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Fullerton Advances Three Trash Haulers and Moves to Eliminate Upfront Cash From Contracts

by Saskia Kennedy

CR&R, Republic Services and Valley Vista head to final negotiations for a 10-year waste deal; council orders Republic to drop a \$10 million payment, with a decision expected in September.

The Fullerton City Council voted Tuesday unanimously to advance three companies — CR&R Environmental Services, incumbent Republic Services and Valley Vista Services — to final negotiations for a 10-year residential and commercial trash contract, and directed that a proposed \$10 million upfront payment from Republic be stripped out and folded back into customer rates.

The 5-0 vote narrowed a field of six shortlisted haulers and set up a final decision expected in September. The council also lifted a self-imposed "embargo" that had barred members from meeting directly with the bidders, and required the three finalists to appear at two public meetings before any award. **Read more on page 17**



Fullerton's Family Fourth of July Parade photos by Gaston Castellanos. See more at www.fullertonobserver.com

Fullerton Woodcrest Community Pushes for Permanent Parking Solutions at City Council Meeting

by Ethan Ferrer

Representatives of the Fullerton Woodcrest community at Palm Gardens Apartments attended the Fullerton City Council meeting on June 16, 2026 to ask again for a permanent solution to their problems with parking. Woodcrest Association President Mireya Figueroa, Fullerton School District Board Member Vanessa Estrella, and Alma Chavez were some of the representatives for Woodcrest's Palm Gardens community at the city council meeting on June 16.

Read more on page 15

Orange County's Governing Bodies Seem to be Taking Cues from Trump

by Andrew Williams

Star Chamber is a term that you use when referring to secretive, arbitrary hearings and procedures. It has become the modus operandi for the Trump administration, and now Orange County government—specifically the OC Board of Supervisors and the Fullerton City Council—has apparently decided to give it a try.

They picked a really bad time to do so. Not only is confidence in the federal government—especially the judiciary and legislature—at an all-time low, but governance in Orange County has come under considerable suspicion. We've all read, or should have read, about Supervisor Andrew Do's embezzlement of public funds and Fred Jung's exaggerated claims regarding his tenure as Fullerton's mayor. Jung was given a right padding at a recent city council meeting, and deservedly so. His claim of having built nine parks, for example, is as ludicrous as Trump's claim that he has stopped eight wars. **Read more on page 20**

NO FRAUD INVESTIGATION DONE BY AUDITORS GRANT THORNTON: It Was a Review, Not an Investigation

by Aaron Sharp

An independent financial review presented to the Fullerton City Council on Monday concluded that the city's \$2.9 million accounting error and the disappearance of roughly \$10 million in unassigned fund balance were the product of bookkeeping mistakes, weak financial governance, and unclear budget presentation — not fraud. But the firm that conducted the review, Grant Thornton Advisors LLC, was explicit, in both its presentation and its written report, that it was never asked to look for fraud in the first place.

According to Grant Thornton's engagement materials, the City of Fullerton hired the firm under a

Statement of Work, dated April 30, 2026, to analyze specific accounting transactions and budget items from the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025. The scope was to determine whether those transactions were conducted at arm's length, complied with generally accepted accounting principles, followed city policy, and served a legitimate city purpose.

Because the engagement was explicitly not a fraud investigation, the report does not address — and does not purport to rule out — motive, intent, or any individual's state of mind in connection with the budget presentations or the 2020 journal entries.

Read more on page 19



City Council Reverses Course, Approves 32-Unit Townhome Project on Hermosa Drive

The Fullerton City Council voted on June 16, 2026 to approve a 32-unit townhome development at 111 W. Hermosa Drive on Monday night, reversing a denial it had issued just six weeks earlier, after the project's developer agreed to fund an additional traffic study at the Harbor Boulevard-Hermosa Drive intersection.

The project, proposed by City Ventures, calls for a three-story, 32-unit residential townhome develop-

ment in the city's Laguna Lake neighborhood. Five of the units — 13% of the total — would be deed-restricted for low-income households. The property is zoned R1-20, and the project was submitted as a "builder's remedy" development under the state's Housing Accountability Act, a designation available to developers in cities found out of compliance with state housing-element requirements.

Read more on page 19

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

SAVE FULLERTON COLLEGE'S HORTICULTURE PROGRAM

Dear Editor,

As a resident of Fullerton for over fifty years, I am well aware that Fullerton College is renowned for its excellent music and horticulture programs. While the music department is being rewarded with a new Performing Arts Center being built at the corner of Chapman and Lemon, it came as a shocking and unwelcome surprise to learn that the school plans to pave over the greenhouse area and replace it with a building for STEM classrooms. This not only disrespects the Fullerton community, which actively supports the college and its famous plant sales, but also contradicts current trends.

At a time when many engineers and computer programmers are facing layoffs due to the expansion of AI, Fullerton

College seems to be doubling down on outdated priorities. The reality is that nearly all those once-coveted STEM jobs may soon be outsourced to AI programs.

In contrast, hands-on jobs such as gardening and horticulture will remain in high demand because they can only be performed by humans and are essentially AI-proof.

Fullerton College should not only preserve its greenhouses and horticulture programs for the benefit of the community but also for the sake of its students. The school currently offers opportunities that few other colleges can match, and it should not discard these valuable assets. I urge all Fullerton residents to band together to help save Fullerton College's horticulture buildings and gardens.

Roseanne Dobrin Fullerton

Dear Editor,

I was shocked and appalled to read that Fullerton College is planning to construct a new STEM classroom building at the location of the college's iconic horticulture department. For decades, my husband and I, along with many other Fullerton residents, have purchased tomatoes, peppers, herbs, and native California plants at the college's annual plant sale. This event is one of the city's most popular local events and showcases the incredible work of the college's horticulture students.

To demolish this beloved and respected area of the school

in such a thoughtless manner shows a complete disregard for both hardworking students and the larger Fullerton community. If the school's administration and the community college district trustees wish to build new classrooms, why not do so in the parking lot adjacent to the horticulture area? As everyone knows, that lot is almost always empty because students park on Berkeley Avenue for free, opting out of the exorbitant parking fees charged by the college. This solution would optimize underused space while protecting one of the school's most admired and respected assets.

Wendy Li Fullerton

THE SCIENCE BEHIND IT

Thank you, Yuvika, for your informative column regarding fireworks. Yes, they're beautiful (especially the professional displays), but fireworks are not limited to those professional displays.

In addition to the air pollution and risk of fires, the disruption to wildlife and pets (not to mention humans with PTSD) is not trivial. I live close to downtown and used have to give my dog a tranquilizer on the 4th of July. My husband and I would sit in our back yard and enjoy the aerial display over Fullerton High School stadium, but I had to hold my dog in my lap and cover her ears—she was still quivering

from the loud booms.

I felt much safer during the years that "safe and sane" fireworks were banned in Fullerton. Several years ago, there was measure on the ballot to reverse the "safe and sane" fireworks ban, which was (unfortunately) written so that a "yes" vote meant reverse the ban and a "no" vote meant keep the ban. Now, there are fireworks (legal and not-so-legal) being shot off in my neighborhood for many nights (and days) surrounding July 4th and New Year's. Bring back the ban!!!

Judy Berg Fullerton

OPEN LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY SERVICES & FULLERTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

A literature rack appeared on my property on or about June 2. I assume it was from your department. You did not contact me about this installation, not so much as a "by your leave..."

Everything—everything—moveable you see on these photos, every book, every piece of paper, was dumped in the gutter in front of this area on June 8. No picture because my neighbor cleaned it up before I got the camera out. Some of it was taken around the corner and dumped at 149 West Whiting Avenue.

So I called the number on the "keep your neighborhood safe" sheet and was told I had to go on line to make a

report. I've tried that before: your device/app will not accept my CDL as ID, and I refuse to give my SSN. An officer I contacted by telephone checked the CDL, and found no problem with it.

Well, I don't mind your lit rack, except that phone number is misleading. I guess my corner is rather the Malden Avenue Trading Post. People leave clothing for all ages, plants, books for all ages, canned goods, once a five pound bag of Japanese rice. I leave it all for the taking, and everything does get taken except not so much the little kids' books.

Judith Kaluzny Fullerton



POLICE ACTIVITY

by David Spargur

Detectives Seek Suspect in Retail Theft Investigation

Fullerton detectives are currently investigating a series of retail thefts believed to involve suspects who have targeted various stores throughout Fullerton and possibly nearby areas. During the course of their investigation, detectives successfully identified three suspects. Two suspects are currently in custody, while one remains at large, named Catherine Cuello.

In a direct appeal to the outstanding suspect, authorities have urged her to turn herself in.

"It's only a matter of time before you're located," a detective stated, emphasizing the importance of doing the right thing. They encourage Cuello or anyone who knows her to contact Detective Curtis at (714) 738-5327 to facilitate a resolution to the case.

Police Department Hosts Scam Awareness Seminar

Friday, July 17 from 5:00 to 6:30 pm
Mural Room at the Police Department
237 W Commonwealth Ave, Fullerton

This is to educate the community about current scam trends, warning signs, and practical steps for protection against scams. Space is limited.

For questions and RSVP, please contact PSR Shahed Tabaza at 714-738-3147.

National Night Out

August 4 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm
at Downtown Fullerton Plaza
125 E Wilshire Ave, Fullerton

This event includes vehicle displays such as SWAT, K9 unit, and Polaris patrol vehicles, drone and equipment displays. The public will have the chance to ask questions, give feedback, and learn about the police department.

Arrest Overview for June 8 through 28

There were 264 arrests made in the record we received.

Note: Arrestees are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

28.41% drug-related arrests
23.11% Violence-related
18.18% Miscellaneous
17.80% DUI-related
6.44% Theft-related
4.55% Trespassing including unlawful camping
0.76% Vandalism-related
0.38% Firearm-related
0.38% Sex offender

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.

Subscribe now for \$39 a year and receive 21 issues delivered directly to your door.

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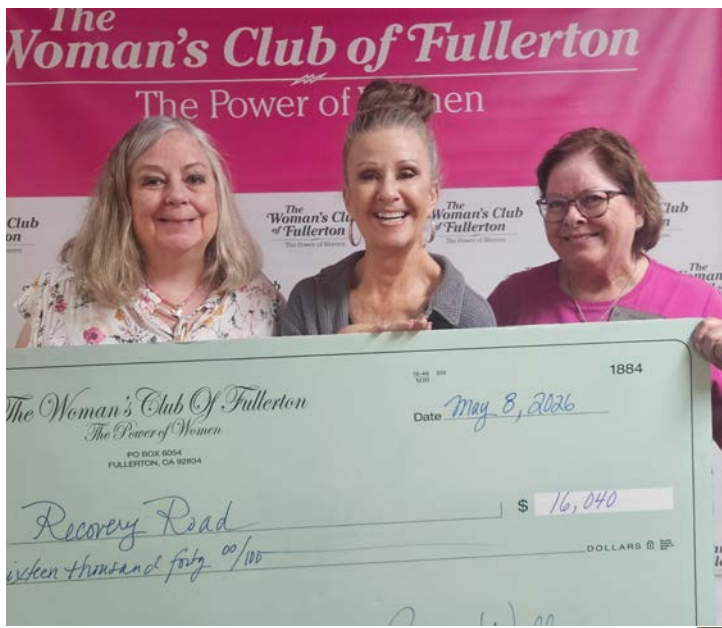
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WOMEN'S CLUB OF FULLERTON Continues Strong Tradition of Community Giving

The Women's Club of Fullerton (WCOF) continues to make a meaningful impact throughout the community by supporting local nonprofit organizations that improve lives. Recently, the club presented two significant donations to organizations serving residents across Orange County. WCOF presented a \$16,040 check to Recovery Road Founding CEO and Executive Director Robin Rush following two successful club fundraisers. The donation supports Recovery

Road's mission of providing hope, guidance, and resources to individuals working toward recovery from addiction. With support from Ocean Subaru of Fullerton, WCOF donated 20 Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Wave Cards to MOMS Orange County. The bus passes will help low-income mothers and infants reach medical appointments and other essential services, removing a critical transportation barrier for families in need.

Enhancing Juanita Cooke Trail with Public Benches

Timothy Choi, a dedicated student from Sunny Hills High School and a member of Troop 1747, has successfully completed his Eagle Scout Service Project, culminating in the installation of three public benches along the popular Juanita Cooke Trail.

The initiative was born out of a need identified by the City of Fullerton for additional seating areas along the trail, a favorite among walkers, runners, families, and seniors. The newly-installed benches aim to enhance the experience for trail users by providing much-needed rest points along the scenic route.

As the project leader, Choi took on the responsibility of planning and executing all facets of the project. This included fundraising, sourcing materials, recruiting volunteers, overseeing bench construction, and managing transportation, site preparation, and installation.

More than 30 volunteers joined his efforts, collectively contributing approximately 300 service hours to the community project. The project received a boost of encouragement



from Fullerton Mayor Fred Jung, who visited the site at the project's outset to highlight the significance of youth leadership and community service. Working closely with fellow Scouts, family members, and local volunteers, Choi led the successful installation of the benches at strategically selected locations.

"This project gave me the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the community while developing

leadership, communication, and project management skills," Choi stated. He expressed gratitude to everyone who contributed their time and resources to bring the project to fruition.

The Eagle Scout Service Project is a critical component on the path to achieving Eagle Scout, the highest rank in scouting. Candidates must devise, develop, and lead a project that provides a benefit to a community

organization or public entity while showcasing their leadership and commitment to service.

The successful installation of the benches was made possible through the collaboration of the City of Fullerton, Troop 1747, local donors, community volunteers, and Choi's family. Their collective efforts transformed an identified community need into a lasting public amenity that will serve trail users for years to come.

Fullerton Observer OUR COMMUNITY. OUR COVERAGE. OUR FUTURE.

For many communities, the future of local news is uncertain. But for the Fullerton Observer, our path is clear: to remain an editorially independent voice for our community. We are not owned by a distant hedge fund. We are a part of this community, committed to delivering the essential reporting that matters most.

From town halls to school boards, our reporters are on the ground, keeping you informed and holding power accountable. This work is vital for you, your children and everyone who wants to see our community thrive.

While subscribers, advertisers and donor support have sustained our daily operations, traditional revenue streams don't cover price hikes and modernization. Your support helps ensure that this community newspaper continues for everyone who calls Fullerton home - not just for today, but for generations to come.

The Fullerton Observer volunteers have delivered news and events about Fullerton for 48 years.

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These aren't just subscriptions. They're an investment in the future of volunteer community journalism.

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New STEM Building Threaten Fullerton College's Historic Horticulture Gardens

Fullerton College's cherished horticulture gardens, a living testament to decades of agricultural education, face potential obliteration as the North Orange County Community College District moves forward with plans for a modern two-story STEM Vocational Center.

This facility aims to enhance programs in biology, biotechnology, and horticulture among others, but its proposed site includes the existing horticulture complex, which has been a cornerstone of the campus since the 1930s.

The horticulture program at Fullerton College has a rich history, dating back to the era of the Works Progress Administration when funding allowed for the construction of early greenhouses. Throughout the years, students have actively contributed to the devel-

opment of propagation houses, gardens, and irrigation systems, blending education with the tangible legacy of Orange County's agricultural evolution.

Today, the horticulture complex stands as one of the college's most distinctive landmarks, featuring mature trees, pathways lined with student-grown plants, and greenhouses that facilitate hands-on training in landscape management and environmental horticulture.

Seasonal plant sales have become popular events, drawing community members from across the region. However, planning documents from the district admit that parts of the horticulture facilities are aging and may no longer meet modern instructional needs.

Despite this acknowledgment, many

students, alumni, and local supporters are voicing concerns that the development could erase an irreplaceable piece of the college's identity. Supporters ask whether the existing gardens and mature plant collections can be preserved or relocated during the construction process.

Additionally, there is fear of the potential loss of invaluable open growing spaces essential for practical agricultural experience, something that can't be easily replicated in a classroom.

It should be noted that the apprehension isn't rooted in opposition to modernization or the expansion of STEM facilities. Many constituents understand the pressing need for enhanced science and healthcare education. However, the conversation centers on whether Fullerton College can mod-

ernize without sacrificing the character and heritage of its horticulture program.

Currently, the project remains in pre-planning stages, with construction tentatively slated sometime in 2026 and occupancy expected around 2028 or 2029. Pending approvals and design specifics are still advancing through California's capital outlay process.

As plans continue to unfold, the dialogue regarding the future of the horticulture gardens intensifies. For students and supporters alike, this issue transcends the construction of a single building; it represents the preservation of a vital piece of Fullerton College history nurtured by generations of dedicated individuals.

Contact Fullerton College President, Dr. Cynthia Olivo at (714) 992-7001 with any concerns and questions.



The Zumba classes at the Center for Healthy Neighborhoods is fun exercise.



Father's Day FIFA Goalee

CSUF Center for Healthy Neighborhoods Empowers Youth Through Creative Projects

The CSUF Center for Healthy Neighborhoods has taken a creative approach to youth engagement, recently hosting two significant hands-on projects that not only foster artistic expression but also promote community involvement.

During a three-day art initiative, students from 3rd to 6th grade crafted terra cotta tiles, which they then painted and glazed as gifts. This project emphasized not just creativity but also the spirit of giving, with participants distributing their finished pieces within the community. "It's wonderful to see children express themselves artistically while also contributing to the community," said a spokesperson for the Center.

Additionally, local children participated in a crafting event where they created wooden "Goalee Game" sets to give as Father's Day gifts. With guidance from CSUF interns and Home Depot volunteers, the kids learned to use tools, assemble pieces, and apply paint. This event was part of the Center's free STEAM Adventure Camp, which provides hands-on lessons in science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics.

