo by Dennis Wagner.

(Middle) A green sewage pipe and black water pipe are exposed in the streets of a Tijuana neighborhood. Photo by Dennis Wagner.

Tijuana woman Guadalupe Hernandez Ovalle lives in a Tijuana neighborhood with an exposed sewage pipe in the street. Photo by Madeline Yang.

(and organizations in Mexico.

Working together involves different languages, laws and cultures. Disputes about how to address the sewage problem lead to political infighting, lawsuits and paralysis.

In a 2003 San Diego Law Review article, attorney Ross Campbell summed up the Tijuana sewage conundrum:

“At first glance, reaching the basic goals of treating the sewage and eliminating the risks to human health seem simple. However, diplomatic, technological, political, and legal disputes have resulted from every effort to resolve the issue. Such disputes have delayed progress and have ultimately prevented the implementation of an effective solution.”

Meanwhile, the IBWC, which by treaties and laws is considered the lead agency in dealing with border dilemmas, has by all accounts a checkered history.

Maria-Elena Giner, IBWC commissioner, conceded that her agency has chronically failed to prevent, monitor, report and clean up sewage discharges.

The daughter of an immigrant and the first Latina to hold her post, Giner previously served as general manager of the Border Environment Co-operation Commission developing environmental infrastructure along the U.S.-Mexico line with the North American Development Bank. (The two entities have since merged.)

Giner said she thought Tijuana's sewage issues were being addressed when she left that position in 2017 to do a dissertation on the impact of sanitation on public health.

Then, in 2021, President Biden appointed her to the IBWC and she discovered almost nothing had been accomplished and wondered, “What happened?”

She declined to identify culprits, and insisted the commission and EPA are now on course to break the historic pattern of failure.

“I have many fingers of blame on that issue,” Giner added.

Coming Next Week: Bitter feuding, wasted money, treaty violations. A history of broken promises.

NAVY

Navy Junior ROTC class learning to fly drones

By JULIETA SOTO
The Coronado News

The Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (NJROTC) class at Coronado High School is learning to fly drones this year.

All the students enrolled in NJROTC, also known as “Islander Company,” collaboratively plan a weekly schedule that lays out expectations and job responsibilities ensuring a successful balance between practicing for various competitions and arranging study halls related to NJROTC or other courses.

There currently are about 10 cadets on the drone team for an upcoming competition on Feb. 25.

“The company is divided up into platoons, which are the cadets that are in each particular class period. So each class period will have one or two platoons,” said NJROTC Senior Naval Science Instructor William Nesbitt.

Nesbitt is a retired U.S. Navy Commander with a Bachelor of Science degree from the Naval Academy and a Master of Science in Operations Research from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey. Nesbitt joined Coronado High School in the 2022-23 academic school year.

Apart from drill, or marching, cadets have physical training that incorporates calisthenics and various sports and games to enhance their physical fitness.

Nesbitt added that NJROTC merges academic aspects with several of these disciplines which inculcate important values.

“It’s a program that is designed to develop cadets from an educational standpoint, physical fitness, character development, personal responsibility, leadership, teamwork, community service,” he said.

The program also has strong support from sailors and Marines.

In September, sailors and Marines from the Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group visited the school’s program to provide an opportunity for them to discuss their diverse backstories, jobs, and experiences in the military, followed by a joint group physical training session.

Navy Junior ROTC growing

And across the country, high schools are integrating the Navy Junior ROTC program.

According to the Naval Education and Training Command website, there were 583 NJROTC Units in January 2017, and Nesbitt said that there are now about 600 participating high schools.

Over the course of the entire school year, a total of six NJROTC classes, with approximately 15 students each, are taught by Nesbitt and Naval Science Instructor Thomas Hellwig.

“We are teaching partners, and we are working together constantly to pursue the objectives of the program and to teach the students. It’s a 100% full collaboration,” Nesbitt said.

A school day for Islander Company begins with the platoon commander, a senior student, forming the students outside the classroom for muster, instruction and inspection.

During this time, the platoon commander will share the schedule and updates. On uniform days, they will check that cadet uniforms meet appropriate standards. After muster instruction and inspection, cadets enter the classroom, where Nesbitt and Hellwig go over what will be covered that day.

Passing (FAA) regulations

Nesbitt said Islander Company’s current progress on flying drones is in the initial stages.

“That is a new unit that we added this year, and we first started flying drones in December,” Nesbitt said.

He explained that each NJROTC unit may plan their curriculum based on information, materials, and resources

“I really do enjoy the [Navy], and I’ve been very fortunate with it; but there’s definitely a piece of me that wants to do something more hands-on.”

Devin Morgan



Devin and Avery Morgan in their backyard with their dog Charlie. Photo by Madeline Yang

Navy Special Warfare chief petty officer, wife start portable, compact firepit business

By MADELINE YANG
The Coronado News

The flames rise a couple feet into the air. Bright orange and intensely hot, the fire dances sideways, its translucent tendrils seeming to curl around the bodiless wind as it comes through the backyard. Folds and creases move through this shifting sculpture of heat, like stone fabric on a roman statue. Lengths of flame disconnect and float for a split second, completely independent from its larger, ever changing body before vanishing and traveling on with the relentless breeze.

Cozy campfire?

Nope. The fire’s home is in an empty metal ammo can.

Tacticool Fire Pits. PORTABLE. COMPACT. HOT AS HELL.

Its architects are Devin and Avery Morgan of Imperial Beach – who have launched TactiCool Fire Pits as a side gig. The “hot as hell” fire pits, according to the company’s sloFirepits3

gan, go for around \$100 for the smallest size, and \$180 for the biggest. They can be found on their website and through their social media.

Devin has been in the Navy for the last 17 years. He is with the Naval Special Warfare doing operational planning as a chief petty officer. Avery, his wife, now works full time with their business, previously coming from a sales and marketing background.

While Devin has made a career in the Navy, he decided to start a side business with his wife and they are not alone.

About half of all active service members and their spouses have turned to the gig economy for additional income, according to a 2019 Harris Poll prepared for the National Foundation for Credit Counseling and Wells Fargo.

Still a startup

It’s a late morning in January. He sips his coffee and Avery glances at him from his side while talking with The Coronado News. They’re relaxed, both sitting back in their chairs, talking in low, steady tones.

“[The fire pits] became a joint thing...” Avery says quietly, giving him a playful grin.

Devin looks down. “It was kind of forced upon her,” he laughs and picks his head back up to catch her eye.

“No!” she laughs back.

Avery chuckles as she describes how Devin had originally started their fire pit business in January of 2022, but then he left for six months on deployment a few months later in April – leaving her with a popular, budding business.

