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The 99-year-old Crystal Pier is susceptible to large winter waves. During the 1982–1983 El Niño, 15-foot waves destroyed roughly 150 feet of decking. (Photo by Thomas Melville/Times of San Diego)

COVER STORY

San Diego’s iconic coastal locations face triple threat from ‘Super El Niño’

California’s entire coast has been scanned six times since 2023 by the California Coastline Survey, a state-funded climate initiative based out of the Air-Sea Interaction Laboratory at Scripps. Using an array of sensors mounted on helicopters, planes and trucks, researchers can compare high-resolution models of the entire coast before and after El Niño storms strike. Iconic locations along San Diego’s coastline may be permanently altered by this year’s historic ‘Super’ El Niño — a “triple-threat for coastal hazards,” according to Adam Young, a Scripps Institution of Oceanography geomorphologist who studies California’s changing coastline. Strong El Niño conditions can raise sea level on the coast by 6 to 13 inches. **PAGES 4–5**

EDUCATION

SDUSD launches refreshed menu with avocado salad and hot chicken

Over the summer, the district’s Sandi Coast Cafe introduced a new menu of nutritious, student-inspired entrées such as Baja fish tacos and hot honey chicken. Sandi Coast Cafe serves approximately 95,000 meals daily across 205 schools. **PAGE 6**



FESTIVAL

Pacific BeachFest to feature music, volleyball, fish tacos

The annual beachside festival returns Saturday, Oct. 3, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., on the boardwalk with its Best of the Beach Fish Taco Contest, live entertainment, volleyball, a morning 5K, and half marathon on Sunday. **PAGE 13**





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City Council passes resolution to regulate Waymo and autonomous vehicles

By Thaïs Giraudet
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO – The City Council took the first step in trying to regulate Waymo and other autonomous vehicle companies in San Diego.

In a unanimous 8-0 decision on Monday, Sept. 14, council members passed a resolution to request local control in the deployment of artificial intelligence and autonomous vehicles.

The resolution comes after the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) permitted Waymo to officially launch in San Diego on Sept. 1, without the city having a say in how the autonomous vehicle companies can operate.

“This is definitely not an anti-technology resolution; it’s not an anti-innovation resolution; this is about people,” said Councilmember Sean Elo Rivera following numerous public comments from residents, transportation workers and advocates both for and against the resolution.

Librado Rivera, co-founder and secretary of San Diego Drivers United, said what he hears most from drivers are their fears of losing their job and losing their ability to support their families.

The introduction of Waymo and possibly other autonomous vehicle companies at the San Diego Airport was an important point of contention during the meeting for both advocates and council members.

“That is one of the last places that taxi drivers can make a living,” said Councilmember Marni von Wilpert, who sits on the San Diego County Regional



Waymo parked at Balboa Park. (Photo by Jennifer Vigil/Times of San Diego)

Airport Authority.

During a presentation at the beginning of the meeting, councilmembers Elo-Rivera and Marni von Wilpert’s staff underscored the public safety impact of autonomous vehicles. The presentation showed clips of Waymo vehicles stopping in the middle of traffic or blocking first responders during emergencies.

“This is unacceptable,” said von Wilpert. “When our firefighters, our police officers, our ambulance drivers, our AMTs are responding to a 911 life or death emergency, every second counts. ... Nothing should be in their way. Not a company, not an algorithm, not an autonomous driverless vehicle.”

Adam Lane, state and local policy manager at Waymo, spoke against the resolution during public comments, calling it “extraordinarily premature.” He explained that Waymo followed an extensive review by the Public Utilities Commission, dating back to early 2025.

“Thousands of safe trips have already been completed,” Lane added before

explaining that Waymo’s data showed a 94% reduction in serious injury-causing crashes. He also said that over 100,000 San Diegans have already joined their waitlist.

“We are deeply invested in local collaboration, having already trained nearly 300 San Diego first responders and partnered with airport leadership through three months of testing at San Diego Airport to ensure orderly, safe curbside operations,” Lane said.

Before the councilmembers voted to pass the resolution, four amendments were added regarding the reduction of empty vehicles in the streets, autonomous vehicles’ capabilities to safely stop on-demand during loss power outages or cyberattacks, passengers refraining from using bike lanes and crosswalks as pick-up spots and disability regulation compliance for any passenger service operations, including rideshare.

Elo-Rivera concluded with a warning about the fast-moving evolution of AI technologies.

“People building this technology are saying out loud that it’s moving faster than they can manage and they are asking for guardrails... Our job is to put people over profit and to not be the last people in the room to take those threats seriously.”

“What keeps me up at night is that there is a race in this country and it is quickly making its way to every state, city and community to be the first artificial intelligence,” added von Wilpert. “When the company that moves the fastest gets to decide what the rules are, that puts the public safety risk straight in our path.”

Pedestrian hit on PB boardwalk after police pursue stolen car

FROM STAFF REPORTS

PACIFIC BEACH – A 39-year-old man who fled from police recently in a stolen car who allegedly struck and seriously injured a pedestrian while driving on the Pacific Beach boardwalk, has pleaded not guilty to charges including assault with a deadly weapon, hit-and-run, and auto theft. San Diego Police Department reported that Juan Antonio Gonzaba was chased down and captured by bystanders after allegedly running down a 25-year-old woman, abandoning the Tesla sedan he had been driving and attempting to

escape on foot. He faces up to 24 years and eight months in state prison if convicted of all charges.

Deputy District Attorney Tyler Nigut testified in court that Gonzaba stole the Tesla in La Jolla, but that the car’s owner was able to track its location through her cell phone and notified police. After the stolen car was spotted around noon traveling southbound on Mission Boulevard, it sped away from police officers attempting a traffic stop striking a roadside electrical transformer. Nigut said Gonzaba then continued driving

onto the crowded Pacific Beach boardwalk, where pedestrians and cyclists had to dive out of the way to avoid being struck.

The injured victim allegedly struck on the boardwalk by Gonzaba was hospitalized after suffering fractures to her spine, broken ribs and a large laceration requiring 20 stitches. After crashing the Tesla, Gonzaba ran, but was chased down by bystanders who detained him until officers came to arrest him. San Diego police said Gonzaba was suspected of being under the influence.

There's a good chance this year's El Niño will break records

By Tessa Balc
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — Summer's end means the precipitation we could see from this year's potentially record-breaking "Super" El Niño is just around the bend.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center released its September El Niño update Thursday, saying there is a greater than 90% chance of a very strong event in the Northern Hemisphere during this fall and winter.

Chandler Price, a meteorologist at the San Diego office of the National Weather Service, said just because an El Niño is evident, it doesn't automatically mean an unusually wet winter. Price says he and other researchers need to see a weather pattern develop before they can provide a forecast.

If the El Niño brings increased rain to the coast, Price said the region

could begin to see winter storms as early as late September and they could last through April.

While the amount of rain San Diego will get this year is still up in the air, high tides and large ocean swells will hit the coastline. In preparation, the city of San Diego began its annual installation of sand berms on city beaches and the Mission Bay shoreline Thursday to help protect against flooding. They will take several weeks to install and are expected to be completed by early November.

Another figure NOAA released is a 75% chance this El Niño will exceed the strength of previously recorded events dating back to the 1950s when the agency began collecting data on El Niño weather patterns. Price said that's actually a good chance of breaking the historical record.

There have been six strong El Niños on record. But strength and precipitation don't go hand in hand, something scientists are making clear to the public.

Price pointed out that the strong events with the highest precipitation as well as those events with the lowest precipitation both had similar scores on the index used to classify them.

Looking at the past data, there is an 83% chance that this El Niño, if it comes in among the strongest on record, will result in more precipitation than we would typically see, Price said.

So, should we sound the alarm?

In spite of the 1972 tune "It Never Rains in Southern California," Price says San Diegans should stay vigilant for flooding every winter, not just during an El Niño.

"The good thing about this is that it is encouraging new conversations about how you prepare for this on a personal or structural level," he said.

While widespread flooding is still not a guarantee, Price says he has a lot of confidence in the fact that Southern California will see coastal erosion and coastal flooding.

Daniel Swain, an associate

researcher at UC Agriculture and Natural Resources and a research partner at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, agrees.

"There will be significant coastal flooding that will get worse from here... How bad it gets will depend [on] whether we get alignment of the king tides, the peak of a coastally trapped Kelvin wave and a big storm event," Swain said.

"It could happen, and it could get pretty darn bad. That would paralyze a lot of the low-lying infrastructure."

