



PHOTOGRAPH BY COURTESY OF HARRY LANGENBACHER

Candlelight Vigil to Honor Lorenzo and Johan by Debbie Langenbacher

Indivisible CA45 joined groups nationwide on July 25 to honor Lorenzo Salgado Araujo and Johan Sebastian Duran Guerrero, community members who died due to the actions of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. The gathering served as both a memorial and a call for accountability from government agencies.

Rev. Noel Anderson from Church World Service and Amiah Adamiak, an intern minister at Live Oak Church, led prayers during the event. Participants also signed a card expressing gratitude to Representative Derek Tran of California’s 45th District for introducing H.R. 9883, the Private Detention Corporate Accountability Act of 2026. This legislation aims to hold privately-operated

detention centers accountable for wrongful deaths of detainees. Additionally, Tran was recognized for co-sponsoring other supportive legislation, including the ICE and CBP Constitutional Accountability Act and the Trust Through Transparency Act.

COUNCIL CHOOSES DEEPEST CUTS

by Jack Hutt

Facing a \$3.8 million deficit, the City Council at its July 21 meeting chose the most austere of three paths forward, directing staff to build a spending plan that balances the books over three years rather than one — even as members openly searched for ways to spare city jobs and services from the chopping block.

The council voted to adopt “Scenario C,” a plan that would unfund 32 vacant positions and stretch one-time revenues and spending reductions across the 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29 fiscal years. Councilmember Dr. Shana Charles cast a dissenting vote, saying she could not stomach deep service cuts while the city sits on millions in reserves.

Rather than adopt the budget outright, the council continued the public hearing and set final adoption for its August 18 meeting, buying time to examine whether an additional \$1 million or more could be pulled from the city’s insurance reserves to reduce the reliance on cuts.

[Read more on page 8](#)

Fullerton Spent at Least \$227,000 to Settle CalPERS Case Over Retired Executive Hires

by Elijah Manassero

The City of Fullerton has agreed to pay \$40,000 to settle a years-long CalPERS case involving four retired officials whom the state pension system determined were unlawfully employed by the city. The settlement comes after Fullerton spent approximately \$187,000 on outside attorneys defending the city and the four retirees.

Councilmember Ahmad Zahra spoke on the settlement in his comments at the latest City Council meeting.

“We had a CalPERS problem that cost us \$240,000,” Zahra said. “Why? Because you fire a city manager, then you bring in people who don’t know how to hire people properly.”

Newly obtained discovery records provide support for the broader point behind Zahra’s criticism: Fullerton’s temporary leadership deliberately used interim retirees while waiting for a future permanent city manager to select members of the executive team.

[Read more on page 12](#)

Outbreak of West Nile Virus Confirmed

The Orange County Mosquito and Vector Control District has announced a concerning outbreak of West Nile Virus, a mosquito-borne illness that can be fatal. Recent data revealed that over 101 mosquito pools—groups of mosquitoes collected for testing—have tested positive for the virus, with indications that it is widespread throughout the county.

Fullerton has emerged as the city most at risk, with 39 of the 101 positive samples originating from the area. The Culex mosquito, the primary vector for the virus, poses the greatest threat. Typically, these mosquitoes feed on birds, facilitating the virus’s spread among avian populations. However, in the absence of birds, they may also bite humans.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the virus often causes mild symptoms such as fever, vomiting, and body aches. In more severe cases, it can lead to serious neurological issues, hospitalization, or even death. While humans are regarded as dead-end hosts—meaning they cannot transmit the virus to others except through organ transplants or blood transfusions—many infections are asymptomatic.

[Read more on page 2](#)

Recall Effort Launched Against Fullerton Mayor Fred Jung and Council Member Jamie Valencia

by Saskia Kennedy

A group of residents filed recall paperwork on July 22, against Mayor Fred Jung and Councilmember Jamie Valencia, capping more than a year of escalating criticism of the council majority during public comment.

Fullerton resident Elijah Manassero announced the effort the night before, telling the July 21 City Council meeting that both officials had been served with notices of intention to recall. He disclosed during the meeting’s public comment period. Several other speakers rose in support, each offering their own reasons for backing the effort.

Neither Jung nor Valencia responded to the announcement from the dais.

Because both are city officers, the City Clerk — not the county Registrar of Voters — serves as the elections official at every stage of the process.

The petitions state distinct grounds for each official. Against Jung, organizers cite what they describe as poor leadership, poor decorum and poor management of city resources, writing that Fullerton deserves a leader who upholds integrity and transparency.

The statement against Valencia is longer and alleges a pattern in three areas. On competence, organizers contend she frequently appears unprepared and has misunderstood items she was voting on. On ethics, they point to her votes to sell discounted city-owned land to a megachurch in District 4 and to approve below-market lease terms for a campaign donor, characterizing both as conflicts of interest and, against the backdrop of a widening budget gap, as mismanagement of public assets.

[Read more on page 12](#)

PRESORTED
STANDARD U.S.
POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 1577
FULLERTON CA

OR CURRENT RESIDENT

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

FULLERTON
OBSERVER
PO BOX 7051
FULLERTON CA 92834

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Casualty Figures

Two numbers: 18 and 624.
Eighteen killed in the Iran War and six hundred and twenty four wounded.
Our government, with a convicted felon at the helm, is trying its level best to fudge the numbers, downsizing those killed from 18 to 14 at one point. And stonewalling: For months, the government withheld the fact that 170 of the wounded are suffering from traumatic brain injuries.

When fudging and stonewalling don't work, the king's men make chaos (i.e. we experienced technological glitches, that's all, and by the by, our new way of counting shows some of the casualties are part of "Operation Epic Fury," others in "Overseas Operations," blah blah, okie doke).
As of July 29, by the Pentagon's and Central Command's own accounts, the number of service members killed in the Iran War is 18. The number of wounded, brains and all, is 624.
Brady Rhoades Fullerton

Concerned Citizen

I'm concerned about fiscal decisions at City Hall. What measures are in place to restrain police spending? They should be frugal. Don't cop cars already have sirens and lights yet the library budget may get cut? If they want to keep police leadership staff then use that quarter of a million on personnel.
How about a cop car budget hold or restraint for now? This way the library doesn't get severe cuts.
Patricia Hanzo Fullerton

State of the City 2026

I listened to some of the June 11 State of the City event. I was impressed with David Faulk, the Nasung Su Company, a Korean brewery in the 100 block of West Wilshire Avenue. I have heard that he is a very fine person and citizen. What impressed me was how he hit the nail on the head in his hopes for his place in our city. He said he wants his company "...to become the crown jewel of this community's identity."

Well, he certainly got that right. With 58 to 60 alcohol licenses within the the 6 or 8 blocks comprising our downtown, our identity certainly is alcohol.
(In applying for a \$30,000 grant from the state to help control the traffic fallout from the alcohol excesses, our city administrators said it was 6 blocks, 60 licenses.). Watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVK mzN4AkRA>
Judith Kaluzny Fullerton

OPINION: ANALYZING THE WASTE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT DEBATE

by Aaron Sharp

Fullerton has about 28,768 residential accounts and about 1,991 commercial accounts. Residential ratepayers outnumber commercial ones roughly 14 to 1. On pure household economics, Valley Vista is the clear winner — cheapest standard rate, deepest senior discount, free extras, and absorption of a landfill increase everyone else passes on.
On the city's institutional interests — SB 1383 compliance risk, the \$500-to-\$10,000-per-day penalty exposure, commercial ratepayer costs, and infrastructure investment — CR&R is the clear winner.
The tiebreaker isn't a number. It's whether the council treats union labor as a threshold requirement or as one factor among many. That is a values judgment, not an analytical one, and reasonable people land in different places. If it's a threshold, the field is CR&R versus Republic, and CR&R wins that comparison on essentially every measure except bulky items and apartment parity. If it isn't, Valley Vista's household economics are difficult to beat — but the council should demand a full accounting of the industry history in public, on the record, at one of the two required meetings.

What the council should fix regardless of winner

Three defects run across the entire field and are correctable in negotiation: Bind the multi-family rate in dollars, on day one. Apartment residents make up roughly one third of Fullerton households; they have the least voice in this process, and only one bidder named a number.
Set a floor on the senior discount — a minimum percentage, protected from escalator erosion — as a condition of award. CR&R's 10% should not survive into a signed contract.
Put the SB 1383 penalty indemnity in writing, with a stated cap and a named responsible party. Every bidder promises compliance; none of those promises is worth anything without a remedy attached.
A ten-year contract with two five-year extensions is the longest commitment this council will make. The rates above compound for two decades. The time to fix the structural defects is before signature, not after.

Outbreak of West Nile Virus Confirmed

continued from front page

The CDC further notes that there are currently no licensed vaccines or medications available for either the prevention or treatment of West Nile Virus. As such, proactive measures are crucial, particularly in reducing mosquito breeding grounds. Residents are advised to empty standing water around their homes at least once a week to eliminate potential larval habitats.
To aid in mosquito control, the district offers a unique solution: free mosquitofish, which consume mosquito larvae and pupae. However, these fish are not available for direct pickup; residents must place a service request for delivery. For more information or to order mosquitofish, visit ocvector.org/request-mosquitofish
As the threat of West Nile Virus looms, the community is urged to stay vigilant in taking preventive actions to protect themselves and others. Learn more at ocvector.org

Sign up to become your neighborhood advocate

Mosquito control is a shared responsibility. Everyone must take charge of their yard and eliminate standing water and unneeded containers weekly. Help educate your neighbors by handing out informational brochures and repellent wipes. Watch the educational video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=0314W yhRAOA

FULLERTON PUBLIC LIBRARY PRESENTS

LOCAL AUTHOR FAIR 2026

NOON-4:30PM SATURDAY, AUGUST 22

Find great new fiction, nonfiction, memoirs, poetry, graphic novels, romance, and comedy, including children's books! Join us in the Conference Center at the Main Library.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

MEET ORANGE COUNTY AUTHORS WHO WANT TO SHARE THEIR WORK WITH LOCAL READERS!

Fullerton Public Library

353 W Commonwealth Ave • 714.738.6333

fullertonlibrary.org

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.
HOW TO SUBSCRIBE
Send \$39, name, & address to:
Fullerton Observer, PO Box 7051,
Fullerton, CA 92834-7051
Or sign up and pay with autopay at www.fullertonobserver.com
Distributed on the first and third Monday of every month except only once in January, July & August.

• STAFF •

- **CEO & EDITOR:** Saskia Kennedy
- **COO:** Mehul Desai
- **COPY EDITOR:** Stephen O'Connor
- **CALENDAR EDITOR:** Heather Shin
- **DISTRIBUTION:** Linda Gardner and Sue Harliss
- **PHOTOGRAPHERS:** Mike Ritto and Gaston Castellanos
- **PROOF READER:** Shawn Hanley
- **SHIPPING:** Irene Kobayashi, Marjorie Kerr, Leslie Allen and Barbara Meyer
- **SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER:** Jennifer Romero
- **YOUNG OBSERVERS EDITOR:** Tegan Yoo
- **BUSINESS REPORT:**Breanna Pineda
- **COUNCIL REPORT:** Thea Pueschel
- **EDUCATION:** Vivien Moreno
- **INTERN REPORTER:** Ethan Ferrer and Aaron Sharp
- **MENTAL HEALTH:** Jo Ann Brannock and Michelle Gottlieb
- **THEATRE REVIEW:** Angela Hatcher
- **AT HOME WITH THE HOMELESS:** Andrew Williams
- **Hits & Misses MOVIE REVIEW:** Pamela Mason Wagner
- **OUR TOWN CROSSWORD:** Valerie Brickey
- **OUT OF MY MIND:** Jon Dobrer
- **SCIENCE BEHIND IT:** Yuvika Salman
- **SENIOR LIFE:** Edith Harvath
- **VIDEO OBSERVER:** Emerson Little

HOW TO ADVERTISE

Email: ads@fullertonobserver.com, or call: (714) 525-6402

Created & Published in Fullerton by local volunteers since 1978
Published by Fullerton Observer LLC

THE NEXT ISSUE WILL BE DISTRIBUTED ON SEPTEMBER 7. NEXT DEADLINE FOR WRITERS & ADVERTISERS IS AUGUST 31.



O’Sullivans of Fullerton Make History in Ireland with Guinness World Record

The O’Sullivans of Fullerton traveled to Castletownbere, Ireland, on May 30, 2026, to attempt a Guinness World Record.

"We successfully set the record for the most people with the same surname gathered in one place, with a total of 1,848 O’Sullivans from around the world coming together. We were thrilled to be a part of this event!"

OBSERVERS AROUND THE WORLD



Left: The Observer relaxes at the Hotel Motoyo Kansuiro in Makone, Japan. Right: Taking the Fullerton Observer on a streetscape walk about in Kyoto, Japan



Fullerton Aquatics Sports Team Shines at SC Swimming Age Group Championships by Leslie Brown

The Fullerton Aquatics Sports Team (FAST) made waves at the Southern California Swimming Age Group Championships held on the weekend of July 24-25. Over 800 swimmers gathered at the Janet Evans Swim Complex in Independence Park to compete in this prestigious event.

Among the standout performances was FAST’s women’s 15 and over 400-meter freestyle relay team, which clinched victory and showcased its members’ talent. Notable athletes in attendance included Yejun Lee, who made a striking impression during the backstroke events.

For more details about the programs offered at the Janet Evans Swim Complex, such as swim lessons, lap swimming, and Summer League, interested individuals can contact Lauren Morford at lmorford@fastswimming.net or visit www.fullertonaquatics.org.

The event highlighted not only the competitive spirit of the participants but also the growing popularity of swimming in the community, bringing together young athletes and families alike to celebrate the love of the sport.



Fullerton Joint Union High School District Board Meeting July 21

by Vivien Moreno

The FJUHSD board meeting introduced Cambria Dominguez from Sunny Hills High School as the 2026/27 Student School Board Member. Ms. Dominguez will lead the districtwide Student Advisory Committee (SAC) composed of Associated Student Body (ASB) Representatives from seven of the school district’s eight schools.

ASB President and full International Baccalaureate candidate, Jaden Aguirre from Sonora High School, will serve as the Vice Chair of the SAC. The students take the same oath as the elected school board members, but student board members cast non-weighted votes on open session board issues and are not allowed to engage in closed session discussions. They provide a student point of view to topics of board business. FJUHSD trustees have stated multiple times that they enjoy interacting with the student board members as it gives them the student perspective on student priorities.

Both students thanked the board for this opportunity and said they are committed to building relationships throughout the district every day. Jayden wrapped up his thank-you speech by saying, “creating connections with others is the most important thing to do in your life.”

Public Comments

Fullerton community members and alumni requested the trustees consider naming the Fullerton Auditorium after Leo Fender. Board members cannot legally address any public comments

that cover topics not on the agenda, so they were unable to explain that, although Mr. Fender was a Fullerton Union High School alumnus and long-time Fullerton resident, the Fender Musical Instruments Corporation owns the copyrights to the Leo Fender name. This makes it legally cost-prohibitive to name any building or mascot in the community after Leo Fender.

Updating Board Policy

The four-member board approved updates to numerous board policies to align the district with updated California Education Codes and newly passed legislation. The California School Boards Association recommended the updates, and as Trustee Lauren Klatzker said, “the updates are guided by legal and ed code and are not arbitrary changes.”

Llama Purchase

The trustees approved a consent calendar that included the purchase of a \$ 3,000 llama. In researching protection practices for lambs and kids (baby goats), the various agriculture programs i the district discovered that llamas are quick to protect and raise the alarm from predators like coyotes and roaming dogs.

It will cost approximately \$300 a month to feed the llama. The prospect of the FJUHSD Llama tickled Trustee Marilyn Buchi. Agricultural students and instructors are hopeful the llama will dissuade the coyotes that roam down onto the campus sites.

Next FJUHSD board meeting:
August 4 at 6pm.

