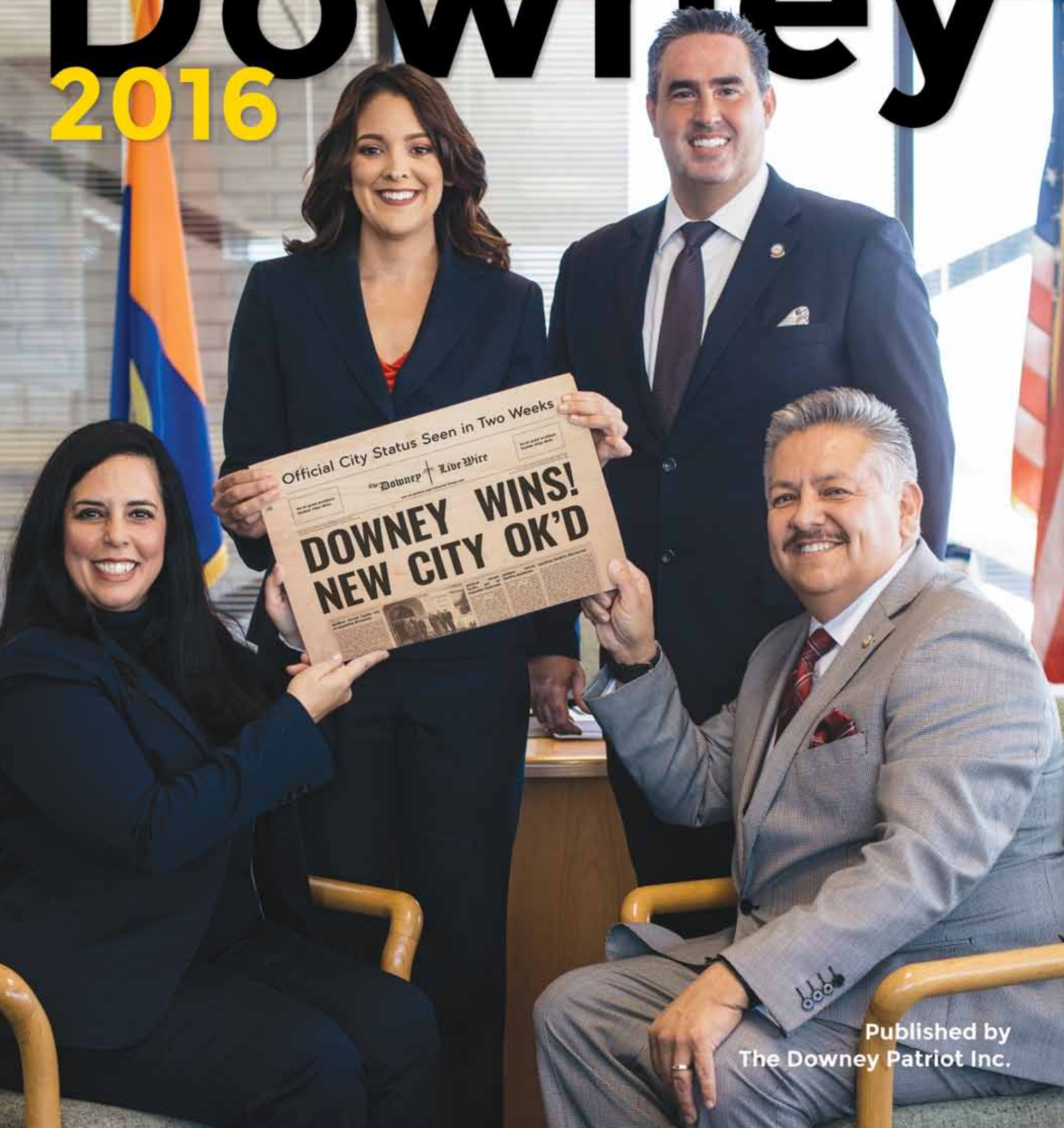


Downey

2016



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My 2017 Wishlist

AN INTRODUCTION

In this introduction I usually reflect on the concluding year (this is a year-in-review magazine after all), but 2016 was such a bummer that I prefer to look forward instead of back.

Downey finds itself in a great position heading into 2017. Two great people were elected to the City Council – Blanca Pacheco and Rick Rodriguez – where they join Alex Saab, Fernando Vasquez and Sean Ashton. That’s a heck of a City Council, comprised of proven community leaders who are strong on ethics, common sense and smarts. These traits are always valued in elected officials but they are even more important now because they’ll be entrusted with an extra \$9 million in annual spending money after Downey residents voted to increase the local sales tax by half a percent. That extra \$9 million is earmarked for things such as additional police officers and upgrades to our parks and streets.

Which brings me to item No. 1 on my wish list for 2017:

- **A strong oversight committee.** Nobody likes to pay more in taxes, but Downey voters approved an increase to the city’s sales tax because they are tired of pot holes, they are tired of inadequate park facilities, and they are tired of an understaffed police department. It’s up to the City Council to follow through on Measure S’s promise to invest the additional sales tax revenue as it was properly intended, and that starts by appointing a strong oversight committee to monitor funds. I hope the committee is staffed by fiscally responsible residents who won’t be afraid to be outspoken if the need arises. There is no shortage of residents – including former mayors – who would make fantastic additions to the committee.
- **More appreciation for the arts.** Will the Downey Symphony be around in 10-15 years? What about Stay Gallery or the Downey Master Chorale? Art organizations are never guaranteed to survive, and once they’re gone, they’re effectively gone forever. (Downey Museum of Art is exhibit A, and Downey Civic Light Opera exhibit B.) If residents attended a couple concerts each year it would go a long way in ensuring the survival of Downey’s existing arts organizations.
- **More hotels.** I know the city is working on it, but Downey would greatly benefit from a second major-brand hotel. Not only is there enough demand to support a second (or third) hotel, but a little competition never hurt anyone. The city was in negotiations last year to bring in a Springhill Suites by Marriott hotel on Firestone Boulevard, where it would open on a city-owned lot next to Dunkin’ Donuts. There was also talk of luring a hotel to the new Promenade shopping center, near the Kaiser hospital. Let’s hope both projects come to fruition next year.
- **Less motels.** A quick drive down Firestone Boulevard towards the eastern city limits at, say, 8 p.m. usually reveals an assortment of unsavory characters, and most can be seen coming in and out of the seedy motels that operate there. These motels exist due to a lack of affordable housing in Southern California, but let’s not pretend they don’t also cater to prostitutes and drug abusers. They bring down our property values, tie up police resources, and contribute to an overall lower quality of life in Downey. (By the way, when you do the math, those motels aren’t exactly cheap. A motel room at \$56 per night comes out to \$1,680 per month.) I would like to see city officials hold motel owners to higher standards, and take action against those who violate our codes and ordinances.
- **Less development.** What’s with this new-found need to build on every single undeveloped lot? Realistic time frames on street construction. Stop telling residents street repairs will take six weeks when really it will take much longer. Residents would rather hear the truth as opposed to wishful thinking.
- **More transparency from City Hall.** Sure, you can watch City Council videos and download meeting agendas on the city’s website, but neither task is easy or user-friendly, crucial elements to encourage civic engagement. Residents should be able to log onto downeyca.org and from the home page see a list of upcoming committee meetings, with links to download an agenda. Wouldn’t you be more inclined to attend a subcommittee meeting related to bicycles, the Downey Theater, or city branding if you knew such a meeting was taking place? Politicians love to use “transparency” as a crutch during election season, well, this is one way to act on that promise.
- **More festivals.** Downey has really distinguished itself in recent years with awesome festivals such as Dia de los Muertos, the International Food Festival, and the World Cup viewing party. More please.
- **A second In-N-Out.** A person can dream.

Many thanks to our readers who continue to read, support and inspire the Downey Patriot. This publication would not be possible without your support.

Cheers to a prosperous 2017!

Eric Pierce, Editor

Cover photo (left to right): Downey city attorney Yvette Abich-Garcia, Councilmember Blanca Pacheco, Councilman Alex Saab and Councilman Rick Rodriguez.

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Downey 2016 Year In Review

IS AN END OF THE YEAR PUBLICATION PRODUCED BY THE DOWNEY PATRIOT

JENNIFER DEKAY
Publisher

LINDA LARSON
Classified Advertising

DR. ALAN FRISCHER
Contributing Writer

ERIC PIERCE
Editor

JULIE LEDESMA
Legal Notices

VALERIE AGUILAR
Contributing Writer

CHRISTIAN BROWN
Editor: The Norwalk Patriot

JONATHAN FOX
Production/Design

GEORGE REDFOX
Contributing Writer

MICHAEL ROBINSON
Display Advertising

ALEX DOMINGUEZ
Contributing Writer

DOWNEYDAILYPHOTOS.COM
Photography

LEEANN ROBERTS
Display Advertising

MARK FETTER
Contributing Writer

GABRIEL ENAMORADO
Photography

January



The Downey Rose Float Association's entry in the Tournament of Roses Parade, "Exploring the Everglades," was awarded the Founder's Trophy for most beautiful float built and decorated by volunteers from a community or organization.

Downey's float measured 55 feet long and 18 feet tall, and featured three panthers and five blue herons, three of which were animated. Downey's float was covered in thousands of flowers and various plant life of different species.

An estimated 51.9 million people in the U.S. watch the parade every year; the event is also broadcast internationally in 220 countries and territories.

► In its first meeting of 2016, the City Council unanimously voted to extend Downey's ban on medicinal marijuana dispensaries.

"Unfortunately right now there's a conflict between state and federal law," explained Mayor Pro Tem Fernando Vasquez. "Based on what I've seen there are insufficient control mechanisms to regulate the use of medical marijuana right now."

Mayor Alex Saab said the City Council's decision was more related to regulation than opinion of personal use.

"I'm not here to judge; we're not here to judge. Whether you use or not, that's your own personal decision and that's not the decision before us," said Saab. "Until we're able to regulate it just like we do prescription drugs out of a pharmacy...then I probably wouldn't feel comfortable going forward in approving something like this."

► Police and fire officials investigated two separate arson fires that occurred on the same day and destroyed more than a dozen vehicles.

The first blaze was reported at 12:30 p.m. in the MTA Green Line Station parking lot, where nine vehicles went up in flames, including an L.A. County Sheriff's Department patrol car.

Later that afternoon, multiple commercial trucks caught fire while parked near the 12200 block of Woodruff Ave.

Authorities never disclosed if the fires were related or if an arrest was made.

► In an anguishing decision, the Downey Police Department cleared the parking lot memorial created for fallen police officer Ricky Galvez, who was killed in late 2015 in a botched robbery attempt.

Downey residents turned the parking space where Galvez was killed into a makeshift memorial, decorating the space with flowers, candles and words of remembrance.

"The men and women of the Downey Police Department want to thank you, our community, for whom we proudly protect and serve, for the overwhelming outpouring of support since the tragic passing of Officer Ricardo Galvez," the department said. "An example of that support included creating and assisting in maintaining a memorial in the west parking lot of our police station."

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“Going forward, we ask that any memorial items set up at the police station be appropriately placed at our Police Officer Memorial statue located adjacent to the main doors of the police station within the civic center complex.

“Again, thank you for your support and understanding. Words cannot express how much it continues to mean to us.”

► The three suspects charged with Galvez’s murder pleaded not guilty at Norwalk Superior Court.

Jeremy Anthony Alvarez, 21, Steven Knott, 18, and Abel Diaz, 17, are accused of gunning down Galvez while he sat in his personal vehicle in the police station parking lot on Nov. 18, 2015.

If convicted, Alvarez and Knott could face the death penalty. Due to his age, Diaz is not eligible for the death penalty but could receive life in prison.

► Lazy Dog restaurant opened at the Promenade at Downey. It was the fourth business to open at the Promenade, after Cinemark, Floor and Decor, and Active Ride Shop..

*In a concert at the Downey Theatre, the Downey Symphony performed the world premiere of Bryan Kostors’ “To the Dust.”

► Assemblymember Cristina Garcia introduced a measure that would have made feminine hygiene products exempt from sales tax.

Calling it a “tampon tax,” Garcia argued women are forced to pay more than \$20 million annually in taxes on tampons and sanitary napkins, paying on average \$7 per month for 40 years.

The measure passed the legislature but was ultimately vetoed by Gov. Jerry Brown.

► Juliette Perez was born seconds after midnight Jan. 1 at White Memorial Medical Center to parents Jose and Jackelyn Perez.

The Downey couple says Juliette was born 10 days ahead of schedule but weighed in at a healthy 9 lbs., 4 ounces.

Baby girl Victoria Lily was born Jan. 1 at 5:05 p.m., the first baby born at PIH Health Hospital - Downey in 2016. She weighed in at six pounds, six ounces and was 19 inches long.

