A look back at the people and places that shaped 2019

BY EDWIN FOLVEN

The past year has been a time of change and growth in the cities of Beverly Hills, West Hollywood, and Los Angeles, with the momentum of progress evident in the changing physical landscape. New development and infrastructure improvements continue, yet many neighborhoods are retaining their defining characteristics while embracing advancement. The social landscape is evolving as well with new approaches to addressing homelessness, public health, and transportation. With the 2020 election fast approaching, people are looking ahead to what the coming year will bring.

Beverly Hills

In Beverly Hills, city government has provided leadership on many fronts, taking bold steps to ensure high quality of life and prosperity. In 2019, the city of Beverly Hills became the first in the nation to ban the sale of tobacco products. The city also spearheaded the fight against a state law (Senate Bill 50) that would have taken away local power over zoning and development along major transportation corridors. The Beverly Hills City Council expanded its BOLD programming, keeping businesses open later during summer and the holidays and offering more entertainment opportunities and attractions. The city also took the lead on housing and infrastructure improvement.

Beverly Hills’ BOLD returned during summer and the holidays with more entertainment and arts programming.

By Cameron Kiszla

A chronicle of the year in Beverly Hills, West Hollywood and the Miracle Mile

CASA program links adults with foster children for advocacy

BY CAMERON KISZLA

Computer engineer Aishwarya Bhave said she’s always enjoyed working with children, though tutoring. However, she felt she could do more for kids in need. More than seven years ago, she heard about CASA/LA, the Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children of Los Angeles. Now, she advocates on behalf of two children in the foster-care system, providing assistance as the children navigate the legal system and other governmental programs, as well as support for them on a personal level.

“My community is as successful as I make it,” Bhave said. CASA/LA, which helps approximately 1,500 children in Los Angeles County each year, needs more people like Bhave, said Wendelyn Julien, CEO of CASA/LA.

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See BOOM! page 22

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‘Comedy and Cocktails’

Comedian Bill Devlin brings his “Comedy and Cocktails” show to the Ice House in Pasadena on Friday, Dec. 27, at 8 p.m. Devlin’s show mixes some of the hottest stand-up comedians around with surprise celebrity guests. 24 N. Mentor Ave. (626)377-1894, icehousecomedy.com.

‘2001: A Space Odyssey’

Film fans won’t want to miss a screening of Stanley Kubrick’s classic: ‘2001: A Space Odyssey’ on Friday, Dec. 27, at 7:30 p.m. at the Egyptian Theatre. The film is Kubrick’s mind-blowing meditation on the inherent dangers and wonders of technology, the limitless vistas of space and the future of the human race. General admission is $15. 6712 Hollywood Blvd. americancineplexcalender.com.

‘The Life of Paul Robeson’

Single Kynthia appears in his NAACP award-winning show “The World is My Home-The Life of Paul Robeson” on Saturday, Dec. 28, at 7:30 p.m. at the Santa Monica Playhouse. The show tells the story of African American artist and activist Paul Robeson, including his close friendship with Albert Einstein, his affection for the Jewish people and his complex 44-year marriage. Kennedy plays 12 characters ages 5 to 65. The program includes music by Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, Fats Waller, Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong and Robeson. Tickets are $30. 12114 Fourth St. (310)394-0797 ext. 1, santamonicaplayhouse.com.

‘Holiday show’

BrendaLearce and Julux Monsoon appear in “All I Want for Christmas” on Sunday, Dec. 29, at 8 p.m. at the Montalban Theatre. The new pre-holiday extravaganza features music and fun. Tickets start at $25. 1615 Vase St. themeantalban.com.

‘Holocaust survivor talk’

Holocaust survivor Paul Kester will speak about his experiences on Monday, Dec. 30, from 3 to 4 p.m. at the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust. Kester was born in 1925 in Wiesbaden, Germany. When he was seven years old, Hitler came to power, changing everything for his family. After Kristallnacht, his family arranged for him to leave Germany on a Kindertransport and he went to Sweden in early 1940. Kester lived in Sweden for 10 years and settled in Los Angeles in 1949, where he worked in finance. A Q&A session follows the discussion. 100 S. The Grove Dr. (323)651-7304, lamoth.org.

‘A Viennese New Year’

Join the L.A. Phil for “A Viennese New Year with Zubin Mehta” on Wednesday, Jan. 1, at 8 p.m. in the Walt Disney Concert Hall. Mehta conducts the program with violinist Julian Rachlin and soprano Chen Reiss. The concert includes works by Mozart and Mahler, featuring Rachlin’s violin and viola in Vienna, led the Vienna Philharmonic and is an honorary member of the Vienna State Opera. Tickets start at $20. 111 S. Grand Ave. laphil.com.

‘Aileen Wuornos’

Join us for the New Year with ‘Aileen Wuornos’ on Saturday, Jan. 11, at 8 p.m. at the Walt Disney Concert Hall. The multi-talented and versatile star of the documentary film ‘Aileen’ will perform in her show, “For the Girls.” The program will include material from throughout Wuornos’ career. Cheyenne Jackson and Shoshana Bean open the show. Tickets start at $70. 111 S. Grand Ave. laphil.com.

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Past and present merge in El Rodeo School project

Crews are making progress on renovations

BY MORGAN KEITH


One of the biggest challenges has been completing the necessary updates while maintaining the original integrity of the building, said Jeff Pylman, executive bond program manager for Team Concept Development Services, Inc., which manages BHUSD’s construction program.

“Our goal is that when we’re done building it and re-modernizing it, we haven’t altered the original structure to where the state will not recognize as a historic building,” Pylman said.

Each portion of the structure, designated by crews as Buildings A-E, poses its own unique challenges, Pylman said. Building A serves as the anchor, with Buildings B and C flanking it on its right and left sides, forming an L-shaped structure. Later, Buildings D and E were added as extensions.

In Building B, a single-story structure that houses kindergarten and music classrooms, all structural cracks have been identified and the flooring is being removed to prepare for foundation upgrades. Crews discovered an ornate mantle in the kindergarten classroom during demolition and are working with the project’s design team to incorporate it.

Building A also has historical pieces that crews have preserved, such as original terra cotta floor tiles, hand-painted ceilings and a large mural. Most of the historical touches can be found in the auditorium’s first and second floor lobbies.

Additionally, structural enhancements of the balcony, replication of a plaster cathedral ceiling and extensive roof repairs are ongoing in the auditorium. Crews removed the original theater seats, replicas of the old theater style seating, and will renovate and reinstall them when the completion of the project nears.

Outside the balcony, the auditorium’s second floor lobby adjoins to a series of classrooms and the school’s former library that shape Building C. While the goal is to restore the original corridor outside of the classrooms, the learning environments will be updated.

“We want our children going to school in a school, not going to school in a museum, if you will,” Pylman said. “So there’s a balance between a modern teaching environment with high security and support and maintaining a historic structure, and that’s a balance we keep going back forth on.”

Buildings D and E will house classrooms, the school’s cafeteria and kitchen, administrative offices and reception area. At the beginning of the year, crews will create footings in Building D’s foundation.

Priorities will also include upgrading structural steel reinforcements. The campus is currently vacated, but is expected to return to full occupancy by 2022, according to a 2018 BHUSD Master Plan update.

Beverly Vista Middle School recognized for digital citizenship

Common Sense Education, the national nonprofit dedicated to helping kids and families thrive in a world saturated with media and technology, has just recognized Beverly Vista Middle School as a Common Sense School.

Beverly Vista Middle School demonstrated its commitment to preparing its students to think critically and use technology responsibly to learn, create and participate, while preparing them for the perils that exist in the online realm, such as plagiarism, loss of privacy and cyberbullying. This recognition acknowledges Beverly Vista Middle School’s commitment to creating a culture of digital citizenship.

“We particularly wish to applaud Beverly Vista Middle School for embracing digital citizenship as an important part of Beverly Vista students’ education,” said Liz Kline, vice president of education programs at Common Sense Education. “Beverly Vista Middle School deserves high praise for providing the foundational skills students need to compete and succeed, and participate ethically in society at large.”

This year, Jesse Braun, Beverly Vista Middle School’s teacher librarian, has worked with all of Beverly Vista’s students to develop tangible skills related to internet safety, protecting online reputations and personal privacy, media balance, managing online relationships and information literacy. Every Beverly Vista Middle School has had the opportunity to visit the library to work with Braun during the months of October and November.

“We’re honored to be recognized as a Common Sense School,” said Principal Kevin Allen. “By preparing our students to use technology safely and responsibly, we are providing them an opportunity to build lifelong habits to help them succeed in a tech-driven world.”

For information, visit commonsense.org/education.
Serial bank robber sought for hold-ups in WeHo, Hollywood

BY EDWIN FOLVEN

A security camera photograph of the bank robbery suspect has been released by authorities.

Police in Los Angeles and West Hollywood have joined the FBI in searching for a serial bank robber dubbed the 20K Bandit by authorities.

The male suspect allegedly struck three times on Dec. 16 at Chase, Bank of America and Wells Fargo branches on Santa Monica and Sunset boulevards in Hollywood and West Hollywood. He also allegedly robbed banks previously in Woodland Hills and the Eagle Rock-Highland Park area, said Det. Daniel Jaramillo, with the LAPD’s Robbery-Homicide Division.

"Finding him is a priority," Jaramillo added. "We have got to get this guy. We are sending this to all the officers and have put his photo out. Hopefully someone will recognize him."

FBI spokeswoman Laura Eimiller said the suspect was wearing the 20K Bandit mask. She has asked tellers for $20,000. In each robbery, the suspect has entered the bank branches, approached tellers and demanded cash. He has eluded to having a gun but none has been seen, Jaramillo added. The suspect fled on foot from each location with an undisclosed amount of cash.

No injuries have been reported. Authorities are looking for him but have not identified a vehicle.

Defendant pleads not guilty to two counts

BY EDWIN FOLVEN

A 24-year-old man from Pennsylvania who was arrested on Dec. 14 in Hollywood for allegedly vandalizing the Nessah Synagogue at 142 S. Rexford Drive in Beverly Hills has been released to Los Angeles to face charges.

The suspect, Anton Nathaniel Redding, was identified on Dec. 17 using security video and forensic evidence including fingerprints, police said. Detectives obtained a warrant for his arrest and tried Redding to Kona, Hawaii, where he was taken into custody. He is charged with vandalism of a religious property and second-degree burglary, with the penalty enhancement that it was a hate crime. Redding pleaded not guilty on Dec. 23 and is next expected to return to court on Jan. 30. If convicted, he faces a maximum sentence of six years in prison.