Since its establishment in 2016, the CSUF Center for Healthy



CSUF Interns and Egleth Nuncci

Neighborhoods has worked diligently to support the Fullerton community through diverse and accessible programs. The Center, located on Elm Avenue adjacent to Richman Park, offers an array of education and health services designed to enhance overall well-being. These services are provided by an interdisciplinary team of students, faculty, and staff who are committed to understanding and respecting the diverse cultural backgrounds of the community.

For families, the Center regularly offers case management, counseling, and foster care support services. They also conduct parenting workshops, such as Baby Development classes in partnership with the CSUF

Department of Kinesiology. Parents attending these classes learn vital information about nutrition and development for infants aged 0-24 months.

Moreover, the Center provides educational programs, including tutoring for K-12 students, which is facilitated by student interns and trained specialists. These after-school sessions offer assistance across multiple subjects, ensuring that local youth have access to the support they need to succeed academically.

Through its innovative initiatives, the CSUF Center for Healthy Neighborhoods strives to make a lasting impact on the community of Fullerton, by shaping the lives and futures of its younger residents.

Fullerton Turns the City Into a Stage for Father's Day

by Gaston Castellanos

Fullerton became one big concert hall Sunday as the 11th annual Day of Music Fullerton (DOMF) rolled through the city's streets, parks, salons, and dive bars on Father's Day, June 21 — the summer solstice — drawing families, music lovers, and first-time attendees to what organizers call Southern California's largest Make Music Day celebration.

The event, entirely free and requiring no tickets at any venue, featured live performances at over 30 venues throughout the city, from the cavernous Fox Fullerton Theatre to neighborhood spots most residents walk past without a second thought. The second-largest festival of its kind in the United States, it kicked off at the Fox Theatre at 1 p.m., with music rippling outward across downtown and beyond from there. Fullerton ObserverAudacy

The overlap with Father's Day prompted local officials to encourage families to make a day of it. Mayor Pro Tem Nicholas Dunlap, at a recent City Council meeting, called the coincidence "particularly special." See photos at FullertonObserver.com.

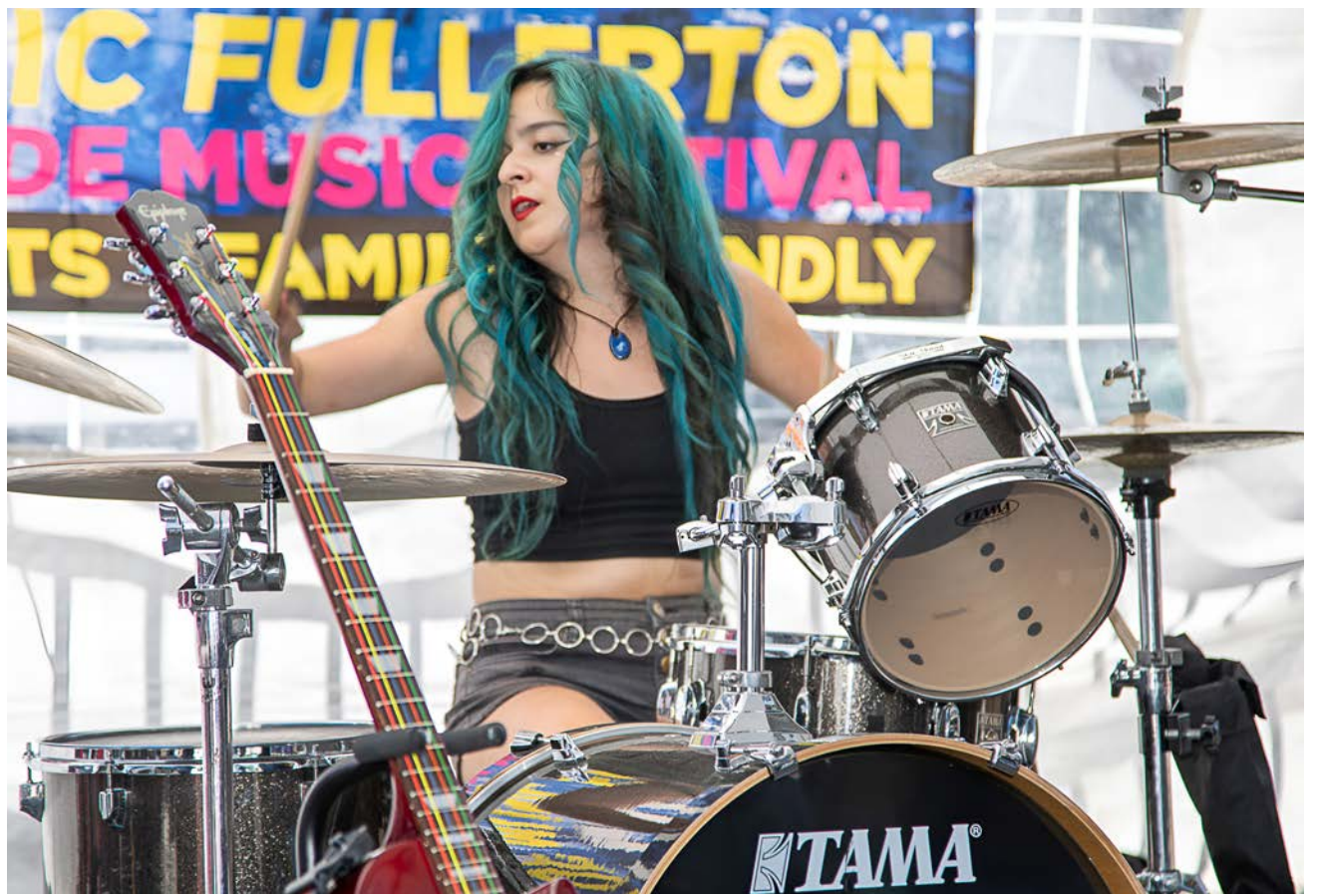


PHOTO BY EMERSON LITTLE

A Night at the Circus by Christina Barnum Garner

A gray asphalt parking lot on North Harbor has been transformed into a red and gold tower of joy by the arrival of Circus Caballero from Guadalajara, Mexico. The famed circus artists have set up their big top with flags flying high for the first time in the City of La Habra.

As a living relative of the Greatest Showman P.T. Barnum, I was eager to join Emerson Little, videographer extraordinaire, for a chat with Rubén Caballero, one of the Caballero Brothers, a half hour before he would perform center ring with his siblings.

It is no surprise that Mexico is the original home base for trapeze artists like the Caballeros. The traditional Aztec voladores honored the four directions tethered to a tower, from which they fell simultaneously, swirling upside down in synchronicity to the ground. Rubén began training in circus arts when he was just five. His father, Rubén Sr., brought the family to the United States in 1981 to perform with Ringling Bros, and the family business has grown over the years.

Headquarters is currently based in Las Vegas with two touring units, Red and Blue. The circus is a haven of international cooperation compared to conflicts in the outside world; artists from Russia, China, France, Italy and South America currently tour with the group.

Rubén recounted that the Caballero family was proud to receive the Golden Crown Award from the

Prince of Monaco at the International Circus Festival in Monte Carlo in recent years.

About 50 families are currently part of the company, and the tight-knit clan will head next to Oxnard. One of the favorite parts of touring for Rubén is moving from city to city, meeting new people and seeing fresh new places. However, the COVID years were particularly hard on Circus Caballero. They found themselves stranded in El Monte and unable to perform for months.

A Facebook livestream fundraiser was held to support them as the situation grew more desperate, and I personally remember the eerie sight of one spectacular act after another on screen, finishing in silence with no audience present to applaud. They were heartened by generous local folk who shared food donations and support until they could return to the road.

Now, the circus spirit is alive and well. Outside the tent, eager visitors were lining up. Two teenagers said they were excited to see their first circus after watching the tent magically appear overnight, within walking distance from their home. They were reassured that there were no longer any animal performers in the production.

Emerson and I settled into ringside

seats with a box of delicious popcorn while families poured in the door. The circus has always been a form of family entertainment and nowadays is one of the few forms of live entertainment that generations can enjoy together.

As the show began, it was astonishing to realize that the same Rubén who had so casually chatted with us half an hour ago was now perched on a motorcycle on a high wire with a woman on a swing dangling below him. The two began to rock perilously and swung in circles completely around the wire. The crowd shouted with delight.

The importance of live performances for mental health has been highlighted recently, as screen dependency increasingly leaves us isolated and lonely. The circus reminds us of the psychological benefits of togetherness, communal joy, and inspiring human potential. From the opening parade of beautiful dancers to the exhilarating sight of trapeze artists flying through the air with the greatest of ease, there was no AI involved. And the intimacy of a one-ring show, instead of the spectacle of a three-ring production, allowed us to witness the skill and concentration of the performers at close range.

In recent years, Americans have come to associate clowns with evil horror movie villains. But the roguish scamp Tutti Frutti restored the original spirit of the clown, a beloved chil-

dren's friend full of mischief and irreverent crowd work, as he summoned more and more applause and enthusiasm from parents and kids. His silliness had the audience dissolved in laughter.

We may not realize that clowns are highly trained artists as well and that their madcap skits are allowing the invisible stagehands, whose work is critical to the safety of the performers, to make crucial preparations for the next act. The final Caballero family trapeze act commanded total attention on the part of the performers and the audience.

I heard the aerialists' circus call "Hup!" the code word that means to begin a trick, and watched as Rubén calmly executed a rare quadruple somersault, ending his flight with the traditional circus grip, wrist-to-wrist instead of hand to hand, as his partner deftly caught the spinning flyer. The crowd roared.

Circus Caballero was in Fullerton until July 5. Tickets and information at www.circuscaballero.com.

Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus, which closed in 2017 after its 146 year run, has been revamped and is touring again coming to Anaheim at the Honda Center, opening July 10, information and tickets are available at www.ringling.com.

You can see Emerson's video of the interview between Christina Garner and Rubén Caballero Jr. at https://youtu.be/PPP_3KeCIXk?si=EXTbpN9X4TbKFq3Y. May all your days be circus days!

Local Control Accountability Plan for Fiscal Year 2026/27 by Vivien Moreno

In June, both Fullerton School District (FSD) and Fullerton Joint Union High School District (FJUHSD) approved their 2026/27 Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP) and budgets. The districts are both fiscally healthy and dispersing funds to serve their students in positive ways.

Each district organizes its LCAP into subcategories to include the state's eight priorities and its own local goals, aligns district funding with programs and services, and uses similar metrics to measure academic achievement.

High school goals consider additional metrics such as graduation rates and A-G completion rates (passing a set of classes that the University of California System uses to rate students' college readiness).

Both districts get input from numerous stakeholders, including student, parent, and staff surveys.

The LCAP reviews effective academic programs, particularly for identified special populations where creative changes address ongoing issues. English Learners (EL) and Long-Term English Learners (LTEL) (students in the EL program for 6+ years) comprise a special population, along with low-income, housing-challenged students and Foster Youth, as uniquely recognized student populations that require additional resources to achieve equitable educational outcomes.

The academic goal for English learners is to reclassify students as Redesignated Fluent English Proficient (RFEP). Students achieve RFEP by

earning a score of 4 on the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC), a grade of "C" or higher in their grade-level English Language Arts (ELA) class, obtaining a positive teacher evaluation of their understanding of English language skills, and having their guardian's signed approval for reclassification. After accomplishing these 4 steps, a student is considered fluent in English.

The state funds additional support services for 4 years after a student's reclassification to address any ELA learning issues.

FSD concentrated on reclassifying EL students and embedding academic rigor in EL dedicated instruction. With mixed results, FSD reclassification fell from 19% to 14.5% over three years; however, English acquisition progress increased by 2.4%, and overall EL student academic achievement showed a 5.1% rise in ELA state testing scores and a 6.3% rise in math scores.

FSD continues to reassess best practices for its designated EL program, particularly by reviewing LTEL-specific instruction and expanding parent education and outreach, including explanations of procedures and ongoing support. FSD raised its districtwide ELA scores to over 23.9% above the state average, and its math scores are

2.2% above the state average.

FJUHSD's top priority is to raise the entire student population's college and career readiness metric. RFEP plays a strong role in this goal, and the reclassification rate for EL students rose 11% in 3 years to 20% in 2025. FJUHSD's state testing scores stayed flat over this timeframe, and the a-g completion rate districtwide rose 3%, with English Learners only rising 1%.

Last year, A-G student qualification and transcript access were transferred over to the California College Guidance Initiative database (CCGI). In August 2025, Cradle2College state researchers warned districts would see a 1-3% increase in student A-G completion rates as it unified the system

and eliminated a majority of operator error. FJUHSD's 3% increase falls within this range and aligns with the district's state test scores.

Both districts focused on bringing down chronic absenteeism. Engaged students attend school at higher rates, achieve better academic outcomes, leading to more opportunities in higher education and career opportunities.

FSD focused on strengthening academic support, social service availability, and student activity engagement, lowering chronic absenteeism from 4.2% to 9.1% in 2025, and EL chronic

absenteeism rates went from 15% to 9.5%.

FJUHSD addressed chronic absenteeism by installing a student activity tracking app and implementing home visits, which lowered rates by 1.3% over the same time frame to 15.7%.

The FSD LCAP shared parent concerns about screen time and parent understanding of district program options. The district is currently assessing screen time limits at school and at home with new recommendations projected by this fall. The elementary district continues to communicate with parents and prospective parents about various programs and services available to FSD children.

The FJUHSD LCAP listed parental concerns regarding student cell phone use and earlier academic interventions. FJUHSD increased student academic supports by expanding Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) programs to all comprehensive high schools and extending library hours. Cell phone usage was not addressed in this LCAP.

A district's LCAP is full of data and action information, each telling the district's unique story, but it can also be dense and difficult for parents to understand the services and programs offered.

The goal for both FSD and FJUHSD's LCAP should tell the district's story, set the goals, assess what is working, and creatively engage with stakeholders to address the challenges for the future success of all students.

Both districts focused on bringing down chronic absenteeism, as engaged students attend school at higher rates and achieve better academic outcomes.

Candace Choi's Animation



Candace Choi, a talented young animator from the local area, is making waves in the animation world. After starting her education at California State University, Fullerton, she transferred to the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) to pursue a BFA in Character Animation.

Choi's groundbreaking work has already garnered recognition, including the prestigious KALH Future Grant. Her first-year animation short, titled "holysht!" tells the story of a man who wakes up late to his alarm and embarks on a surprising journey as he hurriedly races to his destination. With her unique perspective and creative storytelling, Choi is poised to leave a lasting mark on the industry.

See the film on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzQJr2urSX8>.

See more of Candace's work at <https://candacechoi.weebly.com/> and follow her adventure on instagram @dacenart where she also adds a link to the work of her fellow 1st through 4th year classmates at: youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIIT7OF9iYNsYC3Hw-M-vjo5Ree3R4vyh



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The FIFA World Cup

by Olive, 11th Grade

As many people know, the World Cup is underway, and here are some fun facts about it!

The FIFA World Cup officially began in 1930. The inaugural men's tournament was hosted by Uruguay and featured 13 teams. The World Cup is held every four years, with 2026 being the latest edition. It is the most-watched sporting event in the world. Only World Cup winners are allowed to touch the 18-karat gold trophy with their bare hands. Everyone else must wear gloves. Argentina is the most recent FIFA World Cup champion, and its victory marked the country's third World Cup title. The tournament runs from mid-June to mid-July, lasting 39 days. France and Spain are the top projected favorites to win this year, followed by England and Argentina. However, this is one of the most unpredictable tournaments in years.

We'll have to wait and see who wins the 2026 FIFA World Cup!



The Truth Behind That Trendy T-Shirt

Do you ever wonder where that beautiful blouse you purchased at the mall came from? Or why it is so inexpensive?

That's probably because a child made it. Many children living in poverty are exploited and forced to make clothing while earning very little money.

Fast fashion companies not only harm children but also damage the environment. The business of recreating clothes that just walked the runway for cheaper, more affordable prices is called fast fashion. Purchasing trendy clothes may seem fun and easy, but many people don't know the true story behind them.

Children work in clothing sweatshops in countries such as India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, China, Indonesia and Cambodia to make these new, trendy products. Many do not have a choice because they feel pressured by their struggling families to earn money. The companies that produce fast fashion often do not feel the need to pay fair wages and do not care who they are harming.

Fast fashion is difficult to avoid nowadays because it is everywhere. It affects not only the Earth's climate but also its water, energy resources and ecosystems. Just to make one cotton blouse, more than 700 gallons of water

are used. To make one pair of jeans, about 2,000 gallons of water are used.

Fast fashion companies don't just waste water, they pollute it. When manufacturers dye clothing, they often dump excess dyes into waterways, polluting rivers and seas. Brands use fabrics like polyester, nylon and acrylic, which can take hundreds of years to biodegrade and contribute to growing amounts of waste.

The world consumes up to 80 billion pieces of clothing each year, which is 400% more than people purchased 20 years ago. As consumption increases, so does the amount of clothing that ends up in landfills, where it breaks down very slowly. Scientists estimate that 35% of the microplastics in the ocean come from synthetic fabrics, including polyester, which release tiny plastic fibers whenever they are washed and worn.

How can you help? Consider purchasing clothing from a secondhand store—there are plenty in Fullerton—or buying from a sustainable brand. You can also purchase fewer clothes and ask yourself whether you really need that new T-shirt or dress. After all, you can make a difference, one clothing item choice at a time.



The Hidden Reward of Giving Back

by Kate, 11th Grade

The All the Arts summer camp is where I first discovered my passion for working alongside children. A fond memory I often revisit is my experience in a movie-making class full of elementary students who quickly became my tiny co-directors.

They debated camera angles, brought their own scripts to life, and reminded me that creativity begins with the courage to believe a small idea is worth sharing. Along the way, I unexpectedly formed unforgettable friendships with the kids, whose boundless enthusiasm and imagination deeply rewarded me.

