

THE SANTA MONICA STAR

Also covering
The Greater
Westside

Volume XXIV Number 12

Connecting You With Your Community

December 2024

Finding Volunteer Opportunities



Volunteer opportunities are very rewarding, especially during holiday times.

Family Features- Tom Thousand spent many years helping low-income residents with home repairs. After retirement, he knew he wanted to continue helping people in his free time.

He answered the call to serve through AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP. Since 2010, he has volunteered to deliver meals to those in need, transported donated food to food pantries, and captained boats on a nearby lake for group trips.

Thousand was there when his neighbors needed rides to medical appointments and the Red Cross needed help delivering blood in

his community.

All across the country, AmeriCorps Seniors connect people, aged 55 and older, with opportunities to volunteer in their communities. The program matches each volunteer's interests and skills with local non-profit organizations. More than 140,000 older Americans serve their communities yearly through three core programs – the RSVP Program, the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program.

Many older adults look for variety, flexibility, and benefits when searching for a way to volunteer. "Since it was established in 1971, our RSVP program has been one of the nation's largest older adult volunteer programs," said Atalaya Sergi, National Director, AmeriCorps Seniors. "The program has a wide variety of service opportunities that allow volunteers to help address our nation's most pressing challenges. For our volunteers, RSVP takes the guesswork out of choosing how and where to volunteer their time and energy."

Opportunities vary by city and state, but the RSVP program offers volunteers diverse ways to serve through local organizations. Examples include packaging meals for people with disabilities or other older adults, working in a call center for fraud victims, coordinating

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Children enjoyed a show by the Bob Baker Marionette Theater last year at the merry-go-round. There are many other events planned for families.

Share the Spirit of the Holiday Season With Your Community

The most wonderful time of the year is here, and the Santa Monica Pier is the place to be. Through January 5, 2025, the historic merry-go-round building transforms into a hub of holiday spirit, complete with dazzling lights and cheerful holiday music. Inside, kids and adults alike, can get in on the magic by writing Letters to Santa (available until Christmas Eve).

But, the festivities don't end there. Presented by Pacific Park, three special nights, December 5, 12, and 19 – bring even more joy with activities for all ages, live entertainment, and holiday surprises. See details in the Page 5 calendar. Get your free tickets now on Eventbrite.

The Fairmont Miramar Hotel staff is holding their annual Meet Me at the Fig Tree on Sunday, December 15 from 1 p.m.-4 p.m. You are invited to enjoy live music with the Samohi orchestra, photos with Santa, activities for kids, a bounce house, snow machine, arts and crafts, plus culinary delights. Enjoy raffles every hour with incredible prizes, including overnight stays and delicious dining experiences.

In the spirit of giving, they are partnering with Santa Monica CARES, the Westside Food Bank, and Chrysalis to accept donations of canned food, gently-worn clothing, and monetary gifts. See Page 16 for more details.



Santa shows what has been collected for the Westside Food Bank in the past.

You can also celebrate at the Santa Monica Family YMCA or at the Big Bear Family Camp. The YMCA has something for everyone to enjoy this December.

Unplug and reconnect with your loved ones from December 27 to December 30 at their Family Camp on Big Bear Lake. Enjoy

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Do You Recognize This Neighborhood Celebrity?

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The Santa Monica Black Empowerment Association honored NBA Legend Norm Nixon and the Rotary Club of Santa Monica at their Unity Gala last month. Above, from left, Executive Director Kera Blades-Snell, Norm Nixon, Bill and Carolyn Edwards, and Barry Snell. Story on Page 2.

Troop 223 Scouts Take an Entrepreneurial Journey

By Marcus McCannel

Last month, the Falcon Patrol from Scout Troop 223 went on a career trip to the Riot Games office in West Los Angeles. As the patrol leader of the Falcons, this trip showed me how important leadership is when being an entrepreneur.

First, we toured their two buildings and even got to see the large Esports Arena where there are weekly competitions in League of Legends and Valorant. Then, we got to play the beta version of their new game in development, 2XKO.

Then, for the last hour of the trip, we got to interview Marc Merrill, the co-founder of Riot Games, known for League of Legends and Valorant, among others.

Mr. Merrill told us about how he got to where he is today in his business. He shared some of his challenges, like struggling to find investors when his idea for an on-line free multiplayer game seemed crazy at the time.



Members of the Falcon Patrol of Troop 223 are, from left standing, Ari, Cole, with Riot Games co-founder Marc Merrill, Marcus, Soren, Christopher, and Phineas. Sitting are Christian, Braden, and Noah.

A key theme that Mr. Merrill shared with us was the importance of staying true to your beliefs. Even though no investors believed him and his co-partner at the time, they finally got their

support by creating an over 200-page slideshow answering any question an investor could ask.

This showed how he was prepared, which aligns with the scout motto, *Be Prepared*.



Overall, this visit really inspired us and showed us how staying true to your beliefs while staying resilient when faced with obstacles can help you succeed.

To find out more information about our troop, please visit troop-223.org/contact. The active troop is made up of members, ages 11 to 16 from Santa Monica and the Pacific Palisades. There are scout troops for girls, also.



Joe Analco

A Season of Gratitude and Giving

**By Kera Blades-Snell
Santa Monica Black
Empowerment Association**

As we enter the holiday season, our organization has much to be thankful for. On November 8, we held our annual Unity Gala. It was a wonderful evening made possible by the generosity of our sponsors, community allies, and supporters. Thanks to the tremen-

dous turnout and participation, we raised funds to support essential programs and services for our clients. It was a powerful reminder of how compassionate our community is and how deeply people care about making a difference.

But, as we celebrate this success, it's important to remember that many of our clients are facing significant challenges, especially

as the colder months and holiday season approach. While holidays bring families together to reflect on blessings, we know that not everyone has access to a warm meal, a safe home, or the resources they need. Many of our clients are struggling with hardships that may not be visible from the outside, but are incredibly real and pressing.

This season, we're committed to supporting individuals and families in need by providing resources and programs. We invite you to join us in making this season brighter for those in need. Whether it's through volunteering, donating, or simply raising awareness, each gesture helps us offer hope to those who need it most.

Thank you to everyone who supported our gala, and to those who continue to walk with us on this journey. We are grateful for you, our community.

For more details on programs and resources offered, visit www.smbea.org.



Happy December Birthdays to:

Mike Cvejich, Dee Menzies, Aaron Leland, Bill Bubar, RoseMary Regalbuto, JR Dzubak, Judi Barker, Herb Roney, Maureen Molé, Julie Thomas, Frank Lavac, Joyce Margolin, Glenn Ricard, Gretchen Clore, Vicky Curtis, Scott Ferguson, Tammy Andrews, Zachary Perez, Monika White, Carole Mullaney, Steve Green, Carl McKinzie, Chuck Husting, Monty McCormick, Bill Kleinheidt, Susan Annett, and Mike Gitchell.

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www.thesantamonicastar.com
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Distribution: Paper Pushers LA
Special thanks to Rufus Baker, Jane Koehler, and Bernadette Lucier

From the Santa Monica Pier Guy

The Pier During Winter? Yes, Indeed!



By Jim Harris
Winter at the Santa Monica Pier. Have you ever really thought about it? Is the Pier a part of your late-year plans?

It should be, and for several reasons. If you have read my column before, then you already know my perspective about the very special thing that the Pier offers to everyone – Escape. And, that could not be better exemplified than during the holiday season. Tired of the hustle and bustle of holiday shopping? Tired of the crowded stores? Take a walk on the Pier, and you'll be amazed at how relieved you will feel.

Then, of course, there is that year-end stress of how best to close out the tax year by determining which nonprofit organizations to show your appreciation to with tax-deductible donations. Have you considered the Santa Monica Pier Corporation?

