

Downey, 2018

YEAR IN REVIEW



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December 20, 2018



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By: Eric Pierce

If you had to describe Downey's 2018 in one word, which word would you choose? My word is "progress." Progress is subjective but it applies for the strides Downey made in several areas, including a visible and tangible reduction in the homeless population, a growing appreciation for public art, and sizeable financial investments in our community.

It took a generous tax rebate, but Giant RV moved into the former Gemco site where Studebaker Road t-bones at Florence Avenue. The property enjoys great freeway exposure but sits too close to Target and Costco, which, to be honest, are probably the site's ideal suitors.

A couple of miles southwest, Kaiser Permanente broke ground on a new hospital tower next to their existing Downey hospital, further solidifying Downey as the medical hub of Southeast Los Angeles County.

Even the former Krikorian theater is getting a much-needed facelift, thanks to its acquisition by Studio Movie Grill.

But perhaps Downey's greatest progression was accomplished at the polls as voters chose two Latinas to represent them in public office.

Claudia Frometa claimed a victory over equally qualified Carrie Uva for a spot on the City Council. Giovanna Perez-Saab -- or Giggy Saab as she's more commonly known -- defeated relatively unknown challenger Carlos Avalos to claim a vacant seat on the school board.

The election of Frometa and Saab reinforced two things: generally speaking, Downey voters remain politically astute and prefer honest, civic-minded residents to overly-polished, politically ambitious candidates.

Along those same lines, the City Council selected Rick Rodriguez to be Downey's mayor for 2019, and in many ways, his selection comes at just the right time.

Now retired, Rodriguez has taken a second career as a professional volunteer. Like a successful real estate broker, he's in the business of bringing people together and getting things done. He's a believer of creating strength in numbers and the sharing of institutional knowledge and resources.

One of Rodriguez's unique strengths is his ability to bypass governmental red tape in order to put people in positions to succeed. You won't hear him say no very often -- he'll ask, 'How can we make this happen?'

It's a refreshing approach and subtle confirmation that Downey's best virtues often don't originate from City Hall; instead, they come about organically from the local, volunteer level. As lowly residents, sometimes we fall into the habit of expecting "the city" to do things for us when we are perfectly capable of effecting change ourselves.

Today's society has made it easy and -- worse -- rewarding to complain and be outraged, but that doesn't make a lot of sense in Downey, where opportunities to make a positive impact are boundless.

Concerned about crime? Join or start a neighborhood watch group.

Graffiti in your alleyway? Download the city's mobile app and report it.

Garbage on your block? Give up one hour and pick up litter with Keep Downey Beautiful.

Rodriguez already created the Downey Clergy Council, his way of connecting Downey's several dozen religious congregations, and his goal in 2019 will be something he's calling the Downey Care Collaborative, a coalition of non-profits, educators and others to help vulnerable children in the foster care system.

Rodriguez has the drive, connections and political savviness to get things done, as long as he thinks it's in the best interest of Downey; if ever there was a time to think big, bold and ambitious, it's now, you just have to be willing to put in the work.

Every year in this space, I like to post my wishlist for the coming year. Here goes nothing:

Completion of freeway construction. Without the benefit of an engineering degree or any formal training in highway management, it appears ridiculous how long it is taking to widen the 5 Freeway.

Less partisan politics. It shouldn't matter if our city council or school board representatives are Republican, Democrat, or any other party. It's a slippery slope when we allow our nation's political discord to seep into our local elections.

A second hotel option. Or maybe a third hotel option, if the rumored hotel at the Promenade materializes. Construction on a Springhill Suites across from Stonewood Center is supposed to begin early next year.

Live streaming of the Downey Christmas Parade. In the good old days, the parade was broadcast on local cable, but that hasn't happened for a while now. It would be nice to have the parade recorded for those who cannot attend.

Adequate parking for new housing. I'm not against new housing, I'm against new housing with insufficient parking.

Another dog park. If it were up to me, we'd replace the handball courts at Golden Park with a dog enclosure.

Live, on-demand city council meetings. Streaming city council meetings today is extremely difficult, even for people comfortable with technology.

The return of the pedestrian bridge at Wilderness Park. I'm going to wish this into existence.

Turn arrows at Firestone and Lakewood. Turning on a stale green is risky business.

I hope everyone enjoys a wonderful Christmas and cheers to a prosperous 2019.

Eric Pierce, Editor

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Downey 2018 Year In Review

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

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January



The Downey Rose Float Association won the prestigious Queen Trophy at the 129th Tournament of Roses Parade.

Titled "Working Together," Downey's float featured two peace doves on opposite sides of an 11 ft. 6-inch rotating globe. The entire float spanned 42 1/2 feet and was adorned with 15,000 roses.

"The support we receive from the Downey community throughout the year makes participating in the parade possible," said Jennifer DeKay, president of the Downey Rose Float Association.

*Mayor Sean Ashton announced the creation of the Mayor's Downey DNA Award, honoring people and businesses who demonstrate extraordinary leadership and service to community.

*The inaugural award was presented to Zoey Luna, a transgender student at Warren High School.

*Facing pressure after multiple public claims of sexual harassment, state Sen. Tony Mendoza took a leave of absence.

*Warren High wrestler Joshua Mendoza (126 lbs.) was named MVP of the Tournament of Champions Wrestling Tournament.

*The Planning Commission approved plans for an adaptive reuse of the former Avenue Theatre property, including a pizza parlor, craft brewery, and entertainment venue with rooftop lounge. Avenue Pizza will sell New York-style pizza and stay open until 3 a.m. daily, with 24-hour delivery; Crawford Brewery will function as a micro-brewery with southern-style barbecue; and the entertainment hall - likely to be called Rockwell - will total more than 11,000 square feet with live entertainment until 1:30 a.m.

*Girl Power, a student club at Unsworth Elementary, collected toys for the mothers at Angel Step, a domestic violence shelter for women.

*Lars Clutterham, a Downey resident and composer, wrote a piece of music exclusively for Downey, premiering it at a Downey Symphony concert. Clutterham is author of "Downey Celebration Suite," a piece of music celebrating Downey's 60th anniversary of incorporation.

*Vandals knocked over dozens of headstones at the Downey Cemetery, causing an estimated \$2,500 in damage. In response, Supervisor Janice Hahn announced funding to install a perimeter fence around the cemetery.

*Downey firefighters rescued a man whose pickup ended up in the Rio Hondo River during a heavy downpour. With help from an L.A. County Fire Department helicopter, Downey firefighters freed the driver, who escaped without injuries.

*Volunteers canvassed Downey over the course of three nights, counting the local homeless population. Results showed a drop in homeless residents from the previous year, although it did not account for residents living in temporary housing such as motels or with family.

*The City Council voted to spend \$50,000 for the creation of a homeless action plan.

*Blood, Sweat and Tears, featuring Bo Bice, performed at the Downey Theatre.



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*A national ranking listed the intersection of Firestone and Lakewood boulevards in Downey as one of the state's most dangerous.

The busy crossing was ranked the fourth most dangerous intersection in all of California, based on the number of collisions at the site, along with injuries and deaths.

Downey police and public works officials disputed the ranking, claiming the intersection has seen significant traffic safety improvements since 2015.

*Porto's Bakery served the world's largest Rosca De Reyes cake, with more than 400 people enjoying a free slice.

*Hookah Hub, a downtown hookah lounge, hired an attorney as it appealed sanctions by the city of Downey.

The Planning Commission cut the hookah lounge's hours and revoked its ability to host live entertainment after reports that the business was draining police resources due to fights, stabbings and gang activity.

City officials also accused Hookah Hub of violating building and safety permits.

The previous month, the Planning Commission took similar action against another hookah lounge, Mosaik Hookah, stripping its live entertainment permit, rolling back its hours of operation, and raising its minimum customer age to 21.

*City officials approved plans for a third rooftop restaurant in downtown Downey, this one at the southeast corner of 2nd Street and Downey Avenue.

Property owner Don Jervis received approval to redevelop the property into a two-story restaurant with a 776-sq. ft. rooftop deck.

*El Pescador announced it would open at Downey Landing in the space formerly occupied by Elephant Bar.

*Warren High's girls soccer team won its fourth consecutive San Gabriel Valley League championship. The squad also won the Best in the West Tournament, the first time Warren has won the competitive tournament in 10 years.

*Downey Police Cpl. Scott Shockey retired after 23 years with the department.

*The American Cancer Society issued Downey an "F" grade for its anti-smoking efforts (or lack thereof).

*Despite vetoes by Gov. Jerry Brown, Assemblymember Cristina Garcia said she would continue efforts to repeal taxes on feminine hygiene products. "The state budget should not be balanced by a tax of a woman's uterus; our tax codes should be gender neutral," Garcia said.

*Four robotics teams from Downey Unified qualified for the California State Robotics Championships.

*Calvin Spencer, co-founder of Bastards Canteen, was killed in a motorcycle collision. Spencer, 30, was riding his motorcycle southbound on Paramount Boulevard when he was hit by a mid-size SUV.

The driver of the SUV, a 79-year-old Downey woman, was not criminally charged.

*Jorge Orozco, chief executive officer at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, resigned to accept the same job at L.A. County-USC Medical Center.

February

*Two-time Grammy Award nominee John Tesh performed at the Downey Theatre.

*Griffiths and Stauffer middle schools were named California "schools to watch" for demonstrating academic excellence, social equity, and responsiveness to students' needs. The designation was announced by California state superintendent Tom Torlakson.

*Downey Unified superintendent Dr. John Garcia was presented the Superhero Award by Summer Matters, a campaign that supports high quality summer learning opportunities.

Garcia earned the award for building a full-day curriculum at Downey summer school, including academics in the morning and enrichment in the afternoon.

*Prosecutors charged a Whittier woman with manslaughter after forensic tests revealed she was high on marijuana when she struck and killed an 18-year-old Downey woman in October 2017.

Karla Salazar, a 2017 Downey High graduate, was killed when Ilse Moreno-Arredondo rear-ended the vehicle Salazar was traveling in. The collision occurred at Firestone Boulevard and Brookshire Avenue.

*The first Downey Military Career Day was held at St. Pius X - St. Matthias Academy, drawing hundreds of students who learned about their options post-graduation.



Thank you Downey for another wonderful year!

We saw over 75,000 people this past year.

Thank you for your continued support!



Julianna Gamiz gets her big break

By Alex Dominguez

Look out Hollywood, because a new star from Downey is born.

6-year-old Julianna Gamiz likes to sing and dance. She likes to go to Disneyland ride, Splash Mountain and meet Minnie Mouse. She goes to school at St. Dominic Savio Catholic School.

She likes to remind all her friends and classmates that she's "just a normal kid like everyone else" but that doesn't mean she doesn't like the extra attention being in movies brings her.

Julianna says that she's wanted to be an actress since she was only 1. The glitz and glitter of the small screen had a certain appeal to her.

"I get to be on TV," said Julianna. "It's cool."

She's on more than just TV, though. Julianna's first major movie, "Instant Family," came out Nov. 16.

"Instant Family" is a based-on-a-true-story film about a couple who adopts three siblings out of foster care. It stars Mark Wahlberg, Rose Byrne and Isabella Moner.

If you didn't notice, those are some pretty big names to work with for such a young star's big break.

"I was excited and shy," said Julianna.

In the film, she plays Lita, the youngest of the three siblings. Julianna describes her character as a bit of a "firecracker."

"She likes potato chips, she screams a lot," said Julianna. Her favorite scene to film centered around her character wanting a Barbie doll.

Julianna and her mother lived in Atlanta for four months while filming for "Instant Family" took place. The middle child of three, Julianna says that it was nice to have some space from her brother and sister.

"It was nice to be on my own," said Julianna. "Usually my sister always get attention, and my brother and sister always bug me."

Though this was her first big movie, Julianna has already found some success on a wide scale. Fans of the show "Jane the Virgin" might recognize her as "Young Jane," a very special credit for Julianna who was a fan of the show before landing the role.

"[It made me feel] awesome," said Julianna, who added that she was excited to meet and work alongside the stars of her favorite show.

Julianna could quite possibly add another impressive notch on her resume as well: Disney Channel.

"On Monday I had an audition for Disney," said Julianna. "Well, it was kind of an audition. They asked me questions. It was a meeting."

Julianna's mother, 33-year-old Jacqueline Gamiz, described raising a child actor as "different."

"She's just so busy all the time, and it's hard to juggle being a child and having the extra-curricular," said Jacqueline. "Just having a very unsteady schedule. We try setting playdates with a friend, and day of we get a morning call saying, 'We need you in LA at 2 p.m.'"

Jacqueline added that they didn't necessarily keep her daughter's work a secret, but she "liked her being grounded and liked her being a normal kid and being treated the same as most she could."

