

LONG BEACH
BUSINESS JOURNAL

An edition of the Long Beach Post



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Alejandro Izaguirre, 20, looks up at a cawing crow as he weeds a flower bed during a Sowing Seeds of Change gathering.

New nonprofit provides job skills for adults with disabilities

By Tess Kazenoff

Under the beating sun of a warm winter morning, young adults work to install irrigation systems into planter boxes at an old, vacant parking lot just off the 710 Freeway. The “Cupid Shuffle” comes on over a Bluetooth speaker and the group breaks out into dance, taking a well-deserved break from their gardening. It was part of a typical day at Sowing Seeds of Change, a sustainable, urban farm that Lindsay Smith and Dina Feldman founded as a space to nurture

young adults with disabilities. For the nonprofit’s roughly 20 participants, who have all connected to the organization through Long Beach Unified School District’s Adult Community Transition program, days at the farm begin with tea and honey harvested from the site, meditation and mindfulness activities. Music plays throughout the morning, and students dance along to Bruno Mars and Michael Jackson, all while learning about every stage of the gardening process, from planting and transporting seeds, to composting and irrigating, all while

developing job-readiness skills. “After they transition out of school services, a lot of the kids that aren’t completely independent, but still need a little bit of help, just kind of fall through the cracks, and they don’t have as many opportunities as most kids,” said Smith. While Smith had worked with Long Beach Unified schools in special education for the past 10 years, Feldman worked with special needs populations as a certified board analyst for the past 20. When the two were finally introduced in May 2020, they discovered that not only were their backgrounds similar, but their visions for an organization that would unite urban farming with job opportunities for people with disabilities aligned. “We had the exact same dream,” said Feldman. “It was insane.” The two hit the ground running, and in September 2020 they were allotted a plot of land from the city’s Parks, Recreation and Marine Department. While the organization’s main growing systems are almost ready to be planted, the farm already includes

Nonprofits continue pivotal role in building affordable housing

By Christian May-Suzuki

When then-Gov. Jerry Brown shut down California’s redevelopment agencies—government organizations that owned and oversaw the rehabilitation of large pieces of real estate—in 2014, he was responding to mismanagement that was often rife within those agencies, which could lead to high spending and little impact. But he also left a hole that would change the way the real estate industry operates. The process for building affordable housing in particular had to shift. “Redevelopment funding used to be a really big source of funding for building affordable housing, but California eliminated redevelopment areas and agencies so that funding went away,” Suny Lay Chang, who serves as president and COO of Long Beach nonprofit

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Local nonprofits foster innovation, economic growth

By Brandon Richardson

Innovation is the cornerstone of consistent economic growth for businesses and organizations around the world, but not everyone has the ability to innovate on their own, whether it’s due to a lack of knowledge of certain markets or the need for more capital. That’s where nonprofits with a focus on business and economic development come in, according to local leaders. In Long Beach, there are a host of resources and assets that help drive innovation, according to Randal Hernandez, board chair of the relatively new nonprofit Long Beach Economic Partnership, which was founded at the end of 2019. But many do not know how to access them, Hernandez said. That is where the partnership steps in. “[We] strive to bring those resources all to the table to ensure that we’re integrated and coordinated,” Hernandez said,

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Thairus Chaney, 19, puts together components for a planter box irrigation system at a formerly vacant parking lot.

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Courtesy photo

Last year, Love in the Mirror's annual toy drive was converted to a drive-thru event, distributing over 1,000 toys to around 350 families.



Courtesy photo

Jonas Corona speaks to students about community service in 2016.

Love in the Mirror encourages youth-led volunteering and community service

As a child, Jonas Corona founded a nonprofit. Now he wants to inspire other kids to give back.

By Tess Kazenoff

Jonas Corona was only 4 years old when he started volunteering with his family on Skid Row, but the moment that truly set him on a path of service happened when he was 6.

For the first time, he came across a child around his age experiencing homelessness, an encounter that broke his heart.

"That really just lit the fire inside me to want to give back as much as possible," said Corona, now 18.

But when Corona went to local shelters to see about volunteering, he was turned away due to his age.

Refusing to take no for an answer,

he turned his attention toward creating a nonprofit organization of his own, Love in the Mirror, that encourages youth-led volunteering and community service.

Twelve years later, the organization has served thousands of people, through various fundraisers and initiatives that any age group can participate in, such as the Peanut Butter and Jelly Time event that has contributed over 60,000 sandwiches to shelters.

Starting a nonprofit at the age of 6 is no easy feat, but with the support of family members and now a dedicated team as the organization has grown, Love in the Mirror is able to support several fundraisers and events each year, including a hygiene item drive, a school supply drive, a sock drive and food drives.

Corona's favorite event, however, is the annual toy giveaway, which prior to the pandemic, would include a room filled with thousands of toys that children, accompanied by children

volunteers, could select from.

"That was the best thing, to see the smile on the kid's face when they walk through the door," said Corona.

Although the fundraiser had to be converted to a drive-thru event due to the pandemic, last December, over 1,000 toys were distributed to around 350 families.

Apart from providing direct aid to the community, Corona is looking forward to Love in the Mirror's newest initiative, Project G.I.V.E., or, "Grow, Inspire, Volunteer, Educate," a community-service-based curriculum teaching young kids how they can volunteer.

Project G.I.V.E. will begin this fall as a pilot program in three Long Beach schools and one Lynwood school, Corona said.

"I can't wait to do that, because it's everything that I advocate for," he said.

The curriculum emphasizes "planting the seed early," initially focusing on elementary schoolers, although it can be adapted for all grade levels, Corona said.

Activities will include simple ways to contribute to the greater good, such as one of Love in the Mirror's favorite activities, messages of hope, where students write positive messages on blank postcards that will then be included in hygiene kits and care packages that the organization distributes.

"Really our goal when we have events and volunteer opportunities is to make it a fun environment for the kids, so they can want to do it again," he said.

To Corona, kids are the next generation of changemakers, and he hopes to continue spreading the message that anyone can volunteer if they really want to.

"I want to make sure that (kids) get a chance to volunteer because when I was 6, and they told me no, I know most people would ... just wait and maybe lose that passion to want to give back," said Corona. "I want to make sure that that never happens."