"How much have you given back to the community?" is often the first question asked about volunteer service.

Serving 40 hours in the span of 2 weeks at the All the Arts camp seems like an admirable chunk of hours. This tendency of measuring contribution through numerical metrics is deeply ingrained in society, where large figures appear most impressive on college applications, resumes, or job referrals. As a result, many studies focus on hours served and volunteer rates. However, volunteering should not be measured by numbers alone. People can become easily consumed by accumulating more hours than their peers in pursuit of acknowledgment and prestige.

The true value of volunteering cannot be quantified by a spreadsheet or a service log; it should be defined by the sense of purpose it creates, the fulfillment gained from helping those in need, and the willingness to serve even if no one is present to congratulate them.

This prompts an important question: If volunteerism is more than accumulating hours, what is it that causes young people to continue serving even when there is no reward or requirement to do so?

Research suggests that external recognition is not always the primary

reason for people to start volunteering. According to the Springtide Research Institute, 46% of young people ages 13–25 reported volunteering because they enjoyed it, while 42% said helping others simply made them feel good. In juxtaposition, only 31% cited building a resume for school or work as a motivation. It can be concluded that young people are driven by authentic generosity and personal fulfillment of philanthropic work.

This pattern mirrors my own experience as a volunteer. I was awarded the Presidential Service Award and the National Service Honor Gold Award. It seems as though these titles alone reflect an impressive commitment to the community.

Yet, when people ask how I give back, I would rather spend five minutes sharing all of my enthralling adventures and experiences behind those awards rather than mention the awards themselves: delivering weekly meals and watching an elderly woman's face light up with gratitude, celebrating with a middle school athlete after a hard-earned point, or connecting with a special education student over similar interests.

To be fair, I may not have worked as hard to accumulate more than 250 hours in a single year had I not been pursuing the Gold Award.

However, when I became unsure whether those hours would be recognized or not thanks to the suspension by AmeriCorps in 2025, I continued volunteering at multiple summer camps focused on art education and athletics.

My experience, along with published research, indicates that long-term volunteerism depends on more than just

altruistic intentions. So what makes volunteers stay committed? According to GiveButter (a management system for nonprofits), even after volunteers begin their service, roughly 65% of nonprofits identify retention as a greater concern than recruitment. Retaining volunteers, especially younger ones, can be a daunting task, with disengagement stemming from feeling undervalued, unclear expectations, poor communication, and burnout.

To combat this trend of volunteers becoming disengaged over a period of time, a strong predictor of continued volunteerism appears to be identity. Psychologists describe volunteer role identity as "the extent to which they consider their role/s as a volunteer to be important and central to who they are."

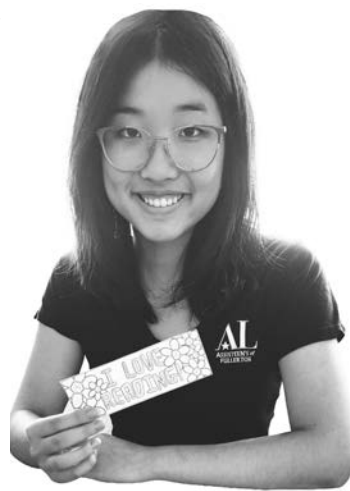
A survey of 214 existing volunteers measured their volunteer role identity pre-pandemic (British Journal of Social Psychology). Months later, during the pandemic, they found that those who viewed volunteering as an important part of their identity were more likely to continue helping others, even in the major social crisis.

In other words, people are more likely to remain involved when meaningful community service allows for a deeper understanding of oneself and evolves into something so much more impactful on one's identity.

While awards initially urged me down the road of rigorous yet satisfying volunteer work, I continued serving even when recognition became uncertain. Similar to the participants in the study, my motivation shifted from earning hours to embracing service as a part of my unique identity.

I am truly blessed for the resources and opportunities to serve others, because it is not the number of certificates or hours, but the number of lives I was able to touch. This work molded my character into one I am deeply proud of and defined what volunteerism means to me.

To champion a deeper understanding of the impact volunteerism has, not only on communities but also on volunteers themselves as they discover their role identity, purpose, and meaning, I hope to continue this research, build an online presence, and collaborate with peers. To support this effort, please take five minutes to complete the questionnaire using the QR code here.



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SENATOR SCHIFF HIGHLIGHTS \$250,000 FOR FULLERTON FIRE STATION UPGRADES by Gaston Castellanos

U.S. Sen. Adam Schiff (D-California) visited a Fullerton fire station Tuesday to spotlight \$250,000 in federal funding for communications upgrades that city officials say will improve emergency response throughout the city.

The funding, secured by Schiff and Rep. Lou Correa (D-Santa Ana), will modernize the Fullerton Fire Department's (FFD) alerting and communications systems across its six fire stations. Officials said the improvements are expected to reduce response times and strengthen coordination with neighboring departments through Orange County's mutual aid network.

During the visit, Schiff said the project demonstrates that bipartisan cooperation remains possible despite political divisions in Washington.

"I know the fighting in Washington gets most of the attention, but you can still get things done," Schiff said, noting the funding received bipartisan support.

Following a roundtable discussion with firefighters, Schiff said department leaders expressed concerns about the rising cost of fire engines, multi-year delays and higher costs in receiving new apparatus. He pointed to industry consolidation as a contributing factor and said Fullerton is partici-

pating in legal action challenging what officials believe are anticompetitive practices within the fire apparatus manufacturing industry.

Schiff also criticized proposed reductions in federal Medicaid spending, saying lower ambulance reimbursement rates could reduce revenue for local fire departments. He said the FFD could lose between \$1 million and \$2 million annually if the proposals become law, potentially affecting staffing and emergency response. Schiff's comments about proposed Medicaid reductions reflect his position and that the legislation remains under debate.

Battalion Chief Bryan McConnell said the communications upgrades will improve public safety by helping firefighters respond more quickly to emergencies, thanks to Congress.

"They were able to put politics aside and have a win for public safety as a whole," McConnell said of the bipartisan support for the funding. "This will enable us to get to our job quicker."

Schiff, who briefly served as a seasonal firefighter with the U.S. Forest Service before attending law school, said the experience gave him a lasting appreciation for the risks firefighters face and reinforced his commitment to securing resources for first responders.

FEATURING: WOMEN OWNED BUSINESSES IN FULLERTON

Gilding the Lily:

A Unique Antique Supplies Shop by Breanna Pineda

Twenty-two years ago, Nancy Jamar bought two vintage hats at a flea market. After the seller told her about his warehouse in Long Beach, where he had even more hats, she bought hundreds of them.

It was that small decision that Nancy traces back to how Gilding the Lily first started. From there, she placed ads in local magazines, hoping to find authentic vintage items to refurbish the hats. Once she had a storage space filled with her unique finds, she decided to start selling them. After briefly operating a storefront in another area, she moved her business to Fullerton, where she specialized in selling her vintage finds.

"The beauty of working with vintage is that you have a product that is not generic, and it's higher quality," she said, "when you start with vintage, you start with a story."

Now, her business in the Villa Del Sol, offers a multitude of unique antique jewelry, beads, ribbons, laces, buttons, and more. All items are meticulously sourced, with a number of pieces imported from areas such as Rhode Island, France, and Japan.

Despite the dedication that Nancy must put into maintaining concessions with overseas suppliers, she finds it fascinating to see what customers create with her store's items.

Many shoppers are jewelry makers, painters, customers, or people simply looking to create new projects using old items.

Nancy recalled a number of favorite creations she has seen customers do with store items, such as one woman who uses scraps of old paper to make collages.

"Over the course of the week, I can have people look at the same items and have different visions for how to use them," she said.

Through the years, Gilding the Lily has cultivated a small community of people interested in using antiques for their own everyday life as well. Nancy describes one couple who dress vintage and visit the shop for specific antique buttons, and a shopper who uses ribbon she found from the storefront's collection to tie her hair.

"So many of my interactions [with customers] begin or end with a hug," Nancy said, "It's just a joy to be around them."

Although Nancy loves the tight-knit friendships she has formed over the years, she noted issues that come with running your own business.

For instance, she tackles both the storefront and running Gilding the Lily's Etsy store. "[Businesses] really have to have a social media presence and [businesses] really have to try to keep up with it," she said.

There are also the aspects of making sure all store items are organized as well as the hurdles of maintaining the store independently. "The sourcing, the organization, displaying things, that is something that is ongoing," she said.

While shoppers don't always notice the work that goes into displaying items, Nancy said that items look appealing when arranged and kept tidy, as well as making the store easy to navigate. "I am always trying to make them [displays] less crazy," she laughed.

Even with the obstacles that come with running an independent business, Nancy maintains her passion for



Nancy Jamar outside her business Gilding the Lily located on 305 N. Harbor Boulevard #101, Fullerton.

Open: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 11 am to 5 pm.

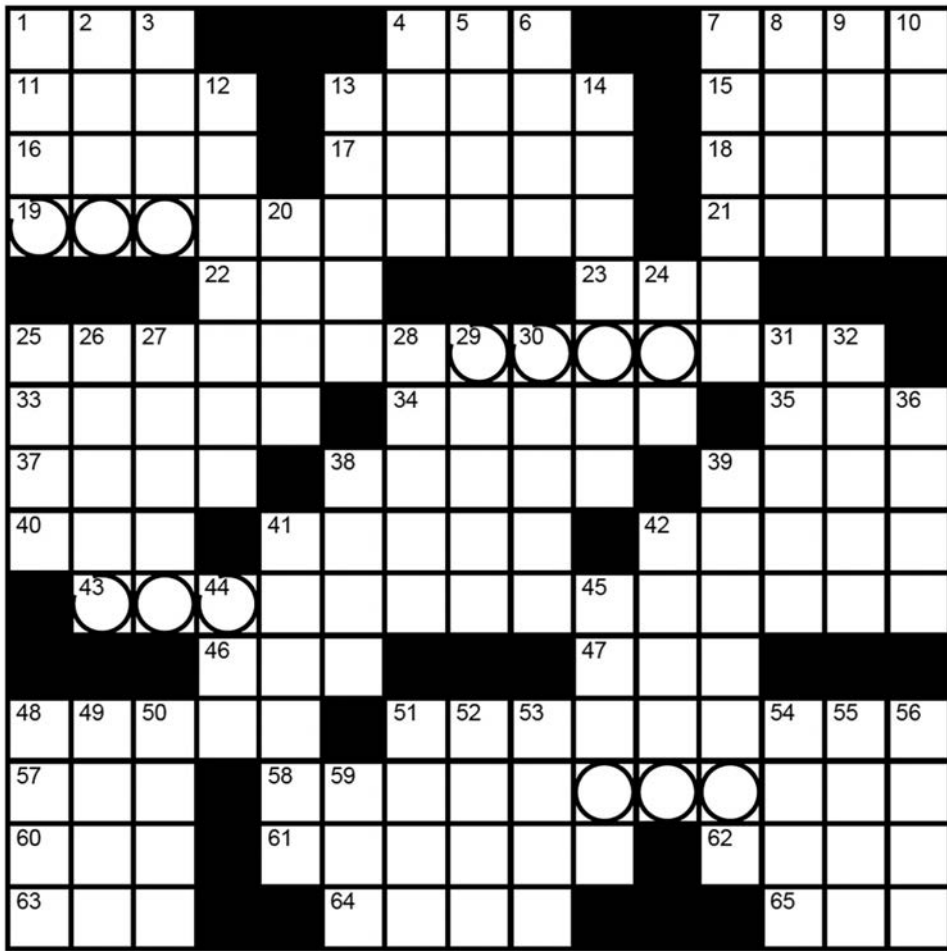
antiques and creativity.

Through the store, Nancy and her friend Ada Rivera hand-make a line of unique bead chains with antique beads, gemstones, and hand-carved ivory beads. She also makes sure to include clearance baskets or occasionally gives items for free in hopes that her antique findings can be reused.

"It gives me joy that these things are being used," she said, "I would rather hand someone a bag full of things and say 'just take it' than throw it in the dumpster. I think my skill is finding things that belong together," she said.

OUR TOWN CROSSWORD © 2026

"BARNYARD BUNCH" by Valerie Brickey (answer key on page 23)



ACROSS

- 1. Baseball bat wood
- 4. Bank acct. amt.
- 7. Squishy lump
- 11. Seed or pet
- 13. Eyelashes
- 15. Mr. Toad's Wild ____
- 16. Fender flaw
- 17. Manhattan Project's goal, briefly
- 18. Sale caveat
- 19. Old MacDonald's favorite Peter Pan?
- 21. Scottish refusals
- 22. Fair-hiring letters
- 23. "You Seem Pretty ____ for a Girl So in Love" (2026 Olivia Rodrigo album)
- 25. Old MacDonald's favorite country singer?
- 33. Oscar or Tony
- 34. Secure, as a ship's line
- 35. Batman before George
- 37. "____ No Sunshine": Bill Withers hit
- 38. "The Brady Bunch" matriarch
- 39. "Twin Peaks" actor Ray
- 40. Rumored NYC wedding locale of Taylor and Travis
- 41. Tuesday fare?
- 42. 1492 vessel
- 43. Old MacDonald's favorite Secretary of State?
- 46. Commuting option
- 47. ____ thai
- 48. "The Brady Bunch" housekeeper
- 51. Puritanical people
- 57. Religious sch.
- 58. Old MacDonald's favorite "American Idol" judge?
- 60. "The Jungle Book" python
- 61. Sound of a sharp blow
- 62. Successful pitch
- 63. Timid
- 64. Taxpayer IDs
- 65. Gullet

DOWN

- 1. "Thunderstruck" rock band
- 2. Home of the N.Y. Mets until 2008
- 3. Clue
- 4. Nickname for Netanyahu
- 5. Slept like ____
- 6. Arm or leg
- 7. Starbucks size
- 8. Repeated, singer who sang with Cult Jam
- 9. "Garfield" dog
- 10. "Jaws 3-D" actress Armstrong
- 12. Deep down
- 13. Tended (for)
- 14. Really bad
- 20. Over there, poetically
- 24. Lull ending
- 25. "Yes, ____"
- 26. "Yeah, if only!"
- 27. Actor's asset
- 28. One way to be taken
- 29. The king of France
- 30. At ____ for words
- 31. Enjoying the great outdoors...indoors
- 32. Sample
- 36. Prolific TV producer Norman
- 38. Low coral islands
- 39. Microsoft's operating system
- 41. Most accurate
- 42. Baby grand, e.g.
- 44. "Law & Order: SVU" network
- 45. Tiny bit
- 48. Inquires
- 49. "The King of Queens" actress Remini
- 50. Hedger's words
- 51. "Ultimate Driving Machines"
- 52. Part of S&L
- 53. Pop's bros
- 54. Baseball feature
- 55. Jazz's Fitzgerald
- 56. Boatload
- 59. Latin initialism on a cross



HITS & MISSES

by Pamela Mason Wagner © 2026



THE DEATH OF ROBINHOOD: A HIT AND A MISS

The terrifying ice storm at the opening sets the tone for the moody, grim, dark movie to come, which is best seen on the big screen. Director Michael Sarnoski has said he wanted audiences to feel as though they were living in the Middle Ages—Robinhood is set in 1247—and in that regard, he succeeds, delivering a world of blood, gore, starvation, and violence.

The overlong first 35 minutes offer nearly pornographic nonstop murder and mayhem. Had the film sustained that relentless pitch, many viewers might have exited long before Robin (Hugh Jackman) finally dies.

Thankfully, the final ninety minutes unfold in a kinder, gentler Middle Ages. A priory perched above the violent Irish Sea provides refuge for the maimed and wounded, and when Robin arrives there, the character drama finally begins.

A young writer-director with only two previous features (Pig and A Quiet Place: Day One), Sarnoski shot the film on location outside Belfast, Ireland, on 35mm film. The format lends a painterly quality to the torch-lit interiors and misty valleys. The first, battle-filled 35 minutes are filmed in widescreen, imparting an epic scale to the storytelling.

Overhead shots of tiny humans in vast, unfeeling landscapes recall the cinematography of other recent period pieces, including Hamnet and The Testimony of Ann Lee. Interestingly, when Robin crosses the sea to the priory, the film shifts to a more square frame (1.66:1), familiar from classic Hollywood cinema and Disney animation. Sarnoski has said he wanted a more intimate visual language for the

latter two-thirds, which focuses less on spectacle and more on faces, relationships, and emotional reckoning. That choice pays off.

The faces are a pleasure to watch. The bearded, long-haired Robin channels Jackman's inner Wolverine, with the song-and-dance man nowhere to be found. Sister Brigid, the prioress (Jodie Comer of Killing Eve), has kindly, expressive eyes that might melt the heart of even the most hardened thief or murderer.

This Robin is no hero who steals from the rich to give to the poor. Sarnoski pulls the legend down from his pedestal, exposing the damage mythmaking can do. Robin himself articulates the film's central unease: "I've seen the power of stories to make men do terrible things. And how these deeds go on to become stories."

Sarnoski is clearly preoccupied with how stories shape behavior and reality. Greek and Celtic mythologies echo throughout the film: a resident leper (Murray Bartlett of The White Lotus), serves as a ferryman across a Styx-like body of water. And Sister Brigid's ministrations recall the Celtic deity Brighid, known for her healing and protective qualities.

But what does this retelling of a familiar myth ultimately add up to? The idea that every person is more than the worst thing they've done feels thin after sitting through more than two hours of near-constant gloom. Still, Sarnoski's talent is undeniable, particularly his ability to choreograph violence and direct charismatic actors. Perhaps his next outing will strike a better balance between action and reflection, spectacle and meaning.

