LA JOLLA VILLAGE NEWS

October 9, 2026

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La Jolla field hockey players Talia Snider (left) and Ella Pearl celebrate a goal during the Vikings' 3-0 win over Mission Bay on Sept. 29. See more on page 12.
(Photo by Steve Sidell/Special for Times of San Diego)

COVER STORY

San Diego International Film Festival in La Jolla is not just a place to see the latest movies. Fans can find community too

The San Diego International Film Festival is celebrating its 25th anniversary, so there are special events planned to commemorate the milestone, including "Night of the Stars," a tribute that's set for Oct. 13 at the Conrad Prebys Performing Arts Center. "25 Years After Dark," a night of music and dancing, followed by filmmaker awards and a live band, is set for Oct. 17 at the Belly Up Tavern in Solana Beach. The majority of the action will be the AMC14 at Westfield UTC in La Jolla. Organizers are converting the cineplex patio into a festival lounge with a stage for panels and performances. **PAGES 8-9**

GARBAGE FEES

Councilmembers trash Mayor Gloria over garbage fee error

Last week, the city acknowledged a "glitch" with the garbage fee that impacted residents citywide. The city's admission to the error immediately set off a new crisis for Mayor Todd Gloria, with one councilmember calling for him to resign and two others placing the screw-up at his feet. **PAGE 4**

BUSINESS

High plans for High Street Village to replace aging Costa Verde in UC



Located across from the Westfield UTC mall and at the transit center of the UC San Diego Blue Line, the Costa Verde strip mall, built in 1989, stood vacant and abandoned for years. Since its closure, two plans to redevelop the property have failed. The new vision: create a European-style, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood called "High Street Village." On Oct. 13, the University Community Planning Group will receive an update on the massive project. Demolition started, and construction is set to begin in 2028. **PAGE 5**

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San Diego to require warning signs on cryptocurrency ATMs to prevent scams

FROM STAFF REPORTS

SAN DIEGO – San Diego could become the first California city to require warning signs on or near cryptocurrency ATMs to prevent scams.

The proposal, from San Diego City Council President Joe LaCava, is intended to combat scams that allegedly focus on the machines and primarily target senior citizens.

In the schemes, the scammers persuade victims to deposit cash into cryptocurrency ATMs located in grocery stores, convenience stores and smoke shops. Once the money is transferred, authorities say it is difficult or impossible to recover.

LaCava, at a Wednesday news conference for his proposed policy change, said warning signs would interrupt the scam before it's too late.

"Stopping scams before they take place is critical," he said. "In many cases, funds lost to these criminal activities are difficult to recover and can prevent individuals from putting food on the table, making rent and purchasing needed medication."

Cryptocurrency ATMs are common across San Diego and San Diego County. Tracking how many of them is difficult.

State data cited by LaCava show 111 cryptocurrency ATMs operating at 75 locations across the city. Nearly half of those machines, 55, are located at 24 Safeway and Albertsons stores, which share the same parent company.

However, the state data may not be complete. A *Times of San Diego* visit to a College Area location listed in the dataset found no cryptocurrency ATM. Meanwhile, a basic internet search identified several cryptocurrency ATMs at locations not included in the state data, suggesting the actual number of machines operating in the city could be higher than reported.

Under the proposed ordinance, which was unanimously approved by a council committee on Wednesday, operators would be required to post warning signs informing customers about common scams and directing them to a city website with fraud-prevention information and reporting resources.

"Our objective is to inform members of the public about the dangers of cryptocurrency ATM scams and empower businesses to recognize and support San Diegans before they become victims," LaCava said.

Before the committee hearing, representatives from AARP California and the city's Senior Affairs Advisory Board joined LaCava to support the measure, describing the signs as a simple way to stop scams at the point of transaction.

"Imagine for a moment that you are a senior," said Gwenmarie Hilleary, chair of the Senior Affairs Advisory Board. "You answer the phone when it rings. There is a friendly voice. You are told your bank account is compromised, or maybe you won a prize."

Hilleary said scammers often spend days or weeks building trust with a victim before directing them to deposit money into a cryptocurrency ATM.

"There is a moment before the crypto machine is used," Hilleary said. "If we put a bright warning sign on the machine, cautioning folks to stop and think before they act, we can prevent some heartache."

Israel Hernandez, associate state director for advocacy and community engagement at AARP California, said adults 60 and older accounted for roughly two-thirds of the $389 million reported lost through cryptocurrency ATM scams nationwide last year, or about $259 million.

LaCava said the proposal was modeled in part on a similar effort in Omaha, Nebraska, where local officials and AARP reported a significant reduction in scam-related losses after introducing warning signs and public education campaigns.

"The signs matter because it's the final point of the transaction," Hernandez said. "By the time someone gets to the crypto kiosk, they've already been in conversations, and they've already been falling prey to the scammer."

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County releases data on city's trash fee error that overcharged residents

By Dorian Hargrove
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO – A homeowner on Meade Avenue in Normal Heights was billed $3,152 for the city's new trash fee, even though the correct annual charge was $534.

The $2,618 overcharge was the largest among 44,038 San Diego properties that received inflated trash fee assessments because of a city spreadsheet error.

