



## SPORTS

### Downey Razorbacks fall football sign-ups begin Saturday

SEE PAGE 2



## COMMUNITY

### Last chance to purchase Soroptimist casino night tickets

SEE PAGE 4

# Costco in talks to open store in Downey

Downey and Costco are in negotiations to open a store on the former All American site.

By Alex Dominguez  
Staff Writer

**DOWNEY** – Downey is in negotiations with Costco to bring the wholesale giant to the city.

Talks remain in the preliminary stages, according to sources with knowledge of the negotiations but not authorized to speak publicly.

The former All American Home Center property on Firestone Boulevard is being eyed as a potential landing spot, the sources said.

Former city manager Gilbert Livas is reportedly attached to the project. The city council last week voted to hire Livas as an economic consultant through the end of this year.

In an email, a Costco representative said the company does not comment on potential store openings.

Councilwoman Claudia Frometa said she asked Livas last year to consider returning as a consultant to “help us with important projects.”

“Gil’s knowledge, expertise and relationships in our community have been instrumental in moving us forward,” Frometa said. “Gil agreed and has been working with us since last year.”

Livas’ contract with Downey will pay him \$63,000.

Mayor Pro Tem Hector Sosa declined to speak directly about Costco but said Livas “had the best interest for the city.”

“He has relationships with the right people to get things done,” he said.

# State urged to make safety improvements at freeway exit

City and county leaders are asking the state to install safeguards at Studebaker Road and the 105 Freeway.

By Eric Pierce  
Editor

**NORWALK** – Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn has sent a letter to the state asking for immediate safety measures at the Norwalk terminus of the Glenn Anderson (105) Freeway, saying the abrupt end to the highway was the scene of a dozen crashes in 2023, including two fatalities, and Caltrans responded by saying multiple projects are in the works Tuesday.

“The way the 105 freeway ends is dangerous and the intersection has become a crash-magnet,” Hahn said in a statement. “Too many people have been injured or killed because of this badly designed freeway. I am asking the state to put in place safety improvements as soon as possible to save lives and protect drivers and the

Norwalk community.”

Hahn sent a letter to California Secretary of Transportation Toks Omishakin, calling for the immediate installation of additional lighting, signage and rumble strips on the freeway as a way of alerting motorists as they approach the freeway terminus at Studebaker Road.

She noted that crashes have occurred so frequently that a medical building located at the intersection was forced to close due to multiple vehicles crashing into it.

Caltrans issued a statement saying officials from the agency met with Norwalk representatives last week to discuss potential safety improvements.

“Caltrans is also in the process of beginning a separate project that would enhance intersection lighting,” according to the agency. “We look forward to continuing our partnership with the city of Norwalk on ways to improve the safety of motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians.”



Sharon Lavery leads the Downey Symphony Orchestra in a rehearsal Tuesday at the Downey Theatre. Photo by Alex Dominguez

# MAESTRO

Seventeen years into her role as conductor of the Downey Symphony Orchestra, Sharon Lavery remains as motivated as ever.

By Alex Dominguez  
Staff Writer

**W**hen you listen to the Downey Symphony Orchestra, the performance is that of each musician, the arrangements and compositions of the composers who wrote them.

And it’s Sharon Lavery who is tasked with bringing it all together.

“I think I figured out that as a conductor, most of our job, in my opinion, is problem solving,” said Lavery. “When you have an ensemble in front of you, and you need to make it sound good, and you need to make the music sound beautiful, you’ve got to problem solve, and you’ve got to figure out who needs help here, and who needs help there, and let’s get the trombones to play with the trumpets.”

“I think that me, personally, I’m a problem solver. I think part of that really attracted me to conducting – being in front of a group and problem solving to figure out how to make them sound good.”

Lavery, 54, has led the Downey Symphony Orchestra as its music director since 2007.

She says she fell “in love with the

organization from the first season.”

“I just remember thinking, ‘Well, I’m just going to do this until they kick me out,’” said Lavery.

As music director, Lavery is responsible for the musical selections of each performance. Once a concert has been selected, Lavery analyzes each piece, breaking down each harmony, phrase, dynamic direction, and cue in preparation to lead the ensemble.

Still, she says most of the music “is already there.”

“All of this music is already there. The majority of it, the music is already there,” said Lavery. “My job is to bring out all the nuances. Whatever Beethoven wrote, if he wrote a crescendo here, and they don’t give a full crescendo to where I think Beethoven wanted them to go, that’s my job: to dig into what he wrote and exaggerate the dynamics, exaggerate the phrasing, exaggerate the articulation.”