That's right, the Pier Corporation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our mission is to curate the pleasure Pier experience for locals, visitors, and admirers. The bulk of that is our work toward producing the free public events that everyone enjoys throughout the year. Your donations help us to continue those events, plus develop wonderful new programs like our "A Walk Through Pier History" tours, and we are eager to launch more new, unforgettable ways to enjoy the Pier. Donating is easy – simply visit our website: santamonicapier.org/support.

This Winter, there is another unique and vital way to engage with the Pier – join our Board of Directors. Our governing Board of Directors is appointed by the Santa Monica City Council, and we currently have an opening for one new Board Member. This is a great way to further engage with and understand the Pier, and I would be honored to work with

(Continued on Page 12)



Sandra Willard suggests you check out the treasures found at the Assistance League Thrift Shop in Santa Monica at 15th and Broadway. Look online also for their special items on sale. Photo by Bernadette Lucier

Consider Sustainable Gift Giving This December

By Isabel Filson, California Climate Actions Corps Fellow

The holiday season is filled with exciting events, quality time with friends and family, and celebration as the year ends. This December, I'm also thinking about how to implement sustainability when it comes to gift giving.

The Community Gardens Program is hosting a gently-used children's toy and book swap on Saturday, December 21 at the Ishihara Park Learning Garden during our free Pancakes in the Park event. Join us from 9 a.m.-11 a.m. to participate in the swap, enjoy a pancake breakfast, tour the garden, and watch a fruit tree repotting demonstration.

Another sustainable gifting idea is focusing on experiences, rather than physical objects. You may gift someone a visit to their favorite restaurant, a museum pass, or a pair of tickets to a sporting event, the movies, or a concert. These are great ways to spend time with someone, and they can be tailored to your loved ones' specific interests and location.

You can also gift a friend a ticket to a fun class, like painting or dance, and promise to attend with them!

When buying a gift, prioritizing local and small businesses is another way to focus on thoughtful and sustainable gift giving. For me, quality over quantity is a helpful phrase to remember.

Another option is searching for unique gifts at a thrift store, crafting a handmade gift for someone, or gifting something you've never used that you know a friend would appreciate. You can also bake a delicious treat or offer a homemade dinner as a gift.

You can also focus on sustainability this month by taking some time to donate excess toys or clothes. These may become a beloved gift for someone else!

You can find more details about Pancakes in the Park and other free garden events at santamonica.gov/events. Also, visit Sustainable Santa Monica on Facebook, and @sustainablesamo on Instagram for more sustainability events.

Keep the Holidays Cheerful With These Safety Tips

This holiday season, the American Red Cross, Western Los Angeles Chapter, encourages everyone to follow simple steps to prevent home fires from holiday decorations.

"December is the peak time for home fires involving candles and holiday decorations," said Sean Inoue, Executive Director, Red Cross Western Los Angeles Chapter. "Help protect your family by using battery-operated candles and practicing your two-minute escape plan with everyone in your household."

• Holiday Safety Decorating Tips

- Follow these safety tips and visit redcross.org/fire for more information. You can also download the free Red Cross Emergency app by searching americanredcross.org/fire for more information.

• If you must use candles, keep

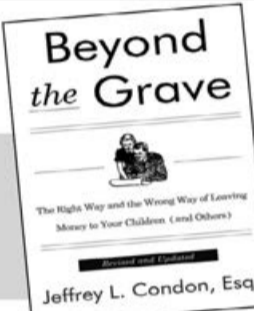


Be careful with holiday lights.

them away from anything that could burn, and place them out of reach of pets and children. Never leave burning candles unattended.

• Check all holiday light cords to ensure they aren't frayed or broken. Don't string too many strands of lights together – no more than three strands per extension cord.


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Reflections From The East

Veuve Clicquot: A Champagne Story of Love and Courage



By Qin Sun Stubis

Growing up in the 1960s and '70s in China, life was a struggle. I had never heard of champagne, let alone had a sip of it. It was not until my early thirties in New York City that I was first introduced to it. As I learned about American culture and life, I also learned to appreciate French champagne and serve it for special occasions.

I have never been much of a drinker, and yet I love champagne. Sipping its bubbles is like infusing myself with stars. It makes any party a special one. Through the years, I have grown fond of a label called Veuve Clicquot, not just because of its taste, but also its 250 years of rich history.

Madame Clicquot was only 27 when she was widowed. In order

to carry on her husband's family business, she had to add the word "widow" to the label since a woman was not otherwise allowed to own and manage a company at the time. When I drink her champagne, Veuve reminds me of its past and how strong women like she was fought for the rights we have today.

When my husband, Mark, and I got married almost 30 years ago, Veuve Clicquot graced our celebration. Since then, this champagne has become an important part of my life. I dreamed that one day I would be able to step into its cellars and learn everything about it.

This past October, I fulfilled my promise of taking Mark to Paris for lunch after my historical memoir, *Once Our Lives*, was successfully published. Afterwards, we ventured into the French Champagne region and visited Maison Veuve Clicquot. My dream finally came

true when I walked down a long flight of stone steps into its underground vaults.

For an hour and a half, we explored its cellars. Really, they were a series of conjoined and numbered caves of old limestone quarries, each looking somewhat like the inside of a giant stone tepee with a square air hole several stories up. These cave tunnels are vast. They stretch about 15 miles, housing precious bottles of liquid gold in wooden crates, some still in the process of being made with their yeast plugs.

With a never-changing temperature of 50 degrees Fahrenheit, stone cellars are the perfect places for storing and curing champagne. I couldn't tell whether the bottles were old or new because they were all covered with a thin layer of dust-colored mold. I touched the stone walls. They were moist, almost wet. "Is this how the French

store their cheeses, too?" I asked myself.

Finally, we stopped at a cave bar bathed in the light of Veuve Clicquot's signature yellow. Leaning against a glass countertop, we each sampled four different kinds of champagnes, including its special 2015 vintage. I will always remember this perfect moment when I had my last sip, and our tour came to an end.

For this holiday season and every holiday season, bubbly will always cheer us up. I'm looking forward to holding up a flute and welcoming another new year.

Happy holidays to you and your family! As we celebrate, please remember to drink responsibly.

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

Keep Christmas With You All Through the Year



By Cheryl Thode

Well readers, we have made it to the last month of 2024. What a whirlwind of a year. We as a civilization, world, country, and city have truly been through a lot.

Sometimes, it is hard for me to grasp how fast it feels like time is going. Didn't 2024 just start? At the same time, I feel like I have run a couple of back-to-back marathons in the last year. So much has happened and I am just exhausted. With all that we have encountered in our daily lives, over the last 12 months especially, how can we stay grounded and present for the wonderful holiday season?

My answer, look through the eyes of a child. Children are the key. They see magic especially at this time. Having two children under five, I have turned to my kids routinely to help me stay grounded and present. In fact,

when it comes to this season and staying present, I have a holiday movie recommendation from my son Nicholas that I would like to share.

Since discovering the movie last year, my five, (soon to be) six-year-old son has been infatuated with the 1978 classic, *Christmas Eve on Sesame Street*. For most of you (at least those over 30), you have probably seen this pre-HD and-predigital hourlong special at some point in your childhood, or while raising your own children.

The Emmy Award-winning special follows the *Sesame Street* crew through the Christmas season and centers around Big Bird's quandary over how Santa Claus could fit down all the "skinny little chimneys" on *Sesame Street*.

Aside from having the familiar human characters of Maria, Bob, Gordon, Susan, and of course, Mr. Hooper partaking in Christmas and other holiday preparations, the story follows the beloved characters of Bert and Ernie in their own *The Gift of the Magi* tale,

Cookie Monster as he struggles to write a letter to Santa, Kermit, Snuffleupagus, and Grover as they attempt to help Big Bird solve the Santa mystery.

