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JANUARY 2026

PUBLISHED THE FIRST AND THIRD MONDAY OF EVERY MONTH EXCEPT ONLY ONCE IN JANUARY, JULY, AND AUGUST



Fullerton Union High School Students Launch Therapy Dog Club for Mental Wellness

Read the story on page 3

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Pedestrian Dies Following Hit-and-Run

The Fullerton Police Department provided an update regarding the hit-and-run traffic collision involving a pedestrian. The adult male was critically injured in the collision and has succumbed to his injuries. He was pronounced deceased on Christmas morning.

As previously reported, on Saturday, December 20, 2025, at approximately 10:23 pm, Fullerton Police Officers responded to the area of S. Gilbert St. and Carol Dr. following reports of a traffic collision. *Continue reading on page 16*

Orange County Supervisors Foley and Sarmiento Oppose New Offshore Oil Drilling

Orange County Supervisors Katrina Foley and Vicente Sarmiento have officially voiced their opposition to a controversial five-year plan proposing the expansion of offshore oil drilling along California's coastline. Following a split vote during the December 16 Board of Supervisors meeting—resulting in 2 votes for, 2 against, and 1 abstention—Foley announced their intention to collaborate on an official letter of opposition to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) ahead of the January 23, 2026 deadline. *Continue reading on page 15*

PUBLIC BOOS AS COUNCIL BLOC SELECTS SAME MAYOR FOR 2026

The overflow crowd booed at the December 16, council meeting, as Councilmembers Jung, Dunlap and Valencia, voted Jung in for his forth time as mayor, again passing over District 5 Councilmember Zahra - the longest serving member of the council, and also passing over District 3 Mayor-Protem Charles - who, according to Fair Rotation, should have automatically become mayor. Dunlap was selected as Mayor Protem. This signals a continuing trend prioritizing political alignment over fairness.

Continue reading on page 15

ICE AGENTS ABDUCT FULLERTON RESIDENT

Reports surfaced regarding an incident involving Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents in Fullerton on January 2. Witnesses reported seeing a man on S. Gilbert St. calling for assistance and urging his family to be notified of his situation as he was cuffed and escorted to unmarked civilian vehicles.

The enforcement action took place around 9 am at Gilbert near the intersection of Orangethorpe Avenue, where a convoy of three vehicles and five masked agents appeared to conduct a targeted operation. See Instagram social media footage at @ocactive_.

Fullerton residents (including at least two US citizens) have been targeted over the past year with warrantless immigration enforcement actions involving unmarked vehicles and plainclothes agents at carwashes and shopping center. Residents can document details of such incidents, including the number of agents, vehicles, location and time and report to OC Rapid Response at (714) 881-1558.

Inspite of some ICE agents wearing vests with POLICE written on them - as in this case - they are not police. California law enforcement agencies, including our local police, do not participate in immigration enforcement. The Fullerton Police Department has reaffirmed its non-involvement in federal immigration matters.

On a related issue, while the City of Anaheim joined the ongoing ACLU lawsuit Perdomo v. Nome challenging ICE tactics on October 2, 2025, Fullerton has failed to follow through despite council vote to do so. Attorney Jones stated that Fullerton was unable to file an amicus brief in the case due to uncertainties about which court would hear the case. For updates on the case visit www.publiccounsel.org

Other Resources:

Asian Americans Advancing
Justice SC (888) 349-9695
Orange County Justice Fund
(714) 340-5469

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LETTERS TO EDITOR

Thank you to the Fullerton Police

Thank you to Fullerton Police Corporal Kirkreit and his crew, who responded so fast to our neighborhood when there was a problem. We witnessed excellent, compassionate, and efficient police officers at work. I am so proud of the way they handled such a difficult issue. Officer Kirkreit went beyond the surface and also came back to give us an update. He is just the kind of officer we want in our town. Thank you so much. *Sharon Kennedy* Fullerton

Re Article: Temporary Solutions to Homelessness is an Expensive Band-Aid on a Broken Bone

Dear Editor,

Unfortunately, without a national change of mentality, this problem is not going to get solved. Right now the main blocks are:

1. The "It'll never happen to me" mindset is locked into America's brain (until it does happen)

2. The "OMG, this could happen to me" fear makes us turn away

3. "They're just drugged up bums" justifies dismissal from thinking about it

4. A social Darwinism ethos that pervades far too much of the upper income classes

A neighbor of mine, many years ago, hit 60 and was tossed out of their job, and couldn't find another due to rampant thinly masked age discrimination. They fought for three years, got physically sick, exhausted their UI, went through a paltry pension, but lost the battle, along with their rental home of decades (rent always paid on time), and wound up losing most of their worldly goods it had taken over 40 years to get, and on the street.

This person was not a druggie, drunk or head case. They were shunned by friends and what family they had left ("Aaaagh! It CAN happen to me!") (Regrettably, I was ill and barely hanging on myself.) Years later they're sheltered, but their remaining goods are still stored, and still lack their own home. According to figures published, the average length of homelessness is 8 to 10 years!

Yes, it CAN happen to you!

I lay a lot of the blame at what this country's citizens: to quote Kurt Vonnegut, "The average American has taken their conscience, thrown it down a manhole, and welded the lid shut so they can no longer hear it screaming."

No, not all of us, just the ones that are in a position to do something about the problem. (There are exceptions; like the physician who took all her excess income and started a food bank.)

Actually, most of us are either treading water, or thrashing around in it trying

ing not to drown, and wind up homeless ourselves!

The whole country's mentality needs a spiritual uplift at the very least, a country with a tax code that fairly taxes the rich, and closes loopholes like offshore assets being untaxable. A universal safety would help too. Not to mention an administration that gives a damn.

Fat chance. This administration is like an inverted Robin Hood: they're taking from the poor and giving to the rich. If you don't believe me, go look at the facts and figures; most of the holiday spending you hear so much about is done by the top 10% income bracket in this country.

In 1947 the US had put into the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights language that declared basic human rights as decent housing, a chance to earn a decent living, medical care, and assistance in case of unemployment, sickness, or old age.

Well, we sure missed that one. Close, but no cigar.

Just remember, friends and neighbors, it CAN happen to you. And for you religious folk out there:

"If you have done it unto the least of them, you have done it unto me."

The US had this put in the UN Charter of Universal Human Rights in 1947:

"Article 25: (1) "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."

(2) "Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection."

We still haven't gotten there, have we?

P.D. Fullerton



Downtown Fullerton came alive on December 21 with the festive spirit of the Hawaiian-themed "12 Bars of Christmas," drawing a lively crowd eager to celebrate the season. Though drinks were offered at full price, the atmosphere of camaraderie and community was deemed priceless by attendees. The event showcased local bars, each providing a unique twist on holiday cheer, as participants enjoyed a night of music, dancing, and socializing amidst the vibrant decorations and warm aloha spirit.

Public Outcry Ignored

Dear Editor,

I would like to address a troubling situation regarding Dunlap and Jung's handling of public commentary. They continue to mislead the public and deceive themselves by insisting that those who voice their opinions are not representative of the community's views.

Each meeting attracts new attendees who are outraged by the actions of the majority. Despite this, Jung, Dunlap, and Valencia persist in telling themselves that the concerns of the public do not matter. It is disheartening to see that they seem unable to accept that dissenting opinions exist, especially in light of their apparent corruption and repeated disregard for the wishes of the community.

It is time for our leaders to listen to their constituents and recognize the importance of the voices that are speaking out. The public deserves better.

Anna Graves Fullerton

Re Article: Fullerton's Proposed Bicycle Safety Measures Fall Short

Thank you for this excellent and timely article. There is an epidemic of deaths and injuries on our roads. We must improve our road designs to make Fullerton safer for those on foot and on bike. We have so many options available, yet almost none are being pursued. Saving lives seems like an afterthought at best - tragedy after tragedy is ignored; nothing is done to prevent future incidents; relevant committee meetings are routinely canceled. Even Nick Dunlap's selfish speech from the dais in response to the Harbor Complete Streets project dismissed the safety of human beings in favor of his own convenience as a car driver - an absolutely unacceptable stance.

I am tired of reading about tragedy after tragedy on our roads. I encourage everyone who cares about this to show up to city council meetings and demand better.

Amy A Fullerton

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Fullerton Observer

The *Fullerton Observer* is a community newspaper founded in 1978 by Ralph and Natalie Kennedy, Roy and Irene Kobayashi, and a group of dedicated friends. Local volunteers are responsible for creating, publishing, and distributing the paper across the community. As a not-for-profit organization, all revenue is reinvested to enhance our independent and non-partisan publication.

Our mission is clear: to inform Fullerton residents about the institutions and societal forces that impact their daily lives. We empower citizens to engage actively, ensuring that private and public entities serve the community in lawful, transparent, and socially responsible ways.

We offer local news coverage and a community calendar to strengthen connections and celebrate the diversity that defines our nation. As an all-volunteer newspaper, we rely on the support of our subscribers and advertisers.

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NEXT DEADLINE FOR WRITERS & ADVERTISERS IS JANUARY 26. THE EARLY FEBRUARY ISSUE WILL BE DISTRIBUTED ON FEBRUARY 2.

continued from front page **Fullerton Union High School Students Launch Therapy Dog Club for Mental Wellness** by Lila, 11th grade

During finals week of my freshman year, I watched how some of my friends and I were stressed out and not being able to deal with it in healthy ways. It was an adjustment to high school trying to juggle rigorous classes and extracurriculars while figuring out new friendships and where you fit in.

We started sleeping less than normal, consuming too many energy drinks, and eating junk food out of convenience. It made me question how differently everyone responded to stress.

At the time, I was volunteering for Pet Partners in Orange County and observing pets during the certification process. These certified dogs and handlers would soon help people at hospitals, schools, rehabilitation centers, and more. Knowing this and my love for my maltipoo, Kody, who gives me comfort everyday, led me to believe that this could be a beneficial program to my high school.

I co-founded and now serve as Co-President of Pause for Paws, a therapy dog club at my high school, Fullerton

Union High School. At first, the school board denied animals on campus for the first two years due to various reasons including liability issues.

The “no” did not stop me and my co-founder from giving up. We have had countless meetings with admin, wrote up a club proposal and created waiver forms, researched multiple pet partner organizations, and the school district finally approved to pilot our first wellness event this past December.

It was an overwhelming success and over 95 students signed up to interact with the animals before finals week. Mental health counselors from five neighboring high schools were also in attendance and later expressed interest in adopting the program themselves.

Therapy animals are proven to help reduce stress and anxiety and with the rise in mental health concerns in teens, we knew it could make a big impact in our peers. With this success, I was able to expand Pause for Paws to a local nonprofit, Assisteens Charity League of Fullerton, where I currently serve on

the board as Secretary. Therapy dogs and a mental health speaker will be coming to speak to the young girls ages 12-18 about topics like academic burnout and how to handle stress. Incorporating this to my community is important to me as I want to pursue pediatric mental health nursing when I graduate high school.

We are helping other students create the same program at their high schools by providing them Pause for Paws’ curated project proposal and the connections we have made from the past couple years. The program includes an introduction, who we are statements, benefits, proven results, the proposal, and how to partner with us, nonprofits, animal shelters, and the schools. Additionally, I have given my email to the mental health counselors at my school so that students who are interested in starting their own Pause for Paws are able to contact us for mentorship.

Tune in for the next Pause for Paws event: Instagram: @fuhs_pause4paws



2025 Sparkleball Bike Parade Lights Up the Night

The Sparkleball Bike Parade took place on December 22, 2025, in the parking lot of the Lenhardt Optometric Group. Participants arrived at 5:15pm to decorate their bikes and themselves with lights and festive decorations.

The parade began at 6pm, winding through the Sparkleball neighborhoods that are known for their holiday decorations. The event prioritized safety, with organizers reminding participants to closely supervise children due to potential traffic hazards when riding in the street.

Originally, the sparkleballs were only dis-

played along the Yale loop, but they have now expanded to multiple streets. There are plenty of lights to see! Each year, one neighbor hosts a Sparkleball workshop in their garage, where residents come together to create their own sparkleballs. Each sparkleball is made from about 50 cups and 150 lights. This tradition has been happening since 2002.

Whether you choose to walk or ride, this is a wonderful place to find joy every winter. The nights get pleasantly cool, making it the perfect time to enjoy a thermos of hot chocolate.



If you have any legal questions or would like a free consultation, please reach out to Camino Immigration Services.
(657) 217-2365



@camino_immigration_services



Certified Farmers Market at Independence Park

The popular Certified Farmers Market in Fullerton is located at 801 W. Valencia Drive, every Wednesday from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm.

Fullerton Joint Union High School District Open Enrollment

by Vivien Moreno

Fullerton Joint Union High School District (FJUHSD) has open enrollment in January for resident 9-12 graders for the following school year. Families wanting to transfer students from their home school to another district high school must meet certain criteria:

1. Pick up and return applications at the student's home school.

2. Provide proof of residency (utility bill and mortgage or rental agreement in the parent's name).

3. Submit the enrollment application by 3 pm on January 30, 2026.

More information, including translations in Korean and Spanish, can be found at www.fjuhsd.org/open-enrollment-information.

FJUHSD's open enrollment allows students to choose a school that aligns with their interests and goals. The district does not guarantee transfers or provide transportation, but most students find suitable high school options if they are in good standing.

Each comprehensive high school offers a strong academic curriculum and unique opportunities, including Advanced Placement programs, International Baccalaureate at four schools, Dual College Enrollment, Dual Language Courses, JROTC, Competitive Sports, and over 26 Career Technical Education Pathways, as well as Visual and Performing Arts.