“That’s my job, but could they do a lot of this music without me? Probably. It all depends on the repertoire.”

Most conductors don’t start off with batons in their hands; neither did Lavery.

Born and raised in Ossining, New York, Lavery began her life in music early in the fourth grade, when she found herself mesmerized by her school band teacher and his clarinet.

Continued on page 3

## Weekend at a Glance

Friday 59°

Saturday 66°

Sunday 66°

## ON THIS DAY

### 1841:

After serving for only one month, William Henry Harrison became the first U.S. president to die in office.

### 1850:

With a population totaling about 1,600, Los Angeles was incorporated as an American city.

### 1949:

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was formed, the founding member nations of this military alliance being Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

### 1960:

The biblical epic “Ben-Hur” became the first film to win 11 Academy Awards.

### 1968:

Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., in Memphis to support a strike by the city’s sanitation workers, was assassinated by James Earl Ray.

### 1973:

A third of all U.S. households tuned it to watch Elvis Presley’s “Aloha from Hawaii” concert.

### 2009:

Metallica was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, along with Jeff Beck, Run-DMC, Bobby Womack and Little Anthony & The Imperials.

### 2013:

Film critic Roger Ebert, the first person to receive a Pulitzer Prize for film criticism, died at the age of 70.

### 2020:

China held a national day of mourning for martyrs who died in trying to prevent the coronavirus outbreak.

### 2023:

Former President Donald Trump became the first former president in U.S. history to face criminal charges when he was arraigned on 34 charges of falsifying business records.

## BIRTHDAYS

TV host **GRAHAM NORTON** (61), “Iron Man” star **ROBERT DOWNEY, JR.** (59), R&B singer **JILL SCOTT** (52), magician **DAVID BLAINE** (51), comedy actor **ERIC ANDRE** (41), Nickelodeon star **JAMIE LYNN SPEARS** (33) and singer **AUSTIN MAHONE** (28).



Assistees Class of 2024

## Assistees celebrate achievements at Iridescent Ball

**DOWNEY** – The Assistees Class of 2024 celebrated recently the completion of four years of volunteer work in the community at the annual Iridescent Ball held at The Mayne Event Center in Bellflower.

Ten Assistees young women and men, their friends, families, and members of Assistance League of Downey enjoyed an evening of dining and dancing. The theme of the evening gala was “An Evening in Paris”, and member Julie Simpson serenaded the audience with a rendition of “Forever Young,” as well as an inspirational message.

During their four years with Assistance League, the Assistees support a number of philanthropic programs, including Operation School Bell, Hug a Bear and Christmas Distribution. Community service performed by the teens is an opportunity to introduce them to volunteerism and is a robust addition to their college applications.

Assistance League is currently accepting applications for our Assistees program available to those entering their 9th or 10th grade only in the upcoming school year. Assistees is a 4-year commitment to philanthropic voluntarism in our community under the concept of “All for Service and Service for All”.

Applications are available by contacting via text Patty at 562-883-4095 or at the Second Tyme Around Thrift Shoppe located at 11026 Downey Avenue. The due date for applications is April 18 per the instructions provided with the application.



## Court reporting students qualify for state exam

**DOWNEY** – Nine court reporting students at Downey Adult School qualified to take the California Shorthand Reporters Examination, a two-day test with academic subjects tested on one day and the skills dictation (voice or steno) on a different day.

To be eligible to take the state test, students must have completed 660 hours of academic training in English, legal studies, medical terminology, court procedures, California codes and computer training in addition to the steno machine or voice mask test.

Students must also pass all steno machine or voice mask speed tests up to and including a 200 word per minute qualifier test with four live readers. Speed tests must be passed with 97.5% accuracy.

Jefferson Wang was the first student to complete the Voice Writer Program at Downey Adult School last November and is now a working court reporter.

Students who recently qualified for the test include Jessica Frescas, Kandis Hofman, Jean Kim, Ashley La, Heather Logan, Claudia Melendez, Amelia Vargas, Jennifer Warren and Julie Welch.

## Downey Youth Football sign-ups begin Saturday at Furman Park

**DOWNEY** – The Downey Razorbacks will kick off registration for its 64th season this Saturday, April 6, from 10 am to 2 pm at Furman Park.

