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News for the people, by the people

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Florencio Blanquel, the owner of Blanquel Popular Art on Harbor Blvd is a skilled carpenter, artisan and musician, performs "La Llorona" during Noche de Muertos.

Museum Center honors departed loved ones with music, community altars

by Gaston Castellanos

The Fullerton Museum Center celebrated Día de los Muertos on Saturday, November 7, with community altars, cultural activities and live entertainment featuring Latin jazz artist Poncho Sanchez. Presented in partnership with Blanquel Popular Art, the Noche de Muertos celebration brought music and remembrance to the museum and the Fullerton Plaza. Activities included face painting, arts and crafts, local vendors, and altars honoring deceased loved ones.

The altars, known as ofrendas, are temporary sacred displays set up in homes, schools, and cemeteries during Día de los Muertos observances. The displays honor deceased family members and friends. Rather than places of worship, they are loving tributes and welcoming spaces built on the belief that the spirits of the dead briefly return to visit the living.

Candy Aguirre Sturdivant and her family put together an offering for family members who had passed away, including a nephew who died young and Candy's sister who died at 47 from breast cancer. The display communicated both the joys and sorrows the family has experienced. We asked Candy about her thoughts looking at the ofrenda with her family.

"Life isn't fair," she said. But the Fullerton resident felt it was important to be a part of this tradition and put together the display with the help of daughter, Elyse.

Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, combines indigenous beliefs with Catholic practices introduced during the colonial period. For Socorro Lugo and her family, it's all about tradition. "It's a chance to honor our loved ones," said Socorro. "It's a wonderful opportunity to visit with our memories."

Read more on page 9

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Observers Around the World



Mike and Helen Higgins on the mighty Amazon in Peru, Nov 4, 2026.

Close races in Fullerton await final count, with results due December 3

by Saskia Kennedy

Two local races remain too close to call in updated, unofficial results released by the Orange County Registrar of Voters on November 13, while other Fullerton candidates hold comfortable leads. As of the 5pm update, the Registrar had counted 1,164,341 ballots countywide, a turnout of 60.8% of the county's 1,916,510 registered voters. All 2,377 precincts are reporting, but the results remain unofficial until the county certifies the election on December 11.

CITY COUNCIL

The tightest contest in town is for Fullerton City Council District 5.

Jozef Maldonado leads with 3,215 votes (42.95%), narrowly ahead of Oscar Valadez with 3,193 (42.66%). David Fischbein trails with 1,077 votes (14.39%). Valadez outpaced Maldonado at vote centers, while Maldonado built his lead on mail ballots.

In District 3, incumbent Council Member Dr. Shana Charles holds a solid lead over challenger Daniel H. Kim, 4,044 votes (60.37%) to 2,655 (39.63%).

SCHOOL BOARDS

For the Fullerton Joint Union High School District board, Regina Cuadra leads Matthew Matias in Trustee Area 1 with 6,087 to 3,296, and incumbent Marilyn Buchi leads Amy Dudich in Trustee Area 5, 8,381 to 5,912.

In the Fullerton School District's Trustee Area 3, Amy Choi-Won leads Jordan Abushawish 5,541 to 3,122.

In the North Orange County Community College District (NOCCCD), the four-way race for Trustee Area 6 is nearly as close. Jesus Silva leads Paulette Chaffee, 10,810 to 10,781. Zonya Townsend follows with 9,353 votes, while incumbent Jeffrey P. Brown sits in fourth with 6,893.

NOCCCD, incumbent Barbara Dunsheath leads Rama R. Maline in Trustee Area 1 with 25,372 to 11,965, and Chloe Serrano holds a wide lead in Trustee Area 3 with 20,819 votes, ahead of Larry Andre 7,861 and Paul Gonzales 3,465.

COUNTY SUPERVISOR

In the race for County Supervisor, 4th District, Connor Traut leads Tim Shaw 87,893 to 79,890. In the 5th District Katrina Foley leads Diane Dixon 127,420 to 114,747.

Read more on page 6

Bring your Fullerton Observer with you when you travel, snap a photo and send it in. Whether it's the beach, your favorite place in Fullerton or local towns or far away like Thailand.

Send Observers Around the World photos to:
contact@FullertonObserver.com

Open Letter

Dear Assemblymember Quirk-Silva,

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to addressing homelessness throughout your legislative career. Your support for emergency shelters, bridge housing, and transitional housing programs has been vital in assisting individuals as they transition into stable, long-term housing. I greatly appreciate your continued dedication to this critical issue and your work on behalf of our community.

Curtis Gamble Fullerton

Re: Scratch-Made Meals with Fresh Ingredients Earn FSD a Eat Real Silver Certification

Congratulations to FSD Nutrition Services for making such a positive difference for students!

Jennifer Shepard Fullerton

Letter to the Editor

Thank you Observer

Keep up the good reporting! Happy holiday to all.

Ann Robinson Fullerton

Thanks for being as objective as possible.

Chris Heusser Fullerton

Your work is appreciated! Carry on!

Wanda Shaffer Fullerton

It's a terrific paper (and I would say so even if my son didn't write for it).

Bentley Little Fullerton

Thank you for your informative coverage of our local candidates. I also appreciate your publication of the fiscally sound recommendations of The League of Women Voters.

Kathy Brzovic Fullerton

I am always happy to renew my subscription plus send some extra, which I know is needed for the outstanding work of independent journalism you pursue!

Barbara Johnson Fullerton

Greetings from Central Florida, from where I send you all congratulations and a big round of applause!

When a new issue arrives, I usually first check the Young Observers section, followed by the Video Observer and then throughout the week I read the rest, always thinking what a great mix of news, information, opinion and heart.

Sometimes life's coincidences so perfectly intersect it's hard to imagine anything other than a perfect triangle: my hometown paper was The Fayetteville Observer, in 1977 I drove cross-county to attend graduate school at Cal State Fullerton where I met (Bucky/Leslie) my dear friend of almost 50 years, and over the years no matter how far I've lived from Fullerton I've heard from her about the Fullerton Observer and about so many of you whose efforts over the years have made it possible for readers like me to now say Thank You All - am looking forward to the next issue!

Maria Gonzalez Summerfield, FL



Medicare Annual Enrollment Made Easy!

Between October 15 to December 7

Feeling overwhelmed by all the Medicare T.V. advertising, mail, and phone calls but have questions? I can help in the following ways with **no cost or obligation**:

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- **Work with your preferred contact style: in person, online, or phone.**



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AGF Advisors™

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 nonpartisan publication.

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

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

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

How To Subscribe

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Thank You for Keeping Local News Alive

by the Fullerton Observer Team

To our subscribers and advertisers:

We did it! Thanks to you, the Fullerton Observer, an all-volunteer newspaper, is entering its 49th year and has met its annual budget. We want to take a moment to say thank you.

That sentence may sound simple, but it carries more weight this year than ever before. Across the country, local newspapers are disappearing at an alarming pace. Some are bought by investment firms that strip newsrooms down to a handful of reporters, or none at all. Others are turned into advertising circulars dressed up to look like news. Many simply print a final edition and close their doors for good, leaving entire communities without anyone to attend city council meetings, ask hard questions or tell the stories of their neighbors.

Fullerton still has its own independent newspaper. That is not luck. That is you.

To our readers:

Readers often ask us what it really takes to publish a print edition. The honest answer is that it costs more every year, and the increases have been relentless.

Newsprint prices have climbed sharply, driven by mill closures, supply chain disruptions and shrinking production across the paper industry. Printing costs have risen along with them, as printers face their own higher expenses for ink, equipment, energy and labor. Delivery costs have gone up as fuel prices and wages rise. And postage, which is how many of our subscribers receive the Observer, has increased again and again, with the U.S. Postal Service raising rates multiple times in recent years.

Each of those increases on its own would be a challenge for a small community paper. Together, they put real pressure on every edition we print. There were moments this year when we wondered how we would close the gap.

Then you stepped up.

Every subscription, renewal and donation made a difference. Some of you renewed early. Some of you added a few extra dollars when you sent in your check. Some of you bought gift subscriptions for neighbors, family members and friends who had moved away but still wanted to know what was happening back home. Some of you wrote notes in the margins telling us to keep going.

We read every one of those notes. They matter to us more than you know.

Your support pays for the paper and the ink, but it also pays for something harder to measure: accountability. You are not just readers. You are the reason this newspaper exists.

To our advertisers

To the local businesses, organizations and individuals who advertise in the Observer, thank you for believing in us and in this community.

Many of you are small businesses facing the same rising costs we are. You could spend your advertising dollars on social media platforms or national websites. Instead, you choose to invest in a local publication that reaches local people. That choice keeps money circulating in Fullerton and helps sustain an independent voice in our city.

Your ads also tell a story. They show readers which businesses are rooted here, which ones care about this community and which ones are willing to stand behind local journalism. We encourage our readers to support the advertisers who support the Observer. When you shop with them, mention that you saw them in our pages.

What comes next

Meeting this year's budget is a milestone, but it is not a finish line. Costs will keep rising, and the pressures facing local newspapers are not going away. We will continue to look for ways to work efficiently while keeping the quality of our reporting high.

We also want to hear from you. Tell us what stories matter to you, what issues you want us to cover and what we can do better. Send us your letters, your tips and your ideas. This is your newspaper, and it is strongest when it reflects the community it serves.

If you are not yet a subscriber, there has never been a better time to join. If you already subscribe, consider giving a subscription to someone who would value it. And if you own a business, consider advertising with us in the year ahead.

Thank you

In a time when so many communities have lost their local newspapers, Fullerton has kept its own. That is a remarkable thing, and it belongs to all of you.

From all of us at the Fullerton Observer, thank you for reading, for supporting and for believing that local news is worth fighting for.

Fullerton Observer

OUR COMMUNITY. OUR COVERAGE. OUR FUTURE.

For many communities, the future of local news is uncertain. But for the Fullerton Observer, an all-volunteer newspaper since 1978, the path is clear: to remain an editorially independent voice for our community. We are not owned by a distant hedge fund. We are part of this community, committed to delivering the essential reporting that matters most.

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

While subscriber, advertiser and donor support has sustained our day-to-day operations, traditional revenue streams don't cover rising costs and modernization.

Your support helps ensure that this community newspaper continues for everyone who calls Fullerton home — not just for today, but for generations to come.

Lifetime Reader: $5,000

Never renew again: digital and print access for life. Your name will be listed in the print edition and online in recognition of your support. Only a limited number of lifetime subscriptions will be offered.

Heritage Reader: $10,000

All Lifetime Reader benefits, plus one complimentary annual subscription to give to a friend, neighbor or new community member.

Community Steward: $15,000

A meaningful investment in the future of community journalism. Lifetime access plus two complimentary annual subscriptions to give (or one two-year subscription). Special recognition for helping ensure the Fullerton Observer survives and thrives for generations, or an anonymous listing if you prefer.

These aren't just subscriptions.

They're an investment in the future of volunteer community journalism. To subscribe or learn more, contact Publisher and Editor Saskia Kennedy at *contact@fullertonobserver.com* or at P.O. Box 7051, Fullerton, CA 92834. Contributions are not tax-deductible. The Fullerton Observer is a not-for-profit venture. All contributions go to printing and mailing costs and overhead.

Thank you for supporting local journalism.

Famous Journalists Who Learned on the Job

Some of these people briefly attended college or took a few classes, but none of them finished a degree. Most learned the trade on the job.

Charles Dickens (1812–1870)

Left school early to work in a factory, then taught himself shorthand and became a court and parliamentary reporter before turning to fiction.

Frederick Douglass (1818–1895)

Taught himself to read while enslaved and had no formal schooling. He founded and edited the abolitionist newspaper The North Star.

Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961)

Skipped college entirely and became a cub reporter at the Kansas City Star after high school. He later worked as a foreign and war correspondent before his career as a novelist.