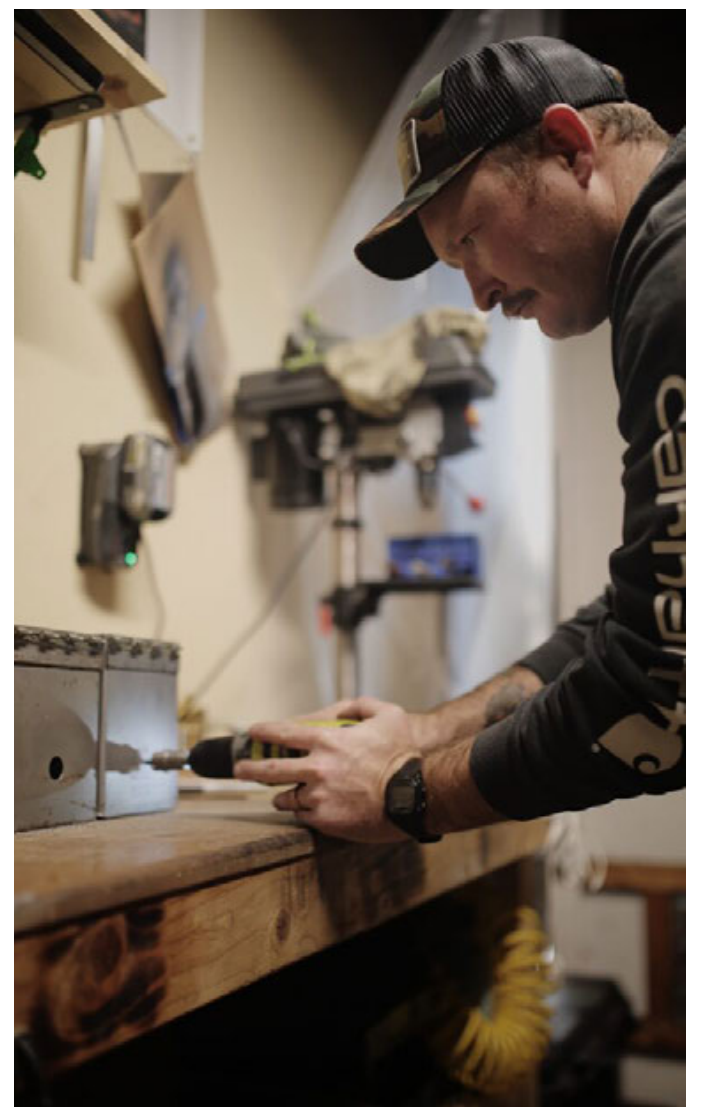
“I will always support everything he does, let’s not get that twisted,” a big smile sits on her lips as she talks about their business.

Devin had always loved tinkering with his hands, and these days he finds that his job in the Navy is very computer and desk-based.

“I really do enjoy the [Navy], and I’ve been very fortunate with it; but there’s definitely a piece of me that wants to do something more hands-on,” he says.

Now in their home, less than a couple miles to the beach, Devin walks to a white door on the left to their work station.

It’s a small, single car garage with a long wooden table



Devin Morgan making the fire pits in his garage
Photo by Madeline Yang

flush against the wall, ammo cans and tools sitting neatly on top. Boxes and bins and containers surround the work table. A large red sign about 7 or 8-feet tall adjacent to their work space brandishes their business. The slogan is not hard to miss.

“It’s rewarding to do something with your hands and create something,” Devin says.

Talks of the future of the business lands somewhere in the realm of informing the community about the significance of fire safety. With the innovation of their fire pits comes a desire to let the public know about the value of controlled fires.

“What would be really great to see...[is] pairing up with CAL FIRE and being able to be a part of some of these fire stations a little more,” Avery says.

According to CALFIRE’s 2022 incident archive, California had 7,667 wildfires damaging or destroying over 900 homes and other structures. With burn bans throughout the state and most recently in San Diego as well, controlled fires are now the new norm, for those on the beach and for those who off-road and camp – who also happen to be their biggest clientele.

Back in their living room, their dog Charlie receives pets from Devin and Avery. They’re both wearing their Tacticool caps, the lids low over their eyes. They meander around the couch and into the kitchen as they walk out to the backyard to turn on one of the fire pits.

NAVY



A color guard presents the American and Navy flags during the national anthem at Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group (EODGRU) 1's change-of-command ceremony on Naval Amphibious Base Coronado on Jan. 24. U.S. Navy photo by Lt. John J. Mike.

Navy's EOD Group One holds change of command on Coronado

Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group (EODGRU) 1 welcomed its newest leader during a change-of-command ceremony at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado on Jan. 24.

Capt. Wade Hilderbrand relieved Capt. Ken "K9" Kleinschnittger in front of friends, family and military personnel during an outdoor ceremony.

Kleinschnittger said the opportunity to work with the civilian and military personnel at EODGRU-1 and its subordinate commands was a highlight during his time as commander.

"You are why people like me stick around. The things you do are so meaningful and important, and we're blessed to be able stay around you," said Kleinschnittger, whose next assignment will be at Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) in

Little Creek, Va.

EODGRU-1 is a critical part of Navy Expeditionary Combat Command that clears explosive hazards to provide access to denied areas, and it employs advanced tactics and technologies to exploit and secure the undersea domain.

Commander, NECC Rear Adm. Bradley Andros used his keynote speech to discuss the importance EODGRU-1 plays in supporting national objectives and priorities.

"You are warriors who are carrying out some of the nation's most demanding tasks in the some of the world's most complex, remote and austere locations. Every day you give the fleet our very best," said Andros.

"We rely on you in countless occasions and de-

manded that you succeed in constantly evolving and sometimes unpredictable circumstances."

Hilderbrand said he was honored to be a part of EODGRU-1 and thanked Kleinschnittger for his leadership.

"K9, under your leadership, the EODGRU-1 team has made numerous significant accomplishments. Thank you for your dedication to this command and to the EOD force. It is an honor to serve the EOD community in this role, I appreciate the opportunity, and I am very much looking forward to it," said Hilderbrand.

This story came from Lt. John Mike and the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service in partnership with the Navy.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife partners with Navy to delist endangered species on San Clemente Island

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced that the four species of plant and one bird species endemic to San Clemente Island will be removed from the endangered species list due to substantial resurgence and efforts from the Naval Base Coronado and Commander, Pacific Fleet wildlife biologists and botanists.

