

Communication halted for federal health agencies, sewage crisis report affected

Congressman Scott Peters, whose district includes the City of Coronado, says a freeze on communications between federal agencies and local public health officials causing that delay is “unacceptable.”

BY JULIETA SOTO
The Coronado News

The Trump Administration last month blocked key federal agencies from communicating with local governments and some San Diego-area officials are worried that efforts to address Tijuana sewage pollution may be stymied.

Surging wastewater from Mexico has created a plethora of public health problems, contaminating and shutting down south county beaches and spawning air pollution in border communities along the Tijuana River Valley.

The White House directive put a pause on communications from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), including the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health on Jan. 21, according to the Washington Post.

In the aftermath of a pause expected through at least Feb. 1, San Diego County spokesperson Tim McClain told the San Diego Union Tribune key federal agencies such as the CDC could no longer “participate in County-related matters.”

On Feb. 4, the county said it is monitoring the situation wherein all communications from federal agencies related to the sewage pollution have stopped.

“We will do everything in our power to restore communication between public health officials, our local governments, and the public if this pause is extended,” said Rep. Scott Peters, a Democrat whose congressional district includes Coronado. “The people want to

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The Blank Table

A \$245 dining experience where the menu — and location — are a secret

On Jan. 30, The Blank Table, a dinner series conceived by Coronado native Alexandria Ott and her childhood friend, Fred Keller, kicked off its sixth season.

BY KATIE MORRIS
The Coronado News

In the summer of 2019, in the inconspicuous alley behind a Pacific Beach gym, 20 or so guests made their way past a chain-link fence, stepping over errant bits of gravel and loose patches of dirt.

The passage opened into a secluded garden space, set with a long wooden table draped in linen, bistro string lights swaying in the evening breeze.

There was no menu, no prior indication of what would be served, no obvious connection between the backdrop — a borrowed space, neither restaurant nor home — and the kind of dining experience one might expect in a city like San Diego.

Nearly six years later, on Jan. 30, The Blank Table, a dinner series conceived by Coronado native Alexandria Ott and her childhood friend, Fred Keller, kicked off its sixth season in Comman Goods, a 2,000-square-foot warehouse in San Diego’s East Village.

Ott, who described that initial extravaganza, said its first-of-five \$245-per-ticket dinners featured chefs Ronnie Schwandt and Matt Sramek of Blue Bridge Hospitality — the duo behind Stake Chophouse & Bar, Little Frenchie, Liberty Public Market and the soon-to-open Avenue Fish & Oyster Com-



pany — alongside mixologist Marina Ferreira of Botanica.

This season, the series will also feature collaborations with Oceanside’s sushi caterer Fish, brothers Danny and Dante Romero of Two Ducks and Chef Doug Settle of Hearth & Harvest.

The premise of The Blank Table is both simple and precise: a dining experience in which neither the venue nor the menu is disclosed in advance to its guests, an exercise in trust between chef and diner.

In the warehouse on Jan. 30, Ferreira said a pair of long communal tables were set up, encouraging conversation among guests.

“After years bartending in New York, coming back to San Diego felt different,” she said. “In cities like NYC and Chicago, you’re constantly encountering people — on the street, on the subway. Here, you’re in your car alone.”

The setup aimed to foster connection, with candlelit tables and live music from the band

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The Laundry Pub at the Hotel del Coronado will be closing after less than a year in business. But, there will be two permanent dining concepts opened in its place. Staff photo by Madeline Yang.

The Laundry Pub is set to close on Feb. 10

After less than a year, the casual hotspot located at the entrance of the famous Hotel del Coronado will be closing.

BY MADELINE YANG
The Coronado News

The Laundry Pub, a casual bar and lounge created by the Hotel del Coronado, is shutting down less than a year after it opened for business.

However, it is not the end of that space, which was built as a laundry room more than a century ago.

But with one spot closing, two more restaurants will open up at the Del, according to Tipi Vyrasith, the director of food and beverage at the hotel. Although the closing of the pub is bittersweet, she said, it marks an exciting new chapter for the hotel. And there are plans to turn the Laundry Pub into a space for meetings and events.

“When we embarked on the resort’s restoration journey back in 2018, our vision for the historic laundry building always included its eventual transformation into a versatile event space,” Vyrasith said. “Throughout the restoration period,

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this week

8 • Saturday

The Coronado Democratic Club is hosting its next general meeting on Feb. 8 at 10:30 a.m. in the Winn Room of the Coronado Public Library. The gathering will host an endorsement vote for San Diego County Supervisor, District 1, and feature guest speaker Jason Bercovitch.

Bercovitch, the new South Area caucus vice-chair and district director for Congressman Scott Peters' San Diego office, will share his insights into local and statewide political strategies. The meeting will include a critical vote to endorse a candidate for the County Board of Supervisors, District 1.

Voting ballot check-in, for members only, will open at 10:30 a.m. The meeting will start at 11 a.m. and is open to the public. Members must be registered Democrats, have paid their 2025 dues, and have been club members for at least 30 days to vote. For more information, contact communications@coronadodemocrats.com.

8 • Saturday

On Feb. 8 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., Emerald Keepers, a nonprofit environmental group in Coronado, will be supporting the Navy's clean up of Delta Beach, and the community is invited to join. Delta Beach, on the bay side of Coronado's Naval Amphibious Base, is not usually open to the public or Navy activity as it is was recently designated a critical habitat for the Least Tern and Snowy Plover birds. As a result, the large amount of trash that washes ashore is not accessible for most beach clean ups and accumulates throughout the year. Those interested in joining the beach clean-up should look for the Emerald Keepers sign by a gate in the fence on Saturday morning. Parking is open at the Fiddlers Cove parking lot, and it will also be available on the sand inside the gated entrance on Delta Beach.

Bring a reusable water bottle to stay hydrated and a picker and bucket if you have them. Emerald Keepers will have gloves, buckets and pickers available for volunteers.

THINGS TO DO

'Once' the musical to show at Lamb's Players Theatre until March 30

Coronado News staff

eight Tony Awards in 2012, including "Best Musical."

