



OJAI VALLEY NEWS

REPORTING FOR THE PEOPLE SINCE 1891

128TH YEAR, No. 40

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Photo courtesy Ventura County Aviation Unit

School board grapples with state ranking

Austin Widger
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At its July 24 meeting, the Ojai Unified School District Board received a report from assistant superintendent Sherrill Knox in regard to Meiners Oaks Elementary and Matilija Middle School being on the list of lowest-performing schools in California.

These two schools are identified as in need of comprehensive support and intervention, or CSI, by the California School Dashboard.

Knox said: There are four indicators that they look at that would potentially qualify you ... that's how you get your rating, so to speak. They are chronic absenteeism, which is missing 10 percent of the school year. Our suspension rate, the way that's calculated is any student who is suspended one time or is in-school suspension as well would fall under that percentage.

All of the indicators are red or orange for both schools, which is why they are on the list. Red is the worst category on the dashboard, and orange is the second worst.

Meiners Oaks is red for suspension rate, and Matilija is red for chronic absenteeism.

Knox said: "We qualify because we have a combination of orange and red. Had

we just had orange, we would have been fine. I wouldn't say we'd have been fine. We have a lot of work to do. We wouldn't have qualified for it."

OUSD is working on a variety of improvements both inside and outside of the classroom to improve student outcomes. The two 'Engage to Impact' workshops led by superintendent Tiffany Morse are intended to engage stakeholders. A third is scheduled for Aug. 11.

Parent Square is a new two-way communication system to be implemented for the upcoming school year. It allows engagement between school and home with full translation.

To better school culture, there is curriculum being implemented to help deal with complex social and emotional issues. Extra emotional support will be provided when necessary, including home visits by school teams for students who are on track to being chronically absent.

For academics, the goal is to provide access to technology such as Google Chromebooks for all students. Across fourth grade, a math program to address problem areas such as fractions and decimals will be implemented.

In December 2018, the low dashboard scores were

State list: Page A4

WATER LEVELS SEASONAL YEAR-TO-DATE RAINFALL TOTALS FROM OCTOBER 1, 2018

Matilija Canyon	39.37"
Soule Park	23.43"
Casitas Dam	26.53"
Oak View	24.92"
Upper Ojai	25.30"

LAKE CASITAS VOLUME

Oct 1, 2018	74,657 acre-feet
July 18, 2019	104,853 acre-feet
Current volume	44.1 percent

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Firehawks, C-130s firefighting game-changers

Perry Van Houten
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Beefed-up air support is coming for Ventura County fire crews this fall, and for firefighters across the state over the next couple of years.

The Ventura County Aviation Unit is adding two new aircraft to its firefighting arsenal, according to John McNeil, assistant fire chief with the Ventura County Fire Department. In July 2017, VCFD purchased two surplus Sikorsky Black Hawk helicopters from the U.S. Army at a price of nearly \$2 million each.

Along with increased power and better maneuverability than the Huey helicopters being flown now, the Firehawks will be able to carry three times the amount of fire retardant — 1,000 gallons versus just over 300 for the Vietnam-era Hueys. "It's a significant difference when you see a Black Hawk dropping next to a Huey," McNeil

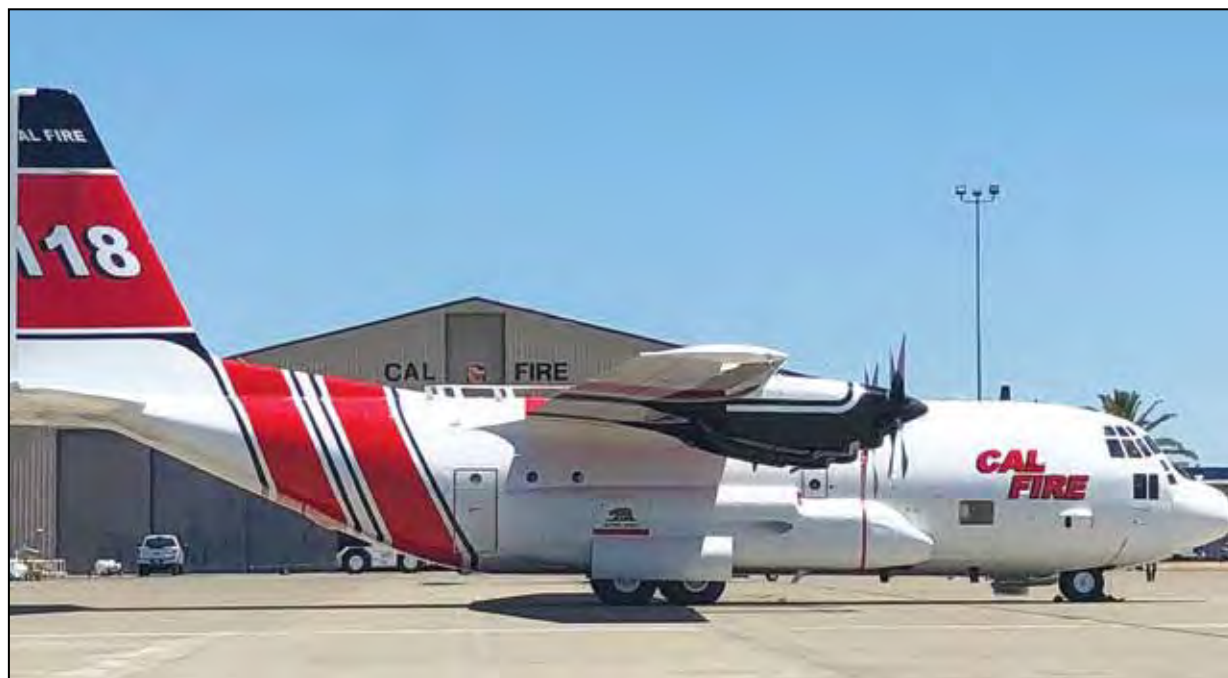


Photo courtesy Cal Fire

This is the first C-130 air tanker to be painted in Cal Fire colors.

said. "It's going to be a game-changer."