Mark Twain (1835–1910)

Left school around age 12 to work as a printer's apprentice. He wrote for newspapers across the American West before becoming one of America's most famous writers.

Nellie Bly (1864–1922)

She left school after one term at age 15 because of financial difficulties. A letter to a newspaper editor earned her a reporting job. She became one of America's most famous investigative reporters.

Truman Capote (1924–1984)

Skipped college and started as a copyboy at The New Yorker. His book "In Cold Blood" helped launch the "new journalism" movement.

Agnes Underwood (1902–1984)

She began in newspaper office work, learned typing and reporting from editors, and gradually earned reporting assignments. She eventually became editor of the Los Angeles Herald Examiner. Her career is a particularly good example of newsroom apprenticeship.

Peter Jennings (1938–2005)

Left high school at 16 and never went to college. He worked his way up through Canadian radio and TV and became the longtime anchor of ABC's World News Tonight.

Hunter S. Thompson (1937–2005)

Learned journalism as a sports writer while in the U.S. Air Force and never earned a degree. He created "Gonzo" journalism.

Walter Cronkite (1916–2009)

Left the University of Texas without graduating to work as a reporter. He became the CBS Evening News anchor, often called "the most trusted man in America."

Larry King (1933–2021)

Went straight from high school to work and broke into radio in Miami. He became one of the best-known interviewers in broadcast history.

Tracy Wood (1943-2020)

Tracy Wood reported from the Vietnam War for United Press International, was part of the Los Angeles Times team that won a Pulitzer Prize for coverage of the 1992 riots and led the OC Register's investigations team as editor. She was a longtime advisor and occasional writer for the Fullerton Observer. As Voice of OC's civic editor, she mentored the newsroom on the fundamentals of accountability reporting.

Belva Davis (1932–2025)

She began her career writing for Jet and Ebony magazines before becoming the first Black woman television reporter on the West Coast. She became an award-winning journalist with a career spanning approximately 50 years.

Local news is one of the best training grounds. The stakes are real, sources are accessible, and editors often need help. Build a portfolio of published pieces.

You don't need permission to start being a journalist. Pick a subject, go find out what's happening, report it accurately, and publish it. Do that consistently, and you'll build the portfolio, skills, and reputation that open doors, with or without a degree. What every good journalist does have is a set of skills, a body of published work, and a reputation for getting things right.

Send articles and source links to *contact@fullertonobserver.com*.

FSD Social and Emotional Learning



by Vivien Moreno

Fullerton School District is proposing expanding its current Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum. FSD's SEL program is based on Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) research, which includes the five areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making practices, providing foundations for FSD's goal for every student to feel safe, heard, and valued. This goal is reinforced by the districtwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and the digital citizenship programs that overlap but are separate from the SEL curriculum.

These programs address the "whole child" by teaching students' self-awareness of emotions and behaviors, social awareness of how personal actions impact other people, decision-making options, self-management, which includes understanding emotional reactions, time management, and personal boundaries, and building relationship skills, honing communication, problem-solving, and learning skills.

The five areas work together to strengthen student focus, persistence, and positive learning habits. The goal is for students to build productive, healthy relationships, understand their boundaries, and develop empathy and resilience.

Dr. Helene Morris, Director of Administrative Services, and Directors Rossana Fonseca and Amy Lees presented an overview of how the district plans to expand the Rethink Ed curriculum currently used for a select group of students in the district utilizing Tier 2 and 3 services, which generally means in small group or individual applications. The district is ready to expand this curriculum in age-appropriate ways districtwide.

Director Lees remarked that students' self-awareness and empathy for others help teachers get more accomplished during teaching time since it allows more focused communication and lessens the time teachers spend regulating classroom behaviors.

SEL enriches student understanding by teaching time management, behavioral self-control, and ways to cope with stress. These skills allow students to feel more engaged in their educational environment. SEL does not replace mental health services, and though it may help teachers to identify students for referral, all FSD mental health services are supervised by trained mental health professionals.

SEL enriches student understanding by teaching time management, behavioral self-control, and ways to cope with stress.

The Rethink ED curriculum consists of 15- to 25-minute grade-appropriate lessons focusing on a districtwide theme. Lessons are commonly in the form of short videos with guided discussions, and multiple chances to practice newly formed skills.

In later grades, there are more group activities and project options available, and teachers can mesh these lessons with other academic subjects to provide real-time examples in action. Parents may access the videos connected to the lessons beforehand, and they have the opt-out option for any lesson if they wish.

California education law gives parents this right; however, if the material covered is part of the curriculum, then students are responsible for learning the information for any future tests that may be given concerning this topic.

Age-appropriate lessons for TK and Kindergarten include defining terms and actions like: what is a boundary, what are different emotions, what is a friend? There are easy-to-follow parent activities to help reinforce the lessons.

By grades 5-8, children are learning to discern between online relationships and in-person friendships. They learn how to recognize and speak up to support positive behaviors and when to alert a responsible adult about inappropriate actions. For example, if the districtwide theme is bullying response, lower grades spend time identifying bullying behaviors, while upper grades practice responses and learn more nuanced actions of how to support each other against negative or harmful actions like bullying or harassment.

Parents receive lesson topics from their student's teacher and school communications and lesson content is available to parents in English, Spanish, and Korean. This curriculum aligns with and supports ongoing PBIS, digital citizenship, and the healthy relationship part of the health curriculum, but will not replace any of those subjects.

Teachers also have options to expand and reinforce the lessons across subjects when appropriate, including enrichment activities and projects to expand on a theme if they choose. The board will vote on the expansion in spring 2027.

Preparing Pets for Natural Disasters



by Alicia Hsieh, contributing writer for Troy Preparedness Club

Disasters can be frightening - even to our pets. Since they rely on us for food, safety and shelter, it's always smart to have a plan for your pet in the event of a disaster. The most common disasters and their risk level are highly dependent on your location.

In California, wildfires and earthquakes are by far the most common type of disaster, but in many regions, people also face hurricanes, tornadoes, blizzards, and flooding. Know what is most likely to occur in your region and take steps to prepare.

California is a state where fire can occur any time of year and entire towns can be evacuated instantly. In the event of a wildfire or anytime the air is smoky, bring your pet inside and be ready to leave when you are instructed to evacuate. Have your pet's emergency kit ready to grab - food, water, bowl, medications, leashes, carriers, waste collection bags, and copies of your pet's medical records. Ensure your dog or cat has proper identification including a microchip and current ID tags.

Earthquake planning calls for something different as they can happen unexpectedly. Owners should have a safe place for their pet to go in an earthquake. Resist the urge to pick up a panicked pet as things are falling around you. Your pet may be scared or confused after the earthquake so keep your pet on a leash or in a carrier.

Different animals need different items in an emergency.

- Dogs need a leash, and enough food, water, and their "blankie" or toy.
- Cats often need a travel kennel, especially since they'll try to take a run for it if they get scared.
- Birds need a travel cage that can be secured, food, water, and a draft-free, temperature-controlled environment.
- Small animals like rabbits, guinea pigs, and hamsters need a carrier, bedding, food, and water.
- Fish are one of the hardest pets to evacuate so ask a vet or other expert how to keep them safe in an emergency ahead of time.

No matter what kind of animal you have, it's worth creating a list of places you'd be able to take them in case of an emergency. Most emergency shelters don't accept animals, so it's important to have an alternative plan such as a pet-friendly motel or hotel, friend or family members, or a disaster shelter. It's also helpful to keep a picture of your pet on you in the case that they go missing. Prepared for a disaster doesn't mean waiting for one. It means being prepared to help your animals if one does occur. An emergency kit, updated identification tags, knowledge of what natural disasters are more likely to happen in your area, and a plan for how you will evacuate and care for your animals can make a real difference for your pets.

How to Start a Cottage Food Business in Fullerton PART 1

An Easy Step-by-Step Guide to sell homemade food legally from your Fullerton home, you need two approvals (as of November 2026): A Cottage Food Operation (CFO) registration or permit from the Orange County Health Care Agency (OCHCA). A Business Registration Certificate from the City of Fullerton. California's cottage food law lets you make certain shelf-stable, low-risk foods in your home kitchen and sell them.

BEFORE YOU APPLY

STEP 1: CHOOSE CLASS A OR CLASS B

Most home bakers start with Class A. It costs less and needs no home inspection. Choose Class B only if you want shops, cafes or restaurants to resell your products.

CLASS A (Registration)

- **Who you sell to:** customers directly, in person, online, by phone, by mail or by delivery app
- **Home inspection:** none, unless there's a complaint
- **Sales cap:** $75,000 a year under the law (about $88,878 for 2026 after the inflation adjustment)
- **Annual renewal fee:** $128

CLASS B (Permit)

- **Who you sell to:** everything Class A allows, plus stores, cafes and restaurants that resell your food
- **Home inspection:** required before approval and once a year after that
- **Sales cap:** $150,000 a year under the law (about $177,756 for 2026 after the inflation adjustment)
- **Annual renewal fee:** $384

Rules for both classes:

- You may have one full-time-equivalent employee, not counting family or household members.
- You may only sell within California.
- You can upgrade from Class A to Class B later by notifying OCHCA.

STEP 2: MAKE SURE YOUR FOODS ARE ALLOWED

Only foods on the state's approved list qualify, and they must stay safe without refrigeration. OCHCA Cottage Food Operations: *ochealthinfo.com/services-programs/environmental-health/food-safety-programs/cottage-food*

If a product isn't listed, you'll need to use a permitted commercial or shared kitchen instead. See the full list at the OCHCA website.

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OC United 5K Pumpkin Run

by Dahlia, 8th Grade



With over 700 runners, 38 bike riders, 35 community partners and 200 Fullerton School District faculty and parents, the OC United Pumpkin Run 5K was definitely one for the books! On Saturday, October 24, the crisp morning, children, adults and even dogs lined up at the Juanita Cook Trail to complete a three-mile run/walk or a 10-to-12 mile bike ride around Fullerton.

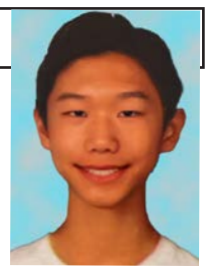
The Pumpkin Run is an essential fundraiser for the United Kids and United Teens programs. These programs help youth heal and grow from past trauma.

To help make the event more inclusive and entertaining for all, the Pumpkin Run added a fall festival and food vendors.

Children were able to enjoy Trunk or Treat, face painting and even explore a police car courtesy of the Fullerton Police Department. Because of the costume contest, runners on the trail were dressed in clever costumes like Forrest Gump, Where's Waldo and much more. At the finish line, the cheerleading team from Nicolas Jr. High greeted each runner with applause and a medal.

All in all, the OC United Pumpkin Run brings the Fullerton community together in a fun and healthy way: running, biking, games and a little friendly competition.

The AI Bubble Burst by Declan, 11th Grade



In late October 2026, the world economy shifted into a state of alarm as Chinese stock indexes crossed the 40% loss mark over a four-month period, losing the equivalent of $480 billion USD. The significant losses have been attributed to the rapidly advancing technology of artificial intelligence, raising concerns about the sustainability of AI investments.

The AI bubble is a term used to describe the accelerated investments in artificial intelligence technology that began in 2022, when ChatGPT was publicly released. ChatGPT's popularity brought massive attention to the potential value of AI, prompting numerous institutions, companies and investors to support its development. As a result, data centers, microchip factories and software firms began to spread across developed cities. Investors began driving the value of AI companies far beyond what they were actually earning or were reasonably expected to earn, leading many to worry that the AI "bubble" would eventually burst and plunge the stock market.