► Five runners from Warren High’s girls cross country team were named to the Long Beach Press-Telegram’s Dream Team. Gwendolyn Hurtado, Samantha Tabares and Janeane Hernandez were named to the first team, while Carlota Conant and Trinity Gomez earned second team honors.

► Downey resident Jim Rudometkin was killed in an apparent home invasion robbery.

Rudometkin, a 59-year-old real estate agent, was at his home on the 10300 block of Lesterford Avenue when three suspects forced their way inside. A neighbor who witnessed the break-in called police.

Police found Rudometkin collapsed and unresponsive. His death was later attributed to heart disease and blunt force trauma.

Four suspects were arrested and charged with murder, home invasion robbery and first-degree burglary. They are awaiting trial.

► Readers of Southland Golf Magazine voted the Rio Hondo Golf Club “Best Overall” in Los Angeles and Ventura counties. The public course received high marks for Best Value, Best 18th Hole, Best 19th Hole (Hacker’s) and Best Scenic View.

► Major renovations began at the Downey Civic Theatre, including upgrades to the theater’s lobby and restrooms, and replacement of its HVAC system.

► The Downey Memorial Space Center held remembrance events on the 30th anniversary of the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster.

February



Downey attorney Dennis Saab, left, was named Attorney of the Year by the Southeast District Bar Association this past Saturday. The award is voted by fellow attorneys and judges in the southeast area.

► Gangs Out of Downey announced the creation of the “Officer Ricardo Galvez Scholarship,” to be awarded to two high school students committed to turning their lives around.

The inaugural scholarships were presented to Jonathan Flores and Kristina Rivera.

Continued on next page

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Continued from previous page

Jonathan was a student at Columbus High School and began at Los Angeles Trade Tech in the fall. Born in Torrance, Jonathan's family moved often, eventually settling in Downey. His grades suffered as a result of the constant moving, but Jonathan has become a serious student determined to achieve his goal of becoming an engineer.

Kristina graduated from Warren High School in 2014 and currently attends Cerritos College, majoring in Anthropology and English. She volunteers at the Downey YMCA, Downey First Christian Church and the 10-20 Club.

- ▶ Warren High soccer standout Estela Sanchez, who was named Freshman of the Year in 2012, accepted a scholarship offer from UC Santa Barbara.
- ▶ Warren High's girls' soccer team clinched the 2016 S.G.V.L. championship with a 2-1 overtime win against rival Downey.
- ▶ Carrie Uva was installed as the 69th president of the Downey Association of Realtors.
- ▶ A Downey family narrowly avoided tragedy after an armored truck crashed into an apartment complex on the 10500 block of Paramount Boulevard.

The armored transport vehicle from Sectran Security Inc., was traveling northbound on Paramount when it was clipped by a gray sedan, sending the armored truck into oncoming traffic. The truck careened between two kitchens at the Woodbriar apartment complex, where it barely missed a woman and her 5-year-old son.

▶ Downey's Joslyn Davis was cast in the newest season of CBS' "The Amazing Race." Davis and her partner, best friend Erin Robinson, finished eighth in the competition.

▶ The Downey board of education unanimously voted to rename the Law Enforcement Pathway at Downey High and the "O" hallway at Warren High in memory of fallen Downey police officer Ricky Galvez.

"Officer Galvez was a true role model to the youth in our community," said board president D. Mark Morris. "This pathway and hallway will be something students can look to and emulate in the officer's honor. He made a difference in our community and will forever make a difference in our students' lives."

▶ The City Council approved new employment contracts with city manager Gilbert Livas (\$252,779), police chief Carl Charles (between \$15,242 to \$18,595 monthly), city clerk Adria Jimenez (\$117,348), and city attorney Yvette Abich-Garcia (\$195,737).

▶ Downey hosted the 53rd annual U.S.-Mexico Sister Cities National Convention, a three-day event that culminated with a new sister cities agreement between Pico Rivera and Mazatlan.

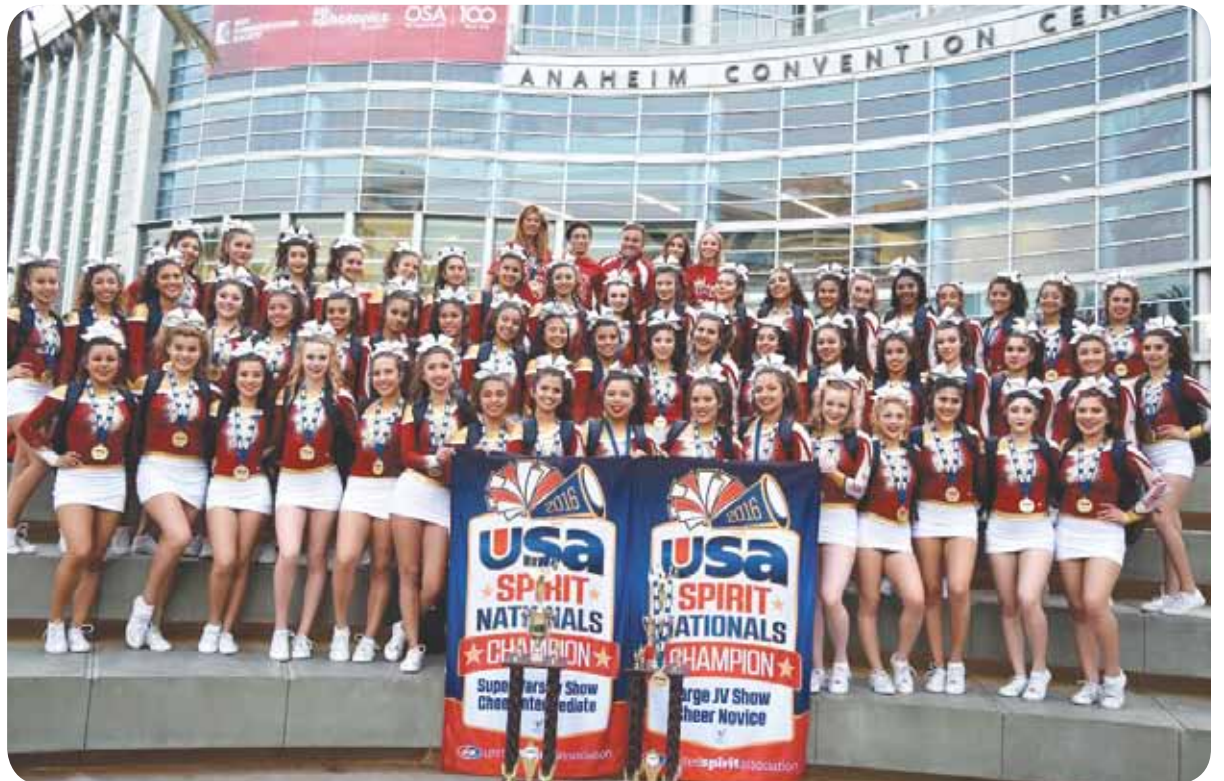
Convention events were hosted by the Columbia Memorial Space Center and Embassy Suites.

▶ Dr. Mary Stauffer, via her foundation, gave away \$37,599 in grants to Downey teachers. The grants, which Dr. Stauffer has issued annually for the past 15 years, are used to fund a variety of projects and programs.

▶ The fourth annual Healthy Downey 5K raised \$30,000 for the TLC Family Resource Center, which provides health and human services to needy families.

▶ A recent study ranking the best U.S. cities for young families placed Downey among the best in southeast Los Angeles County.

March



Downey High School's varsity and junior varsity cheerleading teams won Nationals in Anaheim for the second year in a row. The squads are coached by Ashley Rauls, Natalie Flores and Conner Huber.

Downey shined brightest in school quality, scoring an 88% for excellence in educational achievement, but the study revealed what all residents of L.A. County already know -- housing costs are high.

Nonetheless, Downey managed to outperform many local cities in the study, including Whittier, which was ranked at #133, Norwalk (#162), and Lakewood (#196).

The only neighboring city to exceed Downey was Bellflower, which received an A- grade and ranked at #82 for access to good schools, parks, and cheaper rent.

▶ Real estate broker Steve Roberson was awarded the inaugural Distinguished Citizen/Business Award from Mayor Alex Saab.

▶ On a 4-1 vote, the City Council voted to bring back the July 4 fireworks show, which was projected to cost up to \$61,000. Councilman Sean Ashton dissented.

Rita Assoian, Georganne Bruce, Rita Rodarte-Myers and Mia Vasquez were honored as "Women of Distinction," while teacher Carrie Redfox received

Soroptimist's Ruby Award and Mikayla Minnig the Violet Richardson Award.

▶ Anthony Rendon, a state Assemblymember from Paramount, was sworn-in as the 70th Speaker of the California State Assembly.

In his swearing-in remarks, Rendon pledged to focus on the issues of poverty, oversight and participation, saying it is "unacceptable for almost 2.5 million children to be living in poverty in California," that state agencies – including the Legislature – must be accountable to Californians, and that more Californians should take part in the political process, especially in communities with great needs.

Prior to serving in the Assembly, Rendon was an educator, non-profit executive director, and environmental activist. Rendon attended Cerritos College in Norwalk before earning his Bachelors and Masters of Arts Degrees from Cal State Fullerton.

▶ Jack in the Box closed its restaurant at Firestone Boulevard and Woodruff Avenue to relocate to a new location at Firestone and Pangborn.

Raising Cane's, a fast-food restaurant serving chicken fingers, opened in the former Jack in the Box space.

▶ The Downey board of education voted to introduce 20 new college prep courses to the middle school and high school curriculum, starting in the 2016-17 academic year.

New courses at middle schools include Foundations of Animation, Introduction to Culinary Arts, American Sign Language, Creative Digital Technology, Math 7 with Computing, and Introduction to Law.

High schools received the following new courses: Real Estate Principles, Art: Innovation to Branding & Commercialization, Civil Engineering & Architecture, Computer Science Application, Digital Electronics, Introduction to Computer Science, Professional Development through SkillsUSA, Integrated Math with Computing & Robotics, AP Physics, Honors Engineering Physics, Foundations of Law, American Sign Language III, Advanced Sports Medicine, and Video Production III.

▶ Stauffer Middle School teacher Tri Tansopalucks and a handful of students traveled to Indianapolis after being invited to present at the Project Lead the Way National Summit.

Project Lead the Way is a national engineering program that provides a comprehensive approach to STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education.



Soroptimist International of Downey honored a half dozen women and young ladies for their community service.

Tansopalucks and his students highlight the work being done at Stauffer Middle School, including the creation of mobile apps built by students.

- ▶ Downey teen Viviana Gonzalez was admitted to West Point, the prestigious military academy located in New York.
- ▶ Downey students earned 96 medals at the SkillsUSA State Competition, including 39 gold medals. Of the 39 gold medal winners, 36 advanced to the national competition in Louisville, Kentucky.
- ▶ Downey resident Alicia Edquist, an adjunct journalism professor at Cerritos College, received the Volunteer of the Year Award at the Journalism Association of Community College's state convention.
- ▶ Brandon Hitchcock, the 32-year-old Downey High teacher and soccer coach who had sex with a female student, was sentenced to three years in county jail. Hitchcock had earlier pleaded no contest to two counts of unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor.
- ▶ Citing the need for additional revenue to hire more police officers and fix local parks and streets,, the City Council voted to place a half-cent sales tax increase on the November election ballot.
- ▶ Downey High announced it was creating an all-girls wrestling team.
- ▶ U.S. Olympic water polo champion Maggie Steffens visited the Downey YMCA, where she spoke of the upcoming Rio 2016 Olympic Games.
- ▶ Downey educators Lisa Mitchener, Natalie Soto and Ryan Chitwood were named Teachers of the Year by Downey United Masonic Lodge 22

To the Downey community,
Thank You for your continued support!

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Our Kids Deserve The Best...

April

► Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center announced a partnership with the University of Southern California on groundbreaking stem cell treatment that could potentially restore key motor function to victims of traumatic spinal cord injuries.

► Downey Police Cpl. Ed Hano was awarded a public proclamation for his heroism in saving the life of a 1-year-old child.

Hano was off-duty when he heard the screams of neighbors, who were panicked after a 1-year-old child fell into a swimming pool and wasn't breathing. Hano immediately began CPR and was able to obtain a weak pulse before paramedics arrived.

The child was transported to a hospital and has since made a full recovery. The incident only came to light after a resident emailed the Downey Police Department informing them of Hano's heroic efforts.



Volunteers packaged more than 51,000 meals for local needy families at Downey Federal Credit Union's third annual food-packing event at Warren High School. "Our food packing event has doubled in size each year, which is a true testament of the dedication to support our city," said Sheila Tetangco, DFCU's director of marketing and communication. "Plus, it was great to see so many community members and leaders, in addition to DFCU members, come together for a good cause and have fun at the same time."

