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You can go to Germany and never be German, you can go to Japan and never be Japanese, but you can come to America and be an American."  
~Ronald Reagan



## GUN BUYBACK IN PICO RIVERA GARNERS 271 FIREARMS

L. A. COUNTY Supervisor Janice Hahn held a gun buyback event in Pico Rivera last Saturday Dec.16 with the event netting 271 firearms including: ten assault weapons; four ghost guns thirty-six shot guns, 107 rifles and 114 pistols. Photo by Jonathan Moore

## Exclusive ABCUSD Committee Proposes Schools for Consolidation

Four schools are south of Del Amo; one is in Cerritos and one is in Artesia.

By Brian Hews

Los Cerritos Community News has obtained an internal letter from ABCUSD to district employees and staff outlining the School Facilities and Declining Enrollment Capacities Ad-Hoc Committee proposal to consolidate six schools in the



ABCUSD.

The schools are Aloha ES, Furgeson ES, Hawaiian ES, Juarez Academy, Kennedy STEM, and Willow ES.

Hawaiian and Furgeson are in the one-square-mile city of Hawaiian Gardens; Aloha and Willow are in Lake-wood; Kennedy is in Cerritos, and Juarez is in the 1.6-square-mile city of Artesia.

The letter from ABCUSD Superintendent Gine Zietlow read, "The ad hoc committee has moved closer to their goal of providing a recommen-

[ See ABCUSD page 11 ]

## Novel Approach Born Out of Pandemic Brings Healthcare Directly on Campus to Students

By Laurie Hanson

In the post-pandemic days, one entrepreneur has found a way to bring healthcare to K-12 schools.

"If you can order a hamburger through an app and have it arrive at your doorstep, we should be able to deliver healthcare to kids at schools today," said Thomas Shaffer, President of Campus Clinics. Though only working in the healthcare field for three and a half years, Shaffer has surrounded himself with experts in the field, which has allowed him to think without historical limitations with a unique perspective in an innovative way.

During the pandemic, he volunteered as a board member of a non-profit COVID testing laboratory, which was a resource for



A SCHOOL-AGE student can receive on-campus healthcare through Campus Clinics. The program contracts with 42 school districts in California.

on-campus testing. It was there he noticed how these testing resources were located close to the students and staff and how the utilization of the resources increased. "The small difference in location between a testing site in a school parking lot and a testing cart in a hallway created a

massive difference in the number of individuals who used the service," he said. "As the needs of schools changed from COVID testing to physical and mental healthcare, the lab was not intended or well positioned to address these needs. To help the schools provide

[ See CLINIC page 12 ]

## L.A. County Agency Gives La Mirada Neighborhood an A+

By Brian Hews

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding provides housing rehabilitation grants and loans, conducts code enforcement, resurfaces neighborhood streets, expands drainage capacity to reduce street flooding, replaces damaged curbs, gutters, and sidewalks, plant street trees, and enhances street lighting.

CDBG funds and former Redevelopment Agency funds were used to improve La Mirada's Fos-

ter Park neighborhood over the past twenty years.

The Los Angeles County Development Au-



thority (LACDA) conducts a study every ten years to determine if conditions exist, such as deteriorated buildings or abandoned

properties, that negatively impact the neighborhood overall and, therefore, qualify for CDBG funding.

LACDA recently reviewed conditions in the Foster Park neighborhood and recognized the city's efforts to modernize the infrastructure and enhance the properties in the neighborhood. As a result of these advancements, the community, located west of Valley View Ave., no longer requires CDBG funding.

Linda Jenkins, Director [ See LA MIRADA page 12 ]

## Los Cerritos Community News Investigation Central Basin Director Garza's Private Company Represented La Luz Del Mundo While Its Leader Was an Indicted Pedophile

Garza consulted with La Luz Del Mundo for 15 months after its leader was indicted for forcible sex with a minor and 35 other heinous counts.

By Brian Hews

An examination of Central Basin (CB) Director Juan Garza's Statement of Economic Interests (SEI) obtained by Los Cerritos Community



News has found an extremely disturbing business relationship that will call into question Garza's personal morals and standards as a businessman.

Every elected official and public employee who makes or influences governmental decisions is required to submit a SEI, annually to their agency's legal or personnel department.

The SEI ensures transparency by providing information to the public

about an official's personal financial interests, ensuring that officials are making decisions in the public's best interests and not enhancing their personal piggybanks.

When he was appointed CB Director to replace the late Phil Hawkins, Garza was required to file an Incoming SEI, which LCCN obtained via a public records request a few weeks ago.

Garza listed fifteen companies where he is getting \$10,000 or more in income, as required by the Fair Political Practices Commission on the SEI.

That would indicate that Garza is receiving, at a minimum, \$150,000 from the companies for his Bellflower-based company, Six Heron, and \$60,000 from his current employer, California Cities for Self-Reliance-JPA.

Yet, with all that income, LCCN found Garza to be delinquent with his Bellflower business license fee for four years in October of this year; Garza was on the Bell-

[ See GARZA page 15 ]

## Marshall Goodman Selected La Palma Mayor

By Brian Hews

The La Palma City Council at its regular meeting on December selected Marshall Goodman as Mayor and Mark Wald-

man. He congratulated outgoing Mayor Debbie Baker, acknowledging her successful leadership, stating, "Mayor Baker did a great job steering the ship."



**NEW MAYOR:** (l-r) Councilmember Nitesh Patel, Councilmember Janet Keo Conklin, Mayor Marshall Goodman, Councilmember Debbie Baker, and Mayor Pro Tem Mark Waldman.

man as Mayor Pro Tem for 2024.

"It's an honor to be here, and I look forward to collaborating with the Staff and Council to enhance the community," said Good-

Elected to the City Council in November 2016, Mayor Goodman also assumed the role of President of the League of California Cities Orange County Divi-

[ See LA PALMA page 12 ]



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## LA County Moves Forward with Southeast LA Cultural Center



**THE PROPOSED SOUTHEAST** Los Angeles (SELA) Cultural Center on county property along the Los Angeles River in the city of South Gate near the intersection of Imperial Hwy and the 710 freeway.

### Staff Report




This week the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a motion authored by Supervisor Janice Hahn and co-authored by Supervisor Hilda L. Solis to create a plan for the county’s development and operations of the proposed Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) Cultural Center on county property along the Los Angeles River in the City of South Gate near Imperial Hwy and the 710 freeway

“Southeast LA is bursting with art and with talent, but what it has been denied for too long are the space and investments to celebrate it,” said Hahn, who represents Southeast Los Angeles. “This community deserves the same access to arts and

cultural institutions that the Westside and Downtown LA have had for decades. The Southeast LA Cultural Center has been a dream of artists here in SELA for years, and I am proud that we can take this huge step toward making this dream a reality with the full force of the County behind it and the unanimous support of our board.”

The project has already received \$124 million in state funds secured by Speaker Emeritus Anthony Rendon and State Senator Lena Gonzalez. Los Angeles County departments will now take on the role of planning the construction of the Frank Gehry-designed project, transforming what is now a Los Angeles County Public Works yard into this world-class cultural center.