To volunteer with Love in the Mirror, contact info@loveinthemirror.org. To donate, visit loveinthemirror.org. ■



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FROM THE EDITOR: HAYLEY MUNGUIA

Q&A: The Long Beach nonprofit dedicated to supporting nonprofits

From providing resources to victims of domestic violence to serving the LGBTQ community, there are dozens of Long Beach nonprofit organizations committed to worthy causes. But while those groups support the community, they can also find themselves in need of outside support.

One organization—a nonprofit itself—has spent decades in Long Beach committed to that cause. The Nonprofit Partnership was founded in 1993 to help the folks behind the area's nonprofits strengthen their financial, planning and other skills so they in turn can improve their service to the community. So for the Nonprofits edition of the Business Journal, I decided to reach out to TNP's executive director Michelle Byerly to learn more about the organization and the role it plays in Long Beach's nonprofit ecosystem.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

HAYLEY MUNGUIA: To start off, can you tell me about The Nonprofit Partnership, how it started and how it serves nonprofits here in Long Beach?

MICHELLE BYERLY: Sure, so The Nonprofit Partnership started almost 30 years ago—this is our 29th year here in Long Beach—and we started through the Josephine Gumbiner Foundation. The foundation and a group of nonprofit advocates and executive directors really felt like there was a need for training and support for nonprofits in the community, and so we began as a program of that foundation. Five years later, we became what was then known as the Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership, and we started out with the same core programming that we do now, and really a very

similar mission, which is just to ensure nonprofits have the resources that they need to be successful and impact communities. So we started out with training and workshops and consulting, and we still do that today.

The core of our services are still our workshops, our consulting work, customizing individual support with nonprofits, and also a big space that we fill is also serving as a convening and networking space.

In 2016, we did a little bit of rebranding, and that was when we dropped “Long Beach” from the name and became The Nonprofit Partnership, because we do serve across LA County. The majority still comes from the greater Long Beach region, but we also serve a lot of nonprofits and public sector organizations throughout the county.

HM: So what types of challenges do nonprofits face that The Nonprofit Foundation seeks to address?

MB: Nonprofits are such a critical part of the community, whether it's providing basic needs to the community or arts and culture or youth programming or spaces for the community to connect with one another. Nonprofits range in size, from all volunteer run with no employees to 1,000 employees, and at every level, there just needs to be support.

So I think just understanding that nonprofits are so focused on their service and missions and serving the community that having a space where they can just learn how to organizationally be stronger—to do that has always been a need, and it continues to be. So the reason for an organization

like TNP is because there are those nuanced things that nonprofits need.

There are a lot of trainers and consultants out there, but what TNP brings is a little bit different. It's really that localized approach to the work, and the experts that have the knowledge in what's affecting nonprofits here locally.

HM: OK. So how long have you been with The Nonprofit Partnership, and what drew you to this work?

MB: I have been there for six years in January. I've been the executive director for the last four, and I have worked in nonprofits for the last 20 or so years. I was looking for another way to give back but also be part of a community, and I felt like I had a lot of experience working in a nonprofit. So when I saw the opening at TNP, I felt like that was such a great way to be part of a community and help share what I knew. I saw it as a great opportunity to be part of the Long Beach community and also just to help nonprofits.

HM: What do you see as a success for TNP? Do you have any examples of what that looks like?

MB: One of my favorite things that we do is our Emerging Leaders Program. It's a year-long leadership program for emerging leaders in nonprofits. There's mentorship and also technical skills and courses, and we're really just helping these amazing nonprofit professionals to see where they want to go with their career to continue to make a difference. We offer nine different topics, from strategic planning to financial acumen.

So as far as a success for us goes, we've heard

stories from some of our emerging leaders, saying maybe the financial class we had was the first time they got a full understanding of financial budgets, and they were either able to take that back to their organization or potentially to a job interview or a new organization. The biggest takeaway from that group that I consistently hear is just that people are being given the confidence to be able to have a greater impact than they were having.

It's just my favorite part of what we do at TNP—connecting people.

HM: Are there certain types of nonprofits that you tend to work with, or is there a broad range?

MB: We do work with all types of nonprofits, from foundations to PTAs to churches. We also work with the public sector—different departments in the city of Long Beach or the county, and so it really is a range. But I will say, maybe as another example of our work, we also are an advocate for nonprofits.

What I said about nonprofits being very focused on serving the people they're serving in the community—let's say you're an organization serving seniors in the community and that's what your focus is on, that's who you're going to advocate for. For us, the people we're serving are nonprofits, so when things come along, like during the pandemic, businesses were getting certain resources. But we needed to step in and also ensure nonprofits were being thought of and brought to the table.

Being able to work with such a broad range of organizations, including in the public sector, has also allowed us to make connections between those groups. We've been able to advocate for additional resources for nonprofits and then partner with foundations or even the city of Long Beach, for example, to help be part of their capacity-building for nonprofits.

In working with the city of Long Beach and their racial equity initiative, we've also been able to help create what's almost an incubator for very small or emerging nonprofits that are serving or led by communities of color that were impacted by the pandemic.

HM: That brings up another question I have. Obviously the pandemic has impacted nonprofits, just like it's impacted small businesses. But can you tell me what that's looked like on your end? What changes has TNP had to make during COVID-19?

MB: We have been going nonstop for the past two years. We have been very fortunate to have been able to continue. We basically, in mid-March of 2020, shifted everything online and have been able to continue to deliver the same services, and more, virtually. So all of our workshops have moved online. All of our consulting work primarily moved online, and we did step a little bit more into that advocacy arena, advocating for nonprofits to receive support.

Really what shifted was what we were providing to nonprofits. Normally, organizations pay for our services, so we were able to partner with different foundations and do more programming, either at a very low cost or for free for nonprofits, and we've had scholarships available for projects as needed for nonprofits. The question has really been: How are nonprofits shifting? So we shifted our programming to meet the needs.

We were trying to go as quickly as we could to put together trainings, and we were able to do a lot of that pretty quickly, from facilitating virtual meetings to contingency planning.