"I think her school just started finding out when this movie came out," said Jacqueline. "In the beginning everything was on the hush. She was filming since she was 2-years- She was on as a regular on 'East Los

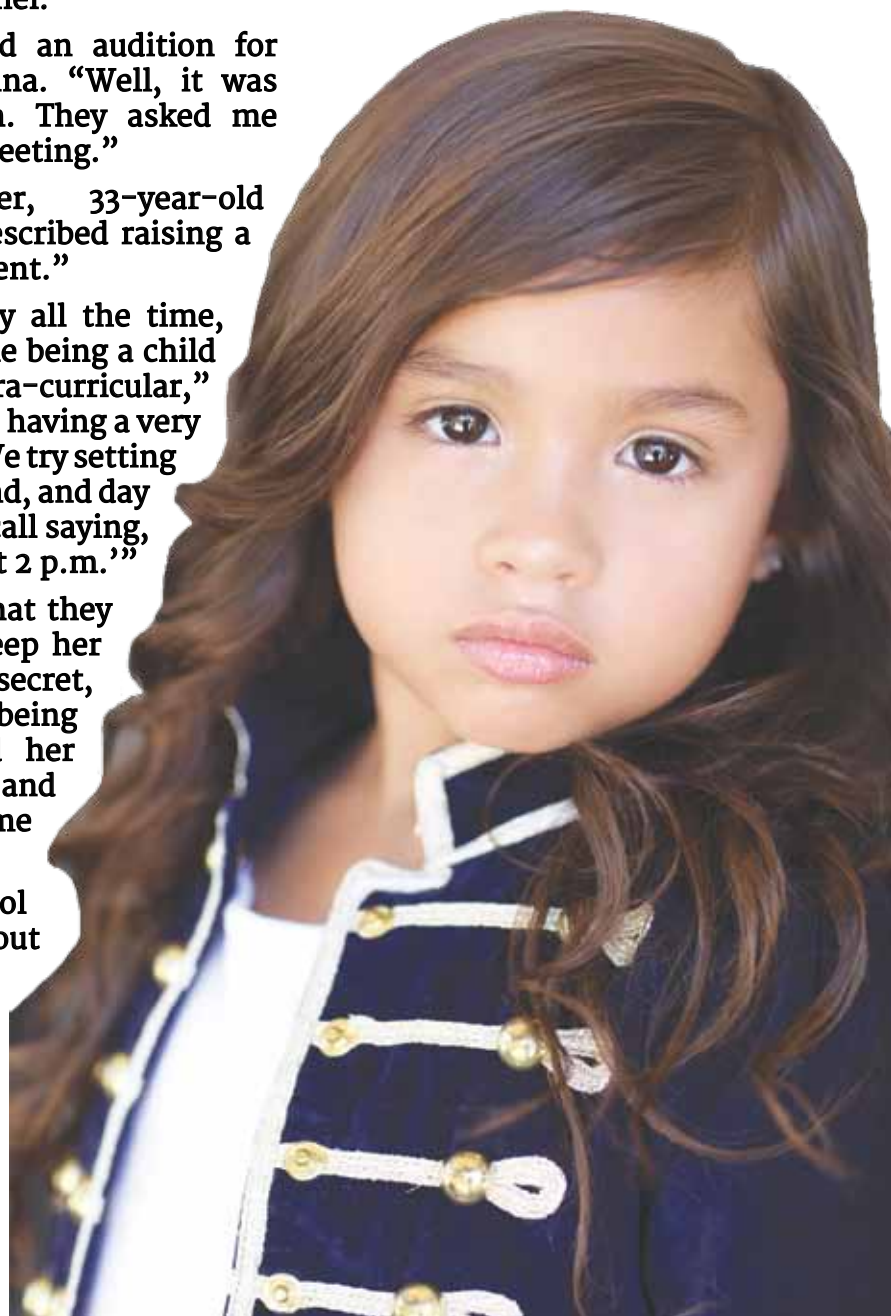
but that was just a Hulu show, not a lot of people watched it."

"Everywhere she walks in school they call her 'the movie star,' the 'celebrity,' she gets her special treatment."

It's okay though, because Julianna has backup whenever the school paparazzi get to be too much.

"My friend Richard always says, 'Leave her alone,'" said Julianna.

The attention isn't that bad though. She likes being famous.





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*The Downey school board voted to change its elections from the first Monday in November of odd years to the first Tuesday of November in even years.

The change effectively gave four board members – Tod Corrin, Willie Gutierrez, Donald LaPlante and D. Mark Morris – an extra year in office unchallenged. They will now be up for re-election in 2020.

*Officer Ralph Diaz, a 9-year veteran of the Downey Police Department, was promoted to corporal.

Cpl. Melissa Clemann, an 11-year veteran of the department, was promoted to sergeant.

*Josie Estrada was named executive director of Stay Gallery, the non-profit art collective in Downtown Downey.



Stauffer Middle School's Alyda Mir was named "Principal of the Year" by the Association of California School Administrators.

*Assemblymember Cristina Garcia went on a leave of absence after she was accused of sexual misconduct, including groping a male staffer, having sex with other politicians in her office, and playing spin the bottle with employees.

A state investigation cleared Garcia of most of the charges, although she was disciplined for using vulgar language and making disparaging comments about her colleagues. She was also ordered to undergo sensitivity training.

*Downey High's girls water polo team won the San Gabriel Valley League championship, finishing league with a perfect 5-0 record (23-5 overall).

*Downey High's boys soccer team captured the league championship, finishing league with a record of 7-1-2.

*The city of Downey reached a labor deal with its four fire department battalion chiefs. The 2-year contract included pay raises for the firefighters plus \$400 lump sum payments.

*The Downey Chamber of Commerce extended its office lease with the city of Downey for 10

years. Under terms of the deal, the chamber pays only \$1 per year in rent.

*Rancho Los Amigos hospital launched a clinical trial that seeks to "rewire" the brain after a stroke, leading to upper limb functional restoration.

*Dogged by sexual harassment allegations and facing expulsion from his fellow legislators, state Sen. Tony Mendoza resigned his seat. By resigning, Mendoza was eligible to reclaim his seat by running in the June primary, which he did. He lost, however, to Democratic rival Bob Archuleta.

*Kaiser Permanente employees staged a protest outside the Downey hospital, rallying against the medical center's plans to outsource 61 jobs. Kaiser officials called the protests "counterproductive."

*The mass shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., prompted copycat threats in Downey, though none of the threats were deemed credible.

*Downey donated a used fire engine to the fire department of Fresnillos, Zacatecas, Mexico. Downey firefighters spent a week training their Mexican counterparts on how to use the engine. The Downey Sister Cities facilitated the donation.

*For the second time in school history, Downey High's freshmen, JV and varsity cheer squads all won first place national titles at USA Nationals.

March

*Former mayor Mario Guerra announced he was not running for state senate, quelling speculation he would seek the vacancy created by Tony Mendoza's resignation.

*L.A. County Supervisor Janice Hahn proposed a plan to hospitalize up to 165 homeless persons at Rancho Los Amigos, helping to ease overcrowding at local hospitals and emergency rooms. "Options are limited for homeless individuals who are recuperating from hospitalization," Hahn said. "Typically, when a patient no longer needs acute care but is still recovering from an illness or injury, they are discharged home to rest and may receive follow-up care as an outpatient. Homeless individuals, however, end up staying in the hospital for much longer."

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*L.A. Metro held an informational workshop where officials discussed plans for a possible light rail line through Downey.

*A live stage adaptation of the Warner Bros. animated series “Animaniacs” was performed at the Downey Theatre.



Wendy Welt was the guest speaker at Gangs Out of Downey's annual fundraising luncheon.

Welt is a congenital quad-amputee, meaning she was born without arms or legs. Despite the disability, Welt has lived a relatively normal life, including marriage and children. She works today as a motivational speaker.

Photo by Claudia Gomez

was arrested for working as a civil engineer despite not being properly licensed. Prosecutors said Wilfrido Rodriguez falsified documents and stole the logo of a legitimate engineering company to secure work from homeowners and land developers. Rodriguez was charged with 487 counts of identity theft and faced 152 years in prison.

*Downey's board of education voted to rename the Carnival of Champions track and field

competition after the late administrator Dale Lostetter.

*The Downey Patriot was named a finalist for three state journalism awards. Staff writer Alex Dominguez was a finalist in the “Breaking News” category for his story on a survivor of the Las Vegas mass shooting; contributor Lawrence Christon was a finalist in the “Best Writing” category for his essay on a homeless tennis player; and editor Eric Pierce was a finalist in the same “Best Writing” category for his profile of Dr. Mary Stauffer.

*In his “State of the City” address, Mayor Sean Ashton emphasized Measure S spending, including plans to hire 12 police officers and 14 firefighters.

*Stay Gallery hosted a panel discussion on female entrepreneurship, with guest speakers including radio personality Yesi Ortiz of Power-106; Chauncey Carothers, a brand strategist and social influencer; and Bruna Nessif, a freelance dating columnist.

*Burlington celebrated its grand opening at the Promenade, and donated \$10,000 to Gaudin Elementary as a show of community support.

April

*Police Cpl. Edward Hano and fire Capt. David Holcombe were honored as Police Officer and Firefighter of the Year, respectively, by the Downey Police and Fire Foundation.

*The Downey Symphony closed its 59th season with an evening of Tchaikovsky.

*Country music star Sara Evans closed the Downey Theatre's 2017-18 entertainment calendar.

*An exhibit celebrating the Cassini space mission opened at the Columbia Memorial Space Center.

*The City of STEM Science Festival kicked off with a press conference attended by Bill Nye “The Science Guy.”

*Downey Police warned residents of a telephone scam in which the caller pretends to be from the IRS in an attempt to pilfer money.

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Soroptimist International of Downey honored several women for their inspiring work in the community. Honorees included Maria Villegas, a sergeant with the Downey Police Department; Christina Ciatti, an instructor at Downey Adult School; Claudia Marroquin-Frometa, an emergency management worker with Kaiser Permanente; Wendy McKinsey, a retired DUSD administrator; Maria Dolores Torres, a non-profit executive director; Mikayla Bisson, a Downey High student; and Jasmine Mijangos, also a Downey High student.

*Downey was named one of the top cities in the nation in which to hold a business meeting, according to the website RewardExpert.com. The site ranked Downey in the top 3 in its Pacific West region, behind only Covina and Huntington Beach.

*Former Downey city council candidate Frine Medrano announced she would challenge embattled Assemblymember Cristina Garcia in the June primary. Garcia went on to victory.

*Cocina Distrito restaurant, a modern, upscale take on Mexican cuisine, opened at the former Salvatore's site on Paramount Boulevard. Unfortunately, the restaurant closed six months later.

*Café 'N Stuff restaurant rebranded as Gatherings 'N Stuff, a private venue for corporate lunches and community events.

*Downey Unified partnered with Cal Poly Pomona on a new project titled The Femineers, designed to expose girls to engineering careers.

*Downey Council PTA honored volunteers from each of Downey's 19 public schools at its Honorary Service Award program.

Honorees included: Erica Lee, Kari Medina, Yobana Sanchez, Brenda Warner, Kimberly Gumino, Luisa Jenkins, Cathy Godinez, Marketplace Grill, Veronica Prado, Amy Worthington, Lilia Gonzalez, Brenda Rodriguez, Jose Rodriguez, Patty Vargas Duarte, Desiree Corral Schneider, Alma Figueroa, Joanna Perez, Anabel Mendoza, Marco Cordova, Adriana Garcia, Lizette Velazquez, Laura Macias, Esther Brossmer, Lucy Jimenez, Patricia Carillo, Dorothy Pemberton, Claudia Cano, Green Olive, Grocery Outlet, Norma Marroquin, Jerry Chavez, Denisse Eleno, Julio Gomez, Lorraine Navarro, April Tamashiro, Kristian Batiste, Jennifer Polgar, Elida Salguero, Jasmine Mijangos, Ed Estrella, Aida Ramirez, Brisol Valenzuela, Steve Maldonado, Christine Spino, Israel Molina, Sarah Shin, Jeff Toussieng, Patty Trejo, Nicole Martinez, Clara Tiscareno, Shelly Miller, Rebecca Pearce, Maria Vera, Sara Molina, Veronica Carrera, and Erin Sevilla.

*The Immanuel Armenian Congregational Church of Downey was honored by the L.A. County Board of Supervisors on April 3 for the church's nine decades of accomplishments, both for local Armenian Americans and the community of Los Angeles.

*Downey topped Warren in the annual Downey vs. Warren Classic track and field competition.

*Loyjean Estrada, a bus driver for Downey Unified, was named State Classified Employee of the Year. Only six employees from throughout California received the honor.

