



We can always count on nature to show us the beauty in the skies, the blooming flowers, and the growing trees. Sometimes we may be so overwhelmed with issues that we forget to look around us and see a sliver of a silver moon in the evening sky, or magical shapes of clouds above.

Photo by Julie Dobkin Gilberg

## And So the Year 2025 Began....

Maybe you attended a lively New Year's Eve party with your friends. You knew there would be changes in our lives as there always are, but you looked forward to them being positive ones. You debated about making New Year's resolutions. Do we really keep them?

We had been warned about strong winds invading our area on Tuesday, January 7. And, around 10:30 a.m. a fire started at the top of the Highlands in the Palisades, and from then on, so many lives changed! Many friends and family members had the most devastating experiences in their lives, as

they had to evacuate from their homes, going down overcrowded roads, only to learn hundreds of homes, businesses, and memories went up in hot, crackling flames around them.

The first responders became our heroes, neighbors helped each other as much as they could. But, throughout our community, non-profit organizations, individuals, and local businesses sprang into action to provide food, clothing, toys, and more, as well as help in dealing with FEMA and other necessary paperwork. The camaraderie in the greater Los Angeles community has been inspiring.

And, it will be continuing for some time. In this issue are examples of how people have rallied around to help in every way they were able.

Count your blessings. Become an active part of your community. It always feels better when you can make a difference in the lives of others.

—D.M.

## Wilshire Coin Staff is Here to Help



Wilshire Coin owner Glenn Sorgenstein, above, invites you to discover a variety of unique items in his store that have included collectibles from Harry Houdini, John Kennedy, Albert Einstein, and Babe Ruth.

Glenn Sorgenstein, owner of Wilshire Coin, has been a dedicated member of the Santa Monica community for 36 years. His store at 1312 Lincoln Blvd., just south of Arizona Avenue, is known for the staff's expertise and commitment to customer service. They are qualified to buy and appraise coins, collectibles, gold and jewelry, diamonds and gems. They can also help you with foreign exchange before you go on a trip.

Originally venturing into real estate, Glenn found that his true calling was numismatics, the study and collection of coins and currency. This passion not only inspired him, but also laid the foundation for Wilshire Coin, transforming it into a destination for collectors, investors, and individuals looking to sell their

valuables. "I've always had a fascination with collecting items. I started with coins, but also enjoyed collecting autographs and historical documents," Glenn explained.

Wilshire Coin is a space where history and investment intersect. Glenn and his team of experts specialize in hard assets, showcased through the team's deep understanding of everything from rare coins and bullion to historical collectibles. "We're not just limited to coins or what people perceive a coin business to be. We're far from it. If you visit, you're likely to see a variety of unique items. Over the years we've showcased collectibles from Harry Houdini, John Kennedy, Albert Einstein, and Babe Ruth."

(Continued on Page 2)

## Meals on Wheels West Steps Up for Palisades Fire Victims

By Chris Baca

Meals on Wheels West (MOW West) serves Pacific Palisades, Santa Monica, Venice, Del Rey/Mar Vista, Marina Del Rey, and Malibu. The Palisades Fire massively impacted people living in MOW West's entire service area.

Eighteen volunteers lost their homes. Twelve of our Palisades clients were forced to flee from their burnt-out residences. Seven Santa Monica clients lived in the mandatory evacuation area and were forced to abandon their homes with many other clients evacuating. Most of our clients throughout the Westside were affected by the smoke and stress created by the fire. Several relocated to protect their health.

In response to the Palisades Fire,

MOW West has undertaken multiple initiatives to ensure the health and wellness of our more than 500 current clients and 200 active volunteers. During the fire, we distributed KN95 masks to all our clients and volunteers. In the north of Wilshire areas of Santa Monica most impacted by the fires, MOW West staff delivered food to clients on Wednesday, January 8 and Thursday January 9, checking on their health, providing KN95 masks, offering additional food and water, and urging them to follow instructions by the City of Santa Monica. Staff and volunteers asked clients if they had evacuation plans, including a place to go. We urged clients to develop an evacuation plan.

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# Rebuilding the Palisades: A Community United

By Richard Lombardi

They say adversity reveals character, and nowhere is that more evident than here in Pacific Palisades. The recent fire was devastating, leaving many of us grappling with immense loss. Yet, in the face of such tragedy, this community has shown resilience and determination. It's been a tough transition for all of us, but it's

also been a powerful reminder of what we can accomplish when we come together.

Personally, this fire hit home for me ... literally. As someone who has spent over three decades helping people find their dream homes, I've always understood the importance of having a place to call your own. But, experiencing loss on this scale changes your

perspective. It's not just the physical structures we mourn, but the memories and the sense of safety tied to them. Like so many others, I've had to adjust to a new reality, but I've also found strength in the outpouring of support from this community.

One shining example of that support is the work being done by  
**(Continued on Page 8)**



## Meals on Wheels Steps Up

(Continued from Page 1)

In January, MOW West accepted 35 new clients to our core home-delivered meals program, Delivering More Than a Meal, immediately delivering to them with food and resources.

As part of our Keeping People and Pets Together program, MOW West distributed additional free pet food to our clients who are pet owners.

MOW West staff called all Palisades volunteers and clients impacted by the fire multiple times, each time checking their safety and offering resources, including referrals to free transportation, mental health providers, and Red Cross resources.

Additionally, MOW West has created a support group for Pacific Palisades volunteers who lost their homes, facilitated by a licensed therapist.

MOW West staff also visited a Pacific Palisades client at the Red Cross shelter in WLA, where we assisted him in completing his FEMA applications.

MOW West is here to help the residents of the communities we serve.

## Wilshire Coin Staff is Here to Help (Continued from Page 1)

The staff at Wilshire Coin is committed to supporting the Santa Monica community. After losing his own home in the Woolsey Fire, Glenn wants to assist local families impacted by the recent greater Los Angeles area fires. He understands the emo-

tional and financial hardships that come with such losses and aims to help others recover, replace, or sell items damaged by the fire.

"We want people to know that all is not lost. We can help you locate precious metal thought to

be lost, assist with past records of purchases or sales made at Wilshire Coin, and buy items which are thought to be unrecognizable."

For more information, visit [wilshirecoin.com](http://wilshirecoin.com), or call 310-393-0661.

**Gabriella Sonnhalter, Contributor**

## Women's History Month in the Community Gardens

By Sarah Caso and Isabel Filson  
California Climate Action Corps Fellows

Throughout history, women's activism has shaped the world of gardening, farming, and agriculture.

