

Happy Holiday in spite of the blaze!

FREE



VENTURA BREEZE

Your Hometown Paper

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 American Red Cross
These items have been donated by generous organizations & individuals wishing to provide comfort & support to those affected by California Wildfires.

In gratitude, Derek, Dashiell, Adrienne, Annette and Kate and other Ventura Land Trust staff.

Ventura Strong



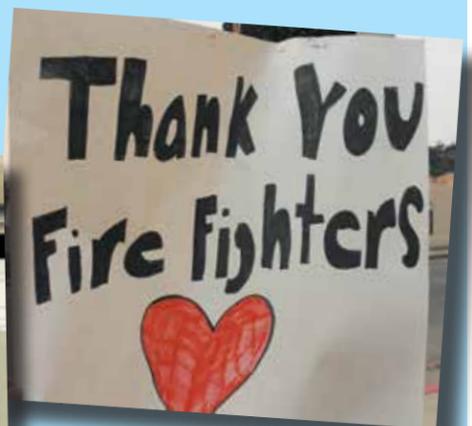
Hooray for Hector Andrade and family who saved Poinsettia Pavilion.



Peter Gillespie (with the grey beard) Volunteer Disaster Services American Red Cross from Atlanta, Georgia organized the donations with help from many amazing volunteers who came from California and across the country.



There was a special place at the Fairgrounds for displaced animals. Angelique was tending to 13 year old Flower, after a mandatory evacuation from Casitas Springs.



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City News

Erosion and ash control product applied to burn areas

The Public Works Department has hired Galion Erosion Control to spray EarthGuard onto residences and other areas burned by the Thomas Fire. The application is a public service to help keep hazardous material from getting into the storm drains by keeping it in place and preventing it from going onto other properties, as well as preventing the material from becoming airborne.

The product will not impact sifting of personal materials and will not affect the ability to seed properties. EarthGuard is a non-hazardous, non-toxic product and will not cause any issues with the watershed or the replanting or re-growing of plants. It is used on construction projects throughout the nation for dust control. The product is mixed with fiber and is green in color in order to show where it has been applied. The application of EarthGuard began on December 12 in the homes where hazardous material burned.

The spraying began in the Clearpoint neighborhood and will proceed to Ondulando east, Ondulando west, Skyline, Hidden Valley and continue west. Other areas to be applied with EarthGuard include water facilities and parks citywide that were impacted by the Thomas Fire. The spraying of EarthGuard is slated for the next few weeks.

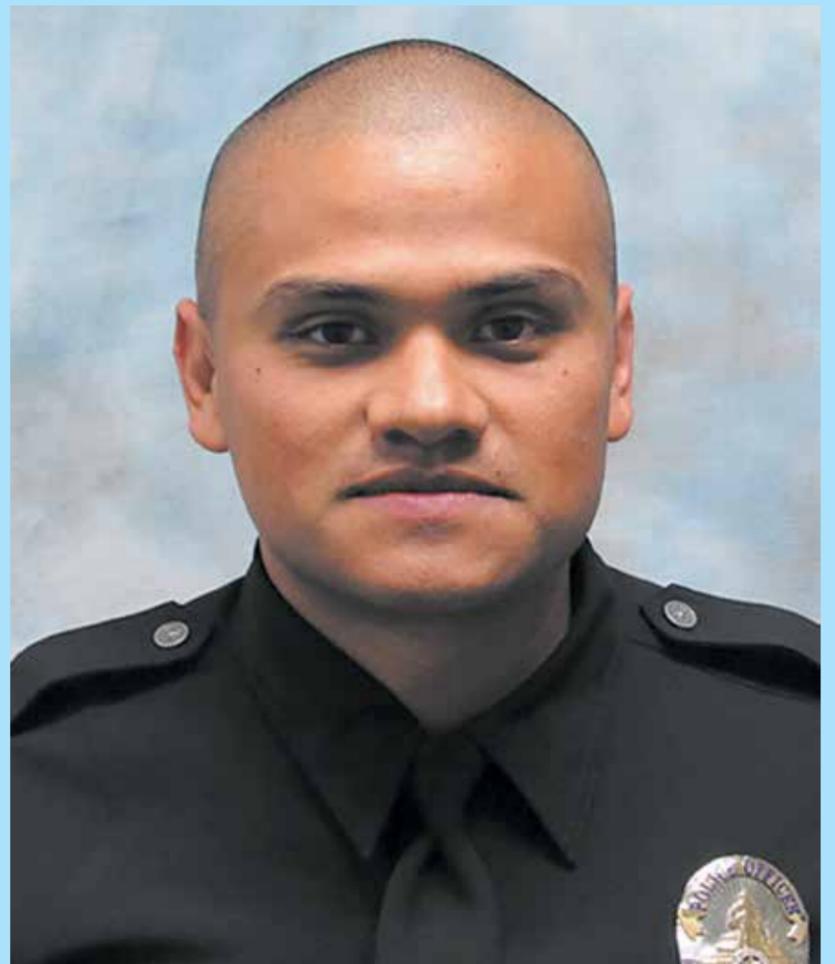
County launches rental assistance program for fire victims

The County of Ventura Board of Supervisors has approved the use of \$500,000 in General Fund to establish a rental assistance program for eligible residents who cannot return to their homes due to the impact of local wildfires. The program, which expands upon current rental assistance programs for low-income households administered by the County of Ventura Human Services Agency, began accepting applications on Wednesday, December 13th.

Eligibility criteria for the program include: county residency; displacement from housing due to local wildfires; financial ability to maintain housing after receiving assistance; and a household income up to 120% of the median income for the local area, based on household size. The yearly income limit for a household of one person, for example, is \$84,000. For a household of two, the income limit is \$96,000, and for a household of four, the income limit is \$119,880.

“Short term rental assistance will help our lower and middle income neighbors who lost their homes get back on their feet more quickly,” said Steve Bennett, County Supervisor for the First District.

The new program may offer eligible fire victims help with: interim housing, rental payments, replacement of household and personal items, moving and storage costs, rental deposits, utility deposits and payments, and credit coun-



Congratulations to Officer Jesus “Chuy” Nunez for being selected as the Ventura Police Department’s Crime Fighter of the Month! He currently serves as a Detective in the Sex Crimes Unit. His service to our community is appreciated.





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seling, as needed. Barry Zimmerman, Human Services Agency Director stated, "We have years of experience running similar programs successfully, so we can implement this one quickly and ensure that assistance begins to flow."

Information about applying for this new program may be found in English and Spanish on the Ventura County

Recovers website, which provides a comprehensive source of information for all matters relating to fire recovery, and on the Ventura County Human Services Agency's web site (www.vchsa.org/help). Ventura County Recovers: www.VenturaCountyRecovers.org Human Services Agency: www.vchsa.org/help



Art City Winter Solstice, a creative and community gathering will be held on Thursday, Dec. 21, 5-9:30 pm. From 5-8 pm, in the Art City Gallery, poetry by Kali Bennett, Phoenix Rising, a poetry, movement and sound performance by Amber Bassett, Maker Space, upcycling objects and materials left behind by the fire, (ash, stone, debris, personal objects, your heart, etc...). Plus local vendors and live silkscreen 'Ventura Strong' T-Shirt printing. (partial proceeds going to Thomas Fire organizations). Then, in the Art City Avant Garden, beginning at 8 pm Fireside Fire Stories, (Come share your story of the Thomas Incident), with singer/songwriter, Meaghan Thalia Lawrence.

Ventura's Art City creative cluster, recently expanded to include three venues (Art City Gallery, Avant Garden, and Under the Bed) in addition to 22 active artist studios. For Winter Solstice, the darkest day of the year...let us gather, create amidst the destruction, tell our stories and come together in a sense to recover our well-being and support one another. 197 Dubbers St. 648-1690 www.artcitygalleryandstudios.com.

Merry Christmas

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Cover photo of Father Junípero Serra
by J. Grant Ball

I see with ever great clarity that our spiritual well-being depends not on religion, but on our innate human nature.

– Tenzin Gyatso
Dalai Lama

Opinion/Editorial



Sheldon (Governor) Brown
Publisher-Editor

First off, I want to thank the amazing Ventura **Breeze** writers for working their fingers off to make this wonderful issue happen. Much research and thought went into their articles. I'm very proud of this issue.

On Dec. 4, when we heard a fire started in Santa Paula, never did we ever imagine that it would completely burn over 600 structures in Ventura and become one of the largest fires in California history (maybe the largest eventually)?

It is called the **Thomas Fire** because of its proximity to Thomas Aquinas College. Perhaps it should have been called the Santa Fire because of Santa Paula and the time of year.

I certainly appreciate the amazing job the now over 8,000 firefighters (fighting the Thomas Fire) and the first responders have been doing to save structures and to try to limit the scope of the fire. But, the reality is that the 50 MPH winds, low humidity, and plenty of fuel made that virtually impossible.

Amazing to me, though, is how so many neighbors spontaneously pitched in to help each other.

One example is the street my son lives on. The hills on both sides of the street always burn when we have fires. He, and I, along with a few other neighbors, spent that first night patrolling his block and putting out small fires that would have become big fires. All through the night, cars would stop and men and women would jump out with shovels to help. People all over were driving around that to see how they could help. We have a few **heroes** in this issue, and we thank them all.

I got home at 5am in the morning, slept for a few hours and then went back out. I slept for 13 hours the next night, which I haven't done since I was six months old.

And, the people volunteering at the Fairgrounds, helping the **Red Cross, the Salvation Army**, the churches, distribution centers and more to organize and distribute clothes, food and other essential goods are to be appreciated. Many of them came here from other states and towns in California.

It is wonderful that no one has been killed in Ventura (and only two people, thus

far, one being a firefighter). Our hearts go out to the families of both. I attribute this to the quick actions of our police and fire departments in alerting people to evacuate their homes on that Monday evening. And to folks heeding their warnings and leaving their homes in a timely manner.

By the way, if you'd like to contribute to the fallen firefighter's family (Corey Iverson), a GoFundMe page has been set or you can contribute through CalFire, San Diego.

The County was great organizing several meetings to inform us about the conditions of the fire and setting up an assistance center at **Poinsettia Pavilion**. They brought together city, county, state and government agencies to answer questions and give citizens direction on what to do next.

One thing that has irritated me is listening to people **complaining** about innocuous things such as their driveways are full of ash, or they lost some food because there wasn't electricity. None of this means anything if you still have your home.

And, of course, the deplorable thieves who take advantage of others' misfortunes and break into evacuated homes. These are horrible people.

The attitude of many of the people who have lost their homes has been just amazing. In some cases they have tried to **cheer me up**.

Amazing how random fire is. I was on streets where only one house burned, and on both sides of the street. Flying embers are what caused a large percentage of the fires not because they were in the burning hills.

Now, what happens to those who lost their homes and apartments? Ventura has a very low vacancy factor so many will need to leave Ventura, and it will take several years to rebuild their homes and apartments. Will they return? What will this do to our economy? Several weeks of no income could put small merchants out of business.

In a few years, when there is a large amount of construction, our economy will be booming but tough times ahead for a lot of people that will last for a long time.

There have been some complaints about price gouging for housing and gas but, generally, very little of this has occurred.

A phone line is devoted to handling calls about gouging at 662-1728.

Unlicensed or unscrupulous **contractors** may try to scam you. The Contractor's State License Board has a disaster hotline 800-962-1125 or visit www.cslb.ca.gov for information. And don't assume just because a person is licensed that they are honest. There are also licensed crooks, so check local references very carefully. And talk to them in person, if possible.

Ventura Fire **Chief David Endaya** stated that the still-growing fire is of a magnitude that he had never seen. And is "the most important evacuation we've ever done."

The Ondulando neighborhood was especially hard hit by the Thomas Fire with rows of homes gone. It is hard for me to imagine losing my home and all its contents. Even the homeowners weren't allowed back in their neighborhoods for several days in the mandatory evacuation areas.

The lack of **water pressure** in our hydrants is a huge concern that will need to be addressed in the future. I was standing with firefighters watching homes burn to the ground because they didn't have water. Had to be very frustrating to them and counter to their training.

The Ventura County Board of Supervisors approved \$500,000 to help low-and middle-income families with short-term rental assistance.

The Ventura City Council voted to declare a local emergency and approved an ordinance that suspends deadlines associated with "routine" land use, subdivision and zoning applications. That allows planning staff to focus on projects related to the disaster.

It's a "temporary measure to protect against unintended consequences" that can happen when a deadline is missed, City Attorney Gregory Diaz said. Still, the time to prepare new building plans, secure planning and building department approvals will be very lengthy. Our departments will be overwhelmed with new projects. And, it is very likely that many homes will require changes during the rebuild process due to ever changing building and planning requirements and codes.

Mailbox

Hi.

The spread of the fire is not yet over... It can blow up again. It takes just small blowing hot glowing cinder to glow up and burn down more vegetation. Why does Ventura not construct "water masts", 150ft. high that have a sprinkling system, much the same as sprinkling systems used in agriculture. Such masts can jetison water around in a very wide perimeter as natural rain does. The "fire prevention masts" can use salt water from the ocean, mixed with fresh water. Salt does not harm the earth or vegetation. I wonder if the manner by which the fire department combats fire by hosing water directly into it at ground level, is not as effective as it would be if the firemen aimed their hoses upwards and let the water come down as rain down does, instead. The construction of a "water mast sprinkling" system might be something to consider... to protect homes.

Ventura has a lot of future potential. One thing for sure Ventura needs is a "desalination and filtration" plant. Creating a desalination system does not require huge expenditure, if small desalination plant entities are constructed,

as on Santa Catalina Island where such a plant was constructed for only \$3 million. One such plant serves hundreds if not thousands of homes and businesses, desalinating thousands of gallons salt water every day. Why not invest and buy a used desalinating system from a decommissioned cruise or large military ship. Those systems are able to produce thousands of gallons of fresh water.

Frank Reyna
(Sweden)

Dear Breeze:

At our North Ventura Avenue business, the loss of electricity and internet was worse than evacuating from the fire. Our insects and biological pest control products are shipped by UPS who came every day during the ordeal. We wrote waybills by hand. With a gas-fired generator, air filters, respirators, battery lights and headlamps we kept perishable inventory refrigerated and coworkers safe to do what was needed in production and shipping. However, customers and vendors could not reach us for four business days--a sales setback at year-end.

Our decision this year to switch to a

phone system that depends on internet now seems like bad one. We pay for support from the phone service provider, but they are based in Ventura, also without power and connectivity.

We need more resilient systems from energy, broadband and VOIP phone providers so negative economic impacts are less widespread and prolonged. One positive step: Ventura County Supervisors and Ventura City Council are discussing joining Los Angeles Community Choice Energy (LACCE). Besides cheaper, cleaner electricity, profits will eventually be invested in the participating jurisdictions rather than going to shareholders and the inefficiencies of scale of a monopoly investor owned utility. We will have input about the type and siting of projects in a transparent, democratic planning process. For example, locally distributed solar generation including battery storage

Continued on page 22

We encourage you to send your opinions to opinions@venturabreeze.com. Please limit them to about 300 words



Photos by www.pacificagleaircam.com.

Ventura Strong



Residents are able to start their recovery from the fire.

Local Assistance Center opened

On Wednesday, December 13, the County of Ventura and the City of Ventura opened a Local Assistance Center at the Poinsettia Pavilion. The center is a one-stop resource for residents affected by the Thomas Fire.

The Local Assistance Center will be open Monday through Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The hours are subject to change depending on demand. Bilingual staff will be available to provide assistance.

The center will be staffed by representatives from the County of Ventura, the City of Ventura, and nine state agencies, including the Department of Motor Vehicles. The Local Assistance Center is a short-term facility and will close after the initial recovery period, but the services will remain available at the normal city and county offices.

Residents will be able to use the Local Assistance Center to start their recovery from the fire. There will be information on debris removal, permits, housing, rental assistance, vital records, property assessments, public assistance, crisis intervention and

stress management, and even services such as replacing driver's licenses. Health care resources will be available on site to provide assistance, education, and connections to other health services in the community.

The center is expected to be very busy and, although walk-ins will be welcomed, appointments are strongly encouraged. Residents with appointments will receive priority service. Appointments can be made on the Ventura County Recovers website or by calling 211. Those requiring transportation to the center can call the hotline at 465-6650.

To further aid fire victims, Ventura County Recovers is now offering a registration feature that allows residents to register their contact information to receive information on specific topics. They can also register the address of their damaged or destroyed property so that officials can proactively provide them with information and official notices related to the rebuilding process.

Because there will be numerous updates to the site as new information becomes

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available, registering on the site will help to ensure that current information gets to the people who need it most.

The registration feature is fully accessible by mobile, tablet and desktop devices.

The alarm

by writer with heart, Karen Leslie

For many Venturians, the morning wake up alarm in the wee hours on Monday wasn't with a yawn at dawn and the smell of coffee. Instead, in a state of shock and disbelief, they were yanked out of their dream state into a nightmare. With eyes burning, lungs filled with smoke and terror abound, the core and foundations of not only their homes were shaken, but for many, life as they knew it had been turned to ashes. With just enough time to grab a child, they were escorted out of harm's way

by our hard working police officers and firemen and taken to safe havens.

Still days later, many evacuees cannot return to their homes that still stand and some families can only revisit what was left of their lives. Even in the darkness of the soul moments, a rising up of the human spirit becomes palatable, resilient, tenacious and strong!

With new eyes of insight, we realize happiness cannot be bought or worn and that it is enough that lives were saved. With hearts overflowing, we reflect and rebuild new foundations with gratitude and compassion for our fellow human beings.

Together, we stood in the eye of the storm with open hands for the good of all and our community.

Because when it is all said and done, it is about the love of friends, neighbors and family that matter most.

Our Ventura cup runneth over!



Ventura Strong



“Many plants in the VBG collection have evolved with fire and are adapted to survive fire events.”

A Message of Hope: Ventura Botanical Gardens will rise again

by **Mary Kay Doubek**
VBG volunteer

One look at the charred hillside above our still-standing City Hall tells one that Ventura Botanical Gardens (VBG) did not escape the destruction of the Thomas Fire as it swept through town beginning December 4. Despite extensive damage, VBG and The City of Ventura have already reaffirmed their partnership and commitment to deliver on the vision for the gardens. “There will be new challenges, of course,” said Joe Cahill, Executive Director of VBG, “but the aftermath of this devastating wildfire also presents new opportunities. We remain optimistic that our circumstances also have potential to benefit the long-term development of Ventura Botanical Gardens.”

VBG wasted no time, surveying the damage to the gardens soon after the fire was extinguished. Along with the destruction, Cahill reported that most of the skeletal infrastructure is intact. “Starting in 2012, our volunteers, the Conservation Corp, and the City of Ventura steadily added structural support and stone retaining walls to the planting areas and garden trail over a 30 acre area. That newer work held up well, but we will need to do minor repairs and replacement to make the trail safe again for visitors. For example, an old clay drainage pipe collapsed and caused the section of trail above it to cave in. In another section of trail, a 10-foot-long wooden retaining wall burned. Amazingly, the wooden bridge under construction in the Fynbos garden remains untouched, but on the other hand, several new educational signs and plant specimen labels melted.”

VBG has already engaged contractors to proceed with the repairs. Other plans underway include reseeding of the hillsides adjacent to developed garden areas to protect and mitigate erosion from winter rains. Depending on the availability of financial resources, the gardens will utilize technical products, such as fiber coating, in areas with severe or unstable slopes. These are protective and proactive measures the gardens can put to use, if they can be funded.

