

# THE CORONADO NEWS

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Michael Ives, a Coronado artist, holds a hardcopy of his children's book "Cool Coronado Tails." Staff photo by Julieta Soto.

## Michael Ives publishes "Cool Coronado Tails," a 'love letter to Coronado'

The local author and illustrator describes the role of artificial intelligence in his new children's book

BY JULIETA SOTO  
The Coronado News

Giant ocean waves appear to crest behind a trio of pooches – Snickers, Dottie and Fella – as

they ride atop a float making its way down Orange Avenue in Coronado's Independence Day parade.

The image is one of many in author-illustrator Michael Phillips Ives' children's book, "Cool Coronado Tails."

"I wanted to go in a new direction," said Ives about his book, describing it as a love letter to Coronado. "These dogs I've been painting for over 30 years in different formats."

The book depicts a group of canine friends as they experience the parade and other annual city events. A version of these dogs are in another of Ives' collections about his childhood.

Ives, 78, is a lifelong artist who for decades has made art with watercolor, acrylic and wood.

"I feel really fortunate to be able to have the spark of creating every day," said Ives. "Coronado

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## A project to build a 'jet house' in the Cays unfolds — but the jet isn't the strangest part

A real estate mogul is building a house in the Cays with a jet fuselage on top of it. Who is he?

BY MADELINE YANG  
The Coronado News

By now, everybody probably knows about Casa Faten, a new Coronado Cays dwelling also known as the "jet house" because it is being built with a fuselage on the roof. It's already triggered a lawsuit filed by neighbors.

To some, the home at 15 Sandpiper Strand is an eccentricity within the developer's rights to build; to others, it is a gaudy magnet for unwanted attention.

The lawsuit claims that "formal" renderings of the jet were never presented to the Coronado Cays Homeowners Association (HOA), and that such a feature would "compromise the community's quiet character."

But, while the neighborhood debates the aesthetics of a partial plane in the Cays, a much more confusing story emerges from the man behind the project.

### Who is Donatello Bonasera?

The developer presents himself as Donatello Bonasera, an extraordinary artist, jewelry-maker and



Pictured here is the rendering of the "jet house." Rendering from Donatello Bonasera Development LLC.

opulent real-estate mogul.

But the name appears to be a pseudonym, and public records suggest that the man responsible for the jet house is actually named Abdulelah Abdullah Albussier. (The last name is spelled "Al Busseir" in some documents.)

In person and via websites, Bonasera takes pride in being elusive and taciturn, not giving away anything about his personal life. "To live happily, live hidden," says

a French mantra on his Instagram bio. A strange sentiment for a man mounting the body of an aircraft on his roof.

In fact, Bonasera saturates the internet with vainglorious articles about his genius, renowned works of art made of pure gold and architectural masterpieces. The articles appear in various publications, but are typically labeled as promotional content. No mainstream news stories could be found concerning

his artistic accomplishments.

His works are touted as extremely rare and featured in private collections, but there seem to be no expert evaluations or gallery exhibitions.

His real estate ventures are also mysterious.

Donatello Bonasera Development LLC, the business entity behind Casa Faten, boasts that

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## REVIEW

### Small but mighty at Boney's Bayside Market

Welcome back to Mouthful! with Michelle, a review column exploring the eateries shaping Coronado's food scene

BY MICHELLE ARMAS  
The Coronado News

Boney's Bayside Market in Coronado is the archetypical San Diego grocery store. It was created for those who enjoy an

epicurean lifestyle — people with refined taste buds and not-so-refined wallets. Admittedly, despite not having the budget, I often stroll the beautifully decorated aisles of fancy grocery stores to feel a sense of calm. This grocery store is one of those.

I love to admire the artisanal aged cheeses, bulk nuts and seeds, the different selections of dark chocolate and colorful exotic fruit, the vitamins and supplements, and a wide array

of premium water in well-marketed glass bottles. The grocery store is comparable to local San Diego grocers like Lazy Acres or national ones like Whole Foods.

And with every good grocery store comes their own deli. It's a section that usually unites the community. At Boney's, tourists may go in the summer, but the typical crowd consists of shoals of daily workers and Coronado



The Meatball Sub was served at Boney's Bayside Market on April 29. Photo by Michelle Armas.

» Continued on Page 7

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## this week

### 12 • Tuesday

The Coronado Public Library will host New York Times bestselling author Kristy Woodson Harvey and USA Today bestselling novelist Meg Donohue, with special guest Kate Luckinbill (granddaughter of Desi Arnaz), for a summer read program. The 7 p.m. event includes an author conversation, audience Q&A and book signing.

### 13 • Wednesday

The San Diego Center for Jewish Culture's Mandelbaum family lecture series concludes its 2025-26 season of free lectures with Professor Xu Xin on March 13 at 10:30 a.m. in the Winn Room of the Coronado Public Library. For more information and to register visit [www.lfjcc.org/arts](http://www.lfjcc.org/arts).

### 14 • Thursday

Coronado's Recreation and Golf Services department is hosting a "Drawing and Painting a Portrait" workshop so participants can learn how to make a realistic head-and-shoulders portrait from a photograph. The workshop takes place at the John D. Spreckels Center on May 14. Register at [coronado.ca.us/civirec](http://coronado.ca.us/civirec) or call (619) 522-7343.

## CONTACT US

For news tips, story submissions and letters to the editor, contact Editor **Sofie Fransen** at [sofie@thecoronadonews.com](mailto:sofie@thecoronadonews.com) or 619-990-8465.

To advertise contact Ad Executive **Braeden Stegman** at [braeden@numbersix.com](mailto:braeden@numbersix.com)

## SOMETHING TO DO



The Coronado Island Film Festival will screen "Dirty Dancing" on the beach on June 26. Image provided by Coronado Island Film Festival.

## Coronado Island Film festival to host movie on the beach

Coronado News staff

The Coronado Island Film Festival invites guests to step into the summer of 1963 on Friday, June 26, for its annual "Movie on the Beach" fundraiser — this year featuring the classic film, "Dirty Dancing."

The film will begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Hotel del Coronado. Beach chairs will be provided, along with bonfire pits and a nostalgic soundtrack by DJ's Trisha Lynn and Marilyn Klisser of Club Coronado.

Guests are encouraged to bring blankets or jackets, and fire pit lounges are available for purchase.

"The funds raised sustain our five-day festival and the free educational programming that reaches students, emerging filmmakers, and film lovers throughout the year, said Merridee Book, CEO and artistic director of the film festival. "This is cinematic magic with real, lasting impact."

For tickets and information, visit [coronadofilmfest.com](http://coronadofilmfest.com).

## PET OF THE WEEK

### Meet Macaron

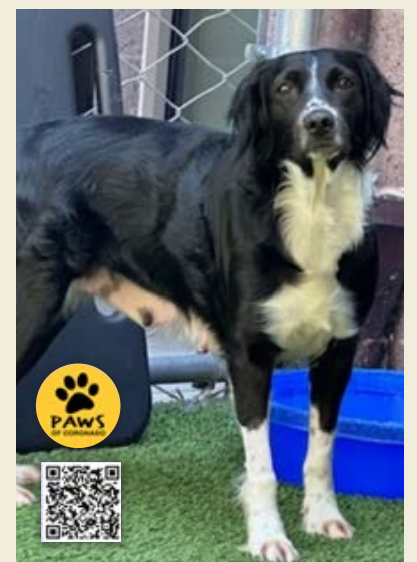
PAWS of Coronado

Macaron is up for adoption at PAWS of Coronado.

Staff members at the non-profit, which provides adoption and rehabilitation services to animals, said that Macaron is a reserved pup who will need a home willing to go at her pace.

Those interested in adoption can visit [www.pawsofcoronado.org](http://www.pawsofcoronado.org). Fostering, donating and volunteering are other ways to support the organization.

