

# Downey 2013



*A Year to Remember*  
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December 12, 2013



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# INTRODUCTION

When my wife and I were married two years ago, we agreed to be "selfish" for a couple of years before we really tried to have children. That was OK with me; I love kids, but sometimes the best part of hanging out with my 3-year-old nephew is handing him back to his parents at the end of a long day.

To that end, 2013 was a year of adventure and I'm sorry to see it end. In March, we gassed up the Impala and drove five hours east to Camelback Ranch for Dodgers spring training. We saw the youthful exuberance of Yasiel Puig up close; there was definitely a buzz surrounding Puig but at that time no one had any idea the phenom he would blossom into a few months later.

The following month, we hopped on a Friday morning flight to New York City and spent 48 hours exploring the city on foot. We took in all the usual sights, ate street vendor hot dogs, tried (unsuccessfully) to hail a cab, and paid our respects at the World Trade Center.

In June, I participated in my first-ever live auction, which was benefitting the Downey YMCA. Clearly I got carried away because, before I knew it, I was the proud owner of a week-long stay in Hawaii. Luckily my wife was not too upset about this (imagine that) and in September we found ourselves on the tiny island of Kauai, dodging wild roosters and spontaneous summer showers. It was surreal.

Finally, in October, we somehow secured two reserve-level seats to see the Dodgers face Atlanta in Game 4 of the NLDS. The game was looking bleak until Juan Uribe smashed a two-run home run into left center field. It wasn't exactly Kirk Gibson's Game 1 World Series homer, but it was a theatrical moment nonetheless. I had never been in an environment so electric, so joyful.

What did I take away from all this travel? For one, I realized there is an entire world out there that extends beyond my immediate bubble. I had fallen into a miserable trap of sleep, work (repeat) and forgotten how to find joy in life. What is the point of working so hard is you can't enjoy the fruits of your labor?

I also realized that while technology makes our lives infinitely more convenient, it can't hold a candle to the magnificence of Mother Nature. Sometimes it's best to put away the phone and camera, and live in the moment.

I'm also grateful to have the health, job and employer to help make this travel possible. All a person can really ask for is opportunity – the rest is up to you.

The title of this magazine is "A Year to Remember" and it certainly was for me.

Eric Pierce  
Editor

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Downey 2013 A Year to Remember  
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## JANUARY

- Millions around the world watched the Downey Rose Float Association's entry, "Dew Drop By," in the Tournament of Roses Parade. An army of volunteers decorated the float with 12,500 roses, 4,000 orchids and thousands of square feet of grass, moss and other natural material.
- Ralph Diaz was installed as president of the Downey Toastmasters Club.
- Downey secured a \$1.8 million FEMA grant to put back into service a fire engine that had been shut down the previous year due to budget cuts. City leaders announced they would use the money to hire nine new firefighters, cross-trained as paramedics. "We are extremely pleased to have been successful in being a recipient of this FEMA grant and look forward to providing the quality of service that our community deserves," Fire Chief Lonnie Croom said at the time.
- The L.A. County Board of Supervisors agreed to pay \$150,000 to settle a wrongful death suit originating from Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center. Eva Partida died at the hospital after being admitted for an undisclosed surgery. County officials denied Partida received negligent care but acknowledged "all appropriate personnel corrective actions have been taken" and that classes were held at Rancho "regarding the management of pulmonary complications."
- Rancho Los Amigos debuted its new patient resource center and garden plaza, part of its Wellness Center which includes dozens of community classes each month, a full gym for patients and other components to improve the lives of patients.
- A survey of Downey's homeless population revealed 19 transients at risk of premature death unless they received proper housing.

- Dr. Jerry Floro, a board certified cardiologist who practices out of Downey, was named a 2013 Southern California "Super Doctor" by Los Angeles Magazine.
- Councilman Roger Brossmer and U.S. Army Capt. Victor Shen were honored by the American Legion for their contributions to local veterans.
- Jim Rodriguez was appointed to the city's Planning Commission, effectively replacing Michael Murray, who had served eight years.
- Stay Gallery formed a preliminary board of directors that included former mayor Kirk Cartozian, Pico Rivera mayor pro tem Brent Tercero, attorney Ricardo Perez, business consultant Mark Brown, DUSD administrator Dr. Robert Jagielski, Downey Adult School principal Phil Davis, and bank manager John Casillas.
- Dr. Stanley D. Smith preached his first Sunday service at Downey Memorial Christian Church after he was chosen to lead by vote of the congregation.
- Conrad Jones, only 22 but already a respected and award-winning trumpeter, performed a solo set at the Downey Theatre as part of a Downey Symphony concert.
- More than 100 Downey High students took part in a leadership conference intended to improve students' leadership skills.
- Sixty members of Downey High's KIWINS youth service club spent Martin Luther King Jr. Day cleaning and re-painting Washington Irving Middle School in South L.A. Downey students also planted a garden.
- Walmart, which had recently opened a grocery store on Paramount Boulevard, donated \$1,000 to Downey High School.
- Councilman Luis Marquez was elected delegate to the

- Democratic Party State Central Committee for the 58th Assembly District.
- Car thefts at Downey Landing and Stonewood Center were cut in half from the previous calendar year, due in large part to proactive enforcement and collaboration with shopping center security, the Downey Police Department announced.
- The City Council approved a \$5.7 million project that will overhaul Firestone Boulevard between Brookshire Avenue and Old River School Road. Work should be mostly completed by late 2014.
- Stephen Joshua Kobata, Jason Joo-Young Lee, Garrett Paul Rodriguez, Kyle Hirsch, James Schuck, Michael Soza, Thomas Foskarino and David Viramontes all earned Eagle Scout honors.
- City leaders asked the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office to investigate allegations of voter fraud after signature gatherers hired by the Downey Firemen's Association were accused of lying to residents in order to get them to sign a petition that would force a ballot initiative. One resident claimed a signature gatherer told her she would save \$1,000 by signing the petition. The fire union was eventually successful in gathering enough votes to force a special election next year, in which voters will decide whether to amend the city charter, which requires two-thirds voter approval before the city can contract out fire and police protection services.
- Downey High School sophomore Karina Gonzalez was chosen out of thousands of applicants nationwide to serve on a youth advisory council to Keep America Beautiful.
- The City Council voted 5-0 to ask Downey voters to consider increasing the utility users' tax to pay for more police officers and firefighters. The plan was scrapped later in the year.

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FEBRUARY

► Astronaut James M. Kelly, a crew member on the "Return to Flight" mission after the Columbia Shuttle tragedy, helped mark the disaster's 10th anniversary at a somber memorial at the Columbia Memorial Space Center.

► The Downey Civic Light Opera's production of "The World Goes 'Round" opened at the Downey Theatre.

► An exhibit featuring the work of late philanthropist J. Arthur Morris opened at Stay Gallery.

► Six Downey wrestlers were named San Gabriel Valley League champions, including Warren High's Adrian Duarte (113), Zac Brito (132) and Chris Angeles (138), and Downey High's Mark Lopez (106), Daniel Martinez (126) and Juan Soto (152).

► Khloe Kardashian visited the Sears at Stonewood Center to promote the launch of her new fragrance.

► Downey police officer Karl Snow was recognized at a City Council meeting for his 11-month deployment in

Kuwait as a member of the National Guard. Snow was presented a replica military banner similar to the one displayed on the streets of Downey during his service.

► Downey Police arrested Chaman Vidente, a self-proclaimed spiritual advisor who allegedly advertised in Spanish-language magazines and sexually assaulted the women who sought his assistance.

► Dr. John Garcia, an administrator with the Glendale Unified School District, was chosen to replace retiring DUSD superintendent Dr. Wendy Doty. Garcia received a four-year contract with an annual salary of \$216,769.

► More than a dozen middle school bands from Downey performed in an all-day "mega concert" at Warren High.

► Warren High's robotics team was crowned tournament champion at the Central Arizona Vex Competition. They also won the Design Award for most technically challenging robots.

► By resolution, Downey officially became sister cities with Roscommon County, Ireland. A nine-member delegation led by Downey Mayor Mario Guerra would travel to the Irish county – the birthplace of John Gately Downey – later that spring.

► Thanks to a \$33,000 grant from MLB and the MLB Players' Association, Downey High School unveiled renovations to its baseball field, allowing the school to now host travel ball tournaments, softball games and youth baseball.

► Nearly \$2,300 was raised in less than three hours during a fundraiser at Stay Gallery to help Downey High's CIF-winning football team purchase championship rings.

► Warren High teacher Glenn Yamasaki was named Project Lead the Way "Teacher of the Year" for California.

► Downey teen Jona Capino won first place in her age group in the intermediate solo category for her musical theater performance to the song "Wherever He Ain't" at

the Revolution Talent Dance Competition. She earned a scholarship to compete at a national tournament in Orlando.

► Gary DeRemer was installed as president of the Downey Rose Float Association.

► City and county officials broke ground on The View, a 50-unit affordable housing complex on 2nd Street in Downtown Downey.



ending. Downey police officers stepped in and used their own money to replace Kayla's bicycle, which was her only mode of transportation. "I love it," Kayla said of her new bike. "It's perfect and it's mine." Police officers also purchased for Kayla a heavy-duty lock.



► Henry Garza, lead guitarist for Los Lonely Boys, was injured after falling into the orchestra pit during a performance at the Downey Theatre. Garza was carried backstage where he was treated by paramedics and transported to a hospital. "Keep praying and thank you all so much for the positive love and prayers!" the band said in a statement. "Henry says to tell you all, a super big thanks to everyone for all the prayers and love! He also says to tell y'all he's fine and he will be ok!"



► Warren High girls water polo team won the league championship after finishing with a perfect 5-0 league record.

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**MARCH**

- ▶ Arlene Salazar was appointed director of Downey's Parks and Recreation Department. Salazar had been serving as interim director since the retirement of Thad Phillips.
- ▶ The Downey Fire Department's explorer program earned the Sponsor of the Year Award from Learning for Life, a division of Boy Scouts of America.
- ▶ Andrew Saldana, an 18-year-old Downey teenager, won a \$50,000 college grant and a new car through a national contest sponsored by Nissan.
- ▶ Downey High girls soccer team won the CIF Div. II championship, their second consecutive CIF title. Goalkeeper Adrianna Salazar was named the CIF's Most Valuable Player and Rachel Godfrey was named Coach of the Year.
- ▶ Warren High boys soccer team won the CIF Div. II championship and Nathan Castillo earned CIF Most Valuable Player honors. Coach Miguel Pena was named Coach of the Year.
- ▶ More than a dozen Columbus High School students toured local colleges, learning about potential careers and – hopefully – finding the motivation to finish high school. The trip was financed by Downey Federal Credit Union.
- ▶ The City Council agreed to install wireless internet downtown and also at city-owned parks and facilities. Installation, however, has yet to begin.
- ▶ A Downey man was sentenced to 54 months in prison after pleading guilty to collecting \$1.3 million in tax refunds after filing fraudulent tax returns.
- ▶ Trash rates went up again, after a proposal by CalMet to increase service fees was unanimously approved by the City Council.