As far as vegetation is concerned, the worst devastation occurred in areas where dead brush had built up since the last major fire in Grant Park in 1970. The garden planting areas fared somewhat better, but it will take months to complete the evaluation of the 700

specimen plant collection from Mediterranean climate regions of the world. However there is good reason to be optimistic. According to Cahill, “Many plants in the VBG collection have evolved with fire and are adapted to survive fire events. The main areas already planted in VBG stand in contrast to the old brush areas of Grant Park. The newly planted areas also survived well because volunteers had cleared dead brush so there was a lack of fuel. And since the fire, VBG has been watering the planting areas. Miraculously, some plants already have new leaf buds forming. Time will tell what the ultimate survival rate is, but we are keeping a positive outlook!”

Joe had more good news about the gardens’ water tanks and old stone walls. “The 10,000 gallon water tanks installed two years ago are intact, affording us a great opportunity to accelerate expansion of our irrigation system, and thus, to plant and restore larger areas of the garden. Also, the fire exposed more historic stone walls that were agricultural terraces, perhaps 50 sections of wall. There are also many remnants of an old trail system in the ravine to the west of the existing trail complete with mortared stone steps, mortared stone walls and switchbacks. These newly discovered features may make it more feasible and cost effective to add new trails, by simply rehabilitating very old trails. VBG is working with Sean Anderson from CSCI ESRM field crew GIS group to map these features so they can be incorporated into future planning.

Rosa Lee Measures, one of VBG’s founders has offered these words of hope to all, “With heavy heart, I mourn the losses of so many homes and precious keepsakes, of our dear friends. Grateful their lives were spared, as homes can be rebuilt.”

I fully believe that many of our precious plants will be resurrected, and maybe stronger out of the ashes. Hopefully, rejuvenating the Ventura Botanical Gardens will be therapeutic, and further reunite our community. “It is important to remember that fire is a natural process in California and in other Mediterranean climate regions of the world. It may look devastating, but periodic fire rejuvenates the landscape. Almost always there are spectacular spring wildflowers in the years following a fire and there will be other silver linings

for VBG as we continue to develop the garden with support from the community.” said Joe Cahill, executive director of VBG.

The gardens and trail will remain closed while repairs are underway. Please respect the “No trespassing” warnings and wait for the public announcement that VBG is once again safe for visitors. Also, be on the lookout for VBG announcements for additional volunteer days so that the public can help with the recovery effort.



It was odd for her to call that late

by **Barbara Brown**

On Monday around ten, my neighbor Lauren called. It was odd for her to call that late... her voice was tense. She relayed news from her husband Tom Lanski, a Ventura County Fire Captain—the fire in Wheeler Canyon was moving toward Ondulando and she should, precautionarily, pack.

Alerting our neighbors, we moved from house to house knocking and shouting as the horizon changed from amber to brilliant red. Then we heard the evacuation announcement and as quickly as possible, we left.

Driving across town to our son’s house, we watched the fire parallel us through the city. It was terrifying to see how swiftly it moved, and how high the flames were. When we curved the 33, the Avenue hillside was ablaze. Seeing that, I had a bad feeling about the botanical Gardens.

Soon after arriving at my son’s house, the flames breached his hillside and we had to leave. I began to call hotels; they were booked. It was hard to breathe in the smoke, it was dark and everywhere there were flames.

Finally, friends offered to let us crash in their room at the Crowne—a huge relief. We arrived smoky, disheveled and in shock.

One of our retired firefighter friends, Tom Retan, who was listening to dispatch, began texting updates. That was comforting. He was with us remotely hour by painful hour.

From our hotel window, we could only see the east side of the city and not much of it. We looked for a better vantage point and finally found a city-facing window in a stairwell. In horror, I watched the Gardens burn. My heart broke. This city jewel was torched. I didn’t sleep that night.

Finally, in the morning, I called Lauren; in tears she spoke, “we’ve lost our home”. My heart dropped, she’d gotten us out, but she’d lost everything. I cannot describe how that felt.

News was spotty on Tuesday; I focused on the Gardens. Then, I saw a text. Susan and Greg’s home had

survived (our friends at the Crowne). I texted, “Could you check ours?” and heard nothing for a long, long time. As the minutes dragged on, anxiety crept in. Then the phone rang. As his own voice broke, our friend Mark explained our home was gone.

My heart actually hurt... it still does... when I think about it.

The first days after learning our home had fallen were surreal. We handled it well enough; friends and family were so supportive. The realization that we had nothing but four boxes of photos and our pajamas was bizarre, but we had each other and citywide, there were no fire casualties. That was a miracle.

Wednesday, we hiked to see our home or, what was left of it. Standing with my husband, son and daughter-in-law, viewing the ash and debris, a sense of profound and irreparable loss set in—the deep and painful realization that our lives had forever changed.

We’re still not out of it; the song “Vagabond Blues” keeps running through my head, but we’ve reconnected with our neighbors and they are alive and well.

I have to say, we are so lucky to be a part of a community that comes together in crisis. So many homes were lost. The next two years are going to be difficult, but we’re optimistic, we love this city and we’re planning to rebuild. We’re deeply grateful for the support of friends and family, the commitment of our community leaders and lastly, the first responders who worked so hard to save homes in desperately dangerous conditions, despite their own profound losses.



What is the truck commonly seen around town with the Cal-Fire logo?

by **Staci Brown**

Cal Fire is the acronym for the “California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection”

They provide fire protection and stewardship for over 31 million acres of California’s privately-owned wildlands. They also provide various emergency services in 36 of the State’s 58 counties via contracts with local



Ventura Strong

governments. Because of the Department's size and major incident management experience, it is often asked to assist or take the lead in disasters. The department has an extensive fleet of vehicles consisting of over 2,800 vehicles which includes 383 front line fire engines, 237 crew buses to transport Conservation Camp crews to projects and fires and 58 bulldozers. Additionally they have large mobile command centers and mobile kitchen units.

The prevention of large, damaging fires remains a priority for Cal Fire. The department's Fire Prevention Program consists of multiple activities including wildland pre-fire engineering, vegetation management, fire planning, and education and law enforcement. Common projects for Cal Fire include fire break construction and other fire fuel reduction activities that lessen the risk of wildfire to communities. This may include brush clearance around communities, and along roadways and evacuation routes. Other important activities they are involved with include defensible space inspections, emergency evacuation planning, fire prevention education, fire hazard severity mapping, implementation of the State Fire Plan, fire-related law enforcement activities such as investigations to determine fire cause and origin as well as arson cases, and support for local government fire safe planning. Additionally, they answer the call for many other emergencies. A Cal Fire engine and crew can be dispatched to the scene of various disasters including; an auto accident, a drowning accident, hazardous material spills, swift water rescues, search and rescue missions, civil disturbances, train wrecks, floods, earthquakes residential structure fires, heart attacks, lost hikers, floods and earthquakes. The department's firefighters, fire engines and aircraft respond to an annual average of more than 5,600 wildland fires, and 350,000 emergencies.

Cal Fire also has a Resource Management Program. Its goal is to maintain the sustainability of all of our natural resources. The Department achieves this goal by administering state and federal forestry assistance programs for landowners, demonstrating sound management practices on demonstration state forests, enforcing the California Forest Practice Act on all non-federal timberlands, providing research and educational outreach to the public on forest pests, and coordinating efforts for fuel reduction to reduce the risk of fire and improve the quality of California ecosystems. Cal Fire has been in existence for 112 years.

When fires are in the hills Cal Fire is in charge of all of the operations.

Tragically a Cal Fire firefighter from San Diego was killed while battling the Thomas Fire. The firefighter was identified as Cal Fire San Diego Unit Fire Apparatus Engineer Cory Iverson. He is the only firefighter to die to date fighting the Thomas Fire.

Pimlott said Iverson was 32 years old and is survived by his wife, Ashley, and 2-year-old daughter Evie. Iverson's wife is currently expecting their second daughter, Pimlott said.

Iverson had been with Cal Fire since 2009.

Cabrillo's fire response: Supporting our residents and neighbors

by **Margarita H. de Escontrias**
Chief Executive Officer

The Thomas Fire has spread quickly across Ventura County.

Our Property Management Department, including our maintenance technicians, have been involved with evacuations and safety checks on our affordable housing communities. We will remain on "HIGH ALERT" to assist. Our residents to ensure their health and safety, which continues to be our highest priority.

Many of our county's residents will need our support and resources. United Way of Ventura County, working with the Office of Emergency Services and many other organizations, will designate a disaster relief fund. Cabrillo will be working closely with United Way to determine how best to support an emergency response to our neighbors.

In the interim, you can make a donation to the United Way relief effort by sending a check to Cabrillo. Please make it payable to United Way and we will ensure they receive your donations. Please note, "Thomas Fire Fund" in the memo.

As we are all painfully aware, the fires have affected us all. Like you, I hope and pray that personal injuries and loss of life is minimal. We have successfully relocated our residents at three of our properties and will continue to monitor three other properties, two of which include many of our seniors who are confined to wheel chairs.

Cabrillo Economic Development Corp, 702 County Square Dr, Ventura, CA 93003

Coping with Loss

by **Jennifer Tipton**

During this difficult time, there is a need to know how to cope with loss. The 5 stages of grieving that occur with any loss:

- denial
- anger
- bargaining
- depression
- acceptance.

Feelings of "this isn't real" to "how could this happen" to "if only..." It is not uncommon to bounce back and forth between these feelings, what you are feeling is a normal process of coping with loss.

Many of the fortunate who did not to lose their home are feeling guilty, "why was my home spared when, so many others were not?" You too, are not alone.

Patrick Zarate the Acting Director for Ventura County Behavioral Health stated, "a wide range of emotions and reactions are normal and natural for such an event. For most people, the responses to a stressful event are temporary and generally do not become a chronic problem. Ventura County Behavioral Health has made more than 70 deployments since the fire began. We have probably committed more

than 2,000 hours and see that the need will probably persist. The Department along with our allied first responders is continuing to be on site at shelters, but has also communicated out at a variety of venues including radio and the web."

For information about community resources dial 211 or call 1-800-339-9597 or visit www.211ventura.org.

If you would like to speak with a professional, Ventura County Behavioral Health encourages residents to call the Crisis Team. They are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Help is available in English, Spanish, and other languages. Ventura County Crisis Team 1-866-998-2243. Resources available: www.wellness.everyday.org.

Text "ThomasFire" to 898-211 for up-to-date fire information.

Mr. Paranick why the gas company had to dig large holes in certain streets to shut off gas lines rather than turn them off at the home.

Water has been a major concern and Kevin Brown, Ventura Water General Manager, answered council questions regarding drinking and use safety and the condition of the city's water system. While mandatory water boiling is no longer required, Brown stressed that the fire overwhelmed the City's complex web of pipes, valves and tanks, as equipment was either destroyed or taxed by rapidly falling pressure when the fire moved through town. Brown said that the fire caused the system to drain ten times its normal draw rate. Once conditions were safer, Water Department crews were able to add chlorine for purification and visit damaged infrastructure to make repairs.

Councilmember Christy Weir asked Mr. Paranick's team what responsibilities will homeowners have during the clean-up and rebuilding in conjunction with what the State can offer. According to County and OES (The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services) officials, the objective is to get people back onto their properties and connect residents with state assistance as quickly as possible, but that hazardous waste and unstable debris must be removed first.

The plan to expedite this timetable is to work with residents as a whole rather than individually, and thus be able to tackle many sites at once. Deputy Director William Stratton of the County's Environmental Health Division emphasized that the largest concern right now is the toxicity of the ash and burned debris that may be caused by heavy metals and asbestos.

Residents brought up concerns over how the smoky and ash-laden air might affect children when school is back in session, and what has happened to the drilling, transportation and storage infrastructures of the many oil sites throughout and near the City. As the rainy season approaches, residents and council voiced concerns about the efforts needed to keep storm drains open and reduce the potential for vast mud flows from the denuded hills.

State OES will have a watershed task force, comprised of hydrologists and other experts, in place to resolve possible mudslide issues. As a welcome relief to homeowners, County Tax Assessor Steve Hintz said that people who lost their homes and first responders who call his office and ask can have their property

Continued on page 8

City responds to fire crisis

by **Burris DeBenning**

As the City enters the recovery phase of fire operations, resident concerns, questions and needs are being answered and assessed and priorities ranked. At the December 11 City Council meeting, leadership personnel from various agencies provided status reports, and the City Manager introduced the team, headed by the Assistant City Manager, Dan Paranick, that would be responsible for the totality of the clean-up and recovery stages of the fire.

Police Chief Ken Corney said that everything is being done to get people who were in mandatory evacuation zones back into their neighborhoods, but that critical safety issues, like the danger of open gas lines and downed transmission wires, remain a hindrance.

Police personnel are also contending with an uptick in crime as there have been multiple reports of looting and burglaries that seem to be in response to the evacuations. Augmenting City police in their efforts to keep the peace has been the California National Guard.

Councilmember Chery Heitmann asked Chief Corney for a timetable on when people can get back to their homes to collect valuable and mementos, and the chief estimated about two weeks, due to the extensive utility work being performed by the Southern California Gas Company and Southern California Edison.

Councilmember Jim Monahan asked

Happy Holidays

★ Trash & Recyclables or Green Waste Pick Up ★
Information for the Christmas & New Year's Holidays

Since both Christmas and New Year's Day fall on Monday this holiday season, delay its trash collection schedule the weeks of Dec. 25-29 and Jan. 1-5 in the cities of Ventura and Ojai. During those weeks, trash, recyclables and yard waste will be collected one day later than usual.

Residents may put out twice the amount of trash at no extra charge during the two weeks following Christmas. Please make sure the trash is in bags. We will also collect extra recyclables, but please make sure to flatten all boxes.

Remember to recycle your Christmas tree by removing the ornaments, hooks, lights, tinsel, bows, nails and tree stand. Cut the tree into sections no more than 4 feet long and place in the yard waste barrel on your scheduled pickup day. **Flocked trees can be recycled too!**

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Ventura Strong

Thousands of acres of wildlife habitat were also lost

by David Goldstein

Ventura County Public Works Agency, IWMD=

Residents eager to return to a normal life following the fires may be tempted to begin cleanup immediately. Instead, additional preparation can save money and reduce risks.

In declaring a local health emergency the Ventura County Board of Supervisors enabled state agencies to launch a program providing free testing of disaster debris and free property clean-up if homes were completely destroyed by the Thomas Fire. Even if your home was not built with asbestos or originally painted with lead-based paint, substances from a wide variety of other building materials may make your ash a hazardous substance.

Consequently, countywide, fire debris can be legally removed only after an inspection by state designated personnel and, most likely, a County approved debris clean-up plan. Details of this program are still being developed and will be posted at venturacountyrecovers.org. Information is also available at 981-5101.

In addition to the many homes lost in recent fires, thousands of acres of wildlife habitat were also lost. Fortunate people have insurance policies and public agencies to help with rebuilding, but it will take years before vegetation grows back to sustain eco-systems. The web of life on wild lands, from plants and insects, to birds and bobcats, will strain to cope with new circumstances. One way people can help is to switch away from toxic substances and to mechanical and exclusion methods of rodent control. Following a fire, fleeing mice and rats tend to infest new areas.

If homeowners near burn areas react to rodent problems by using poison, they risk posing new dangers to wildlife. Anti-coagulants kill mice and rats through internal bleeding, but poisoned pests take a long time to die, and in the meantime, they often become food for wildlife ranging from mountain lions to birds of prey, potentially spreading the poison up the food chain.

Methods of pest control designed to avoid infestations in the first place are categorized as “exclusion” methods, which include sealing off potential home entry points with wire mesh. Trim trees overhanging your roof and avoid dense growth capable of sheltering rats. Keep pet food secured and clean up pet dropping promptly.

Mechanical methods of pest control range from simple, classic snap traps to newer traps using electric shocks to kill pests. Some people mistake plastic bait traps for a mechanical trap, but generally, the large, plastic boxes with holes for rodents to crawl into are bait stations. The rodents do not die inside. Instead, they leave after consuming poison, potentially becoming prey for animals not targeted for poison.

If your mechanical traps are not catching rodents, rather than switching to poison, consider optimizing the traps. Set traps in pairs along a wall with the trip pads pointing in opposite directions, and use a proven effective bait, such as peanut butter. Also, since mice nibbles do not always trigger traps meant for rats, use both sized traps if you are not sure which type of infestation is in your home.

This experience woke me up out of my every day and what seemed like a humdrum boring life to... I have it all and my whitt's within! Through all the drama and chaos, our sweet Ventura Coralier Choir (The Ventura Coralier Choir with talented director Barbara Reed is made up of inspiring second half of lifers from 64-99 years young) rose up out of the ashes and came together to perform and sing for retirement home residents. Our voices of hope and life tearfully lifted not only their spirits but ours as well.

Days later, still on alert with sirens as background, I felt a settling comfort in my spirit and realized I did not need anything or need to do anything but show up as I am. I have friends that love and care about my safety, a place to lay my head at night, more than enough clothes and jewelry to adorn my body, a full tank of gas, food, drinking water and toilet paper.

I have my sense of self to rely on and wisdom from experience to keep sharp while in survival mode. The moral of the story is...be in awe and wonder of your existence, embrace the little things and in times like this, appreciate the risk takers and safety netters, compassionate hearts and helping hands of our amazing human hood that come together in the neighborhood of life!

We are wired to survive together!

ANIMALS FLEE THE FOREST

by James Francis Gray

THE GRAY THAT YOU SEE, BLANKETING OUR SKY IS NOT OUR MORNING SEA FOG, IT'S NOT WET IT'S DRY

ANIMALS FLEE THE FOREST, AND BIRDS FORCED TO FLY GRAYS SOURCE NOT DISCRIMINATE, SOME MAY LIVE, SOME MAY DIE

IT SEEPS IN YOUR SKIN, BURNS YOUR THROAT, WATERS YOUR EYE BENEATH THE GRAY BLANKET, NORMALCY AWRY

AS THE FIRE LEAVES, WE SMILE, HUG, WAVE IT GOODBYE STILL AS STRONG AS EVER (VENTURA) EVEN WHEN WE CRY

OUT OF THE ASHES, A NEW FOREST AND HOMES WILL ARISE OUR NEW FOUND STRENGTH AND UNITY, IS REALLY OUR NEW PRIZE

Instructions for dealing with ash

If your home was impacted by the Thomas Fire, here are some health precautions to take after you return home and before you begin the clean-up process.

If a structure on your property was destroyed during the recent fire, then you must wait for the proper authorities to approve and direct your clean-up. However, many people evacuated their home and later returned to find their house intact. Often, a significant amount of ash can be found on and around your home. People in this latter situation do not need permission to clean up their property.

Do not advise ash clean-up while ash is still falling and the situation is unpredictable. Wait until conditions improve.

Avoid skin contact with ash. Ash from burned homes and other items will likely contain metals, chemicals, and potentially asbestos, items that may be considered toxic if breathed in or touched with wet skin. If you do get ash on your skin, wash it off immediately. Some wet ash can cause chemical burns.

Inhaled ash may be irritating to the nose, throat and lungs. In order to avoid possible health problems, the following steps are recommended.

Avoid doing activities that stir up ash. Do not allow children to play in ash or be in an area where ash-covered materials are being disturbed. Wash ash off toys before children play with them. Clean ash off pets.

Wear a tight fitting N95 respirator mask, gloves, boots, long-sleeved shirts and long pants when cleaning up ash.

Avoid getting ash into the air as much as possible. Avoid sweeping it up dry. Use water and wet cloth or mop to clean items and surfaces.

Under any circumstances, do not use leaf blowers!

If you have symptoms that may be related to exposure to smoke or soot, consult your doctor. Symptoms include repeated coughing, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest tightness or pain, palpitations, headaches and nausea or unusual fatigue or lightheadedness.

Immigration help available to those affected by wildfires

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reminds the public that they offer immigration services that may help people affected by unforeseen circumstances such as natural disasters.