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# Trump Said He Wanted to be a Dictator-Believe Him

Do you really think he can be a "dictator for a day," like he is just going to quit as a dictator on the second day?

## Supreme Court Must Stop Trump Delay Scheme

By Jesse Wegman

Almost three years later after the Jan. 6 insurrection Mr. Trump is still trying to evade legal accountability by delay and misdirection.

Last week, the case reached the Supreme Court, where litigation is normally measured in months, if not years.

But sometimes time is of the essence. That's the case now, as the court weighs whether to expedite the case against Mr. Trump, who is trying to get his criminal charges thrown out.

Last week after the federal trial judge, Tanya Chutkan, rejected Mr. Trump's legal arguments that he is immune from prosecution, he appealed to delay, but special counsel Jack Smith countered by going directly to the Supreme Court, asking the justices to take the case away from the appeals court and rule quickly.

It was, he acknowledged, "an extraordinary request" for "an extraordinary case."

The justices took the hint, ordering Mr. Trump to file his response by next week.

The justices were right not to sit on Mr. Smith's appeal. The American people deserve to know, well before they head to the polls, whether Mr. Trump is a convicted criminal — guilty

of conspiring to subvert the outcome of a free and fair election to keep himself in power.

The Jan. 6 trial is scheduled to start in early March, and it cannot move forward until the court decides whether he, as a former president, is immune from prosecution for his actions in office.

The good news is there's nothing stopping them. The justices are fully capable of acting fast when the circumstances demand. In the 2000 presidential election the dispute over Florida's vote count rocketed up to the court not once but twice in a matter of days.

The court issued its final opinion in *Bush v. Gore*, which was 61 pages in all, including dissents, barely 24 hours after hearing oral arguments.

In 1974 the court managed to decide another hugely consequential case involving the presidency — Richard Nixon's refusal to turn over his secret Oval Office tapes — over the course of a few weeks in June and July.

The court's ruling, which came out during its summer recess, went against Mr. Nixon and led to his resignation shortly afterward.

The stakes in both cases were extraordinary, effectively deciding who would (or would not) be president. In both cases, the justices knew the country was waiting on them, and they showed they had no trouble resolving a legal dispute rapidly.

The Jan. 6 charges against Mr. Trump are similarly consequential. Never before in American history had a sitting president interfered with the peaceful transfer of power; all Americans have a compelling interest in getting a verdict in this case before the election.

For that to happen, the Supreme Court needs to rule on Mr. Trump's claim of executive immunity. The former president's argument is that his actions to overturn the election were taken in the course of his official duties and thus that he is absolutely immune from prosecution for them. It's an absurd claim, as Judge Chutkan explained in denying it on Dec. 1.

"Whatever immunities a sitting president may enjoy, the United States has only one chief executive at a time, and that position does not confer a lifelong 'get-out-of-jail-free' pass," she wrote. "Defendant's four-year service as commander in chief did not bestow on him the divine right of kings to

evade the criminal accountability that governs his fellow citizens."

Mr. Trump made two additional arguments, involving double jeopardy and the First Amendment, that were even weaker than the immunity claim, and Judge Chutkan denied those as well. She was probably tempted to toss out all of them as frivolous, as so many of Mr. Trump's delaying tactics, dressed up as legal arguments, turn out to be. Instead she erred on the side of caution because no one has ever made such arguments, so there is no legal precedent for assessing their validity.

Of course, the reason no one had made these arguments is that no former president had been criminally charged. Classic Donald Trump, "who can shoot someone on 5th Avenue without getting charged."

The irony is that even as he seeks to delay and obstruct the justice system, Mr. Trump is bolstering the case for a speedy trial, thanks to his repeated threatening outbursts on social media.

He has attacked the judge, the prosecutor and others, including those who are likely to testify against him, routine acting out and daring decent Americans everywhere to do something, anything, to stop him.

"He keeps challenging the system to hold him accountable," Kristy Parker of Protect Democracy, a nonpartisan advocacy group, said. "Most other defendants who behaved in this way would risk being thrown in jail for violating the conditions of their bail."

She was referring to the propensity for threats and violence that Mr. Trump's supporters, egged on by their overlord, have shown in the face of any attempt to hold him to account.

At this point, however, many Americans have accepted that risk as part of the price of cleansing the nation of a uniquely malicious political figure. We know the violence is coming, just as we know Mr. Trump will claim that any election he doesn't win is rigged against him.

"The best way to do anything about this is to have the trial soon," Ms. Parker said. Right now, there are nine people in America who can help guarantee that is what happens.

*Ms. Wegman is on the Editorial Board of the New York Times.*

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## Teen Entrepreneur Runs Own Business, Dreams of Greater Things

By Laurie Hanson

Every day, 14-year-old Makenzie Dowlin of Buena Park learns something new or faces a new challenge.

The daughter of a single mother is a high school freshman at California Connections Academy where she attends class online full-time and maintains a 4.0 GPA, but also runs her business, Beaded by Kenzie. With the help of her single parent mother and grandmother, she started her own small business to afford attending a summer school nursing program and eventually wants to join the U.S. Air Force.

"It all makes me so much stronger," Dowlin said of her challenges. "The balance between school, my clubs, business, family, being a kid, and volunteering is sometimes a struggle but extremely rewarding. It empowers me even more, and with every dollar, I get closer to my goal!"

Her teachers have also been very supportive. "They really care about my success as a student and encourage me to do amazing things inside the classroom and beyond," she explained. "Since enrolling, I've enjoyed the flexibility of creating a learning schedule that works for me."

She found it allowed her to be proactive and independent in her schoolwork. She can work ahead or slow down when necessary. It has helped her maintain a 4.0 GPA while participating in other things she's passionate about. One is the Young Entrepreneurs Club she created for other students who want to start or already have their own businesses.

After watching her mother struggle for many years as a single parent and attending a summer program with Girls Inc. Eureka!

Dowlin felt empowered with the idea of selling handmade bracelets to afford a summer school nursing program. As a free, unique five-year program, Girls Inc. Eureka! provides girls with an introduction to STEM, personal development, sports, mentorship, and career exploration while preparing them for their education after high school.

"They taught me that there is absolutely nothing that should stand in the way of my goals and dreams," she said. "They teach girls how to become young ladies and be successful women whether it be in business or entrepreneurship."

By growing her business and using proceeds from it, Dowlin hopes to afford every year of the summer nursing program while helping her mother.

"I've watched my mom struggle my whole life, so I want to do something so I can help her," she explained. "With my mom being a single mom, I knew she could not afford the cost of this and I'm too young to get a job, so I brought the idea up to my mom and grandma. With their full support, I haven't looked back, and with my determination to succeed and never give up, I plan to take this to the next level."

"I started my business in August of this year," she added. "My mom has been my biggest supporter, [and] without her I would not have this drive to succeed."

"When I was first starting, every time I mentioned something I needed, my grandma and mom battled to see who would have it delivered to our doorstep first," Dowlin said humorously. "Grandma would always win! Our family and friends are [also] very supportive and show up to all my events!"

With nursing and success in mind, Dowlin said, "I love helping people!"

"My plan is to get good grades, get the Gold Presidential Award for Volunteering, and have plenty of scholarship options so I can take this with me when signing up for the United States Air Force," she explained.



