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Downey City Hall reopens Monday

Closed since March, Downey City Hall will reopen to the public Monday. Face coverings are required.

DOWNEY — Effective Monday, June 1, Downey City Hall will reopen its doors to the public and resume its regular operating hours of Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The public will now be able to conduct business in person, but will be required to wear a cloth face covering and maintain physical distancing while inside the building.

Downey Fire Department personnel will be conducting wellness checks for all guests entering City Hall. This will include temperature checks and screening questions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The city is also implementing the following safety protocols:

- Installation of Plexiglas shields on public counters
- Yellow markers to ensure physical distancing
- Frequent cleaning/disinfecting of commonly touched areas such as counters, doorknobs, elevators, stairways, Plexiglas and restrooms
- Hand sanitizing stations

Although City Hall will reopen, residents are encouraged to continue accessing city services by email, phone and appointment, as there will be a limit to the number of people allowed inside the building.

As a reminder, the following city facilities will continue to be closed until further notice:

- Barbara J. Riley Community & Senior Center
- McCaughan Gym at Apollo Park
- City Maintenance Yard
- Downey Civic Theatre
- Columbia Memorial Space Center

Downey parks will continue to be open for passive use, such as walking, jogging, and leisure time outdoors for individuals or families. The following park amenities will continue to be closed: playgrounds, basketball courts, volleyball courts, fitness equipment, athletic fields and Skate Park.

“We are pleased to once again be able to re-open City Hall and provide our residents and businesses with the service they deserve in a safe and efficient manner,” said Mayor Blanca Pacheco.

“As we continue our recovery journey, I strongly urge our community members to take every precaution necessary to limit the spread of COVID-19,” added Mayor Pro Tem Claudia M. Frometa.

The public is reminded to continue to do their part to slow the spread of COVID-19:

- Wear a face covering whenever you leave home
- Wash hands throughout the day
- Stay six feet away from people who don’t live with you
- Stay home if you are feeling sick

Water district could be placed in receivership

Financial mismanagement has led to increasing water rates the last five years, critics say. Legislation would dissolve the agency’s board of directors and place someone else in charge.

DOWNEY — California state Sen. Steven Bradford (D-Gardena) introduced legislation this week authorizing the Water Replenishment District of Southern California (WRD) to take control of the Central Basin Municipal Water District (Central Basin), a move that would dissolve Central Basin’s board of directors and put the distressed agency in receivership because “(t) he problems at the district . . . cannot be resolved by the district board as currently constituted.”

As stated in the proposed legislation, Central Basin’s board of directors has a history of “poor leadership, decision-making, and oversight” which continues in spite of recent legislation which made changes to the District’s governance.

As a local measure, the bill has remarkable support with nine coauthors including Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon (D-Lakewood), Assembly Majority Leader Ian Calderon (D-Whittier), Assemblyman Ed Chau (D-Monterey Park), and Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia (D-Bell Gardens).

The California legislation calls out current board mismanagement for “rejecting” a demand from the Los Angeles District Attorney’s Office to cure illegal Board actions, failing “to legally appoint a general manager or general counsel,” a lawsuit filed against the agency by numerous customers for several illegal acts, not having sworn in a vacant board member, failing to impose a crucial annual charge and mishandling the District’s finances.

Numerous financial issues include operating the District “at a deficit” and failure “to enact cost-cutting measures” due to lower

FREE SPENDING

Central Basin’s reserve funds have fallen from \$27.3 million in 2008 to \$9.8 million today.

Central Basin’s average pension liability per active employee is \$333,820, which far exceeds other local water agencies, including the Water Replenishment District (\$132,452) and Municipal Water District of Orange County (\$66,110).

water sales. The District’s annual budget has also not been adopted for the 2020-21 fiscal year.

The District also has recently experienced dramatic declines of approximately 60-70% in cash reserves and water revenues while significantly increasing water rates over the last five years, some more than double. Meanwhile, the District’s credit rating has dramatically tumbled from AA- to BBB+.

Compared to other water agencies in several key areas related to profitability, debt, credit ratings, cash reserves and pension levels, Central Basin has previously reported it consistently compares unfavorably.

As proposed, the receivership would be temporarily enacted for 18 months as another government agency would be tasked to study the District’s governance structure and recommend “alternatives for long-term governance of the services of selling . . . water to public water systems in the service territory of the district.”

This study, to be completed by the Local Agency Formation Commission within six months passage of the proposed legislation, will “report the results of the municipal service review to the Legislature.”



Owner David Devis in front of the Epic Lounge. Photo by Carol Kearns

The cultural legacy of Epic Lounge

By Carol Kearns Contributor

Previously in Part 1

After more than two months of government-imposed restrictions to slow the spread of COVID-19, Downey business owner David Devis is facing an economic challenge common to thousands of businesses that serve the public: can he survive financially until restrictions are lifted?

Devis’s little eatery on Second Street, LA Buns, is providing employment for five people and himself while the core of his business, the Epic Lounge event center, remains closed.

“The restaurant is now supporting both places,” says Devis.

Challenges for Devis are likely to remain even after most retail activity resumes because the Epic Lounge is an entertainment facility where people gather in large numbers. The dilemma for health officials is how to determine when events at such venues can safely resume.

While the Epic Lounge has a modest physical presence in Downtown Downey, it has authored a cultural legacy that many hope will continue when the pandemic ends.

Part 2 of this story picks up with the closure of this

fabled venue, and the eventual reopening and expansion of Devis’s vision.

Part 2 - Closure

Given the young age of audiences attracted to concerts at the Epic Lounge, it was no surprise that the venue’s popularity raised concerns among many residents. The size of the crowds prompted city officials to make a more detailed inspection of the facilities.

In February 2008 Devis received a list of building improvements required for the lounge to remain in business; these included a new smoke alarm system and the addition of a new bathroom.

Devis had a day job as a printing broker for fliers, business cards, advertisements, etc., so he wasn’t suddenly without income when his lounge closed, but he didn’t want to give up on the vision he had.

Many people would have walked away when faced with these Herculean tasks. Devis continued paying for his lease, and put all of his extra money towards making the improvements.

“The fire alarm alone was \$10,000,” he recounts. “It ruined my credit. I ate Cup of Noodles for months.” It took him over a year.

Continued on page 7

Weekend at a Glance

Friday 75°

Saturday 76°

Sunday 78°

ON THIS DAY MAY 28

1830: US President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, authorizing the Army to force Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole tribes out of Georgia and surrounding states, setting the stage for the Cherokee Trail of Tears.

1892: The Sierra Club was founded by a group of Californians who wished to sponsor wilderness outings in “the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast.” The naturalist John Muir was its first president.

1923: US Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty ruled it was legal for women to wear slacks in public.

1957: National League owners voted to allow the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants to move to the West Coast.

1987: 13-year-old Stephanie Petit won the 60th National Spelling Bee by correctly spelling “staphylococci” (a type of bacteria).

1999: After 22 years of restoration work, Leonardo da Vinci’s masterpiece “The Last Supper” is put back on display at the Santa Maria delle Grazie.

2016: Harambe, a gorilla from Cincinnati Zoo, is fatally shot after dragging a 3-year-old boy who had slipped into its enclosure.

Notable Birthdays
Former Lakers player **Jerry West** turns 82. Soul singer **Gladys Knight** turns 76. Former New York City mayor **Rudy Giuliani** turns 76. Pop singer **Kylie Minogue** turns 52. Pop singer **Colbie Caillat** turns 35. Professional wrestler **Seth Rollins** turns 34.