The following measures may be available on a case-by-case basis upon request:

Changing a nonimmigrant status or extending a nonimmigrant stay for an individual currently in the United States. Failure to apply for the extension or change before expiration of your authorized period of admission may be excused if the delay was due to extraordinary circumstances beyond your control;

Re-parole of individuals previously granted parole by USCIS;

Expedited processing of advance parole requests;

Expedited adjudication of requests for off-campus employment authorization for F-1 students experiencing severe economic hardship;

Expedited adjudication of employment authorization applications, where appropriate;

Consideration of fee waivers due to an inability to pay;

Assistance for those who received a Request for Evidence or a Notice of Intent to Deny but were unable to submit evidence or otherwise respond in a timely manner;

Assistance if you were unable to appear for a scheduled interview with USCIS;

Expedited replacement of lost or damaged immigration or travel documents issued by USCIS, such as a Permanent Resident Card (Green Card); and

Rescheduling a biometrics appointment.

To learn how to request these measures, call the National Customer Service Center at 800-375-5283. For customers with disabilities: (TTY) 800-767-1833, (VRS) 877-709-5797, or (VCO) 877-709-5801.

City responds to fire crisis

Continued from page 7

tax penalties and fees waived.

One councilmember asked if there was a central website that will handle all fire communications, and what efforts were being taken to use social media to the fullest extent possible. Mr. Paranic responded that the most valuable central website is VenturaRecovery.org, and that his public information team will work diligently with local news organizations and social media sites to assure consistent and well-informed communications.

Finally, the question was asked, “how can I help?” Councilmembers Cheryl Heitmann and Christy Weir concurred that supplies of clothing and other “hard” goods have been met, but the best thing folks can do is patronize local businesses, like buying holiday gift certificates and air purifiers, and remember that members of the Ventura business community and the Downtown Ventura Partners (DVP) lost homes too.

Glowing Embers

How fired up are you about life?

by Writer With Heart Karen Leslie

This question came to me when the hills that reign gloriously over our charming community and miles of the surrounding areas were a flame. In the dark of night, fires were eating up vegetation, homes and lives were at stake.

Winds of change were fierce!

In survival mode without electricity, I found myself fumbling blind in haste to gather what was absolutely needed. My sleepy panicked brain tried to catch up and register this notion of necessity. My comfort zone became uncomfortable!

With my heart beating rapidly, I grabbed important papers, money, clothes, food and water, then waited in the dark for the possibility of evacuation.

In my street clothes and ready to take action if need be, sleep came, and in the early morning light, the skies thick with smoke, I woke up not yet knowing the depth of devastation. In that moment, I felt safe, lucky and grateful that my life, as I knew it, was still intact.



Ventura Strong



The fire destroyed most of the hospital. Photo by Barry Harrington Photojournalist.

Thomas Fire takes Vista Del Mar

by Jennifer Tipton

On the top of the hill at 801 Seneca Street in Ventura stood Aurora Vista Del Mar, a psychiatric hospital focusing on behavioral health and addiction issues. The 16 acres on which it stood overlooks the ocean (hence, the name “view of the sea”). This scenic location dates back to the founding of Mission San Buenaventura in 1783 when it was known as San Buenaventura Mission Rancho. In 1914, the land was purchased by the state and became the Ventura School for Girls, the first state run reformatory until it relocated to Camarillo in 1962. The area then became the jurisdiction of the City of Ventura until the state issued a certificate of need for 16 acres of land to Community Psychiatric Centers in 1979. The existing buildings were torn down and rebuilt, changing hands several times until 2001 when it became Aurora Vista Del Mar Hospital, one of the most sought-out psychiatric hospitals in the state.

Seneca Street is at the far west end of Ventura and with the Thomas Fire originating in Santa Paula Monday night, it is staggering to think the flames raced that quickly across the hillside, an estimated 15 miles in only a few hours

driven by powerful Santa Ana winds.

One source shows a gas main located in a 150-year-old grove of trees just below the hospital exploding and thereby igniting the hillside. The occupants, patients and staff, had very little time to evacuate but were able to do so safely after a quick role call to ensure they all were accounted for. Vista Del Mar staff are trained with the intent that patient safety is always the priority, however, this was a challenge none expected, there was barely time for staff to grab patient’s charts and medications.

I spoke with Mary Burau, Clinic Administrator with Ventura County Behavioral Health and was told the estimated 65 patients were brought to the Thomas Fire Evacuation Shelter at the Ventura Fairgrounds Monday night and later safely transferred to other facilities, some in and some out of the county.

While other buildings in the area remained intact, the fire destroyed most of the hospital. Vista Del Mar was operated by Signature Healthcare Services, a private company.

At this time, it is unknown if they will rebuild.

organizations. To date, over 500,000 masks have been distributed throughout Ventura County. The sites that will distribute masks are available and update routinely on readyventuracounty.org and current locations are listed below.

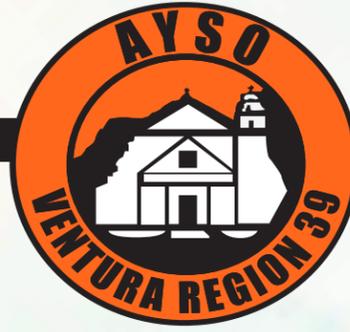
- Ventura County Fair – Red Cross Shelter, 10 W. Harbor Blvd
- EP Foster Library, 651 E. Main St. Ventura
- Beth Torah Temple, 7620 Foothill Road
- Barranca Vista Center, 7050 Ralston Street
- Museum of Ventura County, 100 E. Main Street
- Hill Road Library, 1070 S. Hill Road
- Saticoy Library, 1292 Los Angeles Avenue
- San Jon Yard, 336 San Jon Road
- City Hall, 501 Poli St. (entrance at back parking lot)
- Academic Family Medicine Center, 3291 Loma Vista Road, Building 340, Suite 201
- West Ventura Medical Clinic, 133 W Santa Clara St
- Ventura County Health Care Agency, 5851 Thille St
- Ventura County Health Care Agency, 2323 Knoll Dr # 414



N-95 masks require a tight seal to be effective.

Free masks are available

Due to continuing unhealthy air conditions resulting from the Thomas Fire, free particulate respirators (N-95 masks) are being distributed as part of a coordinated effort of the Ventura County Public Health Department, Emergency Medical Services Agency, various County agencies, City government and multiple community based



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Please note that the N-95 masks require a tight seal to be effective and as a result the available adult sized masks will provide only limited protection for most children. N-95 masks when fitted properly provide some protection from the fine particles in smoke. Ordinary dust masks and surgical masks do not provide this protection. Limited quantities of small masks are being distributed to locations that are more likely to have a concentration of children. When properly worn, these masks should provide a tighter seal for a child’s smaller face. Please note, that only limited quantities of these masks are

available. Masks are distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis and will be available as supplies last.

Thomas

by John Sanders Jones

this week
 the surreal and the unreal met the real
 the real came out ahead
 for the real is the community support
 and love for one another
 through this
 I know
 the uplifting has just begun



The deer’s home, at Vista Del Mar Hospital, will grow green again just as the homes of Venturan’s will grow again.



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Loss of Home can be difficult

by Sheli Ellsworth

Losing a home by fire is not only the destruction of personal possessions, heirlooms and important documents, it is the loss of comfort and safety. Suddenly, small things—once taken for granted—become time-sucking inconveniences. Tweezers, can-openers and medicines can be replaced, but it takes time, energy, lists and attention to the million thoughts fighting for dominance in a too-stressed brain.

According to the American Psychological Association, homeowners can experience shock, anger, depression and hopelessness after a fire. Eventually, acceptance and a focus on the future are followed by a return to safety and security. But how do you get through another day? And what about the one after that?

The APA has some suggestions for dealing with stress after such a devastating loss.

Try to continue your fitness routine. Exercise, yoga, meditation and deep breathing are all proven stress reducers.

Give yourself permission to feel bad: cry, beat a pillow, scream in a closet.

It's okay to laugh. Even when life sucks, things can be funny. Embrace periods of joy.

Make small decisions when the big ones are out of your control.

Avoid major decisions like changing jobs and getting a divorce.

Lower expectations. You aren't a superhero. Do what you can. The rest will wait.

Socialize. Spending time with others is one path to recovery.

It is okay to talk about it. Get it out.

Take advantage of community support. It is not a sign of weakness.

Everyday think of something you are grateful for, even the small things.

Avoid drugs and alcohol when your decision-making skills are already taxed.

Sleep and wake as close to your normal cycle as possible.

Don't skip meals. Eat regular, well-balanced meals. Food tells us we will survive.

Find a routine. Even when nothing is routine, children especially need a certain pattern of behavior. Even simple things like going to school and visiting friends can be soothing.

Ventura Strong



Marta watched her home go up in flames.

Ventura firestorm

by James Francis Gray

Driving home from Camarillo after my writer's group meeting Monday evening, I heard about the Thomas Fire on the 9:00 p.m. radio news. A fast-moving fire that started in Santa Paula's Steckel Park area at 6:30 p.m. was headed west toward the city of Ventura, racing to the hills above the city with breakneck speed.

I arrived home some fifteen minutes later to flashes of light in my neighborhood. Small electrical transformer explosions knocked out the power and the electricity went on and off. Helicopters clattered overhead. The winds kicked up and just after ten, I was trying to catch up with the local TV news about the impending disaster. And then our area was plunged in total darkness.

Getting to sleep with the howling winds and helicopter noise was impossible. I peeked out the bedroom window to the north and saw the moonlit night and the red fire glow. Across the 126 freeway, the hillside was ablaze in bright orange flames. Soon, the stench of burning brush and buildings forced me to close all the windows. Still, I could not sleep.

After dawn, I received a call from a friend, Sheila Lowe, asking if everything

was okay in my neighborhood. She and another friend, Marta Alvarez, were hunkering down at Sheila's eastside home after spending the night in Marta's office on Morse Avenue in Ventura.

Having received a call before midnight from Marta's landlord warning of the fire danger, Marta and Sheila had gone to the residence with two flashlights and retrieved the necessities needed for an overnight stay. They rushed around picking up a few items including a carry-on suitcase still packed from a recent business trip. It contained one pair of yoga pants, one pair of jeans, two T-shirts, pajamas, three sets of underwear, one pair of boots, two scarves and a toiletry bag. The hillside flames were moving down the hill toward the house—a terrifying scenario. Joining a line of neighborhood vehicles, they couldn't get out of there fast enough.

The following morning, Marta ventured back to the Avenue in time to see the garage catch fire. She watched her home go up in flames and her recreational toys: a standup board, a kayak and two quad motorcycles along with a trailer.



Jossy Carbajal is a barber at Ventura Barber Company. Immediately after she heard that the fairgrounds opened up to the displaced she went there and set up free haircuts for all evacuees. She also was giving the firemen quick haircuts as they were fueling up their trucks at State Beach. She is just a giving type person!



Southern California Edison (SCE) crews are working around the clock to restore service for Ventura residents. The City of Ventura has provided an area at the Community Park for SCE to use as their staging area for equipment. Progress of their work will be determined by weather conditions, terrain and the movement of the fire. 367 damaged poles need to be replaced. Restoring the transmission system or rerouting power from unaffected areas to impacted customers is a top priority.



Ventura Strong



"No volunteers needed today."

We are Ventura- part I

by Jennifer Tipton

On Thursday, Dec. 7th I visited the Ventura County Fairgrounds, one of three shelters set up by the American Red Cross.

The billboard at the entrance read "Thomas Fire Evacuees Proceed to Garden Street Gate". At the main parking lot were firetrucks from our neighbors in Los Angeles, Tehama County, Susan River and Hanford (to name just a few), search and rescue vehicles, campers and RVs seeking refuge. Members of the Santa Maria Fire Department, there since day one said they had very little sleep. One emphasized, "this town has been so kind, we've never been treated so well!"

A fire fighter from Riverside showed me 2 large boards, one mapping the fire's activity and the other tallying vehicles and personnel. Currently there were 12 helicopters, 28 hand crews, 471 engines, 26 dozers, 2509 total personnel and 7 water tenders (these carry 1200-3000 gallons of water each).

At the Garden Street entrance, a sign read "no volunteers needed today". Walking up to the main building, another sign read "no donations needed today" – in only 2 days the need for help and donations had been met!

Outside the main building were mobile medical clinics, a long line of portable toilets and a large portable shower. There were cases upon cases of bottled water stacked against the outside of the building. Michael, a volunteer, told me, "the water is literally overflowing". Large boxes of assorted clothing were available for those in need.

Inside the main building security officers stood safeguarding the occupants and sign in sheets were required before entering. I braced myself for heartache but surprisingly the energy was upbeat!

Fred Mariscal, a spokesperson for the American Red Cross, made it clear, "everyone is welcome here, we don't even ask for ID!" There were 225 evacuees

in the shelter, 450 when it first opened and once as many as 600. "It's always changing", Fred said.

Looking like a small city, evacuees were referred to as "residents". Hundreds of cots stood side by side, some with personal blankets and pillows and some with only the American Red Cross blanket waiting for yet another displaced neighbor. A baby changing station was loaded with supplies, WiFi was available and many of the mobile phone providers were present with stations to charge phones. Resources were available for advice and guidance and barbers were giving free haircuts!

Face painting was provided by McKenna Sullivan age 19 evacuated from her home in Carpinteria Wednesday, staying with Merrick Brunner, also age 19. Merrick lives below Foothill and North Petit, right under the mandatory evacuation. McKenna told me, "we're here because I wanted to help."

The Medical Reserve Core (an emergency response group comprised of doctors, nurses and numerous others) were inside the building. Marcie Marino, an E.M.T. for 17 years said, "I am amazed with all the donations, this community has really come out to help!" The greatest medical attention provided was to splint a finger.

Ventura County's Behavioral Health staff were present with printed information such as, "Tips for Survivors" and other related topics. "Sometimes it takes 3-5 days until it really hits you", said Mary Burau, Clinic Administrator.

The Salvation Army coordinated the food. Randy Stokes alongside his wife Jaime, both Cadets volunteered. Randy said, "lots of restaurants are reaching out to help."

I met resident 96-year-old Charlotte Marchetti, a Ventura homeowner in Clearpoint, where she has lived for 40 years. "I don't know what happened, they woke me up Monday night about 9:30 and said you have to evacuate, it happened so fast, this was the only place I could think to come!" Charlotte was sitting on her cot looking quite calm, and added, "we didn't have time to grab anything except a little cash, cause I didn't know if my house would still be there..."

"Is it?", I asked.

"Yes, it is!", she beamed.

Charlotte didn't know when she could return to home, "they won't let us back in until they check gas lines and wiring."

Veronica Estrada, a volunteer with Gold Coast helped with transportation to doctor appointments, dialysis (there were two dialysis patients), refills from



In spite of threatening fire and awful air, Downtown Ventura is starting a new winter tradition the Candy Cane Forest in Ventura's Plaza Park. Fresh cut trees were sponsored and decorated by local businesses, nonprofits, and families around Ventura for the holidays. This completely free, family-friendly, all-faiths festival will last until January 2nd. Sadly, due to the fires many of the planned events have been cancelled but you can still enjoy the beautifully decorated trees. For more information visit holidaysattheplaza.com. Photo by Deena Gledhill.

the pharmacy and oxygen needs, all services coordinated with the Health Department.

Leaving the fairgrounds, I felt a renewed sense of hope, amidst the disaster was an enormous spirit of compassion.

We will recover, and we will rebuild because We Are Ventura!



The Lopez family Victor Sr., Victor Jr., Joshua and John were at the Museum to enjoy making crafts and having some snacks.

Museum of Ventura County to gather and connect

The Thomas Fire covers a span of more than 250,000 acres – larger than all of New York City. Over 1,000 homes and other structures have been

either damaged or destroyed. The cost of the fire is more than \$47 million, according to news reports, and will inevitably increase. Officials say it could take weeks or months to fully contain the fire.

In the weeks and months to come, the Museum of Ventura County will be collecting pictures, oral accounts and artifacts that tell the story of the Thomas Fire. They will be reaching out to you to understand how your homes, businesses and lives have been forever changed by this disaster.

The Thomas Fire story is one of devastation, but it is also one of community and compassion.

Through Thursday Dec. 21, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Museum invites families and chaperoned groups to come to the Martin V. and Martha K. Smith Pavilion located at the Museum for community, activities, crafts and snacks. With Ventura schools remaining closed, the museum will offer several crafts and educational activities that incorporate science, art, music and more. There is also complimentary snacks and water.

The museum is partnering with Thomas Fire First Responders Thank You Cards. A station has been set up with cards and materials for kids and families to write thank you cards to our first responders. Your opportunity to thank them.

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Declaration of local health emergency

On December 8, due to potential widespread toxic exposures and threats to public health and the environment that exist in the aftermath of a major wildfire disaster, the Ventura County Public Health Officer declared a Local Health Emergency to limit the public's exposure to hazardous substances.

This Declaration enables the State Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to survey damaged properties and remove household hazardous wastes at no cost to property owners. It also enables property owners to participate in a voluntary Fire Debris Clearance program administered through the State Office of Emergency Services (OES) and CalRecycle.

The Declaration applies in the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Ventura County impacted by the Thomas Fire and provides the following:

No removal of fire debris shall occur from properties without a hazardous material inspection conducted by either the EPA or DTSC. This does not include the removal of personal property from residential sites.

No debris bins shall be provided to property owners for the purposes of fire debris removal without the authorization of the Ventura County Environmental Health Division.

Property owners that opt out of the Fire Debris Clearance Program must obtain permission from the Ventura County Environmental Health Division before beginning the removal of fire debris to ensure the private debris removal, transport, and disposal is conducted in a manner that does not endanger the community.

The public is advised that the combustion of building materials such as siding, roofing tiles, and insulation can create dangerous ash and dust particles that may contain asbestos, heavy metals, and other hazardous substances. Household hazardous substances such as paint, gasoline, cleaning products, pesticides, compressed gas cylinders, and chemicals may have been stored in homes, garages, or sheds that may have burned or released in the fire, also producing hazardous substances. Exposure to these substances when residents search through debris for personal items, and during fire debris removal activities may lead to acute and chronic health effects, and may cause long-term public health and environmental impacts.

The County Environmental Health Division is currently working with the DTSC to gather more information about the state program and the timing of its operation in Ventura County. As information is gathered, it will be posted along with other recovery information on the County's venturacountyrecovers.org web site. In addition, if property owners with fire debris on their property would like to receive debris removal information directly as it becomes available, they may register via the venturacountyrecovers.org web site.



While researching the agencies at the Poinsettia Pavilion for the Breeze, Staci Brown was sure to pick up the free "bucket of goodies" that were provided. The candles and plant were not included.

Ventura Strong



Full house attentive crowd at community meeting at Buena High School.

CAPS Media will continue to update fire-related information throughout the holidays

by Elizabeth Rodeno

Our heartfelt thoughts and best wishes go out to the citizens of Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties especially those who have suffered personal tragedies caused by the devastating fires. We celebrate the extraordinarily courageous efforts of thousands of fire fighters, law enforcement personnel and other first responders from our community and beyond who continue to risk their lives for all of us. We thank and admire all of the citizens of Ventura who reacted to a shattering crisis with astonishing calm and then opened their hearts and hands to help those in need. Perhaps Ventura's greatest strengths lie within those of us who call Ventura home and who will work together to rebuild our very special community.