Fullerton School District has trained its bus drivers in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) strategies to go the extra mile in supporting student growth.

Open houses and daytime tours are held at each school to showcase programs and campus culture, with attendance encouraged for 6th to 8th grade students in Fullerton.

Open house schedule 2026:

Go to the website to get particulars on location and additional events/ tours offered by the schools.

Buena Park High School

January 14, 5:30 pm

www.buenaparkhs.org

Fullerton Union High School

January 21, 6pm www.fullertonhigh.org

La Habra High School

January 22, 6pm

www.lahabrah highschoo l.net

Sonora High School

January 8, 6pm

www.sonorahs.org

Sunny Hills High School

January 20, 6pm

www.sunnyhills.net

Troy High School

January 15, 6pm

www.troyhigh.com

Parents and students should consider some basic questions when "shopping" for a high school.

• Find out what your child wants out of their high school experience, a focus on specialized programs,

a well-rounded school experience that involves yearbook, arts, sports, and/or student government?

- Do the school's clubs provide your child a chance to explore their interests?

- Which specialized programs require additional testing to participate?

- Which foreign languages are offered at the school?

- Ask about time management for aligning various interests like academics and athletics.

- Does the school offer summer introductory activities and courses for incoming 9th graders?

Once your child transfers, they need to attend the school of choice for at least one full school year, and if they stay at the school, there is no need to reapply. If you do not fill out a transfer form, your student stays at their home school designation. Open enrollment supports students during their high school years by providing rich social and educational opportunities that fit them the best. It has also pushed administrators to offer increasingly relevant and dynamic programs to serve their students.

Open enrollment inspired and sustains College Dual Enrollment, Robotics and Mechatronics Program, BEAST Program, Heritage Humanities California Program, Troy Tech, and many other options offered at the various schools. If you have questions call for more information at 714.870.2865.



All 20 Schools in the Fullerton School District Earn Platinum Distinction for Second Consecutive Year

For the second year in a row, the Fullerton School District (FSD) is celebrating an impressive milestone: all 20 schools across the district have earned the prestigious Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Platinum distinction from the California PBIS Coalition. This back-to-back achievement places FSD among the highest-performing PBIS districts in the state and reflects the district's commitment to fostering student wellbeing, inclusion, and positive

school culture.

PBIS is a research-based framework designed to proactively teach, reinforce, and support positive behaviors of students in all school settings. The goal behind these strategies is to create a multi-tiered system that ensures academic success through strengthening social, emotional, and behavioral skills.

The district recently celebrated this historic achievement with recognition from its Board of Trustees, where Amy

Sotolongo, a Teacher on Special Assignment who oversees the district's PBIS work, shared, "PBIS is grounded in the belief that positive behavior flourishes when students experience clarity, consistency, and connection. Just as we teach academic skills, we also teach the behaviors and expectations that help students feel successful and supported in our schools."

Amy Sotolongo emphasized that PBIS is not a single program but a comprehensive, research-based framework that empowers FSD schools and students with proactive strategies to teach, model, and reinforce positive behavior.

FSD's PBIS journey began nearly a decade ago with just two schools earning recognition. This school year, the district is not only celebrating continued implementation success but also its status as one of the few districts in California with 100% of schools receiving Platinum honors—the highest level of PBIS distinction. In addition, recognition in back-to-back years denotes FSD's systems are not only successful but sustainably embedded across campuses.

The PBIS awards annual evaluation process sees schools evaluated on rigorous statewide standards, including:

Alignment of classroom expectations with schoolwide PBIS systems

At least 80% of students with zero or only one major behavioral referral

A score of 70% or higher on the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI), a national PBIS fidelity tool

Data showing effective Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports for students needing additional assistance

Evidence of positive academic growth, including i-Ready progress

And for FSD, PBIS doesn't stop in the classroom—these practices are also extended to our transportation department and found on every bus..

Amy Sotolongo shared that FSD bus drivers are trained in the PBIS framework, using a dedicated bus matrix, and reinforce positive behaviors with "bus bucks." FSD is the only known school district in Orange County that is currently implementing PBIS on the bus. Bus drivers receive ongoing training and support in addressing student needs.

PBIS in FSD operates within a broader Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), which includes restorative practices, trauma-informed strategies, counseling supports, and other research-based interventions.

FSD continues to set a statewide standard for what is possible when a district commits to whole-child wellness and empowers every student to grow academically, socially, and emotionally. For more information on California's PBIS Coalition, visit pbis-ca.org, and to learn more about PBIS in FSD, visit fullertonsd.org.

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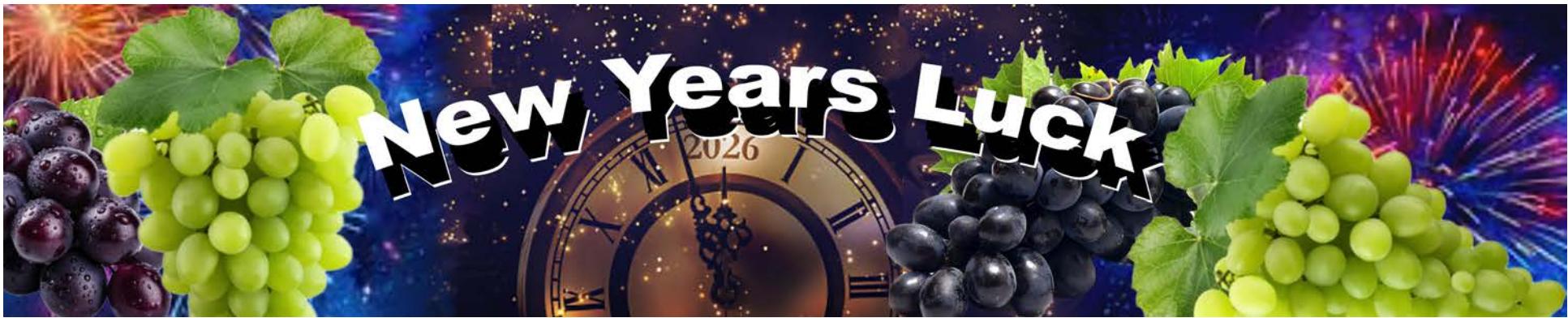
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School Schedules by Tegan, 8th Grade

Some school districts return from winter break after two weeks. Others stay out closer to three. Most students and parents don't think much about it until schedules stop lining up, when one district is already back in class while another is still sleeping in.

The difference usually is not about generosity. It is about how districts choose to structure time. By December, the school year has momentum. Classes are finishing units, teachers are closing grade books, and students are running on deadlines and caffeine. Winter break interrupts that pace on purpose. It gives teachers space to reset and students a chance to step away before everything starts again. Studies on learning patterns suggest that even short breaks can improve focus, though they often come with a period of re-adjustment once school resumes.

December is also incredibly heavy. Finals pile up, expectations rise, and stress quietly becomes the norm. Time away from school doesn't solve that, but it does give students room to breathe. Education researchers have linked breaks during high-pressure periods to lower burnout and better motivation, especially in adolescents.

The duration of such a pause depends on how a district lays out its year. California schools are required to meet a minimum number of instructional days of 180, but the order of those days is flexible. Some districts return earlier in January to keep semesters tight and avoid pushing the year deeper into summer. Others allow winter break to stretch longer, spacing instruction out more evenly instead.

This difference may be observed locally. The Fullerton Joint Union High School District generally schedules about two weeks of winter break, returning shortly after New Year's. The district follows a traditional semester system, and an earlier return keeps grading periods and course pacing consistent. The Fullerton School District, which serves elementary and middle schools, usually schedules a longer break, closer to three weeks, often running from mid-December to early January. Its calendar is built differently, leaving more space between instructional blocks. For younger students, that extra time softens the transition back into routine.



A Grape Way to Start the Year

by Erin, 11th Grade



As the clock inches closer to midnight on New Year's Eve, you can find me under the table, shoving my mouth full of grapes. I wrote twelve intentions— one for each grape—and goals I had for 2025 on a sticky note, reading it over and over in the dark.

The tradition is a variation of the Spanish custom las doce uvas de la suerte, or “the twelve grapes of luck.” In Spain and many Latin American countries, people eat one grape with each of the twelve chimes of the clock at midnight, symbolizing good fortune for each month of the upcoming year. This ritual has become popular among younger generations, especially

through social media. It often involves eating the grapes while sitting or hiding under a table, with the intention of manifesting love or goals in the new year.

I would say it is something worth trying, as I believe it helped drive me to accomplish the goals I wrote on that sticky note at the beginning of the year. Eating grapes under the table at midnight is less about superstition and more about symbolism. Whether or not the grapes “work,” the ritual allows space for reflection, intention and the hopes we carry into the year ahead.

Glowing Up for 2026

by Alicia, 8th Grade



A glow up is not just about looking good but about feeling confident, healthy and comfortable in your own skin. When 2026 comes around, the most effective glow ups should involve having a balanced life—taking care of your body, your mind and your habits.

When you improve all these areas of your life, you will begin to see positive outcomes. A crucial aspect of a glow up is self-care. While self-care does not mean investing in expensive creams or following a super intense routine, there is so much you can do simply by drinking enough water, getting enough sleep and eating foods that nourish and support your body.

Getting enough sleep especially has the ability to impact your skin in a positive way while also improving your energy and mood. Another major domain is physical health. Exercise is good for your body and your confidence too.

You do not have to go to the gym to glow up. Choose something you feel comfortable with and genuinely enjoy, such as dancing or volleyball or yoga or a home workout. Regular exercise helps you feel stronger and more confident and that confidence shows in your posture. A genuine glow up consists of physical transformation along with mental and emotional development.

Confidence is attractive, and confidence stems from self-respect. Learn to set boundaries, learn when to say “no”

and stop comparing yourself to others on the Internet. Everyone develops at different rates.

Writing down your thoughts, reflecting or simply taking time alone can help you recognize your goals and feelings. Break away from habits that hold you back and focus on the ones that make you feel good about yourself.

Your personal style is another way of “glowing up” too. It does not have to mean following every new trend. Instead, it means discovering what works best for you.

Try new things with your wardrobe, your hairstyles and your accessories—things that reflect your personal identity. When you wear what feels like you, you naturally feel more confident.

Organizing your living space and creating healthy habits can also contribute to how put-together you feel overall. Finally, any glow up that takes place in 2026 should include growth and purpose.

Set small goals related to school, art or anything else that interests you. Skills, discipline and curiosity all play a role in confidence. A glow up does not happen overnight—it is a gradual process of becoming the best version of yourself.

In 2026, the biggest glow up will come from staying consistent, treating yourself with kindness and choosing progress over perfection.



FULLERTON JOINT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

1051 W. Bastanchury Road, Fullerton, CA 92833

www.fjuhsd.org

High School Open Enrollment Option

The Fullerton Joint Union High School District (FJUHSD) offers an open enrollment option for students who live within the District boundaries. Students have an opportunity to apply for attendance at one high school other than their school of residence.

Applications for the 2026/2027 school year must be completed in person at the school of residence, **January 12 through January 30, 2026**. Proof of residence is required (utility bill and rental agreement/mortgage statement).

Application window will be closed on January 30, 2026 at 3:00pm.
Acceptance letters will be mailed by the end of February.

For more information visit www.fjuhsd.org or contact Eileen Lopez at (714) 870-2846 elopez@fjuhsd.org.



Buena Park High School



Fullerton Union High School



La Habra High School



La Sierra/La Vista High School



Sonora High School



Sunny Hills High School



Troy High School



Sign up here!



for more Info and updates
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Troy High School Offers a Rare and Casual Guitar Class

by Benjamin Hintz

Troy High School's instrumental music program is fairly diverse, encompassing marching band, jazz band, and orchestra. These programs are all alike in relative rigor, most if not all offering (and often requiring) after-school practice, with many opportunities for performance at concerts, sporting events, and assemblies throughout the year.

Naturally, this invites more rigor, after-school practices, more consistent drilling, more challenging music, opportunities for multi-year enrollment in these programs, giving accolades and competitive opportunities (every Troy student's dream), etc. However, among these programs, one class stands out as an outlier: the guitar class.

Guitar is not as focused on performance as the other instrumental music courses. This, I feel, is the main difference from its sister courses. It is also typically a one-year course and, by most students I know (myself included), considered a light class—we don't get homework, as we usually receive adequate practice in class for our music. Speaking of, the music we learn is less rigorous than band, orchestra, etc.

There are a few reasons for this. One is that the guitar is simply a different instrument, which means guitar songs are intended to be on the surface, typically less complex. Other reasons include the fact that the guitar is used the fewest times per year compared to other instrument classes. We perform in two concerts per year: our holiday concert and the May end-of-year concert. We also do not perform at any other events. The other instrumental bands do, and therefore it is in their interest to perform more complex and precise music to put on a good show for their audiences.

Without this pressure, guitar students are left without the weight that other music students have throughout most of the year. In many ways, guitar is a relaxing class, a respite in many students' days—it also gives a coveted year-long art credit (something many Troy students are hard-pressed to come by). Generally, the class feels light, and while we do practice with the rigor expected in a Troy class, it can feel, at times, like the bare minimum. Not that that is necessarily a bad thing. Again, an easy-to-pass and easy-to-enjoy class.