County of San Diego data, obtained by Times of San Diego, shows 15 homes were overbilled by more than $2,000 on their property tax bills.

The largest overcharges were scattered across the city, affecting homeowners in neighborhoods including Bankers Hill, Hillcrest, College Area and North Park.

In total, 1,026 property owners were overcharged by more than $1,000 in trash fees, which differs from the 640 customers that the city identified on its website.

The majority of the 44,038 homeowners who received erroneous bills were overcharged between $100 and $1,000, while 13,822 were overcharged by less than $100. A total of 97 homeowners saw their trash fees increase by less than a dollar.

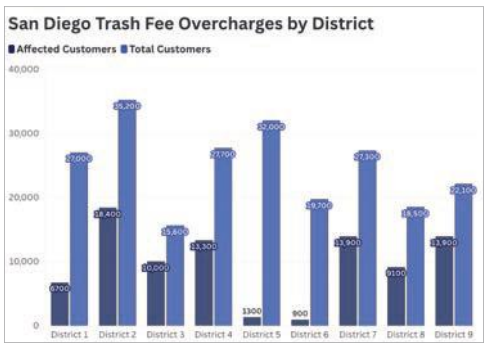
In all, the average overcharge from the billing blunder was just under $269.

District 9 had the highest share of overcharged customers, with about 62.9% receiving bills above the amount they signed up to pay.

The county released the data in a public records request that was submitted by journalist Marty Graham, who was one of the first to discover the city's mistake after reading a post on Nextdoor from a neighbor who spotted an overcharge on their bill.

Graham then got to work with a friend. They looked at the size of trash cans in their Normal Heights neighborhood and then went on the county assessor's website to look to see if their property bill matched the receptacle size. Graham and her friend found that 34% of the homes in their informal survey had the wrong trash fees listed.

Graham alerted the media. The county tax collector posted a message on its website. San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria soon released a statement calling for quick action.



(By Dorian Hargrove/Times of San Diego)

"San Diegans deserve accurate bills, and this error is unacceptable," Gloria said in a statement, three days after Graham first alerted the media.

The city is now trying to unwind the "glitch." Officials say they will notify residents directly if they were discharged and that in the meantime, they can wait on payments and will not be responsible for any costs associated with late payments.

That wasn't enough for Councilmember Henry Foster III, who, before the city's budget committee last week, said he was "disgusted and appalled" by the error, particularly because he said it would hit his constituents in District 4 hard.

He then called for Gloria to resign.

"The mayor needs to look at himself in the mirror and do what's right by the residents," he said. "Mayor Gloria needs to do the right thing for the residents of San Diego and step down."

The city, he said, "continues to make significant mistakes and that speaks to the competency of the mayor."

Councilmember Sean Elo-Rivera, also at the budget committee, fell short of calling for the mayor to resign, but said: "... something needs to change drastically and quickly because the city and its residents can't afford more mistakes like this."

San Diegans, he said, need "someone who wakes up every single day with one job, and that's making sure the city is clean, services work and residents' bills are accurate. We have a job to do as council and that's to make good policy and govern in a way that makes life better."

Gloria took over the role of chief operations officer for the city in early 2025 when he dismissed the city's top bureaucrat, who had previously held the position since 2022.



A San Diego trash truck. (File photo courtesy of the city)

"San Diegans expect their city government to be accurate and accountable," Gloria said. "When we fall short, my responsibility is to acknowledge it, correct it, and make sure it does not happen again. That is exactly what we are doing."

Not all are convinced the accountability and accuracy has been achieved.

"Throughout unscrewing this mess, it's been citizens doing the work, and the county," Graham told Times of San Diego. "The city told reporters it was typically $100 overcharge for 44,000 households. Their own data shows that the median overcharge was $201 and the average was $269. The highest overcharge was more than $2,600. Is it a lack of math ability or a lack of candor?"

Meanwhile, despite the error, the city still issued a call to encourage residents to sign up for their trash portal.

"We encourage customers who have not already done so to create an account in the Residential Waste Collection Services Portal at WastePortal.sandiego.gov. This will allow you to view your service information and receive future updates from the City about trash service," officials said in the city statement.

Councilmember Kent Lee called on Gloria to restore the chief operating officer position, rather than filling the role himself.

"If an error of this magnitude can occur without officials noticing, the problem goes deeper than any one employee or one mistake, and we must confirm the refuse fee program is operationally sound," Lee said.

"It's the City Council's responsibility to help the public get to the bottom of this, and it's the mayor's responsibility to put his house in order so people can trust that their bills are correct," he said.

Graham is awaiting city action.

"The city didn't know until we started shrieking," she said. "First answer was 'Huh? File a claim.' When the claims started pouring in, somebody went and looked. Doh!"

High plans for High Street Village to replace aging Costa Verde

By Thaïs Giraudet
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

UNIVERSITY CITY – The Costa Verde Center redevelopment plan in University City is moving forward. On Oct. 13, the University Community Planning Group will receive an update on the massive project.

Located across from the Westfield UTC mall and at the transit center of the UC San Diego Blue Line, the Costa Verde strip mall, built in 1989, stood vacant and abandoned for years. Since its closure, two plans to redevelop the property have failed.