Beverly Hills officials announced the arrest on the evening of Dec. 18 and credited police for thorough investigative work that enabled them to identify and locate the suspect. Redding is from Millersville, Pennsylvania, and it was not immediately determined if he has any ties to Hollywood or West Hollywood.

Using a series of closed-circuit television cameras throughout the city, police tracked the male suspect after he left the synagogue curly-haired, wearing a red hooded sweatshirt exiting a vehicle, police said. Video shows a man dressed in a red hoodie and "999." Perez is being held on $120,000 bail.

Defendant arrested for graffiti scrawled on cars, at schools

BY EDWIN FOLVEN

A male suspect was arrested by detectives from the Los Angeles Police Department’s Major Crimes Division on Dec. 19 for a series of vandalism incidents involving graffiti scrawled on vehicles in the Pico-Robertson, Beverlywood, Brentwood and Westwood communities, and schools on Mulholland Drive.

The vandalism occurred between Dec. 14-16, and authorities in West Hollywood are investigating whether the suspect is also responsible for graffiti that was spray painted on 10 cars in that city overnight from Dec. 15-16.

“We are aware of the LAPD’s arrest. Obviously, [the graffiti is] similar, but it needs to be verified," said Lt. Bill Moulder, with the West Hollywood Sheriff’s Station. “We are continuing to look for video to make a connection. The investigation is ongoing.”

The suspect in custody, Israel Herrera Perez, 44, was arrested at an undisclosed location and was booked on vandalism and hate crime charges. Perez was also linked to alleged vandalism in the city of Calabasas, where similar graffiti was scrawled on vehicles.

The LAPD has posted video footage of an alleged suspect at one of the scenes where the vandalism occurred at lapdonline.org. The suspect is a man dressed in a red hooded sweatshirt exiting a vehicle, allegedly spray painting graffiti, and then reentering the car and fleeing.

Anyone with further information is urged to call investigators with the LAPD’s Major Crimes Division at (213)486-7220. Anyone who believes they were victim in West Hollywood or has information about the crimes is encouraged to call the sheriff’s station (310)855-8850.

Next stop: more subway.

Season’s Greetings

Enjoy the holiday festivities in the City of Beverly Hills this season.

Construction in the streets and within the public right-of-way for the Wilshire/Rodeo Station is taking a break through New Year’s Day.

Starting in 2020

Piloting activities to create the supports for the Wilshire/Rodeo Station box will continue after New Year’s Day. Work will take place behind K-rail on the north side of Wilshire Bl between Crescent Dr and Beverly Dr.

*Construction is dynamic and is subject to change.*
WeHo purchases property across from City Hall

BY MORGAN KEITH

At its Dec. 16 meeting, the West Hollywood City Council approved the city’s $11.4 million purchase of a building at 8301-8315 Santa Monica Blvd., located across the street from City Hall.

Councilman John Duran said that the city makes purchases along its “commercial corridor” – Melrose to Sunset boulevards – so that it can control rent on the acquired properties.

“Of one the biggest challenges for our community, because we’re such a desirable place to be, is that the cost of housing and commercial rents in the city continue to escalate,” Duran said.

He added that by buying properties and setting rent prices, West Hollywood nonprofits are able to have permanent locations within the city and residents do not have to travel elsewhere to receive social services. The city used the same approach when relocating the West Hollywood Recovery Center to Robertson Boulevard.

According to a staff report, the city determined 8301-8315 Santa Monica Blvd was for sale in April and contacted the owner’s representative for more information. The price and terms of payment were negotiated with the property owner, Broudy Axelrod LLC, at a City Council closed session on Nov. 4.

Currently, the single-story strip center houses three businesses: Crossroads Trading Co., Peter’s Magnolia Cleaners and Joey’s Cafe, totaling over 21,000 square feet.

As part of the purchase, the city will have the property inspected, complete basic environmental testing, request an American Land Title Association survey and review the disclosure from the owner of any property defects, according to the staff report.

A preliminary environmental investigation found that existing soils on the property are contaminated with dry cleaning solvent per-chloroethylene. It also concluded that the solvent’s levels can be low enough to manageable level. Any future projects will be responsible for remediating the contamination.

“The existing commercial tenants on the property will remain for the foreseeable future, and any changes in use to the property are too speculative to analyze at this time,” the staff report reads.

The next steps for city staff will include conducting a study of best uses and feasibility for redevelopment, as well as gathering public input.

“Ideally, as we move forward with these properties, we’re able to meet community priorities and goals,” Duran said.

Interactive map to help find places for housing

Housing department makes the holidays special

Los Angeles County officials recently unveiled a multilayered, interactive GIS planning tool designed to guide efforts to create interim and supportive housing to address the homelessness crisis.

The tool, presented to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors by county Chief Executive Officer Sacha A. Hamai, is intended to guide policymakers as they continue to increase available housing.

The map draws on data from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority’s January 2019 Homeless Count, which reported nearly 59,000 people experiencing homelessness across Los Angeles County. The map makes it possible to view the homeless population data geographically, while adding layers that show existing supportive and interim housing and housing that is currently being developed.

It reflects the unprecedented development underway to create more supportive housing than ever before in county history. It also visually demonstrates gaps between where the need is and where projects currently exist or are being developed.

For information, visit lacounty.gov.

Ryu adds to list of leaders supporting his campaign

Adding to the growing support for his reelection campaign, Los Angeles City Councilman David Ryu, 4th District, has received an endorsement from United States Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.).

“David Ryu has admirably represented his district and advocated for its constituents,” Feinstein stated. “He has a clear vision on matters such as homelessness, housing and transparency, and he has shown the courage to get the job done well. I am proud to endorse David Ryu in his re-election.”

“I am incredibly honored to receive the endorsement of a true champion for California,” Ryu added. “Elected in the historic 1992

Year of the Woman, and having served as the first woman mayor of San Francisco, Sen. Feinstein is the definition of a trailblazer. [Her] tenacity and commitment to critical matters such as gun safety, the environment and homelessness inspires me to keep fighting alongside her to deliver for our constituents.”

In the past month since he announced his re-election, Ryu has received endorsements from other high-profile political leaders, including U.S. Rep. Adam Schiff and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti. Ryu has also been endorsed by 200 grassroots community leaders, Planned Parenthood and the Democratic Party, according to his campaign.

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Students earn top honors for their visions of Hollywood Central Park

BY EDWIN FOLVEN

A new generation of student architects was invited to submit ideas about Hollywood Central Park, an open space proposed to be built over the Hollywood (101) Freeway.

The results, which were unveiled on Dec. 10, will help guide the 38-acre park project above a one-mile-long stretch of the freeway between Bronson Avenue and Santa Monica Boulevard. Earlier this fall, Friends of Hollywood Central Park issued a call to architecture schools in Southern California to participate in a student design competition for the park. Students were asked to address three aspects of the master plan framework: connectivity, placemaking and programming, and technology.


The Hollywood Central Park is a landmark infrastructure project that will reconnect communities separated by the Hollywood Freeway, create 38,000 jobs, provide economic stimulus and long-term economic security, provide healthy communities and offer children open green space in which to grow and thrive. Thirty-nine entries were submitted from 90 students representing Cal Poly Pomona, Otis Art Institute, SCI-Arc, UCLA, USC and Woodbury.

“We reached out to tomorrow’s design leaders to take part in a competition to challenge the notion of what a park is today, rethink urban infrastructure and conceive of new applications for technology in the interest of a bold and sustainable future,” said Paul Danne, of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, master planner for Hollywood Central Park. “The quantity and quality of the submissions we received were both extremely impressive.”

“This proved to be a staggering, challenging decision,” added A.P. Diaz, executive officer and chief of staff for the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, who served as jury chair. “Based on the quality of the submissions we received, the future of architecture appears to be in very capable hands.”

The jury that considered the students’ proposals included architects Barbara Bestor, Renee Dake Wilson and Christi Van Cleave; urban designer Amber Hawthes, city of Los Angeles Chief Design Officer Christopher Hawthorne; and artist Nancy Larew. They selected six entries for prizes.

USC students Sai Liang and Lingyu Huang won first place for the entry “Over and Across,” which includes a series of hills and tunnels throughout the park. The first-place entry envisions potential attractions such as a museum, gallery, lecture hall, amphitheater and observation deck. The proposal also includes a green belt extending north and south within the park and laterally into the surrounding neighborhoods. A small lake, sports facilities, picnic area, paths, tunnels and space for a restaurant and store are also included. The winning design recommends solar paneling to generate electricity in the park.

Other winners included Paige Davidson, of SCI-Arc, who received second-place honors for the entry “Artificial Arboretum.” Jiawei Ji, Minyu Ge and Shengton Xie, also from USC, were awarded third place for their entry “Regenerated Urbanity.” Jing Wu, Jinyi Wang, Ziran Ling and Jing Sun, of USC, received honorable mention for the entry “Over a Park for the People.” Additionally, USC students Yuliang Jiang, Yife Wang and Runbao Zhu received honorable mention for the entry “Hollywood Central Parks.”

The students earned recognition for their work and had the opportunity to talk with public officials, city planners, architects, engineers and community stakeholders. The team that created the first-place entry received $10,000.

“It was gratifying to see so many students use their imaginations and think creatively about what their open space in Hollywood will look like,” said Los Angeles City Councilman Mitch O’Farrell, 13th District. Brian Lewis, of Marathon Communications, which represents Friends of Hollywood Central Park, said a draft environmental impact report is being conducted and it will likely be available for public review in three to four months. Ideas from the winning students will potentially be incorporated into the final design. For information about the proposed park and to view the students’ proposed designs, visit hollywoodcentralpark.org.
L.A. City Council selects nonprofit to run Hollywood FamilySource community center

BY MORGAN KEITH

Volunteers of America Los Angeles’ contract to run the Hollywood FamilySource Center was unanimously approved by the Los Angeles City Council on Dec. 11.

Councilman Mitch O’Farrell 13th District, who represents the area that the Hollywood FamilySource Center serves, referred a motion to the Economic Development Committee in November to negotiate and execute a contract with VOALA.

The approved contract runs through June 30, 2020, and provides VOALA with $464,000 to operate the center. Additionally, a one-year renewal option will be reviewed by the city attorney and checked for compliance with contracting requirements.

“VOALA is an established agency in Los Angeles and has extensive experience in providing services to vulnerable populations,” O’Farrell spokesman Tony Arranaga said. “They also have experience in managing government contracts with complex funding requirements.”