The Kelvin waves Swain mentioned are just extremely large, slow-moving waves that do not break. They're important to note because they bring higher water levels than we would typically see.

These elevated water levels along with high surf, Price said, have already contributed to visible erosion, and could likely be something that will continue through the winter. And as sea levels are expected to rise by a foot in the next couple of decades, the discussions El Niño has brought to coastal communities on how to adapt is something, Price said.

“

It could get pretty darn bad.’

Daniel SWAIN

National Center for Atmospheric Research



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San Diego's iconic coastal locations face threat from 'Super El Niño'

By Thomas Murphy
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — If predictions are accurate and a “Super El Niño” is on San Diego’s event horizon, dozens of iconic locations along San Diego’s coastline will have to withstand not one but three threats, those being erosion of beaches, bluff collapse and coastal flooding from huge swells, high tides and rain.

The triple threat could potentially alter the region’s coastline — according to Adam Young, a Scripps Institution of Oceanography geomorphologist who studies California’s changing coastline.

“Powerful waves can accelerate erosion of beaches, sea cliffs, and bluffs, and cause coastal flooding; and strong El Niño conditions can raise sea level on the California coast by 6 to 13 inches,” Young wrote. “Combined, these factors increase coastal erosion and flooding during El Niño events, which can threaten public parks, beaches, critical infrastructure, highways, and homes.”

California’s entire coast has been scanned six times since 2023 by the California Coastline Survey, a state-funded climate initiative based out of the Air-Sea Interaction Laboratory at Scripps.

Using an array of sensors mounted on helicopters, planes and trucks, researchers compare high-resolution models of the entire coast before and after El Niño storms strike.

The city council looked to protect San Diego’s coast from rising sea levels, adopting the Coastal Resilience Master Plan in September 2025. Project sites were identified at La Jolla Shores, Tourmaline Surf Park, Mission Beach, Ocean Beach and Sunset Cliffs.

Then, the council prioritized the resilience projects at Tourmaline, Ocean Beach, and Sunset Cliffs — which are now in the initial engineering design phase, according to city spokesman Peter Kelly. La Jolla Shores and Mission Beach have not progressed beyond conceptual designs due to funding constraints.

In the meantime, the city is installing sand berms along the shoreline of Mission Bay and other beaches. These sand walls absorb the power of heavy surf, reducing the risk of erosion and coastal damage.

San Diego City College professor of



A surfer carries her board up the beach at Tourmaline Surf Park. The beach there is especially vulnerable to erosion from heavy rainfall and stormwater runoff. (Photo by Thomas Melville/Times of San Diego)

physical science Lisa Chaddock stressed the need for preparation, “I am sure that some people are not taking this as seriously as they should.”

“Any homes on the cliffs are going to be in danger this year,” Chaddock wrote. “Some have put riprap below to take the blow of the waves, but the communities from Oceanside to Del Mar may see a lot of bluff damage.”

Cliff collapse isn’t the only danger posed by heavy rainfall and rising sea levels; El Niño could also worsen South Bay’s sewage crisis by spreading pollution further north, Chaddock explained.

Here are the beaches, parts of the bayfront and other waterways that are at risk, from North County to South Bay.

PACIFIC BEACH

Tourmaline Surf Park is especially vulnerable to erosion, and the reason is rooted in its geology.

The coastal bluffs at Tourmaline are composed of four different types of rock and sediment that are weakly packed together, making the cliffs more susceptible to erosion from heavy rainfall and stormwater runoff.

As a prioritized coastal resilience site, the city is working to shore up Tourmaline before major storms make landfall. Crews will use cobblestone and sand to bury a layer

of large rocks, forming a solid base. Then, native plants will cover the artificial sand dune, which will help support local wildlife.

The 175-foot-long and 50-feet wide natural barrier will protect the nearby parking lot, access ramp, and bathroom from coastal flooding. This project is 15% complete as of September, according to city spokesman Peter Kelly.

Further south, Crystal Pier offers a more visible example of what El Niño can do.

Winter waves have hammered the pier since 1927. During the 1982-1983 El Niño, 15-foot waves destroyed roughly 150 feet of decking when four storms struck in just one week, according to an archival report from Jan. 27, 1983.

The city spent \$2.06 million on emergency repairs after Crystal Pier suffered more storm damage in 2023. The project closed the popular attraction for 18 months.

“While the pier is open and structurally sound, work will continue to strengthen its resilience against rising tides and increasingly intense storms,” City Council President Joe LaCava wrote in a press release on July 3, 2023.

MISSION BEACH

Mission Beach is one of San Diego’s most developed stretches of coastline, with homes, businesses and Belmont Park

packed against the oceanfront boardwalk. With little room left between.

An aging seawall lines the walkway and offers some protection from coastal erosion and flooding, but it may be overpowered by surging tides this winter. The concrete wall guarding the boardwalk seems short, but is buried 20 feet into the sand, according to a 2021 California Coastal Commission report.

In 2017, the Mission Beach Bulkhead Seawall Replacement at Belmont Park replaced a 1,617-foot-long section, restored original 1920s dimensions, textures, and colors, and added ADA-compliant beach access, ramps, and amenities.

The city is considering a plan to restore the seawall, potentially raising the wall by up to 12 inches to protect from rising sea levels. A new 375-foot seawall would be constructed on the northern end of the current wall, from Thomas Avenue to Grand Avenue in PB.

Mission Beach is among the sites included in the city’s Coastal Resilience Master Plan, but the proposed project — a five-foot-tall artificial sand dune along the seawall’s west side — has not broken ground due to funding constraints, according to city spokesman Peter Kelly.

LA JOLLA

La Jolla Shores experienced some of the greatest erosion in the county during the 2015-2016 El Niño. Black’s Beach was hit hard. After that winter, researchers observed more than 260 feet of shoreline retreat and three feet of elevation loss as powerful waves stripped away the sand.

Erosion may endanger the iconic Mushroom House, an unusual concrete house at the southern base of Blacks Beach that became a graffiti battleground earlier this year. Built in 1968, the house has weathered decades of coastal storms and erosion. GDC Construction, a La Jolla-based company charged with maintaining the structure, did not respond to Times of San Diego’s inquiry regarding preparations for potentially supercharged winter storms.

North of the Mushroom House, Torrey Pines State Beach experienced significant erosion during the 2015-2016 El Niño. Researchers found the low-level erosion threatened the shoulder of North Torrey Pines Road — where people park to visit

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

the stoney beach.

"This area has a great wetland, but the road is not on the most stable ground," Professor Chaddock explained. This road also runs along steep coastal cliffs, making significant bluff retreat a potential threat to northbound traffic and public access to the beloved beach.

La Jolla Shores, similarly to Blacks Beach during the 2015-2016 El Niño, Young's research team reported at least 260 feet of beach retreat and a minimum of 3 feet of sand height shaved away by powerful waves. The wide, narrow beach buffer that normally separates the Pacific from La Jolla's parks and businesses may become even narrower this winter.

Kellogg Park sits right behind the eroding sand buffer. The park usually floods when sea levels rise by 2.5 feet, according to the city, especially during storm conditions at high tide. Due to this, the city has identified La Jolla Shores for the coastal resilience project; however, initial engineering has not begun due to funding constraints, according to city spokesman Peter Kelly.

Moving south, La Jolla's shoreline shifts from soft, sandy beaches to rough, rocky bluffs. Despite their solid appearance, the sandstone cliffs face significant erosion risks. That, combined with high tides, forced organizers of the 110th La Jolla Cove Swim to cancel the event on Sept. 9.

The rocky contrast is especially clear around Bird Rock, where cliffside houses sit on low bluffs above the ocean.

"Bird Rock is perched precariously, including Calumet Park," Professor Chaddock added. "These cliffside dwellings are on sandstone and could have a rough time this year."

The crumbling cliffs forced the city to consider an emergency development plan for a seawall reinforcement near Calumet Avenue in 2025, which awaits final approval.

A bluff repair plan for the avenue's 5300 block was approved by a hearing officer in August, according to the La Jolla Light. Nearby individual property owners are pursuing emergency permits from the California Coastal Commission, according to Pacific Beach Builder.

Most coastal erosion damage is permanent, but the Windansea Surf Shack has endured storms since 1947. The local surfing community rebuilt the handmade hut after El Niño storms destroyed it in 2003 and 2015.