*Giant RV celebrated its grand opening at 11111 Florence Ave., near the 5 and 605 freeways.

May

*Willie Gutierrez resigned from the Downey Board of Education, citing a relocation to Long Beach. Gutierrez was elected to the school board in 2001, representing northeast Downey.

*Downey High students Michelle Kim, Earldrene Dubongco, Akhil Sharma, Christian Echeveste

and Evan Saracay created a custom space suit that fights muscle atrophy among astronauts. The creation went on to win the top prize at the Conrad Spirit of Innovation Challenge.

*A new farmers market opened on the grounds of Rancho Los Amigos hospital. Open Thursday mornings, it became Downey's second farmers market.

*Television producer Brian Tessier was the guest speaker at a Downey Historical Society meeting.

*Downey High's boys volleyball team finished its league schedule a perfect 10-0 to claim the San Gabriel Valley League championship.

*Downey High swimmers finished in second place at the CIF Division 4 finals in Riverside. Although they didn't win, it was Downey's best performance at CIF Finals since the 1950's.

*Downey High's girls softball team shared the league championship with Gahr. Both teams finished 9-1.

*Retiring police officers Mike Pope and Kevin Kendall were honored by the Downey board of education for their service to Downey schools.

*Warren High senior Alejandra Barreto was chosen to receive a coveted Gates Scholarship, which covers her college tuition, books, housing and health insurance.



Dona's Donuts became all the rage, with people waiting in line for more than an hour to try their specialty desserts. The quaint storefront on Imperial Highway went viral on Facebook for their Bidi Bidi Bom Boms, a purple glitter donut made in honor of the late Tejano singer Selena.

Photo by William Odis Martin

McDonald's; contributor Carol Kearns was a finalist for her profile on Tropicana Bakery; and editor Eric Pierce was a finalist for two awards, a profile on the Rives Mansion and a commentary on a proposed homeless shelter in Norwalk.

*Mayor Sean Ashton denied a report in the Patriot that he offered a seat on the Planning Commission in exchange for resident Lloyd Vernis agreeing not to run against him in the November election for City Council. Ashton would run unopposed to gain another four years on the council.

*A Downey military veteran was reunited with his service dog after the animal was stolen three days earlier.

Apolonio Munoz stopped at the Arco gas station at Lakewood Boulevard and Cecilia Street and left his vehicle running with his dog inside. A thief swiped the vehicle – and the dog. The service dog was found three days later at a park in Anaheim. The vehicle was recovered in Norwalk.

*Former Downey High principal Allen Layne celebrated his 80th birthday with a party on the Downey High field.

*Thousands attended Downey's annual Greek Festival. This year's event was condensed to two days.

Continued on page 31...



Mariah Lora was crowned Miss Downey at the 64th annual pageant held at the Downey Theatre. Ariana Santillan was named Miss Teen Downey, Sofia Gonzalez earned the title of Junior Miss Downey, and Jazlyn Fernandez was crowned Little Miss Downey.

Photo by Greg Page, Page One Studio



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Meet Downey's first deaf princess

By Alex Dominguez

When Downey's float makes its way down Colorado Boulevard on Jan. 1 in the Tournament of Roses Parade, 17-year-old Leslie Castillo will join the rest of the Miss Downey Court, as is tradition for the Downey Rose Float Association.

However, while every Miss Downey queen and princess who has ever been a part of the Rose Parade has brought with them their own unique personality and story, Castillo will bring with her something new, and a first for Downey's annual entry.

Castillo will join the court as Downey's first deaf princess.

As might be expected, life wasn't always the easiest for Castillo, who was born deaf. She faced challenges that most kids growing up in school probably couldn't fathom.

"In elementary school and middle school, I struggled because I didn't know who I related to: the hearing world or the deaf world," said Castillo. "I was kind of stuck in it, and I couldn't identify with either side."

While her hearing condition has improved over time, Castillo, currently a senior at Downey High School, added that her peers struggled with interacting with her.

"Most of the time, hearing people speak too fast; I couldn't understand them," said Castillo, who communicates both through sign language and lip reading. "They don't understand what the deaf culture is like."

So, when Castillo first became aware of the Downey Rose Float, she admittedly had some reservations.

"In middle school, there were two hearing girls who sat next to me and I overheard their conversation about how excited they were competing for the Miss Downey Pageant," said Castillo.

At the time, Castillo had no idea what a pageant was. After her mom described what pageantry was all about, she says that she wanted to participate. Yet something held her back.

"At first I didn't do it because I was afraid I wouldn't be able to hear," said Castillo. "I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to fit the idea of pageants."

However, that changed this past year, as Castillo was able to overcome her trepidation and participate in the most recent Miss

Downey Pageant.

"I decided to take the risk; you never know," said Castillo. "I expected to experience what the pageant life is, because I've been curious for so long, since middle school."

She says it wasn't long before the girls noticed her signing with her interpreter, and many of the girls approached her extremely impressed and interested in learning.

"It made feel good about myself, knowing that people wanted to learn about my culture," said Castillo. "It felt good to be accepted."

Castillo was successful for the Miss Downey Pageant, earning a spot on the court as one of the Miss Downey princesses.

Castillo has brought a new and refreshing outlook to the court.

"She's been a breath of fresh air because she has taught us all how to do sign language, and she's very willing to go well beyond," said Pam Chambers, secretary of the Downey Rose Float Association and Miss Downey court chaperone. "She has been beautiful to be on court with. I

couldn't have asked for a better young lady. Nothing hampers her; she's willing to try everything and anything. She's a great role model."

This includes being a representative and inspiration for the deaf community.

"I was able to show that deaf and hard of hearing girls can be successful, join pageants, do anything that they want to do," said Castillo. "I am an example bringing better change. It feels great. I feel honored that I was able to make an impact on the deaf community."

Castillo says that she has enjoyed attending events and meeting all kinds of different people, which has included one especially special little girl.

"There's a lot of deaf people who don't think they can be successful or are capable to do anything because they see hearing people have all the advantages in the hearing world," said Castillo. "There was a hearing mom, she came up to me and she called her daughter. Her daughter is hard of hearing just like me. She was shy, she believed that she couldn't do anything. She came up to me and she saw me signing. She was shocked, her reaction was priceless...I was able to share my experience with her, and it seemed like she was inspired. It was obvious that she wanted to be successful too."

As the year wraps up, Castillo is looking forward to representing her city and the deaf community as a participant in the Tournament of Roses Parade.

"That experience is pretty big; I'm going to be on national television," said Castillo. "It'll be nice to share the experience with the other girls. I will also be representing the deaf community too, to share my story and let people know that I'm the first Miss Downey Princess that's deaf."





40 UNDER 40



Lana Joy Wahlquist, 39

Lana Joy Wahlquist is an actor, director, producer, and educator who has been working in the field of theatre for 15-plus years.

As a founding member of Downey Arts Coalition, Lana has enjoyed producing and directing plays, staged readings, and other performing arts events in and around Downey. Most recently she has directed local productions of "Defying Gravity" by Jane Anderson and "A Civil War Christmas" by Paula Vogel.

As an actor, she has appeared on such stages as "A Noise Within," "The Hudson," Sierra Repertory Theatre, and "The Odyssey."

As an educator, she has taught theatre at Cerritos College, Cal State Northridge, and Norwalk High School, where she also directed more than 10 plays.

Lana is an accredited leader with La Leche League International, a volunteer organization designed for mother-to-mother support of breastfeeding. She has been active since 2007 and speaks regularly on panels about breastfeeding, and added a monthly meeting in Downey.

"Lana has been such an incredible source of support for my son and me throughout our breastfeeding journey," said Erin Wiebe. "I reached out to La Leche League when we were having a very difficult time breastfeeding and Lana was there for us every step of the way. She empathetically listened to my tears, gave invaluable advice for my concerns, and enthusiastically celebrated each of our successes. Breastfeeding has been an amazing experience and we would not have been able to do it without Lana."



Erika Gonzalez, 29

When Erika Gonzalez attended Coachella for the first time, she was enamored with the bohemian chic fashions that other women were wearing. Unfortunately, there wasn't a whole lot of option to find styles like that in Downey.

That is, until Gonzalez brought it to her city.

Gonzalez is co-owner and primary operator of Gypsy Queen, a boutique style shop found on Paramount Blvd.

While owning and operating a business is still new to her,

Gonzalez continues to learn and grow along with her business.

Using her keen eye for fashion trends and a mastery of social media, Gonzalez has expanded a once trailer boutique into the storefront that Gypsy Queen is today, and provided Downey women with a way to express their free-spirits through fashion.

Jonathan O'Neill, 17



Jonathan O'Neill isn't legally an adult but he's already making a name for himself in the world of mixed martial arts.

O'Neill has won three championship belts in Muay Thai, a form of martial arts that consists of stand-up striking using feet, shins, elbows, and fists. His record currently stands at 7-1, and he's set to defend his WBC belt early next year.

The young champion credits his early success to his father,

Eric O'Neill, his coach and mentor Isaias Nambo, and the rest of the team at King Cobra in Downey, where he trains.

Ricardo Perez, 36

Ricardo Perez is a civil litigation attorney who practices law out of Downey. He has litigated and settled numerous high-profile cases; most recently, Perez secured the release of Marco Contreras, who was wrongfully convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to life in prison. He was released in 2017 after serving 20 years in prison.

Perez is active in the Downey community, volunteering regularly with the Warren High School Ideas Club, organizing free legal fairs and citizenship clinics, and he actively supports Downey Art Vibe, the non-profit which oversees Stay Gallery, where he served for many years on the board of directors.

Perez also co-founded Ferias Legales, a non-profit organization devoted to bringing free legal resources to underserved communities.



Jesse Kalashyan, 28

Practicing law is never set in stone; it's more about being able to creatively problem solve, and that's what Jesse Kalashyan likes about it.

Kalashyan is an immigrant from Armenia. He and his family came to America in August of 1996 when he was nearly 6 years old. As such, Kalashyan's parents instilled in him to work hard and be successful.

He found that interest in law in high school.

The 2009 Warren graduate received his undergrad at University of California, Berkley, then went on to get his Juris Doctor from the University of Michigan Law in 2017.

Since then, Kalashyan's work portfolio is quite weighted, including some time working at the World Trade Organization in Geneva. One of his biggest cases: representing Boeing versus Airbus.

If that wasn't enough, Kalashyan now works for Skadden, a high caliber law firm that represents some of the biggest companies in the nation.

It's a good thing he likes to apply himself, because Kalashyan says that some of his firms clients are extremely demanding, which makes sense when you consider the \$4 billion merger he already has under his belt.



Hans Fritz, 28

Hans K. Fritz is the owner and CEO of HKF Consulting LLC. Hans began his consulting business over four years ago and is primarily based out of Downey, but services other areas in LA County. As a political consultant, Hans works for four currently elected Downey city council members, including Mayor Rick Rodriguez, and two former Downey mayors such as Mario Guerra. Hans has been involved in nine statewide and local campaigns, eight of which have been successful.

HKF Consulting LLC also offers media and sales consulting to foreign and domestic companies looking to improve their online presence and growth within their industry.

Hans is majoring in business administration with a concentration on entrepreneurship at CSU Dominguez Hills where he is also very involved having served as the marketing director for the Latinos Student Business Association.

Growing up, Hans always envisioned himself as a business owner. It was after being surrounded by the right motivating people that gave Hans the push he needed to start his own business. Although only owner-operated, Hans has grown his business exponentially over the past couple of years.



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Art Montoya, 30

You'll be hard-pressed to find someone more "Downey" than Art Montoya.

He attended Rio Hondo Elementary and Griffiths Middle School, where he was active in DJAA and the AYSO. He went on to Warren High and found a love for community service, giving his time to the yearbook staff, Key Club and CSF, while playing football, cross country, soccer, and track and field.

After graduation, he went on to Cal State Long Beach. In the summer of 2011, Montoya completed an internship with Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, an eye-opening and inspiring experience that motivated him to get more politically involved.

Montoya graduated from Cal State Long Beach with a bachelor's degree in political science with a concentration in law, policy, and politics. He moved on to UC Irvine to obtain his master's degree.

In 2016, Montoya saw another opportunity for service and ran for City Council. He lost to eventual winner Rick Rodriguez, but for Montoya it was ultimately a blessing, as he was able to study abroad, including in Hungary, Germany and Cuba. He graduated with his MBA in 2017.

Today, Montoya is a law student at the La Verne College of Law and has been elected class representative in the Student Bar Association. Upon graduation, he plans to go into business law and found a non-profit to help youth access higher education.

Jailene Lemus, 19



This could be one of our future Supreme Court Justices.

Despite her young age, Jailene Lemus could probably hold her own in government.