- ▶ Jessica Aguirre was crowned Miss Downey, and Allie Beltran Miss Teen Downey, at the annual Miss Downey Pageant. Aguirre's court included princesses Parisa Geshti, Taly Argueta, Ada Hernandez and Jessica Mendez. Miss Teen Downey princesses included Miranda White, Emily Gamboa and Lauren Martinez. Also crowned was Jr. Miss Downey Marisa Padilla and princesses Katelyn Hernandez, Emma Manetta and Michelle Villarino. Little Miss Downey went to Lindsey Moorman. Princesses included Gloria Falach and Azyln Castro.
- ▶ Veteran actor Erik Estrada, of "CHiPs" fame, appeared at a Downey church to promote his latest film, "Finding Faith."
- ▶ A plan by Downey school board members to rename East Middle School in honor of retiring superintendent Dr. Wendy Doty

- drew a sharp rebuke from the community, although the school board was not swayed. The campus officially became Doty Middle School in September.
- ▶ Two people were shot and killed after an altercation outside George's Bar & Restaurant. The killers are still at-large.
- ▶ Police launched a special enforcement campaign targeting drivers who did not properly secure children in their vehicles.
- ▶ Stay Gallery was featured on the KABC-7 news show "Vista L.A."
- ▶ Downey agreed to purchase frontage property at the intersection of Paramount and Firestone boulevards to facilitate street and curb repairs. The city also agreed to pay relocation costs for La Chiva Loca, a Mexican restaurant that eventually moved to South Gate.
- ▶ Dispatch supervisor Tracy Gonzales and fire engineer Renick Sampson were honored by the Masonic Lodge as the fire department's employees of the year.
- ▶ Richard Hernandez, Adam Zipperian and Daniel Zandvliet were officially hired by the Downey Fire Department. They were assigned to engine companies after four weeks of orientation training.
- ▶ Downey's Marisa Urrutia Gedney was named an "Iconic Woman in Literary L.A." by KCET.
- ▶ An overture written and dedicated to the Downey

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APRIL

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Symphony Orchestra by Spanish composer and film scorer Oscar Navarro gained international recognition after it was performed in Valencia, Spain, in front of an audience of nearly two thousand at the Palau de la Musica.

Dr. Mary Stauffer was named Woman of the Year by Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia.

A group of Downey and Warren high school students staged a one-day hunger strike to raise awareness about hunger and homelessness in Downey.

The Planning Commission tightened the rules on hookah lounges, requiring new hookah bars or cigar lounges to obtain conditional use permits before opening. Hookah bars were previously allowed to open "by right" without city approval.

Hundreds of runners and walkers participated in the first annual 5K run/walk to benefit the TLC Family Resource Center. The event took place on the campus of Rancho Los Amigos.

A Ricky Nelson tribute show – featuring Nelson's twin sons – was performed at the Downey Theatre.

Platinum-selling oldies group The Four Preps put on a show at the Downey Theatre.

Canadian band Petunia and the Vipers played to a packed house at the Epic Lounge.

The Downey YMCA unveiled its newly-renovated third floor, which received new bamboo flooring for yoga and aerobics classes and a walking track. The \$100,000 project was financed by the Kiwanis Foundation.

Rancho Los Amigos CEO Jorge Orozco was honored with the Amistad Award, the hospital's highest honor.

Police warned residents of a burglary ring targeting Downey homes. The burglars seemed to target residences in northeast Downey.

Members of Downey High School boys and girls track team set new personal and school records at the Arcadia Invitational Track and Field Meet. Sophomore cross-country runner Lisa Vasquez set a personal best of 10:51.78 in the 3200 meters. Junior Tiffany Gilmore set a new school record in the shot put by throwing 41 ft., 4 inches. The boys sprint medley relay team set a new school record for a second time this year by running 3:29.57, the best

time in California and second best in the country. The relay team consisted of Dakari Archer, Ismael Guerrero, Fabian Mendoza and Eric Enriquez.

Gerald Blackburn, a member of the Columbia Memorial Space Center's board of directors, was presented an Outstanding Volunteer Service Award from the Huntington Park Stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Warren High grad Caitin Bolt-Chambers was named a "Young Woman of Distinction" by Assemblyman Anthony Rendon. Caitin had perfect attendance from kindergarten through high school, and earned Golden Bear awards for her work in English and band.

After the Boston Marathon terrorist bombings, flags at City Hall were lowered to half mast "in a sign of solidarity with Boston and those families who are suffering."

A 22-year-old transient was arrested in connection with a dead body found in a shallow grave along the 105 Freeway.

Volunteers at a Kiwanis "One Day" event at Downey High packaged 50,000 meals to benefit needy families in Haiti.

Downey High principal Tom Houts and assistant vice principal Anthony Zegarra followed through on a promise to shave their heads if students raised more than \$1,000 for fellow student Mario Galvan, who is battling lymphoma. Students sold T-shirts and beanies to reach their fundraising goal. "I'm not

fighting alone, I have the support of so many friends and family," said Mario, who is expected to make a full recovery thanks to early detection.

Mario also motivated his fellow students and teachers to raise more than \$23,000 for the Downey Relay for Life.

Members of Warren High's Humanitarian Society were honored as Youth Volunteers of the Year by the L.A. County Board of Supervisors.

Warren High sophomore Debora Jong won an oratorical contest sponsored by the Optimist Club of Downey. Debora's speech was titled "Why My Voice is Important."

Warren High boys basketball team won the league title with an 8-2 record.

DUSD administrator Dr. Robert Jagielski was honored as Administrator of the Year by the Association of California School Administrators.

Mayor Mario Guerra spoke glowingly of Downey during his annual State of the City address, spending much of the presentation highlighting his "Healthy Downey" initiative while also emphasizing the city's comparatively strong financial footing.

The Downey Gateway food court officially opened.

Downey police officers worked as waiters and servers at Johnny Carino's, part of a fundraiser benefiting Special Olympics.

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Downey's Bobby LaFromboise made his MLB debut, striking out two batters in one inning of work for the Seattle Mariners. LaFromboise said he learned shortly after midnight the previous night that he was being called up. He immediately called his father. "I couldn't get through it," LaFromboise told MLB.

com. "Tear'd up. And then I had to talk to my mom, and that was worse because it's Mom. It was just a great feeling to be able to make that phone call to them and say, 'Hey, I made it.'"

## Stay Gallery looks ahead

Writer: Christian Brown

**DOWNNEY** – If you had asked Valentin Flores five years ago what he'd be doing in 2013 -- he'd probably tell you it wouldn't involve an art gallery.

"All I knew is that I wanted to make a mark on Downey and bring people together," said Flores, executive director of Stay Gallery.

However, as the non-profit art space celebrates its one-year anniversary, Flores and his cohorts are excited to embrace a future that envisions the gallery as a city-wide arts and culture hub.

"A city came together to support a vision -- the real work begins now," said Flores, 30. "We now have the multi-functional space to incorporate any and all creative ideas -- people still can't believe this is in Downey."

With the help of the city of Downey, Stay Gallery opened its doors last October, hosting a series of painting, photography, and sculptural exhibits ever since. The gallery has also played host to several community events, such as short plays and fundraising nights.

However, this summer, the gallery announced plans for structural renovations to create a multi-functional "dream space" that would better serve the community.

"It's about 90 percent finished," said Flores. "Everything was donated...now we have an extra 350 square feet of creative office space [upstairs]. In New York and

LA, these spaces are normal -- why can't Downey have something like this?"

Renovations also included updating the air conditioning unit and adding a new lighting scheme in to control the mood during specific events.

Creative Director Gabriel Enamorado said an updated sound system and projector is next in line.

"We need the sound for acoustics and short films -- and the projector for motion, photo presentations and workshops," he said. "It's a multi-functional space so there could be a yoga class then a workshop with painting supplies."

Once completed, Flores says the gallery will be able to achieve the amount of turnaround they're striving for.

As construction wraps up, Flores acknowledged that the gallery was still considering its options as far as programming is concerned.

While the gallery is still looking for workshop instructors in drawing, painting, and photography, Flores encouraged anyone with creative skills -- for example, video editing -- to submit an application.

In the meantime, Stay Gallery plans to begin a lecture series where attendees can meet the artists and ask questions.

"We want people to know that there's always something on the first Friday of the month, more than likely the opening of an exhibit, and the third Thursday, which could

be music," he said.

"We're constantly using social media so people can see what's going on here."

Stay Gallery will soon unveil its "Here to Stay" project, aimed at raising enough money to keep the gallery sustainable over the next four years of its lease.

"It's a fundraising campaign -- a corporate sponsorship program. We need \$300,000 to implement all our key projects," Flores said. "It will cover rent, operations, administrative costs, maintenance and marketing."

Currently, the gallery is already partnering with the Downey Unified School District, launching a program called "Stay Young," which allows elementary students to experience art up close on field trips while high school students get an opportunity to exhibit their work in competitions.

Enamorado said the gallery is hoping to obtain grant money to purchase iPads that would be used by students attending the art exhibits.

"Over the next few months we'll decide what we want to do, but we want to allow the different groups using the space to interpret it the way they want to," he said. "We want the community successfully engaged in arts and culture -- We want to bring a piece of the westside to Downey."

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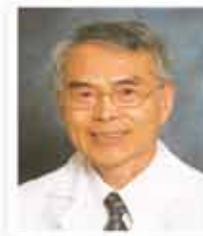
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**MAY**

- ▶ The NBC-4 morning show "Today in L.A." taped live segments from 3rd Street Coffee.
- ▶ Award-winning author Reyna Grande spoke and signed books at the Downey Library.
- ▶ Warren High was named a California Distinguished School.
- ▶ Police collected more than 400 pounds of expired or unwanted prescription medication during a take-back event outside the police station.
- ▶ Warren High boys volleyball team won the league title after posting a perfect 8-0 league record.
- ▶ Warren High girls swim team won their third consecutive league title, finishing their dual meet season with a 6-4 record.
- ▶ MACH-1 Wrestling hosted a live professional wrestling card at the Epic Lounge.
- ▶ Residents near Doty Middle School protested plans for a traffic signal outside the school, complaining it was an eyesore and would lower property values. After a series of community meetings, the City Council scrapped the traffic signal and opted for a "HAWK" device that turns on only when activated by pedestrians. Council members also added a crossing guard.
- ▶ The Assisteens, a teenage auxiliary of Assistance League of Downey, distributed free formal dresses to local high school girls who could not afford a prom dress.
- ▶ "Paint Your Wagon," a Downey Civic Light Opera production, opened at the Downey Theatre. It would be the DCLC's final production.
- ▶ For the first time, Downey celebrated "Bike to School Day," encouraging students to ride their bicycles to and from school. The effort was considered a success, particularly at West Middle School, where approximately 70 students participated.
- ▶ Downey agreed to pay \$4.5 million to the family of Michael Nida, the unarmed man fatally shot by Downey police officers in 2011. Nida ran from officers who were investigating an ATM robbery and was shot near Paramount Boulevard and Imperial Highway.
- ▶ After a lengthy discussion with city staff and Downey fire union representatives, the City Council decided not to proceed in negotiations with the Los Angeles County Fire District for fire and emergency services. Council members unanimously agreed that Downey's needs do not fit the county fire regional mold, which would staff less firefighters at Downey stations, relying on county stations in surrounding cities to respond to emergency calls. "There's a cost to local control. I take pride in having our own guys, but my pride is trumped by the safety of our residents," said Councilman Roger Brossmer. "The regional approach makes sense and it will become a reality -- but we're not there yet."
- ▶ A painting by Downey High School senior Daisy Watson won first place in Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard's student art competition.
- ▶ The U.S. Bank main branch on Florence Avenue debuted solar-powered carports.
- ▶ Warren High softball team finished their league schedule 9-1, good enough to win the SGVL championship.
- ▶ Warren High boys golf team shared the league title with Montebello, each finishing with identical 7-1 records.
- ▶ Warren High students raised more than \$30,000 for the TLC Family Resource Center in Downey. Most of the money was collected through spare change donated by students.
- ▶ Playwright Bill Blush debuted his new series of one-act comedies at the Epic Lounge.
- ▶ Downey realtor Caroline Gim was among the speakers at a global real estate summit in Hawaii.
- ▶ Michael Burks, Alfonso Cabrera, Jennifer DeKay and Steve Mooshagian were inducted into Downey High's Hall of Fame.
- ▶ Rancho Los Amigos patients put on a six-hour summer festival, featuring live concerts, magic acts, a variety show and crafts.
- ▶ Thousands attended the 29th annual Downey Greek Festival. New this year was a cultural exhibit, live cooking demonstrations and an art show.
- ▶ Twenty-eight student-athletes from Downey and Warren high schools announced their college choices during Signing Day. Colleges ranged from Div. I universities to small colleges scattered across the country.



