

Gazette Articles – Comprehensive List

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Young Actor Costars In HBO Movie

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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-January 7, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Twelve-year-old Austin Thomas recently launched what he called the beginning of a lifelong career as an actor.

The Rogers Middle School student will appear onscreen this month in the newly released "Chrissa Stands Strong" movie - an American Girl and HBO production about childhood bullying. Thomas, a Naples resident, said the film has helped jumpstart his childhood dream to star in mainstream movies.

"It's exciting to meet all the new people, and you get free food," he said.

On the set, Thomas portrays Tyler, the brother of protagonist Chrissa Maxwell (played by Sammi Hanratty). He enters the limelight during a pool scene, where he appears to fall in with the help of special effects crews and a stunt double.

"The bully forces me to jump off a diving board," he said. "A stunt double jumped off and got really close to the board. Then I went and laid flat. It was cool."

The story is based on a character created by the American Girl brand and details the challenges of starting school midyear after moving to a new town. The plot follows characters as they confront three of their hostile peers, Thomas said.

"It's about a girl standing up to bullies," he said.

The story, he said, also hits close to home. About a year ago, Thomas said he faced similar challenges at school.

"He was shoving me at times," he said of a peer. "But now we've become friends."

At first, Thomas was known around school for performances in school plays and talent show acts. His father, Tom Williams, said he knew his son had the potential to go mainstream.

"The kids can go into auditions and forget about it," he said. "They control their emotions, which helps me control mine."

In fact, acting seems to run in Thomas' genes. His 8-year-old brother, Jett Patrick Williams, also has made a name for himself in films and commercials. Williams explained that an agent from Jet Set Kids approached both boys during a visit to Palm Springs a few years ago.

"(Austin) has got talent," Williams said.

Coincidentally, he's also got the right initials for the job - A.C.T. and has started attending acting workshops in Los Angeles to prepare him for his future roles. Outside of performing, Thomas keeps busy with Boy Scouts, sailing, snowboarding and skateboarding. He also has a background in modeling.

Before taking on his current role, Thomas costarred in the CBS television "Ghost Whisperer" series, which he said led him to develop an affinity for action films. Next, he plans to take a role in an upcoming LifeLine Entertainment independent feature film.

"Chrissa Stands Strong" will air at 1:15 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 10, and at 5:15 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 25, on HBO (channel 500 on Charter Communications cable). The movie also now is available on DVD.

For more information about Thomas or his brother, Jett, visit www.jettpatrick.com.

RISING STAR. Austin Thomas had a part in the newly released "Chrissa Stands Strong" movie. — Photo by Kelly Garrison

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Single Firm Takes On Task Of Sprucing Up Long Beach Boulevard
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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-January 9, 2009
Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

There's renovation, there's construction - and then there's "archupuncture."

That's the term Howard CDM President and CEO Martin Howard uses to describe the ideology behind a series of projects that he says have breathed new life into parts of north Long Beach. Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association Executive Director Blair Cohn said the company's efforts have boosted the appearance of several local structures.

"Martin has taken it upon himself to do all this," Cohn said. "He's doing a quiet facelift of Long Beach Boulevard, taking over the buildings and keeping the integrity of their look... He knows the viability of the area and is making it more beautiful and attractive."

A Long Beach resident for nearly 25 years, Howard said he remembers a bleak first impression in 2003 of what later would become his office headquarters at the Bixby Knolls Metro Center, 3777 Long Beach Blvd. He described the dilapidated structure as having been rendered useless following about a decade of aging and vandalism.

"It was a mess from head to toe," he said. "The air conditioning was torn up, the plumbing was torn up and the roof was leaking."

But Howard saw possibility.

"I fell in love with it," he said. "This building had a life of its own."

The company proceeded to invest in fixes with the help of a \$100,000 Long Beach Redevelopment Agency façade improvement bond. The result about a year later, Howard said, not only provided an ideal site for his company in the building's annex, but also attracted a slew of new occupants.

"It has filled with tenants over the past five years," he said.

That success, Howard said, spurred on a series of projects along Long Beach Boulevard that have turned old retail and other structures into more viable sites. Today, Davita Dialysis (3744 Long Beach Blvd.) and Virginia Hills Medical Plaza (3918 Long Beach Blvd.) are examples of such efforts.

"You create a statement by doing this," Howard said. "It enhances the neighborhood."

Plus, he said, the improvements give the area a boost in a tough economic time. With that in mind, Howard said he would continue to consider the budgets of potential tenants.

"You have to be practical," he said. "You have to build for your market. The investment we make is long-term. Rent needs to be reasonable."

Since its founding in 1972, Howard CDM has developed clientele throughout Long Beach and the rest of Southern California with its commercial construction, development and management services. Howard said that he has realized visions for the north Long Beach community with the support of city officials and residents.

In 2007, the city awarded Howard CDM a recognition certificate for its contributions to the community.

"I understand the power of terrific architecture and high quality projects," he said. "You have to have an imagination for areas that maybe have been left fallow."

For more about Howard CDM, visit www.howardcdm.net, and for Bixby Knolls, visit www.bixbyknollsinfo.com.

HIGH END. The Bixby Knolls Metro Center is attracting tenants with its renovation. —Photo courtesy Alan Sisto, Fresh Page Images

Section: Community News

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One Man's Contribution Will Feed Thousands At Rescue Mission
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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-January 14, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Last month, Long Beach resident Steve Bryson skipped out on buying all Christmas presents - with the exception of one magnanimous purchase.

That gift arrived at the Long Beach Rescue Mission (LBRM) in the form of a truckload of food weighing thousands of pounds. His donation, LBRM President and Chief Executive Officer Rev. James Lewis said, will provide an estimated 8,000 meals in the year to come during a time when contributions are far and few between.

"We get contributions throughout the year, but for someone to target the mission with such a large donation is pretty rare," he said. "It's a special blessing when an organization chooses to support the mission and our work. It's no small thing - what they allow us to do by partnering with us."

Bryson's donation came under the auspices of his newly created Never Forgotten Foundation - a grassroots effort overseen by himself and his family that he said hopes one day grow into a multi-million-dollar charity. The organization, he said, aims to help orphaned and impoverished children worldwide, but took on a local project to support people within the community at risk of going hungry.

"It was probably one of the most gratifying things we had ever done," Bryson said. "Our goal was to feed people and to get help to people as quickly as we could."

Bryson, chief executive officer of the Cypress-based Global Electronic Technology, Inc., launched the foundation about six months ago. As part of the outreach, his daughter, Samantha, recently traveled to Ethiopia to teach English and help at an orphanage for HIV-positive children.

"We're going to work hard as a family to build the foundation," Bryson said.

And, using mostly his money along with some donations from others, that's exactly what he did.

Bryson arrived at the mission on Monday, Dec. 22, in a 27-foot-long truck filled with 2,400 pounds of turkey, 400 pounds of rib eye, 50 pound bags of rice and 200 pounds of sausage along with vegetables, fruit, breakfast items, flower, pasta and more.

"We went straight out and bought it," he said. "We rented a truck and went to Costco."

LBRM staff said it was the largest single food donation in 22 years.

Lewis said it meant a lot for an organization seeking to provide up to 160,000 meals per year to the homeless and needy in the area.

"We're really blessed by the people who have reached out to help the needy at this time," Lewis said.

Long Beach Rescue Mission opened in 1972 to help people recover from cycles of homelessness.

Its programs provide food, clothing, shelter and spiritual guidance to needy men, women and children.

For more information about LBRM, visit www.lbrm.org.

To find out more about the Never Forgotten Foundation, call (949) 380-0345 or visit www.neverforgottenfoundation.org.

PLENTY OF FOOD. Steve Bryson stands amidst the truckload of food he donated to the Long Beach Rescue Mission, enough to make about 8,000 meals. —Photo courtesy Kevin Hoehn

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Blogger Chronicles Inauguration Trip

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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-January 14, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

In just days, two Long Beach brothers will disappear into a swarm of more than a million people during the Presidential Inauguration.

Andrew Reed, 23, says he knows what he's up against - but that hasn't stopped him from making every effort to ease the trip for anyone else interested in gathering for the historic ceremony.

"It started out as me wanting to chronicle traveling from the West to the East Coast," he said.

"Then I added the guide, because I thought it would be interesting... I was trying to provide a few tips for someone looking for a more concise guide."

The guide he's referring to can be found within an online blog under his pseudonym, Obamathon Man. It touts such features as public commentary as well as history, breaking news and information about Washington, D.C. He's also accepting "Obama-Gram" messages from site visitors that he will include on a poster, to be displayed during the ceremony.

"It was getting maybe 100 to 150 viewers a day," he said. "It's been attracting a little more traffic now."

As of Monday, Reed said they had reached Illinois after dodging some winter weather.

"The hotels booked so fast," he said. "I looked into flying out there, but the flights were more expensive."

So for the first time in his life, Reed opted to drive across the country, counting on a 2000 Nissan Sentra. As for lodging, they likely will stay with relatives in Richmond, Va. He's met a few people along the way, he said.

"I met someone who went to the 'I Have a Dream' speech," he said.

"When I'm old and gray, people will ask me what things I did. Attending this event will be one of them."

Government resources characterize Inauguration Day as typically cold with heavy traffic. Visitors often stand in lines waiting for several hours at a time - but the self-proclaimed Barack Obama advocate said the effort is worth the hassle.

"I remember watching right after the election at a coffee shop in Long Beach," Reed said. "I'm a supporter, and I was really happy.

"A bunch of people got together and were talking about how cool it would be to go and see it."

See the blog at www.obamathonman.blogspot.com.

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Firefighters Train For Giant Crane Rescue

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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-January 23, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

For Long Beach search and rescue team members, climbing at least 120 feet to the top of a giant crane was just business as usual on Thursday morning.

Using a complex cable system, the team simulated a stroke victim scenario by slowly lowering a crane operator to the ground at a container terminal on the Port of Long Beach's Pier F. The risky operation was one of many drills regularly conducted by the Long Beach Fire Department's Urban Search and Rescue experts to prepare workers for emergencies.