A huge wave rolls over the seawall protecting the Children's Pool. (Photo by Thomas Melville/Times of San Diego)

OCEAN BEACH

Dog Beach, the first of its kind in the United States, lost 360 feet during the 2015-2016 El Niño, as reported by Young's research team. This was the greatest land change they measured in all of Southern California. Erosion on San Diego beaches ranged from 6.5 feet to 10 feet that winter, compared to less than six feet in a typical season, as reported by Times of San Diego.

With sea levels rising 11 inches above predicted heights, surging waves stripped away sand from the popular pet beach at the San Diego River outlet. This significantly shrank the buffer between the beachfront and raging sea, leading to major coastal flooding in January 2016.

South along the boardwalk lies the Ocean Beach Pier, a 60-year-old structure that has been repeatedly damaged by powerful waves. This degraded the structure over time; the final nail in the coffin came in December 2023.

The pier was initially closed in October, but strong waves caused significant damage later that winter. Instead of responding once again with costly repairs, the city decided it would be better to replace the pier entirely.

Both iconic areas have been identified in the Coastal Resilience Master Plan, which will raise artificial dunes along Ocean Beach's entire beachfront. The City Council prioritized the neighboring construction projects to restore the sand buffer before winter storms strike — they are currently 15% complete, according to city spokesman Peter Kelly.

POINT LOMA

Point Loma's Sunset Cliffs may look significantly different after the 'Super' El Niño strikes, with San Diego's newest social media attraction at risk to erosion, according to physical science Professor Lisa Chaddock.

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SDUSD launches refreshed menu with fish tacos, hot chicken bowls

By Cyril A. Reinicke

SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

PACIFIC BEACH – When students in the Mission Bay Cluster returned to Pacific Beach campuses on Aug. 10, they were greeted by new choices for breakfast and lunch.

Over the summer, the district's Sandi Coast Cafe introduced a new menu of nutritious, student-inspired entrées while preparing to serve more than 17 million meals during the 2026–27 school year.

The expanded menu provides students with meals to support learning, wellness and academic achievement, according to a statement from the San Diego Unified School District.

Pacific Beach Middle School seventh-grader Kolton Hughes likes the changes. “When kids have a better lunch they will learn better in the afternoon,” he said.

“We serve approximately 75–90 breakfasts and 250–300 lunches each day,” said Robin Lujan, the PBMS cafeteria manager. “Popular breakfast items are pancakes and mini waffles. Popular lunch items include chicken tenders with onion rings and hot dogs with whole grain honey BBQ chips.”

San Diego Unified has embraced a shift in food and nutrition services during the past five years.



Early morning breakfast at Sessions Elementary finds (left) great-grandmother Patsy Stallings, Micah Coste (kindergarten) and (right) first grader Mylene Coste enjoying breakfast together. (Photo by Cyril A. Reinicke/Special for Times of San Diego)



Adriana Veano (left) and Robin Lujan, cafeteria manager, prepping fresh fish tacos for a recent lunch at Pacific Beach Middle. (Photo by Cyril A. Reinicke/Special for Times of San Diego)



Seventh grade student Kolton Hughes' favorite entree is orange chicken and rice at PBMS. (Photo by Cyril A. Reinicke/Special for Times of San Diego)

“Five years ago, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a landmark piece of legislation into law, making California the first state in the nation to implement a universal free school meal program for all public-school students,” said Leslie Luna, marketing coordinator for the district's Food and Nutrition Services.

“In 2024, San Diego Unified's school lunch program was rebranded as ‘Sandi Coast Cafe’ with a commitment to source, prepare and serve tasty, nutritious meals that students enjoy and want to eat, staff takes pride in, parents trust to nourish their children, educators value to fuel their learners and our community celebrates for its excellence,” Luna said.

Read more at timesofsandiego.com



Lunch at Mission Bay High School is a busy time. Four serving lines (two indoor and two outdoor) provide quick service for students at 1:20 p.m. (Photo by Cyril A. Reinicke/Special for Times of San Diego)



Mission Bay junior Zara Hedley selects the chicken entree at a recent lunch period. (Photo by Cyril A. Reinicke/Special for Times of San Diego)



At Mission Bay Back To School Night in August, freshman parents John Maier (left) and Debra Smithton, tried samples of meals from the Sandi Coast Cafe menus. (Photo by Coco Scatena/Special for Times of San Diego)

NEW MENU ITEMS

Breakfast: Waffle with eggs and hashbrowns, turkey bacon breakfast burrito, mango parfait, egg bites with hashbrowns, blueberry muffin top, breakfast taco, bean and cheese burrito.

Lunch: Beef quesadilla, hummus plate, bacon cheeseburger, Baja fish tacos.

Student-developed: Ava's Avocado Salad, and Hot Honey Chicken Bowl with Fried Rice.

More locally sourced and sustainable ingredients that support California agriculture while providing students with fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables.



Pacific Beach Middle student Aurora Sesenbach says her favorite school meal is chicken strips with onion rings. (Photo by Cyril A. Reinicke/Special for Times of San Diego)

La Playa Taco Shop closes after owner deported by ICE

By Dave Schwab
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

MISSION BEACH – La Playa Taco Shop near the Catamaran Resort in Mission Beach has closed for good after serving the Mission Beach community for 30 years.

Saturday, Sept. 19 was the last day the doors were open at the taqueria, known for its carne asada, carnitas and fish tacos.

Victor Rodriguez Ocampo Sr., 54, owner of La Playa Taco Shop, was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents on Halloween morning, Oct. 31, 2025, outside of his National City home.

He was held at the Otay Mesa Detention Center until he was deported to Mexico this past January.

In his absence, his family, including his son Victor Jr., stepped in to run the business. His son has since joined the Navy. The family declined further comment on the closing of their business.

A GoFundMe online fundraiser was set up immediately after Ocampo’s arrest to help pay for his legal expenses and keep his business functioning in his absence.

To date, the fundraiser has raised \$25,563.

Times of San Diego reached out to Rodriguez Jr. for an interview about the closing, but he declined to comment.

In a December 2025 interview, Rodriguez Jr. said his dad ran La Playa for about 30 years, adding the ICE raid took their family completely by surprise.

“What really astonished us is we did not have a warning whatsoever,” he said last December. “There was no card in the mail or anything. He was getting ready early



La Playa Taco Shop on Mission Boulevard. (Photo by Dave Schwab/Times of San Diego)

in the morning to pick up ingredients for the restaurant, and as he was getting into his truck, about four ICE cars came in and took him.”

Rodriguez Jr. characterized his father as the heart and soul behind La Playa Taco Shop.

“La Playa Taco Shop has become more than just a place to eat; it’s a gathering spot where he’s welcomed everyone with kindness and generosity,” he said. “My dad is a strong family man who has always put others before himself, supporting our family, his employees, and the incredible community he’s built through his small business. This sudden and devastating situation has left our family in shock and struggling to keep things together.”

Rodriguez Ocampo’s family is mostly on the U.S. side of the border. “He has nothing over (in Mexico), essentially,” his son told Times of San Diego previously.

E-BIKE FATALITY

A 14-year-old boy riding an e-bike who ran a red light was fatally struck by a Tesla in Pacific Beach recently. The youth was riding his Zooz e-bike northbound on Olney Street, entered the intersection at Balboa Avenue against the red light and was struck about 9:20 p.m. on a Saturday by a 2023 Tesla Model 3 westbound on Balboa Avenue. Paramedics rushed the teen to a hospital where he was pronounced dead. Police said alcohol was not a factor in the crash. Anyone with any information regarding the crash is urged to call Crime Stoppers at 888-580-8477.

PAESAN 2026

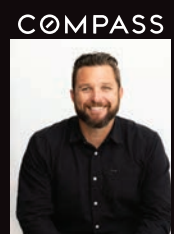
Pacific Beach Town Council held its 46th annual Police And Emergency Services Appreciation Night (PAESAN) celebration on Sept. 23. This year the beach community recognized the hard work and dedication of Stations 20 and 21 firefighters who protect and serve, and is a way for the community to say, “Thank you for a job well done!” Event proceeds will be applied towards the health, cleanliness, and fitness of those two fire stations and its firefighters. The event was held at De Anza Cove Park.



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\$50M grant for UCSD researchers to tackle women's brain health

By Elizabeth Ireland
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

LA JOLLA – Women are nearly twice as likely as men to develop Alzheimer's disease, but scientists haven't locked down what drives that disparity.

New research at UC San Diego seeks to help doctors understand why.