This past year, these fears have seemingly been realized in one major superpower: China. China's AI growth faced a massive setback as its bubble burst, with billions of dollars quickly disappearing as panicked investors sold their shares in technology stocks. Several factors contributed to the significant losses, including excessive speculation, economic concerns and competition. Chinese technology companies experienced inflated share prices that greatly exceeded the actual profits they generated. The stock index STAR50, which tracks 50 major companies, saw stock valuations reach levels reportedly 250 times greater than their actual growth and revenue. American-Chinese relations also contributed to concerns surrounding the AI bubble, as American restrictions limited Chinese companies' access to American technology and markets. Without sufficient evidence of long-term viability and profitability, investors began questioning whether inflated stock prices were justified, leading many to sell their shares.

China's economic situation serves as a warning for the global economy. AI investments remain heavily speculative in other leading countries, including the United States, where prominent companies like OpenAI and Anthropic have reached enormous valuations. China's market decline raises concerns about a similar outcome to the dot-com bubble of the early 2000s, a financial event driven by excessive speculation in internet companies. If leading AI companies are unable to justify their investments, the consequences could include a declining stock market, job losses and a significantly weakened economy. Artificial intelligence is transforming our way of life, but expectations do not guarantee profitability.





How Troy DECA is Giving Back to the Community

by Yoyo, 9th Grade



For nearly twenty years, Troy High School has hosted an active FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) chapter, providing students with hands-on business experience and opportunities to compete in events that challenge their ability to apply business concepts. However, this year, Troy FBLA officially transitioned into a DECA chapter, a similar organization that prepares students for careers in business leadership and entrepreneurship.

Troy's FBLA has historically been an incredibly competitive program, and that tradition is continuing in its newly established DECA chapter. Through frequent interactive practice sessions, the club plans to ensure that students receive live feedback on their event presentations and roleplays, which are an integral part of DECA competitions. They have just finished their tryout process and are now focused on selecting students to represent Troy at the state conference in February.

Aside from fostering a renewed focus on competition and excellence, the transition from FBLA to DECA has prompted a surge in student enthusiasm and engagement. The club plans to use this energy to become more involved in the community.

Co-president Vivi Ni says, "One thing we want to emphasize is that business is not purely transactional. Our school and the community around us has given us so much room to work with in terms of funding for our competitions and allowing our students to develop themselves as future business leaders in the world. We just want to remind them that it's not just about awards, it's about giving back to your community when you have the means to do so."

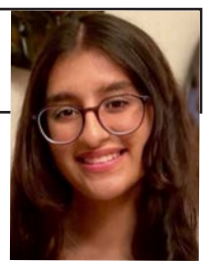
Part of Troy DECA's community service campaign this year is to host weekly campus cleanups, during which members will help maintain the campus by picking up trash and tidying up classrooms. They will also host a Thanksgiving event where members will make cards to donate to local hospitals. The club's newfound emphasis on community service is clear, with members now required to complete three hours of community service.

"We're excited for our chapter to continue connecting students with business professionals so that they can be confident when stepping out into their adulthood and respective careers. Most importantly, we would love for DECA to be a chapter that is known for giving back to those around them," Vivi says.

Troy FBLA's transition to DECA has brought a renewed focus on building a team committed not only to competitive success but also to supporting the surrounding community. The club looks forward to establishing itself within the DECA community.

Freedom of the Flop

by Taliha, 12th Grade



Flip-flops have transcended the game, both figuratively and literally, sneaking their way onto high school campuses in Fullerton. While some may view them as recreational, flip-flops have evolved into a practical choice for students navigating long school days. In regions where temperatures can reach over 100 degrees Fahrenheit, not wearing open-toed footwear means missing out on comfort and affordable footwear. Flip-flops have flopped their way onto our campus, and they are here to stay.

School is a high-stress environment, and physical comfort obviously impacts a student's ability to focus. Sitting in classrooms for an hour or sometimes more every day in restrictive footwear with limited breathing room can lead to discomfort. Imagine math class, when there could be a rock in a student's shoe and they cannot take it out because they might disrupt the lesson. Flip-flops offer freedom for the feet and temperature regulation. It is even said that the closer one's feet are to the ground, the more humble an individual may be. This also allows them to sleep better and be a happier person overall.

Footwear is also how students show who they are. The rise of casual footwear on social media displays a shift toward effortless, relaxed styles. On campus, people wear flip-flops with anything, repping their true Southern Californian colors. Even though people are weirdly afraid of feet nowadays, there is nothing wrong with wearing what makes one feel comfortable, even if that means displaying their toes.

But there is the question of whether practicality should take priority over comfort. What is not practical about flip-flops? They are easy to clean, lightweight and affordable, making them one of the most practical shoe choices for students. School is not a fashion show, and the main focus should be what we learn. If someone chooses to wear flip-flops, should it really make a difference?

Flip-flops are some of the most practical footwear of our generation, and they are a logical response to weather and lifestyle changes. They have so many unique qualities that other footwear simply does not offer. From now on, we all just need to take a step back and embrace the toes.



FEATURING: WOMEN OWNED BUSINESSES IN FULLERTON



Lauren Marie Tucker (far right) stands with three other employees in front of Kitsch Studios.
Kitsch Studios is located at 111 E. Commonwealth Avenue, Fullerton.
Open 12–9 pm Tuesday through Friday, 11 am—9 pm Saturday and Sunday, and closed on Mondays.
Let it Brie is located at 117 E. Commonwealth Avenue, Fullerton.
Open 11 am–8 pm Tuesday through Thursday, 11 am–9 pm Friday and Saturday,
11 am–5 pm on Sunday, and closed on Mondays.

Kitsch Studios and Let it Brie: Three businesses with one busy owner

by Breanna Pineda

If there is one thing all of Lauren Marie Tucker's friends and colleagues know about her, it is that she is always running around.

As the business owner of both Let it Brie and art studio Kitsch Studios on E Commonwealth Ave, as well as the Italian restaurant Alza Osteria in Brea, she said she is no stranger to late nights and high stress with her career.

"You really have to learn your limits and spread yourself very thin," Lauren said when describing her work schedule. "Anyone who knows me knows everything in the world could be going wrong and I would maintain my zen 'cause I have been through it before and worse things will happen again."

Lauren grew up in Fullerton, and mentioned her vast experience in being a business owner. She followed this career path from a young age, describing different small businesses she ran such as selling bookmarks.

Later in life, Lauren spent some time living in England and the Czech Republic where she owned different bars, nightclubs, and vintage shops.

"I just really like working," she laughed. "I really enjoy the ins and outs of business and the stress and problem solving."

Once Lauren moved back to the United States, she later purchased Alza Osteria with her husband, and found her way back to Fullerton. However, Lauren does note the changes she has seen within the city in recent years.

"I was very sad to see what Fullerton has become," Lauren said. "Obviously, being a college town with two colleges, of course night life is going to pick up but it looks like only night life."

Lauren said that although she loves the diversity in Fullerton's population amongst age groups, education and background, she hopes to see more unique small businesses get attention.

"The things that made Fullerton so funky and unique were disappearing and being replaced by mediocre bars," she said.

She mentioned that as a business owner in a college town, she has had plenty of unpleasant experiences with fights or drunken crowds outside of her businesses.

"I think the way we combat that is by creating nicer spaces," she said.

Nevertheless, Lauren's own storefronts prove to be keeping Fullerton's vibrant community alive, with Kitsch Studios providing a variety of art classes and Let it Brie serving as an artisan cheese shop, cafe, and wine bar.

While all of Lauren's businesses are distinct from one another with individual concepts, she ensures all three are able to contribute to something for customers.

"I never really look at business about what I want to do," she said. "I look at it from the angle of what does the community need?" she said.

Lauren opened Kitsch Studios in August2023, after being inspired by an art studio she had visited in LA. She said she wanted the business to serve as a third space for people, where there could be an emphasis on Fullerton's artistic past.

"We were really missing something that could tap into arts and get people to unplug," she said. "I wanted something specifically for the adult demographic."

The studio itself has a soothing atmosphere, with soft music, unique trinkets and welcoming staff.

It was not until July of this year that Lauren purchased Let it Brie. She noted that in acquiring the business from previous owners, she took the time to understand the business system and employees' dynamics. Thus, she has been able to develop a relationship with the Let it Brie staff.

"When you let employees understand that their time, effort and energy is important and valuable then it is a lot easier to get people on the same page," she said.

Looking to the future of the cheese shop and cafe, Lauren shared her interest in adding European-style breakfast and lunch to the menu and small sharable plates during dinner, reminiscent of cafes in Europe.

As she continues to have her hands full with three thriving businesses, Lauren aims to keep the community in mind.

"At the risk of sounding cheesy, do not forget the honor of having people choose your business and I think you should reflect on your business to appreciate that sentiment," she said.

Close races in Fullerton await final count, with results due December 3

continued from front page

STATE AND FEDERAL

Governor

Among Orange County voters, Democrat Xavier Becerra leads Republican Steve Hilton in the governor's race, 636,104 to 513,017. Democrat Fiona Ma leads Republican Gloria Romero in the Lieutenant Governor's race, 625,192 to 507,062. Statewide results are reported by the Secretary of State.

Congress

Democrat Derek Tran leads Republican Chuong V. Vo in the 45th District, 115,374 to 81,803, while Democrat Lou Correa leads Republican David Pan in the 46th District with 139,372 to 55,441.

In state legislative races, Democrat Avelino Valencia leads Republican Rhonda Shader in the 34th State Senate District 154,787 to 64,043.

In the 67th Assembly District, Democrat Mark Pulido leads Republican Paulo Morales, 71,898 to 41,162, and in the 59th, incumbent Republican Phillip Chen leads Green Party candidate Victor Hernandez, 92,570 to 61,498.

Measures

Yes on Proposition with over 50%: Prop 1: Bonds fo Housing Affordability Programs, Prop 2: Increases State's Rainy Day Fund, Prop 3: Permanent Funding for Schools and Health Care, Prop 37: Creates Loan Program for Middle-Income, Prop 38: Bonds for Immunology Medical Research, Prop 41: Prohibits New State Taxes that Exclude Revenues from State Spending Limits, Prop 42: Prohibits New State Personal Property Taxes, Prop 43: Limits Voters' Ability to Raise revenue for Local Government Services, Prop 45: Modifies Environmental Review for Certain Projects,

What's Next

The OC Registrar of voters will continue posting updates as remaining ballots are processed. With margins of only a few dozen votes in two races, the final outcome may not be known until the count is complete.

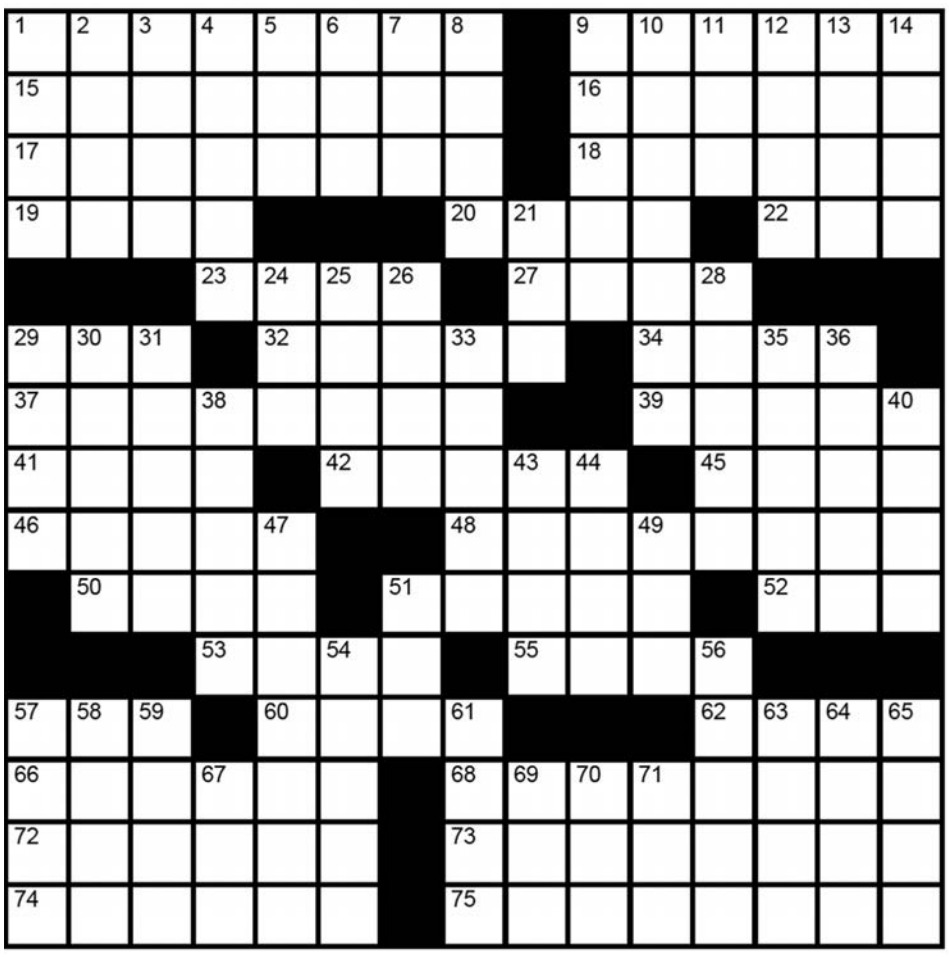
Voters can check the status of their ballot and follow results at *ocvote.gov*.