Notable Deaths
Lexicographer **Noah Webster** died at age 84. English novelist and poet **Anne Bronte** died of tuberculosis at age 29. Actor and comedian **Phil Hartman** was murdered at age 49. Poet and writer **Maya Angelou** died at age 86.

Holidays
Today is **National Hamburger Day**, a celebration of America’s favorite sandwich. Although originating from Hamburg, Germany, the hamburger as we know it was developed in Seymour, Wisconsin.

Also celebrated today is **Amnesty International Day**, which sheds light on the importance of human rights.

TWEET OF THE WEEK

Thanks Downey High Swim Team for making the best memories with these lovely girls. This has been the best 4 years with the swim team. I made so many friendships and I am glad to make this big accomplishment with them. Wish them the best! **Vike vibe @mariavisoso2**

Twitter.com/DowneyPatriot

Crime Report

May 12:

Detectives are investigating an armed robbery that occurred around 6 a.m. near Lakewood Boulevard and 105 Fwy. The victim exited the Green Line station when he was approached by 2 male suspects. They brandished a knife and took the victim's black backpack. The suspects were last seen running southbound on Lakewood Blvd.

May 13:

At approximately 6:40 p.m., Officers responded to the area of Firestone / Woodruff regarding a possible vehicle vs. pedestrian traffic collision. Investigating officers determined that the female suspect intentionally ran over the male victim during an argument. The suspect and victim are related. The victim was transported the hospital for moderate but non-life threatening injuries and the female suspect was arrested for assault with a deadly weapon.

May 14:

Detectives are investigating an armed robbery that occurred around 10 p.m. at the Chase Bank in the 13500 block of Lakewood Blvd. The victim was robbed at knife point by three male suspects who fled the location in a vehicle with the victim giving chase. The suspect vehicle was involved in a minor collision with a block wall at Food 4 Less then continued into Paramount where the suspects abandoned the vehicle and fled on foot. It was determined the suspect vehicle was stolen.

May 15:

At approximately 6:05 PM, Officers responded to 13300 block of Lakewood Blvd regarding a family disturbance call. During an argument, the suspect swung a baseball bat several times in an unsuccessful attempt to strike his adult son. The suspect was arrested without incident and booked for assault with a deadly weapon.

May 17:

At approximately 11:50 a.m., Officers responded to the 7300 block of Florence regarding a residential burglary in progress. Officers detained 3 subjects at the scene, one of which was in possession of the victim's property. The suspect was arrested and the victim's property recovered.

Detectives are investigating a grand theft that occurred around 6:15 PM at 9210 Lakewood Blvd. Two male suspects in their 20's entered the store, grabbed four Apple watches and a cellular phone from the display and fled from the store.

May 18:

Detectives are investigating a strong-arm robbery that occurred around 11:30 a.m. at 9001 Apollo Way (WalMart). The adult male suspect entered the store, selected merchandise and exited the store without paying for the items. A Loss Prevention employee attempted to stop the suspect outside the store and the suspect shoved the employee to escape and fled in a waiting vehicle.

Detectives are investigating a stabbing that occurred around 6:10 p.m. in the 7900 block of Stewart and Gray. The male victim was to the rear of the apartment complex when he was confronted by two males who asked where he was from. The victim and suspects argued and one of the suspects

stabbed the victim, causing a minor wound. The suspects fled southbound through the parking lot and out of sight. The victim was uncooperative and refused any medical attention.

May 22:

At approximately 11 a.m., Officers responded to a possible shots heard call at the abandoned car dealership at 10700 Studebaker. Officers discovered that the property owner was inside the property with construction personnel when he encountered two subjects vandalizing the building. The property owner had a firearm and fired several shots into the ground to scare off the subjects. The subjects fled and were not located.

May 24:

At approximately 1:25 a.m., Officers were dispatched to CVS at 7915 Florence regarding a female who had been advised multiple times for trespassing at the business. An officer arrived and made contact with the female who was inside the business and refusing to leave. The female refused to comply with the officer's orders to leave the store and attempted to punch the officer. The officer was able to detain the female without further incident and she was arrested for trespassing and assault on a peace officer.

2 killed in hit-and-run on 5 Freeway

DOWNEY — A deadly hit-and-run crash that killed two people was caught on dashcam video on Sunday afternoon.

It happened shortly after 2:30 p.m. at the Paramount exit on the 5 Freeway in Downey.

A white Fiat appeared to clip a red sedan and sent it spiraling off the freeway and slamming into a tree.

The man and woman who were traveling in the red vehicle were killed and the Fiat took off from the scene.

The suspect was arrested after independent news photographer Hector Gerardo witnessed the crash and followed him, while calling 911.

"The red car was just on its own driving normally and the white car was going in and out of lanes," Gerardo said. "Thirty seconds later, he starts to move over to the right and clips the red car. I yelled pretty loudly and I was like, wow I can't believe this is happening and just, I did what I had to do, either I pull over and try to help people which in my mind I knew they were beyond what I could do and so my best instinct was to go forward and follow the suspect."

Police caught up to the suspect near Florence Avenue and Studebaker Road, about three miles from the crash scene.

California Highway Patrol said the driver did not appear under the influence of drugs or alcohol, but will likely face felony hit-and-run charges.

"Unfortunately those two people who were just traveling down the freeway, their lives were taken away from them," Gerardo said.

City Council approves pay raises for police officers

DOWNEY — A three-year pay raise for Downey Police Department was given the go ahead by City Council at their meeting on Tuesday evening.

Under the new three-year agreement with the Downey Police Officers' Association (DPOA) - which represents the sworn classifications of Police Officer and Police Sergeant, the across-the-board pay raise will see a 2% pay increase effective in July this year, followed by another 2% raise in July next year, and another 1% raise in July the following year.

The agreement also calls for the continuation of employees' 6% cost sharing of reputable earnings towards city pension costs for the 3% at age 50 retirement formula.

This comes at an increase of personnel costs at approximately \$513,527, \$532,703, and \$137,389 in the respective years.

The item was approved on a 3-0 vote, with Mayor Pro Tem Claudia Frometa and Councilman Rick Rodriguez absent.

Alex Dominguez, staff writer

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Paging Dr. Frischer...

By Dr. Alan Frischer

Is it just me, or does it seem as if we are living in a terrible late night science fiction movie? Today I am writing about the importance of masks and gloves. In our everyday life!



This morning I went out on a long hike in our beautiful Santa Monica Mountains with my wife... keeping our distance, and wearing a mask. This is now allowed, but is it safe? Just how do we stay safe during a global pandemic?

Why wear a mask? Two great reasons: it benefits ourselves,

and it benefits those around us. A family member, friend, or stranger may have the COVID-19 virus, display no symptoms at all, and continue to walk, shop, or work

alongside us. The virus is living in their nose and mouth and can be projected into their immediate environment. And, if *you* happen to be the one who has the virus, with or without symptoms, you may be inadvertently be sharing your virus-containing droplets with others.

It is important to remember that our becoming ill requires that we receive a large enough dose of the virus. The closer we are physically to the carrier, the

larger the dose. The sicker the carrier is, the greater the dose. That is why distance, in addition to wearing a mask, is critical.

We keep hearing about six feet. There's nothing magical about that distance; seven is better, and five not as good. Outdoors is safer, because the virus is diluted by a higher volume of air, and by air current. Enclosed spaces like restaurants, homes or yoga studios lead to a higher density of any virus that might be present.