• **TWO HITS: Don't Miss it!**
 • **A HIT & A MISS: You Might Like it.**
 • **TWO MISSES: Don't Bother.**

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The Titans of Hollywood Fringe: Cal State Fullerton Alumni Show Up at Hollywood Fringe 2026

by Thea Pueschel

A Fringe Festival is an annual, uncensored performing arts event where anyone can register to perform, unconstrained by traditional artistic gatekeeping. These festivals are open-access, meaning performances—spanning theater, comedy, dance, cabaret, and music—are not selected by a jury, allowing for highly experimental and independent artistry.

The Hollywood Fringe Festival has infiltrated Hollywood, but the Titans had infiltrated Fringe. This year's festival featured a handful of Cal State Fullerton alums bringing solo shows, clown shows, and choreopoems to stages across Hollywood. Each Fringer had a different story and medium, but the same thread ran beneath the surface: Fullerton had given them the opportunity to learn storytelling and figure out who they wanted to be on stage.



Reina Abravaya: Turning Loss into a Solo

For Reina Abravaya, it took a hysterectomy and her father's death to push her to write the one-person show she had been putting off for a decade. The Uterus Party marked Abravaya's Fringe debut but not her first time on stage.

She had performed in The Vagina

Monologues during her senior year at CSUF. She credited her journalism degree for teaching her to tell her story and giving her the tools to turn something so personal into a performance audiences could enjoy.

Abravaya said that, though the subject matter was heavy, her show was funny. Her next performances were on Wednesday, June 24, at 5 pm and Saturday, June 27, at 10:30 am.



Gabrielle Jackson: An Exploration of Intuition

Cal State Fullerton alumna and 2026 Hollywood Fringe Scholarship winner Gabrielle Jackson made her Hollywood Fringe Festival debut with *They Tend to Themselves: A Choreopoem*. Jackson crafted a piece of theater that drew from Afrofuturism and ancestral wisdom. It was a dance between spoken word, movement, and music.

Jackson's *Rainbow Delicious* explored the reflection she feared, her own, the spaces between past and future, and what it meant to exist in a world that constantly doubted her. In

an Instagram post, Jackson stated, "It's about what happens when you stop running away from yourself and your own reflection, and you allow yourself to be seen."

Jackson had two performances left: Wednesday, June 24th at 7:30 pm and Sunday, June 28 at 9:15 pm.

The 16th annual Hollywood Fringe Festival ran from June 11th-28th and featured 480+ shows and over 2,150 performances, spanning comedy, drama, immersive theater, clowning, musical theater, puppet shows, and more. It was the largest performing arts celebration in Los Angeles.

It was an open-access community-derived event where anyone with a passion for performance was welcome to participate.



Joe Hutcheson: Sobriety was the Missing Link

"What I learned about being an actor and a performer, I learned at Cal State Fullerton," Joe Hutcheson said. He received his BFA in musical theater from CSUF in 2001 and flew in from New York to bring *Miss Magnolia Beaumont Goes to Provincetown* to Hollywood Fringe. The character started as a joke between friends and grew into a solo show that went on to appear at the New York and Cincinnati Fringe Festivals over the years.

After a long break and realizing his sobriety was the missing piece to the puzzle for *Miss Magnolia Beaumont*, he rewrote the show. Hutcheson offered CSUF alumni and Fullertonians a discount code "titans" (all lowercase). He had 4 performances left, running from June 21 to June 28.



R.M. Aranda:

A Hoop Alien on a Mission

R.M. Aranda had gone to Cal State Fullerton while in utero and spent her early childhood in the city. Her mother attended CSUF while pregnant with Aranda. This year, Aranda returned with her second Fringe show, playing a "hoop alien" sent from the Hoop planet to save the world. She confessed that the power of FOMO won out, and she returned after swearing off Fringe the year before.

Armed with clown makeup and a light-up hula hoop, Aranda, through improvisation, worked with the audience each performance to figure out how the hoop could be used for anything other than its purpose. She performed *Hoop* on June 22 at 7 pm and June 24 at 5 pm.

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The front cover of his book, *iLoveAmerica: An iPhone photographic tour of the USA on her 250th birthday.*



Local Fullerton author David Jerome holding up a United States road map with black lines on all the highways and routes he has travelled across the country.



VIDEO OBSERVER

by Emerson Little © 2026

See videos on YouTube @emersonlittle1901

Local Author Celebrates U.S. 250th Birthday with Smartphone Snapshots Across America

Fullerton residents are choosing to celebrate the nation's 250th birthday this year in different ways. Local author David Jerome, who has visited all 50 states, has decided to commemorate the country's semiquincentennial with a book of photographs that he took through the viewfinder of his iPhone camera while traveling across the United States over the past fifteen years. Recently, while walking north of downtown Fullerton, I ran into Jerome, and had a conversation with him about his book.

Jerome writes in his introduction, "Just like nearly everyone else, I've had different generations of iPhones through the years. You may notice some lesser quality, earlier generation photos, as the camera and the photographer were both improving. With the convenience of always having a camera in my pocket, I've been able to capture some unique views, spontaneous moments...without carrying around expensive and bulky equipment. There

was no planning or set-up for these photos. My only real problem was keeping my pocket lint off the lens."

His book, *iLoveAmerica: An iPhone photographic tour of the USA on her 250th birthday*, contains over 200 iPhone images that have been both digitally preserved and physically printed; they showcase some of the more off-beat places, people, and events that he has encountered across the country. Most were taken between 2017 and 2021. When published altogether, his amalgamation of photos make for a fascinating, yet somewhat random snapshot of the United States. What also stands out to me is how these images we capture on our phones are taken more seriously when they're printed out within large coffee table books.

When I talked with Jerome, he said, "I had this idea, when I first started 10 or 15 years ago, to try and document each place that I went with one good picture (with the idea of eventually

putting them into a book). The reason I did it now is because of America's two hundred and fiftieth birthday."

One of Jerome's most memorable experiences while photographing across the country came when he was visiting Monument Valley with his family during the COVID years. On the back cover, there's a wide landscape shot of an old, oversized red arrow pointing toward one of the southwest buttes of Monument Valley, an image which he titled, "Where's the Butte?"

He said, "We went out there and stayed at this motel that was just right by the buttes. Nobody else was there, first of all, because nobody's travelling at that time, so we practically had the motel to ourselves. I was up fairly early and so this was a morning shot where I was just walking around the motel and noticed this big red arrow that was pointing people in the direction to drive for parking. But I walked by it and I thought if you angle it just right, it appears that it's pointing you to the butte."

Back in Fullerton, next to the desk where he writes, Jerome has an old U.S.A. road map on which he uses a black marker to trace out each and every highway he has traveled on throughout the country. He remembers that his first road trip around the United States was back in 1988. He was privileged enough to travel every few years, and tried to pick a different route each time.

Interestingly, the front cover of his book is more of a candid, documentary street photography shot that depicts a bunch of people dressed in Santa hats and elf costumes facing away from the camera as they work to deflate one of

the holiday themed Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade balloons in Manhattan.

Jerome said, "This is one of my earliest pictures and one of the most interesting because this was a bucket list experience that I had where I wanted to march in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. It's such a great American tradition, and so eventually, I found my way into it and was able to be one of the balloon handlers for the Elf on the Shelf balloon. At the end of the parade, after you're on TV in front of Macy's, they take you around the corner, and this is where they deflate the balloons. So this was all my coworkers, and we were all in charge of getting the helium out of the balloon. I just thought it made such an interesting picture because you always see the balloons flying through the skyline, but you don't see what happens after. They deflate it, just put it in one of these bins, and they haul it back to New Jersey, where it hangs out in a warehouse until next Thanksgiving, so that's just kind of the other side of the Macy's parade."

For Jerome, *iLoveAmerica* is not just about visiting all fifty states; it's an exploration of road trip memories on the highways, byways, back roads, and just the smaller, out of the way places that make for a somewhat cohesive and celebratory look at the United States on its 250th birthday.

For anyone interested in a free digital PDF of the book, email David Jerome at his author page by visiting the following link: <https://davidjeromeauthor.com>.

Hard copies of his book are available at the Fullerton Museum with all proceeds donated to the museum.

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 September through May 9:30 to 11:30 am
 at
First Presbyterian Church of Fullerton
 838 N. Euclid Street, Fullerton
 Contact the club President: (714) 392-3132
 Visit the website: www.fullertongardenclub.com

JULY

7 Tuesday

—MEETING—

5:30pm: Community Meeting about City Budget:

Fullerton Public Library
in the main conference center
353 W Commonwealth Ave, Fullerton

—MUSIC—

5:30pm: Pacific Symphony Concert:

A free outdoor concert experience for the whole family. Bring a chair, a blanket and a picnic and enjoy the music. Hands on music experience, ages 7+. Hunt Branch Library
201 Basque Ave, Fullerton
fullertonpubliclibraryfoundation.org

8 Wednesday

—MARKET—

8:30 am to 12:30 pm: Certified Farmers Market. Fresh local produce. Support farmers live close by.

Independence Park
801 W Valencia Dr., Fullerton
(714) 738-6575

9 Thursday

—ART—

6:30 to 7:30pm: Sips & Stories: Art and Architecture of Ancient Mexico: Lectures led by art historian Dr Megan Lorraine Debin. Through engaging storytelling, rich visuals, and thoughtful discussion, each lecture brings history to life.

Fullerton Museum Center
301 N. Pomona Ave, Fullerton
(714) 519-4461
fullertonmuseum.com

—MARKET—

4:30 to 8:30pm: Fullerton Night Market: Every Thursday local farmers, artisans, merchants, and organizations to offer their unique products and services in a fun and festive atmosphere.

BAND LINE UP

July 9: Hot Rod Trio
125 E Wilshire Ave., Fullerton
(657) 683-4661

10 Friday

—THEATER—

8:00pm: King Kong: Opening night for the return of their wildly inventive and original stage adaptation of the 1933 cinematic classic, King Kong. Runs through August 9.

The Maverick Theater
110 E. Walnut Avenue, Fullerton
(714) 526-7070
mavericktheater.com



11 Saturday

—GAMES—

8:30 am to 3:00 pm: North Orange County Boardgamers Game Day: Join this is a free event for both experienced and new players.

Hunt Library
201 S Basque Ave, Fullerton
(714) 738-6365

12 Sunday

—NATURE—

9:00am to 4:00pm-\$5: Arboretum and Botanical Garden at Cal State Fullerton: The Fullerton Arboretum offers walking trails, botanical gardens, shaded paths, and educational exhibits on the Cal State Fullerton campus.

CSUF Arboretum & Botanical Garden
1900 Associated Rd., Fullerton
(657) 278-3407

13 Monday

—MEETING—

6:00pm: Parks and Recreation Meeting: See what is on the agenda at <https://fullerton.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

City Hall
Council Chamber
303 W Commonwealth Ave
(714) 738-6311

14 Tuesday

—MEETING—

5:30pm: Budget Study Session Meeting: See what is on the agenda at <https://fullerton.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

City Hall
Council Chamber
303 W Commonwealth Ave
(714) 738-6311

15 Wednesday

—MARKET—

8:30 am to 12:30 pm: Certified Farmers Market. Fresh local produce. Support farmers live close by.

Independence Park
801 W Valencia Dr., Fullerton
(714) 738-6575

—MOVIE—

4:00 pm: 1776: A musical retelling of the American Revolution's political struggle in the Continental Congress to declare independence.

Fullerton Public Library
353 W Commonwealth Ave, Fullerton
(714) 738-6333

16 Thursday

—MARKET—

4:30 to 8:30pm: Fullerton Night Market: Every Thursday local farmers, artisans, merchants, and organizations to offer their unique products and services in a fun and festive atmosphere. The market includes a variety of features including fresh produce, prepared food, arts and crafts, and gift items, live entertainment, live entertainment, as well as family and children's activities.

BAND LINE UP

July 16: the Answer
125 E Wilshire Ave., Fullerton
(657) 683-4661

—COMEDY—

7:30 pm: \$40: The Chipper Experience! Where Comedy & Magic Collide: Two-Time "Comedy Magician of the Year," Chipper Lowell, presents his funny & twisted, high-energy, comedy magic show. This performance will be held outside.

The Muckenthaler Cultural Center
1201 W. Malvern Ave, Fullerton
714-738-6595
themuck.org

17 Friday

—NATURE—

5:30 to 7:30pm-\$5: Evening Stroll: The Fullerton Arboretum offers walking trails, botanical gardens, shaded paths, and educational exhibits on the Cal State Fullerton campus.

CSUF Arboretum & Botanical Garden
1900 Associated Rd., Fullerton
(657) 278-3407

18 Saturday

—ARTS—

11:30 am to 1:00 pm - FREE: Animal Crossing video game series but in real life!: Stop at each station where you can catch rare fish, dig for fossils, build and decorate your house, identify works of art, and more! Then earn "bells" at each station to buy souvenirs!

Teens going into 7th - 12th grade can stop by for this free Animal Crossing celebration--no registration required!

Fullerton Public Library
Main Conference Center
353 W Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton
(714) 738-6326
info@fullertonlibrary.org

—MOVIE—

5:30 to 8:00 pm - FREE: Project Hail Mary (2026): Launch into Project Hail Mary (2026)! Based on the bestselling novel by Andy Weir and starring Ryan Gosling, this smart, suspenseful sci-fi adventure follows a lone astronaut racing against time—and the unknown—to stop a cosmic threat to Earth.

Fullerton Public Library
Main Conference Center
353 W Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton
(714) 738-6326
info@fullertonlibrary.org

19 Sunday

—WORLD CUP—

11:00 am to 3:00pm: FIFA WORLD CUP FINALS: Join us in the Grand Ballroom as we stream the FIFA World Cup Final on our massive LED screen. Gather with fellow fans, enjoy food and drinks, and cheer on your team in an unforgettable atmosphere.

The Charleston
114 E Commonwealth Ave. Fullerton
(714) 415-2107

20 Monday

—NATURE—

9:00am to 4:00pm-\$5: Arboretum and Botanical Garden at Cal State Fullerton: The Fullerton Arboretum offers walking trails, botanical gardens, shaded paths, and educational exhibits on the Cal State Fullerton campus. June is typically one of the best months to visit due to seasonal blooms and warm weather.

CSUF Arboretum & Botanical Garden
1900 Associated Rd., Fullerton
(657) 278-3407

21 Tuesday

—MOVIE—

2:00 pm - FREE: The Hunger Games: Sequels on 22, 23, and 24.

Fullerton Public Library
Main Conference Center
353 W Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton
(714) 738-6326
info@fullertonlibrary.org

22 Wednesday

—MARKET—

8:30 am to 12:30 pm: Certified Farmers Market. Fresh local produce. Support farmers live close by.

Independence Park
801 W Valencia Dr., Fullerton
(714) 738-6575

23 Thursday

—MARKET—

4:30 to 8:30pm: Fullerton Night Market: Every Thursday local farmers, artisans, merchants, and non-profit organizations to offer their unique products and services in a fun and festive atmosphere. The market includes a variety of features including fresh produce, prepared food, arts and crafts, jewelry, novelty and gift items.

BAND LINE UP

July 23: Orange Whip Band
Museum Plaza
125 E Wilshire Ave., Fullerton
(657) 683-4661

—MUSIC—

7:30 pm: \$40: Filharmonic: From the viral harmonies and high-energy stage presence of The Filharmonic, to the dynamic K-pop-inspired sound of Vocal Seoul, and the rising talent of Philosophy, this special event celebrates music, culture, and Asian American artistry on one stage.

The Muckenthaler Cultural Center
1201 W. Malvern Ave, Fullerton
714-738-6595
themuck.org

24 Friday

—NATURE—

9:00am to 4:00pm-\$5: Arboretum and Botanical Garden at Cal State Fullerton: The Fullerton Arboretum offers walking trails, botanical gardens, shaded paths, and educational exhibits on the Cal State Fullerton campus. June is typically one of the best months to visit due to seasonal blooms and warm weather.

CSUF Arboretum & Botanical Garden
1900 Associated Rd., Fullerton
(657) 278-3407

25 Saturday

—CLASS—

12:00 to 2:00 pm - FREE: Chasing Nostalgia: Vintage Looks with Jace Medina: Hands-on class with Jace Medina exploring film and digital techniques to create timeless vintage-inspired photography looks.

Image One Camera & Video
809 N Harbor Boulevard, Fullerton
(657) 255-2881

26 Sunday

—LOCAL AUTHOR—

11:30 to 2:00 pm: FREE: Interfaith Inclusion: The University Religious Conference and the Pursuit of a Pluralist America, by Lois Nettleship: Lois Nettleship, a retired Professor of History at Fullerton College will discuss her book "Interfaith Inclusion: Presented by Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Fullerton (UUCF).

First Christian Church of Fullerton
109 East Wilshire Avenue, Fullerton
(949) 575-9711

27 Monday

NATURE

9:00 am to 4:00 pm-\$5: Evening Stroll: Arboretum and Botanical Garden at Cal State Fullerton is a 26-acre botanical garden with a collection of plants from around the world. The Fullerton Arboretum offers walking trails, botanical gardens, shaded paths, and educational exhibits on the Cal State Fullerton campus. CSUF Arboretum & Botanical Garden 1900 Associated Rd., Fullerton (657) 278-3407

28 Tuesday

FAMILY TIME

10:00 to 11:00 am: Family Storytime: A free interactive storytime that will have you clapping, moving, and reading silly stories and rhymes! All ages welcome. Hands o music experience for ages 7+. Hunt Branch Library 201 Basque Ave, Fullerton fullertonpubliclibraryfoundation.org

29 Wednesday

MARKET

8:30 am to 12:30 pm: Certified Farmers Market. Fresh local produce. Support farmers live close by. Independence Park 801 W Valencia Dr., Fullerton (714) 738-6575

30 Thursday

MARKET

4:30 to 8:30pm: Fullerton Night Market: Every Thursday local farmers, artisans, merchants, and non-profit organizations to offer their unique products and services in a fun and festive atmosphere.