Along with the ability to fly at night, the Firehawks will also hold more hand

crew members than the five helicopters now in the fleet. "Currently, we can only fly seven. We'll be able to fly 10 to 12 in the new configura-

tion on the Firehawk. We'll be able to get more personnel to the fire quicker," McNeil said.

Air power: Page A4

Poodle-dog bush has nasty 'bite'

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Don't pet this poodle when you're exploring the Ojai backcountry, unless you want to scratch like a dog for a couple of weeks.

Eriodictyon parryi — commonly known as "poodle-dog bush" — is reportedly widespread in areas of Los Padres National Forest. In some places, it's almost unavoidable.

Known as a "fire follower," the bush's latest resurgence is thanks to the Thomas Fire.

Found in the southern coast ranges and southern Sierra Nevada, this common plant with its pretty purple flowers can cause severe contact dermatitis if touched. "You barely have to touch it and you can get it," said Lloyd Simpson, forest botanist for the U.S. Forest Service, Ojai Ranger District.

The rash is similar to poison oak, Simpson said, "but it's a totally different mechanism that's causing the irritation." Unlike poison oak, poodle-dog is not oil-based.

The reaction — worse than poison oak for some people — is due to tiny hairs on the plant that inject chemicals into the skin, right at the surface, "causing the immune system to attack it, which causes the rash reaction, just like poison oak." The hairs stick to skin and clothing.

To avoid exposure to poodle-dog, hikers should wear long pants, long sleeves and gloves, and they should learn to identify the plant.

An odd-looking shrub that can grow more than 6 feet tall, the plant has leaves that resemble a poodle-dog's fur as they die and start to droop. The plant is also recognizable by its pungent, minty odor.

A native species and a member of the forget-me-not family, poodle-dog bush is unfamiliar to many people, since it only shows up in areas disturbed by wildfire. "After the fire, it's come back like gangbusters, because it doesn't have to compete with anything right now,"

Simpson said. "The bush will be crowded out by the surrounding vegetation after a few years and the plant will fade into the seed bank," he added.

Recently, the plant has been reported growing in abundance in areas above 3,000 to 4,000 feet, along popular hiking trails in Rose Valley, Lion Canyon and on Nordhoff Ridge. "I really noticed it anywhere pines, especially Coulter pines, tend to grow," said Craig R. Carey, local Boy Scout leader and backcountry fixture.

"When you hear a name like that you think, that's got to be a joke," Carey said. But like poison oak, stinging nettle and rattlesnakes, poodle-dog bush has become a topic of pre-hike safety talks to his scouts. "Now, there's a real conversation about poodle-dog, and they know to take it seriously." So far, his troops have been able to steer clear of the stuff.

Poodle-dog bush: Page A4



Ojai Valley News photo by Perry Van Houten

Poodle-dog bush is blooming along Nordhoff Ridge Road, north of Ojai.

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Obituary

Walter William Guina

Walter William Guina, age 76, of Goodyear, Ariz., passed away peacefully on July 2, 2019 after a valiant 10-month battle with pancreatic cancer. Born on March 8, 1943 in Pittsburgh, Pa., to Michael and Eleanor Guina, Walter (aka Bill) served in the U.S. Air Force from 1961 to 1965, including two years on Guam. From 1967 to 1981, Walter worked as an air traffic controller in Napa, San Francisco and Oakland, Calif. In 1983 Walter started working in the tree business in the East Bay. He became a certified arborist and master gardener. He ran a Bartlett Tree Experts business in the Santa Barbara area maintaining a number of estates of the rich and famous from 1990 until 2005 when he retired.



Everyone who knew him loved him. He enjoyed all aspects of landscaping and also loved fishing, traveling, spending time with family and friends and, of course, acting like a pirate on occasion. His presence, laughter and zest for life will be greatly missed by all. Walter was preceded in death by his parents, older brother Thomas and wife of 37 years, Kathleen. He is survived by daughters Elizabeth (John) Chionchio and Christine Solt (grandchildren Jessica and Jacob Prows), son Michael Lawton, devoted partner of 13 years, Jeri Link, sons Brian Link, Steve (Nicole) Link and grandchildren Alyssa and Collin. A celebration of life will be held at 2 p.m. in the Chianti Room at Tuscany Falls Country Club Pebble Creek Resort, Goodyear, Ariz. on September 15, 2019. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to Hospice of the Valley, 1510 E. Flower St., Phoenix, AZ 85014, as they provided incredible services to Walter at the end of his battle.

Water stakeholders brainstorm

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Nearly two dozen of the brightest minds in local water issues brainstormed the development of a water action plan July 23, during the first of two stakeholder meetings hosted by Casitas Municipal Water District.