At the same time, some students join the class out of a desire to play in much the same capacity that students in other performing instrumental music classes do. Thus, we are faced with a conundrum: prioritize the students who take the instrument most seriously, at the likely expense of the majority, or sacrifice that minority for the majority to have a fun time, and force the students who want to become rockstars on the guitar to turn to outside resources, inevitably cramming a potentially already busy academic, personal, and work life.

My opinion is that the class should opt to remain a casual class, an alternative for those who want to explore musical instruments without the full commitment the rest of the instrumental program demands. The instrumental director at Troy has chosen this route, too, for the most part, while incorporating more performances into our roster. The holiday performance was a recent addition to guitar, and we have floated the idea of one or two other concerts, although this is still in the air.

Another suggestion is a second-year guitar option that would offer more performance opportunities. Perhaps one that would focus on modern styles of playing rather than classical style. This has been criticized for bloating schedules and budgets. Instrumental music already has a wide array of sub-programs.

If this second year of guitar is meant to be a separate, higher-level experience, then this class would be separate from regular guitar I. This raises issues of time constraints for the school's instrumental music director's schedule and the program in general. It could also require the school to spend more on buying guitars and fixing up old ones—already an issue, seeing as multiple school-lent guitars have, up until recently, had one or more broken strings that have taken months to get replaced.

Ultimately, there is no clear, easy solution, but this isn't much of a problem for the vast majority of guitar students, who simply join the class to get some performing arts credit for college, learn an instrument, and have a fun class that is only really half a class. This is the core appeal that sets guitar apart from the core instrumental music program at Troy, and for it, I, as a guitar student, am grateful.

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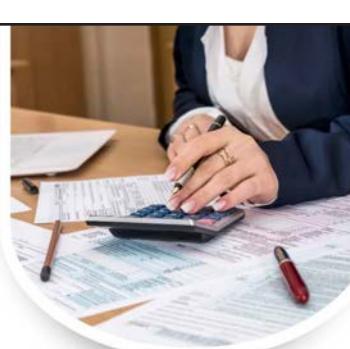
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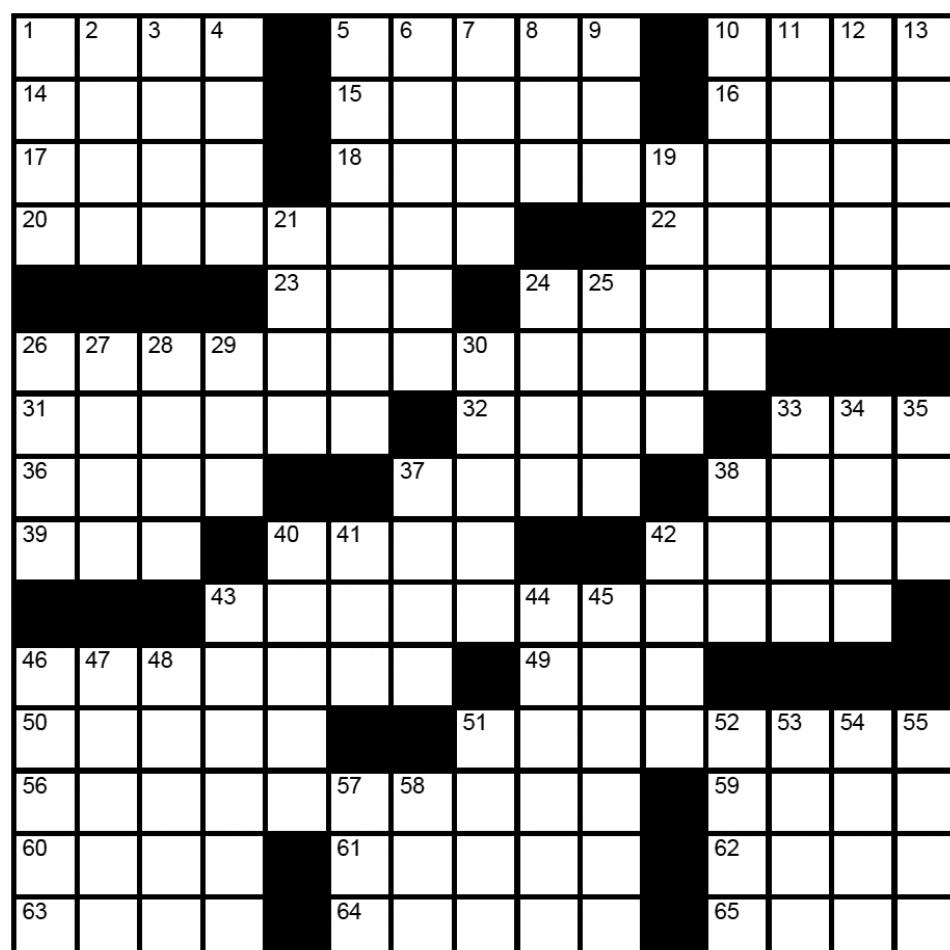
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OUR TOWN CROSSWORD

© 2026 "LAST DANCE" by Valerie Brickey (answer key on page 19)



ACROSS

- "Thunderstruck" group
- Kid-lit elephant
- Humid
- ____ of approval
- High-speed Northeast train
- "Understood!"
- Machu Picchu builder
- Extra work
- Run wild
- Condescending one
- Tuna type
- Stephen, in French
- Someone good at a single thing
- "Così fan tutte" composer
- Journalist Lisa
- One who cries foul?
- Raison d'____
- Cause of some head scratching
- White House staffer
- Hush-hush govt. group
- "Voice of Israel" author Abba
- Chestnut
- Dickens character who wanted some more
- North, South or Central
- Leave speechless
- Pepsi and Coke
- City in Northern California named after the Italian word for "foothill"
- Local Mexican restaurant that is open 24-hours
- Yawl call
- Airline to Tel Aviv
- Sneak ____
- Nunb (Sullustan pilot and Rebel hero in the "Star Wars" franchise)
- Postage paid encl.
- Not Astroturf
- Step on it

DOWN

- Without warranty
- Penny
- Obama-era immigration policy, familiarly
- Symbol of happiness
- Single, for one
- Like vinegar
- "Venerable" English writer
- Ginger ____
- Root word?
- Matterhorn's chain?
- Starter for 007's car?
- Honeydew, e.g.
- Actress Holly Robinson-____
- Taking advantage of
- Last name of "The Incredibles" family
- Cast-of-thousands film
- Rapper Loc
- Harbinger
- Haves and have-____
- "The Snowy Day" author ____ Jack Keats
- ____-Bo (exercise system)
- "Dave" actor Kevin
- Frees (of)
- Trade unions for onions?
- Service charge
- Heavy-duty hand soap brand
- "Moonlight" actor Mahershala ____
- "I Still See ____" ("Paint Your Wagon" tune)
- Flickable lighter
- Was in a red state?
- Prophecy source
- Ups the ante
- Makes minor adjustments
- High points
- Dough
- Fitzgerald and others
- "Not guilty," e.g.
- Staffs
- Buckeye State
- "The Great British Bake-Off" Fielding
- Daly who plays Lacey
- Droop
- Earth Day mo.



FULLERTON'S CALPERS VIOLATIONS WERE REAL: THE CITY'S RESPONSE IS THE BIGGER STORY

by Elijah Manassero

When I published an article detailing CalPERS' determination that the City of Fullerton unlawfully employed multiple retirees, the City's response was not to dispute the facts publicly, but to escalate the matter elsewhere.

The City Council's closed session agenda referenced an appeal titled:

"In the Matter of the Appeal of Post Retirement Employment of Eddie R. Manfro, Cindy J. Collins, Gregory J. Pfost and Jeffrey W. Collier, Respondents, and the City of Fullerton, Respondent."

The mere presence of an appeal indicates that CalPERS had already issued an adverse determination. Appeals are not filed preemptively; they are a response to findings of noncompliance. This was the basis for the original reporting. The existence, parties, and nature of the appeal were all publicly listed.

Instead of publicly clarifying the issue or explaining the violations to residents, the City went a different direction. At a subsequent City Council meeting on December 16, City Attorney Dick Jones announced that the City would ask the Orange County District Attorney to investigate a potential Brown Act violation regarding the reporting of this issue. The City Attorney said Mayor Fred Jung proposed drafting a legal request for an investigation, which Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shana Charles seconded.

Importantly, the reporting at issue relied entirely on publicly available records and logical inference, not leaks, tips from closed sessions, or confidential materials. Even if a referral were ultimately found unwarranted, its use in this context functions as a

deterrent to public scrutiny rather than a corrective to unlawful conduct.

Since then, the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) has released the full set of documents related to the City's appeals, confirming that the underlying violations identified in the original article were real, documented, and formally determined by CalPERS.

The more consequential issue now is not whether the violations occurred, but how the City has responded at every stage; procedurally, legally, and politically.

The OAH records show that CalPERS issued formal Notices of Unlawful Post-Retirement Employment to at least four individuals employed by the City of Fullerton after retirement. These notices cite specific violations of the California Government Code governing post-retirement employment, specifically for a lack of active recruitment and exceeding the 960-hour limit.

The City of Fullerton, represented by outside counsel, did not argue that CalPERS lacked authority or that the rules were unclear. Instead, the City's appeals focused almost entirely on procedural and technical arguments, such as disputing the exact date ranges of unlawful employment, seeking to limit the duration of violations, and challenging whether certain periods should be excluded.

Notably absent from the filings is any claim that the employment itself complied with post-retirement law. The appeals do not deny that violations occurred; they attempt to reduce exposure, not refute wrongdoing. This distinction matters.

Appeals that focus on narrowing liability rather than contesting legality are a tacit acknowledgment that the underlying conduct is difficult to defend on the merits. Viewed together, the City's actions follow a consistent pattern:

1. Violations are identified by CalPERS
2. The City appeals on procedural grounds
3. Public explanation is limited
4. Scrutiny is redirected elsewhere

The City has not meaningfully disputed CalPERS' authority, denied the factual basis of the violations, or proactively disclosed how or why multiple unlawful post-retirement employments occurred. Instead, resources are being spent on appeals, outside counsel, and now a district attorney referral, all while residents remain largely in the dark.

Post-retirement employment laws exist to protect the integrity of public pension systems and prevent abuse. Violations can carry six-figure financial consequences, including repayment of benefits and retroactive contributions.

Equally important is the issue of gov-

ernance. When multiple unlawful employments occur following the abrupt termination of a city manager (Ken Domer) and amid widespread executive turnover, residents deserve transparency, not procedural deflection.

The documents now available confirm that the original reporting was accurate. The unresolved question is why the City's response has prioritized delay, opacity, and escalation over accountability and disclosure.

Additional records have been requested from both the City of Fullerton and CalPERS. As those records are released, they will further clarify:

- Who approved the unlawful appointments, and when
- What internal legal guidance was given at the time
- How much potential liability does the City face

The facts are not going away. The paper trail exists. At this point, the story is no longer just about unlawful post-retirement employment. It is about how a city responds when those violations are exposed.

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MAY 9 TH	SEPT 12 TH
JUNE 13 TH	DEC 5 TH AWARDS

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Fullerton Recreational Riders: Preserving a Local Horse Community for Over Six Decades

by Erin Sheppard

For more than six decades, the Fullerton Recreational Riders (FRR) have been a cornerstone of the local equestrian community, bringing riders, families, and horse enthusiasts together through gymkhana events, volunteerism, and a shared love of horses.

Founded in 1961, FRR was created to provide a welcoming space for riders of all ages and experience levels to compete, learn, and connect. Today, the club continues that mission by hosting a full season of gymkhana events each year while remaining deeply rooted in community involvement and preservation of equestrian traditions in Orange County.

Gymkhana is a fast-paced western riding sport focused on speed, precision, and horsemanship. FRR events feature patterns consisting of barrels and/or poles, offering an exciting experience for both participants and spectators. Riders range from young children

just starting out to seasoned competitors, creating an inclusive environment that emphasizes growth, sportsmanship, and fun.

But FRR is about more than competition. The club is powered entirely by volunteers, with members contributing their time to everything from arena setup and event operations to fundraising and community outreach. This volunteer-driven structure not only keeps events accessible but also strengthens the bonds that make FRR feel like a family rather than just a club.

A key part of that connection comes through FRR's general meetings, which are held May through October on the third Tuesday of the month and are open to anyone interested in learning more about the club. These meetings provide an opportunity for members and non-members alike to hear about upcoming events, get involved

behind the scenes, and better understand how local equestrian organizations operate. Many people attend simply to stay connected to the horse community, even if they don't ride or compete themselves.

In an area where open space and equestrian facilities are increasingly limited, FRR plays an important role in helping preserve a place for horses and horse-related activities. By fostering responsible horsemanship, encouraging youth involvement, and maintaining strong ties with local facilities and organizations, the club helps ensure that horses remain part of the region's culture and future.

As FRR looks ahead to the 2026 season, the club is also embracing growth and accessibility. A recently updated website now serves as a central hub for information about the club, including event schedules, general meetings, rules, and opportunities to get

involved. The goal is to make it easier for community members — whether longtime horse owners or those simply curious about the sport — to learn more and participate.

FRR welcomes riders, volunteers, families, and supporters from across the community. You don't need to own a horse or compete to be part of the club; many members join simply to support local equestrian activities, volunteer at events, or help preserve a vibrant horse community for future generations.

As we head into our 65th year, Fullerton Recreational Riders remains committed to its original mission: bringing people together through horses, competition, and community — and ensuring that the equestrian way of life continues to thrive locally for years to come.