Two women we are celebrating who exemplify the strength and power of women are Dolores Huerta and Fannie Lou Hamer. In 1962, labor and civil rights activist Huerta co-founded the National Farm Workers Association, which later contributed to the formation of the United Farm Workers' Union. Later in life, she became a women's rights activist,

helping bring more focus to the experience of Latina women.

Hamer was a pioneer of what would later become the concept of food sovereignty. She founded the Freedom Farm Cooperative, an agricultural cooperative in Mississippi that focused on the power of controlling one's own food system. Food security was a form of resistance; her cooperative challenged oppressive farming practices that prevented Black families from being self-reliant.

Hamer also fought against discriminatory agricultural policies that reduced Black Americans' ability to own a farm.

This March, join us in celebrat-



A sign declares that the Main Street Community Garden is open for visitors.

ing Women's History Month in the City of Santa Monica Community Gardens.

Stop by any of our Saturday events to contribute to our Women's History Gratitude Tree. Visitors are invited to design a card celebrating women throughout history that inspire them. At the end of the month, we will display these cards at the Ishihara Park Learning Garden.

On Saturday, March 8, join us from 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. for an International Women's Day Bike Ride & Main Street Community Garden Celebration.

**(Continued on Page 6)**



## Happy March Birthday to

- Kris Andresen,
- Donna Byrd, Alan Glick,
- Stan Fox, Larry Mortorff,
- Carol Ann Emmitt,
- Jeannie and Tebb Kusserow,
- Mike Cortrite, Pamela Lawrence,
- Margaret Talai, Jerry Harris,
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and Maureen Molé.  
**Distribution:** Paper Pushers LA  
**Special thanks to** Rufus Baker,  
and Bernadette Lucier

**From the Santa Monica Pier Guy**

**A Note From the Pier**



**By Jim Harris**  
On March 1, 1983, the second of two overwhelming storms left the Santa Monica Pier a shell of itself with but a bleak

outlook for its future. It was much like the same fate the Palisades Fires delivered to the Westside weeks ago.

Resilience and hope prevailed for the Pier after its devastation as the community rallied around the place that charmed generations and inspired countless memories for those who knew and enjoyed it. I know that the Pacific Palisades will follow suit.

A couple of months ago, I had planned to highlight the Santa Monica Pier Corporation's first-ever annual fundraising event, A PIERfect Benefit, which was to take place at the end of this month. That will have to wait, of course, as there are more important causes to raise funds for. In the meantime, we at the Pier are doing our part to support our neighbors to the north.

At our January Locals' Night event, the Pier Corporation alongside KTLA and our partners at Pacific Park amusement park, added a fundraising element to our traditional monthly gathering by collecting donations for Palisades Charter High School. The result was a heartwarming and inspiring get-together for the displaced students, their families, and our local community. It felt like a much needed first step forward after weeks of stunned sorrow and pain.

In February, we continued with the Palisades fundraising spirit at Locals' Night and will continue to do so for the remainder of our Locals' Night season, every third Thursday of the month through May 15.

The Pier is more than an assemblage of deck boards hovering over the ocean – supporting shops, restaurants, and an amusement park. I often refer to the Pier as an escape – a place to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city. But, the Pier is more than that, too, isn't it? The Pier is, and always has been, a place to come together and have fun with friends, family, and neighbors. It is a place of community, where we can all turn to help each other, to be there for one another.

We're here for you, Pacific Palisades, in honor of your people, your places, and the memories that they have inspired.

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

**Celebrating Red Cross Month This March With Free A1C Testing!**

**By Angelica Saucedo**

This March, we celebrate American Red Cross Month by recognizing the compassionate acts of people in Los Angeles, and by renewing our commitment to lend a helping hand to our neighbors in need.

Since Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross more than 140 years ago, generation after generation has stepped up to deliver relief and care across our country and around the world, bringing out the best of humanity in times of crisis.

For Red Cross Month this year, to boost community health, Red Cross is offering free A1C testing for blood donors. One-third of people lack access to regular primary care in the U.S., where diabetes affects one in ten people and nearly a quarter of those living

with it have been undiagnosed, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The free A1C screening aims to help address this gap by empowering blood donors with valuable information to maintain their health and well-being. This new offering is among the longtime work of the Red Cross to support the health of communities, which also includes disaster relief efforts such as basic disaster health and mental health services, among other assistance.

Since the wildfires began in January, over 1,000 Red Cross responders, supported by local community members, continue to provide food, shelter, emotional care, recovery planning, and financial assistance. Red Cross caseworkers are helping shelter

*(Continued on Page 5)*

**Santa Monica-Palisades Lions Member Shares His Experience When He Was Told to Evacuate**



**By Kingsley Fife**  
President Roosevelt once famously said that December 7 was a "Day That Will Live in Infamy." Now I can say that "January

7 is a New Day That Will Live in Infamy."

On that fateful morning a 100-foot high fire storm driven by 90 mph winds came rushing down from the Palisades Highlands and consumed our beautiful town of 30,000 people. What we have left are heartaches and rubble. As one Palisadian put it, "I looked into the swirling fire wall and saw the Devil dancing in hell."

The day started off innocently with me enjoying the *L.A. Times* in the kitchen. My wife yelled that there's a fire starting way over in the Palisades Highlands. We went outside and took videos of the Super Scooper planes dropping water, never thinking that it would ever get over to us.

In fact, the smoke color was changing from black to white and we were cheering that it indicated they were putting the fire out. Friends were already calling and saying they were evacuating and I thought, "What an overreaction!"

Then, the police and fire department cars started cruising around yelling, "Evacuate!" and we started getting messages on the phone. I went to the backyard and started hosing down our back hill, assured that I would stay and fight the fire if it ever got near us. All the while, tornado-like winds were swirling around us. Then 20 minutes later, I was up in our back

hallway and saw huge flames coming over at the top of our back hill. I ran and screamed to my wife, "We have got to get out of here!"

And, we scrambled around the house trying to collect what we needed – in moments of panic and desperation. While in our cars in the street I wanted to go back and get some shoes, but by then the smoke was so thick I couldn't even see our house. I knew if I got out of my car and started breathing this air without a special smoke mask, that I would destroy my lungs. We drove down the street and met nothing but gridlock. We parked by the side of the road, praying that we would have a home to return to.