The meeting's goal was gathering input toward creation of CMWD's comprehensive water resources plan.

The objectives of the plan, in development since November, are identifying water sources, maximizing existing local water resources and hardening infrastructure.

Participants in the 90-minute workshop included representatives from the city of Ojai, Ventura River Water District, Senior Canyon Mutual Water Company, Ojai Valley Sanitary District, United Water Conservation District, Ojai Basin Groundwater Management Agency, Ojai F.L.O.W. and Ventura Land Trust.

First, stakeholders were asked to identify the biggest challenges in increasing water reliability, and then to come up with solutions for increasing the water supply.

Challenges mentioned by stakeholders included a lack of money, not enough supply in the Ventura River watershed and uncertainty from Mother Nature.

As for potential solutions, participants cited connection to the State Water Project, pursuing additional water from the Ventura River and re-evaluating water rates.

Casitas has scheduled a second stakeholder meeting on July 30.

A draft comprehensive water resources plan is expected in the fall, followed by at least one public workshop to gather input. The completed action plan could be adopted by the Casitas board of directors this winter.

For more information, visit www.casitaswaterplan.com.



Ojai Valley News photo by Perry Van Houten

Firefighters on scene of a broken gas line in the Golden West neighborhood Tuesday morning.

Gas line break leads to evacuation

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Two homes in Ojai were evacuated after construction workers broke a gas line July 23.

The incident was reported at 11:46 a.m. in the 1100 block of Paseo Del Robles Court.

According to Capt. Brian McGrath of the Ventura County Fire Department,

the gas line was ruptured by a construction crew using a jackhammer.

The home undergoing construction and a home next door were evacuated as a precaution, said McGrath.

No one was hurt. Paseo Del Robles Court and a portion of Golden West Avenue were temporarily shut down during the incident, McGrath said.

Ojai City Council enacts smoking ban in multi-unit residences

At its June 25 meeting, the Ojai City Council adopted an ordinance prohibiting smoking in multi-unit residences. The law went into effect July 25.

The new law comes in response to concerns raised by local members of the public. It follows a statewide trend of cities and counties enacting laws protecting residents of multi-unit housing from secondhand smoke.

The ordinance expands on Ojai's Municipal Code Section 5-10.03, which prohibits smoking in most public spaces within the city.

The new law includes the following provisions:

Smoking is prohibited in all common areas, whether enclosed or unenclosed and the inside of all units of multi-unit residences. Units with separate ventilation systems may be excepted, contingent on inspection and approval by the city building official.

"Smoking" refers to inhaling and exhaling the smoke of

any cigarettes, cigars, weed, plant or other combustible substance. It includes vaping.

It requires that every new lease include a provision stating that smoking is prohibited.

Landlords must post "no smoking" signs and provide written notice to all unit residents regarding the new law.

Fines for violation start at \$100 and go up to \$500 for repeat violations.

"The ordinance does not address all concerns with the health issues involving secondhand smoke," Mayor Johnny Johnston said. "It is, however, a good step forward in providing greater protection to those living in apartment complexes with common walls."

An informational flier with general information regarding the prohibition may be found at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aPOc8o4Oz1Inh5FUh28RLtfQ9bc0iWwq/view>.

Cannabis Chautauqua to be held July 28 at Sane Living Center

The Ojai Chautauqua will hold its next discussion on legal cannabis on Sunday, July 28, from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Sane Living Center, 316 E. Matilija St., Ojai.

The venue has changed to the Sane Living Center from its originally scheduled location at Matilija Auditorium.

The topic of the discussion will be "Is Legal Cannabis Good for Ojai?"

The following questions will be considered: Has there been any change in traffic accident rates? Has there been any change in crime rates? Has there been any change in reduced pain medication use? Has there been any change in hospitalization rates? Has there been any change in adolescent cannabis use? Have there been tax

benefits for cities and states? Has legalization changed the black market trade?

A panel of experts, including Zona Seca Medical Director David Bearman, Ojai City Councilman Ryan Blatz, Christopher Danch of Hoban Law Group, Ojai Chief of Police James Fryhoff, Ventura County Behavioral Health Manager Daniel Hicks, and Sespe Creek Collective CEO Chelsea Sutula will discuss these and other questions regarding legal cannabis.

Tickets can be purchased at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ojai-chautauqua-panel-is-legal-cannabis-good-for-ojai-tickets-63339713789>. They are \$20 for pre-sale and \$25 at the door.

Police blotter

Crimes

- Burglary was reported in the 1000 block of Shokat Drive July 6.
- Vandalism and graffiti vandalism were reported in the 200 block of East Ojai Avenue July 14.
- Battery was reported in the 100 block of El Camino Drive July 14.
- Petty theft was reported in the 200 block of East El Roblar Drive July 17.
- Vandalism was reported in the 200 block of East Ojai Avenue July 17.
- Vandalism and graffiti vandalism were reported in the 1100 block of Fierro Drive July 18.
- Violating a restraining order was reported in the 300 block of Mallory Way July 18.
- Petty theft and identity theft were reported in the 900 block of North Ventura Avenue July 18.
- Vehicle burglary was reported in the 17000 block of Maricopa Highway July 19.
- Burglary was reported

in the 1400 block of Maricopa Highway July 19.