Find out more at:
www.fullertonrecriders.org



Above Left: The chainlink fence was difficult to navigate for the homeowner with mobility issues. A parking space was paved over half of the former green lawn, and drought tolerant trees were added. Note that no onstreet parking was removed.



garage or other outbuilding located fifty (50) feet or more from the property line, and provided that distance between buildings shall not be less than ten (10) feet. (c) That no portion or part of said lots or parcels of land ever shall be used or occupied by, or rented to, or be permitted to be used or occupied by, or rented to any person not of the White or Caucasian race, and that no person ever shall live upon said property at any time whose blood is not entirely that of the Caucasian race, but if persons not of the Caucasian race are kept thereon by such Caucasian occupant strictly in the capacity of servants or employees of such occupants, such circumstance shall not constitute a violation of this covenant. That no portion or part of said lots or parcels of land ever shall be sold to, or conveyed to, or owned by any person not of the White or Caucasian race.

A Fullerton Homeowner Fights City Hall

by Saskia Kennedy

A Fullerton homeowner's legal battle over front-yard landscaping and parking rules demonstrates why city ordinances must include provisions for reasonable accommodations for residents facing hardships. His struggle underscores the broader failure of rigid codes to address accessibility, housing, and mobility challenges in high-density neighborhoods. This case is a call for municipalities to ensure their regulations can adapt to legitimate individual needs, especially for senior citizens, people with disabilities, and those experiencing unexpected life changes.

"This is the house that I purchased to die in, I want to live here for the rest of my life. I need to be comfortable doing it. As I continue to age and my mobility decreases, my guess is that I will eventually need a handicap ramp to navigate my front entryway," said the resident.

The dispute began after the resident, a 63-year-old nurse and senior citizen who has worked hard to buy his home, undertook front lawn re-landscaping and expanded his driveway for parking to accommodate his limited mobility and to leave accessible parking for the two Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (Jr. ADU) that he built in the back of his house. The modifications included cementing a portion of the yard for additional parking.

Street parking is scarce, and many neighbors in the crowded cul-de-sac park on their lawns. However, city officials refused to sign off on his second Jr. ADU permit, citing municipal codes that prohibit paving over front-yard landscaping for parking, except in approved driveways.

In August 2024, the Planning Manager reiterated that city code requires substantial green space in front yards and that the new cemented area must be removed for final approval. Rigid enforcement like this demonstrates the urgent need for ordinances to allow exceptions or variances when residents face hardships such as limited mobility or inadequate accessible parking. Without reasonable accommodations, city codes can inadvertently harm those they are meant to protect, undermining both community welfare and individual dignity.

The resident expressed frustration with conflicting and confusing parking ordinances and the city's lack of timely response to his requests for reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Despite petitioning for ADA modifications due to declining mobility, and requesting a handicap curb in 2019, he was told his property did not qualify because of existing onsite parking—a technicality that ignored the practical barriers he faced.

The response from Traffic Engineer Tim Brevoort was that "After initial review of the property, it does not meet our requirements for handicap only parking. This is due to the availability of onsite parking, which is the shortest distance to the front door. Additionally, the front porch and driveway do not meet ADA requirements, depending on the disability."

The onsite parking in question was a narrow strip of concrete with a wall on one side and a chainlink fence on the other, leading to the back of the house, where his permitted Jr. ADU was, and to his second Jr. ADU, which was awaiting final approval. To accommodate his mobility challenges, he removed the railing between his house and the driveway, still allowing access to the Jr. ADUs. It was a solution that made sense and did not take up already precious street parking.

"I wanted to be part of the solution to the housing crisis, but the city is making unreasonable restrictions," the homeowner said. His plan provided a practical solution for both himself and his tenants, easing street parking congestion and improving accessibility without detracting from the neighborhood. When city codes refuse to recognize or adapt to such positive outcomes, everyone loses. Reasonable accommodations—be they exceptions, amendments, or variances—are not only a legal necessity under disability law, but a moral imperative for any city that values inclusivity, innovation, and community.

Compounding the issue, the home-

owner received outdated property covenants from 1947 containing discriminatory language. Although these were successfully removed from the HOA's covenants in August 2024 with help from Council Member Ahmad Zahra and Housing Manager Daniel Valdez, the homeowner now faces new restrictions and has limited his rental options, resulting in lost rental income.

Community & Economic Development Director Sunayana Thomas, emailed him with a list of suggestions in October 2024.

Parking Options:

1) Regarding parking, your original plans were approved under State guidelines, which prevent us from requiring additional parking for ADUs. While I understand this may not be ideal, here are some parking alternatives to consider:

2) Tandem Parking: You could have tandem parking on-site and use additional spaces on the west side of the street, which is already exempt.

3) Street (Block) Exemption: If parking is a shared challenge with neighbors, you may consider applying for a block exemption, as your neighbors might be willing to sign in support.

4) Early Morning Parking Permit (Pilot Program until December 2025): This program allows you to apply for an Early Morning Parking Permit for \$50, valid until the end of 2025. Permits are issued in accordance with the program's eligibility criteria. Permits are issued in accordance with the program's eligibility criteria.

"Coordinating and organizing tandem parking with tenants goes beyond unreasonable. The reality on this cul-de-sac—where multi-family, multi-generational living is the norm—is that parking is at a crisis point. Neighbors park wherever possible: on lawns, several streets away, and even double-parking," said the resident.

In a new email from Director Thomas on November 1, 2024: Landscaping Requirements: 15.17.050

H The front yard area of the lot shall be maintained with a combination of planting, turf and hardscape areas such that the total area of non-pervious surfaces shall be 40% or less of the total front yard area.

"The city approved the ADU and the removal of most of my backyard green space. I insisted the city send someone out to measure the area, since according to my calculations, my current cemented area was only at 37%," said the homeowner.

On November 12, 2024, Director Thomas wrote:

Your case planner, Andrew, came out to your property last week for a site inspection. His notes are as follows, which confirms you are not in compliance with the landscaping requirements per the code:

The text discusses the measurements and regulations concerning a front yard's hardscape area. The original driveway is 10 feet wide, and the expanded concrete area measures approximately 18 feet wide by 22 feet deep, resulting in a total non-pervious hardscape area of about 616 sq. ft. This exceeds the maximum allowed non-pervious area of 528 sq. ft., which is 40% of the total front yard area of 1,320 sq. ft.

The expanded concrete area also allows for vehicle parking within the front yard setback, violating local parking standards (FMC 15.17.080.E.2). To comply, reducing the expanded concrete area by 88 sq. ft. is suggested, although concerns remain about parking in the setback. Additionally, there is a need for an owner-occupant deed restriction for the JADU as per the planning inspection requirements.

Two relevant code sections are cited: FMC 15.17.080.E.2, which outlines parking standards, and FMC 15.17.050.H.1, which sets landscape requirements for non-pervious surfaces in the front yard.

While these standards aim for environmental sustainability, they should also allow for case-by-case flexibility—especially when a resident's proposal addresses accessibility, reduces street congestion, and enhances neighborhood well-being.

"I wanted to be part of the solution to the housing crisis, but the city is making unreasonable restrictions."



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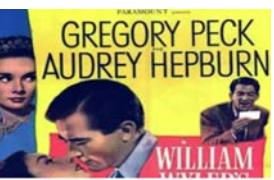
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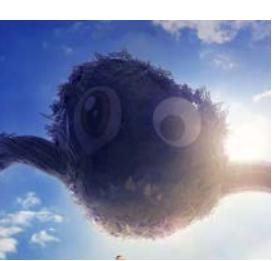
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JAN 24 FROM 3PM • FREE
Movie Night: A Minecraft Movie
Four misfits are suddenly pulled through a mysterious portal into a bizarre cubic wonderland that thrives on imagination. To get back home they'll have to master this world while embarking on a quest with an unexpected expert crafter.


FEB 18 FROM 4PM • FREE
Movie Night: Roman Holiday
A bored and sheltered princess escapes her guardians and falls in love with an American newsman in Rome.


FEB 28 FROM 3PM • FREE
Movie Night: Sketch
When a young girl's sketchbook falls into a strange pond, her drawings come to life-chaotic, real, and on the loose. As the town descends into chaos, her family must reunite and stop the monsters they never meant to unleash.

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FRI JAN 16, 7:30PM & 9:45PM
SAT JAN 17, 7PM & 9:45PM
Mark Normand


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Ms. Pat


WED JAN 21, 8PM
Darren Carter


FRI JAN 9, 7:30PM & 9:45PM
SAT JAN 10, 7PM & 9:30PM
Dusty Slay


SUN JAN 11, 2PM
Harry Potter Drag Brunch


SUN JAN 11, 6PM
Alvin Kuai


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Curated by Marsha Judd

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HITS & MISSES

by Pamela Mason Wagner © 2026



SONG SUNG BLUE: Two Hits

This feel-good tearjerker of the season—a Hollywood movie with an indie soul—is not to be missed, even by those who think they hate Neil Diamond. Starring Kate Hudson as Claire Sardina and Hugh Jackman as Mike Sardina, the film is inspired by a delightful, funny documentary about Lightning and Thunder, a Neil Diamond tribute band. (See the documentary after the movie—available on YouTube.)

Set in 1990s Milwaukee, the story follows two musical wannabes: Claire, a single mother and gifted Patsy Cline soundalike, and Mike, a recovering alcoholic with arena-rock swagger. When Claire suggests Mike might find his niche by channeling Neil Diamond, he's skeptical—until he isn't. He'll do it, but only if Claire joins him. Their musical partnership turns romantic almost immediately, but it's the music that binds the film together. Neil Diamond's songs emerge not as nostalgia, but as something newly alive. When the song "Play Me" began, my companion turned to me in tears. We knew then: the movie had us.

Both leads sing their own parts. Jackman's triple-threat talent is no surprise (except perhaps to fans who only know him from Wolverine). But Kate Hudson's chops at the microphone come as a revelation. With little makeup, a convincing Wisconsin accent, she also delivers a deeply felt performance that cements her as a serious, maturing actor—every bit as compelling as she was decades ago in *Almost Famous*.

Just as the film seems to settle into a working-class fairy tale—boy meets girl, music saves them both—it pivots

sharply. What follows is a tougher, more honest story about addiction, love, and the quiet desperation of American families searching for hope. As one member of Mike's AA group says, "We're all just looking for some hope—and at my age, hope is hard."

That a studio film this sincere exists at all feels like a small miracle. Writer-director Craig Brewer has long been drawn to people with dreams "almost too big." His breakout hit, *Hustle & Flow*, was based on his relationships with Black rappers in Memphis, his adopted hometown.

It was at the 2008 Indie Memphis Film Festival that Brewer first saw the documentary about Lightning and Thunder. But for the next 17 years, the white director primarily made films about Black stories. In 2021, in the wake of our country's racial reckoning, he wrestled with continuing to appropriate content from a culture not his own.

Ultimately, in 2023, he returned to this story about white, working-class Americans with big dreams and big hearts, optioning the documentary and inviting its director, Greg Kohs, into the adaptation process. Brewer faithfully weaves in details from the documentary, from the roar of airplanes over the Sardinas' home to intimate home-video moments where Mike speaks to the camera in his tightie whities.

Nearly all of what happens on screen is true—including a memorable moment when Eddie Vedder invites the band to open for Pearl Jam in Milwaukee. Proof, once again, that truth can be stranger and better than fiction.

- Two Hits: Don't Miss it!
- A Hit & A Miss: You Might Like it.
- Two Misses: Don't Bother.

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Jesus Perez, Household Hazardous Waste Programs Manager stands inside Anaheim waste collection center
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by Emerson Little © 2026
See videos on YouTube @emersonlittle1901

Disposing of Household Hazardous Waste at Anaheim Collection Center

After the holidays, there's always an abundance of e-waste, whether that's used or aging cell phones, old TVs and radios that people never thought to throw out, or old printers that no longer work, according to the workers at the household hazardous waste collection facility in Anaheim. If you're unsure of where or how to dispose of your e-waste (or household cleaning supplies, pool chemicals, paint, thinner, thermometers or any old fluorescent light bulbs or depleted lithium/car batteries, for that matter), the Orange County Waste and Recycling (OCWR) workers down at the HHWCC (Anaheim Household Hazardous Waste Collection Center) welcomes you to stop by.

For Orange County residents, household hazardous waste disposal is free. In fact, it's free at four different collection centers located throughout the County: there's one in Anaheim, Huntington Beach, Irvine and San Juan Capistrano. Situated at the corner of East La Palma Avenue and North Blue Gum Street, the Anaheim HHWCC is the closest collection center for Fullerton and North Orange County residents. In late December, I had a chance to tour the Anaheim facility and interview

Thomas Koutroulis, Director for OC Waste & Recycling, and Jesus Perez, Household Hazardous Waste Programs Manager, about what's considered household hazardous waste, what residents can and cannot bring to the County's HHW centers, how the collection centers operate, and how residents can get free paint, cleaning supplies and other items from the County's material exchange program.

Putting on a bright orange vest so that I didn't get hit by an incoming car, I walked with Jesus Perez through the Anaheim waste collection center, where the various hazardous materials were boxed up in different containers. I also rode with Francine Bangert, Public Communications Officer at OC Waste & Recycling, as she waited in a long line of cars near the center's closing time to dispose of a bucket of batteries. Buckets are free and available at any of the County's household hazardous waste collection centers. Attendants wearing blue gloves asked her what city she was coming from before taking the batteries and sending her on her way.

For Orange County residents, household hazardous waste disposal is free.

