



Setting the stage on your holiday table is a perfect way of showing your guests how happy you are to have them in your home.

Your Table Settings Reflect The Theme of the Party and Your Personality

By Maureen Molé

As you plan your table decor, remember it can be fancy and elegant, or casual and fun.

The major contributor to an eye-catching table is color. Table coverings such as placemats, tablecloths, and runners in solid colors or prints can achieve your desired effect. Fortunately, no-iron tablecloths and runners come in a sotpourri of colors, designs, and prints. On a practical note, dark colors or printed cloths are more functional because wine and food stains won't show if any mishaps occur.

• **Design your table's color palette according to the season or holiday.** In the Autumn, use brown and rust colors, in the Spring and Summer try using dark and light shades of blue. And, of course, for specific holidays, decorate the table with the traditional colors, such as red and green for Christmas, pastel colors for Easter, green for St. Patrick's Day, and red, white, and blue for July 4th.

• **Centerpieces** are key for a well-dressed setting. To complement

the centerpiece, add a few colorful trinkets or small items to accessorize the table that continue the theme. In the summer, you may have a seafood theme with a bowl of seashells in water with a floating gardenia. Sprinkle a few seashells around the table to add to the theme. In the Spring, if you use assorted colorful flowers as a centerpiece, you might put a single flower in a tiny vase at each guest's place setting that would also add color to the table. In Autumn, use a variety of different sized pumpkins and gourds as a centerpiece. Then, scatter colorful, silk Autumn leaves around the table. Add more color with napkin rings, and small items that match the theme.

• **Napkins, dishes, and glassware** play an important supporting role when dressing the table. Tying fabric napkins with colorful ribbon adds more pizzazz to the table. Dishes and glassware do not have to match. It's best to use white or plain-colored dishes so the food will be the standout. Use glasses that are fun to drink from. A favorite "standing ovation" goblet has a large bowl and long stem.

• **For evening parties, always use candles – tapers and votives.** Lighting is very important, and almost everyone looks better in candlelight. A few other tips to create a spectacular table:

• **The centerpiece is the focal point of the table** and should remain on the table and in the lime-

(Continued on Page 8)

Discover the Treasures at the Friends of the Santa Monica Library Store at the Downtown Branch



The Friends of the Library Bookstore originally opened in 2006. Used books are often sold or given away to other local libraries in need. Above, Edward greets one of his regular visitors.

You might wonder what is special about this unusual store that houses a great variety of books, and so much more. It is located just outside the north entrance to the downtown Santa Monica library. Stop by Monday, from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.; Thursday, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.; and Saturday from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. to find out.

The afternoon I visited, I was impressed with the number of people shopping, each seemed determined to go to a certain section to find what they wanted. One had a tote bag to fill up. They also sell children's games, CDs, and DVDs.

The Friends of the Santa Monica Library was founded in 1961 by City Librarian Hilda Glaser. The group was dedicated to advocating for growth and enrichment of our local libraries. The Friends of the



Volunteers Tim, left, and David replace books on the shelves.

Library Bookstore was created in 2006. Proceeds help fund many of the library programs. (Originally, each library branch was selling used books, but it became too much work for the individual branch librarians.)

There is also an online bookstore with more choices.

A former educator, Kent Lewis, started volunteering in 2006 when the new downtown library opened. He was told he would have to serve on the Friends of the Santa Monica Library Board, which he did.

Kent shared that during the pandemic they would often receive up to 1000 books a day. They still receive many books for children and middle school students.

Over the years, Kent has worked in the store with volunteer supervisor Sheila Ober-Brown whose enthusiasm and literary know-

(Continued on Page 10)



The bookstore is just to the left before you enter the main library from the north parking lot in downtown Santa Monica.

Take A Look Inside	
Good News	2
Reflections From The East	4
Architecturally Speaking	5
Clergy Corner	6
Community Service	9
Paws and Claws	10
Adopt a Pet	10
Planning Ahead	10

The Science of Happiness: How to Boost Your Brain for a Brighter Life



By Shannel Kassis Elhelou, PsyD

Happiness is more than a passing feeling; it is a state of well-being closely tied to brain health and longevity. Research suggests that positive emotions can reshape the brain by strengthening neural pathways and lowering stress hormones like cortisol, leading to a healthier brain and more fulfilling life.

The brain responds to happiness by releasing chemicals like dopamine and serotonin, which boost mood and support cognitive health. These feel-good chemicals also reduce inflammation and protect brain cells from damage.

Over time, building a life filled with positive experiences can create lasting changes in how the brain processes stress and handles challenges.

Daily habits play a powerful role in supporting happiness and brain health. Physical exercise increases blood flow to the brain and releases endorphins, which improve both mood and mental clarity. Mindfulness and meditation reduce anxiety and help the brain become more resilient. Spending time outdoors lowers cortisol levels, while practices like gratitude improve emotional balance. Even small actions, like laughing with a friend or enjoying a hobby, can give the brain a healthy boost.

Happiness is not about avoiding difficulties but about creating a

life rich with meaning, connection, and balance. You can support overall happiness by engaging in habits that support both mental and physical well-being.

Understanding the science behind happiness empowers us to take intentional steps toward boosting not just our mood but also our cognitive vitality. Small shifts like taking a daily walk, connecting with a friend, or pausing to appreciate life's simple pleasures can spark lasting changes in your brain.

• Join A Free Workshop
To dive deeper into this mind-body connection, join us online on Friday, April 25 at 12 p.m., for a FREE Virtual Brain Health Booster focused on The Science of Happiness. We explore evidence-based

strategies to enhance mood, improve memory, and support long-term brain health. Whether you are seeking to reduce stress, prevent cognitive decline, or simply feel more joyful, this workshop is designed for you.

Please visit bit.ly/happinessPNI for additional information and registration.

Shannel Kassis Elhelou, PsyD, is a neuropsychologist at the Brain Wellness & Lifestyle Program at Pacific Neuroscience Institute®. She delivers lifestyle interventions and memory training to proactively address and prevent cognitive decline. PacificLifestyle.org / 213-344-2037.