We saw a huge increase in the use of our workshops and convening spaces, especially in the first year and a half from the pandemic, just for organizations that had more time to attend events because, unfortunately, there was a slowdown for them.

HM: And as COVID-19 restrictions are lifting, I'm curious if it looks like things are going back to normal for you? And what types of changes from COVID-19 do you think will stick around for the long term?

MB: I think there have been some shifts, even in our programming. We're starting to hopefully bring a few things back in person again.

More broadly speaking, it depends on the sector. Some nonprofits have gone back to

providing services as they have been. But say, in basic needs—if there's a nonprofit providing food services, they still may have a huge need. And for our arts and culture organizations, especially performing arts organizations, or even youth-serving organizations—I do think their return to what would be “normal” is just a little bit slower. They're still not back up to the capacity they had been at before.

I think a huge outcome, though, of the pandemic is just the collaboration between nonprofits that has emerged—and the creativity. In Long Beach, for example, the Museum of Latin American Art is doing blood drives and different things like that.

I think that collaboration on programming and how nonprofits are working together—I think that hopefully will continue to stay. We already collaborated, and I think the pandemic increased the need for that collaboration.

To learn more about The Nonprofit Partnership, visit tnpsocal.org. ■



Courtesy photo
Michelle Byerly, executive director, The Nonprofit Partnership.



Long Beach-area Boy Scouts unload food donations amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Courtesy photo

Boy Scouts continue service amid pandemic

By Christian May-Suzuki

While the world was put on pause by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Boy Scouts of Long Beach stayed true to its mission.

The organization's service offerings became more crucial than ever, and annual programming like the Scouting for Food event—a food drive the organization has held on the second Saturday of November since the '80s—continued in 2021, providing critical support to those in need.

While the Scouting for Food collection itself happens on a single day, Scouts typically leave a collection bag on their neighbors'

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DemoChicks introduces women, girls to nontraditional career fields

By Tess Kazenoff

Robin Thorne was one of only seven women in her chemical engineering program at Drexel University.

The group remained close knit, “which was powerful,” said Thorne, who was a single mom raising her young son when she decided to enroll in college eight years after graduating from high school.

Thorne recalled the days of bringing her son to the library with her to study, where the women would take turns watching him.

“We stuck close together,” Thorne said.

Throughout her education, not only were there very few women in her classes, but there were hardly any women of color in leadership

positions, she said.

“There was only one woman of color that was a doctorate candidate, and I used to look at her like, ‘Wow, how did she do that?’” she said.

After starting her career in manufacturing as a process engineer and then moving on to regulatory compliance, Thorne founded her own company, CTI Environmental.

It was during a demolition project that Thorne realized she had an entire curriculum at her hands, and the power to start changing the industry from the inside out.

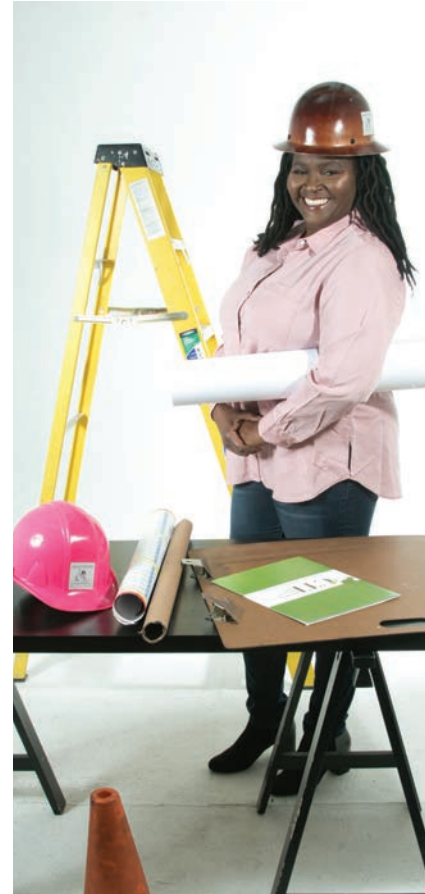
In 2019, DemoChicks—a nonprofit dedicated to introducing young girls to nontraditional careers, varying from demolition, architecture, engineering and

more—was born.

The girls in DemoChicks' monthly online program receive hands-on experience while interacting with industry leaders, learning about chemical engineering through making slime, discovering geotech with sand, water, and dirt, and even understanding architecture through marshmallows and toothpicks.

“One of the things that we talk about with DemoChicks is, ‘See it, be it,’” said Thorne, emphasizing the organization's stress on exposure to representation in largely White, male-dominated industries.

DemoChicks' online program, which tends to be geared toward kids in grades K-8, allows girls to enroll in the entire 10-month program, or just attend



Courtesy photo
Robin Thorne, founder, DemoChicks.

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New Nonprofit

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fruit trees, passion vines and flowers.

“Our main goal is to show them everything about urban farming, and because we’re utilizing this concrete jungle site that we were given, we really want to highlight that you can grow food anywhere,” Smith said.

Through Sowing Seeds of Change, Smith and Feldman hope to create a space for people to feel empowered through nature, while connecting to their food system.

The organization has successfully connected a few participants to job opportunities so far, and Feldman and Smith also hope to be able to hire students themselves in the future.

Apart from developing agricultural skills, students’ individual interests are embraced, whether that’s culinary training, art, building their own business, or even beekeeping.

“We just want to really get to know these students to know what their interests and passions are, and just kind of connect them wherever we can, whether it has to do with gardening or not,” said Smith. “We just want them to see them be successful.”

For Feldman and Smith, who are funding the farm largely by themselves, creating a sustainable and thriving urban space has been no easy feat, and the two have hit significant roadblocks since first welcoming participants last June.

“If COVID taught us anything, it’s: You have to be flexible, you have to roll with the punches, and you can’t fall in love with a specific idea,” said Feldman.

Not only has the site been broken into and vandalized, but a shipping container they purchased was significantly damaged. While the container was initially meant to serve as a mini kitchen along with an office and storage space, during the rain, everything became damaged and moldy, and it has been too expensive to replace or remove from the site.