The musical follows the storyline of an Irish musician and Czech immigrant who are drawn together by their shared love of music, according to Music Theatre International. Performances at Lamb's Players Theatre will run from Jan. 21 to March 30 on Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7 p.m. Matinee showings will also take place on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays at 2 p.m. "Once" is directed by Kerry Meads, choreographed by Colleen Kollar Smith and features a cast of over a dozen singers, actors and musicians. Tickets can be purchased at online [a tickets.lambplayers.org](https://tickets.lambplayers.org).

Lamb's Players Theatre opened its 2025 season with the Irish musical hit "Once," returning from its 2018 season. The production won the San Diego Critics Circle Award for "Outstanding Musical" in 2018 and the original Broadway production won



PET OF THE WEEK

Meet Meeko

PAWS of Coronado

This 1-year-old male Siberian husky is striking and fluffy, weighing in at 47 pounds. His sleek black and white coat is thick and plush, giving him a soft, wolf-like appearance that's hard to resist. With bright, intelligent eyes that seem to always be full of curiosity, he's a playful and active pup who loves to run and explore. His playful demeanor is matched only by his affectionate nature, making him the perfect companion for someone who loves an adventurous and loyal dog. Despite his young age, he's already showing signs of being a confident and friendly dog, always eager to interact with his family.

All animals at PAWS are spayed/neutered, microchipped, vaccinated and up to date on flea prevention. Adoptions are by appointment only. If you are interested in adopting Meeko or other pets, please visit pawsofcoronado.org.

Meet Meeko, the pet of the week. He's at PAWS of Coronado and is looking for his forever home. Photo provided by PAWS of Coronado.

CONTACT US

For news tips, story submissions and letters to the editor, contact Editor Sofie Fransen at sofie@thecoronadonews.com or 619-990-8465. To advertise contact Ad Executive Braeden Stegman at braeden@numbersix.com

Enjoy Life Without Joint Pain



Are you ready to get back to an active life, but pain is slowing you down? Learn about the latest treatments at two free events presented by Sharp HealthCare.

Live Webinar: Advanced Treatments for Hip and Knee Pain

Thursday, Feb. 27, 6 to 7:30 p.m.
Link provided upon registration

Hear from a board-certified orthopedic surgeon about leading-edge surgical options available at Sharp Coronado Hospital, including Mako robotic-arm assisted surgery.

Bone and Joint Health Expo

Saturday, March 1, 9:30 a.m. to noon
Sharp Prebys Innovation and Education Center

This in-person event will offer guidance on the latest treatments for joint pain, foot discomfort and spine issues. Meet orthopedic doctors, hear expert speakers, and explore educational booths and interactive exhibits.

Register now at sharp.com/joint or 1-800-82-SHARP (1-800-827-4277).





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Never Worry About Charging Your Golf Cart Again

OUR STORY

“Once Upon A Time” my son and I were discussing solar systems over lunch. Being licensed electricians, we were familiar with Solar Applications and its advantages.

After conducting a fair amount of research, we determined that Solar Technology had advanced to the point that adding a Solar Panel to the roof of a golf cart could significantly add to the travel range, as well as several other advantages including Green Movement Tax Credits.

I had recently moved to a golf cart community and purchased a cart of my own, after installing the best and most powerful system available, the concept of installing Solar Panels on golf carts was conceived.

We began spreading the word to our friends who owned electric carts and began installing Solar Panels on their carts in our spare time out of our garage in Oceanside, CA. Due to the publicized acceptance and popularity in Beach Communities of San Diego County, we decided to expand the business even further. Many beach cities have permitted the use of golf carts in 35 mph zones and are expanding Bike Lanes to 7 feet wide to accommodate their use.

So, there you have it. There is more to the story and we would love to discuss it with you while we install your Solar Panels on your cart.

We took the concept of Green Solar Energy and put it to practical use to lessen the carbon footprint.

We look forward to meeting you soon.

Richard Stachowicz
Ride All Day Solar Carts
Owner and Coronado Resident



ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Make the Earth Happy. Solar energy is clean. No carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere as it is when batteries are plugged into the wall to charge. Similarly, no fossil fuels are consumed as they are in gas-powered golf carts. The sun’s energy is both clean and renewable. With their renewable, clean energy and lack of generated pollution, solar charged golf carts are an Earth-friendly option. You can help ensure that golf courses will be around for a very long time.

FINANCIAL BENEFITS

While it can be costly up front to buy a solar-powered golf cart or convert your existing cart to solar, in the long run, you might save money. You might be eligible for cost incentives offered to people who go solar. Some programs include:

- Federal tax credits
- Federal grants
- State and local utility tax credits
- Rebates

Together, these can help make solar power an affordable option for your golf cart. Additionally, you will likely save quite a bit of money on your electricity bill without having an electric vehicle drawing from your home’s electricity supply. Individuals aren’t the only ones who benefit monetarily from solar power. When entire golf courses convert their fleets to solar-powered vehicles, they can slash their annual charging costs by about 20 percent. Whether you want to enhance the performance of your golf cart, help the environment, or save money in the long run, you’re sure to benefit from changing your power to the sun.

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OPINION

LISA
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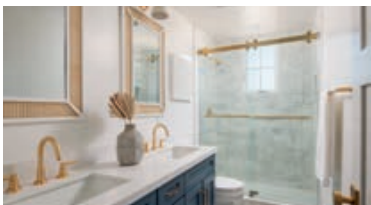
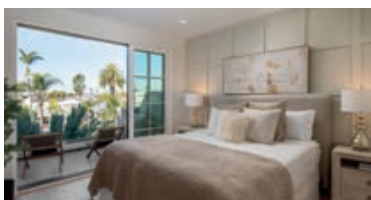


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CORONADO

A national support network for cancer warriors

Three women who battled cancer launched a national nonprofit providing financial help to others who suffer from the disease.

BY JULIETA SOTO
The Coronado News

Coronado resident Shelly Tinney-Miller recalls being overcome by weeks of shock, loneliness and fear when she got her breast cancer diagnosis in 2010.

It took her husband’s constant motivation to encourage her to pick herself up, get to appointments and stay positive.

“But a lot of people don’t have that, they don’t have someone telling them, ‘You’re gonna get through this, you’re gonna be fine,’” said Tinney-Miller, who has since embarked on a journey born from what she calls “a blessing in disguise.”

Tinney-Miller, her sister Katy Tinney-Olson and friend Kerry Solmosen – all three cancer survivors – co-founded a nonprofit known as Cancer Cartel in 2019 to provide financial support for individuals going through cancer treatments.

