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Fair board agrees to hire real estate consultant to study how best to use and profit from the 324 acres of land. **A3**



Surfing Madonna nonprofit gives money to support local artists

The nonprofit supports local programs revolving around art, poetry and music exhibitions. **B4**



Cardiff park hosts reading of children's book inspired by adoption
Adam Ferguson authored fairy tale based on his and partner's experience of becoming parents. **B7**

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Local mother-daughter team compete and create on Amazon's 'Play-Doh' show

BY KAREN BILLING

Cardiff's Anjali Arora-Dow and her daughter Divya took on the ultimate creative challenge, testing their artistic skills and stretching their imaginations on the kids' competition show "Play-Doh Squished" on Amazon Prime.

Hosted by actress Sarah Hyland, the season started airing in November with new episodes launching every Friday. Anjali and Divya, an 11-year-old sixth grader at Ada Harris School, competed as a team with their close friends Emily and Dylan Chapman. The Dows' episode will air on Friday, Feb. 3—they have to keep their lips zipped about what happens on the show but can reveal that their episode was pirate themed. On Feb. 3, they will be watching how the Play-Doh rolls out along with everyone else.

On "Play-Doh Squished" three teams of kids and adults take on silly physical challenges and an obstacle course, collecting Play-Doh lid tokens that earn the team more time or extras to help take their Play-Doh creations to the next level. Anjali describes the obstacles almost like the "Double Dare" show from when she was growing up: "It's making my childhood dreams come true with the obstacles and slime," she said.

Each game is capped with a final test of the contestants' imaginations: a three-hour building

challenge to make a Play-Doh world on the theme, using the amazing Play-Doh emporium on set: "It's like a humongous store full of Play-Doh," said Divya. It's filled with all of the colors, tools, cutters and accessory pieces that the teams get to use to create and sculpt with.

A panel of judges picks who built the best Play-Doh masterpiece—the winning team wins a grand prize of \$5,000 while the other teams' creations get squished.

Each show has surprise guest stars like Hyland's "Modern Family" TV mom Julie Bowen, Alyssa Milano, Rob Riggle and Marshawn Lynch. The Dows can't reveal who their guest was, except to say it was an actor they both liked and was very funny: "We were pretty excited about who it was," Anjali said.

Anjali grew up in Rancho Santa Fe and moved back to Cardiff from the Bay Area a year and a half ago with her husband and three children.

"We've always had Play-Doh in our house and Divya is an extremely talented artist, she creates a lot," Anjali said.

Divya makes artwork in clay and paint and she also loves to bake. She started baking during the pandemic lockdowns and makes elaborate cakes, cupcakes, pies, cookies and boba too. "I think this practice in patience and precision helped us in the challenges as

SEE PLAY-DOH, **A8**



COPYRIGHT OF ANJULI DOW

Anjali and Divya Dow competed on "Play-Doh Squished" with friends Emily and Dylan Chapman.

Human resources executive appointed to vacant Encinitas council spot

Allison Blackwell, who works part time at Cue Heath, will take the District 1 council seat

BY BARBARA HENRY

A member of the city's Equity Committee who holds a law degree from Boston College and has a background in corporate human resources has been selected to fill the vacant Encinitas City Council seat.

Allison Blackwell, who works part time as the chief human resources officer for Cue Heath, will take the District 1 council spot previously held by Tony Kranz, who was recently elected mayor.

The council voted 3-1, with Councilmember Bruce Ehlers opposed, to select Blackwell out of seven applicants for the post Wednesday, Jan. 18. The District 1 region that she will represent primarily covers Leucadia, but also stretches eastward into Olivenhain.

"I think you would make an outstanding addition to our City Council," Councilmember Kellie Hinze said as she made the motion to appoint Blackwell and described her years of community service.

Among other things, Blackwell and her husband Rob have been avid volunteers



ALLISON BLACKWELL

Allison Blackwell, Encinitas City Council, 2023

for the Taste of Leucadia event, Hinze said. She's also worked at the Encinitas Community Garden and served on the Encinitas Homeless Action Plan Community Group, as well as the city's Equity Committee.

"Her breadth of knowledge and experience is the best fit," Councilmember Joy Lyndes said as she seconded Hinze's motion.

Ehlers, who wanted the city to hold a special election rather than having the

SEE COUNCIL SEAT, **A8**

Apartment project proposed near Encinitas Greek Orthodox church wins commission approval

BY BARBARA HENRY

A proposal to add 61 apartments next to the Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church property won approval Thursday, Jan. 19, from the Encinitas Planning Commission.