► Struggling to compete against other fast-food restaurants, the historic McDonald's at Lakewood Boulevard and Florence Avenue obtained approval from Downey's Planning Commission to add a drive-thru lane.

► The City Council voted to waive admission charges to the Columbia Memorial Space Center for all Downey students.

Representatives for McDonald's said the restaurant was struggling to compete against another McDonald's location at Lakewood and Gallatin, which remodeled and expanded last year.

► Road construction began at the intersection of Lakewood Boulevard and Telegraph Road.

► Mayor Alex Saab delivered Downey's State of the City address at the Rio Hondo Event Center, reaffirming that public safety and quality of life remain top priorities in Downey.

"Not many cities spend like we do on our police and fire departments, but it's worth every single dime," Saab said.

► Alfa Romeo announced it would open a dealership on

Firestone Boulevard in Downey, sharing a lot with Champion Dodge and Fiat.

Kiwanis Club of Downey

John F. Casillas
Vice President
Branch Manager
Office: (562) 231-4631
John.Casillas@fmb.com
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Downey, CA 90241
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310.435.1780
JasonSells4U@CENTURY21.COM
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LAW OFFICES OF
GARY E. MUNGER & ASSOCIATES
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
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FAX (562) 861-2119
GARY E. MUNGER
ATTORNEY AT LAW
8221 EAST THIRD STREET, SUITE 307
DOWNEY, CALIFORNIA 90241

Blanca Pacheco
Attorney At Law
Office: 562.861.6001
Fax: 562.861.5001
E-Mail: bp@blancapacheco.esq.com
Web: www.blancapacheco.esq.com
BAR #225243
Address: 8137 3rd Street, 3rd Floor Downey, CA 90241

Direct: 562-244-8281
Office: 562-861-4001
Fax: 562-861-5001
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Downey physician Dr. Alan Frischer finished the Boston Marathon with a time of 3 hours and 49 minutes, qualifying himself to run the race again next year.

a citizen's patrol program to augment the police department.

▶ Downey High senior Briana Medina and Warren High senior Alfonso Hernandez were winners in Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard's annual student art competition.

Briana won the People's Choice Award for her charcoal drawing titled "Unknown," while Alfonso won second place for his black and white traditional photo titled "Keeping Busy."

▶ Old River Elementary earned a California Gold Ribbon for demonstrating "exemplary achievements in implementing state standards in priority program areas."

Walmart opened at the Promenade, serving as anchor tenant at the 77-acre retail center.



Downey hosted a farewell ceremony for outgoing L.A. County Supervisor Don Knabe. City officials and community leaders took their turn feting Knabe, including Dr. Mary Stauffer.

May



Downey Nissan broke ground on their new 46,000 sq. ft. dealership site. The new location, which is expected to open early next year, sits on 6 1/2 acres at Firestone Boulevard and Old River School Road.

▶ The mayor also used the address to announce the creation of

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24 Hour Real Estate hosted a ribbon-cutting for its real estate business in Downey. From left: Jami Berdelis-Gomez, Rita Berdelis, Mel Berdelis and Michael Berdelis.

► For the third consecutive year, Old River Elementary won the Carnival of Champions, an annual competition in which approximately 500 fourth and fifth graders compete in track and field events.

Old River racked up 222 points at Saturday's competition, which was held at Warren High School. They were followed by Rio San Gabriel and Price.

Multiple records were broken at this year's competition. In the 50-meter dash, Aniyah Johnson of Carpenter Elementary finished with a time 7.44 seconds, beating the previous record that was set in 2009 by a Rio San Gabriel student.

The mixed-coed relay team from Old River finished the 400-meter race in 59.37 seconds, setting a new record.

Myah Alvarado of Old River ran the 100-meter dash in 13.59 seconds, which broke the previous record set in 2007 by a Carpenter student.

► The state Senate voted unanimously to rename a portion of the 5 Freeway in Downey after slain police officer Ricky Galvez.

Gabriel Fuerte, a 43-year-old resident of South Gate, and Josue Garcia, a 42-year-old Bell resident, surrendered to Downey Superior Court. Both men were charged with assault.

Police said Fuerte and Garcia were involved in a raucous brawl outside the Buffalo Wild Wings at Stonewood Center on Sept. 20, 2015. A bystander recorded portions of the fight and posted the clip to Facebook, where it went viral and was seen by millions of people.




KB Homes broke ground on 117 townhomes that will replace the long-closed Gallatin Medical Center on Paramount Boulevard.

► Police announced the arrests of two people for their roles in a wild brawl outside Buffalo Wild Wings last September, a fight that was captured on video and went viral on social media.

"The memorial highway honors the service and profound sacrifice of Downey Police Officer Ricardo Galvez," said state Sen. Tony Mendoza, who introduced the measure. "He was a thoughtful and dedicated officer who served and protected our community and our nation with professionalism, courage and distinction."



Downey High's boys' swim team claimed its fifth consecutive league championship.




KIWANIS Club of Downey

A YEAR IN REVIEW...

website:
KiwanisOfDowney.org

Community Project and Events



- Christmas at Las Casita's
- ARC Walk
- Rancho Los Amigos Annual Carnival
- Key Leader
- Rancho Los Amigos Pediatric Monthly Barbecue


- Scholarship Luncheon (Local HS)
- Kiwanis One Day
- Compton Initiative
- Pediatric Trauma Prevention

Youth Sponsored Clubs

- Aktion Club (The ARC)
- Kiwin's (Downey HS)
- Key Club (Downey HS)
- Key Club (Lakewood HS)

- K Kids (Rio San Gabriel Elementary School)
- Kiwin's (St. Pius X / St. Matthias Academy)
- Builders Club (Wendy Doty Middle School)
- Builders Club (St. Raymond's Catholic School)

- Builders Club (Griffiths Middle School)
- Builders Club (Sussman Middle School)



Thank you to all of our members that made this year possible. Kiwanis of Downey SALUTES YOU!

- Donald Cuevas
- Fernando Vasquez
- John F. Casillas
- Lee Powell
- Gary Nesbit
- Nancy Bosnich
- Tom Houts
- Alexander Gaytan
- Ruth Davila
- Carmen Vasquez
- Jason Cierpizewski
- Bob Jacobs

- Lillian Jacobs
- Blanca Galicia
- Stephen Chu
- Leslie Jones
- Ed Schneeberger
- Ricardo Lara
- Dick Lehn
- Roy Jimenez
- Chris Greenbeck
- Jerry Wetzstein
- Edwin Medina
- Cheryl Selenak

- Richard Lehn
- Steve Jordan
- Blanca Pacheco
- Donna Noushkam
- Carmen Palo
- Mina Montejano
- Gloria Lopez
- Paula Mejia
- Mario Trujillo
- Virginia Santos
- Ashvin Patel
- Gary Munger

- Rick Lopez
- Esther Lee
- Mariana Pacheco
- Manuel Rodriguez
- Lynne Appel
- Richard D Holmes
- Claudia Parras
- Marisol Alarid
- Frank Jimenez
- Rose Schneeberger
- Stay Gallery
- Sandra Salazar

- Enrique Aranda
- Luz Lluncor
- Raul Pineda
- Lillian Simonian
- Downey Patriot
- Richard Velasquez
- James Horan
- Downey Razorbacks
- Matias Flores
- Frances Lee
- Jesse Arana
- Francisco Sandoval

- Rita Rodarte-Myers
- Nick Velez
- Edwin Urrieta
- PIH Hospital
- Efferem Sanchez
- Susan Robison
- Joana Peterson
- Marc Nuno
- Cathy Godinez
- Margaret Alrcon-Garica

Join Our Meetings:
1st Thursday at 6:30 pm and
Every Thursday at 12 pm at
the Rio Hondo Event Center

Kiwanis is a global organization of volunteers dedicated to changing the world one child and one community at a time.



June

▶ Bestselling author and three-time Pulitzer Prize nominee Victor Villaseñor gave a talk at the Downey Theatre, speaking on the power of language.

▶ The Planning Commission approved plans for an ALDI grocery store at the southwest corner of Lakewood and Firestone boulevards. Construction on the 18,557 square foot store is currently underway.



More than \$80,000 was raised at Downey's Relay for Life benefiting the American Cancer Society and a cure for breast cancer.

▶ Warren High boys basketball coach Christopher Morrison was named athletic director at St. Pius X - St. Matthias Academy.

▶ The historic Parley Johnson estate opened for rare tours as part of Downey's 60th anniversary celebration.

▶ Laurie Tyler of Financial Partners Credit Union was installed as president of the Downey Chamber of Commerce.

▶ Downey Unified's graduation rate reached 96 percent, a new record in Downey.

"The increase in our graduation rate truly proves that our students continue to benefit from the positive and challenging learning environments provided at each and every school site through our dedicated teachers, administrators and classified staff," explained DUSD Superintendent Dr. John Garcia.

Nearly 2,000 Downey students earned high school diplomas.



Lt. Mark McDaniel of the Downey Police Department was sworn-in as president of Gangs Out of Downey.

▶ Gilbert Rubio, the man sentenced to death for murdering a Warren High School vice principal in 1998, died in his cell at San Quentin State Prison. He was 55.

Rubio was convicted of breaking into the Long Beach home of vice principal George Blackwell, where he forced Blackwell to write a \$2,000 check before shooting and killing him.

▶ Russell Skersick was installed as president of the Rotary Club of Downey.

▶ Christian Brown was named editor of the Norwalk Patriot newspaper, a sister publication of the Downey Patriot.

July

▶ Downey skies lit up with a 30-minute pyrotechnics show commissioned by the City Council to celebrate Independence Day and the city's 60th anniversary.

Meanwhile, Downey police officers issued 12 citations for fireworks violations, nine of which involved the use of illegal fireworks, each a \$2,000 fine.

The other three citations were for legal fireworks discharged outside of the permitted hours, which is a \$100 fine.

"I am pleased to report the Fire Department call volume was less than normal on July 4th, and lower than normal for the holiday weekend," said Fire Chief Mark Gillaspie. "We had no fireworks-related incidents in Downey."

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▶ A 33-year-old Downey woman, Giselle Casado, was convicted of federal racketeering charges after allegedly working as a “secretary” for the Florencia 13 street gang.

▶ Days after five Dallas police officers were shot and killed amid civil unrest nationwide, Downey residents rallied behind the Downey Police Department, donating gift cards to police officers in a sign of appreciation.

Downey Police officials were thankful for the gesture, but asked that residents instead donate to Dallas charities. Gift cards donated to Downey police officers were given to less fortunate residents of Downey.

▶ Pokemon Go fever swept Downey, with players swarming city streets, parks and even City Hall at all hours of the night to capture Pokemon on the mobile app. Players reported that Downey had bountiful amounts of rattata, pidgey, and even a handful of the face of the franchise, Pikachu.

▶ Golden Corral announced it would become Downey’s most eco-friendly restaurant by recycling 1,000 pounds of food scraps daily.

According to Golden Corral, its customers on average eat five plates of food. Seventy-five percent of its food waste is comprised of water, which the restaurant turns into organic compost.

▶ Downey revived its loan program for first-time homebuyers, with eligible applicants receiving up to \$60,000 in down payment assistance. Downey residents received priority for the loans, followed by people working in the city.

▶ City Council members gave a salary increase to Fire Chief Mark Gillaspie, bumping the monthly salary to \$13,064 to \$15,939 per month.

▶ At the request of Police Chief Carl Charles, the City Council agreed to pull \$500,000 from reserves to purchase and install 25 license plate readers throughout the city.

▶ Blanca Rochin was installed as president of Soroptimist International of Downey.

▶ Thieves stole a critical piece of metal track from Downey’s entry in the Tournament of Roses Parade. The track was part of a working roller coaster on the float and cost the Downey Rose Float Association about \$1,000 to replace.

To preview its new elephant-free show, Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus treated 150 lucky kids and passerby to a special outdoor performance at the Columbia Memorial Space Center. Mayor Pro Tem Fernando Vasquez couldn’t help snapping a selfie.

▶ After hearing concerns from area residents, the Planning Commission delayed a decision on a proposed 14-unit condominium project at 10361 Foster Road. The project was later approved.

▶ Dennis Mulhaupt was named president of St. John Bosco High School.

August

▶ Business owners and city officials alike became increasingly frustrated with ongoing street repairs at the Lakewood and Telegraph intersection.

Work began in April and was originally projected to last until June 30. However, the date of completion was frequently moved back due to frequent project delays.

The road work was a hot topic at an August city council meeting, with several council members voicing their growing concern and frustration. One of the more vocal councilmen on the subject, Councilmember Roger Brossmer, echoed many residents’ frustration, noting that work at the intersection was often at a standstill. Brossmer also requested bringing Edison in to a city council meeting to explain themselves.

