

The Casta Courier

Official Publication of Casta del Sol Homeowners Association www.castadelsol.com

CdS Social Committee Reaches New Heights

By Debra Friedman, photo by Kip Isbell

While some committees have experienced a gradual evolution over the past few years, the Social Committee has been revamped. The change is characterized by new leadership, new members, new approach, and a major expansion of activities offered.

Amy Lake assumed the role of Chair in 2022. After a few months of status quo, the committee dove into a mode of novel, expanded, and enhanced activities. Some of the familiar activities of the Social Committee continued such as Fiesta Tuesday, New Year's Eve Bash, Memorial Day Celebration, Holiday Decorating, and Western Hoedown. Albeit 2022 was a

busy year focused on the 50th Anniversary of Casta del Sol, new events were developed. Different events and celebrations were added such as the Car and Cycle Showcase, the combined Fashion Show/Tea Party, a Halloween Party, and a Superbowl Party.

For 2024, the committee ventured in a more ambitious quest with one event per month. First time events taking place in 2024 include Fettuccine Friday and Suds and Spuds. While some



Social Committee members at January meeting

events are repeated each year, others will alternate with new concepts.

The newly organized Social Committee consists of 19 residents and

employs "project groups" for each event. These project groups work on event themes, menus, décor, enter-

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Artist in Residence: Jeff Ponce

By Debra Friedman, photos by Fred Lake



Nature scenes from around California

Jeff Ponce is the latest artist to display his artwork for the "Artist in Residence" program. When Jeff moved to Casta in 2012, he was immersed in his career

in the petroleum industry. Since his retirement in 2020, he enthusiastically returned to painting art, and converted his second bedroom to an art studio.

At a young age, Jeff's parents encouraged his passion, often gifting him with art supplies. Jeff grew up in Southern California and was attracted to art throughout school, inclined to be an illustrator or commercial artist. But being practical and seeking a more lucrative career, he graduated early from high school to pursue a degree in engineering and put his artistic talents on hold to raise a beautiful family including two children.

Jeff's main approach to his paintings can be described as "field studies." Upon choosing the destination, he visits the setting, uses a device to delineate the compositional frame, and then sketches and takes photos.

Sometimes he returns to the location for additional photos or sketches. Most of his paintings are landscapes. His media of choice is acrylic paint and he describes his style as "loose" for the background and "detailed" for the main subject.

Some paintings are inspired by photos sent by family or friends. Jeff continually learns and perfects his skill through workshops, online tutorials, forums, blogs, workbooks, and networking. In his quest to enhance his art, he uses "test panels" to master techniques of specific aspects and subjects, such as clouds, waterfalls, rocks, etc.

Jeff has served as vice president of the Casta Creatives Club for a year. He was honored to exhibit his painting of the Heritage Garden Norfolk Pines

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February: The Month of Love

By Evelyn Rothert

February comes from the Latin word *februa*, which means "to cleanse." The month was named after the Roman *Februalia*, which was a month-long festival of purification and atonement. February had 28 days until 450 BCE when the days changed to 23 or 24. Later, Julius Caesar decided that the month would have 29 days every four years,

known as leap years, and 28 otherwise.

This year is a leap year. Historically, on leap day, February 29, women were allowed to propose to a man if he was taking too long to pop the question. According to legend, Saint Brigid struck a deal with Saint Patrick in the 5th century on behalf of all the women waiting for their partner to propose.

There is a lot happening in the second month of the year. February is usually known to be the wettest, snowiest, and coldest month of the year. We will find out on February 2, Groundhog Day, if winter will last six more weeks. Mardi Gras is celebrated on February 13. The final feasting day before the Christian tradition of Lent begins, Ash Wednesday. Also, February 14, Valentine's Day, is the time to show some love to a special someone.

Have a lovely month. Time to snuggle, stay warm, and eat chocolate.



ASSOCIATION NEWS

President's Message

Linda Silverman, President



Richard G. Kelly, columnist for *The Orange County Register*, has articles filled with ideas and recommendations focused on the *HOA Homefront*. Many of his articles are spot on discussing HOA issues, concerns, criticisms, and suggestions. An example of a few of these articles were residents' behaviors with neighbors, the advantages of living in an HOA, the importance of funding the HOA Reserves, Board of Directors' responsibilities, the unpaid volunteers of the HOA, and the advantages of an HOA versus an independent community of homes.

Mr. Kelly's article in December was titled *HOA Homefront: Could Holiday Charity Include Your HOA?* He made many suggestions how each of us can be a better neighbor, a responsible Board Member, team players, etc. The comments that caught my attention focused on *Board of Directors must build trust in their community*, and the *Board of Directors should work harder to better inform the membership about difficult decisions*. I hope this Board will continue to specifically have discussions with our residents during a Board meeting as we work and serve the Homeowners Association. I am proud of our various clubs for their generosity as demonstrated by the Vegetable Garden donating huge amounts to the Mission Viejo Food Banks, and the Las Damas Club donating thousands of dollars to Camp Pendleton for the families serving our military. This is just an example of our community's humanitarian work.

It is interesting that HOAs were planned for the young at heart beginning at 55 years of age and guided by various rules of the state. I admit the HOA was not our first thought when deciding to sell our home. Little did I know the many advantages of living in an HOA that would bring so much joy to the next chapter of our lives. As life has shown us, to quote Glenn Agung Hole, Ph.D., "Greatness comes from the desire to do extraordinary things – to reach beyond the status quo and relentlessly chase your dreams." Our community provides opportunities to live beyond our dreams, expand

Continued bottom of next column

Manager's Report

Marilyn Smith, General Manager



Scammers use email or text messages to try to steal your passwords, account numbers, or Social Security numbers. If they get that information, they could get access to your email, bank, or other accounts. Or they could sell your information to other scammers. Scammers launch thousands of phishing attacks like these every day.

Phishing emails and text messages often tell a story to trick you into clicking on a link or opening an attachment. You might get an unexpected email or text message that looks like it is from a company or person you know or trust, like a bank, credit card, or utility company. Or maybe it is from an online payment website or app. The message could be from a scammer, who might:

- say they have noticed some suspicious activity or log-in attempts, but they haven't.
- claim there's a problem with your account or your payment information, but there isn't.
- say you need to confirm some personal or financial information, but you don't.
- include an invoice you don't recognize, but it's fake.
- want you to click on a link to make a payment, but the link has malware.
- say you are eligible to register for a government refund, but it's a scam.
- offer a coupon for free stuff, but it's not real.

Here are signs that an email is a scam and may even have the company's logo in the header:

- The email has a generic greeting.
- The email says your account is *on hold* because of a billing problem.
- The email invites you to click on a link to update your payment details.

Continued next column

our ability to interact with neighbors, experience new creative accomplishments, and live a unique lifestyle after our very fulfilling careers.

I never thought I would admit that getting older is worth moving mentally and emotionally to the next wonderful adventure in our lives.

Casta del Sol HOA

- Board of Directors -

President:	Linda Silverman	dirsilverman71@yahoo.com
Vice President:	John Nethercutt	j.nethercutt.bod@gmail.com
Treasurer:	Susan Ashby	ashbycasta@gmail.com
Secretary:	Jayne Freed	jfreedcds@gmail.com
Directors:	Phyllis Foglesong	phyllisfoglesong@gmail.com
	Karen Warren	kwarrencds@gmail.com

For *Courier* staffing contact information, please see page 26.

The Casta Courier is published monthly by the Casta del Sol Homeowners Association. The mailing address is 27651 Casta del Sol Drive, Mission Viejo, Calif. 92692. Deadline for submitting material for the next month is the 6th of each month.

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- Look at the name of who the email is from, always look at the email address to ensure it matches the email of the individual.

While real companies might communicate with you by email, *legitimate companies won't email or text with a link to update your payment information*. Phishing emails can of-

ten have real consequences for people who give scammers their information, including identity theft.

Be extremely cautious of any email sent asking you for money and investigate thoroughly prior to sending any money.

Marilyn Smith,
msmith@powerstonepm.com

Landscape Notes

Bill Thornton, Landscape Services Coordinator



Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer (PSHB)

The *polyphagous shot hole borer* commonly referred to as PSHB, has been wreaking havoc on mostly California Sycamore trees in the Southland for a few years. It was originally found in Whitter Narrows in 2003. California Sycamore trees are the number one tree attacked, but many trees are susceptible with a host range of more than 200 species of trees. The list of trees being attacked by PSHB is growing by the month as arborists and tree workers find them and report their findings.

"These sesame size beetles could kill as many as 27 million trees in Los Angeles, Orange and San Bernardino Counties, including parts of the desert," said Jerrold Turney, plant pathologist for Los Angeles County.

Casta del Sol's trees are also susceptible to this insect and the HOA has lost many large trees recently from the infestation. There is no known way to protect trees from death from this

beetle, and related fungus. Trees that are infested are removed per the Board of Directors policy, and most cities, counties, and universities do the same.

"There will be no miraculous recovery of these urban ecosystems after the beetles are done with them," said Mark Huddle, director of the University of California, Riverside Center for Invasive Species.

"We cannot control the shot hole borer, it will kill all of the Sycamores in California," said Akif Eskalen, plant pathologist at UC Riverside.

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ASSOCIATION NEWS *Cont'd*

Board Meeting Highlights

December 21, 2023, January 4 & January 18, 2024

December 21, 2023

The Board:

- Accepted the Delinquency Report through December 8, 2023. Approved recording a lien on one account that is in arrears.
- Approved the list of homeowners/volunteers to serve as members of the Ad Hoc Policies and Procedures Committee, the *Courier* Committee, and the Facilities Committee for the calendar year 2024.
- Approved appointing Priscilla Tripp as the Casta del Sol Liaison for the City of Mission Viejo for the calendar year 2024.
- Approved the proposal from LaBarre/Oksnee Insurance Agency for the renewal of the Association's insurance policies in the amount of \$115,521 in annual premiums.
- Approved the amended by-laws for Casta Creatives Club and the Shuffleboard Club.
- Approved the dissolution of the Ad Hoc Casta del Sol Drive Committee.
- Approved the contract matrix, indicating expiration dates for the Association contracts.
- Approved a Code of Conduct, Ethics, and Conflict of Interest Policy for Directors of the Board and for advisory committees.
- Approved the proposal from Concrete Hazard Solutions to grind trip hazards, patch, remove, and replace concrete for a total not-to-exceed amount of \$37,531.
- Approved the purchase of a new golf practice cage for use in the chipper area from Parbuster for a not-to-exceed cost of \$1,069.99.
- Approved the update of the Rec Ctr 1 pool and spa by Simply Pools, Inc. dba as AquaTek Pool Service for acid wash of the pool, replaster of the spa, and mastic around the pool and spa for a not-to-exceed amount of \$22,899.
- Approved the procurement of two 16-gauge stainless steel commercial worktables from WebstaurantStore.com for a total cost of \$1,391.27.
- Approved additional ten ground squirrel bait stations in the common area through December 31, 2025, for a one-time charge of \$30 to install each of the bait stations and an additional \$5 per month to service from Allure Pest Management.

January 4, 2024

General Manager Marilyn Smith announced that Director Lori Gilbertson resigned from the Board of Directors effective January 3, 2023.

The Board:

- Approved the 2024 Budget and Election Annual Calendar.
- Approved the list of five tree removals by W.B. Starr due to dead, diseased, damaged and/or dying trees and potential sewer issues for a total cost of \$14,745.
- Approved a list of seven tree removals by W.B. Starr due to dead, diseased, damaged and/or dying, and potential sewer issues at a cost of \$5,945.
- Approved purchasing eight Apple iPad Tablets for a not to exceed cost of \$8,000.

January 18, 2024

Board President Linda Silverman announced the promotion of Susan Wadsley from Executive Office Manager to Assistant General Manager.

General Manager Marilyn Smith reported that with the adoption of the 2024 budget, the HOA dues will be \$574 per month, beginning in January. She reminded homeowners who have automatic payments to go online and adjust their payment to reflect the new dues.

Landscape Services Coordinator Bill Thornton reported that Great Scott Tree Service will begin trimming/removing trees in early February. Staff is training the new landscape contractor, O'Connell Landscape Maintenance, in the use of the water irrigation system.

Maintenance Services Supervisor Ed Pedroncelli reported on projects completed and underway. He has purchased a truck to be used by the maintenance and recreation staff.