The announcement coincides with the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

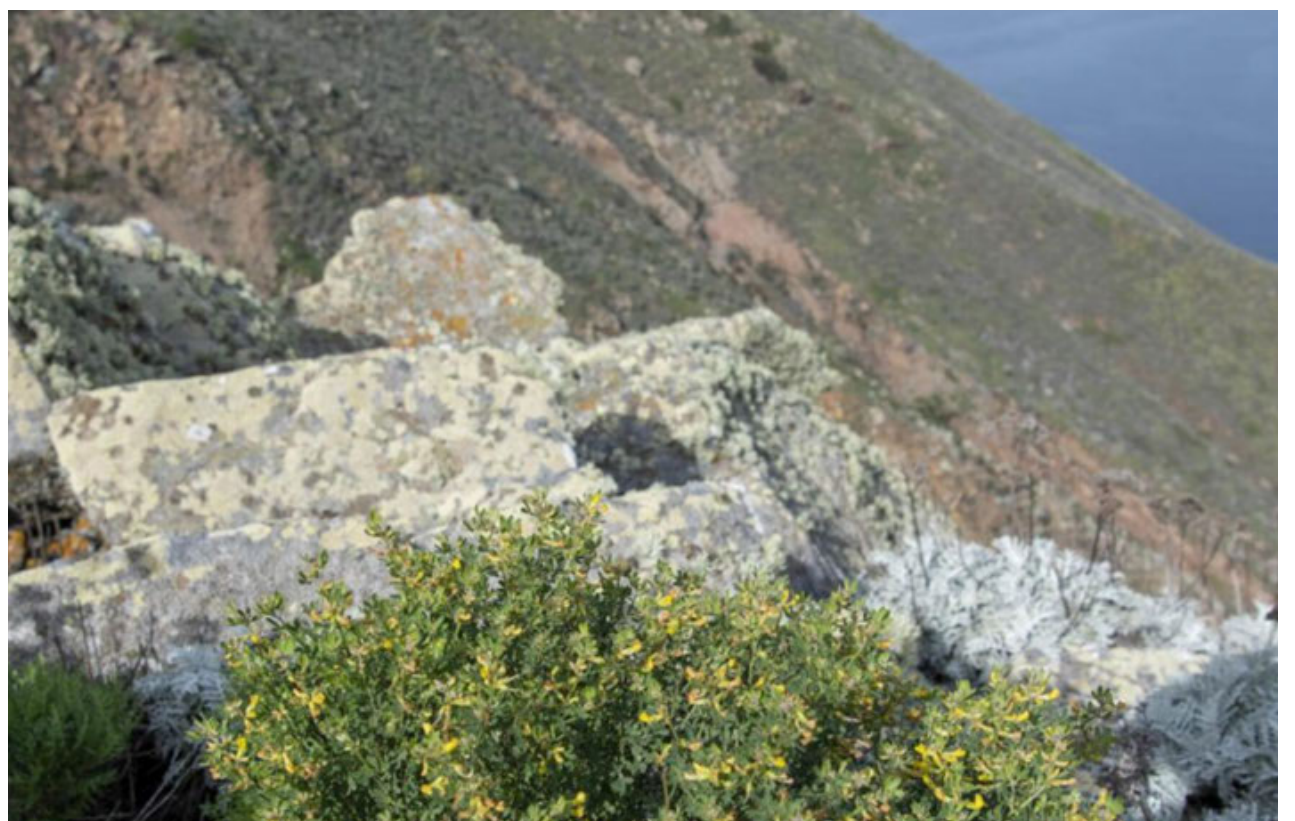
"It's amazing because it shows that the Endangered Species Act works," said Bryan Munson, botany manager aboard Naval Base Coronado. "And not just that the Endangered Species Act works, but particularly that the Endangered Species Act works on a very heavily utilized military island."

San Clemente Island is home to the United States Navy Seals training facilities, and it also serves as the primary maritime training area for the Navy Pacific Fleet, and other sea, air and land forces, housing the impact area known as the Shore Bombardment Area (SHOBA) on the Southern end of the island.

Though the training schedule is heavy and frequent, only a small portion – just under 10% – of the island is utilized for the high-impact evolutions, which leaves the remainder of the island open for the business of conservation.

Prior to the Navy's acquisition of the island in 1934, San Clemente Island was historically used for livestock ranching. Further, scores of voracious goats, pigs and sheep scoured the landscape – leaving it resembling a moonscape – bringing the native flora and fauna to the brink of extinction.

Part of the Navy's conservation mission was relocating the non-native species to enable a comeback



A specimen of Island lotus, also known as San Clemente Island broom, formerly a protected species of plant under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, can be seen during a media tour of the island on Jan. 12. Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Sara Eshleman.

for native species.

"Because this is a Navy island, the Navy is obligated to practice stewardship; to practice care of natural resources because ultimately, these are public lands," said Melissa Booker, wildlife biologist in charge of terrestrial wildlife and seabirds for Naval Base Coronado. "The Navy holds these in public trust, and therefore, it takes care of them. So, when it comes off the Endangered Species list, that's really a signal that all the work we have done is coming to fruition."

In addition to the removal of non-native species, the Navy implemented erosion and fire control practices, constantly surveying and monitoring the programs.

"To be here in a historic moment is very exciting," said Booker. "Particularly at a time when I think it's

easy to get depressed about what's happening in our environment, when we see habitats being lost."

Yet, the work is not complete, and the Navy will remain committed in the development of delisting monitoring programs for the species, ensuring they remain in their new status quo.

"I think the biggest take home from this delisting is how all the different things marry together," said Kim O'Connor, conservation program manager for Pacific Fleet. "I think if you asked the general public, they'd be surprised that an island that hosts this level of training is also recovering not just listed species, but ecosystem-wide recovery."

This story came from Petty Officer 1st Class Sara Eshleman from the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service in partnership with the Navy.

CORONADO

“Everything we do is just to help others.”

JOI president Tayah Bubulka

CREATING TOMORROW’S LEADERS

Junior Optimist Club leads Coronado’s youth through civic engagement

By **JULIETA SOTO**
The Coronado News

The Junior Optimist Club (JOI) instills a changemaker mindset among young people by encouraging them to make a difference within Coronado through various community service projects, according to club members and organizers.

“Everything we do is just to help others,” said JOI president Tayah Bubulka, a senior at Coronado High School.

Bubulka said that JOI has regular monthly club meetings on Wednesdays. At these meetings, 75 Coronado High students gather inside a science classroom, enjoy pizza, listen to a brief presentation and work collaboratively on one service-learning project for the remainder of lunchtime.

At the January meeting, the club made homeless kits which included toothpaste, toothbrushes, and soap. These kits were donated to PATH San Diego, an organization that assists folks experiencing homelessness.

Bubulka joined JOI in the middle of her junior year, after moving to Coronado from Hawaii during her sophomore year. She said that for her, serving the community means trying to make a difference, and “volunteering with the Junior Optimist Club has been a way that I can fulfill that.”

Last year, JOI partnered with The Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank for a food drive and made an impact for folks across the county living in poverty by providing a total of 883 meals through 1,060 pounds of non-perishable food items.

Adding teens to Optimist

Erin Downey is the Coronado High Junior Optimist Club Advisor.

She is also a member of the Optimist International, Coronado Club. In an interview with The Coronado News, Downey shared how she became involved with Optimist in 2015.

“My first child was getting ready to graduate high school. I knew once she left, I’d have a little bit of free time,” she said. “So I asked a friend, ‘Hey, what’s that club that I always see you volunteering with?’ and she said it was the Optimist Club. So I went to a meeting.”

The Optimist Club is geared towards adults in the community, while JOI is intended for teens.

Downey explained that the Optimist Club commits to helping JOI with all its activities and endeavors, as well as other programs for the youth. It also provides a way for adults to get teen-agers involved in public service.

“The premise behind it is supporting the youth of Coronado. The Optimist Club, the adult club, gives money to every high school sport.



JOI members volunteering at Ciders’n’Snaps at the local Holiday parade. (Photo provided by JOI president Tayah Bubulka)

We give money to the Robotics Club at the high school, to Little League, to all these different entities,” she said.