What started as a clothing resale venture on eBay – to generate funds for cancer patients – has expanded to include nation-wide fundraising events, partnerships with local businesses and a junior ambassador program.

And over the last five years, people from dozens of states have benefited.

A four-minute video on their website captures some of those individuals in hospital beds or at home. Their faces crumple, overcome by emotion as three women on the other side of a Zoom screen vow their financial support.

“It’s not just the money,” said Tinney-Miller. “A lot of the time it is just



(L-R) Shelly Tinney-Miller, Kerry Solmosen and Katy Tinney-Olson co-founded Cancer Cartel in 2019 and have since helped hundreds of people through direct financial grants. Photo by Angela Carlyle.

seeing three survivors talking to them about how they made it through and how the other side is better and how you can keep on fighting. And seeing them come back and thank you for that – and just seeing the difference you make – is amazing.”

Solmosen battled skin, thyroid, and breast cancer. Tinney-Olson also had skin cancer, as well as non-

Hodgkins lymphoma. Both based in Washington State, they had the idea of using their love for fashion to begin Cancer Cartel and invited Tinney-Miller.

Fast forward to today, the trio meets over Zoom on a regular basis and review dozens of grant applications.

Tinney-Olson said they accept about a hundred applications through an online grant portal that is only open a few minutes each month.

To avoid receiving fraudulent applications, they only accept submissions from case managers or social workers directly employed by hospitals or cancer treatment centers, according to their website.

“We speak to cancer warriors who are literally making choices between feeding their kids and getting the life-saving chemo treatment that they need. And no one should have to make that choice,” said Solmosen.

Solmosen said Cancer Cartel does not tell recipients what they can or cannot spend the money on.

“They know what they need, they know where this money is going to best serve them and their family,” she added.

All of the money they raise goes to the so-called “cancer warriors” as direct grants. Last year the organization helped 691 patients following a doubling of the \$150,000 in revenue it made in 2023.

This year, the three women anticipate reaching their goal of giving away \$1 million dollars since the organization’s inception.

“Looking back, I’m like, ‘Thank goodness I went through it’ because I can just see how precious life is now, how much more I have to give to others and how good it feels to give,” said Tinney-Miller.

Cancer Cartel is hosting “Fashion Funds the Fight,” a high-end resale shopping event on Feb. 20.

To learn more about Cancer Cartel, visit <http://www.cancercartel.org/>.

Coronado High School writing competition celebrates creativity

BY ELAINE ALFARO
The Coronado News

Coronado High School sophomore Sierra Burton took first place in the Coronado High School creative writing club’s sixth annual short story competition.

The contest is open to all high school students and provides an opportunity to celebrate talented writers outside of a classroom assignment.

The instructions for the competition were to write a story in your own style, 5,000 words or less, in any genre, responding to the prompt: “A hidden scar that reveals an uncomfortable truth.”

Students submitted their stories anonymously to the judges panel, which consisted of six faculty members and two senior students.

For her winning submission, Burton chose a flash fiction short story she authored about a young girl who partakes in a split-second of empathy that leads to a horrifying realization about a time-worn tradition centered around the Christmas tree. Her 422-word story was titled “Decorated Corpse.”

“As a kid I always felt sympathy for the tree and I thought this story showed an interesting dilemma around the tradition of cutting down a tree,” Burton said. This was her first-time entering in the competition.

“I heard about the competition last year and didn’t get anything done in time so I made sure I got it done this year,” she said.

Burton said although math is her favorite subject she has always liked writing short stories.

“This year we had nine entries and they were all unique, well-written, and fun to read,” said Joshua Chao, the faculty advisor for the creative writing club.

The students in the club designed and distributed a poster in December announcing the competition and encouraging their peers to participate.

“We ended up with nine entries, which our eight judges deliberated over,” Chao said.



English teacher Joshua Chao is joined by the three winners: Morgan Maske (left), Roxy Langevin and Sierra Burton (right). Photo courtesy of Coronado Unified School District.

The judges read all of the stories and met in January to choose the winners.

In addition to Burton, other recognitions included second place to Roxy Langevin who wrote a 4,856-word literary fiction piece titled “The Magenta Ribbon,” and third place to Morgan Maske for her 5,000-word fantasy story “Hope, as Ashes Fly.”

Honorable mention awards went to Zoe Miller, Ronin Moulzolf, Sophia Gresham, Emma Olsen, Sophia Bhandari, and Lily Kirk-Raissi.

The club met on Tuesday, Jan. 14 for the awards ceremony. Chao presented the awards, which included laminated certificates along with a selection of prizes including novels, book store gift cards, moleskine notebooks and a custom graphite pencil portrait by Chao, who is a talented artist when not teaching English at Coronado High School.



Volunteers Linda Lewis and Tony Gregorich chat at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park. Photo provided by the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance.

Free February admission for guests aged 65 and older at San Diego Zoo Safari Park

Coronado News staff

The San Diego Zoo Safari Park welcomes guests aged 65 and older to enjoy free admission throughout February during “Seniors Free Month.”

To participate, guests 65 and older simply need to present a valid photo ID upon arrival.

Visitors can immerse themselves in the Safari Park’s vast 1,800-acre landscape, home to over 3,000 animals representing more than 300 species, alongside a botanical collection featuring over 1.3 million plants.

Please note: The “Seniors Free” offer applies exclusively to the Safari Park during February and does not include parking.

CORONADO

Sharp Coronado Hospital reaffirms commitment to patient care amid immigration policy shift

“We encourage those who need to seek care to continue to do so without fear of consequences,” said Scott Evans, PharmD, MHA, senior vice president and chief executive officer of Sharp HealthCare’s Regional Hospitals.

BY KATIE MORRIS
The Coronado News

Amid a surge of immigration enforcement actions by the Trump administration, Sharp Coronado Hospital issued a statement on Jan. 31 vowing to provide medical care to all individuals, regardless of immigration status.

Scott Evans, senior vice president and chief executive officer of Sharp HealthCare’s Regional Hospitals, emphasized the hospital’s longstanding dedication to its patients.

“Sharp Coronado Hospital’s focus has always been — and will continue to be — on delivering exceptional care to our community members in a safe and secure environment,” Evans said. “While we are aware of the changes taking place within the new administration, we are considering potential impacts on our operations and have not altered our practices.”