Fullerton School District Board Meeting July 27

by Vivien Moreno

Orange County Department of Education Superintendent, Dr. Stefan Bean, started the meeting by presenting the trustees with a check for \$525,000 to be paid out over three years as part of the first cohort of districts being awarded the Innovation Funding Initiative Grant.

The grant supports FSD’s Tiny Home Project, which just completed its third build, allowing the district to house three families that would otherwise be housing-challenged. This wrap-around service program combines Career Technical Education (CTE), social services, and academic support, and includes supporting the family to find more permanent housing after the school year ends.

Dr. Bean presented the check to new FSD Superintendent Dr. Gretchen Janson, saying that the Tiny Home Project builds code-compliant tiny houses “transform(ing) CTE into community impact.” Dr. Bean was particularly impressed that the students learn higher-level trade skills that will serve them throughout their lives while also serving local community housing needs.

Assistant Superintendent of Innovation and Technology Jeremy Davis thanked Eddie Carbajal, Director of Maintenance and Operations, as this department has gained responsibilities of teaching

Tiny Home families basic house care, providing repairs, and refurbishing the homes after the families move into other housing.

Superintendent Report

Dr. Gretchen Janson thanked everyone for their welcome and presented a link to share her first 100-day plan with FSD families and community. To read the nine-page document, go to: <https://www.fullertonsd.org/departments/superintendents-office>, scroll down and click on the 100-day tab.

Dr. Janson participated in summer activities with district staff and visited with many of the school sites. Dr. Janson said, “Fullerton sounds good on paper and is better in person.” She looks forward to her favorite day of the year, August 10, the first day of school.

Important dates

- **August 5:** Nicolas Junior High School is hosting a Health Fair from 4-6 pm.
- **August 5:** the last day that Nutrition Services is providing summer meals for families. FSD Nutrition Services provided over 49,000 meals to FSD families from June 1-July 17 during the Encore Summer Program.

Fisler ARC Construction

Trustees approved engaging PJHM Architects to modify the existing Arts Recreation Center (ARC) design being planned for Robert C. Fisler K-8 School. PJHM originally designed the school and is tasked with making an ARC design that blends with the existing school architecture and surrounding neighborhood. This adds \$600,000 to overall costs compared to an additional \$1-2 million if the district had requested a new design. This is a bond Measure “N”-funded project.

Community Schools update

FSD secured funding to support the eight existing district Community Schools. Due to state and federal budget modifications, the program will, as previously projected, not expand this year as previously projected. The Community Schools Program continues expanding family education programs covering student academic support, health and nutrition, and family engagement.

All FSD families are welcome to participate in any of the programs; your child does not need to be attending a particular school to participate. Contact Jenny Saul, Jenny_Saul@mysfd.org for more information. Social services provided in conjunction with the Community Schools are open to all qualified students in the district.

Next FSD board meeting: August 18 at 6pm.



REGISTER YOUR PRESCHOOLER TODAY for the 2026 - 2027 school year

PROGRAM MODEL

- ✓ State Preschool programs free to eligible families
- ✓ Tuition Based programs
- ✓ Full-day & part-day options
- ✓ Low teacher-to-child ratios
- ✓ Play & project based learning
- ✓ Diapering & toilet learning help

Scan for more information & to register





Questions?
Call our office at (714) 447-7499



Fullerton School District Helps Connect Families with Food and Essential Resources

Hundreds of Fullerton families received food, fresh produce, bottled water and essential household items on July 22 as Fullerton School District partnered with Feed the Children, Niagara Cares and Orange County United Way to host a Community Resource Rally at Pacific Drive Elementary School.

Led by the District’s Community Schools and Social Emotional Learning teams, the event helped connect 400 families with resources designed to ease financial burdens and support student well-being ahead of the beginning of the 2026-27 school year.

“We know that when families have access to nutritious food and basic necessities, students are better prepared to learn, grow and succeed,” Superintendent Gretchen Janson, Ed.D., said. “We’re grateful to partner with organizations that share our commitment to supporting children and families.”

Nearly 55% of Fullerton School District students qualify for free or reduced-price meals, making partnerships like this an important extension of the District’s efforts to support families beyond the classroom.

The collaborative effort reflects the District’s ongoing commitment to supporting students beyond the classroom by connecting families with resources that strengthen health, well-being and academic success. Check out the Dolphin Market: https://www.instagram.com/p/Da3k_ZFyHrt/

PUBLIC AWARENESS

BEFORE ATTENDING A SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
COMMUNITY MEMBERS MAY WISH TO BE AWARE
THAT ACTIONS OCCURRING AFTER PUBLIC COMMENT
MAY BE INTERPRETED IN UNEXPECTED WAYS.

THE FOLLOWING IS ONE EXCERPT FROM A LONGER CEASE-AND-DESIST LETTER THAT ADDRESSED MULTIPLE MATTERS. THIS NOTICE HIGHLIGHTS ONE SPECIFIC PASSAGE BECAUSE IT CONCERNS CONDUCT THAT COULD POTENTIALLY AFFECT ANY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING A BOARD MEETING.

"By exiting out of a private hallway, this caused fear and concern among members of the Board, staff, and community members that you intended to engage in further aggressive and disruptive conduct. As a result, a District administrator was required to follow you through the hallways to ensure the safety and security of the District facilities. While you exited the building with no further incidents, this too caused an unnecessary disruption during the Board meeting." — Excerpt from a Fullerton Joint Union High School District cease-and-desist letter dated June 5, 2026.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS ATTENDING PUBLIC MEETINGS MAY WISH TO FAMILIARIZE THEMSELVES WITH DISTRICT EXPECTATIONS REGARDING MOVEMENT WITHIN DISTRICT FACILITIES BEFORE AND AFTER BOARD MEETINGS.



Photo by Timothy Norris, provided courtesy of the LA Phil

Lucy Alo Acuña, a Rising
Hollywood Bowl Star

by Dahlia, 8th Grade

Lucy Alo Acuña’s performance during “Broadway Night at the Hollywood Bowl” was made possible by winning a competition. The Hollywood Bowl announced an open-call audition for anyone older than 18. Acuña’s mother saw the post on Instagram and encouraged her daughter to apply. Little did Acuña know this opportunity would change her career. The “Broadway at the Bowl Spotlight Competition” required auditioners to sing one song from Les Misérables.

According to Acuña, it was “a fairly simple audition.” There were over 500 entries, with only six performers invited to audition again. From there, the performer who stood out the most to the judges was chosen to sing at the opening night of the Hollywood Bowl summer concerts. When she found out she had won, Acuña was “overwhelmed with joy and so grateful.”

It was a whirlwind weekend for Acuña: her audition was Thursday, June 18, her only rehearsal—at the Walt Disney Concert Hall—was Friday, June 19, and the Hollywood Bowl performance was Saturday, June 20.

Acuña performed in front of 18,000 people alongside Broadway greats including Darren Criss from “Glee,” Renée Elise Goldsberry from “Hamilton,” Halle Bailey from the live-action Disney film “The Little Mermaid,” Brian Stokes Mitchell from “Man of La Mancha” and, of course, Lea Salonga, known for starring in many Broadway productions and voicing the Disney princesses Mulan and Jasmine.

The moment she stepped onto the stage, the only thing going through Acuña’s mind was, “Do not trip.” She was wearing four-inch heels and a long dress, which “could have ended quite badly.” Once she reached center stage, Acuña allowed herself ten seconds to

be nervous. However, once the number began, “the audience was so supportive,” so she decided to “not let [her] nerves take away from the performance.”

A standing ovation awaited Acuña at the end of her rendition of “On My Own.” This was the most memorable moment for her: when her final note reverberated through the crowd, the backstage crew turned on all the house lights, and she was able to see the staggering number of people applauding.

“It felt surreal,” since she had never performed for a crowd so large before, and Acuña said, “It took my breath away.”

Acuña has been a performer since the age of five, and singing “is like drinking water or walking” to her. She began taking singing lessons at the beginning of her sophomore year of high school and has performed in a variety of musicals, from small school stages to regional theater.

Recently, Acuña took on the lead role of Kim in “Miss Saigon” at the Short North Stage Theater in Columbus, Ohio. She put her heart and soul into interpreting and honoring the character. It is her favorite role she has ever performed because it “changed her point of view on strong women during the Vietnam War” and taught her how to portray a “good mother in a challenging time.” Before “Miss Saigon,” Acuña graduated from the College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) at the University of Cincinnati. At CCM, she performed as Beth in “Little Women,” Crissy in “Hair,” Louise in “Sunday in the Park with George” and as a member of the ensemble in “Cinderella.”

When people look back on Acuña singing at the Hollywood Bowl, she wants them to remember that “talent does not have to come just from Los Angeles or New York; it can come from anywhere.”

Freshman Year
Doesn't Have to Be Scary

by Olive, 11th Grade



High school can be a scary place, but I promise it’s not as bad as you think. Here are a few tips I wish I had known as an incoming freshman!

First, while it may sound boring, organization is key. By using a planner, your Notes app or a pen and paper, you’ll already be ahead of the game. Staying organized helps you keep track of assignments, deadlines and tests. It also makes balancing homework, extracurricular activities, and your personal life much less stressful.

Next, talk to new people! Coming from a smaller middle school, I worried that high school would feel big and intimidating. But getting to know people, branching out and making new friends makes a huge difference. Join clubs, sports teams or ASB, as they’re

all great ways to meet other students. Don’t be afraid to introduce yourself to someone sitting next to you in class. You might end up making a lifelong friend!

Lastly, have fun. High school is about working hard and taking challenging classes, but there are also plenty of ways to make your freshman year memorable. Go to football games, school dances and after-school activities, and make time to hang out with your friends.

Remember that high school isn’t just about your grades. It’s about discovering your interests, making memories and growing as a person.

Don’t stress too much about high school. You’ll do great.

A Summer Exploration of Business,
Finance and Real Estate

by Yoyo, 9th Grade



For many high schoolers, taking on a summer internship is a great way to gain real-world experience in their field of interest. This summer, rising senior Vivi Ni is gaining business experience through her internship at TAT Property Management, a property management firm.

Vivi discovered the internship opportunity through her counselor, who recommended her to the team at TAT. Her interest in business led her to reach out to the firm and eventually meet the team over a video call, where she shared her desire to expand her knowledge of real estate and finance. During her internship, Vivi worked on numerous projects that required her to explore a variety of fields within the business.

Part of TAT’s business strategy is to look for run-down properties on bidding sites, renovate them and put them back on the market at a higher price. One of Vivi’s main responsibilities was searching bidding sites for properties worth investing in. She also made calls to associates, created marketing materials and even designed a new website for the firm.

For Vivi, one of the most interesting parts of her internship was learning about the many aspects of real estate.

“When I think of real estate, I just think of selling homes, but it’s so much more than that! House flipping, for instance, is a huge industry, and there are so many intricacies—like maintaining relationships with banks to have easier access to properties and making sure tenants at rental properties are happy—to keep in mind,” she says.

Another memorable part of Vivi’s

internship was getting to know the supportive team at TAT, who welcomed her and made her feel at home. While Vivi’s internship introduced her to the fascinating world of real estate and allowed her to form connections with her coworkers, it also challenged her in ways that helped her grow as a business professional.

“I had to make sure that I dedicated enough time to each task every day in order to complete my projects on time. Being able to efficiently manage my time and switch between different projects was definitely difficult at first, but I slowly got into the rhythm of it.”

Vivi urges other students looking for experience outside the classroom to start by reaching out to people and using their connections to find an internship they are genuinely interested in.

“Don’t be afraid! Talk to as many people as possible. Cold email them. Talk to your existing connections and ask about internship opportunities related to your field. It’s also so important to find something that you are interested in because you don’t want to be stuck or pigeonholed into an internship you have no interest in whatsoever. The point of an internship is to take something away from it,” she says.

For students interested in finding an internship, reaching out to teachers, friends, mentors or even searching online is a great place to start. Finding a suitable and fulfilling internship is an excellent opportunity to grow and develop skills that may benefit you in your future career.

Eric Kim, DMD:Family Dentistry

Thoughtful dentistry
in a welcoming environment.

501 N Cornell Ave Ste. 1, Fullerton
(714) 992-0092



“I saw you in the Fullerton Observer.”

FEATURING: WOMEN OWNED BUSINESSES IN FULLERTON

Sip & Savor: A Coffee Haven
Born from Passion

by Breanna Pineda

When passing by W Wilshire Ave, you will be sure to see a busy coffee shop with people walking in and out with uniquely designed drinks in hand.

While today Sip & Savor serves as a coffee shop perfect for getting drinks and hanging out with friends, it originally started with Linda Mun’s passion for coffee creation. At the time, she had her hands full with two sons, yet she had the idea of a coffee shop brewing in her mind.

Once both her kids were old enough to attend school, Linda decided to commit to making her dreams of having a coffee shop a reality.

“I wanted to create a place where someone can relax and reboot; a coffee shop is perfect for that,” she said.

It is clear when walking into Sip & Savor that Linda’s vision was accomplished. You are greeted with warm colors, peaceful music, and the chatter of people who are enjoying the shop’s coffee and matcha.

Aside from the welcoming environment, Sip & Savor also stands out among coffee shops because of its distinctly crafted drinks with unique flavors and designs. A favorite among customers is the Tiramisu Latte, which comes with a creamy tiramisu foam and a ladyfinger biscuit nestled in the drink.

When creating the drink, Linda tried multiple different ratios and ingredients to get the latte to taste like a tiramisu cake. Her main ingredient for this taste was mascarpone cheese, which is used to make tiramisu cake.

“We do not want to use fake stuff to mimic a tiramisu taste, and I think the main component of a tiramisu cake is the cheese and not just the heavy cream and flavoring,” she said.

She emphasized that special coffee options allow Sip & Savor to attract customers as the demand for coffee places in Fullerton grows.

“We needed something that made us stand out from others. I think it is important to have something signature on the menu that no other coffee shops can mimic,” she said.

The shop is also known for its matcha drinks, such as their Strawberry Matcha Latte. While Sip & Savor has always offered matcha, Linda notes that she has seen a stark increase in customers’ interest in the drink.

“In the past year and a half or two, the matcha popularity has increased tremendously! Sometimes to a point

where it’s like, is this a matcha specialty store or coffee specialty store?” she laughs.

With this sudden increase in matcha, she has made sure her business does not neglect the growth in the drink’s popularity, and aims to ensure customers are satisfied.

“I wanted to make sure we serve the highest quality matchas and not something cheap, so we have tested so many different matchas,” she said, “we have gone through so many trials and errors with vendors and flavor creations.”

However, Linda shared that small businesses also must be aware of what prices customers are willing to pay, especially since a large portion of her customer base is college students and young people with only so much to spend. Thus, she often has to consider which quality ingredients will be worth buying.

“Something that can be sold for eight or nine dollars in Los Angeles can not be charged at the same price here,” she said. “Demographically we are close to college campuses. So I don’t think I can be charging those prices even if the business would make greater profit. I have to think about the pockets of college students as well.”

This focus on unique flavors has also resulted in Sip & Savor frequently getting social media attention. When looking at Sip & Savor’s online presence, the business frequently posts eye-catching images and videos displaying the beverage options.

Linda shared a story from when Sip & Savor first opened in 2023, when she was trying to promote the business; however, after a post from an online creator gained popularity, she noticed Sip & Savor’s customer base grew.

“Social media is a good marketing tactic and a good way to get people excited about your business,” she said.

Despite this, Linda is weary of following social media’s ever-changing trends and strives to have her business have high-quality drinks regardless of online attention. As a result of Sip & Savor’s commitment to quality, the business has kept its new audience from social media coming back for more.

“Sip & Savor’s popularity has to do with consistency in our drinks and not going along with the trends,” she said.

Although the shop is constantly bustling with people, there are many stressful aspects that come with running an independent coffee shop that customers do not see.