We invite everyone to help us remember and document our common experience by collaborating with CAPS Media and the Museum of Ventura County to create a series of exhibits, videos and stories that were Forged by Fire. The Museum and CAPS staffs, along with students in the El Camino High School ECTV program, are gathering photos, videos, artifacts and personal anecdotes from the public, officials, responders and others to create a multidimensional, multimedia series of presentations that capture the remarkable stories of the most devastating natural tragedy in county history. We welcome everyone to contribute to the archive of media and stories of heroism, sacrifice and tragedy. Go to capsmedia.org or venturamuseum.org for more details and to learn how you can contribute to this historic project.

On Saturday, December 9 and again on Saturday, December 16 CAPS Media recorded, broadcast and streamed the community meetings held at Buena High School where city, county and state officials provided information to the public, especially those who were displaced by the firestorms in the foothills. The hour-long programs aired live on CAPS Channel 6 & 15, were streamed on capsmedia.org, broadcast on CAPS Radio KPPQ 104.1 and on city and county websites. The informative programs are being rerun every day on channel 15 and online at 9AM, 12noon and 4PM.

CAPS Media is also producing a series of related updates for the Ventura Police Department that will provide the public with critical information. The updates are airing on CAPS Channel 6 & 15 throughout the day and are posted on Ventura city and police department websites including cityofventura.ca.gov/alertcenter and social media sites including facebook.com/

venturapd. Additional vital information on recovery efforts, relocation, repopulation and more can be found at readyventuracounty.org, vcemergency.com and venturacountyrecovers.org

We wish everyone a safe and restful holiday season. CAPS Media will continue to update fire-related information throughout the holidays on channel 15, capsmedia.org and KPPQ 104.1FM, however the CAPS Media Center will be closed from Friday, December 22 through Tuesday, January 2.

We look forward to 2018 as a time to start rebuilding, healing and celebrating our community and the joys that are uniquely of Ventura.

County working on plans for property tax relief for fire victims

The offices of the Treasurer-Tax Collector, Assessor and Auditor-Controller are working on a plan to streamline the application process for property tax relief due to damage caused by the Thomas Fire.

In some cases, penalties and fees on late payments will be waived for fire victims, but taxpayers are still encouraged to make full payments on their first installment. The County will adjust the tax bill on a future installment. Tax relief will be available for any type of property that is assessed by the County, including but not limited to, homes, commercial and industrial buildings, and mobile homes.

More information will be released on tax relief as the plan is developed. Fire victims can get a head start on the process by filing a calamity claim. Information and a claim form can be found on the Assessor's website at <http://assessor.countyofventura.org>.

To learn more:
Steven Hintz, Treasurer-Tax Collector, (805) 654-3744
www.ventura.org/ttc
Dan Goodwin, Assessor, (805) 654-2181
assessor.countyofventura.org
Jeff Burgh, Auditor-Controller, (805) 654-3152
www.ventura.org/auditor-controller



Senior Living

Pull Out Section

People with health problems face particular challenges

by Amelia Karraker

Health Scientist Administrator, Division of Behavioral and Social Research (DBSR). Research Scientific Resources

Harvey ... Irma ... Maria ... hurricanes that won't be forgotten any time soon. And, although they don't have names, let's not forget the Mexico City earthquake in September and the northern California wildfires in October. We know that the human, environmental, and economic costs of natural disasters are high. Studies by the Environmental Protection Agency show that some extreme weather events such as heat waves and large storm systems are occurring more frequently now than in the past—and this trend is expected to continue.

As we watched these disasters unfold on the news, we saw that people with health problems face particular challenges. And, regardless of their physical health status, many, many people will suffer from psychological issues caused by the loss of property and possessions—and most importantly—of a loved one.

For older adults, such challenges during a natural disaster can be compounded by income and disability status. For example, the deaths of 14 individuals living in a Hollywood, Florida, nursing home from exposure to prolonged extreme heat in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma have focused particular attention on how to best help older people who live in nursing homes and similar settings before, during, and after natural disasters.

The shock of these nursing home deaths tells us that formal care is at times significantly deficient in preparation for disasters, with terrible consequences. Yet, a much broader set of issues confronts us as we grapple with the difficulties that extreme weather presents to older adults. How can we better understand the social, psychological and biological pathways through which these extreme events affect health? What are the paths for resilience and recovery?

One recent study found that older adults exposed to Hurricane Sandy in 2012 experienced steeper increases in pain and functional limitations than those who were not exposed.

This and other studies have given us insights into the complex and unique challenges facing older adults during natural disasters. This research also generated more questions on topics such as:

Pros and cons of pre-disaster evacuation

Providing post-evacuation family and unpaid caregiving, as well as medical care for chronic conditions, including access to medications

Measuring immediate and subsequent environmental, industrial, and

psychosocial stress exposure following a disaster.

When the top priority is to provide shelter, food, and water to people affected by a disaster, conducting research can pose significant response-time and logistical challenges. The NIH Disaster Research Response website has a wealth of useful information about time-sensitive funding opportunities, data collection tools (including social survey instruments and field protocols for environmental exposures), research protocols tailored to disaster research, and training resources. The site is managed by the National Institute on Environmental Health Sciences and is available for use by anyone. <https://dr2.nlm.nih.gov/>

You are what you eat

A healthy, balanced diet can help you feel better and promote long-term health. See this summary of the important nutrients you need in a healthy eating plan:

Proteins - Your body uses proteins to build and repair tissues, fight infection, and give you energy. Protein is found in meat, eggs, beans, nuts, and dairy.

Carbohydrates - Carbohydrates are your body's main source of energy. Simple carbohydrates are found in fruits, vegetables, dairy, and sweeteners. Complex carbohydrates are found in bread, cereals, pasta, rice, beans, and starchy vegetables such as potatoes, green peas, and corn. Many carbohydrates - especially those from fruits, vegetables, and whole grains - also supply fiber.

Fats - Fats give you energy and help you feel satisfied after eating, but some types of fats are healthier than others. Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats seem to lower your chance of heart disease as long as you don't eat too much. They are liquid at room temperature and are found in vegetable oils, some nuts and seeds, avocados, peanut butter, and fatty fish. Saturated and trans fats are less healthy and are found in red meat, milk products, palm and coconut oils, and processed foods.

If you haven't talked with your doctor about nutrition lately, take a moment at your next visit to talk about whether you need to make changes to your eating habits to improve your health.



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Senior Living

Seniors fall into a gap on Ventura's East End

by Lori Harasta

A huge hole is left after SCAN Health & Wellness Center closed its doors on December 15th. For 11 years, the center provided a meeting place where patrons enjoyed evidence-based exercise classes, guided meditations, technology training, nutrition and weight loss groups, performing arts and Zumba to name a few.

Rosemary Molloy was both a participant and an instructor. "The SCAN Health & Wellness Center was part of my happy adjustment to the West Coast when I moved to Ventura two years ago. In addition to the great classes and social opportunities, I taught "Acting for Amateurs" and had hoped to continue in 2018. I was dismayed to hear the center was closing.

Regulars are left reeling, with no backup plan. The only senior center serving the City of Ventura is on Ventura Avenue.

City Councilwoman Cheryl Heitmann commented, "It is disappointing to see a loss of resources for our senior population. SCAN offered many valuable programs that I hope we can find other ways to continue to provide."

Ms. Molloy remarked, "My strongest wish for the future is that an adult center be established on the east side. I believe such a center would be the source of much activity and enjoyment for mature adults--and I'd love to offer "Acting for Amateurs" for them again."

Suz Montgomery, Chair of the Ventura Council for Seniors (VCS), is a staunch and tireless advocate for older adults. "With but one senior center on the far west end, city leaders must make it a priority to fund a facility for older citizens on the east side, particularly in light of the SCAN closure. The city's 60+ population is nearly 30% and is growing rapidly.

The space left by SCAN may be the perfect temporary solution while a new senior center is being planned and built.

While the doors are closing, SCAN's Jacqueline Lauder, MSG points out that it does not mean SCAN is turning its back on our community. They will still provide a Medicare Advantage health plan in Ventura County. In addition, they recently awarded a \$20,000.00 grant to the SNAP program, and will continue to support local non-profits that share common goals.

January that are based on the increase in average wages. Based on the wage data Social Security had at the time of the October 13, 2017, announcement, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) was to increase to \$128,700 in 2018, from \$127,200 in 2017. The new amount for 2018, based on updated wage data reported to Social Security, is \$128,400.

This lower taxable maximum amount is due to corrected W2s provided to Social Security in late October 2017 by a national payroll service provider. Approximately 500,000 corrections for W2s from 2016 resulted in changes for three items based on the national average wage: the 2018 taxable maximum, primary insurance amount bend points--figures used in the computation of Social Security benefits--and family maximum bend points. No other items based on national average wages were affected.

The change to the taxable maximum does not take effect until January 2018, and the updated bend points in the benefit computation only apply to people who initially become eligible for Social Security benefits in calendar year 2018. This does not affect current beneficiaries.

For more information about the updated 2018 taxable maximum amount, please visit www.socialsecurity.gov/oact/COLA/cbb.html. Additional information about the new 2018 bend points may be found at www.socialsecurity.gov/oact/COLA/Benefits.html and www.socialsecurity.gov/oact/COLA/bendpoints.html.

An updated Federal Register notice will be published soon to reflect these changes.

VCAAA's Homeshare Program seeks to assist residents affected by Thomas Fire

The Ventura County Area Agency on Aging's Homeshare Program is actively seeking local homeowners who are interested in assisting families and individuals displaced by the Thomas Fire. Homeowners in the Ventura area who have vacant bedrooms or homes to rent under short-term agreements are encouraged to apply. The VCAAA and Homeshare are an entity of the County of Ventura.

On Monday, Dec. 4th, the Thomas Fire began to ravish through west Ventura County, forcing thousands from their homes, and burning more than 500 structures in its path. Many of the families affected by the fire are seeking short-term housing options as they work through the process of rebuilding or finding permanent housing.

Homeshare, which traditionally works to match homeowners wishing to rent rooms with home-seekers looking for affordable housing, has temporarily shifted its focus to assist those displaced

Updated 2018 taxable maximum amount announced

In October of each year, the Social Security Administration announces adjustments that take effect the following

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Senior Living

by the Thomas Fire, and is asking for special consideration for full families who may also have pets.

Homeowners and those seeking residence will be asked to comply with program requirements, which include an application process and background check, however the process will be fast-tracked in an effort to secure short-term housing options for those most affected by the fires.

Homeowners interested in participating in the program must have one or more vacant bedrooms available to rent, or a full home available to rent. For more information, or to apply to become a Homeshare Provider, please call 477-7324 or visit www.vcaaa.org. Please also follow the VCAAA on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for regular updates related to Homeshare and other VCAAA programs.

The Ventura County Area Agency on Aging, an agency of the County of Ventura, is the principal agency in Ventura County charged with the responsibility to promote the development and implementation of a comprehensive coordinated system of care that enables older individuals and their caregivers to live in a community-based setting and to advocate for the needs of those 60 years of age and older in the county, providing leadership and promoting citizen involvement in the planning process as well as in the delivery of services.

Fall Prevention Program awarded \$50,000

The Ventura County Area Agency on Aging's (VCAAA) Fall Prevention Program was recently awarded \$50,000 from the Camarillo-based Gold Coast Health Plan. The funds will be used to continue efforts to address the crisis of fall incidents throughout Ventura County.

The VCAAA's Fall Prevention Program offers a variety of programs backed by evidence-based material to residents of Ventura County who are 60 or older in an effort to arm adults and caregivers with the tools necessary to prevent falls and increase mobility. A wide variety of classes, including A Matter of Balance, Walk with

Ease, Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance, and Stepping On, are offered year round at locations throughout Ventura County. In addition to classes, the VCAAA provides case management to individuals who have reported falls in an effort to address immediate concerns.

Nationally recognized research shows that one in four adults over the age of 65, and half of the population over the age of 75, fall each year. Of those individuals, half will die within a year from complications and injuries sustained from the fall.

The VCAAA, in partnership with several local private and public organizations that make up the Ventura County Elderly Fall Prevention Coalition, is committed to decreasing the number of fall incidents through prevention programs, which will ultimately result in lower healthcare costs.

"Gold Coast Health Plan is helping to ensure that we can provide the best possible services to residents of Ventura County," said Victoria Jump, Director of the VCAAA. "Whether through volunteer work or funding, the community is a vital resource in keeping our programs viable. We are grateful for Gold Coast's continued support."

For more information, please visit www.vcaaa.org.

Finding a nursing home

Nursing homes provide a wide range of health and personal care services for people in need of short-term rehabilitation or long-term care. If you are looking for a nursing home, your doctor may be able to recommend a few to consider, but there are several questions you should ask to ensure you find a facility that meets your individual needs.

Before picking a nursing home, consider questions such as:

Do I need certain amenities like physical therapy, a religious connection, or hospice or dementia care?

How much does care cost at the places I am considering? Are there any waiting lists?

How many people live there? Do they look well cared for? Do I see warm interaction between staff and residents?

Has the nursing home been inspected by the State recently? Can I see the most recent inspection report?

Have I met key members of the staff? Do I understand everything in the contract?

Get more tips on choosing a nursing home at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

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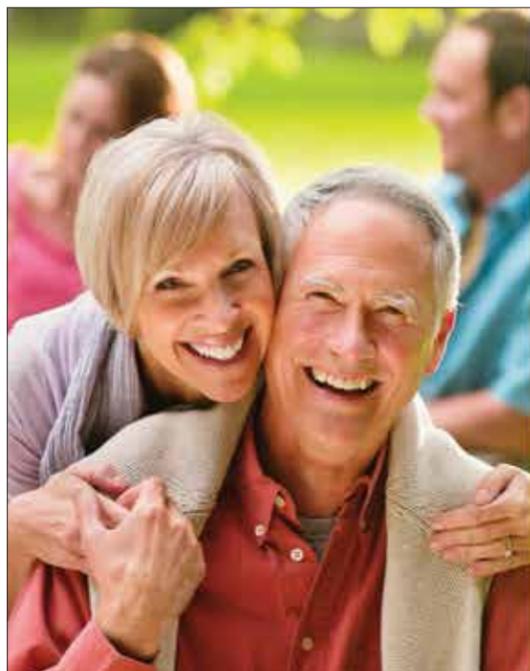
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Ventura Strong

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Top Ten Tips for Wildfire Claimants

1. Obtain a complete copy of your residential insurance policy, including your declarations page.

The law requires your insurance company to provide this to you free of charge within 30 days of your request. Ask your agent or insurer representative to explain your relevant coverages.

2. Take note of your Additional Living Expense (ALE) limits and manage your ALE expenses in recognition of a long rebuilding process.

3. Track all of your additional expenses that arise from having to live in another location away from your home.

4. Document all of your conversations with your insurer/adjuster about your claim and policy limitations. Ask the adjuster to point out the specific provision in the policy being cited.

5. Get at least one licensed contractor's estimate or bid on the cost to rebuild your home just to get a reasonable sense of the actual cost as compared to your coverage limits (for more considerations on contractors, view the CDI's electronic brochure Don't Get Burned After a Disaster and check the website for California's Contractors State License Board.

6. Call the Department of Insurance Hotline for help at (800) 927-4357. Consider insights from consumer advocates.

7. Understand you can purchase at another location, and still receive full replacement cost benefits. You also have the right to rebuild using your own contractor. In order to reduce the cost of rebuilding, you might also consider a community wide development.

8. Assess your situation, do not rush into any decision about contractors, lawyers or public adjusters - consider your mortgage/employment/financial situation, your age, children's schools, your willingness to deal with construction issues (no matter who your contractor is). Of course, move forward if you have obtained multiple bids from reputable licensed contractors, are certain you want to rebuild, are sure of the rebuilding costs

and your insurance limits and want to be sure you are a priority for your selected contractor to start the rebuild. The Contractors State License Board (CSLB) has publications that can help you identify and avoid problems before they occur. Contact CSLB at 1-800-321-2752 to obtain a free copy of their publications and/or verify the licensing status of a contractor.

9. Do not assume you have inadequate coverage based on general information you are hearing about building costs or other general comments. The adequacy of your limits needs to be addressed on a case specific basis to determine how much it will cost to rebuild your home and whether your limits, including extended replacement cost coverage if applicable, are adequate.

10. Evaluate whether you will need a public adjuster or attorney to help you with your claim. Note that for long rebuilding processes you are likely to use your entire ALE limits and if you are also reimbursed by your insurer for your entire personal property loss or your full personal property limits, then there may be no need for the assistance of a public adjuster or lawyer to help you obtain full settlements for either of these coverages.

Public adjusters require a percentage of the claim settlement for their services. Make sure you understand what they charge and the services you are paying for before you sign a contract.

Also, a public adjuster cannot charge a fee for payments already received from the insurance company, so you should consider getting as much advance payment as possible from the insurance company (without signing a final release) before hiring a public adjuster. This way the fee may only be charged for the additional moneys the public adjuster gets for you, Public adjusters are required to be licensed by the California Department of Insurance. To verify a public adjuster's license, call us at 1-800-927-4357 or check the status online by name or by license number. Practicing without a license is against the law.

Insurance understanding is key to recovery

by Sheli Ellsworth

Longtime Ventura resident Susan Lang was prepared for disaster. "We prided ourselves that we had a 'go bag' ready in the garage in case of an earthquake plus having scanned our important documents, installed various back-up systems, and housed several external drives at other locations." The hungry Thomas fire destroyed her home on Via Cielito. "Having lost our entire home and contents is a bit cathartic. Forty-two years ago, we started with nothing and we will start again with nothing. I say we are newlyweds again."

But what next? For Lang and most of the over-400 families who have lost their homes, the challenging task of rebuilding hinges on homeowner insurance.

Mortgage companies require that homes be insured for fire losses. Once a home is paid off, it is the owner's discretion to maintain insurance. In California, a home is insured for original appraisal value or replacement value (which could include code-upgrades) minus depreciation for wear and tear. Depreciation is recoverable on replacement cost policies.

While property in California is expensive, much of the value is the lot and not the actual building. An \$850,000 property might only be insured for the \$200,000 cost to rebuild the home. Because of ever-increasing materials and labor costs, a cash value policy may not have kept up with the cost of rebuilding. Thousand Oaks veteran claims processor, Keith Wade says, "Homeowners should always have Replacement Cost Value policies. It's the only thing that makes sense for catastrophic loss." Wade recently returned from Florida where he processed hurricane claims for Universal Property and Casualty. "I worked for State Farm for 23 years, I've seen homeowners lose almost everything because they were under insured. Homeowners should always ask for replacement insurance because it isn't automatic." Smoke damage is also covered by homeowner policies. Ventura homeowners who opted for lower premiums may find themselves unable to replace their homes. Wade says that sometimes FEMA steps in to help cover losses for qualified homeowners.

Homeowners also have a \$500-2500 deductible which is subtracted from the settlement. A home's contents are additionally covered as a percentage of the home's value—usually by another 40-75%. "In a total loss, if you have a Cash Value policy, the insurance company will most likely cash-out and write you a check," according to Wade. Temporary housing expenses are covered under the Additional Living Expense (ALE) of the policy for either a percentage of the home's value (not the property value), or the actual cost of the expenses with proof. ALE coverage is in addition to the amounts available to rebuild or repair your home. "Insurance companies will provide temporary housing in line with the quality and kind of the insured's standard of living at the time of the loss."

Homeowners are expected to continue making mortgage payments while receiving ALE for a hotel or other temporary

housing. In *State of California v. Allstate Insurance Company*, the court ruled that this benefit is "objectively reasonable expectation of the insured." Payouts of ALE should begin soon after the claim is made. Insured California homeowners have 24 months to spend their ALE benefit unless weather, building codes or permits delay the repair or rebuilding.