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Dr Brown is certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology and a Fellow of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Additionally, he is a member of the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons, California Association of Ophthalmology and the Los Angeles Eye Society. He was former Chief of Ophthalmology at Downey Regional Medical Center and Clinical Instructor of Ophthalmology at the Doheny Eye Institute and Western State University.



Jessica Duran, O.D.

A member of the American Optometric Association and the California Optometric Association, she is certified in diagnostic and therapeutic pharmacological agents, which aid in the detection, treatment, and management of eye diseases. She performs low vision assessments and assists in the selection of the most advanced technologies available to restore independence to those suffering from visual impairment with custom LASIK, PRK and All-Laser Cataract Surgery.



Roya Ghafouri, M.D.

An oculoplastic and reconstructive surgeon with extensive training in eyelid, lacrimal and orbital surgery. She brings tremendous expertise and experience as a physician, researcher, educator and scholar. She is the author of many articles in peer-reviewed medical journals, as well as a book chapter on age-related macular degeneration. She is a frequent speaker at national medical conferences.

Chris Gabriel, owner of Chris's Burgers, says that the roadwork has affected business.

"It has affected my business big time," said Gabriel. "I'm a fast food restaurant, and I rely on my breakfast and lunch crowd. Usually those people are working people and they only have about 30 minutes to 60 minutes of lunch time, and they're not going to spend 20 to 25 minutes stuck in traffic..."

The only explanation given at last week's meeting was that delays have had to do with utility relocations.

The hospital's current emergency room was built to accommodate 25,000 patient visits per year; however, the number of patient visits has increased to approximately 50,000.

About 5,000 square feet of space will be added to the ER, doubling the current footprint, and the expanded waiting room will increase seating capacity from 37 to 80.

The revitalization project will also include new and improved service areas, including "fast track," which will serve patients who are not experiencing life-threatening emergencies, 11 additional exam rooms, a new registration desk, modern nursing stations and new hospital equipment, including a state-of-the-art CT scanner.

Expected completion of the project is fall 2018. Hospital services in the Emergency Department will remain available during the two-year construction period.



PIH Health Hospital Downey broke ground on an expansion of its emergency department.

▶ Downey's Emily Gregorio, 25, gained national attention after making a terrific catch while working as a ball girl during a Dodgers home game.

"Pretty much I saw it right off the bat. I was like, 'Wow, that's coming in hot,'" said Gregorio. "I didn't really think about it and reacted instinctively and just stuck my glove out and hoped for the best...I don't think much was going through my mind."

▶ West Nile virus was detected in a mosquito sample taken in Downey. West Nile virus is most commonly transmitted to humans by mosquitoes, with people age 60 and older at greatest risk of becoming seriously sick.

▶ The City Council voted to spend \$12,500 from reserve funds to purchase ballistic vests and helmets for firefighters.

"As first responders, the Fire Department currently does not have adequate ballistic protective equipment readily available," Fire Chief Mark Gillaspie wrote in a report to council members. "Because any of the fire department's first responders are likely to respond to active shootings, ballistic vests and helmets need to be assigned to each daily sworn position (21)."

▶ Gangs Out of Downey gave away more than 300 backpacks and just as many hot dogs and hamburgers at a community event at Golden Park.

▶ The often-congested Arco gas station at Florence and Lakewood received approval to expand by adding two fuel pumps.

▶ Acapulco restaurant at Stonewood Center held a grand re-opening to celebrate its fresh, remodeled look.

The renovated cantina features a new tile floor, bar top, and all new stools, tables and chairs. The bold painted wall treatment was inspired by intricate Mexican tiles.

The tables, chairs, booths and light fixtures in the dining room are also new, and the decor is highlighted with the restaurant's own take on vintage travel posters from the resort region.

The ball was lined off the bat of an Arizona Diamondbacks player and hooked toward the stands.

DOWNEY ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS 2016 Leadership

					
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A fireplace was added to the dining area, along with a firewall to the front patio. The 20-ft. long, glass-enclosed trough has flames dancing up above the patio wall.

► Mosquitoes known to carry the Zika virus were discovered in Downey, prompting warnings from L.A. County health officials.

“Luckily, there is no indication the mosquitoes are transmitting the viruses to people in Downey,” city officials said in a news release.

“However, we are concerned that there is a risk of a local outbreak. The Aedes mosquitoes are small black-and-white striped insects that can be a threat, but we can act now to protect ourselves.”

► The Downey Civic Theatre released its 2016-17 concert schedule, which included performances by five-time Grammy Award winner Mary Chapin Carpenter; Doobie Brothers soloist Michael McDonald; Cuban group the Havana Cuba All Stars; and Canadian guitarist Jesse Cook.

► Downey’s Columbia Memorial Space Center hosted Rocket Fever, the L.A. area’s only suburban rocket festival.



ESQSIT, an exhibit by graffiti and abstract artist Joshua Galindo, opened at Stay Gallery.

► Downey High was named a “showcase school” by Microsoft for its utilization of technology in the classroom.

► Griffiths Middle School students opened a time capsule from 1996. Contents included a TIME magazine with OJ Simpson on the cover; a Downey Police Department patch; video games; and a Downey Eagle newspaper with a story about financial struggles at Rancho Los Amigos hospital.

► Getting with the times, the City Council agreed to pay \$19,000 to equip the Rio Hondo Event Center with free wireless internet for guests.

► Downey Unified was named an “exemplar school district” by the Partnership for 21st Century Learning.

► Former Downey Patriot intern Jackie Mejia accepted a job as social media editor at Fusion and relocated to Miami.

► Southern California filmmaker Paul Molina began soliciting funds for a documentary about the 1956 CIF championship football game, which pitted Downey versus Anaheim.

► The Glennfest Movie Festival returned to Downey for the fifth consecutive year, featuring two weeks of film screenings, red carpet premieres, and after-parties open to the public.

► Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center hosted the 20th annual Art of Rancho Show.

► The Planning Commission approved a development of 39 condos at Telegraph Road and Tweedy Lane. Twenty-one of the condos will have three bedrooms, with the remaining 18 units featuring four bedrooms. Each of the homes will have 3 1/2 baths.

► The City Council approved plans for a civilian patrol to supplement the Downey Police Department.

Civilian patrol officers will be unarmed and have no authority to make arrests or issue citations. Instead, the volunteers will serve as an extra set of eyes and ears for police officers.

“Perhaps the best way to look at it is like an extension of the Neighborhood Watch program -- only mobile,” said Downey Police Capt. Stephen Garza.

September

► Downey’s Lupita Infante, 29, celebrated the release of her first studio album. Infante is the granddaughter of the late Mexican singer and actor Pedro Infante, who rose to fame in the 1950’s.

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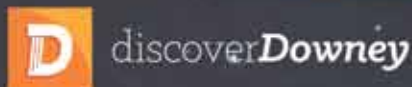
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Thank you Downey for another wonderful year!

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INTERVIEW

DUSD Board Member Martha Sodetani

Last book you read? Clifford y Los Sonidos de los Animales

Place you go to relax? I take a beach chair out front and “ask” silently for the universe to present me a bird, in all its glory, flying by. It is exciting when the first bird appears. Then, eventually two or three do a fly by and then a fancy turn and synchronized loop. Thrilling!

Favorite restaurant NOT in Downey? Papa Dan’s In Palm Desert has delicious Pavarotti Calzone.

What do you want for Christmas? Togetherness

Favorite memory of 2016? Picking one memory is impossible. My gift is unwrapped ribbon by ribbon all year long.

Paging Dr. Frischer

By Dr. Alan Frischer

Each year around this time, my thoughts turn to what has inspired me, and what will continue to inspire me into the coming year. I’ve long observed, both in my practice and out, that words of inspiration may lead to motivation, but not necessarily to success. Far more typically, it is failures that are the critical steps on the road to success. That is how the world works. For example, note that those cigarette smokers who succeed in quitting took an average of six attempts before quitting permanently.

Here are some well-known stories of failure...with amazing endings.

Henry Ford failed many times. His first company closed after a year. His next attempt failed as well. He found yet another investor to start the Ford Motor Company, and the rest is history.

Apple fired Steve Jobs, but several years later he was back. Jobs turned Apple into one of the world’s most successful companies.

Walt Disney travelled a long road to success. He worked at the Kansas City Star but was fired because he was “not creative enough.” Laugh-O-Gram, a company he started to produce cartoons and short advertising films, was in business for only a year. Eventually he moved to Hollywood, where he started the Walt Disney Company.

J. K. Rowling, creator of Harry Potter, received numerous rejections from publishers. Rowling was a divorced single mother living on welfare when her career as a writer began. She was told that “Children’s books never make any money,” and “It is far too long for a children’s book.”

Oprah Winfrey’s childhood was filled with abuse and poverty. In an earlier career as a reporter she was fired because she was “unfit for television.” Later, she said: “I don’t think of myself as a poor deprived ghetto girl who made good. I think of myself as somebody who from an early age knew I was responsible for myself, and I had to make good.”

Michael Jordan didn’t make it onto his high school basketball team, but may well be the greatest basketball player of all time. He has said: “I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”

These people resemble you and me in more ways than you might think. We won’t ultimately fail if we don’t give up. Many of life’s failures belong to people who didn’t realize how close they were to success when they stopped trying. Perhaps our eventual success might be to quit smoking, stop drinking, change our diet, maintain exercise, become drug-free, or to restore important relationships.

Have a happy new year. Now, go out and make something positive happen!





Downey finally gets its own yoga studio

By Alex Dominguez



Downey residents can now enjoy the spiritual and physical benefits of yoga close to home with the opening of Downey Yoga, Downey's first dedicated yoga studio.

Downey Yoga's founder Jovon Bernal has been a resident of the city for 22 years, and a certified yoga practitioner for 13 years. However, up to this point, Bernal has had to travel outside of the city to be able to practice at a decent yoga studio.

"The city of Downey does not have a yoga studio and the practice itself is very meaningful to me so I wanted to give to the community," said Bernal. "As a practitioner - and I know I'm not the only one in Downey - I have to travel pretty far to get to a good quality yoga studio."

Before the opening of Downey Yoga, Bernal would sometimes spend around one to two hours combined travel time to travel from Downey to a studio and back.

"That's a lot of time," said Bernal. "We all work, and we all have a lot of things to do...two hours is a lot of time...It's a struggle..."

With the opening of her new studio, Bernal envisions

a space where the community can "not only get a physical practice, but find connection."

"Yoga is not just a physical practice," said Bernal. "Meditation, concentration, detachment - there's all these different legs of yoga."

"My vision is to be able to create a space for the community and surrounding areas to come in and find a place to decompress, to release, to find that connection, to find self-realization, and to share that with their family, friends, and their coworkers, and to be able to live a more fulfilling life."

The new studio will offer several different classes for various forms of yoga, including Vinyasa, pre-natal, restorative, chair yoga, and gentle flow. Classes will run from 6 a.m. throughout the day, and are aimed for all levels of participant.

The studio is located within Myrtle Plaza off of 3rd Street and Myrtle.

For more information, visit downeyyoga.com.

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Why I participate in the Arc Walk

By Eric Pierce

I participate in the Arc Walk for Independence because I no longer feel sorry for people with developmental disabilities.

Arc of Southeast Los Angeles County has taught me that anything is possible with hard work and motivation.

A developmental disability is not an excuse to not ride a bike, use a computer, get a job, handle money or volunteer in your community.

A developmental disability does not mean a person cannot be independent and ride the bus to the mall or buy a ticket to watch a movie.

I used to think people with developmental disabilities needed someone to hold their hand. But I've learned that sometimes a firm handshake, a slap on the back or even a fist bump is preferred.

I've learned that Arc consumers are some of the most loyal sports fans in the world.

I've also learned that Arc consumers like to

dance but, unlike many of us, they're not afraid to let go of their inhibitions and enjoy themselves.

Arc has taught me that people with developmental disabilities make some of the best employees a company can hire. They don't call out sick because they overslept, because it's raining or simply because it's Monday.

I've learned that I can speak to a person with developmental disabilities without shouting at them. Most of the time, their hearing is just fine.

I have also learned Arc consumers are capable of love, both platonic and romantic.

But most of all, I've learned that people with developmental disabilities are just like the rest of us.

All they want is love, acceptance, equality and opportunity.

INTERVIEW

Mayor Pro Tem Fernando Vasquez

Last book you read?

I can't recall the last book I read, but I do read Time Magazine and The Downey Patriot every week, does that count?

Place you go to relax?

An evening walk with my wife, Donna.

Favorite restaurant NOT in Downey?

Terroni's in Downtown LA.

What do you want for Christmas?

My mom's Pozole and Flan.

Favorite memory of 2016?

#OperationParadise in Maui with my wife, Donna.