Linda with a few Sip & Savors baristas. From left to right- Ky, Tricia, Linda, and Madeline. Sip & Savor is located on 106 W Wilshire Ave. Open 7am - 7pm Monday through Saturday and 8am - 6pm Sunday

Linda described having to create a network of other specialty coffee shop owners in the area that she can reach out to when things break down or vice versa.

“We had the espresso machine break down on us, and it took forever getting the parts,” she said. “I was very fortunate enough to have a friend of mine who owns a coffee shop loan us one of their espresso machines. But if I had not known anyone, I do not know how I could have hopped over that hurdle.”

Now with almost three years as a business owner, Linda feels better equipped to handle situations where machines break down, or an emergency occurs.

“If there is nothing that can be done at the moment, then we have to be honest with the customers,” she said. “I am very grateful because this community has been nothing but generous and patient; we have not had too many customers who have given us difficult situations.”

Looking ahead, Linda plans to expand Sip & Savor to another location in the upcoming years. However, her goal is to ensure her business continues to offer its quality coffee and matcha options even in a new location. She also continues to experiment with different recipes and create new drinks, testing new drinks with customers and baristas.

“If I am not 100% satisfied with the taste, I will not put it out. I have to have the confidence to know that our customers will enjoy it,” she said, “There is no way I could satisfy everyone’s taste buds, but if I made 90% of customers happy, I succeeded.”



Mark 12:31

ALL PRO BUILDERS, INC.
Lic. #809158

- Room Additions
- ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units)
- Kitchen & Bath Remodeling
- Whole House Remodels
- Doors & Windows
- Countertops
- Designs & Plans

714.255.0131
allprobuildersinc.com

Tree Service, Lighting, Irrigation Turf

Save 20% off on First Service
New Customers Only

(714) 869-2247

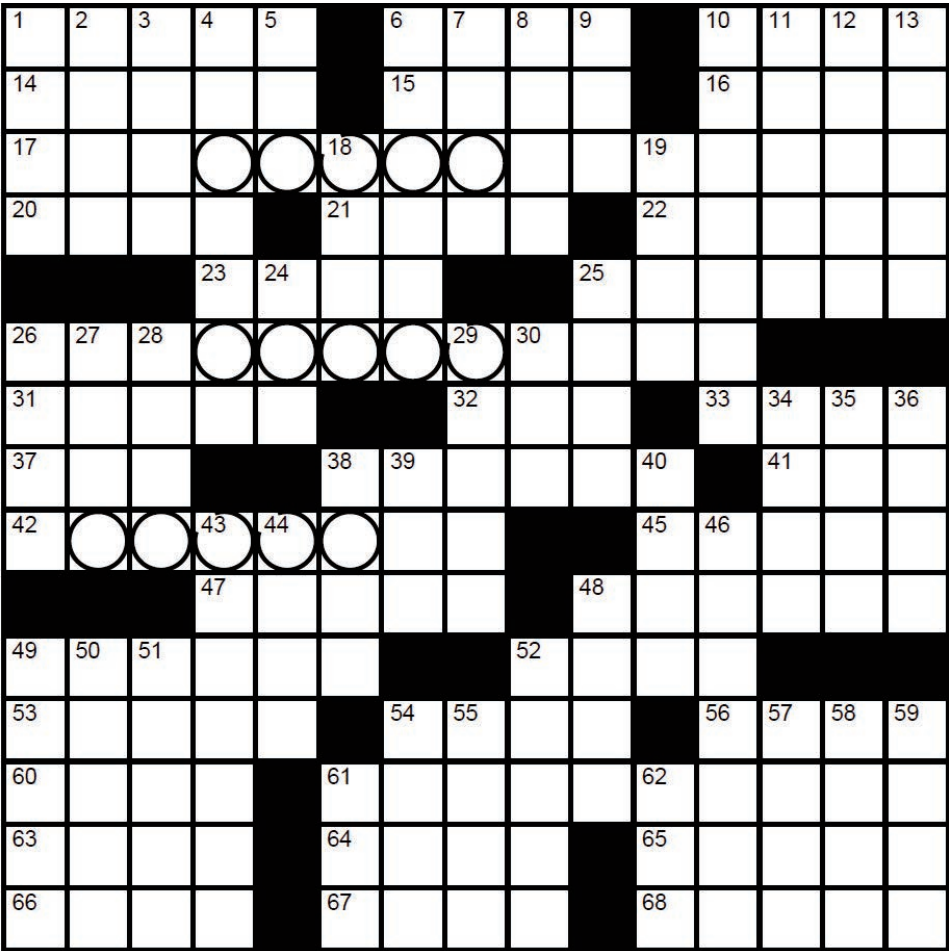
Perfecto's Landscaping



“I saw you in the Fullerton Observer.”
Say it when you visit restaurants, shop local, or attend community events.

OUR TOWN CROSSWORD © 2026

"WORK IT" by Valerie Brickey (answer key on page 19)



ACROSS

1. Defeats soundly

6. Green type of 6-Down

10. Rom-___ (some film fare)

14. Nepal neighbor

15. Wicked

16. "Hot cross buns! ___ penny, two..."

17. Get ___ (easy friendship)

20. Abbr. before the ZIP code 10001

21. Marries

22. Skedaddle

23. Peacock's pride

25. Refused

26. Desserting?

31. "I Got ___": Jim Croce hit

32. ___ de Triomphe

33. Supply-and-demand subj.

37. ___ appeal

38. Summer Olympics debut of 2021

41. Donkey Kong or King Kong

42. Startling sound in the forest
45. Grammy-winning singer Morris

47. Not quite right

48. Breath spray brand

49. Mercury, for one

52. Defense grp.

53. ___ one's bets

54. Quick trip

56. Arborist's concern

60. Harbinger

Four-to-midnight work period, and a literal hint to the circled letters

61.

63. Another name for the "Big Easy"

64. Track assignment

65. Hoists up

66. "Don't be so hard ___!"

67. Small bills

68. Type of person who frequents 59-Down

DOWN

1. "Knives Out" writer/director Johnson

2. Kind of child

3. Japanese noodle

4. "A Christmas Carol" boy

5. Give in to gravity

6. Gemstones

7. Enthusiastic

8. Darkens

9. Type of 56-Across

10. To the point

11. "I swear!"

12. Honeydew, e.g.

13. Direct at, as remarks

18. A hearty swallow

19. "___ on the roof and kicked off the moss": lyric in Elton John's "Your Song"

24. "Wheel of Fortune" purchase

25. Breakaway group

26. Sunrise direction

27. From the top

28. Prepare for takeoff

29. Distorts

30. Baseball stat

34. When doubled, a type of orange

35. Oil grp.

36. "99 Luftballons" artist

38. Make mittens

39. Small batteries

40. Radiate
43. "___ Style," first video with a billion YouTube views

44. Bob Hoskins's role in "Hook"

46. Bar request

48. Attention getter

49. Stereo receiver button

50. Problem vehicle

51. Singer known for numerically titled albums

52. Dressing extreme?

54. The ugly duckling, eventually

55. Type of 56-Across

57. Falling out

58. Newts

59. Crafter's website

61. ___-mo replay

62. ___ Na Na

HITS & MISSES

by Pamela Mason Wagner © 2026



THE INVITE: A HIT AND A MISS

Olivia Wilde’s third feature—a comedy that wrings laughter from uncomfortable truths — tackles a marriage that has seen better days. Joe (Seth Rogen), a burned-out band director, seethes over life's small frustrations. Memories of his younger days as a guitarist in an indie band haunt him. Angela (Olivia Wilde), an art school graduate turned overcontrolling stay-at-home mom, wonders if there's more to life than perfectly curated middle-class domesticity.

Renovating their San Francisco apartment consumes most of Angela's creative energy. Joe either fails to notice her exquisite taste or bristles whenever another purchase arrives.

They argue about money — a likely stand-in for the fact that they haven't had sex in a year. It takes the couple upstairs — Pina (a bottle-blond Penélope Cruz) and Hawk (Edward Norton) — to shake them out of their rut.

A hastily planned dinner party occupies the rest of the film. Adapted from a stage play by Cesc Gay (and it shows), the movie never leaves Joe and Angela's apartment.

Before long, I found myself wishing we'd pop upstairs to Pina and Hawk's place, if only for a change of scenery. While the script steadily peels back the layers of its characters, the performances are the real reason to see the film. It is unmistakably an actor's film.

Rogen is the standout. Once he drops the smart-aleck persona he uses as emotional armor, he reveals a dramatic depth not seen before.

Cruz is luminous as ever, while Norton strikes an appealing balance between swagger and vulnerability. Wilde gives the broadest performance, portraying Angela's anxious need to please with almost painful intensity.

As the couples get to know each other, secrets emerge, and lifestyles are compared. Alcohol and marijuana loosen tongues.

When Angela and Hawk slip away to admire her newly remodeled bathroom — a "renovation without change" — we can't help wondering if it's a metaphor for her marriage.

Meanwhile, Pina shares a joint with Joe in his home music studio, and the simple pleasure of finding someone genuinely interested in his old stories rekindles something in him. Pina is a psychotherapist and sexologist, and before the evening ends, we discover just how much spice she and Hawk enjoy in their noisy romantic escapades.

After all, the apartment walls are anything but soundproof.

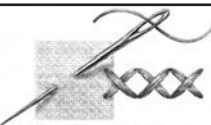
Many films have explored love rekindled when an attractive stranger pays attention to someone else's neglected partner. “The Bishop's Wife” (1947) comes to mind, with Cary Grant as the charming angel who nearly sweeps Loretta Young off her feet while her distracted husband (David Niven) obsesses over building a cathedral.

A whiff of Woody Allen permeates the film: the use of music, the fascination with the role sex plays in our lives, and the dual role of director-star. The Rodgers and Hart standard "Isn't It Romantic?" opens and closes this movie, just as it appeared memorably in “Hannah and Her Sisters” (1986). Joe also resembles the curmudgeonly intellectual Allen often portrays. But as with Allen's uneven body of work, this film never reaches the sparkling wit or comic energy of Wilde's terrific 2019 debut, “Booksmart.”

• TWO HITS: Don't Miss it!

• A HIT & A MISS: You Might Like it.

• TWO MISSES: Don't Bother.



Golden Stitches Embroidery

Transforma cualquier artículo con bordado exquisito y personalizado. Llámanos hoy y permítenos dar vida a tu visión en hilo.

714.213.1192

golden61@sbcglobal.net

Get Top Dollar with My Home Prep



jacki O

the first lady of real estate

I Can Help You!

(714)402-9155

FlipItYourself.com

tng

real estate

Orzechowski DRE Lic. #o1115908

A Great Place to Stay Active: The Fullerton Community Center by Jeanette Reese and Katie Gobar

Retirement is a seductive concept, like walking through a beautiful forest — that is, until we reach the end of our working lives and realize we have to create a whole new life. For anyone born in 1960 or later, Social Security now sets "full retirement age" at 67, so that forest arrives later than it did for our parents.

How do we use all this time that is suddenly available? Luckily, our city has options, and one of the best organizations we can turn to is the Fullerton Community Center, which houses the Senior Citizens Club of Fullerton.

We are not a small crowd. According to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, roughly 20,500 Fullerton residents — about one in seven of us — are 65 or older.

It was August of 1958 when a group of senior citizens came together to propose a senior club, an effort led by a gentleman by the name of John Stickland. Their proposal to the City Council was readily accepted, a building was built, and by August 21 of 1960, the Fullerton Senior Club opened its doors. The club has been meeting ever since — sixty-six years and counting — and was later incorporated as the Senior Citizens Club of Fullerton, the nonprofit name it still carries today.

At the time, there was no entertainment, so some of the members started a "kitchen band." The only true instru-

ment was a piano, but the Kitchen Band recruited until the group included washboards, egg beaters, pots and pans, funnels, and wooden spoons!

The building the club meets in now is not the one that opened in 1960. In October 2012, the city opened the current 60,000-square-foot Fullerton Community Center at 340 W Commonwealth Avenue, on the edge of Amerige Park. Then-Mayor Sharon Quirk-Silva cut the ribbon before a large crowd.

The idea was deliberately intergenerational: rather than keeping youth in one building and seniors in another, the city folded the Boys & Girls Club, the Senior Center, and Parks & Recreation programs under a single roof. The result includes a 5,000-square-foot Grand Hall with a performance stage and full kitchen, a regulation gymnasium, an indoor 25-yard pool, arts and crafts rooms, and an outdoor courtyard.

Currently, the Senior Citizens Club of Fullerton sponsors enough events and activities to keep a senior busy through much of the year. There is Bingo, Creative Coloring, Karaoke, Needlecraft, and a Walking Group, among other activities. These seniors don't limit themselves to local events. They also organize trips.

Retirement is a seductive concept ... until we hit 65 and realize we have to create a whole new life.

The Club office is open Monday through Thursday from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm and Friday from 9:00 am to noon, and the travel office is open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. Both can be reached at (714) 738-6575 or (714) 738-5306. The Club is also looking for senior volunteers — ask at the Club office.

The Fullerton Community Center provides a wide array of opportunities and assistance to seniors. Fun activities include Chair Yoga, Pickleball, Table Tennis, and Longevity Stick Balance, plus a Senior Drum Circle on the second and fourth Thursday of each month, a Senior Ukulele Jam on the first and third Thursday, and a Sing-A-Long on the third Thursday, all from 4:00 to 5:15 pm.

Two of the most critical services are related to food. In partnership with Meals on Wheels Orange County, lunch is served in person Monday through Friday from 11:00 to 11:30 am. And in partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank, free groceries are distributed on the first, second, and third Thursday of each month, from 10:30 am to noon, while supplies last. Bring bags — insulated ones are best — or a cart to carry everything home. It's not always easy being a senior, but

being hungry should never be part of a senior's life, yet for some it is.

The Fullerton Community Center gives a lot to the community, and as residents, we can give back. It's time for a fun event to close out the summer: set aside Thursday, September 24th from 2:00 to 5:00 pm to attend the upcoming Senior Follies! Watch your fellow seniors sing, dance, or play instruments.

The Follies has come a long way in a short time. The first one, presented by Parks & Recreation on May 19, 2023, drew more than 100 people for 28 acts by seniors from Fullerton and the surrounding area — a Korean drum team, a hula group, belly dancers, swing dancers, and a band called The Jammers among them, with Lew Dentler as master of ceremonies. It has since become an annual September tradition.

You can cheer for your friends, but more importantly, you can get out of the house and engage in socializing, one of the most important activities a senior brain can do. That isn't just folk wisdom: the Lancet Commission on dementia prevention lists social isolation among the modifiable risk factors linked to dementia risk, alongside things like hearing loss, physical inactivity, and depression. Showing up matters.

Fullerton Community Center
340 West Commonwealth Avenue.

Council Chooses Deepest Cuts continued from from page

Deficit reduced from \$13.7 to \$3.8 million

Interim Finance Director Steven Avalos told the council the city had already whittled down a shortfall that stood at \$13.7 million in March to \$3.8 million — the second installment of a budget discussion that began at a July 14 study session.

The gap was closed, Avalos said, through roughly \$4.1 million in additional revenue and transfers and \$5.8 million in spending reductions. Those reductions include unfunding nine vacant full-time positions, cutting community programming — among them a fireworks-only Fourth of July and reductions to First Night — and trimming graffiti-removal and security services.

Avalos described the city's problem as structural, meaning recurring costs are outpacing recurring revenue. He pointed to rising salaries, climbing CalPERS pension costs and unfunded liability that grows each year, while sales tax and other revenues stay flat. Property tax, the city's largest revenue source, remains stable, he said, but cannot keep pace on its own.

Under Scenario C, the city would hold its reserve level near 10 percent, compared with a drop to roughly 3 percent under the least aggressive option.

in reserves, when we have horrible city services and not enough police," she said.

Zahra likened the decision to treating a patient. "You start with the most conservative approach," he said. "You don't go straight gutting their entire organs."

