

Flock cameras come under public scrutiny at Council

by Saskia Kennedy

Fullerton Police Chief Jonathan Radus told the City Council on September 15 that the city’s Flock license plate reader cameras “produce vehicle leads” and not personal profiles. Councilmembers and residents pressed him on where the data goes, who can see it, and whether the public was ever properly consulted on the introduction of the cameras.

The item was a presentation, not an action item, so the council could not vote on the program.

Councilmember Dr. Ahmad Zahra asked that Flock and the department’s ALPR policy return as a formal agenda item. Councilmember Dr. Shana Charles seconded his request, and Mayor Fred Jung said the discussion would happen at the next meeting.

Radus said Fullerton has 17 permanent Flock cameras and two mobile cameras. That matches the presentation materials released before the meeting, which listed 19 cameras and 135 police users.

[Read more on page 15](#)



Fullerton fire and police captains and chiefs salute those fallen in the 9/11 attack. PHOTO BY GASTON CASTELLANOS

Fullerton Memorial Commemorates 25 Years Since the 9/11 Attacks

[Read more on page 13](#)

Fullerton Council Delays Solid-Waste Contract Decision

The Fullerton City Council did not select a final solid-waste hauler at its September 15 meeting. Instead, council members voted 3–2 to continue negotiations with CR&R Services and Republic Services and bring the matter back to the council for a final contract decision.

Councilmembers Shana Charles, Ahmad Zahra and Nick Dunlap voted yes. Mayor Fred Jung and Councilmember Jamie Valencia voted no.

The council was considering three finalists for the city’s solid-waste management services contract: CR&R Environmental Services, Republic Services, and Valley Vista Services.

City staff said the companies had an opportunity to revise their proposals after the council’s June 30 discussion and subsequent community meetings. The proposals addressed such issues as bulky-item collection, abandoned trash, compliance with California’s organic-waste requirements under SB

1383, equipment, public education and residential billing.

During the discussion, council members questioned differences among the companies’ proposed rates, how the companies would treat multifamily properties, city franchise and other fees, and the transition process. One issue involved multifamily housing.

Under the proposed structure, properties with four units or fewer would generally be treated as residential.

[Read more on page 14](#)

THAT \$900 FULLERTON APARTMENT ON TIKTOK ISN’T REAL. THE APPLICATION FEE IS.

A scam that has been working its way across the country has arrived in Fullerton’s rental market, and it is built for exactly the person who is most desperate to find a place: someone scrolling their phone at midnight, watching a clean walkthrough video of a one-bedroom near campus listed at half of what anything else costs.

The setup is simple. A TikTok account posts a video of an apartment, a room in a house, or a backyard ADU somewhere in Fullerton. The footage looks professional because it is professional — it was lifted from a real estate agent’s listing, a property management company’s marketing reel, or a Zillow page. The price is well under market. When someone comments or DMs, the person behind the account says the unit is in high demand and that a tour requires a completed application first. The application costs \$50, \$75, sometimes \$100. It is described as nonrefundable, or sometimes as “refundable once you move in.” Payment goes

through Zelle, Venmo, Cash App, or Apple Pay.

Then the account stops responding. Sometimes it disappears entirely and reappears the next day under a slightly different handle. The unit was never for rent. Some of the addresses are real and some are invented.

Fullerton has the two ingredients this scam needs. Rents are high enough that a bargain looks like salvation, and there is a large, churning population of renters who are new to the process.

One-bedroom apartments in Fullerton have been averaging somewhere in the range of \$2,100 to \$2,400 a month, with citywide median rent across all unit types running roughly \$2,400 to \$2,800 depending on which tracker you consult. Against those numbers, a listing at \$1,000 or \$1,200 does not read as impossible. It reads as the lucky break everyone is hoping for.

[Read full article at \[fullertonobserver.com\]\(http://fullertonobserver.com\).](#)

Clarification: City Council Candidate Alters Ballot Designation Following Legal Dispute

An earlier version inaccurately described a lawsuit by Oscar Valadez against Jozef Maldonado regarding ballot designations. The case, titled Valadez v. Page (Orange County Superior Court case no. 30-2026-01592248-CU-WM-CJC), was brought against Orange County Registrar of Voters Bob Page and Fullerton City Clerk Lucinda Williams, with Maldonado as the real party in interest.

Under the stipulated judgment entered on August 27, “Parks Commissioner/Scientist” was replaced with “Chemist” on both the ballot designation and candidate statement for Maldonado. The court did not address whether the original designation met state law, and each party will cover its own attorney fees and costs.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

News Desert Mapping
Can Credit Creator

In my pioneering 2010 media mapping and modeling work (www.mediadeserts.com), I created the basis for this ecosystem analysis of the information and communication flows across geography. Subsequent “news deserts” mapping have built on this work. But the roots of the scholarship and method of analysis remain with Dr. Michelle Barrett Ferrier and the <http://www.mediadeserts.com>

Dr. Michelle Barrett Ferrier
Fullerton

Fullerton College
Controversy Over
Proposed Demolition Plans

In the article, “Fullerton College reintroduces historic 300 building after two years of construction,” it was mentioned that the historic 300 building was successfully restored, but toward the end the article mentions plans for a new performing arts center “which would require the demolition of buildings 1300 and 1100.” The issue with this claim is that demolishing two older campus buildings seems inconsistent with the successful restoration and modernization of another older building.

Instead of demolishing buildings 1300 and 1100, the college should consider giving them the same treatment as the 300 building by finding ways to modernize and reuse them rather than completely getting rid of them. Preserving older architecture is important because it allows the college to continue growing and changing without losing the parts of the campus that have been there for generations of students.

The restoration of the 300 building already shows that Fullerton College can update an older building for current students while still preserving the character and history that made the building important in the first place. Before deciding that demolition is necessary, the college should first look at whether buildings 1300 and 1100 can be restored and modernized in a similar way.

Diego Mena Fullerton

Don’t Save Coyote Hills:
A Debate on
Urban Development

I disagree with your front page story. Coyote Hills doesn’t need to be saved. Take a walk there, and if you wear shorts, your legs will be scratched and bleeding. The vegetation is sagebrush and cactus. There are many areas to the East of Fullerton like that. It is called the Mojave Desert. You can take a nice stroll at Irvine’s Regional Park.

Take a drive up Gilbert Street. When you go down on the other side of the hill, you are in La Habra. There is a beautiful subdivision. If Fullerton allows, there will be increased money into the city from property taxes from the buildings. I am including a story in Sunday’s Register that I agree with as it relates to development. [The article clip is “To solve its housing problem, state must build, not regulate” by Loretta Sanchez. The article is an opinion piece. At the end, it states that Sanchez represented Orange County in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1997 to 2017]

Walt Rountree Fullerton

A diverse coalition of media organizations
is urging Governor Newsom to sign
an important bill that supports local news

More than 130 organizations are urging Governor Gavin Newsom to sign AB 2222, which would give California newsrooms tax credits based on how many journalists they employ. The coalition of unions, press associations, publishers, and civic groups made its case in a September 9 letter. The decision is among the most closely watched of the governor’s bill-signing season.

Signers of the letter backing Assembly Bill 2222, the Community NEWS Act, include SAG-AFTRA, the Communication Workers of America, the National Association of Broadcasters, and the National Newspaper Publishers Association, along with California outlets such as the San Francisco Chronicle, CalMatters, KQED, La Opinión, the Sacramento Observer, and many weekly, ethnic, and rural papers. Newsom has until September 30 to act. His office has not commented.

Assemblymember Christopher M. Ward, D-San Diego, introduced AB 2222 in February with joint author Buffy Wicks, D-Oakland, and sponsorship from the nonprofit Rebuild Local News. The bill offers refundable tax credits tied to newsroom employment: \$20,000 per journalist for the first five positions and \$15,000 for each additional one, with half-credits for part-time staff. Smaller outlets and those adding jobs would receive enhanced benefits.

Eligibility is broad. Print, digital, and broadcast outlets could qualify, whether for-profit, nonprofit, or sole proprietorships. Supporters say screening provisions would keep partisan operations from posing as local news.

The state’s tax board estimates the program would deliver more than \$40 million annually to California news-

rooms, among the nation’s largest state-level supports for local journalism. The five-year program would begin with tax years starting January 1, 2027. It would be paid for by ending a state corporate deduction for executive compensation above \$1 million, a deduction federal law already disallows. Proponents call it revenue-neutral or better.

The letter cites research showing local journalism in the U.S. has shrunk by more than 80 percent since 2002. California ranks among the states with the fewest journalists per capita, and many counties are considered news deserts. It also cites an analysis estimating that thin local coverage costs local governments about \$1.1 billion a year in higher borrowing costs. New York, Illinois, and New Mexico have enacted similar credits.

Opponents include the California Taxpayers Association and the California Chamber of Commerce, which argue it could raise employer taxes. The governor’s Department of Finance noted the measure has no cap on total credits and mainly subsidizes existing positions rather than new ones.

Support has been bipartisan but not universal. The Senate passed the bill August 30 and the Assembly concurred the next day, though some Republicans withdrew their initial support.

Ward calls the bill an economic and civic investment. Charles F. Champion, president and CEO of the California News Publishers Association, is cautiously optimistic despite opposition to the executive-pay provision.

A signature would make California a major test of whether public policy can sustain local journalism; a veto would set back its supporters.

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.

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Distributed on the first and third Monday of every month except only once in January, July & August.

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Created & Published
in Fullerton by
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Published by Fullerton Observer LLC

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Fullerton Residents Honor Sharon Quirk-Silva After 12 Years in the California 67th District Assembly

Approximately 85 community members gathered at the Fullerton Community Center on Saturday, September 12, to pay tribute to Assemblymember Sharon Quirk-Silva and her 12 years of dedicated service in the California State Assembly.

The event, which began at 9 am served as a farewell celebration marking Quirk-Silva's contributions to the 67th Assembly District. Attendees enjoyed a program highlighting her legislative achievements, local events, and resources developed during her tenure.

Notable figures in attendance included Fullerton School District Board

Members Ruthi Hanchett, Vanessa Estrella, Miguel Alvarez, and James Cho; Fullerton Joint Union High School District Board Member Joanne Fawley; Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley; Buena Park Mayor Connor Trout; and U.S. Representatives Derek Tran and Lou Correa, among others.

Quirk-Silva's connection to Fullerton runs deep, having spent over 30 years as a teacher in the Fullerton School District before her political career. She served on the Fullerton City Council from 2004 to 2012, including a term as mayor, before her election to the California Assembly in 2012. After a

brief absence following her 2014 reelection defeat, she returned to the Assembly in 2016 and has been an influential voice ever since representing the 67th Assembly District, which encompasses Fullerton and parts of North Orange County.

Quirk-Silva's legislative work has spanned various critical issues, including housing, homelessness, education, veterans' affairs, health care, small businesses, and local governance. She was very influential in legislation that helped keep senior citizens in their homes at Rancho La Paz Senior Mobile Home Park after John Saunders bought the park and raised

the rents by 70%.

The farewell gathering followed her emotional remarks on the Assembly floor in August, where she reflected on her public service journey and expressed gratitude to family, staff, colleagues, and constituents. She highlighted her commitment to addressing housing, homelessness, mental health, education, and working on the state budget during her time in office.

The event not only marked the conclusion of Quirk-Silva's tenure in the Assembly but also celebrated her long-standing connection to the Fullerton community she has passionately served throughout her career.



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FSD Board Meeting Highlights Key Technology Policies for Student Learning by Vivien Moreno

The September 15 Fullerton School District (FSD) board meeting included the student technology use presentation trustees requested in May. Dr. Adaina Brown, Assistant Superintendent of Education, and Mr. Jeremy Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Innovation and Technology, covered FSD technology policy application, preliminary survey data, and answered questions for over an hour.

FSD technology policy operates on “purposeful technology use,” with safety as a high priority. The district uses safety protocols to block student access to Roblox, anything associated with gaming, social media, or the open internet access. The district also monitors what apps students utilize through their devices, and it added Mosyle, an app that allows parents full control over their childrens student device while at home.

YouTube is blocked for grades TK-3, and grades 4-8 can only access YouTube Education. Teachers may get additional videos and other applications district authorization.

Technology staff and teachers continually review and vet new software to support student education in a safe and age-appropriate environment. Teachers receive ongoing training and partner with the technology department to develop curriculum concerning digital citizenship and AI understanding and use.

Mr. Davis points out that there are district teachers who achieve amazing results with students using little technology, and some teachers achieve equally great results using plenty of

technology. The main factor in all technology-supported learning is the human ingredient.

Students gain greater subject mastery with teachers that utilize technology tools through interactive learning techniques .

Dr. Brown and Mr. Davis emphasized that FSD trusts their teachers, as education professionals, to teach students effectively how to learn and achieve.

FSD technology applications teaches students operator skills, including keyboard basics, the recognition of trustworthy and fabricated resource material, and ongoing digital citizenship.

Teachers and administration review best practices with classroom walkthroughs. Continually work to align education with technology support to provide the best educational environments.

Programs like instructional sound amplification positively support teachers by lowering classroom management issues, especially in English language classes. It lowers teacher health issues related to vocal cord fatigue and lowers the incidence of referrals for educational disabilities.

SNORKL is an AI app that assesses and tutors individual students in their home language, allowing them to improve without giving them the answers. This is particularly useful in assessing student mastery in subjects that are not English-dependent, such as

mathematics and the sciences.