The league is open to children ages 5-14 and offers flag football (\$220), tackle football (\$300) and cheerleading (\$300).

Registration includes trophy, league picture package, and game socks. Equipment is provided to children on loan.

The Razorbacks belong to the SCEYFL conference, which

is composed of 35 cities and covers the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino.

Jersey and uniform fittings will take place June 1 and practice starts July 29. The first game is scheduled for Sept. 7. Home games are played at Downey and Warren high schools.

For questions or more details, contact league president Louis Morales at (310) 350-0220.

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## Lavery keeps pushing Downey forward



Sharon Lavery will conduct the Downey Symphony Orchestra in its season-ending concert Saturday at the Downey Theatre. Photo by Alex Dominguez

Continued from page 1

“When you’re in an early grade, the band teacher comes around and demonstrates on all the instruments, and then if you want to be in the band program you have to choose an instrument,” said Lavery. “[My teacher] was demonstrating all the instruments, and when he got to that clarinet, he made it sound unbelievable. He started from the low register and went all the way up to the high register. I remember like it was yesterday; I remember thinking to myself, ‘I want to sound like that.’”

“Later I found out – this was like 10, 12 years later – he was a professional clarinetist. So, probably my young fourth grade ear probably picked up that he clearly sounded the best on this particular instrument, and I just didn’t know it at the time.”

Following that introduction, Lavery continued her upbringing in band, orchestra, and even some jazz along the way.

Her real passion, however, would be in education.

“As I was getting ready to figure out what I wanted to do with my life, I always knew that I wanted to teach. That was first and foremost,” said Lavery. “I wasn’t sure what that would mean, but as I started becoming a little more serious with my music, it just dawned on me, ‘You know, I think I’m just going to keep doing this music thing and teach music.’”

Lavery pursued music education at Michigan State University, earning her bachelors.

While there, she discovered a new passion in music: conducting.

“As part of music education, you have to take conducting courses,” said Lavery. “I supposed that’s probably where I was bit by the conducting bug, taking some of those courses in my college days. I was also drum major in high school, which put me up in front of a group, so that might have started things as well.”

After finishing her undergraduate degree, Lavery thought to herself that “there was only one way to become a good conductor.”

“That is to master an instrument first,” said Lavery. “So I decided to continue my clarinet performing and went to New England Conservatory

to get a masters in clarinet performance.

“I feel strongly that in order to be a conductor, you really have to master an instrument first and become a first-rate musician before you can start getting in front of an ensemble; that’s just my own philosophy.”

Still, Lavery says that she would take some additional conducting courses because of her own interest.

Upon finishing her masters, Lavery says it was time to “get a job.”

“I got a job teaching in the

public school system for five years,” said Lavery. “While I was teaching high school and elementary...in the summers I was taking these conducting seminars where they’re specifically geared towards learning conducting, and they have musicians play for you.

“I was doing those things in the summer because I always had that dream of becoming a conductor.”

After teaching in the public school system, Lavery “bit the bullet” at the age of 29 and moved out west to audition for and join USC’s conducting

program.

“I moved out here, not a dime in my pocket, but I did it,” said Lavery. “After I got my degree in conducting, I got a job as the orchestra manager at USC.”

Lavery says that “things just started happening” and that she was “in the right place at the right time.”

“We needed a resident conductor for the wind ensemble, and I auditioned for that job, and I won that job,” said Lavery. “For a while there, I was both managing the orchestra and I was the resident conductor of the wind ensemble.”

Lavery is currently the resident conductor of the Thornton Symphony, Chamber Orchestra, and Thornton Winds at USC, and the department chair for the wind and percussion department. She also served as music director of the Thornton Concert Orchestra for seven years, and teaches instrumental conducting at

varying levels.

This weekend, Lavery will once again lead the Downey Symphony’s “Springtide” Concert, featuring performances of Beethoven’s Coriolan Overture, Mendelssohn’s Symphony No. 4 “Italian,” and Mozart’s Piano Concert No. 20 in D minor with Cameron Akioka on piano.

Admittedly, the Downey Symphony has struggled bringing in audiences since the Covid-19 pandemic. Lavery hopes to turn things around.

“We’re trying to find our way through financial challenges; we just are,” said Lavery. “Covid, in my opinion, has hurt us a little bit as far as audience attendance. I don’t know if people are just still nervous to be in crowds.”