BAND LINE UP

July 30: The Mike Taylor Band Museum Plaza 125 E Wilshire Ave., Fullerton (657) 683-4661

CONCERT

5:00 pm Concert at 6:00 to 8:00 pm: FREE: Summer concert in the Park: The Satin Dollz opening for Beatles vs. Stones. Bring chairs, blankets, picnics, and the family. All ages welcome. Craig Regional Park 3300 State College Blvd, Fullerton ocparks.com

31 Friday

TAKE A HIKE

FREE: Juanita Cooke Greenbelt & Trail (2.79 mi): 1275 N. Berkeley Avenue, Fullerton
Brea Dam Trail (1.59 mi): 1700 N Harbor Boulevard, Fullerton
East Coyote Hills Trail (1.79 mi): 3300 State College Boulevard, Fullerton
Hiltcher Park Trail (1.39 mi): 1002 N. Euclid Street, Fullerton

AUGUST

1 Saturday

FESTIVAL

5:00 pm to 9:00 pm: California Sound: Fender Legacy: Celebrate the legacy of Leo Fender with the Fullerton Museum Center, Home of the Leo Fender Gallery! Live music! Fullerton Museum Center 301 N. Pomona Ave, Fullerton (714) 519-4461 fullertonmuseum.com

2 Sunday

THEATER

7:00pm: King Kong: The return of their wildly inventive and original stage adaptation of the 1933 cinematic classic, King Kong. Runs through August 9. The Maverick Theater 110 E. Walnut Avenue, Fullerton (714) 526-7070 mavericktheater.com

3 Monday

TAKE A HIKE

FREE: Juanita Cooke Greenbelt & Trail (2.79 mi): 1275 N. Berkeley Avenue, Fullerton
Brea Dam Trail (1.59 mi): 1700 N Harbor Boulevard, Fullerton
East Coyote Hills Trail (1.79 mi): 3300 State College Boulevard, Fullerton

4 Tuesday

FAMILY TIME

10:00 to 11:00 am: Family Storytime: A free interactive storytime that will have you clapping, moving, and reading silly stories and rhymes! All ages welcome. Hands o music experience for ages 7+. Hunt Branch Library 201 Basque Ave, Fullerton fullertonpubliclibraryfoundation.org

5 Wednesday

MARKET

8:30 am to 12:30 pm: Certified Farmers Market. Fresh local produce. Support farmers live close by. Independence Park 801 W Valencia Dr., Fullerton (714) 738-6575

6 Thursday

MARKET

4:30 to 8:30pm: Fullerton Night Market: Every Thursday local farmers, artisans, merchants, and non-profit organizations to offer their unique products and services in a fun and festive atmosphere. The market includes a variety of features including fresh produce, prepared food, arts and crafts, jewelry, novelty and gift items.

BAND LINE UP

August 6: Rhythem Jukebox Museum Plaza 125 E Wilshire Ave., Fullerton (657) 683-4661



ALL DAY DISCOUNTS

Taco Tuesday
10 tacos for \$20
Dine in or Take out

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20% off Cocktails
50% off Appetisers

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 July 18: The Dixiedelics Jazz August 1: The Dixiedelics Jazz

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Mismanagement or Neglect? Fullerton's Bicycle Lockers Spark Controversy Among Cyclists

by Saskia Kennedy

A pattern playing out in city halls — and at Fullerton's own train station

Organizations in crisis rarely announce themselves as such. More often, they produce charts, reports, and performance metrics that tell a reassuring story — one that, on closer inspection, was shaped by the same decisions it purports to evaluate. This is one of the quieter dangers of institutional mismanagement: it doesn't just damage an organization, it can generate the evidence that justifies its own continuation.

The pattern is visible at the highest levels of government and corporate life. It is also visible, in miniature, at the Fullerton train station, where a dispute over bicycle lockers is offering a textbook example of how low performance, manufactured by neglect, gets cited as the reason to eliminate the very thing being neglected.

When managers make poor decisions, they typically face two options: change course or defend the course

they're on. Defense, in institutional settings, almost always involves data. The problem is that those same managers often control what data gets collected, how it gets measured, and how it gets reported.

This creates a feedback loop. A leader who has misallocated resources will tend to measure success in ways that don't reveal the misallocation. A department head who has pursued the wrong strategy will frame performance indicators around the metrics where progress is easiest to show. Over time, the organization's entire information infrastructure bends toward confirming decisions already made.

It isn't always deliberate fraud. More often, it's a quieter process — choosing which questions to ask, which baselines to set, which time windows to measure, and which comparisons to draw. Each choice, on its own, seems defensible. Together, they produce a portrait of competence drawn in invisible ink.

The Fullerton Locker Problem

Consider the bicycle lockers at the Fullerton Metrolink station. The city is weighing its removal, and the justification being offered is low usage. On its face, that sounds like a reasonable, data-driven rationale. Look closer, and it starts to resemble something else entirely.

Renting a locker requires finding out who is responsible for them, signing a contract, and putting down an \$80 deposit — a process so cumbersome that many cyclists find it easier to ride a beater bike they're not worried about losing, lock it up outside, or simply bring their bicycle onto the train and secure it at their destination. The lockers themselves are poorly maintained and not easily visible from the station. And the city does not provide accessible information about whom to contact to rent one.

In other words, the city created conditions almost perfectly designed to discourage locker usage — and is now citing suppressed locker usage as evidence that lockers aren't needed.

This is the feedback loop in its purest form. As one advocate familiar with the situation put it, it's a case of "lies, damn lies, and statistics." The low uptake isn't a verdict on whether cyclists want secure storage. It's a verdict on whether the city made secure storage findable, functional, and worth the trouble.

Council Member Dr. Ahmad Zahra has reportedly spoken with the City Manager to halt the locker removal, though whether that decision is final remains unclear. The outcome may hinge on whether advocates show up to make the case before it's settled.

What Cyclists Can Do Now

The bike locker situation — and the broader question of how Fullerton funds and designs active transportation infrastructure — is not settled. Advocates have a real window to influence the outcome, but it requires showing up at the right moments.

The city council meeting on July 21 is a critical date. Supporters of the bike lockers at the train station should attend and speak during public comment. But the budget process matters just as much, if not more.

The community budget session and city council budget meetings are where funding decisions actually take shape — and where advocates can explicitly ask that bike lockers be included in the budget, both during agenda items and during the budget approval process itself.

Anyone with connections to Fullerton's cycling community should spread the word. The data the city is

using to justify removing these lockers was, in large part, produced by the city's own failure to support them. The only way to interrupt that cycle is to make the case, in person, before the decision becomes permanent.

Please contact all of the city council representatives at the email and phone numbers below:

District 1: Fred Jung
(714) 738-6311
fred.jung@cityoffullerton.com

District 2: Nicholas Dunlap
(714) 738-6311
nicholas.dunlap@cityoffullerton.com

District 3: Dr. Shana Charles
(714) 738-6311
shana.charles@cityoffullerton.com

District 4: Jamie Valencia
(714) 738-6311
jamie.valencia@cityoffullerton.com

District 5: Dr. Ahmad Zahra
(714) 738-6311
ahmadz@cityoffullerton.com

Community Meeting About the Budget

Budget Community Meeting #1

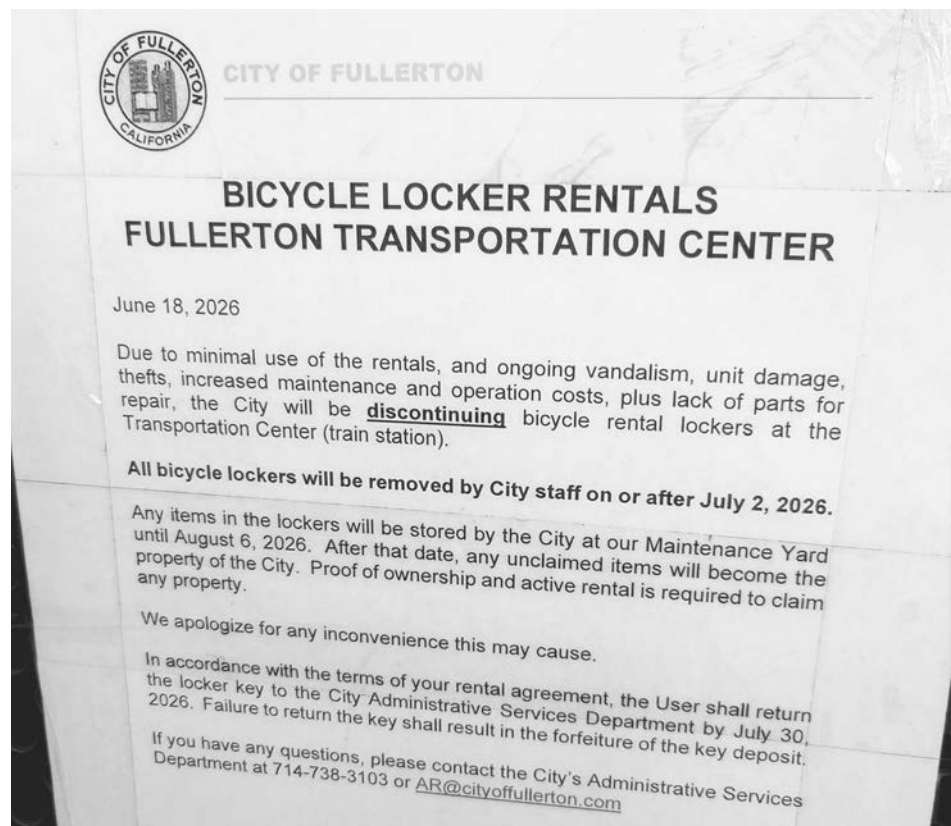
Tuesday, July 7, 2026, at 5:30 pm

in the main conference center of the Fullerton Public Library
at 353 West Commonwealth Avenue, Fullerton, CA 92832

Budget Community Meeting #2

Thursday, July 9, 2026, at 5:30 pm

at the Hunt Branch Library
at 201 South Basque Avenue, Fullerton, CA 92833



Measuring the Wrong Things and Cherry-Picking the Timeline

The locker situation points to a broader pattern in Fullerton's active transportation policies. The city has pointed to low usage of bike lanes and roundabouts as evidence that cyclists don't want or need them. But residents and cycling advocates counter that the infrastructure itself is the problem — that Fullerton's bike lanes and roundabouts are so poorly designed that low ridership reflects the quality of the facilities, not the absence of demand.

This is the classic mismanagement data trap: measuring outputs rather than outcomes, and then using those outputs to validate the decisions that produced them. A bike lane that dumps riders into traffic, or a locker program that requires an \$80 deposit and a phone number no one can easily find, will falsely generate discouraging numbers. Those numbers will then be used to argue against investing in better infrastructure or better programs. The failure becomes self-reinforcing, and the data becomes its alibi.

One of the most common tools in this playbook is selective periodization — choosing a start date for measurement that makes current numbers look favorable by comparison. Applied to civic infrastructure, this often means measuring usage after a program has already been allowed to deteriorate, rather than tracking the arc from functional to neglected. The result is a snapshot that looks like a verdict but is actually a consequence.

In Fullerton's case, the relevant ques-

tion isn't whether the lockers are being used at high rates right now. It's whether they would be used if they were maintained, visible, and easy to rent. That question is harder to answer with existing data, which may be precisely why it isn't being asked.

Organizations under poor leadership often commission external reviews that appear to provide independent accountability but are structured to confirm decisions already made. The questions given to reviewers shape the findings, and the questions come from the people who need favorable findings. The result carries the authority of objectivity while functioning as a mirror.

Cities do this too — with traffic studies, usage audits, and infrastructure assessments that are framed around the conclusion leadership has already reached. Whether that's what's happening with Fullerton's active transportation data is a question advocates would do well to press publicly.

The antidote to data shaped by mismanagement is not more data — it's differently sourced data, with different incentive structures attached to it. Independent audits are conducted by parties with no relationship to the decisions being evaluated. Performance metrics set before interventions begin, not after. Usage data is examined in the context of program accessibility, not in isolation.

It also requires people willing to show up and say so out loud.

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(On the 2nd Floor of the Chase Bank building across from Hillcrest Park)

Hundreds Gather in Downtown to Watch World Cup

by Gaston Castellanos

Hundreds of soccer fans gathered on July 1 on Wilshire Avenue in downtown Fullerton to watch the United States defeat Bosnia and Herzegovina 2-0 in the FIFA World Cup Round of 32, allowing them to advance to the Round of 16.

This free community viewing party transformed the former Walk on Wilshire corridor, just west of Harbor Boulevard, into an outdoor fan zone. Two large video screens broadcast the match as families, friends, and soccer supporters came together to cheer on the U.S. Men's National Team.

The event captured a festive, family-oriented atmosphere, with children playing and parents relaxing in lawn chairs while spectators filled the pedestrian-friendly street throughout the evening. The crowd erupted in celebration after each U.S. goal, creating one of the largest public gatherings in downtown Fullerton since the start of the World Cup.

The watch party is part of the city's Soccer Fest series, which has been drawing larger crowds during the 2026 FIFA World Cup and showcasing downtown Fullerton as a community destination for both residents and visitors. It was promoted the events as free, family-friendly opportunities to experience the excitement of the tournament together. With this victory, the United States advances to face Belgium in the Round of 16 as the country's World Cup journey continues. More events are coming soon.

For more information, call (714) 738-6587 or email specialevents@cityoffullerton.com.

See more photos at www.fullertonobserver.com.



Fullerton Woodcrest Community Pushes for Permanent Parking Solutions at City Council Meeting *continued from front page*

During the meeting, they proposed reviewing permit programs and making potential modifications to Fullerton's parking ordinance, which prevents overnight on-street parking.

<https://www.cityoffullerton.com/government/departments/public-works/traffic-engineering-signals/early-morning-parking/overnight-street-sweeping-parking>

Estrella emphasized the need for mutual understanding between the Woodcrest community and Fullerton, stating:

"I also hope the city considers the impact this is having on these working families, the multigenerational households that are in this community, and the long-time residents who simply want safe and reasonable access to parking near their homes. If you listen to these residents and work together, I'm sure we can find balanced solutions that support both the community and the needs of the city."

Mayor Pro Tem Nicholas Dunlap had a sudden outburst toward city staff, frustrated that residents had to return to the council to appeal for a parking solution he thought the city had already solved last year. That remedy had only been a temporary trial solution, and once the trial ran out, it was supposed to come back to the council, but it never did.

"[We need to] help these folks," Dunlap said. "[For the Woodcrest residents] to have to come out again and again, it's great that you're speaking up, but you shouldn't have to. This should have been addressed for you."

Fullerton City Council Member Dr. Ahmad Zahra recommended re-agenizing a formerly existing program that allowed exemptions for parking permits, establishing particular zones for

approved overnight parking and suspending currently existing parking tickets.

In particular, exemptions for parking tickets around Woodcrest Park were suggested up, as many Palm Gardens residents park there. However, on June 18, Fullerton Director of Public Works Stephen Bise emailed the Woodcrest community, stating that "Per [Fullerton Municipal Code] 9.12.331, the park and parking lot are closed to the public from 10pm to 7am, therefore, no parking is permitted within the early morning 2am-5am parking restriction time-frame."

Bise also mentioned FMC 9.12.170 (H), which he stated prohibits attended or unattended parking and standing vehicles during the park's closing time. Moreover, the email stated that city staff were opposed to the idea of overnight parking at Woodcrest Park, citing "concerns with public safety and park availability" and an "undesirable precedent citywide for overnight parking within parkland."

The email also noted that, although the Early Morning Parking Permit Policy, Procedures, and Standards provide select residents with the opportunity to obtain "individual permit exemption[s]," the areas surrounding the Woodcrest community are "exempt block[s]" for which the program does not apply. The city representative added that "modification to the program would likely create undesirable conditions for surrounding streets/communities." The email then

ended with the statement that city staff would "hold until directed by Council to pursue."

In her response to the email, Figueroa acknowledged FMC 9.12.331 (https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/code/s/fullerton/latest/fullerton_ca/0-0-0-8571), the city's concern for public safety, and FMC 8.44.080's (https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/code/s/fullerton/latest/fullerton_ca/0-0-0-7383) intention to prevent vehicle abandonment and street congestion. However, she asked the city to consider a potential exception to the code, stating that "the current situation for [Woodcrest] residents is untenable."

She explained that the parking allocations within Palm Gardens Apartments, which allow at most two spaces per two-bedroom apartment, do not account for shifting working-family circumstances. With most Woodcrest families having two working adults, as well as children who may also need to drive to work or school—all of whom require vehicles—she maintained the need for a permanent solution.

The Woodcrest community at Palm Gardens Apartments comprises six apartment complexes. Although parking spaces are provided within the apartments' grounds, problems began in 2024. As family sizes grew and more people moved in, the number of residents living in Palm Gardens outgrew the number of parking spaces available. As a result, residents often have to look for parking outside their

community, traveling several blocks to locations such as the local Food 4 Less. This results in many being ticketed, as Fullerton prohibits overnight on-street parking from 2:00 am to 5:00 am.

In an interview, Woodcrest Association Secretary Mireya Figueroa talked about her community's parking problems and their struggles with ticketing.

"This is a sad situation," Figueroa said. "People [in our community] have to work [while being] paid the minimum wage. [Then] they have to pay tickets (averaging \$55 per ticket). Our association doesn't have enough money to help pay them."