WITH HER family's support, 14-year-old Makenzie Dowlin (right) has launched her own small business while maintaining a 4.0 GPA at. Her mother, Kimberly Strickler (left), have been instrumental in her success. Makenzie is raising money for attending a summer nursing school program, and eventually wants to join the U.S. Airforce.

As in any business, success doesn't come overnight. She said now when she makes a profit, she reinvests half to continue having plenty of stock.

"I am halfway to my goal of \$6,500 by summertime so I can participate in the nursing program," Dowlin said. "I haven't decided on which nursing program I'd like to join yet, but with the help of my mom, we will determine which is the best fit for me."

In parting, Dowling hopes others always remember age means nothing when it comes to a person's dreams and goals.

"You can be young, or you can be old but the sooner you start the quicker your dreams can become your reality," she said. "Thank you to Girls Inc. for teaching me this, and all my teachers for supporting my passion to make my dreams a reality!"



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# Happy Holidays!



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### ABCUSD Board President Accepts Award from Artesia City Council



**NEWLY ELECTED** ABCUSD Board President Sophia Tse accepts the Partnership Award from the Artesia City Council at its December 11 meeting. Present were (3rd from left). ABC VP Ernie Nishii, Artesia Councilman Rene Trevino, ABC Trustee Michael Eugenio, Councilwoman Melissa Ramoso, Mayor pro tem Tony Lima, Mayor Monica Manalo, Cerritos College President Dr. Jose Fierro, Ms. Tse, ABC Superintendent Gina Zietlow, Cerritos College Board President Dr. Shin Liu, and Artesia Councilman Ali Taj. Tse remarked, "Thank you to the Artesia City Council for recognizing ABCUSD and our longstanding partnership; the results of this partnership are great schools."

### Councilpersons Attend Filipino American History Month Celebration



#### Staff Report

Artesia Councilperson Melissa Ramoso and Cerritos Councilperson Frank Yokoyama, along with Arleen Rojas from Carson, Juslyn Manalo from Daly City and Secretary of Labor Julie Su represented their respective cities and the Filipino Community on Tuesday, November 28 at the White House.

The electeds celebrated Filipino American History Month at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

**AT WHITE HOUSE:** Artesia Councilperson Melissa Ramoso and Cerritos Councilperson Frank Yokoyama at the celebration.

### Recycle Your Christmas Tree Beginning December 26

#### Cerritos

Residents in single-family homes can recycle their Christmas trees beginning Tuesday, December 26 through Friday, January 5 by placing them at the curb for pick-up by 7 a.m. on their trash collection days. The trees will be composted or used for the Los Angeles County Sanitation District's daily landfill cover.

Trees to be recycled should not contain any lights, tinsel, nails, metal stands or decorations, and should not be placed in bags. Trees more than 4 feet tall should be cut in half. Flocked trees will be accepted.

Businesses in Cerritos or residents living in apartments or condominiums can place trees next to their trash bin for collection.

#### Artesia

CR & R provides holiday tree collection following December 25. You may place trees less than 6 feet inside your green waist cart. If your tree is over 6 feet please cut it in half and lace it at the curb on your regular collection day. Tree collectors will come by on your collection day.

Holiday trees are considered organic waste, which means they can be composted, mulched, or even converted into fuel.

The tree is only considered to be organic if it is stripped down to its original form. This means removing all of the lights, ornaments, and tinsel. the flocked tree, where the tree is sprayed white for a winter effect, is not compostable



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# Artesia Coffee Shop Morphs Into Cool Wine Bar on Weekends

Bakers & Baristas transforms into an ambitious wine bar called Luka after dark.

By Cathy Chaplin  
Eater.com

Opened by brothers Eric and Joseph Quan in 2015 on the border of Artesia and Cerritos, Bakers & Baristas is best known for its flavored lattes and laminated pastries, including classic croissants and buckwheat kouign amann.

Now, the popular daytime spot is offering an all-new dinner service called Luka.

Named after co-owner and head baker Eric's newborn son, the weekends-only

affair serves small and large plates paired with globally sourced, natural-leaning wines.

"Our goal is to create a neighborhood wine bar-restaurant that we feel like our city is lacking," Eric Quan said.

While wine bars are having a certifiable moment in LA proper, they are a relative rarity in this southeast pocket of the city.

"The neighborhood's changed a lot since we first opened, it was just mainly chain restaurants," said Quan.

"Now, there's an influx of more independent operators, but not anyone that's pushing the boundaries like this."

Though Bakers and Baristas briefly served a "gastropub" dinner menu eight years ago, this latest iteration reflects how far the Quans have come and where they hope to go in the future.

"Everyone's starting to have a family, so everyone's starting to move back to Cerritos and we're just trying to create a space for people who enjoy going out, having a nice meal, having a couple of glasses of wine, and not having to drive to LA or Orange County," he says.

One great dish is the spicy blue prawns with Calabrian chile, fermented shrimp butter, fennel pollen, parsley, and scallion ash.

**LUKA OFFERS** weekend specials such as this pork sisig dish—crispy pork belly with chili, yuzu mayo and pickled onion topped off with a fried egg all on top of a fluffy bed of rice.



MARINATED Cherry Tomatoes; Spicy Blue Prawns; Whole Branzino and Caesar Salad highlight some of Luka's menu in Artesia. Photos from Eater.com

Chef Mike Judilla, who worked at Bakers and Baristas when it first opened, spent nearly a decade cooking in Buenos Aires at mom-and-pop restaurants and in Las Vegas at places like the Italian American hot spot Carbone and Wolfgang Puck's high-end steakhouse CUT before relocating back to LA to open Luka with the Quans.

While Luka's evening menu differs from what's brewing and baking during daytime hours, the ingredient sourcing philosophy — supporting local and sustainable producers like Long Beach mushrooms and Wisner Family Farms — and dedication to making everything from scratch carries through from day to night.

Luka's menu is comprised of just over a dozen dishes. Starters include marinated olives with fennel, a hamachi crudo drizzled with chive oil, and a loaf of house-baked country bread paired with salted Isigny Sainte-Mère butter and white anchovies.

Judilla's "Potato Situation" makes for a hearty side dish and consists of a deep-fried, creme fraiche-laced mashed potato

puck dusted with chive powder.

Shareable mains include squid ink spaetzle slathered in Santa Barbara sea urchin butter, a Peadar & Barnett pork collar with green harissa, and a hefty 20-ounce, bone-in Flannery ribeye steak.

To pair with Judilla's cooking is a well-curated beer and wine selection. "Right now we're still building our wine list," said Eric. "The goal is to have a good mix of wine at a pretty approachable price point." Luka's list of 25 to 30 bottles leans French and natural but also includes Italian and domestic varieties.

Luka brings a moody, candle-lit vibe starting at 5:30 p.m. from Fridays through Sundays.

Front-of-house manager Holly Chi runs the 40-seat, full-service dining room. "We're just trying to create a place that we would like to go to," Eric says. "Super casual, great food with great sourcing."