**Brian M. Brown, M.D.**, is Downey's leading ophthalmologist proudly serving our community for over 27 years. He is awarded "Best LASIK surgeon in Downey" in 2011, 2012 and again in 2013; along with a number of other prestigious acknowledgements throughout his years of service.

Dr. Brown performs LASIK and PRK in addition to comprehensive eye examinations, diagnostic testing and treatments for many eye disorders and diseases; including cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration and diabetic eye disease.

In 2012 he began offering his patients diagnosed with cataracts **Lenx**, the most advanced laser technology for cataract removal. This procedure combined with multifocal lens intra-ocular lens replacements enables Dr. Brown to help his patients achieve their personal best vision.

In 2013 he introduced Pelleve' a multi-function device that allows Dr. Brown to provide treatment for individuals suffering from dry eyes, preform pterygium removal, repair droopy upper and saggy lower eye lids, plus facial rejuvenation. Dr. Brian M. Brown now offers "Lunchtime Face-lift" with Vitalize peels, BOTOX, Juvederm and the entire SkinMedica cosmeceuticals line.



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### JUNE

- ▶ Treasure Island Park reopened after receiving a \$400,000 renovation that included a granite walking trail, new playground equipment, landscaping, benches, picnic tables and more.
- ▶ Steffani McMains retired as principal of OLPH School. Gina Aguilar was named her replacement.
- ▶ Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia hosted a town hall meeting at City Hall to discuss state budget issues.
- ▶ The inaugural Make Music Downey all-day music festival was held in Downtown Downey, made possible by a team of volunteers led by Bea Romano and Carol Kearns. Over the course

of seven hours, 61 bands and musicians took turns performing in different downtown venues.

- ▶ Claiming he deliberately "misrepresented facts" that led to the City Council ending negotiations with the L.A. County Fire District, Downey firefighters claimed "no confidence" in Fire Chief Lonnie Croom.
- ▶ Longtime civic leaders Bill and Katie Hare were honored by the Downey YMCA for their contributions to the community. The gala event also recognized the Downey Kiwanis Foundation for their financial generosity.
- ▶ A 31-year-old Downey man was arrested by federal authorities for his alleged role in a regional drug ring controlled by the Mexican Mafia.
- ▶ Before departing for a European tour, rockabilly singer Deke Dickerson played a sold out show at the Epic Lounge.
- ▶ Christina Gibbs (Downey), Kaylie Greilach (Warren) and Christine Diep (Downey Adult School) were recipients of the Woman's Club of Downey's annual scholarships.
- ▶ Mayhem Wrestling Entertainment staged a live card at Downey High, featuring TNA star Joey Ryan.
- ▶ Will Glover, former lead singer of the surf band The Pyramids,

performed a free show at Mambo Grill.

- ▶ Downey's Scott Faulkner was awarded the James B. Evans Scholarship after graduating from the Riverside County Sheriff's Department. The scholarship is awarded annually "to an academy graduate with goals of pursuing a higher education" and includes a monetary prize. Faulkner, 27, plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. He is a military veteran, having served in Afghanistan as a sergeant in the Air Force.
- ▶ Downey council members passed a \$140 million balanced budget.
- ▶ The Downey board of education approved a \$177 million balanced budget that included teacher raises.
- ▶ Downey was named an All America City by the National Civic League. Downey sent a 21-member delegation to Denver to compete for the award.
- ▶ Ten Downey firefighters officially joined the Downey Fire Department, taking part in a skills demonstration before receiving their official pins from the fire chief. The new hires coincided with fire department promotions, including captains Peter Browne, Mike Whitney and Anastacio Rios, and engineers Robert Landers, Anthony Matas, Chris Bohannon, Tim Clark, Zach Nielsen and Ivan Orloff.
- ▶ PIH Health took over day-to-day operations of Downey Regional Medical Center in anticipation of its eventual acquisition. Downey Regional president Ken Strople resigned while chief operating officer Rob Fuller was fired.
- ▶ The Optimist Club of Downey awarded scholarships and cash prizes totaling \$12,000 to 15 students from Downey, Warren and Columbus high schools.

- ▶ Southern California Gas Company's Energy Resource Center in Downey was LEED certified, earning gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council for its energy efficiency and sustainability practices.

Continue on next page

### Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

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Worship times:

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Rev. Lewis M. Busch, Pastor

www.downeygoodshepherd.org



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Continued from page 7

- ▶ First Baptist Church of Downey launched its Family First Wednesday Night summer program, featuring weekly family dinner and activities.
- ▶ Florence Towers was installed as president of Assistance League of Downey.
- ▶ Jacqueline Torres of Kirkwood Christian School was named Teacher of the Year by Sen. Ricardo Lara.
- ▶ A 55-ft. tall LED billboard received the go-ahead from council members to be installed at 7878 Telegraph Rd., along the 5 Freeway.
- ▶ A mosquito sample collected in Downey tested positive for West Nile virus, prompting warnings from vector control agencies to guard against mosquito bites and eliminate standing water around homes.
- ▶ Dr. Danny Posada was named senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Downey.
- ▶ Lynx Grills, manufacturer of luxury outdoor grills and appliances, announced it would relocate from Commerce to Downey, bringing with it about 200 jobs.
- ▶ Dr. Mary Stauffer and Dr. Wendy Doty were honored with humanitarian awards from the Downey Chamber of Commerce.

## Lilly Melgar fulfils dream with launch of beauty line

Writer: Christian Brown



**DOWNNEY** — It's not everyday a Downey native makes it to Hollywood -- but in the case of soap opera star Lilly Melgar, it's not just her acting turning heads in Tinseltown this year.

The 44-year-old actress, director and producer, best known for her role as Lily Rivera Corinthos on ABC's General Hospital, has launched her own line of beauty products and scents -- something Melgar calls a lifelong dream.

"I've always been obsessed with skincare products, it's always been a passion of mine. These are not the same as your everyday products," Melgar said. "We were able to create a high quality product with natural ingredients and a scent for every kind of woman."

Introduced during the General Hospital Fan Club Weekend in July, Melgar's collection, Scentual by Lilly, includes an array of bath and body products from passion fruit and mango body scrubs to white tea and ginger aromatic candles.

"This year was the 50th anniversary of General Hospital so I thought it'd be the perfect opportunity to introduce my line -- I kind of jumped in and thought later," Melgar said with a

laugh. "For me, bath time...it's Zen so

I'm fortunate that I get to share that with my line."

But thanks to a personal friend in the industry, customers aren't the only ones using Melgar's products.

Scentual by Lilly products were included in nominee gift bags for the Primetime Emmy Awards in September, the Country Music Awards and the American Music Awards in November.

"Scentual by Lilly went Hollywood," Melgar exclaimed. "It's my baby and just a fantastic product...one of the actors from the Emmy's even tweeted about it. The feedback was great.

"I take great pride in my line. We only use the highest quality of oils and antioxidants. It's a top of the line product for your skin and you'll see the effects immediately," she said.

In addition to her new beauty line, Melgar is filming the third season of the Daytime Emmy-nominated web series "The Bay," in which she portrays Janice Ramos. Melgar also co-hosts radio talk show "Soapbox" with Days of Our Lives alum Martha Madison. The two interview fellow celebrities and discuss topics relating to entertainment and lifestyle.

"It's a great time for women in my age range, at least as long as I can remember," Melgar said. "The industry is creating a lot more characters for women my age and I personally think it's a lot more interesting."

With all she has on her plate, one would think Melgar was content, but the actress says she still has another dream yet to be realized.

"I'd love to travel the world," she said with a laugh. "I've already traveled quite a bit, but I want to experience every culture all over the world."

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Composting / Earth Friendly Gardening  
[www.smartgardening.com](http://www.smartgardening.com)

Electronics Recycling  
Best Buy, 12118 Lakewood Blvd  
(888) CleanLA (888-253-2652)  
[www.888CleanLA.org](http://www.888CleanLA.org)

### Household Batteries (including rechargables)

Home Depot, 7121 Firestone Blvd  
Radio Shack, 7956 E Florence Ave  
Best Buy, 12118 Lakewood Blvd  
LA County Library Headquarters  
7400 E Imperial Hwy

### Paint Collection

[www.paintcare.org](http://www.paintcare.org)

### Recycling Buy Back Centers

(800) Recycle (800-732-9253)

### Residential Bulky Item Collection

CalMet Disposal  
(562) 259-1239  
[www.calmetservices.com](http://www.calmetservices.com)

### Sharps & Syringes

Kasier Permanente Hospital  
9333 E Imperial Hwy  
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Norwalk Station  
(also accepts expired medicines)  
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A program of the City of Downey in conjunction with the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle)

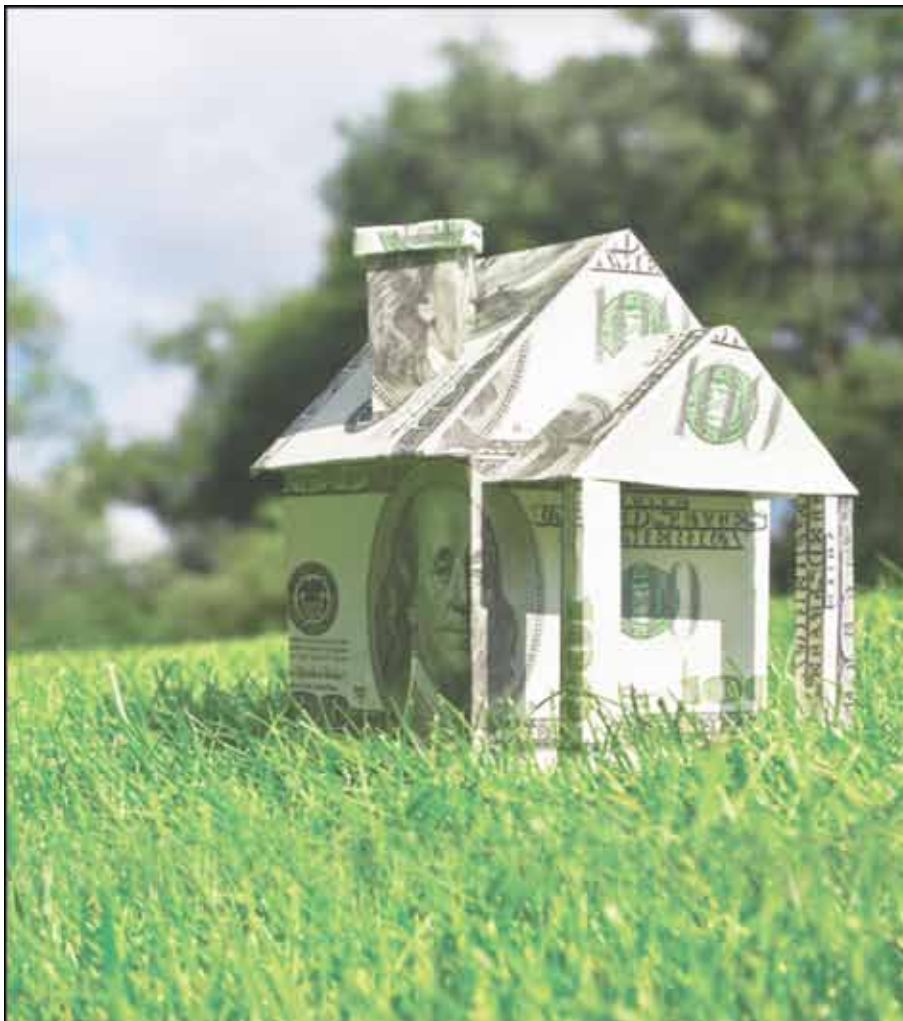
### JULY

- ▶ Classic rock band The Answer opened Downey's concerts in the park.
- ▶ Downey Mayor Mario Guerra announced he was running for state Senate. The primaries are in June 2014.
- ▶ After nearly 30 years of leading the Downey Historical Society, 91-year-old John Vincent announced he was resigning as president. "It was time for me to leave long before this," said Vincent. "The presidency is supposed to change every year, but it was impossible to find someone to fill the position...I enjoyed every year though."
- ▶ Tragedy was narrowly avoided after a fire swept through a Downey apartment unit, trapping a man inside. Firefighters used a ladder to rescue the man through a second-story window. The victim was hospitalized for moderate smoke inhalation but survived.
- ▶ Illegal fireworks were blamed for a house fire on the 9100 block of Hasty Street. No one was hurt but the family living at the home was displaced due to roof damage. Council members described Downey as "a warzone" on July 4, and responded by raising the minimum fine on first-time fireworks offenses to \$2,000.
- ▶ Downey High's Andie Ascencio won Best in Show at the second annual Downey & Warren Photography Exhibition at Stay Gallery. Ascencio's entry was an extreme close-up photograph of classmate and friend Karina Maese.