The special, while over 45 years old, still can touch hearts and teach valuable lessons to our children (and arguably us adults, too) in a way that is quintessential *Sesame Street*. Through the use of Muppets, an array of wonderful and diverse actors, and the knowledge of how to speak to children at their level in an uncomplicated fashion, the special remains a classic.

One of its most moving parts is its music. From the special's opening where Big Bird is learning to skate to José Feliciano's recording of *Feliz Navidad*, to the casts' wonderful adaptation of *True Blue Miracle*, and *Keep Christmas with You (All Through the Year)*, the audience is drawn into the storyline. When it is viewed through the eyes of a five year old, like my son, they are completely mesmerized by the wonderful feeling the music brings

about. During the whole month of December, my house plays the special's soundtrack on repeat.

Despite the outside world, it is hard not to smile when you hear the characters of *Sesame Street* singing about believing in miracles and how, when it's Christmas time, the streets they live on sparkle like the sky. Similarly, watching my son belt out the *Keep Christmas with You* lyrics makes any outside issue or pressure I was stressing over just melt away. As the song says, "these are the precious moments" that we all should hold dear.

As I said last month, time is short, the years, like 2024, go by so fast. Watch a little *Sesame Street*, enjoy your holidays, enjoy your family, and keep Christmas or its spirit with you all through the year. Here's to the last month of 2024. May we keep the joy of the holidays with us and have a wonderful start to 2025! God bless.



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Clergy Corner

Holiday Spiritual Care



By Pastor Carolyn Baskin-Bell

We will be greeting one another for the next couple of weeks by saying, *Happy Holidays!*

The question is posed, "Are we really extending the blessing of love, peace, joy, and hope? Is this a genuine expression, or are we just saying these words on autopilot? Do we possess an authentic desire to extend and experience the blessings of *Happy Holiday?*

The definition of *Happy Holidays!* is significant, but yet holds a different meaning for many individuals. During this Season, there are multiple faith celebrations and cultural practices which represent strong spiritual principles.

Yet, in these diverse celebrations with rituals and activities that differ, there is a commonality of the effort for humankind to illuminate the light of hope.

We are challenged to practice Holiday Spiritual Care during this Season by reflecting and asking ourselves the questions posed in the paragraph above. It is urgent not to engage in business as usual, but our reflections should

move us to practice a deeper ritual that drives the inner self to allow the spiritual principles to arise as a lifestyle. This lifestyle is not merely a seasonal engagement, but resonates and actively expresses the celebrations which are represented.

Whatever faith tradition or cultural activity we participate in this Holiday Season, let us renew our faith to express hope for a better world. In our celebrations of Christmas (Christian), Bodhi Day (Buddhist), Immaculate Conception (Catholic), Hanukkah (Judaism), and Kwanzaa (African American culture), we must allow our lights to shine brighter than ever before. Let us adjust our high beams to overpower hate with love, violence with peace, sorrow with joy, and despair with hope, that each one of us makes a difference beyond the expression, *Happy Holidays!*

**Reverend Carolyn Baskin-Bell
Senior Pastor, First AME
Church of Santa Monica
"A Church Serving the Santa
Monica Community for 103 years"**

Passing Through the Pico Neighborhood

Gina De Baca's Love of Dance Continues



By Stacy McClendon

Sometimes a gift is activated when you are a child. Such is the case with Gina De Baca, as she cannot remember a time in her life when she didn't want to dance.

Becoming a ballerina was at the top of her list. She began learning to dance at the age of four. She continued taking a variety of dance classes throughout her school years. In junior high school, she expanded her dance knowledge by learning to create her own dance routines in dance choreography class. This was a good experience that helped expand her abilities.

One dance memory she shared was a time when she and her cousin cut up their skirts to be like what Tina Turner used to wear when she danced. She loved the electric energy that Tina Turner displayed through dance on the stage.

After high school, Gina majored in dance at Santa Monica College. Over the years, Gina's dance disciplines grew to include tap, folklorico, belly dance, Hawaiian, native dancing (grass roots and held by a native tribe), native American dance, and more. She always continued to take classes throughout adulthood.

Gina also frequented clubs with her friends with the sole purpose of dancing. She would dance the entire night, and her clothes would be soaking wet when she left. Sometimes she would even

find underground spots to continue dancing the night away.

She never had the goal of starting a dance school. Her dream was to attend a professional dance school. However, that didn't happen because Gina had children, and working a 9-5 job doesn't always allow the flexibility to just drop everything and go. So, she just continued to dance.

Gina decided to make lemonade with the lemons she was experiencing by starting her own dance company at a studio she found online at 26th and Pico. She stayed at that location until 2000. No classes took place during COVID-19 for nine months. Classes resumed again in 2020, and were held outside from 2021-2022.

Since 2023, Gina regularly holds classes at the Virginia Avenue Park (VAP) Thelma Terry Center, the Capoeira Studio on Pico Blvd. (across the street from VAP), and at the Pico Youth and Family Center (PYFC). Her dance company has and continues to perform locally, nationally, and globally.

Sometimes what you love finds you, and all you have to do is to respond, while you continue to learn and hone your craft with the intention of sharing it with your world.

This dance aficionado, entrepreneur, mother of six, and grandmother continues to display how this is done beautifully.

For info on Gina's classes and upcoming events, please visit Instagram @santamonicafolklorico, or on Facebook.



Members of Gina's dance class are from left, Amelia, Jade, Leilani (Gina's daughter), Gina, and in front, Rylie.

Photo by Rosemary Martinez

Discover What's Happening on the Westside

By Gigi Appelbaum-Schwartz

• **Sunday, December 8 - Miracle on Main Street** - Enjoy this holiday tree lighting celebration, featuring Santa Claus, kids activities, carolers, and street-wide festivities! Event will take place from 3:30 p.m.- 7:30 p.m.

• **Monday, December 9 - Card and Bookmark Making Workshop** - Upcycle old cards into bookmarks or turn them into new holiday cards in a cheerful and cozy atmosphere. Event will take place from 3 p.m.- 5 p.m. at the Santa Monica Main Library Multipurpose Room, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.

• **Wednesday, December 11 - Refractions: Indigenous Art in Public Spaces** - Join artists and practitioners to reflect on and uplift the power of Indigenous art in public spaces. Event will take place from 6:30 p.m.- 7:30 p.m. at the Santa Monica Library Pico Branch Annex, 2201 Pico Blvd.

• **Friday, December 13 - Artist Panel: Indigenous Knowledge, Sustainable Future** - Visit this panel with Indigenous artists focused on traditional ecological knowledge, ancestry, craft, sci-

ence, and technology. Event will take place from 6 p.m.- 8:30 p.m. at the Fowler Museum at UCLA, 308 Charles E Young Dr N.

• **Saturday, December 14 - Holiday Book Sale** - The Friends of the Kaufman Brentwood Branch Library are holding their annual holiday book sale! Shop great books at bargain prices for the holidays. Event will take place from 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. in the library's community room, 11820 San Vicente Blvd.

• **Saturday, December 14 - Santa Monica-Venice Christmas Run** - Participate in this annual 5K, 10K, or Youth Run, followed by a festive holiday bash! Event will start at 7 a.m. for 5K runners, 8 a.m. for 10K runners, and 10 a.m. for youth runners. Start line is at Ocean View Park, 2701 Barnard Way. Finish line is at Pacific Avenue and Windward Avenue.

• **Thursday, December 19 - Holiday Cheer on the Pier Locals' Night** - Celebrate Locals' Night on the pier with photos with Santa, a pop-up post office for letters to the North Pole, and a Holiday Car Show. Event will take place from

(Continued on Page 12)



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Music Mends Minds Open to All



Music Mends Minds invites all seniors, caregivers, or family members to join their music groups. They welcome everyone, not just those who have been diagnosed with a neurodegenerative illness or challenge.



The practice is a chance for singers, those playing an instruments, and dancers to enjoy the music together.

Last month, we ran a story about the wonderful work of Music Mends Minds as they are celebrating their 10th year.