- Burglary was reported in the 700 block of East Ojai Avenue July 20.
- Vandalism was reported in the 200 block of East Ojai Avenue July 20.
- Burglary was reported in the 700 block of South Rice Road July 21.
- Burglary was reported in the 100 block of Aliso Street July 22.
- Vandalism and graffiti vandalism were reported in the 100 block of North Signal Street July 22.

Arrests

- A 34-year-old man was arrested in the 100 block of Church Road July 14 for public intoxication. Bail was set at \$2,500.
- A 43-year-old man was cited in the 100 block of El Camino Drive July 14 for battery.
- A 60-year-old man was cited in the 200 block of East Ojai Avenue July 15 for consuming an alcoholic beverage

in a public place.

- A 42-year-old man was cited in the 200 block of East Ojai Avenue July 16 for consuming an alcoholic beverage in a public place.
- A 51-year-old woman was cited in the 100 block of Riverside Road July 16 for violating probation.
- A 30-year-old man was arrested in the 11900 block of Creek Road July 16 for being under the influence of a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia. Bail was set at \$7,500.
- A 42-year-old man was cited in the 200 block of East Ojai Avenue July 17 for consuming an alcoholic beverage in a public place.
- A 44-year-old woman was cited in the 200 block of East Ojai Avenue July 17 for consuming an alcoholic beverage in a public place.
- A 37-year-old man was cited at Ojai Avenue and Signal Street July 17 for consuming an alcoholic beverage in a public place.
- A 29-year-old man was arrested in the 10800 block of Santa Ana Road July 18 for being under the influence of a controlled substance. Bail was set at \$5,000.
- A 44-year-old woman was cited in the 300 block of East Ojai Avenue July 18 for urinating in public.
- A 44-year-old woman was arrested on South Signal Street July 18 for a misdemeanor warrant. Bail was set

at \$500.

- A 49-year-old man was arrested at Santa Ana Road and Santa Ana Boulevard July 18 for a misdemeanor warrant. Bail was set at \$10,000.
- A 37-year-old man was arrested in the 300 block of Mallory Way July 18 for violating a restraining order. Bail was set at \$45,000.
- A 29-year-old woman was arrested in the 1900 block of Maricopa Highway July 19 for being under the influence of a controlled substance. Bail was set at \$5,000.
- A 19-year-old man was arrested at Grand Avenue and Shady Lane July 20 for being under the influence of a controlled substance. Bail was set at \$5,000.
- A 35-year-old man was cited in the 700 block of Fernando Drive July 21 for violating probation.
- A 24-year-old man was arrested at Ojai Avenue and Bristol Road July 21 for driving under the influence of alcohol. Bail was set at \$10,000.

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Ojai Valley News Photo by Perry Van Houten

Stay as far away as possible from the poodle-dog bush.

Poodle-dog bush:

Continued from Page A1

Though poodle-dog bush is not pleasant to come in contact with, Carey said the plant does have its benefits.

"It has its value in the natural environment, protecting seedlings and preventing erosion post-fire. I don't begrudge it, but I certainly do avoid it," he said.

The allergic reaction can show up within hours or days of making contact. "Intense swelling and intense itching are probably, by far, the two most common symptoms," said Jim Halverson, M.D., a family practitioner in Ojai.

Halverson has not recently treated any patients suffering from poodle-dog bush, but he has colleagues in the office who have. They included a man who reportedly backed into the plant while taking a selfie.

Aside from washing with soap and water after exposure, there's no definitive way to rid oneself of the plant's tiny hairs or the irritant they carry. "I'm not aware of any way to get the little hairs off any faster than just scrub

and hope they fall off," said Halverson, adding most cases go away in one to three weeks.

Antihistamines like Benadryl may ease the patient's itching a bit and help them sleep, but they won't do anything for the rash, Halverson said. "Oral anti-itch medications are so-so, because it's not a histamine reaction." Scratching the skin can lead to infection, he said.

Calamine lotion or a topical ointment with hydrocortisone can bring some relief from poodle-dog, according to Dutch Atchley, PharmD, pharmacist at Ojai Rexall. Astringent dressings, cool compresses and even oatmeal baths can also help temporarily, he said.

For extreme cases, a steroid anti-inflammatory such as Prednisone can be prescribed by a doctor, Atchley said.

Ojai herbalist and native plant expert Lanny Kaufer recommended applying fresh mugwort juice if a rash appears.

Air power:

Continued from Page A1

The two helicopters, built in 2005 and 2007, are currently in Englewood, Colo. being retrofitted to become firefighting-capable Firehawks.

Modifications include installation of the retardant drop tank, search and rescue equipment, and the standard yellow and blue paint scheme. Total cost per helicopter, including retrofitting, was estimated at \$10 million, less than half of what it would cost to purchase them new.

A joint venture with the Ventura County Sheriff's Office, the anticipated in-service date for the Firehawks is somewhere in the September to October time frame, McNeil said.

Not expected until 2021 is the first of seven C-130 aircraft to be delivered to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

The huge planes belonging to the U.S. Coast Guard were gifted to the U.S. Forest Service in 2013, to be converted into air tankers, said Dennis Brown, Cal Fire senior chief of aviation. But the Forest Service decided it didn't want to continue with the program, so Cal Fire stepped up to receive the aircraft, Brown said.

The U.S. Air Force was tasked with replacing the center and outer wing boxes, painting the aircraft and installing tanks for fire retardant, at a total cost of \$150 million.

One C-130 is already painted in Cal Fire colors and is awaiting installation of the retardant system. Delivery of the first fully-equipped C-130 is expected in spring 2021.