- ▶ A nine-townhouse development on Stewart and Gray Road gained approval from planning commissioners. The project calls for the demolition of two single-family homes. Nine townhomes will be built in their place, each boasting four bedrooms and four bathrooms spread over three floors.
- ▶ Downey announced it had received \$20 million in grant funding to replace the Florence Avenue bridge at the San Gabriel River, and to rehabilitate the Florence Avenue bridge that crosses the Rio Hondo River. A portion of the money will also be used to implement a city-wide traffic signal system to assist public transportation.
- ▶ The city officially began accepting outside proposals for management of the Columbia Memorial Space Center, which has struggled to achieve financial sustainability since opening in 2009.
- ▶ La Barca announced it would open a Mexican restaurant in the former Sambi's building on Firestone Building. The new La Barca is not affiliated with the restaurant at Paramount Boulevard and 3rd Street.
- ▶ Entrepreneur Ralph Verdugo announced plans to restore the Rives Mansion and open the landmark as a steakhouse and wine garden.
- ▶ Six AYSO Downey soccer teams traveled to Puerto Rico as part of an 11-day "cultural trip."



▶ Brian Wolf, a captain in the Downey Fire Department, died at age 44 following a two-year battle with melanoma cancer. He left behind a wife and two children.



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## Downey Heroes

- ▶ Air Force Airman 1st Class Michael A. Bautista
- ▶ Air Force Airman Mayra Barajas
- ▶ Air Force Airman Bryan Dominguez
- ▶ Air Force Airman Manuel Guerra
- ▶ Air Force Airman Amelia Hernandez
- ▶ Air Force Airman Fernando Torres Lopez
- ▶ Army Pvt. Jonathan N. Molina
- ▶ Air Force Airman Jose Saldana
- ▶ Air Force Airman Angelo R. Stephens
- ▶ Air Force Reserve Airman Ivan D. Ramirez
- ▶ Army Cadet James J. Kim
- ▶ Army Pfc. Anthony Gamboz
- ▶ Army Pfc. Jonathan Ruelas
- ▶ Army Pvt. Kevin S. Bonilla
- ▶ Army Pvt. Marcos A. Castillo
- ▶ Army Pvt. Andrew Orozco
- ▶ Army Pvt. Andrew M. Tragerman
- ▶ Army Pvt. Christopher S. Viall
- ▶ MM3 Lauren Perri

This is a list of Downey residents who joined the military in the past year, and who signed release forms listing the Patriot as their hometown newspaper

## SEPTEMBER

- ▶ "Defying Gravity," a play jointly produced by the Downey Arts Coalition and the city of Downey, opened at the Columbia Memorial Space Center.
- ▶ The fourth annual Taste of Downey food festival drew thousands to Downey's civic center.
- ▶ Hundreds of students picketed outside Sussman Middle School in a loud and vocal demonstration against campus bullying.
- ▶ The Late Night Horror Film Festival, a three-day event celebrating the macabre, announced it was relocating from Whittier to Downey.
- ▶ Downey got its own radio station when RocketOldies106.com began streaming online.
- ▶ The Downey Police Department added two dogs to its expanding K9 unit.
- ▶ Downey was awarded a \$225,000 grant to develop a Bicycle Master Plan, which could eventually lead to bicycle lanes on Downey streets.
- ▶ The City Council approved rental discounts for local non-profits using the Downey Theatre.
- ▶ Quadruplets were born at Kaiser Permanente Downey Medical Center. The babies – Solemia, Estrella, Sebastian and Michelangelo – were all healthy.

## AUGUST

- ▶ Downey celebrated its first National Night Out with festivities outside City Hall.
- ▶ St. Pius X-St. Matthias Academy, previously known as St. Matthias High School, reopened as a co-ed campus. Archbishop Jose Gomez attended the rededication and blessed Downey's only Catholic high school.
- ▶ PIH Health agreed to pay Downey \$9.85 million for the land underneath Downey Regional Medical Center. DRMC had been leasing the land on a sweetheart deal, paying only \$1 per year on a lease that was not due to expire until 2082.



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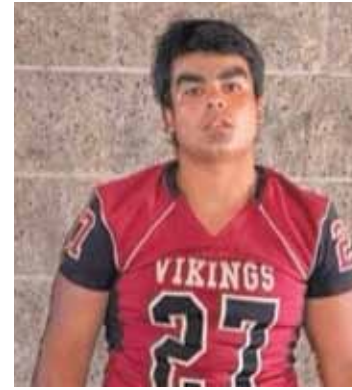
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OCTOBER

- ▶ Grammy Award-winning jazz singer Al Jarreau performed at the Downey Theatre.
- ▶ Farmers & Merchants Bank opened a Downey branch at Lakewood and Firestone boulevards.
- ▶ "Bones of Steel," an exhibit featuring the work of industrial designer Cristian Castro, opened at Stay Gallery.
- ▶ The Women's Conference, featuring renowned medical speakers from around the world, returned to the Rio Hondo Event Center for a fourth year. Each of the conferences has sold out.
- ▶ PH Health's acquisition of Downey Regional Medical Center became official after approval from the state attorney

- general's office.
- ▶ Coca-Cola gave the Downey YMCA \$50,000 to fight childhood obesity in Downey.
- ▶ Mayor Mario Guerra hosted his annual town hall meeting at the senior center. Among his announcements was that Sprouts, a healthy food grocery chain, was looking to open a store in Downey.
- ▶ DUSD officials announced that the Carnival of Champions, a victim of budget cuts three years ago, would return in 2014.
- ▶ Laura Rivas was named principal at Warren High School, replacing John Harris who was promoted to a district administration position.



▶ In October, the Downey community came together to mourn the death of Dodi Soza, a 16-year-old Downey High School student who died after collapsing during a football game. "Dodi has always had a special place in my heart from the moment I saw him the first time," said his older sister, Xhelsea Sozaand. "That was the happiest day because I became a sister

and I promised him I would protect him. Dodi was many things, he was a son, a brother, a friend but most of all he was my rock. I could tell him anything, he would protect me from anything and everything. Despite how when we were kids we would fight without our parents knowing, at the end of the day we knew we loved each other and grow closer as brother and sister and as friends. As the days go on he will always be loved and in my heart." Dodi is survived by his parents, Edgardo and Luz Soza of Downey; his sister, Xhelsea Sozaand; and brothers, Derek and Denzel Soza. He also leaves his grandparents, Carlos and Candida Soza of Bell Gardens, and Jose del Carmen and Maria Edelmira Castro de Castro of Columbia, and his aunts and uncles, Carlos (Angelica) Soza of Lake Elsinore, Maria Amilda Soza of Bell Gardens, Martha Cecilia (Humberto Guaqueta) Castro, Gladys (Alvaro Lancheros) Castro and Jose Wilson (Neyla Reina) Castro, all of Columbia, and numerous cousins.

- ▶ The dog park at Rio San Gabriel Park was named in honor of former mayor David Gafin.
- ▶ The second annual Downey CROP Hunger Walk raised more than \$15,000 for hunger relief efforts both in Downey and around the globe.
- ▶ Dia de los Muertos was marked in Downey with a day-long festival in the civic center.

*The Guerra Family*  
is thankful and proud to call Downey our home, a Character Counts community.

*Our heartfelt gratitude to our community and our city staff for all your support and love as we served together in 2013. Thank you to my colleagues' for your leadership and friendship this past year. May God continue to bless us all.*  
Mayor Mario L. Ann Guerra, Matt, Lynne, Haley, Ryan L. Mario II... Faith, Family & Friends

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*Happy Holidays from Our family to Yours*

*A special thanks to the City of Downey's hard-working Staff, Community Leaders and my colleagues. We wish you a prosperous and happy new year.*  
*Fernando and Donna*



Paging Dr. Frischer...

emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually. We are all aware that New Year's resolutions are much easier to make than to keep, so here are some hints on how to succeed:

- Choose a realistic goal. Select something you need to do, can do, and want to do. Pick only one resolution. Put it in writing, along with the steps to get there. Imagine how good it will feel to be successful with one resolution, rather than fail at five. Put all of your energies into that single goal.
- Plan your life change before starting. How many times have you vowed to begin on January 1, and stopped it shortly thereafter? My daughter tells me that her college gym is packed in January, and empty by February. Start small and build gradually toward your goal. Keep a schedule of your plan.
- Try to avoid the same resolution that you failed at for the past five years. However, if you do choose the same goal, come up with a new strategy! If you are changing an unhealthy habit, note that the habit likely took many years to develop and may well take some time to break. Change is difficult, especially if it involves new habits, such as getting up an hour early to go to the gym, or learning to cope without nicotine.
- Keep reminding yourself of just why you are

doing this. Keep a journal that chronicles your accomplishments, such as the number of pounds lost, cigarettes smoked, or trips around the block.

There will always be bumps along the road. Don't let them discourage you, but instead consider them additional motivation. The path toward a goal is rarely straight, and relapses can be learning opportunities, not failures.

Your chance of success goes up significantly if you enlist the help of friends and family. By involving them, they will help you hold onto your

goal. We all need a community of support around us. Use yours!

Remember that we all have the same 8,760 hours each year to use. Decide today whether you will spend those hours improving the quality of your life, or adding more problems and stress. As we enter 2014, consider that anything worth doing on January 1 is even more worthwhile if done immediately. We don't need to wait for the next New Year's Eve!

I wish you all a happy and healthy New Year.

We have already reached the end of another year. I am so privileged to practice medicine in our wonderful community. It has been a blessing to be able to reach out through these columns for these past seven years, and has been educational, inspirational and rewarding for me. I have no intention of stopping!

I like to use the year-end to think about ways to move toward greater health and happiness. This time of year always seems to provide an opportunity to plan for new beginnings, and can be a great time to establish new routines to help us grow

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Thank you!!!

## Ananias family recalls experience on Costa Concordia

Writer: Christian Brown



**DOWNNEY** – For most people, the thought of a cruise ship vacation triggers visions of relaxation, serenity, luxury, and recreation -- but for the Ananias family of Downey, just five and a half hours aboard the Costa Concordia quickly turned into a nightmare that forever changed their lives.