The commission's vote was 4-0, with Chair Kevin Doyle recusing himself due to a conflict of interest. The item does not require a hearing before the City Council.

Plans call for 49 market-rate apartments and 12 low-income ones, split between two, multi-story buildings. Also planned are outdoor dining areas, a fire pit and a bocce ball court. It'll all go on a 2-acre, church-owned, vacant parcel just north of the current church complex on Manchester Avenue.

Famed for its golden dome and its annual Greek festival, the church already has one housing development — 30 apartments for seniors located behind the church building. Those apartments have low rents, but are not officially designated as low-income housing, John Wurster, the development manager for the new housing project, told the commissioners Thursday, Jan. 19.

Both he and architect Maxine Ward said great care was taken to make the proposed apartments blend well with the church building and the senior apartments.

She said they absolutely did not want a "Motel 6" look. "There's a lot to like about the design," Commissioner Susan Sherod told them after listing off the many things she admired.

Her list included the landscape plan's numerous native plants, the project's proposed vegetable garden area, the plans to keep existing Torrey Pine trees on the site, and the small size of the individual apartments.

"In certain ways, you're exceeding all our criteria," she told the developers.

Commissioner Steve Dalton said he echoed many of her comments, while Commissioner Chris Ryan said her one criticism was that the buildings were going to be painted all white and she'd like some blue accents to break the white up.

While he voted in favor of issuing the project the permits it needed, Commissioner Robert Prendergast said that it "kind of bums me out" that only 12 of the proposed apartments will be set aside for low-income people. He said he wished all of the units were designated as low-income and the developers were putting more units on the site, noting that they could have built 81 rather than 61 under state Density Bonus Law rules.

While Prendergast said he wanted more units, the other commissioners said they liked the design as it was and a resident of the church's senior housing complex said he worried about what the current proposal would do to traffic issues on Manchester Avenue.

"I want to see a quality and safe project here and I have some concerns," resident Larry Pell said.

Making left turns out of the church property now is "downright dangerous," he said, adding that he wished there was a traffic light included in the plans.

— Barbara Henry is a freelance writer for The San Diego Union-Tribune

San Dieguito board 'cures and corrects' officer election

BY KAREN BILLING

The San Dieguito Union High School District board had a do-over of its officer election on Jan. 10, to "cure and correct" any alleged Brown Act violation related to holding the organizational meeting before public comments.

In December, the board had selected newly elected trustees Rimga Viskanta as president, Jane Lea Smith as vice president and Phan Anderson as clerk. The Jan. 10 vote remained largely the same, except Anderson declined the nomination for clerk and nominated Trustee Katrina Young instead. While Young's preference was for Anderson to hold the post to have "fresh new voices" in board leadership, she accepted the nomination and was elected.

The board's action was in response to a

complaint that moving the organizational meeting before public comments was an attempt to mute opposing views and violated the Brown Act, board bylaws and the rights of the members of the public who wished to make comment prior to the election of officers.

The decision to move up the organizational meeting was based on past practices and how other districts handle officer elections currently. According to Viskanta, the decision to redo the selection of officers was a voluntary one to establish best practices moving forward and was not a legal requirement due to any Brown Act provisions.

"I really think as a district we need to get past the adults squabbling and focus on students," Viskanta said. "We did not have

SEE ELECTION, **A8**

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Ocean Knoll Elementary students planting a rare oak tree.

San Diego Botanic Garden plants 100 rare and native oak trees with students from Ocean Knoll Elementary in Encinitas

Tree plantings mark the latest milestone as part of a three-year restoration project to enhance and improve Ocean Knoll Canyon

As part of the Ocean Knoll Oak Restoration Planting Project, San Diego Botanic Garden (SDBG) invited more than 300 Ocean Knoll Elementary students to help plant 100 native oak trees throughout Ocean Knoll Canyon in Encinitas, according to a San Diego Botanic Garden news release. Made possible by an Environmental Champions Grant from San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E), the project's tree plantings took place over three days from Dec. 13-15, with members of the SDBG Science & Conservation and Education teams engaging students in discussions about the importance

of native plants and habitat restoration. Since 2021, SDBG Science & Conservation staff and volunteers have been working to enhance and restore more than half of the canyon as part of a larger Cottonwood Creek Watershed Riparian Enhancement Project at Ocean Knoll Canyon, located adjacent to the elementary school. An important section of the Cottonwood Creek Watershed, SDBG received funding from a variety of partners including California Coastal Conservancy, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and SDG&E to improve 4.6 acres of the habitat, which is an essential ecosystem for native coastal plants and animals. Since the project launch, more than 100 cubic yards of invasive plant material have been removed, with propagation of native plants