As part of Downey-South Gate Youth Government, she was selected as one of 25 students to represent California's Youth and Government program in the Conference of National Affairs over the summer of 2017. As part of the Downey Youth Commission, she organized Student Government Day, Hosted Warren's first voter registration drive in 2016, and communicated with her city council on youth related issues.

She then interned with the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office.

Now attending Wellesley College in Boston, Mass., the aspiring lawyer continues to be active in the workings of government: she currently serves as the Student Body Representative of the Elections Committee at Wellesley, as well as the CPLA Representative of the Wellesley Democrats and the Treasurer of the Committee of Political and Legislative Awareness.

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A special thank you to GLENN STEPHENS, our intrepid founder & director, and our volunteers, organizers, artists, and supporters, without which we could never build the Festival to where it is today. But most of all, a great big THANK YOU! to every movie lover who showed up and enjoyed the films. WE'LL SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!

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Ana Godinez, 27

Ana Godinez's love of art started at a young age and followed her to USC where she graduated with a degree in English Literature and Fine Arts. After college, Ana put down the paintbrush to become curator and youth program coordinator of Stay Gallery where she introduced many young students to local arts for four years.

Ana has worked behind the scenes as a graphic designer for several local companies and organizations. You may not know her face, but you have definitely seen her work. She has created websites and graphics for Stay Gallery, Elysian Salon, Avant Garde, Ferris



Legales, and Downey Christmas Parade. She has also painted a vibrant geometric mural inside of Poached Kitchen along with her abstract paintings that adorn a section of the 3rd floor of PIH Health in Downey.

Today, Ana continues to lend her artistic hand to local organizations while working as the Creative Director of Akash Winery & Vineyard and graphic designer at Lil' Libros. Ana is currently working on illustrating her first children's book with Lil' Libros which is set to be published in fall of 2019.

James Williams, 26

When he graduated from Downey in 2009, James Williams didn't know what he wanted to do.

Graphic design looked like a promising field, but at the time costs for editing software such as Photoshop were steep. That wouldn't work.

He had been on Downey's football team for four years, but didn't see too much play time due to being short (and truthfully, he was okay with that). If he was going to do sports, it probably wasn't going to be on the field.

Then he started thinking about comments he had received throughout school about the quality of his writing. His teachers said he was good, so maybe that was the way to go.

Williams's first big break in writing came in the form of The Downey Patriot, when editor Eric Pierce gave him a shot. After Williams's saw his first article published, he was hooked.

Along with currently pursuing a Journalism Degree at Cal State Long Beach, Williams is working full time as the digital sports producer for Southern California News Group. He is also co-President of the National Association of Black Journalists CSULB chapter.

At the time of writing, Williams is now preparing to head out-of-state to take part in the Associated Press Sports Editors Fellowship.



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Bianca Salgado, 23

For most young people, the most involved in government they get is when they vote at the polls. But for Bianca Salgado, her engagement runs much deeper.

Salgado says that she found interest in "how America functions" in high school. The 2013 Downey alumnus began studying Political Science at Cerritos College, receiving her Associates degree in 2016. She went on to receive her Bachelor's - again in Poli Sci - with an emphasis in Global Politics and a minor in Philosophy at California State University Long Beach, which she completed this year.

Continuing on trend, Salgado is responsible for the Downey Coalition for Sustainable Development Goals, which is centered around having the significant various round-table discussions surrounding the 17 Global Goals and to ensure and record the implementation of each of the 17 SDGs as each goal is achieved in the local community and in the long-term approach of neighboring cities within Southern California.

Her newest endeavor is as a Youth Engagement Coordinator with the Humanity Lab Foundation.



Haley Guerra, 26

She's only 26 years old, but Haley Guerra has already made her mark in local politics.

Born and raised in Downey, Haley has been involved in planning and strategy for several state and local candidate races in California. She's served as communications director for Mayor Pro Tem Rick Rodriguez and Cerritos College board trustee Bob Arthur.

Her experience also includes work in support of the military, such as coordination of Army, Reserve, and National Guard planning, travel for California, and daily coordination with the Secretary of the Army and CASA offices in the Pentagon.

At a young age, her education and experience has given her unique opportunities to work with non-commissioned officers, battalion commanders and generals, helping to assist the Army. Her planning and coordination skills were also put to use locally as she helped plan Downey's first Military Career Day and Gangs Out of Downey's first Public Safety Forum.

Haley has volunteered at the Second Tyme Around Thrift Shop and with Operation School Bell. She was a member and appointed vice president of the board of the Assistance League of Downey.

An accomplished athlete, Haley was captain of the varsity water polo and swim team at St. Joseph High School, and was recruited to play water polo at Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo, where she led the school to two consecutive league championships.

After transferring to Loyola Marymount University, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science in 2015. While at LMU, she was a poll research analyst for the Center for the Study of Los Angeles.

Haley currently resides in Downey with her son, Benny, and fiance, Tyler. She is a personal banking officer at Financial Partners Credit Union.




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Blake Boyington, 19

Blake Boyington was born and raised in Downey and is the product of Downey schools, graduating from Downey High in June of 2017.

He has always loved to help; his history of volunteering began at Gallatin Elementary, where he spent his recesses helping the custodian sweep and mop the cafeteria.

In middle school, Boyington decided the Downey community was in need of a Facebook page where they could learn about local crime. Since the creation of the "Crime Blog of Downey", the Facebook page has racked up nearly 5,000 members.

This past June, Boyington's efforts were recognized when he was selected to receive the Mayor's Downey DNA Award.

In between going to school, working and running his Facebook

page, Boyington found time to become a Buena Park police explorer, in which he dedicated over three years and earned the rank of sergeant.

Boyington currently works as a server at Norm's restaurant in Downey and attends Cerritos College, where he is majoring in Business. He plans on pursuing his dream career in law enforcement upon receiving his degree.

Sofia Jamora, 21

With more than 2.3 million Instagram followers, Downey's Sofia Jamora is one of the country's most popular models, and not just on social media.

Sofia created her Instagram profile in 2014 and gained huge popularity after she was featured in a Lolli Valfre swimsuit campaign. She went on to model for Frankie Bikinis and Love Piper, and gained further fame when Sports Illustrated featured her as its "Lovely Lady of the Day."

She can also be seen in Zayn Malik's music video for his song "Let Me."



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Our Kids Deserve The Best...



Ryan Cho, 16

Ryan Cho was one of the few people across the country to earn a Congressional Award Silver Medal, recognizing his extensive work in the community. The Congressional Award is a public-private partnership created by Congress to promote and recognize achievement, initiative, and service in American youth aged 14 to 23. Cho, and other young people across America, earn the Congressional Award by setting and reaching personally challenging goals that build character and promote community service, personal development, and citizenship.

In earning his Congressional Award Silver Medal, Cho volunteered more than 100 hours of service to the Downey

FoodHelp food bank, and organized multiple fundraising campaigns for Crops of Love. For his personal development program area, Cho improved his artistic skills across several media, including drawing, acrylic, watercolor and sculpting.

For his physical fitness program area, Cho successfully increased his Kendo skill level and achieved the rank of nikyu. He also increased his strike count and now averages 20 strikes per match.

Finally, for his expedition program area, he traveled to San Francisco, where he explored Fisherman's Wharf, Pier 39, and the Golden Gate Bridge.

Daniela Rodriguez, 29

Daniela Espinoza Rodriguez is founder of The Social Cat, empowering small community businesses to tell their story through modern day social media photography.

"Small business empowers the community by strengthening the local economy, creating more jobs and a greater future for our children," she says.

Before starting The Social Cat, Daniela worked in nonprofit healthcare for 11 years from direct patient contact, while at the same time assisting the homeless on skid row and assisting in Human Resources and Marketing Business Development. She also worked to help low-income families obtain healthcare.

Daniela developed a successful children's literacy program, providing 13 health clinics with a steady supply of free books for children ages 3 to high school. She also worked with the Los Angeles County Supervisors office and local governments to help connect youth and working mothers to their communities through social media.

Daniela is a leader and supporter of Latinx businesses, helping family-owned businesses push their everyday products with a cultural flare. A member of the Rotary Club of Downey, Daniela said she is inspired by the club's motto -- "service above self" -- in her business pursuits.

Daniela has been married to Marco Rodriguez for three years and enjoys spending time with her family, mostly her nieces and nephews in which she has modeled her life to be their role model, exposing them to the importance of community service, public policy, and self-empowerment.

Fun fact: Daniela was crowned Miss Ethnic World 2011 and has worked in radio for Guadalupe Radio 87.7 FM and Super Estrella 107.1 FM alongside radio personality Ysaak Alvarez.



Gordon Sodetani, 22

Gordon Michael Sodetani calls himself "fortunate" to live in Downey, but in reality it's Downey that's fortunate to have him.

Gordon's penchant for community service started as a Warren High School student, when he was appointed by the City Council to Downey's Youth Commission. At this same time he became active in the YMCA's youth programs.

This experience sparked his passion for governance and working with children. Through organizations like Downey Sister Cities, the Downey Rose Float Association, Gangs Out of Downey, and the YMCA, Gordon learned the value of volunteering and paying it forward.

Gordon is currently a graduate student at USC, pursuing a master's degree in teaching, with an expected graduation in May 2020. He'll begin student teaching in a local school district in January.

This final stretch of higher education at USC will prepare him for his goal of becoming a middle school teacher. His stand in life is for students: "giving them the tools to be successful so they can bloom and have every opportunity available to them."

Before USC, Gordon was a student at Cal State Long Beach (graduated May 2018), where he joined his Alpha Gamma Omega fraternity. He organized study sessions for members, served on the fraternity executive board as secretary, treasurer and pledge master. He also joined a Men's Successive Initiative group at Long Beach that supported and mentored groups for men from African-American and Latino backgrounds, and organized study sessions and coordinating panels for incoming students of color.

Gordon has interned for Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard and Assemblymember Cristina Garcia, volunteered as a camp counselor for the YMCA, and most recently volunteered with USC Town and Gown Day of Service by making jewelry for cancer patients hospitalized at Keck Hospital of USC.

His goal is to become a middle school teacher.

"My stand in life is for students," he says.

Julianna Gamiz, 6

Not every 6-year-old can say they had their big movie break starring alongside Mark Wahlberg, but Julianna Gamiz can.

Gamiz (now known as “The movie star” by her classmates at St. Dominic Savio Catholic School), recently starred in Instant Family as Lita, the youngest of three siblings who are adopted out of foster care by a couple who become parents overnight.

You may also recognize her from tv series Jane the Virgin, where she played “Young Jane” (a role she was thrilled to land, since she loved the show before appearing in it).

Between takes, you can probably find Gamiz singing and dancing, or at Disneyland hurtling down the flume of her favorite ride, Splash Mountain.

She’s just a normal kid like everyone else, it just so happens that she’s famous too (and she loves it)!

Look out Hollywood, ‘cause a new star is on the rise. No autographs, please.



Alex Dominguez, 26

Alex Dominguez remembers getting the newspaper on his front porch every week as a kid, so when he sees his name on a byline in the paper now he gets a certain thrill out of it.

Dominguez was introduced to journalism in his junior year at Warren High School. After seeing his first story in print on the front page of the school paper, he was hooked. Dominguez went on to receive his degree in Communications with an emphasis in Print Journalism from California State University Fullerton.

In Spring 2015, Dominguez began writing for The Downey Patriot as an intern, eventually working his way up to a contributor and finally Staff Writer.

Dominguez covers a range of topics from news, breaking news, local politics, human interest and entertainment. He is an award-winning journalist, including a two-time Los Angeles Press Club Award finalist.

Aside from writing, Dominguez returns to Warren every year to speak to students of his former teachers about life after high school, college, and entering the workforce. He previously volunteered at Northwest Downey Little League and District 29 by announcing for tournament baseball games. He’s also highly involved in church activities, volunteering in Imperial Highway Church of Christ’s yearly VBS program and serving on the North Downey Church of Christ’s Trustee Board.



City of Downey 2018

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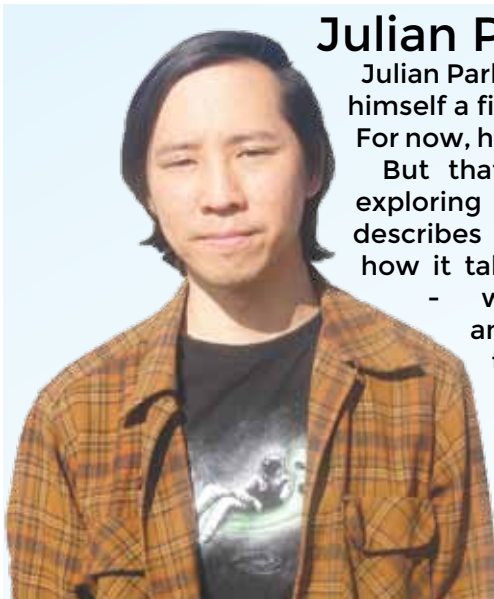
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BARBARA J. RILEY COMMUNITY & SENIOR CENTER ATTENDANCE

 **320,311**
LIBRARY PATRON VISITORS

 **\$15,418,280**
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS COMPLETED





Julian Park, 33

Julian Park doesn't necessarily consider himself a filmmaker; he hasn't "made it." For now, he just calls himself a hobbyist.