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 Macaron or other pets, please visit [pawsofcoronado.org](http://pawsofcoronado.org).



Meet Macaron, the pet of the week. She's at PAWS of Coronado and is looking for her forever home. See all adoptable animals: Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera, and tap on the link. Graphic/photo provided by PAWS of Coronado.



## Don't Let Joint Pain Slow You Down

Whether you are strolling on the beach or kneeling to tie your shoes, chronic joint pain and stiffness can make any activity difficult. If you are looking for relief from hip or knee arthritis, attend a free webinar presented by Sharp HealthCare. You will learn about nonsurgical treatments, joint replacement surgery, and physical therapy to help you safely recover from treatment. A board-certified orthopedic surgeon will talk about leading-edge surgical options available at Sharp Coronado Hospital, including Mako robotic-arm assisted surgery.

### Live Webinar: Advanced Treatments for Hip and Knee Pain

Monday, June 15, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Link provided upon registration

Register now at [sharp.com/jointwebinar](http://sharp.com/jointwebinar) or 1-800-82-SHARP (1-800-827-4277).



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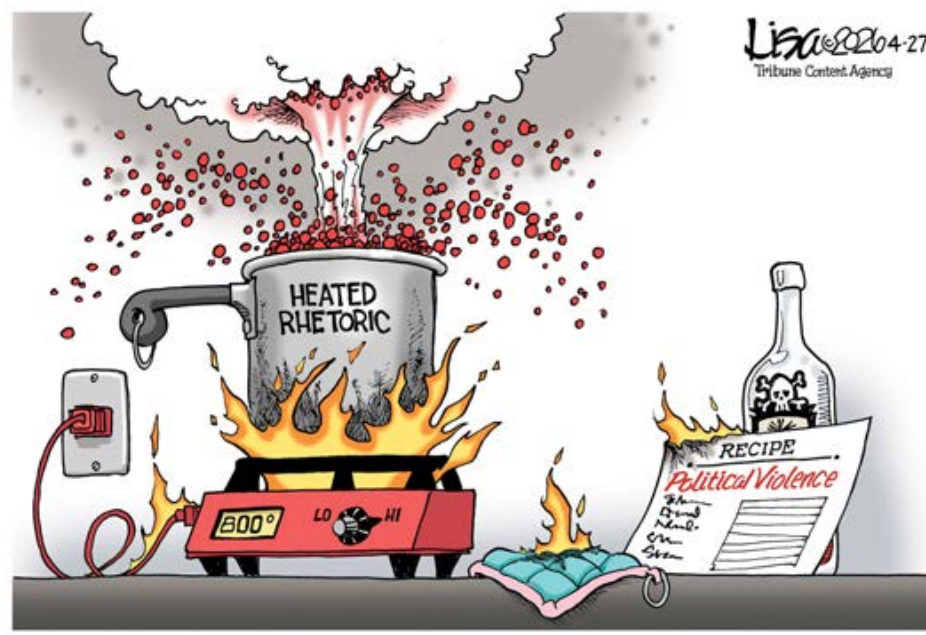
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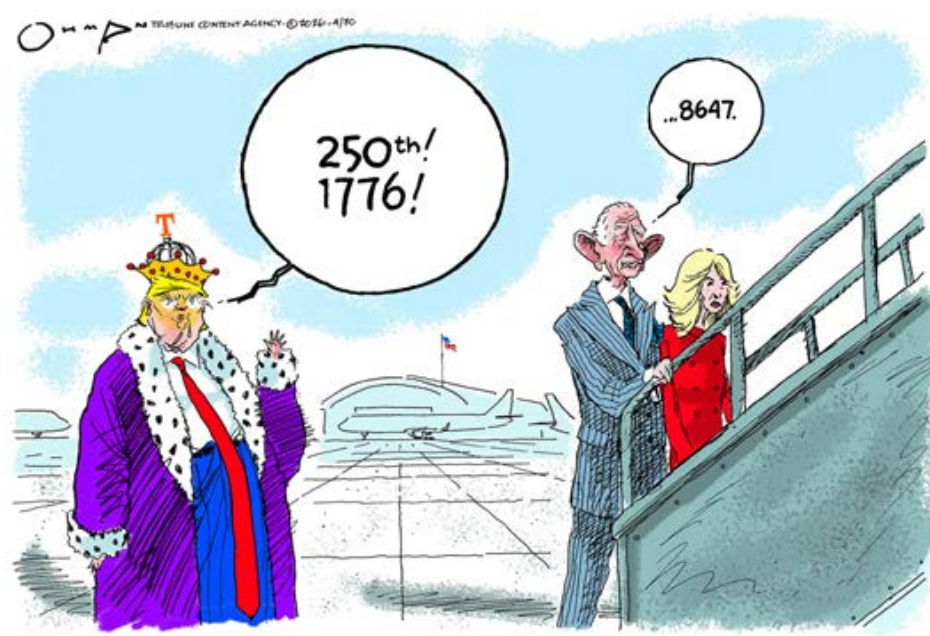
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# OPINION

LISA BENSON



Lisa Benson 4-27  
Tribune Content Agency



JACK OHMAN

**How to be a part of The Coronado News:**

- Submit a news tip
- Capture a cool photo of Coronado and send it in for publication consideration
- Respond to an editorial or a news story by writing a letter to the editor

\*\*\*All submissions can be sent to [newsroom@thecoronadonews.com](mailto:newsroom@thecoronadonews.com)\*\*\*

A large advertisement for "Best of Coronado News". At the top, there is a circular logo with a red-roofed building in the center. The text "BEST OF" is at the top, "20" and "26" are on the sides, and "CORONADO NEWS" is at the bottom. Below the logo, the text "Vote For Your Local Favorites!" is written in large, bold letters. Underneath, it says "Nominations April 15 - May 27" and "Voting May 1 - June 5". To the right, there is a red button that says "SCAN TO VOTE" above a QR code. The background of the advertisement is a scenic view of Coronado Island with a harbor full of sailboats and a town in the distance.

# CORONADO ISLAND FILM FESTIVAL

NOV. 4-8, 2026<sup>t</sup>



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# CORONADO

## NASA's Artemis II moonship returns home to its launch site after historic voyage

Associated Press

The spacecraft that flew four astronauts around the moon is back where its record-breaking journey began.