"We almost died four times on board," said Georgia Ananias. "We were trapped in hallways, under a ladder...we went all over the ship jumping, crawling -- trying to survive."

After narrowly escaping the Costa Concordia, which ran aground off the coast of Isola del Giglio, Tuscany last January, Downey residents Georgia and

Dean Ananias along with their three daughters, Cindy, Valerie and Debbie, have now released a 255-page book, "S.O.S. - Spirit of Survival," chronicling the family's chilling experience aboard the doomed cruise liner.

"We said if we survived this we'd speak for the 32 voices that did die," Georgia said. "You just can't describe everything that happened in a five-minute segment or even an hour segment. We thought we'd detail it out in a book -- if you read the story, you live it out with us."

An avid cruise line family, Georgia, Dean, Cindy, and Valerie traveled to Italy in 2012 for a 30-day adventure of back-to-back cruises, but once aboard the Costa Concordia, Valerie sensed something wasn't right.

"I didn't have a good feeling about it -- and if you listen to your gut, it's usually 100% right," she said.

After leaving the sea port at 5 in the evening, it was just four hours later when the ship experienced what Dean called a "mini-earthquake."

"The lights flickered and there was pandemonium -- an announcement was made in five languages that it was just an electrical problem," he said. "We've been on 50-60 cruises and have had other accidents before so we weren't too alarmed."

Valerie, on the other hand, said she

just knew immediately that they needed to evacuate.

"I tried to stay positive, but it didn't feel right. Something told me, we had to get off that ship," she said. "Did I realize it was that catastrophic? Not really, but my gut instinct told me it was not a good situation."

The entire family soon realized just how catastrophic the incident was as the 952-foot-long boat steadily began tilting to one side.

"It happened so quickly -- I wasn't super scared, but adrenaline totally kicked in," said Valerie, who remembers her family being in the two-story dining hall at the time. "You see it in movies and read about stuff like this, but experiencing it is a different ball game."

As other passengers fled for the door, the Ananias family quickly ran and hid under a overhang as glass dishes and cups fell all around them.

"We stayed under that to get away from people -- we didn't want to get trampled. My dad was very smart, that really saved us," Valerie recalled.

Over the next few hours, Georgia said the family saw the worst and best in people as passengers scrambled to get off the sinking ship.

"Adults were knocking kids off ladders to get out. There was no leadership, no one giving them confidence," Georgia said. "I have to give my daughters a lot of credit. They said, 'we've got to get these kids out of here.' We were able to hoist kids up and out."

At one point, Georgia and Dean even asked their daughters to leave them behind fearful that they could not escape the ship, but

Valerie says the thought never entered her mind to abandon her parents.

"I was very adamant about not leaving them, if we were going to perish then it would be together," Valerie said. "If one of us left, I don't know if we'd been as strong as we were -- each of us brought something to the table."

At the time of the cruise, daughter Debbie Ananias was visiting a friend in Miami, Florida while her husband completed school work at the University of Southern California.

"A family friend called me and said look this [ship] up, I think your family might be on it. I called my husband and he looked it up online and said, 'honey, it's their ship,'" said Debbie who spent the next few days attempting to contact her family in Italy.

"I freaked out for 20 minutes then flew home to figure things out -- I had no idea if they were dead or alive. I had to wait for calls."

It wasn't until days later that Debbie received word from a relative that her family was indeed alive and well.

"The cruise crew did nothing to help us, we never saw an officer -- we were left to die there," said Georgia, who eventually borrowed an international cell phone and was able to make a 60-second call to the United States.

The family says so far Carnival Cruise Lines has offered passengers of the Costa Concordia a 30 percent discount on their next cruise and 11,000 euros to anyone who abandoned ship.

Families who lost a relative have been offered \$76,000, Georgia Ananias said.

"We chose not to take the money -- the biggest deal is to make change. If they don't make it better, anything can happen to anyone," she said.

Currently, there are both criminal and civil lawsuits pending against Carnival and Costa Concordia Capt. Francesco Schettino, who allegedly fled the ship after it ran aground.

While the Ananias family is a part of those court cases, they say more importantly than money they hope justice is served and more regulations are placed on cruise ship companies.

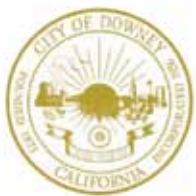
"I'm not angry -- I'm just upset that innocent people died," said Valerie Ananias. "He made a mistake, but he should not have left the ship. This totally could've been avoided."

"We highlight in the book the cruise line passenger bill of rights," Dean said. "People don't realize that your rights on a cruise ship are not the same rights you have on land. Before you sign the contract, make sure you know your rights."

Georgia and Dean Ananias, who own Downey-based American Security Educators, admit they still struggle daily with the questions of why.

"We constantly ask ourselves that question, 'why did we survive?'" said Georgia, a former principal in the Downey Unified School District. "It's the hardest question -- we suffer every day, but this book is dedicated to those who died and survived, who are also suffering."

"Those 32 people never should have died that night, but the rest of our lives, we will be their voice."



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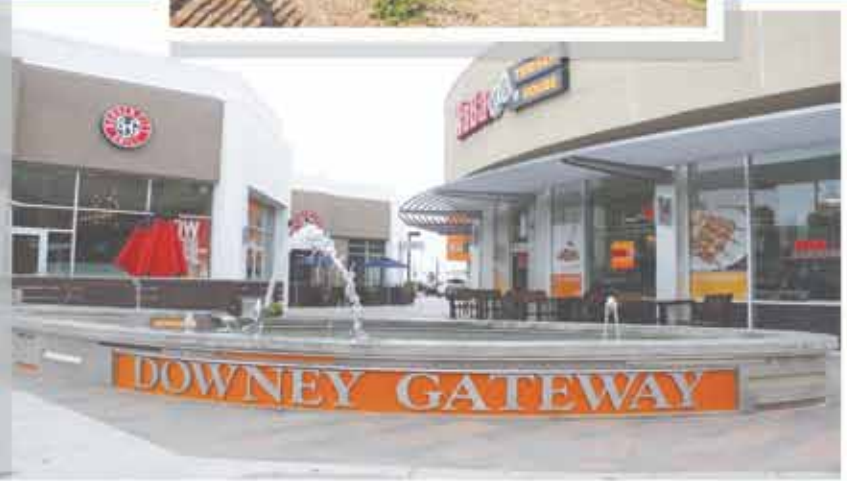
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# CITY OF DOWNEY Happy Holidays!



## A stroke of fortune for the city of Downey

In the fall of 2012, when a team was formed with the goal of reducing the incidence of primary strokes in the Downey community, they never imagined their efforts would soon save many lives throughout the city. The partners, including the RTH Stroke Foundation, Rancho Los Amigos Foundation, The Downey Patriot and the Rio Hondo Event Center, planned a series of five Primary Stroke Prevention Seminars during 2013. The effort was spearheaded by RTH Stroke Foundation President Deborah Massaglia. Deborah is a Downey native who has given nearly two decades of her life in fight strokes such as the ones that felled her good friend Roxanna Todd Hodges. Roxanna established what is now known as the RTH Stroke Foundation, which has become one of the world's most effective organizations in stroke prevention. The foundation had been conducting stroke prevention seminars for more than 15 years in conjunction with many of the leading hospitals in Southern California. But it had never experienced anything remotely approaching the success of the Downey project. Over the years, the largest seminar RTH Stroke Foundation

had conducted had 100 participants. But there had never been a partnership such as the one established in Downey. The foundation provided free carotid artery, aortic abdominal aneurysm and blood pressure screenings. The Rancho Los Amigos Foundation executive director wrote stories about the project that ran in The Downey Patriot, which encouraged community members to RSVP for the seminars. And the Rio Hondo Event Center provided its banquet suites, audio visual support and refreshments at no cost. As the seminars unrolled, the cause of reducing strokes took center stage. And the people of Downey responded with by far the largest attendance ever experienced by seminars such as these. A total of more than 1,000 people attended the screenings, an average of more than 200 persons per event. The screenings were the five largest single screenings in the history of the RTH Stroke Foundation. These free

screenings have been valued at more than \$350,000. In addition to the unprecedented attendance, the seminars featured a premier lineup of presenters. Deborah, a noted stroke prevention educator, inaugurated the series in February. In May, world renowned neurologist and stroke researcher Dr. Amytis Towfighi of Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center was the speaker. Two months later, Dr. Nerses Sanossian, director of the Roxanna Todd Hodges Comprehensive Stroke Clinic at Keck Medicine of USC, was the featured speaker. In September, noted Rancho cardiologist and leader Dr. Yaga Szlachcic provided the lecture. And finally, in November, the legendary Dr. Helena Chui, chair of Neurology at USC, was the featured speaker.

Over five sessions, the speakers covered much of the waterfront of stroke and its causes, securing extremely high ratings from

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those who attended.

Just as importantly, the screenings provided real-life information that saved a number of lives. Individuals were detected with carotid arteries that were nearly 100 percent blocked, with abdominal aortic aneurysms that required immediate life-saving surgery, and life-threatening and extremely high blood pressure. "Many people got to our Downey screenings just in time this year," Deborah said. "They had life-threatening conditions without knowing. Thanks to the results of the screenings we provided, they were referred for immediate medical attention." "The mission of the RTH Stroke Foundation is to eliminate stroke whenever and wherever possible," Deborah said. "People suffer 795,000 strokes in the U.S. every year, 144,000 of which result in death.

"These are dire statistics, but there is one that is even more startling," she said. "Experts in stroke research and treatment say that eight out of every ten strokes can be prevented - eight out of ten!"

Deborah said that the RTH Stroke Foundation operating model enables us to put donor money directly to work affecting the lives of literally thousands of people each year. "The last words of Roxanna Todd Hodges were, 'Strike out stroke wherever you can,' and that is what we do every day of the week," Deborah said. Many lives have been saved because of these seminars, which Dr. Sanossian called "the most successful Primary Stroke Prevention seminar series our nation has ever had."

"We want to thank the entire Downey community for its support of our seminars, which are part of a true health renaissance in the city led by Mayor Mario Guerra and his Healthy Downey

Writer: Greg Waskul



initiative," she said.

"We are extremely pleased with the unprecedented results of our Downey seminar series," Deborah said. "Our entire team is looking forward to bringing life-changing messages from top doctors such as Drs. Towfighi, Sanossian, Szlachcic and Chui to the Downey community in a new series of Primary Stroke Prevention Seminars for 2014."

# Club of Downey



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## Healthy Downey 2013 – Year in Review

Healthy Downey was started in January 2013 by incoming Downey Mayor Mario Guerra to educate community members on the growing health risks associated with making poor nutritional choices and inactivity.

Healthy Downey is a city-wide initiative to encourage healthy and sustainable lifestyles by supporting physical, social, and economic environments that promote opportunities for residents to maintain a productive, high-quality life. As a means to extend its objective of a healthy community, the city partnered with local stakeholders to assist with the coordination of community-wide wellness activities, programs and special events that promote healthy activities.

The purpose of Healthy Downey is to coordinate and leverage resources from the various partners to promote a unified Healthy Downey that provides opportunities for individuals, to make informed choices, for activities that improve their lifestyle. Special emphasis is placed on reducing the youth obesity rate in Downey and

providing opportunities for adults to make the healthy choice – the easy choice – for themselves and their families. Healthy Downey partners meet monthly to discuss existing programs and resources that promote health and wellness. These meetings also serve as planning opportunities to identify opportunities for public education.

**HEALTHY DOWNEY VISION STATEMENT:** Create a Healthier Downey

**MISSION STATEMENT:** Healthy Downey is a community collaborative that focuses on health and nutrition, creating a sustainable approach to wellness that will positively impact

current and future generations through forming partnerships with committed community stakeholders.