Executive Director John Kander II wanted our readers to be sure to know that their music groups and drum circles are always free to join. You are welcome to participate when the group practices on Thursday afternoons at 2 p.m. at the Brentwood Presbyterian Church on San Vicente Boulevard and Bundy. Parking is available.

Music Mends Minds holds weekly rehearsals, offers virtual Zoom sessions, and hosts a podcast series called Music is Medicine. To learn more, join the organization, or to make a donation, visit musicmendsminds.org.

From Me to You...



By Diane Margolin

This past year has certainly passed by quickly. We will have many memories from the changes we have experienced. Still, we focus on being positive and grateful for the blessings we have.

Sometimes the TV commercials blast us with images of happy families dining and opening gifts as if they have nary a care in the world. But, it's not always that way.

If you are not going to be with your family or friends, it is often a good idea to volunteer to help others. It is always rewarding to donate your time to one of our local charities. Meals on Wheels West uses volunteers to deliver meals or to check on homebound clients to see how they are doing.

Chris Baca said that during Thanksgiving his volunteers delivered more than 400 turkey dinners with pies to their clients. Contact Chris at Meals on Wheels West at 310-394-5133 for more information on how to help.

Being kind not only helps those you interact with, but it makes

you feel better, too. It's amazing how that works.

Wishing all of you, our readers, staff, and advertisers a fulfilling and healthy holiday season.

Do You Recognize This Neighborhood Celebrity? (Continued from Page 1)



Frank Bravo has been running the Wishing Well Medical Supply since 2011. This home health care store has been owned by his family since 1976. They stock everything from recliners to mobility scooter rentals and much more.

Finding Volunteer Opportunities

(Continued from Page 1)

poetry workshops at a community center to stimulate the minds of those participating, or transporting cancer patients to medical appointments. Service could also involve workforce development and job training, or providing disaster-preparedness assistance.

There are even select programs specifically designed to support veterans. Mark Piscatelli volunteers at veterans' coffeehouses. Coordinated through his local AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP program, the coffeehouses allow veterans to gather and socialize with each other and with volunteers. The social setting creates a safe space, fostering community, and

stability for everyone involved.

Older adults need volunteer programs that fit their lifestyles and allow them to choose how, where, and the frequency of their service.

Commitments range from a few hours to 40 hours per week. This flexibility allows Piscatelli and his fellow volunteers to participate without feeling overwhelmed by time obligations.

If you're 55 or older, and looking for the right volunteer opportunity, visit AmeriCorps.gov/YourMoment to explore opportunities near you.



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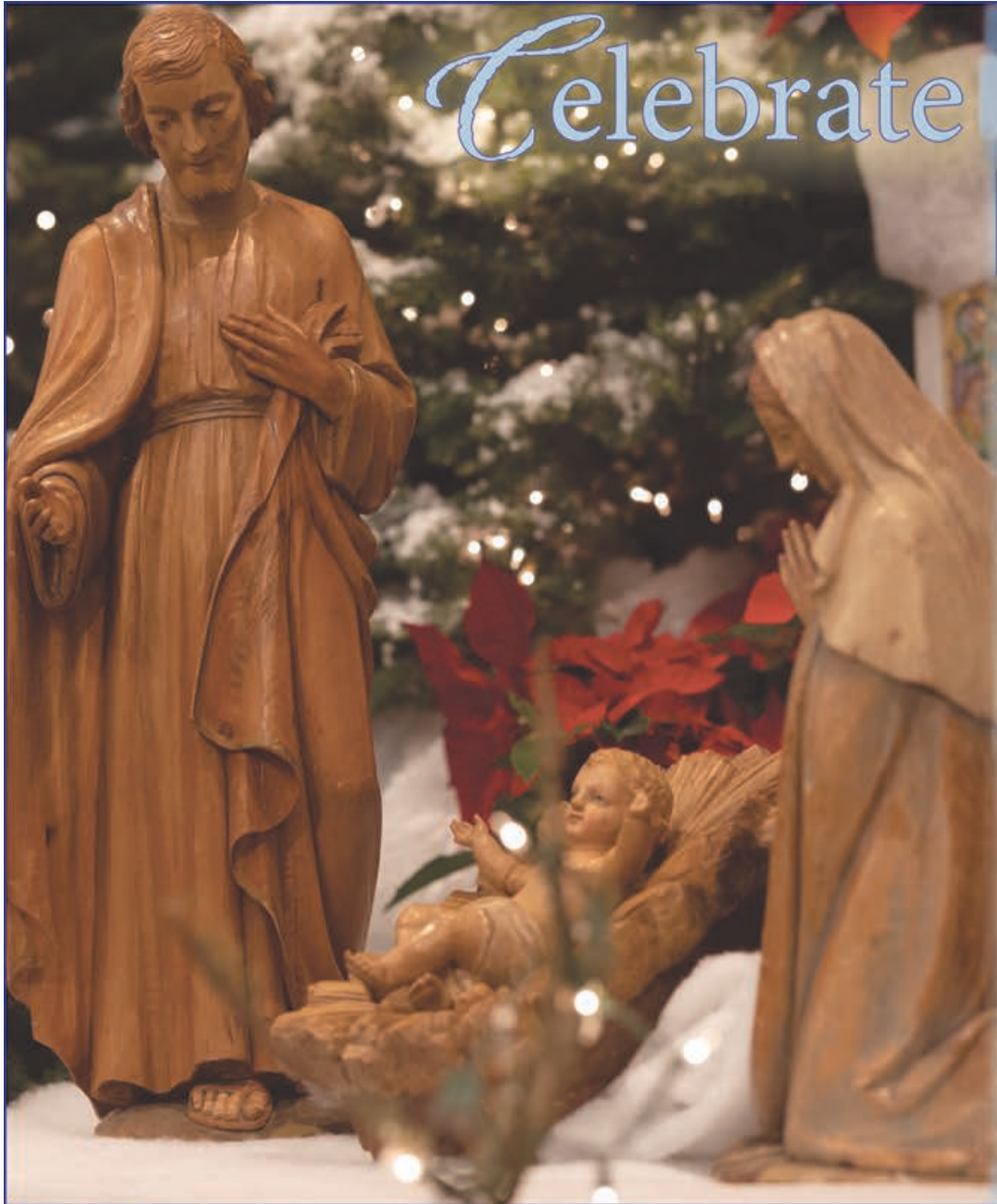
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Christmas Day Masses: Dec. 25

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†**LIVESTREAM**
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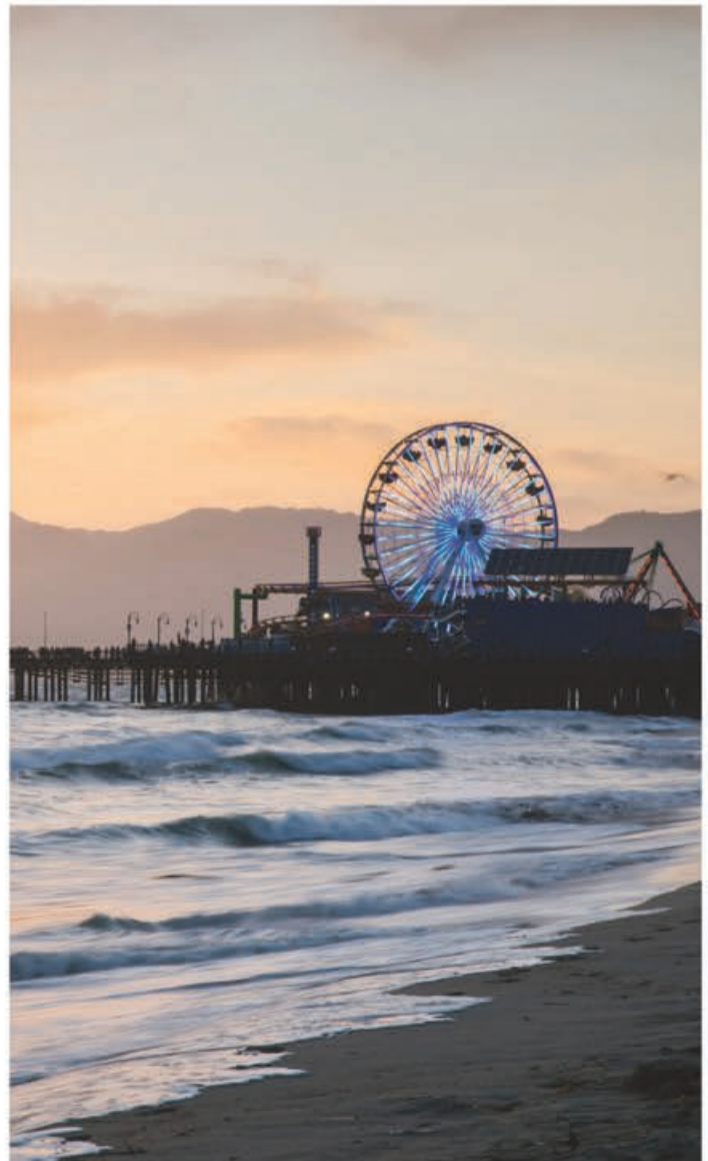