In January 2025, San Diego-based Cass Street Venture LLC purchased the 12.6-acre property along with its partner Global Mutual, a London-based real estate investment firm. The vision: create a European-style, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood called "High Street Village."

Since then, Cass Street Co-Presidents and Developers Luke Daniels and Michael Yanicelli met with community representatives, secured a change in land-use restrictions, and approved their final map for their 13-block plan. Demolition started, and construction is set to begin in 2028.

"High Street will connect to a central piazza near the trolley, with approximately 100,000 square feet of contemplated neighborhood-serving retail, including cafés, a grocer and shops residents and neighbors can reach on foot," said Daniels in an email to Times of San Diego. "The final number of affordable homes and parking spaces will be determined as the project advances."



Artists' rendering of High Street Village. (Courtesy of Gensler)

Chair of University Community Planning Group Chris Nielsen looks forward to receiving Cass Street's update later this month to confirm details. He said transit, retail and housing are priorities for the community and he believes this redevelopment project brings about much-needed change.

"This is the first plan we have seen in quite a while that really does take advantage of the area and adjacency to transit," Nielsen said. "...This is the first one that's actually providing housing as part of its development."

Nielsen said that the planning group supported High Street because it aligned with local density plans. He said residents especially liked the grocery and pharmacy stores included in the project and seek to know more about affordable housing and traffic plans.

According to Nielsen, High Street addresses many resident concerns related to parking, stormwater infrastructure and traffic. The developer, said Nielsen, even took community input in the design of the landscaping.

"They will have native plantings throughout the site, not palm trees that dump seeds into the canyon and create an environmental mess," Nielsen said. "It's this sort of attention to community concern that ends up making a big difference."

The planning group will not be making any decisions on Oct. 13 since the meeting is purely informational, but they will ensure that the project still adheres to the community plan and that residents feel represented.

"The main takeaway here is that this development is radically different than the prior two that were put on the table, which were attempts to tweak the current model and not necessarily come up with a paradigm that is actually better," planning chair Nielsen said.

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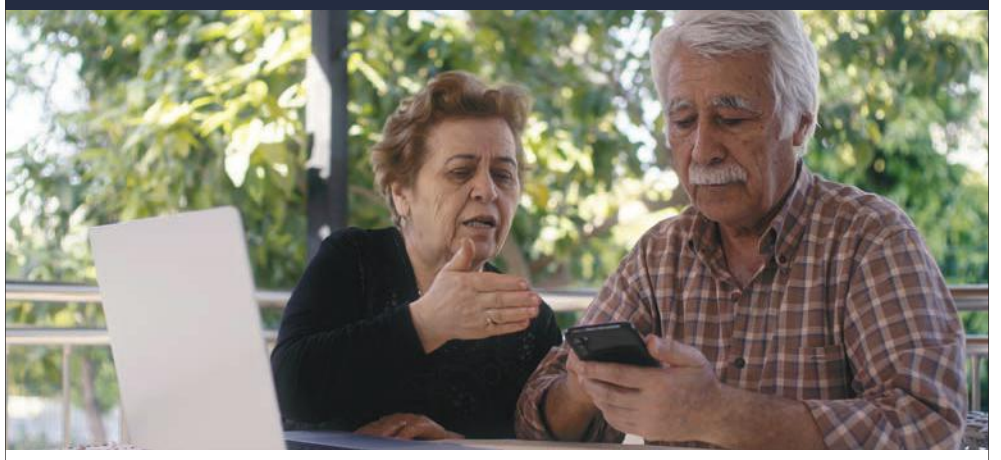
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ACLU asks court to compel city to remove Flock cameras

By Tessa Balc
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO



Audience members who object to the Flock ALPR contract seated in the council chambers at City Hall, Dec. 9, 2025. (File photo by Adrian Childress/Times of San Diego)

SAN DIEGO – Two organizations have joined forces to seek an injunction against the city of San Diego over the San Diego Police Department's use of automated license plate readers.

They're asking the court to make the city stop using ALPRs and terminate contracts associated with the technology, while uninstalling all streetlight cameras that operate as readers and deleting all the stored data that has been collected by the systems.

Last week, the ACLU Foundation of San Diego and Imperial counties and the Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans, the plaintiffs in the case, stood in front of the Hall of Justice in Downtown San Diego to announce the suit.

The plaintiffs argue that the technology, due to the high density of cameras throughout the city of San Diego, violates the right to privacy protected in the California constitution.

By retaining ALPR data for a month-long period, the plaintiffs claim SDPD can create a pattern based on people's movements throughout the city – and others with whom they associate too.

"And let's be clear: These cameras do not just take an individual snapshot of an individual license plate so that somebody's car can be looked up later," Frederick Carroll, legal director at the ACLU foundation, said.

"They work like every other camera. They contain the whole image that the lens sees. So that includes make, model, color, license plate, bumper stickers, identifying insignia, the ball cap you're wearing when your window's down, the tattoos you're showing when your arm's out the window."

While the speakers highlighted the technology's capabilities, they were also quick to point out its shortcomings.

They cited a Times of San Diego report, also included in the lawsuit, that found a man had been wrongfully identified as the perpetrator of a crime by a Flock camera, and spent time in jail despite being innocent.