OUR TOWN CROSSWORD © 2026

"FEAST!" by Valerie Brickey (answer key on page 15)



ACROSS

1. Teddy bear fill
9. Bomb at the box office
15. Greek god of the sea
16. Cheesy bagel choice
17. Savory turnover
18. Clothing fastener
19. Skin growth
20. "Hold your horses!"
22. Since Jan. 1
23. Chip off the old flock?
27. Throw, as dice
29. ___ Na Na
32. Handle
34. Sci-fi princess
37. Small ___(insignificant)
39. Jerks
41. "Here comes trouble!"
42. Pure profit
45. Ballet bend
46. Nine-player chamber group
48. Falter
50. Scorch
51. "Oh My Darling, Clementine" occupation
52. "I ___ what I ___ and that's all that I ___" (Popeye's catchphrase)
53. Bro
55. Former BlackBerry rival
57. Kind of chart
60. Word after "pop-up" or "drop-down"
62. Sounds from the kids
66. Slanting
68. Ocho x cinco
72. Provided for free
73. "The Office" city
74. ___ Berry Farm
75. Wound covering

DOWN

1. Blueprint detail, briefly
2. "Skip ___ Lou"
3. Mailing letters?
4. Achievements
5. Dorsal, e.g.
6. Ore-___ (frozen food brand)
7. Silent assent
8. Vex, with "at"
9. Party game with words you aren't allowed to say
10. More often than not
11. Tie-dye dye brand
12. "Roar" singer Perry
13. Showbiz award "grand slam"
14. Over there, poetically
21. Store posting: Abbr.
24. Chow down
25. Thick-soled shoe
26. Layer
28. Sprang
29. Like some silk or sugar
30. Hostess snack cakes
31. Observe Yom Kippur
33. Japanese beer
35. Decorative embedded design
36. Japanese dog
38. Leading
40. Appear to be
43. Blow off steam
44. Belgian river
47. Louis Armstrong's instrument
49. Wrath
51. U.S. Presidents, so far
54. Cards in Monopoly
56. Harbingers
57. Prepare for a trip
58. "Help ___ the way!"
59. Orange-nosed Muppet
61. La Jolla sch.
63. Against
64. Like ___ of bricks
65. Warbled
67. Choose
69. Inland Empire sch.
70. "___ we there yet?"
71. Dorm overseers, for short



Letters to Santa Nov. 30 – Dec. 15

MAIL YOUR LETTER AT:

Community Center
340 W Commonwealth Ave

Fullerton Public Library
353 W Commonwealth Ave

Hunt Branch Library
201 S Basque Ave

Fire Station #2
1732 W Valencia Dr

HITS & MISSES

by Pamela Mason Wagner © 2026



FJORD: TWO HITS

Structured like a police procedural, Fjord quietly and powerfully unfolds against the vast, frigid landscape of contemporary rural Norway. A blended immigrant family – half Norwegian, half Romanian – arrives in a small fishing village and struggles to maintain its culture, religion, and values. The progressive state, embodied by earnest teachers, social workers, and judges, wrestles with its duty to protect and its respect for individual choices. The result is a nail-biter that keeps you guessing until the very last shot.

None of this should come as a surprise to anyone familiar with Romanian director Cristian Mungiu's previous work, most notably "4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days" (2007), a harrowing drama about an illegal abortion in Ceausescu's Romania.

The same cinematic rigor and masterful technique draw attention to mundane details, forcing viewers to engage with the characters' lives as though we, too, were living them. Mungiu achieves this almost without close-ups, allowing the drama to unfold within the frame, without cuts. There is virtually no musical score, only the soundtrack of village life, which contrasts hymns played and sung by the Gheorghiu family and fellow parishioners with teenage pop music at a wild birthday party.

Nearly unrecognizable, Sebastian Stan ("The Apprentice" and the "Captain America" franchise) delivers a phenomenal performance as the nerdy, straight-laced father, Mihai Gheorghiu. Renate Reinsve, who burst onto the scene in "The Worst Person in the World" and followed with "Sentimental Value," portrays Lisbet. Her near-saintly devotion to helping others as Mihai's wife and mother of five is entirely believable, thanks to Reinsve's ability to disappear completely into a role. The place of women in 21st-century society is delicately explored through all the female characters, including Mia (Lisa Carlehed), who cares for her wheelchair-bound father-in-law while itching to return to her law practice.

The claustrophobia of small-town life emerges as an investigation into the family begins. Neighbors and coworkers think they understand the family's plight, yet knowing something and understanding what lies beneath the surface prove very different things. Even the words used to describe actions – a slap means one thing in Romania and another in Norway – fail to capture the intention behind them.

When a police car thoughtlessly, perhaps unknowingly, runs over the family's mailbox, Mungiu tips his hand as to whom he is rooting for.

"Try to relax, we're here to help," spoken by a self-righteous government employee, sends chills down the audience's spine. Whom viewers root for will depend greatly on their own worldview. This is not a black-and-white story, and Mungiu's greatest triumph is articulating grand themes of personal freedom in the face of a powerful, supposedly well-meaning state, while simultaneously creating individual characters whose lives we believe in and empathize with.

"The aim is to understand that there are people who think differently than you," Mungiu told the New York Times.

The film won the the Palme d'Or at Cannes this year. Without a doubt, this film will garner Oscar attention during awards season.

See it now on the big screen while you can!

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



NOVEMBER

16 Monday

—FAMILY TIME—

10:0 to 11:0am: My Little & Me Craft Time: $65 per 4 week session (includes 1 child and 1 adult).
REGISTRATION REQUIRED
Hunt Library
201 S Basque Ave, Fullerton
Call 714-738-6575 for more info.

17 Tuesday

—BOOK CLUB—

5:30 to 6:45pm: Tuesday Night Book Club: A lively book club discussion featuring a variety of genres and authors! Copies of titles are limited. Please register early due to limited space. Adults 18+
Fullerton Public Library
353 W Commonwealth Ave, Fullerton
(714) 738-6326
fullertonlibrary.libcal.com

18 Wednesday

———MOVIE———

4:00 pm: The Sting (1973): Starring Paul Newman, Robert Redford, and Robert Shaw. Two grifters team up to pull off the ultimate con.
Fullerton Public Library
Conference Center
353 W Commonwealth Ave, Fullerton
(714) 738-6326

19 Thursday

——ART——

12:00 to 6:00pm: Final Rites: Death, Mourning, & Beyond: Blending science, history, folklore, and the supernatural, this exhibition explores why humanity has always sought to understand what may lie beyond.
Fullerton Museum Center
Main Gallery
301 N Pomona Ave Fullerton
fullertonmuseum.com

20 Friday

—FAMILY TIME—

10:30 to 11:30am: Baby Sign Language: Designed for infants and babies and their caregivers!
NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED
Fullerton Public Library
Osborne Auditorium
353 W Commonwealth Ave, Fullerton
(714) 738-6326

21 Saturday

——THEATER——

8:00pm: Santa Claus kidnapped by Martians!: Will the children on Earth have no toys on Christmas day? For ages 5 and up.
Maverick Theater
110 E. Walnut Ave, Unit B, Fullerton
(714) 526-7070
mavericktheater.com

—FREE MOVIE—

3:00 pm: Moana: Live-action adaptation of the 2016 Disney animated film 'Moana.'
Fullerton Public Library
Conference Center
353 W Commonwealth Ave, Fullerton
(714) 738-6326

22 Sunday

–PERFORMANCE–

1:30 to 3:30pm: Haneul Samulnori and Dance Group: Korean Traditional Dance Performance: FREE Visitors can also enjoy Korean-inspired arts and crafts activities on the museum patio, offering an opportunity to engage with Korean culture beyond the performance.
Fullerton Museum Center
301 N Pomona Ave Fullerton
fullertonmuseum.com

23 Monday

–KIDS CAMP–

9:00 to 12:00pm: CRAFTY KIDS CAMP: Fun and interactive craft camp. For those between 6-12 years old. Camp Session: November 23-25 9am drop off and 12pm pickup. COST for the THREE DAY CAMP IS $75. Registration required.
Hunt Library
201 S Basque Ave, Fullerton
(714) 738-6575

24 Tuesday

—FAMILY TIME—

10:00 to 11:00am: Family Storytime: Who knew learning could be so much fun? Come join us for an interactive storytime that will have you clapping, moving, and reading silly stories and rhymes! All ages welcome.
Hunt Library
201 S Basque Ave, Fullerton
(714) 738-6365

25 Wednesday

—FREE MOVIE—

1:00 to 5:00pm: Box Car Drive-In Matinee: Decorate your very own cardboard box car! We provide the supplies, you design your way. After the car is built, time to sit in to watch a crowd-pleasing movie with provided snacks. This event is for all ages and their caregivers.
Hunt Library
201 S Basque Ave, Fullerton
(714) 738-6365

26 Thursday

——WALK——-

8:00 to 10:00am: $22.20: 2026 Kindness Matters Walk: 10th Annual Kindness Matters Walk (KM Walk) - a milestone year for a community tradition built on hope, gratitude, and action. Every step helps carry Katie's legacy forward. All participants are encouraged to register online in advance of the walk.
Juanita Cooke Greenbelt & Trail (2.79 mi): 1275 N. Berkeley Avenue, Fullerton

27 Friday

–TAKE A HIKE–

Go Any Time: FREE:
Juanita Cooke Greenbelt & Trail (2.79 mi): 1275 N. Berkeley Avenue, Fullerton
Brea Dam Trail (1.59 mi): 1700 N Harbor Boulevard, Fullerton

BUY NOTHING DAY, an international counter-movement advocating for mindful consumption

28 Saturday

——VOLUNTEER——

9:00am to 2:00pm: Operation Christmas Child Processing Center: Please complete the OCC processing-center signup to reserve your spot. *https://occvolunteersignup.com/VolunteerSignUp/IndexGroup?rg=e9afe66f4ecd438f80dfd1fa1a2e1af3*
Southern California processing center
4200 Bonita Place, Fullerton

29 Sunday

———PSYCHIC--———

3:00 to 5:00pm: Oracle Readings by Psychic Auntie Pan Pan: $27 Capacity limited. Curious about the supernatural and divination? Here is your chance.
IPSO FACTO
517 N. Harbor Blvd. Fullerton

30 Monday

———--ART———

11:00am to 4:00pm: TOM LA DUKE: slowly, the song goes: Free and open to the public. A solo exhibition by artist Tom LaDuke. 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, offering a rare opportunity to experience the evolution of one of Southern California's most influential contemporary artists.
The College of the Arts Galleries are located at the western edge of the CSUF campus facing Clayes Performing Arts Center (Visual Arts, Bldg. G). The nearest cross streets are State College Blvd. and Arts Dr.