How do I get my hair straightener replaced? Owners who reside in a home will have content coverage. If a home is valued at \$200,000 and content coverage is, say, 50%, a homeowner can expect to have an additional \$100,000 for replacing the home's contents. There is no additional deductible on content coverage. Insurance companies usually pay an advance to help victims begin to immediately replace necessary items. Once the items are purchased, insured homeowners can submit receipts and collect the remainder called "recoverable depreciation". The value of items is usually determined by a consumer depreciation guide. However, without RCV or a Replacement Cost Value policy, used items like hair straighteners may have little or no value.

Smaller purchases may not need proof of replacement, but some insurance companies will ask for receipts, especially if the cost is beyond average market prices like collectibles. In these cases, an inventory, photos, videos and certified appraisals can substantiate a claim. The loss of items like jewelry, cash and firearms can be excluded (not covered) or covered under separate policy limits.

California Department of Insurance is at the Poinsettia Pavilion to answer your questions and have the following handouts: So You've Had An Accident What's Next, Residential Property Claims Guide and Home Inventory Guide.

A Rising Up

by writer with heart, Karen Leslie

There is a blanketed hush of humbleness that is spreading like wild fire, soothing away the raw edges of destruction in the residents of Ventura County. It is a thankfulness that goes beyond monetary things. A united force and breath of relief are now threaded in the tapestry of our lives. From lovingly handmade signs of thank you's for the firemen and peace officers posted throughout our community to an underlying knowing we are not alone.

A song of hope and fortitude is the storyline in the life of a survivor. A kind of common denominator, that we made it through one of the most devastating fires in California history. The flames gobbled up land and homes yet our spirit of rebuilding and lives are not burned out but alive and kicking! With strength and courage as dust rags, we are cleaning off the dust of despair.

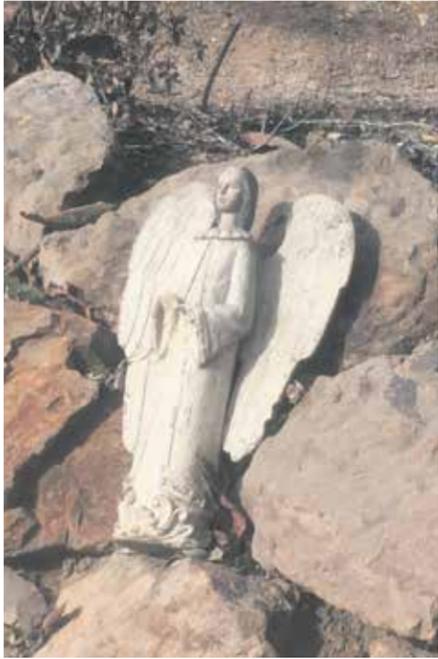
We are rising out of the ashes like phoenixes and a new rhythm and movement is taking place! The bonds of consciousness are lifting us up in sheer determination. A new crop of co-creation is watering the seeds of human potential with love. A new lush undergrowth of humanity is germinating and Heartfully our existence is being activated and ignited to live life like it matters. With clarity, we are fanning the flames of oneness and understanding that each of us has the opportunity and choice to surf and ride the energy waves back home to our authentic ourselves. Love is our lifeline!



When Jim passed away, instead of giving his clothes away, Cheri Jo Weissenbeger decided to form her own non-profit called Jim's Closet. She travels to disasters from her home in Lompoc with her free stuff for people in need. Jim's Closet is in the parking lot at the Museum. Email her at jimscloset@gmail.com to find out the exact times she will be there.



Ventura Strong



One of the only garden decorations still standing.

I am so grateful that my house is standing

by Adela Trainor

There are neighbors all around me that lost their homes, including Dennis and Claire, my next door neighbors. I don't really feel guilty, just sorrow for all those that lost their homes, and it will feel very lonely going back. I miss Claire already!

What I really felt badly about was that I had neighbors across the street that didn't know about the evacuation until they awoke to burning bushes outside their bedroom window!

I am so grateful that my house is standing. I am even more grateful to know that the community I love and talk about so much is everything I thought it to be was so helpful to all—simply wonderful.

The housing crisis just got worse

by Judy Alexandre

Chair Ventura social Service Task force

As the Thomas fire continues to spread in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties, the number of those without a home has also grown. Many of these citizens have insurance, a positive support system, and the backing of the community both public and private. These resources will greatly aid those that have been deeply impacted by the fire. Some do not have the resources; for those who were renting assistance may be more limited. A few of these residents may join the community of those who are already homeless...without a home.

There is and will be difficulty in locating suitable housing within the City of Ventura. High rents, low vacancy compound an already difficult situation. The high rent contributes to the number of people that are experiencing homelessness throughout the state. Wages have been relatively stagnant. To afford the average rent between \$1500-\$2500 a month requires 2-3 minimum wage jobs for the least expensive apartment. If you have children or a pet (an important love

object and companion for many on the street), locating housing is even more difficult. In addition to the monthly rent some landlords are requiring 3 months' rent up front. Ironically, many of our first responders do not qualify to purchase homes in the city and may not be able to find suitable housing for their families.

The majority of our homeless population would move into housing if housing was available. There is a severe lack of affordable housing (earning \$60-\$120,000 a year), very affordable and extremely affordable housing. A person on disability or social security (\$800-\$1200/month income) cannot afford most existing housing. Their entire income is not sufficient for rent. Working one or two minimum wage jobs is not sufficient income. Currently, a few landlords are charging extremely unreasonable rates, because they can. An example is the owner of an old SRO (single room occupancy), hygiene and kitchen facilities at the end of the hall, charging \$1200 a month for a 10'x10 or 10'x12' room. Room rentals in private homes may cost \$600-\$1000 with limited access to other household facilities. Those who are lucky enough to have a housing voucher (may have waited 5-7 years for the voucher) often cannot find a landlord to accept the voucher because they are currently able to charge so much more than what is allowed by governmental standards. We have a housing crisis that just got worse!

We can do better. The City of Ventura needs to actively support the development of very affordable and extremely affordable housing. Implementing interim emergency alternative solutions such as legal camping, expanded safe sleep programs, refurbishing older mobile homes, while permanent housing is developed is necessary. The city can invite low income developers to come build; zoning can be modified to accommodate the need and permits fast tracked for innovative faster built and more efficient forms of housing (container and tiny homes, etc.). We need the will to act. Our seniors, veterans, low income and workforce families deserve better.

Our year round transition to housing shelter needs to be sited and build now. We have identified operators and potential builders if there is a site and if there is housing to transition people from the shelter.

A Helping Hand

The public can get incident information at <https://t.co/F8csSX6ytV> or call 465-6650.

Needed items for those affected by fire in Ventura can come to Community Presbyterian Church to pick up clothing, blankets, shoes etc. Requirements are you must be from Ventura or those fire areas off of the 33. We ask to only take what you need. Items will be found in our Fellowship Hall.

If there is a specific need, please call Jeri at 804-2870.

I have 1 double bed sofa bed mattress to give away and 20-25 children's books (all new). I am also available for whatever families need to get through this difficult time--clean up, hourly childcare of infant-9 years old, grocery shopping, food prep, etc. Kathy Lewis 701-3321.

Supplies and clothing available for any of the families displaced by the fire -

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Ventura Elks Lodge - 2126 Knoll Drive
We have toiletries, cleaning supplies, kitchen item, kids items (clothing, toys, games), pet supplies.

For more information or to donate Monica Merryman 701.8150; Blake Merryman 479.3032 or Elks Lodge 639.0303.

Project Understanding is staying

open extended days and times to help those in need. M-F from 9-2 and by appointment. We are taking donations of food, water, toilet tissue, paper plates, household items, we are also looking for shovels, gardening gloves and shovels to distribute to anyone in need.

Project Understanding is located at 2735 Johnson Dr. Suite E.

Green with Envy



Not a Ventura sunset.



The Pet Page



Dedicated to Scamp

www.missing-petpartnership.org is a good place to help with your missing pet.

Some veterinarians are offering their services for free during these times for our displayed and for

pets without a home to call their own. Check with your vet to find out.

by Jennifer Tipton

On Thursday, Dec. 7th I visited the Ventura County Fairgrounds located at our beautiful Seaside Park, one of three shelters set up by the American Red Cross.

People weren't the only ones being cared for, there were about 150 horses in the stables and in a separate building, managed by American Kennel Club Pet Disaster Relief, they housed about 150 dogs, 150 cats, birds, guinea pigs, hamsters and one very large desert tortoise. Carmen from Ventura County Animal Services said they had taken in a total of 703 animals! The animals appeared very well cared for, each in crates covered with blankets for a sense of security and the dogs were being walked twice daily. "The animals will be cared for until the owner comes for them, if no one comes, they are transferred to the Camarillo Animal Shelter where we will phone, email and send letters to contact the owners, after 10 days, if no one comes for them, the animals will be put up for adoption", Carmen said. The Camarillo shelter is a "no kill" shelter, one of the largest in So. California.

Canine Adoption & Rescue League has a boarding kennel/sanctuary in

Santa Paula. In the first days of the fire they sheltered 50 of SPARC's (Santa Paula Animal Rescue Center) dogs and 8 of Santa Paula's pets.

"This service was offered at no cost to the organizations, although considerable expenditure on CARL's part. All the dogs were well and safely cared for and "weathered" the experience well. "stated C.A.R.L. President "Mary Saputo."

The organization welcomes and relies on the generosity of dog welfare advocates to continue its mission. To learn more about C.A.R.L., how to donate, how to adopt, or how to volunteer, visit <http://www.carldogs.org> or call 644-PETS.

The National Training Center (NTC) campus, at 6800 Wheeler Canyon Rd., Santa Paula lost much, but not all of their buildings.

All of their main buildings – the Welcome Center, Handlers' Lodge, Canine Pavilion and Caretaker's Quarters – were unscathed, as were the Showgrounds, Canine Memorial Wall, and Guardian Glade.

The train car at the top of the Train Wreck prop was burned and will no longer be usable and, sadly, the historic Boone's Cabin, containing relics from over one hundred years of history is completely gone.

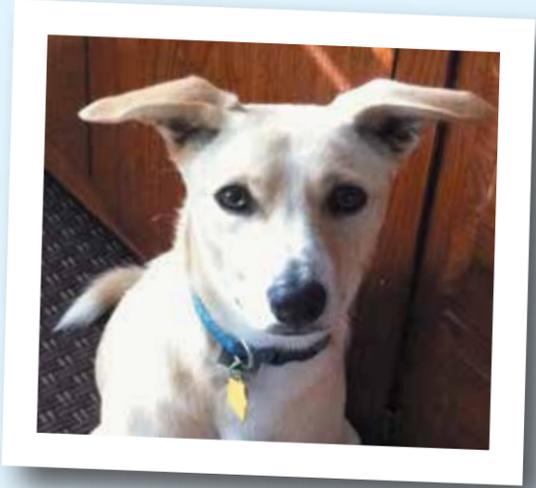
They stated "We look forward to having you continue on this journey with us as we get back on our paws and continue fulfilling our mission of strengthening disaster response in America."

SDF Headquarters 6800 Wheeler Canyon Rd., Santa Paula, CA 93060 888-4K9HERO.

Scamp Club

(Scampclub pets are not for adoption.)

Hi: I'm Teddy, a Lab/Greyhound mix. I'm 7-years-old. I live in Newbury Park, but like to visit Ventura. I climb a 5-foot fence to play with the neighbors' dogs but always come back! I beg with that pitiful, puppy face until I get a treat so hang out in the kitchen waiting for leftovers and drippings.



Join Scamp Club

Animals of all sorts can join the ScampClub. Email me your picture and a little about yourself to Scampclub@venturabreeze.com. You will be in the Breeze and become world famous.



The National Training Center Search City has burned to the ground, with only remnants of the buildings and vehicles that made up the mini disaster neighborhood remaining.



The Humane Society of Ventura County has taken in hundreds of animals displaced by the Thomas Fire. The animals, being housed at the HSVC's Ojai shelter, all are safe and in good shape, but funds are critically needed to maintain their care, as the evacuations wear on and the animals have nowhere else to go.

"The shelter has been staffed 24/7 since the fire began on Monday night," said Greg Cooper, the HSVC's director of community outreach. "Donations are pouring in and are greatly appreciated, but the need is monumental and ongoing."

The HSVC has set up a donation link on its website so all funds go toward Thomas Fire Relief:

To donate: go to hsvc.org/thomasfire.

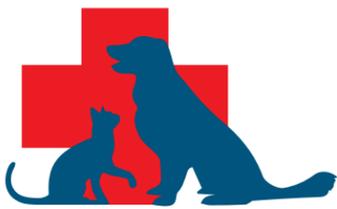
To volunteer: Email Amanda Volden at volunteer@hsvc.org

To drop off food and supplies: Go to the Ojai shelter, at 402 Bryant St.

For additional inquiries: Email Greg Cooper at GregC@hsvc.org

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Sundays
6:00 am to midnight





The Pet Page

LostCatVentura.com and LostDogVentura.com are free resources for finding lost pets in Ventura County, and where you can post a notice to find your lost pet.

Forever homes wanted



Hi: I'm Zero an affectionate and playful 6-year-old Border Collie mix who is in need of a new home. I was originally adopted from a shelter in LA, but the people who adopted me could no longer keep me. The person who has me now did not want to see me go back to the shelter, so she took me in. She unfortunately cannot keep me as I do not enjoy being left alone. I'm a great dog who learns quickly, gets along with other dogs, enjoys walks and being with my people. I hope it's not long before I'm a cherished member of a loving family. Canine Adoption and Rescue League C.A.R.L.

Adoptable Taffy and Amber would like to spread the word that bunnies are happiest and healthiest in pairs. Bunnies thrive when they have companions, and bonded pairs take up no more room in the house than single bunnies. VCAS Bunny Brigade adoption counselors can also facilitate bunny dates for adopters who are looking for a companion for their spayed or neutered single bunnies. To meet Taffy and Amber and witness the playful antics of a bonded pair, please visit VCAS at 600 Aviation Drive in Camarillo and ask for ID #s A674425 and A674426.



Occupational therapist Lauren Taluy and her registered therapy dog Cooper are available to visit places supporting displaced families for Cooper to share some puppy love with those affected by the fires. Cooper is 10 years old and has been with Lauren since he was 8 weeks old, which is when he began his life as a therapy dog. Please contact Lauren at 300-8103 or email lm.taluy@gmail.com to arrange for a visit from Cooper.

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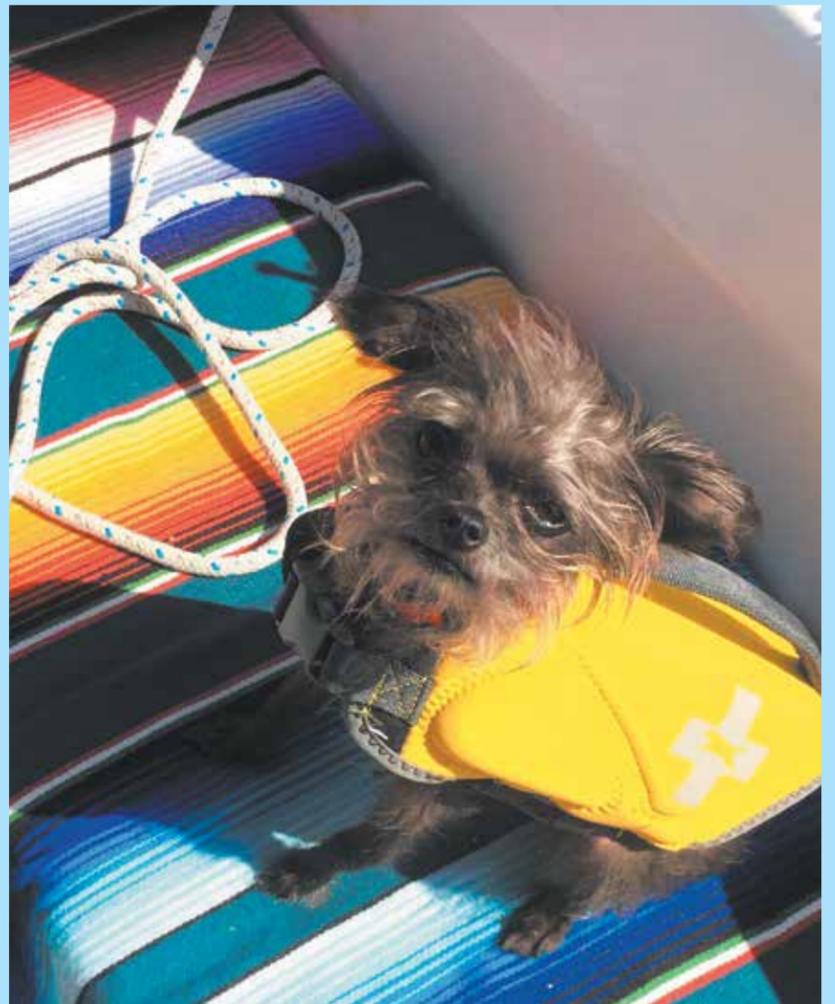
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As told by Finnegan - Quartermaster of the Luna Sea to Jennifer Tipton
My name is Finnegan and I am 2 years old. I was rescued from the Ojai Animal Shelter October 10, 2017 by Lisa Barrick and Shawn Taylor. Lisa and Shawn had sold just about everything they owned to buy a 43-foot Hunter Sailboat they call the Luna Sea. It's been their home in the Ventura Harbor since 2016 and now it's my home too.

On Monday night, December 4th, strong Santa Ana winds started up and we were rocking quite a bit, I could hear the halyard lines slapping up against the main sails, it sounded like a halyard symphony! Then all the power went out and we popped up topside to have a look, with all the pitching and yawing,

Captain Shawn insisted I wear my personal floatation device in case I got tossed overboard. We noticed that all the lights in the Harbor were out and it was very dark, but we still didn't know there was a fire until morning when Captain Shawn and First Mate Lisa could see the flames at sunrise. By then, there was a heavy layer of smoke hovering over the harbor, ash falling and a lot of dust from the fields across the way.

Our boat neighbors told us that many owners of the boat slips here invited evacuees from the fire to stay on their boats and the Marina's office manager allowed many others to stay in the parking lot in their RVs.

By Friday, December 8th, it felt calm, but there was still heavy smoke in the air, so we stayed indoors. We did get a lot of debris in our slip like burnt pieces of wood and tree limbs, but we felt safe because we were surrounded by nature's fire retardant!



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Volunteer Marla Randall and her two granddaughters with helping by walking a "dobie."

Where to volunteer in and around Ventura

by Mira Reverente

The Thomas Fire images are heart-breaking. The figures are staggering. The loss of property is astounding. At least 972 structures destroyed and 258 damaged. As of this writing, the fires have burned through 242,500 acres and is 30% contained.

Everyone processes these losses and destruction differently, but there are a few things that can be done. If you take a look below, you can help. You can make a difference in a small but impactful way. We found five places around town and volunteered at a couple. For sure, there are more not mentioned below that could use your help.

For some of these places, it's highly recommended to visit their Facebook pages first for more updated info or to sign up quickly for volunteer shifts.

Take action and take your pick.

Source: http://www.fire.ca.gov/current_incidents/incidentdetails/Index/1922

American Red Cross, Ventura

No matter what your interest or availability is, there's bound to be an opportunity for you at the Red Cross donation center at 194 Junipero St. or at the shelter at the Ventura County Fairgrounds.

The process to sign up online was easy. I also attended a two-hour volunteer orientation in Camarillo, prior to helping sort donations. The need for helping hands is great. You'll meet a lot of friendly, big-hearted, like-minded folks. If you are a hands-on person, this is for you. Greatest needs: volunteers to help sort donations and man the shelter

Website: www.redcross.org/volunteer/become-a-volunteer#step1

Dobies and Little Paws Rescue, Fillmore

Let's not forget our furry friends who are also going through stress and anxiety during these uncertain times. When my group showed up, there were dozens of doggies that were evacuated and needed to be walked. My furry pal took a long time to get "warmed up" but then cozied up to me and didn't want to leave my side after a 45-minute walk. Warning: if you are a dog lover, you will get attached.