Mayor Pro Tem Nicholas Dunlap seconded the motion for Scenario C but was sharply critical of the process that led there, saying an effort that began as an expected audit had become "a dumpster fire." He argued the option was "really the only choice tonight" because it buys the city a few years to work out of its deficit.

Staff and departments padding the books

Zahra zeroed in on the workers' compensation and liability reserves. Finally, staff said they hold roughly \$29 million combined, including about \$10 million above what is set aside for anticipated claims.

The city manager acknowledged that "at least a million" could likely be tapped from those funds for a one-year period, calling it preferable to "defunding positions and actual services from something that we're just holding on to for anything anticipated."

Charles said she favored the least severe option paired with additional revenue. "I find it so galling to have money in reserves, millions of dollars

SIGN UP FOR OUR E-NEWSLETTER!

FULLERTON MUSEUM CENTER

AND BE THE FIRST TO KNOW ABOUT

EXHIBITS

EVENTS

& MORE!

Scan the QR code to sign up! Please look out for a second authentication email to confirm.

OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE CSUF

Join Us on Saturday, AUGUST 8 Starting at 9:00AM

OLLI Lifelong Learning Institute Open House

Learn, connect, and thrive...together!

Exhibits, Refreshments, Entertainment

Questions? Call us: 657- 278-2446 Learn more at olli.fullerton.edu/about/

SCAN

Year-round offerings Youth and Adult Swim Lessons Red Cross Lifeguarding Classes Water Aerobics, and indoor family fun swimming

for more info and updates visit fullertonaquatics.org or follow us on Instagram @fullertonswimshere

Sign up here!

Exploring Dual Paths: Dr. Ahmad Zahra’s Journey from Filmmaking to City Council

by Ethan Ferrer

Recently, I interviewed Fullerton City Council Member Dr. Ahmad Zahra, who represents District Five. In recent years, many have come to know him for his municipal work, but he also dedicates his time to his independent film production company, Zahra Pictures. In fact, he has lately helped produce a film that is now in post-production. But how does a filmmaker find the drive to become a city representative? What is the connection between his dual paths?

As with most people, everything began in his childhood.

Zahra initially grew up in England, but later moved to Syria. He described moving there as a “culture shift.” The language, customs, laws, traditions, and people were all different compared to what he was once comfortable with. He had to cross a great divide without any proper bridge to ease the journey—or at least, that would be true if it were not for his interest in film.

In England, Zahra had always been fascinated with films, especially horror movies, loving how the medium could present fascinating worlds to its audience. This fascination stayed with him after he moved to Syria, and slowly films became the bridge that he needed to adjust to his new life. Films allowed him to escape and return briefly to his life in England, allowing him to hold onto a home that otherwise would have been lost.

“Films evolved from a fascination in my early childhood into a source of escapism for me. I wanted to be someone who could create those worlds where others could come, enjoy themselves, and find solace,” Zahra said.

But despite his passionate interest in films, Zahra wasn’t yet fully dedicated to movie production. He came from a family of doctors and public servants, and after taking the national exam following his high school graduation, he was matched with Damascus University Medical School. But Zahra was not sure if medicine was the best path for him.

So after communicating with the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts when he was seventeen, Zahra asked his father if he could study film back in

England. His father laughed it off, but told him that he could pursue film after finishing his medical studies at Damascus University.

After achieving a medical degree, Zahra traveled to the United States to pursue medicine but found an opportunity to pursue filmmaking in California—and he took it.

Around this time, Zahra visited a film producer whom he had admired growing up. Hoping that he would have a mentor who would help him rise in the entertainment industry, Zahra enthusiastically approached him—only to be disappointed.

“I went to my meeting with him, thinking he could help me a little bit, teach me or mentor me, but he didn’t. I was rejected. So instead I asked him for advice, and he told me, ‘When you make a movie, worry more about getting the credit than the money.’ And he told me, since I was starting later than most producers, to get things done quickly.”

Zahra’s first break into Hollywood was as an intern at a film distribution company until being hired full-time. There, he learned skills in film distribution, while taking night classes in film and studying Film and TV at UCLA. Later, the company eventually helped him to find a job at Fox Searchlight as an assistant producer.

Some time later, at Fox Searchlight, Zahra asked a producer what it took to be successful in Hollywood. “She said, Ahmad, there is no such thing. No one’s gonna give you anything, [so] go outside of the system and make a movie.”

Zahra took this advice to heart. He eventually quit his job at Fox Searchlight, seeking to establish his own film company. For his first project,



Film maker, producer, doctor, and city councilmember Dr. Ahmad Zahra out shooting film in Fullerton

ect, he wanted to make a horror film, seeking to honor the many films that had captured his imagination in his childhood. And so, with a budget of \$200,000 for the film, everything seemed set for production.

Then, everything changed.

On September 11, 2001, terrorists from the Islamic militant group Al Qaeda struck the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. In the aftermath, the work of Middle Eastern producers became discriminated against, and Zahra’s worldview changed. Shortly after the attacks, an interfaith group

approached Zahra about producing a video to advertise their work in Mexico, where they were building housing to help families in need. Zahra saw an opportunity—not to advertise, but to make an impression upon people’s hearts.

“It dawned on me at that point that all my life I had been not only finding escapism within films, but films were also shaping my perspective,” Zahra said. “I realized that ... I was watching Arabs being portrayed ... with negative stereotypes, and that was the image of myself that I was absorbing. In short, the events of September 11 allowed me to have a deeper understanding of the importance of film in influencing people and their perspectives.”

Rather than filming a promotional video, Zahra filmed a documentary, titled “On Common Grounds.” It was a decent success, winning several awards and airing on the Hallmark Channel. After that, Zahra continued to create films that focused on the stories about diverse cultures building bridges

between communities. His most notable works are the aforementioned documentary “On Common Grounds” and the feature films “Three Veils” and “American East,” which MGM distributed. Zahra mentored film and theater students at CSUF and Fullerton College, hiring them as actors and interns while also helping to raise funds for their own short films.

Zahra, driven by a desire to showcase stories that highlighted activism and community struggles, wanted to contribute further to his community. In 2018, he ran for Fullerton City Council, seeking to represent District Five. Although he was told that his Middle Eastern origins were unlikely to win over the majority Hispanic population of District Five, he was elected nonetheless, becoming the first openly LGBTQ Muslim to be elected to public office in the U.S. He is currently finishing his second term on the Fullerton City Council, and has announced that he will not be running for re-election.

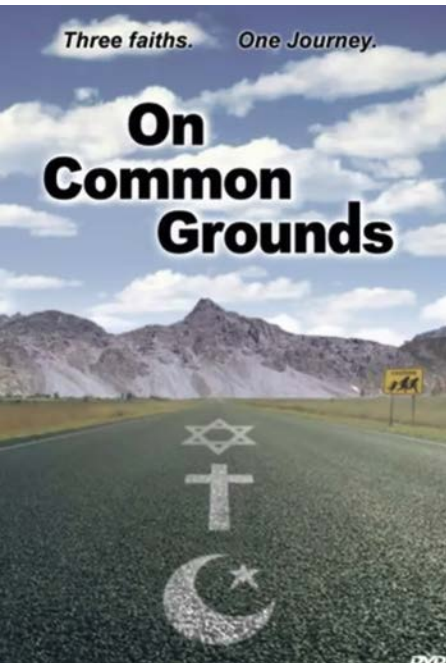
After the end of his term, Zahra plans to continue his path as a film producer.

Zahra’s story is one of breaking the status quo and building bridges for himself and others to cross. He became a filmmaker in a family of doctors and public servants, produced films and media in the aftermath of 9/11 in a time when his name became seemingly undesirable, and was elected to public office amidst an unfamiliar demographic. His story is an American one, one in which he pursued his passion and dreams, despite the odds.

When asked what advice he would give to new and aspiring artists, Zahra offered the following:

“Arm yourself with knowledge. Seek out opportunities to gain practical experience, even if it’s unpaid. The only way to truly learn is by experiencing it firsthand. Never give up on your dreams, and don’t let anyone tell you that you can’t achieve your goals. Rejection only makes you stronger.”

You can learn more about Zahra’s films including trailers at: <https://www.zahrapictures.com>



LOU CORREA

REPRESENTATIVE for CALIFORNIA'S 46TH DISTRICT

OLDER ADULT CONGRESSIONAL COLLABORATIVE

Session II: Health & Wellness

A Positive Approach to Aging!

Plus Special Guests & Resources

Friday, August 7, 2026

9 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Check-In: 8:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.

Downtown Anaheim Community Center

250 E. Center Street

SAVE THE DATE

(Topics will be selected by Collaborative members.)

- Session III: October 2, 2026
- Session IV: December 4, 2026

If you are interested in attending Rep. Correa's Older Adult Congressional Collaborative, please email Janet.Brown2@mail.house.gov or call 714-559-6190.

Thank you! You keep us printing by subscribing and advertising.

AUGUST

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

—COMMUNITY—
5:00 to 7:00pm: National Night Out: The Fullerton Police Department hosts its annual event to build ties between officers and residents, with activities and a chance to meet neighbors and learn about community resources. Downtown Fullerton Plaza
125 E Wilshire Ave., Fullerton

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

—CONCERT—
7:30 pm: \$40: Marty Isenberg: Eclectic, quirky, and always intriguing, Marty Isenberg’s debut album "The Way I Feel Inside. Mr. Isenberg will be joined by his stellar ensemble of rising stars as they perform music from his concept album live. The Muckenthaler Cultural Center
1201 W. Malvern Ave, Fullerton 714-738-6595
themuck.org



7 Friday

—MUSIC—
6:30 to 8:30pm: Friday Night Live: The Remix Band. Funk, R&B and New Jack Swing Night. Aug 14: The Stone Soul Band; Aug 21: POP Vision; Aug 28: Pistol Blonde. Fullerton Sports Complex
560 Silver Pine St., Fullerton
6:45 to 9:30pm: Light the Mic – Youth Takeover: Fullerton Museum Center
301 N. Pomona Ave., Fullerton

8 Saturday

—HISTORY—
1:00-4:00pm: Town & Gown - America at 250: Celebrate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution with an engaging multimedia program featuring two distinguished scholars. An afternoon of history, film, and a lively Q&A. No registration required. Fullerton Public Library
353 W Commonwealth Ave, Fullerton (714) 738-6326

9 Sunday

—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

10 Monday

—HEALTH—
9:00 to 10:00am: Adult Zumba: Free, all fitness levels, every Monday and Wednesday. Also today,
10:00 to 11:00am: Community Meeting: Held the second Monday monthly. CSUF Center for Healthy Neighborhoods
(714) 441-3401

11 Tuesday

—SENIORS—
6:00pm: Tuesday Evening Dance: Fee-based social dance at the senior center. Fullerton Community Center
340 W. Commonwealth Ave. (714) 738-6575



12 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

13 Thursday

—MARKET—
4:30 to 8:30pm: Fullerton Night Market: Every Thursday 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
August 13: Last Call OC
125 E Wilshire Ave., Fullerton (657) 683-4661

14 Friday

—NATURE—
5:30 to 7:30pm-\$5: Arboretum After Hours: Stroll through the garden, sample fruit, listen to live Jazz. CSUF Arboretum & Botanical Garden
1900 Associated Rd., Fullerton (657) 278-3407

15 Saturday

—THEATER—
8:00pm-\$33: Plan 9 From Outer Space: Brian Newell’s stage adaptation of the Ed Wood screenplay widely called the worst movie ever made. Playing Aug 15, 21, 22, 28 and 29 at 8:00pm; Aug 16 and 23 at 7:00pm. Maverick Theater
110 E. Walnut Ave., Unit B, Fullerton (714) 526-7070
mavericktheater.com

—ART CLASS—
10:00am: Drawing for Beginners with Orange County Art Group \$59: This beginner-friendly drawing workshop is designed for anyone who wants to build confidence with a pencil whether you're just getting started or picking drawing back up after some time away. Sign up at *orangecountyartgroup.com*
Downtown Fullerton at the Night Owl

16 Sunday

—THEATER—
7:00pm-\$33: Plan 9 From Outer Space: Maverick Theater
110 E. Walnut Ave., Unit B, Fullerton (714) 526-7070



17 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

—SENIORS—
12:00 to 4:00pm: Medicare Counseling (HICAP): Four appointments available; call the front desk to schedule. English only. Fullerton Community Center
340 W. Commonwealth Ave. (714) 738-6575

18 Tuesday

—SENIORS—
1:00 to 3:00pm: Alzheimer’s Support Group.: Sponsored by Alzheimer’s Orange County. Fullerton Community Center
(714) 738-6575

19 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

20 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 20: Lover Sonicos
Museum Plaza
125 E Wilshire Ave., Fullerton (657) 683-4661

—MOVIE—
4:00 pm: American Graffiti (1973): A group of teenagers in California's central valley spend one final night after their 1962 high school graduation cruising the strip with their buddies before they pursue their varying goals. Fullerton Public Library
353 W Commonwealth Ave, Fullerton (714) 738-6333



21 Friday

—THEATER—
8:00pm-\$33: Plan 9 From Outer Space: Brian Newell’s stage adaptation of the Ed Wood screenplay widely called the worst movie ever made. Playing Aug 21, 22, 28 and 29 at 8:00pm; Aug 16 and 23 at 7:00pm. Maverick Theater
110 E. Walnut Ave., Unit B, Fullerton (714) 526-7070
mavericktheater.com

22 Saturday

—THEATER—
8:00pm-\$33: Plan 9 From Outer Space: Brian Newell’s stage adaptation of the Ed Wood screenplay widely called the worst movie ever made. Playing Aug 22, 28 and 29 at 8:00 pm; Aug 16 and 23 at 7:00 pm. Maverick Theater
110 E. Walnut Ave., Unit B, Fullerton (714) 526-7070
mavericktheater.com

23 Sunday

—THEATER—
7:00pm-\$33: Plan 9 From Outer Space: Brian Newell’s stage adaptation of the Ed Wood screenplay widely called the worst movie ever made. Playing Aug 21, 22, 28 and 29 at 8:00pm; Aug 23 at 7:00 pm. Maverick Theater
110 E. Walnut Ave., Unit B, Fullerton (714) 526-7070
mavericktheater.com

24Monday

SENIORS

10:00am: NOCE Let’s Talk Movies: Senior Club.
12:00pm: Books Come Alive for Older Adults: Senior Club.
12:30pm: BINGO: Sponsored by the Senior Club.
Fullerton Community Center
340 W Commonwealth Ave
(714) 738-6575

25Tuesday

THEATER

7:00 to 9:00pm: Electric Company Theatre: Light up the Night: Celebrate the 2026 season and hear the 2027 lineup. Silent auction.
The Muckenthaler Cultural Center
1201 W. Malvern Ave., Fullerton
714-738-6595

26Wednesday

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

27Thursday

MARKET

4:30 to 8:30pm: Fullerton Night Market: Every Thursday unique products in a fun and festive atmosphere.
BAND LINE UP
August 27: The Split
Museum Plaza
125 E Wilshire Ave., Fullerton
(657) 683-4661

28Friday

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
Hiltscher Park Trail (1.39 mi): 1002 N. Euclid Street, Fullerton

THEATER

8:00pm-\$33: Plan 9 From Outer Space: Brian Newell’s stage adaptation of the Ed Wood screenplay widely called the worst movie ever made. Playing Aug 28 and 29 at 8:00 pm
Maverick Theater
110 E. Walnut Ave., Unit B, Fullerton
(714) 526-7070
mavericktheater.com

29Saturday

MOVIE

3:00 pm - FREE: Hoppers: A 19-year-old animal lover uses technology that places her consciousness into a robotic beaver to uncover mysteries within the animal world beyond her imagination.
Fullerton Public Library
Main Conference Center
353 W Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton
(714) 738-6326
info@fullertonlibrary.org

30Sunday

ORACLE READING

2:00 to 6:00 pm: oracle reading by Psychic Auntie Pan Pan: 15 minute reading \$27. Here's your opportunity to get an oracle reading by Psychic Auntie Pan Pan. Walk ins welcome or sign up online.
Ipso Facto
517 N Harbor Boulevard, Fullerton
ipsofacto@ipso-facto.com

31Monday

SENIORS

8:00am: Walking Group
11:00am: Senior Lunch
11:00am: Table Tennis
12:30pm: BINGO: Sponsored by the Senior Club.
Fullerton Community Center
340 W Commonwealth Ave
(714) 738-6575

SEPTEMBER

1Tuesday

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

2Wednesday

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

Calling All Veterans of the

ARMYNAVYMARINESAIR FORCECOAST GUARD



FELLOWSHIP SERVICE TO VETERANS COMMUNITY PATRIOTISM

Make a difference. Stay connected. Help others. Strengthen our community.