The pair has had to continuously get creative, embracing the challenges



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

The new nonprofit Sowing Seeds of Change is turning a formerly vacant parking lot just off the 710 Freeway into a garden with the help of students from the Long Beach Unified School District’s Adult Community Transition program.



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Lindsay Smith, left-center, laughs as she and a group of young adults with disabilities take a well-deserved dance break from gardening as part of Sowing Seeds of Change, a new Long Beach-based nonprofit.

that have come with the journey of pursuing their shared dream.

Instead of being defeated by the setbacks, the women use them as teaching opportunities for students, to demonstrate resilience and the ability to overcome struggle.

“We both have this visceral desire that we want it so bad,” said Feldman. “I know that this is my god-given purpose, and that there’s

a reason why I met Lindsay, and there’s a reason why all these doors open. And so we laugh and cry, and then we game plan,” said Feldman.

Despite the difficulties of building Sowing Seeds of Change into a flourishing space, for Feldman and Smith, nothing compares to the joy of seeing students come out of their shells and thrive.

“It literally fills your heart with

joy,” said Feldman. “It doesn’t get better than that, the only way to get better is if we got paid.”

As Sowing Seeds of Change continues to grow, Feldman and Smith hope to not only open a secondary location, but to also serve young adults who were in the foster care system. They also hope to offer a sustainable, community-distribution farmers market, that provides free and culturally sensitive food that community members can pick out themselves.

“I don’t think this would have worked in any other city, and I am so grateful,” said Smith. “We know it’s gonna be a big success, even though we’ve had all these challenges, but I’m so happy that it’s right here in Long Beach.”

Brandon Richardson contributed to this report.

To sponsor a participant’s work on the farm, to volunteer with Sowing Seeds of Change, or to help with grant writing, email sowingseedsofchangeuf@gmail.com.

Join Sowing Seeds of Change every second Saturday at Fair Trade Long Beach for a vegan cafe and plant pop-up from noon to 4 p.m. at Parkview Village, 5423 E. Village Road. ■



Courtesy photo

Leigh Lester, founder, Ubuntu Institute of Learning.

Pushing nonprofits toward an entrepreneurial mindset

By Christian May-Suzuki

While its effects are invisible to many, the shuttering of a nonprofit organization can send shockwaves through a community.

Leigh Lester, who worked with the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency for two years as an outreach specialist among other roles working with nonprofits, has seen the impact.

“We’re literally closing their doors,” Lester said in a phone interview. “When there is one agency that’s been providing services for six, seven counties and it closes its doors, I got to see first hand how it devastates the community.”

Lester worked in a region in eastern North Carolina where most of the jobs were provided by a textile company, and she saw how it crushed the community when the company left the area to go overseas.

“Since many of the nonprofits relied heavily on donations from these same companies, they did not have funds to continue,” Lester said. “These towns became ghost towns.”

It’s a problem that Lester has spent much of her life trying to solve: the reliance of nonprofit organizations on others to generate their funding. Whether a nonprofit shuts down because the company donating to them disappears, or because its community partners don’t work close enough with the nonprofit to provide funding, the root of the problem is the same.

“I’ve been singing from the rooftops for a long time now that we need to generate our own money,” Lester said. “We need to stop being so

heavily dependent on donations and writing grants.”

Looking to provide her expertise to the community to minimize such tragedies, Lester founded the Ubuntu Institute of Learning in Texas in 2018. She moved to California a year later, and settled Ubuntu in Long Beach full time last year.

The institute serves as an educational resource that specializes in three particular areas: affordable housing, diversity and inclusion, and nonprofits.

In her consultation with nonprofits, Lester focuses on helping nonprofit leaders develop a more entrepreneurial mindset. One of the goals she emphasizes is dispelling the myth that nonprofits can’t generate revenue themselves. In fact, nonprofits can sell products and services as long as those profits and services are “mission-aligned” and the profit is directed back into the organization.

For those offering services outside their mission, they can create a for-profit entity like a social enterprise to fund their work, according to Lester. But taking these steps requires changing the way one thinks about their role entirely.

“In for-profit organizations, when things slow down, they pivot and say, ‘OK, what else can I do? How can I generate revenue?’” Lester said. “But when that happens to nonprofits, they say, ‘OK, well, we’ll just take the same people and we’ll double the work. We can bring in more money,’ and it just doesn’t work.”

One of the programs that Ubuntu has helped put together to spread this message is Launch

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Economic Growth

Continued from cover

adding it's important to maximize the impact of those resources. "Whether that be from the private sector, our friends in the public sector, academic institutions ... and

our nonprofit partners."

Hernandez said the partnership wants to promote Long Beach as an innovative city, which it can do through various sectors, especially aerospace. Over the last seven years, Long Beach has become a hub of space innovation: Virgin Orbit developed the LauncherOne, a new method

of delivering satellites to orbit from an airplane; Relativity Space uses massive 3D printers to build almost every component of its rockets; and SpinLaunch is devising a method of literally throwing satellites into space.

"There is a lot of innovation already happening in the city," Hernandez said, "and that will

attract more private investment, more personal resources and, hopefully, spur more students to want to come to our university and community college to learn more about those rising industries."

To continue the city's legacy of aerospace innovation, the LBEP recently announced a partnership with Wisk Aero, developer of the first all-electric, self-flying air taxi in the U.S. The partnership will see the two organizations work with businesses, local government and community leaders to study the feasibility of bringing advanced air mobility to Southern California.

Over the next two years, Wisk and the LBEP will evaluate the opportunity for workforce development in the emerging sector, along with community acceptance, the integration of autonomous aircraft into city transportation plans, and federal and state government funding opportunities. The partnership will also coordinate an economic impact study conducted through the Cal State Long Beach Office of Economic Research that will estimate annual impacts. The study is expected to be completed later this year.

The partnership with Wisk is the perfect example of taking a budding, innovative operation and connecting it with resources within a city to allow for growth, Hernandez said.



Courtesy photo

The Wisk autonomous air taxi could be carrying passengers around the Los Angeles region within the next 10 years thanks to a partnership with a Long Beach nonprofit.

housing and quality jobs.

"This organization was really founded ... [so] people who typically have not been able to participate in the economy in a full way are able to do so," Thrash-Ntuk said.