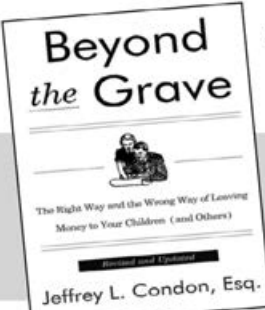
Update: We are now living in a hotel in Santa Monica, and by some miracle our house was one of the few that survived.

The Santa Monica – Pacific Palisades Lions Club has created a special fund for the Palisades Fire Victims. All donations are tax deductible with 100% going towards emergency efforts.

Donate now by check, payable to the California Lions Foundation with the designation SM-PP Lions Club – Palisades Fire Relief. Mail to Calif Lions Foundation, Attn: David Hedebrand, 20231 Valley Blvd. #E, Tehachapi, CA 93561.

For online donations, go to and complete the online form at [californialionsfoundation.org/contact](http://californialionsfoundation.org/contact).

Interested in learning more about Lionism? Contact Kingsley Fife at [jkfife88@yahoo.com](mailto:jkfife88@yahoo.com).



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## Reflections From The East

## The Snowball Effect: Life Lessons on Growth



**By Qin Sun Stubis**

It's March. Here in Maryland, our snow season is officially behind us. Finally, I can celebrate my survival of another icy, threatening Winter, and look

forward to the warmer days ahead, filled with Spring's beautiful colors.

As I grow older, I have to admit, I enjoy the idea of a snowstorm more than its messy reality, and my weary bones are all too easily intimidated by the daunting task of lifting endless shovelfuls of very heavy, wet slush.

And yet, I'm still enchanted by the beauty of these six-sided crys-

tals which only Mother Nature is capable of producing. After a big snowfall, my inner child never fails to lure me into scooping up a handful of that white fluff, pressing it together to form a palm-sized globe, gently dropping it to the ground, and rolling until it grows into a giant white snowball.

Making oversize snowballs is a very fulfilling experience. It teaches us how we can start with something small and work at it until it gains momentum and becomes something big, impressive, or even monumental. After all, most things we do in life start out through baby steps, including writing and making friends.

When I penned my first column

for *The Santa Monica Star* almost 18 years ago, I was scared. I wasn't sure how readers would react to my words and ideas. I didn't know if I had the ability to become a writer. Luckily for me, I had plenty of support and encouragement from those around me, especially Diane, my publisher, Mark, my husband, my children, and friends. So I kept on working at it.

Through the years, one column grew into ten, ten columns grew into a hundred. And, now I have written and published more than 200. My writing career has brought the publication of my first book, as well as many essays, short stories, poems, and opinion pieces. The momen-

tum of the snowball effect is still going strong.

Along the way, I have found new friends – passionate, loving, and supportive friends, one at a time. For someone who was once shy and quiet, I now have more friends than I ever expected.

I may be scared of cold Winters and big snowfalls, but I will always love snowflakes, and use them to make giant snowballs, reminding myself of how their wisdom works in my life.

**You can always reach me at [qstubis@gmail.com](mailto:qstubis@gmail.com), or visit me at [QinSunStubis.com](http://QinSunStubis.com). You can find a copy of my book, *Once Our Lives*, online at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).**

## Thought About Green Eggs and Ham for Breakfast?



**By Cheryl Thode**

Have you ever had green eggs and ham? You know the tasty green version of Denny's Grand Slam. Could you? Would you have green eggs

and ham? Maybe when you were in a jam? Or perhaps, you tried some with a chum? Back in your school days, your teacher, did she give you some? Oh, green eggs and ham, a generation and more you did span. You helped teach our youth to read and planted in many young minds a new culinary seed.

OK, OK, all rhyming aside, how many of you remember and could probably recite portions of the children's book *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss? It is a classic, especially among new readers, and it is a part of Dr. Seuss' wonderful collection of books geared towards children.

Theodor Seuss Geisel, also known as "Dr. Seuss" was an American children's author, poet, political cartoonist, illustrator, and filmmaker. Born in Springfield, Massachusetts on March 2, 1904,

Dr. Seuss (using his middle name as his pen name) wrote a multitude of books (including some for adults) that have been translated into multiple languages all over the world. Known for their whimsical rhymes and quirky characters, his books have taught generations of children the joy of reading.

Today, in many schools on or around Dr. Seuss' March 2 birthday, we celebrate "Read Across America Day." In my son's class, the children come dressed as Dr. Seuss characters, and for snack time get to have some green eggs and ham. The whole day is themed around Dr. Seuss' various books like *The Cat in the Hat*, *The Sneetches*, *Horton Hears a Who*, *Hop on Pop*, and many more. It is a day that my son looks forward to, and I am always excited to hear about what happened when I pick him up.

Despite being only one day, the aftereffects of the day are seen throughout the whole month of March. The kids always seem so energized and excited to read or be read to. Whether it's a Dr. Seuss book, *Winnie the Pooh* or even *Paw Patrol*, there is a huge draw to sit down and read.

As we all know, the benefits of reading to your young (and even not-so-young children) are exponential. Science has proven early reading is critical to our young children's brain development. It is also a wonderful bonding experience for parents and caregivers, too.

Reading opens up a world of imagination where anything and everything is possible. It also can help mold and teach our kids important life lessons. This is true even in the tongue twisting world of Dr. Seuss!

Two of my favorite Dr. Seuss books which can apply to all ages are *The Lorax* and *The Zax*. In *The Lorax*, through the main character, a fantastical creature called the Lorax, Dr. Seuss uses simple rhyming prose to convey the consequences of ecological destruction caused by one character on another's environment.

Similarly, in *The Zax*, Dr. Seuss, again simply explains what can happen if two individuals refuse to compromise or move out of each other's way; they are doomed to go nowhere. While simplistic in their language, these books are so spot-on in their messaging that even

adults can benefit from reading them.

Do you see where I am going for March? This March let's celebrate the Read Across America movement with our schools and pick up a favorite Dr. Seuss book. Read it to your child, to just yourself, or maybe even use it as an icebreaker during your book club.

However, do not just read it. Do a little deep diving and explore the many layers of the story. When you finish reading it, ask yourself or those around you these questions: **1)** What was your favorite part of the story? Why? **2)** What lesson did you learn from this book? **3)** How would you change the story if you were the author? and **4)** What was your favorite line or rhyme? Why?

Depending on what book you choose to read, you could even make a meal out of it. *Green Eggs and Ham*, perhaps? Just keep reading and God Bless!