"These are really dangerous operations that don't happen everyday, but when they do, we need to be prepared," said Battalion Chief Frank Hayes. "It's a high-risk, low-frequency operation. Everything needs to be done correctly, or one misstep could be hazardous."

Rescuers spent about an hour gearing up in a crane cab, high above seawater and cement, before fastening two of their staff to a long cable leading to the blacktop. The would-be situation involved a machinery operator showing signs of debilitation from a stroke and the team's emergency response.

"There's an elevator where (the operator) could get down, but if he's midway, he's pretty much stuck," Hayes explained.

To carry out the operation, firefighters followed a narrow metal frame to the crane cab, where technicians would treat and then lower a victim to safety. Meanwhile, rescue boats and fire trucks helped with securing equipment. Crews also were on hand in case of an unlikely real-life event necessitating a water rescue.

"Rescuers are trained on a high technical level - above and beyond that which a normal firefighter has," Hayes said. "Teams have to stay proficient, which is why we have this continued education program."

That morning, light rain dampened the ground, but caused no complications. LBFD engineer Fernando Silva, who descended with ease as the "rescuer" assisting the would-be victim, said the operation had gone smoothly.

"It went great," Silva said. "It's a good training exercise for the Long Beach Fire Department and for the skills you need to work."

Firefighters followed the training with a debriefing that afternoon. Members of the Los Angeles City Fire Department were on scene to help train for a scenario necessitating a multi-team rescue.

"When something this complex comes into play, you need multiple rescue teams to sustain the energy level," Hayes said.

Earlier in the week, rescuers at Bluff Park had conducted a low-angle rope rescue drill, a type of rescue often used in riverbeds and embankments. Many practices like these, Hayes said, occur annually as a refresher course on saving lives.

"Everything is on a rotating schedule," he said.

And while mocking up life-threatening conditions does pose its own hazards, Hayes said, the risk is one that firefighters are willing to take.

"We've brought down people from cranes after they have had heart attacks," Hayes said. "...It is potentially risky, but that's why we do training, so that we have confidence in our tools and equipment."

Besides crane rescues, local firefighters also prepare to respond to medical, beach and waterway emergencies.

"I love it up there," Silva said of the training exercise. "I'd rather be up there than on the ground."

For more information about the Long Beach Fire Department, visit www.firechannel.org.

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Book Series Seeks To Foster Self-Esteem In Girls
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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-January 28, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Twenty-eight-year-old Kimi Fate-Gross has spent much of her life researching what fosters healthy development in youth.

Now, she and her sister, 24-year-old Megan Fate, have partnered to create a book series and a Long Beach-based publishing company that strive to do just that. Their self-started Kegan Fate Publishing company recently celebrated the release its first work, "Megan Hearts Baking," which they said teaches girls ages 4 to 8 self-esteem through an inspirational story about learning new skills.

"The idea is that Megan desires to learn something, so she goes to someone who knows it well - her mother," Fate-Gross said. "She enjoys the learning process, and afterward, she bakes and delivers cupcakes to a friend, who then is encouraged."

It's no coincidence that the book's central character shares the same name as one of its creators. Growing up, Fate-Gross said she remembers her sister's vivacious and positive outlook on life.

"Megan was always seeking, asking questions and wanting to get involved in everything," Fate-Gross said. "She always went to the people who knew it to learn it."

Today, Fate-Gross said, that outlook has provided inspiration for Kegan Fate Publishing, which soon will release its next book, "Megan Hearts Guitar." She and Megan said they hope the series will teach youngsters about developing new hobbies and passions, working through mistakes, discovering abilities and, ultimately, gaining confidence in themselves.

The story, Fate-Gross said, makes a connection to the real world through a collection of biographies compiled with the help several cupcake shops from around the United States. Store names include the Frosted Cupcakery on Second Street in Belmont Shore.

"It was something we included to let the girls know this can really happen," Fate-Gross said.

Born and raised in Long Beach, she said she grew up as a Girl Scout and developed an interest in studying youth development through her involvement with Hope for Long Beach, a ministry of Grace Brethren Church. She earned a master's degree in clinical psychology.

"From there, I just became interested in seeing young girls succeed," she said. "Most (who do) are involved in sports, church groups or something that helped develop the community. They're the ones who tried new things and sought after adventures."

Fate-Gross and her sister launched Kegan Fate Publishing using money that Megan had saved from winning \$10,000 on "The Price Is Right" game show in 2006. Their combined strengths, she said, made them ideal business partners.

"We knew we didn't want someone to change our mission and vision," Fate-Gross said. "She's a public speaker, and she talks on leadership; I make sure to meet the details."

So with help from writer Kathryn Fore and a team of mothers and chefs, Fate-Gross and her sister got to work on their first book. The result - a 112-page, softbound, illustrated publication - is what they call the first success of many.

"We'd like to grow big enough to bring in a few other unknown authors who also have a desire to help young people grow," she said. "We are authors with a purpose in our writing."

"Megan Hearts Baking" is on sale now for \$10.95 online at www.meganhearts.com.

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Master Plan To Define Arts Culture
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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-January 28, 2009
Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

A new Community Cultural Plan soon will provide guidelines for embracing and promoting the arts in Long Beach.

Community leaders say they have joined efforts to bring a new level of awareness and support to what Project Manager Lugene Whitley called an integral part of Long Beach life. Organizers gathered on Wednesday to discuss ideas for the new plan and will follow with a series of public comment forums in the months to come.

"We will get an idea of what's still valid and what things need to be enhanced in the future," Whitley said. "Given the challenging economic times, we want to look at how to create synergy between arts and cultural organizations. Beyond that, we want arts and culture to be an economic driver. We want more people to become aware of what's here."

Whitley said the plan would provide a vision for years to come in the arts and cultural community. Assessments will be largely through public comment and by taking into account an earlier plan completed in 1996.

"The cultural plan looks at arts and cultural access - and what needs there are in the community," she said. "It's what the community's vision is for next five to 10 years. It will be dictated by the community."

Arts Council for Long Beach Interim Executive Director Lindsay Shields said the document will aim to "make Long Beach a really creative place" by promoting its artists and arts organizations. Making that marketing goal a reality, she said, will require updating the years-old document.

"The overarching goal is to get every segment of Long Beach involved," Shields said. "There are so many arts organizations and artists within different areas that go untouched. They do good work."

WolfBrown Associates consultant Marc Goldring - who helped oversee the 1996 master plan - will lead public outreach in the next few months and likely will create a new draft by June. Details regarding a March 28 public comment forum will be announced in the near future.

"There will be other small outreach sessions in neighborhoods," Whitley said. "After a final (draft) is produced, we'll go back out into the community and share the results."

The original cultural plan is more than a decade old and includes an inventory of arts resources, an economic impact study and a strategic plan. Part of the mission of the Arts Council for Long Beach (formerly known as the Public Corporation for the Arts), a nonprofit organization that the city established in 1976, is to respond to the needs of the growing local arts community.

"Cultural plans should be updated at least every 10 years," Shields said. "The fabric of any city is its arts and culture, so we want all of those organizations to have those really well defined, so that they can be marketed and promoted."

Those who have a hand in the project include Arts Council board President Justin Hectus and Economic Development Bureau Director Robert Swayze. Much of the funding for the project so far has come from a grant from the Los Angeles County Arts Commission.

For information about the organization, visit www.artslb.org.

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Container Transfer Project Gets Review

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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-January 30, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

A proposal to grow a container shipping transfer site in northwest Long Beach has entered its public review phase.

Planners of the Intermodal Container Transfer Facility Modernization and Expansion Project have begun seeking suggestions regarding potential impacts to the environment. The project would swap diesel-fueled cranes for electrical ones, update old technology and reconfigure the site's entrance and railroad tracks at the a Long Beach rail yard.

"We need more capacity, and also, there is new technology out there that can reduce our emissions," said Zoe Richmond, Media Director for Union Pacific - the site operator. "This would benefit the company and the customers and get rid of our diesel equipment."

At the forefront of the \$300 million project are issues of operational efficiency and air quality improvement. Richmond said emissions caused by the ICTF's operations have sparked concern, namely in the area where a 10-foot wall separates the facility from a west Long Beach neighborhood.

"Air quality is an important issue for the community," Richmond said.

Replacing outdated equipment, she said, would increase efficiency at the facility while also reducing pollution through sustainable technology. Enhancements would make use of electric overhead cranes, cleaner tractors and low-emission locomotives.

Meanwhile, the main entrance for trucks would be relocated from Willow Street to Alameda Street. All of the changes allow the facility to more than double its number of containers handled per year from 725,000 to an estimated 1.5 million.

"If the gate isn't working efficiently, you can have trucks building up at Willow and Sepulveda streets," Richmond said. "We will also upgrade it with newer technology. Computers will identify the drivers and their cargo, and trucks won't idle as much, so they won't create as much emissions or traffic."

The ICTF is adjacent to intersections at the 405 and 710 freeways on East Sepulveda Boulevard, about five miles from both the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. Port trucks drive containers to the shipping facility via the Terminal Island (47) Freeway. At the facility, containers are placed on trains and transferred to the Alameda Corridor to downtown rail yards, where they get shipped off to places nationwide.

"The railroads haven't been the nicest neighbors, and we're definitely changing that," she said. "...The project will have benefits for everyone in the Long Beach port community."

And despite a slow economy, part of the project's aim remains to accommodate an influx of shipments more efficiently. Richmond said planners are preparing for a return in demand, whenever that may happen.

A public scoping meeting to discuss the Notice of Preparation and the Initial Study for the project will take place at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 11, at Stephens Middle School, 1830 W. Columbia St. The report is available for viewing at the Main Library, 101 Pacific Ave., or online at www.ictf-jpa.org.

For more information, call 590-4133.

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Studio Owner Works To Inspire Love Of Art In Children

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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-February 4, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Artist Vicky Ojerio says she knows what it's like to face barriers on the way to pursuing a lifelong passion.