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- ▶ Downey indie-pop band Merlot Embargo released its debut album, "Don't Look Back."
- ▶ Monsignor Lorenzo Miranda was installed as the new pastor at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church. Bishop Oscar Solis led the installation ceremony.

- ▶ A Downey couple was convicted of the murder of their 4-month-old child. The mother, Ashley Jones, received 15 years to life in prison while the father, Johnathan Lucero, was sentenced to 10 years in prison

- ▶ Former state Sen. Ron Calderon was sentenced to 3 1/2 years in prison after pleading guilty to bribery charges.

Police responded to the Downey home of Ashley Jones and Johnathan Lucero on Dec. 31, 2015 after family members called 911 to report that the child was not breathing. The baby was reportedly malnourished and suffering from skull fractures, broken ribs, bruised lungs, and a lacerated liver.

- ▶ Bar Louie opened its first California location with its restaurant at the Promenade. "We hope that our new neighborhood bar and restaurant will become a place where residents and employees of Downey and the surrounding communities can come together to relax and enjoy," said restaurant general manager Christopher Getz.

October

- ▶ Downey police officers donned pink patches to raise breast cancer awareness.
- ▶ Downey buried a time capsule at the Promenade shopping center, to be opened in 50 years.
- ▶ Downey hosted the nation's first Disability Pride Parade, a parade featuring performers with disabilities and disability rights advocates. The event was produced by the Downey-based Southern California Resource Services for Independent Living.
- ▶ Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti held a press conference near Wilderness Park in Downey to pitch Measure M, the half-cent sales tax increase that would fund transportation and infrastructure improvements. (Voters approved the measure the following month.)
- ▶ Still more housing was approved in Downtown Downey, this time with the Planning Commission giving the green light to a six-unit townhome development at 3rd Street and La Reina.
- ▶ Michael Chirco was installed as president of Downey Los Amigos Kiwanis. Frank Jimenez was installed as president of Downey Kiwanis Club.

Mark King Jr., 23, was eating when he spotted a woman at a neighboring table in distress. King performed the Heimlich maneuver, giving three to five abdominal thrusts before the food became dislodged.

- ▶ Councilman Luis Marquez faced public accusations of having a child out of wedlock and then attempting to keep his alleged mistress quiet.

Maribel Zavala said she had a child with Marquez after he claimed to be separated from his wife, Alma. Zavala said Luis denied the child after Alma announced plans to run for City Council.

- ▶ A team of 24 Dutch university students visited Downey as part of their 80-day world tour. The students toured Downey High's Engineering Department and spent the night at Stay Gallery.
- ▶ Gangs Out of Downey hosted a sold-out golf tournament, held in memory of fallen police officer Ricky Galvez.
- ▶ Despite wet weather, thousands of people attended Downey's Dia de los Muertos event at the Downey Theatre. Now in its fourth year, the festival featured dozens of dancers, musical acts, altar displays, film screenings and food trucks.
- ▶ Down eight points with five minutes to play, Downey's football team rallied to beat Warren in their annual rivalry game.

November

- ▶ Blanca Pacheco and Rick Rodriguez were voted onto the Downey City Council, while Alex Saab was re-elected to a second and final four-year term. Voters also approved Measure S, a half-cent sales tax increase.
- ▶ Downey was named a finalist for the Most Business-Friendly City in Los Angeles County, an award given annually by the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation. (Pico Rivera won the award.)
- ▶ Downey reached a deal to sell the historic Avenue Theatre to investors who planned to redevelop the theater into contemporary restaurants. The sales price was \$750,000.
- ▶ A memorial plaque paying tribute to Ricky Galvez was added to the fallen officer memorial at City Hall.
- ▶ Comedian Jeff Garcia headlined a fundraiser comedy show at the Embassy Suites. Proceeds were used to buy gifts and necessities for impoverished children in Mexico.
- ▶ The Mary Stauffer Foundation awarded \$120,000 in grants to DUSD teachers and principals.



All nine candidates for Downey City Council participated in a debate at the Downey Civic Theatre hosted by the Downey Patriot. From left: Blanca Pacheco, Hector Lujan, Art Montoya, Rick Rodriguez, Christian Brown (moderator), Alex Saab, Frine Medrano, Alma Marquez and Louis Morales.

In new book, Downey author brings dark topics to light

By Alex Dominguez

A newly published Downey writer hopes to educate and inspire on the topic of abuse and recovery.

Leora Leon is a longtime Downey resident, who lives in the city with her husband, daughter, and son. Her new book, "A Sand Foundation," has been a long time coming; a work of fiction based on real life experience.

"The book is a novel based on a true life story," said Leon. "I've been writing it for about 10 years, and in the last three to four years really concentrating on getting it done."

The story pulls no punches, dealing with very real, extremely raw subject matter.

"It was a story basically about a child that grows up with all types of abuse, from sexual abuse, physical abuse, and then grows into a pattern of abuse through relationships and things like that..." said Leon.

Leon warns that the book is not for an audience under the age of 18.

Despite much of the novel's dark content, Leon has a noble reason for bringing it to the public.

"Why this book was important for me to write – it was something that people in general, women, to let them know that you can get through anything in life," said Leon. "Everything that comes

to you in your life is a lesson. And when you take responsibility for it – even rape, even disease, even cancer – you accept it and you move on. You do what you need to do to get above it..."

"A Sand Foundation" is the first of what is anticipated to be a series. Leon was inspired to write 10 years ago after observing the prison systems and some of those within who suffer from Neurological disorders.

"Instead of being a society where we collectively educate them and medicate them, we lock them up. We don't care if they have ADHD and they were told they were stupid their whole lives, or if they came from a poor family and they were made to feel bad about themselves because they couldn't speak right. Or something, whatever it was," said Leon.

Leon's observations then expanded to a startling new source, which ultimately jumpstarted her writing.

"And then there's kids too, and I see this in the school systems. Where they're 'problem kids...'...I see these kids – they're the 'bad kids,' they're the ones who don't get good grades. Well, what goes on behind the scenes? Where do these kids come from," said Leon. "I started to think about this dysfunctional chain, and that's what it was about. This dysfunctional chain. As I grew as a person and evolved spiritually, I began to realize that you have the capabilities to evolve and grow out of this dysfunctional chain. You have the ability to break it. And in this book, the character breaks the dysfunctional chain."

"A Sand Foundation" can be found on Amazon, Kindle, and Barnes and Noble online.

Made in 1956

Downey was incorporated as a city in 1956, making 2016 its 60th anniversary. But Downey isn't the only one celebrating a 60th birthday.

Who else was born in 1956?

Mel Gibson

Bill Maher

Bryan Cranston

Tom Hanks

Andy Garcia

Dorothy Hamill

David Copperfield

Larry Bird


Martina Navratilova

Joe Montana

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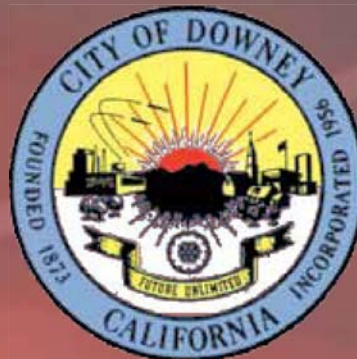
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Mayor




City of Downey

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fvasquez562@gmail.com

OFFICE 562.904.7274
CELL 562.261.7601
fvasquez@downeyca.org



BLANCA PACHECO
Council Member District 1




City of Downey

CITY COUNCIL
11111 BROOKSHIRE AVENUE
DOWNEY, CA 90241-7016

OFFICE 562.904.7274
CELL 562.843.8949
bpacheco@downeyca.org


RICK RODRIGUEZ
Council Member District 3



City of Downey

CITY COUNCIL
11111 BROOKSHIRE AVENUE
DOWNEY, CA 90241-7016

OFFICE 562.904.7274
CELL 562.843.2237
rodriguez@downeyca.org



City of Downey

Dn. Mario A. Guerra
Mayor - Retired

Downey Police Chaplain
8255 Firestone Blvd. 3rd Fl.
Downey, CA 90241

Cell 562.706.4114
Mario@Guerrains.com

ALEX SAAB
Council Member District 5



City of Downey

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L.A. County passes \$468M Project for South Rancho Campus

A significant portion of the long-abandoned south Rancho Los Amigos campus may finally be redeveloped after L.A. County Supervisors unanimously approved a \$468 million project this past August.

The 70-acre development project calls for a 15-acre regional sports complex with multiple playing fields, nighttime lighting, restrooms, a concession stand, an equipment storage room and parking.

The rest of the site will be used to house a Sheriff's Department crime lab, headquarters for L.A. County Probation and Internal Services departments, and possibly a light rail commuter station.

"This is a major accomplishment for Downey," said Mayor Alex Saab. "Our city has worked hard over the past 10 years to encourage the redevelopment of this property, which complements our economic development efforts throughout the city and specifically in south Downey."

County supervisors voted Aug. 9 to spend \$17 million to develop architectural scoping documents and prepare an environmental impact report.

"Today we reached another milestone in the transformation of the Rancho Los Amigos campus," said Supervisor Don Knabe. "I want to thank the City of Downey and the Downey City Council for their great partnership throughout this entire



process. This project has been a longtime coming and I am thrilled that we are finally moving forward with redeveloping Rancho's South Campus into a space that will better serve the County and enhance the quality-of-life of Downey residents and the entire region."

The entire Downey City Council -- minus Roger Brossmer -- along with City Manager Gilbert Livas attended the Aug. 9 meeting, along with AYSO players and coaches. They testified in support of the project.

"As we heard from local AYSO players who testified at today's Board meeting, playing fields are a sorely needed amenity in the southeast communities," added Knabe. "I know these facilities will be used by kids and adults of all ages for years to come."

Downey officials celebrated the project's approval.

"[Aug. 9] was a historic day for our city -- one that will be cemented in Downey's legacy for many generations to come," said Mayor Pro Tem Fernando Vasquez. "Thank you to all of those involved in making this project a reality for our community, from past Downey mayors and city staff to elected officials in our neighboring cities including South Gate, Bellflower and Paramount, thank you for your support for the regional sports park."

"I support this project because it is the right thing to do for the children of Downey and the Gateway Region," added Councilman Sean Ashton. "The council will work closely with the County of Los Angeles to finalize the specifics in regards to the construction of this state-of-the-art, regional sports complex."

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A Downey resident recalls the worst day of his life

By Harold Houglund

On March 19, 1945, at 8:07 a.m., the worst day of my life began to happen.

Our ship, the aircraft carrier USS Franklin, was operating with a task force 60 miles off the coast of Japan when an enemy plane hit us with two armor-piercing 500 lb. bombs. Both scored direct hits and one of the bombs couldn't have been more strategically placed for all the damage and carnage that resulted.



As violent explosions shook our ship like a series of strong earthquakes, the effect was indescribable. Much more traumatic for me than the fear, however, was the task of burial at sea for hundreds (724 to be exact) of my shipmates and the pitiful state of their bodies. It was comparable to picking up the pieces at a major airliner crash.

This one bomb fell among our fully armed planes which we intended for a strike on Kyushu, Japan. As these planes exploded, thousands of gallons of high octane aviation fuel was forced down on to the hangar deck below the flight deck. That area became a blazing inferno, dooming hundreds of men to a fiery death.

After a whole day of fighting fires and explosions, and sustaining severe damage and heavy casualties, it was now time for the burial detail to go to work since the dead now outnumbered the living left aboard the crippled ship. Being a member of the ship's band, one of my duties was that of stretcher bearer of the dead or wounded.

Those who sacrificed their lives are the real heroes -- I'm merely a survivor. I thank God for letting me live through that horrible

disaster and the many prayers that helped me endure it.

Against all odds, our ship limped her way across the Pacific, through the Panama Canal and made it to the Port of New York -- the most heavily damaged ship ever to reach home port under her own power.

After all these years I've never completely recovered from the effects of the horror of that fateful day, but I have learned to live with it and the nightmares no longer haunt me.

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Who retired from Downey Unified this year?

Dozens of teachers and administrators retired from the Downey Unified School District following the 2015-16 school year. Here is a complete list of retirees:

Administrators

Cynthia Benedetti (vice principal, Price Elementary), Leslie Jones (assistant superintendent of educational services), Robin Martin (principal, Lewis Elementary), Margaret McClain (vice principal, Lewis and Unsworth Elementary), Kathleen Succa (director of student services) and Denise Takano (director of elementary curriculum, instruction and assessment).