FSD teachers use interactive technology to increase their efficacy and student mastery of subject understanding, but how much screen time are students actively engaged in during the school day?

A preliminary survey showed that, on average, FSD TK-1 graders experienced 27 minutes of screen time at school, 2-3 grades 53 minutes, 4-6 grades 95 minutes, and 7-8 grades 159 minutes. All textbooks are in e-book format and are counted as active screen class time. There is also a correlated growth of autonomous technology use. Grades TK-2 utilize about 10% autonomy (that is, they use technology interactively 10% on their own), while by grade 7, this is closer to 70%.

FSD is not utilizing ChatGPT on school devices with students. AI technology is being introduced through age-appropriate activities. It seems to be most useful when teaching students how to become effective researchers and learners. All teachers are trained to use their grade-level instruction applications and choose to utilize them or not.

The District encourages active technological engagement, meaning students and teachers doing activities together utilizing district-vetted applications, students accessing library books and textbooks, and students also

getting familiarized with testing processes leading to greater state testing success. Passive screen interaction, which includes watching videos with no interactive engagement, cell phone use, and social media scrolling is banned at FSD.

Parents can get additional information on technology use within the district’s schools by calling their child’s school site principal with questions, watching parent-focused videos covering technology on its FSD channel, and joining in-person discussions concerning online wellness topics. Parents can review their child’s passive screen time use at home and get support from the district to help balance physical activity, face-to-face social interactions, screen time, and sleep for a healthy home environment.

The District is a nationally recognized school district for its implementation, innovation, and self-assessment for the balance it has achieved between student active technology use and face-to-face interaction balance. Board and district policies have been adjusted in recent years as technological advances impact education environments.

Some of the trustees’ questions reflected less on the presentation and more on the perception of technology use, which confuses passive technology use with interactive engagement practices.

FSD is committed to answering concerned parental questions while providing students with the best foundational education, which includes mastery of technological skills and understanding of how to assess their own safe use of technology applications.

***FSD emphasizes
'purposeful technology use,'
prioritizing safety
and interactive learning
to help students achieve
mastery in their subjects.***

The FJUHSD September Board Meeting by Vivien Moreno

JOINING AN OCDE CLASS ACTION SOCIAL MEDIA USE LAWSUIT

Superintendent Dr. Steve McLaughlin presented a resolution and contract agreement to the board to join the Orange County Department of Education as an independent actor in a countywide civil case against social media companies for damages to local youth. The contract with the Bullock Legal Group seeks unspecified damages for mental health and academic remediation due to the loss of time and emotional damage inflicted by companies that knowingly incentivize teenage users to keep passively looking at screens connected to social media applications. The lawsuit is in cooperation with OCDE, but as an independent entity, the district can decide to remove itself from the lawsuit at will. They will not owe the legal group expenses unless Bullock wins the case. In that instance, the legal firm will take 30% from any district award plus any determined legal fees. The board approved the resolution and contract 4-0, after disclosing that the Superintendent met with each trustee independently and that each trustee used email to ask questions about the legal suit and obtain any additional information they needed to make their decision.

Unaudited Actuals

Assistant Superintendent of Business Services, Mr. Ruben Hernandez, presented the trustees with the 25/26 school year unaudited actuals (Unaudited actuals refer to the final financial statements for a completed fiscal year that have not yet been examined or verified by an independent external auditor.)

FJUHSD ended the year with \$241.5 million in income and \$240.3 million in expenditures. This brought down projected deficit spending, leaving the district with \$82.4 million in general fund restricted and unrestricted funds. Steady interest rates, paying down one-time money, and lower early retirement program contributions lessened projected deficit spending. The district is in a strong, but watchful, fiscal position. Mr. Hernandez listed future contract negotiations, benefit costs, tariffs, inflation, and world conflicts as issues he is watching closely as future budget indicators.

Arts Grant Spending Plan

Dr. Sylvia Kaufman, Assistant Superintendent of Education, and Mr. Michael Despars, Arts Teacher on Special Assignment, presented the annual Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) budget funded by Proposition 28 money. This year, FJUHSD adds \$1.9 million to the rotating Art and Music budget, which is down almost 7% compared to the state’s 2025 allocation.

The district’s robust fund maintains the programs and additional personnel it hired following current state law, and the district continues to receive a waiver overruling the required 80% use of funds to hire new VAPA personnel. The district expanded VAPA course offerings by expanding instrumental music course offerings. A major portion of the money was diverted to purchasing new instruments, new band uniforms, field trip funding, Marley flooring for dance rooms, dance shoes, wireless headsets, ceramic kilns, specialized cameras, 3-D printers, and professional training for existing and new staff.

Numerous coaches and support staff for all levels and art subjects have been added. Student participation in some type of Visual and Performing Arts increased to 6112 students district-wide, bringing student participation in VAPA from 45% in the 24/25 school year to 50.56% in 25/26. Research from both The College Board and the National Institutes of Health shows that VAPA participation reinforces student engagement in school overall, and also supports greater math and science understanding.

Mr. Despars indicated that the next step for the program is the review by individual school sites of course sections, student preferences, and support coach effectiveness for next year. Trustee Marilyn Buchi requested a presentation showing the impact of increased VAPA funding on individual school sites and how students are directly experiencing additional VAPA staff and supplies.

Next regularly scheduled meeting:
October 13 at 6pm.



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Hispanic Heritage Month by Dahlia, 8th Grade



Are you a fan of Frida Kahlo’s paintings, Pablo Neruda’s poems, Pedro Pascal’s acting in “The Mandalorian,” or Shakira’s hips? These are just a few of the Latino and Latin American figures who have influenced popular culture.

Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated each year from September 15 to October 15. The dates coincide with independence anniversaries celebrated by several Latin American countries. Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua celebrate independence on September 15; Mexico on September 16; Chile on September 18; and Belize on September 21. Brazil celebrates its independence on September 7 and is generally considered Latino, but not Hispanic.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics made up 19.5% of the U.S. population in 2023. Hispanic or Latino is considered an ethnicity rather than a race in federal statistics, and people who identify as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Hispanics were the nation’s second-largest population group after non-Hispanic White people.

But what is the difference between Hispanic and Latino? Hispanic generally refers to people with origins connected to Spanish culture or the Spanish language, while Latino generally refers to people with origins in Latin America and the Caribbean. The terms overlap but are not identical. Spain is Hispanic but not Latino, while Brazil is generally Latino but not Hispanic.

In 1968, Congress authorized a week-long observance of Hispanic heritage, and President Lyndon B.

Johnson issued the first presidential proclamation that year. In 1988, Congress passed Public Law 100-402, and President Ronald Reagan approved it on August 17, expanding the observance to a 31-day period from September 15 through October 15.

Each year, Hispanic Heritage Month has a theme. In 2026, the theme is “Unidos, Somos Más” — “Together, We Are More.”

If you are looking for a way to celebrate Hispanic and Latino culture in Fullerton, The Muckenthaler Cultural Center is featuring Mariachi Garibaldi de Jaime Cuéllar on October 21 at 7:30 pm.



Photo by Gaston Castellanos

Or, if you are looking for Latino food, Fullerton is home to Hidalgo’s Cocina & Cócteles, Navarro’s Taqueria, Ensenada’s Surf N Turf Grill and Farolito of Fullerton. Whether you are listening to mariachi or enjoying a plate of ceviche, remember that *unidos, somos más!*

Featured Pet - Missy by Jules, 10th Grade



Meet Missy, the sweetest German Shepherd mix in search of her forever home.

Once acquainted, this two year old canine has the most energetic personality. She is currently mastering basic commands, and executes when prompted with treats.

Missy is the paw-fect addition to any active home, as she loves going on long walks and taking a refreshing dip in the pool. Families without young children would best suit Missy as she adjusts to her new surroundings.

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Sofia Lombardi:
Giving Deaf Youth a Voice
by Tegan, 9th Grade

For Sofia Lombardi, learning American Sign Language (ASL) began as an interest in a different kind of communication. Now, as Miss Placentia’s Teen 2026, she is using what she has learned to advocate for Deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

Lombardi is a junior at Rosary Academy in Fullerton, where she is involved in her sixth year of Mock Trial, serves as Co-President of the CHOC Care Club, participates in Rosary Ambassadors and is part of the school’s Leadership Pathway. Lombardi has always enjoyed performing, public speaking and service. She is also entering her third year of learning American Sign Language. She was initially drawn to the language because of how expressive it is, since it uses hands, facial expressions and movement to communicate. As she continued learning, her interest grew beyond the language itself and into Deaf culture and accessibility.

As she became more involved with ASL and Deaf culture, Lombardi created an advocacy initiative called Hope for Hidden Voices (HHV) to advocate for early language access for Deaf and hard-of-hearing children. She created the initiative after becoming “more aware of how important it is for children to have access to language from an early age.” Through this initiative, she hopes to raise awareness while creating more opportunities for Deaf and hard-of-hearing children to communicate, participate and connect.

The issue is also personal for Lombardi, who has pulsatile tinnitus and understands how isolating an invisible hearing challenge can feel. While volunteering at a culinary class,

she met a girl whose cochlear implant was not working. After returning to several classes, Lombardi noticed the girl recognized her and smiled when she saw her. Lombardi explains that “sometimes it comes through simply showing up and spending time with someone.”

Lombardi has continued volunteering with No Limits for Deaf Children (a nonprofit that teaches deaf children the skills to succeed in school and in life) through culinary classes and has created ASL workshops for underserved communities. The children learn the names of foods, ingredients and cooking terms while participating in hands-on activities.

The experience taught her how activities like these can make language learning fun while giving children new ways to communicate and connect. She also created Sign to Shine, a social media platform that teaches basic signs. She believes small efforts, such as learning ASL, can make communication more accessible.

“Communication goes both ways,” she said.

Her advocacy has also become part of her pageant experience. As Miss Placentia’s Teen 2026, Lombardi has used social media and local events to share Hope for Hidden Voices. At Miss California’s Teen, she performed an ASL interpretation of “This Is Me” from The Greatest Showman and was named a Top 10 semifinalist. Pageants are often viewed as being mainly about appearance, but her experience has been much broader. Titleholders are expected to be involved in their communities, serve others, stay informed



Photos courtesy of Sofia Lombardi

about current events and speak about issues that matter to them. For Lombardi, the title has given her another way to talk about Deaf and hard-of-hearing youth and reach people she might not otherwise have reached.

Lombardi hopes to eventually expand Hope for Hidden Voices nationally through partnerships with deaf organizations, more ASL workshops and events for deaf youth. She also encourages other teens to start small. “You don’t need a huge platform to make a difference,” she said. “You are your own best advocate.”

Sew Fun and More: A lively sewing studio filled with laughter and learning

by Breanna Pineda

Along North Harbor Boulevard, you may have seen a storefront with large glass windows and a chalkboard sign welcoming guests. From the sign, people can probably tell the place offers sewing lessons.

But simply passing by isn't enough to capture Sew Fun and More's impact on the community or the unique experience the studio offers.

The sewing studio has been open for close to 3 years; however, owner Beth Jerome's journey to having a business can be traced back to the fourth grade, when her mother bought her a sewing machine and gave her lessons.

Sewing remained a hobby while she was a stay-at-home mom and a part-time substitute teacher.

Eventually, after the effects of COVID, Beth stepped away from teaching. But, her love of teaching never quite settled. Soon, she began inviting neighborhood kids to tutoring classes at her house and incorporating sewing into her lessons.

"I just love kids' joy," she said, "God made me with a gift for kids."

After a few years of teaching at home, Beth got the idea to open her own space where she could offer sewing lessons without the distractions of teaching at home.

"When I am home, I am distracted by all the everyday things, with laundry and the dog barking, so I would just get interrupted a lot," she said. I knew "I could give it more of my all if I had my own space."

Although it was a big jump to go from at-home classes to a full-fledged business, Beth emphasizes her long connection to Fullerton through growing up here, teaching in the area, and raising her kids here. With this extensive community background, she found a wide range of people interested in Sew Fun.

After some painting and refurbishment of the building, Sew Fun and More opened its doors in October 2023.

Even with the success of the business, Beth explained that there were some hurdles during the early stages of the studio, where she worked with basic materials before getting the high-quality products.

"I started out with six little machines, no sign on the window, and foldout tables. It took a while to accumulate enough revenue where I could pur-

chase the things that brought [the studio] to the next level," she said.

Today, the studio has a variety of classes offered to people with different skill sets and a variety of ages, from younger kids to teens and adults. Beth also has two other teachers who help teach classes, Grace Allen and Gabby Whittington. Furthermore, her classes also provide people with sewing machines to use.

Initially, Beth was hesitant when adults began asking for sewing classes shortly after Sew Fun and More opened. But once she began offering simple classes for beginners, she realized teaching adults also brought her joy.

"A lot of adults want to make something for their home, and that saves them money, and they can be more creative," she said.

During classes, people can work their way up to learning how to make a variety of items, from jumpsuits and home decor to unique sewing projects such as customizing the lining of Trader Joe's bags.

Beth also offers "Open Sewing" classes, where people are encouraged to stop by and practice their sewing skills at their own pace.

With each class, it is Beth's kind and joyous personality when teaching that really makes the lessons unique for everyone. Her teaching method allows guests to feel free to make mistakes, ask questions, and laugh together.