A native of the Philippines, she said her parents could not afford to put her through art courses after she moved to the United States as a child. But today, she has funneled her love for creative works into a new Long Beach studio, Inspyr Arts, where she mentors youngsters as they engage in drawing, painting and more - all the while benefiting local schools.

"I want to use art to change lives," Ojerio said. "Even if it's just them feeling confident because of their art for one day, it inspires a different attitude. You have an idea, and art lets you put it on paper and make it real."

Ojerio gives students the option to donate 10% of their tuition to their schools. It's part of her mission, she said, to support the community through art.

"(The studio) is front for a nonprofit," she said. "I'm starting it for-profit, but it has a strong community advocacy role. I'm also working on a scholarship fund."

The studio, which opened last month, allows students in kindergarten through 12th grade to advance to different artistic levels, from "Apprentice" and "Artisan" to "Master," using black and white media, pastels, watercolors and oil paint. Students who achieve "Master" status work on bringing to life their own ideas. Meanwhile, specialty courses teach different types of art, such as life and anime drawing.

"I teach classical and modern art techniques," Ojerio said. "I fuse the two."

She said she is working to develop a program that would sponsor at-risk children or those who cannot afford art classes. Her clientele so far has included homeless and incarcerated youth. Today, a street art motif created by a former gang member hangs among other pictures in the studio.

Having worked with youth at the Boys & Girls Club and other after-school programs, Ojerio said she found it amazing that children as young as age 6 could paint with oils and learn advanced techniques.

That's why, she said, she coined her business name with a variation of the word meaning "to evoke movement."

"Things worked in my favor to open a studio," she said. "I thought I was fortunate and needed to do something for the community."

Outside of her studio, Ojerio said she creates murals for small businesses and has a bachelor's degree in art from California State University, Fullerton. She also has done work as a graphic designer.

Inspyr Arts is at 3910 E. Fourth St. Students receive one free trial art course, with prices thereafter ranging from \$65 to \$85 per month. Classes take place Monday through Saturday. For more information, call 342-6172 or e-mail inspyrarts@gmail.com.

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Nonprofits Cut In Face Of Crisis
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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-February 4, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

A number of organizations that exist to help the greater community in hard times have reported a struggle to pay for their own operations.

Such challenges, they say, are directly related to the widespread economic crisis that has left groups - including the WomenShelter of Long Beach and the American Red Cross' Greater Long Beach Chapter - searching for places to make cuts and save money. Judy Ross, executive director of the Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership, said she has witnessed firsthand the uphill battle nonprofits face to maintain their services.

"We need to make sure the situation we're all facing doesn't immobilize people to the point where they're afraid to carry out their programs, because the need for them has increased," she said. "It's a good time to look at and protect core programming."

The Nonprofit Partnership has provided information, consulting services, educational seminars, networking opportunities and more to community organizations since 1993. Even so, the economic downturn is forcing many groups to cut staff and services.

Nancy Kindelan, chief executive officer of the American Red Cross' Greater Long Beach Chapter, said her staff has felt the pinch.

"We've experienced some severe losses in investments and a radical decline in donations, and those we were hoping to get have been very difficult to get this year," she said. "The only responsible thing to do was reduce our expenses. We looked at our core mission of disaster relief and tried to protect that as much as possible."

On Sunday (Feb. 1), the chapter laid off two employees, reduced a number of full-time staff to part-time and cut staff salaries. In addition, the chapter announced it would close to the public at 4 p.m. on Fridays - one hour earlier than usual.

"You have no choice," Kindelan said. "When income is down, you have to cut expenses - and that almost always affects employees."

Disaster services remain top on the priority list, Kindelan said, since difficult financial circumstances can cause "more people to fall through the cracks."

To donate or find out more information about the Red Cross, call 595-6341 or visit www.redcrosslb.org.

The economy has put the WomenShelter of Long Beach, which helps victims of domestic violence, under a similar strain. Executive Director TuLynn Smylie said she estimated the number of clients staying at the shelter would increase by at least 100 this year. Donations and government funding, however, are dropping.

"We know that when the economy gets worse, domestic violence gets worse because of the stress it puts on families," she said.

Like the Red Cross, the WomenShelter is focusing on paying for existing services rather than expanding programs. Smylie said the shelter is banding together with other Los Angeles county programs to offer services.

For information about the shelter, or to donate, call 437-7233 or visit www.womenshelterlb.com.

"We never made a waiting list before, and we don't want to now," she said. "We want to see as many people as we possibly can or refer them."

Stacie Crompton-Hime, vice president of Marketing and Business Development at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center, explained that healthcare is not immune to current economic pressures. While the not-for-profit organization has not announced any decisions, its staff has begun identifying opportunities for cost reduction.

"We are currently evaluating all our operations and are being very thoughtful with where we place our resources," she said. "At this point, we have maintained services but are naturally concerned, of course, about the recession's impact on our hospitals and will continue to closely monitor the financial impacts of the economic situation."

Visit memorialcare.org/takeaction to get involved.

Ross said money from the state government - a now dwindling source - is critical for maintaining such programs. She advised nonprofits to maintain effective communication with a variety of funding sources.

"Nonprofits (groups), particularly those that are state-funded, are in a difficult situation," she said. "There is a general uncertainty as we move forward with organizations and programming... It's a very unsettling environment to work in."

Community members, Ross said, also play a key role in salvaging nonprofit efforts.

"Now, more than ever, is a great time to support organizations you care about," she said.

For more information about the Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership, visit www.lbnp.org.

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Scottish Clans Gather For Annual Festival Aboard Queen Mary

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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-February 6, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

A busy weekend of entertainment will honor the history behind a decades-old ocean liner built and launched in Scotland, which today has become an icon in Long Beach.

The 16th annual Scottish Festival and Games will kick off on Friday evening, Feb. 13, with music and will continue for the next two days with competitions, authentic Scottish food and ales, historical reenactments, activities and more dedicated to the heritage of the historic Queen Mary. Special Events Director John Adamson said the cross-cultural activities would provide an enjoyable experience for guests of all backgrounds.

"It brings together, not just people from the Scottish community, but also those who just have an interest in their heritage," he said. "...About 4,000 people attend each day."

On Friday, whisky expert Ray Pearson will commence the celebration at 6 p.m. with a single malt tasting. Later that evening, the Men of Worth folk duo will perform at 7:30 p.m. during a concert at the ship's Royal Theatre.

"It's usually a sold-out concert," Adamson said.

The rest of the activities will start at 9 a.m. on both Saturday and Sunday. Athletic competitions will take place first and will include sports such as "tossing the caber" - which challenges participants to balance and launch a heavy post through the air.

"Imagine a 25-foot-long, sawn-off telephone pole," Adamson said. "Someone picks it up from the bottom and leans it against their body - the whole idea is to heave it into the air, and it has to go end-over-end and land in the direction you were running.

"...There will be all kinds of sports that date back hundreds of years."

Festivities also will include sheep herding demonstrations, piping and dance competitions and vendor booths representing Scottish clans and associations. There, guests will have the opportunity to explore family heritages.

"Even if you don't belong to a clan, your name sometimes is part of a clan in some way," Adamson explained.

Singer Alex Beaton and musical groups Highland Way and Sligo Rags will provide entertainment throughout the weekend.

On Saturday, starting at 7:30 p.m., Eric Rigler and Bad Haggis along with the Los Angeles Scots Pipe Band will play during the seventh annual Plaidpalooza Concert in the Queen's Salon. Tickets cost \$12 and will be sold at the door.

Meanwhile, participants in the Classic Dart Tournament will compete for \$5,000 in cash prizes.

Complimentary admission to the festival will be provided to guests who preregister for two or more darting events.

A "kitchen piping" competition will conclude festivities at 8 p.m. on Sunday in the Art Deco Observation Bar.

"It's more freestyle, because pipers will have been in more rigid competitions," Adamson said. "It's like a jam session."

Built on the west coast of Scotland, the Queen Mary embarked on its maiden voyage to New York in 1936 and was the premiere trans-Atlantic cruise ship before it was converted to a World War II troopship.

It later functioned as a passenger ship until 1967, when it was docked off of downtown Long Beach.

The Scottish Festival and Games will begin Friday evening, Feb. 13, and continue from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 14 and 15, at the Queen Mary, 1126 Queens Hwy.

One-day admission costs \$20 per adult, \$18 per senior or individual with military identification and \$13 per child.

Two-day passes, per person, cost \$26, \$24 and \$17, respectively. For hotel room package information, call (800) 437-2934.

More information is available by calling 437-2934 or visiting www.queenmary.com.
SHOWING THE TARTAN. A parade of clans on at last year's Scottish Festival illustrates the heritage of the island. —Gazette file photo

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Temple Honors Holocaust Survivors For Service To Community
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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-February 18, 2009
Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Members of Temple Beth Shalom of Long Beach will turn their attention to two Holocaust survivors this month during an annual award ceremony.

"They have been with the congregation since almost the beginning," event Co-Chair Shelley Carl said. "They are known and loved for their unending commitment and dedication."

Forty-seven-year Long Beach residents Yetta and Rabbi Chazzan David Kane will be honored for what Carl called a life's work of serving others.

"We both lived through the horrific time of Nazis, and we were thankful to come to a country where we had freedom of religion and to pursue our dreams," Kane said. "We decided we would make a tremendous pair to go for those goals."

As a rabbi, Kane served as a U.S. Army chaplain at Fort Ord and was ordained in 1957. As part of his duties, he also visited hospitals to comfort the sick. His support was vital enough to at one point save a patient's life, he said.

"I went to visit someone who was going to have heart surgery the next day," he said. "As I was looking at the (medical) chart, the nurse comes in and says, 'Doctor, this man is not breathing well.'"

Kane, who chuckled at the thought of his misnomer as a physician, said he remembered being pulled into another room. There, he saw the problem.

"His oxygen mask was off," Kane said. "So I put it back on his face and said, 'I'm not a doctor.'"