DECEMBER

1 Tuesday

—FAMILY TIME—

10:00 to 11:00am: Family Storytime: Who knew learning could be so much fun? Come join us for an interactive storytime that will have you clapping, moving, and reading silly stories and rhymes! All ages welcome.
Hunt Library
201 S Basque Ave, Fullerton
(714) 738-6365



2 Wednesday

———MARKET———

8:30 am to 12:30 pm: Certified Farmers Market: Fresh local produce. Support farmers.
Fullerton Downtown Plaza
125 E. Wilshire Ave, Fullerton
(714) 738-6575

3 Thursday

–ENGLISH CLUB–

5:30 to 6:30pm: FREE English Conversation Club: Practice speaking English with adult learners of all levels in a friendly, relaxed learning environment.
Adults 18+. No registration required.
Hunt Library
201 S Basque Ave, Fullerton
714-738-6365

Nouveau Chamber Ballet Brings the Magic of "The Nutcracker" to Fullerton December 19 & 20

Celebrate the magic of the holiday season with Fullerton's own ballet company, Nouveau Chamber Ballet, as it presents the beloved annual production of "The Nutcracker."

Performances will take place on Saturday, December 19, and Sunday, December 20, 2026, at 2:00 PM at the Fullerton College Campus Theatre, located at 321 E. Chapman Avenue in Fullerton.

A cherished Orange County holiday tradition for more than 30 years, Nouveau Chamber Ballet's "The Nutcracker" brings Clara's magical journey to life through beautiful choreography, elaborate costumes, and festive scenery. Under the artistic direction of Sheree King, the company continues the legacy of founder Lois Ellyn, honoring classical ballet traditions while introducing fresh creativity to the stage as Lois Ellyn Ballet Studio celebrates its 70th anniversary in 2026.

This season features new choreography for the Russian dance by Tom Bozigian and the return of Lois Ellyn's original pas de deux choreography for Reeds Flutes and Arabian. New costumes and sets further enhance Clara's magical journey through the Kingdom of Sweets, bringing fresh visual excitement to this 90-minute abridged production, perfect for audiences of all ages.

This year's featured guest artists include Jameson Keating as the Cavalier and Samantha Bell as the Sugar Plum Fairy. Keating previously danced with Oklahoma City Ballet and State Street Ballet, while Bell has performed with both State Street Ballet and Oakland Ballet.

Nouveau Chamber Ballet also welcomes Ryan Rouland Smith and alumna Theresa Knudson, whose return to the stage celebrates the company's longstanding tradition of fostering talented dancers and maintaining meaningful connections with its alumni.

Following each performance, children and families are invited onstage for a complimentary meet-and-greet and photo opportunity with the cast, including beloved characters such as Clara, the Nutcracker Prince, and the Sugar Plum Fairy.

With reserved seating ranging from $30 to $50, The Nutcracker offers a memorable way for families and friends to celebrate the holiday season together. Advance ticket purchases are strongly encouraged, as performances have sold out in previous years.



Performance Details
Dates: Saturday, December 19
Sunday, December 20
Time: 2:00 pm both days
Location: Fullerton College Campus Theatre,
321 E. Chapman Avenue,
Fullerton
Tickets: $30–$50, reserved seating
Tickets & Information:
www.nouveauchamberballet.com



Andrew came with his family to participate



Live music made the celebration with ancestors memorable





Museum Executive Director Elvia Rubalcava

Museum Center honors departed loved ones with music and community altars *continued from the front page*

The observances vary from country to country. The offerings welcome the returning spirits of loved ones, expressing an enduring connection between the living and the dead. The gatherings also help families share memories and pass cultural traditions to younger generations.

The event on Saturday night had plenty for kids to do but also included some great entertainment from singer Shanelle Darlene, who also emceed. Florencio Blanquel, owner of Blanquel Popular Art, performed the classic folk song "La Llorona. "The headliner was Poncho Sanchez, a Grammy-winning percussionist and bandleader, who added Latin jazz to an evening centered on cultural traditions and community connections.

The Fullerton Museum Center's "Final Rites: Death, Mourning, & Beyond" exhibit explores mortality through displays on natural hazards, Victorian mourning customs, and efforts to communicate with the dead. Blending science, history and folklore, the exhibit examines how people confront loss, honor loved ones and seek answers about what lies beyond death.

Sylvia Chavez's son Joseph works for the Fullerton Museum Center. She wanted to participate to support him but also wanted to share the tradition beyond just Latinos. "The more, the merrier," she said.

See more photos on *fullertonobserver.com*



Cervantes-Sturdivant Family









Fullerton Celebrates Veterans Day with Community Parade and Ceremony

by Saskia Kennedy, PHOTOS BY GASTON CASTELLANOS

Along Harbor Boulevard, across from Ralphs near Hillcrest Park, families gathered to celebrate the spirit of unity during the parade that began on Berkeley Avenue on Wednesday, November 11, at 10 am. Although brief, this eight-minute tribute honored our nation's veterans with heartfelt enthusiasm. The Troy High School band and guard delivered a remarkable performance, while the Troy High School Warrior ROTC and Fullerton High School Red Hawk Battalion mesmerized the crowd with their impressive marching cadence songs and formations. The veterans in attendance radiated warmth, and the eager children along the route contributed to the uplifting atmosphere.

After the parade, about a hundred people gathered for the city's meaningful Veterans Day ceremony. Attendees settled into rows of chairs on the lawn at Hillcrest Park, still damp in places, as the sun shone down, creating a vibrant yet challenging ambiance.

Though the warm weather affected a few Troy High School ROTC students in full uniform, their resilient spirit prevailed. The ceremony featured beautiful singing that received some of the day's most passionate applause. Speakers delivered concise messages highlighting the importance of the occasion as members of the Fullerton Police and Fire Departments, along with city staff and several City Council members, came together to honor the veterans.

Despite the heat making the program feel lengthy, the perseverance of the elderly veterans in the audience and the steadfast students standing at attention testified to their dedication. This was the second year the City of Fullerton organized the Veterans Day event independently since the disbanding of Fullerton's American Legion, showcasing the community's commitment to remembrance and honor.

See more photos by Gaston Castellanos at *www.fullertonobserver.com*.



Lemon Park Mural Restoration Moves Into Next Phase

Effort started by Councilmember Zahra in 2019 continues with Our Lady of Guadalupe mural

The City of Fullerton is moving forward with the next phase of restoring the historic murals near Lemon Park. The work continues an effort that Councilmember Dr. Ahmad Zahra started in 2019 and has kept going with community fundraising ever since.

The first mural in this phase is "Our Lady of Guadalupe and Saint Juan Diego," and the artist is donating the labor. The City next plans to restore the "Woman and Vintage Car" mural. Its long-term goal is to restore all four murals in this group, including "Cruising the Past" and "Clasping Hands," as more funding comes in. The work will repair damage from weather, sun and age.

A neighborhood landmark since 1978

Community youth painted the Lemon Street murals on the pedestrian overpass beside Lemon Park in 1978. The project was funded by the Fullerton City Council in partnership with the Neighborhood Youth Corps, a youth job-training program, and was led by artist and teacher David Whelan. The murals show the Mexican American history of the surrounding Maple neighborhood. They also helped curb graffiti, which was a constant problem on the overpass at the time.

In 1988, the City Council approved money to restore the murals and add a new one. Orange County muralist Emigdio Vasquez painted "Mujeres Latinas," which faces west toward the park. A few years later he painted "Niños del Mundo" on the Fullerton Creek wall by Lemon Park, working with neighborhood students.

The murals became a flashpoint in 2008. At an April council meeting, then-Councilmember Shawn Nelson called them "crap" and linked lowriders to gangs. After meeting with Latino community leaders, Nelson apologized publicly at the May 6 council meeting, and the City agreed to restore the murals.

Zahra takes up the cause

At the Feb. 5, 2019 council meeting, Zahra made a motion to put a cost assessment and funding options for restoring the murals on a future agenda. "I believe it's time to restore those murals, but also re-imagine the entire bridge and beautify it," he said at the time.

That May, the council approved up to $8,500 to restore "Niños del Mundo." Emigdio Vasquez's son, Higgy Vasquez Jr., did the work. The council also asked the City's Public Art Committee to start a fundraising campaign for the rest of the murals.

In December 2021, vandals badly damaged the Virgin of Guadalupe mural. "We can and we will bring Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe and the other murals back," Zahra said then.

Since then, Zahra has raised money independently through a City-sponsored donation page. By January 2023, he had raised $11,000 to restore the "Low Rider" and "The Town I Live In" murals. Local artist Andrew Sturdivant led that work with young volunteers and recreated one mural that was beyond repair. On April 16, 2024, Zahra and Councilmembers Dr. Shana Charles and Bruce Whitaker gave certificates of recognition to the volunteers.

"In 50 years, they can look back and say we were part of this," Zahra said at the ceremony.

How to help

The City says the project depends on community donations. It hopes more contributions will let it finish all four murals. Donations can be made at *donorbox.org/lemon-street-mural*.



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A Critical Look at Fullerton's Veterans Day Celebration by Saskia Kennedy

Fullerton held its annual Veterans Day parade on November 11, a brief spectacle lasting just over eight minutes and covering a mere one and a half blocks. While the intent to honor those who have served our country is commendable, the execution of this event fell short, raising significant concerns about participant safety and overall impact.

The parade, although well-meaning, felt like a missed opportunity for a more meaningful tribute. Fullerton boasts a rich tapestry of schools, community organizations, and veterans' groups that could contribute to a more substantial procession. By engaging these groups early in the planning process, the City could foster a celebration that truly reflects the community's appreciation for its veterans.

Following the parade, the ceremony highlighted additional challenges. Attendees found themselves seated on a warm, muddy lawn lacking adequate shade, particularly for student participants, some of whom suffered heat-related illnesses, and senior veterans. These incidents highlight the urgent need for better safety measures. Proactive planning should address predictable weather-related risks. Essential provisions like shaded seating areas and on-site medical support were glaring omissions in the day's organization, especially considering the presence of many elderly veterans.

As this was only the second year that the City organized the Veterans Day event independently, it presents an opportunity for reflection and improvement. For future events, the City should prioritize shaded seating, water stations, and adequately staffed first-aid stations. Moreover, establishing a system that allows student participants to rest and hydrate without fear of penalty would be a significant step toward creating a safer environment.

Planning should also commence well in advance—ideally in the spring rather than the fall. This approach would facilitate broader outreach to veterans' organizations, military service groups, and other local schools with bands or ROTC programs. Clear, effective advertising is crucial; the promotional materials were confusing, with unclear graphics and incorrect street names, which confused attendees.

Veterans Day should be more than just another date on the city calendar; it is a solemn occasion to recognize the sacrifices individuals have made for our liberty. While Fullerton's parade showed heart, with more thoughtful planning, broader participation, and an unwavering focus on safety and comfort, the City could create a celebration that genuinely honors our veterans. The time to start this process is now. It's an opportunity for Fullerton to work together and create a parade worthy of those who have served our nation.

Read what went well on page 9.
See photos and video on
fullertonobserver.com



Atlas Fullerton Brings 329 New Apartments

A new apartment community is emerging at Fullerton Town Center, as a 329-unit residential project takes shape, transforming an underused section of the shopping complex into housing while maintaining the presence of major retailers and existing businesses.

Atlas Fullerton, developed by The Dinerstein Companies, based in Houston, in collaboration with Related Fund Management, is currently under construction on a 4.5-acre site located at the intersection of E. Orangethorpe Avenue and S. Lemon Street.