"I cannot just teach with a monotone and without music, without talking to [people] and getting to know them," Beth said with a smile. "Laughing a little and being silly, and giving [people] a little pat on the back or a little encouragement if I see people having a hard time."

Another part of her teaching philosophy is the value of patience and ensuring people who take her classes feel comfortable.

"When I am teaching a class, people say, 'I am so sorry I did not get it,' and I say, 'Do not be sorry!'" She said, "I want them to know right away, 'Hey, I am not going to judge you. This is not the easiest class in the world, but I am going to teach you, and no question is too small.'"

Since Sew Fun and More's opening, Beth has also learned new lessons on teaching and how to determine age ranges for classes.



Sew Fun and more is located on 624 North Harbor Boulevard in Fullerton.
For information on when classes are available, check out Sew Fun and more's website at sewfunandmore.com.

Originally, she allowed kids of a variety of ages to attend one class together. But after noticing younger kids ages five to seven struggle with certain lessons, she introduced a specific class where younger children can have easier activities. For her, the ideal age to start sewing is eight and a half or nine years old.

Aside from that, Beth notes that even with classes divided by different age groups, she believes both children and adults are capable of learning complex sewing patterns as long as they can stick to directions and have patience.

"To be quite honest, I feel that a confident nine-year-old can sit in one of the adult classes and do just fine," she said.

With the uniqueness of a sewing studio, Beth also shared some experiences the studio went through, such as the time a high school advanced sewing class from Canada stopped by and took a class. There was also a time when the sewing storefront offered some fabrics and outfits from a woman who did costuming for "Dancing With The Stars."

Above all, Sew Fun and More's success can also be traced back to the positive people who work there. The studio is decorated with soft colors reminiscent of an art class in elementary school, and Beth shared she likes to provide cookies for younger classes. The welcoming environment is the reason Beth believes people return for more classes.

"I just wrote an ad for a class, and I wrote 'taught by happy people,'" she said, smiling. "I think it is because [the people that work here] are doing what we love; it is our passion, and we love it."

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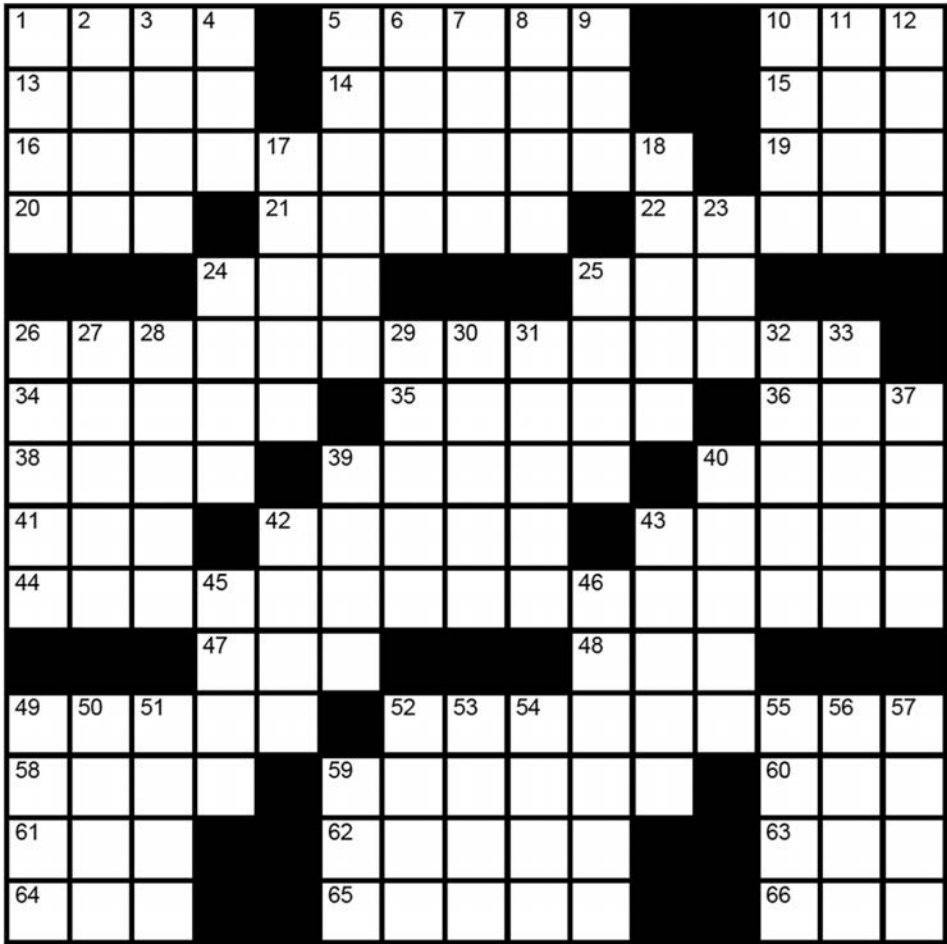
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OUR TOWN CROSSWORD © 2026

"MOVIE SLUMP" by Valerie Brickey (answer key on page 19)



ACROSS

1. Root beer brand

5. Nemesis, say

10. Modifying wd.

13. Burn balm

14. Japanese cartoon art

15. ____-tzu (Father of Taoism)

16. 1993 Michael Douglas desperation film

19. Consumed

20. Wile E. Coyote purchase

21. Lack of musical talent

22. English final, often

24. Half-____ (order for a barista)

25. Fool

26. 2020 Tyler Perry straight to Netflix movie

34. Where Orange County is, in brief

35. Borders on

36. Some football linemen: Abbr.

38. Knowing, as a secret

39. Skating rinks, usually
40. Fruit-flavored soda brand, now RC

41. "Much ____ About Nothing"

42. Mexican dairy condiment

43. Listens to

44. 1996 Nick Nolte neo-noir thriller

47. American gymnast Raisman

48. Summer, in Somme

49. Lukewarm

52. Nostalgic person's favorite Beatles song, maybe

58. Toot one's horn

59. 1998 Denzel Washington supernatural thriller

60. Color TV pioneer

61. [not my error]

62. More feverish

63. "Raiders of the Lost ____"

64. Treat like a dog?

65. Requires

66. "Fantastic Mr. Fox" director Anderson

DOWN

1. Wacky

2. "The Traitors" host Cumming

3. Doofus

4. Partner of poivre

5. Skipped out

6. "Picnic" playwright

7. Ricky Martin's "Livin' La ____ Loca"

8. Cupid, to Romans

9. Kareem, originally

10. "Woe is me!"

11. Numbers to crunch

12. Kangaroo kid

17. Collectively

18. Gets warmer?

23. Health resort

24. Tartan-sporting families

25. Certain NCO's

26. "Take me ____"

27. Ballet bend that sounds like a cheese dish

28. Store in ____, dry place

29. "Bolero" composer

30. The 44th President
31. Disney film based on a Chinese legend

32. Angler's basket

33. Word with alcohol or acetate

37. Puncture sound

39. Paris airport

40. Blazer or Cav

42. Give the ____ shoulder

43. "Come here ____?"

45. Alexander ____ (Secretary of State from 1981-82)

46. Dissuades

49. Baking meas.

50. New York's ____ Canal

51. Treaty

52. Jodie Foster's alma mater

53. "Margo's Got Money Troubles" actress Fanning

54. Downhill racer

55. Sketch

56. Part of a plot

57. Shaggy beasts

59. Dorsal, e.g.

HITS & MISSES

by Pamela Mason Wagner © 2026



PRACTICAL MAGIC 2: Two Hits

There are many reasons to celebrate this second installment of this charming franchise, first launched in 1998. The terrific actors reunite, the script takes us to fun new places, and this time a woman directs the female-centric story. Academy Award-winning Danish director Susanne Bier, who honed her skills on art-house fare and Danish-language films, earned the chance to direct a family-friendly Hollywood blockbuster—and she succeeds.

The story of four witches struggling to keep their powers in check while fully expressing their identities makes the case for big Hollywood movies. The sets, locations, deeply nostalgic soundtrack, cinematography, and special effects—just enough without being over the top—required a \$75 million budget, far beyond the reach of most independent films. That money also buys movie stars, each effortlessly wielding her own cinematic aura.

Nicole Kidman plays Gillian, the carefree, hippie-ish sister who favors one-night stands to avoid the Owens family curse: when love enters the picture, the object of affection inevitably meets a horrific death. Her sister, Sally (Sandra Bullock), leads a Marion-the-Librarian life, suppressing her powers and hiding them from her daughters.

The reliable Stockard Channing is more subdued as Aunt Franny. But two-time Academy Award winner Dianne Wiest steals the first half of the movie. As Aunt Jet, Wiest makes a compelling case for keeping older female stars on screen as long as possible. Her presence here is luminous, her voice delightfully enchanting, and her style—timelessly glamorous. One wonders why Hollywood keeps putting female actors over 40 out to pasture.

The plot introduces the next generation of witches: Sally's daughters, Kylie (Joey King) and Antonia (Maisie Williams), who don't know they are witches.

When Kylie falls for a college classmate, Gideon (Xolo Maridueña), the family curse must be broken with help from a handsome professor, Ian Wright (Lee Pace). The quest takes us to London and beyond, including a Harry Potter-ish bus ride to a charming village in northern England. All paths eventually converge at a ruined castle where dark magic may—or may not—be at work.

Beyond its straightforward storyline, the sequel's real power lies in its universal themes. Everyone can relate to Sally. She has suffered because of her magical powers and the family curse, and her goal is to create a normal life for her children. Ultimately, she learns that her true path is to let go: to allow her children to find their own way, release her repressed feelings, and discover her own freedom.

Movie stars this good can move mountains with few or no words. When Ian and Sally first lock eyes, their instant connection feels powerful and genuine. A simple "hi," delivered by an actress fully in command of her comedic genius, speaks volumes.

Bier understands the power of the movie-star close-up, with its shallow depth of focus concentrating our attention on faces we cannot stop watching. Hollywood figured out long ago that there is little more fascinating than a great star's face. Happily, this director puts that lesson to very good use.

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

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Out of My Mind

by Jon Dobrer © 2026 Jonathandobrer.substack.com

The Terrorists Won Post 9/11

On 9/11, the terrorists lost. Yes, they destroyed the Twin Towers, damaged the Pentagon and killed a lot of people. Bin Laden’s goal was to immediately destabilize us, strike terror into our hearts, and bring down our morale, as Al Qaeda had brought down the towers.

The attack didn’t immediately cause disunity and panic. It brought us together. For a moment we were united across our many divisions. We were not White or Black, Asian or Brown. Covered in ash, we became one people, one nation.

First responders didn’t stop and demand the race, religion, or immigration status of the people they rescued. We joined hands and helped each other, held each other. As Churchill said of England during World War II, this was “our finest hour!”

However, if you wonder today how the Department of Homeland Security, created in reaction to 9/11, rounds up people without warrants or individual suspicion, if you question the dramatic erosion of our rights to due process, being safe in our homes and our expectation not to be stopped, searched and arrested based only on the whim of ICE and DHS agents, look no further than 9/11; the nearly unrecognizable society we have become is the poisoned fruit of the toxic seeds the terrorists sowed on 9/11.

President George W. Bush was widely mocked for telling Americans to get back to work and get back to shop-

ping—implying that if we stopped shopping, the “Terrorists win.” Some saw this as craven capitalism having nothing to do with healing our hearts and defeating the terrorists. While the phrase might be inartful, it was wise. If we stop acting normally, we won’t return to normalcy.

When “We the People” returned to our new normal, we did a better job of not letting the terrorists win than our government did.

The government’s actions and reactions were denials of normalcy, traditions, laws and guardrails. The toxic seeds didn’t instantly spread their poison but lay dormant. Then, watered by our tears, our fears and our government’s commitment to see that it “never happened again,” sprouted policies that have eroded our freedoms and made our xenophobic impulses move from occasional to a chronic condition that has diminished our freedom and our safety.

The 9/11 attack did not instantly break us apart, but it did move us to surrender cherished freedoms without much thought. It encouraged our acceptance of previously unthinkable actions. Our surrender took six weeks till October 26, when we passed the Patriot Act—a piece of legislation too long to be read by our legislators before being passed. The Patriot Act

radically changed what the government was allowed to do in the name of security. It allowed for collecting personal data without a warrant. It accepted that under exigent circumstances there might not be time to establish probable cause. It permitted government agencies to surveil, search and track us.

Knowing that the American people were hurt and angry, the government had to act. They ignored the fact that the 9/11 terrorists came from Saudi Arabia because the Saudis were allies. They needed to find where the hijackers

planned and trained for their deadly mission. This turned out to be Germany and San Diego. What to do? We had to bomb somewhere, and Antarctica didn’t seem satisfying. So, Iraq it was.

Such was the rage that we threw out our rulebook to pursue our enemy. We infiltrated Muslim communities and mosques. We often deployed under-trained and undisciplined

agents who became the forerunners of today’s abusive ICE, DHS and DOJ.

Abroad, prisoners weren’t classified as prisoners and therefore not recognized as POWs to whom the Geneva Conventions applied. They were “enemy combatants,” who had no rights. Since this wasn’t a “war,” they could be held forever.

We also threw away our moral compass by allowing torture. We claimed that we didn’t torture but only performed “enhanced interrogations,” by putting our enemies into “stress positions,” and using electric shocks and

denial of sleep. We deemed it OK to sexually humiliate detainees by mocking them and parading them naked in front of women. We tolerated rendition to “black sites,” where they could be held and abused out of our sight.