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The Magic of Travel With Tanya

**Experience Winter at Post Lech:
Your Home in the Heart of the Alps**



Unwind in serene luxury: Guests at Post Lech can soak in the heated outdoor pool while surrounded by the breathtaking beauty of the snow-covered Austrian Alps.

Photo by Daniel Zangerl



By Tanya Gilbert

It's hard to believe we're already in December, and as Winter settles in, my thoughts drift to snow-draped mountains and the allure of an Austrian wonderland. Inspired by a recent visit from one of my travel partners, I've found myself dreaming of an extended stay at the iconic Post Lech hotel, within the world-famous ski resort of Lech. This 5-star family-owned gem, a proud member of Relais & Châteaux for over four decades, embodies the perfect blend of luxury and tradition, inviting guests to experience the timeless charm of the Austrian Alps.

Lech places you at the gateway to Austria's largest interconnected ski area, boasting over 215 miles of pristine groomed slopes, and 125 miles of deep-snow runs. Embark on the legendary "Run of Fame," a 52-mile circuit that spans from Lech to St. Anton and back. A single ski pass unlocks the entire Arlberg region, revered as the birthplace of alpine skiing. If skiing isn't on your agenda, Winter here is equally magical.

Explore 25 miles of Winter hiking trails, go snowshoeing, glide across the ice, or simply soak in the tranquility of the snow-blanketed landscape.

Inside, the hotel's 46 elegantly-appointed rooms, apartments, and suites, each with unique Alpine

For skiing enthusiasts, Post

(Continued on Page 12)

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Join UCLA's Innovative Memory Research Study



The UCLA Memory Study explores Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation as a potential treatment for memory impairment.

Are you sometimes forgetting things? If you are right-handed and between 55 and 100 years old, UCLA invites you to be part of their cutting-edge Memory Research Study.

Why Participate? Nearly seven million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease (AD), with projected increases to 13 million by 2050. Amnesic Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) is a milder form of memory loss that is twice as prevalent as AD, and progresses to AD at an annual rate of 10-15%. Currently, there are only a limited number of FDA-approved treatments, which only temporarily slow the disease's progression, rather than cure or reverse it.

This clinical trial aims to utilize Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) as a treatment to enhance memory and improve overall brain function. Whether you're experiencing mild memory problems or have been diagnosed with MCI or Alzheimer's disease, your participation can make a significant impact towards finding new treatments for memory loss.

What to Expect? Transcranial

Magnetic Stimulation uses gentle magnetic energy to affect brain activity. The techniques used in the study do not involve invasive procedures or radiation. Participants will undergo neuropsychological (memory and cognitive) testing, two functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) brain scans, and 15 stimulation sessions. Participants will receive either active TMS treatment, or receive a placebo TMS. Those receiving placebo TMS may be eligible for active treatment upon study completion. Participation in the study requires a time commitment of 20 days over the course of approximately three months.

What You Gain: Participants will receive financial compensation of \$600 for completing the study, in addition to parking costs. Additionally, you will receive neuropsychological testing results and a picture of your brain!

Join the Study: For more information, contact the Suthana Lab at UCLA via email at tmsmemorystudy@mednet.ucla.edu, or call 310-210-6978.

Alinea Brings the Latest Dental Technology to Santa Monica

By Gabriella Sonnhalter

Alinea, new to Santa Monica, is redefining orthodontics with its flawless blend of beauty, grace, and elegance. With cutting-edge technology and its impressive interior design, Alinea offers a well-rounded experience for all of their patients.

Santa Monica's latest dental experts, Dr. Jose Ortiz and Jodie Laczko, have spent three years creating Alinea. Jodie and Dr. Ortiz met nine years ago in New York, fell in love, and the rest is history. Since then, the two moved to Los Angeles and Alinea was created.

Jodie's keen eye for design and Dr. Ortiz's passion for top-tier patient care has resulted in the practice carefully crafted to put a new smile on every patient's face – in more ways than one.

Patients are offered a variety of refreshments upon arrival, and the scent of the space is carefully selected to give patients a sense of ease. The cool greens and subtle touches make the space an exper-



Alinea Orthodontic founders Jodie Laczko and Dr. Jose Ortiz

ience surpassing one of an ordinary orthodontist's office. "We wanted to create this space that felt calm and beautiful, a space you actually wanted to go to,"

(Continued on Page 14)

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MISTY DOUBLE \$9.50
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Holidays in December: December 7 - Pearl Harbor Day of Remembrance, December 9 - National Pastry Day, December 13 - National Ice Cream Day, December 15 - International Tea Day, December 18 - National Twin Day, and December 21 - December Solstice

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Paws and Claws

Tips For Dog Walking Safely



By Dr. Frank Lavac, MS, DVM
Q: Should I use a collar or harness to walk my six lb. chihuahua? We walk on busy streets with many

passing dogs.

A: All dogs should wear a collar with identification tags. For small dogs, I like to walk a dog with a

leash attached to a harness. This is primarily a safety issue. Small dogs can be safely and quickly picked up by the owner using a harness/leash.

If an aggressive dog approaches, you can readily pull the dog into your arms using the harness/leash. When using a collar/leash, it is much more awkward and difficult to quickly remove your dog from a dangerous situation.

When walking your chihuahua, you need to be vigilant about potentially unsafe scenarios.

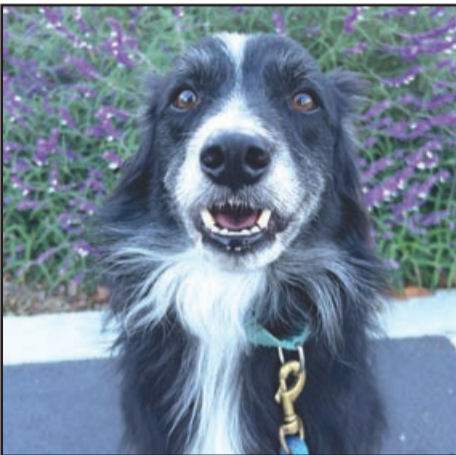
Another tip regarding walking your dog includes not using retractable leashes. It's very difficult to control your dog when the leash is reeled out all the way. I once saw a dog that was hit by a car as the dog migrated into the street because there was too much length from the retractable leash.

For larger dogs that pull, neither harness nor collars are good alternatives. I recommend a "Gentle Leader." This is a type of a head harness similar to a halter for a horse. Once you control their head, the potential for pulling is dramatically decreased. For a deeper dive into this subject, I recommend "Dog Walking Tools" on VeterinaryPartner.com.