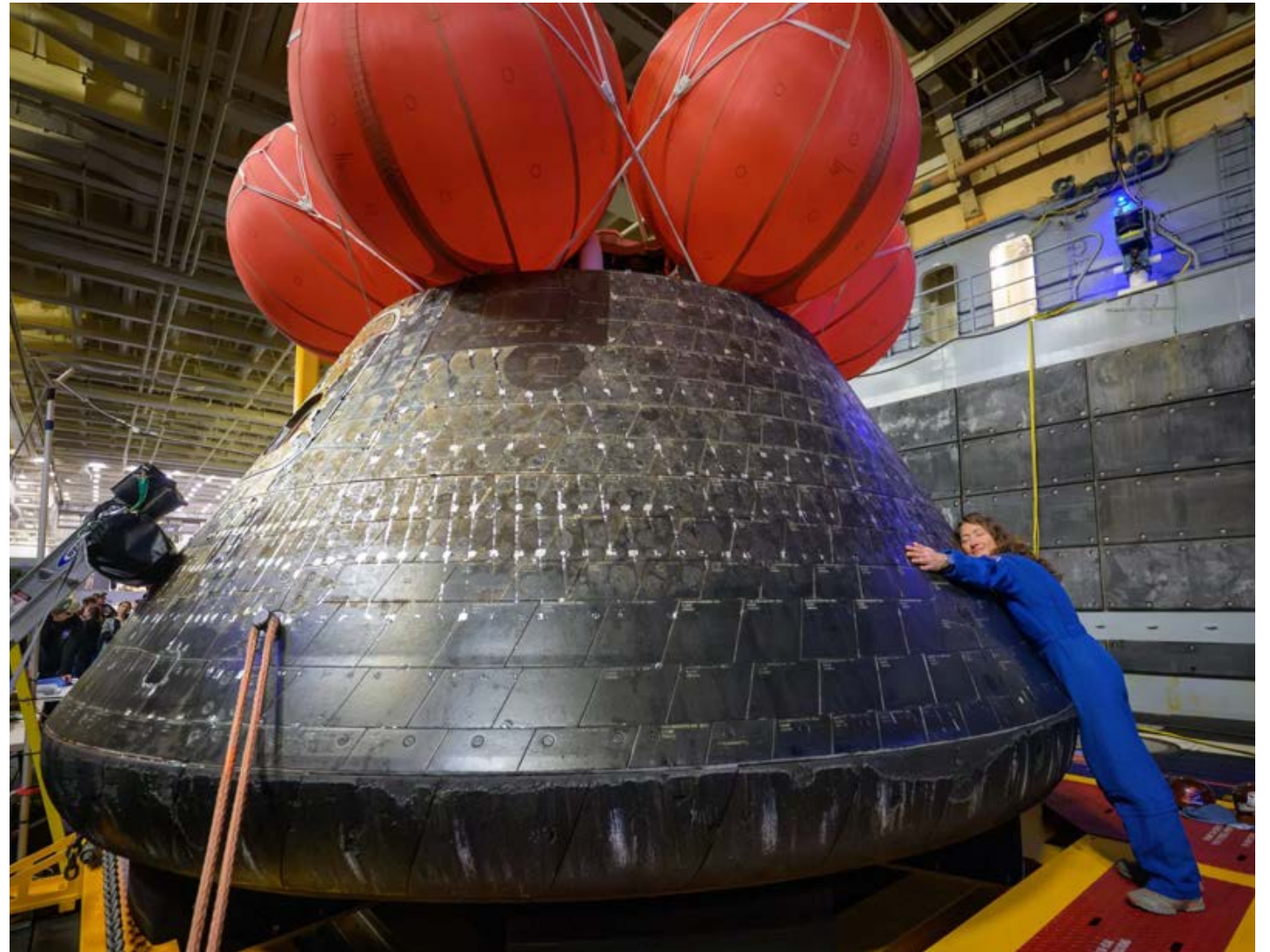
NASA's Artemis II capsule returned to Florida's Kennedy Space Center on April 28, almost a month after blasting off on humanity's first lunar trip in more than a half-century.

Following its splashdown in the Pacific on April 10, the Orion capsule was trucked from San Diego to Cape Canaveral. Engineers will examine the capsule's heat shield in more detail along with everything else in preparation for next year's Artemis III docking demo in orbit around Earth. The capsule's electronic boxes will be removed and recycled, along with research equipment.

The capsule, dubbed Integrity by its U.S.-Canadian crew, carried astronauts deeper into space than humans have ever traveled before. Aside from a finicky toilet, the capsule appeared to perform well during the nearly 10-day voyage, according to NASA.

Commander Reid Wiseman, pilot Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Canada's Jeremy Hansen are finally getting a break after medical exams and other tests that followed their mission.

"Been waiting for this moment," Wiseman said via X late last week, posting a video of himself relaxing on the beach. "There is a lot in my head that I must process and very little has to do with leaving the planet. Today is my first step. I have never in



In this photo provided by NASA, Artemis II mission specialist and NASA astronaut Christina Koch hugs the Orion spacecraft aboard the USS John P. Murtha, Saturday, April 11, 2026, off the coast of California. Bill Ingalls/NASA via AP.

my life felt peace like this."

Until Artemis II, astronauts had not flown to the moon since Apollo 17 in 1972.

Artemis III will feature a fresh capsule and crew. They will remain in orbit around Earth for docking exercises with lunar landers still in

development by SpaceX and Blue Origin. That will set the stage for a moon landing by two new astronauts as early as 2028.

## Calling all local artists — enter the 2026 4th of July t-shirt art contest

Coronado's annual 4th of July celebration is right around the corner, and to celebrate the city's sense of community, The Coronado News is hosting an Independence Day t-shirt art contest.

Residents of all ages are invited to submit their original artwork for the chance to have it featured on a t-shirt that will be distributed on the 4th of July.

The only requirement? It must capture the essence of Independence Day in Coronado — whether that's the parade celebration, firework display, or array of other patriotic activities on the island.

The submission deadline is 12 p.m. on Wednesday, May 27. Along with a free t-shirt and having their artwork featured on shirts distributed on the 4th, the winner's piece will be published online and in The Coronado News' print edition.

### Contest guidelines

**Deadline:** Artwork needs to be submitted to [newsroom@thecoronadonews.com](mailto:newsroom@thecoronadonews.com) by 12 p.m. on May 27.

**Guidelines:** Artwork will be judged based on its ability to capture the essence of the 4th of July in Coronado, whether that's the parade, leap frog event, concerts, fireworks, etc. All ages are welcome to enter the contest.

**Mediums:** Accepted mediums are drawings, paintings and digital artwork.

**Format:** Artwork must be submitted in a JPG, PNG, PDF or TIFF format, meaning artists should take high-quality photos of their hand-drawn artwork or paintings to submit, and graphic design concepts can be entered as a PNG or PDF.

The artist's signature needs to be included in the artwork itself, not as a separate file.

**Prize:** The winning artist will receive a free t-shirt with their very own work featured on the front, and the piece will be published in one of our print editions.

For any additional questions, email [sofie@thecoronadonews.com](mailto:sofie@thecoronadonews.com) or call (619) 990-8465.



## Contest: Nominations open for '2026 Best of Coronado News'

### SPONSORED CONTENT

For the first time ever, The Coronado News is hosting a "Best of" competition to recognize Coronado's local business landscape.

The nomination period is now open through May 27, with a voting window running from May 1 to June 5.

The goal of the "2026 Best of Coronado News" is to highlight the businesses in the 92118 zip code that make our island town unique.

Eateries, small businesses, hotels, professionals, general services — you name it, there's a "Best of" category for it, with a total list spanning 100 different categories.

Support your favorite local businesses by nominating them to receive a "Best of" award at <https://bestofcoronadonews.voterfly.com/>. Nominees must be located within the 92118 zip code or demonstrably serve the 92118 community. Eligibility is verified through the business license database, social media presence and official websites.

Winners will be chosen by the individuals who fill out the online voting ballot, which goes live on May 1. Once voting opens, each person may vote once per category through June 5.

VoterFly uses automated software to detect and prevent fraudulent voting practices. If a business is caught "stuffing ballots" or circumventing security measures, their votes will be flagged and removed.

This competition is meant to be enjoyable for all participants, bringing awareness to the enterprises that make Coronado a thriving community. The contest is driven by community input, as the winners are ultimately chosen through online voting.

For more information and an outline of competition rules, visit <https://bestofcoronadonews.voterfly.com/>.

Winners will be announced on Sept. 2, 2026 and will receive a certificate and bragging rights.

**Editor's note:** This is an advertisement feature from The Coronado News

# Michael Ives publishes “Cool Coronado Tails,” a ‘love letter to Coronado’

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has stuff around every corner.”

Ives first made digital art on the iPhone inspired by a cityscape front cover in *The New Yorker*. He eventually moved to making digital art from his iPad Pro as soon as it launched, a studio he takes everywhere.

Ives said he wrote the chapter stories in “Cool Coronado Tails.” He turned to ChatGPT for help with illustrations and the publishing process. On his computer, Ives asks the bot to generate an image with a prompt. From there he refines the image using Photoshop, later transferring it to his iPad where he spends hundreds of hours on the Procreate app adding layers to enhance what will become a final illustration.