If you want to know how we became so inured to today’s many outrages, look no further than the haste with which we pursued the “evil doers.” Look no further to understand Trump’s constant declarations of “National Security Emergencies” than the widely held image we accepted that our danger was like a nuclear weapon hidden somewhere in a major city, and we had captured the terrorist who planted it. What would you do to save the city from nuclear destruction? Would you yell? Would you put him into a stress position? To save a city, would torture be ok? The normal temptation is to say “Yes.” But if we do, everything becomes an exigent circumstance and a national security emergency. The guardrail that had protected us is gone.

When we look at what Trump does, at the norms that have been shattered, the freedoms we have lost, we must know that 9/11 set us up to tolerate the destruction of what made us a great democracy.

The title of this article is “The Terrorist Won,” but this isn’t yet true. They are winning, but they haven’t won yet. We must remember the six weeks after 9/11 when we were strong, courageous and committed to embracing all that had made us, not perfect but great. We must remember when patriotism wasn’t centered on fear, violence and revenge but on healing and embracing each other. I believe our “Better Angels” are now ready to inspire us if we’re ready to listen.

After 9/11, we surrendered long cherished freedoms without much thought, allowing fear to guide our actions and reshape our society.

AT HOME WITH THE HOMELESS

by Andrew Williams © 2026 WWW.PATREON.COM/C/THEOPINIONATOR

Twenty-five years since 9/11. Have we learned anything?

For those of us who were awake and aware of events on September 11, 2001, we remember something horrific and virtually unprecedented. America was under attack. The World Trade Center in New York City was attacked by commercial airplanes hijacked by suicide bombers, resulting in their destruction and the deaths of over 3,000 people.

It was something that no generation since the Greatest Generation had had to deal with. And in the 2.5 decades since, we have taken all the subsequent goodwill and generosity extended to us by the world, thrown it in the trash and burned it to ashes. We have gone from being one of the lights of the world to one of pariahs. How did this happen?

We have to begin by looking back to our government’s intervention in the affairs of other nation-states. Two examples will suffice. In 1953, the CIA, aided by MI6, Great Britain’s intelligence agency, removed Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, who had been democratically elected two years earlier, and put the deposed Shah of Iran in his place.

The story we sold to the world is that the Shah was being restored to his rightful place at the head of Iran’s government. The real story was that Mossadegh sought to nationalize Iran’s oil supply and get a better price for it, so that Iran’s people could benefit. This coup created a twenty-five-year monarchy, which was then replaced in 1979 by a theocratic monarchy that has

ruled Iran ever since.

Then there’s Chile. In 1973, the CIA, yet again, this time in cooperation with a wing of the Chilean military, decided to remove the democratically elected leader, Salvador Allende, and replace him with the intelligence community’s preferred choice, Auguste Pinochet.

In this case, Allende sadly made it easier by committing suicide on September 11, 1973. (Interesting coincidence, no?) This resulted in decades of a military government and state oppression, with those who opposed Pinochet regularly being “disappeared” or outright murdered.

It has taken the Chilean government and its people decades to recover from our interference. And they are still recovering.

Obviously, I could go on and on ad infinitum, ad nauseam and mention Cuba, Argentina, El Salvador and Iraq, among many others. And our decades-long involvement in Vietnam rates a whole series of books. Suffice to say, when it comes to nation-building, or rebuilding, we tend to put our national interest first and the welfare of the people concerned dead last.

So when 9/11 happened, and our response, rather than learn from our

mistakes, was to continue making them, it told the world that we had learned nothing. And in the last quarter century, particularly the last decade, that view has been reinforced.

A particular line from the Bible would do well for current and future leaders in America to heed. 1 Kings 12:16 says, “Look to your own house” when it comes to judging the affairs of others. This precedes Jesus’ saying in

Matthew 7 to address the plank of wood sticking out of your own eye before you even contemplate acting to clear the mote from your brother’s eye.

Unfortunately, the nature of individuals and governments is to do the opposite—we always prefer to meddle in other people’s perceived problems before taking the painful and necessary action of addressing our own.

The result is that we are a nation in great danger of losing its soul. We are spied on, lied to, threatened with arrest and mur-

der for dissent, for the mere act of honestly reporting government actions, and all of this and more on a scale that neither Richard Nixon nor Ronald Reagan could have envisioned.

We have a President who wiped his tuchus with the rule of law and flushed it down the toilet. We have a cabinet full of men and women who have been given a lease to exhibit their worst impulses and ideas—racism and sexism in speech and violent action run rampant.

Settled history has been called revisionist, and attempts to rewrite it are

gaining strength. Cities are becoming unwilling hosts of concentration camps and data centers. And the world looks on in horror, pity and disgust as these depredations go on.

I believe it is not too late to reverse course. I believe that millions of Americans are sick of this anti-democratic nonsense and are willing to devote their time and energy to turn things around. I believe we can restore the rule of law and confidence in our institutions, namely Congress and the judiciary. I believe we can introduce the reforms we need to end our tendency to interfere with democratically elected foreign governments. But it will take a lot of work, and if we as a nation aren’t up to it, no one is going to do it for us. There is no cavalry coming over the hill. There is just us.

The good news is, if all of us can do even a little—urge our friends and neighbors to vote blue, financially support candidates you believe in (such as James Talarico in Texas, Troy Jackson in Maine, Mary Peltola in Alaska, Dr. Amy Acton in Ohio, John Turek in Iowa, and Abdul El-Sayed in Michigan), write letters, attend protests, speak out at council meetings—we can change things. And it wouldn’t hurt to write to the Democratic leadership, especially Hakeem Jeffries and Cory Booker, to let them know that all of these candidates need to be supported with words and money,

Bottom line: You can fight City Hall, and even the White House, and win. Just as David defeated Goliath. Just as the Texas Rangers say in their motto: “Little guy’ll whup a big guy, as long as the little guy’s in the right and keeps a-comin’.”

Thanks for coming to my TED Talk.

The Science Behind It

by Yuvika Salman © 2026



How Did Measles Come Back?

In 2000, measles was declared eliminated in the United States. Twenty-six years later, we are talking about it again.

I have only ever known this disease as a box checked off on my childhood vaccination records, so its return feels almost out of place.

This year, thousands of cases have been reported across the country, with outbreaks reaching communities that haven't seen widespread transmission in decades.

How does a disease come back after we supposedly got rid of it?

The answer has less to do with the actual measles virus changing and more to do with the conditions surrounding it. Measles never disappeared from the world, and because it is one of the most contagious viruses we know of, keeping it under control depends on maintaining an unusually high level of immunity within a community. Gaps in that protection can grow, ultimately allowing the virus to return.

To understand this, it is important to know what makes measles so remarkably good at spreading.

Measles is a respiratory virus that spreads through the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks or even breathes. Virus-containing parti-

cles can remain in the air for up to two hours after an infected person has left the area. Among people without immunity, roughly 90 percent of those who are exposed will become infected.

Epidemiologists measure this contagiousness using a number called R0. It estimates how many people one infected person can transmit a disease to in a population with no immunity. Measles has an estimated R0 between 12 and 18, meaning a single infected person could theoretically spread the virus to 12 to 18 others. For comparison, estimates for the original strain of COVID-19 were closer to 2 to 3.

This extraordinary ability to spread is why even relatively small gaps in immunity can make a difference.

The measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, better known as the MMR vaccine, is highly effective. Two doses are about 97 percent effective at preventing measles. But vaccination also affects more than the individual receiving it. When enough people in a community are immune, the virus has fewer opportunities to find its next susceptible host. Eventually, transmission chains are interrupted.

This is the basic idea behind herd, or community, immunity.

Because measles spreads so easily, approximately 95 percent vaccination coverage is generally needed to maintain strong community protection. But nationwide MMR coverage among U.S. kindergartners has fallen below that level in recent years.

A difference of only a few percentage points may not seem significant, but across millions of children, it can leave hundreds of thousands susceptible.

Vaccination rates can vary between states, neighborhoods and even individual schools. A community may exist within an otherwise highly vaccinated area where a much larger percentage of people are susceptible. If measles enters one of these pockets, it can move quickly.

This also helps explain what scientists actually mean when they say measles was "eliminated." Elimination does not mean eradication. Measles never disappeared worldwide. Elimination meant that continuous transmission of the virus within the United States had been stopped for at least 12 months.

Cases can therefore still enter the country through international travel. When an imported case reaches a highly immunized community, the virus struggles to spread very far. But when it reaches a population with gaps in immunity, a single case can become an outbreak.

The infection commonly begins with a high fever, cough, runny nose and red or watery eyes before the characteristic

rash appears. In some cases, measles can lead to pneumonia, severe dehydration and encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain. Young children and people with weakened immune systems are particularly vulnerable to complications.

Perhaps one of the most fascinating consequences of measles is something researchers call "immune amnesia." Our immune system normally maintains memory cells that recognize pathogens we have encountered before. Measles can destroy portions of this immune memory, essentially making the immune system "forget" some of the infections it previously learned how to fight. Even after someone recovers from measles itself, they may temporarily be more vulnerable to other infections.

There is a strange irony in successful public health efforts. The better we become at preventing a disease, the less visible its consequences become. Eventually, generations grow up without seeing what that disease once looked like, and it becomes easy to assume the threat disappeared on its own.

But measles was not eliminated because it stopped being contagious or dangerous. We eliminated it because we became good at stopping it from spreading.

Its return reminds us that, sometimes, keeping a disease in the past requires continuing the very measures that put it there.

Healthy Awareness

by Jo Ann Brannock, Ph.D. © 2026



Concussions in the National Football League

I recently fell backward onto a cement pavement after misjudging some steps. Fortunately, there was no brain bleed, but I developed a large swelling on the back of my head. My physician diagnosed a concussion.

Fullerton Observer subscriber Stanley Lewczyk shared the story of his father, who played halfback for a Pennsylvania high school and at Fordham University in the 1940s in a leather helmet. His father later developed cognitive problems resembling Alzheimer's disease: short-term memory loss, getting lost, anger, and difficulty counting change.

I watched the movie "Concussion," which tells the story of Bennet Omalu, a Nigerian-American physician, forensic pathologist, and neuropathologist. His family name is shortened from Onyemalukwube, meaning "one who knows should speak."

In 2002, Omalu performed an autopsy on former Pittsburgh Steelers Hall of Fame center Mike Webster. Webster's brain appeared normal, but his life had been anything but. He had experienced cognitive difficulties, financial hardship, depression, drug abuse, and suicide attempts. So, Omalu paid for his own analysis of Webster's brain tissue, and specialized staining revealed a significant accumulation of tau protein. Abnormal tau deposits interfere with brain function and are associated with problems involving mood, memory, and executive functioning.

The disease itself was not new: the term chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, dates to 1949, and the condition had been described in boxers

as punch-drunk syndrome. What Omalu documented was the first case in a professional football player. In 2005, he and his colleagues published their findings in Neurosurgery, in a paper titled "Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy in a National Football League Player."

The NFL did not accept the findings. In May 2006, members of its mild traumatic brain injury committee called for the paper to be retracted, describing Omalu's account of CTE as "completely wrong." The journal refused.

Living up to his name, Omalu persisted. In November 2006, he published a second Neurosurgery paper on the brain of former NFL player Terry Long, who had suffered from depression and died by suicide in 2005 at the age of 45.

Omalu found tau concentrations in Long's brain that were more consistent with a 90-year-old brain affected by advanced Alzheimer's. He later found evidence of CTE in other deceased players, including Justin Strzelczyk, who died in 2004 at 36; Andre Waters, in 2006 at 44; and Tom McHale, in 2008 at 45.

Not until December 2009 did the NFL publicly acknowledge a link between football concussions and long-term neurological effects, and it continued to dispute the science. Finally, in March 2016, Jeff Miller, the NFL's senior vice president for health and safety policy, testified before Congress that the league believed there was a link between football and CTE.

A study published in the British Medical Journal in August 2026 by Daniel Daneshvar and colleagues at Mass General Brigham Hospital and

Boston University examined 1,712 former NFL players who died between 2008 and 2021. Of the 338 brains donated, 315, or 93.2%, showed evidence of CTE. Because families who donate are more likely to have noticed symptoms, the researchers adjusted for that bias and concluded that at least 25% of players who died between 2016 and 2021 had CTE, possibly far more. Fewer than 1% of the general population has CTE pathology.

For years, researchers believed CTE could be studied only in the brains of deceased athletes. In 2017, Omalu led a team that used FDDNP, a tracer that binds to tau and can be seen on a PET scan, to identify CTE in a living former player, Minnesota Vikings linebacker Fred McNeill; the diagnosis was confirmed at autopsy.

Dr. Daniel Amen has also partnered with the Los Angeles chapter of the Retired NFL Players Association on a study using Single-Photon Emission Computed Tomography, or SPECT,

which measures blood flow. His group reported reduced flow in areas tied to judgment, attention, memory, mood, and processing speed, though neurologists generally do not accept SPECT as a diagnostic test for CTE.

I cannot compare my single fall with the repeated blows professional football players absorb over an entire career, but it has made me think more deeply about the price athletes may pay to play football, hockey, boxing, lacrosse, and other contact sports. Athletes love their sports and fans love watching them, but no game should require a person to sacrifice long-term brain health.