"Improperly disposed of household hazardous waste poses risks to both the environment and the workers who handle it," said Koutroulis. "Leftover household products that contain corrosive, toxic, ignitable, or reactive ingredients are considered to be household hazardous waste. Products, such as paints, cleaning solvents, oils, batteries, and pesticides that contain potentially hazardous ingredients require special care when you dispose of them."

Koutroulis and Perez explained that improper disposal of household hazardous waste can include pouring it down the drain, onto the ground, into storm sewers, or, in some cases, putting it out with the trash. I learned that while the dangers of these types of disposal methods might not be immediately obvious, improper disposal of these wastes can pollute the environment and pose a threat to human health.

"The County of Orange started the household hazardous waste collection facilities in the early Nineties. Part of that was due to population growth and increasing regulations on how waste is managed... So we have landfills in the County that we manage and oversee, which handle all residential waste. However, a fraction of that waste cannot come into the landfill and needs to be managed properly, so that's why the facilities were opened: to divert household hazardous waste to these facilities to be disposed of or recycled," explained Koutroulis.

"We don't accept commercial hazardous waste here, and so it's just residential household hazardous waste that we accept, but we also take e-waste and sharps as well," said Jesus Perez, who manages the County's HHW programs. "For e-waste, remember to remove data before disposal." Sharps refers to hypodermic needles, pen needles, intravenous needles, and lancets.

Perez stressed that residents are not allowed to bring any explosive devices, ammunition, marine flares or other incendiary devices. Koutroulis told me not to bring medical waste (outside of sharps), asbestos, biological waste, unused pharmaceuticals and controlled substances, radioactive materials, tires, high-pressure cylinders, such as acetylene, oxygen, and air tanks, or chemically treated wood

items to HHW collection centers.

Koutroulis said, "When coming to a household hazardous waste center, it's a very simple process. Residents place their household hazardous waste in the trunk of their vehicle. As they come into the facility, they follow the signs and directions of the employees and staff on site. As they pull up, they will stop their car, simply open their trunk. They will need to provide the city from which the material is coming, so that info can be logged. And then the attendant will take the HHW out of their vehicle, while the resident stays in the convenience of their car... Once it's removed, the attendant will shut the trunk and let the resident go on their way."

"We have an agreement with Clean Harbors, which is our contractor that actually oversees the facilities and ensures the right documentation for receiving the waste and makes sure it is segregated and it goes to a few different locations," explained Koutroulis. "In some cases, it will go to a Class 1 landfill, which is basically designed to receive and maintain hazardous waste to perpetuity, and it has special permits. It can go to an incinerator to be destroyed, since some of the chemicals are destroyed by incineration, and in some cases, they can be recycled. One thing that we do recycle here are batteries and paint. So, some of the material that does come in can be recycled."

"We also have a materials exchange program," said Perez. "People are cleaning out their garages during the holidays or over the weekends, and they bring in a container of paint or cleaning solvent, it gets inspected, and if it meets a certain standard, it can actually go on the shelf for the material exchange program. Other residents, as they come to drop off hazardous material, have access to this free material, whether it's paint or cleaning agent, and can take and use it for free."

Through OCWR's material exchange program, I learned that residents can choose up to five items per week from a selection of partially used containers of household, yard and car care products.

Anaheim's HHW Collection Center and all other Orange County HHWC locations are open from 9 am to 3 pm, Tuesday through Saturday, and closed on major holidays and rainy days.

For more information, call 714-834-4000 or visit oclandfills.com/hazardous-waste.

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Healthy Awareness

by Jo Ann Brannock, Ph.D. © 2026



The Power of Attitude

The other day, while walking through Craig Park, I passed a woman wearing a T-shirt that read, "I have an attitude." This made me stop and think—what exactly did she mean by that?

According to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, the word attitude has several meanings. These include the posture of the body, a feeling or emotion toward a situation, a mental position about a fact, a ballet pose, the position of an aircraft, and even a state of readiness to respond to a stimulus. With so many definitions, which one applied to her?

More importantly, what did she personally mean? An article I once read by an anonymous author may help explain it. The author stated that attitude accounts for 90% of how we respond to life, while only 10% is what actually happens to us. This means that we are in control of our attitude, and with that control comes choice.

Our attitude can influence everything—from businesses and churches to families and daily life. While we cannot change our past, control how others treat us, or avoid unavoidable events, we can control how we react to them. As the author explained, attitude

is the one "string" we can always play. Since we can control it, we should not waste energy on the small stuff.

For example, many people find public speaking intimidating. When someone approaches it with fear, they often set themselves up for failure before they even begin.

I know that I sometimes stutter when speaking in front of others, but I have learned that I can reduce this by changing my mindset. Instead of focusing on the fear, I practice my speech and simply do my best. By doing this, I may only stutter a small percentage of the time.

Another example many of us can relate to is making a New Year's resolution to lose weight—only to break it by the second day. We can either dwell on the negative feeling of failure or choose a more positive attitude. Instead of giving up, we can remind ourselves to take it one day at a time and do the best we can. Losing weight takes time, and one setback does not make us a failure.

In the end, attitude truly matters. When we choose a positive outlook, we give ourselves a better chance to succeed in all areas of life.

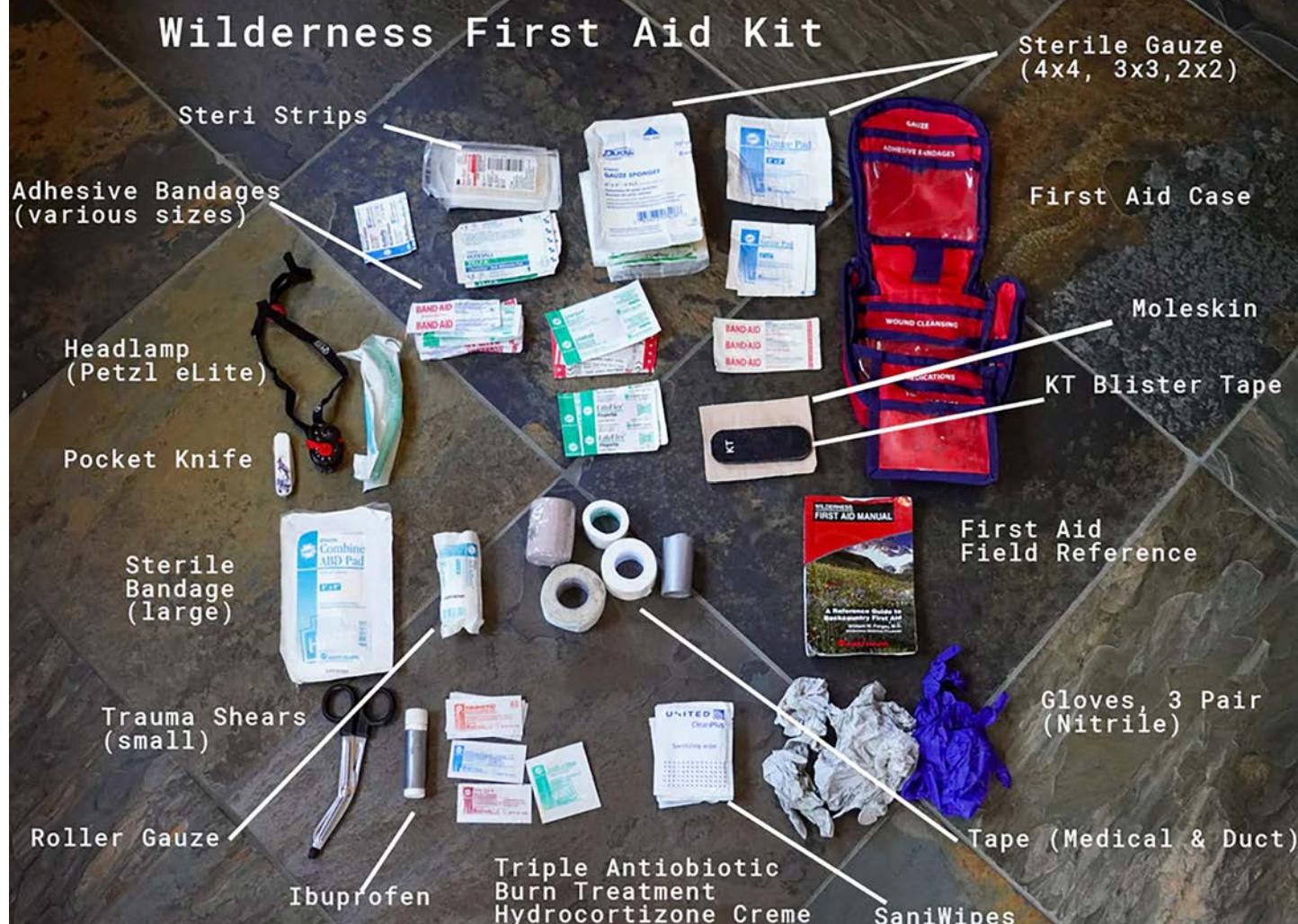
ADVENTURE TURNS INTO SURVIVAL LESSON FOR LOCAL HISTORY TEACHER

by Allen Hsieh,
founder and president
of Troy Preparedness Club

As a teenager, Jason Wilson, now a history teacher, set out on a hiking trip with his father and brother. What began as a day of adventure quickly turned into a test of resourcefulness and preparedness. Midway through their hike, 2.7 kilometers from the trailhead, Jason's brother stumbled and fell off the elevated trail, suffering a painful dislocation of his knee that left him unable to walk.

Without medical supplies on hand, Jason and his father had to improvise. Using sticks found along the trail and their shirts, they crafted a makeshift cast to stabilize his brother's leg. With him supported, they carefully carried him down the trail, grateful for the knowledge and skills that allowed them to safely return to their car.

This experience left a lasting impression on Jason, teaching him the importance of being prepared for unexpected situations, even in seemingly routine activities like hiking. His story emphasizes the value of quick thinking and resourcefulness.



He advises that having basic survival skills and a preparedness mindset can turn a potentially dangerous situation into one where you can safely help yourself or others.

What began as a challenging hike became a lesson in readiness, shaping how Jason approaches both life and teaching.

Balance & Change

by Michelle Gottlieb, Psy.D., MFT, LPCC © 2026

Rethinking New Year's Resolutions: Choosing Meaningful Goals for 2026

As January rolls around, many of us feel the pressure to establish ambitious New Year's resolutions.

This year, I will lose weight, work out, save money, create healthier relationships, change how I eat, and reduce/stop alcohol or drug use. Basically, this year I will become the person that I have always dreamed of!

And sure enough, within about 6 weeks, all of those resolutions have been forgotten or promised to start "later".

But what if we approached the New Year differently this time? Instead of setting daunting resolutions that may lead to burnout, consider focusing on meaningful goals that are easier to achieve.

Like be more mindful.
To notice sunsets.

To walk outside and breathe.
Or perhaps make more connections with people.

This can be simple. Try texting to a friend just to say hi.

Or what if we create resolutions that are just fun? Make a goal to try a new restaurant every time you go out.

Change up your coffee order. Go on an adventure at least once per month.

The point is that there are countless ways to work towards becoming the person you aspire to be—many of which don't require hardship or sacrifice. As we embark on 2026, let's remember that the journey towards self-improvement can and should be enjoyable. Embracing this perspective may lead to a more fulfilling and memorable year ahead. It is important to always enjoy the journey!

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City Council Notes by Gabby Rice

Meetings are on the first and third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 pm. Upcoming agenda information and streaming video of meetings are available at www.cityoffullerton.com click on meetings and agenda. City Hall is located at 303 W. Commonwealth, Fullerton Contact Council at (714) 738-6311 or council@cityoffullerton.com

December 16 City Council meeting

Public Comments

Fullerton Needs a Cold Weather Shelter Now

Curtis Gamble, an activist for the homeless, veterans, Cal State Fullerton students, OCTA bus drivers, seniors, and the low-income community, has the following recommendations:

The City of Fullerton needs to open a 24-hour cold weather shelter immediately—preferably tonight. We urgently need a cold-weather shelter. It is cold tonight, and we must act quickly. We need to utilize navigation centers to take people in immediately. Moreover, OCTA bus drivers should be able to assist by picking up individuals and dropping them off at shelters. We cannot rely solely on the availability of smaller vans; the bus drivers can provide a critical service in this situation.

Road Safety for Orangethorpe Elementary Students

ZJ Hahn: Dedicated Fullerton staff, I come tonight with love and support for each of you. May that love spread among all of you. Nick, I want to personally thank you for stepping up and addressing the patio issue. However, I sent you an email, and I did not receive a response. I'm not sure if you received my emails or where they go when I hit send. This time, I copied four other people on the email, and at least one of them was able to respond, so I know it reached someone.

Jamie Valencia, I continue to volunteer to work with you to ensure safer sidewalks and curbs on the 1800 and 1900 blocks of West Page Avenue. We have children who walk to and from Orangethorpe Elementary School five days a week, ranging in age from 5 to about 12 years old.

At the end of our meeting two weeks ago on December 2, I saw the proposal

for safer bicycle transportation. I believe we can address both issues simultaneously. As a start, we could use a 12-inch white line along the side of the curb before sidewalks are put in. This line would delineate a path for students and their parents, separating their walking route from that of automobiles.

I want to thank the Chief of Police, Jonathan Radus. I don't know whose idea it was, but there was a trailer up for over three weeks warning people about their speed. I believe this contributes to the safety of our children. I've previously mentioned that I hope this is followed up by an officer at the corner of Courtney and Roberta, who could use a radar gun to ticket speeders. As you know, from Roberta Street towards the 91 Freeway, many apartment dwellers tend to be younger and drive at higher speeds.