In the past, discussions have occurred regarding opening up the parking lot of Fullerton School District's Woodcrest Elementary for overnight permit parking. However, according to Estrella, this may cause problems.

"The biggest [problem] is that cars would need to be moved by 7:00 am, and that often doesn't happen. That leaves the school with the difficulty of either not having enough parking for staff or having to tow vehicles. If cars are towed, the community will understandably get upset. If staff do not have parking, that creates another problem because there isn't enough street parking, and on street-sweeping days, staff can end up getting ticketed," Estrella said. As of now, the matter awaits further direction from the Fullerton City Council.

*The Fullerton Woodcrest Association is a dedicated charitable and neighborhood organization composed of residents focused on improving the quality of life and strengthening the community in the Woodcrest area.

"I hope the city considers the impact this is having on these working families and the multigenerational households."

— Vanessa Estrella, Fullerton School District Board Member.

An In-Depth Analysis of Jung's Defeat: Understanding the Reasons Behind His Loss by Jack Hutt

The vote counting in the 4th District County Supervisor primary is all but over, and of four candidates, Fullerton Mayor Fred Jung finished a surprisingly distant fourth. Connor Traut is first with 37,375 votes (33.27%), while Tim Shaw is second (35,445 votes; 31.26%). These two will be in the general election. Rose Espinosa, in a largely self-funded campaign with few endorsements, came in third (20,258 votes; 17.87%). And, despite being one of the biggest spenders, Jung trails Espinosa by about 300 votes (19,955 votes; 17.60%) out of 133,383 votes cast to date. Jung came in third in the Fullerton precincts and first in his own council district. But even there, where he is best known, he only received 34% of the total vote, not exactly a ringing endorsement.

How could Jung do so poorly?

The most obvious reason is that the winners had major-party support: Democrats for Traut and Republicans for Shaw. Jung, whose politics seem to be flexible, was initially a Republican and then a Democrat before changing his registration to No Party Preference in 2025.

Perhaps he recognized that he was not a very convincing Democrat. In any case, that switch may have helped him get the endorsement of the far-right Lincoln Club and pick up some conservative votes, but he seems to have lost more than he gained. But there is more, and it has to do with Jung himself.

In public, he does not communicate well, when he chooses to communicate at all. He does not give voters any sense of who he is and what he is trying to do, other than being for Fred Jung and for advancing his own career.

We simply do not know much about him, nor has he provided much reason to vote for him.

- What are his values?
• What does he stand for?
• What is his day job

and his major source of income?

- What does he really want to accomplish while he is in office?

For that matter, what has he accomplished in five-plus years in office?

His campaign literature was bland, generic and anodyne: grow the economy, reduce homelessness, support public safety. It could have been written by and for any candidate.

As mayor, Jung has snapped up most of the plum appointments to other boards and commissions available to council members, many with stipends (at least one former councilmember pretty much lived on those stipends).

Currently, according to his campaign literature, he is on nine boards and has been on more. These include the Orange County Power Authority, Orange County Transit Authority, LOSSAN Rail Corridor, Municipal Water District and Orange County Water District.

This is bizarre. He collects board positions like other people collect antiques or trading cards. How can you be an effective participant when you're spread so thin?

Yet while he serves on many of these boards as a representative of Fullerton, he rarely reports to the council about his activities or the boards' actions. In fact, he sometimes leaves meetings before his turn while his colleagues are reporting on their activities.

By way of contrast, I was struck by a comment in the NY Times (6/18/26) about incoming British Prime Minister Andy Burnham. A British political scientist commented: "His big strength is that he is a very effective communicator, a very effective storyteller; he's good at giving voters a sense of who he

is, who he's for, and what he's trying to do."

This is the polar opposite of Fred Jung's public persona. He apparently does not feel it is important to inform constituents about who he is, why he is on the council, and what he is trying to do. In short, he is an enigma, and an unpleasant one at that.

More: In an interview with the OC Independent, Jung, in explaining why he left the Democratic Party, said that

Jung's campaign literature was bland, generic and anodyne: grow the economy, reduce homelessness, support public safety. It could have been written by and for any candidate.

one-party dominance in California has harmed governance and society. Disingenuously, he goes on to say that,

"You don't accomplish many good things when you don't compromise and won't listen to the other side...you need to see the other side as human

beings."

This may be what he believes—and a statement I agree with—but it is not how he acts as a member of the Fullerton council. He is rude to and dismissive of his colleagues and the public, often cutting people off mid-sentence and trying to minimize discussion. He makes no effort to bring his colleagues together to seek solutions for the City.

Even more: His public persona is not very "likable", an important political quality. Writing in the LA Times recently, columnist George Skelton addressed the importance of likability

in politics while covering the losing campaign of billionaire gubernatorial candidate Tom Steyer.

Skelton writes: "Steyer came across to many voters, I suspect, as a wild-eyed meanie. He would have been better off spending his negative ad money on positive spots that promote himself and make him more likable. Likability is a candidate's No. 1 asset. We learn that as grammar schoolers in class president elections. It beats a billion dollars every time — at least in California."

Perhaps this is an overstatement, but this aptly describes Jung: not opening up to the electorate about who he is or what his politics are, while at the same time not attempting to be collegial, outgoing or gregarious. What is the incentive to vote for him? Did he expect to win with money alone? Lincoln is well remembered for his Gettysburg Address comment about government being "...of the people, by the people and for the people..."

In short, this means that (a democratic) government exists only with the consent of the people; that this consent is demonstrated through public participation in governing processes, including voting and public forums; and that the role of government is to serve and protect the public interest.

How does Jung embody this: Does he reflect the public will, does he serve the public interest, does he encourage public participation, does he promote the public welfare?

To the extent we know him and can observe his public behavior, the answers would not seem positive.

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Fullerton Advances Three Trash Haulers and Eliminate Upfront Cash From Contract

continued from front page

The decision came at a special meeting convened at 4:00 pm Tuesday on short notice — an unusually early hour that several residents said locked working people out of a contract that will shape their weekly service and bills for a decade. One resident opened public comment by disputing whether the meeting had even been properly noticed. Council Member Ahmad Zahra said he wished it had been scheduled differently and given the public more notice, calling the contract an issue that would affect residents not just now but for the next generation.

The contract would run 10 years, with two optional five-year extensions tied to performance. Solid Waste and Recycling Specialist Michelle Durant said the timeline is driven in part by a state deadline: Fullerton is operating under a CalRecycle corrective action plan, extended to June 30, 2027, on the condition that the city complete a procurement complying with SB 1383, California's organics-recycling law. Durant said the state could cancel that extension and open a compliance audit, with penalties of \$500 to \$10,000 a day dating to Jan. 1, 2022, if the city falls out of step. She said Fullerton's overall waste-diversion rate stands at 15.81%.

The sharpest exchange of the night centered on "enhancement" offers in which two bidders proposed large upfront payments to the cash-strapped city — \$15 million from EDCO Disposal and \$10 million from Republic — in exchange for terms that would raise rates faster over time.

Zahra repeatedly pressed staff and outside counsel to explain who ultimately pays, saying he was getting legal explanations but not answers. The city was trying to hire a trash hauler to keep neighborhoods clean, he said, "not to clean up the city's financial messes." He noted that the person who first floated the concept had elsewhere called it a hidden tax.

Solid waste consultant Mike Valley

said the upfront offers were tied to steeper annual escalators. The city's rate schedule has risen about 3.48% a year over the past decade, he said, while the two firms offering upfront money proposed schedules of roughly 4.1% and 4.15%. Over a 20-year horizon, he said, rates would climb close to 100% for all bidders, but 10% to 20% more for those two.

Patrick Muñoz, the mayor's special counsel on solid waste, said the payments raised unsettled legal questions under Proposition 218 and the California Supreme Court's decision in *Zolly v. City of Oakland*, which addressed when franchise fees become an unlawful tax. The test, he said, is whether the fees "reasonably reflect the value of the franchise" — an analysis he said would require a closed-session discussion if the council pursued one of the offers. City Attorney Richard Jones added that the city would need assurances it could legally defend such an arrangement.

Mayor Fred Jung said EDCO's package, which sought a 20-year term and a 4.01% compounding annual increase, would add about \$1.3 million a year — nearly \$42 million over the term — a cost he said was unacceptable. Mayor Pro Tem Nick Dunlap took a harder line on two of the three offers, saying they amounted to "essentially an illegal tax — high-interest loans that the city or ratepayers are financing over the long term." He said he was not opposed to upfront money tied to a defined public benefit, such as CR&R's proposed road funding.

Public comment

More than a dozen residents and industry representatives addressed the council over roughly an hour, most urging caution and several defending Republic's record. Union labor was a recurring theme. Republic and CR&R employ union workers; Valley Vista and Universal Waste Systems do not. Several speakers warned that choosing

a non-union hauler could cost Fullerton residents their jobs — a concern shared by Council Members Zahra and Charles. "For me, being non-union is a nonstarter; it just is," Charles said. Durant said all bidders committed to offer jobs to Republic's workforce if the incumbent is not chosen.

Lori Bruno, a resident and former Republic risk director who said she now works on school safety, faulted bidders for not addressing safety and urged the council to scrutinize haulers' safety records and fleet condition.

Jeff Otter, treasurer of the Craig Park East Homeowners Association, argued the proposed commercial rate structure would fall disproportionately on apartment and condominium residents, citing his analysis that identical container service could cost 480% to 1,400% of single-family rates. He urged interim rate parity and a formal cost-of-service study within 24 months to comply with Proposition 218.

Other speakers pressed the council to keep unlimited bulky-item pickup, questioned the wisdom of a long contract and asked for cleaner trucks and better street repair. A longtime resident who gave her name as Lucy said the early start time made it hard for working people to attend.

"Everything feels last-minute, and

that's not fair," she told the council.

Mike Valley, the city's consultant, called CR&R "the best overall offer," citing its low commercial rates and competitive residential pricing, and ranked Valley Vista second on the strength of its organics-processing facility. He said Republic's commercial rates were "by far the highest" and flagged unresolved compliance issues, though he praised the company's operations generally.

Council members diverged over how many finalists to keep and how hard to press the incumbent. Council Member Jamie Valencia said she wanted to give Republic a fair chance to keep the account but rejected the priciest bids. "We're in a financial crisis, and I don't want to add more on our residents," she said.

A substitute motion by Charles to advance only CR&R and Republic — and to weigh Valley Vista separately — failed 2-3, with Charles and Zahra in favor. The council then passed the main motion unanimously, sending CR&R, Republic and Valley Vista into final negotiations, lifting the embargo which will allow council members to meet with representatives openly, requiring two public meetings and directing Republic to drop its \$10 million payment. The council is expected to select a hauler in September.

Community Meeting for General Plan Amendment on July 16, 2026, at 6:30 pm

The Fullerton Planning Department will hold a community meeting on Thursday, July 16, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. at the Fullerton Public Library - Hunt Branch, 201 South Basque Avenue. The meeting will discuss a proposed amendment to the city's General Plan to include an Environmental Justice Element, in line with California Government Code Section 65302(h) and Senate Bill 1000. This element

aims to reduce health risks for disadvantaged communities, enhance civic engagement, and prioritize improvements in pollution exposure, access to public facilities, safe housing, and community involvement in decision-making.

For inquiries or comments before the meeting, contact Senior Planner Yan Gao at (714) 738-6854 or via email at yan.gao@cityoffullerton.com.

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How to contact your District Representative

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(714) 738-6311
fred.jung@cityoffullerton.com
- District 2:** Nicholas Dunlap
Council Vice Chair
(714) 738-6311
nicholas.dunlap@cityoffullerton.com
- District 3:** Dr. Shana Charles
(714) 738-6311
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City Council Notes by Thea Pueschel

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

June 16 City Council meeting

Public Comments

INSUFFICIENT ACCESSIBLE PARKING

Maria Figueroa: We're appealing due to a lack of response regarding the overnight parking ordinance affecting our community. We request the reinstatement of temporary parking permits, particularly for residents like Mr. Ramirez, who is disabled and has received a ticket due to insufficient accessible parking. We actively maintain our parking areas and participate in community service events, and we seek your assistance in finding a solution soon.

Vanessa Estrella: I support the Woodcrest community and emphasize that parking issues impact safety and quality of life for families. The city should work with residents to find practical, long-term solutions.

Additionally, I find Council Member Dunlap's recent comment dismissive of residents' concerns during the meeting, which undermines their voices.

Mayor Pro Tem Dunlap: I clarified that my frustration was towards the situation forcing residents to repeatedly attend meetings, not directed at them. We previously gave specific directions to address concerns.

Speaker: I'd like clarification on what qualifies as "most things" that don't require City Council attention. Residents should have the right to address unresolved issues, such as parking.

On a positive note, a Ruck March with over 200 National Guard members and residents fostered community camaraderie. I also want to thank various city officials for their work, particularly noting our current financial situation and the need for a CFO after a significant loss.

Miguel Alvarez, District 4 resident: I echo concerns from Woodcrest residents about ticketing under the overnight parking policy, especially affecting lower-income households. I request a data-driven review on enforcement and ask Council Members Zahra and Valencia to agenda this for policy development to permit overnight exemptions in affected neighborhoods.

Kara Saracino: As a lifelong resident operating a property management business, I see ongoing challenges with the parking ordinance. Some neighborhoods want to maintain it, but ADU developments follow different state laws. I successfully overturned the ordinance on one street and questioned its legality, considering newer laws. The city should review this issue to address the unequal impact across neighborhoods.

Mayor Pro Tem Dunlap: We conducted a study on this issue about a year and a half ago and have extensive data. I can share our report if you provide your contact information.

PULLING CONSENT

Jane Reifer (via Zoom): I'd like to clarify the protocol for pulling consent items during meetings. I also have concerns about the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, noting that important dams and reservoirs impacting Fullerton seem to be missing from the document.

BICYCLE SECURITY

Speaker: First, I request that public comment be moved back to the beginning of Council meetings for proper engagement.

Secondly, there is a pressing need for improved bicycle security at the train station, as a friend recently had his bike stolen from a locker with a broken lock. Urgent actions needed include better maintenance of bike lockers, availability of assistance after hours, and repairs of bike racks to prevent theft.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Aaron: The need for a Chief Financial Officer to support economic development is highlighted, but concerns about the clarity of the current budget presentation persist. Drawing from experiences in Dana Point, I recommend that departments prepare their own budget reports for better transparency and public engagement to enhance feedback.

Speaker: I'm inquiring whether the city uses pesticides in our waterways, especially since cancer-causing pesticides have been found in Orange County. I request an evaluation and potential elimination of this practice.

I appreciate the recent financial audit, which enhances public understanding of our budget and helps rebuild trust.

Regarding parking, I suggest the city allow overnight parking in adjacent lots that are not used early in the morning, based on my experiences growing up in working-class communities.

Fullerton City Council Defers Decision on Tax-Exempt Bond Issuance for Affordable Housing

The Fullerton City Council unanimously voted on Monday to postpone a decision on tax-exempt bonds for two apartment properties, rescheduling the discussion for July 21. Mayor Pro Tem Nicholas Dunlap raised concerns about the potential fiscal impact, leading to the item being pulled from the consent calendar.

The proposal seeks approval for the California Statewide Communities Development Authority (CSCDA) to issue over \$180 million in bonds for the Foothill Affordable Housing Foundation to acquire the properties. City staff noted that approval is required under federal law and assured that the city would not incur any financial liability.

Noah Mayer from the Foothill Foundation stated that the financing would allow 40% of the apartments, or 64 units, to be reserved for residents earning up to 60% of the area median

income, while the rest would be for those at or below 80% AMI.

Dunlap expressed concerns about financial exposure, suggesting it could remove properties from the tax roll and reduce city revenue. He criticized the plan for preserving existing affordable housing instead of creating new units and called for a public hearing.

During public comments, two residents urged immediate approval, but Dunlap's proposal to continue the discussion to July 21 passed 5-0. A council member asked staff to investigate how the proposed affordability levels could impact the city's state Housing Element numbers.

The meeting concluded with the council directing City Manager Eddie Manfro to arrange a meeting about an ongoing parking dispute in the Woodcrest neighborhood and to clarify jurisdiction over bike locker security at the train station.

Fullerton Council Approves Stopgap Budget Measure Ahead of July Adoption

The Fullerton City Council approved a continuing spending resolution in a 4-1 vote on June 16, allowing the current fiscal year's budget to extend into FY 2026-27. The resolution provides spending authority from July 1, 2026, until a new budget is adopted, anticipated in July after the upcoming community budget meetings.

The budget community meetings are scheduled as follows:

Meeting 1: July 7 at 5:30 pm, Fullerton Public Library,

353 West Commonwealth Avenue

Meeting 2: July 9 at 5:30 pm, Hunt Branch Library,

201 South Basque Avenue

City Finance Director Stephen Avalos indicated that while the resolution is not strictly required under the Fullerton Municipal Code, it is standard practice for cities that adopt budgets post-July 1. The continued budget covers essential costs such as personnel, utilities, maintenance, and debt service, but does not authorize new programs or projects beyond existing allocations.

City Manager Eddie Manfro confirmed that the carried-over budget

includes the city's Capital Improvement Program and that any ongoing projects from July 1 to July 21 will be assessed for necessary council actions.

The council also approved the FY 2026-27 appropriations limit, calculated at \$305,506,936 under the state's Gann limit formula, with the city's appropriations totaling \$105,252,534, remaining well within the statutory cap.

California's Gann limit (also known as the State Appropriations Limit or SAL) restricts how much tax revenue the state and local governments can appropriate and spend each year. The fundamental Gann limit calculation formula is: Current Year Limit = Prior Year Limit × Growth Factor.

During public comments, Jose Trinidad Castaneda, a former Buena Park City Council member, voiced support for the resolution, calling it a prudent decision amidst prior budget discrepancies. He criticized recent public discourse regarding the city's finances as speculative and unfounded.