JOIN THE
PLACENTIA
AMERICAN LEGION

POST 277

TOGETHER, WE HONOR. TOGETHER, WE SERVE.
PLACENTIA AMERICAN LEGION POST 277
230 S BRADFORD, PLACENTIA, CA 92870

VETERANS
STRENGTHENING
AMERICA

Contact: Kitty Jaramillo (714)349-5834 or Theresa Garson (714)267-7418

FINAL RITES

DEATH, MOURNING, & BEYOND

FULLERTON MUSEUM CENTER

Saturday, September 5th | 6pm - 9pm

YOU'RE INVITED TO OUR
Exhibit Opening

SCAN TO LEARN
MORE & GET
TICKETS





Tuesday - Thursday 11:30 to 9:30pm
Friday - Saturday 11:30 to 10pm
Sunday 11:30 to 8pm

Live Music Line-up Every Saturday

August 8: The Dixiedelics Jazz
August 15: The Ron Kobayashi Trio
August 22: The Dixiedelics Jazz
August 29: The Ron Kobayashi Trio

ALL DAY DISCOUNTS

Taco Tuesday

10 tacos for \$20
Dine in or Take out

Wicked Wednesday

20% off Cocktails
50% off Appetisers

THIRSTY THURSDAY

Half off Wine Bottles
Only applies to wine bottles \$40 or less

Live Music

Friday and Saturday from 9pm to 12am
in Chapter 4 Lounge

AN EVENING WITH AVERY



128 West Wilshire Ave, Fullerton

Council Approves \$3 Million Federal Housing Plan by Saskia Kennedy

The Fullerton City Council approved a spending plan allocating approximately \$3 million in federal housing and community development funds. The plan, which supports various nonprofit programs, senior services, and after-school youth care, comes alongside a reported 23 percent decrease in the city's homeless population over the past year.

The Fiscal Year 2026/27 Annual Action Plan outlines how Fullerton will utilize its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Of the available funds, nearly \$1.4 million is earmarked for CDBG initiatives, while around \$1.485 million will support the HOME program, including carryover funds from previous years.

During the council meeting, staff introduced two friendly amendments to the plan. Councilmember Dr. Shana Charles recused herself from voting on a line item that provided a grant to Cal State Fullerton Auxiliary Services due to a potential conflict of interest with her employer.

Housing Division Manager Daniel Valdez reported to the council that the city's point-in-time homeless count had dropped by 23 percent, attributing the success to a collaborative effort among local partners, including Fullerton Homeless Liaison officers, the Hope Center, and the Illumination Foundation.

"This is the dedicated work of all those partners," Valdez said, emphasizing the city's "continuum of care" approach.

Mayor Fred Jung commended Valdez for his commitment to the community, stating, "This city benefits from your willingness to go beyond job title and really care about the community." Jung inquired if Fullerton was unique in its decline in homeless counts, to which Valdez confirmed it was.

Out of 18 applications received for funding this year, staff recommended ten programs for approval. These included five focusing on homeless and at-risk services, such as senior meals, and three dedicated to after-school programs for youth. Additional allocations from CDBG funds will support fair housing education, code enforcement, public works street improvements, and Parks and Recreation.

The discussion grew complex when Councilmember Charles recognized that a program linked to Cal State Fullerton was associated with her employer. After consulting the City Attorney, she recused herself from that item, and the council unanimously agreed to treat it as a separate line item.

"I served on this committee before I was on Council and was chair of it for two years," Charles remarked, expressing gratitude for the citizens committee that reviews the lengthy funding applications. "I very much appreciate all the good work that you do."

Councilmember Jamie Valencia proposed an amendment to fully fund the Boys & Girls Clubs of Fullerton's funding request, which was about \$10,000 more than originally recommended. However, Valdez explained that the public-service allocation was capped, leading Valencia to withdraw her request.

A successful second amendment emerged at Valdez's suggestion, allowing the Council to address a \$25,000 shortfall in senior mobility services by reallocating funds from home-improvement resources, ensuring that the changes wouldn't impact other projects. The plan was ultimately approved with this amendment, and Charles's recusal was recorded. The approved plan now proceeds to HUD, with staff authorized to submit necessary documents and finalize agreements with the funded nonprofit organizations.

Fullerton Spent at Least \$227,000 to Settle CalPERS Case Over Retired Executive Hires

continued from front page

CalPERS retirees may temporarily fill vacant government positions without suspending their pensions, but state law generally requires the appointment to occur while the agency is actively recruiting a permanent replacement.

Fullerton appointed Eddie Manfro as interim Human Resources Director, Gregory Pfoister as interim Community and Economic Development Director, Cindy Collins as interim Deputy City Manager, and Jeffrey Collier as an interim executive who performed Deputy City Manager duties before later serving as acting City Manager.

During an August 2021 City Council discussion, then-Acting City Manager Steve Danley explained why he was bringing in interim officials rather than permanently filling the executive vacancies. Danley said he wanted the incoming permanent city manager "to be able to choose who the permanent person is," and therefore wanted "an interim in between" until that person arrived.

Then-Mayor Bruce Whitaker confirmed the same strategy. Whitaker said the interim appointment would allow the anticipated long-term city manager to choose that key member of the city's staff. Those statements are significant because they show that the interim appointments were not simply bridging short recruitments already moving toward permanent hires. City leadership was intentionally keeping the positions temporary so that a future city manager could make the permanent selections. The CalPERS discovery record specifically cites those comments as evidence that Fullerton was not recruiting permanent appointees in good faith at the time.

CalPERS later determined that all four retired annuitants had been unlawfully employed because the city did not sufficiently demonstrate active recruitment for permanent replacements. Fullerton argued that it had begun recruitment by approving internal personnel requisitions and displaying employment flyers at City Hall. The city also argued that it had consulted with CalPERS while arranging some of the appointments.

But CalPERS found that the limited flyers and other records were not enough to establish the legally required permanent recruitments.

CalPERS withdrew some of its original allegations involving work-hour limits and repeat appointments after receiving additional information. However, it maintained its finding that the recruitment requirement had not been met in all four cases. CalPERS also found that Collier had received more compensation than the published salary range permitted for the Deputy City Manager position.

The findings exposed the retirees to potentially severe consequences, including repayment of pension benefits received during the periods of unlawful employment. A December 2025 email obtained through a Public Records Act request revealed that the City Council had agreed to indemnify the four retirees. Indemnification does not necessarily constitute a legal admission of fault, but it meant that the city agreed to financially protect the retirees in the litigation.

At the latest Council meeting, the City Attorney reported that the council voted 5-0 to enter into a settlement agreement and general release with CalPERS on behalf of both the city and the four retirees. Under the agreement, the city will pay CalPERS \$40,000. The City Attorney also disclosed approximately \$187,000 in outside-counsel fees.

CalPERS will release its related claims, ending the administrative appeals without a final ruling determining whether the city's recruitment efforts legally satisfied state pension law. The settlement protects the retirees from the substantially larger financial consequences CalPERS initially threatened. It also means Fullerton taxpayers ultimately paid the legal and settlement costs resulting from the disputed appointments.

The written settlement agreement has not yet been publicly examined. That document should clarify whether CalPERS formally withdrew its unlawful-employment determinations or merely agreed not to pursue the resulting claims in exchange for the settlement.

CalPERS retirees may temporarily fill vacant government positions without suspending their pensions.

Recall Effort Launched Against Mayor Jung and Council Member Valencia continued from front page

On policy, they cite her votes against emergency support for immigrant families during intensified federal enforcement, her opposition to Walk on Wilshire, and her nomination of Jung — described in the petition as her own donor and political advisor — for another mayoral term.

The recall notices draw on complaints that have surfaced repeatedly at council meetings over the past year.

The Les Amis patio: The city removed the downtown restaurant's patio while developer and campaign donor Tony Bushala leases city-owned property for his own café and pays nothing for its patio space. Jung and Valencia have defended that arrangement because the space is open to non-patrons; the patio is fenced and posted with a 45-minute limit. Speakers have characterized the removal as political retaliation.

The 2022 accounting error: Roughly \$2.9 million was recorded in the General Fund rather than the Successor Agency fund and went undetected until 2025 despite annual audits — meaning the council set policy around money that was not actually available. An outside review by Grant Thornton concluded that poor governance, insufficient oversight and a confusing budget presentation limited transparency.

The deficit: Staff has projected a shortfall approaching \$20 million in 2027, and the same firm delivered a five-year forecast at the July 14 budget session that critics called alarming. The city nonetheless reduced this year's \$13.7 million gap to \$3.8 million, a reversal residents have asked staff to explain in detail.

The immigrant support fund: At the February 3, 2026 meeting, a packed crowd voiced concerns, with over 40 comments focused on the January 22 ICE operation at Highland Pine Tree apartments. Speakers demanded full bodycam footage, highlighted prior ICE detentions of over 25 residents, and urged council members Jung, Dunlap, and Valencia to re-agendize the Immigration Help Fund despite the city's reported reserves of \$30 million.

The mayoral selection: Valencia nominated Jung for another term as mayor, and the three-member majority passed over Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shana Charles and Council Member Dr. Ahmad Zahra. Critics said Jung sought to retain the title during his supervisor campaign, and argued that setting aside the customary annual rotation undermines the purpose of district-based elections.

Donor influence: Jung, Dunlap and Valencia are referred to locally as "The Bushala Bloc," after the developer who donated to all three campaigns. A May 2025 opinion piece reported that Jung nominated Bushala to the Fiscal Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee two weeks after the committee was created, and that FPPC filings show more than \$10,000 in donations across multiple election cycles.

The train station lease: No Request for Proposals was issued before the council approved a direct lease extension through 2060 with the existing tenant, Bushala Brothers, Inc. The city had issued a Request for Qualifications in 2017 that drew no responses.

Dismissiveness toward public comment: Jung does not make eye contact with speakers. He has attempted to belittle and discredit them.

The publication ban: On April 1, 2025, the council voted 4-1 to limit non-governmental publications in city facilities to a single rack at the main library, affecting the Fullerton Observer and the Daily Titan.

Ballot statement ruling: A judge ordered Jung to change his ballot designation and to remove claims about opening nine new parks and balancing a budget he said his predecessors left unbalanced.

Other recurring criticisms have included the end of Walk on Wilshire, Jung's efforts to block construction of the Union Pacific trail in a park-poor section of the city, and many more.

Fullerton deserves a leader who upholds integrity and transparency.

23-Year-Old Charged with Mother's Murder in Shocking 4th of July Incident

OC District Attorney Todd Spitzer
Press Release

A 23-year-old man has been charged with murder following the fatal shooting of his mother while she sat in her car, parked directly in front of the Fullerton Police Department, on Independence Day. Emmanuel Wesley, a resident of Santa Ana, faces serious charges in connection with the death of 61-year-old Theresa Jones, whose body was discovered a week later in a church parking lot.

Wesley has been charged with one felony count of murder and an additional felony enhancement for the discharge of a firearm causing great bodily injury or death. If convicted on all counts, he could face a maximum sentence of 50 years to life in prison.

According to the Fullerton Police Department, Jones was reported missing on July 7, after she did not arrive to pick up her grandchild and became unresponsive to calls from family members. Four days later, her body was found in the passenger seat of her vehicle, which was parked at a church in Fullerton. Authorities indicated she suffered two gunshot wounds to her back.



Surveillance footage reportedly shows Jones arriving at the police department on July 4 at approximately 2:46 pm, with Wesley exiting the back seat shortly after she slumped over. Evidence suggests he then moved her body to the passenger seat and drove away from the scene.

Wesley was arrested after a thorough investigation by the Fullerton Police Department and is currently being held without bail at the Orange County Jail. He has pleaded not guilty to the charges against him.

"The death of any human being is a tragedy," stated Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. "For someone to kill their own mother is another level of depravity. We will do everything we can to pursue justice for Ms. Jones and everyone who loved her."

The case is being prosecuted by Senior Deputy District Attorney Mallory Miller of the Homicide Unit.

POLICE ACTIVITY

by David Spargur

Enforcement is the Blade of the Sword of the Rule of Law

In recent years I have come to appreciate that the "Rule of Law" may be an even greater asset than our system of democratic elections. The "Rule of Law" is a framework of laws, ideally created by the capable, ethical, and responsible representatives we, the citizens of the United States, elect. This "Rule of Law" should apply to all people in this country, regardless of how powerful they are. Ideally, this framework of laws should ensure public safety and would advance the concepts enumerated in the U.S. Constitution, which we are fortunate to have inherited and which we must maintain to continue to reach towards the ideals of our founding fathers.

To me, the "Rule of Law" is like a sword. And the indispensable blade of the sword is enforcement. We the people must monitor and mold enforcement in accordance with the ideals of the constitution. That is why you will never see this column advocating "Defund the Police." The police exist as servants of the people, paid to maintain our public safety and our system of justice. To not support and monitor the police would be to abdicate our quest for public safety and the quest to achieve the ideals of the country's founding fathers.

So please excuse the loftiness and perhaps unrealistic vision I just described. That is the background philosophy behind this column. But the goal of this column is also to inform Fullertonians on what's happening regarding police activity and local crime.

Here are significant stories since July 5, which have had additional Observer coverage online.

A man allegedly barricaded himself inside and proceeded to vandalize the Rodeo Smoke Shop on Orangethorpe

Avenue on Sunday, July 12. According to the Fullerton Police Department, 41-year-old Michael Black, allegedly armed with a knife, entered the store around 10:30am and caused extensive damage. A frightened female employee fled the building and called 911 at the neighboring K's Market. Black was arrested under Penal Code 594(B)(1) and was held in Orange County Jail. Since the damage was estimated at \$30,000, Black, a previously convicted felon, faces up to \$50,000 in fines as well as possible imprisonment for that offense.

On the night of July 10, Fullerton Police arrested five people in two separate and unrelated incidents involving illegal narcotics.

Officers seized in total:
Approximately 17 grams of fentanyl (potentially enough to kill over 8,000 people according to the DEA)
19.5 grams of methamphetamine
28 grams of cocaine
20 illicit pills

The five suspects were taken into custody and booked on felony and misdemeanor drug-related charges.

On July 15, Fullerton Police arrested Claudio Marino Hernandez Lopez in Los Angeles for failure to appear in response to a warrant. In Fullerton they charged him with (Penal Code 288.7(a)) sexual intercourse or sodomy with a child 10 years old or younger. He is currently being held in lieu of \$1,000,000 bail. The Fullerton Police Department requested that anyone with additional information or who believes they may have been an unreported victim of Hernandez Lopez should call the Fullerton Police Department. If they wish to remain anonymous, they can contact Orange County Crime Stoppers at 847-6227 or by visiting occrimestoppers.org.

Since 1965

Sunny Hills

Cleans

SERVING ORANGE COUNTY FOR OVER 60 YEARS!

CARPET CLEANING

Deep clean for a healthier home

AREA RUGS

Expert care for delicate rugs

UPHOLSTERY CLEANING

Sofas, chairs, loveseats & more

TILE & GROUT CLEANING

Remove dirt, grime & bacteria

AIR DUCT CLEANING

Cleaner air for a healthier home

FREE

ESTIMATE!

No obligation.

Call today!