The responsibility belongs not only to players, but to coaches, parents, schools, leagues, physicians, and sports organizations. Protecting the brain should be just as important as protecting every other part of an athlete's body: after all, a career may last only a few years, but the brain must last a lifetime.

Balance & Change

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

A Time for Reflection and Self-Care

Fall is coming. I just had my first pumpkin latte, so you know it is close!

We are (hopefully) seeing the last of the hot weather. I love fall. It is always a time for me to reflect, slow down and get ready for the speed at which we deal with the holidays.

How do you slow down? What do you need to permit yourself to only focus on yourself?

If you had to take 15 minutes a day for someone else, you would. Are we not as important as other people?

And if your answer is no, please start there. Please treat yourself just as well as you treat others.

What does it mean to treat yourself well?

First, how is your sleep? Are you getting enough sleep, or are you on your phone scrolling until all hours? Are you eating healthy food? Are you taking time to spend a bit of time in nature? Are you doing fun things?

Each of us will answer these questions differently. There is no single right way to practice good self-care. What matters is that you do.

I know that I will be curling up with my pumpkin latte and a good book! My favorite self-care!

For all of you, I wish you your favorite self-care!

SEPTEMBER

21 Monday

—FAMILY TIME—
10:00am to 11:00am-\$65 per 4 week session (includes 1 child and 1 adult). : My Little & Me Craft Time: Join the Hunt Library for fun and interactive crafts. Your toddler will have the opportunity to touch, push, pull, and create art. For ages 2-5 years old.
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22 Tuesday

—SENIORS—
2:00 to 4:00pm: Free: Grandparent’s Day Celebration!: Celebrate the special bond between grandparents and grandchildren with a fun-filled intergenerational celebration featuring:
Hands-on crafts for all ages Music and dancing
Light refreshments
Fullerton Community Center
340 W. Commonwealth Ave.
(714) 738-6575

23 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



24 Thursday

—MUSIC—
7:30 to 9:30pm: \$40: Sean Oliu: Sean Oliu returns to the Muck! Sean tenderly breathes fresh life into the timeless essence of traditional country music. Grounded in authenticity, his songs and his voice resonate with both nostalgia and the pulse of the present. In 2023, Sean had the honor of opening shows for Grammy Award-winner LeAnn Rimes, a performance that won a three-minute standing ovation.
The Muckenthaler Cultural Center
1201 W. Malvern Ave, Fullerton
(657) 738-6595 • themuck.org

25 Friday

—FILM—
7:00 to 10:00 pm-\$35: A Hollywood Horror Story & Tour of Final Rites: Delivered as an episode of “The Vampira Show,” the mercurial life of her creator, Maila Nurmi, unearths in an electrifying multimedia performance!
The Fullerton Museum
301 N Pomona Ave, Fullerton
fullertonmuseum.com

26 Saturday

—FILM & BOOKS—
8:00pm-\$33: Town&Gown - "That's Me!": Velvet Goldmine, Cult Media, and Finding Ourselves: In her new book on Velvet Goldmine, Katherine Reed explores the power of cult media (like Velvet Goldmine and like the 1970s music it loves) to help us see ourselves and find our communities. A reading from the book will be followed by a discussion of the media that has shaped us.
Fullerton Public Library
353 W Commonwealth Ave, Fullerton
(714) 738-6326

27 Sunday

—WINE TASTING—
2:00 to 5:00 pm-\$65: LGBTQ Annual SipTember Wine Tasting Community Event (Ages 21+): Asocial wine tasting event! This is your chance to get to know us, meet new friends and enjoy the atmosphere.
The Fullerton Museum
301 N Pomona Ave, Fullerton
lgbtqcenteroc.org/siptember-2026/

28 Monday

—OUTDOOR—
12:30pm: Free: Arboretum and Botanical Garden at Cal State Fullerton: A peaceful 26-acre botanical garden serving as an urban oasis with diverse plant collections, shady paths, and quiet streams.
CSUF Arboretum & Botanical Garden
1900 Associated Road, Fullerton
arboretum.fullerton.edu

29 Tuesday

—ART SHOW—
11:00 am to 4:00 pm: Free: TOM LA DUKE: slowly, the song goes: Through May 7, 2027: Bringing together new drawings, recent paintings, and earlier sculptures, the exhibition traces recurring ideas that have shaped LaDuke’s practice for more than three decades.
The College of the Arts Galleries
Nearest crossstreets are St. College Blvd. and Arts Dr.

30 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



OCTOBER

1 Thursday

—MUSIC—
7:30 to 9:30pm: \$40: The Sam Morrison Band: The Sam Morrison Band...Southern Rock from Southern California?
The Muckenthaler Cultural Center
1201 W. Malvern Ave, Fullerton
(657) 738-6595 • themuck.org

2 Friday

—ART SHOW—
7:00 to 10:00 pm-\$10: Final Rites: Death, Mourning, & Beyond: Through January 3, 2027: Final Rites: Death, Mourning, and Beyond invites you on a haunting journey from the silent dangers of the natural world to the solemn beauty of Victorian mourning, and finally beyond the veil through séances, divination, and tales of restless spirits. Blending science, history, folklore, and the supernatural, this exhibition explores not only how we confront death, but why humanity has always sought to understand what may lie beyond the final breath.
The Fullerton Museum
301 N Pomona Ave, Fullerton
fullertonmuseum.com

3 Saturday

—YARD SALE—
8:00 am to 1:00 pm - FREE: Community Yard Sale: Shop and support local vendors at the city's community yard sale.
Independence Park
801 W. Valencia Dr., Fullerton
(714) 738-2803

secondhand

4 Sunday

—SWAPTOBER—
12:00 to 3:00 pm: \$20: SWAPTOBER: Share great clothes, discover new favorites, and meet people who love giving beautiful things a second life. SWAPTOBER is a community clothing exchange whether it’s your first swap or your fiftieth, we’ve designed the experience to be simple, fair, and fun. Bring up to 10 freshly laundered clothing items in excellent condition. All genders and styles are welcome. Receive one Swap Token for each accepted item, up to 10 tokens, and use your tokens to choose up to 10 new-to-you pieces.
Accessories, including jewelry, handbags, scarves, belts, and hats, are welcome and may be brought and taken freely. No shoes, please. Costumes are encouraged! Browse, mingle, make friends, and explore throughout the afternoon as new pieces are added.
Fullerton Museum Center
301 N. Pomona Ave., Fullerton
(714) 519-4461
info@fullertonmuseum.com

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Fullerton
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Music for Dancing! Costumes Welcomed!
Costume Contest: Winners get a prize!
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Family fun for all the community!
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& SUNDAY 3PM-9PM
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Fall Festival
2026

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Nikolai Sivchuk, *bayan*

**Saturday, October 24, 2026
at 3:30 pm**

Fullerton First United Methodist Church
114 N. Pomona Ave., Fullerton
Admission without charge

fullertonfriendsofmusic.org

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Open Sew**

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from 10am-12pm

An Open Sew for QUILTERS.

Bring your quilt-in-progress or a pattern and fabric to start one! We have an avid quilter to give tips and tricks and coffee and fellowship!

\$25 for the use of machines, thread, cutting tables and equipment, notions, etc..
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Sew Fun and more
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For information on when classes are available, check out Sew Fun and more's website at sewfunandmore.com.



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Garden Sessions



FREE ADMISSION

THURSDAY • SEPTEMBER 24, 2026

4:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Fullerton Museum Center • 301 N. Pomona Ave, Fullerton

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HEALTH FAIR

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24TH, 2026

9:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

Celebrate a healthier you with a fun and engaging day of resource and support during Open Enrollment and beyond!

- ✓ Nutrition & Fitness Trends
- ✓ Health Insurance Information
- ✓ Interactive Health & Wellness Booths
- ✓ Fitness Demos
- ✓ Raffle Opportunities
- ✓ Food Vendors

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FRIDAY AND SATURDAY
OCTOBER 9 & 10

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FRIENDS MEMBERS ONLY*	OPEN TO THE PUBLIC	\$3/BAG OR \$5/2 BAGS
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	Saturday 10am-1:45pm	

*You can buy membership at the door! Cash or Credit Card accepted



Join Us For Our

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Thursday, September 24th
2:00 PM - 5:00 PM

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Fullerton CA 92832

\$2 Admission

Don't miss our annual Senior Talent Show!!
Dancing, Singing, Comedy, instrumental, and more!!

FULLERTON PARKS AND RECREATION

Assistance League of Fullerton

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Proceeds support our community programs

Unlimited Food and Drink from local restaurants!
Basket Raffle & Silent Auction
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Fun for All!

Tickets \$75 presale
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\$850 reserved table for 10



CANDIDATES DISCUSS YOUTH, HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS AND FLOCK CAMERAS AT THE FULLERTON COLLABORATIVE MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 14

The Fullerton Collaborative is a cooperative of executive directors, educators, activists, community service leaders and volunteers dedicated to building and supporting a healthy cohesive community.

The candidate forum gave voters an opportunity to hear the four participating candidates discuss their backgrounds and positions on a range of city issues.

The forum featured District 3 candidates, incumbent Councilmember Dr. Shana Charles and newcomer Daniel Kim, and District 5 candidates, Jozef Maldonado and Oscar Valadez. District 5 candidate David Fischbein, the other candidate in the District 5 race, did not participate.

Who are the candidates?

Charles, a public health professor at Cal State, Fullerton, highlighted work she said had been accomplished during her term, including the Union Pacific Trail, tree planting, bike lanes, parks, and park bathrooms. She also cited weekly open office hours and efforts to increase transparency.

Kim claims a career spanning 30 years in Wall Street finance. He also discussed the Dragon Kim Foundation, which he founded after his son Dragon was killed by a falling tree branch in Yosemite. He said the foundation provides leadership and business training, mentorship and funding to young people.

Maldonado described his working-class background and his parents' immigrant and Puerto Rican roots. He said he became a chemist at 22 years old and emphasized the importance of evidence-based decision-making and listening to residents. He also serves on the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Valadez, a Fullerton native and Planning Commission chair, emphasized community-based problem solving. He described his involvement with Love Fullerton, KaBOOM! playground projects, and the Sunrise Rotary's adoption of Truslow Park.

The candidates were asked about preventing youth violence and other problems before they become crises. There were also questions on access to parks and public spaces.

Maldonado said prevention should be considered part of public safety and that the city should work with organizations already serving young people. He said access to healthy surroundings should not depend on a resident's ZIP code. He cited sidewalks, trees, parks and recreational facilities and discussed improvements to Independence Park, Richmond Park, and other facilities.

Valadez pointed to park improvements, lighting and programming as ways to create safer public spaces. He discussed improvements at Truslow Park involving the Fullerton Sunrise Rotary, residents and community organizations. He also cited playground repairs, murals, fitness equipment and community gardens.

Charles cited (CDBG) Community Development Block Grant resources, after-school programs, the Center for Healthy Neighborhoods, and opioid settlement funds. She also mentioned naloxone and community health fairs. In addition, she discussed trails, water fountains, park improvements, and creating spaces that can support mental health and grieving.

Kim emphasized listening to young people and supporting the community organizations that we already working with them. He said the city can improve lighting on trails and sidewalks, particularly in areas where residents may feel unsafe, while addressing basic infrastructure needs.

The candidates also discussed cooperation between the city and local schools.

Charles cited relationships with school board members, parks and school fields, sports programs, police and school officers and community health fairs.

Kim supported public-private and public-public partnerships and funding organizations providing services.

Maldonado said families generally do not care which government agency is responsible for a problem; they want it addressed. He suggested examining crossing guards and dangerous intersections.

Valadez emphasized creating public spaces where children can learn and develop, including playgrounds, libraries, trails and parks.

Questions about the city's role in homelessness and affordable housing produced differing emphases among the candidates.

Kim called for a homeless liaison within the city and said coordination among public safety officials, residents, unhoused people and service providers is important. He argued that people should be connected with services rather than simply displaced. He described his experience in affordable housing and financing. He said his work has included Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and the develop-

ment of multiple buildings.

Maldonado said the city needs to balance compassion and dignity with maintaining clean and orderly public spaces. He said repeatedly moving an unhoused person from one sidewalk to another does not address the underlying problem. He called for coordination with businesses, nonprofits and the county, with measurable outcomes. Maldonado said Fullerton needs more housing while maintaining neighborhood character and involving residents before projects are approved. He rejected an approach of either building everything or building nothing.

Valadez said homelessness affects public safety, neighborhoods, businesses and quality of life. He supported continuing city and Fullerton Police Department work with homeless liaison officers and service providers while addressing shelter, mental-health services and substance-use treatment. He said laws should be enforced while public spaces remain safe and accessible. He supported increasing affordable housing by reducing unnecessary barriers and working with nonprofit and private-sector partners. He also discussed supportive housing and shelters paired with case management and outreach.

Charles pointed to the Illumination Foundation as an example of a service model providing multiple forms of assistance. She also discussed preventing homelessness and the need for additional housing. She said she had worked to restore a safe-parking program to make sure homeless living in their vehicles had a safe place to park, but that the proposal was blocked by the current council. She supported supportive housing, mixed-use development and walkable neighborhoods. She pointed to vacant storefronts and buildings as possible locations for housing and said the city needs to improve communication with residents about community meetings and housing proposals.

The candidates were also asked how they would work with councilmembers with whom they disagree.

Kim said council members need to establish common objectives and trust while allowing disagreement over methods.

Maldonado said council decisions require three votes for a majority and that disagreements can be handled through facts and evidence.