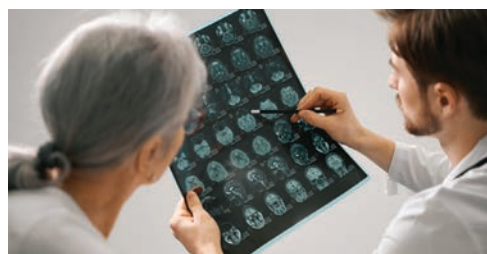
"There's a big open question mark around menopause," said Judy Pa, PhD, professor of neurosciences at UCSD School of Medicine and director of the Alzheimer's Disease Cooperative Study.

Pa and colleagues within the UC system have received two major research awards, granted over three years, as part of a more than \$50 million investment in women's brain health led by Wellcome Leap CARE and other organizations.

These awards will fund an investigation into how menopause and hormone therapy may influence women's risk of dementia, as well as the development of an artificial intelligence tool for earlier detection of Alzheimer's disease.

The hormone therapy project led by Pa will use existing datasets to emulate a clinical trial, allowing researchers to study how women who initiate menopausal hormone therapy compare over time with similar women who do not.

By analyzing long-term health and cognitive outcomes, the team hopes to generate stronger evidence about whether hormone therapy may alter dementia risk and



A patient and physician discuss an MRI of the brain. (Photo courtesy of UC San Diego News)

which therapies may be most appropriate for women with different menopausal experiences.

The grants reflect a broader wave of attention to a field that has been overlooked for decades.

"There's been this silence around studying menopause science for the last 25 years," Pa said. "I'm grateful that I get to work in this area and there's a revival of interest."

Much of the silence Pa described traces back to the Women's Health Initiative, a large federal trial whose results, released in 2002, found that postmenopausal women on hormone therapy had higher rates of breast cancer and cardiovascular events than women on a placebo. The findings reversed decades of assumptions that hormone therapy could prevent disease in older women, and the fallout was immediate, according to Pa.

"It brought everything to a full stop," Pa said. "Physicians, clinicians, practitioners

and providers stopped offering it (hormone therapy), stopped prescribing it because they were worried about the increase in breast cancer for their patients."

More than two decades later, newer data, including re-analyses of the original trial and subsequent studies, have softened that picture, suggesting risks depend on when therapy begins. But Pa said the damage to research and clinical practice has been lasting.

"Women have been suffering for over two decades now, having a very difficult time getting medications that are needed for this menopausal transition," she said.

And the knowledge gap extends well beyond hormone therapy.

"We know almost nothing about menopause," Pa said, adding that basic questions — such as how symptom severity, treatment choices or the age of menopause onset shape later brain health — remain largely unanswered.

Another newly funded study, the Longitudinal Menopause Project, will recruit women ages 40 to 55 and follow them before, during and after menopause, creating what Pa says could become a flagship program for perimenopausal brain health research in the United States.

The project is a collaboration between UCSD, UC San Francisco and UC Santa Barbara's Ann S. Bowers Women's Brain Health Initiative, with Emily Jacobs at UCSB, a neuroscientist with training in neuroendocrinology, taking the lead.

"We always say, science first, egos last," Pa said of the partnership. "We go into all of these collaborations trying to do the very best work that we can. We have momentum and we're trying to capitalize on that."

That momentum extends to policy. UCSB's Jacobs has also worked with California legislators on Assembly Bill 432, which would mandate menopause education in medical school curricula statewide. The bill narrowly failed after a veto but is being reintroduced, Pa said, noting that menopause training currently is not required for any medical specialty, including OB-GYNs.

"An event that happens for every single woman in the world is not required medical training," she said.

Still, Pa said she wants women to come away with a sense of agency. She likens brain health to a savings account: the steps women take now to protect their brains compound over time, building toward greater resilience later in life, much like interest accruing on a long-term investment.

"Women are at greater risk, but they can be empowered with this knowledge and say, 'These are the things I can do for myself now that will help my brain later,'" Pa said.

"I always tell folks it is never too early to start to protect your brain and it's truly never too late."

La Jolla Institute team may reshape how scientists search for vaccine targets

By Thomas Murphy
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

LA JOLLA – Researchers at the La Jolla Institute for Immunology have helped develop a computational approach that could make future vaccines more effective across people with different genetic backgrounds.

Working with Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel, the La Jolla team developed a system to identify rare protein fragments that can interact with multiple versions of key immune-system molecules known as HLAs. The work was published in the Proceedings of the

National Academy of Sciences.

"This is fantastic and exciting work," said Alessandro Sette of the La Jolla Institute for Immunology, a co-author of the study. "We have known for some time that peptides that bound many different HLAs were prominent in responses to microbes and allergens, but a strategy to synthetically identify these sequences was lacking."

"This study takes the issue of 'super epitopes' to a new level and promises to facilitate our characterization of immune responses, and also the design of powerful immunogens."



A vaccine about to be administered in San Diego. (File photo by Chris Stone/Times of San Diego)

HLAs are among the most variable components of the human immune system, with more than 22,000 known

variants. Because each person carries a different combination, immune responses to the same vaccine can vary widely, and some immune-triggering fragments may go unrecognized in certain individuals.

To address that challenge, the researchers built a computational framework called "Super HLA" that scans large numbers of candidate peptides and predicts which are most likely to bind across multiple HLA types. The system uses probabilistic modeling and machine-learning tools and removes sequences that resemble human proteins.

Passion for the pour: Chef Sealy brings wine and food together in PB

By Robin Dohrn-Simpson
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO – Wine Pairs Events, a culinary experience that brings thoughtfully prepared food together with carefully selected wines, is coming to Pacific Beach on Oct. 20.

Whether you're a seasoned wine enthusiast, just beginning to explore wine, or simply looking for an intimate evening of exceptional flavors, chef Erin Sealy invites you to take a seat at her table at Drift Cafe.

Sealy is a self-made chef who specializes in pairing food with wine, beer and spirits. Her passion for wine began at an early age.

“Growing up in a Sicilian-American family, wine was always a part of meals, like bread on the table. I was able to have a tiny taste of wine as a child. I went to Italy my sophomore year of college and quickly realized that wine was cheaper than water. That experience awakened my passion for wine,” Sealy said.

Sealy grew up cooking alongside her mother and Sicilian grandmother, developing an instinctive approach to food and



Chef Erin Sealy. (Photo courtesy of chef Erin Sealy)

flavors.

"I would drive my mother crazy because she was a recipe follower and I wasn't. I was always experimenting with flavors. She doesn't tease me anymore!"

That spirit of experimentation continues



Chef Erin Sealy specializes in pairing food with wine, beer and spirits. (Photo courtesy of chef Erin Sealy)

to shape her menus. Each dinner is built around the wines being poured, with careful consideration given to the flavors, textures and characteristics that make each pairing distinctive.

On Oct. 20, Stiekema Wine Company from Paso Robles will showcase five wines from its cellar in the relaxed, coastal setting of Pacific Beach. Sealy will present the evening's food and wine pairings while sharing the story behind Stiekema wines. The

menu is still being set.

Winemaker Mike Stiekema strives to produce wines that reflect life's balance, incorporating sustainable and regenerative practices in both the vineyard and winery.

Each course will be paired with a specific wine, allowing guests to experience how the flavors of the food and wine complement and enhance one another.

Featured wines include the 2025 Rosé of Grenache/Mourvèdre, 2023 Grenache, 2024 Mourvèdre, 2024 Syrah and a 2023 Grenache/Syrah/Mourvèdre blend. The menu will be posted on the Wine Pairs Events website.

As fall brings cooler temperatures to San Diego, it's an ideal time to gather around the table for an evening of seasonal food, wine and conversation. Sealy hosts dinners at 11 locations throughout San Diego, allowing guests to discover different neighborhoods while experiencing her ever changing wine-pairing dinners.

For current schedules, menus and to register for this or other events, go to winepairsevents.com.