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**For a copy of the December 2023 Treasurer's Report, refer to *castadel-sol.com*, Recreation Center bulletin boards, and/or eblasts.

December Treasurer's Report

Total HOA Assets as of December 31, 2023: \$8,158,263

• Operating Cash: \$2,816,301

This includes \$1,393,001 in checking, \$320,300 invested in a money market account and \$1,100,000 invested in CDs. Two CDs matured at the end of December and we invested \$400,000 in two 9-month CDs at 5% and 5.05%.

• Reserve Cash: \$4,897,592

This includes \$903,208 invested in a money market account and \$3,600,000 invested in CDs. Three CDs matured at the end of December and we invested \$600,000 in three 9-month CDs at 5% and 4.9%. Also included in the balance is interest receivable and due from Operating.

• Total Reserve Expenditures for the year 2023: \$3,519,939 (included \$39,252 income tax payable). Categories with the largest expenditures are Painting, \$796,960; Paved Surfaces, \$1,958,012; and Irrigation & Landscape, \$452,949.

• Capital Improvement Cash: \$369,458

Capital Improvement expenditures for the year 2023 currently total \$5,894.

• Outstanding Accounts Receivable (A/R): \$83,683

This is a slight decrease from November. Allowance for Bad Debts was increased to \$25,282. Allowance for Bad Debts is an estimate of receivables that will not be paid. The Allowance is adjusted Quarterly (March, June, September, December) and is equal to outstanding receivable balances over 91 days.

The following are highlights of our Operating expenses as of December 31, 2023:

- **General & Administration** has a YTD negative variance of \$5,961 due to significant negative variances in Legal Fees and Office Supplies/Equipment. These are somewhat offset by positive variances in Printing, Postage, Bad Debt Expense, and Salaries.

Legal expenses exceeded expectations last year by over \$69,000. Items that required attorney attention included the Landscape Maintenance Agreement, policies and procedures from the Ad Hoc Committee for Policies and Procedures, plus policies written at the request of the prior Board. There were also quite a few legal issues from homeowners that needed attention. We are hopeful the fees this year will be far less.

- **Land Maintenance (LM)** has a YTD significant surplus of \$508,992. In December, expenditures in the extra categories of Irrigation Repair and Maintenance, Tree Removals, Planting, Supplies, and Turf Restoration were slightly under \$50,000.

- **Recreation, Repairs and Maintenance, and Traffic Control** have a combined positive variance of \$31,775 mostly due to salaries.

- **Utilities** has a YTD positive variance of \$453,403 primarily due to the Water positive variance of \$479,861. Gas is over YTD budget by \$22,887.

Treasurer's Comments:

The YTD budget to actual surplus is \$1,071,306. This amount will move to Prior Year Surplus in 2024. \$231,240 was transferred from prior year surplus to the Reserve fund in November and \$416,232 will be transferred from prior year surplus to the 2024 Operating budget as a separate income item. Please note that during the upcoming months, more 2023 invoices will be paid and will need to be accrued to 2023. The amounts reflected in the December financial statements are not final. You will receive the final audited financial statements in April.

Special Comment Regarding Comerica Bank:

Last March, Comerica, the bank that manages our brokerage funds, arranged for Ameriprise Financial to become their investment program provider. This arrangement took effect in November and Ameriprise became the custodian of our brokerage accounts which include money market

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ASSOCIATION NEWS *Cont'd*

Join Us In Welcoming Our New Residents - February 2024



Corradi, Janice28326 Zarza (818) 219-3891
Burbank, CA

Farzam, RoyaUnlisted..... (720) 937-5921
La Jolla, CA

Johnson, Ann & Neil.....28052 Calle Casal (770) 557-7177
Laguna Niguel, CA

Nowels, Rosa28162 Via Chabas..... (949) 446-9653
Fullerton CA

Palmer, Stella27841 Via Dario..... (714) 767-1891
Placentia, CA

Ramos, Neomi.....Unlisted..... (949) 215-1634
Aliso Viejo, CA

Valerio, Gina.....Unlisted..... (702) 815-5444
Anaheim, CA

Maintenance Report

Ed Pedroncelli,
Maintenance
Services Supervisor



The role of maintenance department is to maintain and enhance the quality of the HOA's common areas, and assets via the management of required repairs and preventative maintenance. Included in this duty is enforcement of rules and covenants, support of initiatives, as well as the management of projects and capital improvements.

It is important to understand the process of how projects are identified, funded, and who determines when they are completed. All projects are determined by a community committee such as the Facilities, Architectur-

al, Traffic, Greenbelt, etc. Committees make recommendations to the Board of Directors for review and final approval. Once a project is approved, the BoD provides direction to the HOA's contracted management team.

Please note, the Board may consider staff and members' input, however, it is the Board that has the authority to make maintenance decisions related to the common areas. There are many reasons why members do not legally vote on common area repair decisions. Members are not fiduciaries, so they are free to vote in their own self-interest without regard to the community. Because they are not fiduciaries, they have no collective or individual responsibility for their votes, and no personal liability for damages arising from joint ownership of the common areas as long as the Homeowners

Association maintains the insurance required by Civil Code §5805.

epedroncelli@powerstonepm.com,
(949) 215-9155
Donna Duhn,
Maintenance Coordinator,
dduhn@powerstonepm.com,
(949) 455-4671 (office)



Flea Market Announcement

The Casta del Sol Ceramics Club will host its annual Flea Market celebrating all things unique and awesome on Friday, April 12 and Saturday, April 13 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Vista Room. Residents are invited to sell their gently used or handcrafted wares. You keep the profits from your sales. No furniture, electrical items, or clothing are allowed. Vendors can select and rent a table for a nominal fee beginning March 22 at 8:30 a.m. in the Rec Ctr 1 office. Questions? Call Carol Favreau at (714) 470-8181.

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 Blanca Floorplan
Offered at \$750,000



28078 Espinonza
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 1410 Square Feet
 Maya Floorplan
Offered at \$780,000
IN ESCROW



23541 Via Ventura
 3 Bedrooms, 2 Baths
 1563 Square Feet
 Juautia Floorplan
Offered at \$940,000
IN ESCROW



23846 Villena
 2 Bedrooms, 2 Baths
 1279 Square Feet
 Violeta Floorplan
SOLD for \$700,000
 Sold on 12/28/2023



28041 Calle Valdes
 2 Bedrooms, 2 Baths
 1099 Square Feet
 Blanca Floorplan
SOLD for \$680,000
 Sold on 12/21/2023



27856 Torroba
 3 bedrooms, 2 baths
 1,503 square feet
 Rosa Floorplan
SOLD for \$875,000
 Sold on 10/25/2023



28485 Barbosa
 3 Bedrooms, 2 Baths
 1,503 Square Feet
 Custom Rosa Floorplan
SOLD for \$1,015,000
 Sold on 9/28/2023



23831 Villena
 3 Bedrooms, 2 Baths
 1503 Square Feet
 Rosa Floorplan
SOLD for \$855,000
 Sold on 8/11/2023



28376 Zarza
 3 Bedrooms, 2 Baths
 1472 Square Feet
 Narciso Floorplan
SOLD for \$770,000
 Sold on 7/7/2023



28126 Via Enriquez
 3 Bedrooms, 2 baths
 1346 Square Feet
 Lolita Floorplan
SOLD for \$859,000
 Sold on 6/9/2023



23901 Villena
 3 Bedrooms, 2 baths
 1472 Square Feet
 Narciso Floorplan
SOLD for \$750,000
 Sold on 5/9/2023



28145 Espinoza
 3 Bedrooms, 2 Baths
 1472 Square Feet
 Custom Narciso Floorplan
SOLD for \$895,000
 Sold on 4/3/2023



23682 Via Benavente
 2 Bedrooms, 2 Baths
 1431 Square Feet
 Guadalupe Floorplan
SOLD for \$665,000
 Sold on 3/29/2023



23323 El Greco
 2 Bedrooms, 2 baths
 1607 Square Feet.
 Custom Cypress Point Floorplan
SOLD for \$810,000
 Sold on 3/16/2023



28081 Via Enriquez
 3 Bedrooms, 2 baths
 1346 Square Feet
 Lolita Floorplan
SOLD for \$852,500
 Sold on 3/9/2023



23692 Via Benavente
 2 Bedrooms, 2 Baths
 1,431 Square Feet
 Guadalupe Floorplan
SOLD for \$674,000
 Sold on 2/14/2023



28356 Zarza
 3 Bedrooms, 2 Baths
 1503 Square Feet
 Rosa Floorplan
SOLD for \$740,000
 Sold on 01/20/2023

ASSOCIATION NEWS *Cont'd*

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Landscape Maintenance Requests Update

O'Connell Landscape Maintenance began the landscape maintenance contract on January 2, 2024. When they started the first week, they moved in their equipment and got crew members trained and situated. Since they deferred the first week of mowing services due to Monday being a holiday, the mowing schedule started on January 8.

Moving forward for all Work Orders or LMRs, here is their contact information:

- Phone Number: 1 (800) 339-1106
- Email Address: workorders@oclm.com

Please do **not** call (949) 583-2705 for Work Orders or LMRs. This number is no longer valid for Casta del Sol.

O'Connell Landscape Maintenance thanks everyone for their patience while they get their crews and equipment organized to service Casta del Sol.

CdS Social Committee Reaches New Heights

Continued from page 1

tainment, etc. and then report back to the whole committee. Committee members bring their expertise in art, décor, event planning, creativity, and/or organization. Recreation Director Valerie Hanich is instrumental in helping with supplying décor items, as well as contacting and hiring caterers and entertainers for each event.

Committee members take part in project groups to brainstorm ideas,

conduct research, and help with planning. During events, members assist in set-up, hosting, and clean-up. The monthly meetings include a recap of recent events noting positive aspects and suggestions for improvement.

The main goal of the Social Committee is to provide a broad spectrum of events to appeal to a wide array of residents. These events are instrumental in building camaraderie and helping to create a more cohesive environment within Casta.

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Join us for the excitement of lifelong learning.

OLLI at UCI offers short-format courses, cultural excursions and more for adults 50+ who want to keep their minds and social connections growing.

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ASSOCIATION NEWS *Cont'd*

Residents Are Asking

Q. Why was a vendor being sought for the landscape maintenance contract?

A. The last contract signed with PWLC1 was in 2020 that was a three-year contract set to expire in 2023. PWLC1, formerly called PacWest, had been the landscape contractor since 2001. On many occasions after the three-year contracts expired, new bids were obtained from other landscape companies.

Q. Why did PWLC1 not get awarded the new contract that began in 2024?

A. There were 13 companies invited to bid on the contract. It turned out that seven companies did, in fact, bid. The Board narrowed the choice to two vendors, with PWLC1 being one of them. There were certain aspects of the proposal from O'Connell Landscape that made it more appealing to a majority of the Board members.

Q. Why were residents not informed about all the steps of the contract awarding process while it was taking place?

A. The bids from each of the vendors were sealed. If the interim information had been made public, it would have compromised the validity of the bidding process. There are contracts awarded often for Casta del Sol, and residents only become aware of them after the fact. We rely on the Board of Directors, our consultants, and the volunteer committees to do their due diligence in choosing vendors.

Q. After it was narrowed down to two vendors, was the information made public?

A. During the Board meeting on October 19, 2023, information about the process and the participants in the bidding process were provided. Following that, an article was published in the December 2023 *Courier* describing the timing of all the steps in the contract award.

Board Meeting Highlights

Continued from page 3

Recreation Supervisor Valerie Hanich reported that committee chairs have been notified to pick up the gifts for volunteers to distribute to their members. The Friends and Family program to purchase additional vehicle transponders is ongoing. She reminded residents that the family member, the vehicle, and the vehicle registration must be present to receive a transponder. Residents may purchase two additional transponders under this program.

The Board:

- Approved the revised Casta del Sol Financial Policies and Procedures document as recommended by the Ad Hoc Policies and Procedures Committee.
- Approved the candidate application for the 2024 Board of Directors Election.
- Approved the Election Committee and Inspector of Elections Charter.
- Approved entering a contract with Cura Termite and Pest Control for monthly exterior pest control of lawn bowling buildings, landscape maintenance building, gate houses, and clubhouse/pool and recreation area office buildings at a cost of \$426 per month (\$5,112 per year).
- Approved renewal of the rabbit variance with the City of Mission Viejo for another 24-month period, effective June 2024.
- Approved the O'Connell Landscape Maintenance Contractor's request to purchase the existing Association-owned lawn bowling maintenance equipment for \$5,000, allowing them to use their own equipment to maintain the Casta del Sol lawn bowling green.
- Discussion of next steps required to communicate with the leaders of Clubs and Activities. The General Manager has reached out to a nonprofit company to provide guidance to both the Association and the clubs. The goal is to protect both the Association and the clubs from liability.