But that hasn't stopped him from exploring his passion for the art. He describes film as "magic," considering how it takes a little bit of everything - writing, directing, acting, and photography - to come together in perfect harmony to make a great film.

Although he says he has his "normal day job," Park has managed to already make a couple of films. His first, a documentary on Downey street artist Bumble Bee, caught the

attention of the Downey Arts Coalition.

It's his most recent film though, the *Invincible Boy*, that he is currently shopping out to different festivals. *Invincible Boy*, Park describes, is "about remaining a child and holding onto that childlike wonder that you can do things, whatever you want in the world." It was shot in and heavily features Downey.

As he approaches the new year, Park says he plans to continue to learn and hone his filmmaking skills. He doesn't necessarily look for the mega success and fame of other notable film makers, just hopes to be able to one day establish himself and make a living doing what he loves.

Sam Sarofeem, 15 & Sarah Sarofeem, 13



Sam and Sarah Sarofeem were born two years apart but it wouldn't be unreasonable to mistake them for twins.

They're not just siblings, they're also best friends, and spend much of their time outside school working at their parents' two restaurants, The Olive RestoBar at the Downey Promenade and the Green Olive. Both are also heavily involved in after-school activities and volunteerism.

Sam, a freshman at Downey High School, is part of the KIWIN's service club and is a Boy Scout, poised to earn Eagle Scout honors next year.

He also plays the cymbals in the school band, is proficient in guitar, and is on pace to earn a black belt in karate next year.

Sarah, an eighth grader at Doty Middle School, has long shown leadership qualities, going back to fifth grade when she was voted Character Council president. She's an accomplished dancer, competing nationally in tap, jazz, hip hop and contemporary.

At age 11, she auditioned for "Vaelina El Musical" and, despite her young age, was cast as a background dancer. She was named a Little Miss Downey princess in 2014.

Sam's future goals include attending UCLA and possibly becoming a neurosurgeon. If Sarah doesn't become a professional actress or dancer, she also would like to attend UCLA and become a plastic surgeon, helping people with reconstructive surgery.

Happy Holidays!



"Thank you Downey for allowing me to represent you the last 8 years. Have a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year."

Fernando Vasquez
Former Mayor and Councilmember

The Saab Family

We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous 2019. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve and for being part of our special Downey community.

Alex and Giggy
Dominic (10), Gianna (5) and Alexander (3)



Wishing you a Joyful and Peaceful Holiday Season & a Prosperous 2019
Councilwoman Claudia Frometa, Downey Planning Commissioner Nolveris Frometa & Family



Brandon Vasquez, 25

Brandon Vasquez was a guitar player and had been in and out of a few bands throughout middle school and high school, so you might be surprised to learn that he traded in his strings, fret and whammy bar for a turntable.

By the time he graduated from Warren in 2011, Vasquez had found a deep interest in music production. He entered Cal Poly Pomona to study audio engineering. In the meantime, he needed a way to sustain himself.

Vasquez bought his first DJ equipment and started making the transition to producing, while also DJing parties and events to make a living. It wasn't long though before his new endeavor turned into more than just a way to make some cash.

In 2017, Vasquez officially created his "artist project" and the mantle of Don Dirty. Later that year in December, he was given a chance to be a guest DJ on 99.1 KGGI in Riverside.

As it turns out, the guest DJ opportunities ended up being a sort of tryout, and Vasquez was hired on in March as a full-time mixer with four airtime spots.

David Niemeyer, 39

It's been a phenomenally successful couple of years for the Warren High School Band and Color Guard program, and much of that is due to the work and dedication of director David Niemeyer.

Niemeyer graduated from Washington State University in December of 2002. Half a year later, he was the new director of the already successful and established band program at Warren.

Under Niemeyer, the band and guard program has continued to expand and grow, now including two jazz bands, two percussion ensembles, winter guards, a concert band, wind ensemble, and of course the award winning marching band.

In fact, Niemeyer and the marching band recently climbed to new heights, winning back to back gold medals in Southern California School Band and Orchestra Field Tournament Championship competition in 2017 and 2018.

Niemeyer is also the spearhead behind the newly minted Downey Unified All District Marching Band, bringing all four middle schools and both high schools together to represent the community through their musical prowess.

Niemeyer was named Teacher of the Year in October.



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

from The Guerra Family!

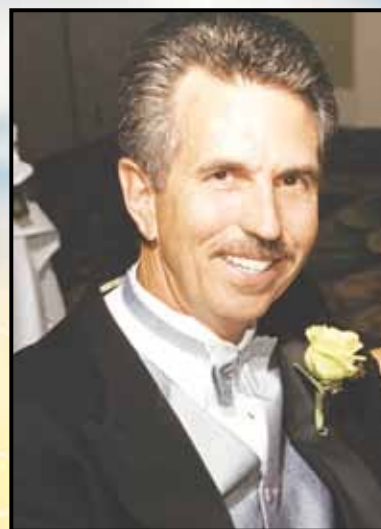


The Guerra Family appreciates your friendship and love throughout 2018. Our continued prayers for you and your family this Christmas and new year ahead...

Faith, Family, and Friends.

The Guerra Family

Farewell to a Downey Patriot



After 48 years in dentistry, Dr. E.N. St. George has retired from the field. This special man has touched the hearts and smiles of so many here in Downey. In 1970 he began his illustrious career in Maywood, relocating to Downey in 1984. For the next 34 years he navigated the streets and the smiles of Downey, ending his career on June 28th, 2018. His last patient was his 2-year-old grandson; a fitting end to a career in which he saw to the care for up

to four generations. Dr. St. George has been deeply involved in the Downey community. He has been a member of the Downey YMCA since 1970 and participated annually in various Downey Unified School events, even donating his own dental chair to the mobile van used to provide dental checks to thousands of school kids. This true Downey Patriot will be sorely missed as a professional, but his legacy lives strong through the hearts and hands of his son and the wonderful team at the "House that St. George built."

Nicholas St. George, DDS



The holiday season is a time to reflect and be thankful for our many blessings. I am grateful to my parents for all their love and undying support. Also, I would like to congratulate my brother for his great accomplishment in graduating from the Fire Academy.

2019 is set to be an amazing year for our city and I am

looking forward to serve the residents of Downey as your Mayor Pro Tem.

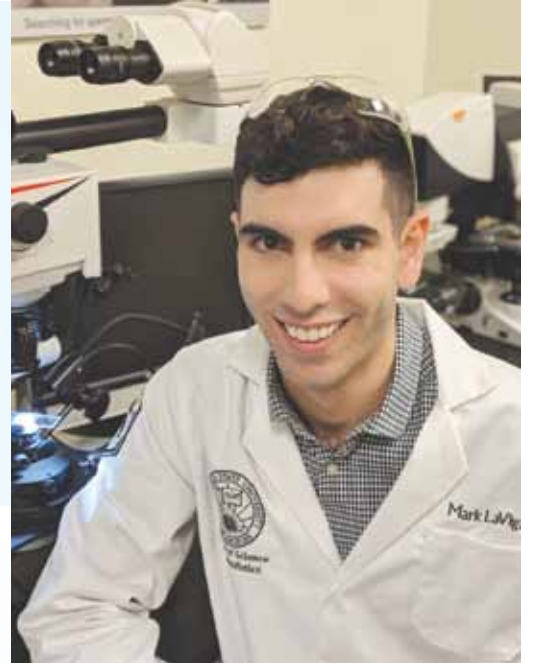
To everyone, I wish you all a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

Mark LaVigne, 25

Mark LaVigne graduated from UCLA in 2015 with a bachelor's degree in Microbiology, Immunology, and Molecular Genetics. While at UCLA, he was active in its Hooligan Theatre Company, performing in productions and serving as its director of education for two years. In this role, Mark organized groups of theatre students to visit inner-city schools and put on workshops for them.

After leaving UCLA, Mark earned his Master's degree in Criminalistics from Cal State Los Angeles. He works in Downey for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Crime Lab. He's been there for over a year as a forensic analyst and recently was given a promotion to a criminalist position.

This is the third fall Mark has taught a class at Cal State Los Angeles, an incredible feat for someone only 25 years old. He currently teaches Introduction to Forensic Science in the graduate program and has also taught a similar class to undergraduates and a laboratory class in the graduate program. Cal State Los Angeles houses the crime labs of both the LAPD and Sheriff's Department.



Clint LaVigne, 30

Like his younger brother, Clint LaVigne also graduated from UCLA, majoring in Communications and graduating in only three years with honors.

He immediately began work at William Morris Endeavor (WME) talent agency in Beverly Hills. He stayed there for a few years before moving to HBO in its Development Department. Again, he stayed there a few years until he was asked to become the assistant to the president at Amblin Entertainment, Steven Spielberg's television production company.

He maintained that role for over a year until he was asked to assume the title of creative executive for Amblin, a job that he continues to hold. In this position, he is the gatekeeper for incoming scripts from writers to the agency. This past year, he has found the writers, directors, producers, actors and "packaged" shows to present to Netflix, Amazon, Hulu and others on behalf of Amblin Entertainment.

His first show, "The Haunting of Hill House," premiered on Netflix on Oct. 12 and has been receiving great reviews. He has three more projects in pre-production and production.

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2018 YEAR-IN REVIEW

<p>Savings per Member Household</p>	\$600	<p>\$52,870</p> <p>Donated to CHOC Children's Foundation</p>	
<p>Total Number of Dream Homes Funded</p>	371	<p>\$101,000+</p> <p>Donated to Other Local Non-Profits</p>	
<p>Number of Members Rescued from "Big Bank" Fees</p>	7,900+	<p>4,078</p> <p>Total Registered Users for FPCU Online Financial Education Classes</p>	
		<p>100+</p> <p>Free Educational Seminars Conducted</p>	
		<p>\$10,200</p> <p>Towards Science Camp & After School Programs</p>	

Numbers quoted as of November 21, 2018

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Thanks for making 2018 a year of prosperous growth!



Ben Alemu, 22

In January of this year you were introduced to Ben Alemu, who had been just named a finalist in the 2017-18 Westly Prize for Young Innovators of California for his creation of SENDforC, a national network of student mentors designing high-impact educational service programs and entrepreneurial initiatives for underserved schools.

Alemu was made a runner up in the competition, receiving \$5000 from the Westley Foundation on their annual competition.

SENDforC continues to keep Alemu busy, as he says he spends 20 to 30 hours a week of volunteering. He is currently the organizations Executive Director.

After the Westley prize, SENDforC decided to hone in on their San Diego and Bay Area communities and have recently launched their third and fourth partnership high schools in California.

Alemu also recently received his degree in Bio Chemistry and Cell Biology from the University of California San Diego, with a minor in education studies.

Fabian Chavez, 25

Downey is responsible for many successful musical acts, including The Carpenters, Metallica's James Hetfield, and Weird Al Yankovic. Who's to say that Fabian Chavez isn't next on that list?

Chavez was exposed to music at a very early age, having started playing the drums at the age of 2. He later added Latin percussion and saxophone to his repertoire, now claiming that these are his "main instruments."

While attending Griffiths Middle School and later Warren High School, Chavez participated in several school ensembles. Deciding to continue his musical education beyond the Downey Unified School District, Chavez went on to receive a Bachelors of Music Degree in saxophone performance from California State University, Northridge with an emphasis in Jazz.

Still in his young career, Chavez can already say that he has performed with Grammy Award winning and Grammy Nominated artists such as Ms. Lauryn Hill, Jill Scott, Angelique Kidjo, Mac Miller, Saint Motel, Sergio George, Miguel Bose, Bobby Rush, Maluma, La India, and Dariush among others. He also released his first single - Tranemanya - earlier this year.



Chavez is also a co-founder of Darknote Collective, a music production team that already has music placements on the big and little screens. Chavez was nominated for a Grammy this year for best Rap album for his contributions on Mac Miller's "Swimming."

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Alyssa Rico, 30

It wouldn't surprise us if, 10 to 15 years from now, Alyssa Rico was running Downey's Parks & Recreation Department.

That's a lot of pressure to put on a person, but it's a goal that Alyssa doesn't shy away from. A lifelong Downey resident, Alyssa began working at the Barbara J. Riley Community and Senior Center as a facility attendant in 2008 before a promotion to activity specialist in 2010.