The new planes will bolster Cal Fire's fleet of 23 S-2T aircraft, the backbone of its firefighting fleet. While the S-2T has a 1,200 gallon capacity, the C-130 can hold 4,000

'It's a significant difference when you see a Black Hawk dropping next to a Huey. It's going to be a game-changer. ...We'll be able to get more personnel to the fire quicker.'

— John McNeil, Assistant Fire Chief, Ventura County Fire Department

gallons of fire retardant.

Cal Fire will need to hire and train additional pilots and mechanics, Brown said.

The new C-130s will carry a three-person crew — pilot, copilot and flight engineer — and three to four and a-half hours of fuel.

Tentative plans call for five of the seven C-130s to be in operation at any one time, Brown said. They'll be based in Chico, Sacramento, Fresno, Paso Robles and Ramona.

Cal Fire is also working to phase out its fleet of 12 Huey helicopters, replacing them with brand new Sikorsky Black Hawk S-70i helicopters with a 1,000-gallon capacity. "It's a much more capable aircraft, as far as performance," Brown said. "It's faster."

The first new Black Hawk should be arriving during the first week of October, with eight more on the way over the next several months, according to Brown.

State list:

Continued from Page A1

addressed by the board as well. "So despite the paper's claim that we were brushing it under the carpet, they just missed the meeting and the reports that we had," Board Secretary Jane Weil said.

The list of lowest-performing schools was not released until February 2019 and the scores apply to the 2017-2018 school year.

Board Member Michael Shanahan said: "This is not

a surprise. It is not something that we are just now acknowledging. The fact that some people just stumbled upon this fact does not mean that it's a new fact. So, yes, we have been looking at this and we are seeing a lot of improvements."

Morse said these metrics do not paint the whole picture of everything that is great about the district. "There's all kinds of amazing things hap-

pening at all of those schools, and all of our schools," she said. "So, yes, being on this list is unfortunate. Yes, it's a label that we don't want to have, but it's only based on four pieces of data, not on everything that's happening in the schools."

"We are going to do our best for our kids to make sure all of those metrics are improving."

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EDITORIAL

Students deserve our very best

If there was ever a good time for Ojai Unified School District to be told by the California Department of Education that it has two of the lowest-performing schools in the state, it is now.

This is a time of change for the school district as it moves sixth-graders to the junior high; creates district voting; and welcomes a new superintendent, Tiffany Morse.

The new superintendent is key to moving the district forward and she was working toward that aim months before her first day on the job.

As disappointing as the state's assessment and low student scores are, Dr. Morse is charting a new path.

She started her new job with the intent to ask questions and to listen, as demonstrated in the first two of the "Engage to Impact" community discussions. At the second community discussion July 20, she said:

"The basic concept is, we have to go to you, the community, to our students, to our parents and ask you what you want to see. Sometimes in schools, we're a machine, we just keep going, day in and day out. And it's time for us to ask: What are we doing well. What can we improve? When we are developing the next phase of schools, there are two things we need: We need the people in our community and we need creativity."

At her first community meeting, she acknowledged that educators and administrators cannot create the best learning environments possible for Ojai Valley students alone. "We're here to do this work together," she said.

That attitude is refreshing and welcome.

Dr. Morse also talked about thinking creatively to address the challenges not only to OUSD, but to the traditional educational model.

She kick-started that conversation July 20 by screening "Most Likely to Succeed," about an experimental charter high school that turns traditional thinking about education on its head.

Those who most agreed with the need for a different approach to learning were the eight Ojai Unified School District students who Dr. Morse invited to the community meeting to share their insights and opinions. Many spoke of a partnership between students and teachers that can be enhanced.

A phrase Dr. Morse has repeated at the last two community meetings is "continuous improvement" and we agree that is vital.

However, we also hope that Dr. Morse is able to implement continuous improvement after a radical shift.

To do that, she needs the community's ideas, support and encouragement. We ask readers to send their suggestions to letters@ojaivalleynews.com and to share their concerns and ideas with their elected school board members.

All Ojai Valley public schools should be among the best in the state. Our children deserve nothing less.

Wonderful school

MELODY LINECKER, Ojai
Re: your July 19 article, "Two Ojai schools on list of lowest-performing schools in California":

In response to the article that Meiners Oaks Elementary and Matilija Junior High School have ranked low on the high-stakes testing performed on students in California and across the country every year — to the contrary!

As a public school educator myself, I intentionally sought out this school in which to raise my own children, and some of the factors leading to that poor scoring are the very reasons I chose it: I wanted a school for my kids that would accurately reflect the complex mix of social classes, races, and cultures that make up the diverse yet united strength of our society. What test can measure that? And as a teacher and as a mother, I am so indebted to the many wonderful adults who pour themselves into my children and others. At Meiners Oaks Elementary School alone, I want to cry with happiness when I think of the impact of such giants and yodas as Mrs. Lessing, Mrs. Plott, Mrs. Wheeler, Mrs. Lepine, Mr. White, and so many others. These teachers get the students to love academics and their school community. Now, I am thrilled to hear of the resources the state is offering them and the new middle school. Just know that, contrary to what some believe, this will be moving from a position of strength.

Anyone who wants to rely on testing alone as a measure of value should get a little more involved with contributing to our most amazing schools.

Go, Mountain Lions!