Through the support JOI receives from the Optimist Club, high school students are making a positive difference, Downey said.

“Everything we do is service to others. ... We’ve made cards for the holidays for the senior center. We baked goods during COVID and gave those to the hospital workers that were working overtime. And coming up we have our biggest campaign where we raise money for childhood cancer research,” said Downey.

Downey said the club’s next big event is being involved with the Souper Bowl of Caring 2023, through tacklehunger.org. And it’s tied to Super Bowl Sunday.

“Everybody’s having a good time watching the game with all their food, but we forget that there’s some people that don’t have enough to eat,” she said.

In preparing for the Feb. 12 event, JOI has begun collecting food items by placing bins around the community.

Bubulka said that although they have started to accept donations, the Souper Bowl of Caring primarily is a one-day event. She said the group will divide into sections of Coronado and try to collect “as many food items as we can.”

Tripled in size

The group has grown from 25 to 75 students in the past seven years.

Downey said while JOI aims to implement

acts of service to help the community, the members also feel great seeing how their actions make another person’s life better.

She noted that putting together the homeless kits allowed another person to get a bottle of shampoo and “just be so happy that they can take a shower and get clean.”

For JOI’s next club meeting in February, Downey anticipates that the club’s Valentine’s Day cards for the senior center will bring a smile to more people.

“I’m hoping people will see how much fun we’re having and all the friends that are made. It’s such a good group of kids. And some of these kids I really get to know on a personal level,” she said.

Downey said Coronado High students participating in JOI later embark on new chapters of their lives, taking with them a dedication to serve others.

“After Junior Optimist and after I graduate, I want to continue to be involved with my community,” said Bubulka, who plans to study architecture in college.

Graduating JOI members are recognized for their service efforts through a stole at graduation, and they receive club shirts for their work with the Optimist Club.

“Once you join Junior Optimist, you’re a part of the family, and it’s a really great organization to be a part of,” Bubulka said. “We really do care about each other.”

To learn more about JOI, you can visit their Instagram Page @chsjoiclub.



JOI Beach Cleanup (Photo provided by JOI president Tayah Bubulka)



JOI members making homeless kits for their SoCal District Service Project, donated to PATH San Diego. (Photo provided by JOI president Tayah Bubulka)

SPORTS



The Coronado High School cheer team competes in the national championship in Las Vegas. Photo courtesy of team.

CHAMPIONS!

Coronado High cheer squad wins national title

By **NICK HANCOCK**
Coronado News Staff

The Coronado High School competitive cheer team secured its third big win of the season at the state championships in Bakersfield, with this title coming on the heels of a national championship victory in Las Vegas in late January.

“Considering the fact that we didn’t win anything last year, I think winning the CIF championships, nationals, and states might make this the best season Coronado cheer has ever had,” said Coach Lee Smith.

Westview High School, the defending champion, was the first team the Islanders took down in mid-December, when Coronado won its first California Interscholastic Federation banner.

It was only up from there.

And as the stakes grew so did the competition, Smith said.

Coronado’s girls matched up against a stacked lineup of teams from across their region when they traveled to Las Vegas for the national championships, he said.

Yet, the Islanders stepped up to the occasion, and expanded their routine to gain the edge over 10 other squads.

“Heading into states, we kept the routine the same,” Smith continued. “We thought, ‘hey if it isn’t broke don’t fix it.’”

The 2 ½ minute routine that Smith and his fellow coaches trained the girls on impressed the Bakersfield judges just as much as it did in Las Vegas, he said.

Coronado beat six other high schools that hailed from both Southern and Northern California to claim their third and final victory.

“It feels so fulfilling to end the season this way, and I’m incredibly grateful for the team and coaches that came together this year,” said Eli Norris, a junior on the squad.

The Islanders were able to end an already remarkable season on a high note with the state champi-



The Coronado High School competitive cheer team won its third title on Feb. 11 in Bakersfield.

Photo courtesy of team.

onship being the final contest of the season.

While this season couldn’t have gone any better for the Islanders, Smith said expectations for the future are through the roof.

Smith said that the returners from the prior season played a key role in keeping the team confident before performing their routines on the big stage.

He hopes that will be the case for next season, with a solid number of the girls from this year’s championship squad returning.

Even if the Islanders’ next cheer squad has newcomers, Smith isn’t worried.

This season, he said, the team had plenty of expe-

rience, but also its fair share of rookie cheerleaders who contributed in positive ways.

“It just shows how if you truly work towards something, you can do great things. We had a lot of newbies this year that caught on quickly and made an impact,” Smith said.

The Islanders used the defeats from last year to fuel their fire heading into this season, Smith said.

“Going undefeated this season feels so rewarding after all our hard work, especially after last year when we didn’t quite make it to the top,” sophomore Lawren Craven said. “We came into this year hungry to win, and that’s what we did.”



Ethan Harrington of the Coronado High School boys tennis team adds depth to the No 17 ranked squad. Photo by Jeff Harrington

Coronado High boys tennis opens season ranked No. 17

By **NICK HANCOCK**
Coronado News Staff

There is life on the tennis courts once again, as the winter months come to a close and the Coronado High School boys tennis team prepares for their upcoming season.

Led by Coach Jeff Harrington, who says the team is loaded with talented young men who have plenty to look forward to this spring.

It all starts with sophomore Savo Simic, one of the league’s best players, Harrington said.

“Savo is a key component we can build the program around for years to come. And, talent attracts talent. So, he brings both immediate and residual benefits to the team,” Harrington said.

Just behind Simic on the depth chart is Har-

ington’s son, senior Ethan Harrington, who, according to the coach, is playing some of his best tennis.

The experience Harrington brings to the team will be essential during the season, according to the coach.

However, there is more young talent beyond Simic, and that’s where Rodolfo Garcia enters the conversation.

Harrington said Garcia will headline the freshmen talent that has joined the team, and has the ability to make an immediate impact.

“He has great match experience as a high-performance player in the United States Tennis Association,” the coach said.

» Continued on Page 19

SPORTS

Coronado High boys basketball ends season on nail-biter at home

By CADE CAVIN
Coronado News Staff

The Coronado Islanders boys basketball team's season came to an end on Valentine's Day, after a nail-biting 53-50 loss to Mount Carmel in the first round of the CIF San Diego Section playoffs.

It was the lone home defeat of the season for the Islanders, who finished the season 21-8. Mount Carmel improved to 13-16 and advanced to the next round after losing its final three regular season games.

Despite a valiant 24-point effort from senior Justin Ayubi, and 9 points from junior guard Ben Lee, the Islanders were vanquished.

Although the season did not end as he had hoped, Coronado Coach Anthony Ott praised his players for their ability to play together, making sacrifices that proved they valued team success over personal success.

"I am most proud of how the team played for one another. Everyone made sacrifices for the betterment of the team. They evolved from boys into young men," Ott said.

As for next year's Islanders squad, there will be no shortage of returning talent, he said.