The center does not only serve individuals but underserved communities in general. Throughout the pandemic, the organization has worked to connect businesses in North Long Beach to resources such as grant programs and other support, Thrash-Ntuk said.

Thrash-Ntuk said the organization has worked to bring technologies to businesses as well as bring owners together. Some may say that is not innovative, she said, but it does not happen enough, especially in underserved communities.

"Long Beach has a regional and national reputation: the port, a world-class university," Thrash-Ntuk said. "In order for us to sustain that, it's important that we have as many ... of our residents and community members as we can participate."

Nurturing innovation is particularly important in a state like California, where the cost of living and the cost of business are known to be high, according to Bill Allen, president and CEO of the nonprofit Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation. Rather than competing as an affordable area, California instead competes

with the quality of its workforce, advanced infrastructure and innovative enterprises and institutions, Allen said.

"Innovation really has long been at the center of the California economy and the LA area economy," Allen said, noting the region's storied past, particularly in the entertainment and aerospace industries.

Los Angeles County has four major industries, Allen said. In addition to entertainment and aerospace, transportation and health care have been prominent for decades. Despite the long, "mature" histories of these sectors, Allen said they are not immune to the need for innovation—in fact, they each thrive on it.

The LACEDC's mission is to reinvent the regional economy to advance growth and prosperity for all, Allen said. Innovation in each of the area's key industry sectors is central to the process of creating a more robust, sustainable, equitable and resilient economy, he said.

Each of the four key sectors is a hotbed for innovation, Allen said. In entertainment, there is digital media, gaming and esports; in transportation, alternative fuels, autonomous vehicles and new forms of transit such as Wisk's air taxi; in healthcare, biomedicine; and the aerospace sector is looking to the stars more than ever.

Building relational infrastructure

within key sectors—connecting companies with one another, to educational institutions, to capital and research universities—is critical, Allen said. To that end, the organization for years has been convening cluster councils within each major sector, Allen said, to accelerate innovation.

Additionally, for the past six years, the corporation has hosted quarterly forums in partnership with Cal State Dominguez Hills meant to provide insight into rapidly evolving industries such as space commercializations—a tradition the Long Beach Economic Partnership has adopted in partnership with Cal State Long Beach. The forthcoming spring forum for the county organization is on the blooming cannabis industry.

Outdated public policy can hinder innovation, Allen and Hernandez agreed. In Long Beach, the Economic Partnership works to identify these barriers and make them known to groups more focused on policy, including the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce. The LACEDC has advocated for change at the regional level.

"Fostering innovation is absolutely essential to economic growth and to maintaining our competitive position in the global economy," Allen said. "It's what fosters productivity, which helps elevate wages and benefits for workers and profits for entrepreneurs." ■

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Atlantic Alano Club supports local LGBTQ community

By Tess Kazenoff

The Atlantic Alano Club is embarking on a capital campaign to find a permanent home to continue its mission of providing a safe space for addiction recovery to the LGBTQ community.

Since its founding in 1984, the organization has relocated six times, although it remains the only club of its kind north of San Diego and south of Silver Lake, said chairman of the board, Bryan Weil.

"The Alano Club was kind of based on the whims of a landlord," said Weil, who hopes the organization will be able to find a permanent space within the next five years.

The organization was initially established to meet an unmet need in the recovery community: a truly judgment-free and inclusive space for its LGBTQ members.

"The feedback that we get from people that come from 'straight' 12-step meetings, is they feel that they can finally share their truth comfortably," said Weil.

Although the club is LGBTQ-focused, all people are welcome, and sometimes as many as 20% of people joining 12-step recovery meetings do not identify as



Courtesy photo

The Atlantic Alano Club board members and City Councilwoman Cindy Allen, third from right, celebrate the reopening of the center after closing from March 2020 to June 2021.

LGBTQ, said Weil.

"They just feel that it's a very comforting, welcoming environment," said Weil. "Even though we're LGBT Alano Club, we

welcome anybody and everybody."

Over the years, Weil has also noticed an increase in attendance from the transgender community, "which is great, which means

they're comfortable coming to meetings," he said.

Each month, Weil estimated that between 1,000 and 1,200 people pass through the organization's doors for

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Pushing Nonprofits

Continued from page 7

Long Beach, a partnership with the Downtown Long Beach Business Alliance (DLBA) and Cal State Long Beach's Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE).

Launch Long Beach's mission is to provide both monetary and educational resources to entrepreneurs and small businesses in traditionally underserved communities in Long Beach. The first cohort, which started Jan. 8, consists mainly of businesses just starting out, but also has a business in its ideation phase, as well as a couple that are looking to scale.

"We didn't want what we saw in the market," Lester said. "There were a lot of programs for people who were already making money, already in the black, but not really for somebody that was kind of in a middle space. That wasn't being served."

The core of what Launch Long Beach offers is a 14-week program, conducted by Ubuntu and the IIE, that provides training that addresses many of the knowledge gaps that, in Lester's experience, has caused other organizations to crumble.

One of the participants in the first cohort of the program is Dina Feldman, who runs Feel Good Salsa, among other enterprises. She spent

most of her career as a behavioral specialist before transitioning to the food business, so she applied to the Launch Long Beach program to learn about how to approach her new field.

"I came to learn the mindset," Feldman said. "I didn't notice some of the things that I was doing that I now understand through the program."

For Feldman, whose background as an immigrant serving her community informs her mindset, one of the toughest things to learn

it forces "me to think about those things and address them."

Those ideas—reflection, finding solutions and improving your mindset—are the focus of the first eight weeks of the program, conducted by Lester and Ubuntu.

One particular group workshop turned out to be far more productive than Lester expected because business owners were so proactive.

"It wasn't intended to be an inspirational session," Lester said.

“Entrepreneurship is one of the most effective vehicles for eradicating poverty in under-invested communities.”

- Leigh Lester, Founder of the Ubuntu Institute of Learning

was putting a high enough price on things to keep her business sustainable. While her history played a part, she identified "self-defeating thoughts and ideologies" through the program that she has been able to tackle.