“I don’t know, but that’s what I’m concentrating on, is how to help us stay vibrant and healthy as an organization. So I just want to keep going.”

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- Deadline: April 18th

## Chamber seeks new board members

**DOWNEY** – The Downey Chamber of Commerce is seeking candidates to join its board of directors beginning this July.

Four current directors are finishing their three-year terms and one director is eligible to run for an additional term, creating three vacancies.

Nominees must be an active member of the Downey Chamber of Commerce in good standing for at least one year.

The nominating committee will interview candidates and recommend a slate of candidates to the board to go on the ballot April 17.

To nominate a candidate, email michael@downeychamber.com and carmengonzalez@lacada.com by April 12. Self-nominations are welcome.

The current chamber board is composed of president Daniel Andrade, president-elect Rain Neg, vice presidents Jeannie Woods and Jennifer DeKay, immediate past president Carmen Gonzalez, treasurer Jesse Gallardo, and members Joe Camarillo, Larry Garces, David Kantar, Cindy Kovach, Alison Millette, Joanna Peterson, Rick Rodriguez, Carrie Uva and Greg Welch.

## Submissions open for student art competition

**DOWNEY** – Submissions are now being accepted for the annual congressional high school art competition.

Each spring, a nationwide high school visual art competition recognizes and encourages artistic talent in the nation and every congressional district.

Interested students can submit entries to Rep. Robert Garcia's office where a panel of artists from around the district will select the winning entries.

Finalists will be recognized at a reception in the district and one winner at the annual awards ceremony in Washington D.C. in June.

Southwest Airlines will provide the winner and one parent or guardian with roundtrip tickets to Washington D.C. to attend a celebratory reception. The winning artwork will be displayed for 11 months at the U.S. Capitol with artwork from all participating districts from around the country.

"Overloaded," a piece by Downey High School's Grace Barrios, was last year's winner.

The deadline to submit is May 1 at midnight. A submission form and regulations can be found on Rep. Garcia's congressional website.

## Assistance League wraps week promoting child literacy

**DOWNEY** – Assistance League marked its annual ACTION! Week program with three community events in February to promote childhood literacy.

This year, Assistance League members, including 12 Assisteens, participated in the True Lasting Connections (TLC) annual 5K run/walk, Downey City Library Family Night and Storytime readings and distributed over 300 books to children from kindergarten through fourth grade.

Additionally, activities included face painting and handing out fun-filled goody bags to children in attendance at the various events.

Assistance League would like to thank Claudia Dailey and the staff at Downey City Library, as well as Luz Perez and her team at TLC for their support of this community-based program designed to get books in the hands of children to encourage them to become "today's readers – tomorrow's leaders."

## El Rancho finishes fifth in academic decathlon

**PICO RIVERA** – El Rancho High School finished in fifth place at this year's state academic decathlon. The team was composed of some of the brightest minds at El Rancho and showcased their proficiency across various subjects, including mathematics, science, literature, social science, and art.

"We are immensely proud of our Decathlon Team for their remarkable performance in the state competition," said Dr. Marco Villegas, superintendent of El Rancho Unified School District. "Their dedication, perseverance and intellectual mastery have truly shone through, reflecting the core values of El Rancho High School."

## Soroptimist casino night tickets still available

**DOWNEY** – Tickets are still available for "Denim & Diamonds" casino night fundraiser hosted by Soroptimist International of Downey on Friday, April 12.

The event begins at 6 pm inside the Reagan Banquet Center at The Arc in Downey. Tickets are \$55.

For tickets, or to become a sponsor, contact Mia Vasquez Zimmerman at (949) 295-2910 or MissSaywellDowney@gmail.com.

## Universal Studios to mark 60th anniversary of backlot tram tours

**UNIVERSAL CITY** – The famed Universal Studios Hollywood backlot tram tour will be going back in time to mark the attraction's 60th anniversary beginning later this month, including a chance for people to step off the tram and wander onto a movie set and snap photos with some iconic props.

"The Studio Tour paved the way for the development of Universal Studios Hollywood and celebrating its 60-year milestone pays homage to its indelible impact," Scott Strobl, executive vice president and general manager of Universal Studios Hollywood, said in a statement. "The Studio Tour is a crown jewel in our theme park portfolio and a beloved attraction for millions of guests. We are thrilled and honored to share our enthusiasm for its historic relevance with guests both new to the experience as well as those who have journeyed with us along the way."