Returning talent

Lee, Tekur Velazquez, Loxly Johnson, Kyle Kuester, David Abdul samad, and Sam Dulin are coming back to play for Ott next year with the same goal: Win a championship.

Ott said that winning is the one remedy for the sickness that comes with falling short of their goals and expectations this year.

"We had the talent and will-power to win a CIF championship this season, and we fell short of our goal," Ott said. "The only way to take away that sting is by coming to an understanding we were not prepared as we thought, and need to make the necessary adjustments to make our goals come to fruition."

In order to ensure the team has done all they can to prepare for next season and the goals that come with it, Ott said that the team will undergo a rigorous strength and conditioning program, as well as compete in several summer tournaments.

'We are not done'

After a 2022-23 campaign including highs such as making the championship round of the Holiday Clas-



Coronado High School honored its four seniors during the final regular season boys basketball game on Feb 10. The players are L R Justin Ayubi, Shane Gillard, Darren Hopkins, and Nolan Reuter. Staff photo by Craig Harris.

sic and beating Scripps Ranch on senior night, the lows including losing in the first round of the playoffs.

The Coronado High boys basketball team lost a heartbreaker on Feb 14 losing 53-50 to Mount Carmel in the first round of the CIF playoffs.

Ott said that this portion of a text message he sent to the team group chat illustrates how he feels about his players:

"So proud to be a part of your journey. You all matured, illustrated a new level of commitment, passion, and enthusiasm. It showed. For the seniors, thank you. I appreciate you for your leadership and determination. We can all learn a lot from you guys. Please carry those wonderful qualities into the next chapter of your life. It will undoubtedly take you to

places you could never imagine.

"For the returning players, we are not done. We are collectively building a foundation that will catapult our program into a conversation we deserve to be in. Please remember what you witnessed last night: an opponent celebrating in elation on our floor, because their actions proved they wanted it more. This off-season will contain pivotal moments in our growth... moments we must embrace to put us in a position to win a championship.

"To everyone, I am honored to have been a piece of forever memories that were created. Memories that hold a close place in my heart. Thank you for becoming men before our very eyes. Job is still not done, for all of us."

Coronado girls wrap up basketball season with loss to La Jolla

By NICK HANCOCK
Coronado News Staff

The Coronado Islanders wrapped up their season on Friday night inside their home gym, facing off against the La Jolla Vikings.

Both teams played a hard nosed style of basketball with buckets being difficult to come by early on, but ultimately the Vikings defeated the Islanders 54-19.

Not only was this the Islanders' final game of the year, but the five seniors were given a proper send off with senior night.

Seniors Alyssa Alarcon, Katie Potter, America Camarillo, Anna Youngblood, and Rikka Navaretta took the floor together as the starting five, and were honored alongside family and friends after the final horn.

As for the game, the seniors made the most of their final moments of high school basketball.

The girls weren't afraid to go up for tough offensive rebounds, drive into the lane to draw fouls, or dive for a loose ball.

"They played hard, and have been the heart and soul of this team all year," said Coach John Coolidge.

Friday's hustle from the seniors wasn't something new, however, as the girls have played gritty basketball all season, according to Coolidge.

The Islanders' aggressive defense was reflected on the scoreboard throughout the first quarter.

They held the Vikings to just seven points, and stayed out of foul trouble.

La Jolla wasn't afraid of a little physicality either, and gave the Islanders plenty of trouble on offense.

Coronado (1-22) was held scoreless through the first quarter with the Vikings (10-14) forcing turnovers and disrupting the Islanders' rhythm with hard fouls.

Coolidge honored his seniors by leaving them in for the entire first quarter, but coming back from the break, sophomore Selena Herrera checked into the game and got the Islanders on the board with a pair of free throws.

Youngblood's efforts on the defense carried over from the first and into the second quarter, with one possession seeing her rack up two blocks.

Alongside Potter's hustle, the Islanders limited La Jolla to just 11 points in the second quarter.

Herrera hit one more free throw, and the score



Coronado High School honored its five seniors on Friday. Sitting L-R are: Rikka Navaretta, America Camarillo, Anna Youngblood, Katie Potter, and Alyssa Alarcon.

was 18-3 heading into halftime.

The defense displayed by the Islanders was large in part due to Youngblood's presence in the paint.

Defense has always been a focal point of her game and an aspect of basketball that comes easier to her than offense, according to Youngblood.

La Jolla continued to double team and full court press Coronado to begin the third quarter, and it took five minutes for the Islanders to score.

A floater from Youngblood and mid-range jump shot from Herrera on back to back possessions brought the score to 22-7.

Herrera would go on to convert two more mid-range jumpers in the final minute of the third, while Navaretta and Youngblood continued to reel in rebounds. The score was 29-11 heading into the final quarter.

As the seniors took a break on the bench, some of the Islanders' younger core got in on the action.

A mid-range jumper in the corner from Jimena Cortes brought the score to 33-15.

With two minutes remaining in the game, Coolidge waved his seniors over and they checked into the game one final time.

The Islander crowd delivered a standing ovation, as some girls played with a smile and others with tears in their eyes.

"It's sad for this chapter of my life to be over, but there is still a lot of gratitude and joy to take from this night," said Youngblood.

The final horn sounded as the Vikings left victorious, but it was still a night of celebration for the Islanders.

The team and school wanted to honor all that this senior group has meant to the program throughout the years, according to Coolidge.

"They meant everything to this program, this is a team I'll always remember," said Coolidge.

SPORTS

Coronado High boys soccer continues to churn out college players

By CADE CAVIN
Coronado News Staff

For the vast majority of high school athletes, competing at the collegiate level is nothing more than a pipe dream. A nice thought, but just not realistic.

According to ncaa.org, only about 1.3% of high school soccer players go on to play Division I soccer, which includes major collegiate athletic powers with large budgets and more athletic scholarships. Further, only about 2.7% play Division III, which are smaller schools that typically are unable to offer full or partial athletic scholarships.

Despite all the statistics, Dylan Groeneveld and Nick Lorr of Coronado High's boys soccer team were determined to receive that elusive, yet crucial, 'yes' to play at the next level.

After successful high school careers as Islanders – careers that included a 17-2-2 season where the Islander's finished ranked 79th nationally in 2022

– both Lorr and Groeneveld received and accepted scholarships to play college ball at the University of Chicago and Stanford, respectively.

With star forwards Groeneveld and Lorr, the Islanders followed up their magical campaign last season with a successful 9-3-1 record as of Jan. 30.

By nature of playing the same position, Lorr and Groeneveld are very familiar with each other, and the two had much to say about their respective college bound teammate.

"He's the best player I've played with, and his potential is through the roof," Lorr said, "Trust me when I say you will not beat this kid one on one".

Groeneveld echoed similar sentiments, highlighting Lorr's defensive capabilities and fundamentals as key to his success.

"U of Chicago is getting a very talented defender that is flexible and capable of playing different positions due to his advanced technical ability," Groeneveld said.

Although both Groeneveld and Lorr have been gifted with athleticism fit for NCAA soccer, the pair of teammates each expressed that the academic prestige of the universities they committed to played a significant role in their decision to attend.