PET URINE

REMOVAL

Specialists!

We remove tough pet odors and stains at the source – not just mask the smell!

CALL TODAY! | 714-259-9999

LICENSED & INSURED

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

SAFE, EFFECTIVE & ECO-FRIENDLY

CLEAN HOME. HEALTHY SPACE. HAPPY CLIENTS. | SUNNYHILLSCLEANS.COM

Arrest Overview for July 3 thru July 25

There were 346 arrests made in the record we received.

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

25.72% Drug-related

24.86% Miscellaneous

15.32% DUI-related

15.03% Violence-related

11.27% Trespassing/camping

5.78% Theft-related

1.16% Vandalism-related

0.29% Firearm-related

0.29% Sex-offender-related

0.29% Arson-related

Trust Consultants

Serving Fullerton for over 30 years

Franco Balistrieri

Enrolled Agent, Expert Trust Tax Planner

Trust Tax Preparation

Complex Trusts, Simple Trusts, Special Needs Trusts, Charitable Trusts, Dynasty Trusts, Legacy Trusts, Living Trusts

Trust Advisory Services

Trust Accounting & Admin Services

LEDGER TECHNOLOGIES

Phone Number:

+714-526-1676

Website:

www.LedgerTech.co

410 W. Amerige Avenue Fullerton, CA 92832

"I saw you in the Fullerton Observer."

Say it when you visit restaurants, shop local, or attend community events.

City Council Notes by Saskia Kennedy

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

July 21 City Council meeting

In a closed session before the regular meeting, the Fullerton City Council discussed two existing lawsuits, one potential lawsuit, and two lease negotiations. While no outcomes were disclosed, a public report confirmed a \$40,000 settlement with CalPERS linked to the City of Fullerton's hiring practice violations from 2021. The legal fees were \$187,000.

The consent calendar passed unanimously, including a contentious street repaving project and a plan to restore the Independence Park gymnasium. However, discussions regarding the state of the city's streets revealed a troubling reality: the average Pavement Condition Index (PCI) rating in Fullerton is the lowest in Orange County, with some streets rated in the 20s and 30s—far below the acceptable PCI level of 80.

Amidst this backdrop, the council debated a proposed 0.5% sales tax set for the November 2026 ballot, intended solely for road and infrastructure repairs. The proposal outlined accountability measures, with the existing Infrastructure and Natural Resources Advisory Committee (INRAC) slated to oversee the allocation of funds. If approved, the sales tax could raise approximately \$200 million, enabling the city to repair its roads within 15 years. Without this tax, experts indicated that repairs could take up to a century, extending beyond the effective lifespan of any immediate repaving efforts.

Public opinion was divided during the discussion. While some residents underscored the necessity of the sales tax, others expressed skepticism regarding the current council's han-

dling of funds.

Councilmember Dr. Ahmad Zahra questioned the oversight provisions, suggesting that the committee should possess subpoena powers due to a lack of public trust in the council's management of finances. He urged a postponement of the discussion for at least two years. In contrast, Councilmember Dr. Shana Charles expressed strong support for the tax, emphasizing that it was the only viable option to generate the needed funds within the constraints of the city's \$290 million budget. A tax lawyer clarified that oversight committees typically lack subpoena power.

Mayor Pro Tem Nicholas Dunlap voiced his opposition, arguing that the tax proposal was not ready for voter consideration and that rushing it could lead to repercussions. He motioned to receive and file the proposal, a move seconded by Councilmember Jamie Valencia. Mayor Fred Jung responded in alignment with Charles' perspective, stating that the city's dilemma is one of revenue, not spending.

Ultimately, Dunlap's motion to set aside the tax proposal passed with a 3-2 vote (Jung and Charles against), leaving the November 2026 ballot without new funding for infrastructure repairs. The council will not revisit this option until 2028.

The meeting also included a brief budget discussion, following a comprehensive session held the previous week. The focus shifted to explain the adjustments made and address a remaining \$3.8 million gap in the city budget. While public comments were generally supportive of the council's efforts, many refrained from selecting a specific budget scenario.

Public Comments

Love and Trust in Fullerton City Council

Jane Rands: I live in what's now District 5. I just wanted to point out that one of my neighbors came up here and said they wanted to be positive, and I'd like to be positive too. A couple of things: I wouldn't be in District 5 with all the other downtown properties and homeowners and businesses if it wasn't for Fred Jung correcting the map for our district elections. So I want to say thank you. The other thing is we're saying thank you to our firefighters. We wouldn't have those firefighters on our side, on our team, on our city staff if it wasn't for Fred Jung. I just wanted to set the record straight. So anyways, I am.

And Jamie, I'm sorry that you always get treated from day one, before you even said a word, in your first meeting, accused of not being able to think for yourself. And I'm sorry. I know that as a woman, that's something you go through on a regular basis. And so stay strong. So I trust Shana, Jamie and Fred. Sorry. Nick, you did a great job getting the general housing plan through and leading that effort. I appreciate it. And Ahmad, all of you filled your roles, and I trust each of you to work through this difficult budget problem as you make decisions, and so carry on and do good work for us. Thank you.

Public Comments continued

Good Hands For One Peer-to-Peer Tutoring

Aaron Kim and Christopher Kim, Vice Presidents of the nonprofit organization Good Hands for One, addressed the Fullerton City Council and community members to express gratitude for the support of the city and the Fullerton Public Library. Their organization, founded in 2013, provides free math tutoring for underprivileged youth in grades 2-6, facilitated by dedicated middle and high school volunteers. They conduct tutoring sessions every Saturday, helping over 100 students improve their math skills and confidence. Looking ahead, they aim to expand their volunteer base to serve even more students in the community. They concluded by thanking the City Council and expressing their commitment to making a positive impact on local families.

CSUF OLLI

Jim Apple: In Fullerton, there's a fantastic program for seniors called the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at Cal State Fullerton. It offers over 120 classes across various fields, including hobbies like Mahjong and ceramics, foreign languages, music, and more. The program provides an excellent opportunity for seniors to meet new friends, audit classes for free with professor approval, and receive two free tickets to sporting events. An open house will be held on August 8 at 9 am at Cal State Fullerton, featuring free parking, food, and a chance to learn more about the program. It's a great opportunity for seniors looking to enrich their lives.



Damage and Dereliction of Associated Road

Aaron Anthony Peral: I'm a resident of Fullerton who lives along Associated Road, between Bastanchury Road and Imperial Highway. Tonight I have 3 concerns that all relate to responsible stewardship of taxpayers' dollars.

First, I'm concerned about the condition of Associated Road. The city approved and completed a major rehabilitation project only two years ago, yet today there are already significant cracks and major potholes throughout the roadway. I respectfully request that the staff answer the following questions. Was this a full reconstruction or simply an asphalt overlay? Is the project still under contractor warranty? Has the city conducted post-construction inspections, and are repairs already scheduled? What was the expected lifespan of this project?

Second, I'm concerned about the lack of routine maintenance along this same corridor, as someone who regularly walks this stretch of Associated Road. I've personally observed weeds, overgrown vegetation, and trash remaining along this roadway for more than two months. The overgrown brush narrows portions of the sidewalk, creating difficulties for pedestrians, parents with strollers, and individuals with disabilities.

Litter has also accumulated in the gutters and near storm drains under these conditions. This does not reflect the quality of maintenance that

Fullerton residents expect. I have these photographs, which I will leave with you, that show the significant cracks and potholes in the litter that's just been accumulating, and the weeds that have been overgrown along the way. You can see it in the pictures.

Finally, I recently paid \$585 for a building permit to install a single replacement window in my home. Regardless of whatever our neighboring cities charge, I believe this fee is excessive for a small residential project. A homeowner replacing one window should not pay essentially the same permit fee as someone who is undertaking a much larger window project.

I respectfully ask the council to review the city's residential permit fee structure and consider creating a more proportional Tiered fee schedule for smaller home improvement projects. Homeowners should be encouraged, not discouraged, to obtain permits and improve their homes within reason. Taxpayers deserve roads that last and neighborhoods that are properly maintained and fees that are fair.

Thank you for your time, and I respectfully request that the council direct staff to investigate these concerns and provide a public response at a future meeting. I do believe that North Fullerton 92835 is kind of a forgotten land. Come and visit us sometime, and I'll leave this letter and all the photos of cracks and weeds.

CITY MEETINGS 2026

August 4 at 5:30pm City Council	August 18 at 5:30pm City Council
August 10 at 6:00pm Parks and Recreation Commission	August 19 at 5:30pm Active Transportation Committee
August 11 at 11:00am Senior Advisory Committee	August 26 at 6:30pm Planning Commission
August 12 at 6:30pm Planning Commission	August 27 at 6:00pm Library Board of Trustees
August 17 at 5:00pm Infrastructure and Natural Resources	September 1 at 5:30pm City Council

Public Comments continued

Canceling City Council Meetings and Poor Leadership

Karen Lloreda, District 2: We have a pretty hefty agenda this evening with several items that require extensive presentation, discussion and debate. Looking forward, it appears that we can expect a few more heavily weighted agendas, so it confounds me as to why this council repeatedly cancels scheduled meetings using the lack of issues, or worse, a lack of quorum, to avoid doing the city’s business.

We all understand that each of you may need a vacation here and there. But when any three of you indicate you will not be available for the same meet-

ing, your commitment to the job becomes questionable. and we are questioning.

Given the numerous topics requiring the Council’s attention in the next few months, we feel you are obligated to disclose why you have now canceled additional meetings in August, and I believe also in September.

Words are cheap. Transparency matters. Let us know what you’re doing. And I think we can say that tonight has made clear by events that have happened that Fullertonians are watching and they are paying attention.

Another Resident: Good evening, I want to address what Mayor Jung, Mayor Pro Tem Dunlap and Council Member Valencia have done to the process of City Council meetings by their votes to cancel four council meetings January 6, July 7, August 4 and September 1. And there would have been one more scheduled had not Council Member Charles strongly objected; it was taken back, and the last-minute cancellation was the May 19 meeting.

What is happening tonight, and what has transpired over the last few weeks, is that very important issues are crammed into long meetings to get necessary city business accomplished.

For example, waste hauler contract selections are required by state law, and the housing development. Under Builders Remedy at Harbor and Hermosa, you are not being transparent with everyone for your reasons.

This is in no way criticism of staff, all of whom I respect highly for their time and efforts preparing and working beyond their work hours to get this done.

None of this was necessary.

How can staff, council members, the public, including me, be prepared to intelligently and responsibly understand, give feedback and vote when meetings are canceled, and then many special meetings are scheduled at 4:00 pm when most of the public cannot attend?

I am not prepared tonight as I should be because it was impossible to be prepared on such short notice with so many important issues on the agenda. It just indicates to me that you don’t care.

You know what you’re going to vote for; you have the majority votes, and we are just coming along for the ride, as required by law that these decisions be made publicly. This is the reason why there is so much lack of trust in this council by residents. That lack of trust is not unfair.

Your actions and votes have created it. Now, when you need people to move forward on what is needed, this lack of trust will keep people from voting for what our city desperately needs. You caused this.



Redwood Trees for Fallen Soldiers

Jensen Hallstrom: Good evening, council and staff. I would like to provide an update on the Sequoia Memorial restoration at Hillcrest Park. The project was carried out by St. Tree Revival of WCA, and it seems to be nearly complete. I am very glad to see that the memorial is now more structurally sound. A lot of the decayed and damaged portions of the wood of the monument have now been filled with a resin. And now moving forward, I would like there to be a very careful and comprehensive plan for the replanting of the memorial grove.

There are 55 missing memorial trees in Hillcrest Park, and those are the 55 trees that were planted for each Fullerton resident who died in World War II. So the city, unfortunately, over the decades, has not held to the management standards that redwood groves require in Southern California.

A lot of local agencies handle redwood groves just fine. Everybody knows that OC Parks manages the redwood grove in Carbon Canyon Park, which is very popular. And that grove is 241 trees large. The grove in

Hillcrest Park is 55 trees large. I think that if staff is currently planning a replacement project, before any work is done, there needs to be a community meeting to have this process be transparent. There are a lot of considerations to successfully designing a redwood grove in Southern California, especially with the soil conditions of an exposed hilltop such as the area where that grove used to grow.

There was a Riverside landscape architect who, in 1996, had put together a report as part of the Hillcrest Park master plan, and he detailed the mismanagement of the surviving redwood trees at that time, including soil compaction and aggressive, invasive weeds such as Ivy, which were crowding out the canopies of these trees.

The last tree died in 2015. And even after that some stumps were left of the original trees. But just a few years ago, those stumps were all completely ground up for no reason. They were not in any walkway or a trip hazard. So this grove has really been disrespected, and I want there to be a public, transparent process in replanting it.

Planning Commission to Hold Public Hearing on New Environmental Justice Element

Community involvement is vital to city decision-making, as those opposing any decision may only raise issues during the relevant public hearing. The City of Fullerton is set to engage the community in a critical discussion regarding a proposed General Plan Amendment aimed at adding a new Environmental Justice Element to its planning framework.

This public hearing is scheduled for August 12 at 6:30 pm in the Fullerton City Council Chamber, located at 303 W. Commonwealth Avenue.

Residents are encouraged to participate by attending the meeting in person or joining remotely. The session will be streamed live online at www.cityoffullerton.com/agendas, as well as on Spectrum Cable Channel 3 and AT&T U-Verse Channel 99. Due to limited seating, members of the public are advised to arrive early.

The proposed amendment, identified as Project Reference No. LRP 2026-0005, seeks to incorporate the Environmental Justice Element as

Appendix N of the City’s General Plan. This initiative aims to address the needs and concerns of Fullerton’s diverse communities, ensuring equitable environmental policies and practices.

For those wishing to provide input before the hearing, written comments can be submitted to Yan Gao of the Community and Economic Development Department via email at yan.gao@cityoffullerton.com. All written comments received by noon on the day of the meeting will be presented to the Planning Commission.

Detailed information about the project will be available on the City’s website 72 hours prior to the hearing, including links to the meeting agenda and staff reports.

The Planning Commission’s decision will serve as a recommendation to the City Council, following the guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which designates this action as exempt from further review under Section 15061(b)(3).

SAVE THE

date

Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk-Silva

invites you to a

Farewell Celebration

After 12 years of serving the 67th Assembly District, it is time to say goodbye. Join us as we reflect on 12 years of service and celebrate the work, partnerships, and accomplishments that have strengthened our community.

Sept. 12, 2026

Check In 8:30 a.m.

Program Begins at 9:00 a.m.

Fullerton Community Center

RSVP

How to contact your District Representative				
• District 1: Fred Jung Council Chair (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 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



OPINION: **Out of My Mind**
by Jon Dobrer © 2026 [Jonathandobrer.substack.com](#)

How AI Will Destroy Us: It's Not What You Think

Karl Marx was wrong. The critical issue is not who owns, what Marx called, "the means of production," meaning the industrial machines. The critical issue today is not industrial but technological. The industrial age made factories and brought people out of their cottages and into cities. Cities and factories needed energy—oil, coal and electricity. This begat drilling, mining and damming.

Later, the automobile created roads, freeways, interstates and suburbs. Suburbs broke up the extended family and left the nuclear family—idealized by husband, wife, 2.3 children plus a dog, all guarded by a white picket fence. This created the motel, the drive-in and, along with "the Pill," changed our mating and matrimonial morés. It didn't make much difference who owned the car factory or which Pharma profited from "the Pill."

Today we live in growing fear of artificial intelligence and its potential for overwhelming the organic intelligence of humanity. Yes, this is a challenge, a problem and a threat, but not our greatest threat.

Our fundamental existential crisis is not technological but epistemological. We no longer share an agreement on what is true and what is real. When the late Senator Daniel Moynihan remarked, "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts," he didn't foresee our world of "alternative

facts."

Today we dispute nearly everything. With our understandable skepticism, twhich morphs easily into cynicism, we can take little at face value. We reject explanations that don't fit our predilections and seek, and therefore find, conspiracies.