The celebration will be held from April 26 through Aug. 11, marking the anniversary of an attraction that began in 1964 and has been experienced by an estimated 200 million people over the years.

The park will harken back to its original "Glamor Trams," which were colored red and white and featured ruffled awnings as they carried visitors through the backlot. Visitors on the anniversary tours will get the chance to disembark from the tram and step onto "a legendary movie set where an original, fully restored 1964 vintage Glamor Tram awaits," according to the park.

The disembarkment area will also include a King Kong backdrop and the park's original hanging "Jaws" shark.

Also included on the tour will be a revamped version of its "Earthquake -- The Big One" attraction, which officials said has "undergone a top-to-bottom renovation and will debut anew with contemporary technology and aesthetics."

The tour will also pass by the Courthouse Square -- best known for its appearances in the "Back to the Future" films. An original time machine picture car will be on display in the area for photos, along with a Doc Brown character.

Also back on display will be a Tyrannosaurus Rex display originally used in promotion of the film "Jurassic World."

In partnership with the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, the park will also have on display a scaled-model replica of the Hollywood Sign nestled on a hillside for photos.

More information on the anniversary attractions -- and accompanying food and merchandise offerings -- is available online at [www.universalstudioshollywood.com](http://www.universalstudioshollywood.com).


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## Filing tax returns shouldn't be this hard

By Bill Harris

Bill Harris ran TurboTax, and was the co-founding CEO of PayPal. He is the author of "The Investment Tax Guide."

In February, the IRS commissioner defended his agency at a congressional hearing centered on the country's arduous tax code and filing process at a time when some in Congress want to cut IRS funding. While the questioning was ripe with partisan politics, there was a common thread that most politicians and taxpayers could agree on: the need to use technology to make the tax process easier for taxpayers and the IRS itself.

As the former CEO of Intuit, I ran TurboTax for 10 years and have founded multiple financial technology firms since. The question I hear over and over from US taxpayers is: "Why is it so hard to do my taxes?"

The root cause is the complexity of our federal and state tax laws. When the income tax was first enacted in 1913, the tax code was just 27 pages long.

New laws and amendments have since expanded it to more than 17,000 pages. Not only is the tax code incredibly lengthy, it also is frequently changing, with an average of 399 changes each year from 2000 through 2022.

During this tax season, for example, lawmakers are debating changes to the child tax credit, which could impact how families file by April 15. These changes naturally lead to confusion, but the IRS doesn't have enough resources to

provide help. In 2022, only 13% of taxpayers calling the IRS were able to speak with a live person.

Our problem is rare in the developed world — the tax systems in other countries, such as the Netherlands and Japan, are so simple that most taxpayers can file in a few hours or less. But in the US, the average American spends 13 hours filing taxes, which costs the US economy \$260 billion in labor.

Unfortunately, there is no prospect of radical simplification of the tax laws. Both political parties use the tax code as a tool to advance their political agendas, from President Abraham Lincoln using the federal income tax to pay for the Civil War to President Barack Obama amending the tax code to make passing The Affordable Care Act possible. At this point, untying that Gordian knot is practically impossible.

So, we must look to technology to address the problem. The answer is threefold:

(1) The IRS must rebuild its internal systems to process tax forms, which rely on software that is decades old. Outdated infrastructure not only leads to massive inefficiencies, but also puts taxpayers' personal information at risk to cyberattacks. Without modern technology, delays within the agency compound. As of October 2023, 69.5% of the IRS' inventory, which includes amended returns, was delayed. Of course, these gaps impact taxpayers waiting for information and returns,

but they also harm the government, as the IRS must pay interest on overpayments it does not refund in a timely manner.

(2) External, customer-facing tax preparation capabilities also need to be drastically improved. Both the IRS and the states must build online portals to make the filing of very simple tax forms easier, cheaper and faster. The good news is that pilot programs are underway and will be available to help more people over the next few years — as long as they have the proper funding.

(3) The tax software industry at large should embrace the coexistence of government and privately supported tax preparation portals. Government efforts such as the current pilots are long overdue and indisputably commendable, yet are unlikely to be sufficient for taxpayers with more complex returns, such as anyone with investment income. These taxpayers will always need — and greatly benefit from — the sophisticated software that private companies produce. The IRS and private-sector providers need each other and should be natural partners.