Homayra Yusufi, a senior policy strategist at PANA, said that despite being touted as a tool to be used in an emergency, ALPRs did not direct law enforcement toward the scene of May's fatal mosque shooting in time to prevent it.

"My community was ravaged in May after white supremacists shot and killed members of my community. On that horrific day, ALPRs were not just an affront to our democracy, but they were ineffective," she said.

"So, when you compile the fact(s) that these are ineffective technologies and who they are surveilling and targeting, we have to recognize that this technology is being used against us, not for us."

Carroll told Times of San Diego that to their knowledge this is the only local lawsuit targeting a city in an attempt to discontinue its use of ALPRs under the California constitution. He said, though, that there are complementary efforts, including a case in Northern California called Siren v. San Jose.

Seth Hall, of the Trust SD Coalition, formed in 2019 to push back against and promote responsible use of the smart streetlights in wide use across San Diego, said he believes the track the city is on is a slippery slope.

"When's it going to be a big enough deal? Hall said.

"Is it when the skies are filled with drones? When the police are able to pull the Ring doorbells, and the smart streetlights and the Flocks and the drones together to create a god's eye view? Is that too much? For me the line has been crossed a long time ago."

The San Diego City Attorney's Office declined to comment on pending litigation.

La Jolla group aims to preserve coastline through public-private partnership

By Dave Schwab
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO



This photo shows the current condition of the South Casa Beach Stairs that has kept the beach closed for more than two years. (Photo courtesy of La Jolla Coastal Conservancy)

LA JOLLA – A nonprofit operating under a special use permit is pushing a new public-private partnership model to maintain and enhance La Jolla's shoreline.

La Jolla Coastal Conservancy is a nonprofit dedicated to combating coastal trail deterioration, erosion, and lack of governmental funding.

The conservancy, operating under a formal Special Use Permit from the city of San Diego, is exploring ways to preserve and enhance a 1.5-mile stretch of La Jolla shoreline from Coast Walk Trail to Whale View Point.

The group's goal is to raise monies beyond what the city can fund on its own, vowing that every dollar raised – and every project executed – will serve the public's needs, not those of private interests.

The nonprofit shares on its website that it wants to shape the future of La Jolla's coastline by working in partnership with the city of San Diego, partner organizations and residents and visitors to "create a thriving, sustainable La Jolla shoreline area of parks and green spaces for all to enjoy."

The conservancy says now is a critical time to take steps to preserve critical coastal infrastructure.

"Decades of deferred maintenance, a lack of centralized oversight, and deepening budget cuts have placed these parks at risk," states the conservancy, adding that estimates put the cost of annual upkeep of this 1.5-mile section of coastal trails at $500,000, with more than $30 million needed for capital projects over the next decade.

Brenda Fake of fellow nonprofit Friends of Coast Walk and consultant Solange Jacobs both spoke of the La Jolla Coastal Conservancy's efforts to protect coastal infrastructure.

Fake credited a "strong work ethic" for real progress being made to preserve La Jolla's coastline, noting, "Our superpower is that we work hard to do this, including physical work at times."

Jacobs thanked the city for its support, pointing out their group's special use permit with the municipality "makes us different" and is "something no other group in La Jolla has today."

"Projects we tackle have a clean plan on how to take them on, in what order, and why we are prioritizing them," said Jacobs. "We're trying to protect the coastline from further erosion while replacing fencing guided by the city. We're getting so much synergy with the community. We're showing improvement and getting the work done."

With approval of the California Coastal Commission, Fake said that agreement allows the conservancy's public-private partnership to "help the city out in a big way by getting projects fast-tracked."

Fake believes the La Jolla Coastal Conservancy can become a template for other communities to use. "If we can create this model in La Jolla, it's replicable in other places along the San Diego Coast like Sunset Cliffs and Bird Rock," she concluded.

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San Diego International Film Festival builds community

By Mark Nero
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

LA JOLLA – The word 'international' in the name San Diego International Film Festival isn't just for show. Of the dozens of movies being screened at this year's event, nearly two dozen were made outside the United States.

"This year, we probably had 3,500 films submitted to us, representing 85 countries," event co-founder, CEO and artistic director Tonya Mantooth told Times of San Diego. "We narrowed that down to just over 90 (total films) representing 22 countries."

Among those countries are Nepal, Germany, Brazil, Romania, Iraq, Spain, Canada and Mexico. Mantooth said that the cultural diversity of the films helps broaden viewers' mental horizons.

"One of the things that the film festival brings to San Diego from an arts and culture standpoint, is to bring films from around the world to the city and to be able to give a different perspective," she said.

"To be able to watch a film about monks in Nepal or people in poverty in Brazil, for you to be able to have that experience through cinema, I think changes you," she explained. "I think it allows you to look at the world differently and more importantly, look at people differently and to see that these issues are complicated, but they're human issues."

Ultimately, she concluded, "those are the dialogues that we want people to have."

Among the buzzworthy foreign and domestic films set to be screened this year:

- "The Six Billion Dollar Man," a documentary about WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange that has received four-star reviews from a number of major outlets, including Variety and the Hollywood Reporter.
- "Gringo Champion," an adaptation of the award-winning 2017 novel of the same name, written by Mexican author Aura Xilonen when she was a teenager.
- "I Play Rocky," a dramatization of how a then-unknown Sylvester Stallone wrote the screenplay for the movie "Rocky" in three-and-a-half days and then refused to let anyone else play the title role.