The next regular meetings of the Board of Directors will be **February 1 at 9 a.m. and February 15 at 1 p.m. in the Vista Room.**

Fran Morgan, Courier staff

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

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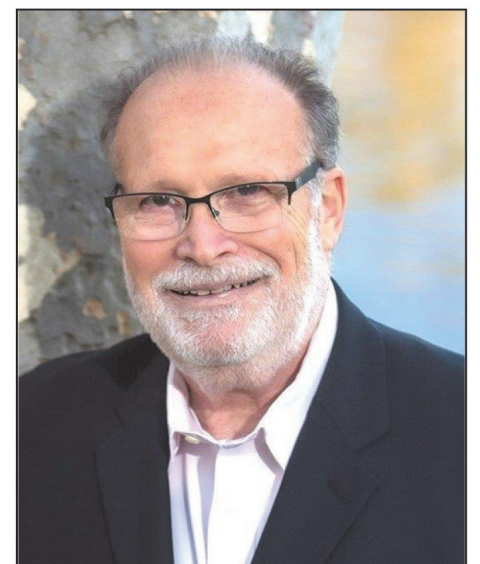
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ASSOCIATION NEWS *Cont'd*

Treasurer's Report

Continued from page 3

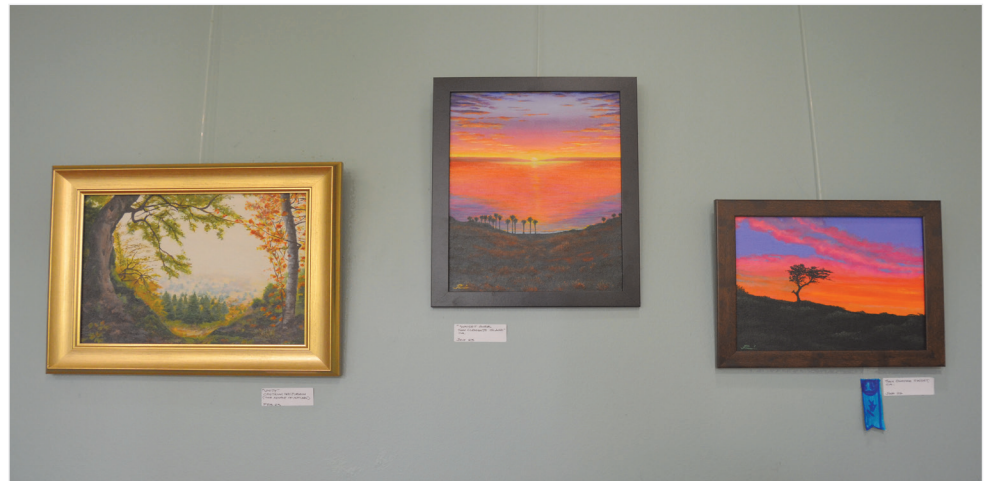
funds and our CDs in both the Operating and Reserve accounts. There was a breakdown in their efforts to notify us of this change, so it was a surprise to see changes on the November bank statements when we reviewed them in December. Comerica has apologized for their oversight in notifying us properly. Ameriprise statements have been reconciled and all our funds were correctly moved and are intact. It is not unusual for a bank to change securities custodians. Comerica made the change because of the advanced technological capabilities of Ameriprise. We look forward to a continued and improved working relationship with Comerica.

This Treasurer's Report as of December 30, 2023, is being submitted to the Board of Directors for their review and acceptance. Once accepted by the Board, this report will be posted.

*Respectfully submitted by Susan G. Ashby,
Casta del Sol Board of Directors, Treasurer*

Artist in Residence: Jeff Ponce

Continued from page 1



Landscapes and vibrant sunsets by Jeff Ponce

Forest in that setting during the Art in the Garden event.

A pursuit of his is to master the explicit details required to paint buildings and cityscapes. He already belongs to the San Clemente Art Association and will explore other

nearby art groups by presenting his art in juried shows.

Please head over to the library to view the wonderful talent and accomplishments of Jeff Ponce from January through March.

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Casta del Sol Resident

Jo Bedi
(949) 292-5946
License #0105927



Landscape Notes

Continued from page 2

John Kabashima is a well-respected horticulturist in Orange County and has done extensive research into the

spread of the beetle and he agrees with these grim projections.

*Bill Thornton,
bthornton@powerstonepm.com,
(949) 455-4672*



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Christina Ford

Christina Ford is a full-time Realtor with decades of experience in the business, this is why my wife and I chose her and because of her kindness and easy to talk too. Her knowledge of the region allows her to make the connections we needed in selling our home.

Christina gave us professional insight and advice about our home and the local Real Estate market. She knew exactly what to set the price of our home and received multiple offers in a few days after putting our home on the market. She gave us efficient, energetic and professional service. It was a very smooth and easy transactions throughout the process.

Any questions we had, Christina gave us a quick response back. We highly recommend Christina for all your Real Estate needs.
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COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD

Architectural

Here we are already in February and with the rainy season it is a good time to look up to your roof. The Architectural Committee has noticed that many roofs in Casta del Sol could use some maintenance. Homeowners do not often look at their roofs until there is damage from the wind or a leak inside. What could have been a simple tile replacement or the cleaning of debris from your roof could now become a costly repair. A failing tile could allow moisture to invade the substructure and settling debris, such as leaves or pine needles, could be a breeding ground for moisture-related damage. A dirty roof is not only unsightly but could also mean that trouble is brewing.

*John Nicsinger, Co-Chair,
(818) 261-5316*
*Mary Kay Crowley, Co-Chair,
(949) 412-8735*

Budget and Finance

The Budget and Finance (B&F) Committee reviewed the December financials at our January meeting. While we will have a surplus in 2023, much of the surplus will be needed for our 2024 expenditures and deferred revenue. In February, we will continue our year-end financial statement review since our fiscal year-end is December 31. This process takes a few months. The 12-31-23 audited financial statements will be ready for Board review and approval in April.

All residents are welcome to attend the B&F meetings. The Budget and Finance Committee meets regularly on the third Monday of each month at 1 p.m. Our next meeting is scheduled on February 26 due to the holiday on February 19. Please look for the eblasts with additional details about our next meeting.

*Lisa Shoemaker, Chair,
(949) 305-6336*

Courier

Starting this month, we are providing in-depth profiles of the Casta del Sol Committees, introducing key committee members, and offering insights beyond the monthly *Courier* committee articles. There have been changes over the past few years in the composition and the direction of some of the committees.

Committees are such an import-

ant part of our community. We are grateful that residents have stepped up to volunteer on these committees. Many of the committees can use more volunteers, especially those who have expertise in that committee's area. The regular committee reports in every issue of the *Courier* are helpful for residents to understand what each committee is planning. The annual Newcomer's Community Fair in August is another opportunity to learn about the committees.

The *Courier* Committee is made up of members with various responsibilities. Our officers are: Debra Friedman, Chair; Jeff McCoy, Vice Chair; and Karen Scott, Secretary. We have a total of 23 members. We have four staff photographers, four columnists, and eight feature writers. We also have section editors, proofreaders, and those who contribute in other ways. Our Editor-in-Chief Charlotte Lassos has been with us for just over a year. We are a cohesive committee that works well together with the goal of producing an accurate and useful publication each month.

*Debra Friedman, Chair,
debrafriedman0@gmail.com*

Election

An updated Candidate Application was sent to the Board of Directors in January for their approval. In 2024, four Board of Directors positions are up for election. Applications to run for a Board seat will be available to homeowners on March 1. The deadline to apply will be April 1. A *Nomination General Notice* which includes procedures for submitting candidate nominations will be posted on the Casta del Sol website and the HOA bulletin boards on February 23.

At the committee's January meeting, a revised draft of the *Election Committee and Inspector of Elections Charter* was unanimously approved. The major change in the new charter is the separation of the Election Committee and the Inspector of Elections. An individual who is appointed by the Board of Directors as the Inspector of Elections may also be a member of the Election Committee, but that is not a requirement. The Inspector of Elections serves as an independent third party and performs the duties specified by California Civil Code 5110. The new charter also specifies

the responsibilities of the Election Committee and of the Inspector of Elections.

*Jeff McCoy, Chair,
jmactr1@gmail.com*

Facilities

The Facilities Committee (FC) is looking forward to the new year with plans to update the Fiesta and Ceramics/Arts & Crafts Rooms. The Project Groups assigned to these projects have met with clubs and are working on scopes of work.

The Board approved the capital purchase of a used truck for use by HOA Maintenance at a not-to-exceed price of \$35,000 to include taxes, registration, and warranty. HOA Maintenance was successful in finding a used truck with one owner and listed at 17,000 miles.

Other items in the works include painting the trim on 395 homes, the update of the pool/spa/shower at Rec Ctr 2, update of pool/spa at Rec Ctr 1, grinding, repair and replacement of concrete, adding a 20-amp branch circuit to the electrical panels at Gates 1, 2, 3 & 4, and adding smart thermostats at HVAC locations. HOA Maintenance will be quoting the 2024 Asphalt Project.

Capital items still in process are FC and Traffic working to secure Gate 1, FC and Architectural working on shade covers over pool equipment at both recreation centers and installing locked enclosures for large waste bins at both recreation centers.

Remember, homeowners having concerns about amenities, buildings, streets, home painting, greenbelt areas, and gates are asked to use the Customer Service Request form available online or in the Administration and Recreation Offices.

Want to get involved? Join the Facilities Committee. The Committee meets monthly on the fourth Thursday at 9 a.m. in the Fiesta Room. Come check us out.

*Nancy Cunningham, Chair,
(949) 350-3562*

Greenbelt

What does your Greenbelt Committee (GBC) do? A great question, especially if you are a new member to the community. The Committee acts solely in an advisory capacity to the Casta del Sol Board of Directors. The committee must request, through

management, to meet with contractors or vendors. Management must be in attendance during meetings with committee members, contractors, or vendors. Committee members have no authority to make commitments on behalf of the Board.

The GBC advises the Board of Directors regarding the aesthetics of the landscape throughout Casta. The committee addresses owners' concerns with decisions of the Landscape Services Department and provides accurate information on committee activities to the residents of Casta via the *Casta Courier*. The Committee also monitors and evaluates the condition of all common area landscaping in Casta. These are just a few of the responsibilities listed under the new Board approved GBC Charter. You may obtain a complete GBC Charter at the main office at Rec Ctr 1.

As a reminder, if you have a landscape maintenance request (LMR) please use the following contact information from O'Connell. You can phone in your request at (800) 339-1106 or email workorders@oclm.com. You may always contact Bill Thornton, Landscape Services Coordinator at bthornton@powerstone.com. The GBC is continuing to plan community projects under their charter for 2024. Members of the GBC not only attend committee meetings but are also involved in smaller project groups that report back to the main committee for any actionable items.

*Randy Gish, Chair,
gishra@sbcglobal.net*

Library

Happy New Year! In keeping with the newness of the year, the Library Committee is going to have its very first annual inventory. Presently it is scheduled for February 8. The library will be closed all day or at least until the inventory is completed. Save the date.

Now is a good time to review the rules and regulations of the library found in your Casta del Sol phone directory. Basically, the hardcover books can be checked out for three weeks and renewed as often as you need. Exceptions are brand-new books and those books that have been reserved by others; these cannot be renewed past the original three weeks.

We also have a selection of small pa-

Continued on page 10

COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD *Cont'd*

Library

Continued from page 9

perbacks and DVDs which are loaned out on the honor system. Additionally, we have a *free* bin of books that are yours to take and keep.

Happy reading.