“My credo when I was writing these was, ‘I don’t want to write them just for kids from 2 to 8, I want adults to really enjoy it too,’” said Ives.

## Collections

Ives said he attended trade school for architectural drafting and holds an associate’s degree in architecture.

His mechanical drawing background led him to the Peace Corps, teaching architecture in West Africa, and office jobs, including a position in Raytheon’s graphics department before he took “a leap of faith” and moved to Santa Fe where he pursued art.

“I gave them four hour’s notice and left,” said Ives. “I had moved to Santa Fe and no one knew me and I had to prove myself all over again.”

Since then, Ives has dedicated his life to making art influenced by the places he has lived.

Ives said he’s been influenced by impressionists and outsider folk artists to paint colors almost at war with each other.

He aims to create art that is “whimsical or so different that no one has ever thought about before” through a style he describes as “loosey-goosey.”

“I want people to get a kick out of it and to share it,” said Ives, who grew up in Perrysburg, Ohio. “And that’s kind of the feedback I get, especially my hometown series.”

His online website features a collection with 28 designs of important childhood memories, including his most popular piece, “Sledding Maple Street Hill, 1954,” the first in a series of acrylic paintings and digital illustrations.

Ives has a total of seven collections online, including a group of 21 pieces on Coronado celebrations that he began sketching in 2019 around the



**Snickers, Dottie and Fella are part of “Surfing Parade Float,” an illustration by Michael Ives in Chapter I about the Fourth of July parade in his children’s book “Cool Coronado Tails.” Photo provided by Ives.**

time he moved to town.

“The first one was the Fourth of July parade. And the second one was Halloween on Orange Avenue,” said Ives. “I kept saying to myself, ‘Wow, what a town. They know how to do stuff here.’ And so the series just kept going.”

Last October, Ives launched a new phase in his career.

“A good friend here in town asked me on several occasions, why wasn’t I writing and illustrating children’s books with my styles,” he said about what led him to publishing.

## Digital art

For the past half year, Ives worked on the storyline and illustrations of protagonists inspired by a trip to Bali with his wife approximately 30 years ago.

“The dogs would come into the rice fields every day and they would just raise hell,” said Ives.

Ives said those memories stuck with him, and he brought the images to Coronado in his children’s book collection.

“I named them after important things in my life,” said Ives. “Dottie’s got dots. ...She’s the smart one. She keeps the others in order. Fella’s kind of goofy. And Snickers just kind of follows him around like a little puppy dog.”

In his previous collection on Coronado, Ives said every illustration he sketched from start to finish.

In his book’s illustrations, Ives integrates AI for the start of the artistic process, beginning with a generated image he then spends hours editing on his iPad to “give them my own spirit.”

“I’d say (the illustrations are) 85% me, 15% AI,” Ives said. “I just use it as an initial tool and put it aside as quick as possible.”

“It’ll go back and forth from my iPad to Photoshop ... several different times before I’m really satisfied with it,” said Ives.

Ives organized the book’s pages in Adobe InDesign with finalized illustrations and text.

“This is probably one of the most difficult projects I’ve ever done in my life,” said Ives. “I may not have done it because of the academic or the administrative hoops that I had to jump through in the publishing world.”

Ives said AI allows somebody like him to make products that he never would have accomplished on his own.

As for the creative process, Ives says AI apps cannot replace a creator’s skill.

Ives considers AI another paint brush in his studio and advises young artists to “make sure, at the end of the day, that what you create is yours.”

“I became successful when someone could walk into a gallery, see my work on the wall and say: ‘That’s a Michael Ives!’” he added. “The same goes for working with AI, be sure you’re strong in your own style as an artist through developing your own techniques and purpose... Don’t be lazy and give in to just pumping something out with the click of a button.”

In May Ives travels to Hawaii, where he wants to be more hands-on with his art, focusing on sculptures and acrylics.

“Everything that I do is just a labor of love,” said Ives.

To learn more about Ives, visit: <https://ivesart.com/>.

Contact: [julieta@thecoronadonews.com](mailto:julieta@thecoronadonews.com)

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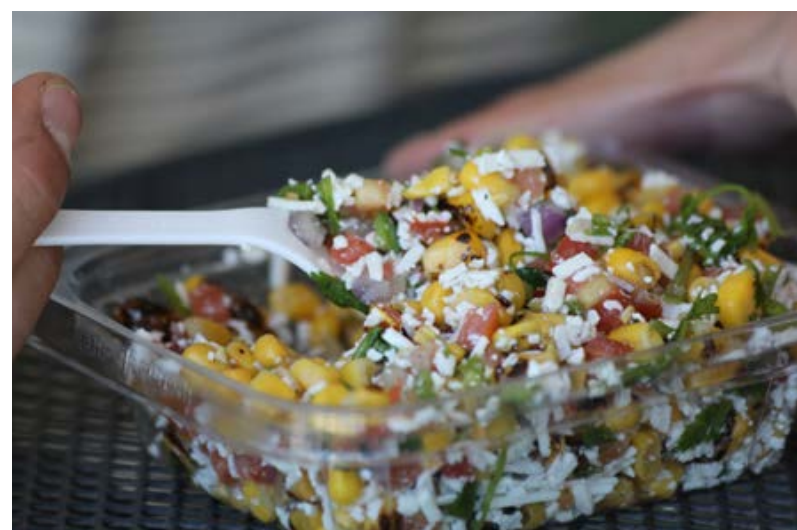
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**The esquites side served at Boney’s Bayside Market on April 29, 2026.**

Photo by Michelle Armas.

## Small but mighty at Boney’s Bayside Market

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residents who need a quick address of hunger.

Amongst typical deli sandwiches written in cute cursive on the menu, an alternative stood out: the house made meatball sub.

Because Boney’s offers a hodgepodge of choices, I made a hodgepodge of selections: Along with the meatball sub, I ordered a smoked gouda chicken salad on the side and the esquites, an off-the-cob form of Mexican street corn.

As I unwrapped the meatball sandwich, I immediately understood why it cost \$8.99 — a suspiciously low price for any deli, especially one in Coronado. I stared at it, shocked. For me, meatball sandwiches usually come with a brash, Italian American East Coaster yelling your order in the background: messy, hard to eat, spilling out of the bun from sheer overload. Despite the chaos, you know you’ll leave full.

This one was the delicate little sister of that. I could fit the whole sandwich in my hands. The meatballs were golf-ball size, and the bun was more comparable to a hotdog bun.

Still, the mozzarella, tomato sauce and meatballs were warm and seeped into the soft french roll. Mozzarella melted and stretched in the gap between my teeth and my hands. The sauce was flavorful and rich, as if they used the most in-season tomatoes.

The meatballs, laced with oregano and flakes of parsley, garlic, grated parmesan, and olive oil, tasted as if it was just made. The edges were crispy, and the mozzarella was as if it was taken off the artisanal shelf, adding a briny complement to the tomatoes. Despite the size, the flavor was powerful.

I paired it with the chicken gouda salad, a mix of penne pasta, smoked gouda, roasted red peppers, spinach, red onion, and chunks of roasted chicken. The smoked gouda gave the whole salad a nutty and smoky essence. The roasted red peppers complemented the smokiness with a sweet acidity. It was crunchy, sweet, savory, and peppery all at once. It was one of those recipes you might scribble down in case you needed an elevated last minute dish for dinner.

The esquites also had the common through-line, which was fresh. Roasted elote, tomatoes, cotija cheese, red onions, lime juice, cilantro. While it didn’t quite go in line with my Italian motif, I will never deny a salsa-esque side salad. Each corn kernel popped in my mouth, and the diced tomatoes made me want some tortilla chips to carry the technicolors. It was sprinkled with cotija cheese for a bit of salty robustness.