Help Fullertonians Impacted by ICE raids

Mike Rowe: Since 1992, my family has resided in District 5 in Fullerton. I would like to publicly thank every one of our City Council members for the vital public service you provide and for being good stewards of our tax dollars. I appreciate your participation in the often challenging conversations and decisions that you face.

I was disappointed when the agenda item regarding the funds to assist families impacted legally and financially by ICE raids was tabled. However, I understand the financial constraints that many of you expressed.

I have an alternative proposal. I recommend that the city approve two smaller sets of seed funds sponsored by the City of Fullerton. These funds would allow private citizens and civic-minded businesses in the city to make donations while receiving tax benefits for their contributions. The city could administer these funds for the benefit of families directly affected by ICE actions.

If there are remaining funds after meeting the needs of these families, I propose that they be allocated to ongoing projects within the city that address homelessness and other urgent issues we all face. This approach would foster a more cooperative, civic-minded community of neighbors.

It distresses me to see how profoundly many of my neighbors have been affected, and I would like to see all of us take action. This proposal would give people the option to participate in a way that feels right for them.

Harry Langenbacher: I live in Fullerton, and I want to repeat my request that you, the City Council, address the impact of ICE raids in our community. This is in line with an item you previously voted to table.

I've been trying to understand and define the role of the City Council. I know it goes back over 100 years, but I believe it is to look out for the welfare of all residents in our community.

Just as we care for the homeless, senior citizens, and people with disabilities, we must also consider those affected by ICE raids.

While I know these raids have lessened recently—I've not heard of any occurring at our Home Depot or car washes—they are still happening throughout Orange County, and this issue is far from over.

Some of you have expressed sympathy for the victims of ICE as individuals, but I request that you take action as a City Council for the benefit of all our residents.

Please do something—anything—to address this ongoing problem.

I appreciate the earlier comments about the city using seed money to establish a way for community members to help. However, in all my reading about the city's responsibilities, I have not found anything stating that it is the duty of churches to take care of individuals that the city does not want to support.

Again, I assert that it is the city's responsibility to care for all of its residents.

Alternative Pledge of Allegiance

Judith Kaluzny proposed an alternative pledge of allegiance.

I pledge allegiance to the Constitution of the United States of America and to the Republic, which it describes as one nation of laws, indivisible. Aspiring to liberty and justice for all.

I propose this alternative pledge because the current Pledge of Allegiance seems to imply that God approves of our actions, such as the bombings in the Caribbean Sea. We have a Coast Guard that could handle these situations legally.

Moreover, these bombings are not truly focused on drugs, as evidenced by the president pardoning a major drug dealer, Orlando Hernandez, who

brought 40 tons of cocaine into our country and openly stated his intent to distribute it.

This situation raises serious concerns, especially with the unjust targeting and deportation of individuals without due process. Now, it has been mandated that the Attorney General target dissenters within the U.S. These actions, done in our name, are a far cry from the ideals of liberty and justice for all.

As Albert Camus commented on France's treatment of Algerians, "I wish I could love justice and still love my country."

I propose this alternative pledge to remind ourselves of the need to restore liberty and justice for everyone.

Union Pacific Trail Grand Opening

Eglith Nuncci: I come here with a lot of gratitude to thank so many people who made the Union Pacific Trail possible. I also want to advocate for Union Pacific Trail Phase Three, which will extend from Independence Park to the Hunt Library. Later, we will advocate for the trail to continue to Buena Park and then to La Habra. This will be an important connection within our city.

When you have a vision and the support of the community, we can make this happen. Thank you so much to everyone who played a role in this project. I wish I had the time to mention all of our wonderful resident leaders, including Veronica Moran, Armando Chavez, Martha Diaz, Veronica Segura, and Miss Loretta.

Thank you to Diane Vena, Anjali Tapadia, Helen Higgins, Saskia and Sharon Kennedy. The Fullerton Observer, Voice of OC, Telemundo, and Chapman University. Special thanks to the Environmental Justice

groups from UC Irvine and Fullerton. I want to acknowledge Curtis Gamble, ZJ, Maureen Milton, and our wonderful Todd and Yolanda Harrison. Ruthie Hanchett, Vanessa Estrella, Aruni Tahkur and our dedicated city staff, including Edgar Rosales and Ricardo Milos, Daisy Perez and the Parks and Recreation team.

Thanks to our Police Department for supporting this event, our Mayor Pro tem Charles, who was there on Saturday with Councilmember Ahmad Zahra, Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk-Silva, Cristina Garcia, as well as the representatives from Senator Tom Umberg and Congressman Lou Correa's office.

There were so many people who came together for this project, and I apologize for any names I've missed. This is the result of many years of advocacy, proving that nothing is impossible when you dedicate yourself to the right cause.

Environmental Concerns

Jensen Hallstrom: I would like to start by mentioning that on July 15, the Council approved a contract for the construction of the Euclid Sidewalk Gap Closure Project. The intention of this project was to improve pedestrian accessibility Euclid for 500 feet south toward Bastanchury Creek, as well as to enhance drainage by installing two catch basins in place of the existing gutter drains.

I believe this project was an opportunity to highlight and celebrate a unique and rare remaining piece of natural creek, which serves as a tributary to both Bastanchury Creeks. Many creeks in Fullerton have been paved over into concrete channels, resulting in blighted areas dominated by invasive weeds and graffiti, as well as the loss of habitat and scenic aesthetics.

The section of Euclid we're discussing is a scenic corridor within Fullerton, as are Bastanchury Creeks. However, for the cost of one-third of one million dollars, the city approved a

500-foot long concrete sidewalk when there were alternative, less expensive options that were equally ADA accessible.

I believe there was a lapse in judgment regarding this project. I sincerely hope that future projects adjacent to seasonal creeks in Fullerton will take a watershed approach and consider more sensible options.

Some of the drawbacks of this project included damage to the tree canopy that contributes to the green scenic appeal of that area of Euclid. During construction, the installation of the 500-foot fence resulted in damage to some of the mature trees along the creek. Additionally, improperly piled soil around the bases of these trees may lead to future root rot.

I also want to mention the World War II memorial in Hillcrest, which has been deteriorating for years. This memorial was erected in 1946 and honors over 50 servicemen.

(microphone was shut off)

How to contact your District Representative

- Chair District 1:
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fred.jung@cityoffullerton.com
- Vice Chair District 2:
Nicholas Dunlap
(714) 738-6311
shana.charles@cityoffullerton.com

- District 3: **Dr. Shana Charles**
(714) 738-6311
nicholas.dunlap@cityoffullerton.com
- District 4: **Jamie Valencia**
(714) 738-6311
jamie.valencia@cityoffullerton.com
- District 5: **Dr. Ahmad Zahra**
(714) 738-6311
ahmadz@cityoffullerton.com

Mini History of Fullerton Mayor, Mayor Protem, and Members 1990 to 2026

The following is a year-by-year list of every person who has served on the Fullerton City Council, including the mayor (who is appointed by council each year).

1990: Buck Catlin (**mayor**), Richard "Dick" Ackerman, Don Bankhead, Molly McClanahan, Chris Norby

1991: Chris Norby (**mayor**), Richard "Dick" Ackerman, Don Bankhead, Buck Catlin, Molly McClanahan

1992: Don Bankhead (**mayor**), Richard "Dick" Ackerman, Buck Catlin, Molly McClanahan, Chris Norby

***1993:** Molly McClanahan (**mayor**), Don Bankhead, Buck Catlin, Chris Norby, Julie Sa

***1994:** Julie Sa (**mayor**), Chris Norby

RECALLED

In a June 5, 2012, special election, Fullerton City Council members were recalled primarily due to public outrage and perceived lack of leadership following the brutal beating leading to the death of Kelly Thomas, a mentally ill homeless man, by several city police officers.

• Don Bankhead (*replaced by Greg Sebourn*),

• F. Richard Jones (*replaced by Travis Kiger*),

• Pat McKinley (*replaced by Doug Chaffee*)

2013: Bruce Whitaker (**mayor**), Doug Chaffee, Jennifer Fitzgerald, Jan Flory, Greg Sebourn

2014: Greg Sebourn (**mayor**), Doug Chaffee, Jennifer Fitzgerald, Jan Flory, Bruce Whitaker

2015: Greg Sebourn (**mayor**), Doug Chaffee, Jennifer Fitzgerald, Jan Flory, Bruce Whitaker

2016: Jennifer Fitzgerald (**mayor**), Doug Chaffee, Jan Flory, Greg Sebourn, Bruce Whitaker

2017: Bruce Whitaker (**mayor**), Doug Chaffee, Jennifer Fitzgerald, Greg Sebourn, Jesus Silva

2018: Doug Chaffee (**mayor**), Jennifer Fitzgerald, Greg Sebourn, Jesus Silva, Bruce Whitaker

2019: Jesus Silva (**mayor**), Jennifer Fitzgerald, Jan Flory, Bruce Whitaker, Ahmad Zahra

2020: Jennifer Fitzgerald (**mayor**), Jan Flory, Jesus Silva, Bruce Whitaker, Ahmad Zahra

2021: Bruce Whitaker (**mayor**), Nicholas Dunlap, Fred Jung, Jesus Silva, Ahmad Zahra

2022: Fred Jung (**mayor**), Jesus Silva, Nicholas Dunlap, Bruce Whitaker, Ahmad Zahra

2023: Fred Jung (**mayor**), Shana Charles, Nicholas Dunlap, Bruce Whitaker, Ahmad Zahra

2024: Nicholas Dunlap (**mayor**), Shana Charles, Fred Jung, Bruce Whitaker, Ahmad Zahra

2025: Fred Jung (**mayor**), Shana Charles, Nicholas Dunlap, Jamie Valencia, Ahmad Zahra

2026: Fred Jung (**mayor**), Shana Charles, Nicholas Dunlap, Jamie Valencia, Ahmad Zahra

***** SPECIAL NOTE *****

1993: First Asian American City Councilmember

1994: First Asian American City Mayor/Chair

1994: Three City Councilmembers are Recalled

1995: Council meetings began to be broadcast

2010: City Council adopts Fair Rotation Policy

2012: Three City Councilmembers are Recalled

2016: Fullerton residents voted to establish a district-based system for City Council elections, moving away from an at-large system. The change was prompted by a lawsuit alleging that the at-large system violated the California Voting Rights Act.

2018: The first district representatives for Districts 3 and 5 were elected in November.

2020: Since 2020, all Fullerton City Council members have been elected solely by district.

2022: The district boundaries were updated following the 2020 census, with a new map (Map 114) adopted in April 2022.

continued from front page PUBLIC BOOS

AS COUNCIL BLOC SELECTS SAME MAYOR

The Fair Rotation policy was put in place to ensure equitable access to leadership positions among council members representing districts, fostering an environment where all voices can be heard and represented. By opting for a leadership team that does not reflect this commitment, the current council majority demonstrates a blatant disregard for the very principles that form the foundation of democratic governance.

Dr. Ahmad Zahra, the most senior council member, was absent from the meeting because his work extended the timeline of a film set. Meanwhile, Dr. Shana Charles found herself outnumbered by the bloc driving the decision. By ignoring the Fair Rotation policy,

the council risks alienating constituents who expect a level of integrity and fairness from their elected representatives. Elected officials are entrusted to govern not just for their district constituents, but for every individual in the community. Scrapping the fair rotation undermines public trust.

The leadership selection raises serious questions about the council bloc's priorities. Will the bloc act in the best interest of all Fullertonians, or will they continue to prioritize political alliances at the expense of democratic values? It's essential for residents to hold their elected leaders accountable, urging them to adhere to the principles that promote fairness, representation, and unity within the government.

continued from front page OC Supervisors Foley and Sarmiento Oppose Offshore Oil Drilling Plan

In a joint letter, Foley and Sarmiento articulated their concerns, stating, "On behalf of the residents we represent on the Orange County Board of Supervisors, we write to express our strong opposition to the 11th National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program draft proposal that authorizes new offshore oil drilling along the California coastline." They emphasized the significance of the region's 42 miles of sandy beaches, declaring them essential to the local economy and quality of life. "Our coastline supports family-owned small businesses, fuels approximately one-third of the County's tourism economy, and sustains a vibrant coastal community," they noted.

The letter also addressed the potential environmental risks associated with offshore drilling. They cited the October 1, 2021, oil spill off Huntington Beach, which released over 25,000 gallons of crude oil and caused more than \$100 million in damage, as a stark reminder of the hazards posed by offshore drilling.

Foley further criticized the federal proposal as "unnecessary and reckless," arguing it undermines decades of environmental protections established during Ronald Reagan's presidency. "Orange County families are unified. No new offshore drilling," Foley asserted, stressing that claims about drilling lowering gas prices are misleading and could jeopardize the County's \$4 billion coastal tourism economy.

Highlighting the current context of energy independence, Foley remarked, "Since the United States regained energy independence in 2020, there are over 1,800 offshore oil leases currently unused by major oil companies." She underscored the importance of safeguarding public safety and health by avoiding further risks to the local environment.

The proposed Five-Year Offshore Drilling Plan (2025-2030) from the Trump administration could potentially open the entire California coast, including regions off Orange County, to new oil and gas lease sales for the first time in decades, with sales scheduled between 2027-2030. This has ignited significant opposition from California officials, environmental groups such as OC Coastkeeper and Sierra Club, and local communities concerned about the dangers of spills, economic impacts on tourism, and broader climate implications.