Evans stated that existing California laws protect an individual’s right to seek medical attention without fear of immigration consequences.

“We encourage those who need to



Sharp Coronado Hospital issued a statement this week vowing to provide medical care to all individuals, regardless of immigration status. Photo courtesy of Sharp HealthCare Director of Internal and External Communications Jennifer Chatfield.

seek care to continue to do so without fear of consequences,” he said.

Evans’ statement comes in response to directives issued Jan. 20 by acting Department of Homeland Security Secretary Benamine Huffman.

These directives rescinded the Biden administration’s 2021 Guidelines for Enforcement Actions in or

Near Protected Areas memorandum. The previous guidelines limited Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) enforcement actions in designated “sensitive” areas, such as hospitals, schools and places of worship.

In Jan. 21 release, an unnamed DHS spokesperson said the changes

are intended to enhance law enforcement’s ability to “catch criminal aliens — including murderers and rapists — who have illegally come to our country.”

Despite changes at the federal level, California law ensures all individuals can access health care services in the state without interference from immigration enforcement.

The Parker Pump Station is set to be finished in just a few months

The Parker Pump Station was one of the causes of the major flooding that happened in Coronado last January, but a newly built pump station should be done by this summer.

BY MADELINE YANG
The Coronado News

When a major rainstorm flooded Coronado’s streets on Jan. 22 of last year, the Parker Pump Station, responsible for collecting storm water in the Country Club area of the city, was turned off. In certain areas of the city, flooding occurred up to 5 feet.

The city had said the station was turned off at the time due to water build-up that would have short circuited the electrical controls. However, a new pump station that avoids these problems is in the works.

The Parker Pump Station project proposes to accommodate a storm drain wet well and valve unit, an emergency generator and an electrical/control room as well as other miscellaneous underground vaults, piping and appurtenances, according to a staff report from December 2021.

Now the project, built to prevent flooding in homes and pollution to the ocean, is scheduled to be completed in a few months.

Filanc, the design-build contractor, anticipates the new pump station will be operational this summer, with decommissioning of the existing pump station and construction of a public green space completed shortly thereafter, according to Kelli Maples, the city’s senior management analyst.

There will be about 6,000 square feet of green space added to the neighborhood with this project. The city purchased the neighboring property, which allowed for the layout to be shifted and accommodate the green space. The size of the pump station was not impacted, wrote Maples.

Filanc just completed installation of a new 48-inch storm drain pipe on Jan. 24 along with modi-



The Parker Pump Station has been in the works for two years now, and it’s almost done. It should be ready to go by summer 2025. Photo taken from projectcoronado.org.

fications to the existing storm drain cleanout, according to the project’s webpage.

In the meantime, the city has implemented protective measures to prevent erosion and ensure runoff enters the storm drain system as intended, according to Maples. Two portable backup pump units are stationed for quick deployment, and a generator is available for electrical outages.

“We have also ensured that spare sewer and storm wet well parts are on hand, and the pump station alarms have been tested. Though we are experiencing a dry winter, the city remains vigilant in our emergency preparedness efforts,” Maples wrote in an email.

The city relies on pump stations because of Coronado’s low elevation and flat topography, according to Maples. Within the Country Club Estates vicinity, stormwater does not naturally gravitate toward the ocean; therefore, it must be pumped to the ocean.

The original Parker Pump Station is the largest of 20 pump stations across Coronado and it extends 35 feet into the ground. During the Jan. 22 storm, it filled with water to a point where the city had to shut down the pump station to prevent electrical controls from shorting out.

It was originally constructed in 1983 and was used to service both storm water and wastewater flows, responsible for collecting and routing these flows in the Country Club area of the city.

However, just a year before the flood, the pump station started its replacement project due to it aging and failing. It cost the city \$26 million with \$3 million provided in federal appropriations.

The new Parker Pump Station will replace the current station located at the western end of the city, along the Naval Base boundary. The replacement project will completely rebuild the pump station to better protect it from impacts from flooding and storm surge.



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CORONADO



Coronado Island Film Festival's 2024 Industry Tribute Gala was held in the Hotel del Coronado's Crown Room. The board of directors have been announced for the 2025 festival. Staff photo by Katie Morris.

The Coronado Island Film Festival announces 2025 board of directors

Coronado News staff

The Coronado Island Film Festival has announced its slate of officers and directors for 2025, with Phil Garn returning as the president for the second year.

“Jumping into my second year as president, I couldn’t be more thrilled for CIFF’s 10th anniversary year,” said Garn, who will also be marking his sixth year on the board. “You can expect an elevated year celebrating film, industry icons, community and the rich cinematic history of this island.”

Joining Garn on the board is Carole Arendt, the vice president, along with Jeanmarie Bond as the secretary and Alison Lancaster as the returning treasurer.

Three new members have joined the board of directors — Dr. Kevin Kenny, Pam Sauter and Renee Simpson — with the return of former board member Ken Fitzgerald.

The board saw the retirement of Steve Rippe, Janice Lowenberg and Gail Bardin.

The full list of the current board is as follows:

Officers
President: Phil Garn
Vice President: Carole Arendt
Secretary: Jeanmarie Bond
Treasurer: Alison Lancaster

Directors
Christian Esquevin
Ken Fitzgerald
Jennifer Franks
Robin Franck
Arlene Inch
Dr. Kevin Kenny
Pam Sauter
Renee Simpson
Carol Sommer
Jeff Tyler

Student representatives
Lilia Spiegel and Ethan Wahamaki

The Laundry Pub is set to close on Feb. 10

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we’ve also been able to experiment with the space as a casual neighborhood hotspot as The Laundry Pub.”

She said she wants the space to enable the Del to host special occasions such as weddings and corporate events.

“But when one door closes, two doors open,” Vyrasith noted. “As The Laundry Pub wraps up its time at The Del, we’re preparing to introduce two fantastic new and permanent dining concepts including the world-renowned Nobu Del Coronado, set to open this spring.”

The Laundry Pub will have one last hurrah on Feb. 9 for the Super Bowl, starting at 2 p.m., before closing its doors on Feb. 10.

CORONADO

A snapshot into Friday mornings at Silver Strand Elementary School

Flagpole ceremony assemblies are a standing tradition at a school where three-quarters of its students are military connected.