Today, Kane and Yetta maintain their involvement at the temple through everything from volunteer work to prayer.

"I'm busier now than when I was working," he said. "This was my calling. It was more a labor of love than anything."

"Temple Beth Shalom was, and still is, my home away from home. We consider each member of the temple part of an extended family."

Even strangers he has treated as family. Yetta said she remembered answering a request from Long Beach Memorial Hospital about 30 years ago to care for a sailor who had injured his foot while unloading a cargo ship.

"The young man spoke no English," she said. "He stayed with us for a few months."

As a child, Yetta often wore handmade outfits of potato sack material to keep from dirtying the few nice outfits she owned. Her dolls were handmade, too, and filled with earth before being sewn into shape. Her vivid smile and kept appearance today hides the years she lived without a toothbrush and only lye to wash her hair.

"We were immigrants, and we didn't speak the language, but we didn't expect anyone to give us anything," said Yetta, who earlier worked as both a seamstress and a teacher.

The couple's worldliness showed in their conversation at the kitchen table as they discussed optimal word choices to make from their lexis of words in Yiddish, Polish, Hebrew and other languages.

"My success, my strength, comes right from her," Kane says, gazing toward his wife. "Of all the degrees I have, the zayde (which translates to grandpa) is most honorable."

He and his wife met at a refugee dance in Los Angeles and married in 1952.

"When we first got married," she said, "We will finish the way we started, because in the end, it will be just you and me," Kane said.

Kane has three children and a handful of grandchildren. His eldest, Long Beach resident Dr. Bryna Kane, has followed in their footsteps to help others by offering free tattoo removal services to ex-gang members in exchange for community service hours.

"We try to project the fact that children are so lucky to have the opportunity to study and to be in this beautiful country of ours. We tell them, 'Anyone in the country can better themselves if they work for it,'" Kane said.

Temple Beth Shalom of Long Beach, at 3635 Elm Ave., will host the Gala Celebration Tribute Dinner at 6:30 p.m., Feb. 28. Admission costs \$136 per person. For reservations, call 426-6413 or e-mail office@tbslb.org.

"As long as God gives us life," Kane said, "we will live up to the honor we've received."

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City Tests Super Hybrid For Its Fleet

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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-February 18, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Touting a leafy green logo across their passenger doors, two white Toyota Prius models parked at the city's Fleet Services headquarters closely resembled the same hybrids frequently seen on today's roadways.

But under the trunk of both compact sedans rested a high-power lithium ion battery, capable of increasing the cars' efficiencies to 100 miles-per-gallon.

Mayor Bob Foster and other city officials were onsite Tuesday morning to unveil the new technology, part of a one-year pilot program aiming to save money and energy.

"This demonstrates that the city is on the cutting edge of innovation," Foster said. "... If it goes further, we'll convert more of the fleet."

Four of the vehicles now will rove Long Beach streets using the plug-in battery power.

If the pilot proves worth the investment, the city could opt to retrofit more vehicles with the technology, Fleet Services Acting Manager Carlos Velasquez said.

"The next step within the year is to see how successful the pilot plan is," Velasquez said. "We hope to add more to our inventory."

Current electricity rates would allow the city to spend less than half as much on each tank of gas. In addition, plug-in hybrids need refills only about once per month.

"The city is now paying about \$2 a gallon for gas," Velasquez said. "By the end of spring, that could go back up even more. The (plug-in) price is very attractive when you think of being able to charge during off-peak hours."

Velasquez said that, along with lowering fuel costs, the cars would lessen the city's dependence on foreign oil and reduce air pollutants. Battery pack retrofits for each hybrid cost \$10,000, but likely will be paid for through fuel savings, he added.

"We already had Priuses that were a couple of years old," Velasquez said. "We thought, 'How can we go further?' So we started this pilot program on the notion that it would expand."

The city will primarily use the vehicles for different aspects of community development, such as going out into the field for building inspections. City staff also may use the plug-ins for transportation to meetings and other functions.

"These two will go to whoever has the highest vehicle usage," Velasquez said.

Each vehicle uses technology developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and patented by A123Systems.

"This was one of the first plug-in technologies to be approved," Velasquez said. "And the city was among the first to make the retrofit."

The city's rolling stock, or fleet, is made up of 1,700 pieces of equipment, Velasquez said. Of those, approximately 300 are powered by compressed natural gas, liquefied natural gas, propane, electricity and biodiesel - with a growing number also being powered by hybrid technology. Long Beach has used alternative fuels for about 30 years, starting with compressed natural gas vehicles in the 1970s.

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New Harvest Organization Puts Surplus Produce To Use

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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-February 20, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

When life gives you extra lemons, give them away.

That's the philosophy behind a new initiative being conducted through the North Long Beach-based Food Finders, Inc., which helps feed people in need throughout the city and parts of Orange

County. East Long Beach resident Cathy Clarkin said she founded the effort, known as SoCal Harvest, to provide community members with a venue to share their "backyard bounties" with others less fortunate.

"I wanted to provide people with an outlet to help people eat healthier," she said. "That, coupled with my interest in gardening and my neighbors who had more fruit on their trees than they could handle."

Her new organization, which launched last month, collects food donations from residents who have a surplus of produce from backyard gardens, fruit trees and other sources. Contributions are taken to Food Finders, where they then go out to food banks at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Christian Outreach in Action, Centro Shalom and other affiliated agencies.

"It's an avenue of food donation we haven't yet touched upon," said Diana Lara, vice president of program and volunteer services for Food Finders. "We're in markets, restaurants and different venues - and we have people who have come in and donated (produce), but this is the first time, since I've been here, that someone's put it all together."

Residents can bring donations, which are tax-deductible, to designated drop-off sites on Sundays or to Food Finders, at 3434 Atlantic Ave., during normal business hours. Volunteers are on-hand to pick up produce as well, and can help with harvesting upon request.

James Perfitt, Clarkin's 5-year-old son, is among those who have taken an interest in SoCal Harvest, she said.

"It's something you can do with your kids," Clarkin said. "You're not only giving back to the community and being a role model, but you're giving kids a way to enjoy time outside."

On Monday, Jan. 19, SoCal Harvest garnered 900 pounds of produce, which was sent to three local food banks. Such a service, Lara said, is important for Food Finders' mission, given a recent drop in donations due to the national economic downturn.

"We've noticed a decline in the amount of food," she said. "Stores are cutting back on ordering."

Clarkin said she has been encouraged by the number of people interested in getting involved, although she added that she still is hoping for more donations and volunteers - this coming from a mother who has spent much of her career as an environmental chemist and who only last year took up gardening.

"It was really challenging, and at first I didn't really know what I was doing, but I thought, 'If it's not working out, I'll learn from it and get better,'" she said.

Residents are invited to attend a planning meeting for the organization at 1 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 28, at Clarkin's home. E-mail info@socalharvest.org for details.

"I was amazed that the interest is so great and that people have so much extra food," she said. "It has pushed me to take this even further."

For more information about SoCal Harvest, visit www.socalharvest.org.

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FOCL Art Walks Add To Lagoon
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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-February 25, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Nature enthusiasts now have another avenue through which to explore Colorado Lagoon - the arts.

A new Creative Arts initiative is in the works to add to a plethora of educational and outreach programs organized by the Friends of Colorado Lagoon (FOCL). Coordinator Timothy Dunham says participants will have a new way to experience the 36-acre East Long Beach estuarine habitat.

"Toxicology reports have their place, but it's just numbers to me," he said. "I'm thinking outside the normal realm of where art traditionally belongs."

Highlighting the upcoming events will be a series of art walks to site-specific works that would be temporarily set up at the lagoon. Other activities will include music nights and monthly bike rides. Public meetings will help determine dates and times as well as the exact direction that Creative Arts will take. Events will be listed at www.coloradolagoon.org.

"Except for the existing education programs, this program is pretty much in its initial stages," Dunham said. "We plan to dig posts into the sand and hang or install pieces. It would be a venue for local artists."

Education programs at the lagoon for the past two years have included discussions, nature walks and regular cleanups. This year's schedule also will include an Earth Day celebration.

"There are so many other ways people can express themselves in nature," said FOCL Education Director Taylor Parker. "It seems appropriate that we would facilitate this."

Community members also have gotten involved in several recent Wetland Habitat Restoration Parties to help remove harmful plant species from the area. California State University, Long Beach, students have taken a particular interest in the restoration, Dunham said.

"We've helped a few people figure out what they want to do with their lives," he said.

Dunham, who works as an x-ray technologist at the Veterans Affairs Long Beach Healthcare System, launched his own Some Things Creative company about a year ago to feed his passion for

photography and the outdoors. He will use those passions, he said, to document lagoon outreaches through a new Daily Lagoon Report online.

"I love shooting photos and being in nature," he said. "This last year was a huge growing year for me in my career and my life, so I felt it was time to take that energy and put it to use in Long Beach."

Since mid-December, progress at the lagoon has been largely suspended until further notice as a result of an order to halt work funded by state bonds. The decision impacted two major grants totaling \$4.3 million. The recent passage of the state budget agreement should free that logjam soon.

The \$15 million restoration project proposes to clean out the underground culvert that connects Alamitos Bay to the Pacific Ocean through Marine Stadium and construct an open channel to improve circulation. In addition, it will repair the tidal and draining system, remove contaminated sediment from the lagoon and add native vegetation to feed and shelter wildlife.

A public meeting about the project will take place at 6 p.m. Thursday, March 12, at Lowell Elementary School, 5201 E. Broadway. In addition, restoration advocates will be on-site during Dunham's upcoming photography show from 4 to 6 p.m. this Saturday, Feb. 28, at 4th Street Vine, 2142 E. Fourth St.

To read the Daily Lagoon Report, visit www.coloradolagoon.blogspot.com.

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Designer Opens Gallery To Give Space To Area Artists

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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-February 27, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Long Beach resident Ali Amani is a kitchen designer and cooking enthusiast who says art can take on many forms.