Lorr cited that his ultimate verdict came down to the University of Chicago being the reigning DIII national champion for men's soccer and that its Booth School of Business, where he wants to study, has one of the top academic ratings by U.S. News & World Report.

"UChicago is the perfect combination of academic rigor and high level soccer," he said. He said.

Although the paths these two soon to be Coronado High graduates took to achieve their dreams were different, Groeneveld said he knew he would play collegiate soccer when he excelled at playing in an older age group. Lorr, meanwhile, said the process was more gradual when he realized he was capable of playing college soccer.

» Continued from Page 17

Heading into this spring season, the Islanders will open up ranked No. 17 in a conference that features 93 teams. Coach Harrington said this ranking means a bit more to the team considering they don't match up with other high schools when it comes to size.

"It's pretty amazing how well the team competes despite the fact that CHS is one-half to one-third the size of the other teams in the conference," Harrington said. "We do not have quantity, but we clearly have quality."

The mindset that the program has developed over the years explains why their high ranking in a stacked division is no mistake, according to Harrington. "These guys are competitive, and they understand we are the little guys 'punching up.' That is all the motivation they need," said Harrington.

Led by Simic, Harrington, and Garcia, the Islanders' season kicks off in late February.

Their first match is a non-league contest against Bonita Vista High School of Chula Vista on Feb. 21. League play begins for the Islanders on March 7, when they face off against St. Augustine.

According to Harrington, the team has high expectations for themselves this year and are looking forward to matches against local rivals such as Mission Bay and Scripps Ranch.



Savo Simic, a sophomore, is one of the top players for the Coronado High School boys tennis team. Photo courtesy of Jeff Harrington

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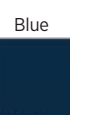
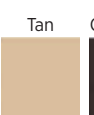
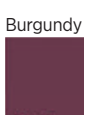
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LIFE ON THE ISLAND



The Lamb's Players Theatre opened its 2023 season with "R-E-S-P-E-C-T." Photo from Lamb's Players Theatre Facebook Page.

Sock it to me!

"R-E-S-P-E-C-T" celebrates voices of the 1960s at Lamb's Players Theatre

By **ANTHONY Le CALVEZ**
Coronado News Staff

The 1960s were a challenging decade for the United States, full of political strife, societal upheaval and wars in foreign lands, but for every obstacle there were gleams of goodness, especially across the burgeoning world of popular entertainment and mass media.

With the development of TV and radio came the proliferation of pop music; a new tool for the voices of the few to be heard and messages of love and peace to be disseminated.

Enter "R-E-S-P-E-C-T," the brand new play showing at Lamb's Players Theatre in Coronado. It looks to celebrate those voices, particularly those of women, and their influence on pop culture with their contributions to the musical landscape.

"R-E-S-P-E-C-T" was written by Kerry Meads and Vanda Eggington, Coronado inhabitants who have a long history with producing plays about the '60s at Lamb's. In fact, 30 years ago, they produced "BOOMERS," another show about music from the '60s, and in 2000, they produced, "American Rhythm," celebrating 100 years of American music.

In this newest production, Meads and Eggington shine a spotlight on many of the biggest names in popular music of the '60s, notably, Aretha Franklin, Joni Mitchell, and The Supremes. Actually, so many artists get a mention in the 90-minute production that it's more of a floodlight than a spotlight.

With a stage set up like a '60s variety show, the retro-modern look so perfectly captured by Austin Powers, the scene was as welcoming as walking onto the Ed Sullivan show or a late evening TV special. There were brightly colored symmetrical circle patterns around the frame of the performance area and a long curtain of tassels hanging from the ceiling that evoked the feeling of being hugged by a leather wearing stranger offering

peace, tie-dye, and flowers.

When the lights went down, the tassel curtain served as a screen on which the names and faces of musical icons were projected.

The cast opened the play with an introduction of what the show was to be, delivered as if by the muses, reminiscent of the opening sequence of Disney's "Hercules."

This performance wasn't to be a play, but a guided journey by the band and the cast into the music of the '60s; a time capsule freshly unearthed full of gilded greatest-hits compilation records.

Within the first 20 minutes of the performance, the cast of six women were divided into two groups, each trio with their accompanying '60s get-ups, to do a buffet-style presentation of girl bands.

The groups performed 30-second bits from The Shirelles, The Paris Sisters, The Ronettes, The Mermaids and countless more. To be able to commemorate so many artists in one go is commendable, but by the 20th group, the 30-second change-ups were whiplash inducing.

While the rapid-fire delivery of songs felt a little rushed, the show slowed down to start examining particular artists one by one. In these moments, the cast of singers were able to spread their wings a little bit more and dive a little deeper into their repertoires.

At this point, the cast had already shown an incredible ability to harmonize with each other, their harmonies and accompaniments were divine-like in their fragility and sustenance, but to hear all the performers on their own was an even greater treat.

Janaya Mahealani Jones, through several pieces, demonstrated an impeccable dynamic range that filled the loudest to softest notes with a consistent texture that was so rich you could almost touch it.

Sydney Joyner, who splendidly and successfully stepped up to cover Aretha Franklin, filled the room with her voice, accepting the challenge of

trying to live-up to one of the greatest American singers of all time and thriving at it. Her crystalline voice sounded marvelous. It's amazing she even required a microphone.

Through this back and forth of solo pieces and group arrangements, the pacing of the production struggled a bit, sometimes staying in one spot too long, other times rushing through second-long bits of an artist's most popular songs. The use of skits and introductions, as well as the accompanying images and titles on the screen gave the plotless play a documentary-like presentation, a very creative direction for musical theater.

Fortunately, the voices carried the cast through the '60s because the costumes did not.

Despite an excess of costume changes, many of them looked thrown together with no regard to how the performers would look while wearing them. Wigs seemed ready to fall off at a moments notice, and a pair of rainbow boots paired with a black and white checkered dress was an especially unflattering choice to depict what was meant to be colorful go-go girls.

It would be unfair not to mention that the performers changed outfits often enough to depict an extensive amount of iconic styles, but the effort does not match the execution and does not redeem the quality of the costumes.

Tightly arranged and well-researched, "R-E-S-P-E-C-T" did its best at granting recognition to as many female musicians of the '60s as possible. While more development and emphasis put into the substance rather than the style could have benefitted the play, it serves its function well.

"R-E-S-P-E-C-T" is a nice warm bowl of nostalgia soup that has a sniffling audience oohing and aahing to every song they recognize from Senior Prom 1965.

"R-E-S-P-E-C-T" is showing at Lamb's Playhouse Theater from Wednesday through Sunday and has extended the production run until March 26.



R E S P E C T celebrates the voices of the 1960s at Lambs Players Theatre. Photo courtesy of Lambs

LIFE ON THE ISLAND

Coronado Playhouse celebrates diamond anniversary in 2023

By **ANTHONY Le CALVEZ**
Coronado News Staff

The Coronado Playhouse, a 75-year tradition, opened its 2023 season in mid-January, and the musical comedy “Company” is coming in March.