San Diego Botanic Garden Conservation Specialist Joe DeWolf teaching students about plant restoration and habitat.

using seeds and cuttings from SDBG underway. The tree plantings mark the first time that students from the elementary school have been engaged for plantings.

news release. "This project allows us to do both at the same time with students, teachers and environmental leaders working shoulder to shoulder planting our native plants to grow a better future." In addition to students, a number of professionals involved in the preservation of rare oak species from around the region also helped with tree plantings, including representatives from Botanic Gardens Conservation International, Global Conservation Consortium for Oak, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, The Wildlands Conservancy, Oak Glen Preserve and The Morton Arboretum in Chicago. For more information about Science & Conservation projects at SDBG, along with a schedule of current and upcoming educational programs, visit www.sdbg.org.

FROM EDUCATION MATTERS, A6

present to offer varying viewpoints. Young may have been fearful of hearing negative comments directed her way, but trustees don't get to pick and choose who can speak, and when. Also, why should public comment change the board's decisions? Maybe offer new perspective, yes. But it's each trustee's responsibility to weigh all sides of controversial issues, despite hearing public comments from just one faction. They were elected to do the hard work and make tough decisions, even in the face of public criticism. The disdain exhibited by the board majority for public input was center stage in

December. A misstep was made, clearly. Moving past this unfortunate beginning and establishing trust is the board's first challenge. For the full version of this column, see delmartimes.net. Opinion columnist and education writer Marsha Sutton can be reached at suttonmarsha@gmail.com. Marsha Sutton is a columnist and presents her opinion. If you disagree or agree with her opinion, we'd like to hear from you. Email your comment to editor@delmartimes.net. Column: Combines reporting, storytelling and commentary to make a point. Unlike reporters, columnists are allowed to include their opinions. Columnists in the Union-Tribune Community Press are identified clearly to set them apart from news reporters.

FROM PROGRAM, A4

60s, he said his life was always an unspoiled and carefree adventure. Like ABBA's Lyngstad, Gundersen was born just after the war ended on Oct. 15, 1945. According to his original birth certificate, his birth name was Magne Reidar Olsen and his birth parents were Rudolf Müller and Mildrid Olsen. Olsen abandoned her son to an orphanage, where on Sept. 23, 1947, he was issued a new birth certificate with the name, Arthur Johannes. His adoptive parents, Arthur and Elisabeth Gundersen, were now listed as his birth parents. Arthur Sr., who was born in 1903, was a Norwegian-born captain in the Merchant Marine who'd moved to the

United States before World War II. But when and his wife decided to adopt a child, they traveled to Norway to find one. John Gundersen always knew he was adopted and he knew he had two birth certificates, but he'd never studied them nor looked up his birth parents' names until 2010. John Gundersen grew up on the East Coast, where he earned his pilot's license in his teens and set a rifle range record in the Marine Corps Reserves. At age 19 in 1964 he started the magazine "Atlantic Surfing" to promote the then little-known sport on the East Coast. Two years later, he opened one of New York's first surfing shops on Rockaway Beach in Queens and he later helped petition the city to legalize the sport. Gundersen's efforts as a surfing

pioneer landed him in the East Coast Surfing Hall of Fame in 2014. He moved to California in the 1970s for the waves and worked as a commercial pilot and later as a surfboard-shaper and distributor. His company today, Woody Resin Surf Products, supplies Chinese-made surfboards and other surf gear to more than 160 shops on the East Coast. Gundersen said he has lived many lives in his 77 years and he wonders how things might have been different had he known the secret of his birth. He's thought about what he might have done if he were in his

birth father's shoes when the Nazis came to power. "I wonder what I would have been like as an SS officer," he said. "I hate bullies, and the Nazis were bullies, so I don't think I would have wanted any part of that." Coburn will be presenting a free talk about her novel, "Cradles of the Reich," at 2 p.m. Feb. 24 at the San Carlos branch of the San Diego City Library at 7265 Jackson Drive. For details, visit jennifercoburn.com/events. — Pam Kragen is the arts and entertainment editor for The San Diego Union-Tribune

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