His brand new FA4 Gallery on Anaheim Street, he said, epitomizes that philosophy by offering budding artists a quality, affordable space to showcase their work. Such a resource, he explained, often proves vital for creative professionals struggling to make a name for themselves in a competitive industry.

"It's unorthodox in the sense that we provide a beautifully and well-designed space for artists to put up their show, and they rent the gallery for minimal fees," he said.

For Amani, opening FA4 was more a labor of love than anything, he said. Since he doesn't charge artists a percentage of their commission, rental fees essentially make up his revenue. His ultimate aim, he said, is to transform FA4 into a nonprofit.

"I'm excited about the possibilities," he added.

Tall, beamed ceilings coated in jet black paint contrast against the gallery's pallid walls, freshly decorated with single-dimension art pieces that encompass both the abstract and the literal, the vibrant and the monochromatic. Amani's footsteps echo across a concrete floor as he details his motives for opening the site.

"It's very hard to make a living out of art," he said. "This is a community-based gallery that's affordable for the masses and for artists - especially groups of artists."

The gallery idea was fueled by his wife and daughter, who he said inspired him to combine all of his strengths.

"She gave me a push," Amani explained. "She said, 'Why don't you do what you love?'"

His focus thus far has remained on local art, with an admitted tendency toward that of students from the California State University, Long Beach.

It was in building FA4 (Fine Art Building 4), at the school's art department, that Amani said he cultivated his passion for design.

"I took classes there," he said. "(Students) would always say, 'I'm heading over to FA4.'"

On Friday, Feb. 20, Amani opened his doors with a reception of about 200 people. He provided the provisions, a service he said he offered as part of his mission to help artists thrive in their careers.

"Food has always been a means of bringing people together," he said.

Amani said he would like to see his gallery branch out as both a venue for art and design-related educational events and musical performances. Outside of his new title as a gallery owner, he heads Amani Design, Inc., located on East Broadway, and spends much of his free time pursuing his other favorite hobby - cooking.

Today, work on the walls denotes an assortment of cross-cultural and multi-skilled talent, from tattoo art renderings to abstract landscapes. Artists showing at FA4 include Adam Wise, Aimee Ricafrente, Betsy Lohrer-Hall, Heather Moye, Nooshin Amani and Parviz Payghamy.

FA4 Gallery is at 3708 E. Anaheim St. The site measures 15 by 50 feet, with 12-foot-high ceilings. Amenities include wireless Internet, a window storefront, track lighting, a kitchenette and restroom. An introductory fee is available to artists for \$85 per day. For more information, call 961-3708, e-mail fa4gallery@gmail.com or visit www.fa4gallery.com.

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Queen Mary To Be Floating Classroom

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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-February 27, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Reading, flashcards and homework - these are a few ways students can absorb educational material about national history, physical science and other topics.

But what if they could spend time in the corridors of an iconic venue brimming with tales about everything from Art Deco and World War II to engineering principles and other sciences? That's what one new program is striving to do for youth in Long Beach schools.

Waves of the Past will begin this month at the Queen Mary, offering Long Beach Unified School District students field trips at no cost through the support of several organizations. Queen Mary Leadership Coalition Chairman John Thomas said the effort aims to help youth grades three through 12 apply their classroom learning to real-life, tangible experiences.

"Kids would get connected to the arts and sciences as well as math and climate - you begin to see how all those factors in life play a role in the operation of an ocean liner," he explained.

"It's one thing to hear about Winston Churchill," added Bruce Vancil, Steamship Historical Society of America (SSHSA) Western Region vice president. "It's another to walk on the same decks and to know you're in the same place where important things happened."

Organizers announced the launch of the program's pilot phase after about a year of planning. In its initial stages, Waves of the Past will focus primarily on the history of the Queen Mary, although - with enough support - it could branch out to serve a greater number of students and include such topics as physical science, design and fine art, Thomas said.

"They are ushered onto the ship, given a lecture and a tour with the story of the Queen Mary," he said.

Thomas said such programs are vital to a community where some children could otherwise never make a trip to the historical destination. Organizers will select classes for Waves of the Past based on the program's relevance to students' current studies.

"It's a wonderful teaching asset right in the backyard of the school district... Many kids may have not been to the Queen Mary yet," he said. "Getting them across the (Queensway) Bridge sets the table for the opportunity for their minds to open up. It gets them out in the elements."

With a startup cost of \$8,000, the program has just enough funding for its first phase. Coordinators, however, say they will need thousands of dollars more to expand, or even just maintain, Waves of the Past. Bringing 35 students and a teacher to the ship, with lunches included, will cost an estimated \$1,000 per class.

The Queen Mary is home to a number of themed tours, but its new program, Vancil said, is unlike any other in the ship's recent history. Support has been provided by the Queen Mary, Hostmark Hospitality Group, the Art Deco Society of Los Angeles and SSHSA's Southern California Chapter.

"This is a long-anticipated program," Thomas added.

To find out how to support Waves of the Past through volunteer efforts or tax-deductible donations, call (949) 232-3583.

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Alamitos Bay Marina Plan Has Rowers Calling Foul

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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-March 4, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

A throng of residents gathered Monday evening to voice concerns about a proposed renovation many say could create hazards at the highly-frequented, historic Marine Stadium.

A presentation by the city's Marine Advisory Commission at the Pete Archer Rowing Center detailed plans for a complete overhaul of Alamitos Bay, which includes in its bounds the popular water recreational facility. Sentiments included concerns over general safety and the narrowing of a channel often used for boat races.

"Encroachment has been getting worse over the years," said Keith Johnson, president of the Long Beach Junior Crew, which uses the facility for its programs. "...We're having accidents out there more frequently. This is a huge safety issue. We've been squeezed out to where we don't have any water."

Plans call for rebuilding 1,647 boat slips and installing new docks and pilings. It would include seawall repairs, waterway dredging, restroom replacement, parking lot refurbishment and the rebuilding of seven basins at the east Long Beach marina.

Marine Bureau Manager Mark Sandoval called the rebuild a necessary part of meeting boater demands and increasing the site's revenue. In addition, he said, Alamitos Bay has seen electrical and other failures and is at least 10 years overdue for a renovation.

A channel near basins 3 and 4, beneath Davies Bridge near the Marina Shipyard, largely makes up the area in question. There, docks would be extended into existing lanes 1 and 6 on either side.

Sandoval said those lanes for years have remained essentially unused for recreational activities.

"It will cover up what's not available in day-to-day current times," he said. "...You have four lanes now - you'll have four lanes after the rebuild."

Johnson suggested that if more energy was spent on enhancing the stadium as a sporting venue, it could produce a stream of revenue comparable to that of the proposed rebuild.

"We could feature some of the most beautiful regattas here that would generate so much more revenue," he said. "We have a solution."

In addition, residents said that kayakers, paddlers, swimmers and others who use the site would see more congestion in an already heavily-trafficked area.

John Nunn Vice President of the Long Beach Rowing Association's board of directors, echoed the need for maintaining safety and called the stadium a unique asset with great historical significance.

According to Sandoval, the proposed elimination of an estimated 320 slips to make room for a smaller number of bigger boats could actually ease boating traffic.

A Marine Advisory Commission will address the proposed rebuild during its regularly scheduled meeting at 2:30 p.m. Thursday, March 12, at Long Beach Yacht Club, 6201 Appian Way.

The project would use a design-build bid, which would require a contractor to take responsibility for both the ultimate design and the engineering of the project. It would cost an estimated \$88 million, \$22 million of which has been secured through the California Department of Boating and Waterways and the city.

An Environmental Impact Report being prepared now will assess the project before it goes to the city's Planning Commission and, ultimately, the California Coastal Commission.

Construction could start by the end of the year and would take four to five years to complete.

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Red Cross Honors Hometown Heroes

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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-March 4, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

A routine investigation of an unoccupied vehicle last February quickly became anything but routine for Long Beach Harbor Patrol Officer Sgt. Doug Rangel.

As he prepared to have the car towed from under the west end of the Gerald Desmond Bridge, Rangel said he spotted what appeared to be a suicide note. Immediately, he called for backup and within minutes found himself negotiating with a man who had expressed intentions to jump from the edge.

"Due to the nature of this person's position on the bridge and of the note, there was no time to call a negotiator," he said.

The man sat, legs dangling from the steel mesh walkway lining the outside of the overpass.

Rangel had little to grip hold of as he carefully maneuvered over the bridge, conversing with the man as a distraction while a police officer approached from behind.

Finally, both moved close enough to subdue him.

"I spoke with him for about four minutes before we pulled him off the bridge," Rangel said. "When it all ends well, you're glad you were able to do something. This guy has a family and people who care about him, and you're just happy to pass on good news."

Staff from the Greater Long Beach Chapter of the American Red Cross have since taken notice of Rangel's actions, along with the heroic efforts of more than 20 other people credited for saving lives.

The organization's fifth annual Hometown Heroes Awards Ceremony will recognize each of them during a breakfast celebration on Tuesday, March 10, at the Hyatt Regency Long Beach.

"It's the feel-good event of the year," event chair Mollie Beck said. "It celebrates our mission statement. These heroes embody our message."

Stories of each hero - including Deborah Hanson, credited for scaling a six-foot chain link fence to pull three victims from the smoking wreckage of a helicopter crash on Catalina Island - will busy much of that morning.

"We all need good news right now," Beck said in a press release. "We call this the feel good event of the year. Our neighbors, ordinary people, ran to help somebody in need."

During the event, the Red Cross also will present its inaugural Outstanding Business Hero of the Year Award to Boeing Corporation for its support of the Ready When the Time Comes program, which trains volunteers from local companies in disaster relief.

The Greater Long Beach Chapter of the American Red Cross, at 3150 E. 29th Street, provides disaster relief, youth leadership programs, life saving courses and other services. Its Hometown Heroes event launched in 2004.

The awards ceremony will take place at 7:30 a.m., Tuesday, March 10, at the Hyatt Regency Long Beach.

Admission costs \$50 per person.

To register, call 595-6341 or visit www.redcrosslb.org.