Even an imperfect mask will block some or most of the virus-containing droplets. Most masks will filter out large droplets, even if they imperfectly filter smaller particles. Some masks are more effective than others. A properly fitted N95 mask, while most effective, is still in short supply even for medical personnel on the front lines. A surgical mask is loose fitting and disposable. They are not to be shared, do not

act as a complete barrier, and were never intended to be used more than once.

The best choice? A mask made of high thread count cotton, with another layer of polyester, which has a snug fit. It can be washed and reused.

Note that the virus resides in the both the nose and the mouth. A mask must cover both! How the mask is worn is critical. Gaps along the mask edge can degrade its performance by as much as 50%. While getting the virus through the eyes is possible, it is far less likely to be the route of entry for most of us. (Health care professionals and others in the line of duty are wearing eye shields.)

What about gloves? Even though the major route of transmission appears to be through airborne droplets, the current wisdom is that this virus can live on surfaces for up to three days. We touch a lot of surfaces wher-

ever we go - doorknobs, elevator buttons, streetlight buttons, counters, grocery packaging, toilet handles, sink handles, etc. If we touch any of these and then touch our face, it is possible to transfer any virus present to our eyes, nose or mouth. We might then touch someone or something and spread the virus even further.

What if we were wearing gloves? They become contaminated, instead of our hands. Let me restate that. Gloves are not automatically sterile. They can become contaminated, just like our hands. How many times have you seen someone wearing gloves touch their face or clothing? Those gloves are no longer clean.

A benefit of gloves is that they do remind us that we are attempting to stay sterile, and we tend to be less likely to touch our face or anything else. Gloves can be easily thrown away. If you

intend to be at, perhaps, a store where virus might be living on surfaces, feel free to wear gloves - any type of rubber gloves - but be aware that they are no longer sterile the moment they touch anything.

Let's continue to do our best to NOT get infected. COVID-19 is unpredictable, and has hospitalized and killed both young and old. Testing is not reliable, and we still don't understand enough about antibodies and future immunity to count on that. For now, I urge you to use a mask, wear gloves when appropriate, avoid being with others in small spaces without good circulation, and maintain that six-foot distancing. I wish for you the very best of health.

Dr. Alan Frischer is former chief of staff and former chief of medicine at Downey Regional Medical Center. Write to him in care of this newspaper at 8301 E. Florence Ave., Suite 100, Downey, CA 90240.

Foundation donates iPads to Rancho

DOWNEY — Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center has received donated iPads to be used by COVID-19 patients and their families.

The donation of 300 iPads came from the Annenberg Foundation.

While social distancing has been successful in flattening the curve of the COVID-19 surge in Los Angeles County, it is anticipated that it will continue for several months.

With this gift, physicians and nurses will be able to place an iPad in the room of COVID and other critically-ill patients for the duration of the

admission and reduce potential exposure and use of personal protective equipment going in and out of the room.

Having a stationary iPad helps relieve medical staff who would otherwise have to hold the phone for a patient or search for the person's personal phone. It also will allow patients who do not have a personal mobile device to communicate and "visit" with their family.

"The engagement of loved ones during hospitalization has been shown to improve clinical outcomes," said Dr. Christina Ghaly, director of Los Angeles County Department

of Health Services. "Clinical staff identified a role for virtual visiting through technology in order to facilitate this family involvement. The generous donations by the Annenberg Foundation and MobileDemand will help support this critical element of our patients' care."

The donation provides 300 iPads to be used in DHS hospitals to ensure patients and their families are able to connect, despite restrictions in access to the hospital.

A second donation, by

MobileDemand, provides rugged, protective healthcare iPad cases to protect against damage and loss.

The rugged case also has an adjustable easel attached, providing effortless viewing for patients who are too weak to hold a tablet.

Additionally, it frees health care staff from having to hold the device for patients.

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POETRY MATTERS

Grass

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work—
I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:
What place is this?
Where are we now?

I am the grass.
Let me work.

Carl Sandburg

From February to December, 1916, French and Germans fought at Verdun. Total casualties numbered more than 700,000; deaths, over 300,000 in 300 days. The battle was indecisive. Poetry Matters is curated by Lorine Parks.

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Bancarrota

Divorces
Divorcios

Visitation & Custody
Visitaciones y Custodia

Restraining Orders

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Metro **Caltrans**

Notice of Availability (NOA) of an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (EIR/EA)

I-105 ExpressLanes Project Area
California Department of Transportation
District 7, Los Angeles

WHAT'S BEING PLANNED? The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in cooperation with Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) are evaluating alternatives to convert the existing high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to dynamically-priced, high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes, also called ExpressLanes, in the eastbound and westbound directions of Interstate 105 (I-105) in Los Angeles County from the terminus of the existing HOV lanes west of Interstate 405 (I-405) in the City of Los Angeles to Studebaker Road in the City of Norwalk. The I-105 ExpressLanes Project (Project) limits include installation of a new overhead tolling system and signage. Caltrans, as assigned by the Federal Highway Administration, is the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

WHY THIS NOTICE? Caltrans has studied the effects that the proposed Project may have on the environment and community. The results of these studies are summarized in an environmental document known as a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (EIR/EA). The supporting Draft EIR/EA and Project Report technical studies, as well as printed copies of the aforementioned reports, are available upon request. The purpose of this notice is to inform the public of the availability of these draft documents to any interested individuals, to provide the public an opportunity to comment, and to notify the public of an online presentation and Q&A (details below). *Note: questions submitted for the Q&A will not be part of the official comment record.* Please submit your comments in writing no later than **Monday, July 6, 2020** to:

Ronald Kosinski, Deputy District Director
Caltrans District 7
Division of Environmental Planning
100 S Main St, MS-16A, Los Angeles, CA 90012

WHERE AND WHEN? Based on Governor Newsom's executive order, as well as recommendations from the California Department of Public Health to stay at home, except as needed, in-person public hearings will not be held to maintain social distancing requirements. However, you can join a live presentation with Q&A via the web or phone on **Thursday, June 11, 2020, 6pm**. For more details on the live presentation, visit the project website (metro.net/105ExpressLanes) or virtual open house tool (105virtualforum.com). You may also listen live in English by dialing the following number: **213-458-5634, Pin: 433-164-484#**. Individuals who require special accommodations are requested to contact the Project Team at 213-922-6565 at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled presentation date.

For more information, please contact us at 213-922-6565 or 105ExpressLanes@metro.net. Thank you for your interest in this project!

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What will the next school year look like? There are more questions than answers

By Lorine Parks
Society Columnist

What is going to happen to us? Where do we go from here?"

In an informal talk at a Zoom meeting of the Rotary Club of Downey, Dr. John Garcia, superintendent of the Downey Unified School District, asked these questions and answered them, for the most part with more questions.

Recently named 2020's California Superintendent of the Year for Region 14, which ranges from Beverly Hills to Long Beach, Dr. John was singled out even before the present emergency, "for his exceptional leadership in managing school programs." The current crisis calls on all his abilities in "creativity and innovation in the classroom."

"We have no idea what the fall semester will look like," said Dr. John. "Los Angeles County is leading the nation as a hotspot for the coronavirus

infection. Our county will lag behind the nation in reopening, on purpose. We don't have the answers yet, and we have to be open and flexible."

"Our goal," said Dr. John, "is to bring back students and staff safely. I'll let Roger fill in the gaps."

"We operate within the CDC guidelines, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention," said Assistant Superintendent Dr. Roger Brossmer. "School openings and non-contact sports come with Phase Three, when we can reopen. Some families want their children to go back to schools; other families are not ready to send them back yet. We need to know how many kids will be coming."