Don't fear oaks

JAN SCOW, Registered Consulting Arborist, Ojai

The poem by Henry Bland published in OVN on July 19, "Careful where you plant trees," while entertaining, is somewhat misleading.

It is important to consider where you plant any tree for safety reasons and a host of other reasons, including future conflicts with buildings and hardscape, electrical lines, view obstruction, sign blockage, etc. It is what we in the arboricultural profession call "right tree, right place," and this becomes a recurring issue when people fail to consider what a given tree will develop into. However, oak trees are not necessarily a more risky tree than many other trees, so I take exception to the fear generated by this poem regarding oak trees.

All trees, regardless of species, have the potential to fail and cause damage or injury. While the remedies (for

all trees, not just oaks) include planting the right tree in the right place, they also include many other factors. Among those additional factors are, first and foremost, proper care to ensure a tree's health and to enhance its structural safety as it grows over time.

I see many trees in Ojai that give me pause concerning their safety and, yes, because most of our trees are oaks, many of the trees that concern me are indeed oaks. But that should not be a reason to not plant oaks. Each person (and the city) needs to look at their trees and think about their safety. The proper reaction to a safety concern is to get a professional opinion about a tree's safety so that any risk factors can be assessed and appropriate measures can be taken when needed to reduce the risk of harmful failures. Indeed, it is possible that "someday a limb will fall — kerpalk" so look at your trees and consider their safety, by

all means.

Fear often leads to the unnecessary removal of trees, and I fear this lovely poem may contribute to that type of outcome. I'd hate to see folks afraid to plant oaks in Ojai!

Standing for justice

ELAINE C. NEEDHAM, Ojai

The July 12 rally in front of Libbey Park with so many thumbs up should confirm the fact that Ojai residents stand behind people of color and demand the release of people incarcerated on our southern border.

I am sure that our local Mexican residents don't realize how much the people of Ojai value their many and various contributions. Other minorities in Ojai are valued equally. We love to see people in our midst who are of many nationalities and are able to contribute their work here in Ojai.

How bland and boring would our city be if only whites lived here.

Ojai joins other cities in declaring a climate emergency

By Suza Fancina
Ojai mayor pro tem

On Monday, July 22, at a special City Council meeting, Ojai joined more than 850 other jurisdictions worldwide that have declared a climate emergency.

I would like to thank the residents who came before the City Council and encouraged us to declare a climate emergency.

A Declaration of Climate Emergency is a resolution passed by a governing body such as a city council, a county board of supervisors, a state legislature, or a national government. It puts the government on record in support of emergency action to reverse global warming. Resolutions vary around the world, with many governments including local climate impacts and new climate goals in their resolution. (We included the 2017 Thomas Fire in ours.)

Our Ojai Resolution opens with these words: "Whereas, the climate crisis is causing immense human suffering and damage to the natural world and threatens to destroy civilization and kill billions of people. We hereby declare that overcoming the climate emergency is the great moral imperative of our time."

The Resolution includes a statement of intent that "the City of Ojai will form a Climate Emergency Mobilization Committee to present high-priority strategies to achieve emissions reduc-

Ojai can help solve problem

PHIL WHITE, Ojai
High-five to the Ojai City Council for adopting a Climate Emergency Resolution!

The city of Ojai has again shown itself to be a leader in addressing global warming/ climate change, and the resolution confirms this.

Next steps? The city should consider the adoption of a comprehensive Climate Action Plan with specific actions to be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles, buildings, industry, agriculture, and equipment, and to sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into soil and vegetation.

Climate change is a global problem, but Ojai can and should continue to work to do its fair share of solving the problem.

such as "Being the Change: Live Well and Spark a Climate Revolution," by Peter Kalmus, who spoke at Ojai's Earth Day in 2018.

Another book I highly recommend is by local author and documentary filmmaker Josh Tickell: "Kiss the Ground: How the Food You Eat Can Reverse Climate Change, Heal Your Body, and Ultimately Save Our World."

I also highly recommend that the book, "Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming," edited by Paul Hawken, serve as a guiding document for the climate emergency committee.

"Drawdown" presents 100 of the most substantive solutions to reverse global warming, based on meticulous research by leading scientists and policymakers around the world. We can use the strategies in this book that best apply to Ojai, including the creation of a solar farm — harvesting energy from the sun.

The solutions exist, are economically viable, and communities throughout the world are currently demonstrating them. If cities act collectively on a global scale over the next three decades, these strategies represent a credible path forward, not just to slow the earth's warming, but to reach drawdown, that point in time when greenhouse gases in the atmosphere peak and begin to decline.

tions at emergency speed."

The Resolution is a golden opportunity for each one of us to educate ourselves about climate change. I highly recommend taking time to study books

thumbs up, thumbs down

• Thumbs down to the Ojai Basin Groundwater Management Agency for submitting a defective report that got rejected by the state water board.

• Just love the paper now — look forward to Fridays. Thanks for all you are doing to help our community. Thumbs up to Perry Van Houten!
• A reader sends a thumbs up to Peter Strauss and his talented actors and production team for an extraordinarily moving reading of "The Outgoing Tide" on July 20. Ojai is so fortunate to have the gift of such talent, as well as their donation to the Ojai Art Center Theater.

Thumbs up, thumbs down is meant to provide commentary on a specific act and is not meant to imply blanket support nor condemnation. We reserve the right to not publish submissions and to edit for fairness, clarity and length. Submit thumbs to letters@ojaivalleynews.com.