## Mini Message Bulletin Board



**Santa Monica-Pacific Palisades Lions Club Dinner Program**

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**Architecturally Speaking**

**How to Build a Fire-Resistant House**



**By Elisa Garcia Garcia Architects**

Here are more areas to learn about when building a fire-resistant house. This month we will share details about windows and doors.

**Windows**

Windows are the weakest link in your house, as they offer fire an opening into your home. Extreme heat alone is enough to shatter glass or trigger combustibles inside your home without the blaze even entering your house.

Choose insulated double glazing with tempered glass for all windows. Single glazed windows will crack from the blaze and expose the home to the fire. Double glazed windows will take twice as long to break, with the outer layer breaking first; tempered glass is heat-treated making it about four times stronger.

You can also consider fire safety glass, which holds together even when it's cracked by heat. When it comes to size, smaller windows are preferable to larger ones.

For window frames, steel framing is the most flame-resistant option, followed by aluminum, with vinyl as the least resistant. Acrylic

skylights are susceptible to melting, leaving a hole in the roof, so are to be avoided. The safest option is to install roll-down metal fire doors from your roof overhang or along the side recesses that can be automatically released and secured with a latch. They'll protect all windows and doors and act as an important extra layer of defense protecting your home.

**Doors**

Doors act as another access point into your home for wildfires. Wood doors provide only about 20 minutes of fire protection.

Instead, doors with a metal core (and covered in any material you'd like) or fiber-cement will stave off a fire for much longer. Garage doors are a key access point too. Metal panel doors are your best approach, but you'll need to make sure these doors are very tightly fitted to prevent embers from sliding under.

*In coming months, Elisa will highlight siding, decks, fencing, landscaping, sprinklers, power, and house styles to consider when rebuilding a fire-resistant home. 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.

These businesses below have graciously posted our fliers in their locations. Thanks to the Urth Cafe, Gilbert's El Indio, Santa Monica Motors/Smog, Honda of Santa Monica, Lazy Daisy Cafe, Brooke Rodd Kids, (They sell kids' books in their store.), Edelweiss Flowers, Quinie & b, Montana Mail, Sunset Park Swim, Santa Monica Yoga, Co-opportunity Market, Meals on Wheels West, Bob's Market, Erba Market West LA, and Neli's.



*Josue, a member of the Lazy Daisy Cafe staff, is pointing out the flier he has posted at the Pico Boulevard cafe.*

**Santa Monica Breakfast Club Postpones 2025 Mad Hatter Tea Party**

After careful consideration, members of the Santa Monica Breakfast Club (SMBC) have voted to postpone their popular annual Mad Hatter Tea Party fundraiser this year. The event, which was to have taken place on March 30 honoring Jim Harris, the Executive Director of the Santa Monica Pier, will take place in Spring, 2026.

SMBC members have decided to focus their efforts this year on

supporting their Pacific Palisades and Malibu members impacted by the fires, continuing to make dental health presentations to the first graders of the Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District in association with UCLA Dental students, and on funding urgently-needed dental care for local children whose families cannot afford the cost.

For more details, contact kboole@gmail.com.

**Celebrating Red Cross Month (Continued from Page 3)**

residents plan their next steps in disaster recovery and connecting them with other community resources. The top priority is housing, but we also help individuals with transportation, health care,

childcare, and many other needs. The Red Cross has been here from the beginning, and we will continue to be here in your community helping with recovery every day.

**Passing Through the Pico Neighborhood**

**Sunset Park Swim Hosts Donation Events for Athletes**



**By Stacy McClendon**

Sunset Park Swim, in collaboration with LA Tri Club held an athletic donation event in early February for athletes who lost everything, including all their athletic clothing and equipment in the recent fires.

Paul Hekimian, the owner of Sunset Park Swim and the owner, founder, and president of LA Tri Club, a 500-member triathlon



*Sunset Park Swim will be sharing donated items with athletes.*

club, decided to contact companies and ask for donations.

**(Continued on Page 8)**

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To all our friends and clients affected by the recent fires, please reach out if you need assistance recovering any precious metals lost in your home. We're also happy to help provide records of past transactions for your insurance claims.

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Clergy Corner

## Keep Moving Forward



**By Rev. Carolyn Baskin-Bell**

We entered the first quarter of this year with many unexpected occurrences. The year 2025 began with much trouble and tragedy in the Southern California region.

Some experienced losses as a result of the wildfires that raged through many communities. The political climate, both nationally and globally, continues to trigger alarms and uncertainty regarding the mental, physical, and spiritual well-being of many. Individuals are suffering from compassion fatigue as they observe the pain, hurt, and suffering of humankind.

Even though these unexpected occurrences brought about a shift in our goals for 2025, we must *Keep Moving Forward*. Often, trouble and tragedy cause us to become stagnant and stuck. The shift may cause us to move in a different direction or alter our goals. Through prayer and meditation, one seeks divine direction for movement that is beneficial and best for that individual.

The ability to flow with the shift in one's life requires steadfast

faith in God. Faith is believing and hoping for all things to work out for the good. Faith is an action word which requires an individual to *Keep Moving Forward!*

Faith is contacting resources for information to restore and rebuild. Faith is writing a letter of concern or participating in a non-violent protest regarding the political climate of this world. It is necessary to keep it moving with steadfast faith!

During these times of uncertainty, it is imperative to stay connected to God, family, and community. Even in our differences and disagreements, we have common ground which is the need to love and be loved. We must break through the barriers that attempt to divide us by moving forward together. Stay connected through prayer with God and communicating with family, friends, and community through worship, forums, and other activities.

*Keep Moving Forward* in the flow of the shift with steadfast faith and staying connected with God and humankind!

**Reverend Carolyn Baskin-Bell,  
Senior Pastor  
First AME Church, Santa Monica**

## Cedars-Sinai Psychiatry, Pediatric Trauma, and Spiritual Care Experts Share How to Navigate Complex Emotions and Move Forward

Some of the Los Angeles wildfires may be waning, but in their aftermath, emotional and mental health concerns are growing.

"That's true for people experiencing the trauma of devastation and loss firsthand, as well as those following the news from a distance," said Rabbi Jason Weiner, PhD, senior rabbi at Cedars-Sinai and director of the Spiritual Care Department. "This tragedy reminds us all of our vulnerability," he said.