Plan for Zero-Waste Spring Cleaning

**By Sarah Caso
California Climate
Action Corps Fellow
Extraordinaire**

Spring has arrived, which means it's time for Spring cleaning. This year, as you dust off your top shelves, wash your windows, and go through your wardrobe, take note of both items you no longer use and single use items.

Are there items you could reuse or swap for durables? While you take the time to clean, use it as an opportunity to make simple changes to reduce waste. It is not possible to be truly zero waste in today's society. We have little con-

trol over the plastic packaging of products or the financial barriers to buying sustainably. But, there are super-easy swaps that you can make to reduce your environmental impact.

Instead of feeling pressured to switch items like paper towels to 100% recycled paper towels, find a towel that has lost its fluff or a ratty shirt that you no longer wear to clean up messes or wipe away grime. Rather than fret about buying costly green cleaning products, use the ingredients you already have sitting around your house. Add lemon rinds to white vinegar (stop by Ishihara Park



Sarah Caso, CCAC Fellow, showing off some herb-infused oil from the February event held at Ishihara Park.

Learning Garden's orchard to grab some lemons!), combine baking soda with vinegar, and dig out hydrogen peroxide from the first aid kit for a well-rounded set of cleaners.

What is most important is trying your best to reduce consumption, no matter how small the change. It is easy to get caught up in the impossible feat of being zero waste, just as it is easy to get frustrated at all the financial and time barriers to being zero waste. The onus is not on you alone, (the

(Continued on Page 9)



Happy April Birthdays to:
Marlene Dobkin, Klaus Brandt, Paul Gaulke, Mervyn Hecht, Carol Jackson, Frank Vespe, Xavier Banister, Sarah Young Shepard, Alan Rich, Rena McKinzie, Sharon Croskery, Beth Field, Cameron Khoury, Matt Williams, Kathleen Fish, Jessica Heffernan, Isabelle Viguier, Jason Nadler, Jamie Menzies, Steve Litvack, Jenna Analco Gilliland, Raul Gomez Salazar, Lenn Hilario Chowdhury, and Linda Greenberg



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From the Santa Monica Pier Guy

The Pier in Spring: Present and Past



By Jim Harris
April has long been an interesting month for the Santa Monica Pier. Annually, it is a month of preparing for another

busy Summer, while simultaneously enjoying the Springtime phenomenon known as Spring Break. And, trust me, the entire team down here at the Pier is deeply immersed in all of that wonderful fun right now.

In April, there are a couple of very important historical dates which the majority of Santa Monicans may not be aware of, but certainly should be. They are April 8 and April 10.

On April 10, 1973, the City of Santa Monica held an election to fill three City Council seats. For many months leading up to election day, three esteemed incumbents seemed poised to continue their service on the dais. That is, until they found themselves on the wrong side of the community fight to save the Pier from being demolished.

The short version of this story is that the Council approved of a man-made island in lieu of the Pier, then abandoned the island project due to financial and environmental concerns, but con-

tinued with plans to demolish the Pier anyway.

As you might imagine, the community was not pleased. The City Council meetings of January and February 1973 were exceptionally contentious, and ultimately all City Council members who had voted for the demolition were pressured into changing their votes, thereby saving the Pier.

But – the voting public was less than forgiving. Not a single City Council member who had originally voted to demolish the Pier was ever re-elected, beginning with those aforementioned three on April 10, 1973.

Two years later, on April 8, 1975, Santa Monica voters again showed their love and support for the Pier by passing Proposition 1, an initiative to preserve the Santa Monica Pier forever with a specific decree that the only way that the Pier may be demolished or altered in any significant way is by a popular vote of the Santa Monica citizens.

It seems safe to say that the Pier has its own way of conjuring up Spring fever!

Jim Harris is the Executive Director of the Santa Monica Pier Corporation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Celebrate Arbor Day by Planting Trees on Olympic Boulevard and 17th Street with Service Club Members and City Staff



By Kingsley Fife
This month is a very special month for nature lovers. In April, we celebrate National Arbor Day, usually on the last Friday

of the month.

It's a holiday that's celebrated all around the world. The first Arbor Day in history was an "Arbor Festival" celebrated in Spain in 1594. The first American Arbor Day was started by Sterling Morton of Nebraska City, Nebraska, on April 10, 1872. On that day one million trees were planted!

Santa Monica has always enthusiastically participated in National Arbor Day because our city is very proud of the 34,000 beautiful trees that form our urban mantle. This is maintained by the rigorous work

of our Santa Monica Urban Forest Public Landscape Division headed by Matt Wells.

We members of the Santa Monica-Pacific Palisades Lions Club are once again very excited about participating in this year's event. It will be held on the Olympic Boulevard median at 17th St. on Thursday, April 24 at 9 a.m., where several trees will be planted by the local clubs.

Besides our Lions Club, there will be all the other service clubs, the Salvation Army, and various city dignitaries present. The general public, of course, is also invited to enjoy the festivities. Don't miss it, we're all going to have a fun time.

Are you interested in learning more about Lionism? Be our guest at one of our dinner meetings. Please contact me, Kingsley Fife, at jkffife88@yahoo.com.

Theater Notes From the Santa Monica Playhouse

By Evelyn Rudie

We're especially excited about the first annual *GeniusFEST* (April 24-27). Three amazing actors, three wonderful Geniuses – (Einstein, Hedy Lamarr, Shakespeare) – one weekend of award-winning shows, including matinees and early evening curtain times, for those who prefer not to wander out at night. *EINSTEIN!* Is the longest-running solo show in L.A. *Shakespeare's Last Night Out* is a wonderfully bawdy musical. *HEDY!* has traveled all over the world – and so many folks who aren't in show business have no idea that Hedy Lamarr was any-

thing but a beautiful actress – no idea of the amazing scientific discoveries and inventions she shared with the world. Details in the ad to the right.