**Healthy Downey community partners:** Excluding the city: Apple Care Medical Group, Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, Chamber of Commerce, U.S. Army, Downey Bicycle Coalition, D.U.S.D/TLC, Health Net, Family Health Care Centers of Greater LA, YMCA, Downey Art Vibe, County of LA Public Health, Coca-Cola, Kaiser Permanente, CareMore Medical Group

**Healthy Downey sponsored/promoted events in 2013:**

5K Run/Walk event for TLC – April 5, 2013, over 600 participants

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Continued from page 21

Bike to School Day – May 8, 2013, coordinated with Downey Bicycle Coalition and with five participating schools from DUSD

1st Annual National Night Out - August 6, 2013, coordinated with Downey Police Department and Downey Bicycle Coalition, promoted community awareness and wellness by educating about crime prevention and, health and community resources

Shop with a Nutritionist – August 17, 2013, coordinated with Downey YMCA and Kaiser Permanente. Participants learned how to read and understand food labels, nutritious foods, Q&A, and more.

Need to Know Bicycle Safety Education Course – August

24, 2013, coordinated with Downey Bicycle Coalition and featured one hour of class instruction, one hour of parking lot practice and a one hour bike ride. Participants received free helmets, lights, bike maps and more.)

Walk to School Day – October 9, 2013, coordinated with DUSD. Thirteen Downey schools accounted for almost 2.5% of statewide participation (on a school-by-school basis) in California.

Turkey Trot Ride – November 30, 2013, coordinated with Downey Bicycle Coalition

**HD Mayor commitment in 2013:** Mayor Mario Guerra committed to Healthy Downey by hosting twice-monthly

“Walk with the Mayor” meet-ups at Downey High. He also weighed himself before each City Council meeting and organized community walks before each of the summer concerts at Furman Park.

Number of Healthy Downey meetings in 2013: 12 (one per month)

**Marketing:** Facebook, Twitter, Parks & Recreation quarterly guides, city website, information flyers, information booths at city events

**Healthy Downey introduced into:** ASPIRE after-school program curriculum, Youth Commission annual goals to promoting healthy activities for youth, YMCA fit kids program sponsored in part by Kaiser Permanente and Coca-Cola Foundation.

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## Rick Rodriguez: from hired muscle to businessman

Writer: Henry Veneracion

With current sales at \$40 million, RMI International, a forward-looking security services company founded in 1996 and operated by longtime Downey resident and community leader Rick Rodriguez, finds itself enjoying a run of success driven by love of family, hard work, and a tradition of service. Initially based in Downey, RMI (for Rodriguez Management International) later moved its base of operations to its 2-acre property in the nearby city of Paramount for more elbow room. Providing an array of security services, RMI today operates in 18 states mainly through its close 13-year association with American Honda Motors, whose U.S. headquarters are located in Torrance. Honda, whose security needs are filled exclusively by RMI, has its plants and facilities spread throughout the country, and accounts for 40 percent of RMI revenue.

RMI's other major accounts include its government contracts (30 percent of gross income) and Ohio-based AK Steel (20 percent). The ten percent remainder is contributed by private accounts, one of the longest-lasting, most visible, and most important of which is providing security for the Academy Awards, with an annual RMI complement of 1,000 security protection staff.

Rodriguez's extensive security experience is laced with an international flavor with his company's past 4-year contract assignment with the U.S. State Department in Bangkok, which provided international corporate security in such far-flung places as Vietnam, Malaysia, Burma, Taipei, Cambodia, Laos, and Seoul, South Korea.

Nearer to home, he has also managed assignments for executive protection in American Honda Motors' facilities in Mexico, Brazil, Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, and Canada, as well as Hawaii.

The distinguishing feature of RMI's support facilities at its Paramount multi-function headquarters is its high-tech capability. In one room is a bank of TV screens which are linked in real time 24/7 to any and all facilities in the company's areas of operations. Thus every breaking situation, problem, or emergency anywhere can be seen on the screen and promptly addressed.

Among the government contracts RMI has are those

with Metro, the LAPD and, most recently, with Los Angeles County – this took six months of negotiations – to provide armed and unarmed security officer protection to 44 courthouses.

Also, next time you see those bike patrols in Downey, know that these are RMI's. Rick says the bike patrols have proven effective wherever they have been installed, with noticeable corresponding drops in crime rates.

Rick's is an amazing story of hard work, being in the right place at the right time, the willingness to listen (to good advice), and recognizing and seizing opportunity when it presents itself.

From the beginning, he says, "My business mode has been work, work, work," inculcated early on by his gardener-father (who, semi-retired at 92, still tends to his gardening business) and mother (who, at age 83, still works at a Target store in La Puente). He says he spoils his dad like nobody's business.

Rick says he worked, and worked hard, to feed his family. Faith and prayer also were part of his make-up (these have been passed on to his children), and, "It was not really about making money. I gave my all in a spirit of service, and the money came. This is my legacy to my kids, who I'm sure will pass it on to their kids, and so on. And they're good kids, good listeners." He dotes on his eight grandchildren.

"Hard work really pays off. I believe this strongly," Rick goes on. "And if you're in business, you've got to stay in touch with your clients. People are our number one product."

A Shields of Faith chaplain at Calvary Church of Downey, he says, "Our business is also faith-based."

Early in his working career, Rick provided personal security to two Honda presidents at Honda's U.S. headquarters. He provided such outstanding service that he actually became their protégé.

Continue on page 24

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# Rotary Club of Downey

PO Box 339 Downey, CA 90241  
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### ABOUT ROTARY

The mission of Rotary International is to provide service to others, promote integrity, and advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through its fellowship of business professionals, and community leaders. The Rotary Club of Downey does this through a variety of community and internationally based service projects. We meet weekly for fellowship.

There are 1.2 million Rotarians and 34,000 clubs worldwide. Join us and make a difference in the world.

### MEETINGS

We meet every Tuesday for lunch from 12 noon until 1:30 p.m. at the Rio Hondo Event Center

### SERVICE

Rotary's commitment to Service Above Self has been channeled through the Avenues of Service, which form the foundation of club activities. The Avenues of Service are: Club Service, Vocational Service, Community Service, International Service and New Generations (otherwise known as Youth Service).

Visit us at any of our lunch meetings or events.  
Contact us at:  
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Continued from page 22

Kiochi Amemiya especially, the second president Rick provided personal protection to for about eight years, would often pull him aside and challenge him to think about the larger picture. At the time there was a Honda-sponsored program that provided incentives and sought to help minority associates like Rodriguez.

To have a chance against the big, fair-haired boys of the security industry, Amemiya urged Rick to try building his own security firm. The incentive package provided \$650,000 in working capital and staked him to a \$6 million contract with Honda. Rick, who was not afraid of long hours and learning on the fly, started with a team of six and went to work.

Of three people who took advantage of the program, only Rick succeeded.

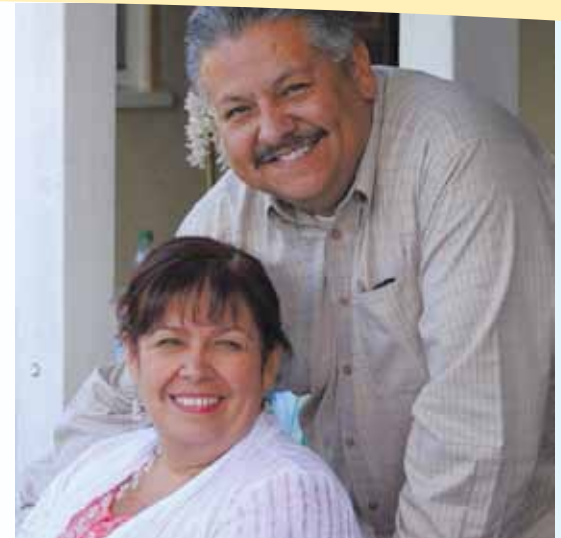
RMI today employs a total of 1,300 full-time and part-time

security personnel at any given time, found throughout the continental U.S. and Hawaii. Many of RMI's hires are veterans returning from the wars and off-duty policemen.

Training at RMI is tough and thorough, provided by trained professionals. "Nothing is left to chance," says Rick.

Rick, who is still a young 53, says 20-hour days and traveling 21 days out of the month defined his work routine until two years ago. Two years ago he had major back surgery that forced him to scale back on his activities. Today he may travel once every other month.

He has been a past president of the Downey Chamber of Commerce; belongs to the Emergency Preparedness Committee as a public safety commissioner; is on the board of advisors for the U. S. Army's Los Angeles Battalion of the Rough Riders; and recently became a board member for Gangs Out of Downey.



Rick Jr. has eagerly embraced the challenge and has already relieved his dad of most of his functions. He now serves as vice-president in charge of quality control.

The other family members in the management team: his wife, Lupe, is vice-president and CFO; Rachel runs the equipment and supply division; Roxanne is executive assistant; Sarah is in charge of human resources and administration; Alfred is communications supervisor; Daniel, also an Iraq veteran, serves as LAPD liaison and manages RMI's off-duty officers program.

A martial arts practitioner for the past 25 years, Rick is a member of the U.S.A. Martial Arts Hall of Fame.

He is also heavily involved with the Rodriguez family's Living Tree Foundation, which among other things supports such causes as Rebuilding Warriors, Purple Heart Baseball, Race for the Wounded, Prison Ministry of America and Angel Wings. He has in the meantime begun to actively groom his eldest son, Rick Jr., who is a former soldier and Iraq War veteran, to take over the reins of the company completely "when the proper time comes." Possessing leadership qualities of his own,



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DELEGATION TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Office of the Head of Delegation

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

Washington, March 28, 2013

Dear Patrick,

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 European Union and the United States. We salute your efforts in cultivating and maintaining these important relationships.

With Sincere good wishes,

Maeve O'Beime

Senior Advisor to Ambassador Vale de Almeida

2175 K Street Washington, DC 20037-1831 Telephone: (202) 862.9500. Telefax: (202) 429.1766.  
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NOVEMBER

Public speaker and martial artist Victor Marx delivered the keynote address at the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast.

School board incumbents Barbara Samperi, Martha Sodemani and Nancy Swenson easily won re-election to the Downey Board of Education.

Rick Bureson, Jesse Hunt, Donald LaPlante, Barbara Samperi, Nancy Swenson and George Zambrano were inducted into Warren High's newly-created Hall of Fame.

Warren High girls tennis team won the league championship after finishing with a league record of 11-1.

Heavy construction began at the Promenade at Downey (formerly known as Tierra Luna), the giant 77-acre mixed-used development south of Downey Landing.

Mireya Ruiz was named 2013 Realtor of the Year by the Downey Association of Realtors.

In-N-Out received permission from the City Council to demolish the office building directly to its north in an effort to expand its drive-thru and add parking.

The Downey Kiwanis Foundation donated \$10,000 to enhance technology at Old River Elementary.

Top students at Sussman Middle School were given "SWAG" t-shirts at a campus assembly, which stands for "Students with A+ Grades."

More than \$5,000 was raised for American Red Cross relief efforts in the Philippines during a fundraiser at the Rives Mansion. Three-time boxing champ Abner Mares and radio personality Big Boy signed autographs and posed for pictures with anyone who donated.

The first annual Thanksgiving Turkey Trot, an eight-mile bicycle ride through the streets of Downey, was held on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Organizers hope to make the ride an annual tradition.

Warren High boys cross country team won its fifth consecutive league title and also captured the CIF Div. I championship.



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## Ed Schneeberger's long road to Downey

The list of accomplishments that distinguish the life and career of Social Security Administration Administrative Law Judge Ed Schneeberger, who was born in Kansas City, Missouri and grew up against the backdrop of legendary Leavenworth County, is long and varied.