Elementary School

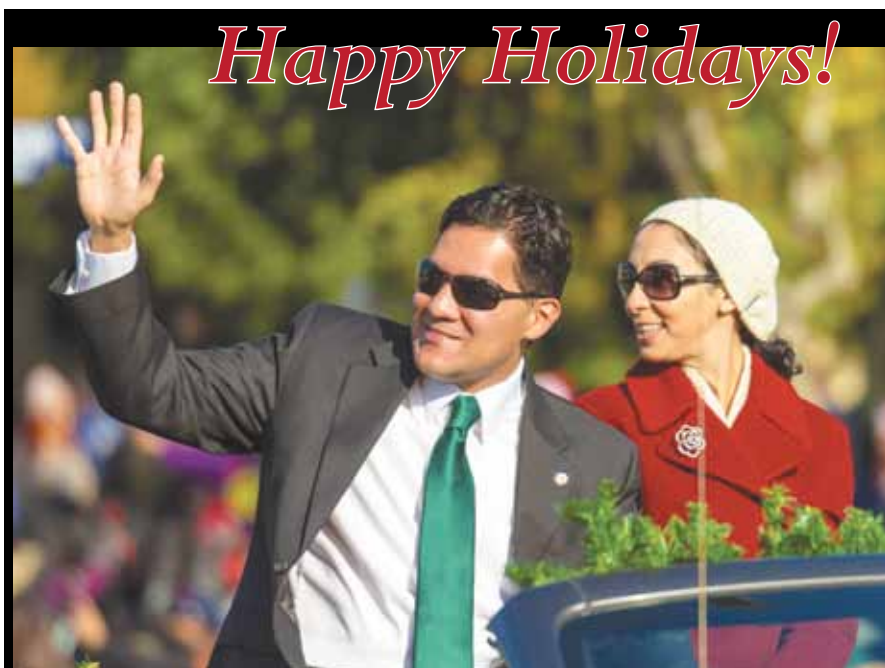
Susan Barber (Rio Hondo), Nancy Barras (Williams), Alison Cleeland (Williams), Stephanie Hathaway (Old River), Cindy Johnson (Lewis), Jonina Jolly (Williams), Kathleen Kile (Price), Jan Lake (Alameda), Valerie Leonard (Rio Hondo), Brad Mathews (Lewis), Dana Mehling (Unsworth), Nora Pedersen (Gallatin), Tamera Rodgers (Unsworth), Barbara Simpson (Williams), Betty Skarbo (Imperial), Victoria Smith (Price), Judy Stayton-Glaister (Price), Sandra Lynne St. Pierre (Williams) and Carole Watanabe-Lee (Lewis and Rio San Gabriel).

Middle School

Gregory Benner (Sussman).

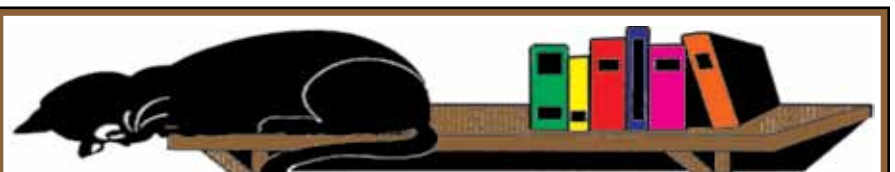
High School & Adult School

Jay Brunner (Downey), Virginia Comer (Columbus), Melody Delgado (Downey), William Greer (Warren), Reginald Jones (Downey), Timothy Meledy (Downey), Mary Monica Miller (Downey), Susan Rodriguez (Columbus), Sherrill Romero (Warren), Linda Shelton (Warren), James Stewart (Warren), Shirley Stewart (Warren) and Teresa Tinnerman (Downey Adult School).



Thank you, Downey, for the honor and privilege of allowing me to serve as your Mayor Pro Tem. Together we achieved many wonderful things in 2016, and I'm confident 2017 will be even better.

Fernando Vasquez
Mayor



Friends of the Downey City Library

The Friends is a non-profit organization of volunteers which promotes library use and provides financial support for many library programs throughout the year. It also sponsors author events and operates a used book store near the young adult section of the library. Joining the Friends of the Downey City Library is an inexpensive way to show that you believe our library plays an important role in our community. Yearly membership is \$5 for students, \$10 for individuals, \$25 for families and \$75 for businesses and organizations. Membership applications are available in the Friends Book Store. Stop in and see us and see the wonderful things going on in our library!

The Saab Family

We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous 2017. We are grateful to be a part of our special Downey community.

Alex and Giggy
Dominic (8), Gianna (3), and Alexander (1)





It's time for Downey to take historic preservation seriously

By George Redfox

Over the last 20 years, there has been a significant change in the way we live in Downey. The places we live, shop and dine have all changed; some for the good and some for the not-so-good.

This made me start to think about the things that can be done to make it better for everyone in our city. We have decent shopping and dining, but our neighborhoods seem to get lost somewhere in-between. We have a stock of beautiful older homes, some needing a little work, and we have a mix of newer builds that are just a little out-of-place when you put them next to most of our community's housing.

I think we have finally come to a place where we could use a little more oversight as to what is being built around town, something that will make it good for investors/builders, while also respecting the rights of those people that have made their own investments in a neighborhood by buying homes.

Many of you may remember that a few years back, I, as well as many other people in the community, spoke out against some of the large homes that were being built. With this being said, the city implemented a few standards that were intended to

make things better for neighborhoods. The issues of setback and height were addressed by the city, and those actions did do some good with these homes.

Another thing that was done was the adoption of design guidelines which were supposed to be used in the neighborhoods to integrate both new homes and remodels, so the impact would not be so harsh. This is where I think we need a little work to move forward and help all residents retain high property values.

Most neighborhoods in Downey have established streetscape patterns defining their character. New structures should respect these established patterns and be consistent with the typical characteristics that can be seen from the street. Setbacks and views of existing homes should be taken into consideration when a new home is built or an older home is restored or redone. New infill construction as well as additions should be compatible with the character of the neighborhood and the traditional architectural styles found there, and should incorporate the features of prevalent styles.

Massing, materials and detail to design should all be considered

so the development is beneficial not just to investors/builders, but also to the residents that have spent their hard-earned money to buy into the neighborhood. I, as well as many other people here in town, take great pride in our homes and our city. We want our homes to remain relevant to how we live today, but we also want to keep our investment in our community so that we all may flourish in the future.

The steps that need to be taken are actually not out of the ordinary, they are being done today throughout Southern California in other communities. For instance, the cities of South Pasadena and Alhambra have implemented great models for design guidelines that could easily be used here in Downey. Although our city did approve the implementation of similar design guidelines a few years ago, it has not yet put them into effect.

What the Downey Conservancy encourages for the upcoming year is a historic survey of our neighborhoods to determine what the prevalent design patterns are, while at the same time looking for possible historic structures that may need to have special attention brought to them. Historic structures and historic neighborhoods bring value to the city as a whole and help to create local jobs. It is not uncommon for designated historic zones to have property values up to 40% higher than the surrounding neighborhoods. As a homeowner in the City of Downey, I would be proud to own a historic home, and I believe many other members of the community would be as well.

The Downey Conservancy would like to share with the community a common myth about historic preservation.

MYTH: "If a property gets designated as a historic landmark, it's protected forever and can never be demolished."

FACT: Landmark designation ensures a more-thorough review of demolition proposals, but it does not prohibit demolition outright. In the City of Los Angeles,

designation as a city historic landmark (Historic-Cultural Monument) allows the city's Cultural Heritage Commission to object to the issuance of a demolition permit, but only for 180 days. The City Council may then extend the objection to demolition for an additional 180 days.

Many East Coast cities, including New York, do actually prohibit demolition of their landmarks, but these cities also leave an exception for cases of demonstrated economic hardship. Even listing in the National Register of Historic Places, which sounds more elevated than "mere" local listing, does not provide for more iron-clad protection. Although demolition of a designated landmark in California additionally requires preparation of an Environmental Impact Report to assess the feasibility of alternatives to demolition, a truly determined property owner may be able to obtain approval to destroy even our most cherished landmarks.

To learn more about The Downey Conservancy, please visit downeyconservancy.org or contact the organization at: (562) 869-4900.

George Redfox is president of the Downey Conservancy.


Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from The Guerra Family!



The Guerra Family is proud to call Downey their home. We are so grateful for all our Public Safety Officers and our community of volunteers. Downey is truly a Character Counts city.

Congratulations to our newly elected Councilmembers, we are lucky to have you to guide us into the future.

Continued Blessings from the Guerra's, Dn. Mario L. Ann, Mario II, Lynne, Matt, Haley, Ryan, Benny L. Porter.



During this holiday season, I am grateful for many things. I am most thankful to have such a wonderful family and supportive friends. A big THANK YOU to all the voters and supporters that encouraged me throughout the campaign. I look forward to serving my community on the Downey City Council, District 1.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

*Blanca Pacheco,
Councilmember*

Downey PD releases use-of-force statistics

Only three use-of-force complaints were lodged against the Downey Police Department in the last five years, according to data released by the department. The data shows that the vast majority of calls to which Downey PD responded between 2011 and 2015 resulted in peaceful resolutions. Single complaints alleging excessive force were filed in 2012, 2013 and 2015. Of those three complaints, none were substantiated.

Police officers used force 372 times over the five-year span. There were four officer-involved shootings: two in 2011 and two in 2014. "Of the 682,067 calls for service over the past five years, less than one-half of one percent resulted in force being used against a person. And of the 372 uses of force by Downeyz officers over that span, only three resulted in a citizen complaint," said Police Chief Carl Charles. "We take great pride in the community we serve and believe in providing the highest quality of service to everyone. As such, we believe that transparency is critical in maintaining trust within the community and have provided this information as a way to further that relationship." In a press release, Downey Police said their officers are trained to resolve conflicts "using the least amount of force necessary."

"Incidents involving force are not a common occurrence at our department which can be attributed to the amount of training our officers receive and the professionalism they display on a daily basis," the statement said. "While every attempt is always made to bring situations to a peaceful resolution without using force, there are circumstances where a level of force is required to protect the public, the officer(s), and the subjects they are interacting with."

Below are the full stats:

2011

Total Calls for Service: **136,434**

Total Arrests: **3,656**

Total Use of Force Incidents: **58**

Use of Force Complaints: **0**

Officer Involved Shootings: **2**

2012

Total Calls for Service: **136,539**

Total Arrests: **3,355**

Total Use of Force Incidents: **65**

Use of Force Complaints: **1**

Officer Involved Shootings: **0**

2013

Total Calls for Service: **130,819**

Total Arrests: **3,298**

Total Use of Force Incidents: **77**

Use of Force Complaints: **1**

Officer Involved Shootings: **0**

2014

Total Calls for Service: **137,585**

Total Arrests: **3,508**

Total Use of Force Incidents: **80**

Use of Force Complaints: **0**

Officer Involved Shootings: **2**

2015

Total Calls for Service: **140,690**

Total Arrests: **3,867**

Total Use of Force Incidents: **92**

Use of Force Complaints: **1**

Officer Involved Shootings: **0**

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Dear Friends and Supporters:

I want to start off by thanking the residents of Downey for voting to elect me to be your next City Councilman! I am so honored to have the opportunity to serve the great people of Downey.

Your support is important to me and we will continue to serve together. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for believing in me. I am so grateful for the amazing support from my family, Team Rodriguez and all of the Downey voters and volunteers who joined me to fight for our community. The journey has just begun.

As promised, I am dedicated to keeping our public safety local and strong, creating jobs and working on making the quality of our lives better every day.

I am looking forward to working with our current Downey City Councilmen (and Councilwoman) to continue the success of our community. I am committed to bringing my experience, passion, and business skills to our City.

I can't wait to get started! Let's Do This!

*Thank you!
Rick Rodriguez*



Inspired by SpongeBob, Kayvon Hoveyda has become Downey's unicycle man

By Alex Dominguez

Many might say that “two is better than one,” but Downey resident Kayvon Hoveyda might disagree.

While the sight of a man riding around on a unicycle might be reserved to the circus or sideshow, Hoveyda has made it commonplace for the city of Downey.

Hoveyda's unicycling journey began during his high school years at Warren, however his inspiration to start riding on one wheel would probably surprise most.

“I saw a SpongeBob episode where he was riding a unicycle to his boating school,” said Hoveyda. “At the time I was still in high school. But I really started unicycling when I was a junior in high school. So the main reason I really got into unicycling was because of Sponge Bob.

“I thought it was just so cool how he was riding a unicycle, and you know I'm really like – if I see something really cool and unique, I would really like to try it – I like trying new things.”

After purchasing his first unicycle, a 24-inch wheeler, Hoveyda practiced a few hours every day in his back alley. He said it took him about a week to start going short distances.

Now a seasoned unicycling veteran, Hoveyda rides a much bigger wheel, 36 inches,

for longer distances.

“I've done some pretty long trips here and there,” said Hoveyda. “I would say my two longest trips were from my house, which is here in Downey, to Bolsa Chica and back. And if that wasn't my longest I would say the Metro Green Line Station to Wilshire, Korea Town.”