*Luka is located at 11700 South Street, Artesia, CA 90701, and is open Friday through Sunday from 5:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.*





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## 26th ANNUAL NIKE TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS

## WHITNEY GIRLS BASKETBALL SPLITS FIRST TWO GAMES OF PRESTIGIOUS OUT OF STATE TOURNAMENT

By Loren Kopff

@LorenKopff on X/Twitter

MESA, AZ-The first appearance in the 26th Annual NIKE Tournament of Champions for the Whitney High girls basketball program didn't go the way head coach Myron Jacobs would have wanted. The Wildcats flew out of Long Beach this past Monday morning, arrived in Phoenix around 9:15 and had roughly five hours to get their rental vehicles, check in at the tournament hotel and head over to the Legacy Sports Complex, located in the far eastern suburb of Mesa.

When its game against Las Vegas-based Faith Lutheran High began an hour later, Whitney quickly trailed 10-4 before going on a 9-4 run to end the quarter. But inconsistent play on both sides of the ball and foul trouble to senior star player Kylie Wang was too much to overcome as the Wildcats lost to the Crusaders 51-47. Whitney was held scoreless the final 1:25 of the contest after junior Haylie Wang had tied the game. In fact, Whitney took one shot over that span, which didn't come until less than five seconds remained on the clock.

"There's no excuses," said Jacobs. "We had our [butt] handed to us because we didn't want to listen. That's what it all comes down to; not listening and not rebounding and terrible passing. There's no excuse. We landed at nine; we didn't land at two. At the end of the day, we lost, fair and square."

After the early six-point deficit to begin the game, Whitney stormed back to take a one-point lead. The Wang sisters combined for all seven points in that

stretch, including a steal and subsequent basket from Haylie Wang and her receiving a pass from Kylie Wang to make it 11-10 with 2:21 left in the stanza.

Faith Lutheran would respond with an 8-2 run before the Wildcats regained the lead with eight straight points, highlighted by a three-pointer from freshman Alyssa So with 5:09 left in the half. That would be Whitney's largest lead of the contest and the only three-pointer the team would get. The Wildcats were one of six from beyond the arc. The Crusaders would end the half on a 13-6 run and would not relinquish the lead until Haylie Wang tied the game late.

"We just lost," said Jacobs. "They wanted it more than us. We went out there trying to look for fouls and look to play superstar basketball and not look to play team basketball. If something is working, why go away from it? A three doesn't solve anything. A mid-range doesn't solve anything. We lost, fair and square."

Despite the game staying close throughout the first half, Kylie Wang was saddled with three fouls in the first seven minutes of the game. She picked up her fourth early in the fourth quarter but would not foul out and ended the game with a season-low eight points on three of 15 shooting from the field but had six rebounds and two steals.

"She was trying to do too much," said Jacobs. "She was trying to do entirely too much. Instead of relying on everyone around her, she was trying to do too much, and that's what you're not supposed to do as a senior."

Whitney outscored Faith Lutheran



**THE WHITNEY HIGH** girls basketball team poses after defeating Mesa (AZ) High 51-30 this past Tuesday morning in the second of four games in the NIKE Tournament of Champions. PHOTO BY LOREN KOPFF.

11-8 in the third quarter, including a 9-2 run over the final 4:50. But the fourth quarter would see the teams trade point for point, or basket for basket as the 'Cats got it down to a point four times, but could never grab what would have been their fourth lead of the game.

Haylie Wang led everyone with 22 points and had seven rebounds with three steals while sophomore Mady Macaraeg added 10 points and nine rebounds. So finished with seven points and five rebounds as no one else got into the scoring column.

"It comes down to rebounding," said Jacobs. "You can't let a team get three consecutive rebounds back to back to back to score and then, there's 1:45 [left in the game] and we're not sprinting back on defense putting it on the fence. That's the personal issues we have to fix."

This past Tuesday morning, Whitney faced hometown Mesa and blasted the Jackrabbits 51-30. Whitney, which improved to 10-3, scored the first 12 points in the first 4:56, then went on runs of 7-0, 6-0 and 10-0 in the first half as it led 42-

[ See WHITNEY page 11 ]

## GIRLS BASKETBALL

## GAHR BREEZES PAST VALLEY CHRISTIAN IN NEIGHBORLY BATTLE OF DEPLETED TEAMS



By Loren Kopff

@LorenKopff on X/Twitter

The Gahr High girls basketball team, trying to feed off the success it had last season when it went to the CIF-Southern Section Division 5AA championship game, began this season with 11 players. But when the Gladiators hosted Valley Christian High last Friday night, they were down to eight players.

They weren't getting any sympathy cards from the Defenders as they were in a little worse condition, suiting up seven players out of 11 but with two starters out since at least Dec. 1. Against Gahr, they started three sophomores and two freshmen while the Gladiators started three juniors and two freshmen. When it was all said and done, Gahr showed why it is still the favorites to go deep in the playoffs, crushing its Artesia Blvd. neighbors 63-34.

It was a game where others had to step up and for Gahr, it was Simarpreet Sogi, who blistered V.C. for 27 points and three steals.

"That's actually the mindset," said Gahr head coach Alfred Howard. "Without a starter tonight, without two starters on Wednesday, you want to [have] the next man up mentality, but actually, everybody should be ready to go. We're not as deep as last year, so one through nine has to be ready to go because any given night, we have to play."

Sogi began her team's scoring with a three-pointer, but with Gahr quickly down 5-3, it went on an 11-0 run and the Defenders wouldn't get closer than seven points the rest of the game. Without the services of senior Jada Thompson and sophomore Jocelyn Tani, the Defenders tried to find other options and two of them came from freshman Hannah Burgoyne. She and fellow freshman Jenna Van

Kampen each scored five points in the first half while sophomores Liana Lopez and Aniyah Peoples each had two points as Gahr was comfortably ahead 37-14 at the break.

"It's pretty difficult when I can't do what we normally do because I don't have the bodies," said V.C. head coach Dan Leffler. "We need to play man and switch everything, and we can't because I don't have the personnel to do it right now because we're banged up."

"[Burgoyne] is a great player; she's a good shooter who had a great night shooting," he continued. "But we're pretty one-dimensional with the crew that I've got right now."

Gahr was up 19-7 after the first quarter with Sogi getting 13 points on four of six shooting from the field and three downtown shots. By the time the game had reached halftime, Sogi had 25 points with half a dozen three-pointers while junior Jody Colbert (four points, three assists, two rebounds) and freshmen Rachel Fredenburg (four points, 11 rebounds) and Ella Sims (four points, eight rebounds) combined to do the other damage.

"Ella didn't want to play basketball anymore," said Howard. "She came in; she bought in to what we were doing. She's having fun, but also Rachel Fredenburg. She's a freshman also. So, with those two, Gahr's future is bright with those two young players."

"Honestly, at that point, I'm not super concerned about [Sogi]," said Leffler about the first half. "I'm more concerned about us and not quitting and fighting through adversity. Hey, these are the girls we have, and we have to go compete. We're in the gym now and we have to go.

The goal was to win the third quarter and I think we came up short."

After a free throw from Gahr junior Karen Barrocan opened the second half scoring, the Defenders scored consecutive baskets for the first time—a three pointer from Burgoyne and a two-pointer from Van Kampen. Later in the stanza, Lopez had back to back buckets to make it 49-25 as V.C. was outscored 14-11. It would be outscored by three points again in the fourth quarter as Leffler continued to be pleased with his team not quitting.