A gathering of about 100 attendees local leaders, business owners, environmental advocates, and community members rallied against the U.S. Department of the Interior's proposed plan on December 8. Among the speakers were Representatives Dave Min and Ted Lieu (via video), Assemblymember Cottie Petrie-Norris, and several other state and local leaders, all emphasizing the need to advocate for the community and the environment against the backdrop of potential oil drilling.

Take Action

• Submit official comments to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management before the deadline on

January 23, 2026 at:

www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/11/24/2025-20760/notice-of-availability-of-the-11th-national-outer-continental-shelf-oil-and-gas-leasing-draft#open-comment

• Sign up for alerts from Surfrider at <https://surfrider.advocacyai.com/action/IH4hEiM24fyJBXb3>

• Share the action alert with your friends and family!

• Stay connected with this campaign and follow along by visiting <https://www.surfrider.org/drilling-is-killing?hsCtaAttrib=176518561576>

Follow Surfriders: [@surfridernorthoc](https://surfridernorthoc)

CITY MEETINGS 2026

January 6 at 5:30pm
City Council CANCELLED

January 12 at 6:30pm
Parks and Recreation Commission

January 14 at 6:30pm
Planning Commission

January 15 at 5:30pm
Investment Advisory Committee

January 19 at 5:00pm
Infrastructure and Natural Resources

January 20 at 5:30pm
City Council

January 21 at 5:30pm
Active Transportation Committee

January 22 at 6:00pm
Library Board of Trustees

January 26 at 6:00pm
Youth Advisory Committee

January 27 at 6:30pm
Community Dev Citizens' Committee

**OPINION: Out of My Mind**by Jon Dobrer © 2026 [Jonathandobrer.substack.com](https://jonathandobrer.substack.com)**Venezuela:
Hubris Nemesis & Self-Delusion**

President Trump's words seldom reveal much truth. He's attached to the moment without future or past and offers his wishes and desires as if they were factual. It's a psychological issue whether he knows that what he's saying is untrue or if he's a kind of "method" salesman who is fully committed to his spiel. Thus, "The economy has never been better." "Inflation isn't real," and "America, which was a laughingstock under Biden, is now 'Hot' and the envy of all."

If his words are unreliable, his actions absolutely reveal often uncomfortable truths. In other words, pay little attention to what he says and focus on what he does. In today's post-action news conference, Trump quickly revealed our real motive and plan. We will run the country until they're ready to take over and choose leadership that is acceptable to us. (I'm neither kidding nor exaggerating). We will repair their oil industry and use the revenues to rebuild Venezuela, only after we repay ourselves for the repairs and make our big oil companies whole in recompense for their unremunerated nationalization. Any leftover money may go to the people.

From the very start of his seemingly irrational obsession with Venezuela and Maduro, he explained, unconvincingly, that it was about Maduro attacking us with Fentanyl, recently labeled a weapon of mass destruction. He was poisoning us just to make money. (See & Compare: Trump's EPA delists human contribution to climate change) We had to blow up small boats powered by outboard motors, incapable of reaching our shores. We killed these people without any offers of proof. We based their death warrants on our instincts, with Minister of Bellicosity Hegseth assuring us that "We know exactly who they are and exactly what they're doing." We didn't.

Then we had to get Maduro because

he was mean to his own people and driving millions out of Venezuela and into Central America, Mexico and the United States. These charges were true. But hardly unique. China is pretty mean to its own people. India gets chippy towards its Muslim population. Somalia and Sudan are terrible places for all. As yes, the West Bank and Gaza suffer from both the actions and inactions of their homegrown leaders and occupiers.

Do we care? Will we bomb, invade and pretend to save them? You know the answer. NO! Why are they not filled with human beings entitled to our active concerns? Yes, of course, they are. So how do we treat them with malign neglect while pretending to care deeply about the poor, exploited people of Venezuela? Easy. They don't have oil, and Venezuela does.

Trump denied being interested in regime change. Obviously, a false assertion. He pretended to be moved by the suffering of the people, but we might have to bomb them or invade strictly as a defensive measure against the deadly war they were waging against America and the American people.

Many smart people thought that Trump was not serious about going to war with Maduro. They thought it was only a distraction to take the focus off of Epstein, his victims and enablers. Every once in a while, someone mentioned that our ambition and animus just might have something to do with oil. But Trump denied this. Even after hijacking an oil tanker in the Caribbean and saying that we now owned its cargo of crude, people thought that Trump was bluffing and blustering. Seems he wasn't.

Venezuela has the largest oil reserves on the continent. It did have a thriving oil industry—largely dominated by

American interests. But then Hugo Chavez nationalized the oil industry and quickly drove it into failure. This was due partly to the inability of his socialism to run the industry, but also because, without American expertise and spare parts, the industry had to fall into disrepair and stagnation.

Now, however, all is no longer lost. We have come running, flying and bombing to their rescue. We bombed their small craft, which made them deploy their forces away from their cities and into the Caribbean and eastern Pacific. Last night, we sent over 150 aircraft to carry out Operation Absolute Resolve. We started by taking out their anti-aircraft defenses and drew their human assets to their military staging areas, leaving the Capitol and the Presidential Palace virtually defenseless. Credit where it's due, this was very well planned, thought out and achieved its immediate goals.

The problem is that though this stage was successful, this was the relatively easy part. We invaded Iraq twice and always won the battle, but could not establish any kind of peace. We are very good at breaking things. Building societies, governments, and democracies is difficult, and our record, however well-meaning we might be, is not promising. Now, with Nicolas Maduro and his wife gone, around whom will we choose to build a democracy? And, why would we imagine that it is our choice to make? We did not do well at choosing the Shah over Mossadegh in Iran, Diem over Nhu in Vietnam, and Pinochet over Allende in Chile. Given our actual free election of Trump twice, we may not be competent to choose our own leadership, no less another country's leader.

As of this moment, we do not know what Trump means by asserting that "we will run Venezuela." Who is the "we?" Is it the remains of Maduro's crooked regime and his Vice President Delcy Rodriguez? Or maybe it should be from the opposition and be the Nobel Prize-winning Maria Machado, or possibly the real winner of the last election, Edmundo Gonzales. If we go

with Maduro's VP, it might be payback for some clear cooperation we received from the inside in deposing Maduro.

Trump has been led to believe that this will not be another forever war, and we will not get bogged down. He may actually believe that we can rebuild their oil industry unmolested by various militant dissidents. This is a form of wishful thinking and denial.

Our efforts, whether sincere or cynical, will likely take their place in the Great Pantheon of Broken Dreams alongside his peace deals with Pakistan and India, Thailand and Cambodia, Ethiopia and Egypt, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo and the entire Middle East.

Trump, who promised no more wars and campaigned for the Nobel Peace Prize, has come to the world stage in Trump 2.0 with both rhetorical and real guns blazing. He campaigns for peace and pursues war, threatens sovereign countries and makes the Democrats' version of being the "Policemen to the World" look modest. He promises violence to the West Bank, Gaza, Iran and our own cities.

If his policies are against the interests of our nation, they are also against his own. Democrats will not support his violence nor his disregard for our Congress. Many MAGA folk believed his America First pledges of peace. They will abandon him. He is losing his hold on his formerly loyal by first confusing them and now betraying them.

His loyalty is not to those below him but to his billionaire bosses, whose respect he hopes to earn with his craven capitulation to their economic agenda. They will never respect one who serves them. He has certainly enriched himself and his family, but not sufficiently to be treated as anything but a poseur and loser.

All his gold-plated graffiti and renamed buildings will quickly be erased by the next government—even if it's Republican. No one will remember him fondly. His loyal subjects of today will deny knowing him and assert that they were really in the underground, only pretending to go along to save our nation. They too will decompose in the dustbin of history.

How Fullerton Can Save

An investigation by Voice of OC has revealed that 15 cities in Orange County, including Brea, La Habra, and Yorba Linda, do not provide health benefits to their city council members. This practice raises questions about the necessity of taxpayer-funded health care for elected officials who do not serve full-time.

Yorba Linda serves as a noteworthy example: over a decade ago, residents decided to discontinue healthcare benefits for their council members. David Christian, who formerly held the position of assistant city manager in Yorba Linda, articulated community concerns about council members receiving health benefits akin to those of full-time employees, stating, "[Council

members] were getting this health benefit, the same health benefits that were offered to the full-time employees, and I think there was probably some rumblings in the community that the council wasn't really full-time," he said."

The report indicates that health benefits payouts for city councils across Orange County in 2024 vary significantly: Santa Ana spent a comparatively modest \$13,828, while Laguna Hills spent a staggering \$107,431.

For the City of Fullerton, medical benefits expenses totaled \$23,413 for its five-member council, which meets approximately twice monthly (24 times per year). Recently, the council voted to cut five of those meetings from its schedule for next year, poten-

Money

tially underscoring the argument against providing full benefits to part-time officials. (Stay tuned as we try to find out what other council perks could be removed to further increase annual savings.)

To delve deeper into the details of these findings, the full report titled "How Much Do OC Taxpayers Spend on Local Politicians' Health Benefits?" authored by Nicole Kayos, Sarah Hart, and Annie Lewis is available at Voice of OC. The report raises important questions about governance, accountability, and the prudent use of taxpayer funds.

Additionally, a chart from the City of Fullerton outlines healthcare payouts for its council members in the first nine months of 2025.

Councilmember Shana Charles does not participate in the city health insurance program. Councilmembers Jung and Dunlap received \$11,050 each, plus supplemental vision and dental payments. Councilmembers Zahra and Valencia opted out of health insurance and received Flex payments, with Valencia also receiving \$389 in dental services.

Read the full report at [voiceofoc.org](https://voiceofoc.org/report-city-council-health-benefits/)

Coffee with a CopTHURSDAY, JANUARY 8TH

9:00 AM - 10:30 AM



Fullerton Police Officers will be there to answer questions, chat about all things Fullerton, and connect with the community we're proud to serve. No speeches, no agendas just good conversation and great coffee.

Qamaria Cafe located at
229 E Commonwealth Ave Unit

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OPINION: AT HOME WITH THE HOMELESS by Andrew Williams © 2026

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A Call for Action for Winter Shelters

“Plans are worthless, but planning is everything.” – Dwight D. Eisenhower

I hadn't commented before on the lack of planning for extreme weather shelters in Orange County because the Observer and the Orange County Register seemed to have the matter well in hand. But since apparently no one on any of the City Councils in the County has been listening, a comment from yours truly on the front lines might have some value.

It seems clear, given the scope of the unhoused problem in Orange County, that every city from La Habra to San Clemente should have at least one operating emergency winter shelter. This certainly would have been welcome this past holiday week, where, thanks to the multiple atmospheric rivers passing through from the tropics, we had one of the wettest Christmases on record.

And yet, there was no emergency program ready to receive on the instant those needing shelter from the downpours that swept through on Christmas week. Even Santa Ana and Fullerton, unlike previous years, had made no such provisions. To say that was inexcusable is an understatement.

By the time this sees print, the Christmas Storms will be gone, leaving many leaky roofs, potential mudslides and other collateral property and personal damage in their wake. And yet, county officials claim we are better situated for unhoused shelter this winter, with more shelter beds and hotel voucher programs in place.

However, as Claire Wang noted in the opening paragraph of her December 24 Register story, “Orange

County is entering winter again without a dedicated emergency shelter for homeless people,” and whereas emergency shelters are designed to get people temporary shelter quickly, there is no such guarantee with the added shelter beds and voucher program.

Also consider the words of Michael Sean Wright, director of field medicine for the Lestonnac Free Clinic in Orange and founder of Wound Walk OC, quoted at length in Wang's article: “Folks who become unhoused or housing unstable do not adhere to a calendar...If you happen to become unhoused during times of inclement weather, there are no opportunities for you. To hear a county of this size with tens of millions of dollars say, ‘We've done enough,’ I say, ‘Look out your window today and ask if you've done enough.’”

Predicting emergencies is still an inexact science, but it was well known, days in advance, that the aforementioned atmospheric rivers would bring hard rains to the region around Christmas time. If plans had been made months in advance to utilize emergency facilities—as had been done in previous years—this emergency could have been handled.

Unfortunately, Santa Ana and Fullerton, in particular, have chosen—for the past 3 years—not to prepare and

Predicting emergencies is still an inexact science, but it was well known, days in advance, that atmospheric rivers would bring hard rains to the region around Christmas time.

open the facilities at the National Guard armories in those cities. No explanation. Just apparent unwillingness. Inexcusable. Unacceptable.

If we are ever going to get a handle on the unhoused crisis, two key things need to happen:

1) we need to find out what methods work, and which don't, and dispense with the latter;

2) use the new technologies in energy collection and home building to optimize housing availability.

For instance, it should be glaringly obvious to anyone even vaguely familiar with the problem that jailing the homeless should end immediately. It is a waste of money and only serves to further traumatize and stigmatize an already obscenely traumatized and stigmatized population.

We have the capability to build “tiny” homes quickly and cheaply. We have multiple non-coal and gas resources available to light and power those homes—hydroelectric, geothermal, wind, and solar power, amongst them.

The idea of “drill, baby, drill” to solve our ongoing energy crisis is obsolete and antiquated. There is, therefore, no longer any reason why anyone should be homeless.