"How many teachers will we need?" said Roger. "Twenty-five percent? How many days a week? What about special needs education? We provide 40,000 meals each week and most kids have two meals at school. This is a major source of nutrition. How

much food do we order, and how many staff to prepare and serve it?"

A lot depends on the state legislature and the governor, in allocating additional state money to education. And whether the federal government passes a relief bill. Our school district budget is about 95% dependent on the state of California.

A special task force of school superintendents from across the county has been meeting regularly since April 29. They will establish guidelines to assist the county's 80 school districts as they discuss the possibilities for reopening with their communities. The Downey Adult School, whose principal Blanca Rochin was selected as Region 14's Adult Education Administrator of the year, will be included in the decisions.

"Planning for social distancing is major," said Roger. "One-way traffic in the halls? Five areas where the kids can congregate? And what is a contact sport? Football and basketball, yes. What about volleyball? The kids all pick up the same ball and touch it."

What about using summer school schedules, one shift for four hours in the morning, and another shift for four hours in the afternoon? "We plan on customizing programs and allowing for alternate schedules," said Dr. John.

Will we start the school year online? Dr. John said that for him, education depends on the



Dr. John Garcia, left, and Dr. Roger Brossmer. Photo by Lorine Parks

teacher-student relationship.

Education was once defined as Mark Hopkins on one end of a log, and the student in the other. "Does that work with the teacher on the other end of the computer?" Dr. John asked.

That epigram is attributed to President James A. Garfield, who had been a student of Hopkins at Williams College, where from 1836 until 1872 Hopkins was one of the ablest and most successful of the old type of college presidents. He is a role model for educators.

"Over the past year," said Dr. John, "we had three quarters of a school year to establish that teacher-student bond. But what about the next year? The essence of learning is the teacher-student experience

together. The challenge is to offer that in some safe way."

John Lacey asked, "Will everyone wear a mask? And if the curriculum is distributed on-line, some students will go online and study. Others have no access to computers. Some will not for various reasons be able to study. There may be abuse in the home, or they may be homeless. The teacher has the extremely hard decision whether or not to pass them to the next grade level. Should they get a grade? Should it be simply a credit-no credit?"

Said Dr. John: "Those decisions are above Roger's and my level. The county will decide."

Alex Lopez remarked "My 5 year-old twins are about to

start school. Jenette and I have to decide if we will hold them back for a year. I don't want to send them into a situation I can't control."

John Lacey inquired, "What about the way it was handled after the Spanish flu 100 years ago?" John went to college in Philadelphia, the epicenter of that pandemic, when at least 50 million people died worldwide, including 675,000 in the United States.

Closing American schools earlier and for a longer period of time blunted the impact of the Spanish Flu in 1918. But closing schools "is not like turning a light switch on or off," as a professor at Arizona State University has said.

"Our people are amazingly committed," said Dr. John. "Everyone continues to work on this. Phase Three will allow gatherings of up to 300. We would relish working with that."

"We need to know our options," said Dr. John. "We are studying many plans.

"Social distancing. This is where the rubber meets the road."

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Always look for the third option

By Jackie Gingrich Cushman

“Stay shut or open up” is the current political argument. In its most simplistic form, it’s painted as a choice between saving lives (stay shut) or helping the economy (open up). As with many supposedly two-choice options, it’s both false and ill-framed. Just remember: When people give you two choices — it’s often a sign that they have not thought deeply enough about the problem and potential solutions — there are often many potential solutions.

Yes, we can focus on both saving lives and restarting the economy.

In early February, just as COVID-19 was being tracked as moving out of China and into other countries, I traveled to Korea. I had debated whether I should cancel my trip. It seemed to be a simple two-choice decision — go; no go. Instead, I chose a third option. I decided to travel with an N-95 mask and a container full of Lysol wipes. I wiped down the interior of the plane where I was sitting, wore my mask while in the airport and wiped all the surfaces in the hotel room. This was go — while taking precautions to mitigate risk.

While not everyone wore a mask while I was in Korea, most did. When I walked into a hotel for lunch, a computer scanned my body temperature, and it was double-checked by a masked attendant using a thermometer on my wrist.

I shook hands — but rarely. I washed my hands often and used hand sanitizer before eating. I skipped the shared breadbasket for reasons other than lightening up on carbohydrates.

I made it home more knowledgeable about Korea and with new

friends, much richer from the experience.

A few days later, my husband and our two children were holed up in various parts of our home, learning and working through technology. The shutdown had begun.

Decades from now, when the data can be analyzed with more detachment and less emotion, I believe that we will regard our reaction to COVID-19 as ill-informed and, well, reactionary, rather than thoughtful and useful. We decided there were two options. In our current political environment, one that is fueled by emotion, rage and judgment, a gut reaction, rather than thoughtful response, might be what we deserve.

This week, Avik Roy published an article in Forbes titled “43% of COVID-19 Deaths Are in Nursing Homes & Assisted Living Facilities Housing 0.6% Of U.S.” Roy was referencing a study he completed with Gregg Girvan for the Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity. It’s rare to find a title that is informative and cuts cleanly to the takeaway of the author’s work. While we have heard that older people are more susceptible than others to COVID-19, we now know that age is not the only risk factor: Those who live in nursing homes and assisted living facilities (2.1 million Americans) die in greater percentages than those who live elsewhere, including those of the same age.

Yes, they may have been more fragile and in worse health to begin with, but they also shared space and staff with others. As we move forward, we should use this data to inform ourselves on how to better screen visitors, workers and patients in these settings. We

also now know that the shutdown has had many unintended negative consequences on health — missed health checkups, anxiety, weight gain, etc.

We know that the coronavirus is highly contagious. So, too, are optimism, courage and action. We should be optimistic about the future. Americans have historically been inventive, creative and persistent. We often fail — but we always get back up and try again. Let’s encourage one another to try to find another way if the first is not working, rather than yell at those who have failed. We should encourage ingenuity and action. We should be courageous and speak our mind — but more importantly, to listen to others without attacking them. Listening does not mean you agree with them, just that you respect them and understand they have a right to their opinion. This should be true especially if you believe they may be wrong. They have as much right to be wrong as any other American.

As for action, we definitely need to take action, but we need to base that action on what we have learned. Yes, we should venture out into the world while taking precautions, mitigating risk. It’s not a one-size-fits-all process — and we can’t all stay home forever. There is always a third, fourth or fifth option. We just have to figure them out.

Jackie Gingrich Cushman is an author and nationally syndicated columnist. She is the daughter of former House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

The freedom to pursue happiness

By Judge Andrew Napolitano

The governors of all 50 states, and the mayors of many large cities, have assumed unto themselves the powers to restrict private personal choices and lawful public behavior in an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19.

They have done so not by enforcing previously existing legislation but by crafting their own executive orders, styling those orders as if they were laws, using state and local police to enforce those so-called laws and — presumably when life returns to normal and the courts reopen — prosecuting the alleged offenders in court.

It is hard to believe that any judge in America would permit a criminal trial of any person for violating a standard of behavior that has not been enacted into law by a legislature. We know this because under our system of representative government, separated powers and guaranteed liberties, only the legislative branch can craft laws and assign punishments for noncompliance. This is Constitutional Law 101. Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch has written that the executive branch cannot enforce a law that it has written. If it does, we will have approached tyranny.

Have we approached tyranny already?