Valadez emphasized relationships, common ground and good-faith discussions. He said council members should seek solutions that can receive broad support.

Charles discussed what she described as changes in the council's working relationships and cited unanimous action on the Union Pacific Trail and other instances in which council members had worked together despite disagreements.

The candidates were also asked about Flock cameras, which were scheduled for a presentation at the September 15 City Council meeting.

Maldonado said cameras could help police identify suspects and solve crimes, but also that residents have legitimate concerns about privacy and the collection of information about people's movements.

Valadez said the city needs to balance public safety with privacy protections and suggested a formal roundtable involving the community and city officials.

Charles said the police chief was scheduled to explain the program and its safeguards at the September 15 meeting. She encouraged residents to review the presentation and participate in public comment. She said civil liberties are important and that the constitutional questions surrounding camera use are not necessarily clear-cut.

Kim said he supports Flock cameras but wants restrictions on how the information collected can be used. He said the cameras can help with crime prevention and investigation while also emphasizing the need to protect privacy.

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CDBG Funding Opportunity



MANDATORY MEETING

Tuesday
October 6, 2026
11 AM - 12 PM
Fullerton Public Library



POLICE ACTIVITY

by David Spargur

Here are significant Fullerton Police Department (FPD) related stories since September 7. Some may have had additional Observer coverage online.

Death Investigation Launched Following Untimely Passing of CSUF Student

An investigation is underway following the tragic death of an 18-year-old California State University, Fullerton student, identified as Anthony Joseph Blas. The young man was pronounced dead shortly after being dropped off at St. Jude Medical Center around 12:07 am on September 13.

Fullerton Police Officers responded to the emergency department after receiving reports of an unresponsive male. Despite the efforts of medical staff, Blas was declared deceased at the hospital.

Detectives from the Fullerton Police Department quickly arrived at the scene to commence an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding Blas's death. Preliminary information suggests the incident took place near Associated Road and Milton Avenue, where Blas had reportedly attended a

function at an unaffiliated fraternity. Initial findings indicate that alcohol consumption may have played a role in his passing. However, the official cause and manner of death are pending a determination by the Orange County Sheriff-Coroner's Office.

At this stage, authorities do not consider hazing to be a contributing factor, nor is there any indication of foul play. The investigation remains active.

Anyone with pertinent information is urged to contact Fullerton Police Detective Eric Carrillo at (714) 738-5361 or via email at Eric.Carrillo@fullertonpd.org.

For those wishing to remain anonymous, tips can be submitted to Orange County Crime Stoppers at 1-855-TIP-OCCS (1-855-847-6227) or through their website at <http://www.occrimestoppers.org>.

The Police Department Teams Up with Special Olympics for Charity Event at Heroes Bar & Grill

On Wednesday, September 30, from 5:00 to 9:00 pm, the Fullerton Police Department is taking "protect and serve" to a whole new level at Heroes Bar & Grill at 125 W. Santa Fe Avenue in Downtown Fullerton!

FPD officers will team up with Special Olympics athletes, trade the patrol car for an apron, and help serve up dinner for a great cause.

All tips collected during the event will benefit Special Olympics Orange County, which provides year-round sports training and athletic competition

for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Through sports, athletes build confidence, develop skills, form friendships, and experience the joy of competition—all while helping create more inclusive communities.

Tip-A-Cop has become one of the police departments favorite traditions, bringing our community together for good food, plenty of fun, and an even better cause.

Come hungry.
Tip generously.
Support some incredible athletes.

UNCLAIMED PROPERTY NOTICE

Under Government Code §50051, this property will become the property of the City of Fullerton on November 2, 2026, unless claimed as provided by law.

CASE #	ITEM #	NAME	AMOUNT
24-76553	208648-2	ROSA LOPEZ	\$16.17
24-37741	209481-1	RUBEN GUZMAN	\$20.00
25-26975	211827-1	UNKNOWN	\$23.76
25-15042	210462-5	MICHAEL DELORBE	\$27.65
25-25623	211678-1	ARTHUR WILLIAMS	\$100.00
25-13648	210271-2	DAVID MUNOZ	\$102.62
25-32103	212354-4	ROY BURDICK	\$141.00
24-34869	203547-6	IVAN D SAPUTO	\$165.00

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PHOTOS BY GASTON CASTELLANOS

Community Memorial Commemorates 25 Years Since September 11 Attacks

A poignant memorial service was held on Friday, marking the 25th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks. Residents of Fullerton, alongside firefighters, police officers, and community leaders, gathered at the home of Scott and Julie Townley, a longstanding local landmark for remembrance.

The ceremony commenced at 8:30 am with the solemn reading of the names of those who lost their lives in the attacks of 2001. This annual observance, which began just days after the tragedy, has evolved significantly over the years. After the attacks, Scott Townley placed a handmade sign and a few American flags in the front yard of his home on Woods Avenue. What began as a personal tribute became an extensive annual memorial that now draws community participation.

As part of the observance, a ceremonial bell was rung at specific times to commemorate the timeline of the events of that fateful day, beginning at 8:46 am, the moment when American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center.

Over the years, the Townleys have expanded the memorial to include thousands of American flags, photographs of victims, and individual crosses honoring the

brave firefighters, police officers, and Port Authority personnel who lost their lives on September 11. The display also features replicas of the Twin Towers and pays tribute to first responders who succumbed to illnesses related to their service at Ground Zero.

The memorial has become a community initiative, with neighbors contributing to the display and victims' families visiting to pay their respects. An exhibit showcasing photographs of the deceased allows visitors to leave personal messages, emphasizing the community's collective grief and remembrance.

Perhaps the most significant impact of the memorial is its role in educating younger generations who have no personal memory of the events of September 11. Students from local elementary schools, including Hermosa Drive, Orangethorpe, and Golden Hill, have visited the memorial to learn about the attacks and those who perished. Townley has made it a mission

to ensure that today's youth understand the gravity of the day, stating, "My goal is to teach the youth of today about what happened on 9/11 so we don't forget it."

As the 25th anniversary approaches, remembering the past grows even more critical, marking a shift from living memory to history. Despite its growth in scope and community involvement, the memorial remains rooted in its humble beginnings—located not in a civic plaza or a museum, but at a family residence on a quiet residential street in Fullerton.

For 25 years, Scott and Julie Townley, along with their neighbors, have adhered to the simple yet profound purpose that inspired the first flags: honoring the lives lost and fostering understanding of the events of September 11 among future generations.

As the observance continues, the promise to never forget remains steadfast on Woods Avenue.

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9/11 remembrance recognition: The council honored the Townley family for 25 years of 9/11 remembrance and community service. Jung praised the family for turning national grief into a sense of duty. He said they had kept up the memorial for 25 years at their own expense. Zahra recalled that the attacks came 11 days after he moved to Fullerton. Charles described the memorial set up on the family's driveway and lawn, where every victim and every site was marked. Dunlap spoke about bringing his two daughters to see it. Valencia, the council's only first responder (she is a nurse), presented the certificate. First responders in the room joined the family for a photo.

City Council Notes

by Nora Van Urkenberg

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

Meeting Summary: September 15

Flock camera update: Fullerton Police Department Chief Jon Radus gave a presentation on the department's Flock automated license plate reader (ALPR) program. Council questions followed, including a tense exchange between Jung and Zahra. Zahra asked to bring the program and its written policy back as a formal agenda item so the public could weigh in, and his request was seconded. Jung said that discussion would take place at the next meeting.

Youth Advisory Committee: Two appointments were approved: Gulianna Nannci, appointed by Zahra, and Zeke Winters, reappointed by Dunlap. Valencia made no appointment. Charles also made none; the clerk confirmed that her current appointee can keep serving until replaced unless she ages out.

Solid waste contract (regular business): After nearly two hours of presentations, public comment and debate, the council voted to narrow the trash-hauler competition to the incumbent, Republic Services, and CR&R Environmental Services. It dropped Valley Vista Services, the lowest-priced bidder. Both remaining firms will be asked for one more round of offers before a final selection. Jung voted no.

Fullerton Council Delays Solid-Waste Contract Decision

continued from front page

Properties with five or more units would generally be treated as commercial. Staff said CR&R was the only finalist that had offered to work with the city on a separate multifamily rate rather than treating those properties strictly as commercial accounts. The specific rate would have to be negotiated and now that it is between CR&R and Republic the negotiations may hinge on this.

Councilmembers also discussed Rancho La Paz and how the mobile home community would be classified for billing purposes. Staff said additional research was needed as rate schedule for the park was unknown.

Another issue was the city's fees. Councilmembers asked whether the contract fees could be reduced and whether that could lower rates paid by residents. Staff said the city spent about a year reviewing other solid-waste contracts and found that a 10% franchise fee was common, along with additional fees for state compliance and municipal programs.

The council also discussed the city's existing disabled-resident walkout service. Staff said the service, which allows eligible residents to have their

trash containers moved to and from the collection point, would continue under a new agreement.

Public testimony was divided among the three finalists. Speakers cited rates, continuity of service, union employment, local operations, environmental programs and other considerations. Some speakers also raised questions about political contributions involving Valley Vista. Individual speakers made those statements during public comment, and the council did not adopt them as findings.

As the discussion continued, a motion was made to move forward with Republic and CR&R rather than make a final selection that night. Councilmember Zahra proposed proceeding with the two companies for another round of negotiations. The amendment was accepted.

The motion therefore passed 3–2 (Jung and Valencia opposed).

This item is expected to return to the council after negotiations for a final decision. City staff and the city's solid-waste attorney discussed the compressed schedule and the possibility that additional time could be required before a contract is ready for approval.

Waste Hauler Public Comments

Jeffrey Otter, treasurer of the Craig Park East HOA, said Valley Vista would save his association about \$6,000 a year. He urged the city to adopt CR&R's offer of a separate multifamily rate tier. Without it, he said, about 15,000 multifamily units would move to commercial billing and pay far more than single-family homes.

A Fullerton resident said she supports Republic Services and cited decades of service, a union workforce and the \$4.25 million road payment.

Patricia Hanzo said, "We are a family of three and homeowners, and we have Republic for our trash service. I strongly encourage you to keep them. That would mean no transition. I wouldn't have to change my trash bins, and that would make me happy."

"The CEO of Valley Vista was at the Hunt Library in July or August for a meet-and-greet where residents could come talk to these companies. I met him. I said, "Something concerning to me is that you, as CEO, gave \$10,000 or \$15,000 to Fred Jung for his run for supervisor. Did you do that?" He said yes, he did. To me, that's a conflict of interest. That's pay-to-play."

Curtis Gamble said he supported Republic Services

Elijah Manassero raised concern over political contributions by Valley Vista's leadership (David Perez); Manassero said \$15,000 went to a PAC run by Tony Bushala that has supported three of the council members, Jung, Valencia and Dunlap.

Ken Calvin backed Valley Vista's lower rates and free street sweeping.

Zee, a resident, described poor service from Republic during strikes and urged a change because his trash was not picked up during strike.

Yolanda Harrison of Rancho La Paz asked how mobile home parks would be billed, warning that seniors on fixed incomes could end up subsidizing larger households.

Council Member Closing Comments

Zahra offered condolences to the family of the 18-year-old Cal State Fullerton student who died that week-end after being brought to St. Jude Medical Center. Police later identified him as Anthony Joseph Blas, who was pronounced dead after being dropped off at St. Jude shortly after midnight on September 13. Zahra also re-agendized two items he said had not come back: a lobbyist disclosure policy and a local tobacco retail license. He asked that both return at the next meeting because he has three meetings left. Staff said tobacco regulations are forecast for October 6. Zahra asked that the lobbyist item return in October. Charles seconded.

Charles wished a happy new year to those observing Rosh Hashanah. She noted Alzheimer's awareness, suicide prevention (the 988 crisis line) and the start of Hispanic Heritage Month, and promoted the "Flavors of Solidarity" event. She said two more people were detained by ICE in the community the previous weekend, as reported on Fullerton Buzz. She urged mosquito precautions against West Nile virus, saying the odds that a mosquito carries the virus rose from about 1 in 10 last year to over 50% this year. She also announced her office hours.

Valencia offered condolences to the 18-year-old Cal State Fullerton student's family.

Dunlap adjourned the meeting in memory of Stephan "Bax" Baxter, a Fullerton punk-scene figure, art curator and activist who later was a driving force at the Punk Rock Museum in Las Vegas. The museum was founded by "Fat Mike" Burkett of the band NOFX in 2023. Dunlap said Baxter lent help and artifacts to the Fullerton Museum Center's punk exhibit.

Flock cameras come under council scrutiny *continued from front page*

The city has spent about \$236,000 on Flock since 2021, covering equipment, subscriptions, repairs and maintenance.

The city keeps data for 30 days, then purges it. Radus said this is a department decision, not a vendor rule.

The cameras take still photos of license plates and vehicles on public roads and check plates against “hot lists” of stolen or wanted vehicles.

The system does not record video or audio, use facial recognition, or connect plates to names, addresses, birth dates or DMV records. It does not issue tickets or predict crime, and he said it is not used for immigration enforcement.

Officers may not act on a plate read alone. They must confirm the hit through other databases before stopping a car.