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



Adopt a Pet



"Russell" is a polite and charming six-year-old Border Collie mix who would make a perfect playmate for other medium to large dogs. He is most content when his days are full of play and activity, so we suggest Russell goes to an active home where he can thrive as a companion. If you are interested in Russell, please visit our website at annenbergpetspace.org/adopt.

Hosting With Heart

Give an Easy and Festive Holiday Party



By Maureen Molé
 Happy December! Whether you are celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or some other seasonal holiday, it's a wonderful time to

plan a party. Here are a few of my favorites:

• **Karaoke Caroling Party**
 When inviting friends to your Karaoke party, give them an idea of what food you'll be serving and who else is invited. You might invite about 12-15 people, either with or without children.

You can buy an inexpensive microphone with Bluetooth compatibility online and buy or make Christmas caroling booklets for everyone. Be sure to prepare the appetizers in advance so you can spend all your time with guests.

You can arrange a charcuterie board as I often do with assorted cheeses, crackers, prosciutto, almonds, olives, hot pepper and raspberry jam, fresh slices of tangerines, and dried figs.

When everyone arrives, encourage a brave guest to take the mic and start singing. Then everyone can join in. Later on, serve hot cups of soup and display a deli-ordered six-foot sandwich. Guests simply help themselves. For dessert, you can display an all finger food spread with assorted Christmas cookies, chocolate peppermint bark, and your special signature dessert. Using seasonal paper plates and hot cups makes for an easy clean up.

• **Children's Make-your-own Holiday Ornament**
 This party is fun for children and a wonderful way to appreciate their heritage. Guests are invited to be creative and make their own traditional ornament. First, gather



A beautiful charcuterie plate



Appetizers for your guests

colored markers, glue, yarn, paper plates, construction paper, and scissors. A crafts store offers great flourishes like artificial pinecones, Styrofoam balls, sparkles, felt, yarn, and other seasonal supplies. Display the material on a large table covered with a paper cloth.

One child might make a tree ornament for Christmas, another a menorah (9-branch candelabra) or dreidel (a spinning top with four sides) for Hanukkah, or a Kinara (candle holder), or Zawadi (gifts) for Kwanzaa. Of course, the refreshments should be consistent with their family's holiday tradition, such as eggnog and Christmas cookies, potato latkes, or sweet potato cookies. Not only will the children have a keepsake, but the ornaments can hang

(Continue on Page 12)

KOOZA at the Santa Monica Pier Through January 5

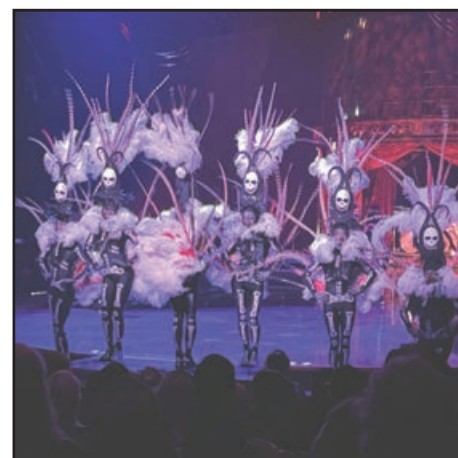
The thrilling, internationally-acclaimed Cirque du Soleil production, KOOZA, will be at the Santa Monica Pier through January 5, 2025. From daredevil performances to mischievous clowns, KOOZA delivers a signature Cirque du Soleil experience in its most exciting form with high-flying acrobatics, whimsical characters, lavish costuming, colorful sets, hilarious clowning, and a powerful live score. Acclaimed the world over since its opening in 2007, KOOZA has mesmerized close to eight million spectators with over four thousand performances in 65 cities across 22 countries. This marks Cirque du Soleil's first Big Top show in Santa Monica since 2014.

The Big Top first set ground at the beautiful and iconic Santa Monica Pier for its first international staged show in 1987, which led to a turning point in the growth of Cirque du Soleil.

Tickets for Santa Monica performances of KOOZA are available online. For tickets to the memorable shows, go to cirquedusoleil.com/kooza.



The amazing KOOZA performers



An example of their very creative costumes

Photos by Bernadette Lucier

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Christmas Season at Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church

December 8th: Las Posadas Christmas Celebration & Kids Pageant, 3pm
 December 15th: Community Christmas Recital, 2pm
 December 24th: Christmas Eve Family Service, 5pm
 Candlelight Service, 9pm

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Planning Ahead

Newly Married? Review Your Estate Plan



By Lisa C. Alexander, Esq.

California law generally protects the inheritance rights of a spouse when the deceased spouse's estate plan was signed before the marriage. If the surviving spouse is not provided for in the Will or Trust, then with some exceptions, (unless the Will or Trust makes clear that the surviving spouse was intentionally not provided for), the surviving spouse will be treated as an "omitted spouse." An "omitted spouse" is entitled to receive the same share of the deceased spouse's estate as the omitted spouse would have received, if there was no Will or Trust. This may or may not be what the deceased spouse would have wanted if the estate plan had been updated after the marriage.

To avoid the default provisions for an omitted spouse, when you get married, it is critical to review and update your estate plan. Even if the plan is to not leave anything to the surviving spouse (not uncommon with later in life marriages when both spouses have families and separate estate plans), it is important to update the estate plan to note the change in marital status, and the intention not to include the new spouse in the Will or Trust.

But, don't stop with updating your Will or Trust. You also need to review the beneficiary designations for your IRA, 401(k), and

other retirement accounts. In a recent case, the husband updated his Will following marriage to his new spouse. But he forgot to update the beneficiaries of his IRA. Unfortunately, most of his wealth was held in his IRA with his nephews as the named beneficiaries. When he died unexpectedly, his surviving spouse received little under the Will, and the nephews, not his surviving spouse, received large inheritances under the IRA. This is not what was intended.

In another case, the deceased spouse did not update his Will or Trust, nor did he review the beneficiaries of his IRA. His surviving spouse went to Court arguing that the protections given to an omitted spouse should extend to the IRA. She lost her case. The Court ruled that because the IRA proceeds did not pass through the deceased spouse's Trust or estate, the omitted spouse protections do not apply.

Estate Planning is all about making sure your estate is distributed according to your wishes, not according to the default provisions under the law. If you get married, you must review your Will or Trust, make the appropriate updates, and be sure you don't forget to review your designated beneficiaries under your IRA, 401(k), and other retirement accounts.

Lisa C. Alexander, Esq.
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Thoughts From a Second-Time Father

Not Taking Things for Granted



By Michael Margolin

Something I have tried to instill in my children is the tendency to not take the people and things they have in life for granted. We are fortunate enough to have a roof over our heads, food to eat, and a loving family. We have good health as well, and that is as close to the top of the list as you can get. In the city of Camarillo, where we live, more than 130 houses burned down in the Mountain Fire. The fire was several miles from our house and we were never in any kind of danger.

When we were watching the news and seeing the tragedy unfold, Jake asked me what three things I would take if we had to evacuate quickly. Of course, my first was response was to take him, his sister, and mother. We discussed material items, (I would take my Chevelle for the record), and also talked about how so many things can be replaced, but how people cannot. That no matter what we would have to do, getting out of our house and to safety would be paramount. We would be able to figure everything else out later. These are hypotheticals for us, but realities for people in our city, and for people that my family knows. Not taking our home and

our safety for granted is very important. Not only is it important, I firmly believe that being cognizant of the positive things you have in life, the richer your life can be.

I was reminded of this recently in a much more elementary way. During Alexa's soccer practice, I was running and strained my calf which sidelined me. This happened just a couple days before Halloween, so it curtailed my trick-or-treating participation.