The five-story, Class A development will offer a mix of studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments, designed around three landscaped courtyards. A key feature will be an attached parking garage with 617 spaces, in addition to approximately 6,000 square feet of ground-floor retail space.

Future residents can look forward to a range of amenities including a pool and spa, fitness center, clubhouse, coworking spaces, outdoor lounges, a coffee bar, a dog park, a pet spa, and facilities for bicycle storage and repair.

The project repurposes a stretch of surface parking and dated retail space rather than replacing the shopping center. Costco and AMC Theatres remain among the Town Center's major tenants, while the former Amazon Fresh store permanently closed March 2026.

Architecturally, Atlas Fullerton draws inspiration from Fullerton's historic landmarks, reflecting the design of significant buildings such as the former Railroad Depot, now home to The Old Spaghetti Factory.

Construction, which began following a groundbreaking ceremony in 2025, is expected to continue through 2027, with studio rents projected to start at around $2,800 per month, although final pricing has yet to be confirmed Residential preleasing information anticipated closer to the opening date.

Fred Jung Appointed to OCTA Amidst Recall Campaign by Elijah Manassero

Fullerton Mayor Fred Jung was reappointed to the Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors on Nov. 5, following a 4-3 vote by the Orange County City Selection Committee. The appointment comes as Fullerton recall organizers collect signatures over concerns about Jung's leadership and fiscal management. Jung, registered with no party preference, defeated Democrat Carlos Franco, who was endorsed by the Democratic Party of Orange County.

Jung was supported by mayors Jose Medrano of La Habra, David Shawver of Stanton and Chad Wanke of Placentia.

The appointment extends Jung's representation of the Fourth Supervisorial District on OCTA through December 2028. He has served on the board since 2022 and is its vice chair.

OCTA oversees transportation planning, infrastructure investments and public transportation services for more than 3 million residents in 34 cities. The agency operates OC Bus and OC ACCESS, helps fund Metrolink commuter rail, oversees major freeway and road improvements, and supports bicycle infrastructure and pedestrian safety projects.

OCTA also administers Measure M, the voter-approved half-cent sales tax for transportation, which funds highway, local street and public transportation improvements.

Most residents do not directly elect their OCTA representatives. The 18-member board includes five county supervisors, 10 city representatives, two public members and a nonvoting Caltrans representative. The city representatives are selected by the Orange County City Selection Committee.

For the Fourth District appointment, the mayors or designated representatives of Anaheim, Brea, Buena Park, Fullerton, La Habra, Placentia and Stanton each receive one vote, regardless of their city's population.

Jung's reappointment gives him another term influencing billions of dollars in regional transportation decisions.

In December, OCTA established an operating funding target for Metrolink about 10% below its contribution in the previous fiscal year, a reduction of roughly $5.2 million. On June 8, 2026, OCTA's board unanimously approved its fiscal year 2026-27 budget, which incorporated the reduced funding target. Jung attended and voted in favor.

OCTA officials have defended the funding decision, citing lower-than-expected ridership, rising operating costs and the end of temporary state and federal funding that had helped sustain commuter rail operations. The agency says its contribution must remain sustainable within Measure M's long-term revenue.

On Nov. 5, the California State Transportation Agency announced a $20 million grant to Metrolink intended to prevent proposed service reductions and maintain current operations through the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. The grant provides temporary relief, but Metrolink's long-term finances remain uncertain. The Metrolink Board is scheduled to consider a revised budget Nov. 13.

Residents seeking better pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure have also scrutinized Jung's record on local transportation projects. In May 2023, the Fullerton City Council considered redesigning Associated Road between Bastanchury Road and Imperial Highway. The proposal would have reduced the existing four traffic lanes to two, widened bicycle facilities and potentially introduced Fullerton's first Class IV protected bike lanes. OCTA had reviewed and approved the proposal, which also received recommendations from several city advisory bodies.

City staff proposed making the changes during planned road rehabilitation, limiting additional construction costs. Some nearby residents opposed the proposal, citing concerns about parking, congestion and neighborhood impacts. The council did not advance the lane reduction and retained the four traffic lanes.

Jung's reappointment also comes during political controversy in Fullerton. Recall organizers began circulating petitions against Jung and Councilmember Valencia in September, citing concerns about fiscal management, government transparency and decisions by the council majority. Each recall campaign must collect about 3,100 valid signatures from registered voters in the respective council district before an election can be scheduled. The signature-gathering period continues through Jan. 14, 2027.

At Thursday's meeting, members of the public addressed Jung's record and the responsibilities of regional board representatives. The 4-3 vote returned Jung to OCTA, where he will continue participating in decisions involving billions of dollars in transportation spending.

Jung chairs OCTA's Transit Committee and serves as vice chair. The board is scheduled to elect its 2027 chair in January. His reappointment gives him another term in regional transportation decisions as Fullerton residents pursue a recall election and OCTA faces questions about the future of public transit and countywide transportation priorities.



Out of My Mind

by Jon Dobrer © 2026 *Jonathandobrer.substack.com*

Pursuing Justice in New Congress

In my previous Op-Ed, "Dems Won but not a Mandate," I celebrated the sweeping victory of the Democrats and the amazing and diverse winning candidates whom we elected to govern us. I held that while this was a great victory for Dems, more importantly, it was a rejection of Trump and MAGA.

I advised that celebration was in order but that the large turnout and "coming home" of blue collar workers, minorities and alienated former Democratic supporters was not necessarily permanent and unless their needs and concerns were effectively addressed, this could be a one-off.

Most controversially, I counseled the Dems in our new Congress not to fall into the tempting trap of over-focusing on "Justice and Accountability." Their first job needs to be improving the condition of the people. There is so much that is broken that demands repair. Traditional guardrails have been weakened or destroyed. Decency and comity have all but disappeared from our political conversations. Environmental protections have been steamrolled by special interests. Tax codes have been rigged to favor the 1%. Health insurance, public and private, has been made beyond the reach of average families. Friends and allies have been betrayed while adversaries and enemies have been courted, praised and supported. Civil rights have been eroded in an upside-down world where, according to Trump and the Department of Civil Rights, the truly racially oppressed and marginalized are not the poor or people of color but white men. Really?!? Shameless.

This is the time, I held, for restoration and repair. While pursuing justice and accountability are virtues, they should take second place to governing in the interests of the people. They should not be ignored but are not at the top of my personal to-do list.

Of course, I would love to see Trump in the dock facing justice. I would spend good money on the pay-per-view trials of Trump, Hegseth, RFK Jr., Lutnick, Patel, Kushner, Eric and Don Jr. I suspect that a pay-per-view trial of Elon Musk could balance our budget and go a long way towards paying off the national debt.

I would love some good show trials and televised oversight hearings. They would feel good but alas, no matter how tempting it might be to bring these malefactors to justice, it won't happen because it can't happen. Why? Simply because of the toxic combination of the Supreme Court's inexcusable finding of near total presidential Immunity and the President's virtually unlimited pardon powers, Justice cannot be done.

Yes, the House could impeach Trump, but the Senate wound't convict him. This would be a fundraising bonanza for "poor beset-upon Trump" and a dead end for both Dems and justice. Going after Trump's family (Junior, Eric, and Jared) is another dead end because Trump will pardon them along with most of his sycophantic cabinet, enablers and pay-to-play pals.

We will have Oversight Committee hearings that will garner great ratings. They will subpoena Trump cabinet members, heads of agencies and enablers. Every subpoena first will be ignored, then contested, then litigated and then appealed from trial court to Court of Appeals and not finally to the Supremes.

We portray Justice with scales indicating a balance between Justice & Revenge

The Supremes will kick half the cases back to lower courts and their findings will eventually be appealed again. After much sound and fury signifying, if not nothing, very little, a few of those subpoenaed might show up sincerely evincing an inability to "recall" just what they said or did. Global amnesia of convenience will be the default pleading. These hearings will be a boon to CNN, MSNOW and Fox. They will be terrific TV with politicians shouting well-crafted soundbites. There will be no open-minded or open-hearted listening. These hearings will not achieve justice, and they will not be in the pursuit of new information. They can have little probative value but will only reveal what we already know. Like nearly all confirmation hearings, they will be feel good Kabuki.

But what about the biblical order to pursue justice? The best justice achievable will be the verdict of history and the best revenge is repairing of our nation now and in the next presidency. Then we will wipe out Trump's Fool's Gold-Plated legacy. Tear down the ballroom. Level the Trump Arch if it's built. Restore the Rose Garden. Get rid of the ruinous tariffs. Regulate Cryptocurrency. Restore financial support for Obamacare. Embrace our traditional allies and stop pandering to Putin, Xi and Kim.

Yes, the Bible exhorts us, "Justice Justice thou shall pursue." It also tells us that "There's a time to every purpose under heaven." This is the time to prioritize governing, restoration and repair.

Yes, "the Arc of History bends towards justice" and we help bend that arc by succeeding through hard work focusing on the needs and priorities of those who put us in office. Performative hearings too often are cotton-candy and empty calories. This is a serious opportunity to create justice by listening to the voices of the people and acting on their priorities. Your job, Dear Democrats, is to maintain this coalition and win the presidency in 2028. Then you can pursue legal justice and karmic accountability.

AT HOME WITH THE HOMELESS

by Andrew Williams © 2026

WWW.PATREON.COM/C/THEEOPINIONATOR

An interview with Brittany Page: Part Two

Brief recap: Brittany Page was born in Idaho to white supremacist parents but overcame that upbringing to attend California State University, Fullerton, where she earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in clinical psychology.

Since then, she has worked as an advocate for people with mental illnesses, people experiencing homelessness and victims of domestic violence. Her experience includes working in low-cost nonprofit clinics, inpatient psychiatric facilities and court-mandated programs, advocating for people struggling with severe mental health disorders, homelessness and substance use disorders.

Page also hosts a regular podcast, The Page Perspective. Visit *thepageperspective.com* or her YouTube channel.

ANDREW WILLIAMS:

Even though the Housing First approach has repeatedly been shown in the United States and Europe to reduce homelessness and lower the costs of providing assistance to people experiencing homelessness, it's clear that President Donald Trump and, in particular, his HUD secretary, Scott Turner, don't believe it works.

If the Senate and House return to Democratic control later this year, how do we get Housing First back on track?

BRITTANY PAGE:

Well, I think we can definitely improve the educational aspect of this. There are a few Democrats who I think are pretty good on this issue.

I just watched a recent hearing where some officials were testifying, and Maxwell Frost and Rashida Tlaib named Housing First directly. They talked about how effective it was, particularly for veterans.

And, you know, it's interesting because elected officials will recognize the success of Housing First programs for things like veterans, but then it's like they don't know how to defend it beyond that. So I think some of it is an educational issue.

But one thing we'll really need to change once Trump is out of power is ensuring that the programs receiving funding are the ones adhering to evidence-based policies, not what they're trying to do right now, which is pivoting toward faith-based programs.

There are particular standards for what a program needs to be, based on what the evidence and research show. And you'd think they'd want to do that anyway, right?

Because it's more effective. But it's not about what's effective for them. It's about punishment. It's about shame. It's about making people feel bad.

ANDREW WILLIAMS:

Following up on that, you mentioned programs for homeless military veterans, and I've been thinking about that for a while. It seems to me that if I were a homeless veteran, I'd stand a better chance of getting housing than just a regular citizen.

I think it's great that homeless veterans, people who literally fought and suffered for this country, get the help they need to keep and find housing. But I also find it upsetting that getting housing assistance is so strongly tied to military service. In a way, it suggests that people who haven't served are worth less than veterans.

BRITTANY PAGE:

That's a great question. I almost wonder whether such a strong emphasis on veteran homelessness leaves everyone else out of the conversation.

There's such a political liability for Republicans in turning their backs on veterans that they're the only segment of the homeless population they can will themselves to care about.