In addition, baseball fans or those interested in stories out of America's Finest City may want to check out "Alone on the Mound: The Tortured Life of Eric Show." The documentary depicts the short life of the former San Diego Padres pitcher who surrendered Pete Rose's record-breaking 4,192nd career hit during a 1985 road game.

The film festival is celebrating its 25th anniversary, so there are special events planned to commemorate the milestone, including "Night of the Stars," a tribute that's set for Oct. 13 at the Conrad Prebys Performing Arts Center. "25 Years After Dark," a night of music and dancing, followed by filmmaker awards and a live band, is set for Oct. 17 at the Belly Up Tavern in Solana Beach.

"Our 'Night of the Stars' tribute is all about celebrating the great works coming out of Hollywood," Mantooth explained. "We've added a night just to celebrate that."

Even though some events are taking place at various locations, the majority of the action will be the AMC14 at Westfield UTC in La Jolla. Organizers are converting the cineplex patio into a festival lounge with a stage for panels and performances.

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Oscar winner Viola Davis becomes latest Film Fest Gregory Peck Award honoree

By Mark Nero
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO



Viola Davis (Photo courtesy of SDIFF)

LA JOLLA – Viola Davis, one of the more acclaimed American actors of the past 20 years, is a woman of many titles: author, activist, producer, philanthropist and more.

And on the opening night of this year's San Diego International Film Festival, she'll add another title to her resume: Gregory Peck Award winner.

Davis has been named the 2026 recipient of the Gregory Peck Award for Cinematic Excellence, joining a list of acclaimed past recipients that includes Alan Arkin (2014), Sir Patrick Stewart (2017), Annette Bening (2016), who was raised in San Diego, and more.

She's the first African American woman to receive the award since it was originally handed out in 2008, and just the fourth woman. She'll receive the award during the festival's "Night of the Stars" tribute in La Jolla.

Film festival co-founder and CEO Tonya Mantooth said that Davis was chosen for the award as much for her offscreen work as her onscreen roles.

"Cecilia Peck, who is Gregory Peck's daughter, sits on my board of directors and because of that, we're able to give and present the Gregory Peck Award," Mantooth explained. "And what (the board) looks for are two things: one is the body of work they feel like represents the kind of range that (Peck) had."

"But equally, it's how much of a humanitarian are they," she added. "How have they given back in their life? And how have they gone to serve those who are underserved? Because that was a big piece for Gregory Peck," she said of the Hollywood Golden Era star – also a La Jolla native – perhaps remembered most fondly for his turn as Atticus Finch in the classic "To Kill a Mockingbird."

And Viola Davis, Mantooth noted, is "an EGOT – Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony (winner) – her body of work is extraordinary." (She won her Oscar in 2017 for "Fences," for which she earlier received a Tony in 2010.)

"And then you turn around and you look what she's given back in terms of philanthropy," Mantooth continued. "She started a foundation to help fight hunger for children as well as fighting domestic abuse. Her give-back to the world is as equal as what she gives to us on the screen."

"Night of the Stars" tribute at the San Diego International Film Festival, with honoree Viola Davis, 7 p.m. Oct. 13, Conrad Prebys Performing Arts Center in La Jolla.

'The Debut' to open San Diego International Film Festival

By Mark Nero
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

LA JOLLA – Kicking off this year's San Diego International Film Festival is a movie that showcases the power and pull of performing.

"The Debut" stars Julianne Moore as Mona Friedman, a shy housewife whose life is upended after she's cast in a bit part at a small community theater in New Jersey. Paul Giamatti co-stars as the production's demanding director.

During the musical comedy, produced by Emma Stone and also starring Halle Bailey, Bernadette Peters, Mona becomes an enthusiastic method actor willing to do anything to protect the artistic integrity of her marginal role — even if it means warring against its director.

"The Debut," 7 p.m. Oct. 14 at The Lot movie theater, La Jolla. An opening night pre-party is planned for 5:30 p.m. For tickets and more information, see the SDIFF Opening Night page.

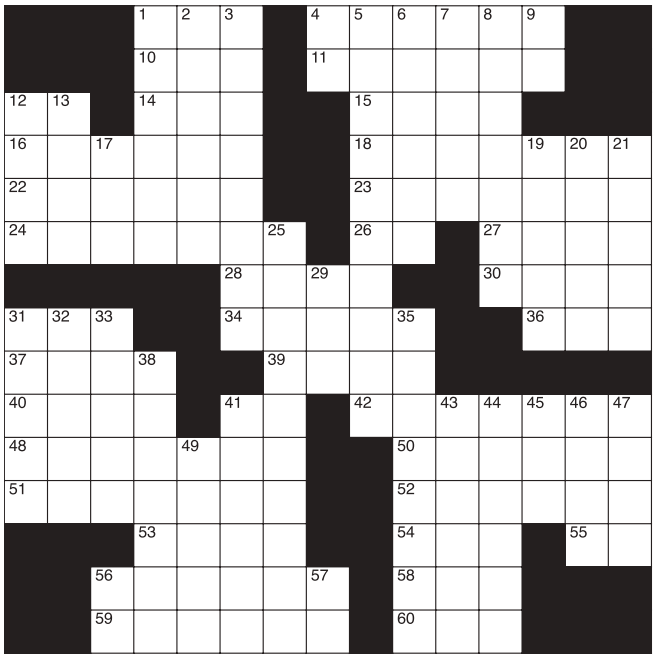
"I felt like it was a great film to kick the festival off," said festival co-founder and CEO Tonya Mantooth.