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- Keep it local. Letters about issues impacting the Ojai Valley receive priority.
- Don't get personal. Stick to the issues.
- Keep it short (350 words is ideal).
- Include your phone number for verification (not publication).
- E-mail to letters@ojaivalleynews.com, fax to (805) 646-4281 or mail to P.O. Box 277, Ojai, CA 93024.

OVN

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To report the news of our town with diligence, accuracy and integrity; and to share the conversation and events of our community.

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Entered as second-class matter at

Oak Tree House provides adult day-care activities in Ojai Valley

Austin Widger
awidger@ojaivalleynews.com

Oak Tree House is an adult day care program — operated as a part of HELP of Ojai — that provides a unique support program for seniors right here in the Ojai Valley.

Since the mid-1990s, the program has provided an in-between step for seniors from living at home to going to a nursing home. It provides emotional support, socializing and mental stimulatory activities for those particularly dealing with dementia or Alzheimer's.

It is the only adult day health care center in the Ojai Valley, and provides respite for caregivers and families.

Erin Miller, Oak Tree House program director, said: "Most of our seniors, they live at home still with family members or caregivers and they come here during the day. So they still go home at night. This isn't like a nursing home. They don't live

here. It's just a day-support program. We offer stimulating activities, things for them to do during the day while their loved ones can go have time for themselves or work or whatever it is that they need to do. Hour by hour, we switch up the activities that we do. We do physical activities, mentally stimulating activities, socializing activities."

There is an enrollment process for the program. Attendees must be approved by a physician, free of diseases and eligible physically before attending Oak Tree House.

Miller found a passion for working with seniors 15 years ago by taking care of her grandma. Miller said: "We're much cheaper than a nursing home. I feel like a lot of people get put into a home too early. Their children or caregivers don't realize this resource is available. We're nurturing, we provide love and support, psychologically for them and the caregivers."

The program actually has improved the memory of some of the attendees who have Alzheimer's, Miller continued.

"They deserve to get out of the house and go do something fun," Miller said. "They deserve to have friends that they see every day, whether or not they remember who they are."

It's a win for both the seniors and the caregivers, Miller said.

Daily activities vary, but always begin at 9 a.m. with current events and celebrations of holidays such as National Root Beer Float Day or Pudding Day. After that, the activities can include physical activities, mentally stimulating activities, socializing activities and more.

Often, there will be the chance to participate in chair yoga, aerobics, walks and other opportunities to ex-



Photo courtesy Oak Tree House

Erin Miller (third from right) helps the seniors at Oak Tree House as program director.

plore the outside yard. Field trips to places around the valley sometimes occur, too.

The programming concludes at 2:30 p.m. each day.

Miller said: "I feel like it's important work. I really cher-

ish the seniors. They're the ones who built this country for our younger generations, and I feel like they deserve to be more honored than they are. Their life isn't over. There's still more they can

do." For more information about Oak Tree House or to register, visit <https://helpofojai.org/oak-tree-house-adult-day-care/> or call (805) 646-0161.

144th annual fair from July 31 to Aug. 11

Looking for a break from the Ojai Valley heat wave? Head down to the Ventura County Fair.

The Ventura County Fair returns July 31 to Aug. 11 with 12 days of fun, excitement and entertainment. This year's fair, themed "A Country Fair with Ocean Air" is a celebration of one of Ventura County's oldest and most beloved traditions. The fair will feature unique exhibits, exciting contests, grandstand entertainment performances, free with fair admission.

Discounted admission, carnival ride tickets and Wow Passes (good for all 12 days) are available until July 30

at the Ventura County Fairgrounds. The ticket booth to purchase discounted tickets is open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Special admission days offer opportunities to enter the fair free or at low prices. Opening day July 31 is "Dollar Day," with \$1 admission until 3 p.m. On Youth Day Aug. 2, children under 12 are admitted free all day. Seniors (62+) and persons with disabilities are admitted free all day on Aug. 6; "\$3 Before 3" Day is Aug. 7. Military Appreciation Day is Aug. 8. On this day, all military personnel holding a current, valid military ID will be admitted free.

Thrill-seekers will en-

joy Carnival Wristband Days again this year. On Aug. 1, 5, 6, and 8, purchase a \$35 wristband, good for unlimited carnival rides until 7 p.m.

The fair offers a unique way for visitors to have fun while giving to the community at the "Feed the Need" Food Drive, presented by Food Share on Aug. 1. Bring five cans of food to donate to Food Share and you'll receive a free return ticket to the fair, good for Aug. 5 to 8.

Visitors can see their favorite musical acts and rodeos free with paid admission to the fair. This year's lineup includes Styx (July 31), Martina McBride (Aug. 1), Melissa

Etheridge (Aug. 2), The Ohio Players with special guests The Emotions and Evelyn "Champagne" King (Aug. 3), Banda Carnaval, Luis Coronel, Cuarto de Milla (Aug. 4), X Ambassadors (Aug. 5) Tommy James and the Shondells (Aug. 6), Brothers Osborne (Aug. 6), Daughtry (Aug. 7), George Thorogood and the Destroyers "Good to Be Bad Tour — 45 Years of Rock" (Aug. 8), and Collective Soul (Aug. 9).

Check the schedule of events for local acts.

For more information, visit www.venturacountyfair.org or call 805-648-3376.