"It's a whole value system that you have because of your background, so realizing that I have to let go of some of those things," Feldman said,

This particular exercise involved business owners identifying the things that they felt were holding them back, and the other members of the program could give feedback and advice. What unfolded was something Lester remembers as a breakthrough for many in the program.

"The whole time people could chime in and make recommendations," Lester said. "Not

one person left that class not feeling like they had something that they can now do to help them get over it."

"I was ecstatic, because it wasn't just me doing it. It was a collective."

Following this training, the IIE steps in for six weeks with a more technical approach.

The institute provides coaching on setting up accounting, building a team, operating equitably and deciding whether to organize as a limited liability company or a C corporation, among other topics. Taken together, program participants are taught all of the skills they need to run their business.

"We try to help them avoid pitfalls that you see frequently with entrepreneurs," James Wan, director at the IIE, said by phone.

"I think that it is important that if someone has a vision, that they have the support and the skills to pursue that vision," Wan added. "It's more so about understanding the hurdles."

To help support business owners in the first cohort of the program, the DLBA has partnered with Waterford Property Company and Turnbridge Equities to fund the new Entrepreneurs of Color grant program. Through that program, 10 of the business owners taking part in the current cohort of the Launch Long Beach program will receive \$2,500 following the completion of their 14-week training.

"Launch Long Beach is a great opportunity to leverage the resources of the entrepreneurial ecosystem to foster and grow businesses in BIPOC communities," Austin Metoyer, DLBA's economic development and policy manager, said in an email. "Supporting this program is part of our longer-term effort for economic development to champion and uplift businesses owned by historically marginalized communities in Downtown."

This support lends itself to another important facet of Lester's philosophy: that entrepreneurship is an effective tool to tackle the greater issue of poverty.

"Entrepreneurship is one of the most effective vehicles for eradicating poverty in under-invested communities," Lester said in a statement. "However, entrepreneurs of color often lack the skills, support and funding necessary to be successful."

People of color—especially women—have faced disproportionate barriers to entrepreneurship and climbing up the income ladder. Launch Long Beach hopes to address that systemic issue by providing support on an individual level.

"We don't want to say 'OK, you face challenges getting access to funding because you're from a community of color, or you're a woman that gets only 2% of venture capital funding,'" Wan said. "We look at their journey, their desire, their interest, and try to ask ourselves how we can make that go smoother."

Applications to the Launch Long Beach program are rolling, so businesses are encouraged to apply for the next cohort at any time. For more information, visit launchlongbeach.org. ■

Affordable Housing

Continued from cover

Linc Housing, said by phone.

Since then, nonprofit developers in California like Linc have had to figure it out on their own, searching for the right bonds and grants to fund their projects—and finding out, at times, that those funds might not be available. In other cases, restrictions on grants and other funds can make it difficult to find a suitable site to start development.

"Developers will build it if they can put together the financing to make it happen, but there is a limitation of resources that we have available," Chang said.

One way nonprofit developers have worked around this combination of money and land problems has been by purchasing already existing properties that are vacant or underused, often sites like churches or preschools, and redeveloping them into housing.

But there's more flexibility for for-profit developers who are looking to include affordable housing in new mixed-use projects to satisfy city requirements. Long Beach's inclusionary housing law, for example, requires new developments in Downtown and Midtown to have a certain percentage of units set aside as affordable housing.

These "inclusionary developers," while not necessarily pursuing a mission to develop housing for the greater good, play their own important role in sustaining a balanced housing market.

"What's really nice about those units is they are built basically where the market-rate units are built," Chang said. "So what you're getting is a mixing of incomes, in one building, and in a neighborhood."

This blending of backgrounds is beneficial to both sides of the spectrum, adding diversity to the community while providing an affordable home in a central location



A kitchen inside a one-bedroom unit at the new Vistas del Puerto affordable housing development.

for people who need it.

"I guess you could have a community of just lawyers and doctors, but who would make the coffee?" Chang said.

On the other hand, nonprofit developers bring two important pieces to the picture: scale and focus.

When it comes to dedicated affordable housing, most large projects in Long Beach—like the 47-unit Vistas Del Puerto that celebrated its grand opening late last month, along with the 95-unit Spark at Midtown and the 160-unit The Beacon—are undertaken by nonprofit developers. There are a few reasons why.

First, funding: While there is no fund explicitly set aside for affordable housing in California, there are various bonds and grants that can only be accessed

by developers whose projects meet certain scale requirements. Since these projects require large allocations of project space for affordable housing, many inclusionary and private developers do not reach the scale needed to qualify.

"You would never put a tax credit program on a 10-unit building, it just doesn't make sense," Chang said. "But if I am building a \$50 million project, that makes sense."

Beyond the financing of projects, nonprofits are also better positioned to focus on the overall well-being of their tenants.

Linc Housing's Spark at Midtown, for example, includes a four-room exam clinic provided by St. Mary Medical Center, a space for several remote services provided by the YMCA of Greater Long Beach and a community kitchen space.

"The aspect of being a nonprofit factors in," Chang said. "We want to make sure that when we are building, we're always building space for the residents to gather, to form a community."

Another recently opened affordable housing project—Vistas Del Puerto—has a design that reflects an expanded focus on tenant wellness both directly and indirectly. Clifford Beers, the nonprofit developer of the property, emphasized the importance of tackling interconnected issues like racial equity and climate change when building affordable housing.

Vistas Del Puerto takes these challenges on through several unique features, including a rooftop solar panel array that cuts down on natural gas usage by helping heat water and gas in the building and commercial spaces on the ground

floor reserved for "BIPOC and women owned businesses that have been disproportionately affected both by the pandemic and the historical racial inequities around housing in the LA area."

"For a long time, they have been treated as mutually exclusive problems, and here, we feel it is important to address them all together, because they are interconnected issues," Clifford Beers spokesman Aaron Perry-Zucker said in a phone interview.

Aesthetics, though, also matter—particularly when it comes to how a project fits into the surrounding area. Chang said it's an even more important factor for nonprofits and dedicated affordable housing projects than for other developments.

"Often when you drive down the street, you'll see that the affordable projects are the newest looking, or the nicest looking, or the best maintained buildings, because we want to make sure that we are showing well," Chang said.