**JULIETA SOTO
& CORONADO NEWS STAFF**
The Coronado News

A circle of parents, teachers and their students surround the flagpole every Friday at Silver Strand Elementary School to say the Pledge of Allegiance.

Following the pledge on the last Friday in January, Principal Jenny Moore also made a few announcements and welcomed a special guest from Jazzercise Coronado who danced alongside staff and students.

These Friday assemblies host a variety of activities. Once a month, students from Anchored4Life — a peer-to-peer youth club — lead the Friday gatherings. And on Jan. 31, clinical counselor Sophia Frost guided the students through breathing exercises, or a “peaceful pause.”

Darcy Miente and her fifth-grade daughter Kailani Miente announced a new Girls on the Run club chapter for third to fifth-grade students.

“It’s such an embedded tradition,” said Frost about the weekly school meet-ups at the flagpole.



Priscilla Juarez, a kindergarten student at Silver Strand Elementary School, dances during a Friday Flagpole assembly. Staff photos by Julieta Soto.



ABOVE: Silver Strand Elementary School staff, students and parents recite the Pledge of Allegiance on Jan. 31. LEFT: Leanne Anderson from Jazzercise Coronado leads Silver Strand Elementary School students through two dances.

The Blank Table: A \$245 dining experience where the menu — and location — are a secret

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Spare Change. With four cocktails on the menu and 50-60 guests, Ferreira mixed between 200 and 240 drinks over the course of the evening.

The first dinner

Keller, a chef whose resume included Chicago’s Roka Akor and Auckland, New Zealand’s Harborside Seafood, had spent years cooking in the confined, unpredictable kitchens of luxury yachts.

Ott, who spent seven years working in Chicago’s hospitality and public relations sectors, had returned to her hometown of Coronado to find it, at least gastronomically, wanting.

The San Diego of 2019, she felt, had yet to embrace the kind of culinary risk-taking she had grown accustomed to; the coastal city’s dining scene was dominated by a kind of culinary conservatism: steak and salmon, Caesar salads and craft beer.

“San Diego wasn’t Chicago,” she said, “but Fred and I saw an opportunity to bring some of what we loved back home.”

The first dinner required four months of planning.

It was a leap of faith; Keller covered the upfront costs, with the plan that each dinner would pay back the investment, slowly bringing them to even before they could even think about making a profit.

Keller designed a five-course meal that borrowed from his time in Chicago while gently nudging the boundaries of what a San Diego diner might expect. Ott, meanwhile, by her own admission, obsessed over every detail.

The experience, she insisted, had to be immersive. Lighting, florals, plateware — each element had to be in service of something greater than the sum of its parts.

Then came the guests, whom Ott considered to be some of the most influential San Diegans — “friends, people who could get the word out, who have supported her in her career and who could curate the community to come.”

The evening began with flutes of champagne and oysters adorned with a grilled pineapple chutney, followed by tuna carpaccio, seared scallops and yellowtail, the meal concluding



Alexandria Ott (standing) speaks with guests at The Blank Table’s dinner in September 2024. Photo courtesy of The Blank Table / Kambria Fischer Photography.

“If people are going to spend the money they’re going to spend [on the dinner], I want them to walk away, first and foremost, with their minds being blown.”

- Alexandria Ott

with buttermilk panna cotta.

A “sensorial curation”

From that first night in 2019, the dinners grew in ambition. Ott and Keller scouted locations, secured partnerships and planned menus.

The site changed with each event — Adams Avenue Theater, a private

airport hangar, a private dock on Harbor Island — and the details, curated by Ott, were as much a part of the experience as the food itself.

“I think the juxtaposition of these experiences is what really keeps people on their toes,” Ott said.

Each event is staged, marrying location and ambiance to create a narrative.

Ott described the process as “sensorial curation,” drawing inspiration from her travels and an innate sensitivity to the environment.

“When I travel to Mexico City, New York, Portland or San Francisco, I’m constantly in awe, but also taking notes of the environment around me when it comes to culinary experiences, or any experience, for that matter,” she said. “What is the lighting saying? How are the shadows playing upon each other?”

In 2023, Keller relocated to North Carolina to focus on family, encouraging Ott to collaborate with other chefs.

Since then, The Blank Table has partnered with some of the city’s

best, including James Beard semi-finalist Tara Luansing Monsod of Anima, MasterChef season six winner Claudia Sandoval and Michelin-nominated Ruffo Ibarra.

Ott said the collaborations stem from genuine connections.

“Sometimes I’ll go to a restaurant and have the most amazing dish of my life, figure out who the chef is and reach out to them. If we vibe, it’s a yes,” Ott said.

Ferreira met Ott in 2022 when she began bartending at Botanica, where Ott handled PR. From the start, she was drawn to The Blank Table’s mission.

Now, Ott sends Ferreira the menu two weeks in advance, giving her free rein to design drinks.

Ott said each dinner is evaluated with a careful post-mortem of what worked and what could be made, somehow, even more precise.

“If people are going to spend the money they’re going to spend [on the dinner], I want them to walk away, first and foremost, with their minds being blown,” she explained.

Communication halted for federal health agencies, sewage crisis report affected

» Continued from Page 1

know if they are unsafe and what precautions they can take during a public health emergency. The most dangerous thing we can do is leave them in the dark.”

The communication hiatus comes weeks after the CDC, which is part of the HHS, announced it would assess levels of hydrogen sulfide in the air near the Tijuana River. A recent CDC report found that 77% of South Bay residents view Tijuana River Valley pollution and ocean sewage as threats to public health in the region.

The data was drawn from a survey of area residents which the San Diego County Health and Human Services

Agency conducted last fall with assistance from the CDC.

In October, the county also conducted a similar survey regarding chemical exposures in the communities along the river valley, according to the county interim public health officer, Ankita Kadakia.

But now those results are in abeyance, McClain added.

Peters, a former environmental attorney, described the freeze on external public health communications as “deeply troublesome.”

“We know it has already temporarily stopped federal agencies from working with our local public health officials on the vital health study they are conducting to measure the effects of the cross-

border pollution crisis,” he added. “Any further delay is unacceptable.”

The Trump administration did not respond to a request for comment from The Coronado News.