My generation began distrusting official narratives from JFK's assassination and the Warren Report. It just couldn't have been the one communist in Texas who changed history and broke our hearts. It had to be the Mafia

or the CIA, or Khrushchev or LBJ. We went on to wonder at the shifting and shifty explanations for the Vietnam War. Was it to stop China, or defend South Vietnam's democracy (which wasn't democratic), or to prevent the dominoes from falling throughout Southeast Asia? Or maybe it was for oil.

More recently, we have wrestled with 9/11. Some posited that a primitive turban-wearing Arab hiding in Tora Bora couldn't have organized it. Must be clever Israelis. Or maybe it was orchestrated by President George W for reasons that remain unclear. We saw film purporting to show missiles, not planes, crashing into the Pentagon.

We naturally had to ask the critical question of our time: What is real? Since we can't trust our politicians, nor

*We no longer share
an agreement on
what is true
and what is real.*

corporate spokesfolks, nor any "official explanation," can we trust our eyes? When we look at a picture, are we seeing a depiction of reality? How much does a picture need to be tweaked, cleaned and photoshopped before it becomes a false representation? We get spam and spoofs trying to manipulate our politics and purchases. We get "catfished, pig butchered and phished." To survive, we must decide what is real, but we can seldom be certain.

From CGI (Computer Generated Images) to AI, we wonder if some famous actor really endorsed a product guaranteed to reverse balding or cancer or dementia? No! Only a few years ago we could be entertained by Woody Allen's Selig being convincingly inserted into historic events and Tom

Hanks, as Forrest Gump, showing up and interacting with famous filmic ghosts. We should not be seduced by the production values but worried about losing our grip on what once was a shared reality.

If democracy needs an informed electorate to flourish or even survive, what are our chances when any politician can be credibly shown to lie, to kill, to be drunk or violent? Even without AI and CGI, Hillary was depicted as sick, near death and carried to her car during her campaign against Trump—and Fox News. With AI, what can't we distort? The Trump White House regularly releases AI-generated lies. It doesn't just use normal and unfortunately normalized lies; it shows us visual lies which our eyes tell us to believe.

When WWII was coming to an end, General Eisenhower encouraged the filming of the liberation of the Nazi death camps, because he believed this would make the horrors of the holocaust undeniable. His belief today seems naive. Despite the film, Holocaust denial started much before AI. But now with AI, we can create credible yet false depictions of events that never happened and show positive proof that regular history got it wrong.

I'm not talking about stupid falsifications like Trump putting up signs at the Smithsonian telling people that the museum is lying. His whitewashing will fail. However, what won't fail is AI's bipartisan undermining of the social convention we used to call our shared reality.

Consider the irony that now, when we are insisting that police and ICE agents have bodycams to show us if the first official stories are true or fabrications, the images can quickly be made to show us what didn't happen.

Yes, AI may take our jobs. It could turn on us and convince itself that we humans are incompetent to run the world, then label us redundant and set us out to pasture or to perish. Yes, this could happen, but we really won't know since reality will have long since been replaced by prejudice, opinion, conspiracies and alternate (not) facts but realities. In our news silos and bubbles, fixated on our algorithmically determined personal feeds, we will become isolated and powerless.

Is it already too late to stop this bending of reality past both its and our breaking point? No. Not yet. But soon. As Hamlet said of death, "if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all." We are not ready.

OPINION: **AT HOME WITH THE HOMELESS**
by Andrew Williams © 2026 [WWW.PATREON.COM/C/THEEOPINIONATOR](#)

The Dark Agenda of Stephen Miller and the Threat to Vulnerable Populations

The Trump administration and the gilded class are coming for the rest of us—starting with the disabled and unhoused. Stephen Miller is a troglodyte homunculus. He is an odious and odiferous troll who leaves a repulsive slime trail behind him that dissolves the flesh of every living thing unlucky enough to touch it. His skin is so gray and pallid that people are amazed that he doesn't catch fire during his infrequent public appearances.

Like Trump, he's never had to work a service job in his life, and the sense he gives of arrogant unearned privilege makes one's gorge buoyant. His suits are so soaked with mucus, sweat, saliva and bile after a day of wear that they have to be steam-cleaned for half a day in an autoclave to get rid of all traces of his bodily fluids.

Miller has made no secret of his contempt for human beings he perceives as less than—people who make less money than he does, or people who don't look like him. Basically, that leaves the 1 percenters whom he lavishes affection on, so to speak. I have seen no actual evidence that he is capable of expressing affection—just the opposite; he clearly had no qualms with using his pregnant wife as a shield during the assassination attempt on Trump at the Mayflower Hotel in DC.

He also recently said on Laura Ingraham's show on FOX that, "If I have a loved one who's in the hospital under emergency medical care, I'm going to take the licensed American nurse, not the illegal alien from Haiti."

(Shades of Charlie Kirk's infamous quote, "If I see a black pilot, I'm going to be like, boy, I hope he's qualified.")

It should surprise no one, therefore, that Miller's constant demand to ramp up ICE arrests to 3,000 a day, and the eventual deportation of 100 million US citizens is in tandem with the institutionalization of the disabled and the discarding and elimination of the unhoused in concentration camps. Anyone who thinks they can expel 30 percent of the US population is clearly living in a more dystopian reality than the one the world is enduring at the moment.

Here's what little Stephen has in mind for "the great unwashed" and "useless eaters" as he sees us:

- A recent DOJ memo, instigated by Miller, would authorize states to institutionalize people with disabilities instead of funding community-based care (which has been working JUST FINE, thank you very much). It openly states that "States may feel free to disregard Supreme Court precedent."

- The DOJ memo, if put into action, would effectively overturn the Olmstead Mandate. In 1999, in Olmstead v. LC, the Supreme Court wrote that "Unjustified segregation of persons with disabilities constitutes discrimination and violates Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act." In other words, you can't warehouse the disabled if they are capable of independent living with assistance on an

*Now IS the time
for all good people
to come to the aid
of their country.*

as-needed basis. The Court also mandated community-based services when appropriate and voluntarily accepted by the person with disabilities.

- Stephen Miller is an admirer of Calvin Coolidge, as was Adolf Hitler, because of "Silent Cal"'s 1924 Immigration Act, which created the Border Patrol and essentially used the so-called science of eugenics as a basis for discrimination against those applying for immigration, such as disabled individuals.

According to a contemporary (1924) statement from the Department of State, the purpose of the act was "to preserve the ideal of U.S. homogeneity."

This defined US immigration policy for nearly three decades, until it was supplanted initially by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (Truman) and finally replaced by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Johnson).

"Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country." Anyone who took a typing class prior to 1980 will recognize that practice sentence. With one correction, it has come true: Now IS the time for all good people to come to the aid of their country. We can't afford to say "I've seen all good people turn their heads each day, so satisfied I'm on my way," as Jon Anderson sang on "The Yes Album" in 1971.

Sadly, another couplet from another song that same year comes to mind: "Then I was inspired/now I'm sad and tired/After all I've tried for three years/seems like thirty." For everyone but the Boomers, that was from "Jesus Christ Superstar." (Thank you too

much, Tim Rice.) But that's how it feels to Americans like me who've been trying to motivate people to rise up against Orange Julius' tyranny.

So when, people? When are you going to get so tired of this fascist groove thing that you will stop talking and take action? Start a boycott, a general strike, or a local work strike? Or surround the White House and refuse to leave? When? Because guess what? You're out of time. Our country is out of time. It's now, or never. Protests are nice, but they're not making it. They're not hurting the pocketbooks of those promulgating this new Gilded Age.

OK, I understand. You feel overwhelmed by all the manure that Trump and his minions have thrown at the collective fan. And you're asking, what can just one person do? A lot. More than you suspect. You're familiar with the domino and ripple effects that can spread far beyond the collapse of one domino or the skipping of one stone. One action can inspire others to follow suit, to take a risk in order to save our democracy. But—you have to start. And you have to start now. No more sitting on your hands. No more twiddling your thumbs. No more saying "Ain't it awful!" or "Somebody ought to do something." YOU ARE THAT SOMEBODY.

There's no one to take your place. Act now—and at least you can say you tried—or continue to sit in your own slough of despond and accept the collapse of life as you knew it. If you don't have any ideas, talk to people. Read history books about past revolutions and how they were accomplished. You'll find ideas there. Those are your choices. Choose wisely. Choose now. A better world awaits us—if we want it enough to work for it.

The Science Behind It

by Yuvika Salman © 2026

Cyclospora and Practicing Safe Eating Habits

If you've been following the news recently, you've probably heard about the Cyclospora outbreak linked to fresh produce. As someone who has studied foodborne bacteria like E. coli and Salmonella throughout my biology courses, I was immediately curious. I did some research on what exactly is Cyclospora and what makes it different from the other microbes responsible for food poisoning.

Cyclospora is a microscopic parasite with a unique life cycle and understanding how it spreads highlights not only the science behind foodborne illness but also why practicing safe eating habits remains so important.

Cyclospora (Cyclospora cayetanensis) is a single-celled parasite that infects the small intestine. Unlike bacteria, which can multiply rapidly under the right conditions, Cyclospora cannot reproduce in food or spread directly from one person to another. Instead, it must first mature in the environment, typically in contaminated soil or water, before it becomes capable of causing infection. Because of this, people usually become sick after eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water rather than through close contact with someone who is ill.

Fresh produce such as cilantro, basil, lettuce, raspberries, and bagged salad mixes have all been associated with Cyclospora outbreaks. Since these foods are often eaten raw, there is no cooking process to destroy the parasite before consumption.

Once ingested, Cyclospora invades the cells lining the small intestine, disrupting the body's ability to absorb nutrients and fluids. This leads to inflammation and symptoms that can last much longer than a typical case of food poisoning. Common symptoms include prolonged watery diarrhea, stomach cramps, bloating, nausea, fatigue, loss of appetite, and weight loss. Symptoms usually appear about a week after exposure and can persist for several weeks if left untreated.

As our food supply has become increasingly global, outbreaks like these have become more challenging to prevent. Fresh fruits and vegetables are transported across countries and continents before arriving at grocery stores, creating more opportunities for contamination during growing, harvesting, or processing. If contaminated irrigation water or poor sanitation introduces Cyclospora into the food

supply, thousands of servings of produce may be distributed before anyone realizes there is a problem.

This is where public health plays an essential role. Epidemiologists investigate outbreaks by interviewing patients, tracing where contaminated foods originated, and working with laboratories to identify the source. Their work helps remove contaminated products from shelves, issue recalls, and prevent additional illnesses. While these efforts often happen behind the scenes, they are a vital part of keeping our food supply safe.

Although no method can eliminate every risk, practicing safe eating habits significantly reduces your chances of foodborne illness. Always wash fresh fruits and vegetables including produce with peels that won't be consumed under running water before eating them.

Wash your hands before handling food, keep raw meats separate from fresh produce to prevent cross-contamination, clean cutting boards and kitchen surfaces thoroughly, and refrigerate perishable foods promptly. It is also helpful to stay informed about food recalls and public health advisories, especially during outbreak investigations.

One important misconception is that washing produce completely eliminates Cyclospora. While rinsing fruits and vegetables helps remove dirt and many microorganisms, it cannot guarantee the removal of every parasite. Rather than relying on one precaution alone, food safety works best when multiple layers of protection, from farms and food processors to public health agencies and consumers work together.

The recent Cyclospora outbreak serves as a reminder that food safety extends far beyond our own kitchens. It depends on farmers, distributors, scientists, healthcare professionals, and public health officials working together to identify risks before they become larger problems. While we can't eliminate every risk, understanding the science behind these outbreaks empowers us to make informed choices. Sometimes the simplest habits such as washing fresh produce, practicing good kitchen hygiene, and staying informed are some of the most effective tools we have for protecting both our own health and the health of our communities.



Healthy Awareness

by Jo Ann Brannock, Ph.D. © 2026

Music Therapy

My daughter, Nancy, recently moved her baby grand piano into my home so she can play while she is in Fullerton. This inspired me to take piano lessons at CSUF's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI).

I may never progress beyond the first two lines of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, played with my right hand alone, but it brings me great joy. It also supports my motor skills, engages my brain, and serves as a form of emotional therapy.

The neurologist Oliver Sacks wrote in "Musicophilia" (2007) about using music as a therapeutic intervention for patients with Parkinson's disease. His work helped advance our understanding of music therapy in treating neurological injuries and disorders. In one case, he described a patient who, after being struck by lightning, felt an unexpected urge to play the piano — a sign of music's deep neurological reach.

Similarly, former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, who was shot in the head in 2011, underwent extensive speech and physical therapy to recover lost function. Among her rehabilitation efforts, relearning the French horn, an instrument she had played as a teenager, helped strengthen neural connections and contributed to her ability to regain aspects of speech and communication (American Psychological Association. (2026, March). Monitor on Psychology, 57(2).

While there is no single "music center" in the brain, most people possess an innate ability to perceive tone, timbre, pitch, melody, harmony, and rhythm. Music engages multiple brain systems, including those responsible for cognition, memory, attention, pattern recognition, sensorimotor integration, learning, and emotion. Through active engagement and rhythmic synchronization, it can influence speech, movement, pain perception, and mood.

Sensorimotor synchronization (tapping, moving, or breathing in time with music) appears to enhance music's pain-relieving and regulatory effects. Moving in rhythm with sound strengthens the connection between the brain's auditory and motor systems.

The science of music is also closely tied to identity and personal meaning. Music activates the brain's reward pathways, particularly the medial prefrontal cortex, which is more strongly engaged when we choose music ourselves than when it is chosen for us. This region is associated with self-referential thinking, internal goals, values, and a sense of agency.

The applications of music therapy are broad and expanding. They include chronic pain management, treatment of depression and anxiety, emotional regulation in individuals with autism, restoration of speech after traumatic brain injury, and reduction of psychological distress in cancer patients.

One evidence-based approach, rhythmic auditory stimulation (RAS), is used in neurological music therapy to help individuals with Parkinson's disease improve gait and balance through rhythmic cueing. The method draws on the natural link between music and movement — the same instinct that sets our feet tapping in time with a beat.

Other emerging approaches combine music with visual stimulation to help reconnect neural networks in individuals with mild cognitive impairment and early Alzheimer's disease (Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience, Vol. 11, No. 6, 2016).

Music is often more powerful than language in conveying emotion. One need only think of a Thursday evening performance at the Muckenthaler to understand its impact. According to my Apple Watch, my heart rate climbs during live music, and it comes with chills and a sense of emotional arousal. What about you?

Music ultimately reminds us that healing is not only biological but deeply human. It reaches places in us that language cannot, restoring connection where there is fragmentation and vitality where there is fatigue. In its simplest form — a melody, a rhythm, a familiar tune — it returns us to ourselves, and to one another, in ways that are both measurable in the brain and felt in the heart long after the final note fades.



Balance & Change

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

Hot Weather's Impact on Mental Health

It is hot outside. Like seriously hot. Summer is supposed to be hot. So, why am I writing about the heat in a column that is about mental health issues? This happens every single year. What does it have to do with mental health?!

Well, everything! The outside environment has a direct impact on our emotional well-being. It is not uncommon to see people get angrier when it is hot outside. We all tend to be a bit grumpier when we are not comfortable in our bodies. One of the primary ways we feel uncomfortable is what your thermostat is showing!

If it is too hot or too cold! Notice how your reactions change as the weather gets out of your comfort zone!

Please be aware that if you start acting snippy, it may have very little to do with the person you are dealing with and more to do with the environment you are having to deal with! Take a minute and check in with yourself. How are you feeling, not just emotionally, but physically? Take care of yourself. Sit inside with the air conditioning. Then finish the conversation! Now, if you will excuse me, I need to find some a/c! Enjoy your summer!

INDIVIDUAL & COUPLES THERAPY

Resolving issues from your past that block your future.