VOALA is a nonprofit human services organization that provides caregiver services and programs. Through funding for the center provided by Community Services Block Grants, VOALA will continue the services the FamilySource Center provided prior to its closing in early November. These services include financial literacy programs, after-school tutoring and English as a Second Language programs.

The center’s former operator, the Youth Policy Institute, notified the city on Nov. 5 that it would close immediately and cease all programs and operations. YPI was forced to close and file for bankruptcy after its chief executive allegedly used $1.7 million of the nonprofit’s funds for personal expenses.

Following YPI’s closing, the Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department issued a request for interest outlining the required scope of services and expectations for potential new FamilySource Center operators. VOALA was ultimately selected to assume operations at the center.

“FamilySource Centers provide critical assistance to Angelenos,” said Mayor Eric Garcetti spokeswoman Andrea Garcia said. “We look forward to supporting Volunteers of America in their work to build on the success of the Hollywood FamilySource Center and continue helping families with the highest needs.”

The Hollywood FamilySource Center, located at 1075 N. Western Ave. #110, is expected to begin services on Jan. 1, and will serve a minimum of 2,900 residents annually.

Count Assessor convenes four new advisory councils

Los Angeles County Assessor Jeff Prang held meetings for his four new advisory councils last week at his downtown office and outlined an aggressive agenda to help shape public policy in the coming year.

“I created the Assessor Advisory Councils because I want to have a voice between my office and the community focused on specific areas,” Prang said. “These are the top professionals in their chosen field and bring to my office a level of expertise that has long been needed. We have a very productive first series of meetings and I look forward to their contributions.”

The four Assessor Advisory Councils include realtors and industry associations, title agents and escrow officers, civic and community leaders, and business professionals and industry leaders. There are 57 members in the councils, which will meet quarterly. Members are volunteers and applications to serve on the councils are still being accepted.

“The Assessor’s Office is constitutionally responsible for identifying and placing a value on all taxable property. The county has more than 10 million people covering 4,751 square miles, 88 cities and numerous unincorporated areas,” Prang added. “I believe it is in the best interest of my office as well as the residents of the county to ensure that independent points of view are encouraged because that will improve our ability to deliver excellent public service.”

Prang was first elected as assessor in 2014 and reelected in 2018.

Prang outlined an aggressive agenda to help shape public policy in the coming year.

Notable Quotes

“In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart.”

Anne Frank 1929-1945

In the spirit of the holidays, the words of Anne Frank give hope to all people.

(source: “Barlett’s Familiar Quotations”)
Metro plans to resume piling work in the city of Beverly Hills after the beginning of the year, with street reconfiguration in advance of piling anticipated to start on Jan. 2. There will be no work along the entire subway project route on New Year’s Day.

Wilshire Boulevard will be reconfigured to support piling operations on the north side of the street from Beverly to Crescent Drive. This work includes removing permanent street lights and traffic signals and replacing them with temporary lights and signals; installing k-rails, restriping Wilshire Boulevard to two lanes in each direction and installing sidewalk barriers to protect pedestrians from piling activities. Lighting for pedestrian safety will be installed along the sidewalks.

The work will require lane closures on Wilshire Boulevard and adjacent streets, with two lanes maintained eastbound and westbound on Wilshire Boulevard during daylight hours and one lane maintained in both directions during weeknights. After installation of K-rail and stripping, vehicles will not be permitted to turn west from Wilshire bound to Beverly and drive drives. Left turns will also be restricted along Wilshire Boulevard from piling activities. Lighting for pedestrian safety will be installed along the sidewalks.

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Authorities send stern message about DUI driving

Los Angeles City Attorney Mike Feuer and Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey recently joined law enforcement officials to warn the public about the hazards of driving under the influence during the holiday season.

"Driving a car under the influence is a crime, and so is driving a motorized scooter, when impaired."

Feuer said. "This year alone, my office has prosecuted over 6,800 DUIs. Don't drink or use cannabis or other drugs and drive any kind of vehicle. We will prosecute."

These are senseless — and easy to prevent — crimes that destroy the lives of everyone involved," Lacey said. "Together, let us make our streets safer, which is something we can all celebrate."

In addition to the 6,900 DUI cases Feuer's office has filed, the district attorney's office has filed more than 12,000 DUI cases. The number of driving under the influence of drugs cases presented for filing consideration increased 66% for the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office over three years, from 433 cases in 2017 to 720 this year. Similarly, the number nearly quadrupled for the district attorney's office, from 285 driving under the influence of cannabis cases in 2017 to more than 1,100 as of Sept. 30. Feuer said his office has also prosecuted 11 DUI cases involving people riding scooters.

Anticipating an increase, Lacey established the DUIT Training and Prosecution Section in January 2017. Through a $1.3 million grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office continues to improve training and increase the number of certified drug recognition experts. Feuer's office was awarded $724,966 grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety to expand a prosecution team focused on impaired driving, and to advance traffic safety.

Lacey and Feuer reiterated that prosecutors will aggressively investigate and prosecute vehicular deaths and injuries caused by impaired drivers.

"We need the help of family, friends and others who can hopefully prevent a potential deadly outcome when they notice someone may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs," Lacey added.

Local medical office owner settles over fraud allegations

The U.S. Department of Justice announced on Dec. 19 that Nassir Medical Corp. and its owner, Dr. Youram Nassir, have agreed to pay the United States and California $3.5 million to settle False Claims Act allegations that they defrauded public health care programs by billing for oncology drugs and services that were not provided to patients.

Nassir Medical Corp., which does business as Cancer Care Institute, is a hematology and oncology practice based at 5901 W. Olympic Blvd. The medical office specializes in treating cancer patients and the treatment often requires physicians to prescribe, dispense and administer oncology drugs.

Medicare and Medi-Cal reimburse physicians for the cost of drugs and for the cost of infusing or administering them to patients.

Between January 2010 and December 2013, Nassir Medical Corp. and Nassir allegedly violated the False Claims Act by submitting bogus claims to Medicare and Medi-Cal, according to a settlement agreement in the case. The defendants allegedly billed public health programs for drugs that were not purchased, dispensed or administered, and for infusion services that were not provided. The defendants have agreed to pay approximately $2.3 million to the United States and $978,000 to the state of California.

Nassir Medical Corp. and Nassir also have entered into an integrity agreement with the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General.

The settlement resolves allegations originally brought in a lawsuit filed in 2016 by Kenneth Bryan, a retired health care consultant and administrator, under the whistleblower provisions of the False Claims Act. The provisions permit private parties to sue on behalf of the government for false claims for government funds and to share in funds recovered. Bryan will receive more than $475,000 from the federal government as his share of the settlement.

Assistant United States Attorney Ross M. Cuff, of the Civil Fraud Section, represented the United States government in the case, which was investigated by agents from the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General.

An accountant who was the former chief financial officer of the Beverly Hills Cancer Center agreed to pay restitution as to both victims, said Deputy District Attorney Benyonnin Foner.

Patricia Cascione, 53, of Santa Clarita, pleaded no contest on Dec. 18 to one felony count of embezzlement by a public or private officer.

She was convicted of stealing the money from the cancer center and Girl Scouts troops over a four-year period and agreed to pay restitution as to both victims, said Deputy District Attorney Benyonnin Foner.

Cascione, a certified public accountant, also served as treasurer for a Girl Scouts service unit when the crimes occurred, the prosecutor said.

From March 1, 2013, to Feb. 13, 2017, Cascione used $58,863 in funds from Girl Scouts accounts for her personal use. Furthermore, in her CFO role, the defendant diverted $34,500 in donations from the cancer center to one of her Girl Scouts accounts with the purpose of embezzling that money, Foner added.

The case was investigated by investigators from the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department’s Emerging Cyber Trends Bureau.
Young Cedars-Sinai patients enjoy holiday festivities

Families of children being treated for cancer and blood disorders enjoyed a festive holiday celebration on Dec. 18 hosted by the Cedars-Sinai Pediatric Hematology Oncology Division, part of the Maxine Dunitz Children’s Health Center. The annual holiday party included games, arts and crafts, a magician, DJ and photo booth. Gifts were given to all participants, who also visited with Santa Claus.

“We also enjoy seeing their caregivers outside of the hospital setting,” Ordono added. “It’s a party just for them. They get to be kids and have fun with their families,” Ordono added. “They also enjoy seeing their caregivers outside of the hospital setting.”

The toys and gifts were donated by students from El Segundo High School, a tradition for 15 years. Seventy-five bags of new toys were provided.

The patients, many of whom spend years being treated at Cedars-Sinai, look forward to the joy to other young people who may be going through a difficult time. “For information, visit cedars-sinai.org.”

Funds provided for ShakeAlert earthquake early warning system

U.S. Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Burbank) praised the recent passage of appropriations funding for the ShakeAlert West Coast Earthquake Early Warning System. “We have to do everything we can to ensure we are prepared, and one critical step we can take is the development and expansion of the ShakeAlert West Coast Earthquake Early Warning system,” Schiff said. “We’ve come a long way toward building out the system and making it operational, with $93 million secured in federal support already, and we have to keep up the momentum because early warning can and will save lives when the next big quake hits.”

Last week, President Donald Trump signed a funding bill providing $19 million for continued development and expansion of the Earthquake Early Warning System and $67 million in infrastructure funding for capital costs. Since 2014, Schiff has advocated for $93.1 million in funding to develop and establish the system along the West Coast.

Schiff first secured $5 million in funding for the system in 2015. Since then, Congress has continually increased funding including $8.2 million in 2016, $10.2 million in 2017, $12.9 million in 2018 and $16.1 million in 2019. This year, members requested $18.6 million in funding. The increase in funding will help the United States Geological Survey move closer to obtaining an annual operating and maintenance budget of $28.6 million per year.

January designated as National One Health Awareness Month

The U.S. Senate on Dec. 20 unanimously approved a bipartisan resolution introduced by Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Martha McSally (R-Ariz.) designating January as National One Health Awareness Month to promote collaboration between public, animal, and environmental health scientists.

“One Health” is a relatively new term being used by health experts to better focus on the linkages between human, animal and environmental health, and the need to develop comprehensive solutions. For instance, public health specialists are working with physicians and veterinarians to minimize the inappropriate use of antibiotics in human and animal patients to combat antibiotic resistance.

“By using the ‘One Health’ approach, global health problems including antibiotic resistance and the spread of infectious diseases can be more easily addressed,” Feinstein said. “Our resolution will hopefully draw attention to the need for holistic approaches to addressing human health that take into account changes in environmental and animal health. With diminishing resources and a growing human population, fighting problems with a ‘One Health’ approach must be encouraged now more than ever.”