The resolution passed with Mayor Pro Tem Dunlap opposing.

Fullerton Relaunches Local Gift Card Program to Support Small Businesses

The City of Fullerton has partnered with Yiftee to relaunch the Fullerton Local Gift Card program, a digital gift card initiative designed to support small businesses and keep local spending circulating within the community.

The digital gift card can currently be redeemed at 11 participating small businesses across the city. Participating businesses include:

- Akashiro Nikkei Sushi
- Crepes Bonaparte,
- Fuoco Pizzeria Napoletana
- Green Bliss - The Cafe
- Les Amis Restaurant
- Lovetta Coffee

The program allows residents to purchase one digital gift card that can be used exclusively at participating Fullerton businesses, helping encourage residents to shop and dine locally rather than spending outside the city.

As part of the relaunch, the Yiftee is also offering a limited-time promotional bonus. Customers who purchase a \$100 Fullerton Local Gift Card will receive a \$50 bonus gift card while supplies last. The promotion is intended to increase spending at local businesses and attract new customers to participating merchants.

Yiftee, which operates community gift card programs nationwide, said its platform is designed to help cities and chambers of commerce create "closed-loop" digital gift cards that can only be redeemed at approved local businesses. The program is beneficial for teenagers during summer break, as well as for friends, family, and the homeless.

For more information or to purchase gift cards visit: <https://fullerton.yiftee.com>

CITY MEETINGS 2026

July 13 at 6:00pm Parks and Recreation Commission	July 22 at 6:30pm Planning Commission
July 14 at 4:00pm City Council *Special*	July 23 at 6:00pm Library Board of Trustees
July 15 at 5:30pm Active Transportation Committee	August 3 at 4:00pm Transportation & Circulation
July 16 at 5:30pm Investment Advisory Committee	August 4 at 5:30pm City Council
July 20 at 5:00pm Infrastructure and Natural Resources	August 10 at 6:00pm Parks and Recreation Commission
July 21 at 5:30pm City Council	August 11 at 11:00am Senior Advisory Committee

Fullerton Council Reverses Course, Approves 32-Unit Townhome Project *continued from front page*

On May 5, 2026, the City Council voted to deny City Ventures’ appeal of a Planning Commission decision rejecting the project, upholding the commission’s denial. The applicant’s attorneys, Cox, Castle and Nicholson, subsequently agreed on May 19 to extend the appeal deadline.

On June 1, City Ventures sent the city a letter asking the Council to reconsider its decision, offering to voluntarily fund a traffic impact analysis of the Harbor-Hermosa intersection, examin-

ing level of service, queuing, and collision history, to be approved by the city’s Traffic Engineer. That commitment was added as Condition 3 to a draft resolution prepared for Monday’s meeting.

Although the City Attorney advised that the public hearing did not need to be reopened, Mayor Fred Jung chose to reopen it to allow renewed public comment, noting that anyone who had testified at the prior hearing could do so again.

Public Comment

More than a dozen residents and community members addressed the council, split between opposition and support.

Opponents, including longtime Laguna Lake residents Diane Siegfried and Omar Siddiqui, cited traffic safety, narrow neighborhood streets without sidewalks or lighting, limited visitor parking, and potential interference with emergency vehicle access.

Siddiqui, president of the Fullerton Police and Community Foundation, told the council that 160 residents had signed a petition opposing the project and urged members to uphold their prior denial.

Several callers questioned whether the proposed traffic study would even cover the streets residents were most concerned about, and one speaker

requested a broader emergency-access study addressing whether fire apparatus could safely maneuver into and out of the site.

Supporters, including residents who said they lived in similarly sized or larger townhome and apartment complexes elsewhere in Fullerton without traffic problems, argued the city could not afford to reject a state-qualifying housing project, citing the area’s housing affordability crisis and the financial risk of litigation.

Several speakers also referenced a letter the city received from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) before the May 5 hearing.

According to Council Member Charles, who read from the letter during the meeting, HCD stated that under

Government Code Section 65585(j), it would monitor the city’s handling of the appeal and could refer violations of state housing law to the California Attorney General’s office.

The letter also referenced Assembly

Council Discussion and Vote

During council deliberation, members disagreed over the adequacy of the case for denial.

Council member Dr. Shana Charles argued that the Planning Commission’s original 3–2 vote to deny the project was not based on objective health-and-safety or traffic data, that city staff had specifically recommended approval, and that continued denial risked decertification of the city’s Housing Element — which currently shields Fullerton from additional builder’s-remedy actions.

Mayor Pro Tem Nicholas Dunlap, who is also a real estate professional, addressed conflict-of-interest concerns raised during public comment regarding campaign contributions and professional ties to the local real estate industry, noting that the relevant financial disclosures are publicly filed with the City Clerk’s office.

Council Member Jamie Valencia asked for a traffic study, and the City Ventures representative agreed.

On the original resolution to deny the appeal and uphold the Planning

Bill 712, effective January 1, 2026, which increases the financial penalties that courts may impose on local governments that deny qualifying housing projects after being formally warned that the denial would violate state law.

Commission’s denial, the motion failed, 3–2, with Council Members Charles, Valencia, and Zahra voting no on the denial — effectively a vote to allow the project to proceed.

The Council then took up an alternative pair of resolutions: one approving the appeal and overturning the Planning Commission’s denial, and approving the major site plan for the 32 townhomes, including the five deed-restricted affordable units.

The resolution was approved 3–2, with Council Members Charles, Valencia, and Zahra voting to clear the way for the project to move forward, subject to the additional traffic study at Harbor and Hermosa Drive.

City Ventures representatives told the council that the project has been in development for roughly two and a half years and has been modified in response to community feedback, including shifting the building placement, lowering the site elevation, increasing landscaping for screening, and adding a dedicated sidewalk and parkway along Hermosa Drive.

NO FRAUD INVESTIGATION DONE BY AUDITORS GRANT THORNTON *continued from front page*

The engagement materials state plainly that Grant Thornton “was not retained to investigate specific allegations of fraud or misconduct,” was “not engaged to perform a forensic review,” and that its procedures “were not designed to identify, nor should they be relied upon to have identified,” all information that could bear on the matter. The firm also notes it was not engaged to perform an audit or provide attest services under AICPA or Government Accountability Office standards.

Despite that limited mandate, both the slide presentation and the written report state that, “based upon the procedures performed, no indicators of fraud or intentional misconduct were identified.”

During the June 16 council meeting, that combination — a firm not tasked with investigating fraud, nonetheless offering a conclusion about its absence — drew direct questions from Council Member Dr. Ahmad Zahra, who asked how the firm could reach that conclusion without having investigated it.

Grant Thornton director Ann Lane responded that the conclusion was based on the procedures the firm did perform: review of underlying documentation, review of internal communications, and discussions with city staff and council members, limited specifically to the two transactions in scope and the FY 2024-25 budget presentations of April 23 and June 4, 2024.

She did not extend that conclusion to the broader question of citywide financial governance.

The \$2.9 Million Error

The report traces the \$2.9 million prior-period adjustment to a property at 501–515 North Pomona Avenue, originally purchased by the Fullerton Redevelopment Agency in 2004. When the state dissolved redevelopment agencies in 2012, the property passed to the city’s Successor Agency. In December 2020, while preparing for an audit, city staff in the Administrative Services department determined the property should instead be recorded in the General Fund and directed that a journal entry transfer it.

both irregular treatments, according to the report. The result was that the General Fund’s fund balance and its claims-on-cash balance were each overstated by \$2.9 million.

In 2022, the city sold the property in a transaction the report describes as “an apparent arm’s length transaction,” unanimously approved by the city council on November 15, 2022. The report identifies no issue with the sale itself.

Separately, in 2022, staff determined the original 2020 transfer had been wrong and attempted to reverse it — but the reversing entry corrected the assets-held-for-resale account without correcting the fund-balance error, leaving the \$2.9 million overstatement in the city’s books until it was caught during the FY 2025 external audit and corrected through a prior-period adjustment.

That entry, and a follow-up correcting entry made the same month, did not use the “due to/from” interfund accounts required under governmental accounting standards when no actual cash changes hands between funds. Instead, the entries ran through a “claims on cash” account and ultimately posted directly to fund balance —

The Vanishing \$10 Million

Grant Thornton’s review found that unassigned fund balance — money with no formal restrictions on its use — grew from about \$4 million in FY 2022 to roughly \$10.1 million by the end of FY 2024, before dropping to zero in FY 2025.

The firm attributes that decline to several compounding factors: a \$7.4 million operating deficit (expenditures exceeding revenue), \$4.5 million in net transfers out of the General Fund, a \$2.9 million reduction tied to the correction described above, and a \$2.8 million reclassification of fund balance into assigned, committed, or restricted categories.

After accounting for these factors and a \$1.2 million draw from the contingency reserve, Grant Thornton’s reconciliation came within \$290 of fully explaining the depletion.

Critically, the report identifies the

operating deficit as “the most significant driver.” The adopted FY 2024-25 budget — approved by the council on a 4-1 vote on June 4, 2024 — included a planned deficit exceeding \$9.4 million.

In other words, the depletion of fund balance was substantially foreseeable at the time the budget was adopted, though the report notes the budget materials did not clearly communicate that fact: the presented “beginning fund balance” did not reconcile to audited financial statements (a roughly \$468,000 gap even after adjustment), a \$5 million reserve tied to a county road-maintenance matching program was never properly reclassified as “assigned” fund balance, and the budget’s “net operating surplus/deficit” line blended transfers together with core operating results in a way Grant Thornton said could obscure the General Fund’s actual performance.

Auditors Conclusions and Recommendations

Grant Thornton’s bottom-line conclusion, as stated in both the report and presentation, is that the issues it found “relate to financial governance and oversight, accounting treatment, financial reporting, and budget presentation” — not fraud or intentional misconduct. The firm’s five recommendations are to establish formal financial governance, including hiring a Chief Financial Officer with governmental accounting experience and creating a standing council finance committee; to standardize interfund accounting procedures; to improve budget presentation so that beginning fund balances reconcile to audited financials and operating results are shown separately from transfers; to implement regular fund-balance “rollforward” reporting; and to revise the city’s financial policy to provide clearer operational guidance rather than aspirational language.

The report also notes that the city has seen turnover in key finance positions since 2024, including departures of both the prior City Manager and the prior Director of Administrative Services, with the Administrative Services role currently filled on an interim basis.

What the Report Does Not Say

The conclusion that no indicators of fraud were identified is bounded by the procedures actually performed: document review, email review, and interviews related to two specific transactions and two specific budget meetings. Grant Thornton stated during the presentation that it does not, at this time, recommend a further “Task 2 or 3” forensic investigation into the city’s broader finances, based on the results of the work completed so far.

Community Meeting About the Budget

Budget Community Meeting #1
 Tuesday, July 7, 2026, at 5:30 pm
 Fullerton Public Library
 at 353 West Commonwealth Avenue

Budget Community Meeting #2
 Thursday, July 9, 2026, at 5:30 pm
 Hunt Branch Library
 at 201 South Basque Avenue



OPINION: **Out of My Mind** by Jon Dobrer © 2026 Jonathandobrer.substack.com

ON BIRTHRIGHT CITIZENSHIP: DID TRUMP TANK THE ARGUMENT?

The Supreme Court came to the proper decision on Birthright Citizenship. Although the fact that three dissenters, well, dissented, is appalling based on the arguments presented by the attorneys representing the Trump administration.

There is, however, a different argument that they could have made that was not absurd and might have been taken seriously. The fact that they did not make this potentially viable and obvious argument inclines me, at least, to wonder if they tanked it and might actually prefer having this issue rather than solving what I believe to be a non-problem.

Before I get to that “good argument,” let me make clear that I fully and unambiguously support birthright citizenship. While it may have expanded beyond the original intent of the 14th Amendment, the costs of that expansion are minimal.

Yes, it is true that there is “birth tourism,” people coming to the United States with the intention of giving birth to an American citizen. Is this taking advantage of our largess? I suppose so, but where is the damage?

If people in China have the means, what is our cost for them to come here, have their babies and go back home? They are trying to secure a lifeboat for their children, in case things turn bad in China. And yes, some mainland

Chinese are both coming here to give birth and buying property in case China cracks down and further betrays their growing upper-middle class. I do not see either an economic or cultural downside for us.

Nor do I see much of an impact when people from South America come here and have American-citizen babies. If they go back home, where is our harm? If they remain here legally, what is our cost? If they remain here illegally, what difference does it make, long-term or short-term?

It won't protect them from deportation. Do we have any records and statistics concerning American citizen children coming back here, asserting their citizenship and committing crimes, sucking up social services and displacing long-time citizens from schools or the workforce? If not, what is the real basis of the fear that Trump is stoking? This seems to me to be just another mean-spirited act of xenophobia.

The lawyers for the administration argued the intent of the 14th Amendment and the context of the United States v. Wong Kim Ark

(1898), which held that the child of Chinese immigrants was indeed a citizen, even though our government argued that they were under the control of the Chinese Emperor and therefore were not “subject to our jurisdiction.”

This argument was plainly rejected, and the decision has stood for over a century.

What the Trump administration did not argue was one seemingly clear cutout from birthright citizenship in the text of the 14th Amendment itself. Children born in the U.S. to “hostile, invading military forces” are excluded from the 14th Amendment and birthright citizenship.

Trump has seemed to be setting this argument up by talking about foreign “Invasions” for two decades. He has called immigrants invaders. He has characterized Latin American gangs as “Invading armies,” and tried to invoke the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to deprive them of due process and speedily deport any and all by labeling them as invaders and wartime enemies.

While this is to me hateful and vile rhetoric and even worse policy, I cannot conceive of any reason that this

was not argued to the Supreme Court. Was he afraid of winning?

The invasion argument wouldn't just be applicable to South Americans. In Trump's xenophobic world, it could just as easily apply to others from largely Islamic nations and further his blatant Islamophobia.

He consistently argues that many immigrants come here not to be “real Americans” but to convert us, undermine our European origins and traditions, and eventually overthrow the good white folks. He promotes fear that these invaders, with no commitment to our culture and Christianity, dilute both our culture and our blood. He has compared brown people, Muslims and other foreigners to diseases that must be stopped.

How did his administration fail to argue the specific language of the 14th Amendment that the children of hostile invaders were an exception to birthright citizenship? I, who resist conspiracy theories and generally favor interpretations of inexplicable behavior to come from incompetence rather than conspiracies, am at a loss here.

While I'm always inclined to see Trump's thugs as incompetent, I cannot completely reject the idea that some cunning might be at play here and that he wants the issue to linger and last. Am I too cynical or not cynical enough? I'm not certain.

The fact that they did not make this potentially viable and obvious argument inclines me to wonder if they tanked it and might actually prefer having this issue rather than solving what I believe to be a non-problem.

OPINION: **AT HOME WITH THE HOMELESS** by Andrew Williams © 2026 WWW.PATREON.COM/C/THEOPINIONATOR

Hobson's Choice—shelter or jail?

continued from the front page

But things have now advanced to the point where even county officials are having their mics cut off when attempting to speak at board meetings—specifically, Todd Spitzer's appearance before the Orange County Board of Supervisors on the county budget during the Tuesday, June 23, 2026 meeting.

It's generally bad form to treat the county's District Attorney as an unwelcome interloper, but that's precisely what the Board did.

According to an excellent article by Voice of OC reporter Norberto Santana Jr., titled “OC District Attorney Lambasts Supervisors For Silencing Public Debate On Budget,” Spitzer had his mic cut as he was addressing the Board. He was quoted as saying “Our employees rely on a budget process that builds credibility and morale... Let's have a robust discussion in public about our budget.” And that was when he was cut off.

This was not a one-time occurrence. At a Board meeting the week before, County Treasurer/Tax Collector Shari Freidenrich was also cut off when she

attempted to address the budget issue. “I am also concerned by the lack of transparency in this year's budget process,” she wrote in a statement afterward. “Unlike prior years, the budget materials do not fully present the TTC's s requested staffing and budget recommendations in a manner that allows the public to evaluate the differences between the Department's request and the CEO's recommendation.”

So it seems that the Board of Supervisors wanted to rush through their budget with a token effort to solicit comments. Spitzer agreed, saying that outgoing Board head Michelle Aguirre told him that the decision to 86 public comments came from the supervisors themselves.

“She told me the board doesn't want to have a public discussion,” Spitzer said.

And this sounds uncomfortably like the Fullerton City Council's recent cancellation of a public meeting at the last moment, as well as their decision to hold a meeting regarding solid waste management proposals on June 30 at

4:00 pm—a time when most people who would wish to comment would still be at work or occupied with family. For perspective, city council meetings usually start at 5:30 pm.

Secrecy is a very bad look when you're already under scrutiny for budget shortfalls and missing funds. Cutting off public officials when they attempt to address these issues is even more suspect.

When Santana asked Spitzer if he considered the Board's behavior towards him and Freidenrich a violation of the Brown Act—the law that stipulates meetings must be open to the public—Spitzer responded that, “You raise a super interesting question. I need to contemplate.”

The Brown Act is unequivocal on this point. According to Wikipedia, “it

requires local government agencies to conduct their deliberations and actions openly. It mandates public access to meetings, advance notice of agendas, and opportunities for public participation, while strictly prohibiting secret gatherings and ‘serial meetings.’” In other words—no star chambers. And especially no pissing off county government officials who have legitimate questions about specific funding issues.

Basically, this is the adult version of saying “Neener neener neener” over and over and hoping your inquisitor will simply get fed up and go away. Todd Spitzer is not one to just go away. And it's clear from his comments during and afterward that the Board of Supervisors will regret giving him the bum's rush at that hearing.