"We've played in a few of these now, where we've been getting beat up pretty good score-wise," said Leffler. "Our message is life is hard; we've got to do hard things, and we're going to figure out how to face adversity and keep finishing games because that's what we signed up for."

While Sogi was held to two points on one of seven shooting in the second half, Mims had a monster third quarter with five rebounds, four points, all on free throws and a couple of blocks. Four other players combined for eight points as the team is finding other ways to pick up the slack while junior Christine Ho, a key starter from last season, remains sidelined. Fredenburg and Mims each finished with 10 points with the former grabbing 17 rebounds and the latter getting 15 boards.

"It's the confidence," said Howard of Sogi. Last year as a 10th grader and this year as a junior, you could see out there she's just more confident. We really needed that tonight without Christine being here."

For the Defenders, Burgoyne scored a team-high 17 points and had five rebounds. Since scoring eight points in the

[ See GAHR page 11 ]

## NORWALK BOYS BASKETBALL RUNS OUT OF STEAM, FACES FAMILIAR SITUATION AS LEAGUE APPROACHES

By Loren Kopff  
@LorenKopff on X/Twitter

ANAHEIM-Considering how the beginning of the Edward Prange Memorial Basketball Tournament went for the Norwalk High boys basketball team went, head coach Brent Campanelli must be pleased with how it ended. The Lancers lost to Huntington Beach High by 34 points last Thursday, then bounced back to knock off Anaheim High 48-31 the next day.

Facing host Loara High last Saturday, Norwalk was down by 10 points in the first quarter to trail by a point with 88 seconds left in the first half. It was down by 17 points in the third quarter only to trail by two points with 2:51 left in the game. But that's where the Lancers went cold and ended up losing 60-52.

"They are resilient; they're tough," said Campanelli. "We have always been like that and when you're playing from behind, you really don't have any other choice than kind of to play chaotic and play fast. I've been talking to the guys about identity and what their identity on finding is trying to be a little bit grimy; a little more tougher defensively to create open shots and try to allow them to play a little more free. That's what was happening at that moment."

The Saxons were up by 10 points with 4:51 left in the third quarter before scoring the next seven points to hold their largest lead of the game. However, Norwalk responded with an 8-0 run with junior Andruw Castellanos scoring the last six points. Loara upped its lead to 14 points less than half a minute into the fourth quarter before the Lancers found

their groove again, this time going on a 9-1 run after junior Aaron Reyes hit a three-pointer with 4:07 left to play.

A free throw from Reyes with 2:51 remaining made it a 52-50 contest. But the Lancers would miss five straight shots from the field since Reyes' three-pointer and didn't score again until sophomore David Zazueta scored off an offensive rebound with 12.5 seconds left. Norwalk had outscored Loara 22-7 over a span of 8:50 in the second half.

"I thought [junior] Ariel [Rodriguez] got a really clean look right in front of me," said Campanelli. "He had a three-point look right in front of me and he missed it. Andruw had played really, really well in that stretch and knocked in a few, I know, and he had another look that didn't go in. They tightened up and they got urgent as well and they tightened things up as well. They made it difficult for us."

Zazueta led the Lancers with 16 points, had six rebounds and two steals while Castellanos added a dozen points and also had six rebounds and two steals.

"We lean on those two guys," said Campanelli. "David has really stepped up as a sophomore and Andruw was kind of a guy we were always going to lean on as a primary playmaker. Talking about resilient, Andruw Castellanos is basically the definition of it for us. What he goes through night in and night out, being undersized...he is the vocal leader of the team. He sets the tone, he never makes an excuse, he takes ownership. Having him be the focal point is good for us."

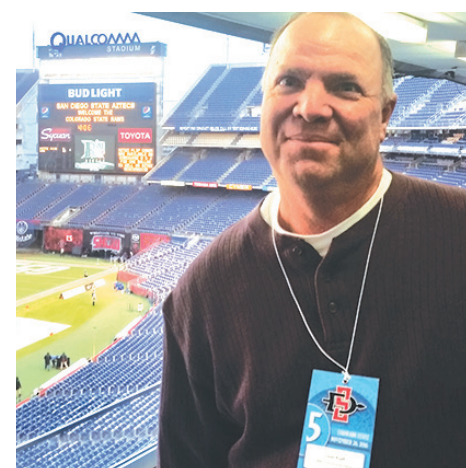
Also having a good game was Reyes, who scored 14 points and grabbed three rebounds. However, things might have

been better for the Lancers through the first 12 games had they had the services of senior Jakhari Ramey, who averaged 11 points a game last season. He tore his ACL and MCL towards the end of summer. Without him in the lineup, Campanelli has had to make some adjustments with his starting five. On top of that, senior Robert Salazar hasn't played in the last five games.

"The leaps he had taken in the summer; it was just the sky's the limit kind of thing," said Campanelli. "And to be honest, it still is for him, because he will make a full recovery. But we miss him dearly, absolutely. His skill set, his energy...the joy that guys feel just being around him. He had the ball in his hands a lot last year; he had the ball in his hands a lot in the summer and so guys had to step up. But we don't dwell on it, and he wouldn't want us to. We just keep plugging away."

The Lancers find themselves in a precarious situation just like the one they were in around this time last season. Norwalk was sitting at 7-11 last season after a 55-53 loss to Loara in the last game of the Anaheim Colony Classic, knowing it had to go at least 7-3 in Mid-Cities League action just to make the playoffs, a 6-4 finish would leave the Lancers with a sub-.500 overall record and no chance of the CIF-Southern Section playoffs.

Norwalk began the week with a convincing 65-15 win over John Glenn High, improving to 5-8 with five games remaining before heading into league action. After a game on Catalina Island against Avalon High on Friday, Norwalk will participate in the Estancia Tournament beginning with a Dec. 26 game against



**News and Notes**  
**From Press Row**  
LCCN Sport Editor  
Loren Kopff

Pioneer High.

"It's really frustrating," said Campanelli. "I think we are better than what our record indicates. We need to start to pile up wins, obviously. I do think we are a better basketball club than what our record shows. But [with] six games before league, if we can go 3-3 in those, that will help. It will keep us right where we're at. Then we get a couple of guys back that can play. Hopefully, Robert is healthy, and we get a couple of [transfers] who are eligible to play after Christmas."

In other boys basketball action, Artesia High flew across the country to play in the Osceola Tournament and lost to Poinciana High out of Kissimmee, FL 57-22 this past Tuesday before knocking off Kathleen High of Lakeland, FL 58-50

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### GAHR from page 10

season opener against Santa Fe High on Nov. 13, Burgoyne has reached double figures in scoring in 12 straight games, including back to back games in which she had 30 and 32 points against San Gabriel Academy and Norwalk High respectively.

"It kind of goes in spurts," said Leffler. "Now, as people start to recognize that she can score, we're going to have to be more creative with what we do offensively. That gets a little more difficult with the girls I have on the floor because I can't draw it up on the fly like I normally would, like the old days."