-Joe Analco

Give the Gift of Time This Month: Volunteer With the Red Cross

By Angelica Saucedo

During National Volunteer Month, the American Red Cross Los Angeles Region is celebrating heroes whose daily support and hard work embody the organization's lifesaving mission to help people in need. Volunteers are the life blood of the Red Cross, representing 90% of our national workforce. Because of their commitment, local families can depend on the Red Cross to be there during emergencies.

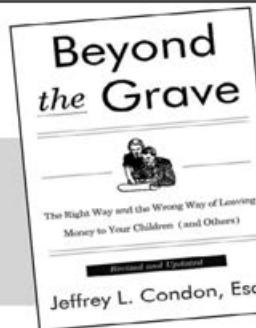
Today, the combination of heartbreaking home fires, and the worsening climate crisis is creating a critical need for disaster volunteers. The recent California Wildfires that directly impacted our local communities saw 1,188 Red Crossers come to support the region. Their impact was felt across the region with more than

154,500 meals and snacks served with partners, more than 18,000 overnight shelter and hotel stays, more than 21,500 households provided with relief items, and reached an estimated 87,800 people with disaster relief and recovery services. All of this relief would have been nearly impossible without the support of our volunteers.

As the Red Cross delivers disaster relief such as food and shelter, we also think about the future of those who were impacted, and begin planning how to help communities and families in the months and years ahead.

Red Cross isn't leaving our community any time soon, though no two roads to recovery are the same. The Red Cross prioritizes financial assistance to help


(Continued on Page 5)



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Reflections From The East

In Search of a Perfect Moment in Life



By Qin Sun Stubis

We know life is not perfect, and that there is often a large discrepancy between what we desire and what we can actually achieve. Neverthe-

less, a harsh reality has never stopped us from dreaming about having a perfect life moment. In fact, the harder our life, the more we dream. Sometimes that dream may be the only lifeline to propel us forward.

As a girl growing up during the Cultural Revolution in China, I dreamed of having my father come

home to us, instead of being unfairly incarcerated in jail, subjecting us to public shame that soured most of my childhood. I wished that our dinner table would be full of tasty dishes so I would not go to bed with a half-empty stomach. I dreamed for that perfect tomorrow.

In my teenage years, I wanted to be able to go to school without being humiliated by the patches sewn on my elbows and knees. I wanted to attend my school outings instead of being excused because my mother couldn't come up with the money.

After I landed in America with two suitcases, achieved my aca-

demic goals, and built my own little family, I yearned to shrink the distance between China and America so I could have my parents and sisters by my side, instead of being a continent and an ocean away. I felt loneliness and regret.

Still, life has had a paradoxical way of rewarding me by fulfilling some of my wishes, while at the same time punishing me by taking away what little I had. That made me ask myself: Can I ever achieve that perfect moment in life? What should I do when life fails me just as I'm about to achieve it?

The longer I have lived, the more I have realized that the perfection

of life resides in its imperfection. It is the lack of a perfect moment that drives my desires and wishes, builds my courage, and pushes me to do the things I normally would not attempt. Ironically, I owe my life's achievements and accomplishments to my failures and frustrations.

I have learned not to sit and wait for that perfect moment anymore, for it will never come, but to act and keep on dreaming.

You can always reach me at qstubis@gmail.com, or visit me at QinSunStubis.com. You can find a copy of my book, *Once Our Lives*, online at Amazon.com.

Spring Clean Your Mind



By Cheryl Thode

Well reader, we made it to Spring. We are in our fourth month of 2025, and boy, what a year it has already been.

Eversince the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020, I find myself amazed by just how much can happen in the first quarter of the year.

The New Year always brings such promise, and by April, sometimes, we can feel a little burned out and weighed down by the weight of our realities. This year was no different. For some of us, we lost our homes to fires, for others, we are emotionally drained from trying to support friends and families devastated by the January fires. What's more, if you have children, the last couple of months, if not years, have been pretty difficult for them, too. So, what to do?

For me, Spring always reminds me of Spring cleaning and decluttering. It is a centering act that is calming and productive. What's more, it doesn't just apply to material things. You can Spring clean your mind, heart, and soul, too.

Given what we have been through this last quarter, I suggest we all get to Spring cleaning our mental and spiritual space.

You could clean with your entire family, on your own, with your beloved, or with your kids. The goal of this cleaning will be to make your inner spirit shine, remove the cobwebs of doubt, the burdening clutter of worry, and the dingy feelings of regret and loss.

So, how do we Spring clean our emotional/nonphysical space? Well, you need to dust and brush off any negativity, and shine up your positive feelings of self.

First, practice mindfulness, the practice of paying attention to the present moment without judgment. This will allow you to observe your thoughts without judgment and recognize negative and unhelpful patterns.

Second, work on releasing your negative thoughts.

Third, establish a daily or weekly routine that includes activities you find enjoyable and relaxing, such as reading, spending time in nature, or pursuing hobbies. Some of us claim we are "too busy" or that there is "not enough time in the day" to do anything other than the mundane

tasks we must do. However, this type of thinking is not only draining and cluttering our mind, it sucks out our energy and joy.

We humans need to play. Adults are no different than the two-year-old craving to play in the playground. We all need to have some fun activity we look forward to doing. Make time for fun. Figure out what activity would bring you some joy and put it into your schedule at the same level of need as eating and breathing. I am serious. When you do something that brings you joy, it is amazing how your outlook on your surroundings changes, and the energy and time that seems to just appear for your use.

Fourth, limit the screen time. Yes, we all know that we are engaged too much with the little computers in our pockets, on our walls, at our desks, in our cars, and really, almost everywhere. However, as wonderful as they seem, these devices are the time suckers that contribute to our anxiety and negativity. Put a time limit on how much you use them. If possible, put them away at mealtime. It will help you be focused and present on your meal and the people with whom you are sharing it. Instead

of turning to your phone to fill your time, go connect with nature. Spending time outdoors can be a powerful way to connect with something larger than yourself, and allow you to experience a sense of peace and renewal.

Fifth, be kind and understanding towards yourself, especially

(Continued on Page 8)

Coming in May...



Moms, send in pictures of you and your children to share in our Mother's Day issue!