SUDOKU

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CROSSWORDS

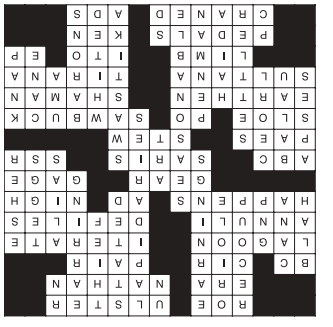


CLUES ACROSS
1. Small Eurasian deer
4. Province in Northern Ireland
10. A major division of geological time
11. Broadway actor Lane
12. Canadian province (abbr.)
14. Human gene
15. Two
16. A notable one was "blue"
18. Utter repeatedly
22. Ring-shaped objects
23. Sullies
24. Occurs
26. Commercial
27. Near
28. Tools you may need
30. A pledge
31. They start the alphabet
34. Silk garments
36. Soviet Socialist Republic
37. Longtime mayor of Rio
39. Hot meal
40. A type of gin
41. Atomic #84
42. $10 bill
48. About ground
50. Medicine man
51. Seedless raisin
52. National capital of Albania
53. Appendage
54. OJ trial judge
55. European government entity (abbr.)
56. Bike parts
58. Friend to "Barbie"
59. Stretched to see or hear
60. Commercials

CLUES DOWN
1. Make up for
2. Baltimore ballplayer
3. Wages
4. International organization of countries
5. Engravers of gems
6. Declared as fact
7. One who steals
8. Jewelry
9. Hospital worker
12. Nonsense (slang)
13. Town in Galilee
17. Value
19. Alternative identity
20. Sheep in their second year
21. Town in Surrey, England
25. Appropriate to a time of year
29. Creative work
31. Recesses
32. Largely forested municipality in Germany
33. Rider of Rohan
35. Ancient symbol co-opted by Nazis
38. Pioneer
41. Scribe
43. Painted a bright color
44. Member of British nobility
45. "Pulp Fiction" actress Thurman
46. Helps people walk
47. Crest of a hill
49. People of southeastern Alaska
56. One's own device
57. The Mount Rushmore State

ANSWERS

5	3	8	7	4	2	9	1	6
1	7	4	3	9	6	2	5	8
6	9	2	1	8	5	7	3	4
8	4	5	9	1	3	6	7	2
3	6	1	2	7	8	4	9	5
7	2	9	6	5	4	1	8	3
4	1	6	8	2	9	3	5	7
9	8	3	5	6	7	2	4	1
2	5	7	4	3	1	8	6	9



The Social Diary – Country Friends, Promises2Kids, and 'Eating For Life'

By Margo Schwab
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

Chilled bubbly champagne got things off to a fabulous start for the Art of Fashion on Sept. 10 at the Inn at Rancho Santa Fe. The chic came couture clad to the South Coast Plaza fashion show followed by lunch on the lawn under gauzy tenting. There was no filter for the cause though. The hosting Country Friends organization has raised significant funds since 1954 to help provide services to San Diego County-based charities, specifically services to women, children, elderly, military families and people with disabilities.

Mille Fleurs provided the pre-event cocktail reception for sponsors, John Matty donated the auction earrings that everyone wanted, and Karen Hoehn served as Honorary Chair, with Kiki Hayward and Irina Fenison as event co-chairs. Special thanks to patron Denise Hug for having me as her guest.

And it was a local who's who gathering to hear Foreigner perform at the Joan Waitt estate on Sept. 14 all to benefit Promises2Kids endeavors to help foster kids. Help they did indeed with over $2 million raised!

On the healthy front, integrative nutritionist Torie Borrelli-Hall and chef/food photographer Eric Wolfinger gathered with friends and followers at the Waverly Restaurant and Lounge in Cardiff for the launch of their delicious collaborative book effort, "Eating For Life." Core to the book is providing tantalizing holistic recipes, a smart foundation for healthy families and healthy pregnancy. Bon Appetit!



Dr. Margo Emami, MJ Wittman, Gina Block and Valerie Robbins at Country Friends. (Photos by Margo Schwab/Special for Times of San Diego)



Co-chairs Irina Fenison and Kiki Hayward with MJ Wittman of FLEURESSENCE in a beautiful Zimmerman dress, and Tamara LaFarga at Country Friends.



Anna Houssels, Vivian Capozza, MJ Wittman, and Barbara Nappi at Country Friends.



Sahar Nozari, Sanaz Nozari, MJ Wittman, Melinda Stockmal, Roshanak Roshanzamir, and Ladan Mortazavi at Country Friends.



Denise Hug of Mille Fleurs in a fun dress from Cabo San Lucas, and Judy Keys at Country Friends.