However, most of Hoveyda's rides are to Pico Rivera's In-N-Out location where he works, and a portion of his route to Santa Monica College, where he studies chemical engineering.

He does own a car, but admits that his 36 inch unicycle, custom ordered to his favorite color of orange, is his primary source of travel.

“It's a great way to burn off the In-N-out in my stomach,” laughed Hoveyda. “I just love it because it burns off calories, [and] it's really fun.”



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A Message from Assemblymember Cristina Garcia



What We Accomplished

Grateful for all Team Garcia accomplished in 2016 and geared up to keep fighting for environmental justice, gender equity, and good government in 2017.

Signed - AB 1794 (CGarcia) Central Basin Reform, a response to a state audit, adds accountability by adding technical expertise and more transparency to the board.

Signed - AB 2153 (C Garcia) ensures funding to clean up man-made lead environmental disasters, including Exide in my district.

AB 1561, my bill repealing the tax on all menstrual products (aka No Tax on Tampons) was vetoed but I'll keep fighting for gender equity in our tax code. I will introduce a bill to repeal this tax & one to make sure our periods are not barriers to our education, I will fight to have access to these products in our schools/universities.

Paid for by Garcia for Assembly 2016, FPPC ID#1373564

There Ought to Be a Law

Have you ever found yourself in a situation and thought *There ought to be a law...?* My office is currently accepting applications for my fourth annual "There Ought to Be a Law" Community Bill Idea Contest. Help make our state of California a better place by sharing your thoughts today. Winners will travel to Sacramento to advocate in front of the California State Assembly's Legislators. **To submit your ideas, please go to our website to enter: <http://bit.ly/2gGoufL>**

Cristina Garcia

For more info please contact my district office at:

8255 Firestone Boulevard, #203

Downey, CA 90241

www.asmdc.org/members/a58/

Assemblymember.Garcia@assembly.ca.gov

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asmgarcia



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A local hemp advocate is beginning her own business with the intent to educate and help her community

By Alex Dominguez

Downey Irene Hesse is not shy about her advocacy for Marijuana and its potential medical benefits – she was very vocal about it at the beginning of the year when Downey City Council was deciding to extend the city ban on medical marijuana dispensaries.

A user of cannabis for 20 years, Hesse has solidly stood behind the plant since the early to mid-nineties.

“Since [The] Compassion Act 1994, since then I’ve been just, you know, doing my thing as a normal “Jane” – living life, mother life, wife life,” said Hesse. “From there I decided that I wanted to try and get involved a little bit more because it has helped so many different people in so many different ways.”

Hesse describes her views as “the beauty of the seed.” “It is just a seed that is planted, that from there we can

produce and we can go in many different ways,” said Hesse. “Just like anything else planted – lettuce, tomatoes, potatoes, spinach – all of that.”

Specifically, Hesse is enthusiastic about the potential medical benefits of hemp, such as in cancer research and individuals with anxiety.

Hesse herself uses cannabis for her arthritis and achy joints.

Hesse’s long standing support for marijuana and her established career in skin care has led her to recently become involved with Cannaeo, a Californian based skin care company that produces an anti-aging serum produced from the seeds of hemp.

“That gravitated towards me, not only knowing that there’s a beauty product that we’re able to use the seed for, and the plant, but there’s also medical research

that’s out there from the hemp seed.” Still, Hesse looks onward.

With the recent passing of Proposition 64 in the past election, Hesse now hopes to be able to expand, and is now looking into other potential products and the development of her own business.

“I’m interested in starting to carry maybe some kind hemp products also, that would probably go towards anything that can go in the correct direction for anybody in medical use or recreational use,” said Hesse.



Hesse is still doing her research and getting all her business qualifications in order before she moves forward with her vision. She hopes everything will come together by February of next year.

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A Downey senior's struggle to find affordable housing

By Sharon Smith

You can't read the newspaper today or turn on the radio and TV without hearing or seeing something on the subject of senior housing. I never would have known it to be such a drastic problem until it became reality for me.

After having worked from age 16 to 76, having two failed marriages, and making not-too-smart financial decisions, I was living in a mobile home in need of endless repairs. After 14 years of living there, I was persuaded to retire, and my Social Security became my sole source of income.

Having lived with various relatives in situations not working for us, I decided it was time for me to check into senior housing. Was I ever in for a rude awakening!

I take a memoirs writing class at the Norwalk Senior Center, and I asked the receptionist about senior housing, and she gave me a list covering a number of cities in the surrounding area. These were Norwalk, Downey, Bellflower, Lakewood, Santa Fe Springs, Pico Rivera, and Whittier. I began by phoning each listed facility and eliminated those offering assisted living, since I am fortunate enough to be in good health and capable of taking care of all my needs.

Over the course of the next few weeks, dear friends Maggie and Eddie accompanied me to facility after

facility where I was told the wait could be as long as two to six years; the shortest wait time being one year. Some facilities were taking applications; others had such an extensive waiting list that they were no longer taking applications.

A studio apartment, 525 sq. ft., goes for \$788 in Norwalk (in my income bracket). I applied to two of their apartments, but they could not tell me how long the wait would be. It's all dependent upon a tenant's dying or giving the 30-day required notice of moving; even then there's that waiting list to deal with.

Totally frustrated by now, one empathetic woman to whom I talked gave me the phone number of someone she knew at the Housing Authority who she felt sure would be able to help me. I quickly called him, explained my dilemma in detail and asked, "Isn't there anything available for an American senior citizen who has contributed to the system for 58 years?" To which he promptly replied, "I know what you're going through. I am a Mexican American citizen also, and I can't help my own parents and friends with their housing needs. The immigrants, homeless and lower income brackets have the priority."

I even learned in one conversation that HUD and Section 8 Housing Authorities are no longer taking applications. They, too, are inundated with seemingly


endless waiting lists.

Not giving up too easily, my next approach to the problem was to check into the Whittier area, in particular, as they are known to have "casitas," "granny houses" or "mother-in-law quarters" behind the main house. The older section also has an ample variety of duplexes and triplexes as well.

Those dear friends of mine again drove me up one street after another. We saw very few "For Rent" signs, and the several numbers I did call turned out to be for one bedrooms that went for as much as \$1,100 to \$1,300 which just about amounted to my total income per month. So, that, too, turned out to be an effort in futility.

Feeling totally frustrated and down in the dumps about the situation, I decided to share my problem with my particular group at the writing class. Bless their hearts! Word got around, a classmate made an offer I couldn't refuse, and it has been a win-win situation in a lovely home that came with a cute and playful dog named Dency.

I'm back to my usual attitude of gratitude, and thanking God for answering the prayers of my friends and loved ones and for always opening another window each time one is closed.



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Office of the Head of Delegation

Patrick Gurrola
9903 Paramount Blvd, Suite 229
Downey, CA 90240

Washington, March 28, 2013


Dear Mr. Patrick Gurrola,

Many thanks for keeping us informed of your sustained and successful campaign to establish a sister-city connection between Downey, CA and the birthplace of John Downey in Co. Roscommon, Ireland.

We are delighted to learn that this relationship has now been formalized and will be celebrated in Ireland as part of "The Gathering" in the third week of May.

Sister-city connections are vitally important to keeping alive the deep ties of family, history, culture and values between the European Union and the United States. We salute your efforts in cultivating and maintaining these important relationships.

With Sincere good wishes,



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Warren High grad lands internship with Pixar



Since Briana Ornelas was a young girl, she dreamed to someday be able to share her creativity with the world. Family, friends and teachers would always find her drawing different characters in a notebook or on her homework; if there was white space on the page, it would be covered with her imagination.

Ornelas grew up in Downey and attended Downey Unified schools from kindergarten, starting at Williams Elementary, to 12th grade at Warren High School. The first art project she remembers feeling proud of was her drawing of the Tasmanian devil in Mr. Desalernos' art class at Stauffer Middle School.

"He was the first teacher to tell me I was talented, and from that moment, I wanted to do my absolute best to show him that he was right," said Ornelas.

In high school she discovered her passion for animation. From sophomore to senior year, Ornelas was part of the animation program at Warren High School. In Mr.

Austin's animation class, Ornelas was given the opportunity to branch out from the group and work on her own projects.

It was in this classroom that she created her first official animation project.

"Everyone starts somewhere and I am extremely grateful that Mr. Austin gave me the chance to work freely and be creative in his class, because it was there that I discovered my love of animation," said Ornelas. "There are some teachers who wouldn't have given their student that freedom."

During her junior year of high school, she had a vivid memory of her time at Williams Elementary School. As she reflected back to her third grade classroom, she remembered receiving Disney gifts from her teacher Ms. Kaveney's husband, who worked with Disney Consumer Products.

Ornelas had a goal to work with Pixar Animation, and she knew that this could possibly be the connection that could lead her there. She reached out to Ms. Kaveney, who then provided her with a personal contact with a Disney employee. It was eight long months after reaching out that Ornelas finally received an email with an invitation to have lunch with an animator at Walt Disney Animation Studios in Burbank.

"This truly was the first stepping stone to my animation career," said Ornelas. "It all started because of a small detail I remembered about Ms. Kaveney and had I not contacted her, I might never have had all the opportunities I am lucky enough to say I've experienced thus far."

Ornelas drove out to Burbank anxious and excited for the moment that she was hoping would forever change her life. She had been envisioning this moment since her passion for art was ignited and, as she arrived at the studio lot, just seeing the sign from the gate took her breath away. Before lunch, she was given a brief tour of the studio. During the tour, she met Eric Goldberg, one of the top American animators, directors and voice actors at Walt Disney Animation Studios. Ornelas could barely believe her eyes as she stood talking with him.

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As they conversed about the world of Disney animation, Goldberg mentioned that he heard marvelous things about Ornelas and kindly gave her a gift, a book he had written, signed with a drawing of his original animation: Genie from Walt Disney's film "Aladdin."

"Meeting Eric Goldberg was the biggest inspiration I could have asked for," said Ornelas. "Being in the presence of such a rock star was unbelievable! It truly solidified my dreams and did nothing but propel me forward in my endeavors."

Only weeks before her freshman year of college, Ornelas decided to apply to Laguna College of Art and Design (LCAD). She had visited the campus in high school with Mr. Austin's animation class, and though she felt hesitant about the traditional styles of art that she saw, she was pleasantly surprised when she received a \$40,000 scholarship and started classes just a few weeks later.

Throughout her four years at LCAD, Ornelas spent long hours and often sleepless nights pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in animation. From working on various animation projects for school, to a 12-week master class with "stop-motion maestro," Stephen Chiodo, Ornelas found any opportunity to better her craft.

During her junior year of college, she interned at an animation studio known as Picnic Productions where she had the opportunity to animate several short films used to teach young children about history. It was one of Ornelas' English teachers at Warren High who taught her the art of storytelling. "I was excited about the opportunity to use animation to tell stories and engage learners, something I had learned to enjoy at Warren in Ms. Than's class," said Ornelas. As her time at LCAD was coming to an end, Ornelas was ready for the next adventure in her animation career.

In March of this year, Ornelas applied for the internship program at Pixar Studios in Emeryville, California. Two months later, she received a call from the studio informing her that she got the internship. Thrilled by this news, Ornelas packed her

things at LCAD and made the journey up to Northern California.

During this summer internship at Pixar, Ornelas will have the opportunity to work on different assignments that will showcase her skills with storytelling and character development in animation. She will also have the opportunity to learn Pixar's unique computer animation software.

"I remember finding my bucket list I created when I was 12 years old and at the top, I wrote 'Work at Pixar forever'," said Ornelas. "Now I'm here and I don't want to leave because everyone is so encouraging and it feels like family."

Some of the assignments she has already worked on include trying to make the Pixar signature lamp look alive through technical motion and conveying attitude in the pink elephant "Bing Bong" from Disney Pixar's film "Inside Out."

The final project Ornelas will be working on will be a dialogue scene using characters from Pixar's animated film "Cars." Once she completes this project, her work will be reviewed to see if she qualifies to be hired to work on "Cars 3" while concluding her internship.

Ornelas believes that the encouragement she received throughout her youth in Downey Unified, along with her drive to never give up, has allowed her to get this far in her animation career.

"Looking back, it was the cumulative support of all the staff and teachers within Downey Unified who each inspired me in different ways." Ornelas shared. "From working on my own animation projects in Mr. Austin's class, to drawing in the margins of my tests; my teachers never got mad and always encouraged me to follow my dreams. This is something I appreciated throughout the years and still do today."

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After 50 years of teaching, Shirley Stewart calls it a career

By Valerie Aguilar

Shirley Stewart is known around the Warren High School campus as “kind-hearted,” “full of energy,” and “genuinely loving” by faculty, students, and just about anyone else who gets to know her. Beginning her successful career as a DUSD teacher in 1966, this year marks Mrs. Stewart’s 50th year teaching.