At Fort Leavenworth High School, from which he graduated in 1966, he was senior class president, editor of the school newspaper, and a member of the Centennial League championship football team. "I enjoyed playing sports, and I was glad just to be on the teams," he says.

In college (he went to Baker University, Baldwin City, Kansas, which is 60 miles from Kansas City, and said to be the oldest university in the state of Kansas), where he earned a BA in political science in 1970, he was student body president, an officer in the Kappa Sigma Fraternity, and was the play-by-play radio voice of the Baker Wildcats on the student radio station.

Again he relished taking part in athletics. He played football, baseball, and softball. He admits he wasn't particularly very good at them, and he mostly occupied the bench, but a sports nut he was, and he ended up coaching all these teams he played for anyway, so the whole thing



was a fun experience for him. His playing softball would in fact continue until he was 55 years old. Besides coaching five state championships in basketball, "I also broadcast the football and basketball games at the university," he says.

He graduated with a J.D. degree from the Washburn University of Topeka, Kansas School of Law in 1973 whereupon he entered active duty in the U.S. Air Force as a captain and judge advocate (he was commissioned the year before as a second lieutenant in the service). While in the Air Force, he says he tried military jury trials

as both a prosecutor and defense counsel. In addition, he was coach of the Dyess AFB varsity basketball team which in 1976 took fifth place in the Texas State AAU Tournament in Houston.

Schneeberger, who was installed only last Oct. 1 as president of the Downey Kiwanis Club for 2013-14 (his second turn as president) says he really wanted to be a military lawyer at first but he didn't find JAGs moving around much to his liking, but "I knew I needed to be in the Air Force."

Wanting to get back to his hometown, Schneeberger actually completed four years of service in the Air Force and established a solo law practice in Leavenworth, with his wife, Rose, as his office administrator. He maintained the practice from 1977 to 1997.

It was during this period, in 1978, that he joined the Leavenworth, Kansas Kiwanis Club, becoming its president in 1988-89. A member of the First United Methodist Church, he also served on the boards of United Way, Boys and Girls Club, the Leavenworth County Assistance Corporation, and other charitable endeavors.

In 1997, Schneeberger accepted a position with the U.S. Social Security Administration as an administrative law judge, and was assigned to Downey to hear primarily

Continue on next page

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Writer: Henry Veneracion

Continued from page 26

Social Security disability cases. He was here for 16 years before the Downey office, with a total of six judges, each focused on a different aspect of the SSA administrative matrix, moved to the Norwalk Courthouse complex in August of last year.

"I adjudicate 80 cases per week sometimes," Schneeberger says, with his high-volume service area including Downey, Norwalk, Lynwood, South Central L.A., Whittier and Monterey Park. Having already transferred his Kiwanis membership when he moved here to the Downey Kiwanis Club (both his wife and his daughter, Carmen, are members of Downey Kiwanis as well), he first became Downey Kiwanis president in 2002-03.

In his estimation, Kiwanis consists of a lot of "very committed" people who really want to help a lot of people, especially children and youth, and that the club is indeed a major player in improving people's lives.

"I didn't want this job, but I'm glad I did [accept it]," Schneeberger admitted. "For example, we're heavy contributors to Arc. We air-conditioned their factory, among other things."

"I truly believe that Kiwanis is the pre-eminent player in Downey, in terms of service in Downey," he continues. "Besides our contributions to Arc, we donate \$40,000 a year in scholarships to send students to college. We have also contributed heavily to provide a computerized system to the Downey Unified School District. We are able to do these things because our foundation has a \$4 million endowment. People are willing to give donations when they know the money is going to help somebody."

Schneeberger resides near Covina and has been married to Rose, who was also in the Air Force, for 36 years. Son Noel, 39, is a social worker and lives in Hampton, Virginia, while daughter Carmen, 34, is an executive at IBM. His dad was a Methodist preacher descended from Swiss immigrants, while his mom's ancestors came from Ireland and Germany.

Schneeberger, ever cheerful and aware of his reach as well as his limitations, to this day considers himself capable of stepping in as a professional broadcaster. I don't disagree: he's a well-rounded man.

## For Mia Vasquez, fun and community service are one and the same

Writer: Henry Veneracion

Except for some eight years when she oversaw the banquets and catering services at the Rio Hondo Country Club, Mia Vasquez, the general manager of Saywell Florist and a past president of Soroptimist International of Downey, has been working uninterruptedly for the family floristry business for the past 29 years.

The ownership of Saywell Florist itself passed on to Mia's dad, Mark Vasquez, long-time Downey resident and two-time City Council candidate, in the early '70s. Mark died in October after a 60-year career in the floral design business.

Mark's wife, Dee Bacus, Mia, Mia's Uncle Jerry, and Mia's sister, Cyndi, formed the core of his Saywell staff over the years, and it's the same staff Mia will be working with in the years ahead. The mid-morning I visited the store, which had relocated from the old location on Paramount Boulevard to Firestone Boulevard across from the post office, the trio of Mia, Jerry and Cyndi were busy readying several Christmas trees for delivery to various actual and potential destinations, their hands deftly placing ribbons and ornaments where they ought to be: the trees, whose tops nearly touched the ceiling, practically occupied all available space in the store.

"Our busiest season has started," Mia said while pausing in between tasks.

Indeed, the interview was interrupted several times as one customer entered the store, browsed around, asked about prices and, after a few moments of deliberation, promptly placed an order for a Christmas tree rental (including all the lights and decorations). The tree was to be delivered to such-and-such a place by the first week of December, so I gathered.

Then a few minutes later, another customer walked in, browsed around, asked a few questions, and again promptly walked out the door with a paid-for flower arrangement.

"You're batting one hundred," I told Mia. Then I just had to ask the question, "Have you attended any formal sales technique seminars?"

"No," she retorted — and, obviously in a light mood — said: "I'm a natural. Talk about selling a fridge to an Eskimo. I think I could if I were to try hard enough."

Impressed, I asked her: "What do you think is the key ingredient in a successful sales presentation?"

It didn't take her long to come up with this answer: "The attitude of service is key, of course. You must make them feel comfortable in dealing with you, and getting them to trust that you know what you're talking about. It all adds up to a feeling of confidence."



Currently, the store has 100 Christmas trees in stock, which are shipped from San Diego by their long-time supplier.

"In this business you have to have a specialty and find your niche," she added. "Ours is crafting flower arrangements for parties, banquets, events. And business has been good."

A product of Rio Hondo Elementary, Griffiths Middle and Warren High School ('94), Mia went on to Cypress College and finished the hotel management and culinary arts course there. The youngest of six children, she was born in Torrance.

Her siblings can be found in San Antonio (Mark's hometown), here in Downey, and elsewhere (she has two sisters and three brothers—one deceased).

Her active service memberships include the Soroptimist Club (five years), the Elks Club (1-1/2 years), and the Chamber of Commerce.

"Wherever there's a party involved, I'd be in the midst of everything," Mia said. "Even when I was young, I was the one who enlivened the party. In Soroptimist, I'm currently the fundraising chair. What it really means is I'm a glorified party planner."

She received the Chamber's "Volunteer of the Year" award last year.

Travel apparently is a big part of her life. Mia says she has been to Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

"I love to cruise the Caribbean or have a little weekend party cruise to Mexico," she said.

"But my favorite city is San Francisco—for its architecture, the food, the people."

## DECEMBER

- ▶ Kari Volen and Lois Buchanan rode as grand marshals in the Downey Christmas Parade.
- ▶ R&B legend Smokey Robinson was honored during a television awards show at the Downey Theatre.
- ▶ Fernando Vasquez was sworn-in as mayor of Downey. Luis Marquez became mayor pro tem.





# KIWANIS Club of Downney

## A YEAR IN REVIEW...

website:  
KiwanisOfDownney.org



### Community Project and Events

- Christmas at Las Casita's
- Rancho Los Amigos Annual Carnival
- Scholarship Luncheon (Local HS)
- Hero Run
- Veterans Day Supply Drive
- Kiwanis One Day
- ARC Walk
- Key Leader
- Compton Initiative
- BUG (Bring Up Your Grades)
- Young Child Priority One
- Pediatric Trauma Prevention
- Rancho Los Amigos Pediatric Monthly Barbecue

### Youth Sponsored Clubs

- Aktion Club (The ARC)
- Kiwanis Green Team
- Builder Club (Griffiths Middle School)
- Kiwin's (Downey HS)
- Builder Club (East Middle School)
- Builder Club (East Middle School)
- Key Club (Downey HS)
- Builder Club (Wendy Doty Middle School)
- BUG (Gauldin Elementary School)
- Key Club (Lakewood HS)
- Builder Club (St. Raymond's Catholic School)



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

- |                    |                       |                   |                  |                   |                    |                     |
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# Kiwanis Club of Downney

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## The Legend of Gypsy Johnson

Writer: Greg Waskul

Gypsy Johnson is one of the most revered names in the storied history of Downey. For more than 60 years from the time she came to Downey in the early 1920s to marry her husband Parley until her death in 1986, Gypsy was at the center of Downey society.

Her home, the magnificent Casa de Parley Johnson estate on Florence Avenue near Rives Avenue, is one of the most storied estates in the city. The home, now owned by the Assistance League of Downey, was opened to the public for two days this fall and more than 500 local residents visited its majestic buildings and garden.

A group of Gypsy's friends and Assistance League members recently remembered this true Downey legend. Here, in their own words, are their remembrances of Gypsy.

### ARLENE HOFMAYER

Arlene, who recently passed away at age 92, said, "I was Gypsy's neighbor, but I got acquainted with Gypsy because she was a good friend of Mabel Tweedy. Mabel's daughter was my friend. Gypsy was wonderful to me and my husband and entertained us a great deal.

"I played bridge with her and went with her to her garden club often when it was in Beverly Hills or Hancock Park or when she entertained here. She was very pleasant with my family and my husband.

"Gypsy was very sociable and very loving, and a very good hostess. She enjoyed her guests and enjoyed being involved in things even during the latter part of her life.

"She had my husband Ed and I as guests a lot of times because she was wishing to have company. We often had dinner here. She really trusted Ed a lot because whenever we would be going anywhere she would have him go down to her safe in the basement and take out her jewels. When we returned she would have him put them back.

"She was considerate of everyone and wanted to have a happy time and also give other people a delightful time. She was just a wonderful, fine lady and managed her life and her association with other people better than most anybody."

### BEVERLY MATHIS

"We are extremely fortunate that Gypsy gave the Assistance League this lovely home, the Casa de Parley Johnson. We have a huge responsibility to keep it in a manner that would please her and retain

the historical significance. We are very fortunate that she left us this wonderful meeting place for our chapter, our Assisteens, and our Gypsy Johnson Auxiliary.

"The era that she lived was one of formality and garden parties and receptions, and she kept meticulous records of who attended these events. It was very common for her to have more than 100 people at these parties, and we can close our eyes and think about the beautiful events she had here. We are so proud that we can keep her legacy alive in our community."

### ADELE ALEXANDER

"Nowadays, women can do anything. But in her day, that wasn't the case. Gypsy was a Southern Belle, but her charm and her wit made her very important to many people.

"We should all remember that she did things most women didn't get to do in her day. She was able to leave a mark on a city and everyone she ever knew."

### ANNA TSEKLENIS

"Gypsy was a very intuitive, very sensitive woman. She was kind, gentle and yet very purposeful. She was an exceptional woman who knew what she wanted and how to get it. She was also charming and gracious...what more can I say? She was just an incredible lady.