Lopez had eight points and seven rebounds while Van Kampen added seven points and five rebounds and two assists. The Defenders dropped to 6-7 but were 3-3 before losing Thompson and 3-4 when Tani went down. They will host Bellflower High on Dec. 21, then face Marlborough High on Dec. 26 in the first round of the Larry Doyle Tournament of Champions at Marina High.

"I think to get where are right now with kind of what we've been through, I'm happy with it," said Leffler. "I'm not satisfied with it, but I'm happy with it, and I feel like we've probably won a couple of games that people think we're going to win, especially when we're banged up after the 3-3 mark. I feel good about where we're at, but we have a long way to go yet, and we're running out of time because league is coming."

"It's not all me," he later added. "So, I'm going to start with that. It's the girls; we have younger girls who want to work hard, and they have to show up and put in work. I demand that of them because I'm going to be here and I'm going to be on time early and so are they. I think we're getting to a place where we understand the instructions are important."

Last season, Gahr started 5-5, then won 16 of their next 17 regular season games before going 5-2 in the playoffs. Now, with just four returning players and its only returning starter injured, Gahr has stunned the critics and finds itself at 10-1 with upcoming games against Lakewood High (Dec. 18), Mayfair High (Dec. 20) and Rancho Alamitos High (Dec. 22) and four more games in the Rancho Alamitos Tournament from Dec. 26-30.

"You don't get your freshmen until after June or July," said Howard. "So, we didn't know [who we would have]. When I made the schedule, there was no Ella; there was no Rachel, there was no [freshman] Lexi [Thomas], there was no [sophomore] Chloe [Beard]. The schedule was tailored for the returners, but with only one starter returning. It's really a blessing that we inherited this talent because in May and June, we didn't know [how it would be] with the three returners from last year."

### WHITNEY from page 10

13 at the break.

"I think the message was clear," said Jacobs. "Either take care of business or let's get back in the gym and let's do a lot of running."

Jacobs was able to play his entire team of 11, but standing out was So, who scored a game-high 17 points, all coming in the first half. She was four of eight from the field in the opening quarter, all coming from three-point territory and ended the game five of 13 from downtown. Kylie Wang scored 10 points, had nine rebounds, five assists and four steals while junior Kiera Kato came off the bench to post a career-high 10 points with two steals. Haylie Wang pitched in with seven points and eight boards.

"This game was okay," said Jacobs. "I thought our girls on the bench did good; they got a chance to get in and see what they'll look like in the next couple of years. I thought my freshman did really well, Alyssa So. Yesterday she was a little bit nervous; today she was more comfortable."

Whitney faced Chatfield Senior High out of Littleton, CO this past Wednesday with the winner to face either (Gillette, WY) Campbell County High or Denver East High in the final game on Dec. 21. The NIKE Tournament of Champions hosted 112 teams in seven divisions with 31 teams coming from California, 24 from Arizona and 12 from Colorado. There is at least one team from 17 other states and even Australia, Canada and New Zealand were represented. Teams from the CIF-Southern Section went 9-13 in first round games.

Whitney was situated in the Derril Kipp Division and with wins in the final two days will win the consolation championship of the division. Other teams in the same division from the CIF-SS are Crean Lutheran High, whom Whitney defeated on Nov. 30, and Valley View High. Once Whitney returns home, it will next be in action on Jan. 3 at Pioneer High for the 605 League opener.

"That's been the story for us the last couple of years; these consolation championships," said Jacobs. "When you look at our team, we have a complete team. We actually can play. A lot of people don't see that. We have freshmen who can come in and give you...that's Alyssa's third or fourth 17 (plus point) game and we're already 13 games in. The kid can play. If she doesn't have 17 points, she'll have at least 12 or 13. We're just not playing to our potential sometimes."

### ABCUSD from page 1

dation to the board. After reviewing data, they are looking at six school sites for potential consolidation.

"Just to be clear, even if a school is on this list, that does not mean the committee will include it in its final recommendation. It means that the committee is going to look at further data around each of those schools regarding enrollment."

The committee only makes a recommendation, and the board will make the final determination only after considering the issue "carefully."

If the board determines to consolidate any school, the soonest it will occur is the '25-'26 school year.

Zietlow continued, "I know this may be concerning, but I want you to remember that the committee still has many months of work ahead, where they will engage with the community through townhall meetings and dive deeper into each school on the list. Sadly, enrollment across the region continues to decline, and we are not immune to it. In 2019, we had about 20,000 students. This year, we have about 18,000 students, and demographers predict that we will be down to just over 15,000 students in 2029.

"We must address this issue so we can continue to dedicate resources to support students in the future."

The committee will hold town hall meetings later this winter to get community input.

The next committee meeting will be held on January 17, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at the ABCUSD District Office, in the Board Room, located at 16700 Norwalk Blvd. in Cerritos. Public comments about this issue should be made at the committee meeting.

**CLINIC** from page 1

healthcare resources on-site, Shaffer created Campus Clinic. "I used the lessons learned during the pandemic to improve the location and access for patients," he explained. "Now, healthcare resources are a classroom or a hallway away from many students. This maximizes attendance and instructional time while driving utilization of healthcare."

"Campus Clinic is uniquely positioned to meet the growing mental and physical healthcare needs of K-12 students, staff, and their families," he said. "Unlike other services that rely primarily on Telehealth, Campus Clinic places therapists, doctors, providers, nurses, and other medical staff right on the school campus."

One example is Campus Clinic's access to mental health services.

"We provide access to in-person and Telehealth therapy in not only one-on-one sessions, but we also provide access to group therapy and family therapy," Shaffer explained. For physical health needs, Campus Clinics provide programs that enable on-site, in-person primary care services. These services can address many immediate needs that a patient might go to a retail clinic for. "Schools and families see tremendous value in the outbreak prevention programs we offer," he added. "Through these services, students and staff can be tested for Influenza A and B, RSV, and COVID on school campuses. This [physical health] program has been demonstrated to increase attendance by over 1 percent while reducing the spread of various diseases."

"Our mission is to put healthcare on school campuses, to remove barriers to access, [and] create a loyal patient base at the schools we serve," Shaffer explained. The key to their success is delivering in-person care right on campus.

"Although we also make Telehealth services available to all, we believe in-person services are critically important," he said. "In-person services have better outcomes, they reduce absences, and they also increase the availability of resources."

Shaffer learned the value of this through a superintendent friend who explained the need of an underprivileged elementary school by describing how the school-based health clinic was two miles away from the school. "It might as well be twenty miles away," his friend said. "This statement has resonated with me and helped me define the way our programs look," Shaffer said.

Evidence demonstrates that in-person services provide more engagement and better patient outcomes than other modalities. According to Shaffer, this deployment model requires Campus Clinic programs to be adaptive to the available spaces on campus.