It's politically motivated care, right? Because they can't turn their backs on veterans without facing public anger.

ANDREW WILLIAMS:

You're an advocate of harm reduction measures and treating drug addiction. Obviously, there's no one-size-fits-all treatment protocol for addiction, but what methods, based on your research and work, seem to work best for people with addictions and reduce deaths from HIV/AIDS?

BRITTANY PAGE:

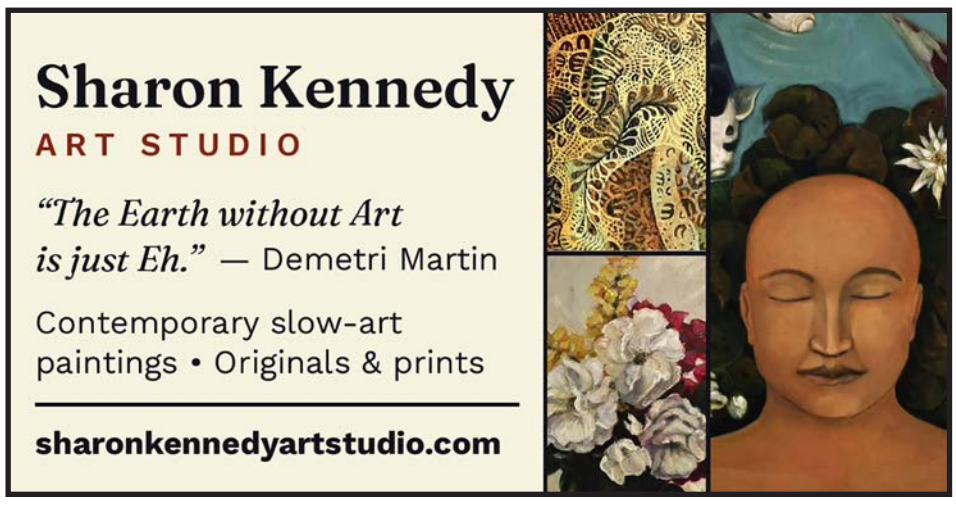
I think so much of the work we do in this field as therapists depends on the therapeutic relationship, meeting people where they're at, taking a nonjudgmental approach and having genuine curiosity about people, their backgrounds, their histories and what they've endured.

I think the best and most effective programs are those that offer people genuine connection and are provided by people who demonstrate genuine curiosity and a nonjudgmental attitude.

Beyond that, when we're talking about addiction, it's really important to emphasize harm reduction strategies, especially if people aren't ready to enter a period of complete sobriety. We're talking about ways to reduce harmful behaviors, create the life they envision for themselves and move toward a place where they can do the things they want to do, have the relationships they want to have and enter the fields of work they want to pursue.

All those things are really important, but I think it fundamentally starts with how you view people.

When we look at Republicans, I feel like a lot of their work, or the perspective they come from, is judgmental. They're trying to beat people into submission, and those things typically don't work.





The Science Behind It

by Yuvika Salman © 2026

The Experience of Pain

A week ago, a friend of mine started watching "Better Call Saul" and became particularly intrigued by the experiences of the show's main character. Her thoughts on the show turned into a much longer discussion about human perception and, more specifically, pain. Pain is a universal human experience, so it was interesting to look further into how pain varies subjectively with each individual.

If two people experience the exact same injury, do they actually feel the same amount of pain? Or is pain something our brains construct differently, making it impossible to know what someone else is truly experiencing?

Imagine accidentally touching a hot stove. Almost immediately, specialized sensory receptors called nociceptors detect potentially harmful heat. These receptors convert the stimulus into electrical signals that travel along sensory nerves to the spinal cord and eventually reach the brain.

Interestingly, your hand may pull away before you consciously register the pain. This happens because the spinal cord can initiate a protective reflex without waiting for the brain to process what happened.

The interesting thing is that detecting something harmful and actually experiencing pain are not the same thing. Scientists distinguish between nociception, the nervous system's detection and processing of potentially damaging stimuli, and pain, the conscious, unpleasant experience that can follow.

The International Association for the Study of Pain defines pain as both a sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage. In other words, pain is not simply a message traveling from an injured body part to the brain. It is an experience shaped by how the brain interprets that message.

Our emotions, attention, memories, expectations, and previous experiences can all influence how intensely we perceive pain. Consider how a child might react differently to a scraped knee depending on whether they are distracted by playing with friends or frightened after a fall. The injury may be identical, but the experience can change dramatically.

This is partly because the brain actively regulates pain signals. Neural pathways connecting the brain and spinal cord can amplify or dampen incoming signals, meaning our nervous system can effectively adjust the volume of pain.

Stress and fear can sometimes intensify pain, while distraction or feelings of safety may reduce its perceived intensity. These effects reflect measurable processes occurring within the nervous system. This also helps explain the particularly fascinating phenomenon of chronic pain.

Typically, we think of pain as a warning that something in our body needs attention. But sometimes the nervous system becomes increasingly sensitive, continuing to produce pain even after an original injury has healed. This process, known as sensitization, demonstrates that the intensity of pain does not always correspond directly to the amount of physical damage present.

Pain is both undeniable and subjective.

We can measure nerve activity, examine brain responses, and ask someone to rate their pain on a scale of one to ten, but none of these measurements allows us to experience precisely what another person feels. My five out of ten might be someone else's eight. Because pain exists at the intersection of biology and personal experience, neither rating is necessarily incorrect.

This has important implications for medicine, where patients' descriptions of pain are sometimes the most valuable information clinicians have. Understanding that pain is subjective reminds us why listening to patients matters just as much as examining their physical symptoms. While I was aware of how pain signals are transmitted through our body and that the experience is subjective, researching this topic more made me curious about whether I could consciously influence my own perception of pain.

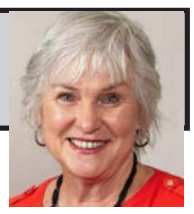
Since that conversation, I've started conducting a small, admittedly unscientific experiment on myself. Whenever I experience minor, everyday pain, I try repeatedly telling myself that I am not actually feeling it. Rather than immediately focusing on the discomfort, I attempt to convince my brain that the sensation isn't painful at all. I haven't reached any sort of conclusion yet, but I've become fascinated by whether changing my internal dialogue can change the intensity of what I feel.

There is science behind this idea as well. Researchers have found that our expectations and interpretations can influence pain perception through a process called cognitive modulation. Techniques such as cognitive reappraisal, distraction, and even placebo-induced expectations can alter how the brain processes painful sensations.

Of course, telling yourself that something doesn't hurt cannot magically eliminate tissue damage, nor should it encourage ignoring pain that signals an injury or medical problem. But the possibility that our thoughts can influence the intensity of our discomfort raises an intriguing question of how much of pain is determined by what happens to our bodies and how much is shaped by what our brains believe is happening. Pain is both undeniably real and remarkably subjective.

Healthy Awareness

by Jo Ann Brannock, Ph.D. © 2026



Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a psychological condition that can develop after a person experiences or witnesses a traumatic event involving actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence. The individual may experience intense fear, helplessness, or horror. Children may respond with disorganized or agitated behavior.

Interestingly, PTSD was not formally recognized as a psychiatric diagnosis until 1980, when it was included in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III). Its recognition helped bring greater attention to the psychological consequences of traumatic experiences.

Symptoms of PTSD may include:

1) Flashbacks or episodes of mentally reliving a traumatic experience.
2) Hypervigilance, or constantly feeling on guard.
3) Being easily startled by sudden noises or movements.
4) Nightmares and difficulty sleeping.
5) Difficulty concentrating.
6) Memory problems.
7) Increased stress in personal relationships.
8) Changes in eating habits.
9) Reminders of previous losses or traumatic experiences.
10) Feelings of panic or anxiety.
11) Emotional numbness or feeling dazed.
12) Avoiding social situations or groups of people.

PTSD can affect nearly every aspect of a person's life, including work performance, personal relationships, self-esteem, intimacy, parenting, and overall emotional well-being. Individuals may feel helpless, sad, or ashamed and ask themselves, "Why did this happen to me?" or "What is wrong with me?"

Some may feel so powerless that they engage in self-harming behaviors, such as cutting or burning their skin. Others may rely on psychological defense mechanisms, including denial, rationalization, or avoiding memories of the traumatic experience, as ways of coping with overwhelming emotions.

What happens in the brain?

Research into the brain's survival mechanisms is helping scientists better understand PTSD. The hippocampus, which plays an important role in learning and memory, helps the brain distinguish between experiences associated with safety and those associated with danger. Research involving the ventral hippocampus has provided additional insight into how memories of safety and threat are stored and retrieved.

For individuals with PTSD, however, the distinction between danger and safety can become blurred. A sound, smell, location, or seemingly harmless situation may trigger a traumatic memory. The brain may then respond as though the original danger is happening again. This helps explain why someone with PTSD may experience intense fear even when there is no immediate threat.

Treatment and recovery

Counseling and group therapy can help individuals understand and manage PTSD. Evidence-based treatments, including trauma-focused psychotherapy, can help people process traumatic experiences and develop healthier ways of responding to reminders of the event. Recovery does not mean forgetting what happened, but rather learning to live without constantly feeling controlled by the experience.

Other helpful activities may include journaling, writing poetry, expressing feelings, developing positive coping strategies, and seeking support from family and friends. Recognizing oneself as a survivor rather than a victim can also be an important step toward regaining a sense of control and confidence.

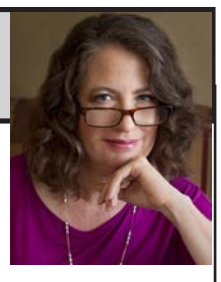
Unfortunately, suicidal thoughts can occur among people struggling with PTSD. Anyone experiencing suicidal thoughts should seek professional help. In the United States, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is available 24 hours a day by calling or texting 988. Veterans can call 988 and press 1 to reach the Veterans Crisis Line.

PTSD is not a sign of weakness, nor is it something a person should have to face alone. Traumatic experiences can leave lasting emotional wounds, but with appropriate treatment, understanding, and support, recovery is possible.

We cannot always control what happens to us, but we can seek help in learning how to move forward. Being a survivor means recognizing that the past does not have to determine the rest of our lives.

Balance & Change

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



Reflections on Thanksgiving

Happy Thanksgiving! I love this holiday. No, not so much for the turkey and family, although that is all good, too. But I love this holiday because of the idea of giving thanks.

I think that this is an often overlooked concept. We may say thank you to whomever it is we pray to, but we often don't say thank you to each other.

When was the last time that you thanked your partner for choosing to stay with you? Now, this doesn't mean that we debase ourselves or put someone on a pedestal, but it is a definite choice to stay with someone. We may not always be the easiest person to live with, so say thank you and that you appreciate the choices that your partner has made.

When was the last time you thanked your children for being part of your life? Obviously, they do not have the same kind of choices that your partner has. But it is still important that your children know how much you appreciate them and love them.

When was the last time you thanked yourself for all the hard work that you have done, for all the healthy choices that you made? Do not end that statement with a "but" or "except." Just thank yourself, knowing that you still have more growing to do!

Thank your friends and family. Thank the people that you have contact with on a daily basis. We all deserve it. It feels good to say it and hear it. I would like to thank you all for reading this column. And wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving!

Mary "Anita" Torres *1937 - 2026*



Mary "Anita" Torres, aged 89, of Fullerton passed peacefully and with grace on November 2.

Born in Denver, Colorado on February 26, 1937 to parents Tony Felix Lopez and Margaret Madrid, both from Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Anita and husband Adrian moved to the Los Angeles area in 1962, with their three sons. They eventually moved to the north Orange County city of Fullerton, where they found a wonderful home and idyllic neighborhood to raise their family.

Anita found true joy in crocheting, gardening, volunteering at the local library, and working for many years in the Fullerton School District as a clerk at numerous elementary and junior high schools, before finally ending her long career as an assistant at the Fullerton School District Office.