Greatest needs: dog walkers,

blankets, towels

Website: www.DobiesandLittlePawsRescue.org

Santa Paula Animal Rescue Center (SPARC)

Over 100 dogs are also in dire need of walks at this no-kill shelter. Volunteer orientation is required. Call for the updated schedule. Again, animal lovers, be prepared to get those heartstrings tugged.

Greatest needs: dog walkers,

blankets, towels

Website: santapaulaarc.org

World Central Kitchen, Ventura and Santa Barbara

This is ideal for those who like to be involved in mass meal preparation and delivery. When I clicked on the volunteer sign-up link from their Facebook page, several shifts were still open at their kitchens in Ventura and Santa Barbara. With over 2,000+ meals being prepped every day, they could use your help.

Greatest needs: volunteers to prepare, distribute and deliver meals to first responders, shelters and children at the Boys and Girls Clubs

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WorldCentralKitchenThomasFire/>

Website: www.worldcentralkitchen.org

Ventura Recovery Coalition

A new grassroots coalition of 20+ non-profit groups aimed at accommodating specific community needs and matching those with available resources. VRC is currently in the process of organizing a centralized volunteer network to assist in recovery efforts.

Fill out this form to volunteer: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfUpSzxgjeq-DSRrScNl-WA0Bh2TGFV5jdKTW3iL1GlcBStk-Ag/viewform>

Greatest needs: varies

Website: unknown

Also, for updated fire info and ongoing volunteer needs, search for and join Thomas Fire Info on Facebook.

Ventura Strong



To volunteer with the Red Cross: redcross.org/volunteer.

Volunteering with the Red Cross/Thomas Fire

by Jill Forman

"Welcome to the Amazon of Hope," says the sign above the makeshift desk in a deserted ex-bus barn in downtown Ventura, now filled with bags and boxes and pallet of donations. The community had come forward and given food, toiletries, paper goods, clothing, water and so on.

And the trucks and cars keep rolling in, with thousands more items to be downloaded, sorted, and distributed. It is an incredible sight. Red Cross personnel from all over the USA, along with community volunteers, work continually to handle this outpouring.

I had spent Saturday at Orientation the Red Cross headquarters in Camarillo, then stayed there to field phone calls, talk to folks coming in the front door, run errands, whatever needed doing. Sunday things were quieter in the office, and we heard that this collection and distribution center was open and desperately needing help. So I signed up. The Red Cross has an amazingly efficient computer system for volunteers, letting them know what is needed and allowing them to sign up online.

After a brief morning meeting, we get to work. And work we do. In addition to the donation management, clients start coming in needing items. Yours truly ended up running that end of things for the next three days. Clients come in, fill out a list, then wait for the "pickers" to find their items. We give the folks snacks and water, try to find things to entertain their children, and talk to them.

The Red Cross personnel are incredibly patient with us "newbies," smiling, giving us positive feedback and thanks at every turn. I have never felt so valued. And the community volunteers, they are amazing; working whatever hours they can manage, taking time off from their jobs, filling their school vacations with helping others. Pretty much everyone was on their feet, walking around the warehouse, lifting, sorting, doing some hard physical labor for up to 8-9 hours at a time.

We get fed every day also by local restaurants. One day it was a gorgeous spread by Command Performance Catering, another was from Mai's Café. I was unable to find out the names of the restaurant or group that put on the taco bar, or the one that gave us bag lunches with sandwiches and the best soup ever. And people show up

with trays of cookies and bags of fruit. I was sorting a pile of donations and found a plate of homemade chocolate chip cookies perched on top. Whoever you are, thanks, they were delicious (and yes, I shared them.)

I obviously could go on and on, but just trying to give an idea of what it is like to be a part of something, a little piece of helping out in this difficult time. Most of us can't fight a fire, or rebuild a house, or give a home to a burnt-out family. But almost everyone has something to give. The people at the collection and distribution center are giving their time, their hard work and their hearts to this part of the effort. This has been a significant time in my life.

City of Ventura offers parcel record packets to fire victims

City of Ventura residents whose property was damaged or destroyed by the Thomas Fire will be able to pick up a parcel record packet for their property. The City of Ventura Community Development Department has compiled all records for parcels with homes or structures that were damaged or destroyed. This information may assist homeowners with filing insurance claims and beginning the rebuild process.

Packets will include:

Building Permit Records
Including historic building permits and/or planning permits (Please note that packets will not include copyrighted plans or calculations/reports.)

Property Zoning Information
Subdivision Tract Information, if applicable.

Property owners (with identification) may pick up their individualized packet at Ventura City Hall located at 501 Poli Street, Ventura during City Hall business hours in room 124 (lower level, West wing). Residents may also request an electronic version of the parcel packet by emailing their request to CDTR@cityofventura.ca.gov. The City of Ventura is committed to supporting the recovery and rebuilding process for property owners.

Police Reports

by Cindy Summers

Police reports are provided to us by the Ventura Police Department and are not the opinions of the Ventura Breeze. All suspects mentioned are assumed to be innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Strong Arm Robbery

On December 3, at approximately 10pm, the Ventura Police Department Command Center received a 911 call reference a strong arm robbery in progress. Several employees were working their assigned stations at Jack in the Box when the suspect later identified as 24 year old Ventura resident Jesse Rivera entered the restaurant wearing a black hoodie, black gloves and a dark colored bandana covering his face. Rivera approached the cash register, pulling it from the counter and began to flee the restaurant. Store employees attempted to apprehend Rivera who physically resisted. Rivera released the cash register and attempted to flee.

Store employees pursued and detained Rivera as officers arrived on scene. Rivera was arrested and later booked at the Ventura County Jail for robbery. The two employees that apprehended Rivera received minor injuries.

Shooting with Arrest

On December 5, at approximately 1am, the Ventura Police Department Command Center received a call of shots fired in the 2500 Blk. of Bayshore Ave. Responding Ventura Police Patrol Officers arrived on scene and located the victim who had a non-life threatening gunshot wound to his back. The shooter remained on scene and Officers immediately took him into custody.

Ventura Police Detectives were

summoned to handle the investigation. Investigators learned that the shooter was an off-duty CHP officer from the Ventura CHP office. Investigators determined that the officer, identified as 49 year old Ventura Trever Dalton, and the victim got into an altercation in the driveway of the residence on Bayshore. During the altercation, the officer fired his weapon twice at the victim, striking him one time. As a result of the investigation, Dalton was arrested and booked at Ventura County Jail for Assault with a Deadly Weapon. A firearm was recovered at the scene. The victim was transported to a local hospital for treatment. The California Highway Patrol has been notified regarding this investigation.

Anyone with additional information is asked to contact Detective Ed McCain at 805-339-4478.

Vandalism Arrest

On December 12, at approximately 11:15pm, the Ventura Police Department Command Center received a call of vandalism in progress in the area of Lynn Dr. and Gale Way. The caller reported two suspects were using spray-paint, and spraying graffiti on the sidewalk.

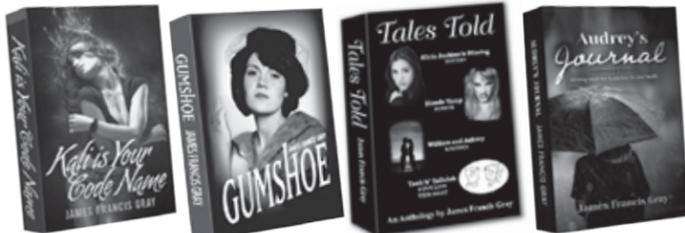
When officers arrived on scene, the suspects ran away from officers but were detained a short distance away.

During the investigation, officers determined the 17 year old male juvenile had vandalized several different locations in the area, which caused several hundred dollars of damage. He was issued a citation for felony vandalism and released to his parents at the scene.

The other juvenile was cited for curfew violation and released to his parents.

The public can report damage from graffiti by leaving a message on the City

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of Ventura's Graffiti Removal Hotline number at 654-7805.

Stolen Vehicle Arrest

On December 14, at approximately 3am, a VPD patrol officer observed a white and silver Ford Flex driving in the area of Ventura Ave and McFarlane St with a dealer paper plate on the rear of the car. The officer knew that a car matching that description had just been reported stolen a couple days prior. The officer attempted to make contact with the occupants of the car as the car drove quickly north on Ventura Ave. The car made a quick turn into a residential neighborhood in the area of Ventura Ave and Shoshone St and was located parked and unoccupied. The front license plate was missing and the VIN had been purposely covered.

Officers waited in the area to see if the occupants would return to the car. Two subjects, later identified as 25 year old Ventura resident Raeann Patterson and 28 year old Oxnard resident Andrew Coombes, were seen running from the area and getting into an unrelated car driven by an Uber driver. Officers stopped the car and contacted both subjects.

Further investigation revealed that the Ford Flex was in fact the earlier reported stolen car and there was property belonging to Patterson inside

the stolen car as well as controlled substances. Other evidence was obtained that showed that Patterson was the one that had stolen the car. Patterson was ultimately arrested for possession of a stolen car and controlled substances and later booked into the Ventura County Jail.

Coombes was found to be a convicted felon in possession tear gas and arrested. Coombes was later booked into the Ventura County Jail for being a felon in possession of tear gas.

Stolen Vehicle Arrest

On December 14, at approximately 10:15am, a Ventura Police officer observed a suspicious four door sedan in the parking lot of Silver Sands Motel that matched the description of a recently reported stolen vehicle. The officer was able to quickly confirm the vehicle was in fact stolen and requested additional officers to assist.

As the stolen vehicle exited the parking lot additional officers arrived on scene to conduct a traffic enforcement stop. The driver, later identified as 37 year old Ventura resident Monique Dabour, was ordered out of the vehicle and was taken into custody without incident. Record check of Dabour revealed a felony no bail warrant for her arrest. Dabour was also found to be in possession of Methamphetamine.

Ventura Strong

Ventura County Community Foundation supports those affected by fires

The Ventura County Community Foundation awarded a total of \$477,000 to two vital service providers providing immediate relief efforts to those impacted by the Thomas Fire--the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army. The grants awarded to these organizations will help fund their overall relief efforts including staffing of disaster shelters and the provision of food, supplies and other resources.

In addition, VCCF launched three new funds to support on-going recovery and support for those affected by Ventura County fires. Two of the funds are seeded by VCCF and are currently accepting community contributions. The third fund was created by the local district of Rotary International and has generated thousands of dollars in donations from Rotarians within the first few hours of launching.

VCCF's Sudden and Urgent Needs (SUN) fund was established to provide a quick funding response in order to avoid the loss of critical safety net services. The fund has gone to work immediately, funding a power generator for Interface Children and

Family Services, to operate the 211 community services hotline during power outages.

VCCF's Community Disaster Relief Fund has been seeded with \$200,000 by VCCF to provide funds for long-term relief and rebuilding efforts. Both funds are currently accepting community contributions through the VCCF website, www.vccf.org.

"Based on the experience of other communities that have experienced a disaster, donations come in fast initially with approximately 73 percent of those funds being used to provide immediate support during a disaster. Unfortunately, full recovery efforts may take from 5 to 10 years," said Vanessa Bechtel, president and CEO of the VCCF.

The donor-advised fund set up by the regional district of Rotary International, though VCCF provides Rotarians a means of contributing to support relief efforts. Rotary leadership will provide guidance on how the funds will be utilized and which relief efforts are funded.

In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, the immediate relief needs are clear--shelter, food, cash, and other basic needs. Recovery and rebuilding are more complex and depend on each community's needs. In other communities, recovery efforts have included basic needs as well as longer term economic, health and social service support, he said.

Contributions can be made by mailing a check, contributing online, or

making a gift of stock or wire transfer. For details, visit www.vccf.org.

The foundation was established in 1987 and endeavors to build philanthropy in the region and to give generously for the well-being of all in Ventura County. VCCF invests in the future through scholarships, grant making and collaborative partnerships. For more information or to donate, visit www.vccf.org.

United Way Thomas Fire Fund

In response to an outpouring of support, United Way of Santa Barbara County is joining forces with United Way of Ventura County with a joint fund to directly support those individuals and families affected by the fire in both Counties--The United Way Thomas Fire Fund.

Local community partners have determined that the United Way organizations, in both counties, are uniquely positioned and qualified to manage the disaster fund, accept contributions, make distributions, promote the fund and provide a report to the community on how the funds were used. After the wildfire is contained, a committee of representatives from community- and faith-based organizations will be convened to assess needs and allocate

money from the fund in Ventura. In Santa Barbara County, United Way of Santa Barbara County will coordinate with local partners such as the Santa Barbara Foundation and the Santa Barbara County Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (SBC VOAD) to determine the most appropriate SBC VOAD member organizations and individuals to receive funding, based on the direct need of those affected. United Way of Santa Barbara County may also work to address additional support for individual victims if the wildfire emergency expands into more populated areas.

"The financial and emotional costs of the loss of homes and businesses in Ventura County, including Ojai, is immense and difficult to comprehend," said Eric Harrison, CEO, United Way of Ventura County. "We will do all we can to ensure a solid path to recovery for our residents."

To date, \$2.25 million has been raised.

Both organizations will utilize the Ventura County systems of donating to the Fund that have already been established. One-hundred percent of the donations will support those in communities affected by the wildfires. Donations can be made by texting UWVC to 41444, online at www.unitedwaythomasfirefund.org, www.unitedwaysb.org or www.vcunitedway.org or by calling 485-6288. Checks may be sent to the United Way office at 702 County Square Drive, Suite 100, Ventura, CA 93003. Please write "Thomas Fire Fund" in the memo.



Ventura Strong

Protect your health during the California fires

by Dr. Brent Caplan and Dr. Tiffany Caplan

Central Coast Center for Integrative Health

The Thomas fire has caused tragic loss in our community. However, it is inspiring to see the community come together to support each other through this difficult time. One important thing to keep in mind is the health impact of the wildfires. We are not only inhaling smoke from trees and bushes, but also contaminants from houses, including toxic paints, plastics and chemicals. This can lead to oxidative damage and inflammatory destruction of our cells and tissues. The good news is we can take certain precautions to avoid the negative impacts of the smoke on our health.

HEPA Air Purifier

High efficiency (HEPA) air purifiers are a great way to improve your indoor air quality. You can put HEPA air purifiers in the rooms you spend most of your time in (i.e. living room, bedroom) or take one with you as you move around your house.

Stay Indoors

Make sure to keep windows closed and avoid spending excessive amounts of time outside. Do not exercise outside until the air quality clears up. Instead, exercise inside your home or at an indoor gym. If using your car's air conditioning or heat while driving, set it to recycle the air from inside your car.

Particulate Mask

When going outside into a smoky area, wear a particulate mask (N-95 or P100). Dust masks and bandanas are ineffective against wildfire smoke.

Water, Water, Water

Stay hydrated by drinking lots of clean water. In some regions, loss of water pressure and water supply from fire-related power outages has compromised water sanitation. If you are in one of these regions, utilize bottled water or bring tap water to a rolling boil for at least 1-minute before drinking or using it to cook.

Vitamin C

Inhaling smoke and ash will wreak havoc on your body and cause oxidative stress. Taking vitamin C is a great antioxidant that will combat this and help flush toxins out of your system.

Olive Oil

Research indicates that olive

oil may counter the detrimental effects of exposure to air pollution. Utilizing extra virgin olive oil on salads or other foods may help your body combat the effects of the wild fire smoke.

Visit Ventura is sharing crisis messaging

by your friends at Visit Ventura
Marlyss Auster, Cheryl Bagby,
Michele Gilmour, Mike Laan,
Fiorella Calderoni, Chelsea Soto,
Lucas Suarez, and Michele Foster

It can be hard to find the right words in moments of crisis and we want to do whatever we can to help.

Visit Ventura is continuously providing updates at visitventuraca.com/thomasfire. The page includes the latest news and accommodation offers from hotel partners across Ventura County, Santa Barbara County, and San Luis Obispo County with special rates for evacuees.

Visit Ventura is also sharing crisis messaging in hopes of achieving integrated communications. After all, the more similar our messages sound, the stronger our impact. Crisis messages are being updated in real-time and are free for anybody to use as needed.

The latest updates on road closures and evacuation zones can be found at readyventuracounty.org.

Many of us are eager to help. At the moment, the best ways to help are to keep the roads clear for first responders, keep a safe distance away from affected areas, conserve water for firefighting efforts, and stay informed to help disseminate accurate information. United Way has also launched a text-to-give campaign for those looking to make a difference. Text UWVC to 41444 and 100% of the donations will go directly to those affected by the fires.

Amidst the smoke, there are beautiful stories of friends, neighbors, and businesses opening their doors to complete strangers who have been displaced by the #ThomasFire as well as first responders needing meals or rest. In the craziness caused by this event, we want to take a moment to appreciate everybody that has made a difference. It's you that make Ventura special.

We hope you and your loved ones are staying safe. Our thoughts are with everybody affected by the Thomas Fire. Please reach out to us if there is anything else we can do to help.

Meter parking regulations

The Ventura Police Department will not enforce meter parking regulations in Downtown Ventura until January 2, 2018. Drivers are not required to pay the meter fee at time of parking.

Oversized vehicle parking restrictions are also lifted and will not be enforced until January 2, 2018. During normal conditions a permit is required to park an oversized vehicle for up to five consecutive days. An oversized vehicle means any vehicle which exceeds 25 feet in length; or exceeds 80 inches in width; or exceeds 82 inches in height.

Drivers must continue to follow posted parking signage and colored curb regulations. The California Department of Motor Vehicles Driver Handbook on Parking provides information on parking regulations that will continue to be enforced: <https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv/detail/pubs/hdbk/parking>.

Ventura Family YMCA increases free services to the community

In the aftermath of local fires, the Ventura Family YMCA will increase child care, membership and facility access to members in the community who need it. The Y offers firefighters and anyone who have lost their homes to the fire free membership until March 31. Those in need have free access to the Y until December 31. The YMCA will also continue to provide two hours of free child care for families in need, so parents can run errands outside of the Y.

Until schools open, the Y will continue to offer full-time (7am - 6pm) child care services at Elmhurst Elementary. The services are free for families who have lost their home. For all others impacted in the community, the Y will offer child care for \$30 per day. All other child care sites will remain closed.

If interested in this care, families should contact Julie.obrien@ciymca.org in order to guarantee a spot, to receive all of the registration paperwork needed, and to RSVP so the Y can secure staff as needed.

In addition to these services, Red Cross staff and volunteers may shower at the Y. The staff will also stock locker rooms with toiletries until December 31. "We want the community to know that we are praying for everyone who has been affected," Amy Bailey, Executive Director for the Ventura Family YMCA, said on behalf of everyone at the Ventura Y.

For any updated information and open hours visit <https://www.facebook.com/VenturaFamilyYMCA/> or contact Amy Bailey at 642.2131 ext. 24 or Amy.Bailey@ciymca.org.

Mailbox

Continued from page 4

and eventually wind-wave support can be designed to be more reliable as well as more economical than the current grid. Local interconnected distributed generation facilities may sustain damage, but would not be affected from power lines going down many miles away. They will be designed with work-arounds when a microgrid is damaged.

If the Governor is right about this being the new normal, we appreciate leaders with the foresight to take more control over our energy to assure resilience.

Jan Dietrick

President Rincon-Vitova Insectaries

Dear Mayor Andrews, Deputy Mayor LaVere, Chief Corney and Council Members:

My home is on Brodiea Ave., my neighbor's also on Brodiea Ave., and a home on Lupin around the corner from us were looted during the mandatory fire evacuation. We also had no electrical power at the time we were ordered to evacuate so we could not set our burglar alarm. I am told there are other looted homes as well but I have not personally spoken to other homeowners.