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Please provide first names of all pictured.

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Architecturally Speaking

How to Build a Fire-Resistant House



By Elisa Garcia Garcia Architects
This is a continuation of Elisa's suggestions on building a fire-resistant home. **Decks, Fencing, and Sprinklers**

are her topics today. Wood decks have a reputation for fueling wildfires and bringing them right to your home's doorstep. Either use composites, which will spread fire less quickly, or make sure the wood is treated with fire-resistant coating. Instead of a typical wood deck, use concrete materials instead, if possible. Protect the underside of your deck with metal screening to keep the fire out. The same goes for wood fencing. They can act as an incendiary, so it's wiser to create a fire-resistant barrier using stones or other masonry construction. Keep dead and highly flammable vegetation under control. Keep plants at least five feet away from your house instead of hugging the

home's exterior. Homes lined in mulch fare much worse compared to homes lined with rocks. **Sprinklers and Power** Install sprinklers on the roof, patio, or deck that turn on automatically to help stave off a fire. You can program the sprinklers so that once the firestorm has passed, the sprinkler systems can move on to putting out remaining spot fires along the roof and other exterior surfaces. It's an expensive approach, but you can have a roof that is actually a shallow pool of water. A swimming pool near the house can also be connected to a sprinkler system. Prepare for the worst and assume that your home will lose electricity and water pressure. You'll need a portable generator that will automatically turn on during an emergency with fire-resistant materials.

Elisa Garcia has been an architect for several years. Her firm, Garcia Architects, has offices in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara.

Local Businesses Encourage Donating Children's Books to the Santa Monica Family YMCA

Thanks to Stacy McClendon, several local businesses have joined *The Santa Monica Star* in encouraging neighbors to drop children's books off at the Santa Monica Family YMCA. The goal is to distribute the books to children who have lost their homes in the fires.

We appreciate these businesses helping with our goal – Co-Opportunity Market, Merrihew's Sunset Gardens, Color Me Mine, Rabano, Sundays Cycles, Samosa House, Thai Vegan, Surf Liquor & Wine, Horchata, Santa Monica Yoga, and Dolcenero Gelato.



An employee from Dolcenero Gelato posts the flyer asking for book donations.



Shabnam from ERBA Market gave us books donated by their customers after they saw the flyer.

Give the Gift of Time (Continued from Page 3)

empower people to cover their most pressing needs. To date, the Red Cross has given more than \$12 million in financial assistance directly into the hands of impacted families. Our recovery efforts help communities be better prepared for the next emergency. Local vol-

unteers educate people about disaster risks, and share a variety of free tools by speaking to community groups or offering classroom programs. Our volunteers continue to be a vital part of recovery efforts in large and small disasters.

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Passing Through the Pico Neighborhood

Poetry is Here to Stay!



By Stacy McClendon
It's Springtime and National Poetry month has arrived! It's time to celebrate the poet and the large

roles they play in shaping culture through their sharing of creative expression.

National Poetry Month was launched in 1996 by the Academy of American Poets. They believe that poetry matters, and that it is a highly important art form that must continue to be shared. Their website, poets.org, has a plethora of information, resources, upcoming events, and more. You can register to attend the Poetry & the Virtual Mind online gala on April 24 for free. This gala showcases legendary artists from various creative disciplines, sharing poetry from places throughout the world.

Santa Monica's first Poet Laure-

ate, Anne Carmack, will host a Poems for the Planet workshop to be held during the Main Library's Earth Day Celebration on April 22. There will also be other poetry events held at satellite branches. Visit smpl.org for more details.

I am also a poet who has always enjoyed crafting pieces from scratch. I love the freedom that this art form brings! It is truly invigorating, gratifying, and healing. I watch the words form in the sky of my mind and fall to the page in whatever style it decides. It's also a true joy when someone from the audience thanks you and is touched by the words you've shared.

Words expressed through poetry are extremely powerful and have the capacity to transform many hearts and minds. I know this firsthand, as it's happened for me and many others that I've come in contact with.

Let's get out and enjoy some inspiring poetry!

Santa Monica Chamber Honors Local Women at Women's History Month March Luncheon



Susan Potter purchased a book from wonderful local author and honoree, Julie Clark.



Judi Barker, Eddie Guerboian, and Kathy Irby were also at the luncheon.

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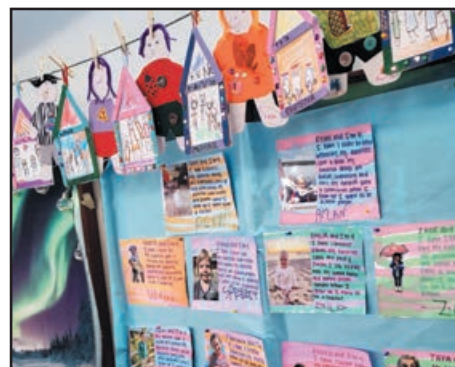
Mt. Olive Lutheran Church Presents Preschool Art Fair

The art work of the preschool students at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Ocean Park was beautifully displayed last month in the church hall. When visitors first entered, they were met by a wonderful variety of exhibits, inviting your eyes to look above, and at every table around the room. As Pastor Christie Webb perfectly described, "It was magical!"

The youngest students are 16 months, and the oldest four years old. Each had a work on display. Some showed a photo of the child working on a project. There was such creativity at each table. **-D.M.**



Assistant Director Corlene Flanagan and Director Kris Ladish were so proud of their students' work.



Cedars-Sinai Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist's Tips for Helping Families Cope With Loss

The smoke has cleared, but children affected by Los Angeles' January wildfires may still be processing their grief. Parents can help by keeping lines of communication open and helping children, tweens, and teens feel a sense of control, said Rebecca Hedrick, MD, a Cedars-Sinai child and adolescent psychiatrist.

"For very young children, use simple explanations when answering their questions," Dr. Hedrick said. "With older children, you want to be honest and open, directly answering questions and using as simple language as possible."