During the past eight weeks, governors and mayors have closed most businesses, public venues and houses of worship, prohibited public assembly and restricted travel — all of which they have unilaterally decreed to be nonessential.

In his terrifying novel “1984” — which posits a future of total control of all persons by the government and total control of the government by one political party — George Orwell argued that he who controls the meaning of words controls the laws as well.

That Orwellian truism has been manifested like never before here in America, where executive branch officeholders have used state and local police to restrain people from engaging in private and public behavior which they concede was lawful two months ago because today it is not deemed “essential.”

Frankly, I am surprised at the ferocity of police enforcement and the lameness of police compliance. The police have taken the same oaths to uphold the same Bill of Rights — it’s not the Bill of Safety; it’s the Bill of Rights — as have all other officeholders. The police also know that it is unlawful for them to obey an unlawful order, particularly when they use force.

The lockdown orders are all unlawful because none of them — none — has been enacted by a legislature, and all of them — all — interfere with fundamental liberties, each of which is guaranteed — guaranteed — by the Constitution.

Please don’t misunderstand me. I recognize the scientific value of personal efforts to control contagion. But under the Constitution, these social-distancing, wear-your-mask, shut-your-business, stay-at-home edicts constitute mere recommendations that should induce rational voluntary compliance, because the government in America is without lawful power to compel compliance.

The governors complain about resistance. They need to know that Americans will resist efforts to interfere in behavior that remains as moral, natural, lawful and constitutional as it was 60 days ago.

Last week, President Donald Trump, sounding fed up with gubernatorial lockdown orders, declared that religious worship is essential — meaning, in his opinion, all houses of worship should be opened — and he offered that he was prepared to “override” any governors who disagreed with him.

When he realized that he lacked any authority to override even unlawful gubernatorial decrees, he dispatched the Department of Justice to begin filing challenges to governors in federal courts and to argue that constitutional freedoms are being impaired by the states.

I applaud this, but it is too little, too late. Where was the DOJ when Catholic priests were threatened with arrest for saying Mass or distributing palms and when Jewish rabbis were put in COVID-19-infested jails for holding funerals? At all these religious events, folks freely chose to exercise their freedom to worship; and to take their chances.

These DOJ interventions provoked the question: Who should decide what goods, services or venues are essential — the states or the federal government? The question is Orwellian, as the answer is: neither of them. The government in America — state or federal — has no power and no right to determine what goods, services and venues are essential.

Those determinations have been for individuals to make since 1776, and those individual choices have been constitutionally protected from the feds since the Bill of Rights was ratified in 1791 and from the states since the 14th Amendment was ratified in 1868.

What is essential to the laborer or student or housewife may not be essential to the former Goldman Sachs partner who was elected governor of New Jersey, and who decreed last week, “It shall be the duty of every person or entity in this State... to cooperate fully” with his orders, or essential to the ideologue who is mayor of the Big Apple and who, for all his professed liberality, threatened to close permanently — permanently — businesses and houses of worship that flaunt his guidelines.

A duty is undertaken voluntarily or by nature, not by executive command, Governor Murphy. And the government cannot take property away from its owners except for a legitimate public use and only for just compensation, Mayor de Blasio.

Governors and mayors can make all the dictatorial pronouncements and threats that they wish. But they cannot use public assets to enforce them. And when they seek to use force, those from whom they seek it should decline the offer.

In America, we decide for ourselves what produces happiness. We have never delegated to the government — ever — the power to make personal choices for us.

And some of us are willing to take chances and even do “nonessential” things. The essence of the freedoms for which we have fought since 1776 is the liberty to be ourselves.

Judge Andrew Napolitano is the senior judicial analyst for Fox News.

Have you considered a Libertarian? DUSD’s disingenious message

By John Stossel

We have a choice!

Next presidential election, we don’t have to decide between two big-spending candidates, neither of whom has expressed much interest in limited government.

Now, we have a third serious choice. This week, Dr. Jo Jorgensen, a psychology lecturer at Clemson University, won the Libertarian Party’s presidential nomination.

OK, I won’t delude myself — a libertarian is unlikely to become president. But Jorgensen’s platform is a refreshing change.

She correctly points out that government “is too big, too bossy, too nosy, and way too intrusive.”

Of course, many candidates say that when running for office.

President Donald Trump said it, but once he was elected, he increased spending by half a trillion dollars, created a new military branch designed to protect U.S. interests in space, imposed tariffs and demanded more funds for “infrastructure” and “building a giant wall.”

Joe Biden wants to spend \$532 billion more, increasing spending on things like education, climate and health care.

By contrast, Jorgensen says government should do less and spend less.

She’s right. The founders’ insistence on limited government is what made America prosperous.

Jorgensen noticed how our big and cumbersome government slowed our response to the coronavirus.

“We had about 60 American companies making testing kits and the FDA only approved two,” she said in the final Libertarian Party debate. “What the president should have done was use the Emergency Powers Act and say, ‘FDA, you only have to prove safety, not efficacy. Get these kits out there.’”

If some tests don’t work, the free market will weed that out, says Jorgensen. “If you are a large drug company, you don’t want to put out a drug or testing kit that doesn’t work — you’ll go bankrupt.”

Trump supported the latest multitrillion-dollar stimulus bill, saying, it “will deliver urgently needed relief to our nation’s families and workers.” Biden called for another stimulus — “a hell of a lot bigger.”

Jorgensen wouldn’t sign either bill. “Let the people keep their money,” she says. “Let them decide who should stay in business and who shouldn’t.”

She points out that government is not as good as individuals at deciding where money should go. “Government money usually goes to their friends and special interests and lobbyists.”

America’s most popular government program is probably Social Security. Created to help the minority of Americans who lived past age 65 at that time, it’s now an unsustainable handout to most older people. Social Security is going broke because people my age just keep living longer. Sorry. We won’t volunteer to die.

Jorgensen would save social security by offering everyone “an immediate opt-out,” something like the Cato Institute’s 6.2% solution, which would let individuals invest 6.2% of their payroll tax into a private retirement account.

While phasing the program out, she says seniors would be paid back what they’ve put in. “Sell those government assets, mineral rights, water rights, buildings downtown,” she says. “Give that money to seniors.”

Finally, Jorgensen would end “these needless wars that caused the injuries or deaths of hundreds of thousands of American soldiers... and the waste of trillions of tax dollars.” She’d “make America one giant Switzerland, armed and neutral... no American military personnel stationed in foreign countries. No foreign aid. No loan guarantees.”

This is not pacifism, she says, “I am proposing an American military force ready and able to defend the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii and all U.S. territories against foreign attackers.”

But like most libertarians, she doesn’t want America involved in foreign wars.

As the Libertarian Party’s presidential candidate, Dr. Jorgensen will be on the ballot in most states. Voters will have a real choice this November.

Libertarian ideas are very different from those held by today’s Democrats and Republicans. Instead of lusting for more money and power, her party proposes a government that keeps the peace and, mostly, leaves people alone.

Sounds good to me.