*Pat Vitti, Chair,
(949) 457-9194*

Social

The Social Committee was pleased to start our new year of events with a first, Fettuccine Friday, on January 19. Think of yourself back in the old country of Italy dining alfresco at a table covered with a checkered tablecloth. Picture a bottle of red wine, a red rose, and Doug Houston singing Italian favorites like Frank Sinatra. The buffet consisted of — what else — fettuccine with red sauce and meatballs, and chicken alfredo. The addition of salad and a dessert of tiramisu was the perfect way to transport you across the world (with a little imagination). Many thanks to the project group for dreaming this up and to Valerie for making it happen.

Coming up on Sunday, February 11 is a return of our Super Bowl Potluck. Those of you who were there last year know what a fun time we had. Please

bring an item of food for the potluck and maybe an alcoholic beverage of your choice, and join in the fun. Who will be playing in the Super Bowl? At the time this was written, nobody knew, but wear your favorite team jersey and root for the commercials.

The Social Committee meets on the first Friday of the month at 10 a.m. in the Fiesta Room.

*Amy Lake, Chair,
(516)263-794,
Arlake225@gmail.com*

Traffic

Happy New Year! Here's a friendly reminder for 2024 and an excerpt from our traffic rules: *Identification cards are issued to Casta del Sol residents. Residents entering Casta gates on bicycles or walking are required to present their ID cards to the Gate Attendant before passing through the gate.* Our iGate system makes it fairly easy to regulate vehicular traffic through the gates, but pedestrians and cyclists (including e-bikes) pose very different challenges. It's impossible for our gate attendants to see or acknowledge every pedestrian or cyclist entering the community, especially those coming in behind their backs.

Do we want strangers (even the nice ones) on foot or bike using Casta

for their recreation? While this is not a new concern, the changes being planned by the city in conjunction with the Oso Creek Trail project are likely to bring greatly increased pedestrian and bike traffic to our doorstep and, consequently, into our community. Let's all work together to do everything we reasonably can to assure that only residents and authorized guests are entering. In the months to come, you may see Traffic Committee members at the gates monitoring this pedestrian and bike traffic. Someday, locking pedestrian gates may be installed at all entrances and residents will be provided an electronic means of entry. Until then, if you leave the community on foot or bike, please remember to carry, and plan to show the gate attendant, your Casta ID card for re-entry; it's your key.

*Elizabeth Wing, Co-Chair,
mewinghome@gmail.com*

Welcome

Welcome as always to newcomers in the community. We would like to meet you. Members of the Welcome Committee contact new residents to arrange a meeting and provide a packet of information about the many activities, clubs, and committees in Casta del Sol and to answer your questions. If you have not yet been contacted by one of our members and wish to meet, you may email me to arrange a time and place to get together with one or two of us.

Welcome to Casta once again and we hope you enjoy exploring and finding your way around the community. We look forward to meeting each one of you.

*Priscilla Tripp, Chair,
ptripp1@gmail.com*

Gate Passes

The gate attendants, who work for Allied Security, at the entrances to Casta del Sol get many calls in the morning hours, making it more difficult for them to answer the phone in a timely manner. Just a reminder that evenings are a good time to call with questions and you can call the Gate the night before to give any names of visitors/vendors coming to your home the next day. Visitor information may also be input online at www.castadelsolnordicsec.com.

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CLUBS & ACTIVITIES

Bible Study

Any resident of Casta del Sol who has an interest in participating in the study of the Bible is welcome to join us. This is an active group of folks from different churches. Our studies are varied, but always Bible-oriented. We examine and/or question the study of the day, but always keep the discussion on topics from the Bible.

The club meets at Rec Ctr 2 every Tuesday morning from 10 to 11:30 a.m. for study and prayer. Come and join us as we sing the old hymns.

We are a no-dues club. All are welcome. For more information, please contact Peter Filakouridis at (949) 305-1935.

Kay Reed,
dentist2cali@gmail.com,
(949) 354-1460

Billiards

So, what's so great about billiards? Well, here are some thoughts. Billiards is a game that can be played with friends or as a competitive sport.

It is a game that requires both skill and strategy to win. It can be played at various skill levels, accessible to players of all abilities. There are many different variations of billiards, including 8-ball, 9-ball, and straight pool. It's played indoors, making it a great option for the coming rainy days and cold weather. Playing can improve hand-eye coordination. It is a social game that brings people together to enjoy friendly competition and conversation. Mastering difficult shots in billiards can provide a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Billiards can be a lifelong hobby. It can be a relaxing and enjoyable activity to unwind after a long, hard day of retirement. So, come on down to the Billiards Room and enjoy the fun.

Fred Wilmott,
BilliardsCdS@cox.net,
(949) 367-6671

Bridge

Valentine's Day approaches. Unfortunately, my sweetheart does not play bridge. But some other couples do, and

others play with a significant bridge partner. With or without a bridge partner, please feel free to stop by the Garden Room on duplicate Tuesday between noon and 3 p.m. to introduce yourself and perhaps find a partner. There are also nearby opportunities to learn bridge; stop in and ask us. Duplicate Bridge at Casta del Sol is unsanctioned by the ACBL.

The Wednesday noon party bridge gathering has a generally fixed membership but occasionally requires substitutions. There is apparently no fixed room location available; check with the Rec Ctr 1 office for the location each week.

If you would like to be a regular or substitute player, please email me with your availability for Party/Duplicate, or Both. Please include *bridge* in the subject line. Have a sweet Valentine's Day!

Tim McCoy,
mccoystest@cox.net

Canine Companions

We all portend to be pet lovers. At least the ones who have one. Perhaps the others don't know what they're missing. And here we are in Casta del Sol. Not everyone can buy into the program of what you give you get back tenfold. The companionship can be remarkable, especially for someone alone, but it takes forgiving, love, and patience.

For those of you interested in pursuing that thought further, I suggest a visit to Mission Viejo Animal Shelter. Also, you are always welcome to attend our Canine Club monthly luncheons and enjoy Linda's fine fair and discuss your consideration further.

That brings us to this month's Saturday, February 10 meeting from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Lawn Bowling Pavilion featuring Valentine's Day costume dress along with pulled pork sandwiches. In January, we enjoyed Linda's Chili. Come on out.

Tom Brockmiller,
lindabrock@cox.net,
(949) 412-1083

Casta Creatives

Happy New Year to all our Casta Creative members and potential members. We are looking forward to 2024 events including demonstrations, workshops, Paint and Wine events, and field trips to local museums and art fairs. If you are interested in being a member for 2024 and participating

in our activities, please pay your dues of \$10 to the front office. Everyone is welcome to join and try your hand at our workshops. We hold Paint and Wine for the community as an introductory event twice a year.

Please join us or observe on Wednesdays and Thursdays for Open Studio from 2 to 6 p.m. in the Arts and Crafts Room at Rec Ctr 1.

Congratulations to our Vice President, Jeff Ponce, who is displaying his work in the library and office until the end of March.

If you are interested in finding out more about our club, please contact Jacki Keller at (949) 293-5487.

Debra Friedman,
debrafriedman0@gmail.com,
(949) 230-7195

Crafts For Charity

This month, the Craft Ladies of Casta del Sol are delivering Valentine tray favors to the Age Well group at the Norman P. Murray Center, which handles Meals on Wheels in Mission Viejo. The ladies have also created 30 love-filled Valentine gift bags for the residents of Laura's House, which provides help for domestic violence victims.

We meet on the first and third Wednesday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon in Rec Ctr 2. Club meetings this month will be on February 7 and 21.

We'll be starting several new projects for spring. We welcome new project ideas and potential recipients. Stop by when you can and lend a hand. We would love to meet you. Materials will be supplied, and you'll be shown what to do. It's a great way to meet your neighbors and make new friends while helping others.

Jessica Hollowell,
(310) 480-9093

Cribbage

We play cribbage each Thursday in the Heritage Room at Rec Ctr 2 from 6:30 until about 8:45 p.m. If you are interested in learning to play this old English card game, any of our members would be willing to teach you on a one-to-one basis, or we can do it on a Thursday evening; it's really not that complicated. You just need to be able to count to 31. If you have ever played in the past, the rules will quickly come flooding back; just come on down for a few games and a general

Continued on next page

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CLUBS & ACTIVITIES *Cont'd*

Cribbage

Continued from previous page

social evening. There is no sign-up or commitment. If you want more information, contact Susan Herrning.

*Susan Herrning,
susanherrning@aol.com,
(949) 630-2565*

Democrats

The next Casta del Sol Democrats Club meeting is on February 18 at 3 p.m. in the Vista Room. We will have our New Year's kick-off party. Expect a feast of salad, lasagna, luscious dessert, and more for only \$15. There will be a sign-up sheet in the office, but we will collect the payment upon entry to the party.

We won't have a formal presentation, but the club officers will discuss future presentations and topics for meetings in 2024. We are also looking into writing postcards and reaching out to our friends and neighbors to help candidates get elected.

Generally, the meetings will be on the third Sunday of the month at 3 p.m. in the Vista Room.

We are hoping to expand our membership, especially in this important election year. Please encourage friends and neighbors to join. Cur-

rently, we are a no-dues club. If you would like to receive emails, please let me know.

*Debra Friedman,
debrafriedman0@gmail.com,
(949) 230-7195*

Health & Fitness

So, the 2024 clock ticked into January and you had the best intentions. You were going to get out and get fit. But somehow, the month has slipped away. Casta's Fitness Classes are here for you!

What could be better than: classes three times a week, and on-site in the Vista Room; certified, professional instructors who make it fun; gentle workouts in small groups, among friends; a No-Judgment Zone! We are all levels and all abilities, and everyone's needs are considered. There is a \$10 fee per class, but you won't find a more personalized exercise experience anywhere. We are seniors and we don't need to injure ourselves!

We encourage you to come by and observe to see if a class is right for you. Class schedule: Balance (Mondays, 10:30 a.m.); Stretching (Tuesdays, 10 a.m.); Mat Pilates (Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m.) Come join us!

*Helen Freedman,
PelicanPost123@yahoo.com,
(646) 662-7325*

Heritage Garden

February is the season of love and a reason to wear red. Not only because of Valentine's Day, but also because it is National Heart Health Month. It reminds us to focus on our emotional as well as our cardiovascular health. Nothing beats walking for good health. It strengthens your heart, boosts your mood, and reduces stress. Our beautiful Heritage Garden offers many opportunities to improve our health. Walking through the meandering paths, stopping to enjoy the beautiful colors and listening to the chirping birds is sure to enhance physical and mental health. Grab a light sweater and plan to catch the sun rise in the garden. It promises to be a symphony of soft pastel orange and pink eastern skies, crisp air, and chirping birds. Walk down from the African Garden to the Butterfly Garden and from there head to the Geranium Garden to enjoy the colors. We will see you in the garden.

*Parizad Sethna,
parizad9@outlook.com,
(949) 298-0076*



Italian American

Our next Bingo will be on Thursday, February at 8 p.m. in the Vista Room. The cost is \$5 paid at the Rec Ctr 1 office. Cards are \$1 each. There will be a Pot of Gold drawing, \$100 last-game payout, and a light dessert. BYOB.

*Lucille Naves,
neilnaves@cox.net,
(949) 600-5887*

Las Damas

February has arrived, and cherry blossoms and romance are in full bloom. Las Damas Club will celebrate this beautiful month with a Valentine Luncheon Meeting on February 13, beginning at 11:15 a.m. in the Vista Room.

All club members and guests are cordially invited to partake in a delicious menu featuring chicken cordon bleu, rice pilaf, mixed green salad, rolls and butter, followed by decadent chocolate cake for dessert.

Featured entertainer, vocalist Rebecca Felix, will include the history and era of the songs and artists portrayed, using props and costume changes.

Reservations are being taken through

Continued on page 16

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4 	5 9:00 AM Traffic, F 2:00 PM Ad-Hoc Policy & Procedures, F	6 1:00 PM Architectural, F	7 10:00 AM Library, F 3:00 PM Election, F	8 6:00 PM Italian American Bingo, V	9 10:00 AM Architectural App Review, G	10 1:00 PM Canine Companions, LBP
11 3:00 PM Social's Super Bowl Party, V	12	13 9:00 AM Greenbelt, F	14  9:30 AM Courier, F 11:30 AM Las Damas Luncheon, V	15 1:00 PM CdS BoD, V, Z	16 10:00 AM Architectural App Review, G	17 
18 10:30 AM ARMDI Event, V 3:00 PM Democrats, V	19 President's Day 2:00 PM Ad-Hoc Policy & Procedures, F	20  10:00 AM Welcome, F	21 5:30 PM Men's Golf Dinner, V	22 9:00 AM Facilities, F	23 10:00 AM Architectural App Review, G 12:00 PM Fishing Club, F	24 5:30 PM Sol Rock N Rollers Event, V
25 	26 1:00 PM Budget & Finance, V 5:00 PM Military Veterans, V	27	28 	29 10:30 AM Courier Stuffing, V	Calendar Coordinator, Valerie Hanich Recreation Director, vhanich@powerstonepm.com (949) 455-4681 	

• Association, Board & Committee Meetings • Association Sponsored Activities • Club & Activity Events

Note: All meetings are subject to a change of location or being on Zoom.