She later became the senior center's recreation director, coordinating and implementing the facility's programs and activities, and organizing leisure time activities such as contract classes for pre-school, teens, adults and seniors.

In 2014, she was promoted to recreation coordinator in charge of special events. Her job was to execute large scale events, such as Kids Day, Taste of Downey, and the Halloween pumpkin patch, while staying within budget. She also secured sponsorships, marketed these special events to ensure optimal attendance.

Alyssa was hired as Community Services Coordinator by the City of Moreno Valley in October 2016 where she has even greater responsibilities, including training all senior recreation leaders and overseeing sports budgets. She's also the city's liaison for the Arts Commission.

Alyssa is the current treasurer for the California Parks & Recreation Society (Recreation Section) and vice president of the Southern California Municipal Athletic Federation (Inland Empire chapter). She was also a Women in Leisure Services board member from 2014-16.

Alyssa graduated from Biola University with a bachelor's degree in Community Studies and from Biola University's Crowell School of Business with a master's in Business Administration. She graduated with honors.

Evan Longoria, 33

A product of Northwest Downey Little League, Evan Longoria is perhaps Downey's most accomplished athlete.

Drafted by the Rays with the third overall pick in the 2006 MLB draft, Longoria went on to become the 2008 American League Rookie of the Year. He made three consecutive All-Star games between 2008 and 2010, and won three gold gloves for his defensive work at third base.

Rooting for Longoria became slightly more difficult when he was traded to the San Francisco Giants prior to the 2018 season.



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Ernesto Rojas, 22

A Doctorate is no easy feat to come by, but Ernesto Rojas is so up for the challenge that he looks to have two within eight years.

While he was at Warren, Rojas could have been described as the poster-child of success. He was a Golden Bear recipient in Science as a Freshman (most Golden Bear Awards go to seniors). He was within the top students of his class. He was drum major of the marching band. You can add Prom King to the list as well.

Not much has changed since.

Rojas went on to UCLA, where he just earned a degree in Molecular Cell and Developmental Biology (MCDB) and a minor in Biomedical research. He graduated with College Honors, Highest Department Honors, and Magna Cum Lade.

And still he shows no signs of slowing down.

Rojas is currently traveling to and interviewing at several top-notch schools, with eyes set on earning a MD and Ph-D.

The ultimate goal?

Rojas plans to work studying infertility. While he says he primarily wants to work in a research lab, he hopes to one day be able to work with couples who have difficulties conceiving and ultimately give them a shot at the family that they've dreamed of having.

Monica Rivera, 28

You'll be hard-pressed to find someone more motivated for success than Monica Rivera.

As a freshman student at USC, Rivera landed an internship with a property management company. By the time she graduated four years later, she was the company's leasing and marketing director.

Rivera's success in the real estate industry propelled her to her current position as business coach and team leader at Keller Williams in Downey, where she leads a staff of 150 real estate agents. Her priority, however, isn't necessarily to drive sales and commissions; it's to help the agents - and their clients - achieve multi-generational wealth.

Helping others achieve their dreams is what Rivera does best. She co-authored "Latina Empowerment Through Leadership" in 2017, in which she shares her struggles and triumphs as a Latina woman.

She's been invited to speak and lead workshops on topics ranging from motivation to branding and business, and has written articles for the Huffington Post, examining the intersections of culture, wealth-building, real estate, and politics.

"When someone says I can't do something, either because I'm young, a woman, or a Latina," that pushes me," said Rivera.



Dale Jervis
Doing Things Better

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As a third generation real estate professional, Dale Jervis has seen just about every side of the industry. And, he's seen people make just about every mistake they can when selling their home. That's why he's put together his own special report, "10 Mistakes You Can Make When Selling Your Home That Will Cost You Thousands (and How To Avoid Them)." This valuable information is offered to you free of charge. Just give Dale a call and he'll be glad to send you one today.

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To Dale Jervis, the phrase "treating people like family" means simply that you do the best you possibly can to take care of that person. Dale's own family instilled these values in him, and as a third generation real estate professional, it's something that people have come to expect when they deal with Century 21 Jervis & Associates. Just look at what a few of Dale's clients have to say...

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—Marisa Koch

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—Dale Jervis



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Steve Sedano, 23

There aren't many young people as dedicated to giving back as Steve Sedano.

Sedano's first venture into volunteering was at the Downey Family YMCA where he also joined the YMCA Youth and Government program that works imilar to a mock trial.

He is now responsible for the LA Thunderbirds, a non-profit designed to provide the youth of LA, including those with special needs, the opportunities to excel at Lacrosse. He also founded Protect LA, another nonprofit that is dedicated to building a culture of college attendance within South LA.

When away from his nonprofit organizations, Sedano works with Courage Forward, Downey's local veteran support organization.

Recently, Sedano began working at Shop Now To Fund (SNTF), a tech company that gives away 40% of retail purchases to an organization of the purchasers choice. They are currently helping Courage Forward, A veteran organization that is based in Downey, raise money as well as the Downey Parks and Recreation raise money to build new facilities for Apollo Park.

Having earned a degree in Anthropology with an emphasis in Biology from Cal State University in Long Beach in 2017, Sedano is currently preparing himself for Stanford University where he will pursue his MBA and Dr's in Education next year.

Moises Rios-Hernandez, 36

Moises Rios is a Los Angeles native but was raised in Downey, graduating from Downey High School in 2000. After high school, he shipped off to boot camp, serving our country with the U.S. Marines.

After his service, Moises enrolled in butcher school in Kingston, N.Y., in 2012. As a kid, he had spent his summers working at Luis Meat Market in Downey, and the work had always fascinated him. He finished butcher school in 2013 and took over the Luis Meat Market, changing the name to Luis Butcher Shop.

Moises has expanded the restaurant's reputation in Downey, earning acclaim for a variety of handcrafted dishes, including black pepper country-style ribs, 18-hour smoked brisket sandwiches, and Argentine sausage.

As a veteran small business owner, Moises has also committed himself to the Downey community. He is president of Courage Forward, a support network for local veterans, and is involved with Gangs Out of Downey.



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Mariah Lora, 18

Mariah Lora isn't like most teenagers, or most adults for that matter.

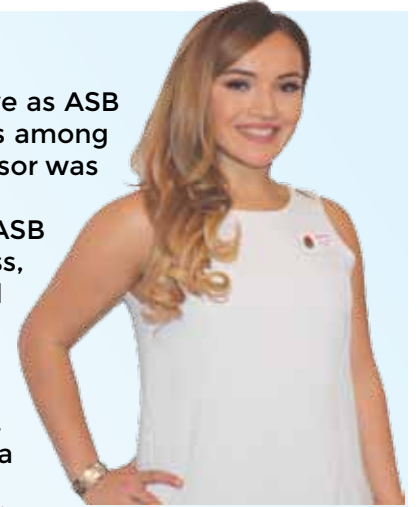
Last year, as a senior at Warren High School, Mariah was elected by nearly 4,000 of her peers to serve as ASB president. As president, she founded Small Acts of Kindness, a non-profit that promoted nice gestures among students. The organization hosted a dinner for Paramount High School's ASB, after the school's ASB advisor was shot and injured in the Las Vegas terror attack.

Mariah also hosted the First Annual Silent Heroes Company, bringing Warren and Downey High's ASB together to host an awards ceremony for 10 outstanding people from Downey who embody selflessness, compassion, hardwork, and go above and beyond to protect and develop students in the Downey Unified School District. A few of the recipients included a Warren High security guard, a Downey police officer, a teacher, Dr. Mary Stauffer, and a librarian.

As a high school junior, Mariah was elected as majority floor leader in Assemblymember Cristina Garcia's Young Legislators program. By the time Mariah graduated, she had a 4.06 cumulative GPA, earned a CSF Seal Bear distinction, and was captain of the varsity basketball team, leading the Bears to a CIF championship.

Mariah was crowned Miss Downey this past spring and has continued her charitable endeavors at Cerritos College, co-founding an English honors society for English majors such as herself. She is an honors program scholar and is working on undergraduate research that will be presented at the National Conference of Undergraduate Research. She also plays point guard for the Cerritos College women's basketball team.

Mariah plans to transfer to a university in 2020 and double major in English and education. She also plans to run for local office in Downey and eventually the state, advocating for equality in our school systems.



Alejandra Barreto, 18

A first-generation college student from a family born in Jalisco, Mexico, Alejandra Barreto earned quite the achievement this year: she was chosen as a Gates Scholar.

Alejandra was one of only 300 students across the nation selected out of a pool of 28,700 applicants. As a Gates Scholar, Alejandra received a scholarship that not only pays her college tuition, but also housing, books, transportation, health insurance and other costs.

The scholarship is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Alejandra moved to Downey from Lynwood when she was in middle school, attending West Middle School. She moved on to Warren High School, graduating this past June.

Alejandra began attending USC this fall, double majoring in Human Biology and Spanish. The scholarship will also send Alejandra to Spain to study abroad for an entire semester.

While at Warren, Alejandra graduated with a 4.92 GPA (second highest in her class), and competed in SkillsUSA competitions, making it to the national level three times. She also played varsity water polo and swimming during all four years as a Bear.

Alejandra credits her success to her teachers.

"I know it takes a village, I've seen it here at Warren," Alejandra said. "I wouldn't have been able to do this without the help of many of my teachers. And through this scholarship, I hope to continue to do the same for others and influence them to follow their dreams."



Edward Mejia, 24

Education looms large for Downey native Edward Mejia.

Only 24, he works as an admissions counselor for Pepperdine University, encouraging students to apply to the university in the regions he covers which includes Los Angeles, Seattle, Colorado, Florida, Georgia and other regions across the country.

He's a student at Pepperdine himself, studying to obtain his master's in leadership in higher education, with a goal of becoming a chancellor of student affairs.

Mejia is part of the Ready.Set.Go. program at Chico State (his alma

mater), giving presentations at Downey High School on college life.

Walter Sarnoi, 32

Walter Sarnoi started off a little rough around the edges. He was a troublemaker, and was headed down a path that wouldn't lead him to much good.

But some intervention from the 10-20 club and a love of fighting was able to turn things around for the future boxing champion.

After getting his education at the University of Northern Michigan, Sarnoi set off to focus on his boxing career and his childhood dream of holding a WBC "green belt."

Sarnoi currently holds a 21-4 record, with 13 knockout wins and no knockout losses. More importantly though, he recently took the title of World Boxing Council Latino Silver Featherweight Champion.



Joseph Manacmul, 35

From an art gallery to street pita? It may not be the most obvious transition ever told, but it's exactly the path that Joseph Manacmul took.

Manacmul received an Associates Arts Degree from Cerritos College in 2004 and a Bachelor's of Art's Degree in History in 2006 from UCLA.

After completing his education, Manacmul would find himself at the heart of Downey's art scene, serving as Director of Operations for the Downey Art Vibe. He would remain there from 2012 to 2016.

Eventually, Manacmul moved on from the position with Stay Gallery and Downey Art vibe, and entered into a whole different kind of arts: the culinary arts.

Specifically, Pita.

Manacmul has made an entirely new mark on Downey in the form of Greek food. As a partner of the Parea Restaurant Group, Manacmul has helped bring Louks Greek Baby Donuts and street food restaurant Pita GR to Downey, the latter of which he currently manages.



Matias Flores, 39

Matias Flores fits a relatively new trend seen here in Downey - young individuals going out, becoming educated and establishing themselves in their profession, then coming back and using their new knowledge to contribute to the city.

Flores received his law education at Loyola Law School, his undergrad at UC Santa Barbara, and in-between became a certified interpreter at the Southern California School of Interpretation. His first job came in 2011 at the Law Office of Nigel Burns in Downtown LA, where he primarily worked on family law.

He opened his own firm in 2016 in Downey, where he says it is now thriving with close to 200 clients.

Flores has also been a member of the city planning commission since late 2012. Having been appointed to the position by Councilman Fernando Vasquez - who termed out this month - his time as part of the commission is now coming to an end.

Thank you
Members and Downey community!

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Office of the Head of Delegation

Washington, March 28, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Patrick Gurrrola,

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

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

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

With Sincere good wishes,

Maeve O'Beirne
Senior Advisor to Ambassador Vale de Almeida

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*Downey Adult School celebrated the opening of its new dental lab.

*Bobbi Bruce was installed as president of Downey Coordinating Council. Other officers included Joanna Peterson, first vice president; Carol Kearns, second vice president; Jackie Sweida, secretary; Beth Gendreau, treasurer; and Donna Lindley, auditor.

June



The city of Downey planted a tree at Dennis the Menace Park in memory of Ken Thompson, the World War II veteran who died the previous month at age 101. In this picture, Thompson is receiving a proclamation from Mayor Sean Ashton in 2017.