It is a shame that this urgent issue has devolved into a partisan political debate. Budget cuts would delay modernization efforts by many years, if not indefinitely. Let Congress debate about how to simplify the tax code and let the non-partisan staffers at the IRS get on with the onerous process of updating their technology.

## Don't blame immigrants for rising crime

By Steven E. Barkan and Michael Rocque

Steven E. Barkan is professor emeritus of sociology at the University of Maine. Michael Rocque is associate professor and chair of sociology at Bates College.

Americans have often linked immigrants with crime. During the 19th century, for example, native-born Americans were flooded with messaging that branded Irish immigrants as both violent and subhuman. The association of Chinese immigrants with opium use, also in the 19th century, led to charges that these individuals were bringing vice and crime to the United States, leading to several anti-immigrant laws. The immigration of millions of Italians in the early 20th century prompted similar concerns about their supposed violent tendencies.

Former President Donald Trump has repeatedly stoked this fear, harkening back to those earlier concerns. In launching his 2016 presidential campaign, he declared of Mexican migrants, "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people." On this past St. Patrick's Day, he called migrants entering the United States "people coming in from prisons and jails, long-term murderers," and the day before, he called them "animals" and "not people."

Does immigration actually raise crime rates? Many Americans certainly think so. In a recent Pew Research Center survey, a majority responded that the large number of migrants entering the United States is causing more crime.

However, just because many people believe something does not mean it is true. Social science research regularly produces evidence filled with inconvenient facts that contradict people's strongly held beliefs. Research and evidence on immigration and crime is one of these areas.

Based on many studies from the past two decades, the answer here is clear: Immigration does not produce more violence or other crime, and immigrants do not have higher crime rates than native-born Americans. Much research even suggests that immigration reduces crime rates and that immigrants are less likely than native-born Americans to commit crime. This finding applies to unauthorized immigrants as well as to those who are authorized or become citizens.

If immigrants do have lower crime rates, despite what many people think, why is this so? Several reasons seem to explain this inconvenient fact.

First, because most immigrants come here to seek a better life for themselves and their families, they are highly motivated to do well and stay out of trouble.

Second, immigrants tend to have strong family units and hold stable jobs. These advantages likely help immigrants be less crime-prone when compared with White native-

born males with a similar low level of education, who often lack the supportive advantages of family and employment.

Third, many immigrants live in tightly knit communities with strong churches and other social institutions, and they own or work in small businesses. These are precisely the types of neighborhoods that criminologists say produce lower crime rates.

Fourth, immigrants who are able to migrate to the US may have advantageous social backgrounds compared with those who are not able to migrate. These backgrounds likely make them less prone to crime, as is evident among native-born Americans.

Fifth, immigrants who are not yet citizens may fear being deported if they do commit crimes.

Given all the research evidence, why do so many Americans still think immigration endangers public safety? One reason is that they are not familiar with the research. Another reason is that people tend to disregard information that contradicts their strongly held beliefs. A third reason is the alarmist statements from Trump and similar remarks from others on social media that are simply false and play to people's concerns about crime.

We've unfortunately seen similar disinformation spread throughout American history, which is filled with examples of native-born White Americans fearing without any evidence that immigrants and people of color would murder, assault and rape them and their children.

Many native-born Americans after the Civil War thought that Chinese immigrants' use of opium dens in the mountain and Western states would cause them to kidnap and rape White children. During the 1930s, many also thought that Mexican immigrants' use of marijuana would cause them to assault and murder White people. In perhaps the most far-fetched example, many White people in the early 1900s feared that Black people's use of cocaine (which was then legal and an ingredient in Coca-Cola in its early years) would cause them to assault and murder White people. They even feared that cocaine use would make Black people extra cunning, super-strong and invulnerable to bullets!

There was certainly no basis for any of these absurd notions, but many White people believed them anyway.

## Response to debate challenge

Dear Editor:

Come on, Jorge, give this young 85-year-old female an opportunity to debate you.

As a female, I don't claim to be smarter than you or any one else, but when reading the mountains of letters demonizing MAGA supporters and former President Trump, I feel I have a lot more wisdom and common sense than you and other writers.

Let's leave our guns at home and have an old fashioned debate on the topic of supporting MAGA and your reasons for not supporting MAGA, to be held preferably at the Barbara Riley Center.

Martha Morrissy  
Downey

Dear Editor:

Allow me to begin by saying I am not a MAGA follower, nor do I wish - in any way, shape or form - to debate anybody about anything.