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Healthy Awareness

by Jo Ann Brannock, Ph.D. © 2026

The Seven Primal Questions: A Journey of Self-Discovery with Mike Foster

A friend recently recommended the book "The Seven Primal Questions" by Mike Foster, a coach, speaker, and author known for his work in personal growth and emotional healing.

In the book, Foster explains that people develop a "Primal Core Question" during childhood that continues to shape their lives well into adulthood. These questions influence emotional responses and triggers; relationships and interactions with others; self-perception; and decision-making.

According to Foster, these deeply rooted questions operate subconscious-

ly and repeatedly throughout life. The seven Primal Questions are:

- Am I Safe?
- Am I Secure?
- Am I Loved?
- Am I Wanted?
- Am I Successful?
- Am I Good Enough?
- Do I Have a Purpose?

When the answer to one's Primal Question feels like "yes," life tends to feel balanced and positive. However, when the answer becomes "no" or even "maybe," a person may enter what Foster calls a "Scramble" — a

reactive emotional state marked by stress, anxiety, insecurity, or emotional overwhelm. In more extreme cases, this can lead to what he describes as "Primal Avoidance," where individuals disconnect from themselves or engage in severe self-abandonment.

Many people attempt to force a "yes" to their Primal Question through unhealthy coping mechanisms. These behaviors may include people-pleasing, controlling others, perfectionism, excessive focus on appearance, overcommitting, avoidance of personal responsibility, or becoming a workaholic. Conversely, avoiding the question altogether can lead to self-sabotaging patterns.

Despite these challenges, Foster emphasizes a hopeful perspective: each Primal Question can also produce a unique "Primal Gift" or personal superpower. For example, someone whose core question is "Am I Loved?" may become exceptionally nurturing, compassionate, and emotionally intuitive, often excelling in friendships, marriage, caregiving, or leadership roles that require empathy and emotional connection.

For anyone interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the hidden emotional forces that shape behavior and relationships, "The Seven Primal Questions" offers an insightful and thought-provoking perspective.

According to Mike Foster, recognizing your Primal Question is the first step toward greater self-awareness and personal growth. If the topic interests you, consider checking out a copy at your local library.



The Science Behind It

by Yuvika Salman © 2026

Chronic Inflammation

Every day I scroll through social media, and I always come across wellness influencers talking about "fighting inflammation." They blame everything from seed oils to gluten and promise miracle supplements that could supposedly "cure" inflammation overnight.

It made me wonder: what actually is inflammation, and why has it become such a buzzword? As it turns out, inflammation isn't something we should fear. It's something we literally cannot live without. The real problem begins when it never turns off.

Your body has an emergency response team. For example, let's say you accidentally cut your finger while cooking dinner. Within seconds, your immune system leaps into action. Blood vessels widen to allow more blood to reach the injury, causing redness and warmth. White blood cells rush to the scene like first responders, attacking invading bacteria and clearing away damaged tissue. Specialized immune cells release chemical messengers called cytokines that coordinate the entire healing process.

This is called acute inflammation, and it's exactly what your body is supposed to do. It is time-limited, targeted, and purposeful. Once the threat is neutralized, the immune response winds down, and the tissue heals.

Inflammation is one of the main reasons your body can repair itself at all.

Problems arise when the immune system stays activated long after the original threat has disappeared. This is known as chronic inflammation: a low-level, persistent immune response that can continue for months or even years. Unlike the redness and swelling you notice after an injury, chronic inflammation often produces no obvious symptoms. Behind the scenes, immune cells continue releasing inflammatory molecules that gradually damage healthy tissue.

Researchers believe many factors can contribute to chronic inflammation. Excess body fat, especially around the abdomen, isn't just stored energy. It behaves like an active organ, releasing inflammatory chemicals that keep the immune system in a state of low-grade activation. Poor sleep disrupts immune regulation in a similar way. Even a few nights of inadequate rest have been shown to measurably increase inflammatory markers in the bloodstream.

Smoking, chronic psychological stress, environmental pollution, certain infections, autoimmune diseases, and untreated metabolic conditions like

Type 2 diabetes can all contribute as well. A diet consistently high in refined sugars and processed foods, which research has linked to elevated levels of inflammatory cytokines, also contributes to this phenomenon.

Rather than one single cause, chronic inflammation is usually the result of many small factors interacting over time, quietly compounding in the background.

The reason chronic inflammation receives so much research attention is that prolonged inflammation can lead to serious consequences. Persistent inflammation

has been linked to heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, and even certain cancers. The mechanisms vary, but the throughline is consistent: sustained immune activation causes collateral damage to healthy tissues and disrupts the body's normal regulatory systems.

In cardiovascular disease, for example, inflammatory molecules can damage the inner walls of blood vessels, making it easier for cholesterol to accumulate and form plaques that raise the risk of heart attack and stroke. In the brain, chronic neuroinflammation may contribute to the buildup of abnormal proteins associated with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. Even cancer researchers have found that chronic inflammation can create a microenvironment where damaged

cells are more likely to survive and multiply unchecked.

Doctors sometimes use blood tests, most commonly C-reactive protein (CRP) and erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR), to detect signs of systemic inflammation. These tests can indicate that the immune system is active somewhere in the body, but they can't pinpoint exactly where or why.

Researchers are actively searching for more precise biomarkers that could identify chronic inflammation earlier, before disease takes hold. It's one of the more promising frontiers in preventive medicine. Without inflammation, even a minor cut could become life-threatening because your body wouldn't be able to fight infection or begin repairing tissue. Immune suppression, whether from certain medications or diseases, makes that danger very real.

What scientists recommend instead are habits that help the immune system self-regulate. This includes regular physical activity, adequate sleep, a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats, stress management, and avoiding smoking. These small changes help the immune system respond decisively when necessary and stand down once the job is finished.

Inflammation has become one of the most misunderstood words in modern health. It's easy to assume it's inherently bad, but in reality, it's one of the body's most essential survival tools. The danger comes not from inflammation itself, but from an immune system that never receives the signal to stop.

The real issue arises when it becomes a chronic condition, lingering long after the initial threat has passed.

Balance & Change

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

Differentiating Between FUN and fun

Do you know the difference between FUN and fun? It is a very important distinction! FUN is a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Paris! On the other hand, fun is taking a walk with a friend.

Having some occasional FUN is important. These are the highlights in our lives. These are the big things that we look forward to. However, we cannot have FUN every single day for several reasons. First, it costs too much. Most of us do not have the resources to live like that every day!

But more importantly, FUN stops being FUN if it becomes ordinary.

However, fun is an everyday way of living. And it is important to have some fun every day. It might simply be enjoying listening to music, reading a book, watching a show or a reel that makes you smile. This is the type of fun that replenishes us. This is the type of fun that truly makes life worth living.

So, in order to enjoy the journey, have some fun every day. And plan some FUN throughout your life!

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Dalton William Bordner 1936-2026

Dalton William Bordner passed away at his home in Rancho Mission Viejo on April 25. The cause of death was mesothelioma, likely the result of occupational asbestos exposure during his work as a young research chemist some 67 years earlier.

Born to Pauline Clements and Dalton Dwight Bordner in Long Beach, California, on July 10, 1936, he grew up in Belmont Shore, catching scallops in Alamitos Bay, playing baseball in vacant lots, and coming of age during the extraordinary optimism and growth that characterized Southern California in the years following World War II.

Dalton's family roots ran deep in Southern California. Both of his parents came with their families from the Midwest to Long Beach in the early twentieth century, and he grew up surrounded by a large network of aunts, uncles, and cousins throughout the Los Angeles area. He loved the Sierra Nevada, especially the Eastern Sierra and Mammoth Lakes region, where he spent countless days fishing and many nights backpacking in the mountains.

He graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in 1954 and from Pomona College in 1958 with a degree in chemistry. At Pomona, he played water polo, was a member of the Alpha Gamma Sigma fraternity, formed lifelong friendships, and remained a loyal alumnus throughout his life.

Dalton met Susan Wellington while at Pomona, and they married in 1960. Together, they made their home in Fullerton, where they raised three sons, Robert, Douglas, and Bruce.

He was active in Scouting, sharing his love of the outdoors with his boys, and he took great pride in telling people that all three became Eagle Scouts.

Dalton spent most of his career with Ameron Corporation, beginning as a research chemist and eventually serving as Manufacturing Director, a role that included opening a facility in Singapore. He developed deep expertise in composite plastics and



corrosion-resistant piping systems for marine applications.

Drawn to challenging and engaging projects, he earned several patents through his work and later spent five years as an industry consultant. He

was often an early adopter of technology, from the latest HP programmable calculators to some of the earliest Apple computers and, ultimately, even artificial intelligence.

In retirement, Dalton and Sue moved to El Dorado Hills, where he enjoyed woodworking, fishing in the Mammoth

Lakes area, supporting Sue in her many civic endeavors, and spending time with family and friends—including annual trips to the San Juan Islands. In 2019 they moved to Reata Glen, where they made many new friends and remained active in the community through activities such as Mahjong and woodworking.

Friendships were central to Dalton's life. He remained in touch with people he had known since sec-

ond grade—friendships spanning more than 80 years—and participated in weekly Zoom calls with college friends he had known for over seven decades. He was a modest but proud man: proud of his community, proud of his family, and proud of the life he built. Friends knew him for his lifelong intellectual curiosity, his willingness to help with projects large and small, and his consistently supportive nature.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Susan, and his brother, Kenneth.

He is survived by his sister, Joan Bordner; his sons, Robert (Susan Mitchell), Douglas (Jennifer), and Bruce (Christine); eight grandchildren, Nicholas, Caroline, Austin, Travis, Samantha, Addison, Ryan, and Tara; and two step-grandchildren, Kate and Mitchell Duran.

Dalton's family thanks everyone for their support during the past nine months. Donations in his memory may be made to Pomona College, for the Dalton W. and Susan W. Bordner Memorial Fund in Chemistry, or to a local hospice organization.

Miriam Esther Wright 1933-2026

Miriam Esther Wright, also known as Esther Wright-Dankman, passed away peacefully on June 13, 2026, at the age of 92 after a courageous battle with illness.

She was born on September 21, 1933, in Illinois to jewelry store proprietors Lorin and Miriam Wright.

Miriam dedicated her life to education and healthcare. She earned her registered nursing degree and spent 18 years as a nursing educator before transitioning to teach Biology for 30 years. In recognition of her commitment she received her doctorate in education in 1991.

In retirement, Miriam pursued her interests in Shamanic journeywork and integrative healing techniques, establishing a practice that included Craniosacral therapy, aromatherapy, and energy medicine.

She was passionate about animals, nature, and culture, and she traveled



extensively throughout China, Russia, and the United States. Her love for the arts was evident in her enjoyment of playing the flute and guitar, as well as writing, reading, and knitting.

In 2023, she relocated to Southern California to be closer to her son, Lorin Geitner, a professor, and his wife, Terri Kennedy.

Miriam was married to Charles Geitner and later to Roy Dankman, both of whom preceded her in death.

Miriam is survived by her sister, Elizabeth Jane Schwab; her two children, Charlotte Susan Burnham and Lorin Charles Geitner; and five cherished grandchildren.

A celebration of life memorial and interment for Miriam Esther Wright was held on June 30 at Loma Vista Memorial Park at 701 E. Bastanchury Road, Fullerton.

She will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege of knowing her.

Fifteen years later, The Murder of Kelly Thomas still resonates by Leigh White

Maybe you weren't born yet, were too young, or simply never heard about what happened to 37-year-old Kelly Thomas. On July 5, 2011, Kelly was brutally beaten, tased, and suffocated by six Fullerton police officers at the Fullerton Transportation Center near Bus Dock 1 until his brain death. It's a place many people pass every day without a second thought. That night, Kelly had been near what was then the Feed By The Tracks community meal, where volunteers served anyone in need: homeless and housed alike, families, children, seniors, and single adults. Kelly wasn't under the influence of drugs or alcohol. He wasn't stealing. He wasn't armed. He was simply there.

Kelly lived with schizophrenia, something the officers knew. What followed was more than twenty minutes of violence. As he was beaten, he cried out for his mother, his father, and for God to help him. Imagine being in that situation: terrified, in pain, pleading for your life while no one comes to save you. The incident was captured on surveillance cameras and police recordings. Everyone there watched and did nothing because they were terrified. Yet the officers were ultimately not convicted of excessive force in the justice system by an Orange County, CA jury. Fifteen years later, Kelly's life and death still matter because he should still be here. He would have turned 52 this year. Born and raised in Fullerton, Kelly loved music, fresh air, skateboarding, playing guitar, and bands like The Beatles, Metallica, and Bob Marley. He dreamed of becoming a firefighter. He was more than a headline, more than a

case, and more than the worst thing that ever happened to him.

I bring up Kelly because forgetting what happened to our fellow human beings is how humanity disappears, quietly, one person at a time. Excessive force remains a reality in communities across the country. From 2024-2025, 29% of the people who experienced excessive force died from it. That's just the ones the FBI has on its website. What is the actual number?

At the same time, many people still struggle with homelessness, mental illness, lack of housing, healthcare, and access to basic services. These are not distant issues; they are human issues affecting people around us every day.

The work I do in direct street outreach is deeply connected to this reality. Kelly's story and the verdict that followed changed me. I never knew him personally, but I see his face in the people I help. Every person deserves dignity, compassion, and the chance to be seen as fully human.

This isn't about politics or religion. It's about recognizing each other's humanity. So if you ever find yourself at Bus Dock 1 by the lamppost at the Fullerton Transportation Center, take a moment to remember Kelly Thomas. Then look around. You may find an opportunity to help someone, show kindness, or make a difference.

That is how change begins. That is how we honor those we have lost. And that is how we make sure Kelly is never forgotten. We've still got a lot of work to do to make life better, more inclusive, and more peaceful even 15 years later.



RELEVANT LINKS:

- <https://youtu.be/Rr0zbO92-E?si=0K0LhYYA8MD-4bvT>
- <https://youtu.be/dDpJ5FtG6Ac?si=NruIli-PZx8ZMblw>
- <https://homelessstrategy.com/dying-while-homeless-is-a-burgeoning-crisis-in-california-that-necessitates-systemic-changes/>

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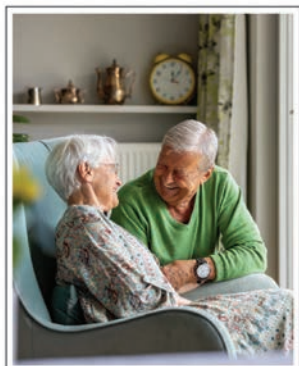
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Applications are only accepted for current City of Fullerton vacancies.

Community Services Leader

Salary: \$16.90 - \$17.40 Hourly
Location: 303 W Commonwealth Ave
Job Type: Non-Regular
Job Number: 2026- CSLEAD
Department: Parks and Recreation
Closing Date: Continuous
The Position: Under general or direct supervision promotes, organizes and

leads a variety of recreational activities at a recreation center or other facility; conducts activities within assigned groups and performs related work as required.
This is an At-Will, Temporary, Non-Benefited Position Limited to 1000 Hrs Per Fiscal Year

Community Services Specialist

Salary: \$17.90 - \$18.90 Hourly
Location: 303 W Commonwealth Ave
Job Type: Non-Regular
Job Number: 2026- CSSPEC
Department: Parks and Recreation
Closing Date: Continuous
The Position: Under general or direct supervision promotes, organizes and

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Salary: \$89,234 - \$137,488 Annually
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Job Number: 2026-PO-Lateral
Department: Police

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Skilled Maintenance Worker - Water II - \$5,039 - \$6,432/ Monthly
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Department: Public Works

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ANSWER KEY TO "BARNYARD BUNCH" © 2026 from page 7



PUZZLE MASTER
Valerie Brickey
was born in Fullerton and returned to raise her family here. She has contributed puzzles since 2014.

A	S	H		B	A	L		G	L	O	B						
C	H	I	A		C	I	L	I	A		R	I	D	E			
D	E	N	T		A	B	O	M	B		A	S	I	S			
C	A	T	H	Y	R	I	G	B	Y		N	A	E	S			
				E	O	E				S	A	D					
M	I	R	A	N	D	A	L	A	M	B	E	R	T				
A	W	A	R	D		B	E	L	A	Y		V	A	L			
A	I	N	T		C	A	R	O	L		W	I	S	E			
M	S	G		T	A	C	O	S		P	I	N	T	A			
				H	E	N	R	Y	K	I	S	S	I	N	G	E	R
						B	U	S			P	A	D				
A	L	I	C	E		B	L	U	E	N	O	S	E	S			
S	E	M		S	I	M	O	N	C	O	W	E	L	L			
K	A	A		T	H	W	A	C	K		S	A	L	E			
S	H	Y			S	S	N	S					M	A	W		

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When the next earthquake, wildfire, or other disaster hits, will you be ready?

Saturday, August 1 at 10 am Fullerton*

*Registered families will receive the event address via email.



Learn how to build a family emergency plan.



Learn to shut off your gas, water and power.



Practice using a fire extinguisher.



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FREE Emergency Starter Kit for the first 50 families to register (includes a solar-powered light, battery charger, and first aid kit).

REGISTER: readyoc.com/prepare



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Saturday

Starting at 9:00AM

AUGUST 8

FREE TO THE PUBLIC!

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- Live entertainment
- Meet curious like-minded adults 50+
- Free parking and light lunch



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California State University, Fullerton
is located at 800 N State College Blvd, Fullerton

OLLI Trolley drivers stop at the following locations:

- Parking Lot S10
- Parking Lot S8
- State College Parking Structure
- Ruby Gerontology Center
- Parking Lot E6

The pick-up and drop-off location at the Ruby Gerontology Center is at the bench near Parking Lot E6.