Radus described two uses. One is real-time alerts to patrol officers. The other is searches after a crime, which he acknowledged “causes a lot of the consternation.” He said Flock’s AI also lets detectives search by vehicle description, such as “black Honda

Civic, white bumper sticker,” when no plate is known. He said the department owns its data and controls who it is shared with. Flock does not sell it. Under state law (SB 34 and SB 54), sharing is limited to California agencies, and he said Flock’s system does not even allow sharing outside the state.

Every search requires a reason and a case number and is permanently logged.

He recently moved internal audits from once a year to every 90 days. The property crimes sergeant runs them and reports to a captain, and Internal Affairs handles any suspected misuse.

Flock’s audit tool flags repeated searches of the same plate, unusually broad searches, and searches past the 30-day window. Radus said there were 10 to 15 flags that day for review. A flag does not mean wrongdoing, he said.

The department updated its ALPR policy that same day, he said, and a transparency portal on its website shows camera counts, plate reads, and search activity.

Radus reported results since Flock was added: 274

stolen vehicles recovered, 18 missing people located, and about 885,000 unique vehicles detected. He said the 885,000 figure was already outdated. He also cited a national study of 216 agencies that found an 11% drop in vehicle theft and about a 16% rise in theft cases cleared by arrest. He noted the department does not track how often Flock helps solve a case, but said detectives use it “in virtually every investigation.”

On public input, the chief said Fullerton’s ALPR program dates to 2007 and was funded through a federal Homeland Security grant. Parking contractor SP Plus has used Vigilant cameras since 2019.

Flock was added in 2021 under former Chief Dunn as part of a technology package paid for with federal ARPA funds; Radus said Flock was not named specifically at the time. SB 34 took effect January 1, 2016, and requires a public comment opportunity before an agency starts an ALPR program. He argued the law does not apply retroactively or require a new hearing when an existing program changes vendors, so the city is in compliance.

Council questions

Zahra said he was “disappointed that this is a presentation and not an agendized item.” He argued that Flock’s 2021 technology was different enough from the 2007 cameras that a public process was likely required. He asked how the city can verify what the system does not do, given that images are processed by AI and may pass through data centers anywhere. Radus said he is “not an expert on how Flock works” and would look into it.

He then read aloud an email the department received from Flock after he asked for an audit of data sharing. It was signed only “Kaci,” from a Flock customer-success address, and said out-of-state requests had appeared, but none were accepted. “This is not an audit to me,” Zahra said. Radus said he had repeatedly answered Zahra’s question about ICE access, and that the email was the written confirmation Zahra had requested.

Jung then cut in. “It is a presentation, not an agendized item. I think you are really getting close to a line here,” the mayor said. He added, “I’m all OK with you soapboxing, and you seem to do that a lot.” He suggested Zahra email cc him with his questions to the chief.

Zahra objected. “You know there’s a word called ad hominem. I’m not soapboxing. I’m asking questions, because that’s my job,” he said.

He said he grew up “in a country where our phones were tapped.” He also noted that cities run by both Democrats and Republicans have suspended Flock contracts. Zahra asked whether the department could track Flock’s role by case outcomes. Radus said he would check with the city attorney.

When Zahra asked what the 10 to 15

audit flags were, Radus said he would not release those details. Zahra’s last request was that Radus find out who “Kaci” is, and Radus agreed.

Charles said the Brown Act may prevent council members from copying one another on emails, so the public meeting is the right place to discuss this. She asked why the city has 19 cameras while Cal State Fullerton had 46 on its campus.

Radus said cost was one reason and that the city covers its major roads. He added that many private businesses, including big-box stores such as Lowe’s in Fullerton, run their own license plate readers, and some of those feed into police systems.

Radus said CSUF recently switched from Flock to Axon, which also supplies Fullerton’s body cameras. He called Axon “essentially the same system, just a different provider.” He confirmed that state ALPR laws apply no matter which vendor is used.

Valencia relayed questions from constituents. Radus confirmed the cameras capture no audio and cannot identify who fired a gun or set off fireworks. Valencia asked for details on officer training at the next meeting, and Radus agreed.

Dunlap said he would save his comments for the agendized discussion.

Jung noted that Senate Bill 1013, by Sen. Sabrina Cervantes, would have limited data retention, restricted sharing, and required training and search tracking. He said it died in the Assembly and predicted it would return next year. A CalMatters report by Khari Johnson confirms that Assembly Majority Leader Cecilia Aguilar-Curry was behind shelving the bill, the latest in a string of failed ALPR reform efforts since 2022.

Public reaction

Flock comments were heard during general public comment, near the end of the night. Two remote speakers who tried to comment during the trash item were told to wait. Nearly every speaker raised concerns:

Patricia Hanzo called for a city ordinance with accountability for data misuse and asked how many training hours users receive.

Debbie Longenbacher cited the city website’s list of 325 agencies that receive shared data. “Who’s auditing?” she asked.

Harry Longenbacher warned that 800,000 plate reads a month could produce “heat maps” of residents’ movements if federal agents obtained the data.

Bianca, a CSUF student organizer, said 400 students had signed a petition against Flock on campus. She cited public records reporting by the Electronic Frontier Foundation and 404 Media on officers elsewhere entering improper search reasons, including “ICE.”

Elijah Manassero said he supports the police but asked the city attorney for a written opinion on whether today’s searchable Flock database is the same program that existed in 2007.

A remote speaker identified as **AB** pointed out that the study the chief cited carries a caveat. The researchers found that arrest clearances began climbing in the three months before the cameras were deployed, which weakens the case that the cameras caused the increase. *CrimRxiv*

Libby, speaking with Sunrise

Orange County, urged the council to cancel the contract.

Zee, a longtime resident, called the chief’s report “very good.” He said Zahra’s questions were appropriate and criticized the mayor for trying to intervene.

“Then, Brother Fred, you didn’t like the way the questions were being asked, and you told Dr. Zahra that if he didn’t get the answers he wanted from the chief, he could copy you on his emails and you’d make sure he got answers. No, Fred, that’s not how it works. No one needs to check in with you.

Two men can communicate without your intervention. You may be the mayor for four out of five years, but you don’t run the whole city, and you don’t intervene between adults. You’re impatient with questions. That’s your track record, brother, but it’s not how life works. I do appreciate that you’re consistent, though. Just as you didn’t want to hear the details of hard questions from the council member to the chief, you also didn’t want to hear the details about the budget that lost \$12.9 million. You wanted to pave over that,” he said.

Several speakers mentioned Costa Mesa, which Radus himself had cited. There, a former police officer pleaded guilty in April 2026 to misdemeanors tied to unauthorized use of police databases, including the license plate reader system. That city’s council voted 6-1 to keep its Flock contract while directing staff to renegotiate terms. *FlocksafetycameraVoice of OC*

What’s next

Radus agreed to bring back information on data processing, officer training and the identity of the Flock employee who wrote the email in response to an audit request as a formal agenda item at the council’s next meeting.

TERM OF THE DAY: AD HOMINEM

An ad hominem is a logic mistake where someone attacks the character, motives, or traits of the person making an argument instead of dealing with the actual facts or logic of the argument itself.

How to contact your District Representative

• District 1: Fred Jung Council Chair (714) 738-6311 fred.jung@cityoffullerton.com	• District 3: Dr. Shana Charles (714) 738-6311 shana.charles@cityoffullerton.com
• District 2: Nicholas Dunlap Council Vice Chair (714) 738-6311 nicholas.dunlap@cityoffullerton.com	• District 4: Jamie Valencia (714) 738-6311 jamie.valencia@cityoffullerton.com
	• District 5: Dr. Ahmad Zahra (714) 738-6311 ahmadz@cityoffullerton.com

CITY MEETINGS 2026

Meetings are held at City Hall which is located at 303 W. Commonwealth Avenue, Fullerton

September 21 at 5:00pm Infrastructure and Natural Resources CANCELLED	October 12 at 6:00pm Parks and Recreation
September 23 at 6:00pm Planning Commission CANCELLED	October 14 at 6:30pm Planning Commission
September 24 at 6:00pm Library Board of Trustees	October 15 at 5:30pm Investment Advisory Committee
October 5 at 4:00pm Transportation & Circulation	Ovtober 19 at 5:00pm Infrastructure and Natural Resources
October 6 at 5:30pm City Council-Successor Agency	October 20 at 5:30pm City Council-Successor Agency



A Local Safety Plan for San Onofre’s Nuclear Waste is Taking Shape

by Sarah Mosko

The Garden Grove chemical plant scare in May was an all-too-real reminder that even common hazardous industrial materials can pose sufficient threat to upend entire communities in a single moment. A valve malfunction in the storage system of a chemical used in manufacturing plastics and resins led to the near explosion of a storage tank and the emergency evacuation of tens of thousands of nearby residents. San Onofre, just south of San Clemente, presents a far greater and longer-lasting danger. Roughly 3.6 million pounds of highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel are stranded there, near the shoreline, in 123 temporary storage canisters.

For over four decades, there has been no tangible progress toward creation of a permanent, federal repository for the nation’s commercial nuclear waste, which must be isolated from humans and the environment for about a mil-

lion years. Attempts to convince other states to store nuclear waste from other parts of the country on an interim basis have so far failed. Consequently, San Onofre is effectively a de facto nuclear waste dump site for the foreseeable future.

Spent nuclear fuel is far more radioactive than the uranium which fuels nuclear reactors. For example, each one of San Onofre’s canisters contains about one-third the amount of deadly Cesium-137 as was released in the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. Southern California is at risk should those canisters fail in some way that might release radioactive chemicals into the air and/or water – the region could become contaminated or even uninhabitable for untold generations.

The first step in preventing a nuclear waste storage crisis at San Onofre is recognizing that this is not only a federal problem. While the federal gov-

ernment remains responsible for building a permanent national repository for commercial nuclear waste, there is no guarantee that a solution will materialize soon enough for Southern California. San Onofre’s canisters were never designed for long-term storage. They are thin-walled (5/8-inch steel) and subject to corrosion and cracking in moist, salty air.

Moreover, the canisters are stored out in the open, alongside both the Pacific Ocean and Interstate 5. This location leaves them also vulnerable to earthquakes, tsunamis, storm flooding, sea level rise and terrorist attacks.

As long as the spent fuel remains at San Onofre, California has a responsibility to ensure, with the utmost certainty, that it is stored in the safest possible configuration so that a radioactive catastrophe cannot occur.

That is why a local and regional safety plan for San Onofre is urgently needed. Irvine Mayor Larry Agran and his Chief Policy Advisor, Scotty Hong, have been working with local residents, community groups, and legislators across Orange and San Diego counties to advance an effort toward safer storage.

They have also been working with technical and academic partners, including Dr. David Richardson, Associate Dean for Research at UC Irvine, and postdoctoral researchers who are examining the public-health, environmental, and technical dimensions of the problem. Southern California Edison has also been engaged in discussions, which is essential because any realistic safety plan must include the participation of the site operator.

One concept now being explored is whether, after the San Onofre site is fully decommissioned, the spent fuel canisters could be moved from their current location and secured onto higher ground within an above-ground, fortified storage facility at the adjacent “domes” site. The point is not simply to move the canisters from one place to another. The goal is to create a far more robust, better-monitored storage system built to both prevent cannister corrosion and withstand all foreseeable insults, including from flooding, earthquakes, tsunamis, fire, and security threats.

A fortified storage facility would be designed for long-term monitoring, emergency protection, and public accountability. It should be built to last at least 100 years, in the realization that a permanent federal solution may

not arrive sooner. Other countries, such as Switzerland and Germany, have shown that spent nuclear fuel can be secured in fortified above-ground facilities specifically designed for real-time monitoring, inspection, and protection against major external hazards.

A serious safety plan should also include a “hot cell” facility – a highly shielded structure which allows experts to fully inspect nuclear waste canisters and the integrity of the contents, all under controlled conditions. A hot cell would allow for nuclear waste to be safely repackaged into new canisters, if needed. Without that capability, Southern California would remain largely unable to respond if canisters degraded or suffered serious damage as a result of environmental insults.

This effort should be science-based, transparent, and regional. It should include local governments, county and state agencies, federal regulators, Southern California Edison, credentialed nuclear researchers at UC Irvine, local residents, and community organizations.

Just as community activism was pivotal in the permanent shuttering of San Onofre in 2013, public awareness of the scope of the plant’s nuclear waste storage predicament is equally important now to encourage these various societal elements to pull together to craft a sound and doable solution.

It is already clear that some local residents are anxiously waiting for authorities to take action. For example, concerned citizens donated time and money in May and June to display banners on I-5 overpasses near San Onofre over several weeks. The two banners read “Nuclear Waste Forever Deadly” for those traveling north past the nuclear waste site, and “3 Million Pounds of Radioactivity Next Exit” for southbound traffic.

San Onofre is not a problem we can afford to leave for another generation. A permanent federal solution might come some day. But until it does, Southern California must lead with a practical interim safety plan, a fortified storage strategy, and the courage to act locally before a preventable emergency becomes a regional disaster.

... The author thanks Irvine’s ... Mayor Larry Agran and Chief Policy Advisor Scotty Hong for their contributions and assistance in developing this article, which first appeared in the *Voice of OC*.

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2026

CANDIDATE FORUMS

MEET THE CANDIDATES

SEPTEMBER

22

Fullerton City Council

Tuesday, September 22

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Council Chambers

303 W. Commonwealth

Parking behind City Hall

Fullerton, CA 92832

29

Fullerton School District and Fullerton Joint Union High School District

FJUHSD Candidates

Tuesday, September 29

6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

FSD Candidates

Tuesday, September 29

7:45 - 8:45 p.m.