“The health of our population is dependent on the interconnection of people, animals and the environment,” McSally added. “I was glad to join Sen. Feinstein in introducing this resolution designating January as National One Health Awareness Month to promote ‘One Health’ and its growing collaboration in order to make our world a healthier place.”

For information, visit feinstein.senate.gov.

10 Reasons Why I Don’t Want An Estate Plan

1. I want large sums of my hard-earned money to go to a law firm.
2. I want the government to decide who gets my life savings.
3. What for? My house is only worth a half-million dollars.
4. I really don’t care who raises our children.
5. I want a total stranger to go through all of my personal papers and financial affairs.
6. I like family fights – especially unnecessary ones.
7. I don’t care who inherits my hard earned money.
8. I’ve been messy in life; I’ll be messy in death.
9. They say you can’t take it with you, but what if you can?

If you don’t do it for yourself, please do it for those you care about.

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Residents are reminded to recycle Christmas trees this year, with LA Sanitation offering numerous drop-off locations and other ways to ensure the trees are reused instead of ending up in landfills. People should remove all decorations, tinsel, and the tree stand, and cut the tree into pieces before placing them in the green bins for regular pick-up on collection day. Residents of multifamily buildings are also requested to place their Christmas trees curbside on collection day for pickup. Flocked trees and artificial trees can be recycled; place them in the black trash containers.

From Dec. 26 through the end of January, two mulching facilities will accept trees Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The facilities are located at the Lopez Canyon Environmental Education Center, 11950 Lopez Canyon Road in Lake View Terrace, and the Harbor Mulch Facility, 1400 N. Gaffey St., San Pedro.

Christmas trees can be dropped off on Sunday, Jan. 5, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at six Recreation and Park locations. They include the Los Angeles Zoo Parking Lot, 5333 Zoo Drive; the Rancho Cienega Recreation Center, 5001 Rodeo Road; Cheviot Hills Recreation Center, 2851 Motor Ave.; Westchester Municipal Building, 7166 W. Manchester Ave.; Balboa Sports Center, 17015 Baja Blvd.; and Sunland Park, 8651 Foothill Blvd. People can also dropoff trees at numerous Los Angeles Fire Department stations through mid-January, including Fire Station 29, 4029 Wilshire Blvd.

For information, call (800)773-2489 or visit laxtis.org.

Mortality rate trends detailed in Los Angeles County

A new report on recent mortality trends released on Dec. 18 by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health indicates death rates in Los Angeles County appear to be on the rise in some groups in recent years. Deaths from Alzheimer’s disease and drug overdoses have dramatically increased.

The overall mortality throughout the county decreased by 6.2% from 2008 to 2017, however, the decrease only occurred between 2008 and 2012. From 2012 to 2017, overall mortality showed little change. Also, between 2008 and 2017, deaths from Alzheimer’s Disease increased 71% and deaths from drug overdose increased 28%.

“Mortality is one of the most important barometers of the health of our residents,” said Dr. Barbara Ferrer, director of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. “These findings indicate clear areas of concern which require a collective response to the complex social conditions that contribute to the many health challenges we face as a county, especially for those residents experiencing the worst health outcomes.”

The report also identified a lack of progress in reducing the large health disparities in different populations. For example, mortality among blacks remained 30% higher than the county average throughout the 10-year period. Mortality among Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders was 41% higher than the county average, and among Native Americans, mortality was 27% higher than the county average.

No positive note, significant declines in mortality were found for many leading causes of death. Although coronary heart disease was the leading cause of death, accounting for 18% of all deaths in the county in 2017, mortality associated with it decreased by 29% from 2008 to 2017. Mortality from lung cancer and chronic obstructive lung disease, both associated with smoking, decreased by 27% and 15%, respectively, during the 10-year period.

The report also included statistics on the leading causes of premature death, defined as deaths occurring before age 75, which is a standard ending age used in public health analyses. Overall, the leading cause of premature death in the county population was coronary heart disease, followed by drug overdose, suicide, motor vehicle crashes and homicide.

“These premature deaths are particularly tragic, as they are almost always preventable,” said Dr. Paul Simon, chief science officer for the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. “Not only do we need to take action to enhance integrated health care, mental health and drug treatment services, but we must all work to create safer environments and more equitable institutional supports to ensure that all people have the opportunities and resources they need to be healthy, irrespective of race or income."

For information and to read the report, visit publichealth.lacounty.gov.

City offers Christmas tree recycling

SoCalGas fund available to help people pay their gas bills

Southern California Gas Company is inviting customers and employees to contribute to its Gas Assistance Fund, a program that helps low-income SoCalGas customers pay their natural gas bill with a one-time grant of up to $100 per household. All customer donations are matched by SoCalGas shareholders.

The fund, administered by the United Way of Greater Los Angeles, helps veterans, seniors, people with disabilities and families in need pay their gas bills. Last year, the assistance fund received $374,995 and benefited more than 4,100 households. Since 1983, over $19 million has been given to the Gas Assistance Fund, helping more than 230,000 individuals and families.

“Thanks to SoCalGas’ generous customers and employees, we’re able to help our customers in need cook meals and keep their homes warm during winter,” said Sharon Tomkins, vice president of strategy and engagement at SoCalGas.

“Not only do we need to take action to enhance integrated health care, mental health and drug treatment services, but we must all work to create safer environments and more equitable institutional supports to ensure that all people have the opportunities and resources they need to be healthy, irrespective of race or income.”

For information on how to donate or apply to receive a grant, visit socalgas.com.

Families needed for foster pets

Los Angeles Animal Services has launched the Short Term Foster Program, which will allow the public to foster companion animals from a few hours to a few weeks, providing dogs and cats with additional socialization and a better chance for adoption. The program’s launch coincides with the Foster Express Challenge presented by Maddie’s Fund, which will be awarding $55,000 in grants to participating organizations throughout the United States that promote animal foster care.

“Short term fostering not only helps our adoptable animals available at our six L.A. Animal Services Centers, it also helps provide some much needed space for our centers,” Los Angeles Animal Services General Manager Brenda Barnett said. “Even if you only spend a few hours with one of our pets on a furry field trip, the socialization and love that you provide can make a huge difference in helping companion animals find loving homes.”

The Foster Express Challenge runs through Jan. 10, and Los Angeles Animal Services is encouraging the public to participate. For information, visit laanimalshelter.org/service/fosterprogram.
Toca Madera NYE
Enjoy signature items such as American wagyu served over hot lava stones with red wine jus, or the signature burger made with bacon, sliced cucumber, avocado and leech de tigre. There will also be a chef signature dish: 'omelette' menu and creative craft cocktails from beverage director Charity Johnston. beverage director Charity Johnston. Reserve your table for those looking to ring in the new year with entertainment including fire dancers and DJs accompanied by live musicians. 8450 W. 3rd St., (323)852-9400.

Peruvian NYE Party at Rosaline
First seating guests will enjoy Chef Ricardo Zarate's four-course tasting menu, priced at $99 per guest for reservations before 8:30 p.m. For seatings after 8:30 p.m., guests will receive a glass of sparkling wine for a New Year's toast, priced at $110 per person. Reservations can be made at rosaline.la/reservations. 8479 Melrose Ave., (323)297-9500.

Beverly Hills
Celebrate New Year's at Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills
Jean-Georges Beverly Hills is offering two seatings complete with live music. The first offers an a la carte menu option from 5 to 7 p.m. The second seating is a Midnight Masquerade seven-course menu from 8:30 to 10 p.m. The Rooftop by JG is hosting a New Year's Eve celebration from 10 a.m. to 1 a.m. complete with a DJ, hors d'oeuvres, caviar and a bottle of Cristal Champagne. This view spot party is $240 per guest with VIP tables starting at $1,500. These tables include hors d'oeuvres, caviar and a bottle of Cristal Champagne. On New Year’s Day, Jean-Georges Beverly Hills is serving brunch between 10:30 a.m. and 3 p.m., and dinner from 5:30 to 10 p.m. The Rooftop by JG will also be open on New Year’s Day with a brunch menu between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Later, an all-day menu is available from 4 to 10 p.m. 9850 Wilshire Blvd., (310)860-6700.

The Milky Way honors Hanukkah
Celebrate the eight-day Jewish "Festival of Lights" with latkes and salmon. This special entree includes three crispy potato latkes, smoked salmon and an apple compote with sour cream. For takeout, order the latke platter and Hanukkah gift for the kids. Takeout orders need 24 hours notice before pickup. 9108 W. Pico Blvd., (310)859-0004.

Beverly Grove
NYE Party at Riviera 31
At the Sofitel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills, Riviera 31 will have a live DJ play crowd favorites, from hip-hop to Top-40 songs. There is a five-hour, premium open bar and complimentary Champagne toast. Tickets can be purchased on Eventbrite. 8555 Beverly Blvd., (310)278-5444.

Two NYE seatings at Angler
On Tuesday, Dec. 31, ring in the New Year with an opulent menu from Chef Joshua Skanes and Saison Hospitality. The first seating is at 5:30 p.m. for $198, with an optional wine pairing for $80. The second seating begins at 8:30 p.m., with a $285 menu and $135 wine pairings. Guests joining the second seating will receive a frozen choco- late bar and a complimentary glass of Champagne. Reservations are available on OpenTable. Walk-ins are welcome on a first-come, first-served basis at the bar if tables are not available. 8800 Beverly Blvd., (424)332-4082.

NYE with an Asian twist at INKO NITO
Ringing in the new year with DJ P. Trice and DJ Chop. There will be a photo booth and private cocktail bar on the modern Japanese restaurant’s patio. Starting at 5 p.m., enjoy a four-course meal including a winning cocktail courtesy of Seedlip and Lefi aperitifs for $85 per person. Enjoy Soto sake and sashimi platter, robata-grilled entrees, dessert and a complimentary glass of bubbles at midnight. The INKO NITO a la carte menu will also be available. 225-227 S. Garvey St., (310)999-0476.

NYE at The Mullin Wine Bar
Enjoy a prime view to ring in 2020 with "Cocktails and Countdown." Party-goers can reserve a garden table with wine, light bites, wine or Champagne. This year, the party extends from Hope Street to Los Angeles Street with activities on the Music Center Plaza and throughout Grand Park. See signature 3D video projections and light shows on the west side of City Hall. Select $150 seats for two guests or $300 seats for four guests and receive a cheese board with dried fruit, chocolate covered strawberries and a glass of Prosecco. The beverage menu includes Veuve Clicquot Champagne, Justin Cabernet Sauvignon and Caymus Conundrum. The party runs from 8 p.m. to midnight. Get your ticket at eventbrite.com/s/best-christmas-tree-bar-new-years-eve-cocktails-countdown-2020-tickets-85555285053. 135 N. Grand Ave., (213)972-8048.