Playtime can help children express themselves and feel a sense of control. One example, Dr. Hedrick relays, is focusing on the positive aspects of knowing fire safety. "For children who haven't lost their homes, but are affected by the fires, involve them in age-appropriate fire drills," she states.

"Or allow other types of play to be related to the fire, because a lot of times it's easier for kids to express their feelings through play, rather than by outwardly saying, 'I'm feeling scared.'"

Building simple forts with pillows, blankets, and sheets can be a beneficial play activity for children of all ages – even some mid-

dle schoolers, Dr. Hedrick said. "The parent can get inside the fort with them and talk about feelings, as the child may feel safer there," she described.

It also can be helpful for parents to model how to express feelings. "A parent could say something like, 'I noticed I was feeling a little scared today; are you feeling scared?' This gives their child a chance to talk about feelings of fear, anger, sadness," she suggested.

Alternatively, when the child says they're angry, sad, or scared, parents should acknowledge those emotions.

"It's important not to say, 'You don't have to feel sad, or scared or angry,'" Dr. Hedrick explained. "It's better to say, 'Of course, that's how you're feeling and it's perfectly normal. At the same time, there are things we can be grateful for. Let's talk about some of those.'"

Tweens and teens especially may find journaling helpful, as well as art, physical activities, and supportive connections with their peers.

"Reminders that there is hope, and that the family will get through this together, are important," Dr. Hedrick concluded.

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What's Happening on the Westside?

By Gigi Appelbaum-Schwartz

- **Saturday, April 5 - Exploring Jordanian Food** - Listen to Chef Chris Sayegh of Layla restaurant tell stories of his grandmother, a Jordanian cook who inspired him to bring Jordanian cuisine to fine dining in Santa Monica. Enjoy Jordanian food at the reception. 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the Santa Monica Main Library MLK Jr, Auditorium, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.
- **Saturday, April 12 - Spruce It Up: Revitalize TreePeople Park** - Volunteer to help maintain and care for the trails, plants, and grounds at TreePeople's 45-acre park in the Santa Monica Mountains. 9 a.m.-12 p.m. in Beverly Hills. Sign up to volunteer at laworks.com to be sent the full opportunity address and directions.
- **Saturday, April 12 - Native Plant Landscaping** - Learn about

native plant landscaping and fire restoration efforts, and grab some free seeds from volunteers from the Santa Monica Community Gardens. 12 p.m.-2 p.m. at the Montana Branch Library, 1704 Montana Ave.

- **Saturday, April 12 - Passover Seder at St. Monica's Church.** Call 310-566-1500 for details.
- **Saturday, April 12 - First Night of Passover.** Goes through Sunday, April 20.
- **Sunday, April 13 - First United Methodist Church Santa Monica Palm Sunday Service.** 10 a.m. Worship. 11 a.m. Brunch/Easter Bunny/Egg Hunt. All are welcome.
- **Thursday, April 17 - Locals Night at the Santa Monica Pier** - Enjoy youth activities, a car show, live music, art exhibits, and more at this night for Santa Monica locals. Event will take place from

3:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m. at 200 Santa Monica Pier. santamonicapier.org.

- **Saturday, April 19 - Orchestra Nova LA: "American Masters"** - Come to hear a concert featuring a variety of songs written by American Masters Charles Ives and George Gershwin, as well as a musically-illustrated discussion. 8 p.m. at Mount Olive Lutheran Church, 1343 Ocean Park Blvd. Tickets: orchnovala.org.
- **Sunday, April 20 - Happy Easter!**
- **Tuesday, April 22 - Earth Day Celebration: Our Power, Our Planet** - Explore ways to help protect the planet at this event featuring information tables, mini presentations, and activities for all ages. 3:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m. at the Santa Monica Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.
- **Friday, April 25 - Moonlight**

Hike Featuring Hana Stretton - Join TreePeople and LivingEarth for a musical performance followed by a moonlight hike, where you can learn about and immerse yourself in nature. Event will begin at 7 p.m. at 12601 Mulholland Drive. treepeople.org/events.

- **Saturday, April 26 - Arts & Literacy Festival** - Celebrate reading at the library with this dinosaur-themed day of live performances and family-friendly activities. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Virginia Avenue Park, 2200 Virginia Ave.
- **Saturday, April 26 - Hands on History Tree Walk with Stephanie Carrie** - Discover the history and diversity of the trees that make up Santa Monica's urban landscape. 2 p.m.-4 p.m. at the Santa Monica History Museum, 1350 7th Street. Email rsvp@santamonicahistory.org.

Passover is a Holiday of Remembrance, Rest, and Reflection

By Gigi Applebaum-Schwartz

Each year, the Jewish tradition asks observers to set aside eight days to honor Jewish history: passing down important stories and fostering gratitude for the hard-earned freedom their ancestors obtained. Those eight days, known as Passover, begin with a Seder: a traditional meal throughout which the story of the holiday is told.

At the Passover Seder, families sing specific prayers and read stories as they eat a variety of foods specific to the holiday. Seder plates generally include a

hard boiled egg, a shankbone, bitter herbs (maror), parsley, and a sweet mixture of fruit and nuts called charoset. Matzoh, unleavened bread eaten throughout the holiday, appears at the seder as well.

The story of Passover, found in the Torah, recounts the escape of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, led by a man named Moses. Moses asks the Egyptian pharaoh to release his people, but is tricked several times, so God interjects to help Moses by sending ten plagues against Egypt.

After turning their water to

blood, sending a variety of invasive insects and animals, inciting boils, hail, and darkness, killing livestock, and promising death of the Egyptians' firstborn children, the pharaoh finally allows the Jewish people to leave. When they reach the Red Sea, God helps Moses to part the water, allowing him to lead them to safety once and for all.

The Jewish people have celebrated Passover for over 3,000 years, passing the cherished traditions and values down to their children from generation to generation. During the eight days of the

holiday, observers are asked not to eat any form of leavened grains, including bread and sometimes rice. This practice commemorates the Jewish peoples' hasty exit from Egypt, during which they did not have time for their bread to rise. People are also encouraged to relax during the Seder and throughout the holiday, to show gratitude for the sacrifices others made to allow them the freedom to do so.