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LEGAL ADS

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO. 2026-9018789 Fictitious Business Name(s) a. Popperiffic, 882 Emerald Street, San Diego, CA 92109 is registered by the following: a. Quality Gain, LLC business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company. The first day of business was: N/A Registrant Name: a. Quality Gain, LLC This Title of Officer, if Limited Liability Company/Corporation Title of Signor Alisha Harris, Member The statement was filed with Jordan Z. Marks, Jr. Recorder/County Clerk of San Diego County on: August 27, 2026, ISSUE DATES: September 11, 18, 25 & October 2, 2026

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO. 2026-9018922 Fictitious Business Name(s) a. Julian Pie Company, 21976 Highway 79, Santa Ysabel, CA 92070 is registered by the following: a. Julian Pie Company, LLC business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company. The first day of business was: N/A Registrant Name: a. Julian Pie Company, LLC This Title of Officer,

if Limited Liability Company/Corporation Title of Signor Timothy Robert Smothers, Member The statement was filed with Jordan Z. Marks, Jr. Recorder/County Clerk of San Diego County on: August 31, 2026, ISSUE DATES: September 11, 18, 25 & October 2, 2026

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO. 2026-9019157 Fictitious Business Name(s) a. Little House Coffee, 4668 Lotus Street, San Diego, CA 92107 is registered by the following: a. Ryan Daniel Tafolla b. Cara Ashley Tafolla business is conducted by: a married couple The first day of business was: 01/01/2025 Registrant Name: a. Ryan Daniel Tafolla b. Cara Ashley Tafolla This Title of Officer, if Limited Liability Company/Corporation Title of Signor statement was filed with Jordan Z. Marks, Jr. Recorder/County Clerk of San Diego County on: September 02, 2026, ISSUE DATES: September 11, 18, 25 & October 2, 2026

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME; CASE NO 26CU048500C SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF San Diego; Superior Court of California, County of San Diego, 330 West Broadway, San Diego, CA 92101, Hall of Justice TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: 1. Petitioner (name) a. Lisa Lee Romstadt Filed A. Petition With This Court For A Decree Changing Names As Follows: Present Name: a. Lisa Lee Romstadt To Proposed Name: a Sloane Rose Grande THE COURT ORDERS That All Persons Interested In This Matter appear before the court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that indicates the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing. NOTICE OF HEARING a. Date: 10/27/26: 8:30 AM DEPT: 61 ; a. A copy of this Order to show cause shall be published at least once each week for four consecutive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county (specify newspaper): La Jolla Village News, Beach & Bay Press & Peninsula Beacon. Date: Sep-

tember 14, 2026, by D. Donaldson , Deputy Clerk. Judge Michael S. Groch, Judge of the superior court ISSUE DATES: September 18, 25 & October 2, & 9, 2026.

NO HEARING WILL OCCUR ON THE DATE SPECIFIED IN THE ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE. The Court will review the documents filed as of the date specified on the Order to Show Cause for change (JC Form#NC-120) If all requirements for a name change have been met as of the date specified, and no timely written objection has been received (require at least two court days before the date specified), the petition for change of name (JC Form#NC-120) will be granted without a hearing. One certified copy of the Order Granting the Petition will be mailed to the petitioner. To change a name on a legal document, including a birth certificate, social security card, driver license, passport, and other identification, a certified copy of Decree Changing Name (JC Form #NC-130) or Decree Changing Name and Order Recognizing Change of Gender and for Issuance of New Birth Certificate (JC Form #NC-230) may be required. Contact the agency(ies) who issues the legal document that needs to be changed, to determine if a certified copy is required. A certified copy of Decree Changing Name (JC Form #NC-130) or Decree Changing Name and Order Recognizing Change of Gender and for Issuance of New Birth Certificate (JC Form #NC-230) may be obtained from the Civil Business Office for a fee. Petitioners who are seeking a change of name under the Safe at Home program may contact the assigned department for information on obtaining certified copies. If all the requirements have not been met as of the date specified, the court will mail the petitioner a written order with further directions. If a timely objection is filed, the court will set a hearing date and contact the parties by mail with further directions. A RESPONDENT OBJECTING TO THE NAME CHANGE MUST FILE A WRITTEN OBJECTION AT LEAST TWO COURT DAYS (excluding weekends and holidays) BEFORE THE DATE SPECIFIED. Do not come to court on the specified date. The court will notify the parties by mail of a future hearing date. Any Petition for the name changes of a minor that is signed by only one parent must have this Attachment served along with the Petition and Order to Show Cause, on the other non-signing parent, and proof of service must be filed with the court.

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO. 2026-9019829 Fictitious Business Name(s) a. POSTSEASON.COM, 975 1/2 Diamond Street, San Diego, CA 92109 is registered by the following: a. POSTSEASON.COM, LLC business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company. The first day of business was: 08/29/2028 Registrant Name: a. POSTSEASON.COM, LLC This Title of Officer, if Limited Liability Company/Corporation Title of Signor Michael P McGrath, Sole Member The statement was filed with Jordan Z. Marks, Jr. Recorder/County Clerk of San Diego County on: September 14, 2026, ISSUE DATES: September 25, October 2,9,&16, 2026

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO. 2026-9020007 Fictitious Business Name(s) a. Daygo Medical Group, 10089 Willow Creek Road, Suite 200, San Diego, CA 92131 is registered by the following: a. Katzen International Medical Corporation, business is conducted by: a corporation The first day of business was: N/A Registrant Name: a. Katzen International Medical Corporation, LLC This Title of Officer, if Limited Liability Company/Corporation Title of Signor Seth Katzen, President The statement was filed with Jordan Z. Marks, Jr. Recorder/County Clerk of San Diego County on: September 16, 2026, ISSUE DATES: September 25, October 2,9,&16, 2026

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Dig for Pink volleyball fundraiser for cancer slated at Mission Bay

By Cyril A. Reinicke
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

PACIFIC BEACH – The Mission Bay High girls volleyball team will hold their latest Dig For Pink fundraiser at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 7, in the school gym.

The Dig For Pink fundraiser asks everyone (parents, grandparents, friends who attend, and the public at large) to pledge a dollar amount for each successful “dig” made during the game against Lincoln High. The goal is to raise \$3,000 for breast cancer research, treatment and ongoing patient needs.

There are several ways to donate. The first, and most fun, is to attend the game, watch from the stands, and cheer on the Buccaneers. Or access the donation page online. Checks also may be sent to: Dig For Pink Fundraiser, girls volleyball, Mission Bay High School, 2475

Grand Ave., San Diego, CA 92109.

Volleyball coach Barbara Birnbaum, said, “This is our sixth year supporting one of the many critical needs in everyone’s fight against cancer. I am a two-time breast cancer survivor. There are so many players in our program who have been directly affected by someone with breast cancer.

“The Dig Pink Foundation works specifically with volleyball teams to raise money for metastatic breast cancer research, treatment and ongoing care. Please come out and support our team and their fundraising



A well-executed dig by Mission Bay sophomore Shay McGinty against High Tech High Mesa earlier this season. (Photo by David Albarian/Special for Times of San Diego)

efforts on Oct. 7.”

What is a dig in volleyball? Extended volleys include several digs. Successful digs are what keep a volley going and the carefully executed defensive move prevents the opposing team from scoring and redirects the ball to the setter and then the hitter to score a point.

Thus, there is a need to make successful digs many times during a match.

San Diego State lowers ticket prices in fight to fill Snapdragon

By Mark Nero
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO – After struggling in recent years to attract large crowds to its home football games, San Diego State has responded by reducing season ticket prices at Snapdragon Stadium, while creating a new discount ticket package that also might help boost turnout.

For 2026, season tickets cost 4% to 35% less than they did a year ago,

depending on the seats and section, according to the university.

The starting base price for single games remains in the same range, at about \$23-30, including fees, depending on the seating area and opponent. But medium-priced and higher-priced single-game tickets have been lowered, depending on the row and section.

Season ticket prices this year range from \$175 to \$775, down from \$200 to \$1,200 per seat in 2025.

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TIMES of SAN DIEGO

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25. Chest muscle (slang)
26. Ribonucleic acid
27. Doctor of Education
28. Coffee receptacle
29. Where rockstars work
34. International airport in Connecticut
35. Russian river
36. It's used to make cabins
37. OJ trial judge Lance
39. A means to persuade
40. Short poem
41. A way to begin hostilities with
42. Multi-function radar (abbr.)
44. Joints
45. Blatted
46. Swedish rock group
47. Millisecond
48. ____ podrida: Spanish stew
51. Doctors' group
52. Trunk of a tree
53. Tattle
54. Metrical foot
58. ____ Angeles

CLUES ACROSS

1. Egyptian bull god
5. A young canine
8. North Carolina university
11. "Oddbod" actor Tom
13. Midway between northeast and east
14. A place to shop
15. Mysterious "Severance" family
16. Single Lens Reflex
17. Malaria
18. Informal loan organizations
20. Twitching
21. Holm oak
22. Willing to consent
25. In an early way
30. Stuck it out
31. Language in Ghana
32. Obtain
33. Ancient Greek currency
38. One point east (clockwise) of due north
41. Popular baseball movie
43. Group of islands
45. Church building
47. Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
49. Late AC/DC frontman Scott
50. Spiritual leader of a Jewish con-

CLUES DOWN

- gregation
55. Thick piece of something
56. Breakfast food
57. One mole of solute per kilogram of solvent
59. Ancient Greek City
60. Bitterly regret
61. Don't forget it
62. Dishonorable man
63. Affirmative
64. " ____ and flows"
- Bridge-building degree
- Expression of sorrow or pity
- Lizard species
- Turkish leader title
- A way to bother
- Blank
- A fine, closely woven cotton fabric
- Sports broadcaster Ian
- Popular whodunit board game
- Alkali flats mineral
- Large African antelope
- It's delivered most days
- Satisfy
- Water soaked soil
- Of a past era

ANSWERS

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San Diego's Joe Cardona takes pride in being NFL long snapper

By Noah Perkins

SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — Former New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick once was asked a seemingly simple question: Why do NFL teams devote a roster spot to a long snapper rather than teach a player at another position to handle the job?