Mrs. Stewart grew up in Downey and returned back to her hometown after graduating UCLA and Cal State Long Beach with an English/speech major and mathematics minor. She soon became a teacher at Warren High School and has thoroughly enjoyed her career ever since.

“This whole time, the kids haven’t really changed. Downey has changed, but the city has always had value in education, in community involvement, and in trying to make itself a better place,” Mrs. Stewart commented. “Of course, lots of things have changed, but not these values.”

She has not only taught English, but has also taught other classes and gotten involved in countless organizations, boards, and on-campus clubs over the years.

Some of the multiple clubs she advises for this year include SkillsUSA, Girls League, Ladies Leadership, California Scholarship Federation, Glee Club, Speech and Debate Club, Send for C, and more. Mrs. Stewart has been around long enough to see the establishment of many of these clubs and has been given the opportunity to see them grow over time.

She was additionally responsible for the Peer Counseling

Program which helped students to become better at who they already were. Students would help other students find healthy solutions for their problems.

Prior members of the Peer Counseling Program got in touch with Mrs. Stewart recently and, along with thanking her for the assistance she provided so many years ago, mentioned that they teach their kids the same ethical points they were taught from Mrs. Stewart herself through the program back then.

“You hope in your lifetime you can touch someone’s life and here we were touching their children’s lives. And we didn’t even realize that we were doing that at the time!” Mrs. Stewart exclaimed.

Her hard work does not go anywhere unnoticed. Mrs. Shirley Stewart has been Teacher of the Year for the school district and even named National Teacher of the Year by Cable in the Classroom.

Helping the students to reach their full potential is the reason why Mrs. Stewart chooses to be involved so much. She considers herself to be a “facilitator by nature” and finds satisfaction in uniting people and ideas. If a situation is given to her and she figures out what a person needs, she will make it work.

One of her many specialties is assisting high school seniors in writing their college essays. The application process can be stressful and confusing; but with the help of Mrs. Stewart, countless students have achieved their perfect essay and been accepted into their dream schools.

“When essays represent who you truly are, you can be comfortable with whether or not you get accepted” Mrs. Stewart said.

Students go to Mrs. Stewart for questions not only about college, but on life in general. She gives kids the motivation they need to pursue their goals in life with determination and ambition.

“I don’t have a day without a special moment. Somebody somewhere moves me. How can anybody be so lucky to be a part of that? I think it’s my calling in life,” she added.

In balancing all that she does, she still manages to have had the time to raise her children and grandchildren and spend time with her husband. She values her family more than anything else and has recently made the important decision to spend more time with them.

Fifty is just a number to Mrs. Stewart. Fifty years teaching, 50 years learning, she does not feel as if it has really been that long. Being 71 years old, Mrs. Stewart and her husband, Jim Stewart, decided to retire at the end of the 2015-16 school year.

“I’ve always said I teach life. If you teach English, you teach life. It’s because people write about what they experience and what they know and what they think and, that’s what life is all about.

“So now I’ll go teach and learn about life in a different place,” Mrs. Stewart stated with a smile. “We’re just off to a new adventure!”

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Downey's Marcela Arrieta a full-time entrepreneur

By Christian Brown



Marcela Arrieta might just be the busiest stay-at-home mom in Downey. And she's okay with that.

When this 36-year-old wife and mother of two decided to leave her career in human resources and purchasing nearly five years ago, she never imagined that would lead to her own line of handcrafted soaps.

"I left my job in 2011 because I wanted to spend time with my kids," Arrieta said. "But being home alone -- I didn't stay idle for very long."

In fact, Arrieta, a Downey resident since 1999, became a practitioner of holistic and alternative medicine helping clients heal from emotional and psychological stresses.

"My clients started asking how they could prolong their state of bliss so I created something they could use at the end of the day to deliver a stream of relaxing energy," she said.

With the help of family and friends in 2014, Arrieta launched Majestic Bliss Soaps, which sells handmade vegan, palm oil-free, and animal cruelty-free bath products.

"All of the soaps are made from scratch with top quality ingredients," Arrieta said. "But I established this with one purpose in mind, to help humanity and the animal kingdom thrive."

In addition to making decorative bath soaps for humans and animals, Majestic Bliss Soaps also works closely with non-profit organizations and charities in an attempt to promote societal wellness by feeding the homeless and providing medical treatment around the globe.

The company, which now sells its products in Whole Foods Market and Lazy Acres Market chains from San Diego to Santa Barbara donates 10 percent of its profits, products or staff time each month to these philanthropic causes.

Arrieta said her business takes the first day of every month and tries to find a way to give back. Majestic Bliss Soaps, which is based in Santa Fe Springs, recently put together 150 care packages for Alleviate Skid Row, a non-profit striving to end homelessness on the streets of Los Angeles.

"We don't just make soap, but we connect our customers to organizations that need the support," Arrieta said. So far, the company has partnered with the Lamp Community of Skid Row, Hope for Paws, Rescue from The Hart, Doctors Without Borders, and Drive-By-Do-Gooders, which drops off water, hygiene kits, and snacks to men and women on Skid Row.

"They just want someone to care -- they're great, wonderful people and they appreciate everything we do," she said.

Arrieta believes the company is on track to steadily grow this year and its products could even venture into new stores in the coming months.

"It's an opportunity to help more people and raise more awareness, using our products to contribute to a greater cause," Arrieta said.

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Johnny Lemucchi gets a new heart

By Alex Dominguez

It didn't require a trip down the yellow brick road or a visit to a wizard, however Downey's "man without a heart" is heartless no more.

Johnny Lemucchi was easy to spot in a crowd with the large, bulky apparatus he carried around with him wherever he went. However, it was this noisy machine and a couple of tubes that kept 55-year-old Lemucchi between life and death.

After suffering a devastating heart attack in September of 2015, the longtime Downey resident received a rare form of treatment: an artificial heart.

Lemucchi and his story of perseverance, inspiration, and education were featured in a Downey Patriot article back in July. At that time, Lemucchi was using his situation to educate patient and physician alike, all while anxiously waiting for a call that could come at any time.

Now, after 203 days of being "heartless," Lemucchi has received his new heart.

Lemucchi's transplant story is easily just as much of a rollercoaster ride as the story of his artificial heart. According to Lemucchi, a call indeed came from the hospital, but it wasn't what he was expecting, and it wasn't great news.

"I got a phone call...but it was to tell me that the machines were being recalled," said Lemucchi. "What was happening is they were shutting off. There was no alarm, no nothing. When it shuts off, you've only got about 45 seconds to connect again or it's over."

Lemucchi and his family were given a choice: go to the hospital

and wait for a new machine there, or wait at home. Lemucchi decided on the prior.

"We all decided 'no decision,'" said Lemucchi. "Because if it shuts off, that's it."

Originally, Lemucchi was only waiting for a new machine. However, the decision to play things safe at the hospital ended up being a bigger deal than anyone could have expected.



By deciding to wait it out at the hospital, Lemucchi was bumped up the transplant list. Originally only slated around seven or eight on the list, Lemucchi now was considered a top priority.

This made all the difference, as a heart became available only three days after Lemucchi arrived at Cedars-Sinai.

"I'll never forget when [the doctor] came and told me," said Lemucchi. "She says 'we found you a heart,' and it was like I was in shock...I didn't comprehend right away. But once they

started bringing the papers and everything that's when I started getting excited."

Lemucchi received his heart on August 22nd.

Lemucchi's surgery lasted around eight hours, with another two hours in recovery for observation purposes.

After his transplant, Lemucchi spent about a month in the hospital.

He's back home now, but is still limited as to what he is allowed to do and where he is allowed to go. He describes post-transplant life as "like starting all over."

Lemucchi is also on a myriad of medications, which he likens to a bowl of Skittles.

However, Lemucchi gains more and more strength every day, and over time will be allowed to gain his normal life back.

Lemucchi still plans to do some outreach for the purpose of education. He hopes to be able to do so through school visits, and through his beloved youth sports.

Lemucchi was extremely active with youth sports before his heart attack, especially soccer. His artificial heart halted those activities, however he remains enthusiastic.

When asked if he saw sports in his future, he enthusiastically replied, "I see Golf next month!"

Until that time comes, "The man without a heart," has as big a heart as ever.



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Downey loses Judge Leon Emerson

Judge Leon Emerson, who served as president of the Downey Chamber of Commerce in 1958 and helped Downey become an incorporated city, died in his sleep Feb. 11. He was 90.

As a young local attorney, Emerson was an active member of the Steering Committee for the Incorporation of Downey. When the movement for incorporation won the vote in 1956 (a similar vote had failed in 1954) the instant city of 86,000 began to establish processes and take over services that had previously been supplied by the County.

He therefore led the Chamber at an important time in the city's early history, when debates raged about what the services would be, and how much they would cost.

He also became president of the Exchange Club and several other local groups. He was a Scoutmaster, long-time member of Downey Kiwanis and the Shriners, and a founder of Downey Counseling Center.

In 1961, he was appointed to the Downey Municipal Court, and served most of his 30 years on the bench here. Judge Emerson was a local leader who ultimately left a national impact in his tireless crusade to get drunk drivers off the road. Time Magazine hailed him as a courtroom innovator.



He met Bud McDonald, a former child actor in the "Our Gang" series, and they became friends and collaborators. Together they developed what is known today as the court card, used by judges nationwide to confirm attendance at a local Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meeting under a judge's order.

Emerson, a former Downey Toastmaster, spoke at judges' and lawyers' conferences all over the country to promote the concept. He campaigned for treatment programs, as well as tougher laws. McDonald and Emerson founded the nonprofit Southern California Alcohol and Drug Programs (SCADP) to bring treatment, education and services to alcoholics and addicts.

Like many early Downeyites, Judge Emerson came from the heartland of America. The eleventh of 13 children, he grew up on an Oklahoma farm. In WWII, he fought at Iwo Jima and the Battle of Okinawa. He then used the G.I. Bill to attend Compton College and Loyola, and graduated from the Southwestern School of Law.

He is survived by his wife, Lora; daughter Julia; sons David and Donald; granddaughter Ayisha; two grandsons and two great-grandchildren; and an older sister, Cleo LeVally of Oklahoma.

Judge Emerson was laid to rest at Riverside National Cemetery after a short military ceremony.

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John A. Garcia, Jr., Ph.D. p 562.469.6511
Superintendent f 562.469.6515
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Obituaries

The following is a list of people whose obituary appeared in The Downey Patriot in 2016, through December 9.

- Felicitas Gonzalez Aguayo
- Verla Maurine Oldham Allen
- Ada Mary Amador
- Alta Pauline Anderson
- George Allan Avery
- Richard William Babb
- Charles William Barber
- Anne Marie Bennett
- Barbara Bermudez
- Craig Bertsch
- Wilhelm Bretz
- Steven Alma Broderick
- Donald Brooks
- Mark John Brown
- Adele Burger
- Marjorie Burger
- James Busby
- John Lee Cameron
- Louise Evelyn Castillo
- James William Crawford
- Joseph Curi
- Gloria Davila
- Byron Dillon
- Elizabeth Dreher
- Ed Egge
- Nelli Emmi
- Ernesto Flores
- Edelmira Garcia
- Robert Elliott Garstang
- Eugene Goodwin
- Patricia Diane Grissom
- Madolyn Lucille Hudson Grover
- Carol Dawn Gunderson
- Francis Hall
- Patrick Joseph Hansen
- Norman Ferdinand Hauret
- JoAnn Higginbotham
- Milton Smith Higgins
- Charles Edward Hildreth
- Chuck Hutchinson
- Richard Johnson
- Linda Kennedy
- Gerald Kline
- Sheila Lendrum-Burkhart
- Nellie Macias
- Michael David Marine
- Gemma Martin
- Charlene McCluskey
- Dale Miller
- Robert Monahan
- Patricia Montano
- Mark David Montgomery
- Shelly Montgomery
- Gene Frank Moore
- Marylene Morris
- Harry Delzell Moshenrose
- Don Nassar
- Lydia Noguera
- Melva Alicia Ortiz
- Shirley Anne Potter
- Frank Prieto
- Daniel Anthony Pulone
- Barbara Ann Redd
- Raymond Glenn Richart Sr.
- Donald Russell
- Tobias Sanchez
- Jesus David Santos
- Thomas James Semponis
- Sue Shradar
- Geneva Lily Smith
- Linda Snipes
- Roger Dale Stanley
- Nancy Stratford
- Dorothy Ann Laumann Van Bergen
- Elizabeth Voigt
- Idamae Ann Vega
- Mary Harmon Weber
- James Weston
- Helen Ziler



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Pharmacy Technician Clinical*	25 weeks	\$2,999	\$15,000
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