Downtown LA
Sky-high New Year’s Eve at WP24 by Wolfgang Puck
Celebrate the new year with a seven-course experience on the 24th floor of The Ritz-Carlton, Los Angeles. Guests will be greeted by a petite plate of "oomph" dishes like hanami sashimi. Char Siu Lamb chop and pink New York Steak. An expansive display of sweet treats and bottomless New Year’s Eve punch will be available all night in the restaurant’s dessert lounge. This special evening is $169 per person from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. 900 W. Olympic Blvd., (213)743-8800.

Wild Game Flight at Nick + Stef’s Steakhouse
Ringing in the new year with Nick + Stef’s Steakhouse on Dec. 31 with dry-aged steaks and the best surf and turf in town. For $72, guests receive a petite filet mignon, lobster tail, JBS potato puree, roasted root vegetables and sauce au poivre. The filet is a la carte menu is also available. Now through Jan. 9, taste some of the best of the winter game season with a trio of roasted meats. The plate includes venison loin, wild boar chop and bison strip loin. Each meat is paired with a sommelier-selected wine. Optional sides include caramelizeed Brussels sprouts, creamy goat cheese polenta and red wine braised cabbage. Start with a “Left Hand” winter cocktail made with bourbon, camomile, antica carpano and chocolate chilli bitters. The cocktail provides just the right amount of sweetness to complement the boar, venison and bison. This Wild Game Flight is $70 per person. Sides range from $11 to $13, and the cocktail is $15. 330 S. Hope St., (213)680-0330.

New Orleans NYE at Manuela
Located in the Hauser & Wirth South Coast complex, Chef Kris Wollert is introducing a Southern-inspired NYE celebration from 9 p.m. to 10 p.m. to 10 p.m. The rooftop by JG will also be open on New Year’s Day with a brunch menu between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Later, an all-day menu is available from 4 to 10 p.m. 3955 Melrose Ave., (323)460-4170.

Ring in the New Year at our House
New Year’s Eve Tasting Menu:

FRESH COURSE
Choice of Lobster Bisque or Cold and Red Beet Salad with crowns red goose sauce and horseradish
SECOND COURSE
Smoked salmon and an apple compote with sour cream

ENTREE SELECTIONS
Filet Mignon with three incorporate, cabernet sauvignon
Maine Lobster & Shrimp Fettuccini with a cognac poached light cream sauce
Herb Encrusted Alaska Halibut with a lemon tarragon and lobster croque sauce, topped with caviar
Stuffed Breast of Free Range Chicken with corn, chives, beed, caramels & a French

HOMEMADE PASTA
with grilled veggie, marinara mushrooms, gouda cheese, pine nuts, olive oil and fresh herbs

LOBSTER RAVIOLI with tartare & tomato

GRILLED NEW ZEALAND LAMB CHOPS served on a bed of roasted fennel with a grainy mustard, fennel sprouts, creamy goat cheese polenta

MAPLE LEAF FARM BEET DUCK with a Duxelles orange sauce

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 Ott Vine's Famous Souffles Cheese Fingers Grand Marnier, Pumpkin Fresh Seasonal Berries with crepe Anglaise

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Dec. 15
At 11:33 p.m., an unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked in the 800 block of Westbourne.

Dec. 16
At 11:33 a.m., an unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked in the 800 block of Westbourne.

An unknown suspect robbed a victim in the 7300 block of Santa Monica at 3:07 p.m.

At 4:45 p.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 8300 block of Sunset.

An unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 8000 block of Santa Monica at 9:46 p.m. Two additional vehicle burglaries were reported in the same location at 10 p.m.

Dec. 17
At 3:15 a.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a building in the 900 block of N. La Cienega.

An unknown suspect committed a burglary in the 1400 block of N. Hayworth at 11 a.m.

At 8 p.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 7000 block of Hollywood.

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 6700 block of Melrose at 8:15 p.m.

At 8:28 p.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a building in the 600 block of N. Formosa.

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 6300 block of Sunset at 8:30 p.m.

An unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked in the 6200 block of Hollywood at 9 p.m.

At 11:25 a.m., an unknown suspect assaulted a victim near the corner of Sixth and Van Ness.

Dec. 18
An unknown suspect assaulted a victim in the 1100 block of N. Highland.

An unknown suspect committed a burglary in the 1300 block of N. Sycamore.

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 6700 block of Hollywood at 7:25 p.m.

An unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 500 block of Wilshire at 8 a.m.

An unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 7000 block of Hollywood at 6:06 p.m.

At 7 p.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle in the 1300 block of N. Sycamore.

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 6700 block of Hollywood at 6:00 p.m.

At 8:20 p.m., an unknown suspect robbed a victim in the 1300 block of N. McCadden.

An unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked in the 1200 block of N. Cherokee at 10 p.m.

At 10:30 p.m., an unknown suspect committed a burglary in the 800 block of Ridgewood.

An unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked near the corner of Lodi and Lexington at 11:30 p.m.

Dec. 19
At 5:25 p.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a victim in the 8800 block of Santa Monica.

An unknown suspect burglarized a victim in the 1300 block of N. Sycamore.

At 2 a.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a victim in the 1300 block of N. Hollywood.

An unknown suspect committed a burglary in the 1300 block of N. Orange Grove at 5 a.m.

An unknown suspect robbed a victim near the corner of Sunset and Detriot at 2:45 a.m.

At 5:13 a.m., an unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 700 block of N. Western.

An unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked in the 8200 block of Blackburn at 5:14 a.m.

At 11:36 a.m., an unknown suspect assaulted a victim in the 300 block of Las Palmas.

A suspect assaulted a victim during a domestic violence incident near the corner of Franklin and Hayworth at 5:30 p.m.

At 12:30 p.m., an unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 6500 block of Hollywood.

An unknown suspect robbed a victim in the 500 block of Alta Vista at 12:30 p.m.

At 2 p.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 100 block of S. Highland.

An unknown suspect committed a burglary in the 6200 block of Third at 5:15 p.m.

At 6 p.m., an unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked in the 1800 block of N. Cherokee.

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 300 block of N. La Brea at 6:45 p.m.

An unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle in the 1800 block of N. Los Angeles.

At 11:10 p.m., an unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 7100 block of Sunset.

An unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked near the corner of Franklin and Sierra Bonita at 1:30 p.m.

At 11:30 p.m., an unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked in the 5500 block of Wilshire.

Dec. 17
At 2:18 a.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 900 block of Seward.

An unknown suspect assaulted a victim in the 6400 block of Hollywood at 2:55 a.m.

At 5:20 a.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a building near the corner of Las Palmas and Franklin.

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 7000 block of Hollywood at 11:40 a.m.

At 2 a.m., an unknown suspect robbed a victim near the corner of Olympic and Slauson.

An unknown suspect robbed a victim near the corner of Cherokee and Hollywood at 4:15 a.m.

At 5 p.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle parked in the 300 block of Hauser.

An unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle in the 700 block of Vine at 6:06 p.m.

At 7 p.m., an unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle in the 700 block of Wilshire.

An unknown suspect burglarized a vehicle in the 1300 block of N. Sycamore.

An unknown suspect committed a petty theft in the 6700 block of Hollywood at 7:25 p.m.

At 8:20 p.m., an unknown suspect robbed a victim in the 1300 block of N. McCadden.

An unknown suspect stole a vehicle in the 1200 block of N. Cherokee at 10 p.m.

At 10:30 p.m., an unknown suspect committed a burglary in the 800 block of Ridgewood.

An unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked near the corner of Lodi and Lexington at 11:30 p.m.

Dec. 18
An unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked in the 1200 block of N. Cherokee at 10:30 p.m.

An unknown suspect burglarized a building in the 8400 block of Melrose Place.

An unknown suspect robbed a victim in the 8600 block of Melrose at 3:20 p.m.

At 5:20 a.m., an unknown suspect committed a burglary in the 8400 block of Melrose Place.

An unknown suspect committed a burglary in the 800 block of Wilshire.

At 8 p.m., an unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked near the corner of Beverly and Western.

An unknown suspect committed a burglary in the 1300 block of N. Maretz at 6:36 p.m.

At 7 p.m., an unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked in the 7300 block of Beverly.

An unknown suspect stole a vehicle parked in the 400 block of N. Mansfield at 10:30 p.m.
Ronan’s casual New Year’s Eve

The Cal-Italian hotspot offers caviar and champagne in addition to its menu of imaginative Neapolitan pizzas. The champagne-caviar combo begins at $40 for a glass of champagne and 10 grams of Calvisius caviar. Other items include burrata, Margherita pizza and steak. 7131 Melrose Ave. (323)917-5100.

Space Cowboy Party at Tanka

The newest restaurant in Virgil Village is hosting a dress-up Space Cowboy Party on Dec. 31. Tickets are $75 and include all-you-can-eat-and-drink specials that include festive platters, tacos and enchiladas, with cocktails provided. Entertainment includes palm readers, fortune tellers, photo-ops and other fun NYE surprises. 611 N. Virgil Ave., from 8 to 10 p.m. (323)741-0001.

Adame celebratory champagne feast

In the roaring 20s with fine food and great cocktails with all of your friends and lovers. Guests can enjoy a $30 feast, $20 bottles of Champagne and $20 carafes of Champagne cocktails. All guests will receive priority entrance to Bar Flores’ Studio 54. Party and Lowboy’s “Soul Train” to dance and party into the new year. 1538 Sunset Blvd., (213)266-8001.

Koreatown

Openaire

Celebrated chef Josiah Citrin’s new Openaire restaurant at the Line Hotel in Koreatown is hosting a New Year’s Eve prix fixe three-course dinner with two seatings. The first seating is from 5 to 6:30 p.m., and includes a three-course menu for $79 per person with supplemental white truffle risotto. From 8:30 to 9:30 p.m., a five-course menu will be offered for $165. Afterward, dance the night away in the hotel lobby. Openaire will also be open on New Year’s Day for brunch and dinner. Reservations are available on OpenTable. 3515 Wilshire Blvd. (213)368-3065.