Passover, which follows the Hebrew calendar, generally occurs in

(Continued on Page 10)

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Come Play Croquet and Have Cocktails in Topanga

The Social and Emotional Wellness Initiative (SEWI) staff is thrilled to be hosting its 4th annual spring fundraiser, Croquet & Cocktails, on Saturday, May 3, from 1 p.m.-3 p.m. at Blackberry Creek Farm in Topanga Canyon.

This event is held in recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month. All proceeds directly fund accessible youth mental health and wellness services that SEWI provides across Southern California.

Guests at Croquet & Cocktails will be treated to an afternoon of wellness activities, lawn games, food, drinks, and community building. The major theme of this fundraiser is *Together for Mental Health*.

SEWI was originally born out of a local Boys & Girls Club over 11 years ago. Founder and Executive Director Sarah Young-Sheppard, a social worker, saw a need for mental health services for youth and an increased need for young

people to learn about social and emotional wellness. The program expanded to several different clubs and local schools, and became its own nonprofit organization seven years ago.

Croquet & Cocktails is taking place at 1801 N. Topanga Canyon Blvd, Topanga. (Check to see if Topanga Canyon Blvd. is open from PCH.) To purchase tickets, please visit SEWI.org/croquetandcocktails.



Rising from the Ashes: A Journey of Resilience and Renewal

By **Richard Lombardi**

Our transition continues.

For a month, we were Pacific Palisades fire refugees, living in a Santa Monica hotel that quickly became our makeshift command center. We filed insurance claims for our charred and melted cars, personal belongings reduced to ash, and the home that once stood as the heart of our lives. Every meal, every expense – painstakingly recorded in a spreadsheet as we navigated the bureaucratic maze of recovery.

Nearly every day, we visited the Disaster Relief Center, seeking guidance from FEMA, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, the Small Business Administration, and others. The post office became an informal gathering place, where displaced friends and neighbors exchanged fire stories while picking up forwarded mail.

Then came the day we were

allowed to return – to walk the ashy remains of a home where we had entertained friends, hosted business and charitable events, and celebrated birthdays and holidays. The loss was immeasurable, but so was the determination to rebuild.

A turning point arrived. We bought cars, secured a rental home, and began the slow, deliberate process of restoring normalcy. Furniture was selected, clothes replaced, and the refrigerator and spice cabinet restocked. I found solace in small victories – purchasing a smoker and my favorite Meater® thermometer probes, finally able to cook again.

Now, brown, blue, and white delivery trucks roll up daily, bringing the essentials of our new life. The pile of empty boxes in the garage grows faster than the recycling bins can keep up. We ride our shiny new bikes, relishing the

crisp Spring air. Laughter returns, and peaceful sleep no longer feels like a luxury.

Yet, as we move forward, we are deeply aware that we are not alone in this journey. The Palisades Fire took many homes and displaced thousands more. Families across our community are navigating the same heartbreak, the same uncertainty, and the same long road to recovery. The shared resilience, support, and determination of our neighbors remind us that while the fire may have taken our homes, it has not taken our spirit. Through it all, gratitude – always a cornerstone of our lives – has deepened beyond measure. We are rebuilding, not just our home, but our sense of home. And for that, we are profoundly thankful.

Richard B. Lombardi
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Spring Clean

(Continued from Page 4)

during challenging times. Acknowledge your strengths and focus on your growth, rather than your perceived flaws.

Lastly, continue to practice gratitude. Regularly acknowledge the things you are grateful for to foster a sense of positivity and contentment. As an extension of this idea, identify areas in your life where you want to grow and set intentions for positive change.

We all only have this one precious life to live. Just like we try to keep our belongings and material possessions in good repair this Spring, clean your mental and spiritual space so you can see the wonderful world around you. God Bless!