*Michael Franzese, a former mafia boss turned motivational speaker, delivered the keynote address at the 31st annual Downey Mayor's Prayer Breakfast at the Rio Hondo Event Center.

*The city of Downey planted a tree at Dennis the Menace Park in memory of Ken Thompson, the World War II veteran who died the previous month at age 101.

*Yolanda Rodriguez-Nelson, Anne Russell, Dina Carter and Christina Carlson, all of Downey

Unified, were honored as Teachers of the Year by Downey United Masonic Lodge No. 220.

*The Downey YMCA hosted its annual Battle of the Businesses competition. The week-long competition was expanded to include go-kart racing and an indoor obstacle course.

*Rotary Club of Downey hosted a masquerade ball at the Embassy Suites, raising money for the Downey YMCA and TLC Family Resource Center.

*Fourteen teachers and one administrator retired from the Downey Unified School District upon the conclusion of the school year.

Retiring from the elementary school level were Joy Clark (Imperial), Mary Esposito (Lewis), Susan Heckert (Imperial), Karla Hufenbach (Lewis), Maggie Stava (Rio Hondo), Monica Taylor (Rio Hondo), Suzan Wilson (Rio Hondo) and Jon Zack (Alameda).

The middle school level said farewell to one retiree: Jane Chandler from Sussman Middle School. Retiring from the high school level were Kirby Drake (Warren), Tracy Garrido (Columbus), Steven Guthrie (Downey), Marc Lurie (Warren) and Jim Quick (Warren). Phil Davis, director of Career Technical Education, also retired.

*A man was arrested and charged with murder for running over a security guard at Gloria's Restaurant.

*Downtown property owners voted to approve a community benefit district, agreeing to tax themselves to fund services and events specifically for Downtown Downey.

*Shannon DeLong, assistant to the Downey city manager, left to become assistant city manager in Whittier.

*Downey's Ryan Cho received a Congressional Award Silver Medal and a Certificate of Congressional Recognition for volunteering more than 100 hours at the Downey FoodHelp food bank and organizing multiple fundraiser Crops of Love, a non-profit that food to African nations.

*Greg Welch was installed as president of the Rotary Club of Downey.

*Julie Garcia was installed as president of Gangs Out of Downey.

*Open auditions were held at 24 Hour Fitness for a potential spot on a Team USA Olympic team. The process was filmed as part of a reality TV program "The Next Olympic Hopeful" on NBC.

*A giant sinkhole wreaked havoc on a Downey street over Father's Day weekend. The hole appeared at Rives Avenue and Brunache Street, swallowing up an empty SUV. The sinkhole also knocked out power to hundreds of homes in the area.

*Randy's Donuts filed plans to open a donut shop on Firestone Boulevard, across from Ralph's.

*More than 2,000 students graduated from Downey's three public high schools. Of those students, 659 were moving on to an Ivy League school or 4-year university.

*The city council agreed to pay \$650,000 to update the police department's radio communication system. The previous radio system was so outdated Motorola warned it would stop servicing the technology at the end of the year.

*Downey High volleyball player Matthew Brito was honored as CIF Division 3 Player of the Year. Head coach Robert McCarthy was named Coach of the Year.

*Boosted by new restaurant and retail development, the City Council passed a \$262 million balanced spending plan. City officials cautioned, however, that a recession was looming.

July

*The Downey Symphony hosted a party on the stage of the Downey Symphony to kick off its 60th anniversary season.

*Two people were shot and killed outside Rick's Motel. A suspect was arrested after a lengthy standoff in Santa Fe Springs.

*Three-hundred elderly residents were forced to evacuate Lakewood Health Center after illegal fireworks ignited a tree at the retirement facility on July 4. Police issued 54 fireworks-related citations that night.

*John Casillas was installed as president of the Downey Chamber of Commerce.

*Council members overturned a Planning Commission decision and voted to approve a 14-unit housing complex at 10221 Downey Ave., which replaces a single-family home.

*A class action lawsuit accused Downey Community Health Center, a nursing home, of being dangerously understaffed. The facility was cited 63 times in the past three years, according to the suit.

*The board of education voted to name Warren High's administration building after longtime board member Barbara Samperi.

*Downey Youth Football moved its practices from Rio San Gabriel Park to Discovery Sports Complex. The Razorbacks had practiced at Rio San Gabriel Park for at least 50 years.



Kaiser Permanente Downey Medical Center broke ground on a new hospital tower, adding 96 beds and making the Downey campus Kaiser's second largest hospital in Southern California. The tower is scheduled to be completed by December 2020.

August



Dr. Mary Stauffer celebrated her 101st birthday with parties at Stauffer Middle School and the Assistance League of Downey.

*Downey's Relay for Life fundraiser in support of the American Cancer Society was held at Downey Adult School. This year's event was scaled back from 24 hours to 12 hours.

*Havana Nights, a summertime Cuban music festival, drew thousands to the parking structure rooftop in Downtown Downey.

*One year after he was nearly killed in a training accident, Downey Police Cpl. Ed Hano returned to active duty with his K9 partner, Dani.

*Downey firefighters were dispatched to northern California to help battle the Carr Fire, which scorched nearly 230,000 acres and killed three firefighters.

*Downey Unified announced a pair of new principals for the 2018-19 school year: Darryl Browning (Stauffer Middle School) and Cary Calvo (Williams Elementary). Alyda Mir, the previous principal at Stauffer, was promoted to director of secondary education.



The world's oldest-operating McDonald's celebrated its 65th anniversary in Downey. The celebration included remarks by historian and pop culture commentator Charles Phoenix and architect Alan Hess.

*Downey Unified announced the creation of a "senior activity pass," giving senior citizens free access to most athletic events, plays and musicals at Downey schools.

*El Taco, a culinary institution in Downey for the past several decades, closed suddenly on Firestone Boulevard. The restaurant's general manager cited rising rents and increased property taxes for the closure. The Florence Avenue location remained unchanged.

*Downey singer Laraine Turner was named a finalist in a VH1 songwriting contest.

*A city-wide search for a bone marrow donor was launched after 2-year-old Jazmyne Zequirá-Guillen was diagnosed with leukemia.

*The City Council granted Giant RV a \$504,000 tax rebate in return for the creation of 55 full-time jobs.

*Downey-based Century 21 My Real Estate was acquired by Century 21 Peak.

*A housing crash is not likely any time soon, said economist Christopher Thornberg during his keynote address at the Gateway Cities Economic Forum, held at Rio Hondo Event Center and presented by Financial Partners Credit Union. Thornberg was mostly positive about the economy but said California's labor problems stemmed from a shortage of workers.

"If you want to debate how they come to this country, fine," Thornberg said. "But in the end, the right answer is more, not less. Anybody who thinks immigrants are a problem for our economy, you're out of your mind."

*Downey school board member Martha Sodetani was named grand marshal of the Downey Christmas Parade.

*The City Council formed an ad-hoc committee to explore

the creation of a public memorial paying tribute to fallen firefighters.

*The Downey Theatre released its 2018-19 season calendar, headlined by Billy Ocean, Blue Oyster Cult and the Mariachi Divas.

^ Weird Al Yankovich, who was born in Downey, received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

September

*Rose Schneeberger was installed as president of Downey Kiwanis.

*Warren High was selected for the inaugural class of ESPN Honor Roll, a national recognition program that honors schools around the nation for inclusiveness in sports, youth leadership, and whole-school engagement. Warren was selected for making its sports programs, student clubs and campus activities accessible and welcoming to students with intellectual disabilities.

*Downey High was named one of the top 35 California high schools to have its students successfully complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

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A man reportedly upset about a missed doctor's appointment threw a chair through a glass window and brandished a handgun, prompting Kaiser Permanente Medical Center to go on lockdown.

Police officers from Downey and Whittier responded to the hospital, along with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The suspect, 34-year-old Jesus Chavez, of Lynwood, was arrested without incident and charged with making criminal threats.

*Thirteen people were arrested when Kaiser Permanente employees protested outside the Downey hospital on Labor Day, blocking an entrance into the hospital.

*Artistic director Chad Berlinghieri announced he would bring a Christmas show to the Downey Theatre, featuring

internationally renowned opera singers, a full orchestra, and the All American Boys Chorus.

*After 48 years in dentistry, Downey dentist E.N. St. George, DDS, retired.

*Downey High School students marched local streets carrying 44-lb. jugs of water to raise awareness of the global water crisis.

*A ceremony was held in the civic center to remember the victims of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

*Robotics students at Griffiths Middle School were filmed as part of a "Helpful Honda" television commercial, set to air in January.

*Downey resident and World War II veteran John Carl Lane was selected to be part of an "Honor Flight" to Washington, D.C.

*The GlennFest Film Festival opened in Downey, a weeklong festival featuring two dozen film screenings, along with musical performances, artist panels, and more.

*Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center celebrated the opening of a new hospital wing, an inpatient facility that brings all the hospital beds into a single structure.

October

*Michael Calvert was installed as president of Downey Los Amigos Kiwanis.

*St. Pius X - St. Matthias Academy dedicated its new athletic stadium, featuring an all-weather turf football field, soccer field and rubberized track.

*Author Michael Jacobus spoke and signed books at the Downey City Library.

*One of the generation's greatest debates - who was better: the Beatles or the Rolling Stones? - was settled at a Beatles vs. Stones tribute concert showdown at the Downey Theatre. Results, however, were not available at press time so the debate rages on.

*The Downey Symphony performed a Latin-infused concert, "Viva La Musica!", at the Downey Theatre.

*Hundreds participated in a hunger walk in Downey, raising money for local food pantries and global hunger eradication efforts.

*Tens of thousands of dollars were raised at the Gangs Out of Downey golf tournament, with proceeds benefiting college scholarships in the name of fallen police officer Ricky Galvez.

*Black Bear Diner announced it would open at the site of the recently-closed Coco's on Florence Avenue.

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The City Council honored its 2018 Parents of the Year: Lilia and Saul Haro (Downey High), Norma Marroquin and Irsel Molina (Warren High), and Lisa Louie (Columbus High).

*Lori Reeves, Nathan Mahoney and Jose Duran were installed as new members of the Downey YMCA Board of Managers.

*City officials announced that the proposed Springhill Suites hotel across from Stonewood Center could break ground as early as first quarter 2019.

*A group of residents and city officials from Roscommon County, Ireland, visited Downey for a week-long stay. Roscommon County was the birthplace of John Gately Downey, our city's namesake.

*Downey Unified announced it would host L.A. County's first eSports tournament, a video game competition with the championships held at the Downey Theatre. Participating students became eligible to enroll in game design courses, each worth three college credits, offered by West Hills College Coalinga. The winning school earned a meeting with leading game designers and an all-expenses paid trip to a one-week gaming bootcamp, where they were eligible to earn an additional two graded college credits.

*Downey Unified superintendent Dr. John Garcia announced plans to attempt to increase student enrollment, which has been on the decline in Downey the past six years. Officials attributed the enrollment drop to more families moving to the Inland Empire for cheaper housing, and families having fewer babies. Garcia made the announcement during the district's State of the Schools function.

*A short film, "Invincible Boy," made its premiere at local film festivals. The film was shot almost primarily in Downey and was written and produced by Downey High alumnus Julian Park.

*Thousands of people attended Downey's Dia de los Muertos festival held inside and outside the Downey Theatre. The free festival featured decorated altars, live dance and musical performances, an art gallery, skull decorating, film screenings, and food trucks.

*Warren High quarterback Chris Venegas threw five touchdowns as the Bears beat Downey, 48-28, in the annual crosstown rivalry game.

*Downey High's girls volleyball team defeated Gahr to share with them the San Gabriel Valley League championship.

*Residents of South Gate began public protests over a veterans housing development on the western edge of Downey. Financed by L.A. County, the development will create up to 80 permanent housing units for homeless veterans.

*It was announced that the Downey City Library would close for 15 months for extensive renovations. The closure will begin next spring.

*Dr. Mary Stauffer gave \$147,200 in grants and scholarships to Downey students and teachers.

*The Embassy Suites began a multi-million-dollar renovation of all its indoor suites.

November



Claudia Frometa defeated Carrie Uva and Tony Hernandez-Ayala to win a seat on the City Council, replacing Fernando Vasquez, who was termed out after eight years.

"I'm looking forward to being a strong advocate on behalf of all residents and representing our community ethically and with transparency," said Frometa. "My goals and priorities will not change: public safety and advocating for the needs of our seniors, and engagement with our residents."

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"I'm looking forward to being a strong advocate on behalf of all residents and representing our community ethically and with transparency," said Frometa. "My goals and priorities will not change: public safety and advocating for the needs of our seniors, and engagement with our residents."