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Voices-Visions Features Man Who Uses Poetry To Fight Cancer

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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-March 4, 2009

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

As part of a weeklong celebration honoring the practice of oral history, one man will share a story of survival he credits in part to poetry.

Long Beach resident Richard Harvey will host two workshops aimed at sharing the healing properties of creative expression during a citywide festival of arts and literature, known as Voices – Visions.

At 43 years old, Harvey overcame brain cancer and has since conducted numerous events promoting his philosophies about how to deal with trying circumstances.

"This oral history is about getting a devastating disease and learning how to focus on the outcome I want," Harvey said. "It's got a lot of value, not just for cancer survivors, but for people struggling with major life challenges... Storytellers have something people can relate to or learn from."

Participants in his workshop will hear an introduction about concepts of expression before generating their own "vocabulary of hope" word list, he said. Along with hearing Harvey's story of survival and some of his own writing, they will have the opportunity to generate their own written and illustrated works.

"I appreciate art and like to stay in touch with what's going on in the city," he said. "This event seemed like a good match for me."

Harvey for years worked as a teacher for at-risk youth and today lives in Wrigley.

His life, he said, changed about four years ago after he woke up in an intensive care unit following brain surgery for stage-three cancer.

"Throughout treatment, I've done better than expected in everything, and this, I believe is because I've focused on that," he said. "It's not what happens to you; it's what you do about it."

Healing Through Creativity workshops are free and will take place at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 11, at Viento y Agua and Friday, March 13, in room P104 at the Long Beach City College Liberal Arts Campus. To register, e-mail info@lemons-to-lemonade.com; or, for more information, visit www.lemons-to-lemonade.com.

Harvey's program is part of a festival kicking off Friday, March 6, that will feature performers, speakers and local celebrities.

Many programs will focus on this year's featured book, "Three Cups of Tea," by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin.

On Friday, March 6, author Greg Mortenson will sign books and host a discussion during a sold-out event at the Carpenter Performing Arts Center. Meanwhile, a collection of multimedia performances in the form of poetry, art and music will take place on Wednesday, March 11, during Long Beach I Love You, a public event at the Aquarium of the Pacific.

For information, call 570-1930.

Voices – Visions will conclude with a Spoken Word Festival from 6 to 10 p.m. Saturday, March 14, at the Lafayette Building, 140 Linden Ave. There, guests can partake in a performance and dance party with appearances by poets Jerry Quickly, Beau Sia, Eitan Kadosh and Mindy Nettifee.

Other programs throughout the week catering to the community will include video presentations, plays, children's story times, book discussions, music, craft-making and more. A complete list of event dates and times is available at www.artslb.org.

"Three Cups of Tea" is an autobiography that tells the story of Greg Mortenson as he attempts to climb the mountain K2.

He nearly loses his life, before being saved by people in a remote village where children were taught by writing in the dirt with sticks.

The book follows his subsequent efforts to build schools in remote regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The event combines the former Smithsonian Week with Long Beach Reads One Book and is the result of a partnership between the Long Beach Public Library Foundation and the Arts Council for Long Beach.

The foundation has organized Long Beach Reads One Book for several years with help from city libraries, while the Arts Council has fulfilled the city's contract with the Smithsonian.

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Smooth's Event Benefits Young Cartoonist

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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-October 6, 2008

Author: Kelly Garrison

Twelve-year-old Bryce Chesser - the artist behind Gazette Newspapers' weekly "32nd Street" comic strip - says he has big dreams to make a career out of cartooning.

But Chesser is struggling to keep at bay a rare and incurable genetic disorder that his parents say has set back his physical development and become an obstacle for their son. So in an effort to support his goals and find a cure for his condition, community supporters have teamed up to host a "Friends Helping Friends" benefit on Thursday at Smooth's Sports Grille downtown.

"It's made me miss a lot of school and have extra work to do," Chesser said of his condition. "I get far behind. I'm looking forward to not having to go to the infusion center."

He suffers from what is called Hunter Syndrome, or MPS II. It is a form of mucopolysaccharidoses and occurs in the absence of enzymes that would otherwise break down certain molecule chains in the body. The result can affect growth, development, appearance, organ function and other aspects of health.

"He doesn't like to dwell on the physical things though," said his father, Steve Chesser.

He said his son has seen improvement with the help of enzyme replacement therapy, but there is no cure for the disease. And Chesser, a seventh grader at McAuliffe Middle School, has missed out on much of his education while undergoing treatments that he said "seem like they take an eternity" to complete.

"Now he's growing and doing all the things a 12-year-old boy should be doing, but he still has to miss school and he has a lot of challenges," Steve said. "It's not a cure. It's a treatment to slow it down."

In 2004, Smooth's Sports Grille owner John Morris offered to host an annual fundraiser to support research for the disease. This year marks the fifth time he has helped put on the benefit, which includes dinner and an auction led by Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe.

"It's a group of friends coming together to help a good cause," Steve said. "The outpouring of community support over the years has been so gratifying to see. Bryce's story moves people. He's a brave kid who has overcome a lot."

Organizers said they are hoping to garner another \$50,000 to add to the \$250,000 raised so far. Proceeds will go toward research grants at the National MPS Society.

"We're working as hard as we can to raise money for research," Steve said. "One of biggest challenges is raising awareness."

Friends Helping Friends will begin at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 9, at Smooth's Sports Grille, 144 Pine Ave. Tickets are tax-deductible and cost \$125 or \$1,000 for a 10-person table. For details, call 889-3544.

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New Manager Selected For Animal Care Services Bureau

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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-November 19, 2008

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Controversy has spurred changes at a facility that recently came under scrutiny for questionable treatment of animals.

Just months after the resignation of its manager amid reports about the quality of care at Long Beach Animal Care Services (ACS), city officials have announced their selection of acting business manager John Keisler as the new Animal Care Services Bureau manager. Keisler said his new position would allow him to take a more proactive approach in enforcing employee protocols and preventing any mistreatment of animals.

"We've made a lot of efforts to redefine roles and responsibilities," he said. "Primarily, my job will be to manage the financial budget and personnel issues, but also to help with strategic partnerships in the community."

The shelter, he said, has taken several steps to remedy issues that earlier this year led to questions about two botched animal euthanasias as well as operations at ACS. Changes in the works include revising policies, recruiting additional veterinary assistance, improving internal communications and enhancing employee training.

"The incidents were symptoms of larger structural issues," Keisler said.

The shelter, he added, also has improved its external communications by clarifying its mission to ensure the welfare of animals. A revamped Web site launched a few months ago now details services more thoroughly and publicizes animals that are up for adoption. Ultimately, animal care staff said they hope to increase adoptions and decrease the number of euthanasias.

"A bigger issue emerged - we realized media and residents as well as others had no idea what we do," Keisler said.

The Animal Care Services Bureau, at the P.D. Pitchford Companion Animal Village, functions with a \$3.5 million budget and employs 44 staff members. An investigation into the facility began this March when an e-mail leaked to the media concerning Animal Control employees who had mishandled the euthanising of a pit bull. Reports of a second incident involving a feral cat later surfaced.

According to reports, one employee took the animal out of its cage without sedating it, resulting in a painful struggle before the animal was euthanised. Reports of a second incident involving a feral cat later surfaced. An attempt to euthanize the cat failed, and the animal was left in a cage for more than six hours before it was discovered and dealt with.

"I believe we have one of the strongest policies now, and I'm proud that it meets an extremely humane standard," Keisler continued. "If we learn from the bad, we'll emerge a lot stronger and better than we were."

Department of Health and Human Services Director Ronald Arias said Keisler boasts strong management skills necessary for the position. He was appointed with the help of City Manager Pat West following a national search and an ensuing interview process.

"John brings a unique number of qualities to the position," Arias said. "He's a professional administrator, his strengths are in his organization, and he's a tremendous leader."

A Long Beach resident, Keisler has worked as both a management and policy analyst. He earned a bachelor's degree from St. Olaf College in Minnesota as well as a master's degree in public administration from the University of Southern California.

"I'm extremely grateful for the support of staff over the last few months and for the tremendous support of community members," Keisler said.

For more information, visit www.longbeach.gov/acs.

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Firefighters Sent Throughout Region
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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-November 19, 2008

City firefighters responded to wildfires in other counties this week and last after infernos swept through Southern California, prompting the need for backup.

Strike teams were dispatched to help control fires in both Santa Barbara and Orange counties last week as they burned through thousands of acres, triggering evacuations and damaging structures along the way. Public Information Officer Capt. Jackawa Jackson said the Long Beach Fire Department sent 44 members of its staff to help with supervising operations, structure protection and controlling the blazes.

"Winds have died down, but they still have personnel out on the fire line looking for hot spots and making sure there are no flare-ups," he said. "They don't want to take any chances and have it flare up again."

The first team deployed on Wednesday to the Tea Fire, which ignited last Thursday, Nov. 13. Once firefighters had controlled the fire to an extent, the Long Beach team moved on to the Sayre Fire in Los Angeles County.

The city sent out a second team to a fire that broke out in Riverside County and later spread to Orange County. Each team included two battalion chiefs and five engine companies, totaling 22 people per group.

Jackson said teams would return as soon as the fires dissipated. By Tuesday (Nov. 18), the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection reported that incidents were at least 70% contained, with the Tea Fire 100% contained.

Over the summer, firefighters stepped in to protect Northern California communities after electrical storms ignited about 1,000 fires in the area. The department deployed close to 30

members of its workforce to several sites, where they guarded residential areas from damage that could otherwise ensue from the blazes.

- Kelly Garrison

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Even Worst Off Have Cause To Give Thanks

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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-November 19, 2008

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Three months ago, Matthew De Felice reached what he called the lowest point in his life as he struggled to overcome alcoholism.

Then he found a second home and what he now calls his "extended family." So this Thanksgiving, De Felice says he'll be showing gratitude to the Long Beach Rescue Mission, one of many organizations throughout the community offering meal services for the annual holiday.

"Since the end of August, my life got turned around, and I owe it all to the mission," he said. "I'm grateful for everything it provides."