I read where you were going to be working on future disaster planning so I thought I would share our experience for future consideration.

At our home the thieves broke over the back fence and smashed in the door to our garden house. They were unsuccessful kicking in the side garage door so they threw a large concrete block through our back sliding glass door. It was double paned glass and this caused an explosion of shattered glass throughout the kitchen and dining area as well as glass tracked throughout the house. They took our TV and all our family jewelry and keepsakes. When they left, they left the front door open which caused ash from the fire to blow into our house throughout the night. In the morning the open door is what caused someone to alert Ventura Police. Officer Anthony Reginato called us home and took our report as well as those of our neighbors.

It is too late for us, and I realize so many others have lost so much more. However, fire sometimes cannot be stopped, but looting can be prevented.

When you call for a future mandatory evacuation you should have in place a cadre of police personnel, cadets, and police volunteers to block off and restrict all access points to evacuated areas. They should be checking identifications of anyone entering or exiting the area.

Public safety is the number one priority in any community and I realize this fire disaster was greater than any emergency we have ever faced. Moreover, I have the utmost praise for all of our police and fire personnel. I will be forever grateful for their help. Heroes all.

However, I respectfully ask that each of you and Chief Corney develop a plan to protect neighborhoods from looters during future disaster evacuations. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Marianne Coffey

1700 E. Thompson Blvd. Ventura
805.648.1070
 Mon - Thurs 11am - 9:30pm
 Fri & Sat 11am - 10:30pm Sun Closed

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This 'n' That



County and City dignitaries helped Kaiser staff in cutting the ribbon at new facility.

New Kaiser Permanente grand opening celebration

Article and photos by Richard Lieberman

The new Kaiser outpatient clinic held a grand opening for the 57,000 square-foot building alongside of the 101 Freeway in Ventura. The complex officially opened to patients on December 11th 2017.

Originally scheduled to open early next year Kaiser pushed up the opening date to December this year ahead of the original schedule. The construction project began with a ground-breaking ceremony in September, 2016.

The new clinic is Kaiser's answer to the need for additional space in West Ventura County. The new facility will serve as an outpatient center. The clinic features optometry, orthopedics, obstetrics-gynecology, cancer infusion, gastroenterology, podiatry, laboratory services and additional specialties.

Dr. Justin Kane, a hand surgeon will serve as the clinics physician-in-charge, "we have all the medical and surgical specialties under one roof," said Kane. Kane will serve along with 22 other physicians

based at the new site.

A pharmacy and an urgent care center are scheduled to be added in the second half of 2018. Kane added "there won't be outpatient surgery, but some office procedures for certain types of skin cancer removal procedures will be available at the site."

The new Kaiser building has caught the attention of residents and those traveling along the 101 Freeway by its brightly lit lines running across its exterior. Dr. Kane noted that the "lighting is like a beacon and that is exactly what we want."

Taking advantage of modern interior design techniques, the facility features self-tinting windows, solar panels and other technology designed to be energy efficient. The brightly lit exterior lines compliment the design of the interior.

Kane added "it's a billboard" referring to the lighted exterior. "We wanted the building to look like the innovation and technology that we have included in its interior."



Thomas Fire incident community meeting at Buena High School

by Richard Lieberman

Saturday, Dec. 9 a public meeting to discuss the on-going Thomas Fire was held at Buena High School

auditorium. The meeting was called to alert residents of the latest developments of the Thomas Fire.

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Website: www.VenturaExecutiveSuites.com

Following the meeting the cafeteria was utilized to present several city, county, private and other public agencies, each working from tables set-up in the cafeteria to provide vital information about services available to affected residents.

Matt Lavere Deputy Mayor began the meeting with comments about the situation as of Dec. 9th. "This is the worst natural disaster in the 170-year history of our city", said Lavere. He also commented about three Ventura restaurants where patrons gave a standing ovation to first responders dining at these restaurants.

Steve Bennett, County Supervisor 1st district was next up and said "I am truly humbled as I watch the progress of firefighters and other first responders" He added "We will continue to fight this disaster and we will get answers on how the fires started and progressed so quickly."

Mark Watkins, City Manager was next to speak and he was blunt and to the point "This fire is still active, and will take a long time to get it under control", he said.

Next speaker David Endaya, Fire Chief City of Ventura, said "Our department was able to evacuate 27,000 people in less than an hour." He also added "This fire came through the city faster than any we have ever seen."

Other speakers representing emergency services in the city were CAL Fire, City of Ventura Police Chief Ken Corney, Dr. Levin, Public Health Medical Director, Chris Stephens, Director of Resource Management Agency, and Terri Ynez, Deputy Director of Behavior

Health.

Informational table representatives included: Ventura County Recorder's Office, Red Cross, Ventura County Health Care Agency, Ventura County Consumer Rights and Protection, Ventura Unified School District, Ventura County Tax Assessor, Ventura County Human Services Agency, Ventura County Resource Management Agency, Southern California Gas, Southern California Edison, City of Ventura Community Development, Ventura City Fire, Ventura Water, Ventura Police Department, United States Post Office, and the Department of Insurance.

While at the gathering we were able to talk with a Sacramento Fire Fighter here as a member of Cal Fire Response Team, his journey to Ventura was typical of out of area firefighters responding to the disaster. "Each night we are here we sleep at different locations, the first night I slept in my car no other lodging was available" he said. One night I slept in my sleeping bag on the ground," he added. Sacramento area responders numbered about one hundred, which included 4 engine companies. These out of area fire fighters are working 24 hour shifts (24 hours on and 24 hours off), and sometimes , because of the severity of the fires they will work 36 to 48 hour shifts.

Here at the Breeze we welcome the generosity and commitment of fire service personnel from all over the Western United States. Thank you all.

Another such meeting was held at Buena High on Dec.16.



by Pam Baumgardner
VenturaRocks.com

I'm not going to lie, this is awkward. How does one write about promoting a music scene while so many around us are suffering major loses? We're suppose to be celebrating the most joyous time of the year and we find ourselves affected by one of the worst disasters our City has ever had to endure. I'm a firm believer that music helps to heal, and thankfully we have a community of artists, venues and music supporters who have been rallying to help others. That is what I plan to take from this catastrophic event. The fundraisers, the donations of one's tip jar, bands playing for free, venues offering their facilities, and the dozens and dozens in our community planning, creating, and supporting all these efforts. Yes, Ventura does and will continue to rock.

Here now, as promised, New Year's Eve parties around town. Please contact the venues for ticket pricing and amenities and be sure the event has not sold out. Grapes and Hops will be hosting a Speakeasy themed party with the Barrelhouse Wailers; Discovery has Hirie in the house; The Tavern offers a dress-up black and white themed event with DJ Aycer; the Hong Kong Inn has the Misunderstood band; the Star Lounge snagged Alastair Greene for their party; The Greek at the Harbor has an "Under the Sea" themed soiree with the band Awesome Sauce; Café Fiore has Young Dempsey up front and Big Adventure in the Tree House; you can party at the Copa Cubana with the Brandon Ragan Project; you'll find What the Funk at Gigi's; Crosscut will be at the Keynote Lounge; the House Arrest band will be at the Moose Lodge; and there'll be plenty of dancing with DJs at Bombay's and Sans Souci.

Quick notes: Tilford Jackson's Christmas special will be held on Thursday, December 21, at Squashed Grapes; Smash Mouth plays Discovery on Friday, December 22; the Ventura Theater 5th annual Holiday Sing-along has been rescheduled for Friday, December 22; Hi Hat Entertainment presents James Intveld and Elvis Blue Christmas on Friday, December 22, at the Hong Kong Inn; Shaky Feelin' is hosting a Christmas show on Saturday, December 23, at Bombay's; there's a Ventura Strong community holiday party on Saturday, December 23, at the Ventura Beach Club with Hard Six, Raging Arb and the Redheads, Laura Ruth Ward, and DjPj; and just a reminder, Chopper Fest was postponed, new date is February 4.

And I just got the press release that Night Demon has announced Frost and Fire has gone global with their next event to be held in

London over two days, May 11 and 12, 2018. Headlining will be Cirth Ungol. Way to go boys.

I'm wishing a safe, prosperous and harmonious year for one and all.

Do you have any music-related news or upcoming shows you want help publicizing? Please send all information short or long to Pam@VenturaRocks.com, and for updated music listings daily, go to www.VenturaRocks.com.

Music Calendar

For more events go to VenturaRocks.com

Boatyard Pub

Ventura Harbor Village

Fri 12/22 - RJ Mischo & Paris Slim

Sat 12/23 - Unkle Monkey

Fri 12/29: Teresa Russell

Sat 12/30: CRV Trio

Bombay Bar & Grill

143 S. California Street

Fridays: DJs; Karaoke

Sat 12/23: Shaky Feelin'

Café Fiore

66 S. California Street

Wed 12/20: Donna Butler

Thurs 12/21: Fabulous Hangovers

Fri 12/22: Alex Nestor

Sat 12/23: Ricky Coz

Tues 12/26: Fabulous Hangovers

Wed 12/27: Big Adventure

Thurs 12/28: Amber & Smoke

Fri 12/29: Red Muffs

Sat 12/30: Young Dempsey

Sun 12/31: NYE Party with Young

Dempsey; Big Adventure

Casa Bella

391 E. Main Street

(805) 340-1119

Music starts 7 pm

Fridays: Encore

Saturday: Ricky Williams

Cask Alehouse

5952 Telegraph Road

(805) 765-4201

Music 7-9 pm

Sat 12/23: Sarah Lightman

Sat 12/30: Jon Gindick

Sun 12/31: Will Beman

The Cave

4435 McGrath Street

5:30 - 8:30 pm

Weds & Saturdays: Varon Thomas

Thurs & Fridays: Warren Takahashi

Copa Cubana

Ventura Harbor Village

Week nights 6 pm; Weekends 7 pm;

Sundays 3 pm

Tuesdays: The Jerry McWorter Trio

Wednesdays: Creative Open Mic Jazz

Jam

Fri 12/22: Martinez Brothers

Sat 12/23: Havana 5

Fri 12/29: Havana 5

Sat 12/30: Havana 5

Sun 12/31: NYE Party with Brandon

Ragan Project

Cork

1930 E. Main Street

Music 6-8 pm

Wednesdays: The Swillys

Discovery

1888 Thompson Blvd

Thurs 12/21: The Aggrolites w/
Slightly Stoopd Horns

Fri 12/22: Smash Mouth; The Inside
Break

Thurs 12/28: Tomorrows Bad Seeds

Fri 12/29: Heavy Petty

Sat 12/30: Cash'd Out

Sun 12/31: NYE Party with Hirie

El Rey Cantina

294 E. Main Street

Fridays: Xoco Moraza and Friends (4
pm)

Saturdays: DJ Erock

Garage

1091 Scandia

Fri 12/22: DJ Darko

Gigi's Cocktails

2493 Grand Avenue

(805) 642-2411

Thurs, Fri & Sat: Karaoke

Sun 12/31: NYE Party with What the
Funk

Golden China

760 S. Seaward

(805) 652-0688

Karaoke seven nights a week 9 pm

Tuesdays 7 pm: Open Mic

Grapes and Hops

454 E. Main Street

Fri and Sat 8 pm; Sundays 3 pm

Fri 12/22: Tex Pistols

Sat 12/23: Alastair Greene

Fri 12/29: Shawn Jones Trio

Sat 12/30: Brandon Ragan Project

Sun 12/31: NYE Party with Barrel-

house Wailers

The Greek Restaurant

Ventura Harbor

Sun 12/31: NYE Party with Awesome
Sauce

Hong Kong Inn

435 E. Thompson Blvd

Mondays: Karaoke

Thursdays: Gypsy Blues Band

Fri 12/22: Hi Hat Entertainment

presents James Intveld & Elvis Blue
Christmas

Sat 12/23: Roberto Valley & Carlye
Bariteau & Friends

Sat 12/30: The Bomb

Sun 12/31: NYE Party with Misun-
derstood

Keynote Lounge

10245 E. Telephone Road

Tues & Wed: Karaoke

Thursdays: Open mic night

Fri 12/22: Heathers on Fire

Sat 12/23: Reigh

Fri 12/29: CRV

Sat 12/30: Loose Cannons

Sun 12/31: NYE Party with Crosscut

Leashless Brewing

585 E. Thompson Blvd.

Fri 12/22: Jade Hendrix

Sat 12/23: Danielle Stacy

Made West Brewing

1744 Donlon Street

Thurs 12/21: Dan Grimm

Fri 12/22: Inertia

Sat 12/23: Jeff Uzzel

Thurs 12/38: Alice Austin

Majestic Ventura Theater

26 S. Chestnut Street

Fri 12/22: 5th Annual Holiday

Sing-a-long

Fri 12/29: Chicano Batman

Moose Lodge

10269 Telephone Road

Sun 12/31: NYE Party with House

Arrest band

O'Leary's

6555 Telephone Road

Wednesdays: Karaoke

Fri 12/22: M1-6

Paddy's

2 W. Main Street

Wednesdays: Karaoke

Fri & Sat: DJs

Patio at Players Casino

Auto Center Drive

Thurs 12/21: Andres Herrera Trio

Fri 12/22: Carmen & The Renegades

Sat 12/23: 805 All Starz

Thurs 12/28: Andres Herrera Trio

Fri 12/29: 805 All Starz

Prime

2209 E. Thompson Blvd

Tuesdays: Danny D

Fridays: Mike Moody

Saturdays: Jessica Ash

Red Cove

1809 E. Main Street

Thursdays: Music Club Open Jam

Night

Rookees Sports Bar & Grill

419 E. Main Street

(805) 648-6862

Fri and Sat: Rotating DJs

Sandbox Coffeehouse

204 E. Thompson Blvd

805-641-1025

Thurs 6 pm, Weekends noon

Thursdays Open Mic

Sun 12/24: Ashton York

Sat 12/30: Steve Badau

Sun 12/31: Robert Quinda

Sans Souci

21 S. Chestnut

Sundays: DJ Darko

Mondays: Karaoke

Tuesdays: DJ Nick Dean

Wednesdays: Open mic

Thursdays: DJ Spinobi

Fri 12/22: Divided Heaven

Sat 12/23: DJ Pistolero

Fri 12/29: DJ Pistolero

Sat 12/30: Seaside Band

Sun 12/31: NYE Party with DJ Darko

Squashed Grapes

2351 E. Main Street

Music 7-10 pm

Wed 12/20: eSmooth featuring

Fundi

Thurs 12/21: Tilford Jackson's

Christmas Special

Fri 12/22: Dogfish

Sat 12/23: Doug Webb Quartet

Fri 12/29: Carey Frank and Bruce

Forman

Sat 12/30: Studio C Jazz Band

Star Lounge

343 E. Main Street

Tues: Karaoke

Thurs: DJ Trolbte

Fri 12/22: Shawn Jones Trio

Sat 12/23: Pull the Trigger

Fri 12/29: Bloody Reunion

Sat 12/30: Whiskey Stone

Sun 12/31: NYE Party with Alastair

Greene

The Tavern

211 E. Santa Clara Street

(805) 643-3264

Sundays: DJ Steezy Steve

Tuesdays: Karaoke

Metal Wednesdays

Get it Right Thursday DJs

Fri 12/22: Noble Grizwald

Sun 12/31: NYE Party with DJ Aycer

Topa Mountain Winery

821 W. Ojai Avenue

Music 3-5 pm

Sat 12/30: Alan Thornhill, Martin

Young & Jim Monahan

Sun 12/31: Natalie Gelman

Vintura at the Wine Rack

14 S. California Street

(805) 653-9463

Thurs 12/21: Vanise Terry Band

Fri 12/22: Jason Ho

Sat 12/23: Déjà vu Too

Thurs 12/28: Andy D

Fri 12/29: Epitome of Dreams

Sat 12/30: Kevin Longden & Friends

The 805 Bar

Ventura Harbor

Music at noon Sat & Sun with Kenny

Devoe

Ventura Strong



The Lewis family is starting from ground zero.

Fires and families: what to tell your child, how to cope

by Rebecca Wicks

On the night of December 4th Jamie Lewis had to ask her daughter Jenna, 11, and her son Jackson, 9, to choose.

"I told them there is a fire, and we were going to evacuate and they needed to fill up their suitcase with their most favorite possessions," said Lewis. "I told them I loved them, that we would be fine, but I needed them to focus."

Like hundreds of others, the Lewis family's home burned to the ground, and today are left with essentially nothing. Her story about that evening mirrors many others, gathering valuables in the dark after the power went out, consoling children, being taken in by gracious friends. They have not returned to Ventura yet, but are planning to soon when school resumes. As expected, many of the Lewis family decisions are being based on their children.

"We will return to Ventura, it's where the kids' activities and friends are," said Lewis. "We're excited about getting them back into their schedule."

How children react and recover from fires and other disasters depends on their personal experience of the fire, previous experiences, and life circumstances. In addition to damage or destruction to their home and possessions, victims of residential fire may also have to overcome financial hardship, relocation, and loss of pets. According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), fires can cause serious emotional distress to children and families. And, while most families will recover over time, the length of the recovery process depends on how well families cope with post fire stresses and on the amount of support and resources available through family, school and their community.

Mica Beving, his wife Jess, and his 11-year-old daughter Amelia were winding down for the evening when they first noticed smoke outside their residence, the former Hawaiian Village Apartments.

"I figured this was just another brush fire like so many I've seen in the past," said Beving, who said renters insurance was not available for the apartment building as it was too close to the hillside, and the exterior of the place not completely fire resistant. "After the power went out and as the smoke began to grow in intensity and ashes rained down more and more, that's when we started to pack."

Beving put three boxes in his daughter's room and told her to fill them with things she wanted to keep.

"I came back and they weren't completely full, and I tried to tell her to fill them up more," said Beving. "I think because I was

trying to be so calm, she didn't understand the severity."

As his family packed, the smoke and ashes grew to the point they couldn't open their eyes much and could only breathe if they had something over their mouths.

"We tried to pack more but by 12:30am we had to go," said Beving who could then see flames at the back of the property and around the houses near them.

Today Beving and his family are together and safe, staying with his parents in Camarillo. Their primary goal, like the Lewis family, is to secure housing so he, his wife and daughter can resume some sense of normalcy. Beving said he and his daughter have talked about the fire a couple of times. They talk about the things they wish they would have taken. Beving told his daughter to make a list of things she wished she still had, so she won't keep thinking about them.

Research has shown children and adolescents can react in a variety of ways when dealing with a fire including experiencing anxiety, nightmares and sleep disorders. The American Psychological Association (APA) reminds parents that a child's ability to cope is highly influenced by how their parents and caregivers deal with crisis. Because children often look to adults for guidance, support and information, it is important to work toward coping successfully in order to serve as a positive role model.

"You are likely their main source of security during this time," the APA website states. "Be open to children sharing their thoughts, concerns and ideas. Encourage them to return to their normal routines, including playtime. Be careful not to use your children as a way of venting your fears and worries."

Ready.gov, a Department of Homeland Security preparedness site advises the following:

- Encourage dialogue. Listen to your kids. Ask them about their feelings. Validate their concerns
- Answer questions. Give just the amount of information you feel your child needs. Clarify misunderstandings about risk and danger.
- Be calm, be reassuring. Discuss concrete plans for safety.
- Shut off the TV. News coverage can create confusion and anxiety. Repeated images can be harmful. If your children do watch TV or use the Internet, be with them to talk and answer questions.
- Find support. Whether you turn to friends, family community organizations or faith-based institutions, building support networks can help you and your children cope.