Marina del Rey

Midnight at Marina del Rey

Celebrate NYE in true Marina style with open bar packages starting at 8 p.m. Start your night with a red carpet photo, receive party favors and dance on the pool deck and event lawn while DJ Ninja and Aaron Colbert. Dress in 60s and 70s costumes and enjoy an open bar and passed appetizers from 8 to 10 p.m. Bottle packages and tables are available for purchase. 603 N. La Cienega Blvd., (310)855-9955.

The roaring 20s at Employees Only LA

New Year’s party at Employees Only begins at 9 p.m. Tickets include a five-hour premium open bar and small chef-driven bites. Entertainment includes a DJ and resident fortune teller who will be reading cards and palms until midnight. Buy tickets at nightout.com for $125 per person. Try the High Octane made with Santa Teresa Rum started with Mancino Rosso Vermouth, Grand Marnier, Laphroaig, and dashes of Xocolatl Mole and Angostura Bitters, right. 7953 Santa Monica

Bogie’s Liquor

Stock your guests’ favorite beverages this Holiday Season!

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Don’t Drink & Drive!
Music Center, Grand Park gear up for NYE festivities

More than 50,000 people are expected to ring in 2020 at the seventh annual Grand Park + The Music Center’s NYE.L.A. Free for all ages, this unique civic event brings together Angelenos and visitors from around the globe to greet the new decade at L.A.’s biggest free music and dance party. The alcohol-free, family-friendly event will expand its celebratory footprint and will now span seven city blocks from City Hall through the newly-renovated Music Center Plaza.

Starring DJs and bands, NYE.L.A. will also feature a 3D video projection and light show on the west side of City Hall, designed by L.A.-based digital innovation studio U2rco. This year’s theme is “Who is L.A. 2020?” and will feature images of the Angeleno community.

The event features two stages of simultaneous performances. Pan African Peoples Arkestra headlines the “Countdown Stage,” located near Spring Street, and also features DJ Pauli “The PSM.” Thee Simsers, and Bandua Los Angelinos between 8:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m., encircled by Pili Montilla. The sights and sounds of the “Countdown Stage” will be broadcast live on The Music Center Plaza’s giant LED screens. ASL interpretation will be available on the “Countdown Stage” throughout the party.

Parks After Dark will serve multicultural fare representing the many communities found along the Blue, Red, Purple, Green, Gold and Expo lines. Entrances to the event include Hill and Temple streets, 1st and Main streets, 1st and Olive streets, and 3rd Street and Broadway. The park will close prior to the event at 10 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 30, until the start of the celebration.

For information, visit grandpark.org/nyela, or musiccenter.org/nyela.

NHM announces upcoming Jane Goodall exhibit

The Natural History Museum announced an upcoming exhibition “Becoming Jane: The Evolution of Dr. Jane Goodall,” which celebrates Goodall’s legacy as a United Nations Messenger of Peace and the founder of the Jane Goodall Institute. In the exhibit, visitors can explore Goodall’s life from her early years to establishing herself as a renowned scientist in Tanzania to her present role as an activist, mentor and advocate for creating a better world for all life on Earth.

Visitors to the exhibition will have the opportunity to learn more about chimpanzees, explore Goodall’s early years through images, enter a replica of her research tent, encounter a hologram-like projection of her in present day and learn about her current role leading community-centered conservation and youth empowerment through her institute.

The exhibit will be on view from Oct. 18, 2020, through April 11, 2021. The Natural History Museum is located at 900 Exposition Blvd. For information, call (213)763-3466, or visit nhm.org/becoming-jane.

Do you have news about a student, teacher or program? Send it to editor@beverlypress.com for consideration in our Schools section.

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DRE 01074649

Please call us for a private showing of this beautifully renovated upper unit featuring an open living and dining room with wide-plank hardwood floors, picture window and decorative fireplace; a remodeled kitchen with concrete tile floors, subway tile backsplash, quartz counters, stainless steel appliances including dishwasher and built-in microwave; double sink and tons of cabinetry. The fully redone bathroom boasts quartz counters, stone floors and stylish fixtures.
District examines ways to boost early education

Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Austin Beutner recently unveiled the “Birth to Eight Roadmap,” an initiative to accelerate learning and ensure LAUSD’s youngest students are academically and socially ready by third grade.

Failing to build a foundation in the early years is critical to a child’s long-term success,” Beutner said. “The Birth to Eight Roadmap will help us continue to provide the best possible education, beginning with our youngest students.

The initiative will develop an instructional guide for teachers so they can understand how each grade builds upon the next and can help fill in gaps in student learning. It also seeks to expand early-education dual-language programs so young students have the opportunity to continue their language development.

The plans seek to increase family engagement with elementary schools in their communities for informational tours of early education programs, and provide kindergartners access to academic and attendance information for incoming students, allowing them to better assess strengths and needs.

“The Roadmap ensures that we provide the instructional support and wraparound services for our youngest and most impressionable students,” LAUSD Interim Chief Academic Officer Alison Yoshimoto-Towery said. “All of our students have a right to a joyful and creative space where they can learn academics and begin establishing their identity.

LAUSD operates 86 early education centers for children ages 2-4 and is assisted by the nonprofit Child360, which offers programs for more than 500 schools in Los Angeles County.

“The Birth to Eight Roadmap provides a framework and action that will put all of the children coming out of Los Angeles Unified’s early education programs on a path toward graduation and success,” Early Childhood Education Executive Director Dean Tippetts said.

“Los Angeles Unified is investing in high-quality programs for our earliest learners, and we’re thrilled to release the ‘Roadmap’ to expand and deepen those opportunities,” said LAUSD Board Member Kelly Gonez, chairwoman of the Early Education Committee.

“I’m particularly proud of our commitment to dual-language programs in early childhood, which help support all of our students and put them on the path to lifelong success.”

For information, visit lausd.ca.gov.

Grants provide a boost for local school literacy programs

In 2019, City National Bank awarded 135 “Reading is The Way Up” literacy grants totaling $52,500 to support literacy-based projects and financial literacy in elementary, middle and high schools in California.

Recipients include Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy in Beverly Hills, Citizens of the World Charter School in Hollywood, AlephBeta Elementary School on Riverside Drive and Stella Elementary Charter Academy on South La Brea Avenue.

“Reading is The Way Up” is a nonprofit literacy program through which City National has donated more than 1 million new books to elementary school libraries and awarded nearly 1,300 teacher grants to enhance literacy since 2005. The grants provide educators up to $1,000 and help augment or expand literacy projects that were judged to be creative and engaging, and that have a tangible effect on student achievement.

The winning programs are expected to directly improve literacy for more than 10,000 students in over 100 schools and nonprofits. The educators receiving literacy grants were selected from among the many full-time teachers, librarians, administrators and school media specialists who submitted an online application.

“We are very pleased with the total number of grants and dollar amount we were able to award this year,” said Jennifer Nickerson, senior vice president and corporate citizenship manager for City National. “We significantly increased the number of grant recipients and funding this year over last year. Putting more money into the classroom is the goal of our teacher literacy grant program, and we more than achieved our goal.

The money for this program comes from our colleagues and our work place giving program, which makes it even that much more special.

For information, visit readingisthewayup.org.

Melrose Avenue Elementary School has been a named a Distinguished School by the California Department of Education.

Students performed songs from popular musicals during the “Everything Old is New Again” concert in Beverly Hills.

After-school program instills a love of performing arts

The 39 elementary schools are located in all six local districts and all seven board districts.

“Congratulations to all the schools recognized for their great work improving student outcomes for our kids,” LAUSD Board Nick Melvoin said. “We will continue working to replicate success and expand access to outstanding programs so that every student has the opportunity to succeed in Los Angeles Unified.

A component of the California School Recognition Program, the Distinguished Schools program recognizes schools based on performance and progress on state indicators including test scores, suspension rates, conditions and climate. Elementary schools and middle and high schools are recognized in alternate years. Every year, two of California’s Distinguished Schools Awardees are also eligible to be recognized as a National Elementary and Secondary Education Distinguished Schools Awardee.

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Autry Museum announces new Western, Native collection curators

Following a national search, the Autry Museum of the American West announced the appointment of curators Joe D. Horse Capture and Tyree A. Boyd-Pates.

Both bring deep knowledge in their respective areas of expertise and underscore the Autry’s commitment to advancing public understanding of the art, history and culture of the American West.

We are thrilled to welcome Joe and Tyree to our curatorial team. I have watched their career paths and development into public intellectuals with great admiration, and I know their fresh insights and insight will immeasurably enhance the Autry’s ability to reveal the stories, experiences and perceptions of the diverse peoples of the American West,” said W. Richard West Jr., the museum’s president and CEO.

Horse Capture, who will be appointed as vice president of Native Collections and the Ahmanson curator of Native American History and Culture, most recently served as director of Native American Initiatives at the Autry Museum of the American West in California.

“I am committed to a process of inclusion that ensures a diversity of voices are heard and honored and, to that end, I am excited to contribute to the museum’s growing focus on contemporary Native arts and social concerns, as well as to further explore its exemplary collection.”

Boyd-Pates, who will be associate curator of Western History, comes to the museum from the California African American Museum, where he was the history curator and public program manager, curating exhibitions about the history of African Americans in California and the West.

“Raised in Los Angeles, and as a child who regularly visited Griffith Park’s sites and attractions, this is undoubtedly a full-circle moment,” Boyd-Pates said. “I look forward to supporting the Autry in broadening our collective understanding of American Western history, not only in a national context, but globally. Through exhibitions and research, I will seek to examine histories through the lenses of diverse communities to understand what it means to be, truly, American.”

The Autry Museum of the American West is located in Griffith Park, 4700 Western Heritage Way. For information, call (323)667-2000, or visit theautry.org.

Orthodox rabbi visits Cedars-Sinai for Talmud dedication

Prominent Orthodox rabbi Meir Soloveichik made a pilgrimage of sorts Tuesday when he visited Cedars-Sinai for the dedication of a complete set of the Talmud, the Jewish books of law and commentary.

“They told me that if I came, I could hold the tablets,” Soloveichik said, referring to the tablets used in Cecil B. DeMille’s “The Ten Commandments” (1956), starring Charlton Heston.

“Do you ever think about the tablets?” Soloveichik asked. “I think about them a lot. I love ‘The Ten Commandments.’

Donated to Mount Sinai Hospital, Cedars-Sinai’s predecessor, by DeMille’s wife, Constance Adams DeMille, the tablets were on display alongside the colorful new English translation Nota Edizioni Talmud Bavli, a gift to Cedars-Sinai from Koren Publishers of Jerusalem.