Daily/Weekly Activities Schedule - February 2024 (All activities are subject to change.)

Bible Study T, 10:30 AM, H	Jewelry Class F, 1 PM, AC	Shuffle (Pot of Gold) W, 6:30 PM, SBP
Bocce Ball M, W, F, 2-3 PM, BC	Lawn Bowling M, W, F, 1:30 PM, LBG	Shuffle League Play TU, 10 AM, SBP
Bunco 1st T, 6 PM, H	Mah Jongg Mavens S, 10 AM, H	Shuffle (Friendly Play) W, 10 AM, SBP
Bunco 2nd T, 6 PM, H	Mexican Train T, 1 PM, V or AC	Shuffle Training F, 10 AM, SBP
Bunco 2nd T, 6 PM, G	Paddle Tennis M, T, W, TH, F, 9 AM, PTC	Shuffle Super 2nd Su, 1 PM, SBP
Bunco Babes 3rd T, 6 PM, G	Pickleball T, F, Su, 8 AM, TC;	Strummers M, 1 PM, H
Casta Creatives W, TH, 3 - 6 PM, AC & CW M, W, 4 PM, TC	Support Group 1st & 3rd TH, 10:30 AM, G
Ceramics Club M, T, TH, F, S, 9 AM - 1 PM;	Ping Pong S, 9:00 PM, G or V	Tennis T, TH, 6:30 PM, TC;
..... W, 9 AM - 3 PM, AC & CW	Pinochle F, 6:30 PM, H M, W, S, 8 AM, TC
Crafts for Charity 1st, 3rd W, 10 AM, H	Poker Ladies 1st W, 6 PM, G	Texas Hold'em W, 12:45 PM, G
Cribbage TH, 6:30 PM, H	Quilting 2nd & 4th TH, 1 PM, G	Water Exercise M, T, W, TH, F, 9 AM, P1
Duplicate Bridge T, 12 PM, G	Rubber Bridge M, 11 AM, G	Wood Workers M, TH, 12 PM, AC
Hand & Foot M, 6 PM, G;	Scrabble T, 6 PM, L	
..... W, 12 PM, H;		
..... S, 5:45 PM, H		

Recreation Center 1

- AC = Arts & Crafts
- B = Billiards Room
- BC = Bocce Ball Courts
- CW = Ceramics Workshop
- F = Whole Fiesta Room
- G = Garden Room
- L = Library
- P1 = Pool 1
- SBP = Shuffleboard Pavilion
- V = Vista

Recreation Center 2

- CG = Chipping Green
- H = Heritage Room
- LBG = Lawn Bowling Green
- LBP = Lawn Bowling Patio/Pavilion
- P2 = Pool 2
- PTC = Paddle Tennis Court
- TC = Tennis Court

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FEATURE OF THE MONTH

Happy New Year: A Sparkling Celebration

Article and photos by Kip Isbell

While many couples around the world were getting married to celebrate this New Year's Eve special date of 123123, a very lively crowd of our residents were showing how to party hardy. The sold-out Vista Room dance floor was filled all night thanks to the truly awesome five-piece band, Sideways.

After social time and a fully catered dinner by Martinez, we jumped feet first into dancing the rest of the night away. This was a departure from previous years of games and prizes; no one was disappointed with the music as the dance floor was packed cheek-to-cheek, elbow-to-elbow, line dancing, or with whirling dervishes. They all had fun!

The beautiful decorations with faux New York Ball Drop table centerpieces were courtesy of Valerie and her mom Karen – what a great team. The theme of “All That Glitters Disco Ball” was not only reflected in the décor but also in the sparkly outfits of many party goers.

The Social Committee deserves a loud shout-out for this wonderfully planned New Year's Eve party. Let's see more in '24!



The band Sideways



Ring in 2024



Dancing the night away



A toast to the new year



Smiling faces and disco ball décor



Dance floor packed with line dancers



Valorie Stover having fun



Valerie Hanich and her mom Karen

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CLUBS & ACTIVITIES *Cont'd*

Las Damas

Continued from page 13

February 10 at Rec Ctr 1. Tickets are \$25, members and \$30, non-members. Annual dues of \$20 are also payable by check to Las Damas Club.

March (St. Patrick's Day) sign-ups begin immediately following.

Pat Crowley,
(949) 305-0582

Mah Jongg Mavens

Players, join our group on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and Tuesday 1:30 to 4 p.m., in the Heritage Room at Rec Ctr 2. No reservations needed. Bring the 2023 card and \$3.

Mah Jongg Mavens hold a tournament and potluck on the first Saturday of each month. Bring a 2023 card, \$3 to play, and a potluck item to share.

Winners on January 6: Most Mah Jonggs – Myrna Smith; Concealed Hands – Madeleine Lipofsky; Singles and Pairs – Miriam Armstrong; Quints – Jayne Freed; no winners in Jokerless.

May the Jokers be with you!

Jean VanDerford,
abutterflylady@cox.net

Military Veterans

Movie night, pizza bonanza, guest speakers, summer cook outs by the pool area, officer nominations, and our annual potluck along with the Honors Ball celebration are just some of the year's events we CdS Veterans Military Club accomplish. Would you like to take part? We welcome your participation. If you are a military veteran or spouse of a veteran and a resident of Casta del Sol, you are invited to attend either a formal meeting or social gathering.

Come join us for a simple chat and camaraderie with other military veterans that share your interests. As a reminder, there is a \$20 dollar membership due this year to support future club events. We meet every fourth Monday of the month with a place and time to be determined. Did I mention the 50/50 drawing? Take a chance at making your wallet a little fatter!

Rod Jordan,
roddy@roddyjordan.com,
(714) 746-1158



Ping Pong

Join us on Saturday mornings from 9-11 a.m. in the Garden Room for competitive play. All skill levels are welcome. There is always a table available for newcomers and/or those who need a refresher. In addition, open play is available on most Saturdays and Sundays. Paddles are available for loan at Rec Ctr 1 office. We look forward to seeing you there. For more information, contact Sherry Hargrove.

Sherry Hargrove,
(858) 336-5369

Pinochle

Springtime special for Casta del Sol residents who can play Pinochle. If it's been years since you have played, and you'd like to see what you remember, please send me an email to idglass@cox.net or call and leave a message at (949) 455-9826. I'll be happy to meet you and help you recall how to count meld and bid the hand that you are dealt. Then, when you feel comfortable, we'd like you to join us. We play Pinochle every Friday evening at 6:30 p.m. sharp in the Heritage Room at Rec Ctr 2.

In December 2023, there were five Fridays. Alice McNany (4090) and Cathie Joy (3770) were the winners of three game high score. Total high scores for the month were 16970 for Alice and 15320 for Cathie. There were five Double Pinochles; Dawn Hibbs had two.

Dawn Hibbs,
idglass@cox.net,
(949) 455-9826

Republican

The Republican Club is in the process of gathering informative speakers and candidates for you this year, along with some fun events. We begin the year with our first event on Sunday, February 25. We have speakers lined up for this event for discussions on the upcoming 2024 election. We are working on the plans for the entire year and will send out information closer to the event date. We will continue to provide our membership with informative and interesting topics, guest speakers, and films.

It is time again to collect dues for the 2024 year. There is no increase in dues, which remain at \$10 per individual and \$15 per couple. As we complete another year, it becomes necessary to replenish the treasury

to continue to provide our events at no charge to dues-paying members. Thank you for your continued support.

Betty Houston,
Consultantbetty@gmail.com,
(626) 422-0771

Social Singles

If you are a Casta del Sol resident who is single, you are invited to join our singles group. We have no membership dues. In February, we will be meeting for lunch on Thursday, February 8 at 1 p.m. at Lucille's BBQ on the corner of El Toro and Ridge Route. To reserve your seat at the table, please RSVP only to Carol Kowalsky at cekewpiel@cox.net by Monday, February 5. If you would like to join the group and get on our email list, or for more information, please contact Mary Carlson.

Mary Carlson,
marycarlson28@gmail.com,
(949) 380-0744

Sol Rock 'n Rollers

Looking forward to another fun year dancing and enjoying *live music*. We are working hard on our 2024 dates to bring you free concerts, unique fun options as well as at-cost dinner/dances. Keep your eyes open for an email or flyer soon. Good news, again this year there is no membership fee for Sol Rock n' Rollers. We consider all residents in Casta to be members who have the option to attend. We have reviewed the survey cards and will work hard to make our events meet your needs. See you on the dance floor soon!

Deanna McKeon,
deecinder@gmail.com
(714) 747-1792

Support Group

If you experience grief because of losing a loved one, losing independence due to illness, aging, or caring for a loved one, this is a place for emotional support, sharing experiences, and hearing similar situations. You are not alone on your journey. Come and meet others in similar seasons and situations. We meet twice a month. For more information, contact Kathy Wu.

Kathy Wu,
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CLUBS & ACTIVITIES *Cont'd*

Variety

The Casta del Sol Variety Club took our movie on the road to Laguna Woods in January. It was a huge success. Our club is expanding and getting better known. We may receive additional offers to do a live show or show our movie elsewhere.

We are planning our next event at Casta del Sol to take place from May 31 to June 2. It will be an in-person humorous show based on a well-known musical. This senior oriented twist on the musical will be directed by Bear Sanchez and Barb Turino. Watch for announcements about our first meeting/casting call in February.

The Variety Club is so much fun that we keep adding to our family of performers. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Barb Turino at (951) 858-7350.

*Debra Friedman,
debrafriedman0@gmail.com,
(949) 230-7195*

Vegetable Garden

Winter brings us broccoli, cabbage, kohlrabi, and more. Kohlrabi is a vegetable; it is often called a German turnip. Onions, cauliflower, and garlic are also staple crops in the garden. Thanks to the rain we had (in December we had over 2 inches of rain), our crops are growing very well, and we all are looking forward to a good harvest. On February 3 in the Fiesta Room, Master Gardener Laurie Menosky will be giving a talk about bugs in a garden, and which one do you "squish and spray" or coddle as a needed friend. Check the Bulletin Calendar for details. At this writing, 25 people are waiting for a lot. Happy Gardening!

*Michael Schlesinger,
mikeschles123@gmail.com,
(914) 815-1002*



SPORTS

Away Golf

Our next tournament will be held on Tuesday, February 13, at Welk Resort Golf Course in Escondido. We will have a 9 a.m. shotgun start. Cost for golf with cart and prizes is \$60. Sign-up will be available at Casta del Sol Rec Ctr 1 from Monday, January 15, through Saturday, February 3. We

Woodworkers

Woodworkers Club members are looking forward to some positive plans for changes in our meeting and workplace during 2024. Meanwhile, we are considering accepting Casta del Sol residents' requests for minor woodworking repairs or projects that we can complete in our garage workshops.

Several club members attended the first Orange County Woodworker's Association meeting of the year at the Tustin Senior Center where we met with other experienced woodworkers. Often there are member demonstrations with woodworking tools and materials along with opportunities to obtain gently used woodworking hand and power tools no longer wanted by longtime members. The Association has a library containing extensive printed and visual woodworking information useful to amateur and beginning woodworkers.

Woodworkers meet on Monday afternoon at 2 p.m. in Rec Ctr 1 Arts and Crafts Room located across from the Vista Room. Drop by if you have a wood project request or are interested in our activities.

*Steve Vallely,
(714) 595-5766*

Water Exercise

We have had a great start to the new year, the weather has been brisk, but we still have some hearty members, and we continue to have our daily exercise program. The pool is warm, about 86 degrees, so it's really not hard to get in. Afterward there is always the hot tub and some good conversation. Join us at 9 a.m. in Pool 1. Register in the office by signing the waiver and paying the annual dues of \$10. Hope to see you soon.