"I first met Gypsy through an antique seminar at her home, and soon she invited my husband and I to dinner. It was a gracious southern dinner with her maid and her butler

"Downey legend Mabel Tweedy and Gypsy were like sisters. They loved to play bridge and sometimes when one of the regular players was out of town, I would substitute and go and see these beautiful ladies. I was about half their age, and it was a very different world.

"One day in the early 1970s, Gypsy asked me to drive her and her maid Leola to a garden party in Los Feliz. I had a wonderful time that day, and so did Leola. Gypsy also gave wonderful Christmas parties in her home. She loved entertaining and she loved having people around her.

"Gypsy was a very great Southern lady. She was tiny, and her voice was very soft. She was always smiling, and she was interested in you. She wanted to know everything about you. To me, she was just lovely, like a great aunt. She was always so happy so see you.

"She enjoyed every room in her house, but I think she loved the office the most. She used to sit and read in there for hours on end. And of

course, the gardens are so massive and colorful. They really remind you of a Spanish hacienda.

"Our ladies and Assisteens work their hearts out to keep Gypsy's house and gardens going. I hope the younger generation will continue to support it. How many of these beautiful homes do we have?" I always drive people over just so they can see the building. It's an incredible legacy and we're lucky to have it.

"I loved Gypsy. Very rarely do you meet people like her. There was just something about her, like she could walk on water. She was a beautiful friend. I felt honored to have met her and to have been a small part of her life."



### LESLIE RIPLEY

"Gypsy was always happy when her beautiful house was being enjoyed by others. I was married in Gypsy's home, as were my parents.

"She had a West Virginia tone to her Southern accent. She had a graciousness about her that helped her bring people around to her way of thinking. She truly had an art and a gift to it, and she was sincere. She loved beauty, she loved people, and that's why all of this was so important to her.

"My grandmother Mabel Tweedy, Ruth Ball and Gypsy were the equivalent of sisters, and the Garden Club was very important to them. Whenever Gypsy had guests there were always fresh-cut flowers throughout the house, even in the bathrooms. She loved beauty.

"Gypsy loved Downey and Downey loved Gypsy. Originally she talked about giving the house to my parents, but my mother felt that it should go an organization that could take care of it over time. By donating this home to the Assistance League of Downey, Gypsy made sure this magnificent estate could be shared for generations.

"She was an elegant, lovely, refined human being...a rare flower. I've never met anyone like Gypsy!"

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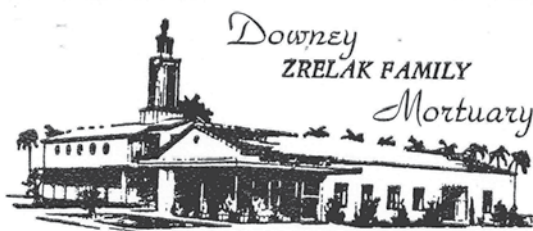
## IN MEMORIAM

In honor of those who have passed, the following is a list of residents who were memorialized with an obituary in The Downey Patriot through December 5, 2013

Serena Ann Bayze-Acuna  
Michael Axton  
Keith Baker  
Erma Rose Baysinger  
Wanda Beardslee  
Oliver Nelson Bennett  
Mariateresa Bobadilla  
Warren Eugene Boyes  
Irene Amelia Bradshaw  
Barbara Brindley  
Robert Brindley  
Mary Margaret Keogh Cahill  
Darwin Callejas  
Fay Rosemary Campbell  
Helen Mary Cerda  
Mark Allan Child  
Vita Chirco  
Alicia Clements  
Jose Cuevas  
Ruth May Cwynar  
Kenneth Drake  
Gwendolyn (Gwen) Roberta Egge  
Kenneth George Eib  
Margaret Maxine Evans  
Joseph Anthony Farruggia  
Mary Fuller-Brown-Reed  
Nick Gergorio  
Gary Ray Givens  
Blanca Margarita Guoz  
Donald Hammerle  
Mae Adele Haiden  
James Hawkins  
Gloria Cox Heer  
Anna Dell Hemphill  
Eugene Hicks  
Roger Allan Higgins  
Verna Marie Hinsberger  
Arlene Hofmayer

Harold Paul Hogarth  
Donald Hollister  
Laura Hughes  
Samuel Hurd  
Marla Iriarte-Claiborne  
Robert Mansfield Jennings  
Margaret Elizabeth Johnson  
Mary Johnston  
Jody Louise Kaessner-Hensley  
Daniel Katreeb  
Marian Beverly Klausman Klaas  
Christopher Robert Kutlu  
Jeanita LaVigne  
Antonia LoCicero  
Cesar Lopez  
Elaine Lopez  
Karen Lopez  
Yolanda Maria Louwers  
Milton Mackaig Jr.  
Gordon Elmer Madru  
Shirley Mark  
Maria Martinez  
Jim Matos  
Maurice McAlister  
Eva McDaniel  
Garoldine Elizabeth McMurray  
Beckie Mendez  
Raul Agustin Mendez  
Aldine Lucille Michaels  
Eleanor Miller  
Mary Elizabeth Molander  
La Verne Monahan  
Frances Moren  
James Lee Myer  
Roger Nordin  
Maxine Vanita Ogle  
Jose Pajon  
Margaret Emma Panneck  
Raymond Patrick Paris

James Francis Patterson  
Jacquelin Perry  
Giovanni Joseph Persico  
Donald Albert Reel  
Bette Richards  
Tracy Riley  
Becky Romano  
Lucille Roybal  
Alex Saab  
Jerry Scheerer  
Mary Lou Schmidt  
Robert Schroeder  
Alex Smick  
Lillian Sneed  
Violet Solis  
Emma Sonnenberg  
Dodi Soza  
Floyd Stauffer  
Deborah Jean Stoltman  
George Peter Stone  
Leonore Julia Stroh  
Robert Gene Swyden Jr.  
MacLeod Chris Thiessen  
Jerry Dwindle Thornton  
Josephine Eve Tirado  
Bettie Norman Tompkins  
Dorothy Tuttle  
Mark Vasquez  
Marian Janet Vinovich  
Robert Warren  
Patricia Weidknecht  
Mary Louise Welch  
Norma Willis  
Richard Lee Williams  
Brian Wolf  
William Wong  
Juanita Yancey  
Joe Yeno Jr.  
Bonnie Mae Young



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# MESSAGE FROM THE PUBLISHER

December is always a bitter-sweet time of year for me. It's a time to look back on this past year, and reflect on how much progress I have made, both professionally and personally. Professionally, the question I am most often asked is "How do you do it?" Quite often, I ask myself the same question. There are so many options for news, however, The Downey Patriot has a unique following within the community and residents of Downey, and surrounding areas. Therefore, I want to take a moment to introduce the dedicated staff of *The Downey Patriot*, without whom none of these things would be possible.

Our Editor, **Eric Pierce**, has been with The Downey Patriot since it started in 2001. He oversees all the Editorial content that publishes in The Downey Patriot and The Norwalk Patriot. This year Eric received an award from the California Newspaper Publisher Association's Better Newspaper Contest for Best Writing with his story "Bob Feliciano Brings Suicide Out of Its Shadow." Staff writers **Christian Brown** and **Henry Veneracion** work with Eric regarding story ideas and community events. The Downey Patriot also works with contributing columnists **Mark Fetter** who covers as many high school sporting events as possible, as well as **Dr. Alan Frischer** who educates us in hopes of living well, eating healthy and making good choices. **Cristina Gonzales** heads up the Legal Advertising Department and also works with **Jonathan Fox** in the Production Department, building ads, creating templates for special sections and laying out the paper. **Linda Larson** oversees the Classifieds each week, as well as subscriptions. **Dorothy Michael** and **MaryAnn Sourial** are the Display Advertising Department. They communicate with local businesses in Downey, working to promote their business through *The Downey Patriot* and *The Norwalk Patriot* by devising advertising and marketing plans. While our staff is small, we publish a newspaper that is welcomed by the community, community leaders, businesses who advertise and so many more people throughout the world who utilize our website. For that, I am thankful. I am also thankful for articles of interest contributed by concerned citizens too numerous to mention, as well as all the Letters to the Editor and "On Vacation with The Downey Patriot." The acceptance and positive feedback of *The Downey Patriot* in the city, creates internal motivation to reach higher and strive for new goals.

This year, from a personal standpoint I have experienced

a great deal of change. I have heard over the past year that I am a very private person, and keep to myself. While I normally don't volunteer information about my personal thoughts and feelings, I thought I would give you some insight about me. Most of you know that I'm a homegrown Downey product, attending Methodist PreSchool, Good Shepherd Lutheran School, East Middle School and graduating from Downey High School. I attended Cerritos College, where I received my Paralegal Certificate, and graduated from California State University Fullerton with my Bachelor's in Communications and Public Relations.

For me, high school was an amazing time. Walking on the campus as a freshman - not knowing whether I would survive the day without being "trashed" all the way through to graduation day, where I was surrounded by my graduating class who had become like a second family. During those years I truly believe I developed a lot of my characteristics, cultivating and refining right from wrong, learning selfness v. selfishness, dealing with peer pressure, acceptance, etc. I have friends from High School and previous years that I am still close with today, some with help of Social Media, others without. Memories that are made in high school will live with you forever and will be appreciated more and more when sharing them with those that made them with you.

In May I was inducted into the Downey High School Hall of Fame, which came with both amazement - that someone thought to nominate me and the nominating committee who actually thought me worthy and presented me with this award - and humility, that I can hopefully live up to this honor. While I had an acceptance speech prepared, it was cut short by my 3 year old daughter who dodged grandma and grandpa and unknowingly followed me to the stage, waved and blew kisses to the audience, and then started to dance. Needless to say, she stole my thunder, and the show and totally revised my speech.

It's been more than 20 years since I graduated, and there have been many changes to the campus, with the addition of new buildings, an animal farm, new football field, a cheerleading room (with mirrors as opposed to the cafeteria windows that I practiced in front of.) There are also more available academic courses and the newest addition, an auto shop.

If provided an opportunity to address the graduating classes

of 2013, or 2014, from our local high schools, these are the lessons that I learned from high school, which are still relevant now.

*Be Yourself.* Everyone is an unique individual, with a one of a kind personality and irreplaceable quirks and peculiar in their own right.

*Be Confident.* It's been said, believe in yourself and you'll go far. Be "that person" that introduces yourself. Smile! Stand up straight, speak clearly and distinctly.

*Be Honest.* Honesty should come naturally. While sometimes, it's important to use a little sugar in the "honest" delivery, speak from your heart, knowing that what you say, you believe to be true. Besides, it's a lot easier to remember the truth than a lie.

*Don't Judge a book by its cover, or a review.* Same goes for people. Before you judge a person based on what you've heard, do yourself a favor, and get to know that person and form your own opinion.

*Don't be afraid to make a mistake.* Mistakes happen. Sometimes they are able to be repaired and sometimes you can only move forward, and learn from them. Making a mistake is different then failing. Mistakes happen when you try. Don't quit! Rethink it, ask for help and try again. Occasionally the largest accomplishment will come from the worst mistake.

Accepting who you are is one of the largest lessons in life. Confidence may or may not come naturally, being assertive and confident enough to introduce yourself to another, may be life changing - for you or for them. Be confident enough to accept your mistakes, and apologize when necessary. Surround yourself with people that appreciate you for who you are, what you believe in and who will listen and help you make your goals a reality. Everyone makes mistakes. Learning from your mistakes, builds character (so they say) and is what makes you grow as a person. Life is funny, as sometimes you find yourself in similar scenarios. If you can pin point the mistake from the past, put "Plan B" into action, and try again, the result may allow you to attain your goal.

Thank you for making 2013 "A Year to Remember".

Jennifer DeKay  
Publisher

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