Itai Danovitch, MD, chair of the medical center's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences, said feeling distress and anxiety right now is normal, as is feeling numb or disconnected from emotions. Among anxiety-management tactics are maintaining daily routines and self-care while staying connected with supportive people, getting adequate rest and exercise, and practicing relaxation or meditation exercises. "Plan ahead for potential future evacuations and manage exposure to news and social media."

For parents of kids who have experienced the fires, listening is key, said Suzanne Silverstein, MA, founding director of Cedars-Sinai Share & Care and a registered art therapist.

"Hear what they're saying,"

Silverstein said. "Instead of talking at them, validate their feelings by acknowledging that it's scary, hard, or sad. Reassure them that they are OK as a family and will get through this together."

Art for young children can be a beneficial coping mechanism: Children can draw things they miss, or items they would have gotten out of their home if they'd had the chance. Very young children may be better able to express feelings through play – using dolls or stuffed animals to act out scenarios and discuss emotions, or building forts with sheets and pillows to create a "safe space."

"When adults can provide a safe emotional space for the child to take the lead in creative play, children will naturally work through difficult emotions without having to verbalize their feelings directly," said Rebecca Hedrick, MD, child and adolescent psychiatrist at Cedars-Sinai. "It helps them feel some control and be able to process grief."

"Older kids may benefit from a daily ritual of saying five things that they're sad about, five things they're worried or angry about, five things they're grateful for, and five things they're looking forward to," Dr. Hedrick added.



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## Women's History Month (Continued from Page 2)

This will be a fun, family-friendly bike ride to celebrate International Women's Day. Enjoy a relaxed ride along the Beach Bike Path, visit the Main Street Community Garden, and savor some light refreshments.

We will meet for the bike ride at 8:30 a.m. in the garden at 2818

Main Street. We will leave at 8:45 a.m., and the ride will be about an hour long. Please bring your own bikes and helmets.

Find out more about our City of Santa Monica Community Garden events by visiting [santamonica.gov/events](http://santamonica.gov/events).

## Community Members Help Get Books to Children Who Lost Their Homes



The cast of "Cinderella" to be performed at the Santa Monica Playhouse, brought books to drop off at the Santa Monica YMCA after their show.



The Sandbourne Santa Monica Hotel front desk staff will give the books they received along with other souvenirs they offer to the children staying at the hotel. From left, Reo Owens, Michael Yurevich, Manager Alberico Nunziata, and Alex Hernandez.

### What's Happening on the Westside?

In 1981, U.S. Congress designated the second week of March National Women's History Week, and in 1987 Congress expanded it to a month-long observance.

- **Saturday and Sunday Matinees - March 2-29 - "Cinderella"** - A special Rudie-DeCarlo Family Theatre Musical. 310-394-9779, ext.1.1211 4th St.
- **Monday, March 10 - Citizenship Class**, Pico Branch Library Annex. 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Enroll through the SMMUSD Adult Education Center, or call Olga Saucedo at 310-664-6222, ext. 76203.
- **Thursday, March 13 - Kiddie Karaoke: Diva Edition**. Montana Branch Library, 3:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.
- **Saturday, March 15 - Purim Carnival** with game booths, prizes, snow cones, food, bake sale, and so much more. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Beth

Shir Shalom, 19th and California.

- **Monday, March 17 - Main Library Book Group** will discuss *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride. 7 p.m.-8:30 p.m.
- **Sunday, March 23 - Garden Tour at the Shotgun House** - 2 p.m.-3:30 p.m. Hilda Weiss, gardener and poet, leads a tour of the garden at the Shotgun House, 2520 2nd St., Santa Monica. \$20 for the general public. \$10 members. Walking tours of Santa Monica are also available. Details: 310-496-3146 or info@smconser vancy.org.
- **Saturday, March 29 - Screening of Fly Like a Girl (2019)** Santa Monica Main Library MLK Jr. Auditorium. Celebrate Women's History Month and reach for the skies with trailblazing pilots, astronauts, and future soarers. The screening of *Fly Like a Girl* (84

min.) will be followed by a panel discussion with Women in Aviation International (WAI) Greater Los Angeles Chapter. They include Treasurer Ashley Hawley, WAI Co-Events Chair Liraz Bershady, and Aerospace Engineer and Chief Product Officer at Airspace Experience Technologies, Dr. Anita Sengupta.

- **Ongoing - Roots and Branches: A Tree's View of Santa Monica** - This groundbreaking exhibition celebrates the city's 150th anniversary. The immersive exhibition delves into the intricate connections between trees, urban development, and the cultural and environmental history of Santa Monica. Santa Monica History Museum, 1350 Seventh Street. 310-395-2290.



Carlos Ortiz, manager of the Hilton Santa Monica Hotel & Suites, and Veronica, a member of his front desk staff, made sure the books they received were distributed to the children who were guests at the hotel.

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## Discover the Magic of Marrakech: A Journey for the Senses and Soul



**By Tanya Gilbert**  
Marrakech holds a special place in my heart as one of my favorite destinations. From horseback riding through the breathtaking Atlas Mountains and Dades Valley to exploring the vast landscapes, my journey from Marrakech to Zagora, Erg Chebbi near Merzouga, and Ouarzazate was filled with unforgettable discoveries. Along the way, I was struck by the incredible warmth of the Moroccan people, whose hospitality is as vibrant as the landscapes they call home.

Known as the "Red City," Marrakech offers a feast for the senses.

The city's culinary scene is unmatched, from elegant Le Liste-recognized restaurants like La Grande Table Marocaine to bustling spice shops brimming with fragrant cumin, saffron, and ras el hanout. Food tours and cooking classes deepen your appreciation of Moroccan gastronomy, while encounters with local women displaying their intricate craftsmanship showcase the artistry woven into daily life.

Wellness seekers will love the city's traditional hammams and spas. My first hammam experience in an ancient local bathhouse in Marrakech remains one of my most cherished memories,

**(Continued on Page 11)**



With two camels resting in front of a traditional mud-brick structure in Zagora, Tanya is capturing the timeless charm of Morocco's desert gateway.

## Rebuilding the Palisades (Continued from Page 2)

American Legion Post 283. Established in 1928, Post 283 has been a cornerstone of Pacific Palisades for nearly a century. As the 2nd Vice Commander of the Post, I've witnessed firsthand how this organization has stepped up in ways that go far beyond its traditional mission of serving veterans. The Legion Hall has been transformed into a vital recovery hub, offering free insurance and legal advice, FEMA and Red Cross assistance, mental health support, and practical necessities like shovels, sifters, Personal Protection Equipment, food, and water.