Maria-Elena Giner, U.S. commissioner with the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC), said the communications freeze has not affected her agency’s efforts to address the sewage crisis to date, including crucial repairs and expansion of the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant in San Ysidro.

“The USIBWC has a robust and expansive communications network with all of our stakeholders and we expect that will continue,” said Giner in a statement on Jan. 30.



Early this month, San Diego County Health Services reviewed medical records in South Bay. Staff photo by Madeline Yang.

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NAVY



WWII Veteran Walt Travis turns 101

Walt Travis, one of the few remaining World War II veterans, turned 101 years old on Jan. 12. He is pictured here celebrating with (from L-R) Rose Navarrette, Jerry Hinton, Linda Haley and Rachel Hagopian. Travis joined the Marine Corps at 18 and was sent to the Recruit Depot San Diego in 1942. Travis spent about three years abroad as part of VMF-115, a fighter-attack squadron that was led by Medal of Honor recipient Joe Foss. Travis and his wife moved to San Diego in the 1980s before her passing. Travis eventually moved to Coronado with his daughter, Leslie, during the pandemic. *Photo courtesy of Westmont of San Miguel Ranch.*



Capt. Wade Hilderbrand, outgoing commodore of Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group One, gives his remarks during a change-of-command ceremony on Naval Base Point Loma on Jan. 30. *U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class John A. Miller.*

New leader for Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group 1

DVIDS

Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group 1 welcomed its newest leader during a change-of-command ceremony at Naval Base Point Loma on Jan. 30.

Capt. Clinton Cornell relieved Capt. Wade Hilderbrand in front of friends, family and military personnel during an outdoor ceremony. “I will honestly sleep soundly at night knowing you have the watch,” said Hilder-

brand, who is slated to retire later this year. “If history is any indicator, this force will find itself in conflict again. You are the one strategic advantage this Navy has that no enemy can ever compete with. Thank you for what you do. Go build a legacy.”

Marine Aircraft Group conducts training exercises

DVIDS

Marines with the two fixed-wing Marine Aircraft Groups launched a series of cross-MAG Large Force Exercises in the skies of Southern California from Jan. 9-16. These were the first of their kind in duration and scale with involvement from all 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing fighter squadrons. The series featured defensive counter-air and strike missions, critical components of modern aerial warfare. The primary training objective of the LFEs were to prepare F-35 Lightning II and F/A-18 Hornet pilots for the Marine Corps’ prestigious Weapons and Tactics Instructor Course, a

rigorous seven-week course that certifies instructors to ensure aviation units maintain cutting-edge training and readiness. Before pilots can attend the advanced course, they must achieve the critical milestone of air mission commander qualification. “The mission commander is the individual delegated responsibility for planning and executing with all available assets and capabilities to achieve the assigned mission,” said Maj. Jason Garden, pilot training officer with MAG-13. “Mission commanders are qualified and designated to manage the overall blue force formation which typically consists of a minimum of three divisions of aircraft, aerial refueling assets and other joint or coalition forces assigned to the mission.”



An F-35C Lightning II assigned to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314, Marine Aircraft Group 11, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, takes off from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California, during a Large Force Exercise. *U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Alexis Ibarra.*

SPORTS

15th Annual Valentine’s Day run taking place in Coronado

BY CADE CAVIN
The Coronado News

Coronado will celebrate Valentine’s Day this year with a love-themed run on Sunday, Feb. 16.

Taking place at Tidelands Park, the 15th annual Valentine’s Day 10K, 5K, and one-mile races, organized by KOZ Events, will be slated with activities to celebrate the holiday.

Those interested in participating are encouraged to sign up as either an individual or as a couple. Jennifer Nanista Stephens, the event manager at KOZ Events, said that there will be a vow renewal held at the start line before the one-mile run, as well as a costume contest with tiki mask awards.

Stephens said the one-mile race will start at 7:30 a.m., and the 10K and 5K will kick off at 8 a.m.

The official theme of the race is “Celebrate Love, Be Active, Make Friends,” and race bibs will display one of three messages: “Available,” “Taken,” and “It’s Complicated,” for those looking to mingle.

“In 2025, we’re bringing back wedding vow renewals at the starting line,” said Carrie Panek, the race director. “Last year, over 200 individuals reaffirmed their love — a heartwarming way to celebrate Valentine’s Day, embracing couples, singles, families and friends.”

Registration is open at www.Valentinesday10k.com.



Runners take off during the 13th annual Coronado Valentine’s Day Run. The race is scheduled for Feb. 16 this year.
Staff photo by Willem Quigley.



Lauren Gilhooly won both the 60 and 150-meter dashes at the qualifying meet at Canyon Crest Academy on Jan. 25. Photo by George Green.

Gilhooly, Ayan, Collins qualify for California Winter Track and Field Championships

Coronado News staff

Three Islanders — Lauren Gilhooly, Nathan Ayan and Davin Collins — qualified for the California Winter Track and Field Championships in their respective heats.

To qualify for the championships, which will be held at Arcadia High School on Feb. 8, an athlete must meet a standard (time, distance, or height) in their event at one of the 27 qualifying meets held around the state.

Gilhooly won both the 60-meter and 150-meter sprints at the Canyon Crest Academy qualifier on Jan. 25, while Ayan emerged as one of the six finishers under the 600-meter standard of 1:31 at the same meet.

Collins qualified for the championships the following weekend, on Feb. 1, at the Vista Murrieta qualifier in the 300-meter dash.

Would-be pro soccer players navigate NWSL futures without a college draft

Associated Press

Former UCLA defender Quincy McMahon was excited to launch her professional soccer career with choices about where she’d land.

McMahon was among the first college players to navigate a transition to the NWSL this coming season in the absence of a college draft as she signed with the San Diego Wave.

The NWSL became the first major pro sports league in the United States to eliminate the draft last year as part of its collective-bargaining agreement with players. While many college players in years past prepared at this time of year for a January draft, now they’re on the open market.

McMahon got interest from several NWSL teams, many of which she was familiar with because of off-season training sessions. Upon graduation, she hired an agent and began interviews.

“It was almost like college recruiting all over again,” she said. “I talked on the phone with head coaches, saw presentations that they had given me, kind of just like, ‘Here’s what we have to offer you.’ And then I’d gotten contract (offers) from those and then just had to kind of choose based on that.”