Boney’s Bayside Market, at 155 Orange Ave., is open every day from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Contact: [michelle@thecoronadonews.com](mailto:michelle@thecoronadonews.com)

# A project to build a 'jet house' in the Cays unfolds — but the jet isn't the strangest part

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the namesake artist and architect has designed masterful skyscrapers and luxury high-rises, but there isn't a single name or address for these buildings.

Moreover, two of the pictures representing his constructions aren't even his own designs, according to results of a Google image search.

The image next to "high-end luxury residences" is a photo of One New Change, a shopping mall in London. St. Paul's Cathedral can be seen in the reflection. One New Change was designed and constructed by an entirely different team.

The image next to "bespoke bunkers" is of an underground tunnel in Montréal, Canada. It connects the International Civil Aviation Organization museum building to an underground city, a maze of shops, attractions and more located right under the streets of downtown Montréal. It was designed in the early 1960s, also by a completely different person.

Bonasera and his elite enterprises don't seem to exist outside of what looks like his own endorsements.

Except for, potentially, the jet house.

## Casa Faten

When completed, the jet house will be composed of two floors and an open rooftop. The first floor has enormous windows overlooking San Diego Bay, where Bonasera's team says his 100-foot dock currently is the base for his yacht.

However, The Coronado News visited the construction site and didn't see a yacht.

Bonasera was present at the time. He drove a black Tesla Model Y and wore a plain white t-shirt. He seemed to be overseeing construction that day.

He appeared busy but waved down a reporter and said he wanted to make sure The Coronado News was getting the information needed.

Bonasera still declined to answer a number of questions, referring them to his "team." But he did reveal that he is collaborating with Bugatti, a French auto maker, and intends to place a luxury sports car in his living room.

Meanwhile, according to Bonasera, the dwelling's rooftop will have glass walls on three sides, a putting green, plus two other standout features.

The planned centerpiece – not yet installed – is the fuselage of a Gulfstream G550, positioned at the building's edge for an unobstructed view and "seamlessly integrated as part of the architectural narrative," said his team.

The second feature is a sculpture of a \$1,000,000 bill made from mosaic marble. (The U.S. Treasury has never printed bills in the million-dollar denomination.) Floor plans show that, from above, the entire installation perfectly replicates a banknote.

Bonasera's team said the entire project would cost \$30 million and is about three or four months from being completed.

His team also addressed the concerns about the house: "Any objection not rooted in a code violation is simply an opinion. While opinions may be expressed, they do not impact construction or the progression of an approved project."

Bonasera said he is building four other homes in the Cays, and one of them will have a helipad on the roof. He did not provide more information on the other projects.

The Coronado News viewed architectural plans, renderings and documents which were approved by the city and the Coronado Cays HOA.

The city did not respond to questions about the project, and the HOA declined to comment.

## Faten Alsafadi

While Bonasera was reticent to answer certain questions about the project – and any inquiries about his life – he disclosed that the 15 Sandpiper Strand residence is named for his mother.

Faten Alsafadi at one time was listed as owner of the Sandpiper Strand property, and she appears as a man-



The construction site for the jet house. Donatello Bonasera Development LLC can be seen on the safety netting. Staff photos by Madeline Yang.



Pictured here is the jet house, second-from-left, from the water.

ager on some corporate records associated with Bonasera.

He explained that he proudly features her first name throughout his art, jewelry and real estate ventures. For example, gold jewelry works by Bonasera are marketed on a website known as "La Faten," including a Fleur Pendant for \$200,000 and a Jardin Bangle for \$280,000. One cannot simply buy his jewelry, however, there is an application process to be selected to purchase a piece.

The Sandpiper property belonged to "Alsafadi Faten 2021 Trust" before being acquired by Solvency Ca LLC and then moved to "Abdulelah Albusseir 2023 Trust and Alsafadi," which is listed as the current owner.

Solvency Ca LLC, which is listed as active through the California Secretary of State, seems to be the business entity which the project is under, with most permit applications and documents listing Solvency Ca LLC as the property owner.

There is also a business listed with Alsafadi as the manager: The F Penthouse LLC at 1020 Isabella Ave. on Coronado. It was listed as active as of May 6 through the California Secretary of State. This address is connected to Solvency Ca LLC and Donatello Bonasera Development LLC, with building documents acquired by The Coronado News listing 1020 Isabella Avenue and 15 Sandpiper Strand as these businesses' addresses.

## Who is Abdulelah Abdullah Albusseir?

Which brings the whole story back to Abdulelah Albusseir. He is a Saudi Arabian man identified on records of the jet house as the owner, the manager of Solvency Ca LLC and manager of Donatello Bonasera Development

LLC.

Bonasera told The Coronado News he did not know who Albusseir was.

However, he is listed as the manager of the development company and because Albusseir's name appears on one of the permit documents submitted to the city of Coronado for construction of the jet house. It is signed by "Don Albusseir."

Albusseir is also listed in state records as manager of La Faten Foundation.

There are also federal court records that show that the man named Abdulelah Albusseir sued the Department of Homeland Security and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services in 2024 after the government failed to process his permanent residence application.

According to court documents, Albusseir is married to his coplaintiff, Sebrinna Gavzie, a United States citizen and Coronado resident.

They filed for him to be a permanent resident in 2021 and, three years later, sued seeking declaratory relief and legal fees.

In January 2025, Albusseir dropped the case. The outcome is unclear. His attorney, Richard Wilner, did not respond on deadline, and Gavzie declined to comment.

## Bonasera and Albusseir

Meanwhile, the name Albusseir carries an online presence nearly identical to that of Donatello Bonasera – boastful yet mysterious, with almost no biographical information.

For example, an outlet known as The Wall Street Times published an article in 2024 about "One of the World's Richest Arabs You've Never Heard of: Sheikh Abdulelah Al Busseir."

"While many business magnates seek recognition, this Sheikh prefers to let his portfolio speak for itself – a global empire rooted in real estate and gold that has thrived through volatile markets," the article says. "Within certain elite circles, he is known as 'The Phantom Billionaire,' a title befitting his low-key yet highly influential presence."

The reporting was listed as "branded content from a third party" that "does not reflect the opinions and beliefs of The Wall Street Times." The Coronado News could find no mainstream news articles about a sheikh named "Al Busseir."

The internet describes Albusseir as a business genius with a fortune that is as untraceable as it is loudly proclaimed.

One account states that "his net worth, firmly in the billions of dollars, continues to grow, yet the full extent remains a mystery due to his masterful ability to maintain privacy."

Another claims he is "noted for his belief that 'what is hidden remains invincible; what is exposed becomes a target,' a quote he is famously known to have said."

By comparison, a post in Architectural Digest about Bonasera likens him to Leonardo da Vinci, adding, "Donatello Bonasera's reputation as 'the golden artist' wasn't given. It was earned ... Bonasera is a person of few words. The high-status artist maintains an intentionally low profile."

The article includes a notation that "Architectural Digest editorial staff were not involved with the creation of this content."

That post also explains why Bonasera wants a jet fuselage on his roof. It says he had a sort of epiphany while flying at 40,000 feet "in his own jet," and decided to integrate aviation into his works. "The result is architecture with the presence of flight itself, balanced between earth and sky," says the article. "...Bonasera's vision extends beyond Earth. While some speak of colonizing Mars, Donatello plans to build on it."

All of the findings were brought to Bonasera but he declined to comment.

Even Albusseir's website is set up to resemble several Bonasera websites, with gold lettering in all caps and the same font.

The Coronado News contacted Albusseir by email and received a response that said all inquiries should be directed to Bonasera. It was signed "Abdulelah."

Yet, when Bonasera was asked directly about Albusseir, he said he didn't know who that was.

Contact: madeline@thecoronadonews.com

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## MILITARY

# Part of Coronado Bay Bridge to close for annual Navy Run/Walk

BY MICHELLE ARMAS  
The Coronado News

The Navy's annual Coronado Bay Bridge Run/Walk will be held May 17, beginning at 8 a.m., bringing runners and walkers across the Coronado Bay Bridge on a four-mile course from San Diego to Coronado.