*Nan Rednall,
nrednall@gmail.com,
(949) 584-4321*

look forward to seeing you all there.

*Joyce Parlin,
(949) 588-0337*

Bocce Ball

Come on down and try the game of Bocce Ball. We play on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons

Continued on page 18

Bulletin Board

Please see club reports for more information.



Book Group #1

The book we are reading for the February 26 meeting is *The Smallest Lights in the Universe* by Sara Seager. The story is about an MIT astrophysicist who reinvents herself in the wake of tragedy and discovers the power of connection on the planet as she searches our galaxy for another Earth. We meet on the fourth Monday at 6:30 p.m. in the Casta Library. Suzanne Popel, (949) 215-5157

Yarn Art Group

Calling all yarn crafters! Tired of tangled skeins and lonely projects? Longing for a community of fellow yarn enthusiasts to share your passion with? Join the Casta del Sol Yarn Art Group every Wednesday from 9 to 11 a.m. in the Garden Room at Rec Ctr 1. We welcome all who enjoy crocheting, knitting, looming, and all yarn art. We are not a club and have no dues. Contact Teresita at (949) 716-5072 for more details.



Quilters Group

Gather your fat quarters and precut squares and join our CdS Quilter's Group for a fun afternoon of learning, sharing, and camaraderie. Join us from 1 to 4 p.m. in the Garden Room on Thursday, February 11 and February 25. We are not a club, have no dues, and we welcome all who enjoy needle art. Contact Victoria Crayne at (949) 587-1853.

Shuffleboard

The CdS Shuffleboard Club invites residents to come and learn to play or practice Shuffleboard at 10 a.m. on the first and third Friday of each month in the Shuffleboard Pavilion. Equipment and instruction are provided. The air-conditioned Shuffleboard Pavilion is located next to the Rec Ctr 1 pool. Contact Bob and Mo Caywood at (949) 916-1972.

Canine Companions Club

Please join the Canine Companions Club for our Valentine's Dress your Dog contest on February 10, 1:00-3:00 p.m. We will have prizes for the three best costumes! We will be serving pulled pork sandwiches, chips, coleslaw, and dessert. Water and soft drinks will also be served. Come out and join the fun. Contact Linda Brockmiller at (949) 412-1083 or lindabrock@cox.net



The Strummers Talent Search

Are you proficient at playing banjo, bass, guitar, ukulele, harmonica, or harp? Want to join a fun group with no dues? Contact Joe Hart at (949) 939-1792 for an appointment on February 5 or 12. We hope to hear from you.



Submissions to the Bulletin Board

The Bulletin Board is to be used by Casta del Sol clubs and organizations to briefly announce activities or changes to activities occurring during the month of, and the following month. (Example: an announcement for February must be submitted for publication one month in advance or by January 6.) The Bulletin article should be succinct, including only the basics: what, where, when cost, and who to contact. Submissions to the Bulletin Board are due the sixth of each month and should be typed in the body of an email or as an attachment in Word document format.

—Jeff McCoy, Bulletin Board Editor, jmactr1@gmail.com.

SPORTS *Cont'd*



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Bocce Ball

Continued from page 17

from 2 to 3 p.m. It is very casual, and we end up with a lot of laughter. Our next social event will be a Pizza/Bingo Party on Monday, April 1 at 6 p.m. in the Vista Room. Sign-ups will begin in March. Our next meeting will be on Monday, February 5, at 7 p.m. in the Fiesta Room. Following a short business meeting, we will be playing Bingo. At our March 4 meeting, we will be playing cards. Dues will remain at \$10 per year and are now payable at Rec Ctr 1.

*Carol Zinsmeister,
(949) 305-9890*

Bowling

The Casta del Sol Bowling league bowls on Thursdays at 1 p.m. at Saddleback Lanes on Marguerite Parkway in Mission Viejo. If you do not want to commit to bowl every week, you could get on our list of subs, we can always use more subs. Just call Donna Miller at (949) 395-8958. If interested in checking out how much fun we have, you can always stop by on Thursday at 1 p.m. at Saddleback Lanes.

*Van Quinn,
(949) 842-9151*

Fishing

We are into the new year. The ocean outlook starts with sculpin and ocean whitefish as the primary targets. Rockfish season is closed until April. Bass fishing is slow and will remain slow until the water warms in May. I have no new information on trout stocking in the lake. For now, there are no definite stocking days scheduled. I will keep you informed.

Our standard lunch meeting will be on Friday, February 23, 12-1:30 p.m. in the Fiesta Room. Six-inch Subway sandwiches, chips, and soft drinks are on the menu for only \$5. Newcomers are welcome; contact Nick Morenc for details. Until next month, tight lines for all.

*Nick Morenc,
(949) 588-6223*

Golf Chippers

All Casta del Sol residents are welcome to play in the quarterly Golf Chippers event at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, February 3 at the Rec Ctr 2 Golf Practice Area. Adult guests are welcome. Admission is \$5, including a raffle ticket. We try to have something on the gift table for every participant.

Continued on next page

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SPORTS *Cont'd*

Golf Chippers

Continued from previous page

The raffle table needs white elephant items from a garage, golf bag, or office near you. Please consider providing something that another participant might want to take home.

The Heritage Garden has more volunteers and visitors than ever before. Please be aware that too many stray golf balls are found outside the golf area. This safety issue needs cooperation from everyone who uses the area. So, please use only short chip shots and take great care. Thank you. Any questions? Just call.

*Bob Hrad,
(949) 290-036*

Lawn Bowling

It's a brand-new year; are you ready for a brand-new you? Let's face it, there's not too much "new" about us here in Casta del Sol. We're not talking about a New Year's resolution because nearly everyone breaks them. But it can be true change for you. Exercise is good for the body and soul. We are really more about friendships and camaraderie than competitiveness. So come spend a couple hours in the California sunshine talking with old friends and making new ones. Hey, there is something "new" that can be found here, so come to Rec Ctr 2 to check it all out. We've got our own kitchen area and plenty of tables and chairs. If you want to try something "new," come down and check out free lessons after 2:30 p.m. or so, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, or call Shuman Chan at (626) 428-9250.

*Roman Swystun,
(818) 669-9970*

Men's Golf

Since Casta del Sol is always adding new residents, let us tell you about our club and activities. The club has more than 130 members. We play each Wednesday at Oso Creek Golf Course, an 18-hole, 3670-yard executive course. Tee times are 7 to 10 a.m. We play a varied schedule of tournament games. Prizes are awarded for all skill levels.

Congratulations to Bart Patton for his recent hole-in-one on the third hole, a 135-yard par 3, using a six iron. The club awarded a \$50 prize for his "dream shot."

The February games are: 2/7 - Team

Twosome Total; 2/14 - Odd/Even Twosome; 2/21 - Winter Tournament and Awards Dinner; 2/28 - Jeopardy. If you are interested in becoming a member, please contact our membership chairman Al Arnott at (714) 425-4320. Wishing you a happy new year and great golf.

*Merl Barrett,
(949) 770-5024*

Paddle Tennis

The Paddle Tennis Club officers have planned the schedule of events for 2024. We will have three tournaments: Luck of the Irish Tournament on March 16, Cinco de Mayo Tournament on May 4, and Halloween Tournament on October 26. For our social events, we have the Paddle/Pickle Pizza Olympics on August 3, the Progressive Dinner on September 14, the Oktoberfest Annual Meeting on October 17, and Pickle/Paddle Holiday Party on December 7. Please pay your \$10 dues for 2024 at the Rec Ctr 1 office so you can join us in all these wonderful events.

Open Court times are 9 to 10:30 a.m. Monday through Friday and from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday. Everyone is welcome to play. For other times, please put your name on the whiteboard outside the courts.

*Debra Friedman,
debrafriedman0@gmail.com,
(949) 230-7195*

Pickleball

Why not choose pickleball to satisfy your New Year's resolution to be active? It's fun and a highly accessible social activity that allows you to meet some of your neighbors. The club has reserved the courts every Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 8 to 10 a.m., and every Monday and Wednesday from 4 to 6 p.m. Come join us at Rec Ctr 2 for some fun action. Loaner paddles are available and club members will help get you introduced to the game.

Please remember that 2024 club member dues of \$10 per person should be paid by check to the *CdS Pickleball Club* at the Rec Ctr 1 office. Dues allow the club to fund tournaments and social events, and to buy balls for open play.

*Eric Vanderslice,
(562) 712-1225*

Shuffleboard

The Shuffleboard Pavilion is in full swing. The winter Shuffleboard leagues began in early January and take place until March 20. Please consider signing up as a sub as they are often needed. For the Tuesday morning league, contact Jim Kinney at dothemath99@yahoo.com, and for the Wednesday evening league, contact Susan Herrning at susanherrning@aol.com.

The dates for Sunday events are as follows: February 18 for the Sunday Supper Shuffle and February 25 for the Sunday Potluck Social Shuffle. Sign-ups are available on the bulletin board in the Shuffleboard Pavilion.

The Wednesday Friendly Shufflers meet every week at 10 a.m. All are welcome to play this "no take-out" style. Friday morning lessons by Bob and Mo Caywood take place on the first and third weeks at 10 a.m.

*Debra Friedman,
debrafriedman0@gmail.com,
(949) 230-7195*

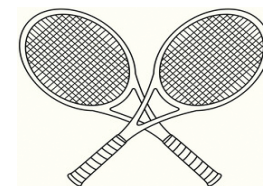
Tennis

Although there was an unusually rainy start to the winter tennis season,

all the Tennis Club's weekly court activities are now back on track. These include morning sessions at 8 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays along with evening sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The first Saturday of each month includes *Clarity Tips*, along with coffee and breakfast munchies. The third Saturday of the month features drills with local pro Jimmy Gleason.

At the recent Tennis Club board meeting a variety of on-court and social events was outlined. Initially, the list of events includes two major Casta-wide parties and two tournaments. A very exciting year is anticipated so continue to check your calendars for specific dates. Newcomers are always welcome at Tennis Club group events. To ensure they can easily get into the swing of things, we have a variety of gently used demo racquets available courtside.

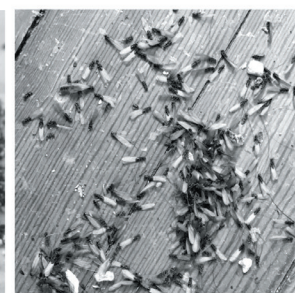
*Roger Gyger,
(630) 430-9045*



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CASTA COMMUNITY

On the Road Again Holocaust Education Center

New to SoCal, too busy to explore, or perhaps time to revisit? Debra offers suggestions.



Debra Friedman

Mel Mermelstein was a Holocaust survivor who had been at both Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps. After surviving and moving to the United States, he returned to Auschwitz 42 times where he collected artifacts to bring back to the U.S. for a foundation.

After he moved to Orange County, he worked at a lumber business in Huntington Beach. He housed his extensive artifact collection in a trailer near his business. He had numerous photographs including family who died in the Holocaust – his mother, father, brother, and two sisters.

Mel had a unique way of displaying the artifacts he collected from the death camps. He created assemblages and sculptures of items including silverware, barbed wire, lights, etc. His collection was extensive by the time he passed away in 2022. His granddaughter invited school children and others to tour the Huntington Beach trailer and tell the story of her grandfather's survival.

When looking for a new home for the collection, the Chabad Center of Newport Beach offered to provide two rooms in their facility on University Drive. However, there is only room for about 10% of the items, with hope for a new larger museum space to curate all the items.

The Orange County Holocaust Education Center offers book talks, and lectures in addition to tours of the museum. The first part of the tour begins with a 20-minute video regarding Mel Mermelstein and the formation of the museum. The Education Director is available for tours of any size. Go to Holocaustmuseumoc.org.

Small Talk Guitar Lessons and the Lifeguards

A freelance writer's humorous spin on the ups and downs of life.



Dorothy Frances

Looking back, I can always get a laugh from some of the lengths my high school best friend and I went to for the all-important pursuit of boys.

During the summer, we went regularly to a nearby town to go swimming. We couldn't help but notice the handsome, and often flirtatious, lifeguards. We did all the normal teenage girl things to get their attention: we wore attractive bathing suits, tried not to get our hair too wet, attained a nice tan, and found reasons to walk past the lifeguard station. Then, the day came when we noticed that several of the lifeguards played their guitars during their lunch hour. This sparked

a new idea. What if we learned to play guitar? We could bring our guitars to the beach and impress the lifeguards!