“It’s an interesting conversation,” Belichick said.

What followed was a more than nine-minute, roughly 1,500-word history lesson on the evolution of long snapping.

The long snapper on Belichick’s roster that day was Joe Cardona, an El Cajon native and Granite Hills High School graduate selected by the Patriots in the fifth round of the 2015 NFL Draft out of the United States Naval Academy. He was just the fourth pure long snapper ever drafted.

“I credit Bill for a lot of my own growth and development,” said the NFL veteran, now a Point Loma resident.

“You go in there immediately humbled by the amount of talent that was there, the knowledge that this team doesn’t need you, but I need to find a way to have an impact and to do my job. My goal was to prove him right in taking a chance on drafting me.”

‘DOING SOMETHING MEANINGFUL’

For Cardona, 34, who helped the Patriots win Super Bowls LI and LIII before moving on to the Dolphins and Rams, the pressure of the position is almost paradoxical: The long snapper is supposed to be invisible.

Do your job perfectly, and nobody notices. Miss it, and everyone does.

On punts, field goals and extra points, the margin for error is tiny. A bad snap can turn a routine play into a blocked kick, a short punt or a game-changing mistake.

“I don’t think there’s ever a callus that you can build for big moments,” Cardona said. “And if I ever did build a callus for those emotions and those feelings, a lot of what this sport is would feel a little bland. Part of why I continue to play is going out there and feeling like I’m doing something meaningful.”

According to Drew Ferris, that ability to embrace the pressure is part of what separates Cardona from other long snappers.

Ferris, a former University of Florida long snapper who attended NFL rookie and training camps with multiple teams,



Joe Cardona, a Point Loma resident and East County native, poses for a portrait with his new team, the L.A. Rams. (Photo by Los Angeles Rams via AP)

first met Cardona as a teenager when the two competed as local high school long snappers, Ferris, a graduate of San Diego Jewish Academy, has since trained long snappers at multiple levels.

The long snapper, Ferris said, has to repeat the same movement over and over through a long season, regardless of weather, fatigue or pressure. But snapping is only the first part of the job. After delivering the ball, he has to get up quickly, execute his blocking assignment and, on punts, become a coverage player. A specialist can have one bad snap that changes a game — and potentially his career.

Long snappers are constantly evaluated, Ferris added, and one mistake can put a player in danger of being replaced. Sometimes, he said, a player can lose his job when a position coach wants to bring in his own guy.

“The guys who last a long time, their B day is probably better than most guys’ A days,” Ferris said. “It’s maintaining a high floor.”

Let’s turn back to Belichick for a moment. In his long-snapping lecture, which took place five years ago, he pointed to a shift in

the mid-80s, and said “really the key guy in that was (Steve) DeOssie, in my opinion, because Steve was the first center that really, truly allowed a spread punt formation against all-out rush.”

He eventually arrived at the dilemma: A player who could perform multiple jobs would be valuable enough to save a roster spot. The problem, he said, is finding one.

“There would be so much value in a player that could do a couple of things and save a roster spot, but I would say there are so few of those players available,” Belichick said.

At that point, he was about to embark on the seventh season with Cardona on his roster.

‘VERY, VERY GOOD LONG SNAPPER’

Ferris sees Cardona’s longevity going beyond the mental. Cardona’s physical skill set is unusually well suited to the position.

“If I was to build a long snapper, I’d build one like him,” Ferris said.

Cardona is big, strong and athletic, with the ability to snap, block and cover. His wide base and footwork help him stay square through contact, while his control of the ball’s velocity allows him to deliver quick punt snaps without making life more difficult for the punter. He also has the athleticism to get off the ground quickly and transition from the snap into his blocking assignment.

“He’s always been a very, very good long snapper,” Ferris said.

Cardona’s rookie season showed him how much more the job demanded at the NFL level. Ferris remembers talking with him that offseason about the adjustment — learning protections, understanding the responsibilities within the punt and field-goal units and adapting to the speed of the NFL game.

Cardona told Ferris he wanted to play as long as he could, but he didn’t know how long he would last. Even eight seasons, Ferris remembers, seemed like a lofty goal at the time.

For Cardona, the answer to that uncertainty was preparation.

“From a longevity standpoint, I think one thing that’s really benefited me, and I credit my time at the Naval Academy for this, is always having a focus on preparation,” Cardona said. “I’ve always prided myself on being prepared for whatever’s going

to happen, and if you maintain that level of preparation, go out there and play hard and make the most of every opportunity, you just kind of find yourself continuing to do it.”

He eventually made that eight-season benchmark look modest.

Cardona became a mainstay in New England, spending a decade with the franchise before being released.

Leaving New England meant starting over.

“I had a lot of stability in New England for 10 years, and when I was thrust into a situation where I was released, as disappointing as it was for me, it was an opportunity to go and prove myself to a new team and a new group of teammates,” Cardona said.

NEW BEGINNING

There were familiar faces in Miami, including punter Jake Bailey, a Solana Beach native and Cardona’s former Patriots teammate, and kicker Riley Patterson, who had previously spent time on New England’s practice squad. But Cardona said the experience forced him to confront a more fundamental question about his career.

“I had to really understand if I was the player and the leader I thought I was, or if I had just been there the longest,” Cardona said. “That was my opportunity to figure that out.”

He answered it by playing all 17 games for the Dolphins in 2025.

Then came another move, this time bringing him back to California.

The Rams signed Cardona to a two-year contract in March. He began his 12th NFL season when the Rams played the 49ers Sept. 10.

For Cardona, the story of his career starts in El Cajon.

Cardona grew up playing El Cajon Pop Warner at Wells Park and playing both sides of the ball at Granite Hills High, in addition to long snapping. The football program was not nearly as successful then as it has become under coach Kellan Cobbs. Cardona remembers winning only four games during his varsity career.

But he remembers something else. “I got to play a lot of football,” Cardona said. “And those memories you make playing high school football, they never really leave you.”

Pacific BeachFest to feature live music, volleyball and fish tacos

By Dave Schwab
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

PACIFIC BEACH – Family friendly Pacific BeachFest showcasing live music, a fish taco contest, a beach volleyball tournament, and local shopping returns Saturday, Oct. 3, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Stretching along the iconic Pacific Beach boardwalk from Felspar Street to Grand Avenue, BeachFest brings together thousands of residents and visitors for day-long live music, food, family activities, and fun.

During the event, streets will be closed to traffic west of Mission Boulevard so street parking outside of the festival will be limited. Pay attention to “no park signs.”

There will be extra bike parking, ride share drop off and scooter parking at Thomas Avenue. Guests are encouraged to use alternative transportation to the event. There are also several paid parking lots nearby.

“Pacific BeachFest is more than a festival – it’s a celebration of our community, our culture, and our beach,” said Sunny Lee, executive director of Discover Pacific Beach, the community’s nonprofit business improvement district. Discover PB promotes the community through events, beautification, and business support.



Pacific BeachFest attendees receive fish tacos from the Fish Shop during the Best of the Beach Fish Taco Contest last year. (Photo by Thomas Melville/Times of San Diego)

FISH TACO CONTEST

2025 winner: Duck Dive.

Be part of Pacific BeachFest’s Best of the Beach Fish Taco Contest from 11 a.m.– 2 p.m. The people will decide who has the best fish taco as five restaurants will provide samples to attendees for judging from 11 a.m.–2 p.m. Tickets for \$20 include five tacos and are available on the day of the event at the food court.

BEACH RUNS

Saturday, Oct. 3, Pacific Beach 5K – Early Wave at 7:30 a.m.; Main Wave at 9 a.m. Pacific Beach Kids 1K at 10:15 a.m.