The race starts at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront and finishes at Tidelands Park.

Road closures and bridge preparations will begin around 3 a.m. on May 17. One lane of the bridge will be closed, while the other will remain open throughout the event. All roads are expected to reopen by noon, with normal operations resuming on other roads by about 1 p.m. Glorietta Boulevard will remain open for southbound traffic; however, drivers should expect delays near Harbor Drive due to construction.

The event is hosted by the Navy Region Southwest Morale, Welfare and Recreation Program and raises funds for Quality of Life programs supporting Navy personnel and their families across San Diego's military community.

Bib pickup begins at 6:30 a.m., with an additional pickup option available May 16 from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Road Runner Sports in San Diego.

Parking near the start line is limited. Organizers recommend arriving early or using public transportation, including the San Diego Trolley. Free shuttle buses will transport participants back to downtown San Diego after the race.

A complimentary ferry service is also available from the Coronado Ferry Landing to drop passengers at



**A Navy Bay Bridge Run participant runs on May 18, 2025 at Tidelands Park.** Photo provided by Navy Bay Bridge Run.

the Flagship Cruises & Events hub between Broadway Pier and the USS Midway Museum, about one mile from the race start area.

Registration fees vary by age and category. Discounts are available for military members, seniors and children. A virtual entry option is available through May 1, and a "Sponsor a Sailor" option allows community members to cover registration for a service member.

Participants will receive a medal and event T-shirt at the finish line, along with access to sponsor booths and prize drawings. For more information, visit <https://www.navybay-bridgerun.com/>.

Contact:  
[michelle@thecoronadonews.com](mailto:michelle@thecoronadonews.com)



**A U.S. sailor watches a commercial ship as U.S. forces continue to enforce a blockade against Iranian ports, preventing ships from entering or exiting. American forces have directed 38 ships to turn around, or return to port.** Photo taken from U.S. Central Command.

# United States shoots down several Iranian boats in Strait of Hormuz

BY MADELINE YANG  
The Coronado News

**Editor's note:** Due to our print deadline, this story reflects the most up to date information as of May 4.

The United States has "shot down" seven small Iranian boats in the Strait of Hormuz on Monday according to President Donald Trump after American ships and vessels were targeted by the Iranian regime.

Trump added that there was "no damage" due to the strikes, other than to a South Korean vessel.

Coronado-based aircraft carrier, the USS Abraham Lincoln, continues to enforce a blockade against Iranian ports in the strait as Iran and the U.S. try to figure out an end to the war.

According to U.S. Central Command (CentCom), Iranian state media falsely claimed that a U.S. warship was hit with two missiles.

"No U.S. Navy ships have been struck," CentCom reported. "U.S. forces are supporting Project Freedom and enforcing the naval blockade on Iranian ports."

Project Freedom was launched over the weekend in order to help navigation of commercial ships through the strait.

The mission "will support merchant vessels seeking to freely transit through the essential international trade corridor," said the press release from CentCom.

"Our support for this defensive mission is essential to regional security and the global economy as we also maintain the naval blockade," said Adm. Brad Cooper, CentCom commander.

The Lincoln is working alongside the USS Gerald R. Ford and the USS George W. Bush. Three aircraft carriers have not worked together in the Middle East in the last three decades, according to CentCom.

American forces have directed 50 ships to turn around, or return to port, as of May 4.

All three ships include over 200 aircraft and 15,000 sailors and marines.

Contact:  
[madeline@thecoronadonews.com](mailto:madeline@thecoronadonews.com)

**Fundraising Gala:**  
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Nautilus Room, Coronado Community Center

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It promises to be a meaningful and memorable night in support of Ukraine. For tickets and more information, please scan the QR code or visit the Shield of Freedom website below.

**[shieldoffreedom.org](https://shieldoffreedom.org)**

## Attention, Coronado Art Collectors and Art Enthusiasts



Pauline Johnson-Brown  
Worldwide Art and Auction Advisor  
New York, San Diego, Washington D.C.  
San Francisco, Paris, London

I am very excited about introducing myself to the Coronado Community. Over the course of my extensive career in Real Estate and in Fine Art, I have been involved in unearthing hidden art provenances, achieving record auction results, as well as making gifts to major museums for my clients.

If you have art that you are curious to know more about and have considered selling, do not hesitate to call me. I will work as your liaison to assist you with Provenance Research, Preliminary No fee Valuations and access to the leading National and International auction houses. I will handle your art consignments and sales with the utmost integrity and discretion. As your Art liaison I will provide you with exceptional, discreet service.

Call or email today, I look forward to discussing your art with you!

Pauline Johnson-Brown

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## SPORTS

# Padres announce agreement to sell team to investor group

Associated Press

The San Diego Padres have reached an agreement to sell control of the team to an investor group led by Kwanza Jones and José E. Feliciano.

The family of late owner Peter Seidler formally announced the deal on May 2. The sale must still be approved by Major League Baseball.

The deal with private equity billionaire Feliciano and his wife took shape last month at an MLB-record valuation of \$3.9 billion. The Padres' announcement of the deal didn't give specifics on the members of the investor group or the purchase price.

"The Padres are more than a baseball team; they are a unifying force in San Diego, rooted in community, connection and belonging," Jones and Feliciano said in a joint statement. "As life and business partners, and as a family, we are honored to lead this next chapter together. We have worked hard for everything we have achieved, and we have built it together. We see that same spirit in this team and its fans, and we know what it takes to win. We are committed to showing up, listening and earning the trust of this community while building on the strong foundation established by the Seidler family.

"This is about more than baseball — it's about boosting the pride, energy, and connection that define the Padres, investing in community, deepening belonging and ensuring this team remains accessible and endures for generations. We are all in — with the goal of bringing a World Series championship to San Diego."

Seidler's family began to explore a sale of the Padres last November, two years after the death of the popular Peter Seidler, who became the Padres' primary owner in 2020. His brother, John Seidler, has served as



San Diego Padres' Xander Bogaerts, center, and teammate stand line prior to a baseball game against Arizona Diamondbacks in Mexico City, Saturday, April 25, 2026. AP Photo/Fernando Llano.

the Padres' chairman since his death.

"When I became control person, my goal was to continue building on our recent success in pursuit of a World Series championship for the city of San Diego and our faithful fans," John Seidler said in a statement. "As I pass the baton to Kwanza and José, I do so with full confidence that they share that vision as well as the Padres' deep commitment to San Diego. It's what the team, our fans and the community deserve. Our family loves this team."

Peter Seidler joined the Padres' ownership group in 2012 when John

Moore sold the team for \$800 million to a group headed by Ron Fowler.

Seidler took over and immediately endeared himself to San Diego's fans with his aggressive financial backing of general manager A.J. Preller, who built a team that has reached the playoffs in four of the past six years.

The Padres have been a hot ticket for several years as San Diego's only team in the four biggest North American sports leagues, ranking second in the majors in attendance last season. Preller's roster is off to another strong start this season, sitting second in the NL West at 19-12 heading into a home

game against the Chicago White Sox on May 2.

Jones and Feliciano already got a start on their new endeavor last month when they traveled to Mexico City to watch the Padres' international series against the Arizona Diamondbacks. The couple was spotted sitting with Padres CEO Erik Greupner.

Feliciano will become the second Latino owner in baseball, joining Los Angeles Angels owner Arte Moreno. Latino and Hispanic players comprise roughly 30% of major league rosters.

## Chargers bet on the trenches, adding an edge rusher and a center-turned-guard in the draft

Associated Press

Jim Harbaugh understands the importance of the line of scrimmage, so it wasn't a surprise that the Los Angeles Chargers used NFL draft capital to bolster their defensive and offensive fronts.