We begged our parents to pay for guitar lessons and were soon taking the bus to another town to start learning. I remember that the cost was two dollars per lesson and included the loan of a guitar. That sounds unimaginable these days.

Unfortunately, the lessons were short-lived for me, as I had no discipline about practicing. My friend's parents made her keep going for lessons for a while before she finally gave it up, too.

Summer ended without us ever finding a way to impress the lifeguards. Did it dampen our spirits? Not a bit. The lifeguards could wait until next summer. After all, there were new adventures waiting.

Oh, to be young and that carefree again.



Reflections of a Casta Neighbor

A resident explores the adventures of Casta.



Nevin Valentine

I have been struggling with the loss of my friend Georgia, who was an integral part of my women's group for more than 50 years. I know I will get through this challenging time, but I'm having an especially challenging time experiencing my sadness. As we age, we are often faced with saying goodbye. Each loss can feel like a piece of us is also gone. How can we gracefully accept the passing of a loved one, while also being with our deep sorrow?

A book I am currently reading, *One Minute Meditations for Older Women* by Jennifer Westrom, offered a passage that empowered me to be with my grief and to embrace the painful feelings of my loss. Please give some thought to Westrom's inspirational words: "One of the most important things the last stages of life teach us is the power of being with the things we cannot change. Because as much

as the thirty-five-year-old tries to learn to be with what is, there is nothing quite like the master class of aging to fully embrace, embody, and live out this truth."

If I have an opportunity to speak at Georgia's memorial, here is an excerpt of what I will say. "For fifty years, Georgia has been my head cheerleader, always on my side and the first one to say, 'You can do it.' She loved us all and wanted the best for everyone. Now we must find a way to go forward without her cheering us on." I imagine you could say similar things about close friends you have lost.

Here in Casta del Sol, many of us are learning to fully accept what is. I know I can share my grief with you and be heard. And I gain strength when I see how your life can go on, even during a time of loss, loneliness, or tragedy. I am so grateful for the Casta community, where we can all be each other's cheerleaders.

What's Cooking at Casta

Want help in the kitchen? Linda shares her favorite recipes.



Linda Brockmiller

Pesto and Goat Cheese Palmiers

1 pkg. frozen Puff Pastry, defrosted
 ¼ cup Basil Pesto
 ½ cup crumbled goat cheese
 ¼ cup sun-dried tomatoes in oil (drained and finely chopped)
 ½ cup pine nuts, toasted
 Kosher salt

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly flour the working surface and carefully unfold one sheet of puff pastry. Roll the pastry with a rolling pin to about 9 ½ x 11 ½ inches. Spread the sheet with half the pesto, then sprinkle

with half of the goat cheese, half the sundried tomatoes, and half the pine nuts. Sprinkle with salt.

Working from the short ends, fold each end halfway to the center. Then fold each side again toward the center until the folded edges almost touch. Fold one side over the other and press lightly. Place it on a sheet pan lined with parchment paper. Repeat the second sheet of puff pastry using the remaining ingredients. Cover both rolls with plastic wrap and chill for at least 45 minutes.

Cut the prepared rolls of puff pastry into ¼ inch thick slices and place them face up, 2 inches apart on a sheet pan lined with parchment paper. Bake for 12 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm.

Note: Defrost puff pastry overnight in refrigerator. Toast pine nuts in a dry pan until golden brown.

Coyotes

Coyote mating season is January through March. During this time, they are extremely aggressive and looking for food. Coyotes are important to our environment, but can

be dangerous for small pets. They are skilled hunters and do not have any other natural predators.

While walking your dog, long leashes make it easier for coyotes to attack your pet before you have a

chance to intervene. Dog doors can be hazardous to you and your pets. Even fences around your home can be easily jumped by coyotes. Please stay alert and protect your pets to the best of your ability.

PEOPLE, PLACES & EVENTS

Men's Golf Club

By Liz Rickett, photos by Darrell Holdaway and Fred Lake



Jerry Castro swinging while John Klein and Merl Barrett look on

Bill Burfeind is the unofficial historian of the Casta del Sol Men's Golf Club. He has lived in Casta since 2006 and joined the Men's Golf Club in the fall of that year.

The Club, organized in 1974 at the newly constructed Casta del Sol Golf Course, had more than 200 members, about half of whom were Casta residents. Membership was open to all local residents. There were weekly tournaments.

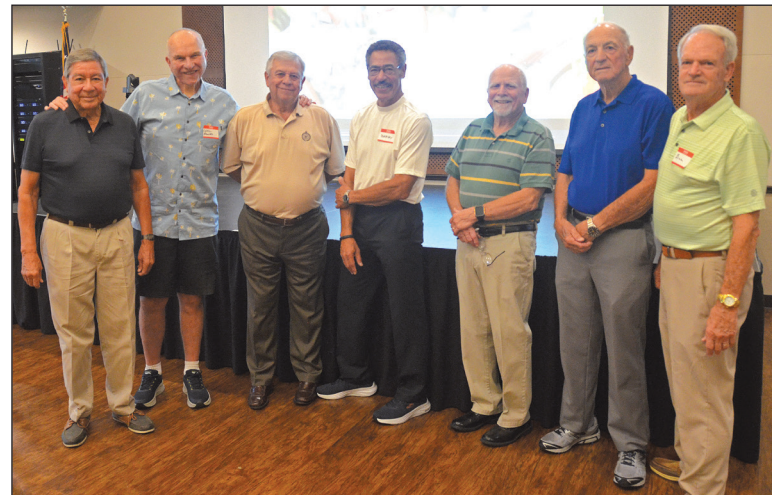
By 1981, the majority of members were not Casta residents nor were

they retired. A new club was formed at the golf course, called the Saddleback Valley Men's Golf Club. It exists today, playing each Saturday, with membership open to the general public.

Casta residents then formed the

Casta del Sol (referring to homeowners) Men's Golf Club. New membership was restricted to residents of Casta.

As the years passed, membership declined. In 2007, the club by-laws were changed to allow membership to any senior (age 55+) who wanted to join. In 2019, because of the continued declining Casta resident membership and the need to have non-residents help manage the Golf Club, it became a Casta activity, rather than a club. In 2021, the City of Mission Viejo



Golf Club Officers at Awards Dinner

Course, asking all clubs to discontinue the use of the Casta name. The club is now named the Oso Creek Senior Men's Golf Club.

At the present time there are 116 total members, of which 28 are Casta resi-



Tom Driscoll, President, with Joe Corrado, Bob Richards and Vic Katsuyana about to play

dents. Membership is open to anyone 55 years of age or older. Membership is obtained by applying online at the Southern California Golf Association website, SCGA.org. Members must follow the "Rules of Golf" as published by the United States Golf Association and post all golf scores on the *Golf Handicap Information Network*. The club plays different style games each Wednesday. In addition, there are four major tournaments and a Club Championship tournament every year. Awards dinners are always well attended by members and their significant others. The Club welcome new members, so check their information each month in the *Courier*.

purchased the Casta del Sol Golf Course from American Golf and renamed the course the Oso Creek Golf



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PEOPLE, PLACES & EVENTS *Cont'd*

CdS Lawn Bowling Club - Alive, Well, and Thriving

By Sara Henninger, photos by Fred Lake

Lawn Bowling has been around in our community for close to 50 years. It is a wonderful sport for many residents as it is gentler on the body than some of the other sports. The lawn bowlers are an active group both in Casta and in Orange County. CdS greens have a reputation of being one of the premier spots in the area.

As a brief explanation of the game, the object is to roll a ball, called a “bowl” closest to the target ball which is a small white ball called a “jack.” Since the bowl is slightly flattened on the side it is challenging because the bowl travels on a bias.

On October 18, 2023, the Casta Club had a yardstick tournament. Different from regular play, the yardstick is used to define the area around the jack and all bowls within that circle get a point. For this tournament, the first-



Peggy Torrance, Patty Doidge, Ann Sakamoto, Mary Ellen Lamparter, Eleanor Reafsnyder: winners on Ladies Day

place winners were Ann Sakamoto and Howard Reafsnyder.

On November 8, the women took center stage with the Southwest Ladies Day Tournament.

Casta winners for this tournament were Peggy Torrance, Patty Doidge, Ann Sakamoto, Mary Ellen Lamparter, and Eleanor Reafsnyder. It was impressive to see all the women dressed in different styles of white as



Ed Tutton, Roman Swystun, and Bob Rivas during yardstick tournament




Ladies Day participants all wear white

this is a tradition for this tournament. Some of the best women bowlers in the country attended this event.

On December 12, the ladies had a holiday luncheon with the Laguna Woods Lawn Bowling Club. They bowled then sat down for lunch. Roman Swystun is the current Lawn Bowling Club president. Former

President Butch Nelson and his wife, Sondra were very helpful in providing information for this article.


Any resident who is interested in learning how to lawn bowl can contact Roman who writes the monthly club report in the *Courier*. Potential lawn bowlers can stop by the green to observe and talk to the members.



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Congratulations to Our Champions

By Liz Rickett

Casta del Sol residents Joanne Hedgespeth and Mary Thompson competed in the Atlantic Senior Fours Lawn Bowling Tournament held December 1-12, 2023 on the Island of Cyprus. Their team won the Silver Medal in the Mixed Fours Competition. Joanne and Mary learned about the sport of lawn bowling and how to play when they moved to Casta del Sol thirteen years ago.

PEOPLE, PLACES & EVENTS *Cont'd*

Valentine's Day is for Lovers and Martyrs

By Liz Rickett

Like many of our holidays, it has been suggested Valentine's Day has its roots in the Roman Empire. The Romans had a festival in mid-February called Lupercalia. This festival celebrated the coming of spring and included fertility rites and the pairing of women with men by lottery. At the end of the 5th Century, Pope Gelasius I forbid this celebration.

Meanwhile, there were several Christian priests named Valentine who became saints after being martyred in the 3rd Century. One was imprisoned and signed a letter "from your Valentine" to the jailer's daughter, whom he had befriended and may have cured her blindness. Another, or perhaps the same man, defied the emperor's orders and secretly married couples to spare the husbands from war. Records are sketchy as to whether this was the same or a different man.

Formal valentine's messages appeared in the 1500s. Commercially printed cards began to be printed in



the late 1700s. In America, Valentine's Day cards became popular in the mid-1800s.

My most striking Valentine's Day memories are as a teacher. For Valentine's Day, each child decorated a box, usually a shoe box, and during the week he/she would bring cards to class. The stores generally had packages with 30 or so Valentine cards, enough so that each student could have a Valentine card for each classmate. If students finished work early, they could make additional cards. Some students went home with arms full of cards, candy, and treats making for very happy children.

Getting to Know Our Neighbors: Ann Jenner

By Liz Rickett

As a child, Ann Jenner led a magical life. She, her two older brothers and parents lived in a 13-room home in Voorburg, Holland. Her father owned 17 butcher shops and bought livestock for the Queen. Her grandparents lived nearby and she saw them often.

In 1940, when she was six, everything changed. The school she attended informed her parents that she and her brothers were no longer welcome. Her father hired a tutor who quit because she was Gentile and Ann was Jewish. An hour's walk away, a school for Jews opened, so Ann walked. The yellow Star of David with the word Jew sewn on her clothes meant she was not allowed on streetcars.

In 1942, her family was told they had an hour to leave their home. From across the street, they saw the Germans break into their home, destroy their furnishings and perform even worse atrocities.

In 1943, the family dispersed and went into hiding. They were lucky and found people willing to hide them which Ann's father paid them for. Other family members were not as

fortunate, ending up in concentration camps.

When World War II ended, Ann's father had little money. He went door to door selling scrap wood for stoves, then scrap iron. He bought a small railroad line to move the iron. He then bought railroad ties for the coal mines.