I am ill-prepared on any topic, have never engaged in any such activity regarding public debates, nor - as I said previously - do I wish to begin doing so now. And I will decline any challenge to do so.

I am a 66 year-old retired teacher who simply has a question for Mr. Montero.

Why must your challenger be a white male?

William Austin  
Downey

Racial and ethnic prejudice fueled their fears, as it does now. People of color have historically been targeted for their behavior, as were the Irish and Italian immigrants many decades ago when they were not considered White. When we hear warnings today about immigration and crime, it appears as if most of those warnings are targeting migrants from certain nations and those who look a certain way (not White).

It is true that some immigrants do commit crime, but they commit no more crime than native-born Americans do, and, as research consistently finds, they likely commit fewer crimes. Amid the continuing controversy over immigration, we must let the facts, however inconvenient, guide the discussion and policymaking. And one inconvenient fact is clear: Immigration does not cause more crime, and it may even lower crime rates. Anyone who says otherwise either doesn't know the evidence or just wants to inflame anti-immigrant hostility.

## Poetry Corner

Dear Editor:

I would like to thank the Downey Patriot staff, especially Eric Pierce and Carol Kearns, for your wonderful tributes to the full and inspiring life of Lorine Parks.

I have been a fan of Poet's Corner for years; Lorine curated it so elegantly and thoughtfully. She had a gift for choosing well-crafted poems that could appeal to the wide-ranging viewpoints of Patriot readers. In this sense, she was a unifying figure in our community. Her small rectangle of a column was like a window--amid the local news of the day--to what is timeless, universal, and beautiful. (Her articles showed, at the same time, her engagement with local matters, especially the arts here in Downey.) I hope that the Downey Patriot can continue Poet's Corner.

In 2021, Lorine published the first poem that I had ever submitted for publication. Her encouragement, expressed in subsequent emails, inspired me to pursue the writing of poetry more seriously. I will always be grateful for her generous spirit. Her writing leaves us with many beautiful recollections, such as the following, where Lorine is describing an evening at the Downey home of her friend, Joyce Sherwin, watching egrets roost in the twilight:

"We sat there as the evening deepened, as if nothing in the world were more important than trying to make contact with beauty from another world."

Thank you, Lorine, for so memorably imparting your joy, gratitude, and sense of wonder.

Lubna Walford  
Downey

## Today's Republican Party

Dear Editor:

It saddens me that the party of Earl Warren, Ronald Regan and Pete Wilson could not find a decent candidate to run for the Senate and had to scrape the bottom of the barrel and come up with Steve Garvey, whose only qualifications are that he was a good baseball player, hardly an intellectual activity, and that he was *muy macho* and got women pregnant out of wedlock.

How low can we go? I have been a registered Republican ever since I was awarded US citizenship and have honored Republican principles all my adult life but I find it hard to accept that we have to settle for the lowest common denominator because we don't have respectable politicians in the party any more.

Where are the John McCain and Mitt Romney types now or how can we get qualified, educated people to join the California Republican party so that we can field candidates that we would be proud to support?

Jorge Montero  
Downey

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# Metro celebrates \$900 million in federal funds coming to L.A.

Los Angeles will use the money to make improvements to public transportation before the 2028 Olympics.

By City News Service

LOS ANGELES – Metro and elected officials Wednesday celebrated nearly \$900 million in federal funding for the Los Angeles region to support transportation and infrastructure projects ahead of the 2028 Summer Olympic Games.

“On behalf of L.A. Metro, it is an honor to be here with leaders who have the key vision and strong focus to ensure that our region is prepared to welcome the world for the 2028 Olympics and Paralympic Games,” Metro CEO Stephanie Wiggins said during a Wednesday morning news conference at Exposition Park.

The money comes from a congressional spending package signed into law by President Joe Biden, and from new federal grant funding. A large share of the money -- \$709.9 million -- will go toward two L.A. Metro projects: the East San Fernando Valley Light Rail Transit Project and sections two and three of the D (Purple) Line Subway Extension Project.

In addition to the \$709.9 million secured through the U.S. Department of Transportation’s New Starts and Expedited Project Delivery Pilot Programs, the region will also receive \$160 million in new federal grant funding through the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program and the Neighborhood Access and Equity Programs.

Sen. Alex Padilla, D-California, noted the recently passed appropriation bills in September 2023 gave a “sneak preview” of investments coming to the L.A. area.