The Playhouse, as part of its diamond anniversary, will host six plays this season and provide a new schedule that includes Saturday matinees, in addition to staged readings, concerts and cabarets that will be announced at a later date.

Technically, this is The Playhouse’s 78th season of plays, though it can only celebrate a 75th birthday due to delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the imposed cancellations and postponements, Barron Henzel, president of the Playhouse Board of Directors, has high hopes for the upcoming season.

“We took a hard hit from COVID, attendance was certainly down and we had to cancel a lot of things, but we’re coming back stronger than ever, in part because of our amazing patrons and subscribers,” he said.

The Playhouse is situated on the bay, neighboring the Glorietta Bay Park promenade and nestled in the City of Coronado Community Center.

Unlike a traditional theater, this space has seats centered around tables, hosting about 120 people, with a bar and overflow seating area in the back of the venue.

Tickets range from \$24 to \$27, depending on the time of the show, with active military, student, senior, and group discounts available. Season subscriptions are also available for \$96.

The season opened in January with a comedy, “Ripcord,” that depicted a conflict between two elderly women in an assisted living home, who routinely tried to one-up each other in attempting to convince the other to move out of their shared upper floor living space. Their originally harmless bets began to slowly get out of hand and the women discovered that, despite their age, their actions still held graspable consequences. “Ripcord” ran from Jan. 13-29.

Next in line for the 2023 season is Stephen Sondheim’s musical comedy, “Company,” based on the



The Coronado Playhouse has opened its 2023 season. Pictured in the center of the photo is Kimberly Miller, who played Sweet Sue, in the 2016 production of “Sugar.”

Photo by Barron Henzel.

book by George Furth.

“Company,” first opened on Broadway in 1970 and won six Tony Awards, travels through the memories, thoughts and dreams of Robert, a 35 year-old bachelor, as he reflects and ponders on whether or not he wishes to be content with his life or become a married man.

With vignettes occurring out of chronological order, this modern musical reshaped and reinvented the musical comedy. “Company” will be running Thursdays through Sundays, from March 3 to 26.

The Playhouse will be running its following play, “Hay Fever” by Noel Coward, as part of its 27th Annual FREE Classic Series, made possible by a grant from the City of Coronado.

A classic comedy of manners, “Hay Fever” will be running Thursdays through Sundays, from May 19 until June 4. Patrons are permitted five free tickets per party, and are asked to inquire at the box office for more information.

After that throwback, The Playhouse will be treading into new territory with the world premiere of a new musical, “Underground.”

In collaboration with Blindspot Collective, a San Diego-based theater company, “Underground” is based on the discography of singer-songwriter and composer Ben Folds.

The play will attempt to transform the stage into

a dive bar, where the stories of patrons, friends and lovers will clash and intertwine in a new and immersive musical format. The performance will run every Thursday through Sunday, from July 7 to 23.

Continuing the theme of a comedic season, “Underground” will be followed by the hilarious 1985 musical, “Nunsense,” a story about a convent of nuns who must find a way to raise money for a funeral, after an absurd accident leads to the death of 52 other residents of the convent. With a whacky cast of characters, and an otherworldly premise, this absurd farce comes to the Coronado Playhouse every Thursday through Sunday from Aug. 25 until Sept. 10.

The final production of the season will be the musical, “Xanadu,” about a disenchanting chalk artist who lacks the will to live, until one of the Greek Muses descends from Olympus to enlist his help in opening a roller skating, disco rink. Put on your pads and lace up, “Xanadu” will be showing Thursday through Sunday, from Oct. 20 until Nov. 12.

Inside Scoop: Sunday matinees are very busy and popular, so try a Saturday matinee if you want to avoid crowds. The Playhouse prides itself as the “oldest arts organization in Coronado.”

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LIFE ON THE ISLAND

Susan Lucci: Naughty & Nice

The “queen of daytime TV” shares the joys of playing “naughty” Erica Kane + more

BY NICOLE PAJER
Parade

If you’ve caught an episode of *All My Children*, you’ve seen Susan Lucci in her element. The Emmy award-winning actress is known for portraying Erica Kane on the series for the show’s entire 41 years. “Erica was the bad girl in town, the naughty girl, the pot stirrer,” says Lucci, 76. Playing her, she says, was one of the best times of her life. “I never thought that the audience was going to love her as much as I did,” she says. But they did: The soap garnered devoted fans from across the nation, with Lucci’s notorious character becoming one of the genre’s most beloved roles of all time. She spoke with *Parade* about her years as Erica Kane and how she coped with a dangerous heart blockage that nearly killed her.

An Audition That Would Change Her Life

Lucci grew up on Long Island, New York, the daughter of an American-Italian father and Swedish mother. As a child, she admits to being painfully shy. But one summer day, her mother shoed her outdoors, encouraging her to play with the neighborhood kids. “The first time they knocked me off my tricycle. I ran home crying, but I went out again,” she recalls.

Then, she discovered television. “I was the first one up in the morning and I would turn the TV on and watch all kinds of stuff,” she says. At night, she would lie in the hall outside of her parents’ bedroom, sneaking glances at the reflection of the TV on the far wall. “I saw a lot of stuff I probably shouldn’t have seen,” she says. She remembers being three or four years old and thinking, “I don’t want to be watching. I want to be doing that.”

Before she knew it, she was blasting her parents’ Broadway cast albums, wrapping herself in her mom’s scarves to look like Grace Kelly and acting out scenes with those neighborhood friends. She went on to study drama at Marymount College in Tarrytown, N.Y., and one day in 1969, Lucci found herself at the audition that would change her life. *All My Children* was calling to her. And they called her a lot.

“There were five callbacks,” recalls Lucci, who had gotten used to being told that she didn’t have the looks for television. People in the business

would say to her, “If you only had blue eyes, if you had dark eyes but you had blonde hair, if you weren’t so ethnic looking,” she says. But on that humid day in New York City, the young actress tied a scarf around her head to tame her curls and met with casting directors. The show’s creator, Agnes Nixon, took a chance on the hopeful star, who admitted she wasn’t sure at first if she should accept the part. “I had to sign a four-year contract and I thought that was a big commitment. Four years is the length of high school, the length of college!” she says. But after an eight-page audition scene with Frances Heflin, who portrayed her mother Mona on the show, Lucci was hooked.

“There was so much about Erica that an actress could sink her teeth into,” she says. “The character was unpredictable, so to dive into that and find out what made her tick was really fun for me.” Lucci, who was 23 at the time, was also thrilled to portray a teenager in her natural element on television. “And at that time, teenagers didn’t have a major storyline; they were always sent out of the room to go do their homework or something like that while the grown-ups talked,” she says. “But [*All My Children*] had full storylines around us and introduced humor, comedy and glamour. And I got to be the character the show told a lot of those stories through.”