"Rather than placing the burden of seeking care and driving to a facility on patients and parents, we believe in the right to receive care wherever the patients are," he explained. "We operate a mobile model where providers, therapists, and other healthcare resources go to the campus they serve. This overcomes transportation and access issues for even the most under-resourced areas. It is a key point of differentiation in our program and in healthcare in general." "Sometimes providers work one morning in an empty modular classroom and rotate to a Vice Principal's office in the afternoon," Shaffer said. "Flexibility is key to unlocking the on-campus healthcare opportunity for schools." Universal mental health screening platforms are but one service Campus Clinics offer, which highlights the goals and culture of the organization. This web-based technology platform is available to schools as a tool to identify students who

may be suffering from anxiety or depression. Schools use it to screen all their students several times per year to see who needs additional resources, according to Shaffer. "Campus Clinic provides the schools with a real-time reporting tool that shows the screener results on a district, school, grade, and individual basis," he said. "Our tool immediately emails their counselors and principals if a self-harm risk is identified." Campus Clinic also pairs the screener with the Campus Success team. This team of professionals reaches out to guardians and parents or students who may need mental health support and connects them with therapists and providers, according to Shaffer. "This allows the schools to rest easy, knowing that we not only surface an issue, but we immediately connect it with a solution and resource," he explained. "This connection to resources allows schools to move forward with confidence with this universal screener." The culture and goals of Campus Clinics are to identify healthcare needs wherever they are and to quickly connect those needs with easy-to-access resources. "Our universal mental health screener and therapy program highlights this goal and culture well," Shaffer said. Funding for Campus Clinics is available in several sustainable ways, he added. Some come at no cost to the school districts and are funded through insurance payers. Others that may have a cost are supported by grants and other mechanisms, he said. A unique feature of Campus Clinics is that no patient has ever been turned away for not having insurance. "We operate an 'all-comers' model whereby anyone can receive the care they need," Shaffer said.

Additionally, Campus Clinics has a grant enablement team that locates them for school districts whereby they might not otherwise be aware of these funding resources. They help them with writing and submitting the grant applications. "This grant enablement program comes at no cost to districts and allows them to add resources to support our programs," he explained. The success of Campus Clinics is measured in several ways, but all focus on patient outcomes and those of the schools, according to Shaffer. "If patients and schools are healthier, that is a success," he said. Stories that motivate them most are ones where they have identified a need that does not have a resource, where Campus Clinics meets it in such a way that produces a good outcome in an easy-to-access way, according to Shaffer.

"We have implemented this approach from Northern California to the Border, and we plan to scale it nationwide over the coming years," he said. "We measure the quality of the care through the patient outcomes it produces, and we feel very encouraged by the results we see. Mental health is improving in the patients, and physical health needs are being addressed in both preventative and responsive ways."

Currently, Campus Clinics contracts with 42 school districts and hundreds of schools, including California's largest elementary school district, Chula Vista.

**LA PALMA** from page 1

sion earlier this year.

Mayor Pro Tem Mark Waldman echoed Mayor Goodman's sentiments, expressing eagerness to collaborate with the City Council and contribute to La Palma's status as one of the best places to live. Elected to the City Council in 2004, Mayor Pro Tem Waldman served two terms, returning to office in 2020 after an 8-year hiatus.

**NEWS AND NOTES** from page 11

this past Wednesday, The Pioneers (8-4) faced Osceola High on Dec. 21. Glenn's loss to Norwalk dropped its mark to 8-5 as the Eagles will host Alliance Health Services Academy on Friday and New Designs University Park on Thursday.

Cerritos High will visit Fountain Valley High on Friday and will be in the Holiday Hoops Tournament at Mt. Carmel High in Rancho Penasquitos beginning on Wednesday where they will face Mira Mesa High in bracket play. The tournament runs through Dec. 30.

La Mirada High dropped a 71-67 decision to St. Pius X-St. Matthias Academy last Friday, its third setback in 14 games this season. The Matadores will face Owyhee High out of Meridian, ID on Wednesday in the first game of The Classic at Damien.

Valley Christian High defeated Chaminate High 65-50 last Friday to level its record after 10 games. The Defenders hosted Kennedy High this past Wednesday and entertained Serrano High on Dec. 21. The program will host its yearly tournament next week with V.C. facing Rowland High on Tuesday, Holy Martyrs Armenian on Wednesday and Brea Olinda High on Thursday.

**GIRLS BASKETBALL**

Artesia (6-4), which hasn't played since Dec. 8, will be in San Diego for the Southern California Holiday Prep Classic next week. The Pioneers will face West Hills High on Wednesday and Lincoln High on Thursday.

Cerritos blasted Foothill High 60-38 last Saturday on the final day of the Segerstrom Tournament to improve to 7-4. The Dons host North Torrance High on Friday and will also be in the So Cal Holiday Prep Classic where they will play Gig Harbor High out of Washington on Wednesday and Fallbrook High on Thursday in pool play action.

Glenn lost to Rancho Alamitos High 60-18 this past Monday to see its record go to 2-9. The Eagles visited Baldwin Park High on Dec. 21.

La Mirada has won four straight games including a 49-24 decision over Norco High last Friday. The Matadores (6-2) hosted Bolsa Grande High this past Wednesday and will face Long Beach Cabrillo High on Tuesday while Norwalk (4-11) went to Bolsa Grande on Dec. 21 and will travel to San Gabriel High on Friday.

**BOYS SOCCER**

Artesia has not allowed a goal in four straight games, improved to 6-0-2 with a 0-0 tie against Kennedy last Thursday,

a 6-0 win over Workman High this past Monday and a 3-0 win over Norwalk this past Tuesday. The Pioneers hosted Baldwin Park on Dec. 21 and will entertain Corona High on Thursday.

Cerritos (2-6) fell to Bellflower High 4-1 this past Tuesday and entertained Esperanza High on Dec. 21 while Gahr saw its record drop to 1-5-3 after a 3-2 loss to Yorba Linda High this past Tuesday.

Glenn was blanked by Ocean View High 3-0 last Friday to fall to 4-6-1. The Eagles visited Whittier High on Dec. 21 and will host San Gabriel on Friday while La Mirada tied Norwalk 1-1 last Friday and was shutout by Brea Olinda 3-0 this past Tuesday. The Matadores are 4-5-1.

Norwalk's loss to Artesia dropped the Lancers to a 1-7-1 start, one of the worst in the program's history. The Lancers had a record of 4-11-4 in the 2004-2005 campaign and has missed the playoffs four times in the past 25 seasons. Their lone win was the first game of the season on Nov. 14, and they have scored four goals thus far.

V.C. edged Whittier 2-1 last Thursday to improve to 2-7-2 as it hosted Pacifica High this past Wednesday and entertained Mayfair High on Dec. 21.

**GIRLS SOCCER**

Just like the boys, Artesia has been playing stellar defense, defeating San Gabriel 4-0 and Mountain View High 2-0 last Saturday in the final day of the Best in the West Tournament. The Pioneers (8-1-1) visited Norwalk this past Wednesday.

Cerritos (5-3-1) swept its two opponents last Saturday in the Best in the West Tournament by identical 2-1 scores over Crean Lutheran High and La Mirada while Gahr blanked Magnolia High 4-0 and Whittier 5-0 last Saturday in the Best in the West Tournament, then edged Whittier Christian High 3-2 this past Tuesday to improve to 6-6-1. The Gladiators, now on a four-game winning streak, hosted Hawthorne High on Dec. 21.