But, Post 283's contributions extend far beyond emergency recovery efforts. As the owners of the buildings housing the CVS

and the U.S. Post Office, the Legion has used its resources to invest millions of dollars back into the Pacific Palisades community.

It's important to recognize that the American Legion is a family. In addition to the veterans who make up the Legion itself, this family includes the Sons of the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary. Together, these groups embody the values of service, dedication, and community support.

What's clear to me is that this community isn't just rebuilding homes we're rebuilding hope. The transition back to normalcy won't be quick or easy, but we're making progress, one step at a time. Every effort, big or small, moves us closer to recovery.

This fire tested us, but it didn't break us. It brought to light the strength of our people, the generosity of our neighbors, and the leadership of organizations like Post 283 and its Legion family. Together, we're proving that while the landscape may have changed, the spirit of Pacific Palisades remains as strong as ever.

For those seeking help, or to volunteer, The American Legion Post 283 is located at 15247 La Cruz Drive, Pacific Palisades.

**Richard Lombardi is a resident of Pacific Palisades, a real estate broker, and the 2nd Vice Commander of American Legion Post 283.**

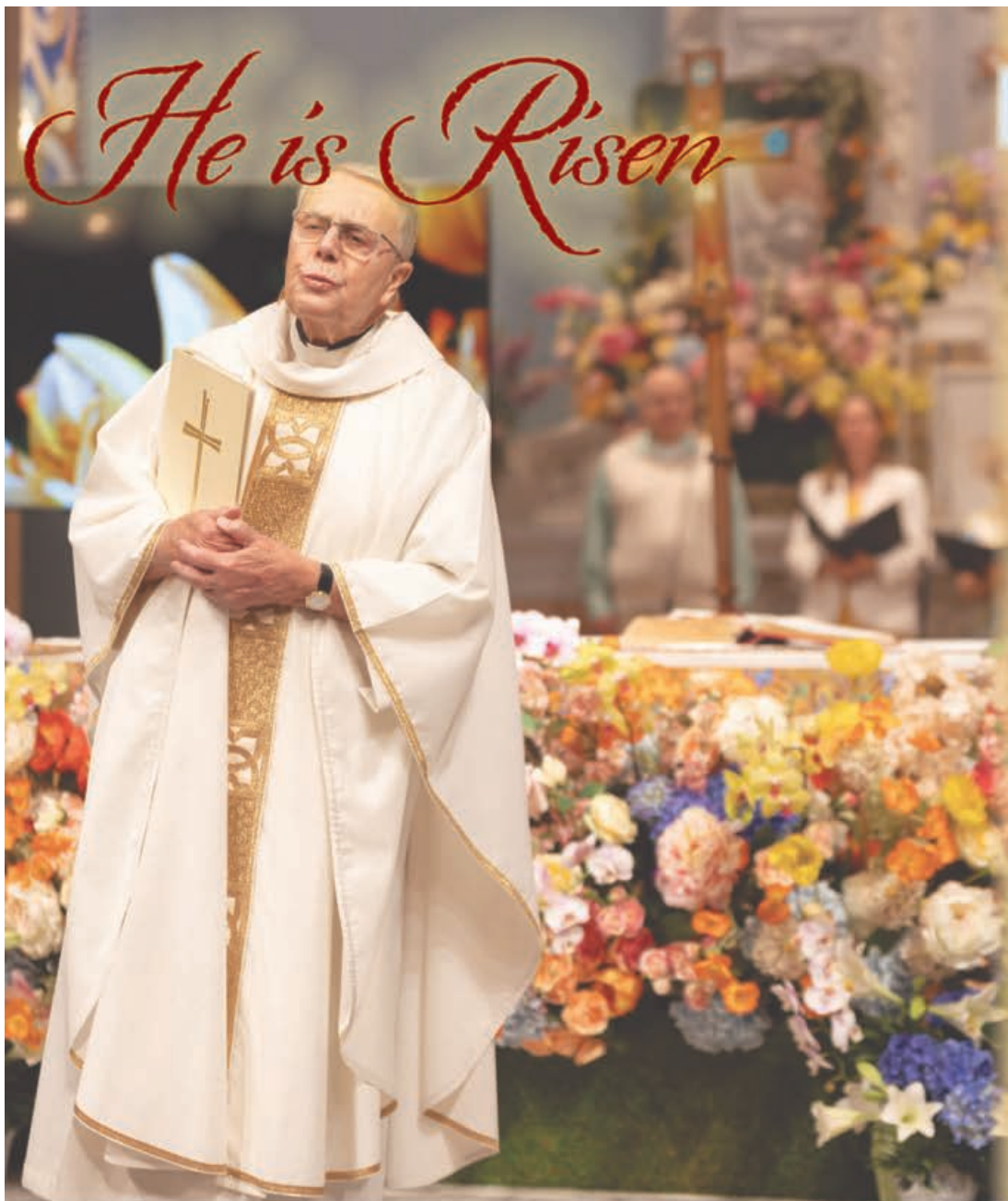
## Sunset Park Swim

**(Continued from Page 5)**

Since making the calls, athletic gear, equipment, bikes, and more have been arriving.

The first donation event was held right after the fires, and the third event will be held early next month. The goal of this event is to help those who lost everything build back their athletic arsenal.

Paul himself knows firsthand that fitness isn't something that can be thrown to the wayside, no matter what's going on, and especially when a love of fitness is a way of life!



## EASTER AT ST. MONICA

St. Monica Catholic Community is a diverse and vibrant faith community that offers many opportunities to enrich your spiritual life, serve those in need, educate your family, and most importantly, to belong.

**All are welcome!**

**Holy Thursday: April 17**  
7:00 p.m. · Mass of the Lord's Supper

**Good Friday: April 18**  
Noon & 7:00 p.m. · Solemn Liturgy  
3:00 p.m. · Stations of the Cross with Taizé

**Holy Saturday: April 19**  
7:00 p.m. · Easter Vigil

**Easter Sunday: April 20**  
7:30 · 9:30 · 11:30 a.m. · 5:30 p.m.

OUTDOOR: 9:30 & 11:30 a.m.  
LIVESTREAM: 9:30 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.

**stmonica.net/easter**  
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# Community Service on the Westside

## The Santa Monica Family YMCA's Response to the Palisades Fires



**By Araceli Alejandre, COO**  
The Palisades Fire was a stark reminder of the power of nature and the resilience of our community.