The Purple Line subway extension is being constructed in three sections, and will connect downtown with West L.A. It is part of a broader 9-mile project that will provide a high-capacity alternative to driving for commuters.



Metro anticipates receiving \$165 million for section two (between Wilshire/La Cienega and Century City) and \$478 million for section three (between Century City and Westwood), with all sections expected to open prior to the 2028 Olympics.

The East San Fernando Valley Light Rail Transit Project will receive \$66.9 million to improve connections and access to crucial destinations. The first segment of the line is a 6.7-mile at-grade alignment that will run along Van Nuys Boulevard and will include 11 new transit stations.

“So today as part of the \$900 million that we’re celebrating, let’s acknowledge that \$140 million of federal funding is specifically targeted to reconnect communities here in Los Angeles,” Padilla said. “It was one of the first bills I introduced in 2021, Removing Barriers and Creating Legacy. It became a component of the bipartisan infrastructure law.”

That particular pot of funding would improve bus services, bring online bikeshare stations and create mobility hubs that will “help the people of L.A. get around more efficiently,” he added.

Rep. Jimmy Gomez, D-Los Angeles, noted there should be a shared vision for the Olympic Games to be inclusive and not exclusive. He said money to prepare the L.A. region should

also be used to “right the wrongs of the past.”

Of the \$160 million coming in from federal grants, the money will fund the following programs:

-- \$139 million for Metro to reconnect communities across highway and arterial barriers by creating multimodal investments: bus speed and reliability improvements, first/last mile strategies and projects, mobility hubs, and non-capital mobility solutions;

-- \$9.96 million for a partnership between Metro, Caltrans and L.A. County Public Works for construction of a dedicated pedestrian and bicycle overcrossing adjacent to the existing Humphreys Avenue bridge over the 710 Freeway in East Los Angeles;

-- \$5 million for the Port of Los Angeles to support a pedestrian bridge over two mainline freight tracks, which can accommodate emergency vehicles and connect the economically disadvantaged Wilmington community with the Wilmington Waterfront;

-- \$3.59 million for Friends of the Hollywood Central Park. In partnership with the city’s Department of Recreation and Parks, Healing Hollywood aims to use community planning grant funds to take the Hollywood Central Park, a cap park over the Hollywood Freeway, from a concept design to a shovel-ready project; and

-- \$2 million for the city of Los Angeles to support community planning activities with the aim of creating 1.7 acres of new open space in one of the most park-poor areas of the city and remove a high-injury arterial adjacent to a high concentration of elementary schools by closing Wilshire Boulevard to vehicular traffic from Alvarado Street to Carondelet Street.

Casey Wasserman, the chair of LA28, the committee organizing for the Olympic Games, emphasized that when the world comes to Los Angeles, they will experience “games that celebrate the people and the communities of our city,” as well as the “transportation system that connects the people and the communities of our city.”

“We are well positioned to host the greatest games on Earth, worthy of our city, worthy of our communities, and we can’t wait for 2028,” Wasserman said.

## Doug Hall is guest speaker

DOWNEY – Doug Hall will be the guest speaker at the April 25 meeting of the Downey Historical Society.

The meeting is from 6-8 pm at the Barbara J. Riley Center.

Hall enjoyed a long career with Dunn-Edwards Paint company, managing multiple store locations before he was transferred to the Los Angeles corporate office in 1989. He joined the Kiwanis Club of Downey in 2019 upon his retirement.

He and his wife, Nancy, have lived in Downey for more than 25 years, raising two sons.

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**NEW AGENT - 24 HOUR REAL ESTATE**

24 Hour Real Estate is pleased to announce the addition of a new sales associate, Nathan Priest to their growing team. Nathan joined “The 24 Hour Team” and has recently completed the company’s exclusive “Smart Start Success Course.”

“We are very excited about having Nathan join us,” said Mel Berdelis, Broker/Owner of the office. “He possesses the type of enthusiasm and commitment we know is critical in this business. We believe he will be a positive addition to our office.”

Nathan was attracted to this office by the energy and cooperative attitude that existed. “The atmosphere at this office was different,” he said. “I saw a high level of professionalism among the agents and staff. 24 Hour Real Estate’s reputation was well known for its exceptional training, state of the art technology, and exceptional support. I realized that I would gain valuable experience from a company that had standards as high as my own.”

If you would like to contact Nathan for your real estate needs, please call her at (562) 445.1511

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