Taken together, every aspect of a project that these builders must consider—financing, location, tenant services and aesthetics—speaks to the greater mission behind Linc Housing, Clifford Beers and other nonprofit developers.

"It's about not only housing people, but serving them so that they are set up for greater opportunity, economic mobility, access to resources, better health and wellness, and better educational opportunities," Chang said.

"We start with housing, but then we provide much more than just housing," she added. "Housing is just a base and an anchor for the kind of services that we provide." ■

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Terrie Pritchett, left, Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia, center, and Councilwoman Suely Saro celebrate the opening of the Vistas del Puerto affordable housing development with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

DemoChicks

Continued from page 5

individual workshops. For college-aged women, the nonprofit also offers a scholarship program, and as of last month, a mentorship program that connects women in the industry to college students. Thorne is also working with women in Long Beach City College's trade programs for DemoChicks' membership program, with plans to offer networking events and even financial literacy workshops.

"No person is an island, right? We were born to engage with others, and I think it's really important to support each other and nurture each other, because it's challenging," said Thorne. "Once you realize that you're not the only one going through something, it empowers you or uplifts you." Thorne has also introduced a workshop to Long Beach Unified schools. Since the organization's founding, all of DemoChicks' initiatives have been spearheaded solely by Thorne with the help of a couple of volunteers, and she

would love to be able to expand her staff, to allow the nonprofit to grow further. While Thorne envisions an organization that has an established curriculum for schools across the United States and even internationally to utilize, her goal, first and foremost, is to inspire girls to pursue their dreams. "If they do decide to go the nontraditional route, I want them to feel supported, I want them to know that they have a whole movement behind them," said Thorne. "When women come together and unite, it just makes a powerful situation." ■

Alano Club

Continued from page 9

a recovery meeting. The club hosts about 25 in-person meetings a week (when pandemic restrictions allow) and another seven that are online-only, although the club has recently adapted the technology to allow participants to virtually attend in-person meetings, said Weil. While the club has always strived to provide a safe space to its participants, the switch to virtual meetings at the start of the pandemic had a detrimental side effect: Zoom bombing. "We did have people logging into our meetings, and saying homophobic slurs," said Weil. Fortunately, it has not been an issue since then, said Weil, although it remains a reminder of the difficulties facing many LGBTQ+ members in recovery.

"They say that addiction is really tied to a lot of shame, and I think that there's a lot of shame that society puts on gay people," said Weil. While the organization's emphasis is on recovery meetings, another integral piece of Alano Club is the opportunity to bridge connections between its members through social events. "Within the gay community, there's quite a bit of struggle with addiction," said Weil. "We want to make sure that we create a safe environment for meetings . . . but we also try to create a community amongst those different people." Pandemic permitting, the club hosts various sober events throughout the year, such as New Year's Eve party, a beach party, drive-in movie theater nights, and more. "They learn how to have fun, sober fun, and they get to be in an environment that's accepting of their sexuality as well as their sobriety," said Weil.

The pandemic created a financial hardship for the organization, but Atlantic Alano Club found a solution with its membership program, an initiative that allowed the club to not only keep its space but also build some savings. While the completely volunteer-run organization never expects any money from its members, currently 60 to 65 members pay monthly dues, bridging the club's financial gap and supporting the goal of purchasing its own space, said Weil. "We don't have these big, huge, lofty goals. It's just to be able to have a permanent home with a big enough space that's welcoming, so as many people who want to can attend meetings and we can host as many meetings as possible," said Weil.

Atlantic Alano Club is located at 600 Redondo Ave. To volunteer, email board@atlanticalanoclub.org. ■

Su Casa domestic violence shelter faces housing challenges and increased need since pandemic

By Tess Kazenoff

Su Casa has remained a fixture in the Long Beach community for over 40 years, providing trauma-informed support and shelter to those experiencing domestic violence and abuse. The nonprofit was initially formed as a grassroots organization by Petra Medelez in 1979, a domestic violence survivor frustrated by the lack of resources available. Today's space is "a total community effort," said director of development and community outreach, Dean Lockwood. Not only has Su Casa's staff expanded to 25 people, but its budget has reached over \$1.2 million, allowing the nonprofit to offer both emergency shelter and transitional housing to its clients. While its emergency shelter provides the first level of trauma support, including legal advice, counseling, and medical assistance, its second shelter, which opened in 1996, is designed for more long-term stays, said Lockwood. Clients are able to receive support with life skills such as financial literacy, education, and employment, with the ultimate goal of securing permanent housing back in the community. While the emergency shelter has a 26-person capacity and the transitional shelter has 24 beds, it has been difficult responding to the increased need since the pandemic, said Lockwood. Last year, Su Casa's hotline received about 2,400 calls, which was a 20% increase compared to previous years, mirroring a national trend, he said. Not every call that Su Casa receives is a person needing immediate shelter; sometimes, it is a connection to other resources, such as Su Casa's Domestic Violence Housing First program, that helps clients maintain permanent housing, whether that is by providing moving costs or helping them stay in their current location. The program assisted around 50 people last year. Lack of affordable and accessible housing remains an issue facing many Su Casa clients, and many have stayed in the shelters longer than the usual time frame since the pandemic, said Lockwood. "There was not a lot of movement, so there were not a lot of openings for apartments and it was difficult to find housing," said Lockwood. "The normal transition of housing in the community wasn't happening." While capacity restrictions due to the pandemic also limited the amount of beds available in Su Casa's shelters, the organization pivoted to coordinating hotel space for clients, thanks to Project



Courtesy photo

Su Casa has provided trauma-informed care and shelter for over 40 years to individuals and families experiencing domestic violence. The shelters largely serve families, with three children for every one adult staying in its two shelters.