A Star Is Born

The fandom behind the show reached a level Lucci had never dreamt about. She was nominated for an Emmy in 1978 and 19 nominations later finally won the Daytime Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series in 1989. She knew that night that she wasn’t going to win...again. But her seatmate, Rosie O’Donnell, quelled her doubts. “She said, ‘Let me take your evening bag because when you go up there, you’ll probably step on it,’” Lucci recalls. Indeed her name was called and she would go on to be nominated two more times, for a total of 21 nominations.

“Winning is much better than not winning,” she says with a smile, hopping out of the Zoom frame to grab her Emmy off her living room mantel and proudly show it off. “I was surprised how heavy they are,” she says, with a grin and the disclosure that after winning it, she took it to every interview she did that year.

Her string of consecutive losses wasn’t forgotten, though, and has resulted in her being spoofed on *Saturday Night Live* and having people refer to themselves as “The Susan Lucci of” when they found themselves losing. She found the spoofing comical, she said, and then was flattered when



PARADE MAGAZINE, 1983

“Being on a daytime show was the only way I could be both full-time actress and a mother,” Lucci told *Parade* in a 1983 cover story. During a parade procession a gentleman tried to board her car, yelling, “C’mon baby, give me a little of what you’ve been giving Nick!”

Martin Scorsese once said, “I’m the Susan Lucci of the Oscars.”

Age Is Just a Number

Age has certainly not shown on the outside of Lucci, who is famously asked, “How do you look so young?” Her secret, she says, is a lot of discipline—staying hydrated, being sun smart and focusing on posture. After competing on *Dancing With the Stars* in 2008, she learned to “let your power come from your core.” And the chorus boys at Radio City Music Hall, she says, taught her to “walk as if your legs begin right from your ribcage. Oh, it makes you feel like you have the longest legs in the whole wide world,” she says.

These days, the resident of Garden City, NY (for more than 50 years!) has been leaning into being a grandmother. She has two children who both have children whom she dotes on. “I’m trying to spoil them. I have to follow the desires of their parents...but I have plans,” she says with a grin. After she turned 75 last year, she has learned to not get fixated on being in her 70s. “I don’t feel my age,” she says, revealing that when she turned 60, she called her mother. “I was having trouble with the number and I asked, ‘mom how do you do this?’ There was a pause and my mother said, ‘Well, I just don’t think about it.’ And I thought that’s probably good. Just live your life, be who you are and don’t let it get you down.”

Navy Junior ROTC class learning to fly drones at Coronado High

» Continued from page 14

that the Navy provides, while also leveraging the individual instructors’ areas of expertise as well as the needs of the particular student body.

“Given the importance of aviation historically and currently in the Coronado community,” he said “It was important to introduce that aspect of flight to students. ... The introduction of drones was part of a larger discussion of unmanned autonomous and remotely piloted systems. ... Those systems are becoming increasingly important in the military and outside of the military as things move towards higher levels of autonomy.”

Adrian Nasori, 17, joined Islander Company at the start of his freshman year.

“I joined NJROTC because I saw the activities and thought it would be fun to be a part of the program,” he said.

Now a junior, Nasori considers that the most important piece of knowledge he has gained during his time in NJROTC is that one’s efforts allow for eventual success.

Having the opportunity of flying drones, he considers running through obstacle courses a “very fun” experience.

First step: Safety test

To begin flying drones, Nesbitt helps cadets get qualified with the recreational user safety test.

According to the Federal Aviation Administration website, The Recreational UAS Safety Test (TRUST) is an online test required for all recreational drone users that ensures safety and regulatory information knowledge.

To obtain a TRUST certification, one must answer all questions correctly in order.

“We get our cadets qualified. ... Once they’ve taken that test, we are also introducing other fundamentals of a flight,” he said. “We also walk through safety considerations as part of that as well. The cadets go through a pre-flight safety checklist ... each time they fly the drones, which we only fly indoors.”

Nesbitt believes that naval science has a direct connection to work in other classes, particularly STEM or Science, Technology, Engineering and Math classes.

He explained that concepts like “lift” relate to robotics, computer programming, and physics. He



Chief Quartermaster Dya-monde Metz and Ensign Marlon Narvaez speak to a NJROTC class at Coronado High School.

Photo By Petty Officer 3rd Class Kendra Helmbrecht.

added that when cadets learn about the various environmental factors that impact flight wind patterns, it references earth sciences.

“This can give sort of a hands-on tangible manifestation of the things that they’re learning across their educational experience,” he said.

Many of the students had limited hands-on experience flying the quadcopters, Nesbitt said.

“A lot of kids started off nervous,” he said. “In some cases, kind of hesitant to actually grab the remote control and fly them around.”

Nasori, the high school junior, said that his experience in the NJROTC class has been a great one because every week there is something new.

“It’s also a good place to make friends as there are many teams you can join in the program,” he said.

Nasori also is a team commander.

“As the team commander, I am responsible for setting up team practices and meetings as well as making sure the drones are being operated in a safe manner,” he said. “I think it’s important for the school to provide these opportunities because it encourages extracurricular activities for the students to be involved with. It also helps them find possible interests that could be developed in the future.”

Demystifying the aircraft

After demystifying the aircraft work and teaching cadets how to properly operate the drones, cadets became much more comfortable, said Nesbitt.

“More and more of them are expressing interest in

joining the drone team and competing as well,” he said. “In the near term, we’re looking to see how our competitions turn out here as our drone team continues practicing and goes on to take on other JROTC strong drone teams in competition.”

Nesbitt also shared that he is looking forward to working with future cadets in upcoming academic school years.

Cadet knowledge beyond the classroom

Nesbitt said flying drones provides cadets an experience that helps them gain transferable skills, but it only is the beginning for some cadets.

He said the next step would allow cadets to become certified as commercial drone pilots.

Coronado USD Public Information Officer Maria Simon said that this is one of the school’s “premiere programs,” which more students have had the opportunity to participate in through the implementation of a block schedule at Coronado High School.

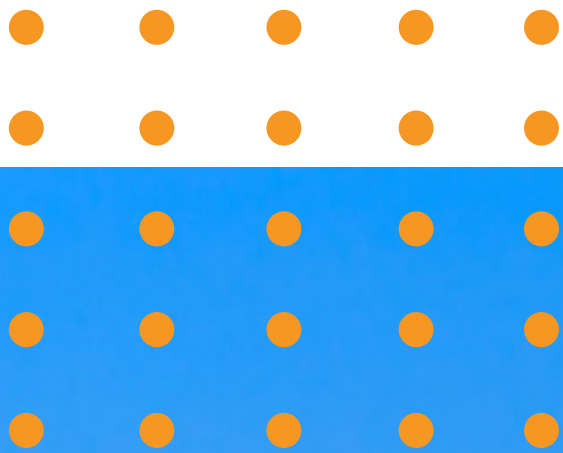
Coronado USD President Renee Cavanaugh said that opportunities like flying drones are amazing skill sets that will continue to help Coronado students.

“It’s great because it’s a real-world experience that I think will help them if they continue on in the military as a career. Or, they can take that experience in private industry somewhere,” she said. “It’s just one more opportunity to expose our students to something that is happening and give them that opportunity to have that experience first-hand.”

Defense Visual Information Distribution Service contributed to this story.



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