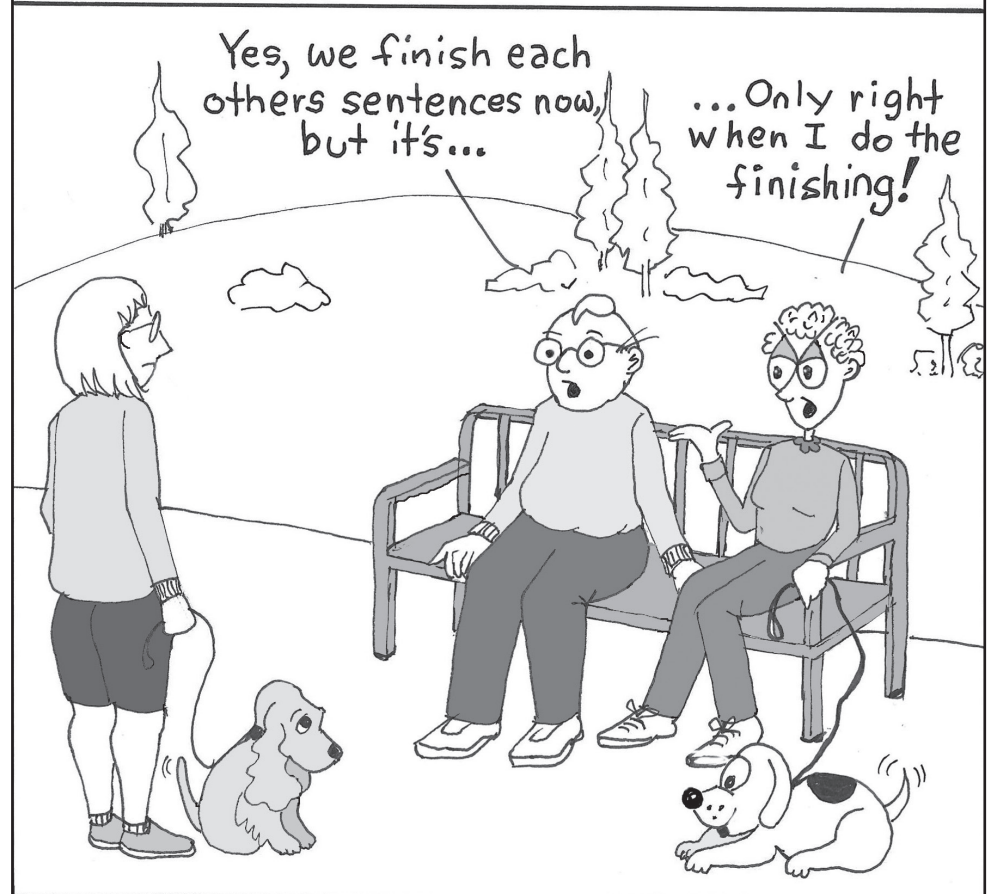
Before the War, her father was advised to move to the United States which he declined. After the War, he went to the United States to find a sponsor. In Downey, California, he found a fellow Dutch man who dealt in livestock and was willing to sponsor the family of eight.

It took three years before the family was allowed to emigrate. Before boarding the ship to the United States, her parents were searched to ensure they weren't taking more money than allowed out of the country.

In Downey, Ann met her future husband, Ed, at a local synagogue. They have been married 69 years, have two children, six grandchildren, and six great grandchildren. It has been a life of enormous challenge with a very happy ending.

MICK & MIDGE

by Jeff McCoy



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The *Casta Courier* can now be found on castadelsol.com more easily than ever before. Scroll down to the middle of the home page and click on the *Casta Courier* box. You will not only find the current issue of the paper, but also issues from previous years.



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PEOPLE, PLACES & EVENTS *Cont'd*

Named a Pine, but Not a Pine!

By Parizad Sethna, photo by Jeff McCoy

The Norfolk Island Pine Trees area is a very picturesque part of the Heritage Garden making it a favorite for resident sketch artists. Planted by first-generation resident garden volunteers, it is possible these are anywhere from 30-35 years old.

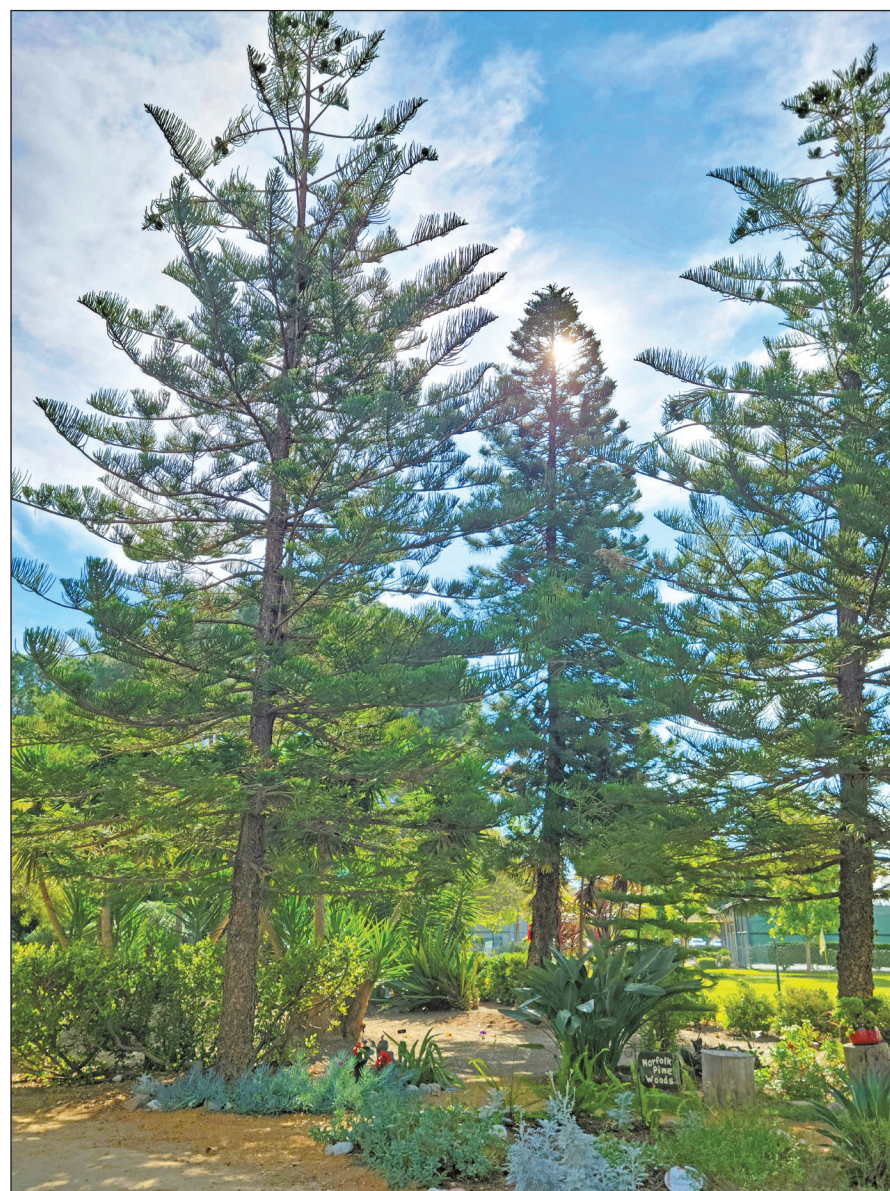
Despite its “common name,” these evergreen trees are not true pines. They are a species of sub-tropical conifers. These stately trees were first discovered by Capt. James Cook on Norfolk Island, a tiny quaint island off the coast of Australia, hence the name. Loved for the symmetrical shape with evenly spaced whorls of branches, they have a single upright trunk and some develop a graceful lean. They are known to tower up to 200 feet. These “pines” are also sold as small ornamentals and are a popular alternative to Christmas trees. The unique growth pattern and small needle-like leaves make it a favorite amongst bonsai enthusiasts.

In the words of Donna Oran, resident volunteer gardener who lovingly takes care of these distinctly striking trees and the area beneath, “While

gardening under these majestic Norfolk Pines, I get to enjoy the feeling of calmness, strength and beauty. Taking care of nature reminds me just how delightful it is to watch my garden area grow. The kaleidoscope of vivid plant colors and textures stimulates my senses and fills my heart and soul with happiness.”

So what are you waiting for? Unwind from your daily routine and walk down to the *Norfolk Pine Woods* section of the garden. Take a seat under the calm haven of these magnificent trees. Relax and listen to the murmuring of the gentle afternoon breeze blowing through the branches and experience peacefulness. Breathe in the fresh air and enjoy the colorful landscape under these trees. Feed your spirit and revel in the garden’s beauty in all its majesty. See you in the garden.

“Norfolk Island pine trees are a species of sub-tropical conifers.”



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PEOPLE, PLACES & EVENTS *Cont'd*

Italian American Club Shines

By Debra Friedman, photos by Jeff McCoy



Jill Shwam interviewing Patti and Jerry Castro



Rosalie Molloy and Barbara Brantley selling raffle tickets

Prior to the pandemic, the Italian American Club was thriving. The monthly events were well attended and always successful. The President of the Italian American Club, Jill Shwam, is a force of nature. She not only heads the Italian American Club, but is also President of Las Damas, the monthly luncheon group for women.

Although Las Damas continues to have a solid cadre of officers, the Italian American Club was being led almost single-handedly by Jill for more than a year. Jill looked judiciously for other officers to share the concepts, planning, and enactment of each party. Good friend and colleague Jan Schwartz currently takes on the coordination of entertainment, while Rosalie Molloy is the treasurer, and Lucille Naves is the secretary writing monthly *Courier* articles. The entertainment choices are well researched due to Jill and Jan's attendance at

yearly preview events for venues seeking entertainers.

The Italian American Club took a hiatus in order to regroup. The new structure includes a full catered dinner with live, high-energy entertainment every three months – September, December, March, and June. This schedule is much more manageable than attempting monthly parties. As with Las Damas luncheons, Martinez Caterers provides and serves the food with a theme relevant to the month of the party.

While the club was also known for its raucous bingo nights, the bingo group is now an offshoot. Italian American Club bingo nights, at a minimal cost of \$5, are held every month. While Jill oversees this ancillary group, Leo Restrigh is President and Patti Bronson is Vice President. On bingo nights, assistance is provided by Barbara Harris who is in charge of

selling the bingo cards and Bob Hrad serves as the “Great Caller” along with an electronic bingo program shown on the large screen.

In addition to Jill being energetic, she is extremely invested in meeting the desires of the attendees. The formation of the two coordinated teams was a result of requests for bingo from some people and catered dinners from others. Jill is also cognizant that there are several groups in Casta offering

parties and the monetary outlay for residents can be a burden.

The fact that the vast majority of attendees are not, in fact, Italian American does not dampen their enthusiasm for participating in a club with this name. The Italian American Club has been in existence in Casta for many years and will likely continue for many more.

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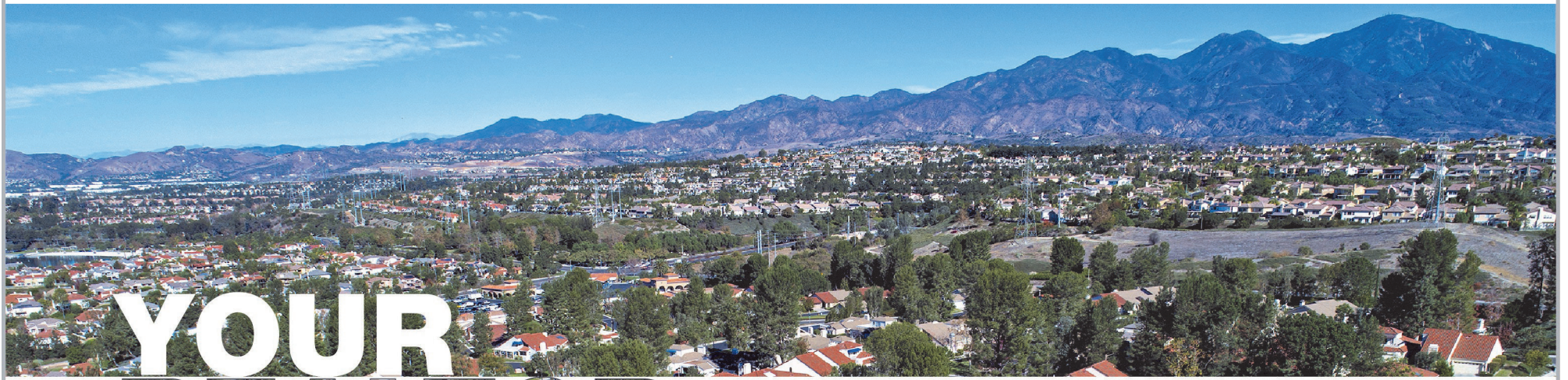
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