The Chargers had needs on both lines, and they addressed them by selecting Miami defensive end Akheem Mesidor at No. 22 in the first round on April 23 and Florida offensive lineman Jake Slaughter with the 63rd pick in the second round on April 24.

"When a need matches the best player available, it really is easy," general manager Joe Hortiz said.

### D-line addition

Mesidor gives the Chargers another disruptive edge defender to help fill the loss of Odafe Oweh, who signed with Washington in free agency after posting 7 1/2 sacks in 12 games for Los Angeles following an in-season trade from Baltimore.

With new defensive coordinator Chris O'Leary carrying over the same system and approach the Chargers used in Harbaugh's first two seasons under Jesse Minter, who left to become the Ravens' head coach, Mesidor should complement veteran Khalil Mack and emerging star Tuli Tuipulotu, with all three likely to be on the field in pass-rush situations.

Mesidor had 12 1/2 sacks and 17 1/2 tackles for loss as a sixth-year senior for the Hurricanes, showing a variety of moves and the ability to line up in multiple spots to get to the quarterback. Mesidor is also adept at stopping the run, and his versatility could make him a successor to Mack, who considered retirement before sign-

ing a one-year contract in March to return for his 13th NFL season.

"I think I'm adding a really good piece to that D-line," Mesidor said. "I think I'm a well-rounded player, and I'm just excited to go out there and compete with the boys."

### O-line addition

Slaughter is more of a projection in his fit with the Chargers, who notably described him as a guard despite him never playing a game at the position for the Gators. Slaughter showed good movement as a three-year starting center, a trait that will be emphasized under new coordinator Mike McDaniel as the offense will feature more spread concepts, screen passes and zone runs.

"We've had long discussions in the process, do we feel like he can play guard in this scheme, and the answer to that question is absolutely," Hortiz said.

Although Slaughter will compete to start at left guard, Harbaugh said he would be the backup center and could end up slotting in at any of the three interior spots on the line.

### Line overhaul

Injuries and ineffective play on the offensive line brought the Chargers' season to an unsatisfying conclusion, culminating in quarterback Justin Herbert being sacked six times in a 16-3 wild-card playoff loss to the New England Patriots.

In an effort to remedy those issues, the Chargers signed center Tyler Bivasz and right guard Cole Strange in free agency and then drafted Slaughter and Memphis tackle Travis Burke (fourth round).

"It's incredible that we got Tyler in



Los Angeles Chargers fans cheer during the first round of the NFL football draft, Thursday, April 23, 2026, in Pittsburgh. AP Photo/Sue Ogrocki.

free agency, and Jake's been our top center through the entire process, top of our board there with the ability to play guard, in our opinion at least," Harbaugh said. "That's something we needed."

### Last-day finds

Hortiz cut his teeth with the Ravens, and his Baltimore-like approach to roster-building has yielded several late-round finds. In 2024, defensive backs Tarheeb Still and Cam Hart were fifth-round picks who have found regular playing time, and sixth-round selection Kimani Vidal flashed with three 100-yard rushing performances last season. The 2025 crop yielded tight end Oronde Gadsden II, who had 664 yards receiving and three touchdown catches after

being taken in the fifth round, and safety R.J. Mickens, who had two interceptions and made six starts as a sixth-round pick.

"We want to create the most competitive environment we can out there, and it's more players, the better," Hortiz said.

Besides Burke, the Chargers made five other selections on the final day of the draft.

They took Mississippi State wide receiver Brenen Thompson (105th) and Arizona safety Genesis Smith (131st) in the fourth round. They also chose South Carolina defensive lineman Nick Barrett (145th) in the fifth round along with Boston College guard Logan Taylor (202nd) and Oregon guard Alex Harkey (206th) in the sixth.

# SPORTS



FILE - United States' Allyson Felix competes in the women's 4x400-meter final during the World Athletics Championships in London on Aug. 13, 2017. AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth, File.

## Allyson Felix, 40, looks for a comeback and maybe a spot at the LA Olympics

Associated Press

Allyson Felix is attempting a comeback at age 40 that could give her a chance to add to her Olympic-record medal haul two years from now in Los Angeles.

Felix, a mother of two, told Time Magazine she thought about coming back some four years after calling it quits and decided: "Let's go after the thing. Let's be vulnerable."

"You know, at this age, I should probably be staying home and taking care of my kids, doing all that. And just, why not? Let's flip it on its head," she said.

Felix has won 11 Olympic medals — the most by any woman in track — and has a record 20 medals from world championships.

She is a seven-time Olympic champion, with six in the relays and her

lone individual gold coming in the 200 meters at the 2012 London Games.

Before retiring in 2022, she became an outspoken advocate for athletes who become mothers and want to keep their careers going.

Felix, who landed a spot on the IOC Athletes' Commission in retirement, has two kids — 7-year-old Camryn and 2-year old Trey.

She said she expects to start full-time training with her coach, Bobby Kersee, in October with the goal of competing in 2027. The Olympics will be in her hometown a year later.

"I totally get the person who sticks around too long and you're like, 'What are they doing?'" Felix said. "I know, at 40, I am not at my peak. I have no illusions about that. I'm very clear in what it is and what I want to see. And so I hope it's seen that way."

## 4 US-born players could be in the mix for Mexico's World Cup roster

Associated Press

Mexico's World Cup roster could owe more than a little bit to its northern neighbor.

The country has already had Mexican-American players on previous World Cup squads, but as many as four who were born and developed in the United States could be suiting up for El Tri in 2026.

"It would be a tremendous impact for the Mexican Americans for me to play in the World Cup," said midfielder Brian Gutiérrez, who was born in Berwyn, Illinois, and was selected for the World Cup roster on April 28. "It would be really exciting."

Gutiérrez could be joined on the Mexican squad by Chivas teammate Richy Ledezma, a midfielder and right back born in Phoenix, as well as Obed Vargas, a midfielder from Anchorage, Alaska, and right back Julián Araujo, a native of Lompoc, California.

Coach Javier Aguirre released a partial World Cup roster this week composed exclusively of players from Liga MX. Although Ledezma wasn't included, that doesn't mean he couldn't be on the 26-man roster Aguirre announces on June 1. Mexico plays its tournament opener against South Africa on June 11 in Mexico City.

Vargas, who plays for Atlético Madrid, and Araujo, who plays for Glasgow Celtic, will have to wait alongside Ledezma. Araujo has been training in Mexico's facility alone this week even though his place is not assured.

"I am Mexican, I feel the flag, the country and coming to Guadalajara was amazing," Ledezma said. "It is an honor, a dream of mine to play in the World Cup in the country where my

parents were born."

Gutiérrez played two games for the U.S. national team and Ledezma and Araujo one each before switching affiliation, and all four appeared for the American Under-23 and Under-20 teams. The quartet found themselves far back on the American depth chart.

Araujo made his Mexico debut in 2021, becoming the third player to appear for the U.S. and Mexican senior teams after Martín Vásquez and Edgar Castillo. Vargas debuted in 2024, and Ledezma and Gutiérrez this past January.

Mexico has never had more than two Mexican Americans suit up for a World Cup.

Two California natives, Isaac "Conejito" Brizuela and Miguel "Pochito" Ponce, represented Mexico in the 2014 tournament in Brazil.

Brizuela was born in San Jose, California, moved to Mexico when he was 2 and is now contemplating retirement after playing 16 years in the Mexican League.

Ponce, who was born in Sacramento, California, also returned to Mexico when he was a child after his mother was deported. She had worked as a housemaid in Sacramento.

"I don't remember it because I was very young, but my mother told me about the deportation. It was a difficult time because my father stayed behind and we returned to Mexico, although years later we reunited," said Ponce, who helped Mexico win the 2012 Olympic men's soccer gold medal.