Response to state rejection of Ojai Basin Groundwater plan discussed

The Ojai Basin Groundwater Management Agency board of directors met in regular session Thursday at 5 p.m.

On the agenda was the possible authorization of a response to the California Department of Water Resources, regarding DWR's recommended rejection of an alternative groundwater sustainability plan submitted by OBGMA.

Under requirements of the Sustainable Ground-

water Management Act, local agencies in California must sustainably manage groundwater basins. Though it recommended rejecting OBGMA's plan, DWR approved nine alternative groundwater sustainability plans from other state agencies.

The meeting was held in the Council Chambers at Ojai City Hall, 401 S. Ventura St.

For more information, visit www.obgma.com.

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Ojai City Council clarifies ordinance that affects fences, walls and hedges

Austin Widger

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The Ojai City Council held a special meeting July 22 and adopted an urgency ordinance to amend some of the language regarding fences, hedges and walls.

The section of the Ojai Municipal Code that references setbacks now reads: "The front setback for fences, walls, hedges and screening shall be measured at right angles from the nearest point on the front property line of the parcel (or edge of the access easement on a private street) to the nearest point of the wall of the primary structure."

The key addition is the word "primary." Under the old language, it just said "structure," causing ambiguity. A structure really was just defined as four walls and a roof, City Manager James Vega said.

Vega said: "This would not affect projects that had already received a zoning clearance or other zoning permit, which there is one currently. So the ordinance is not intended to affect that project that's present. It's intended to prevent future projects from applying under this portion of the code."

Among other properties, this urgency ordinance addressed a proposed project where a swimming pool would be placed in the front

"I think one of the other things that we need to address is swimming pools in front yards sooner or later. Along with that ... we have asked planning to review Title 10 (of the Ojai Municipal Code). We asked over a year ago."

— Randy Haney, Ojai City Councilman

yard. This property came up at the July 9 council meeting. Under the old code, any building placed in the front yard would set the setback for a 5-foot pool wall, even if it was unpermitted. The application has since been withdrawn.

Councilman Randy Haney said: "I think one of the other things that we need to address is swimming pools in front yards sooner or later. Along with that ... we have asked planning to review Title 10 (of the Ojai Municipal Code). We asked over a year ago. The response that we got from the commission was, well, we need someone to read it for us, make recommendations and therefore then we'll vote on it or adopt or not adopt. I would like the city manager, if I can get the support of council, to actually designate someone from planning staff to work with the Planning Commission and actually start the review process of Title 10 immediately."

Vega responded: "The planner and I last week met

on that topic and agreed on doing exactly that. So, unless council tells me not to do so, we're planning to move forward."

Bob Daddi (owner of the Ojai Valley News) said: "This is not a democracy when you're on a commission. They serve at the will and pleasure of the council and they're supposed to do what the council asked them to do. A year later, after missing a half a dozen meetings because they had nothing to do, we have nothing to do. We're here tonight because they had nothing to do. It's time for you to make sure we have some serious people."

Councilman William Weirick said the general issue of fences, hedges and walls is already scheduled for a future meeting.

Since it is an urgency modification to the ordinance, it took effect immediately after adoption. It applies to any project that has not yet received a zoning clearance or other zoning permit from the Community Development Department.



Photo courtesy Humane Society of Ventura County

In the event of an earthquake or other emergency, the HSVC stresses the importance of having a go-bag and portable crate for each pet in your household.

Have disaster prep for pets, too

In the wake of two significant quakes recently in Southern California, the Humane Society of Ventura County wants to remind all pet owners of the importance of having an earthquake plan for the entire household — including the pets. "Southern California is prone to all types of natural disasters and being prepared should be at the forefront for every resident," said Greg Cooper, director of community outreach for the nonprofit HSVC. "But unlike weather-related disasters, an earthquake can strike without warning, so planning in advance is key." There are a number of things pet owners can do in preparation and in the event of an earthquake.

Your pets should always have up-to-date ID tags on their collars, and they should also have embedded microchips. "Have your pet microchipped in advance in case they get separated during

an emergency," said Arlene MacSween, assistant director of the HSVC's Ojai shelter. "Don't forget to register the microchip and keep those records up to date for any changes in address or phone numbers."

If you need to evacuate your home, having preassembled go-bags for every person and pet in the household is a must. Your pets' go-bags should include food, water, poop bags and cat litter, spare leashes, and collars with ID tags. Also, have copies of vet records, pet medications and recent photos. And don't forget pet treats and toys to help keep them comfortable during trying times.

Having portable crates for your pets can help keep them safe in a contained space. Store your pet crates in easy-to-reach places.

In the event of an evacuation, you'll want to know what hotels are pet-friendly; research hotels in advance,

locally and regionally. Also, check with local animal shelters to see if they may provide sanctuary for your pets during the emergency.

You help yourself and your pets by staying calm. "Animals get scared and nervous and may act differently during earthquakes," said Tracy Vail, HSVC senior humane officer. "They can feed off of our emotions when we're uneasy during a disaster."

Through the end of July, the Humane Society of Ventura County is offering reduced-cost microchips, portable crates and free ID tags. The HSVC also offers shelter whenever it's needed for evacuated pets and livestock at no cost to the owners. The Ojai shelter is at 402 Bryant St. For more information about the resources and services offered by the HSVC, visit hsvc.org/disaster_preparedness or call 805-646-6505.

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