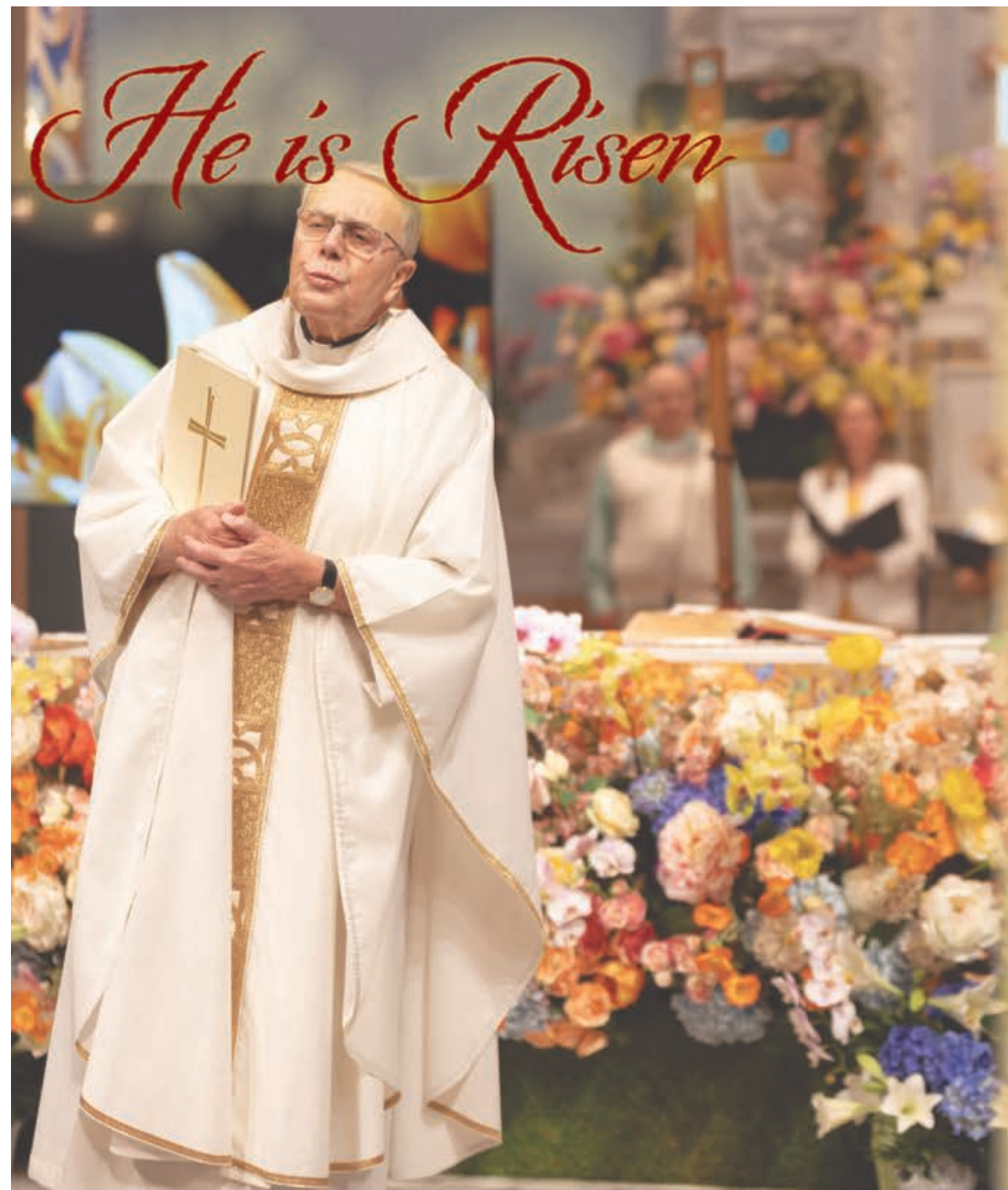
Your Table Settings

(Continued from Page 1)

light for the entire party.

- **Centerpieces must be reasonable in size** and below eye level, so everyone at the table can see and speak to each other.
- **Use serving pieces that are attractive.** And, use your imagination. A rarely used champagne or ice bucket can serve as a space-saving vessel holding flatware tied with a ribbon on the buffet table.

Maureen Molé is a lecturer, product spokesperson, and the author of The Book of Entertaining at Home. Email her at MaureenMole@gmail.com.



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Holy Saturday: April 19

7:00 p.m. · Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday: April 20

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Community Service on the Westside

The Santa Monica Family YMCA: A Charitable Force for Good



By Araceli Alejandre, COO
At the heart of our community, the Santa Monica Family YMCA is more than just a

gym or a place to swim. It's a charitable, non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to serving individuals and families in Santa Monica, the Palisades, and Venice.

Every day, we work to ensure that people of all ages and backgrounds have access to life-enriching programs, from sports and life-saving swim lessons, to after-school care, senior wellness, and community outreach.

But, we can't do it alone. Right now, our Y is actively fundraising to reach a goal of \$110,000, which will allow us to continue our mission of providing financial assistance to those in need. Every dollar raised helps ensure that children can participate in camps, families can enjoy health and wellness programs, and seniors can stay active – regardless of their financial situation.

As a non-profit, the Santa Monica Family YMCA relies on the generosity of individuals, businesses, and community partners to keep our doors open to everyone. Your support can make a tangible difference – whether by making a donation, joining as a member, or simply spreading the word about our cause.

Together, we can build a stronger, healthier, and more connected community. To contribute or learn more about our fundraising efforts, visit ymcasm.org/annual-giving.

Coming Up: Healthy Kid's Day! Join us for a free community event with fun for the entire family! Healthy Kids Day is Saturday, April 19 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. It will include local vendor booths and organizations focused on children's health. We will have giveaways, activities for kids, and all kinds of fun!

For more details, contact the Santa Monica Family YMCA at 310-393-2721, or visit our website at ymcasm.org.

An Update From the SMBWC



By Patricia Webber
The Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club (SMBWC) is pleased that our sister club, the Pacific Palisades Woman's Club,

will hold their monthly meetings at our Club for the next few months. While their club survived the fire, there was damage to the building. It's one small way we women support each other.

On the agenda for the SMBWC are two of our annual efforts in support of our community. The Board will be making donations to selected community charities. Those that support people impacted by the fires will be top priority. I will report on those donations in the coming months.

Also, our Elmira T. Stephens Scholarship Committee will be making their nominations for our 2025 awards. These are competitive awards given to Samohi seniors who have been accepted to their chosen college or university. Again, more on those events in the coming months.

The General Federation of Woman's Clubs (GFWC) is recommending members contact their elected officials in Washington, D.C. to support several pending bills. The "Take it Down" act deals

with kids' online safety. The GFWC has advocated for funding for programs and services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, and for international vaccine programs.

At SMBWC, our weekly activities continue. Canasta, bridge, and Mahjong every Monday afternoon; Arts, Crafts, and Conversation every Tuesday morning; and book club the fourth Tuesday of the month. Anyone interested in learning to play canasta, contact Becky Upchurch, and for bridge contact Darlene Bahr, both at 310-395-1308. There is also Duplicate Bridge on Thursdays. The contact person is Sue Price McGough at sue.mcgough@yahoo.com. The contact for Mahjong is Minky McKeivitt at 310-395-1308. Arts, Crafts and Conversation welcomes new artists and the contact person is Joan Temple at joanie.tee@gmail.com.

No Pets Policy - Due to Club member allergies and other conditions, pets will no longer be allowed in the Club. Certified Service Pets will, however, be allowed.

For more information, or other questions regarding rentals and membership, go to SMBWC.org, or call 310-395-1308.

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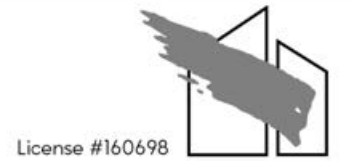
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(From Page 2)

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Passover is a Holiday of Remembrance

(Continued from Page 7)

late March or April each year. It's a special time for Jewish people to come together as families and celebrate their freedom and pros-

perity, while passing down the traditions that are integral to their religion and culture.

Discover the Treasures (Continued from Page 1)

ledge has kept the store and its dedicated volunteers on a positive growth track for 19 years.