La Mirada (2-5-3) concluded the Best in the West Tournament last Saturday with a 1-0 win over Dana Hills High before the loss to Cerritos. The Matadores hosted Yorba Linda this past Wednesday while V.C. lost to Flintridge Prep 5-1 and Fairmont Prep 2-0 last Saturday in the Best in the West Tournament. The Defenders (3-4) will face Montclair High and Northview High on Wednesday in the Ontario Christian Christmas Classic.

**LA MIRADA** from page 1

of LACDA's Community Development Division, wrote in a letter to the city, "Although this outcome does not allow the city to qualify for CDBG activities... it demonstrates the city's efforts over the last 20 years have made a difference in addressing blighting conditions in the Foster Park Neighborhood."

Many homeowners in the neighborhood received various grants and loans to improve plumbing and electrical systems, replace roofs, windows, and doors, fix damaged garage doors, complete landscaping enhancements, and provide new exterior paint. Much of this work was funded by a city-sponsored curbside appeal rebate program. As with other areas of Southern California, property values have increased significantly in the neighborhood, with many homes more than doubling in value since the Great Recession.

Public improvements were also a crit-

ical factor in LACDA's favorable review. "The Foster Park neighborhood was the first neighborhood in La Mirada to receive comprehensive infrastructure enhancements," said Public Works Director Mark Stowell. The work there preceded other infrastructure projects in La Mirada neighborhoods funded by Measure I, a five-year sales tax measure approved by voters in 2012 that has since expired. In addition to the neighborhood street improvements, the city replaced the playground and added Community Gardens at Frontier Park and completed landscaping renovations on the Valley View Ave. median.

Foster Park neighborhood continues to receive service from the city. The recently adopted Housing for All initiative continues prioritizing homes in the area for the city's housing rehabilitation program. Neighborhood streets were most recently slurry sealed in 2019, and work on rehabilitating Valley View Ave. is set to begin next fiscal year.







**GARZA** from page 1

flower City Council for most of those four years.

Even after the revelation and fallout, a recent public records request by LCCN shows that Garza remains delinquent on his business license fees.

But that is not the worst part of Garza’s SEI; buried on the list as a client is a company that will call into serious question Garza’s personal morals and ethics.

Garza listed La Luz Del Mundo (La Luz) as a client, the mega-church whose leader pled guilty to heinous sexual acts with minors in June 2022; additional sex charges have recently been in October.

In June of 2019, La Luz leader Joaquin Garcia and three others were hit with 36 felony counts that included human trafficking, production of child pornography, and forcible rape of a minor.

The case dragged on until June of 2022 when Garcia, originally facing 36 charges, took a last-minute plea deal.

Garcia pleaded guilty to two counts of forcible oral copulation involving minors and one count of a lewd act upon a child who was 15 years old.

The Attorney General said at the time, “Garcia abused his authority to take advantage of children while relying on his followers to groom congregants for the purposes of sexual assault.”

Despite the charges, Garza admitted to LCCN that “due to a previous commitment,” he took La Luz on as a client with his private company Six-Heron after Garcia’s indictment and represented the church during the height of felony sex charges proceedings from January 2021 to March 2022.

When asked about the client, Garza deflected, shockingly calling Garcia a prophet and comparing him to the Pope. “Just as the Pope in the Vatican is not the Catholic Church and its millions upon millions of followers and believers, their now-convicted prophet is not one and the same.”

In another statement, Garza repeated the moniker, calling the convicted pedophile and sex trafficker a prophet.

“The client of my former employer and me was in fact the church itself, La Luz Del Mundo, and its millions of followers and believers focused on

**CALIFORNIA FORM 700** STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS  
FAIR POLITICAL PRACTICES COMMISSION **COVER PAGE**  
*A Public Document*

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Please type or print in ink.  
 NAME OF FILER (LAST) Garza (FIRST) Juan (MIDDLE)

1. Office, Agency, or Court  
 Agency Name (Do not use acronyms)  
 Central Basin Municipal Water District

**SCHEDULE A-2**  
**Investments, Income, and Assets**  
**of Business Entities/Trusts**  
 (Ownership Interest is 10% or Greater)

► 1. BUSINESS ENTITY OR TRUST

Six Heron LLC

► 3. LIST THE NAME OF EACH REPORTABLE SINGLE SOURCE OF INCOME OF \$10,000 OR MORE (Attach a separate sheet if necessary.)

1784 Capital Holdings LLC

Anresco Laboratories

BLDG Partners

Bob Baffert Racing, Inc

California Cardroom Alliance

CR&R Incorporated

Englander Knabe Allen & Associates

Kit Cole Consulting LLC

Master Collective Management

Optimus Properties, LLC

Project Dimensions, Inc

SecureSpace Holdings, LLC

Valley Vista Services, Inc

Courtney Torres Consulting

La Luz Del Mundo

**JUAN GARZA’S** incoming SEI Form 700 filed with Central Basin Water. The Schedule A-2 requires the filer to list companies that pay the filer \$10,000 or more during the year. The last on the list is La Luz Del Mundo, which Garza represented for fifteen months after the leader of La Luz was indicted for heinous sexual acts.

their incredible faith-based charity work throughout the world, and not the prophet himself,” wrote Garza.

A recent Netflix documentary showed that the church knew and supported the trafficking, child pornography and sexual harassment, and worse, that the

church would retaliate and harass members who filed complaints; this while La Luz Del Mundo was Garza’s client, with Garza lauding the church’s “incredible faith-based charity work throughout the world.”

But it gets murkier for Garza; a clos-

er examination shows that Garza may have attempted to hide the fact that La Luz was his client on a 2022 SEI.

On Garza’s Candidate SEI filed in August 2022 with the city of Bellflower, Garza did not list La Luz as a client.

When asked about the omission, Garza told LCCN, “My non-inclusion of La Luz Del Mundo as a client of my firm in my candidate FPPC form 700 submitted to the [Bellflower] city clerk on August 6, 2022, was an unintentional error, thank you [LCCN] for bringing that to my attention....it should have been included and that’s an unintentional error on my part.”

But was it “unintentional,” on Garza’s 2021 SEI, LCCN found that La Luz was once again not listed.

When asked about the second omission, Garza described an odd business relationship where he worked for La Luz for an entire year in 2021 but got paid more working for only three months in 2022, completing his work with the church just three months before Garcia pleading guilty.

In his statement, Garza indicated that, during the height of felony sex charges proceedings involving Garcia, he met with La Luz church leadership and “increased his compensation.”

Six months later, the “prophet,” as Garza called him, pled guilty to two counts of forcible oral copulation involving minors and one count of a lewd act upon a child who was 15 years old.

Garza told LCCN, “The reason they [La Luz Del Mundo] were not included in my year [Sic] 2021 FPPC form 700 is because my firm’s rate for services resulted in them compensating my firm less than \$10k during all of 2021. Rates for my firm’s services with that client [La Luz Del Mundo] increased in January 2022, resulting in them compensating my firm for services in excess of \$10,000 during the three-month period from January to March 2022.”

In the end, Garza tried to spin his relationship, texting, “The contracted relationship with La Luz Del Mundo ended way before his conviction.”

In reality, the contracted relationship ended only three months before the guilty plea.



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