Fullerton Joint Union High School Education Center

Board Room

1051 West Bastanchury Road, Fullerton, CA 92832

OCTOBER

7

Placentia City Council

Wednesday, October 7

6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Placentia Council Chambers

401 E Chapman Ave., Placentia, CA 92870

8

Buena Park City Council

Thursday, October 8

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Buena Park Council Chambers

6650 Beach Blvd. Buena Park, CA 90621

15

Brea-Olinda School District and Brea City Council

Thursday, October 15

5:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Brea Council Chambers

1 Civic Center Circle Brea, CA 92821

19

North OC Community College District

Monday, October 19

6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Fullerton College

Cruz Reynoso Hall Room 224

321 East Chapman Ave. Fullerton, CA 92832

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by making financial aid enrollment easier.

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✓ IMPROVE TRANSFER RATES
and strive to enhance the on-campus experience.

✓ SUPPORT VETERANS
with effective programs and services.

PAULETTE CHAFFEE

is an educator, nonprofit leader, and mom who has been active in North Orange County schools for more than three decades.



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2026

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MEET THE CANDIDATES



Enter Here

Monday, October 12

from 5:30 to 7:30 pm

Fullerton College

Campus

Room 224



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Fullerton Observer

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Cindy Layne Vincent — In Memoriam 1937-2025

the Los Angeles Times reported that the 10th annual First Night Fullerton on December 31, 1999, would include more than 20 entertainment sites and featured “hypnotist Cindy Layne.” The celebration took place throughout downtown Fullerton and culminated with midnight fireworks.

Friends also remember Layne performing at Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida, and as a headline entertainer at the annual Miracles Happen gay AA convention in Laguna Beach. Friends who worked with her at the Laguna Beach convention recall one particularly memorable experience.

One of them served as Layne's stage assistant. He discovered that he was so easily drawn into hypnotic suggestion that Layne eventually had to pull up a chair and make him one of her subjects instead of keeping him backstage as an assistant. According to the friend, the same thing happened several times when they worked together.

Layne reportedly had some initial misgivings about becoming a stage hypnotist. Friends say her husband, Bob Vincent, encouraged her and convinced her that she could succeed.

Bob Vincent was himself a veteran of the entertainment business. Born Vincent John Cernuto on March 7, 1918, in Detroit, Michigan, he became a big-band singer and theatrical agent. He later worked in entertainment management and became associated with Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Reno showrooms. In the 1960s, he became involved in managing the career of a young Wayne Newton. Historical material also documents Vincent presenting entertainment at Harrah's Lake Tahoe, including a 1964 program featuring Jack Benny with special guest Wayne Newton.

Bob Vincent died in Fullerton on June 25, 2005, at age 87.

Cindy was also preceded in death by her beloved daughter, Frosta Palmieri. Friends say Frosta struggled with severe substance abuse and that Cindy continued to love and encourage her throughout the struggle. They say the loss took a profound toll on Cindy.

Away from the stage, friends remember another side of Cindy Layne. She was an accomplished cook and a generous host who frequently opened her home to friends and family.

Mitch Macias, Katherine Thurman White, Debbie Perrotte, Kevin Curriston, and Michael and Rebecca Nickodem, whom friends describe as Cindy's adopted family, shared many holiday dinners with her. They also gathered at her home for a wedding reception and other celebrations.

For those closest to Cindy, these gatherings were as important as her performances. Food, laughter, friendship and conversation filled the same spaces where she had entertained audiences.

Her friends remember her as someone who could make people feel welcome, whether they were sitting around her dinner table or standing beside her on a stage.

There was also a personal quality to Cindy's hypnosis performances. She could turn an ordinary audience member into part of the entertainment, often with humor and without taking herself too seriously.

That quality is part of what her friends say they will miss most.

They describe Cindy as effervescent, energetic, loving and remarkably warm. She entertained audiences professionally, but those who knew her personally say she also entertained the people around her simply by being herself.

In remembering her now, her friends say they were, in a sense, hypnotized by Cindy's love and warmth for so long that it took them months to “awaken” to the realization that she needed to be memorialized in print.

So this is their attempt to do just that.

Cindy Layne Vincent spent much of her life onstage, asking audiences to suspend disbelief, participate in the moment and follow her lead.

Now her friends are asking the community to remember her.

The show may have ended, but the memories remain.

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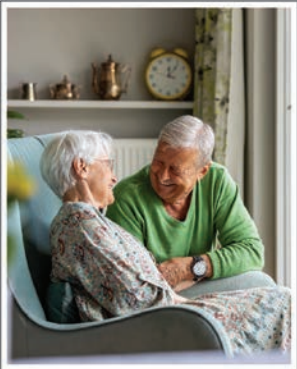
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Community Services Leader

Salary: \$16 - \$17 Hourly

Department: Parks and Recreation

Location: 303 W Commonwealth Ave

Job Type: Non-Regular

Job Number: 2026- CSLEAD

Any combination of training and experience, which provides the required knowledge, skills, and abilities, is considered qualifying. A typical way to obtain the required qualifications is: Completion of the 10th grade AND Some group leadership experience working with children or adults.

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.

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Salary: \$0.00

Location: Fullerton Fire Department

Job Type: Volunteer

Job Number: 2026- FR CADET

Department: Fire

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Location: City of Fullerton, CA

Job Type: Regular Full-Time

Job Number: 2026-PO-Lateral

Department: Police

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Water Lead Worker

Salary: \$65,191 - \$83,206 Annually

Job Type: Regular Full-Time

Department: Public Works

Location: City of Fullerton

Job Number: 2026-WaterProdOperator

Closing Date: 9/20/2026 11:59 PM

What We're Looking For:

Experience: 3+ years of full-time work experience in water/sewer construction, maintenance, and repair, including expertise in leading or coordinating field work

Education: Coursework, training, and certifications related to water systems, water distribution, and/or utility maintenance

Skills: Ability to coordinate multiple active projects, have strong teamwork, communication, and organization skills

Knowledge: Solid understanding of water distribution systems, preventative maintenance practices, and system safety standards

Water Production Operator

Salary: \$71,674 - \$91,474 Annually

Job Type: Regular Full-Time

Department: Public Works

Location: City of Fullerton

Job Number: 2026-Water Lead Wrk

Closing Date: 9/20/2026 11:59 PM

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ANSWER KEY to "MOVIE SLUMP" © 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.

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T	N	T		N	O	E	A	R		E	S	S	A
			C	A	F				S	A	P		
A	F	A	L	L	F	R	O	M	G	R	A	C	E
S	O	C	A	L		A	B	U	T	S		R	T
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A	D	O		C	R	E	M	A		O	B	E	Y
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VIDEO *OBSERVER*

by Emerson Little © 2026

See videos on YouTube @emersonlittle1901

Directing the Undead On Stage: Adapting “Night of the Living Dead” for the Maverick Theater

Brian Newell has been raising the undead inside Downtown Fullerton’s Maverick Theater for over 20 years. Back in 2005, he adapted George Romero’s 1968 B-movie, “Night of the Living Dead,” into a play and is continuing the annual Halloween tradition today. I recently had the unique opportunity to enter the darkened theater space and interview Brian about how his live adaptation of the zombie cult movie has been creeping out theater aficionados for decades.

This year’s Maverick Theater production of “Night of the Living Dead” opens September 25 and runs until October 31. For those who are unfamiliar with the horror story, it essentially follows a group of stranded survivors who are forced to barricade themselves inside an isolated farmhouse.

At the same time, a horde of the cannibalistic undead gather outside. The Maverick’s production for “Night of the Living Dead” also involves a high-tension situation much like you would see in a lot of action and horror genre films, which gives Brian an excuse to underscore it with great uncanny themes.

As both a producer and a director of the production, Brian said, “Back in 2006, it was my second Halloween season in this space, and I came across the idea of ‘Night of the Living Dead.’ I saw that some people had done it as plays because it’s public domain, and so I was like, ‘if it’s public domain, that means I can adapt it.’ And so that first year, that’s what I did with no intention of bringing it back every year. But, as fate would have it, just before I opened, I got a phone call, and the lead actress from the original movie happened to be living here in Orange County. She called up and said, ‘Are you really doing my movie on stage?’”

He didn’t believe it at first, but it really was Judith O’Dea, the actress who played the role of Barbara in George Romero’s film. She told him that she had to be there on opening night, and so she came and took a cast picture with Brian and everyone in the production.

Brian said, “Afterward, she comes over to me and goes, ‘Now you’re going to do this every year, right?’ And I was like, ‘Yes!’ and that’s what I’ve done ever since. So I took her question and made it reality. It has been a wonderful journey, all the fun times we’ve had putting this on for the audience and then [seeing] all the actors that have come through here.”

There have been almost a thousand actors who have played roles as zombies in Brian’s adaptation over the years. In that time, the Maverick Theater has held way more than 450 performances. For such a small space, Brian and his theater company have to do a lot of performances because of the demand.

The show has sold out before, so his company has added more shows over time. He now has two casts performing the show to cover all those dates. The cast size is close to thirty, making it

one of the largest casts in the theater’s history. However, he doesn’t have much of a backstage crew; performers tend to do double duty, playing both roles as zombies and working behind the scenes, such as running fog machines, moving machinery or handling more technical production roles. They’re always active one way or another.

“I’ve got to put movies on stage; that’s what I’ve got to do,” Brian told himself when he first started. He always strived to be a filmmaker and worked in small positions within the film industry, but he never got the break everyone was waiting for. Instead of sitting around, he needed to be imaginative, so when a friend of his, who ran a theatre called Stages here in Fullerton, asked him to be a resident sound designer, he jumped at the opportunity and helped his friend design sound for different shows.

During that time, and dating back to when he was a student at Troy High School, Brian always wanted to put movie scores to theatre scenes, underscoring them like a film. He loved it because it came naturally to him and he had a vast library of scores.

At Stages, he had an opportunity to adapt and direct a show, so he took on a western called “The Magnificent Seven” and adapted it. Brian chose it for the stage because of composer Elmer Bernstein’s traditional western score, and because he also thought the story had rich characters in it.

He said, “I took it on just to see what would happen, and that was it. I was hooked so over time, I did other shows at Stages, then eventually ended up opening the Maverick with one of my best friends, Jim Book, who taught at Fullerton College for thirty years. He and I, and my wife [Heidi Newell], first opened the theater at the Block at Orange. We were there for a couple of years and then decided to have a permanent home here in downtown Fullerton, where we grew up.”

Brian continued, “My whole concept of even owning a community theater was not to do all the traditional stuff that people see in theatre being offered everywhere I wanted to do my idea of cinema on stage. That’s why “Night of the Living Dead” is such a great example of my type of theatre.”

There are a lot of actors and non-actors out there who have the strange desire to be a zombie on stage. Brian is thankful that many people have this eccentric wish. Putting in contacts, applying zombie makeup every night, making guttural sounds and maybe even throwing out your voice is a challenge the actors in “Night of the Living Dead” have taken on and handled very professionally. There’s also the physically intense side to playing a zombie, which involves getting beat up and thrown to the ground (obviously with safety precautions taken by the theater’s staff). Most of Brian’s zombie performers have never been actors before.

“What I get excited about is seeing this new blood come in, and I take them through a bunch of lifelike sce-



narios on how to prep yourself to be my kind of zombie, with my stage manager and assistant director,” said Brian. “My kind of zombie is ultimately the George Romero zombie, and so that’s what we did at our last auditions [this August]; we took them through the physical part of it, the movement part of it. I want them to focus their energy before, during or after an attack, and all those kind of things play into [casting] it, and from there, we make our decision.”

Recalling memories of previous “Night of the Living Dead” productions, Brian says that he has formed many relationships with his cast, to the point where some of them have become lifelong friends and many of them continue to work on the show, so it’s almost like a family reunion every autumn when they come together. He also really enjoys the excitement of bringing on new people to the production after auditioning, as well as his own relationship to the show, and how

he interacts with the audience.

“I run every show. I’ve only missed three performances out of the twenty-one years we’ve been doing it I sit up there in the booth and I program the lights and the sound, play it, hit all the cues, and I get to watch the audience, get to watch them react to the moments I was able to create on stage, the thrills, the scares, the humor, and I think it’s just a wonderful time of year to be doing a show like this. Audiences come in excited, they leave thrilled. So for me, that’s probably my favorite part of doing the show every year,” said Brian.

Located at 110 E. Walnut Avenue, Unit B, the Maverick Theater performs “Night of the Living Dead” at 8pm on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays; 7pm and 9pm on Saturdays, and 7pm on Sundays from September 25 to October 31 (Halloween). Tickets cost \$39. For more information visit the Maverick Theater website at maverick-theatre.com.

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HAUNTED FULLERTON WALKING TOUR

FULLERTON MUSEUM CENTER

OCTOBER

WEDNESDAYS, THURSDAYS, & FRIDAYS
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Tours begin at the Fullerton Museum Center with a ghoulish cocktail mixer hosted by your ghost guides. (1) Pre-paid drink coupon and Gallery access to **Final Rites: Death Mourning & Beyond** is included in your ticket price. The tour includes visiting many local Fullerton locations and is different every time!

The tour is around 1.5 miles of walking with some stairs. Persons requiring special accommodations are asked to notify museum staff prior to coming into the museum. The Haunted Fullerton Walking Tour is not recommended for children under 13.

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