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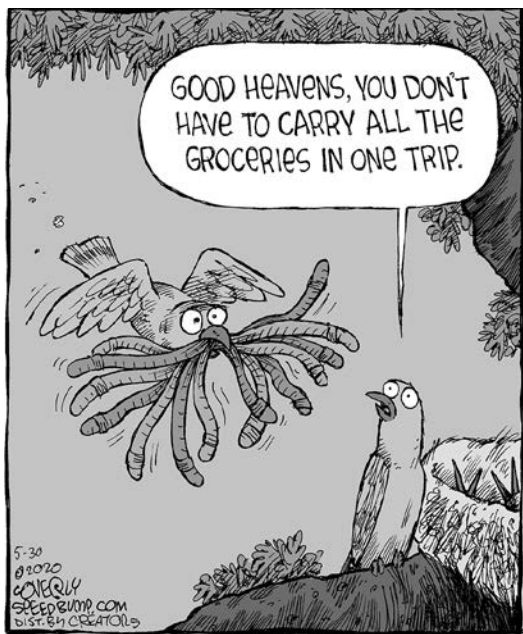
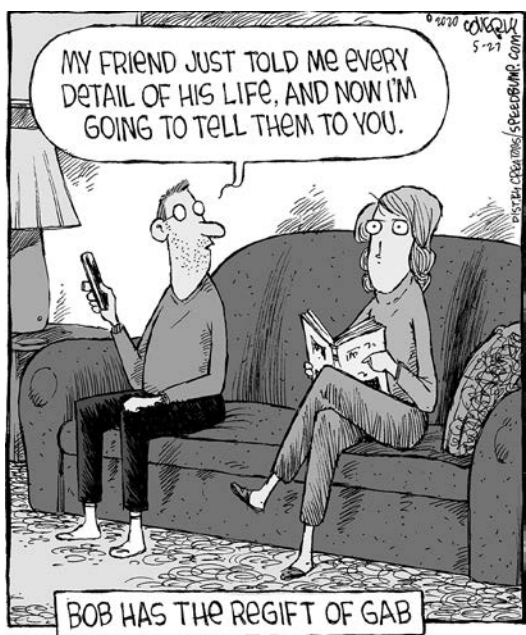
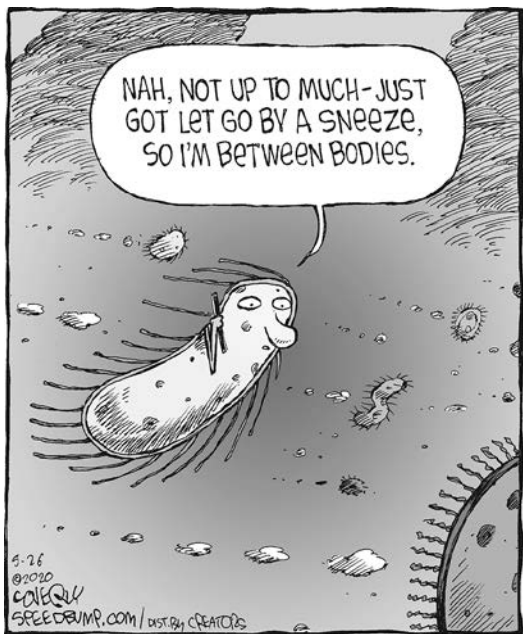
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Downey Community Calendar

CITY MEETINGS

1st & 3rd Wednesday, 6:30pm: Planning Commission, Council Chamber at City Hall.
 1st Tue., 4:00pm.: Recreation and Community Services Commission, Council Chamber, City Hall.
 2nd & 4th Tue., 6:30pm: City Council, Council Chamber.
 3rd Tue., 6:30pm: Library Advisory Board, at Downey City Library.
 3rd Thurs., 6:30pm: CERT, at Downey City Council Chamber at City Hall, for more info call 299-5462.
 4th Mon., 5 pm: Green Task Force, at City Hall.

Regularly Scheduled Meetings

MONDAYS

7 pm: Boy Scout Troop 2, at Downey United Methodist Church, call 869-6478.
 4:30 pm: Courage Forward Meeting, at 10829 New St, 2nd Floor, call 213-545-6810.
 2nd Mon., 11 am: American Legion Auxiliary #270, at United Methodist Church, call 310-386-8112.
 3rd Mon., 11:30 am: Downey Newcomers Club, call Marilyn 928-2623.
 4th Mon., 7:30 pm: Downey Numismatists, at Downey Retirement Center, call 862-6666.

TUESDAYS

9 am: Quilters group, at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, call 803-4459.
 9:30 am: Downey Seniors Club, at Apollo Park, call Irene Vallini at 328-7039.
 10 am: Downey Bocce Club, at 7850 Quill Drive, call John Fiorenza at 652-4399.
 12 pm: Rotary Club, at Rio Hondo Events Center, call Nate Mahoney 416-1826.
 6 pm: Toastmasters Club 587, at First Baptist Church, contact Salvador Cervantes: tmsalcpuede@gmail.com.
 7 pm: Downey Knights of Columbus Bingo, at 11231 Rives Ave., call 923-1932.
 7 pm: Healing Room and Prayer, at Desert Reign Church 11610 Lakewood Blvd, call 861-6011.
 7:30 pm: Downey Master Chorale, at Cornerstone Church, contact info@downeymasterchorale.org.
 1st Tues., 7:30 am: Gangs Out of Downey, at City Hall training room.
 2nd Tues., 6 pm: Downey Fly Fishers, at Apollo Park, call 425-7936.
 3rd Tues., 6:30 pm: Community Emergency Response Team meeting, Fire station 1, 12222 Paramount.
 3rd Tues., 6 pm: American Legion #270, at Sizzler Restaurant, call 544-0372.
 Tues., Thurs. & Sat., 10 am: Downey Bocce Club, at 7850 Quill Drive, call John Fiorenza 652-4399

WEDNESDAYS

7 am: Kiwanis Club, at Rio Hondo Events Center, call Steve Roberson at 927-2626.
 7 am: Women's Bocce Club, at 7850 Quill Drive, call Marie Puch at 869-4366.
 7 pm: Out Post 132 Royal Rangers, at Desert Reign Church, call 928-8000.
 1st Wed., 11 am: Woman's Club of Downey, call Cheryl Olson 833-8954.
 1st Wed., 11:30 am: Downey Coordinating Council, Community Center, call Bobbi Bruce 440-5416.
 1st Wed., 7:30 pm: Downey Stamp Club, at Maude Price School cafeteria, call 928-3028.
 2nd Wed., 11:30 am: Christian Women's Club, call Marilyn 928-2623.
 2nd Wed., 3:30 pm: Keep Downey Beautiful, at City Hall, call 904-7102.
 2nd Wed., 7:30 pm: Downey Model A Club, at Gallatin School Cafeteria, call 928-4132.
 3rd Wed.: Downey Dog Obedience Club, for information please call Gina 869-5213 or Valerie 420-2972.
 3rd Wed., 10 am: Los Angeles County Quilters Guild, at Women's Club, call 860-8821 or 927-3635.
 3rd Wed., 10 am: OLPH Women's Guild, at OLPH School Auditorium, contact Melodie Santana, (562) 806-3102.
 3rd Wed., 6:00 pm: Sister Cities of Downey, at Barabara Riley Senior Center, call Gloria Nezahualcoyotl (562) 776-6136.
 4th Wed., 7:30 pm: US Coast Guard Aux. Flotilla 5-10, First Presbyterian Church, call Brian 419-5420.
 Wed. & Fri., 10:15 am: Senior Bingo, at Apollo Park, call 904-7223