The first player to test this draft-less future was Texas all-time leading scorer Trinity Byars, who signed with the San Diego Wave in November. McMahon joined the Wave in December, inking a three-year deal.

The NWSL Players’ Association says the change will give players like Byars and McMahon greater control over the start of their careers. Teams will need to compete for the best players, which in turn could boost salaries and prompt clubs to invest in better facilities.

While the draft was a celebratory moment in the past — players got their moment in the spotlight in front of family and friends — the reality was that nothing was official until contracts were signed. Teams held their drafted players’ rights for a period, even if they ultimately didn’t sign, said Meghann Burke, executive director of the NWSL Players Association.

“You could find a number of players across the league saying, ‘Yeah, I was drafted. I was all excited. I got to camp, and I very quickly realized I wasn’t going to be seeing the field or I wasn’t the right fit for the coach.’ ... And now they’re stuck because the club unilaterally holds the rights without a contract,” Burke said.

While elite players may choose to skip college in the absence of a draft, players and coaches alike said most athletes can still benefit from development at the college level.

“I’m an advocate for opportunities for my student-athletes. So if I can help them develop and get opportunities in the NWSL, it’s fantastic. That’s what I want. I want to see them playing hopefully on the U.S. women’s



FILE - North Carolina’s Isabel Coxs (13) and UCLA’s Quincy McMahon (19) battle for a ball during the second half of the NCAA women’s soccer tournament final in Cary, N.C., Monday, Dec. 5, 2022. AP Photo/Ben McKeown, File.

national team in the future,” Stanford women’s coach Paul Ratcliffe said. “Obviously, I want to help them grow and I’m an advocate for education and I want them to get their degree. So my hope is they take the time to get their degree and then go on to, if they did aspire to, play professional women’s soccer.”

Sophia Smith, part of the U.S. team that won the gold medal at the Olympics in France last summer, played for Stanford for two years and won a national title before she declared for the draft and was taken with the was No. 1 overall pick by the Portland Thorns in 2020.

“I loved my two years at Stanford. You learn a lot about yourself. You develop not only as a player by as a person. In college, it gives you real life experiences. It makes you go away from home and challenge yourself,” Smith said. “So I do still think college is very important. But I do think there will be more players going pro earlier, and that’s also good, because the talent is there, for sure. But I think it’s just knowing yourself and knowing what route is best for you.”

Teams are also adjusting to the new draft-less landscape in women’s soccer.

There were 56 players taken in the 2024 draft. So far, the 14 NWSL teams have collectively signed some 27 free agents out of college.

“Talking to agents, talking to other GMs, talking to people in the league, it’s like this is the wild, wild west,” said Racing Louisville interim general manager Caitlyn Milby. “No one knows what’s happening. No one knows how to do it. No one knows if they’re doing it right. We won’t know if we’re doing it right for a little bit of time.”

NWSL Commissioner Jessica Berman also said it will take time to see the impact on the league.



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SPORTS

Rays and Ha-Seong Kim agree to 2-year deal worth \$29 million

Associated Press

The Tampa Bay Rays and free agent Ha-Seong Kim have agreed to a two-year contract valued at \$29 million, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press on Jan. 29.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the deal hadn't been announced. ESPN first reported the agreement.

Kim, who played his first four seasons in the majors with the San Diego Padres and won a Gold Glove in 2023, will be paid \$13 million this year. He also could earn \$2 million in performance bonuses — \$10,000 per plate appearance starting at 326 through 525.

Kim has a \$16 million player option for 2026.

The 29-year-old infielder from South Korea tore the labrum in his



FILE - San Diego Padres shortstop Ha-Seong Kim (7) in the ninth inning of a baseball game, Aug. 17, 2024, in Denver. AP Photo/David Zalubowski, file.

right shoulder on Aug. 18 and needed season-ending surgery. He hit .233 with 11 homers and 22 stolen bases in the final season of a \$28 million, four-year contract.

San Diego Padres re-sign catcher Elias Díaz to a 1-year contract

Associated Press

The San Diego Padres have re-signed catcher Elias Díaz to a one-year contract that includes a mutual option for the 2026 season.

The team announced the deal on Jan. 30.

The 34-year-old Díaz played for San Diego and Colorado last year, batting .265 with six homers and 39 RBIs in 96 games. He agreed to a

contract with the Padres after he was released by the Rockies on Aug. 16.

Díaz, who made his major league debut with Pittsburgh in 2015, is a .251 hitter with 62 homers and 297 RBIs in 724 career games.

Díaz was the All-Star Game MVP when he hit a two-run homer in the NL's 3-2 victory in 2023. He batted .267 with 14 homers and a career-high 72 RBIs in 141 games with the Rockies that year.



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FEATURES

FireAid

A combination of music’s biggest acts and stories of loss to raise money for LA wildfire relief

Associated Press

Pop stars, first responders, rock stars and those who’ve lost everything in the devastating LA-area wildfires came together for FireAid, a massive benefit concert on Jan. 30 that combined spectacular performances with moving storytelling from survivors and reminders of the destruction.

In a night full of surprises, a reunion of Nirvana — fronted by St. Vincent, Kim Gordon and Joan Jett in the place of the late Kurt Cobain — tops the list. They launched into “Breed,” “School” and “Territorial Pissings” respectively, inspired and unexpected choices.

Drummer Dave Grohl’s daughter, Violet, then emerged on stage for “All Apologies.”

Closer Lady Gaga, after powering through the Oscar-award winning “Shallow” and “Always Remember Us This Way” from “A Star Is Born,” played a new song on the piano. “It’s just for tonight, it’s just for you,” she said of the song she wrote with fiancé businessman Michael Polansky. “Time is a healer.”

“All I need is time,” she sang in the folk-y pop chorus. “To heal my broken wings and then I’ll soar.”

Green Day kicked off the massive show by launching into “Last Night on Earth” at the Kia Forum and were soon joined by Billie Eilish for the first surprise of the night. The lyrics are surprisingly astute: “If I lose everything in the fire / I’m sending all my love to you.”

After their set, Green Day frontman Billie Joe Armstrong hugged actor Billy Crystal, who was there to welcome to the crowd at the Kia Forum.

“Our goal is simple tonight, to spend more money than the Dodgers spent on free agents,” he joked. He told the audience U2 offered the first big donation of the night: \$1 million dollars.