The shelter opened in 1972 to help people recover from cycles of homelessness. Its programs provide food, clothing, shelter and spiritual guidance to needy men, women and children and this year will serve at least 100 people with Thanksgiving dinner on Wednesday (Nov. 26) and breakfast on Thursday (Nov. 27).

"We serve meals everyday, but we try to do really nice meals during the holidays," Volunteer Coordinator Jenn Gold said. "People just show up on the day-of, and we feed as many as we are capable of. It's great to see the community come together and to see all the food donations come in. Volunteers encourage people here by talking to them, and guests are so grateful to be here."

While the mission has enough volunteers for this year's Thanksgiving outreach, community members still can help with future programs. To find out more about Rescue Mission outreaches, call 216-7610.

Also among special events planned by local charities, the Salvation Army has partnered with Ristorante daVinci once again to provide an upscale Thanksgiving meal. The event will invite men undergoing rehabilitation for substance abuse and other issues to reconnect with families, said Gail Crandall, an assistant to Major Glen Madsen, commanding officer for the local division.

To find out more about the Salvation Army, call 426-7637.

While Thanksgiving-themed specials and events take place throughout the day at local restaurants, hotels, senior centers and convenience stores, the Christian Outreach In Action

nonprofit will serve a family meal on the morning of Saturday, Nov. 29. Organizers said they expect between 100 and 140 guests to attend. For more information, call 432-1440.

Until then, the organization has invited community members to donate everything from turkeys and hams to men's clothing, toiletries and unwrapped new toys during a donation drop-off at the Marketplace, at the corner of Pacific Coast Highway and Second Street.

More information about community charities can be found at www.longbeach.Gox/health.

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Mom Escapes Abuse, Gives Thanks

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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-November 26, 2008

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

This Thanksgiving, a local mother of three will celebrate liberation from domestic violence.

She has a lot to express gratitude for, she said, starting with WomenShelter of Long Beach - the place where she sought support when her life took a turn for the worse.

"I went to a lot of domestic violence classes and abuse programs for most of my life," she said. "This one finally made me realize I'm not the problem. I'm blessed for everything I have today and especially that I don't have to go back to the abuse - that I can move forward."

So instead of living in fear, 44-year-old Clara this year will spend Thanksgiving enjoying a meal with her children. Now that she has found "a light at the end of the tunnel," she said, her former burdens no longer hold her back.

And her story, she said, doesn't stop at recovery.

Having recuperated from an abusive relationship with the help of both the WomenShelter and the Long Beach Rescue Mission, Clara said she has seen doors open to opportunities she once never thought possible.

"After I get situated back into housing, I want to go back to school and look for a part-time job at the Rescue Mission," she said. "I want to give back a little. I'm grateful for the help I received. I felt alone for so long."

But Clara never was alone. In fact, she was in the company of many other women facing similar ordeals, which is why the WomenShelter arranges regular holiday meals and food outreach efforts that Executive Director TuLynn Smylie said require a great spirit of giving from the community.

"The community is very generous during the holidays," she said. "We get companies donating turkeys. There are about 600 families in outreach, so not everyone gets sponsored, but a good majority of them do."

Since donations to families in-need always depend on contributions, the WomenShelter encourages, those people who can, to give.

"We prefer monetary donations or gift cards good for any grocery store, department store, Target or Wal-Mart," Smylie said. "Or, during the holidays, you can make a food donation, but it's best to call in advance."

Despite the influx of donations, however, Smylie said domestic issues continue to exist. Since 1977, WomenShelter's ultimate objective has been to help end the cycle of domestic violence through intervention, prevention and education. Its services include a crisis hotline, counseling, a resource center, support groups, an emergency shelter and a Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART).

"Domestic violence, unfortunately, is a never-ending problem, especially with the current economic situation; escalations to violence tend to come out a little more," Smylie said. "We serve as a safety net when families need it."

To find out more about the WomenShelter of Long Beach, call 437-7233 or visit www.womenshelterlb.com.

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Teen Racing Prodigy To Ride In Second Street Parade

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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-December 3, 2008

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Some youngsters first get behind the wheel as student drivers dodging orange cones in parking lots. Dylan Stalker started with a racetrack.

That's because at age 13, Stalker started karting school and - within about three years - made a name for himself as a local racing sensation.

Now, the Long Beach driver has earned an assortment of championship medals for his agility on the raceways and will join about 10 other racers this Saturday as they drive down Second Street in the 26th annual Belmont Shore Christmas Parade.

"Living in Long Beach, we've always gone to the parade as spectators," he said.

Last year, Stalker went from spectator to participant when his father, Joe, registered the Los Angeles Kart Club for the first time as a parade entrant. This year, they're sporting full-on race gear and attire as they maneuver down the street - not far from the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach participants - in karts decked in tinsel and holiday lights.

"We'll have a stakebed truck, decorated with lights, while a few of our members will walk," Joe said.

Drivers that evening will range in age from youth to adults. Each is part of the Los Angeles Kart Club, which regularly hosts sprint kart races at the California Speedway in Fontana.

"Karting and racing are my main passions," Stalker said. "I've been going to the Grand Prix since I was a year old. I watch Formula 1 on television and take from the drivers and learn."

Since then, Stalker has gained champion status at such races as the 2007 Los Angeles Kart Club Jr. Rotax, the 2007 Apex Raceway Jr. Rotax and a list of others.

It's competition, he said, that drives him to pursue the racetrack.

"Karting is probably one of the most competitive sports," he said. "Driving at high speeds and battling people on the track is a really fun adrenalin rush... Karts can exceed 90 and up to 100 miles per hour, but top speed isn't what you're looking for. We want handling and cornering. It's all about getting around the track as fast as you can."

Stalker explained that he learned, the hard way, the hazards that are associated with competing.

Before the 2006 season started for Stalker, he sustained a compound fracture to his upper left arm - the result of a crash on the racetrack that also prevented him from racing for six weeks while he recovered from the injury.

Aside from watching out for his son's safety, Joe said he also encourages his son to balance his favorite hobby with his academic studies.

That kind of support, Joe said, could prove useful for a Los Alamitos High School student with big dreams to pursue the science that fuels motor vehicles.

"My ultimate goal does involve auto racing, but I'm also looking at engineering in the automotive industry," Stalker said.

"He's the driver," Joe added. "I'm just the wrench and tuner."

YOUNG PRO. Dylan Stalker, an award-winning kart racer from Long Beach, will ride in the annual Belmont Shore Christmas Parade on Saturday, Dec. 6. — Photo courtesy Joe Stalker

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Dogs Leap, Parade Back Into Downtown

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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-December 5, 2008

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Each year, organizers from the AKC/Eukanuba National Championship Dog Show seek the most suitable, canine-savvy city to host its competition.

Once again, that city is Long Beach.

This weekend at the Long Beach Convention Center, about 3,000 dogs will dance, dodge obstacles, leap, sit and heel during a series of challenges created to test agility and obedience. Meanwhile, guests there will have opportunities to shop and see demonstrations by purebreds and their handlers.

"It's a great way to meet the different types of dogs and breeds," said AKC (American Kennel Club) Spokeswoman Lisa Peterson. "It's really a canine extravaganza."

Guests can take advantage of shopping at about 150 vendor booths, some of which will have show dogs on hand to meet and pet. Meanwhile, a Eukanuba Super Dock Jumping Competition will challenge dogs to jump great distances through the air and into a pool of water.

"There will be purebred dogs and national clubs with booths," Peterson said. "Guests can go Christmas shopping for their dog-loving friends. There also will be a demonstration ring with different activities going on."

Invitation-only competitions will include a national championship - for money prizes totaling \$225,000 - as well as agility and obedience shows.

"The main event is the AKC championship invitation-only confirmation dog show," Peterson said. "Judges look for specimens that ideally represent their breeds."

Top dogs from different countries will vie for prize money during the Eukanuba World Challenge.

Then, during the AKC National Obedience Invitational, dogs will perform commands from heeling and sitting to picking up scented items, Peterson explained. Meanwhile, the AKC Agility Invitational will challenge dogs to race through an obstacle course of jumps, turns, weave poles and tunnels.

"We invite the top five dogs from each breed," Peterson said. "It's very fast and active as they try to beat the clock and get through the course in the fastest time."

Among the contenders, T'ai - a Siberian Husky - will join her owner, Long Beach resident Desiree Snelleman in running the timed agility course. Snelleman, a dog trainer through her own Fido'n Friends service, is in her third year of competing in the Eukanuba show.

"It's the thrill of being representative of the breed, having a dog that can do the sport and be able to showcase," she said. "We compete every weekend and go to national championships."

Peterson explained that show participants prepare year-round for the competition by attending other competitions. Each dog that reaches the upcoming event also has an opportunity to win the title of Best in Show.

"People who reach this level of the competition are out there every weekend competing to get to the top level," Peterson said. "It's a lifelong passion for most of us."

The AKC purebred dog registry was founded in 1884 and promotes the health and well being of purebreds along with responsible dog ownership and rights. Long Beach has hosted the organization's annual dog show a number of times in the past.

"Long Beach has been a great venue for us," Peterson said. "We need a large space with a large location to accommodate all the spectators. It's a dog-friendly place and a nice city for an event like this.

"...It lets people know what wonderful breeds are out there, and it's great for people heavily involved in the sport to have an outlet to express their passion."

The 2008 AKC/Eukanuba National Championship Dog Show will take place all day on Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 13 and 14, at the Long Beach Convention Center, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

Ticket prices range from \$12 to \$20. Day admission for children ages 12 and younger is free; evening admission for children younger than age 2 is free.

To purchase tickets, call (213) 480-3232 or visit www.ticketmaster.com.

For more information, visit www.akc.org.

FLOPPING, FLYING EARS. Breeds of all sizes and colors, not to mention fur length, will take part in the AKC/Eukanuba National Championship Dog Show this weekend. —Gazette file photo

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Bell Ringers Needed To Help Charity

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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-December 17, 2008

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Salvation Army kettle bell ringers donning seasonal red attire once again have dotted the sidewalks outside local storefronts and restaurants.