Meanwhile, Giggy Perez-Saab won a seat on the school board, warding off challenger Carlos Avalos in a competitive race. Perez-Saab replaces Willie Gutierrez, who resigned earlier in the year.

In other races, Assemblymember Cristina Garcia and Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard were both re-elected, and Bob Archuleta was chosen by voters to replace Tony Mendoza in the state senate.

*Downey police officers held a 5K in memory of late police officer Ricky Galvez. The run started at the Columbia Memorial Space Center and made its way through the Downey Landing and Promenade shopping centers.

*Following the slaying of 11 worshippers at a Pittsburgh synagogue, Rabbi Daniel E. Mehlman of Temple Ner Tamid penned an op-ed, writing: "Words no longer suffice. They are meager and lacking. They ring hollow to those deep in shock and grief. Many things come to mind, but to write yet another statement will be just that, another statement — more words, wholly inadequate. The real statement we must make has to be action. We must be one people

coming together, standing shoulder to shoulder, speaking out strongly against all violence and in support of peace, decency, solidarity. That must be our statement."

*A pop-up exhibit about the life of Anne Frank opened at Stay Gallery. The exhibit opening was attended by representatives of the Anne Frank House, the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, and the Netherlands Consulate General.

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Perez-Saab replaces Willie Gutierrez, who resigned earlier in the year.

In other races, Assemblymember Cristina Garcia and Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard were both re-elected, and Bob Archuleta was chosen by voters to replace Tony Mendoza in the state senate.

separate company to produce local house shows.

*Council members extended a temporary ban on new massage parlors, concerned about their growing presence in the city.

December

*Downey Unified school board member Martha Sodetani rode as grand marshal in the Downey Christmas Parade, presented by the Downey Chamber of Commerce. This year's parade was notable for the return of equestrian units.

*Carl Charles, Downey's first African-American police chief and a 28-year veteran of the Downey Police Department, retired. Capt. Dean Milligan was named the new chief of police.

*Rick Rodriguez was sworn-in as mayor of Downey. Rodriguez said his focus would be on increasing the collaboration between Downey's extensive volunteer network. Rodriguez also announced an initiative called the Downey Care Collaborative, a support system aimed at helping at-risk youth, particularly those in the foster system.

*Rotary Club of Downey hosted its 70th annual pancake breakfast benefiting the Downey YMCA.

*Downey firefighters were dispatched to help fight several wildfires raging across California.

Downey Engine 62 was deployed to the Hill incident in Ventura County, where Downey personnel joined a strike team comprised of firefighters from Downey, Compton, La Habra Heights, Vernon and Santa Fe Springs. More Downey firefighters were dispatched to help fight the Woolsey Fire in Malibu. The Downey firefighters joined a strike team that contained fire personnel from Glendale, La Verne, San Marino, Torrance, and Redondo Beach.

Downey firefighter and paramedic Scott Wilcox was separately deployed as a fire medic to the Hill Fire in Thousand Oaks.

Fire Chief Mark Gillaspie said Downey firefighters have been credited with saving several homes.

"Reports indicate our crews performed well under extremely challenging conditions, saving many homes," said Gillaspie. "I am extremely proud of our firefighters. They literally save lives every single day."

*The City Council awarded a new 3-year contract to VenueTech to manage the Downey Civic Theatre, although city officials indicated they would seek a

*Blanca Pacheco was sworn-in as mayor pro tem, setting her up to serve as mayor in 2020.

*Lupita Infante, the granddaughter of iconic Mexican actor and singer Pedro Infante, performed live at Joseph's Bar & Grill.

*Studio Movie Grill announced a complete renovation of the former Krikorian Theatre, including plush leather lounge chairs with in-seat dining service. It also announced the creation of 200 jobs.

*A holiday spectacular show, "It's Christmas in Downey," was presented at the Downey Theatre, featuring performances by the All American Boys Chorus, professional opera singers, and live music by the Cathedral Productions Orchestra.

*Warren High School won Downey Unified's first eSports championship, defeating Downey High in the finals at the Downey Theatre.

The video game competition taught students about coding, game design, and teamwork, officials said. Students from the winning team also earned three college credits.

*Assemblymember Cristina Garcia re-introduced legislation that would eliminate sales tax on feminine hygiene products. Similar legislation had already been vetoed three times but Garcia was hoping for better success with Gov.-elect Gavin Newsom.

*Giggly Saab took her oath of office as Downey Unified's newest school board member.

*Claudia Frometa took her seat on the City Council, replacing termed-out councilmember Fernando Vasquez.

*Downey rental prices dipped for a second straight month, perhaps signaling a softening real estate market.

*Warren High's band and color guard won a second consecutive gold medal at the Southern California School Band and Orchestra competition.



Downey Unified school board member Martha Sodetani rode as grand marshal in the Downey Christmas Parade, presented by the Downey Chamber of Commerce. This year's parade was notable for the return of equestrian units.

Thank you from all of us here at **The Downey Patriot newspaper. We want to wish you all a Happy Holiday Season and a wonderful New Year.**





Gypsy Queen: Started in a trailer, now we're here

By Alex Dominguez

It just made sense. She was born in Downey. She was raised in Downey. She was a Downey Viking. She was even Miss Downey 2011. So when her boutique-style store Gypsy Queen first started to take shape, 29-year-old Erika Gonzalez knew there was no other place to lay its foundation than in Downey.

"I'm a super Downey girl," said Gonzalez.

Gypsy Queen's beginnings were probably as humble as you could get for a future store front.

"We actually started off in a 1970's trailer that my dad gutted out and remade it into a mobile boutique," said Gonzalez. "We started selling at street fairs and swap meets. We did that for about a year, and then we opened our first location behind Big 5 which was not your conventional store. It was like a warehouse but we made it into a mini store."

Six months later, a new opportunity in the form of a more traditional storefront opened up. That is now where Gypsy Queen currently resides, located at 11405 Paramount Blvd.

Their new space on Paramount is triple the size of their former location. The store has been on Paramount for about a year and a half.

Gonzalez says that owning a store was "always the goal."

"After I graduated high school in 2007 I went to FIDM (Fashion Institute for Design and Merchandising)," said Gonzalez. "We had an entrance project. Owning my own boutique in my hometown and where I grew up was always my dream, and that's how I presented it to the faculty that was there that I had to present to."

Gonzalez is co-owner of Gypsy Queen alongside her mom and step-dad. She says that they all have a hand in the day-to-day operations.

"My step-dad does the finances and he's the handyman. My mom, she helps me run it when I can't run the store," said Gonzalez. "I'm here usually 24/7 if I have nothing to do. I'm usually here all the time."

The name Gypsy Queen comes from the idea of a "free-spirited individual girl," as well as a reference to her 2011 Miss Downey reign.

The store's merchandise is inspired by Gonzalez's first time attending the popular Coachella Music Festival.

"It was super bohemian, chic," said Gonzalez. "I got inspired by that style. When my step-dad surprised me with the trailer, right away I went to vendors that had that kind of style. At that time, it was killing it; all these girls were obsessed with it."

It's a style that was a little harder to find locally before Gypsy Queen came along.

"Downey doesn't really have any stores that have that style. It's something different," said Gonzalez. "The girls who were interested, they'd drive out to LA to go to those boutiques out there because they carried something different than what other Downey stores had."

"I knew I wanted to bring that here so girls could shop in their hometown or somewhere local."

Gonzalez continues to keep her eye on evolving fashion trends and then adjusts her stock accordingly. She pays attention to what her clients want, what trends are in, and what celebrities wear.

Her clientele is a "good mix of everybody," although her usual customers fall between the ages of 18 to 35.

"It's for a girl that is very trendy, chic, and 'boho' style," said Gonzalez.

Eventually, Gonzalez says that she would like to have a second store. For now, though, she's focused on getting and keeping her Downey store "set."

"This is like my number one. I want this to run smoothly. I want this to be the number one spot where girls go, like the hub of Gypsy Queen," said Gonzalez. "Once this store is secure and where I want it to be then eventually my second location is where I'm going to be focused on."

Owning and running a store isn't always easy. On top of keeping up with trends and making sure her customers are happy, Gonzalez says that determining price points can be a bit tricky.

"I want to be very affordable, but at the same time I have to think of my overhead cost," said Gonzalez. "We've never ran a business before; this is all new to us. My step-dad is a rocket scientist, my mom is in



loans. We don't know how to run a business. We're learning as we go. It's a challenge."

Gonzalez and her family have already invested \$20,000 to start Gypsy Queen.

"My dad fronted the money first. As we go on he'll pay himself little by little," said Gonzalez. "But what we profit we still invest into the store."

One thing that Gonzalez has figured out – and put to good use – is the use of social media, specifically Instagram.

"Honestly, I don't think we would be a business without Instagram. I owe everything to Instagram because that's where my free marketing is," said Gonzalez. "I post everything new on Instagram. I post it on Instagram before I even post it on the website."

Her following has continued to grow. At the time of writing, Gypsy Queen has over 19.1 thousand followers on Instagram.

"I'm very picky about the way I post my things, so I think that has a lot to do with the positive feedback that my customers have been giving me," said Gonzalez.

More than fulfilling a dream of hers, Gypsy Queen has provided an outlet to contribute to the community that has given her so much.

"I was born and raised here; anything I can give back to the city, I love that," said Gonzalez. "I just love that I can give back to the city that raised me."

In Memory Of...

The following is a list of people whose obituary appeared in The Downey Patriot through December 13, 2018.

- Jacob Adajian
- Bonnie Addington
- Lennice Anderson
- Raymond Armas
- Patricia Beckerman
- Harold Boschma
- William Bruner
- Thomas Burger
- Mary Champlin
- Calvin Chappell
- Elinore Corse
- Gary Cuevas
- Jim Cullison
- Cecile Dalmau
- Afton Davis
- George Thomas Deere
- Noel Dale Devereux
- John Echeveste
- Robert Egan
- Lowell Farris
- James Finley
- Isabel Frailey
- Alice Fray
- Lillian Freeman
- Eugenia Gil
- Bessie Gonos
- Helen Gregorio
- John Thomas Henzel
- Eustace Hetzel
- Theodore Heyer
- Wilbur Hitt
- William Hojel
- Lyle Charles Jamison
- Raymond Jantz
- Mary Jones
- Jerry Klett
- Michael Layland
- George Lee (Yo Yu)
- Henry Lee
- Edith Lehman
- Harriet Littlewood
- Judy Ann Luers
- Esperanza Luna
- Beverly Luther
- Judith Manis
- Caryl Maniscalco
- Ellen Mascaro
- Arlene McArthur
- Ronald McArthur
- William Menighan
- Janet Molinaro
- Patricia Molinaro
- Philip Munden
- Rose Neal
- Barney Nipp
- Pauline Jean Turner Olson
- Barry Ord
- Elaine Pardlow-Bowls
- Helen Pautsch
- Chris Pelonis
- Audrey Perkins
- Victor Plummer
- Frank Redd
- Elwood Renshaw
- Lenora Isaacson Schuricht
- Erica Seelig
- Marshall Skinner Jr.
- Calvin Spencer
- David Spilsbury
- Allison Stafford
- Beth Steele
- Patricia St. Marie
- Roy Streeter
- Kenneth Thompson
- Carmen Vineyard
- Maxine Watson
- Della Welch
- Marjorie Wimmer
- Scott Zowada




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God has comforted us in our sorrow.
2 Corinthians 1:4

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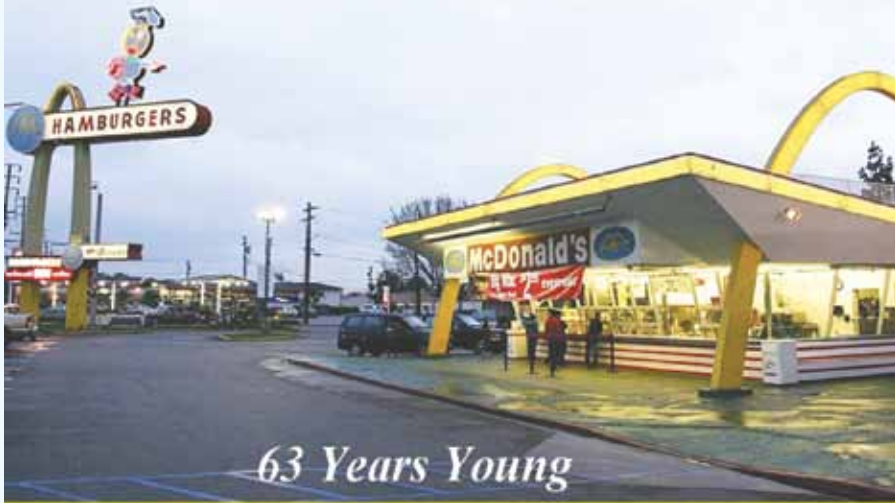


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