Sunday, Oct. 4, Pacific Beach Half Marathon at 6:30 a.m.

Kick-off Pacific Beachfest with the annual Pacific Beach 5K on Saturday morning. The PB Half Marathon will take place on Sunday morning. Rally your crew for this one-of-a-kind San Diego race. Come on out and join the party on the beach.

BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Returning to BeachFest, this popular Volo tourney features fun challenges for extra points with awesome prizes up for grabs for winning teams and the best costumes. All levels welcome for this co-ed event. See Volo’s website for more details and to register.

KIDS ACTION ALLEY

At Kids Action Alley youngsters will be kept busy with beachside rides as well as other free fun games and activities. The YMCA will fill this year’s kids action alley with a climbing wall and activities. Local schools and community groups from Pacific Beach will also welcome you to the neighborhood with goodies and activities. Don’t miss the school bands and local acts performing on the Community Stage nearby.

SHOPPING

Shop and browse over 60 arts and crafts displays and visit the many eclectic shops

Main Stage - Hornblend

9:30 a.m. DJ Betty Bangs

11a.m. Paging the 90s

1:30 p.m. Rock of Ages

3:30 p.m. Fishing for Chips

5:30 p.m. The Sleepwalkers

Grand Ave Stage

9 a.m. DJ Tony A

11:30 a.m. DJ Betty Bangs

2:30 p.m. DJ Brian Rose

5 p.m. TBD

Community Stage - Felspar

9 a.m. Nancy & Nico

10 a.m. Tap Fever Studios

11a.m. Crown Point Jr. Music Academy

11:50 a.m. Old School Skaters

12:50 p.m. PBMS Concert, Orchestra & Jazz Band

2 p.m. The Hazards

3 p.m. MBHS Preservationists & Mambo Orchestra

4:45 p.m. Thriller San Diego

5:30 p.m. Shoreline Blues

and popular restaurants at the PB Merchant Sidewalk Sale. Many PB businesses will have booths set up for attendees to browse. The arts and crafts village is along Garnet Avenue and on the boardwalk between Felspar and Garnet.

For more information, a schedule of entertainment, or to learn how to participate, visit pacificbeachfest.org.

Dancing queens and toga parties – Live music on the coast this week



Jack White plays The Sound on Sept. 30. (Photo courtesy of David James Swanson)

By Bart Mendoza
SPECIAL FOR TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

MOLLY HATCHET IN OB

Southern rock fans won’t want to miss an appearance from Florida-based group Molly Hatchet at the Holding Company on Oct. 1. Touring in advance of their first album in sixteen years, “Lost Horizon,” due out on Nov. 27, the quintet is firing on all cylinders, with their most recent single “Firing Line” being a worthy addition to their canon. While the band is promoting new music, fans can rest assured all their hits will be present and accounted for, with the biggest cheer sure to be reserved for the set closing “Flirtin’ With Disaster.”

• **Molly Hatchet: Thursday, Oct. 1 at The Holding Company, 5046 Newport Ave. 7 p.m. \$50.**

TOGA PARTY

Crowd-pleasing cover band, the Toga Party Band, takes over Humphreys Backstage Live on Sept. 25. Part of a new wave of costumed and themed groups, Toga Party goes all in on the ancient Roman imagery, with togas and laurels for the band members, and columns and vines amongst the stage décor. Excellent musicians, Toga Party’s set list consists of nothing but dance floor fillers, essentially being a fun live jukebox full of hits ranging from The Romantics to Prince.

• **The Toga Party Band: Friday, Sept. 25 at Humphreys Backstage Live, 2241 Shelter Island Drive. 8 p.m. \$15.**

DANCING QUEEN

More than four decades since they originally split, Swedish superstars ABBA

continue to be one of the most beloved groups to emerge from the 1970s. A staple of movie soundtracks and oldies radio, it’s a testament to the band’s popularity that at press time Abba’s 1992 album “Gold” was still on the Billboard charts after more than thirty years. With such a devoted fanbase, it’s only natural that there are numerous tribute bands around the world playing their music. One of the best, The Concert: A Tribute To ABBA, takes the stage at Humphrey’s Concerts by the Bay on Sept. 27. The band does a great job of replicating the sound and look of ABBA, with attention to detail. Longtime fans will particularly enjoy the band’s costume changes to match what was worn in ABBA’s iconic videos.

• **The Concert: A Tribute To ABBA: Sunday, Sept. 27 at Humphreys Concerts by the Bay, 2241 Shelter Island Drive. 8 p.m. \$78.**

Fall will bring top artists to San Diego arenas, concerts halls

By Peter Blackstock

SPECIAL TO TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO — Making plans for shows this fall? Let's help.

From indoor arenas to outdoor amphitheaters to concert halls to classic nightclubs, San Diego is chock-full of musical entertainment options this fall.

Times of San Diego's fall music guide offers a little bit of the big national acts coming to town. Be ready to sample all manner of music in venues from El Cajon to Poway and Solana Beach to Chula Vista, as well as hot spots in the city and on college campuses.

Billy Strings

Sept. 28, Pechanga Arena. In less than a decade, Strings went from self-released upstart to arena headliner — rare heights for a guy who plays bluegrass (albeit with a twist of punk energy). Strings is so highly respected by his peers that he got the coveted opening slot for Willie Nelson's 90th birthday at the Hollywood Bowl, where he played a song he wrote and sang with his fellow weed-toking picker. It's titled, naturally, "California Sober." No opening act. 7:30 p.m. Sold out (StubHub resales \$109 and up).

Gary Clark Jr.

Oct. 27-28, Humphreys. The Texas blues guitar slinger was considered an heir to Stevie Ray Vaughan in his teen years, but he gradually came into his own with a distinct style that injects blues with elements of rock, punk, soul, hip-hop and more. Both shows of this two-night stand are phone-free; all cell phones will be placed in a locking pouch. No opening act. 7:30 p.m. \$87.

Punch Brothers

Oct. 9, Epstein Family Amphitheater. Instrumental virtuosity is central to the Punch Brothers' identity. Now they have a new addition, a sister, fiddler Brittany Haas from the band Crooked Still. They also have a new album, "The Unsung Adventures of Punch Brothers," a nod to the album being their first-ever all-instrumental project. 7:30 p.m., \$82-\$135.

Vieux Farka Touré

Sept. 24, UCSD Epstein Family Amphitheatre. Mali native Touré's mesmerizing mix of adventurous African



Ken Marino of the Middle-Aged Dad Jam Band gets the crowd dancing during their high-energy show at the Epstein Family Amphitheater on May 17. (Photo by Thomas Melville/Times of San Diego)

folk and blues likely would have garnered worldwide attention even if his father had not been Malian music legend Ali Farka Touré. In recent years, the son has been more openly connecting with his father's music, especially on the 2022 album "Ali," a collaboration with eclectic Houston ensemble Khruangbin. Opening act, Gitkin. 7 p.m. \$35-\$55.

Mavis Staples

Sept. 27, Poway Center for the Performing Arts. A member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and a multiple Grammy winner, the biggest star from 1960s-70s family band the Staple Singers has become an American icon. At 87, Mavis remains remarkably active, touring regularly to bring her uplifting soul songs to the masses. She's also built a bridge to younger audiences by recording albums with noted indie producers including Jeff Tweedy and Brad Cook. 4 p.m. \$47-\$104.

Jack White

Sept. 30, The Sound, Del Mar. From acting (the Oscar-nominated "Cold Mountain") to producing (Loretta Lynn's "Van Lear Rose") to running a record label (Third Man), Jack White has stayed plenty busy enough over the years to almost make you forget that he made his name fronting the White Stripes and the Raconteurs. He's also released seven solo albums, including this

year's "Frozen Charlotte," which likely will be featured at this phone-free show (all cell phones will be placed in a locking pouch). No opening act. 8 p.m. \$104.

Marco Antonio Solis

Oct. 2, NICU Amphitheatre, Chula Vista. Winner of five Latin Grammys and a member of Billboard's Latin Music Hall of Fame, Solis is one of Mexico's great romantic balladeers. Since leaving his breakthrough band Los Bukis in 1996, he's released more than a dozen Spanish-language solo albums. No opening act. 8 p.m. \$78.25 and up.

The Wallflowers

Oct. 8-9, Belly Up, Solana Beach. Band leader Jakob Dylan hasn't been nearly as prolific as his famed father Bob, releasing just seven Wallflowers albums plus three solo efforts in a 34-year recording career. But the quality level of the Wallflowers' rock and pop material is consistently high, as they proved at an excellent Belly Up show two years ago. Whitmore Sisters open. 8 p.m. Thursday, 9 p.m. Friday. \$65-\$114.