As the fires continued, our brave firefighters, first responders, and emergency personnel worked tirelessly to protect lives, homes, and cherished landscapes. We extend our deepest gratitude to these heroes for their dedication and sacrifice. Our hearts go out to the families impacted, those who faced loss and uncertainty.

In response, the Santa Monica Family YMCA exemplified community spirit by swiftly mobilizing resources to support those affected. One of the immediate initiatives was the organization of free Emergency Day Camps for over 80 children whose schools were closed/impacted. These camps provided a safe and engaging environment for children, offering families a semblance of normalcy during a tumultuous time. By ensuring that children had a place to learn and play, the YMCA alleviated some of the burdens faced by parents navigating the crisis.

Thanks to our partners, we were also able to coordinate, distribute, and transport over 3,400 meals to provide a warm plate to first responders, SMPD, SMFD, and families impacted by the fires. We're thankful for the partnership and support from Cobi's, Thistle, No Res Gourmet, Truxton's American Bistro, Chick-fil-A, California Pizza Kitchen, The Butcher's Daughter, Fiorelli Pizza, Maria's Italian Kitchen, C&O Cucina, and others who made this possible.

Our Community Room was transformed into a safe haven, offering grab-and-go resources for those in need, including water, diapers, toiletries, non-perishable food items, and much more. These



*Ben Davis, a neighbor of the Santa Monica Family YMCA, volunteered in the Community Room when it was offering grab-and-go resources for those in immediate need.*

items would not be available had it not been for the community that came together to donate so much to our YMCA. We are eternally grateful.

As CEO Hodge Patterson aptly stated, "Together, we remain committed to providing stability, connection, and support during times of need. We are better together."

The YMCA continues to support the community by encouraging anybody who is still in need of resources to complete the "Needs & Volunteer Interest Form" located on our website, ymcasm.org.

To anybody looking to support our continued efforts to assist the community, we encourage you to make a donation to the Santa Monica Family YMCA's Emergency Response Fund. We will distribute these funds to relieve the financial burdens for people impacted by the fires. Monetary donations will help cover the cost of memberships, preschool, and childcare programs for affected families.

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 committed to serving our community, especially after the horrible

month of January. We want clubs and organizations from the Pacific Palisades to know that our clubhouse has rentals available for events. Please contact our office at 310-395-1308 for information and dates.

Our March Membership Drive is in full swing. We recognize that today's women – of all ages – have busy lives. But as our current members might attest, having the camaraderie of other women, whether it's playing cards, creating art pieces, coming to book club, or just joining us at our monthly Pass-the-Dish events, coming together is empowering.

The continued support and in-

volvement of members who participate in our activities and volunteer for our community projects ensure the Club's mission of fellowship and community service. New members can join the SMBWC for an initial \$60, and \$50 per year thereafter. Our website – SMBWC.org – has contact information.

If you have questions, one of our volunteers will be happy to speak with you by phone.

The SMBWC is once again hosting a breakfast meeting for the Marina District of woman's clubs. (The Marina District consists of Culver City, El Segundo, Redondo Beach, Torrance, Hermosa Beach, Playa del Rey, Beverly Hills, Silicon Beach, and the SMBWC. It is part of the California Federation of Woman's Clubs, which in turn is part of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs headquartered in Washington, D.C.) The meeting will take place at our club on

*(Continued on Page 11)*

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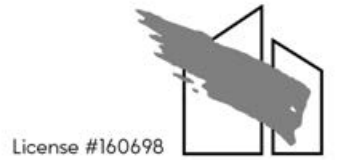
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## Santa Monica Area Interfaith Council Hosted Annual Prayer Breakfast

In a powerful display of unity and spiritual strength, the Santa Monica Area Interfaith Council hosted its annual ecumenical and inclusive Prayer Breakfast in mid-January. This soul-stirring event, far more than a mere prelude to the MLK weekend, stands as a testament to the community's commitment to fostering understanding, healing, and collective empowerment.

The sanctuary of Mt. Olive Church resonated with the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., as the incomparable Gerald C. Rivers brought the civil rights leader's voice and words to life, reminding attendees of the enduring legacy they gather to honor. Spiritual leader and community builder Kathleen Benjamin, along with her dedicated Interfaith leadership team, crafted a program that touched hearts and ignited minds.

Reverend Carolyn Baskin-Bell, making history as the first female pastor of the First AME Church Santa Monica, delivered a moving keynote address. She challenged the audience to become "transformation specialists," urging them to remain available, alert, and engaged in the ongoing work of positive change.

Peacemaker and Healer Najeeba Sayeed shared a poignant reflection on navigating recent challenges, including the L.A. Fires.

The event transformed individual spiritual perspectives into a collective wisdom, where different



Jamshid Ashourian, Kathleen Benjamin, Parand Youssefi, and Farhad Toluei.



Rosemary Smith and Dr. Shirley Compton

religious traditions melded together, creating something more powerful than their separate identities.

A highlight of the morning was the performance by singer-songwriter Jessica Childress. Her song *Walk With Me* emerged as a 2025 anthem, its lyrics serving as a powerful call to action.

This event, deeply rooted in prayer and reflection, proves that the strength of a community lies in its ability to unite, support one another, and work towards a common vision of justice and peace.

—Kathleen Benjamin

## Paws and Claws

### Finding the Best Food For Your Pets



**By Dr. Frank Lavac, MS, DVM**  
**Q: There are so many dog foods to choose from at the pet stores. How do I know if I'm feeding a quality diet?**

**A:** It is not always easy to determine "the best food." There are

definitely some foods to avoid. Foods that are raw-based diets are potentially dangerous. Both the CDC and the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) have published position statements against raw foods. Additionally, grain-free dog foods should be avoided. Research done at UC Davis suggested a correlation between grain-free diets and development of heart disease.

One tool used for evaluating diets is the American Association of Feed Control Officials (AAFCO). Foods that have gone through "Animal Feeding Tests" validate that they are a high-quality food. There is an AAFCO statement on the side of every bag of food. You can find more information on VeterinaryPartner.com, and search AAFCO Pet Food Labeling.

Other questions that might help develop a better-informed opinion include: Does the food company employ a veterinary nutritionist? What kind of product research or nutrition studies have been performed?

There is a more extensive list on the World Small Animal Veterinary Association at WSAVA.org, where you can search for Guidelines on Selecting Pet Foods.