“We are very grateful to Koren Publishers for this gift,” said Rabbi Jason Weiner, director of the spiritual care department at Cedars-Sinai. “It’s an incredible feat to translate the entire Talmud, and this is not just any translation,” Weiner said.

The translation uses modern language, along with charts, color photos, historical background information and archeological diagrams to give perspective on the text.

The gift coincides with the Jan. 4 completion of a 7.5-year cycle of daily Talmud study, known as Daf Yomi. During this cycle, scholars study one page a day of the Talmud, in sequence. The completion of one cycle and the beginning of another is cause for celebration around the world.

Cedars-Sinai patients and their families, as well as employees who are participating in Daf Yomi, will have access to the books to continue their studies while at the hospital.

For information, visit cedars-sinai.org.

Groundings hold New Year’s Eve Spectacular

Ring in the new year with Groundings at the “Groundings New Year’s Eve Spectacular.” Doors open at 9 p.m. and guests will enjoy appetizers and specialty cocktails. The show starts at 10 p.m. and concludes at midnight, with a champagne toast to welcome 2020. Tickets are $100.

The Groundings Theatre is located at 7307 Melrose Ave. For information or tickets, call (323)934-4474, or visit groundings.com.

BUSD installs 2019-20 Board of Education officers

On Dec. 17, the Beverly Hills Unified School District held the Board of Education Organizational Meeting and installed the 2019-20 officers. The Beverly Hills High School Madrigals opened the festivities and the flag salute was led by student leaders Maddy Nassir (BHHS), Zachary Khodabash (Bella Vista Middle School), Josh Nika (Hawthorne Elementary School), and Trevor Levin (Horace Mann Elementary School).

Isabel Hacker was installed as president and board member, and Rachelle Marcus as vice president. Board members Tristan Walker-Shuman, Mel Spitz and Noah Margo will continue to serve on the Board of Education.

Hacker said the oath of office and was sworn in by her son, Avram, and husband, Adi Hacker. Boyd-Pates and Board members Tristen Walker-Shuman, Isabel Hacker, and Tyree A. Boyd-Pates were also in attendance.

Representatives from the city, Beverly Hills Police and Fire departments, Beverly Hills Parent Teacher Association, Beverly Hills Unified School District and BHUSD school administrators and past board members were also in attendance.

The meeting was followed by a reception hosted by the PTA Council.

For information, visit bhusd.org.
What to watch when you want to feel down

‘Uncut Gems’ and ‘Marriage Story’ are the downers of the season

Cinema is an emotional experience. The Avengers make us cheer as they assemble. Martin Scorsese suspends our moral compass in favor of some shady dude’s journey into criminality. And try surviving a good Pixar film without at least watering up.

The ensuing hero of emotions, however, is pure, unadulterated frustration. Sure, dry comedies evoke such responses for a laugh, but some films elate themselves in misery. Welcome to “Uncut Gems” and “Marriage Story,” the season’s most uncomfortable cinematic experiences.

From divorce to chronicling the life and times of an irredeemable fool, this pair will test your temperament for characters and subtext, the pair shine at portraying chemistry? That’s Driver and Johansson during their relationship’s deconstruction. Awkward conversations laced with a locomotive of torture. Character dramas like this ask a similar question. “Marriage Story” and “Uncut Gems” are both films that favors tedium over mechanical devices that literally rip the body apart. But this is torture porn that earns awards. Cry, scream, prostitute yourself in service of the Golden Man. And wow, they do it right.

In one painful scene, Sandler’s Howard attempts to have a sincere conversation with his daughter following a school performance he missed because a couple goons punished him by locking him in his expensive car’s trunk naked. Neither he nor his wife Dinah (Idina Menzel) nor his son许 (Jacob Tremblay) or the FBI or even his journalist friend Tom (Dax Shepard) can help him. He is a fool.

In another, his wife Dinah takes him to see “Rock of Ages.” It is the most rom-com-y rom-com on record. She promises to help him with his self-esteem. He is not looking for self-esteem. He’s a fool.

Many films employ this technique. There are numerous scenes of groundhogs, lizards, dogs, snakes, birds, and other terrestrial and aquatic creatures suffering far beyond their dire prophecies. In every scene, the groundhog is the fool. These films want us to feel the pain of their characters, to feel for them. The end of a marriage is not a happy ending. The world is a mean and dirty place. And don’t believe any rumors that divorce sucks but can be endured. “Uncut Gems” seems to be the most uncomfortable of these films. It is not for the faint hearted.

What’s the opposite of romantic achievement? It’s an ostracizing experience. By comparison, “Marriage Story” is safe, a happy-sad film with its own ceremonies and initiation rituals. Their performances effectively suture us into a familiar but still heartbreaking story.

Both films walk in pain and heartbreak, but the points are entirely different. The end of a marriage is not a far-fetched prospect. But hopefully nobody is a Howard, that bottom-fearing friend, relative, co-worker or acquaintance who cries wolf so much that the truth reeks of deceit. He has every opportunity to repair his relationships and settle debts, but he’s greedy and selfish. At least divorce proceedings eventually conclude, but for a fool, suffering is a life-long journey.

Make no mistake, these are horror films. If you’re not a fan, you probably wonder why anyone would suffer through serial killers, ghosts and torture. Character dramas like this ask a similar question. “Marriage Story” and “Uncut Gems” are torture porn that favors tedium over mechanical devices that literally rip the body apart. But this is torture porn that earns awards. Cry, scream, prostitute yourself in service of the Golden Man. And wow, they do it right.

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Over in “Uncut,” Sandler is perhaps even more effective (that’s a sentence we don’t often hear). This is hardly surprising considering the “SNL” alum’s work with Paul Thomas Anderson (“Magnolia,” “There Will Be Blood”) in “Punch Drunk Love.” Now in the hands of “Good Times,” he is hardly Charlie here (no spoilers), but director Noah Baumbach (“Frances Ha,” “The Squid and the Whale”) isn’t interest-ed in casting blame. Perhaps he should.

And don’t believe any rumors that “Marriage Story” is a comedy. Modest sequences that go for a chuckle don’t count. But that’s always been the indie comedy way, on big and small screens, a comedy in name only.

Films like these are made for Top 10 lists and awards shows, both sympathetic leading to gloriously remove themselves from each other’s lives to Sandler’s successful depiction of 2019’s worst, someone so shady, so irritating, so moronic, so stupid, so familiar. That’s not a dig at Sandler or the film.

“Uncut Gems” wants that pain, that discomfort. Its crowning achievement is an ostracizing experience. By comparison, “Marriage Story” is safe, a happy-sad film warning that divorce sucks but can be endured. “Uncut Gems” seems more content to tell us, “Don’t be that guy.”

photo courtesy of Netflix.

Scarlett Johansson and Adam Driver navigate the painful intricacies of divorce in “Marriage Story.”

Adam Sandler’s character Howard is hard to like in “Uncut Gems,” but the film remains compelling.

photo courtesy of A24

ON SCREEN
WITH
TIM POSADA
absolutely nothing.
Both films walk in pain and heartbreak, but the points are entirely different. The end of a marriage is not a far-fetched prospect. But hopefully nobody is a Howard, that bottom-fearing friend, relative, co-worker or acquaintance who cries wolf so much that the truth reeks of deceit. He has every opportunity to repair his relationships and settle debts, but he’s greedy and selfish. At least divorce proceedings eventually conclude, but for a fool, suffering is a life-long journey.

Make no mistake, these are horror films. If you’re not a fan, you probably wonder why anyone would suffer through serial killers, ghosts and torture. Character dramas like this ask a similar question. “Marriage Story” and “Uncut Gems” are torture porn that favors tedium over mechanical devices that literally rip the body apart. But this is torture porn that earns awards. Cry, scream, prostitute yourself in service of the Golden Man. And wow, they do it right.

In one painful scene, Sandler’s Howard attempts to have a sincere conversation with his daughter following a school performance he missed because a couple goons punished him by locking him in his expensive car’s trunk naked. Neither he nor his wife Dinah (Idina Menzel) nor his son许 (Jacob Tremblay) or the FBI or even his journalist friend Tom (Dax Shepard) can help him. He is a fool.

In another, his wife Dinah takes him to see “Rock of Ages.” It is the most rom-com-y rom-com on record. She promises to help him with his self-esteem. He is not looking for self-esteem. He’s a fool.

Many films employ this technique. There are numerous scenes of groundhogs, lizards, dogs, snakes, birds, and other terrestrial and aquatic creatures suffering far beyond their dire prophecies. In every scene, the groundhog is the fool. These films want us to feel the pain of their characters, to feel for them. The end of a marriage is not a happy ending. The world is a mean and dirty place. And don’t believe any rumors that divorce sucks but can be endured. “Uncut Gems” seems more content to tell us, “Don’t be that guy.”

photo courtesy of Rock of Ages Hollywood


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Academy announces 92nd Oscars shortlists

On Dec. 16, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced shortlists of films under consideration for the 92nd Academy Awards in nine categories: Documentary Feature, Documentary Short Subject, International Feature Film, Makeup and Hairstyling, Music (Original Score), Music (Original Song), Animated Short Film, Live Action Short Film and Visual Effects.


The 92nd Oscars will be held on Sunday, Feb. 9 at the Dolby Theatre at the Hollywood & Highland Center and will be televised live on ABC. For information, visit oscars.org.

Crossword Puzzle by Myles Mellor


Across
2019 was a dynamic year in the area

From page 1

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti joined paleontologist Ashley Legier at a ceremony in June marking the halfway point to completion for the Purple Line Extension subway project. Also joining them was Beverly Hills Mayor John Mirisch (left) and Los Angeles City Councilman David Ryu, 4th District.

In March, John Mirisch was appointed mayor of Beverly Hills and led a fight for more local control over civic matters. A target was SB 50, a bill authored by state Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco) intended to make it easier to build multiple-story housing near major streets and transit centers.

The law threatened to take away city control over major parts of Beverly Hills, Mirisch contended, and he was vocal at city meetings about the threat it posed. The cities of Los Angeles and West Hollywood also opposed SB 50. The Los Angeles City and County Senate Appropriations committees approved earlier this year but remains in limbo and could soon return to the realm of public discourse.

Beverly Hills also made progress in considering a future with autonomous vehicles and held meetings on how the city can be part of the process to prepare. This city’s Fine Art Commission evolved into the Arts and Culture Commission, expanding its reach in advancing programs and events that promote the arts. Beverly Hills’ BOLD programming also returned in August with more entertainment, art installations, bringing more people to Rodeo Drive and the business triangle while stores and restaurants remained open later into the night. BOLD’s winter programming returned in November, providing a welcoming holiday experience in Beverly Hills.