With Alexa being 11, I do not know how many more years I will be able to wander around with her celebrating the ghosts and ghouls. Jake is eight, so I have at least a few more years to accompany him around our neighborhood. And, especially since I could not go this year, the years I have left to enjoy watching them collect candy corn and gummy worms will most certainly not be taken for granted.

Mike Margolin has been writing for us since his daughter Alexa was born 11 years ago. He is an avid sports fan.



- Joe Analco

An Update From ERBA Markets

Is CBN Safe to Help With Sleeping?



By Stephen Freedman

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 14.5% of adults have difficulty falling asleep, and 17.8% have trouble staying asleep.

With so many Americans suffering from sleep issues and searching for relief, the pharmaceutical industry has filled this void by providing chemical sleep aids, such as Ambien or Tylenol PM. The downside to these is the addictive nature and vast side effects of consistent use.

Melatonin has also become popular for the sleep-deprived, but most commercial melatonin is made synthetically through a complicated chemical process. It is also not recommended to be taken nightly, or for a long period of time. As more people become aware of what they are ingesting, they are seeking more natural remedies to help them sleep. One such remedy is the fasted-growing segment of the cannabis industry, cannabiniol, or CBN.

CBN, like the more well-known CBD, is a non-psychoactive cannabinoid derived from the cannabis plant that provides medicinal benefits. Unlike CBD, which helps with pain, anxiety,

and inflammation, CBN is mainly used to help promote a more restful sleep. Like most cannabinoids, more research is necessary to understand the full effects and benefits of CBN, but initial studies show that CBN acts as a natural sedative, relaxing the body and mind before sleep, and causing the user to stay asleep throughout the night.

CBN is safe to consume, with no known side effects (although like all cannabis products, one should start with a low dosage, as effects are subjective).

CBN products can be purchased with added THC for a more psychoactive effect, or CBD to increase relaxation. The most popular method of consumption is in edible form, which is convenient for microdosing. However, CBN can be found in tinctures as well as flower, giving the consumer a wide variety of use.

With more and more people discovering the benefits of CBN, and more research being conducted, this segment of the industry should continue to flourish and provide users with the natural benefits they seek.

Stephen Freedman is the Regional Manager of the ERBA Markets, the WOODS, West LA, Venice, Culver City, and WeHo.

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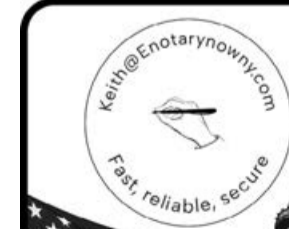
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Give an Easy and Festive Party

(Continued from Page 10)

in a window or somewhere else in the home to create a festive atmosphere.

• Festive Dessert Party

This is an easy party to host, and you can invite a large group, depending on the size of your home. As always, let the guests know it's a large party and desserts will be served. Set your holiday table in advance and mix it up by selecting a combination of sweet and savory treats. Sweets might include holiday cookies, a raisin walnut cheeseball, and assorted chocolates from a box of candy. To make the table look more interesting, use pedestal plates, and display the desserts in a variety of different size serving pieces. Of course, all the food should be finger food, so there's no need

for utensils.

In the middle of the party, it's wonderful to surprise your guests with a special dish such as a baked wheel of brie cheese wrapped in biscuit dough. By serving the dish, the host gets a chance to walk around the party and chat with each guest a bit. Do make sure that you speak with each guest as you circulate the party.

I hope these suggestions inspire you to want to host a festive holiday party.

Maureen Molé is a lecturer, product spokesperson, and the author of *The Book of Entertaining at Home*. Email any questions or comments to MaureenMole@gmail.com.



Over 50 of your favorite Disney stars shine in Disney on Ice Presents Magic in the Stars at the Crypto.com Arena downtown in December.

Disney Stars Return to the Ice This December

Chart a course through the night sky to *Disney On Ice presents Magic in the Stars* where every story begins with a wish! This all-new production brings the brightest Disney stars to life through cutting-edge figure skating, high-flying acrobatics, unexpected stunts, innovative lighting, thrilling special effects, and more.

Experience the moments that take place on the ice in its SoCal debut for four weeks playing Anaheim, Los Angeles, Ontario, and Long Beach from December 12, 2024 thru January 5, 2025.

Join *Disney On Ice presents Magic in the Stars* for a magical journey with Mickey, Minnie, Goofy, Donald, and Daisy through timeless tales and today's favorites. The adventure begins when the North Star shines brightly and descends upon Jiminy Cricket as he welcomes

and reminds the audience that the most fantastic, magical things can happen, and it all starts with a wish.

In the end, audiences will learn that everyone has dreams they want to come true, but the brightest light shines inside of you.

Shows at the Crypto.com Arena will run on Thursday, December 19 at 7 p.m., Friday, December 20 at 7 p.m., and Saturday, December 21 at 11 a.m., 3 p.m., and 6:30 p.m. Sunday, December 22 shows are at 11 a.m., 3 p.m., and 6:30 p.m.

The Crypto.com Arena is at 1111 S. Figueroa St. in downtown Los Angeles.

Family-friendly ticket pricing is available. Tickets can be purchased online at AXS.com or in-person at the venue box office.

What's Happening on the Westside

(Continued from Page 5)

4 p.m.-9:30 p.m. at the Santa Monica Pier merry-go-round building, 200 Santa Monica Pier.

• **Sunday, December 22 - Santa Monica Airport Antique Market** - Held every 1st and 4th Sunday of the month. An outdoors and dog-friendly antique market with furniture, art, collectibles, vintage clothes, and more. Event will run from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Santa Monica Airport, 2800-3200 Airport Ave. Details: santamonicaairportantiquemarket.com.

• **Wednesday, December 25 - Merry Christmas and**

Happy Hanukkah

• **Thursday, December 26 - Kwanzaa begins.**

• **Tuesday, December 31 - Ring in the New Year: East Coast Countdown Celebration** - Count down to the new year at this family-friendly celebration at Ice at Santa Monica, Experience ice skating under the stars and a countdown to midnight (East Coast time). Event will take place from 8:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m. at Ice at Santa Monica, 1324 5th Street.



The Pier During Winter? (Continued from Page 3)

you. For information about how to apply, please contact the Santa Monica City Clerk's Office at smgov.net/departments/clerk/boards/.

Finally, I must share that the Pier Corporation carries an inventory of some merchandise that really belongs in every Pier-loving household, so if you're still brainstorming for holiday gift giving ideas, consider a miniature replica of the Santa Monica Yacht Harbor neon sign, the beloved children's book, *Stella Rose & the Sea*

Dragon, and the official history book, *Santa Monica Pier: America's Last Great Pleasure Pier*, which has been acclaimed as a "must have" atop everyone's coffee table. You can find these online at santamonicapier.org.

Jim Harris is the Executive Director of the Santa Monica Pier Corporation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the Pier visitor experience, as well as an accomplished author and playwright.

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Experience Winter at Post Lech

(Continued from Page 8)

décor and local antiques, offer a cozy haven after a day of adventure. Gather by the crackling fire in the Hubertushalle or rejuvenate in the spa, home to Lech's first heated outdoor pool. Dining at Post Lech is an experience with panoramic views complementing award-winning cuisine and a wine selection numbering in the thousands.

Just under two hours from Inns-

bruck Airport, or a scenic 2.5-hour drive from Zurich International Airport, it's an easy journey to this Winter escape.

Whether you're traveling with friends, family, or seeking a getaway for two, let the Post Lech be your Winter sanctuary.

For more details or to start planning your Alpine retreat, reach out to me at tanya@mariposatraveladvisors.com.



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Community Service on the Westside

Celebrating With the Salvation Army



By Kingsley Fife

As we enter December and the holiday season, one of the things that comes to the minds of we Santa Monica-Pacific Palisades

Lions, is the great work done by the largest nongovernment provider of social services in the U.S. I'm speaking of our Salvation Army members.