But this year, more than ever, they signal more than impending holidays, said Mike White, business administrator for the Salvation Army of Long Beach (SALB). That's because the signature red pails typically filled with monetary donations have remained much emptier this year - reflecting what White called an ominously low level of contributions in an increasingly demanding economy.

"We stand in front of Wal-Mart, CVS and grocery stores, and all of those people who do business there are now the same ones asking for donations," he said. "When they come out of the stores, they start asking us for assistance."

Donations have dropped about 30% since last year. That, coupled with an anticipated 300% increase in first-time applicants requesting assistance, has spelled adversity for an organization that helped about 6,000 Long Beach residents last year, White said.

"It's the average Joe," he said. "People we haven't seen before are coming in for assistance. Donations are down, and with so many people out of work, the need for assistance has increased. Getting those two (factors) to balance has been a real struggle."

To help cope, administrators have started asking anyone with either spare time, or spare change, to make a donation. Community members can get involved in a number of ways, such as volunteering as, or sponsoring, a bell ringer - or simply donating money to the Salvation Army.

Sponsoring costs \$8.85 per hour, with most kettle bell ringers collecting for at least three hours at a time. Volunteer bell ringers must be at least 18 years of age, or they may be younger if under the supervision of a guardian. In addition, musicians may volunteer time playing instruments alongside bell ringers to encourage patrons.

"If we can find kettle bell ringers, it saves us from hiring someone," spokesman Evan Lamont said. "Or, if you sponsor one, you make a donation to cover the cost of having someone else do it."

SALB staff said they attribute financial challenges to greater unemployment levels and pinpointed the issue as beginning as far back as July.

"After that, the (need) has just gone up incrementally," Lamont said. "It's a national problem. Charities are down this year, and the Salvation Army is no different from any other business or corporation when the economy takes a downturn."

The Salvation Army provides families in need with food, transportation and clothing vouchers, school supplies, shelter, youth activities, social services and more. The bell ringer tradition began in San Francisco in 1891 and since has become an annual fundraiser, providing funds for its programs and services.

"The Salvation Army has never been an organization to turn away individuals and families," Lamont said.

For details, call 426-7637.

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High School Surprises Bethune With Christmas

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Grunion Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-December 17, 2008

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

For Christmas, she wrote a letter asking Santa Claus for a flower.

That was the single request of a 6-year-old girl that organizers said touched the hearts of Robert A. Millikan High School students as they planned a holiday party for their less-fortunate peers. Teacher Keith Ladd said the Monday afternoon event was the first of its kind and aimed to bring gifts, games and joy to students facing homelessness.

"It's something a lot of us take for granted, but those kids have probably never had a holiday party like that," he said.

That afternoon, nearly 20 youth from Mary McLeod Bethune Transitional Center arrived at Millikan anticipating a field trip day much like any other, Bethune Program Facilitator Rhonda Haramis said. Instead, Millikan PEACE Academy students and teachers surprised them with fun and festivities.

"It was nonstop activity," Haramis said. "This was the high point of them showing us warmth and how much we mean to them. I noticed the children at Millikan - how they just watched, knowing they were reaching out to others in their own school district."

In years past, students from the academy had organized toy drives for Bethune, but had yet to plan such an interpersonal event, Ladd explained. This year, following about two months of preparation, Bethune students had opportunities to play games, enjoy refreshments and receive personalized holiday gifts - courtesy of answered letters "to Santa."

"Before this year, we had a toy drive and took all of the toys to the shelter to distribute," Ladd said. "This year, besides doing a lot of the same stuff, we're stepping it up and having a party."

The Millikan PEACE Academy is a college-preparatory program emphasizing growth through empowerment, academics, conflict resolution and ethics. Its initiatives have included fundraisers for Miller Children's Hospital and pediatric AIDS research. The holiday party this year was paid for with donations from the Long Beach Unified School District as well as the community.

"We try and make the academy as much of a small family as possible so that each grade level of students is not lost here at Millikan," Ladd said. "We're trying to prepare these kids for college so that they will be interactive members of society."

The Mary McLeod Bethune Transitional Center serves local youth experiencing homelessness by preparing them for mainstream schools - but Haramis said Monday's event transcended even that goal.

"The kids see that connection between the high schools that they will be attending and where they're at right now," she said. "I think they are starting to see how important it is to stay in school."

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Resident Celebrates 102nd Christmas
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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-December 24, 2008
Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Before she celebrated Christmas around a decorated evergreen tree, Ina DeLapp would unwrap presents with family over breakfast plates.

"We didn't have a lot," she says. "I always bought my father a beautiful necktie. I got my mother a gorgeous blouse."

The Long Beach resident says she has watched renditions of the holiday change over time, but to her, the meaning behind it has remained as a sacred occasion dedicated to observing her Presbyterian values. This year, she commemorates another Christmas, just days after celebrating her 102nd birthday on Dec. 21.

For about three decades now, DeLapp has resided off of Broadway in a quaint apartment brightened by large windows looking out to neighborhoods nearby.

A 4-foot-tall St. Nick statuette faces the living room and dining area, where dolls, sleigh miniatures and wreaths dot aged, ornate furnishings - her live-in caretaker and longtime friend, Ed Stein, says he decorates her home each year.

Decades ago, DeLapp began celebrating holiday traditions with her husband's family. In earlier years, Christmas had meant family and gifts - but without a tree, since such commodities were rare in her Minnesota hometown, she says.

"My folks lived on a farm, and I'd walk three-and-a-half miles into town," she says. "That's one reason why I'm so healthy."

Later, DeLapp admits another secret to keeping her youthful character.

"I use Dove soap and Ponds for dry skin," she says.

Stein, sitting across from her in the living room, quickly jumps in.

"I give her lots of fresh fruit, too - a healthy diet," he says.

And while she remains confined to sitting much of the time, that hasn't stopped her from traveling around the country and attending special events. An emcee invited her up onstage this past fall during the annual Oktoberfest in Alpine Village, where a crowd crooned for her an early "Happy Birthday."

"The emcee remembered me and came down and greeted me," she said. "...He had an elevator for wheelchairs. I had to make a speech."

She recounted that story in one of 82 holiday letters sent out to loved ones this season. She recently learned to converse with relatives through live online video sessions and e-mail correspondence, but nothing, she said, compares to the lost art of writing by hand.

"There was a time when I was ill and I stopped writing," she said. "A year ago, I started again."

That hobby follows a life busied by career moves and family memories. A college graduate, DeLapp began teaching at a one-room grade school in South Dakota before dabbling in modeling for JCPenney and becoming a buyer for the Broadway department store in Los Angeles.

In 1927, she married into an 11-member family. DeLapp said she and her husband had grown up together and knew they were meant for each other. Together, they were among the first to set foot in the local Covenant Presbyterian Church after its completion.

"When he danced with me, he said to me, 'She's going to be my wife,'" he said.

He has since passed away, but this holiday - like many - she said, will be busied with visits from her relatives. Memories of the past occupy her home in the form of heirlooms, such as the 97-year-old porcelain-faced doll she holds. It dons a rose-pink shawl she once crocheted by hand. Straightening the garment, she admires the doll for a moment.

"She is beautiful," she says.

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Environmental Efforts Forefront In 2008

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Downtown Gazette, The (Long Beach, CA)-December 31, 2008

Author: Kelly Garrison, Features Editor

Cheers - here's to greening the city.

About a year has passed since community members first clinked glasses at the launch of Green Drinks Long Beach, where guests chatted about sustainability issues over cocktails. And if "green" efforts are a cause for revelry, then there's much more in the way of city sustainability where that came from.

Starting with work on a plan of action aimed at bettering the environment, the 11-member Sustainable City Commission in May commemorated its one-year anniversary. Coordinator Larry Rich said the year ahead holds opportunities for the Office of Sustainability to help make the best of a challenging economy and a new presidential administration.

"Not too many other cities have something like the Office of Sustainability," he said. "Our next challenge is sustaining our commitment to this and (seizing) the opportunity for federal monies that are available to cities showing that commitment."

In announcing plans to step down from his position in July, Long Beach Harbor Commission President James Hankla added to city efforts, saying that he wanted to see the Port of Long Beach take greater steps toward environmental stewardship. The urging followed his advocacy in both the Green Port Policy and the Clean Air Action Plan. He also backed Clean Trucks Program, which bans pre-1989 diesels from the port now, and will push the envelope to 2007-level trucks by 2010.

Another port initiative in November powered the Long Beach effort with shore-side electricity using "cold ironing" at its first terminal. Other steps toward sustainability included the Long Beach City Council's approval over the summer of a policy requiring trash haulers to institute recycling programs for apartment buildings within the next 12 months - or face losing their permit.

Long Beach Transit, meanwhile, retrofitted its buses with particulate traps to reduce emissions and replaced older, diesel buses with hybrid models.

In October, the city's Green Ribbon Committee was commissioned to draft a green building ordinance for private development. The draft ordinance will be heard by the City Council in the coming months. Other city initiatives include starting a Bike Share program, increasing the number of alternative fuel vehicles in its fleet and observing the newly launched "Day Without A Bag" on Dec. 20.

Also this year, planners organized three meetings to invite public comment on a project proposing to reconfigure the Long Beach Breakwater. The rock reef, built in 1941 by the Army Corps of Engineers to protect the Navy's Pacific fleet, has sparked debate between different groups about its uses and impacts on the environment.

In April, city streets made way for the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach, which commenced with a series of environmental features. The first-ever Green Power Prix-View this year included activities, displays and product demonstrations highlighting renewable energy sources, water and energy conservation, green building and more at the Long Beach Convention Center.

In May, local officials addressed solutions for everything from trash to urban runoff during a Let's Talk Trash forum at the Aquarium of the Pacific. In response to the problem, officials said they plan to look into natural filtration and water preservation systems, new mandates controlling pollution flows and better education programs.

Also this year, the