Gutiérrez, 22, played for the U.S. in January 2025 friendlies against Venezuela and Costa Rica.

» Continued on Page 15

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## SPORTS

# Growing interest in women's rugby is helping make push from club status to NCAA championship sport

Associated Press

Jara Emtage-Cave started playing rugby as a 13-year-old in Barbados, never really imagining how the sport might shape her world.

She graduated from the flag program to full contact at age 16, continued her career as an undergrad on Stanford's club team and this weekend played on one of more than two dozen teams competing in Indianapolis at the College Rugby Association of America championship. But for Emtage-Cave and the others, there's a potentially bigger prize in Indy than merely winning a title. They could help turn women's rugby into a full-fledged NCAA championship sport.

"I like the physicality because I think it's one of the few contact sports and full contact sports for women," said Emtage-Cave, now a 24-year-old grad student at Stanford. "So the physicality is something I find you just don't get anywhere else."

Certainly, things are changing rapidly in the sport with the addition of an American professional league and the Olympic-level success. And having a popular personality like Ilona Maher, an Olympic bronze medalist, "Dancing with the Stars" runner-up and social media celebrity, helps give rugby a larger platform, too.

But at the grassroots level, those tracking interest in rugby such as NCAA executive Gretchen Miron and USA Rugby CEO Bill Goren readily acknowledge that more youth and prep programs have helped fuel a surging interest that has veteran players and even relative newcomers expressing similar sentiments to those of Emtage-Cave.

"People are intrigued by that (physicality) and want to play that way at the college level," said Miron, director of education and external engagement in the NCAA's Office of Inclusion. "We do see some recruits who have played rugby in high school or the youth space, but we also have a lot of interest from people who are on campus and try rugby for the first time. Rugby has a history of having people that are newer to the game compete in college and really fall in love with it."

## American rugby

Rugby, like soccer, has been popular internationally for centuries. But in the U.S., it struggled to gain a foothold over more popular sports. That seems to be changing quickly.

Rugby was reinstated as an Olympic sport in 2016, and the U.S. is set to host the 2031 and 2033 men's and women's Rugby World Cups, though neither the dates nor host sites has been announced.

Organizers believe those events can serve as a launching pad to build momentum, much like the boost that American soccer received from hosting the 1994 FIFA Men's World Cup and 1999 and 2003 FIFA Women's World Cups.

"It took about 25 to 30 years for soccer to get where it's at today, in the U.S.," Goren said, pointing to the impact of those World Cups. "Back then, I knew a small handful of people that played soccer, but I didn't. It



A player from Davenport tries to evade tacklers from Life University during a preliminary round game Saturday, April 25, 2026, at the College Rugby Association of America championships being held in Indianapolis. AP Photo/Mike Marot.

was kind of a niche sport. Today every kid across the country seems to play soccer as an entry-level sport. We're behind that (curve), but, obviously, that's the path we want to be on."

The indications that rugby is following a similar course do exist, though.

While Maher has emerged as the sport's top female star, recent NFL draft picks such as Indianapolis Colts defensive end Laiatu Latu and Chicago Bears tight end Sam Roush both played rugby in high school. The Colts even gave Daniel Adongo, a Kenyan rugby player who had not played American football, a three-year chance to show he could become an NFL linebacker.

Today, 30 women's college teams have varsity-sanctioned programs, leaving them 10 short of potentially moving from an emerging sport to a championship sport like women's wrestling and perhaps soon women's flag football.

But safety still seems to be a concern for parents.

While many believe soccer is less injury-prone than American football, that opinion doesn't necessarily translate to rugby.

Supporters insist the lack of hel-

pets and shoulder pads likely reduces injuries because of fewer players launching themselves to make tackles, and a rule lowering the tackle zone has eliminated some once-prevalent injuries such as broken noses.

"It used to be you would tackle at the shoulders, but they moved that to now where it's sternum height,"

Emtage-Cave said. "So it's very unlikely your face is going to be involved in a tackle."

## The future

Emtage-Cave first entered the sport through Barbados' national program.

Bryce Campbell, the general manager of Kuntz Stadium, switched from football to rugby at the urging of his friends in middle school because he was too big to run the football in the youth league. At Indianapolis Cathedral High School, he became fully committed to rugby

and at Indiana University he won the Rudy Scholz Award winner as the nation's top college men's player.

That sent him on a globe-trotting career, which included playing on America's 2019 World Cup team, competing on four different continents and now managing this weekend's two-day women's sevens tournament, featuring fast-paced 14-minute games, and next weekend's men's final four.

Goren will attend both events, perhaps with an eye toward making Indianapolis a regular stop for rugby tourneys, something that sounds like music to Campbell's ears.

"It's got deep roots and deep traditions in colleges across the country and it's kind of professionalized over the past few years," he said. "It's taken some of the same steps soccer did, and with the World Cup coming, that's kind of the North Star of all this. There's a lot more investment coming into the game, not only at the professional level, but at the youth level and more people are getting involved."

Organizers hope several thousand fans meander these two weekends through Kuntz Stadium's two fields, just a few miles down the road from Indianapolis Motor Speedway, a venue where automotive innovations became prominent features on passenger cars, and across the street from Bush Stadium, a minor league baseball stadium that helped launch the careers of Hall of Famers such as Hank Aaron and Randy Johnson before being converted into an apartment complex.

And here, players such as Emtage-Cave are embarking on their own trail-blazing journey to help a wildly popular international sport gain traction in America.

"I think it's a great opportunity to become a championship sport, and I definitely feel like more teams should push to elevate to varsity status," she said. "I do think there are demands that come with being a varsity team that a lot of clubs just don't have the capacity for, but I think that's just a matter of funding and expertise in women's rugby and I think that should be our goal."

*"I think it's a great opportunity to become a championship sport, and I definitely feel like more teams should push to elevate to varsity status."*

- Jara Emtage-Cave, female rugby player

## 4 US-born players could be in the mix for Mexico's World Cup roster

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The 25-year-old Ledezma played for the U.S. at the 2019 FIFA Under-20 World Cup and had one appearance with the senior squad in a friendly against Panama on Nov. 16, 2020. His career was slowed by a torn right ACL suffered with PSV Eindhoven in December 2020.

Araujo appeared for the U.S. in a December 2020 friendly against El Salvador.

Ledezma joined Chivas last summer from PSV and Gutierrez this year from the Chicago Fire.

"After the MLS season I was looking

for another opportunity and Chivas came up. It was a dream come true," Gutierrez told The Associated Press. "It was a no-brainer; it was bound to happen and I am glad that it happened now."

Playing under the Chivas spotlight helped both players reach the Mexican national team quickly, but both had already been contacted by Andrés Lillini, who oversees Mexico's youth teams.

The same was true for Vargas, while Araujo had already been called up in 2021 when Argentine Gerardo Martino coached Mexico.

"Scouting is the foundation of any development process, that's why I

came to the national team," said Lillini, who worked as a scout for CSKA Moscow. "Every eligible Mexican player with the necessary skill level should be here, and we decided to begin with the United States."

As part of Lillini's and the Mexican Federation's plan, the presence of Mexican American players could increase in the future. In the last call-up for the Under-16 national team, six players born in the U.S. were selected.

And although Lillini initially focused on the northern neighbor, he has also extended recruitment to children of Mexican parents living in Europe. He said he already has con-

tacted 30 players abroad.

"All the federations in the world do it, we had to do it, too," Lillini said.

Some fans and analysts believe the Mexican national team should consist only of Mexican-born players.

When Ponce and Brizuela played in the World Cup, there was no controversy because both were substitutes, and Brizuela's nationality was only revealed after the tournament.

In other sports, such as baseball, having players of Mexican descent on national teams is commonplace. In the last World Baseball Classic, 10 of the 30 players on the Mexican squad were born in the U.S.



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