THURSDAYS

7:30 am: Connections Networking, at Bob's Big Boy, for info., call Nick Smith, 861-5222.
 7:30 am.: Soroptimist Int'l of Downey, for information, call Mia Vasquez, 806-3217.
 9 am: Crafters group, at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, call 803-4459.
 9:30 am: Take off Pounds Sensibly, at Barabara Riley Senior Center, call (800) 932-8677.
 12 pm: Kiwanis Club of Downey, at Rio Hondo Events Center, call Roy Jimenez 923-0971.
 12 pm: Optimist Club of Downey, at Rio Hondo Events Center.
 6:30 pm: Downey United Masonic Lodge # 220, 8244 3rd St., call 862-4176.
 7 pm: Troop 351, Boy Scouts of America, at First Baptist Church, call 776-3388.
 7:30 pm: Downey Elks Lodge #2020, call 803-3557.
 1st Thurs., 12:00 pm: Downey Christian & Professional Luncheon, Sizzler's Restaurant, call James 310-1335.
 1st Thurs., 7:30 pm.: The Downey Amateur Radio Club, at First Baptist Church room 120.
 2nd Thurs., 7:30 pm: Beaming Rebel Foxes Collectors Club, call Carl D. Jones at 923-2400.
 2nd & 4th Thurs., 6:30 pm: Downey Lions Club, at Mimi's, call Lenora (310) 283-9825.
 3rd Thurs., 4 pm: Public Works Committee, at City Hall Training Room.
 3rd Thurs., 6 pm: Downey CIPAC, at Sizzler's Restaurant, call Rich Tuttle 413-6045.
 4th Thurs., 10 am: Assistance League, at Casa De Parley Johnson, call 869-0232.
 4th Thurs., 7:30 pm: Downey Historical Society programs, at Community Center, call 862-2777.

FRIDAYS

7:30 am: Pro Networkers, at Mimi's Cafe, call Barbara Briley Beard at 869-7618.
 3rd Fri., 8:30 am: Women's "In His Glory" Ministry at Los Amigos C. C. 622-3785.

SATURDAYS

9 am: Farmers Market, Downey Avenue at 3rd Street, call 904-7246.
 4th Sat., 12:00 pm: Downey Arts Coalition, email contact@downeyarts.org.

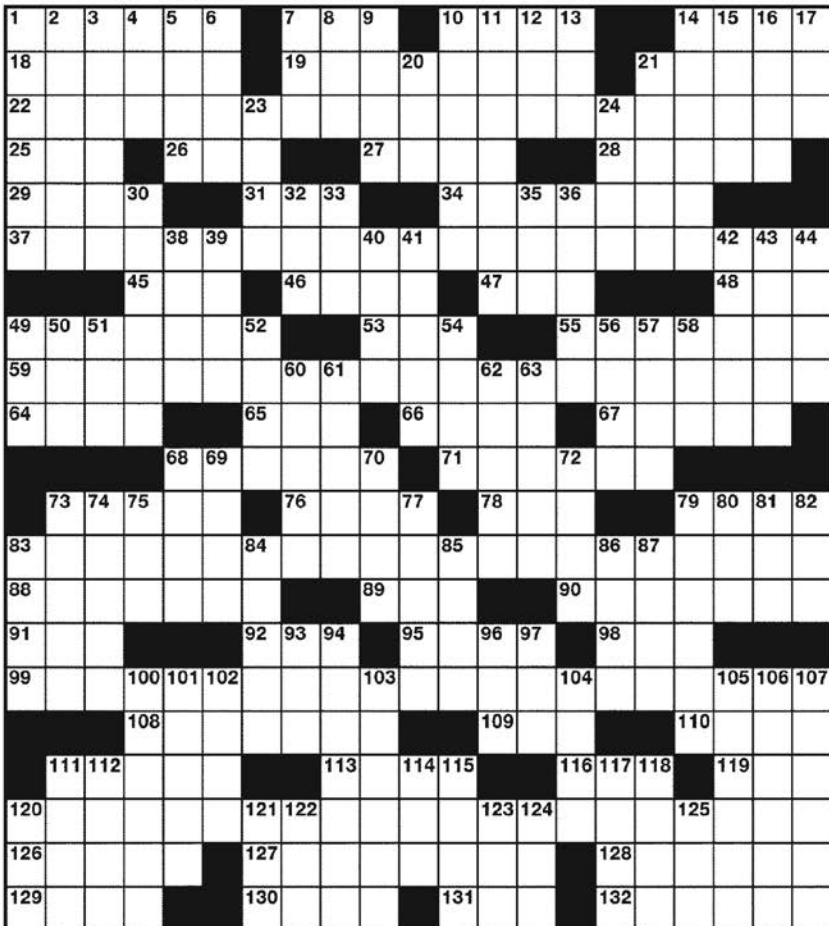
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Besides the crocus, other IRIDS include the freesia, gladiolus and, not surprisingly, the iris. Over the years, RPK Stadium football, World Cup soccer matches, and a Le Mans auto race. Frida Kahlo (73 Across) depicts herself twice in *The Two Fridas*, wearing a European-style Victorian dress and a traditional Mexican dress.



How the Epic Lounge became the artist hub Downey needed

Continued from page 1

“So finally, when I did everything they asked, I crossed my Ts, dotted my Is,” Devis says, “they had no choice but to let me re-open. But I knew I was going to be walking on eggshells for a very long time.”

Even though the venue served no alcohol, Devis felt the all-ages format of the concerts was a problem. The presence of young teens provoked too much worry and antagonism among city residents.

Devis opted to apply for a beer and wine license as a restaurant/event center. His first event after reopening was a comedy show.

“I sold beer and wine out of a cooler,” he tells. “And as soon as I made some money, I bought a little refrigerator.” Eventually he applied for and received a full liquor license.

Having an on-site restaurant meant that sometimes people under the age of 21 could attend select events. Devis sublet the restaurant space to various eateries, finally having success when LA Buns opened in 2012. He also made sure that the bar was far across the room from the stage.

Expanding Arts Scene

Devis’s reopening of the Epic Lounge coincided with an emerging arts movement in Downey spearheaded by millennials.

For decades, Downey was known for the musicals produced by the Downey Civic Light Opera and performed at the Downey Theatre, and performances by the Downey Symphony Orchestra. Younger residents wanted the opportunity to produce and attend a wider range of events, and they petitioned the city for help with venues.

In early 2010, Downey residents Gabriel Enamorado and Valentine Flores put together a photography exhibition at the Downey Theatre. The attendance on a Thursday evening, over 700, demonstrated the enthusiasm for a broader range of art events.

During this time, two new non-profit arts organizations appeared. The Downey Art Vibe successfully petitioned the city for financial support, with Gabriel Enamorado, Valentine Flores, and Joe Manacmul, opening Stay Gallery on Downey Avenue, a block from Epic Lounge. (Stay Gallery is also currently closed to public events.)

Reflecting on his motivation for influencing the arts scene in Downey, Enamorado writes in an email, “We would imagine Downtown Downey becoming a cultural arts hub, full of public art and spaces. Epic Lounge showed us that the community we live in was not void of art and music lovers—it was a beacon of hope for the arts, and still is.”

Andrew Wahlquist and others founded the Downey Arts coalition (DAC), an umbrella organization with the purpose of supporting a variety of artists and genres. Collaboration was the watchword and the various groups often worked together.

Bookings at the Epic Lounge began featuring a broader range of the arts, including theater, poetry, and film, as young arts advocates approached Devis about the use of his space. Devis was not only open to new ideas, he was generous.

In 2013, director, choreographer, and producer Sylvia Blush offered a series of one-act plays to a sold-out crowd with standing-room only.

“David was incredibly generous with the amount of time that we had for rehearsals,” says Blush, “and worked with the budget we had to make sure that we could put on a quality experience without breaking the bank. He was so gung-ho about helping us as artists.” Chairs and cocktail tables were rearranged to make the space into an ad hoc 99-seat theater.