It was started by William Booth, a Methodist preacher, in London in 1865. He wanted to bring "The Word" to the poor, desperate souls who dwelled in the London ghettos. However, when he went down there and saw the hungry, starving people among the filth, he realized they were not ready yet for religion. His priority sequence could best be summed up by their mantra, "soap-soup-salvation."

The Salvation Army has grown today to encompass the world, and

last year, they assisted more than 33 million people in the U.S., alone!

The Santa Monica Corps of the Salvation Army has a very strong presence in the city under the leadership of Captains James and Katrina Fleming. We are especially proud that Captain James is also a Lion. We recently had a very successful Salvation Army Red Kettle Bell Ringing day at Bristol Farms. The enthusiasm and energy of the day really put us in the holiday spirit.

We also had the Salvation Army make their annual visit to our Club at our recent monthly dinner meeting, where we enjoyed listening to the Salvation Army Band, singing holiday carols, and donating personally to their worthy cause.

Are you curious about Lionism? Learn more by being our guest at one of our dinner meetings. Call me at 310-454-2960, or email jkfife88@yahoo.com.

An Update From the SMBWC



By Patricia Webber

This year has been a very positive one for the Santa Monica Bay Women's Club (SMBWC). We've increased

our membership and had more rentals of our beautiful ballroom.

And, this past October, or Socktober, was a banner month for collecting socks for the homeless, an event in conjunction with the Santa Monica Travel & Tourism Bureau. Last year we collected 442 pairs. This year, thanks to our generous members, we collected 956 pairs. Don't know if we can surpass that next year.

One of our ongoing projects for many years now is Pennies for Pines, a program to plant trees in California's burn areas. This year we hope to help the Ventura area.

In other news, we have finished the refurbishment of the lounge area, located just inside the building lobby. We also updated our men's and women's restrooms on

the first floor. Our building is 110 years old, with the original ballroom floor, but given her age, it's a challenge to maintain it. Fortunately, we have people who love working on old buildings.

The purpose of our Club is the advancement in all lines of culture, education, welfare, service, and civic affairs. We organize cultural programs for our monthly meetings, support local charities, and sponsor grants and scholarships. Our weekly and monthly activities continue to give our members a chance to make new friends, engage in card games, Mahjong, book club, arts and crafts, and potluck dinners.

We welcome inquiries about renting our clubhouse, and for anyone interested in becoming a member of our Club. Our website is smbwc.org for information and to see Google views of the lobby, ballroom, stage, and balcony. Our office hours are limited to Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. when you can call 310-395-1308 for more details and information.

Share the Spirit of the Holiday (Continued from Page 1)



Here's the entrance to the Santa Monica Family YMCA Camp Big Bear just after its first snow of the season.

a weekend of fun activities including the ropes course, arts and crafts, s'mores, and an opportunity to enjoy the quiet of Big Bear in the Winter. It's the perfect post-holiday retreat to recharge and create cherished memories.

Experience the magic of the season with their Winter Wonderland event, where the YMCA transforms into a festive holiday haven. To enjoy crafts, games, holiday treats, and a special visit from Santa's elves, bring your family to the Y on Wednesday, December 19 from 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Need a way to keep the kids entertained while school is out? Sign them up for Winter Camp at the Y. Packed with exciting activities like arts, sports, and STEM projects, their camp offers a fun, engaging environment where kids can learn and grow during the holiday break.

Holiday shopping just got easier. Take advantage of their Drop & Shop Days, where parents can leave their kids at the Y for an evening of supervised fun, games, and activities while they shop, or enjoy some well-deserved downtime.

This December, make the YMCA your go-to destination for holiday fun, family bonding, and peace of mind. Join them in celebrating the spirit of the season while creating memories that last a lifetime. The YMCA will be closed on Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

For more information and registration details, visit their website at ymcasm.org.



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Keep the Holidays Cheerful

(Continued from Page 3)

- Ensure outside decorations are for outdoor use and fasten lights securely to your home or trees. If using hooks or nails outside, make sure they are insulated to avoid an electrocution or fire hazard.
- If buying an artificial tree, look for a fire-resistant label. When putting it up, keep it away from fireplaces, radiators, and other sources of heat. Never use electric

lights on metallic trees.

- If getting a live tree, make sure it's fresh and keep it watered. To test if the tree is fresh, bend the needles up and down to make sure no needles fall off. Don't light the fireplace if hanging stockings or other decorations on the mantel.



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Discover the Many Services of Your Local Library

By Deborah Gray

Recently, I found myself drawn into pickling. Although I had no prior interest in the subject, I was intrigued by the idea of a class on how to ferment foods, especially since it was being held at a library. My curiosity led me to the Venice-Abbot Kinney Branch where I joined the surprisingly large group that had gathered for the workshop. Heading the demo was fermentation specialist, pastry chef, and food entrepreneur, Jess Wang.

Jess had an early passion for pickles and was encouraged by her Chinese grandmother to explore the world of fermented foods. During the workshop, we were supplied with various raw veggies and of course, the glass jar where all the magic happens. It was a fun, and completely hands-on experience that spawned many questions and answers about the enormously healthy aspects of fermented foods, of which, I learned, there are many.

Inspired by the quirky nature of this workshop, I delved further into what lies beyond the usual offering of knitting circles, yoga, and tech lessons, and to my delight found that within the Westside library circuit, there is a wide range of special events and ongoing classes available.

For instance, you might not know that aspiring humorists can work on their comedy chops at Open Mic Night, held every Wednesday at the Mar Vista Branch. If you're looking for a



Jess Wang introduces her students to the art of pickling.

novel way to spend your time, you could be tempted to check out the Banned Books Reading Club (sounds pretty cool to me), at the West L.A. Branch every third Sunday at noon.

If you're a dance enthusiast, you can partner up with the Lunchtime Line Dancers at the Venice-Abbot Kinney Branch every Thursday at 12:30 p.m. And, the word from Santa Monica's Main Branch is that social readers can "bond over books with music and refreshments," at their Literary Lounge on Wednesday, December 11 from 6:15 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

So, why not Branch out? Get up close and personal with one or more of the local libraries. They've got your curiosity covered.

Holiday Shopping Safety Tips from the National Crime Prevention Council

During the Winter holiday season, we often get so busy and preoccupied, we forget to keep some basic safety tips in mind.

- **Do not buy more than you can carry.** Plan ahead by taking a friend with you or asking a store employee to help you carry your packages to the car.
- **Save all receipts.** Print and save all confirmations from your online purchases. Start a file folder to keep all receipts together and to help you verify credit card or bank statements as they come in.
- **Don't flash the cash.** Consider an alternate option to pay for your merchandise, such as multipurpose disposable credit cards. Use them also at online stores.
- **Wait until asked by a cashier before taking out your credit card or checkbook.** An enterprising thief would love to shoulder surf to get your information.

• **Packages should not be visible on your car seat.** Lock them in the trunk, or if possible, take them directly home.



-Joe Analco

Happy Holidays



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Alinea Brings the Latest (Continued from Page 9)



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Jodie explained.

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Ranging from Invisalign to jaw surgery to braces, Alinea offers a variety of treatments through utilizing state-of-the-art technology, The iTeroDigital Impressions, for example, is a 3D scan used by Dr. Ortiz and his team. The scan previews immediate, AI digitized adjustments to craft the best approach, and to comfortably fit

every patient's needs.

Alinea is all-inclusive, accepting all PPO insurances. For those without insurance, Alinea offers flexible payment plans. Dr. Ortiz and his team are committed to ensuring that everyone in the community has access to the unique experience Alinea has to offer. "I love connecting with patients and treating the whole person, not just their smile. It's a privilege to help transform smiles and positively impact lives," said Dr. Ortiz.

To find out more about Alinea Orthodontics, visit helloalinea.com, or call 424-428-0008. Alinea is located at 2701 Ocean Park Blvd., Suite 110, across from the Santa Monica Business Park.

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