At times she may set up a cart of unusual donations for sale, such as first editions signed by the authors. Customers should keep checking for treasures.

Sheila makes sure books that can't be sold benefit other organizations in Southern California such as inner-city schools, jails, or the Veterans Administration.

Palisades parents whose children are sharing a campus with West L.A. school students asked Sheila for books. She donated

several cartons of books to start a school library for them on their current campus.

In Sheila's 28 years of service, she has made beneficial contacts throughout the country that help her do even more with the books she receives at the store.

Watching the activity of the busy volunteers in the store assured me that the Friends of the Santa Monica Library Bookstore will continue to help enrich the library programs for a long time to come. **-DM**



Paws and Claws

What is Leptospirosis?



By Dr. Frank Lavac, MS, DVM
Q: What is Leptospirosis and should I get the vaccination for my dog?

A: Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease.

Dogs can be infected through exposure to other dog's urine, livestock, wildlife, or to rodents. In the summer of 2021,

there was an outbreak of Leptospirosis in L.A. County where 201 cases resulted in 13 deaths.

Exposure to infected urine or drinking water was a common source. Dogs that are infected with Leptospirosis can show lethargy, fever, and muscle tenderness.

Other symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, increased urination, and blood from nose, urine, or stool.

Although possible, there is a low risk of passing the disease from dogs to people. Leptospirosis is treatable with antibiotics.

The American College of Internal Medicine has issued a consensus statement recommending that Leptospirosis is considered a core vaccine, meaning it should be given routinely. It is given once, then boosted in three-four weeks, and then, yearly.

For further information, go to publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/Leptospirosis2021.htm.

If you have any questions, you can always contact Dr. Lavac at 310-828-4587.

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"Skipper" is one of the cutest puppies we've ever seen. She is a ten-week-old pug mix raised in an amazing foster home with her four siblings. She is incredibly friendly and cuddly. Please contact The Lange Foundation at info@langefoundation.org for more details.



-Joe Analco

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Planning Ahead

Incapacity Planning Outside of Marriage



By Lisa Alexander, Esq.

As we get older, the formality of our relationships changes. Many older couples live together without marriage. Or, we may be in committed relationships, but living apart. Or, we may have supportive relationships without being a couple at all. All of this works, but needs to be protected in case of incapacity.

If incapacity happens outside a legal relationship, our important people may be excluded from receiving vital health care information on our behalf, or worse, kept out of our room in the hospital or other care setting.

You can protect against this with an Advance Health Care Directive that appoints your chosen agent to have access to your health care information and to make health decisions for you. Your Advance Health Care Directive can include your direction for sharing protected health information with others who are not your designated agent and directions for visitation by your important people.

We also need to protect ourselves and our important people when it comes to our finances. Every one of us needs a Durable Power of Attorney. This could not be more true than when we have no legal relationship with the

people we rely on. Bills need to be paid, and important financial decisions may need to be made. But, without a properly executed Durable Power of Attorney giving a named agent authority to act on our behalf, the bank cannot give access to our accounts. Imagine if your housemate is financially dependent on you, but your assets were essentially frozen because of a lack of legal financial documents.

If you own your home in your Living Trust, you want to make sure a housemate is protected. If you have to move to a supportive care facility and will likely not return to your home, your Trust can give the Trustee direction protecting your housemate's rights to continue living in the home, even if for only a limited time, and including directions for how the expenses will be paid.

When we think of estate planning, we are usually focused on what will happen when we die. But, we cannot ignore the likelihood of incapacity. Sadly, incapacity can happen suddenly with no ability to plan once it happens. If you are relying on important people outside a legal relationship, planning ahead is especially important.

Lisa C. Alexander, Esq.
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alexander@jaklelaw.com

Welcome a Branch of IKEA to Santa Monica



Members of the IKEA staff joined the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce in a ribbon cutting service in February.

The IKEA Santa Monica Pick-up point in Santa Monica is open! Located within the strip mall at 3017 Wilshire Blvd, adjacent to Aristeia Needlepoint shop, the store celebrated its official grand opening ceremony at the end of February.

The Pick-up point offers a seamless blend of online and in-person shopping enabling customers to place any order in store, or on IKEA.com/us, and pick it up for free the next day.

This location also offers the full range of IKEA services with the

support of their home furnishing experts, including delivery, assembly, and financing. Hours are 11 a.m.-7 p.m. daily.

"Our expansion in the Los Angeles region is a result of customer feedback and demand in the area. We know our customers want a more convenient way to access affordable home furnishings, and we are excited that existing and future locations across the L.A. region will help meet that need," said Gustavo Tinajero, Los Angeles VAPS Area Manager, IKEA U.S.

Thoughts From a Second-Time Father

Preparing for Teenagers



By Michael Margolin

Alexa will be 12 in July, and it occurred to me my wife Enjoli and I will have a teenager on our

hands next year. We have more than a year to prepare for it.

Alexa is really a very good kid who behaves, gets good grades, and is a great friend and teammate. These characteristics do not necessarily exclude her from displaying traits that can be undesirable in teenagers.

What we have working for us, if history and genes can be a guide, is that Enjoli was not a disruptive or combative teenager. For the most part, neither was yours truly. I will say that the more Alexa takes after her mother, the better she behaves.

It is because of these advantageous qualities that we tend to trust her with information we do not want leaked.

At any rate, she has tended to ask her mother more of these questions than she has me. What pleases me is that Alexa is totally comfortable asking about things she has never heard of, or seen before.

For the most part, Enjoli has been frank and straightforward in her response. I believe that this builds trust with us. She also knows that if she hears it from us, it is not some rumor or some information that one of her friends got from an older sibling.

Since I feel I get a bit too far ahead of myself when it comes to how old my daughter is, I will enjoy this stage of her life as I have all of the others. She is still my perfect 11 year old.

Mike Margolin has been writing for us since his daughter Alexa was born 11 years ago and son, Jake, nine years ago. He also coaches each child's soccer team. Mike is a great sports fan.



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