Of course, consult with your veterinarian to help find the best food for your pet.

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

## Adopt a Pet



*Picos is very friendly, cute, and has lots of personality. Picos is a spayed female, white shorthaired rabbit. Her age is unknown. If you are interested in adopting Picos, or any of the other available animals, please visit the City animal shelter located at 1640 9th St., Santa Monica. It is open Tuesday-Saturday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. (closed 12 p.m.-1 p.m. for lunch). Call 310-458-8595, or go online to smasf.org.*

## Planning Ahead

### Family Dynamics - The Biggest Obstacle to Estate Planning



**By Lisa Alexander, Esq.**  
 We all know what can happen when you don't have a Will or Trust. So why, then, do so many people die without

an estate plan? Besides procrastination, which we all experience, and failure to make it a financial priority, I think many people just don't know what to do. There are family dynamics that feel impossible to navigate.

A common scenario involves the tension in a second marriage between the current spouse and children by a prior marriage. Whose interests should be primary? How to provide for the spouse in such a way that your children aren't left with nothing by the time the surviving spouse dies? Another common scenario involves children in a bad marriage. How to protect the child's inheritance from the influence of a disfavored spouse? In case of divorce, how to make sure your child's inheritance will still be there as a nest egg when the child is starting over?

Another situation people struggle with is children who are not similarly situated, financially, or may struggle with disability. How do you leave more to one child than another? Will the relationships among the siblings be irrep-

arably harmed by what you do? There may not be perfect solutions to all these issues, but people would benefit from seeking the advice of an experienced estate-planning attorney. First, they would find out they are not alone.

It is true that every family is unique and no one-size-fits all, but you will be comforted to know you are not the only one facing your particular problem. Second, the attorney may have suggestions that you had not thought of, or ideas for how a trust can be designed that you did not think possible. Often the attorney can help craft the "script" that can be used to explain a difficult estate plan decision to family members.

Most important is the universal truth that doing something is better than doing nothing. Life is precarious and uncertain. A revocable trust can be amended. The estate plan you create now is not set in stone for all time. You can keep working on it and making adjustments. But, with good legal and practical advice, you can make an estate plan that protects your family in the best way possible, even if it's not perfect.

**Lisa C. Alexander, Esq.**  
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**An Update From ERBA Markets**

**Misconceptions Regarding Cannabis**



**By Stephen Freedman**

There are many misconceptions regarding cannabis, as well as outdated information that many

have held onto. One such fallacy is that the higher the THC % in a product, the more potent it is and thus will provide a more powerful effect. While this would be a convenient marker of potency, there are other factors that must be considered to find the product with the desired effect consumers are looking for.

Most people equate cannabis and potency with alcohol. And, it's easy to see why. Both are intoxicating substances and have a clear percentage indicated on packaging. However, while the alcohol % on bottles signals how strong the specific alcohol is upon consumption, THC % does not work this way. Consuming a product with a lower percentage may provide you with a stronger high. Simply put, a product with high THC % does not indicate it will give an elevated high. In reality, THC % is just one aspect of what is called the entourage effect.

When looking for a more nuanced experience, one should look at the lineage of the strain as well as the terpenes therein. Terpenes are compounds found in many plants that give them their pleasant aromas. They play a large part in cannabis, as terpenes are responsible for the scent and flavor of a user's chosen strain.

In addition to affect on the senses, research shows that terpenes interact with cannabinoids, like THC and CBD, to enhance the effects of one another. This gives what is known as the entourage effect. This means that terpene profiles have a significant influence on the strain's overall effect, which extends to affects like mood alteration and pain relief for that user.

When searching products for a specific effect, it's best to search for more than just high THC %. While the system can be confusing, your budtenders are happy to answer any questions you may have, and make sure you have a more specific, tailored reaction using the entourage effect.

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

**Make a Reuben Sandwich for St. Patrick's Day**

**Family Features - Here's a recipe for a yummy sandwich to honor the day when everyone celebrates the Irish.**

**Reuben Sandwich**

Servings: 2

- 2 Tbsps. butter, softened
- 4 slices rye and pumpernickel swirl bread
- 4 slices Swiss cheese
- 6 ounces corned beef
- 2 Tbsps. plus 2 tps. Thousand Island Dressing, divided
- 4 Tbsps. sauerkraut
- Heat nonstick skillet over medium heat.

- Spread 1 Tbsp. butter on one side of two bread slices. Place buttered side down in heated skillet.
- Add two slices cheese to each bread slice. Spread 2 Tbsps. dressing over cheese slices.
- Add 3 ounces corned beef to each bread slice.
- Spread 2 tps. dressing over corned beef. Spread 2 Tbsps. sauerkraut over corned beef.
- Spread remaining butter on one side of remaining bread slices.
- Place buttered side up on top



*Serve this tempting sandwich with some chips and a side of cole slaw.*

- of sauerkraut.
- Cook each side 4-7 minutes, flipping once until golden brown, and cheese is melted.

Find more seasonal recipes at [Culinary.net](http://Culinary.net).



**Discover the Magic of Marrakech**

*(Continued from Page 8)*

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When will you begin your Moroccan adventure? I can help

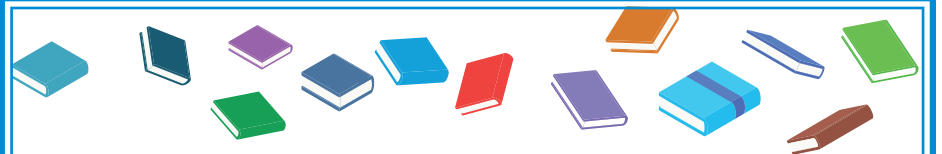
craft an itinerary tailored to your interests. Contact me at [Tanya@MariposaTravelAdvisors.com](mailto:Tanya@MariposaTravelAdvisors.com) to start planning an unforgettable trip.

**An Update From SMBWC (Continued from Page 9)**

Friday, March 21. Any members who wish to attend should contact Becky at 310-395-1308.


The Arts, Crafts, & Conversation group is one of the Club's enduring activities. They meet on Tuesday from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Anyone interested should contact Joan at [joanie.tee@gmail.com](mailto:joanie.tee@gmail.com).

Ongoing activities include card playing (bridge and canasta) and Mahjong on Monday; and book club on the fourth Tuesday of the month. For more information, or other questions regarding rentals and membership, go to [SMBWC.org](http://SMBWC.org), or call 310-395-1308.



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