MICHELLE GOTTLIEB *Psy.D., MFT, LPCC*

305 N. Harbor Blvd. Ste 202, Fullerton

714-879-5868 ext 5

www.michellegottlieb.com

Rene Perez

Senior Fitness Specialist

One-on-One In-Home Personal Training

Exercises to improve activities of daily living (ADL)

Trusted and recommended by families for over 15 years.

Call me to schedule an assessment.

951.384.1137 | 714.395.2002



Luvenia Printup 1931-2026

Luvenia Printup passed away on July 12, at the age of ninety-five. She was a long-time resident of Fullerton and a charter member of Friendship Baptist Church.

Luvenia was preceded in death by her husband Rogers Printup and her sons Gary Maxey and Forrest Maxey. She is survived by her daughter, Dana Morris, sons, James (Marchier) Maxey, Ronnie Maxey, Michael (Dana) Maxey, Eric (Anita) Printup, Maurice (Erika) Printup, nine grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

A viewing and visitation will be held on Thursday, August 6, from 4:00 to 7:00 pm at McAulay & Wallace Mortuary, Fullerton. Funeral service will be held at Friendship



Baptist Church in Yorba Linda on Friday, August 7, at 11:00 am. Luvenia will be laid to rest with her husband at Loma Linda Cemetery in Fullerton.

She will be missed.

Geoffrey Robbins Irwin 1952-2026

Geoffrey Robbins Irwin, affectionately known to everyone as Geoff, passed away in Fullerton on July 8.

Born on December 12, 1952, in Cleveland, Ohio, Geoff loved life fully and ensured that everyone around him enjoyed it just as much. Geoff's passion for baseball defined his early years. A standout athlete, he played through his college years at Chapman University, where he earned the distinction of pitching Chapman's first NCAA no-hitter. His talent eventually took him to Ecuador, where he played professional baseball for two seasons. However, Chapman gave him much more than a sports career; it was there that he studied theology—deepening a faith that took root in high school—and met the love of his life, Susan.

Geoff and Susan married in 1982 and built a beautiful life together in Fullerton, where they raised their three children. Geoff's sense of humor was legendary, bringing fun



wherever he went. He was honest, generous, fiercely loyal, and held a beautifully simple faith. He often reminded loved ones, "Give it to God, you can trust Him." Having received Jesus Christ as his Savior in high school, he grew in his faith under the ministry of Chuck Smith and frequently ended his prayers by thanking God for the cross.

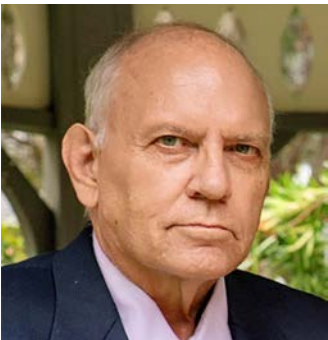
Geoff is survived by his beloved wife, Susan; his son, Gregory (Jessica) Irwin; his daughters, Alexandra (Bruce) Anliker and Emily (Morgan) Nelson; and his ten grandchildren: Noah, Emery, Isaiah, Oliver, Isla, Rauly, Anna, Calin, Ira, Vernon, and a grandson expected in January. He is also survived by his brother, Charles Irwin, and his sisters, Laura (Larry) Randolph and Margaret (Lynn) Crew.

Geoff, we will miss you deeply as a husband, father, "Papa," and friend. Until the day you meet us at the gates of heaven, we say goodbye.

J. Graydon "Gray" Martz 1956-2026

Fullerton resident J. Graydon "Gray" Martz, 70, passed away peacefully in his sleep on July 2, at St. Jude Hospital.

Born April 23, 1956, to Vernon "Bud" Martz and Barbara T. Martz (née Tolley), Gray enjoyed a childhood filled with adventures, riding horses, and traveling across the U.S. creating enduring friendships. He graduated from Douglas County High School in Colorado and earned a B.S. in Geology from Western State College of Colorado. After graduation, he relocated his family to California and began a career in environmental consulting, which he ultimately built into WGR SW Inc. with his business partners.



Affectionately called "Uncle Gray" or "Papa Gray," he loved cooking for family and friends and will be deeply missed.

He is survived by his sons, Trent Lieber and Stephen Martz; his granddaughters Lilly, Annika, Quinn, and Claire; and extended family, friends and colleagues.

Gray will be laid to rest next to his late wife, Michele, in Hardin, Illinois.

A celebration of life and memorial service will be scheduled for a later date.

Memorial donations can be sent to Reach Out Students for Education, 568 Ponderosa Lane, Batchtown, Illinois 62006.



MCAULAY & WALLACE MORTUARIES

FUNERALS • LIFE CELEBRATIONS • CREMATIONS

LIVE STREAMING • PRE-NEED PLANNING

We help create remembrances that reflect the unique values, character and traditions of the families we serve. That is our passion, that is our purpose, that is our promise. Guaranteed.

MCAULAY & WALLACE MORTUARY, FULLERTON

714-525-4721 FD 190

MCAULAY—WALLACE MORTUARY, YORBA LINDA

714-777-2692 FD 1304

<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/funeral-homes/mcaulay-wallace>

Every Detail Remembered® | Dignity

“And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.”

KJV, Genesis 1:31



Sunday Service & Sunday school at 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday Testimony Meeting at 7:30 p.m.
Reading Room: Wed, Fri and Sat from 10 a.m.–1 p.m.
First Church of Christ, Scientist
1300 N. Raymond Avenue, Fullerton 92831
Office (714) 525-4062 Reading Room (714) 525-2649
christiansciencefullerton.com csfullerton@sbcglobal.net

LOMA VISTA
MEMORIAL PARK

CEMETERY • MORTUARY • CREMATORY

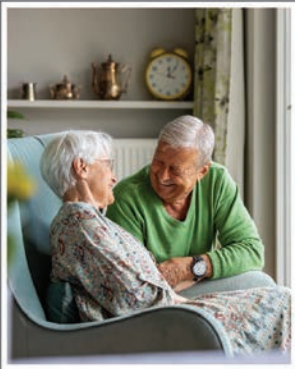
Family owned, operated, and cared for since 1914.

Choosing a final resting place is a very personal decision.

At Loma Vista, your family becomes
our family as we help you through
the process of insuring a lasting legacy.

NEW lawns and family estates available now.
Call for an appointment today.

701 E. Bastanchury Road, Fullerton, CA 92835
(714) 525-1575 • lomavistamemorialpark.com



To place an obituary

Please email the text and a photograph to
ads@fullertonobserver.com.

We will create a proof, calculate all discounts, and send you the information for your approval. Once approved, we will send you an invoice. Once the invoice is paid, the obituary will be placed in the upcoming issue.

City of Fullerton Employment

303 W. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, CA 92832

Contact: (714) 738-6300

Hours: Monday - Thursday 7:30 am – 5:30 pm

Every other Friday 7:30 am - 4:30 pm

<https://www.cityoffullerton.com/government/departments/human-resources/city-employment>

Applications are only accepted for current City of Fullerton vacancies.

Ambulance Operator

Salary: \$20.00 Hourly

Location: 303 W Commonwealth Ave

Job Type: Non-Regular (At Will/Non-Benefited)

Job Number: 2026 - Ambulance Oper

Department: Fire

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

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

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

Police Officer - Lateral/Academy Trained

Salary: \$89,234 - \$137,488 Annually

Location: City of Fullerton, CA

Job Type: Regular Full-Time

Job Number: 2026-PO-Lateral

Department: Police

The Fullerton Police Department is dedicated to the Prevention of Crime and Disorder, Protection of Life and Liberty, and the relentless Pursuit of Justice.

Skilled Maintenance Worker - Water I/II

Salary: Skilled Maintenance Worker - Water I - \$4,815 - \$6,146/Monthly

Skilled Maintenance Worker - Water II - \$5,039 - \$6,432/ Monthly

Location: City of Fullerton, CA

Job Type: Regular Full-Time

Job Number:2026-Skilled Maint Wkr Water

Department: Public Works

Closing Date: 7/19/2026 11:59pm

What We're Looking For:

Experience with water and sewer system maintenance, repair, and construction.

Understanding of traffic control procedures and work zone safety practices.

Someone who knows safe operation of hand, power, and specialized equipment.

Program Operations Manager

Tara's Chance is excited to announce that we're hiring a Program Operations Manager, and we'd love your help finding the right person!

This is a key leadership role that helps keep Tara's Chance running every day. The Program Operations Manager serves as the operational backbone of our programs, cross-collaborating closely with our Executive Director, Program Director, staff, and participants to ensure our programs run smoothly and efficiently.

This individual will lead day-to-day program operations, oversee program administrative systems, support and develop staff, improve organizational processes for programs, coordinate participant services, and help drive the continued growth of our programs.

They will play a vital role in creating an exceptional experience for everyone who walks through our ranch while ensuring our mission is carried out with excellence.

We're looking for an organized, collaborative leader who enjoys solving problems, can confidently manage multiple priorities, and is passionate about making a meaningful impact in the nonprofit community.

If you know someone who is an organized leader, enjoys building strong teams, thrives in a nonprofit environment, and has a passion for making a difference, please share this opportunity with them. And if you think you'd be a great fit yourself, we'd love to hear from you!

For any questions or additional information, please contact Kat at kat@taraschance.org.

Apply Here!: https://www.indeed.com/viewjob?jk=23bf1d58020c48c5&from=shareddesktop_copy

OUR TOWN CROSSWORD

ANSWER KEY TO "WORK IT" © 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.

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

Volunteer Training

Interested in learning more about the many volunteer opportunities at Arboretum and Botanical Garden at Cal State Fullerton? Fill out the Volunteer Inquiry Request to get started, and join us for a training.

Saturday, August 8

Step 1 from 9:30 to 11:30am and Step 2 from 12:00 to 2:00pm

Orientation and training required. RSVP: arbvolunteer@fullerton.edu

CSUF Arboretum & Botanical Garden

1900 Associated Rd., Fullerton

(657) 278-3407

Fullerton Garden Club

Are you passionate about gardening and building new friendships?

Join us on the first Tuesday of the month

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

WE'RE HIRING

Program Operations Manager





Left to right: Professor Vince Buck, Library Trustee Dr. Sueling Chen, Councilmember Dr. Shana Charles, Library Trustee Lisa Wozab, Fullerton Heritage President Ernie Kelsey, Library Director Anita O’Keefe Torres, and Planning Manager Chris Schaefer



VIDEO OBSERVER
by Emerson Little © 2026
See videos on YouTube @emersonlittle1901

**Fifty-Year-Old
Fullerton Sculpture
Flies Toward Local Landmark Status**

Standing between Fullerton Public Library’s Main Branch and City Hall, artist Aldo Casanova’s “Flight,” the first piece of public art in Fullerton, is now flying toward local landmark status as it celebrates fifty years in the community. I was one of about fifty or so people who attended the city’s commemoration ceremony for Fullerton’s bicentennial sculpture on July 10, 2026.

Flight’s 50th anniversary celebration was held underneath a sweltering summer sun. Many of the red, white and blue balloon displays that city staff had set up at the beginning and the end of the walkway that passes directly by the piece of public art were popping, sounding like fireworks. Quite a few local residents, Fullerton Public Library Trustees, and library and city staff who attended gathered in the shade of City Hall.

As people waited, they had a chance to view a few historical artifacts, including photographs, books and displays about the sculpture, which had all been preserved and taken out of the Fullerton Public Library’s Local History Room by archivist Cheri Pape. There were also light refreshments provided by Porto’s Bakery.

Around 10:00 am, once everyone had arrived, Anita O’Keefe Torres, Director of the Library, Dr. Sueling Chen, Chair of the Library Board of Trustees, and Ernie Kelsey, Fullerton Heritage President, delivered short speeches to start the commemoration ceremony.

O’Keefe Torres said, “As you all know, I’m new to the area, so I’m also new to the “Flight” sculpture, and as people were explaining the sculpture to me, I heard many different interpretations of what it might be. I heard paper airplane. I heard checkmark. I heard a book as it is being opened ... and what I came away with is that I think that’s

what art does; it helps your imagination take flight.”

She soon introduced Sueling Chen from the Library’s Board of Trustees, who wanted attendees to imagine back to 1976 when the nation was celebrating its bicentennial. Chen said, “Here in Fullerton, we had a group of visionary citizens who asked one question: what can we create today that will inspire people fifty years from now? ... Florence Arnold was the Chair of the Bicentennial Committee, and spearheaded the whole project. And you know what the answer was? It’s not a parade; it’s not fireworks ... the answer was a dream cast in a zinc and steel post, and that’s what we call “Flight.””

I learned from listening to Chen’s speech that the sculpture almost didn’t happen because the cost was nearly \$50,000, an expensive investment. The library’s board at the time stepped up and made a large contribution along with many other donors and donations to make the sculpture happen.

“The Library doesn’t just collect knowledge; they truly believe in investing in the imagination,” said Chen in her speech, “So, fifty years later, “Flight” is still here, looking at all of us ... artist Aldo Casanova believed in humanity’s journey into space and exploration, but beneath that is something more universal ... creativity and the courage to be able to dream beyond what we already know. It’s the same as what our library believes in. Every book begins with someone’s imagination. Every scientific discovery begins with someone’s curiosity. Every great invention begins with someone asking ‘what if.’ So perhaps that’s why “Flight” belongs here.”

Local historian, author, and Fullerton Heritage member Deb Richey remembers that a large community effort went into getting the sculpture created and

installed during the Bicentennial. Now, fifty years later, its local landmark nomination also honors that effort. She enjoyed the fiftieth anniversary celebration because it was one of the few city events related to the country’s 250th birthday.

Richey explained that to have a sculpture like “Flight” designated as a Fullerton local landmark, it has to meet a set of criteria laid out in the city’s municipal code, which generally follows the same criteria used by the state and federal governments. She elaborated that properties typically must be at least 50 years old and retain historic integrity.

According to her, generally, with owner approval, the historic preservation organization, Fullerton Heritage, completes the nomination form. The property then goes before the Fullerton Landmarks Commission, and if recommended, goes before the City Council for final approval. She said that Fullerton Heritage currently has five properties pending approval, one of which is “Flight.”

Richey said, “I completed the nomination form ... and I learned a lot about the history of how “Flight” was selected and installed, as well as information on Aldo Casanova and Jack Brogan, the fabricator. I did not realize that a lot of remarkable pieces of furniture and art by postwar artists had been fabricat-

ed by Brogan, including the Wiggle Chair with architect Frank Gehry.”

Ernie Kelsey, President of Fullerton Heritage said, “Its been fun over the last six months talking about “Flight.” This was born out of the work of Cheri Pape and Deb Richey ... Now, Fullerton Heritage is working on having some signage that explains the background of “Flight” next to it. My favorite thing was learning about Jack, the fabricator, the unsung hero that went on to great things. As far as local landmark status, we’re waiting for the July 14 City Council meeting to see what’s projected on the next agenda.”

Fullerton Heritage worked closely with the city’s Public Works Department that, according to Kelsey, “did the remarkable job of cleaning out the plants and other vegetation that kept the sculpture from being viewed.” He also mentioned that city workers fixed the lights on the concrete base of “Flight,” so the sculpture is now more visible at night.

Fascinating Fullerton residents for decades, the public art piece was designed to “symbolize the continuous movement from Earth to Space,” according to Aldo Casanova’s artist statement. So, the next time you’re driving on Commonwealth or walking between City Hall and the library, be on the lookout for the 40-foot tall sculpture that is “Flight.”

Broken Sprinklers?

Sprinklers • Valves • Timers & Settings
Trouble Shooting • Emergency Shut-off Valves



46 years experience



3730 W. Commonwealth

We'll Find Them & Fix Them



Lawn & Garden Sprinkler Systems

REPAIR • SERVICE • INSTALLATION
No Job Too Small - From Sprinkler Head to Entire System

(714) 773-4865

Across from Fullerton Airport
www.PacificCoastLandscaping.com
Contractor's Lic. # 1097870