Dovetailing with the need to solve the crisis in housing is the equally encroaching crisis in employment. Jobs are becoming scarcer through automation, which has been the trend since 1970 and has exponentially accelerated with the increasing development and sophistication of artificial

intelligences.

What no one is saying—the “quiet part”—is that computers don't need to be paid. They do not draw a salary. They have no expenses for which a salary would be required.

So, why not use those savings and the profits derived thereof to pay the workers who were put out of work by automation? That is the thinking behind universal basic income, which I have written about repeatedly.

Denmark recently concluded its own experiment with UBI, and the results were the same as in other studies worldwide: those given UBI did three things:

1) paid off overdue bills;

2) made purchases of needed materials not previously affordable;

3) put the remainder into checking and savings accounts. The obvious advantages to economies worldwide are starkly apparent.

“But what will happen to people when they don't have to go to work? Won't they just lie around, smoke pot and play video games?”

At first, some will. But then, they will get bored with that and will start to think about these questions posed by Buckminster Fuller:

“What was it I was thinking about when I was told I had to ‘earn a living’—doing what someone else had decided needed to be done?

What do I see that needs to be done that no one else is attending to?

What do I need to learn to be effective in attending to it in a highly efficient and inoffensive-to-others manner?”

That is the future we should be working towards. Innovation and invention are born when one has time to think. “Innovation leads to prosperity and prosperity leads to peace.” Jack Ma.

In-Custody Death at Fullerton Jail

Report by Fullerton Police Department

An in-custody death was reported at the Fullerton City Jail following the arrest of a male for public intoxication. The individual was found slumped against a light pole at the intersection of S. Euclid St. and W. Orangethorpe Ave. around 10:48 pm on December 28, 2025. The arrest was made by a Fullerton Police Officer, and the male was booked at the jail at approximately 11:05 pm.

During a routine cell check at 12:05 am on December 29, the jailer noted that the inmate appeared to be asleep and breathing. However, during a subsequent check at 1:05 am, the inmate was discovered unresponsive. Life-saving measures were initiated by the jail staff and responding police officers until the Fullerton Fire Department arrived to assist.

The inmate was transported to a local

hospital, where he was pronounced dead. Authorities reported that there was no use of force during the arrest or while in custody, and the inmate remained cooperative throughout the process.

The Fullerton Police Department's body-worn cameras and the jail's CCTV captured the incident. The Orange County District Attorney's Office has been notified, and an independent investigation is underway to determine the circumstances surrounding the death.

The identity of the deceased will be released by the Orange County Coroner in due course.

In accordance with state law, relevant videos and recordings will be made available within 45 days through a Critical Incident Community Briefing Video.



Suspect vehicle is white with damage to the front where the victim was hit.

Pedestrian Dies Following Hit-and-Run

continued from front page

The collision involved a vehicle and a pedestrian. The victim was transported to a local trauma center in critical condition. The driver failed to stop, render aid, or remain at the scene.

The investigation remains ongoing. The suspect vehicle is described as a white, four-door sedan believed to have sustained front-end damage.

The Fullerton Police Department continues to seek the public's assistance in identifying the suspect vehicle and driver involved in this fatal collision.

Anyone with information is urged to contact Fullerton Police Traffic Accident Investigator Manes at (714) 738-6815 or via email at jmanes@fullertonpd.org.

Those wishing to provide information anonymously may contact Orange County Crime Stoppers at (855) TIP-OCCS or visit occrimestoppers.org.



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Body Donation Program at University California Irvine Supports Education and Research

Each year, over 1,000 Californians donate their bodies to medical science, significantly contributing to the education of health professionals and advancing scientific research. The University of California, Irvine (UCI) operates a Willed Body Program that aids the School of Medicine and UCI Medical Center, enhancing the training of healthcare workers and improving community health.

Body donations provide medical students with essential hands-on experience of human anatomy, advance research initiatives, and support resi-

dency programs. These donations are also vital for practicing physicians and biomedical scientists engaged in developing new medical techniques and innovations that save lives.

UCI's program also collaborates with the California State University and California Community College systems, along with various educational, healthcare, and industry partners across California and beyond.

You can download the donation packet at:
[https://medschool.uci.edu/
community/willed-body-program](https://medschool.uci.edu/community/willed-body-program)

Willed Body Program

Give the gift of knowledge—and life—by donating your body for medical education and research. This donation will have an enduring impact, as those who receive training at UCI School of Medicine go on to apply what they learn in service to others. Donors are truly the silent teachers that enable us to fulfill our mission: Discover. Teach. Heal.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: ... and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9) "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2)

Sunday Service & Sunday school at 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday Testimony Meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Reading Room: Mon-Wed & Fri and 2nd & 3rd Sat from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.



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National Blood Donor Month: An Overview of its Importance

January is recognized as National Blood Donor Month, a campaign established in 1970 following a proclamation by President Richard Nixon. The initiative raises awareness of the ongoing need for blood donations, which tend to decline during the winter months.

For more than half a century, National Blood Donor Month has highlighted the critical role that blood donors play in saving lives. The observance aims to acknowledge current donors while encouraging new individuals to donate blood.

This month, various organizations and health institutions emphasize the need for blood donations for medical procedures, including surgeries, the treatment of chronic illnesses, and emergency care. The campaign under-

scores the importance of maintaining an adequate blood supply for effective healthcare delivery.

As National Blood Donor Month progresses, there is a concerted effort nationwide to promote the importance of blood donation, ensuring that healthcare facilities are equipped to meet patient needs year-round.

Donate at the American Red Cross Blood Donation Center, 1379 S Harbor Blvd, Fullerton

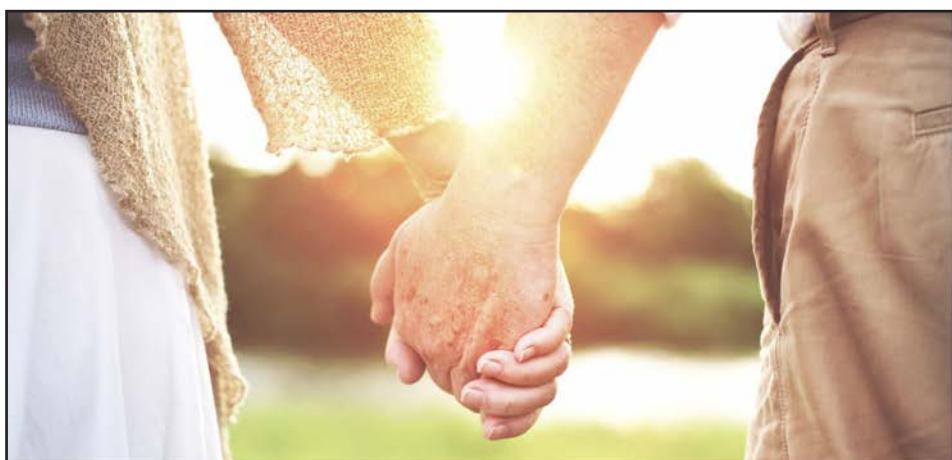
Hours:

Friday	7:30 am–3:30 pm
Saturday	7 am–3 pm
Sunday	7 am–3 pm
Monday	11:30 am–7:30 pm
Tuesday	11:30 am–7:30 pm
Wednesday	11:30 am–7:30 pm
Thursday	10 am–6 pm

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California Introduces AI Transparency Law

California has enacted a new law requiring technology companies that develop large advanced artificial intelligence (AI) models to disclose information about how their products may impact society.

Effective January 1, 2026 the law provides whistleblower protections for employees at firms like Google and OpenAI, allowing them to report critical safety incidents.

The legislation, known as Senate Bill 53, mandates that AI developers publish frameworks detailing their response to critical safety incidents and how they manage catastrophic risks. Violations can result in fines up to \$1 million. The law defines catastrophic risks as scenarios where AI could lead to significant loss of life or property,

such as through cyber attacks that cause over \$1 billion in damages.

AI developers are also required to produce transparency reports that outline intended uses of their models, restrictions, and risk assessments. However, critics point out that the law does not address issues like environmental impact or societal risks, such as disinformation and discrimination.

While companies must file incident reports with the state, the contents of these reports will not be publicly accessible, as they may be classified as trade secrets. Additional oversight may come from Assembly Bill 2013, which demands disclosures about the data used to train AI models.

Certain provisions of SB 53 will be phased in over time, with a significant reporting requirement from the Office of Emergency Services set to begin in 2027. The law's effectiveness will depend on government enforcement and the cooperation of AI companies.

Public Safety Laws Set to Take Effect in 2026

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) has unveiled several new public safety laws taking effect in 2026, aimed at enhancing road safety for drivers, pedestrians, and vulnerable road users.

Assembly Bill 289 introduces a pilot program for a Work Zone Speed Safety System, utilizing mobile radar and lidar technology to monitor vehicle speeds in work zones. The Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will oversee the implementation of these devices in active construction and maintenance areas.

Another key change comes with the expansion of the "Slow Down, Move Over" law under Assembly Bill 390. This legislation mandates that drivers either slow down or change lanes when

encountering a disabled vehicle displaying flashing lights, aiming to reduce accident risks.

Assembly Bill 1014 allows the Department of Transportation to lower highway speed limits by 5 mph, with new signage to reflect these changes. Additionally, Assembly Bill 382 standardizes school zone speed limits at 20 mph, down from 25 mph, to be fully enacted by 2031.

With the rise in e-bike usage among students, Assembly Bill 544 requires e-bikes to have a red rear-facing reflector or light for improved visibility.

Violations of these laws may result in citations or mandatory safety courses. The CHP encourages Californians to stay informed about these changes to promote road safety.

CALIFORNIA LAWS GOING INTO EFFECT IN 2026

In 2026, numerous new laws will take effect in California, many of which stem from legislation passed in 2025. Below are some key areas of impact.

Judicial System Enhancements

Over 500 laws enacted in 2025 will enhance the judicial process, focusing on accessibility for court users from diverse backgrounds.

Notably, SB 281 mandates that courts provide a verbatim immigration advisement to defendants who are not citizens, informing them of the potential immigration consequences of pleading guilty or no contest.

AB 1261 requires the state to supply legal counsel to unaccompanied undocumented minors in immigration proceedings.

Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice

New laws aim to bolster child welfare services. AB 779 allows counties to start a three-year pilot program where domestic violence consultants assist social workers.

AB 896 mandates that counties must create a placement transition plan for foster youth.

Courts are now required to allow incarcerated parents to attend dependency hearings in person or via video/teleconference (AB 651). Additionally, the Family Preparedness Act of 2025 broadens the definition of "relative" in caregiver authorization

affidavits to include various familial relationships up to the fifth degree of kinship.

AB 621 introduces protections against the exploitation of minors through deepfake pornography.

Mental Health Initiatives

The Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment Act (CARE), initiated in 2023, is expanding eligibility as of January 1, 2026.

SB 27 will include individuals with bipolar I disorder with psychotic features in the CARE plans aimed at providing behavioral health care and housing services.

Criminal Law Adjustments

AB 321 empowers courts to classify cases as felonies or misdemeanors at any point before trial.

Civil Law Revisions

AB 250 permits plaintiffs to revive sexual assault claims that have expired statute limitations prior to January 1, 2026, provided that they can demonstrate that the entities involved engaged in cover-ups of previous allegations.

The Social Security Tenant Protection Act of 2025 allows tenants to cite Social Security hardship as a defense for non-payment of rent if income is disrupted due to interruptions in Social Security benefits, contingent upon evidence verification.

These legislative changes reflect California's ongoing efforts to address a range of legal and social issues.

OUR TOWN CROSSWORD

ANSWER KEY to "LAST DANCE" from page 6:



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and returned
to raise
her family here.
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puzzles since 2014.



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<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/fullerton>

Ambulance Operator

Salary: \$20.00 Hourly
Location: 303 W Commonwealth
Job Type: Non-Regular (At Will/Non-Benefited)
Job Number: 2025 - Ambulance Oper
Department: Fire

Join the Fullerton Fire Department and become part of a proud tradition of service, where we invest in our community, protect our people, and work together to shape a safer, stronger future.

Library Clerical Assistant

Salary: \$41,414 - \$52,856 Annually
Location: Fullerton Public Library
Job Type: Regular 3/4-Time
Job Number: 2025-Lib Cler Asst
Department: Library
• Help patrons check out books, answer questions, and guide people to what they need.
• Juggle clerical tasks.
• Create fun displays, mend books, and help with programs.
• Keep the library in tip-top shape.

Parks and Recreation Coordinator

Salary: \$53,547 - \$68,342 Annually
Location: City of Fullerton
Job Type: Regular Full-Time
Job Number: 2025 - P&R Coordinator
Department: Parks and Recreation
• Planning and running engaging community programs and events.
• Handling registration, budgets, and supplies.
• Supporting of tennis program, manage golf course contracts, facilities, and special events.
• Engage with community members.
• Oversee daily operations of parks, facilities, and lead recreational programs.
• Work closely with staff and volunteers.
• Promote activities and community events.

Water Production Operator

Salary: \$63,292 - \$80,783 Annually
Location: City of Fullerton
Job Type: Regular Full-Time
Job Number: 2025-WPO
Department: Public Works
• Operate and monitor pumping plants and wells to regulate water flow between reservoirs.
• Use the SCADA system to control, monitor, and adjust water system operations.
• Check and maintain disinfecting and treatment equipment to ensure water quality standards are met.
• Inspect, clean, grease, and service motors, pumps, and other mechanical components.
• Record and report system data, including meter readings and flow rates.
• Maintain facilities and grounds around pumping stations.



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