Torie Borrelli Hall with book illustrator Avalon Preisendorfer and Eric Wolfinger at Waverly Restaurant at Hall/Wolfinger book signing.



Rocio Flynn, Sandra Alavi in Balmain, Joan Waitt in Marchesa Notte, Kat Green, and Lee Posnock at Promises2Kids.



Kathy Henry, Gabriela Bacino, Denise Hug, Susanne Bacino and Judy Keys at Country Friends.



Sandra Alavi, Marjan Mortazavi, Joan Waitt in Marchesa Notte, Sheryl White, Rocio Flynn at Promises2Kids.



Rocio Flynn, Sandra Alavi, and Sheryl White at Promises2Kids.



Rocio Flynn, Lee Posnock, and Joan Waitt at Promises2Kids.



Joan Waitt table front and center at Promises2Kids.



Marjan Mortazavi, Rocio Flynn, Event Co-Chair Reagan Prior, Sandra Alavi, and Sheryl White at Promises2Kids.

La Jolla Art & Wine Festival ready to pour for an 18th year

By Dave Schwab
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

LA JOLLA – La Jolla Art & Wine Festival returns the weekend of Oct. 10-11 for its 18th year, showcasing juried artists, live music, entertainment, and fun for all, including an age 21-plus Wine & Beer Garden.

From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. both days, guests can experience world-class art, curated libations, live entertainment, and community connection along the iconic streets of La Jolla.

Spanning Girard Avenue from Prospect Street to Torrey Pines Road, the festival draws 45,000 guests annually and will showcase more than 170 juried artists from across the U.S. and Mexico.

Event attendees can explore an expansive collection of fine art including painting, sculpture, jewelry, photography, ceramics, glasswork, and more, offering something for seasoned collectors and casual browsers alike.

The free, two-day, open-air festival is sponsored by nonprofit La Jolla Art & Wine Festival Foundation to bring needed funds to local public schools and art to the community while promoting La Jolla merchants.

The event promises to have something for everyone, including hands-on activities for kids under the guidance of Geppetto's Toys Family Art Center.

Beyond a weekend of art, food, wine and entertainment, money raised supports the La Jolla Art & Wine Festival Foundation. Since its founding, more than $1.7 million has gone to support arts, music, science and technology programs at five La Jolla public schools, reaching more than 4,000 students each year.

The event's popular Wine & Beer Garden features a curated lineup of premier wineries, local craft breweries, and select spirits. New this year, guests can also upgrade their experience with an exclusive VIP area, offering an elevated tasting experience. Additional highlights include live music and entertainment, a two-day silent auction, interactive experiences and pet adoption stations.

Sherry Ahern, who founded the art & wine festival in 2008, was no newcomer to successfully promoting fundraising events. She had previously co-founded the La Jolla Open Aire (Farmers) Market in 1996 along with others.

Ahern drew inspiration from La Jolla's Green Dragon Colony site, a famous turn-of-the-century bohemian artist enclave overlooking La Jolla Cove, in creating a modern-day art festival supporting funding for local schools.



An aerial view of the La Jolla Art & Wine Festival spanning Girard Avenue from Prospect Street to Torrey Pines Road. (Photo courtesy of La Jolla Art & Wine Festival)

"I started seeing that every other window on Girard Avenue and Prospect Street had a for-lease sign in 2008, and I thought, 'What can I do that will help this community?" she recalled. "Schools needed money, and I needed to get them involved. Not being afraid to try anything, I asked, 'What do I have to lose?'"

On what to expect from 2026's La Jolla Art & Wine Festival, Ahern noted, "We'll have one of the most amazing silent auctions ever as well as a high-end food court. There will also be a petting zoo, pet adoptions, robotics from the schools and 40 sponsor booths. We'll have food, drink, dancing, art, wine cars and animals."

Asked her secret to promoting a major event successfully, Ahern answered. "Keeping your eye on the ball and being a good 'connector.' When I first put these La Jolla schools together, none of them were united."

Ahern added the situation is the same now with the art and wine fest, pointing out 475 volunteers now do everything imaginable to facilitate the two-day annual event, which includes having 16 food vendors on hand.

"We try to go with locals if we can," Ahern added.

Asked what advice she'd give to would-be fundraising event promoters, Ahern said: "Don't underestimate someone who never gives up. You have hurdles in life. Period. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Don't be afraid to try."

La Jolla artist Krista Schumacher to exhibit at La Jolla Art & Wine Festival

By Dave Schwab
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

LA JOLLA – Krista Schumacher is one of more than 170 artists exhibiting showing their work at the 18th annual La Jolla Art & Wine Festival Oct. 10-11 in La Jolla Village.



Krista Schumacher's painting 'Chasing California.' (Photo courtesy of Krista Schumacher)

This is Schumacher's eighth year participating in the art festival, which showcases juried artists from across the U.S. and Mexico. The event lets guests explore an expansive collection of fine art, including painting, sculpture, jewelry, photography, ceramics, and glasswork, offering something for both seasoned collectors and casual browsers.

The La Jolla-based palette knife oil painter, whose gallery is in La Jolla Village, says the Art and Wine Festival is the only show she participates in for several reasons.