Anita was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Adrian, and her sons Orlando and Douglas.

Anita is survived by her middle son Brian and her four grandchildren: Orlando Jr., Courtney, Heather, Brennan; and her loyal dog, Darby.

A devout Catholic, Anita grew and nourished many lifelong friendships and relationships at several local parishes. Funeral Services were held on Tuesday, November 10, at 10:30am at Fullerton's St. Mary's Catholic Church.

Checking Your Trees Before and After Santa Ana Winds

by Tanner Peterson

Santa Ana winds present significant risks to trees throughout Orange County. Strong gusts, drought stress, aging trees, and structural defects can increase the likelihood of branch or tree failure. Regular inspections and proper maintenance can help identify potential hazards before severe weather arrives.

As an ISA Certified Arborist, I recommend homeowners visually inspect their trees from the ground before and after major windstorms. Walk around each tree from several safe viewing angles, observing the canopy, trunk, major branch unions, and visible roots.

Look for dead or hanging branches, cracks in the trunk, weak branch attachments, and splitting where major limbs connect. Pay particular attention to the root flare and surrounding soil. Newly lifted soil, heaving roots, or a sudden change in the tree's lean may indicate structural instability.

After a storm, watch for broken branches caught in the canopy, commonly called "hangers." These can fall unexpectedly. If you notice significant damage, restrict access beneath the affected tree and contact a qualified professional. Never attempt to climb or remove hazardous branches yourself.

An ISA Certified Arborist can evaluate tree health, structural defects, and potential risks to nearby homes, vehicles, and pedestrians. Professional assessments help determine whether pruning, monitoring, structural support, or removal is appropriate.

One common mistake is topping trees to reduce their height. Topping creates large wounds, encourages weakly attached regrowth, and can increase decay and future maintenance costs.

Proper pruning follows ANSI A300 Tree Care Standards and ISA Best Management Practices. Selective reduction cuts, structural pruning, and appropriate branch subordination can reduce excessive limb weight while preserving healthy growth and natural tree structure. No pruning method eliminates all tree-related risks.

Fullerton residents should also understand tree ownership responsibilities. Trees within public parkways may be City-maintained street trees and require authorization before pruning or removal.

Contact Fullerton Public Works Maintenance at (714) 738-6897 or *maintenance@cityoffullerton.com* to verify responsibility and obtain guidance. Private-property and HOA trees are generally maintained by their respective owners or associations.

Before hiring a tree service, verify the contractor's license through the California Contractors State License Board at *cslb.ca.gov*. ISA Certified Arborist credentials can be verified through *treesaregood.org*. Request proof of liability and workers' compensation insurance and confirm that work follows applicable ANSI A300 and ANSI Z133 standards.

Healthy trees provide shade, beauty, and environmental benefits. Proactive inspections, professional evaluations, and proper pruning help preserve these valuable assets while reducing preventable risks during Santa Ana wind events.

Two Choice Single Gravesites at Loma Vista Memorial Park
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Thanksgiving Day Service
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Sunday Service & Sunday school at 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday Testimony Meeting at 7:30 p.m.
Reading Room: Wed, Fri and Sat from 10 a.m.–1 p.m.
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Office (714) 525-4062 Reading Room (714) 525-2649
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https://www.cityoffullerton.com/government/departments/human-resources/city-employment
Applications are only accepted for current City of Fullerton vacancies.

Library Technology Assistant

Salary: $25 - $32 Hourly
Location: Fullerton Public Library
Job Type: Non-Regular (At Will/Non-Benefited)
Job Number: 2026 - Lib Tech Asst
Department: Library

Police Officer - Lateral/Academy Trained

Salary: $92,803 - $142,987 Annually
Location: City of Fullerton, CA
Job Type: Regular Full-Time
Job Number: 2026-PO-Lateral
Department: Police

Fire Cadet

Salary: Volunteer
Location: Fullerton Fire Department
Job Type: Volunteer
Job Number: 2026- FR CADET
Department: Fire

Community Services Leader

Salary: $16 - $17 Hourly
Department: Parks and Recreation
Location: 303 W Commonwealth Ave
Job Type: Non-Regular (At Will/Non-Benefited)
Job Number: 2026- CSLEAD

Associate Engineer

Salary: $105,100 - $134,132 Annually
Location: 303 W. Commonwealth Ave
Job Type: Regular Full-Time
Job Number: 2026- Associate Eng
Department: Public Works

Police Officer Trainee

Salary: $92,803 - $102,315 Annually
Location: Fullerton Police Department
Job Type: Regular Full-Time
Job Number: 2026 - Police Off Trainee
Department: Police

Senior Maintenance Worker I

Salary: $47,860 - $61,110 Annually
Location: City of Fullerton
Job Type: Regular Full-Time
Job Number: 2026- Sr Maint Worker
Department: Public Works

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



OUR TOWN CROSSWORD

ANSWER KEY TO "FEAST!" © 2026 **from page 7**

S	T	U	F	F	I	N	G	■	T	U	R	K	E	Y
P	O	S	E	I	D	O	N	■	A	S	I	A	G	O
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C	Y	S	T	■	■	■	W	H	O	A	■	Y	T	D
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C	O	M	P	E	D	■	S	C	R	A	N	T	O	N
K	N	O	T	T	S	■	D	R	E	S	S	I	N	G



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









Video *Observer*

by Emerson Little © 2026
See videos on YouTube @emersonlittle1901

Touring Fullerton School District's Central Kitchen

What would it look like if elementary school children could choose from nutrient-rich meals, such as horchata overnight oats, quesabirria tacos, or orange chicken with veggie dumplings, instead of ultra-processed foods? Well, I found out earlier this month when I had a chance to taste some of the foods made from the Fullerton School District's (FPD) Central Kitchen, where the FSD's nutrition services team wakes up bright and early to ensure students have scratch-mademeal options to choose from.

This central kitchen, which is more of a warehouse, serves over 11,000 students across all 20 district schools, and I learned that more than half of these students qualify for free or reduced-price meals. For many families in Fullerton, these meals make a difference.

This kitchen tour was part of a much larger event that happened on November 2 at Richman Elementary, where a national children's health nonprofit organization called Eat Real presented the Fullerton School District and its nutrition services team with a silver certification, marking a major move toward lunches made from scratch with produce from nearby farms.

Natalie Linden, COO of Eat Real, discussed the nonprofit organization and how FSD earned its certification in the multi-purpose room of Richman Elementary.

Linden said, "We were founded by two doctors who saw the kids in their practices getting sicker sooner with things they should never have when they looked at the trajectory of their careers and how many advancements had been made in medicine in that time, it was pretty easy to figure out that the only thing that hadn't changed in kids' favor was the food."

She continued, "Sixty-seven percent of kids' calories today are from ultra-processed foods. They were looking for an upstream solution to help change kids' diets as early in their lives as possible, so they focused on America's largest restaurant chain: our schools. With just shy of a hundred thousand locations, schools have more locations than Starbucks, Subway, and McDonald's combined, and they serve over seven and a half billion meals. So that means if we can change what's on those trays, we can change the trajectory of our kids' health, strengthen local economies, reconnecting the local food systems to the families that are supporting them."

From Eat Real's presentation, I learned that the nonprofit collaborates with food service directors to help them make their programs "more nutritious, delicious and responsibly sourced." Eat Real has 10 science-based standards that K-12 school districts need to meet in order to earn certification: reduced sugar, menu variety, whole grains, sustainable produce, fresh choices, responsible proteins, healthy fats, waste prevention, minimal processing, and real food education.

Fullerton was one of our very first district partners in Southern California," said Linden. "Victor Trejo [Director of Nutrition Services at FSD] and his team started working with us in Fall 2024 after attending an Eat Real School Lunch Tour at Capistrano Unified and being inspired to join our program. The changes didn't happen overnight.

The team moved from four percent local produce to forty-six percent. Organic produce went from zero to nine percent. They built up to about twenty scratch-made offerings every week. Ninety-four percent of menu items are now not fried, up from seventy-five percent. That steady work earned Fullerton its Eat Real Silver certification."

Trejo added, "By prioritizing real food on the menu, we can inspire healthier choices and create a more vibrant school environment for our students, staff, and community."

After the presentations at Richman Elementary, we walked down South Richman Avenue and crossed West Truslow Avenue to reach FSD's Central Kitchen, where members of the District's Nutrition Services team divided us into two different tour groups and showed us around the facilities where the food is processed and kids' meals are made from scratch.

I learned from Claudia Martinez, Assistant Director of Nutrition Services at the Fullerton School District, that the central kitchen is made up of six different departments. We got to meet the specialists in charge of each department on the tour. She explained that at this facility 91 staff members prepare, deliver, and serve fresh meals with local ingredients daily to Fullerton schools, and 1,640,296 breakfasts and lunches are made and served by FSD's nutrition team each year.

Throughout the tour, Martinez walked us through the entire process, from receiving the foods, all the way to executing school meals and the delivery of them. Over the last year, she explained that they received a little more than 43,000 cases of frozen, refrigerated and dried goods, which all came through the warehouse.

She said, "This is our warehouse, probably the largest department we have here. Our school sites order about four different meals a day: breakfast, lunch, supper, snack. We receive those warehouse orders, get them together and ship them out."

Martinez continued, "We try to keep about seven days' worth of food here, and then we have one large freezer at the end. So out of that 43,000 cases, a little more than half of that is frozen. With those 43,000 cases, that's more than 800,000 pounds that we bring in. This includes commercial products, commodity products, and Department of Defense produce. All of that goes through here."

Everyone on the tour had to put on a hair net before we transitioned up to the central kitchen where active production was taking place. We first stepped into the produce department, where I learned from Martinez that last school year, the nutrition services staff prepared about 400,000 lbs. of fresh produce. I got to watch how they prepare, cut, and wash produce like strawberries.





Above: *Claudia Martinez, Assistant Director of Nutrition Services at the Fullerton School District, talks about how Breads, muffins, and granola items are made in the baking department.*
Below: *Fullerton School District Nutrition Services staff cook meals using a portable BBQ.*

"Not only do we just buy it, then package it and serve it, but we actually do a thorough wash of it, tumble it, put them in containers, then we weigh out those containers. Every pan has to have a certain weight, and that's what we send out for our kiddos," said Martinez. "We have about one fresh food option for breakfast every single day. We have four fresh fruit and vegetable options for lunch; we have another two options for supper, and for snack, we always have one fresh option. On top of that, we do have eleven menus."

The kitchen's "main dish" department prepares all the items for FSD's 15 elementary schools and 2 K-8 schools. They sometimes do up to 4,800 servings at one time in this kitchen. This "main dish" area was also where beans are cooked from scratch.

The next area was the baking department, where I got to taste a small sampling of the bread used to make sandwiches for Fullerton's junior high students. Breads, muffins, and granola items are made here.

She said, "We do a lot of baking in this district. We have at least three different breakfast items every day for elementary schools, and one of those items is always a baked good. So, in this baking department, we do about fourteen scratch-made breakfast items."

Martinez considers members of the kitchen's "behind-the-scenes support" department jacks-of-all-trades. The department doesn't even have a name; it's just called 'department six' because they do four to five different things every day, handling junior high recipes and special diets, while also catering and taking care of staff development needs and vegetarian secondary items for the elementary school menus.

I learned that about 5,000 meals a day come out of the district's central kitchen. Some of the students' new favorite menu items include horchata overnight oats, orange chicken with veggie dumplings (which are extremely delicious), quesabirria tacos, BBQ chicken, cornbread and BBQ Beans with smoked turkey.

The nutrition team at the Fullerton School District has really built a program rooted in community, and with its Eat Real silver certification, the FSD team can continue sourcing foods from nearby farmers to speed along their production of scratch-made meals that they know students will recognize and