The Beverly Hills City Council made progress on health issues, approving an ordinance in June banning the sale of tobacco products. The ordinance will take effect on Jan. 1, 2021, with exceptions for the city’s three cigar lounges and hotels that sell the products to guests. In another move to make the city safer, the council continued a ban on shared mobility devices such as e-scooters, and came to agreements that provide for the city to purchase water wells formerly operating at Beverly Hills High School.

The city also made headway on plans for La Cienega Park, where a redesign is under consideration that includes a new recreation building with indoor and outdoor tennis courts, new basketball courts, two pools, parking and a landscaped bridge spanning La Cienega Boulevard to connect sections of the park on opposite sides of the street. The city is continuing the LAUSD project to build a new middle school at the site to create a world-class facility to serve the city for years to come.

West Hollywood

In the city of West Hollywood, progress was evident on many fronts, including the advancement of civil rights and providing social services to seniors, people with disabilities and debilitating diseases, and others lacking resources. Construction continues at West Hollywood Park, where a four-story Recreation and Aquatic Center is taking shape near the library and parking garage, and an AIDS Memorial will pay homage to people who lost their lives to the disease.

The city also remains a center of the LGBTQ+ community, hosting the annual One City One Pride festival, which drew thousands. The city hosts more than a dozen events from May through June including educational and arts programming. The festival this year included concerts by top artists such as Paula Abdul, Meghan Trainor and Years & Years. LA Pride will mark a milestone in the coming year with its 50th anniversary.

West Hollywood held an election in November in which incumbents won big. In March, Mayor Pro Tem Lindsey Horvath received the most votes with 24.4%, followed by Councilwoman Lauren Mayor with 22.6% and Mayor John D’Amico with 15.3%. Joined by fellow council members John Heilman and John Duran, the council has taken a lead in work to accelerate a light rail line through West Hollywood, and has worked to preserve landmarks like the French

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art also began its transformation in 2019, with three major building projects that will continue into 2020. The project will result in a singular structure extending over Wilshire Boulevard and connecting to the south side. The project is anticipated to be complete in 2024 and will create more open space around the museum, as well as new innovative and naturally-illuminated spaces to view art. LACMA remains open during construction with exhibits and programming in the Broad Contemporary Art Museum, Resnick Pavilion and other spaces, as well as programs off-site at satellite locations such as the Charles White Elementary School in Koreatown.

LACMA’s neighbor, the La Brea Tar Pits and Museum, also made headlines in 2019 as it embarked on a re-envisioning process that will shape its future. Three firms were selected to present ideas, with New York-based Weiss/Manfredi recently announced as the winner. The firm’s proposal calls for a looping series of paths throughout the site and a new museum facility augmenting the existing building. Much to the delight of countless people who grew up visiting the site, the statue of a mammoth family at the edge of the lake pit along Wilshire Boulevard will remain.

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, which opened in 1965, will next move into a multi-year design phase that will include opportunities for the public to provide input and direction on the future of the tar pits.

Tom Bergin’s, an 83-year-old Irish pub at 840 S. Fairfax Ave., reopened last week. The Los Angeles Conservancy and Miracle Mile Residential Association fought to save the pub after it was announced it was being closed to make way for potential new development. The pub was designated a historic-cultural monument in 2019, however, the adjacent parking lot will be developed for housing.

Los Angeles, and other cities throughout the region, continued to struggle with the homelessness crisis, however some progress occurred. In March, a temporary bridge-housing shelter opened in Councilman Mitch O’Farrell’s 13th District on a city-owned parking lot on Shader Avenue in Hollywood. The facility offers 70 beds where people can get off the streets while transitioning into permanent housing. In September, another bridge housing facility with 30 beds for women opened in a former library building on Gardner Street in Councilman David Ryu’s 4th District. The shelters are among others opening or planned throughout the area to reduce the homeless population.

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority’s annual homeless count will be held again in January, and officials are hoping for better results than last year, when approximately 36,300 people were found to be experiencing homelessness countywide in Los Angeles, a 16% increase. 2020 could be a year of dynamic change for the city of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, the state and nation occurring. Local leaders will be precautions in the coming year, including Ryu, in Los Angeles, and Council members Lili Bosse and Julian Gold in Beverly Hills. The California primary is a little more than three months away, and federal leaders for the local area including U.S. Reps. Adam Schiff, Ted Lieu and Karen Bass will appear on the ballot.

Los Angeles

Los Angeles remained a center of change in 2019, with new buildings taking shape throughout the year. The Purple Line Extension project continues its push toward Century City and eventually West Los Angeles. Major future projects were approved including a 26-story tower that will house the old site of Amoeba Records, and the $1 billion Crossroads Hollywood project.

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CASA seeks volunteers to help foster children

Now in its seventh year, #BOOM! does for New Year’s Eve what #SELFIE2019 does for Pride, offering a fun party that is free of alcohol and drugs during a holiday that is known as a time to indulge, said Jimmy Palmieri, a West Hollywood Human Services Commissioner and co-founder of #BOOM! The party, however, isn’t just for those recovering, and Palmieri said he expects more than 1,100 people to come through over the course of the night. Some of them may already be under the influence, and they won’t be turned away as long as they do not use drugs or drink at the party, Palmieri said. Without the drinking and drugs, many of the negative aspects of partying, such as fighting, are absent, a leaving a party that has grown over the years, Palmieri said.

Alexis Sanchez, assistant program manager for the nonprofit West Hollywood Project, said people often embrace their or other parties so that they can spend more time at #BOOM! We want to give people a fun event. I have friends who aren’t in recovery, and they say they’ll drop by for just a little bit, and then they’ll stay for the whole night because it’s really a good time and a really great party,” Sanchez said.

Along with food and drink, music and dancing, #BOOM! is a costume ball. This year’s theme is icons, and attendees can expect to see guest’s take on Beyoncé, Marilyn Monroe and Ruth Bader Ginsburg and strut their stuff on the catwalk. It’s not a contest, though participants will receive a token gift.

“There are lots of really good costumes, and people really go all out. I know it’s going to be a great time,” Mayor Pro Tempore Lindsey Horvath said. #BOOM! is so popular that the auditorium sometimes reaches capacity, so those who show up later in the evening might have to wait to enter. Palmieri said that capacity can be minimized if people register for their free ticket online before the event, though everyone eventually gets in.

Mayor John Amico said #BOOM! is a part of a “new Year’s Eve” for him and his husband, Keith Rand.

“All of that overriding is the alternative for me. Being clear-eyed and sober and facing the new year with those things in place is really how I like to live my life,” Mayor John D’Amico said.

Councilman John Duran said #BOOM! is an ideal place for anyone who wishes to avoid the partying atmosphere that can be found elsewhere in West Hollywood.

Julien said If someone doesn’t have the time to be a CASA, Julien said a donation is a perfect way to help. Julien said, as less than 10% of the organization’s budget comes from government funding, CASA/LA needs money to recruit and support volunteers, as well as connect foster children with services beyond the scope of their court-appointed lawyers.

“With our funding, we provide services for our young people that the court can’t pay for, sometimes a trip to Disneyland or a new medical bed that they need because of a medical condition, or a backyard uniform. There are multiple things that we use our funding for,” Julien said.

“CASA is in the thralls of a crisis that has grown over the years, and that has become really acute,” Mayor John D’Amico said.

“We need to permanently discourage the fossil fuel industry in California. We need to call for an end to oil and gas production in California. The elected officials highlighted how the state’s fossil fuel production threatens health and safety. They called on Newsom to end new drilling permits and to enact science-based 2,500-foot setbacks on toxic drilling to protect our public health and communities,” added Culver City Mayor Meghan Sahli-Wells.

“They called on Newsom to end new drilling permits and to enact science-based 2,500-foot setbacks on toxic drilling to protect our public health and communities,” added Culver City Mayor Meghan Sahli-Wells.

“All of that overindulging is the alternative for me. Being clear-eyed and sober and facing the new year with those things in place is really how I like to live my life,” Mayor John D’Amico said.

“Lots of our volunteers are working people or people with small children. … This is a great opportunity to make a tangible difference in someone’s life,” Julien said.

Beyond the rewarding feeling of having an impact on someone’s life, Bhave said being a CASA is a great way to fulfill a societal obligation to one’s community. “The way I look at it is these children belong to all of us. We as a society decided that we would take care of them instead of the family … [CASA] has really impacted me in my view of what I should be doing as a member of my society. I wrestle with that, that my community is as successful as I make it, and I truly believe that,” Bhave said.

For information, to donate or to be an advocate, visit casalsa.org.

“You don’t even have to get off the couch,” Julien said.

LAPD brings smiles to Blind Children’s Center

Leaders call for an end to fossil fuel production

Following the United Nations COP25 climate negotiations in Madrid, 50 mayors and local elected officials from Los Angeles County called on Gov. Gavin Newsom on Dec. 20 to enact a statewide climate emergency plan to phase out oil and gas production in California.

Phasing out fossil fuel production in California is essential for the state to show leadership in addressing the climate emergency, the officials said. The group included West Hollywood Mayor John D’Amico, as well as civic leaders from Culver City, South Pasadena and many other municipalities.

“The state is in the thralls of a public health emergency from the effects of fossils with more than 12,000 lives lost annually because of it,” D’Amico said. “I’m proud to say West Hollywood is one of more than 80 local governments in California that have passed more than 115 local policies to protect our communities from fossil fuels.”

The elected officials highlighted how the state’s fossil fuel production threatens health and safety. They called on Newsom to end new drilling permits and to enact science-based 2,500-foot setbacks on toxic drilling to protect our public health and communities,” added Culver City Mayor Meghan Sahli-Wells.

“We need to permanently discourage the fossil fuel industry in California, and make sure the state converts to using 100% clean, renewable energy resources sooner than later.”

On Nov. 19, Newsom announced a halt on new oil extraction wells that use high-pressure steam injection drilling, an independent review of new fracking permits and a new rule-making process for public health and safety protections near oil and gas extraction facilities that will take effect next year. The officials praised the moratorium but urged for a permit for new all fossil fuel projects, prohibiting drilling within 2,500 feet of homes and vulnerable areas, and committing the state to 100% renewable energy in all sectors.

The most damaging health risks of oil and gas drilling occur within a one-half mile radius of active oil and gas development, according to the California Council on Science and Technology. California has no statewide policy limiting the proximity of drilling to homes, schools or other sensitive areas.

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