Bonnie Raitt

Oct. 17, Rady Shell. Winner of 13 Grammys plus a Lifetime Achievement Award, Raitt's still rocking out at 76. Known for her fiery guitar playing as well as a richly expressive singing voice, Raitt has continued to create

some of her best work in the twilight of her career, winning Song of the Year at the 2023 Americana Music Awards for her single "Just Like That." Opening act Jon Cleary & the Absolute Monster Gentlemen. 7 p.m. \$71-\$210.

Iron & Wine

Oct. 20, Magnolia, El Cajon. The performing name of singer-songwriter Sam Beam, Iron & Wine has enchanted audiences with quietly beautiful songs since 2002's Sub Pop Records debut "The Creek Drank The Cradle." After a jump to 4AD and Nonesuch in the 2010s, Beam returned to Sub Pop for his last three releases, including this year's acclaimed "Hen's Teeth." Opening act, Dug. 8 p.m. \$42-\$92.

Joy Oladokun

Oct. 21, Observatory North Park. From Nashville via Arizona, Oladokun is known for poignantly addressing her experiences as a Black and queer woman with songs such as "I See America." She's touring behind a new album, "Hope Is A Heavy Thing," due out Sept. 25 on major label Concord. No opening act. 8 p.m. \$40.

Juanes

Oct. 22, Gallagher Square. A native of Colombia, Juanes has been among the biggest names in Latin rock and pop in the 21st century. He's won three Grammys and an astounding 26 Latin Grammys, and he's fresh off the release of the bold new concept album "JuanesTeban." No opening act. 8 p.m. \$69 and up.

Son Volt, Kelly Willis

Nov. 21, Music Box. Get twice the bang for your buck with this double bill of major players in Americana music. Jay Farrar's Son Volt charged out of the gate with a near-perfect debut album in 1995 and has continued combining indie-rock and trad-country sounds on a dozen records, including the new "Sound Signal Serenades." Son Volt and Willis collaborated on a 1996 EP, which makes her an ideal touring partner. The Austin country singer-songwriter has more than a dozen records of her own, counting collaborations with ex-husband Bruce Robison and a recent album as "Wonder Women of Country" with Brennen Leigh and Melissa Carper. 9 p.m. \$38.

From film fests to dance, more artsy activities to explore this fall

By Drew Sitton
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO – Some art defies easy categories. But variety is the spice! So, we created this special category to encompass a cornucopia of artful fall celebrations. Here we touch on fine arts, film, opera, dance, books and more.

VISIONES NOCTURNAS

Through Jan. 17, 2027. The new Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego exhibition, “Visiones Nocturnas: Queer Nightlife in Contemporary Art” includes art that explores a variety of spaces — clubs, dive bars, backyards and bathhouses—as sites of queer joy and possibility. More than a dozen artists have pieces in the exhibit, ranging from painting, performance and photography to sculpture, collage, video and more. Tickets, MCASD.

TROLLEY DANCES

Trolley Dances takes place Oct. 3 and 4 starting at UTC Mall, then shifting to various locations. In partnership with the



A group of performers line up for Trolley Dances. (Photo by Adrian Childress/Times of San Diego)

San Diego Metropolitan Transit System, dance companies and community groups perform at locations along public transit trolley lines and at stations. Former San Diego Dance Theater artistic director Jean Isaacs created the program over 25 years ago to make dance accessible to all of San Diego by taking art “to the people.” Tour guides lead audiences on and off the trolley to view

original dances from over 50 local performers. Tickets, San Diego Dance Theater.

SDIFF GALA

The San Diego International Film Festival celebrates 25 years at its After Dark Party on Oct. 17 at 8 p.m. at the Belly Up Tavern in Solana Beach. The festival will hand out filmmaker awards at the industry party before the Mustache Bash Band takes the stage. The entire fest takes place from Oct. 13-18, and includes popular programs like Night of the Stars and Culinary Cinema in La Jolla. Admission – festival passes start at \$250 with individual tickets available for parties and screenings.

GALBANI BELLA VITA FEST

Galbani Bella Vita Fest on Oct. 17 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Oct. 18 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Little Italy. Can’t wait until flagship event ArtWalk San Diego to see chalk art? The ArtWalk team has you covered with the third annual fest, where chalk painters take over the streets of Little Italy for the weekend. And don’t sleep on the Italian food and wine available for purchase at

the all ages, free event.

ITALIAN FILM FESTIVAL

Sept. 26 from 5:30-9:30 p.m. at The Brain Observatory (725 W Broadway). The festival is celebrating its 20th edition with a new launch event that honors the history that began with late founder Victor Laruccia and his legacy within Italian San Diego culture. Part of that legacy is the short film competition Ristretto Awards, now in its eighth edition. The evening starts with some of the most memorable short films from past competitions. Enjoy food from Forchettina, Italian wine and a silent auction. The rest of the festivaile, through Oct. 10, takes place at the Museum of Photographic Arts at the San Diego Museum of Art and Digital Gym Cinema in East Village. Tickets and schedules, San Diego Italian Film Festival.

OPERA AND TANGO

Oct. 4 at 6:30 p.m. at the San Diego Museum of Art. Camarada, the chamber music group, celebrates its first season in residence at SDMA with a concert blending music and visual art.

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Duckville: Strange little place that sat on Pacific Beach marshes

By Debbie L. Sklar
TIMES OF SAN DIEGO

There was once a place on the edge of San Diego where you could spend the day hunting ducks, fishing, swapping stories around a wood stove and perhaps stopping in at a place called the Hotel de Mallard.

It was called Duckville.

The name sounds invented. The place sounds even more unlikely.

But Duckville really existed — a ramshackle little settlement of shacks and makeshift buildings that occupied the marshes of old False Bay, the body of water now known as Mission Bay.

It was not a conventional town. There were no neat streets, grand houses or carefully surveyed lots.

Instead, Duckville was a loose collection of waterfront shacks associated with duck hunters and others drawn to the marshes and mudflats of Mission Bay. Historical accounts describe it as a place with no formal boundaries, more an informal destination than an incorporated community.

The Ocean Beach Historical Society dates



Duckville is shown on this 1930 U.S. Geological Survey map near the eastern edge of Mission Bay, close to Tecolote. (Photo and caption info courtesy of U.S. Geological Survey, La Jolla Quadrangle, 1930; map annotation by Debbie L. Sklar.)

Duckville's existence from the mid-1880s to the early 1930s.

And it apparently had a sense of humor.

One of its shacks was known as the Hotel de Mallard — a grand name for one of the rough waterfront structures. The historic photograph is identified as showing the Hotel de Mallard among the Duckville shacks.

The name fit the setting. Mission Bay's marshes and mudflats supported abundant waterfowl, and duck hunting became

increasingly popular among settlers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Historical accounts describe False Bay as a destination for sportsmen because of its shallow waters, marshy shores and duck habitat.

Duckville also benefited from the fact that old San Diego had a very different relationship with Mission Bay.

The bay was still commonly called False Bay, or Puerto Falso, during much of Duckville's early history. It was a broad, shallow landscape of marshes, mudflats and channels rather than the developed recreational waterway San Diegans know today. The City of San Diego notes that recreational development, including hunting and fishing facilities, began in False Bay in the late 19th century.

That made Duckville difficult to pin down.

It wasn't a formally incorporated community with precise boundaries. It was a place people knew how to find.

Historical maps provide another clue that Duckville was more than a colorful story passed down over the years. A 1930 U.S. Geological Survey map labels Duckville

near the eastern edge of Mission Bay, close to Tecolote. The USGS identifies the map as the 1930 La Jolla historical quadrangle.

The settlement was also vulnerable to the landscape around it.

The marshes flooded, and the rough structures could not withstand repeated inundation. The Ocean Beach Historical Society's account says the little community had dwindled considerably by the early 1920s and eventually washed away for a second time.

A separate historical account places Duckville among the hunting and fishing shanties near the San Diego River delta and notes that flooding destroyed facilities in the area.

The exact sequence of Duckville's destruction and rebuilding is difficult to reconstruct from surviving records, but the broader picture is clear: it was an informal settlement in a flood-prone marshland, and its existence was tied closely to the changing landscape of Mission Bay.

By the early 20th century, that landscape was already beginning to change.



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PB FUN FACT:

Did you know? Before Garnet was named Garnet, it was named College Ave. This name was chosen because of the College of Arts and Letters that opened in PB in 1888.