"It's really important for local artists to support the local art show because all the money goes back to five public schools," said Schumacher. "It provides a really fun environment for people to meet and learn about the different arts and different styles."

Public Notice: University of California, San Diego

Department of Toxic Substances Control

Emergency Permit to manage and treat hazardous waste for Salk Institute for Biological Studies

➢ **The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) issued an Emergency Permit to the Salk Institute for Biological Studies valid September 10, 2026, through November 9, 2026.**

Why is this needed: DTSC has determined that expired chemicals at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies must be treated prior to transport because they are an imminent and substantial risk to human health and the environment.

Where: 10010 N. Torrey Bines Road, La Jolla, California 92037

What chemicals will be treated:
- Perchloric acid, 10 milliliters
- 1-hydroxybenzotriazole hydrate, 25-grams

Duration: About 3 hours to set up, treat, and ensure that all hazardous waste is stable and safe for transport to a permitted waste facility. The applicant is required to certify that no hazardous materials remain in the treatment area.

Safety measures
Veolia Environmental Services will perform the treatment according to the workplan reviewed and approved by DTSC. The following safety measures will be taken:
- The expired chemicals are stored in a secure location away from the public until treatment occurs.
- Qualified staff from Veolia Environmental Services will perform the treatment.
- Treatment will happen in a secure, ventilated area not accessible to the public.
- The expired chemical will be tested to confirm the treatment is successful prior to disposal at an authorized facility.

For more information
Contact the Project Manager to review the Administrative Record for this project at the contact information below. The physical Administrative Record is available for review by appointment only at the DTSC Sacramento Regional Office

Contacts:

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Michelle Snapp
Project Manager
(916) 255-3647
Michelle.Snapp@dtsc.ca.gov

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Vikings field hockey red hot

By Hector Trujillo
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

LA JOLLA – After an up-and-down start to the 2026 season, the La Jolla field hockey team has rattled off five victories in a row, all of which have come via shutout.

The Vikings now find themselves with a 10-4 record, which is just two wins short of the 12 they achieved in 2025, but with nine games left in the regular season.

"I think we went in with the expectation that it was going to be a rebuilding year," said head coach Amanda Combs Warford. "We are a different team, and we have improved so much. We lost some pretty strong seniors last year, but I feel that my young players have really stepped up and the team has improved tremendously."

La Jolla started with a dominating 7-0 win over Rancho Bernardo on Aug. 19 before moving on to compete in the second annual West Coast Classic field hockey tournament on Aug. 21 and 22 at Torrey Pines, where the Vikings went 4-2 with victories over Westview, Great Oak (Temecula), Hockaday (Dallas), and La Costa Canyon.

The only losses during the two-day tournament came at the hands of the eventual finalists, Torrey Pines and Scripps Ranch, by the same score of 4-0. The Vikings then suffered back-to-back defeats to Huntington Beach and Scripps Ranch on Aug. 28 and Sept. 1 before getting back in the win column after a 1-0 victory over San Marcos on Sept. 3, which kicked off the current undefeated streak.

"I expect us to keep improving and keep winning," Combs Warford added. "We have some tough competitors coming up in league, and the teams that we will play in Northern California are in the top division. Our team has improved so much, and there is a lot of chemistry, so I really do expect us to perform very well the second half of the season."

Junior goalie Adalee Branstetter continues to be a huge reason why La Jolla continues its impressive play along with teammates Talia Snider, Sofia Saiegh and Sydney Hersman.

The Vikings' next match is an Oct. 9 meeting against Cathedral Catholic on senior night. La Jolla then goes on the road to take on Bishop's on Oct. 13 before traveling to Northern California for tournament play against Palo Alto, Archbishop Mitty, and Los Altos on Oct. 16-17.

Centurions battle-tested and ready to improve

By Ed Piper
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

UNIVERSITY CITY – Deshaun Hille, A 6-foot, 195-pound rock of a running back. Tucker Wojdowski, a 6-foot-6-inch-tall, 240-pound tight end who also plays edge rusher on defense.

Two mountains of men who get stronger from intense training during the summer, constant repetitions, whether that's carrying the ball or blocking and slashing towards an opening to catch a pass.

Times of San Diego and La Jolla Village News sat down with the two senior football stars and talked about the disciplined diets to make them stronger and more fit.

“My mom prepares me plenty of protein," said Hille of his protein-rich meal plan. "We got a thing going."

In the third week of the season, the University City Centurions traveled to Las Vegas to face a Nevada state superpower, Mater Academy, and took a licking. By the time Hille rushed for a 49-yard touchdown in the second quarter, the home team had already scored three times.

What Hille referred to as his"little run play” was huge for the Cents’ confidence, as the team fought to adapt to what Modjowski said were unique conditions.

“They had a couple of guys who weighed 300 pounds,” said Wojdowski. “Many were transfers and ready for college. It’s a new school, so we didn’t have much video to study on them."

Testing the team's resolve is precisely why University City High's head coach, Paul Lawrence, known as “P-Law” to his players, scheduled the game. The coach wanted to take his players out of their routine and force them to adapt to the unknown. The final: Mater Academy 51 and the Centurions 20.

“We underestimated them,” said Wojdowski. "Before that game, we steamrolled two (local) teams. If we had prepared better, the result would have been better.”