“And then when we had the first event,” continues Blush, “he was excited and wanted to know when we were going to do the next one.”

Blush, who has directed plays in Los Angeles and Orange counties and at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, finally was able to return to Epic Lounge in 2016, when she produced an eight-night run of a new series of one-acts.

Because it was theater, and not a comedy event, Blush says that Devis wasn’t making a lot of money from the event, even though the bar was open prior to curtain and after curtain.

“He was really investing his space in giving us an opportunity to bring theater of a different kind to Downey,” concludes Blush. “He’s been a very humble person who puts humanity before business.”

Some events regularly attracted grandparents who also wanted to see more variety in the live performances in the city.

Well-known southland poets also gave readings at Epic Lounge for the monthly poetry series, Poetry Matters, founded and curated by Lorine Parks. Devis made the space available at no cost for the few months when it could not be held during its usual evening at Stay Gallery.

Devis willingly rearranged furniture for art exhibits and film screenings presented in between his schedule of rock concerts. It mattered little to audiences and performers that the décor remained somewhat the same. Disco balls hung from high open rafters; dark red walls were the background for faux Grecian-like columns and large plaster griffins. The look was somewhere between

edgy and sketchy, but there was no question that Devis was welcoming.

Downey videographer and film maker Julian Park screened his film about the mystery guerilla artist who painted whimsical portraits of children around town and signed his work Bumblebeelovesyou. The mural outside the building was later painted by Bumblebee with the approval of the city. Bumblebee is now known internationally and his work appears on Google headquarters in Venice and the Kodak Building in Hollywood.

Devis’s band bookings expanded to include the likes of Deke Dickerson, the California Feetwarmers, Petunia and the Vipers, and Downey homeboys Phil Alvin and the Blasters.

For three years, 2013-2015, the Epic Lounge was a major stage for Make Music Downey, a free, public music festival organized by members of DAC. Stay Gallery was also a stage for these events.

Last fall a full house gathered for a concert by a young Downey composer and pianist, Flora Cheng (Warren High 2007), who was accompanied by a string quartet.

For the past five years Epic Lounge has also been a venue for Glennfest, the free, public film festival in October featuring award-winning international and indie films hard to find at the major movie chains. Over time, a movie screen and improved sound system were added.

Civic Support

When the lounge is not busy with performances and art exhibits, Devis has been a reliable friend to those seeking an affordable venue to fundraise for a worthy cause. The Downey Symphony, now in its 61st season, held several fundraisers there.

Devis has also opened the lounge to support fundraising for musicians suffering from cancer, and for causes like breast cancer awareness and suicide prevention.

“You name it, we’ve done it,” says Devis. “And it feels good to do this. You’re doing something positive, and when you do something like that, you create positive vibes. I wish people would ask me more to do events like that.”

Devis got a little of that community love back a few weeks ago after vandals had smashed the glass entry door. Downey resident and Warren High graduate (2018) Jacob Robledo donated the cost of replacement.

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Robledo, who works from home for Universal Music Group while attending Los Angeles Film School, describes himself as a self-taught musician.

“I play 14 different instruments,” he explains. “I get my inspiration from my grandfather who played Bolero music in Mexico.” Like so many young musicians, Robledo has attended shows at Epic Lounge and feels a bond with the venue.

“I knew how much life [Epic Lounge] brought to the Downey music scene and it kind of broke my heart that someone would do something like that.”

Devis said Robledo’s generosity left him speechless because Robledo is fighting his own serious battle with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma. Robledo is currently in remission.

“This kid is fighting this disease and he still finds it in his heart to donate to the lounge,” exclaims Devis, “it’s breathtaking. You know, even though there are people smashing windows, there are people ten times nicer and greater than those doing stuff like this.”

Despite the economic challenges created by the coronavirus pandemic, there is one change to the Epic Lounge that is now cheered by many.

Last September Devis was actually able to buy the building—quite an accomplishment for a man who started his business as a self-described “young punk” 18 years ago and continues to be guided by his inner compass. Building tenants include the well-known restaurant around the corner, Ichiban.

Devis’s approach to this new challenge of meeting a mortgage payment during a government-enforced business closure

continues to reflect his empathy and optimism.

“We want to work with all our tenants,” he affirms. “We’re going to give them a few months rent-free.”

While his road to economic survival during this pandemic is daunting, Devis’s history of perseverance will be a major

factor to any success.

Enamorado speaks for many who want to see the Epic Lounge reopen after the worldwide health crisis has passed. “I can only hope that Stay (and Epic!) Will come out of this on the other side to see the light of another day. There is so much more work left to do!”

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Downey's Rosa Cuellar draws on childhood lessons about service and resilience



Rosa Cuellar overcame obstacles to earn a college degree. Photo by Robert Huskey/Cal Stae LA

DOWNEY — As a kid, Rosa Cuellar first learned about volunteering from watching her parents serve in their church and community. As a Cal State LA student, Cuellar discovered opportunities to continue the family tradition of helping others.

The university's emphasis on service to the community made it a perfect fit for Cuellar, who pushed past her shyness and became a leader, contributing to the campus and her community.

In May, Cuellar is graduating cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work from the Rongxiang Xu College of Health

and Human Services. This fall, she will begin studies in the Master of Social Work program at Cal State Long Beach.

Cuellar's story is one of service, success and resilience.

"When I came here, I thought, 'I don't just want to come here for [classroom learning]—I want more meaning,'" says Cuellar, 21, who resides in Downey. "I was able to be involved and be a part of the community."

Cuellar's interest in helping others evolved at Cal State LA into a decision to become a social worker focusing on people who have disabilities.

During an internship at EL ARCA, a Los Angeles center for individuals with developmental disabilities, Cuellar helped organize educational and fun activities to nurture a sense of community and help clients learn new skills.

"Doing that internship is what really inspired me more to do social work," Cuellar says. "I had a population in mind that I wanted to work with and I have a connection with and can relate to."

Cuellar was born with hearing loss, and at the age of 3 she received a cochlear implant that restored her hearing. For a time, she attended a private school for children who are hard of hearing. Her experiences at the school and her mother's support at home enabled her to succeed academically.

While she was a student at Cal State LA, Cuellar returned to her old elementary school and volunteered with hard-of-hearing students. She connected with them through her experiences.

"I was able to tell the students about my story, and

they were, like, 'Oh, my God! They just liked me.'"

At Cal State LA, Cuellar became president of the Association of Student Social Workers, a club that fosters support among its members and facilitates professional development. Under Cuellar's leadership, attendance at meetings and participation in events increased.

Through her work with the group, Cuellar worked closely with Professor Ga-Young Choi, who served as advisor. Choi also teaches research, family violence and foundation social work courses.


"She helped a lot with the club," Cuellar says of Choi. "She was always there for me."


Cuellar also served as vice president for Tau Eta, a national social work honor society that recognizes students for their academic excellence and provides opportunities for volunteer services. With the group, Cuellar organized a range of service activities, including breast cancer and domestic violence awareness campaigns and work with people who have disabilities. She was on the Dean's List for four semesters.

For Cuellar, the decision

to embrace service to others in her search for meaningful experiences has paid off.

"I decided to say yes to Cal State LA and I don't regret it," Cuellar says. "It brought me a lot of choice, and I had a lot of good experiences here, professors and everything."



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Kirk Cartozian, former Downey mayor, teacher, and current owner of Gaucho Grill, traveled to Iguazu Falls, Argentina in January 2009 and took a copy of the Downey Patriot.



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