The last recommendation is one many families in Ventura may need to consider when thinking about long term effects on their children. While Lewis' kids have had difficulty sleeping since the fire, she is particularly concerned about long terms effects.

"I'm learning as we go, right now they don't want to talk about it," said Lewis who is worried the effects on her kids will be more profound when they come back to Ventura. "I have a feeling it will hit them in a month, then in 3 months, and then time will tell."

Jamie and her husband Jake have been back to the site of their home only once, and don't intend to take their kids to the area for quite some time. The family moved into the home barely four months ago, and hadn't gotten around to securing renters insurance.

"We were so busy," said Lewis, having started working again recently, their daughter starting a new school this fall. "We're now starting from ground zero."

For more information on how to cope with children in the aftermath of a fire

visit: www.ready.gov, www.apa.org or www.nctsn.org.

To contribute to the Lewis or Beving family visit: www.gofundme.com/lew-family-fire-fund; and www.gofundme.com/beving-after-the-fire-fund.

Just a very few Ventura Heroes

by Victoria Usher

Battling the fires in Ventura has been tough to say the least and one of those neighborhoods just south of Arroyo Verde was no different. The reason that the entire neighborhood didn't burn was because of all the efforts of everyday citizens who were out there for more than 10-12 hours fighting hot spot fires all over the neighborhood. A few of those great citizens heroes were Eric Jarl (who stopped ten foot tall flames under his back porch at 4:00am after driving all night from Stockton), Mark Perry who helped knock down fence fires, Robert Washington and his friend Sean Ardouin and lastly George Brown.

Mr. and Mrs. Gene Dunn (suggested by Lyn Fairly) were driving around looking at the fire damage when they came upon a couple who were digging into the ruins of a burned-out motor home and horse trailer. The horse trailer was actually the man's work shop, he was making jewelry as his business and they lived together in the motor home. Everything they owned including their business was completely lost in the fire. The trailer and the workshop contained gold, silver, jewelry, precious stones, pearls, and the tools needed to make the jewelry.

Their 10-year-old daughter's toys that she'd bought for Christmas with a \$100 shopping spree that she'd won with the firefighters were all gone because of the fire. Then on top of everything else they also lost their dog. Mr. and Mrs. Dunn, their daughter Patti, and their son in law William decided to spend the greater part of the afternoon helping them dig, rummage, and try to rescue some of that material and they were successful to a point. They gave them some cash for the night and directed them to the perfect place to ask for assistance and then both families exchanged their phone numbers. Mr. and Mrs. Dunn are Ventura heroes and they now have some new friends too.

Hooray for Hector Andrade, the Poinsettia Pavilion's caretaker for more than 20 years. On Monday night, as the fire raced down Ventura's hillsides, Hector, his wife, Joanne, and son, Hector, Jr., saw it coming and turned on the sprinklers, grabbed hoses and shovels and fought back the flames. With danger closing in, Hector refused to leave until the firefighters arrived. He stayed across the street and once they allowed him to return, he was back at it putting out hot

spots and protecting the building throughout the night. We are convinced that if it were not for Hector and his family, the Poinsettia Pavilion would be nothing but a memory.

These are the unsung heroes you usually never hear about but if not for their efforts we would have lost many more homes. Also, a huge thanks to all the firefighters who did show up! I believe you saved a lot of Ventura. Hats off to these heroes!

From the inside (aka: My three days in an evacuation shelter)

by Frances Spencer
Artist, Playwright

The Thomas Fire was burning on the hill above Ventura City Hall. My apartment building, two miles downwind, was in the path of the flames. Despite being warned to evacuate, I couldn't bring myself to leave. My personal wealth was in my paintings and manuscripts lying in wait for the flames. So I stayed on, as if somehow by being there, I could will away the danger. When the smoke-filled air became too difficult to breathe, I knew I had no choice. Everyone had left, nothing was open throughout the City. It was a ghost town. I had no place to go except the evacuation shelter.

That's how, in the twilight of my life, I spent two days and nights in a shelter, sharing space with those made homeless by the great California fire. What I took away from this experience was the knowledge of what a caring and generous community I live in, and how the urge to help our fellow humans burns brighter within our souls than the fires outside. For two days, the firefighters, police, Red Cross, Salvation Army, and sundry volunteers young and old surrounded, fed and protected me.

The generosity of the business community was awesome. Several times a day, food was brought in from restaurants. Everyone was treated like royalty, with courtesy and compassion. No criticism. Just kindness. Toys, coloring books, games were laid out on tables, and volunteers entertained the children. There were mounds of donated clothes, shoes, blankets, toothbrushes, odds and ends to fill all possible needs. To pass the day, I sketched scenes in the shelter.

But nighttime was surreal. In a barn bigger than a football field, endless rows of narrow cots were packed together; a sea of bodies huddled under coats and blankets in an uneasy silence punctuated by coughing, a baby crying, a woman sobbing over an unknown sorrow,

Continued on page 27

Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

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

King Crossword

Answers

Solution time: 21 mins.

H	U	N	K	S	U	V	A	B	L	E		
E	L	O	N	G	A	T	E	C	L	O	P	
S	T	R	I	N	G	E	R	H	O	L	E	
F	A	A	I	C	I	C	L	E				
R	E	N	E	W	O	F	A	N				
A	X	E	D	S	W	I	N	G	E	R		
Y	E	S	D	U	N	E	S	D	O	H		
S	T	I	N	G	E	R	A	G	A	R		
J	A	G	R	E	V	E	N	S				
M	O	U	S	S	E	A	V	E				
I	M	P	E	S	S	P	R	I	N	G	E	R
M	E	T	E	T	A	I	L	G	A	T	E	
E	N	O	L	S	P	A	E	G	A	D		

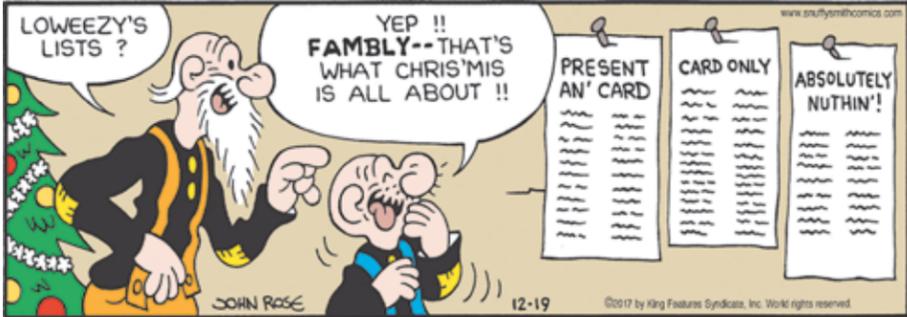


Lighter Breeze

Baby Blues



Barney Google and Snuffy Smith



Crock



Hi and Lois



Sam and Silo

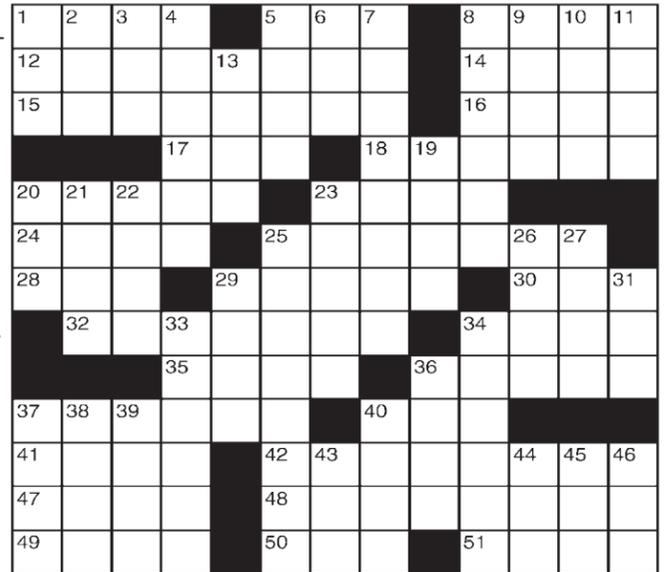


Solutions on page 25

King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Piece of beef-cake?
- 5 Chevy Equinox, for one
- 8 Competent
- 12 Stretch out
- 14 Hoofbeat sound
- 15 News correspondent
- 16 Golf target
- 17 Air safety org.
- 18 Big drip?
- 20 Get more magazines
- 23 In the twinkling — eye
- 24 Chopped
- 25 One with an exciting social life
- 28 "Absolutely"
- 29 Sand formations
- 30 Homer's interjection
- 32 Wasp's weapon
- 34 Culture medium
- 35 Jaromir of hockey
- 36 Odds' opposites
- 37 Fluffy dessert
- 40 "Hail!"
- 41 Mischievous tykes
- 42 TV host Jerry
- 47 Apportion



- 7 Fact-checker, often
- 8 Sore
- 9 United Nations
- 10 Lounge about
- 11 Dueler's sword
- 13 Eat away at
- 19 Supermarket stack
- 20 Shaft of sunlight
- 21 Former mates
- 22 Birds' home
- 23 Title holder
- 25 Hints at
- 26 Advantage
- 27 Reddish
- 29 "CSI" collections
- 31 Day fractions (Abbr.)
- 33 Dutch river
- 34 Get back at
- 36 Satanic
- 37 Marceau's forte
- 38 Portent
- 39 Doing
- 40 Operatic solo
- 43 Drivel
- 44 Joke
- 45 Greek H
- 46 Scarlet

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year.
LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Be assured that your efforts to make this holiday special for everyone won't go unnoticed by those who could make some important changes in your life.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) An old adversary wants to make amends over the holidays. The decision is yours. But wouldn't it be nice to share the upcoming new year with another friend?

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) As news of your work gets around, expect to receive a special holiday "gift" from influential contacts who could help you launch your new projects in the new year.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Instead of fussing over what you didn't do to prepare for the holidays, relax and enjoy the kudos for a job truly well done. A happy surprise awaits you early next year.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) The best way to shake off lingering holiday blues is to join loved ones in the fun and festivities of this special time. A confusing situation starts to make sense in upcoming weeks.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) Special emotional rewards mark this holiday time for Leos and Leonas who are able to open up to new relationships and the possibilities they offer in the upcoming year.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) Your efforts to make the holidays especially memorable for some people will be rewarded in some unexpected (but very welcome) ways in the upcoming

21) Lots of folks want you to light up their holiday parties. But try to take some quiet time 'twixt those glittering galas to spend with some very special people.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) While the current round of holiday revels has your social life on the fast track, someone special might want to keep pace with you next year, as well.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Enjoy all the fun you deserve at this holiday time. However, don't lose sight of the need to check out some of the changes the new year is expected to bring.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) What happens during this holiday time can help clear up some of the confusion jeopardizing a once-stable relationship. Follow your instincts on what to do next.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) Your holidays are brightened by new friends eager to become part of your life. But don't forget to spend time with that one special person. (You know who!)

BORN THIS WEEK: You have the ability to encourage people to reach their potential by setting an example with your own efforts.

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Fire fundraiser sponsored by Veteran of Foreign War, Post 1679, 3801 Market Street, on December 28, from 5-9pm.

Silent auction from various vendors and a raffle.

\$10 food plate available for purchase. All the proceeds will be donated to the families who lost their homes to the Thomas Fire.

Solutions on page 25

(For a beginners guide to playing Sudoku go to venturabreeze.com)

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

Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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Show Time

Coco



Breeze rating from 1 to 4 palm trees,
4 being best.

by Manuel Reynoso

Coco is a 2017 musical, family film produced by Pixar Animation Studios and released by Walt Disney Pictures. Based on an original idea by Lee Unkrich, it is directed by Unkrich and co-directed by Adrian Molina.

For me, representation is lot more than just seeing someone with the same complexion as me on screen. It's the embrace of what makes my culture unique and irreplaceable. It's seeing our stories, our music, and our life up on the silver screen for all to enjoy, and I got that with *Coco*. The worldwide success and admiration for *Coco* is a victory for Mexican representation in Hollywood, and being able to see *Coco* at our local theater playing in Spanish is a small step in validating the Chicana/o people here in Ventura County. For me personally, it brought tears to my eyes. To see a film so meticulously exhibit the values and culture of a people, and move them to tears is what film inspires to be.

Coco's ability to capture a people was the single most gratifying part of the movie. When I saw *Coco* on screen, I saw my abuelita. Then I saw my brother, my cousins, my uncles and so on. I saw what so many have tried and failed to do, and that was bringing the Mexican family to the big screen. The writing of these characters was genuine and natural. The world of the dead Pixar created was original and stunningly beautiful. So much care and craft went into the production of *Coco* and it shows from beginning to end.

The themes of family and death were heavily present during this film but treated with a lot of care. Death has always been an important matter in Mexican culture, and I believe *Coco* showed how our people handle it. The day of the dead aesthetic tends to serve as little more than window dressing, so seeing it used well aesthetically and in writing was great. While the writing may at times come off as predictable, it's so well executed I found little issue with it. The biggest star attraction was the music. The familiar rhythms I've heard in Mexican music was used so effectively. It felt both nostalgic and fresh listening to the soundtrack on the way home from the theater.

Coco is going to be a film that stays near and dear to my heart for a long time. I think it's a must watch for families of all cultures. While there's a lot of fun and great music to enjoy, *Coco* will be a tear jerker for even the toughest of us. PG 1h49m

A View from House Seats

Healing through entertainment

by Shirley Lorraine

In times of disaster, there is a desperate need to be entertained. During the last few weeks Ventura County has

been pounded with strife, destruction and loss. The usual Christmas season preparations may take detours this year due to natural consequences beyond our control. However, county theaters are doing their best to provide healing laughter and sanctuary for our minds.

For those who may say "this is not the time to be going to the theater" – I say Bah, Humbug! This is exactly the time to take a breather (masks encouraged) to refocus and recover. And, as the old saying goes, "The show must go on". Our county's theaters have risen to the challenge.

Santa Paula Theatre Center has recently been lauded for continuing to stage "It's A Wonderful Life: On The Air". Not only the audiences, but the actors as well require a way to escape and focus on positive aspects of the season. The show continues through December 23 – go see it and have your spirits lifted.

Despite a difficult situation, the Ojai Theatre Center only cancelled one performance of its holiday offering, "Animal Crackers". The community needs the theater as a reminder of the wonderful place they live and a welcome, if temporary, diversion from the struggles facing the valley.

Camarillo's Skyway Playhouse presented several weekends of the lively and hilarious "Nuncrackers", a musical that is just pure fun. Although rehearsals were somewhat compromised, according to director Dean Johnson, by the smoky atmosphere (not conducive to singing), the opening went ahead as scheduled.

Rubicon's popular version of the classic "A Christmas Carol" continues through December 23, as does the musical "A Christmas Story" at the Simi Valley Arts Center.

Even the Ventura Improv Company is up to the challenge, planning a performance at the Ventura Harbor Comedy Club for December 23.

The Every Now And Then Theater has been delighting county radio audiences for 27 years. Two of their award-winning Christmas themed radio dramas will be broadcast commercial-free on Newstalk 1590 KVTA at various times on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The all-volunteer productions, in conjunction with KVTA, annually raise funds for the Children's Services Auxiliary of Ventura County serving foster children. This year the fire destroyed the homes of 61 foster children. Support is needed more than ever.

Most theaters will be on a short holiday hiatus as they prepare for their January offerings. Season schedules for 2018 are being announced and publicized. Patrons will want to take note of the wonderful, challenging, moving and amusing options each theater is planning.

Here's how to find out just what's on stage around the county:

- Camarillo Skyway Playhouse
www.skywayplayhouse.org, 388-5716
- Conejo Players Theater
www.conejoplayers.org, 495-3715
- Elite Theater
www.elitetheatre.org, 483-5118
- Every Now And Then Theatre
www.everynowandthentheatre.com
- High Street Arts Center
www.highstreetartscenter.org, 529-8700
- Ojai Arts Center Theater
www.ojaiact.org, 640-8797
- Rubicon
www.rubicontheatre.org, 667-2900
- Santa Paula Theatre Center

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www.santapaulatheatercenter.org,
525-4645

Simi Arts Center

www.simi-arts.org, 583-7900

Ventura Improv

www.venturaimprov.com, 643-5701

Rubicon reaching out to theatre communities across the nation

The artists of Rubicon Theatre were in final dress rehearsals for the first show of the company's 20th Anniversary Season – an original adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas*. The large two-story set was in place; the period costumes were pressed and ready; lights were designed and focused; stockings were hung by the chimney in the lobby and a 27-member cast, led by stage and screen veterans Peter Van Norden and Joe Spano, was poised and ready for opening Dickens' timeless tale of transformation and redemption.

The rehearsals came to a halt when the electricity went out in the building; staff, cast and crew were evacuated, and fires throughout the area came within blocks of the theatre.

Fortunately, the theatre's home has been spared. However, previews and opening week performances had to be canceled, as well as a student matinee and a Saturday morning Tiny Tots Concert and Santa Party for young children. The company has lost approximately \$50,000 in ticket sales and is in a perilous cash flow position – having also incurred additional expenses in order to clean ash and debris from the theatre, shampoo carpets and seats, purify the air in the theatre, clean costumes, etc. Additionally, the season brochure had dropped just a few days before the fire started. The phones were ringing and subscriptions sales were strong, but the shelf-life of the brochure ended as soon as the fires started.

Recognizing that the whole community is affected and that local support must go to basic needs in Ventura, Rubicon is reaching out across the nation to ask for support from other theatre communities.

Rubicon has set up an account for tax-deductible contributions at the following: <https://www.gofundme.com/rubicon-theatres-fire-relief-fund>. Secure donations may also be made by phone at 805.667.2900 or on the Rubicon website at www.rubicontheatre.org/donate. Please follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/RubiconTheatre or Twitter at @RubiconTheatre

In true show-must-go-on mode performances resumed on Wednesday, Dec. 13. Performances will continue on the regular performance schedule.

The company is offering free tickets for

December events for first responders and for anyone affected or displaced by the fires. The free tickets may be redeemed through the theatre box office at 1006. E. Main Street, or by calling 667.2900.

Ventura Land Trust was very lucky

by staff

One week ago, Ventura was forever changed by the Thomas Fire. Ventura Land Trust was very lucky. No one on our staff or Board of Trustees lost their home, our office at the Poinsettia Pavilion still stands and many people have stepped up with offers of love, support, and assistance.

Please know, that our hearts are with all of you. We love this community and for the past 15 years have worked tirelessly to protect what makes it beautiful. We know that it will be beautiful again!

Our thoughts go out to the more 7,000 brave first responders, firefighters and every day heroes from around the country who continue battling the relentless flames. We are humbled by their bravery and have faith that they will soon bring the fire under control.

Today, we are taking time to clean the ash from our office, assess the damage to our preserves and, most importantly, count our blessings. In the coming weeks and months, as our community heals and the rebuilding begins, we will need your help. Burned areas will be cleared, trees will be planted, wildlife will return and eventually, the rains will come bringing an abundance of wildflowers.

Keep an eye on our website for future opportunities to help us heal the land. We are forever #VenturaStrong.

From the inside

Continued from page 25

perhaps the loss of her home in the fire.

On the morning of day three, the smoke had gotten so bad within the shelter, that those who could were told to leave. So with heart aching for those sufferers who had to stay, I went to a hotel far, far away and languished there for three more days. I was finally able to return home on the first day of Chanukah. I was sure it was a sign that all would be well. The people of the Bible believed in signs and so do I. It's in my blood. Although smoky debris was still blowing about, it felt good to be home and grateful I had a home to return to. Despite modern technology, for a few days in the shelter, survival depended on the concern and compassion of strangers who had traveled miles to help. I was proud of my community that had pulled together with such generosity of spirit. It was because of this, I became convinced that there is more than enough goodness in humanity to save the world.



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