Crystal said he was wearing the clothes he had on when he evacuated. He lost his home in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood that he lived in for 46 years.

SoCal in the building

Is there any band more Southern California in spirit and geography than the Red Hot Chili Peppers? Bassist Flea did a handstand on stage wearing only a Speedo before they launched into one of their countless odes to the state: “Dani California,” “Californication” and “Under the Bridge.”

The first true-blue Los Angeles moment came from a surprise performance by Dr. Dre. The progenitor of West Coast hip-hop tackled “Still D.R.E.” with Anderson .Paak and Sheila E. before pivoting to Tupac and Dre’s classic “California Love.”

It was followed by the figurehead of Laurel Canyon folk, a moving set of “Both Sides Now” by Joni Mitchell.

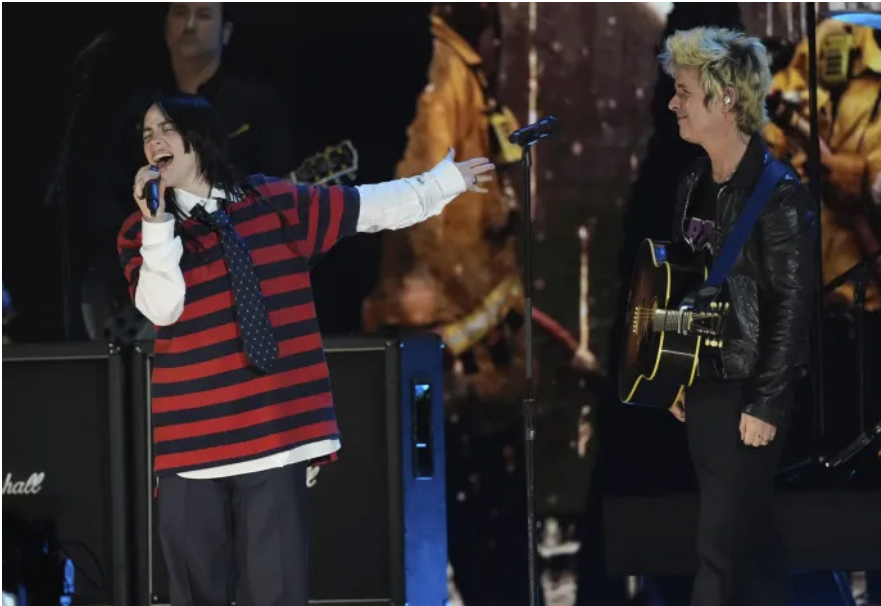
Later in the night, the recently reunited, Orange Country ska punk legends No Doubt launched into “I’m Just a Girl,” “Don’t Speak” and “Spiderwebs,” led by frontwoman Gwen Stefani.

Katy Perry was joined by the Pasadena Chorale for “Rise” before launching into “Roar” and “California Gurls.” She paraded across the stage with the California state flag in hand.

And Eilish and her brother Finneas, who’ve called Los An-



Joni Mitchell performs during the FireAid benefit concert on Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025, at The Forum in Inglewood, Calif. AP Photos/Chris Pizzello.



Billie Eilish, left, performs with Billie Joe Armstrong of Green Day during the FireAid benefit concert on Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025, at The Forum in Inglewood, Calif.



Gwen Stefani, left, of No Doubt, and Adrian Young perform during the FireAid benefit concert on Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025, at The Forum in Inglewood, Calif.

geles home for their entire lives, performed beautiful acoustic versions of her recent hits “Wildflower,” “The Greatest” and “Birds of a Feather.”

Two venues, one huge concert

FireAid spread its performances between two venues, the Kia Forum and Intuit Dome, providing a near seamless stream of music for nearly six hours. Behind early performances, images of firefighters and the devastation brought forth by the fires appeared on screen.

Olivia Rodrigo, Stevie Wonder, Sting and Pink provided memorable sets.

Stevie Nicks did “Edge of Seventeen,” “Stand Back” and “Landslide,” and told the story of evacu-

ating her Pacific Palisades home that miraculously did not burn down. Her home is mostly wood, built in 1938, and she theorized its loss would have destroyed the whole street.

Earth, Wind & Fire did a medley of their biggest hits: “That’s the Way of the World,” “Shining Star” and “September.” The Black Crowes backed up John Fogerty for “Have You Ever Seen the Rain?” Then the band was joined by Slash.

Lil Baby offered a rare hip-hop break in the night of mostly pop and rock, with his hits “So Sorry” and “Emotionally Scarred.”

Tate McRae performed her 2020 cut “You Broke Me First” and a cover of Crowded House’s “Don’t Dream It’s Over.” Jelly Roll brought country music to the event, per-

forming his hit “I Am Not Okay” and a cover of Bob Seger’s “Hollywood Nights” with Blink-182 drummer Travis Barker.

Music mixed with stories of fire’s toll

Between sets, survivors telling stories of losing their homes were broadcast throughout the arena, both in person and in video packages.

Non-celebrities brought heart. The Williams family, including four daughters and their mother, took the stage and discussed losing four homes in Altadena, California. They introduced the folk rock band Dawes, whose members also were directly affected by the Eaton fire.

Dawes’ Taylor Goldsmith lost a portion of the Altadena house he shares with actor-singer Mandy Moore and his home recording studio and instruments were destroyed. Goldsmith’s brother and bandmate, Griffin Goldsmith, and his pregnant wife also lost their home in the fire.

Spirits were high. “We’re appreciative of this moment. I hope people remember this concert forever,” said Scott Jones, 54, who brought his daughter to the concert at the Kia Forum. The Los Angeles-resident and his daughter wore black T-shirts with “First Responders” written across their chests.

“I hope some of the firefighters who are able to attend can come and decompress a little,” Jones said. “They needed it. I’m supportive of what they have done for this city.”

Donations are the focus

Throughout the show, viewers and attendees were encouraged to donate via FireAidLA.org.

Los Angeles Clippers owner Steve Ballmer and his wife Connie pledged to match all donations made during the live broadcast, doubling the proceeds. Crystal noted that because of their announcement, U2’s million dollar donation was worth twice that amount.

All of the proceeds will go to those affected. A 501(c)(3) was set up, and contributions to FireAid will be distributed under the Annenberg Foundation, which with FireAid has assembled a small committee to advise.



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