Safe Haven, a Los Angeles Mayor's Fund initiative that allotted \$4 million to assist with providing shelter to those experiencing domestic violence. While grant funding can sometimes create a challenge for

nonprofits because it can only go towards specific uses, "we've really done well during the pandemic in fundraising," said Lockwood. Apart from securing a number of emergency and regular grants, Su Casa also received two donations of

\$10,000 from anonymous sources. Additionally, at the end of 2020, the organization received the Jeff Bezos Day One Family Fund Award of \$1.25 million, which the organization is still determining how to best utilize. "We're looking really to expand our capacity," said Lockwood. "Normally, we'll shelter 230 people a year, so if we can make that 300 people, we're making a bigger impact." In the next year, Su Casa is also looking to expand its outreach program, bringing even more services out to the community. Outreach is central to Su Casa's mission, but the pandemic and the switch to virtual programming has limited the nonprofit's efforts. Lockwood hopes to expand the organization's youth outreach in particular, and move beyond the four walls of Su Casa to meet more clients where they're at, whether that's through telehealth or providing services where they're living. "We're really focused on making sure that our services are at work," he said. ■

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Boy Scouts

Continued from page 4

porches to be filled with food in the weeks prior to the event. Last year, the Long Beach Salvation Army and Lakewood’s Project Shepard both benefited from the drive, receiving 22,567 pounds of food total.

The Scouting for Food event is just one of many food-related projects the Scouts undertake, with food donations occurring “nearly every weekend of the year,” according to Long Beach Boy Scouts CEO Marc Bonner.

And last year, an impromptu food donation came from an unlikely source: the Boy Scouts’ annual popcorn sales drive, which Scouts use as a fundraiser.

“Between August and November each year, our Scouts sell popcorn to pay their way for campouts, achievements, equipment, uniforms, and more,” Bonner said.

Last year, though, there was a surplus of about 220 bags of popcorn that were still good but hadn’t been sold.

Seeing an opportunity, the Scouts reached out to Long Beach Memorial Medical Center, and the organization donated the extra popcorn to the hospital “as a thank you for all their hard

work during the pandemic,” Bonner said. Newly minted Long Beach Eagle Scouts, meanwhile, also had an impact last year.

To receive the coveted title, aspiring Eagle Scouts must earn 21 merit badges and lead a large-scale program that contributes to their community in a positive way.

Only 6% of eligible Scouts are named an Eagle Scout, and in 2021, 71 Long Beach members joined the exclusive group after raising more than \$110,000 to help schools, hospitals, parks, and other community organizations.

While the Boy Scouts have continued in their efforts to help the local community, the organization itself has also sought to maintain the service and experience it provides to members.

That includes members who don’t have the time or money to participate in the traditional Boy Scouts experience. The organization’s ScoutReach program, an afterschool program that launched in 2005 to make the Boy Scouts more accessible for all interested students, was derailed by the pandemic and its associated school closures.

But the program, which was available at 33 sites across the city before COVID-19 hit, is slowly being revived.

“In September 2021, we got back up and running at four schools,” Bonner said. “School principals reached out to us to ask if we would be coming back. We have a fifth school opening up very soon with another three or four planned for later this year.”

The Boy Scouts’ camp offerings are also making a comeback.

While 2020 saw operations at both the Scouts’ remote camps—Camp Tahquitz and Sea Base—put on hold, both programs returned last year.

Camp Tahquitz offers kids the opportunity to study nature, shoot rifles, climb and rappel on a 640-acre property in the San Bernardino Mountains, while Sea Base takes kids to a leased waterfront property in Long Beach where they can kayak, canoe and sail.

Referring to the two camp locations, Bonner said, “We have unique assets that are rare, and I can’t think of many others who have them.”

There was high demand for both camps last year, but Sea Base camp in particular saw a spike in participants, with over 800 kids participating in the eight-week camp program, up from an average of 600 to 650 kids in the four-to-five years leading up to 2020.

But perhaps the biggest moment of the pandemic for the Boy Scouts’ Long Beach

Area Council involved just one member: Lily Morse.

After first being allowed to become a Boy Scout in 2019, Morse worked for 18 months to become the council’s first ever female Eagle Scout.

The path wasn’t always easy. Morse’s determination—a key trait for all Eagle Scouts—was evident after she received the accolade.

Morse told Backpacker Magazine that after the Boy Scouts announced her new rank, she was often called sexist or homophobic names. Some people even accused her of cheating the requirements.

“I’ve had some—a lot of boys and even adults tell me I shouldn’t be there,” Morse told ABC Channel 7 News. “While it’s really frustrating, it kind of just encouraged me to keep going and want to be an Eagle Scout even more.”

Looking ahead, the Long Beach Boy Scouts are eager to jump into 2022. As COVID-19 restrictions begin to loosen, the organization has a full calendar of activities and events.

“I would invite all families in Long Beach to check out the amazing opportunities we offer youth,” Bonner said.

Those interested in participating can visit the Scouts’ website at longbeachbsa.org, visit their social media platforms, or call the Scout Service Center at 562-427-0911. ■

Curtains to close on Found Theatre

The new owners intend to demolish portions of the City Place complex in Downtown.

By Christian May-Suzuki

The future of the sprawling City Place complex is once again being reimagined. But this time around marks the end for at least one Long Beach institution: the nearly 50-year-old Found Theatre.

The 14-acre City Place, a prime piece of property in Downtown Long Beach, has seen several attempts at reinvigoration in recent years, most recently with former owner Tony Shooshani rebranding the shopping district as “The Streets” in 2017.

But Shooshani, who bought the development in 2005, defaulted on a \$63 million loan in 2020. A partnership among Waterford Property Company, Turnbridge Equities and Monument Square Investment then bought the loan through a bidding process.

Now, City Place’s new owners—who have decided to reinstate the property’s old name—have their own plans for the site.

Conceptual plans submitted to the city on Dec. 16 indicate the new owners intend to demolish portions of the City Place complex, including the building bounded by Fifth Street on the north, Fourth Street on the south, The Promenade on the west, and Long Beach Boulevard on the east, as well as the building on the block east of the city parking structure between Fifth Street and Sixth Street, where the Found resides.

If the plans are approved, the demolished areas will be replaced by three new eight-story apartment buildings totaling 900 units, with 36,000 square feet of ground-floor commercial space and a standalone commercial pavilion. To comply with the city’s inclusionary housing law, 6% of the proposed apartment units would have to be designated as affordable housing.

The plans must still go through a multi-step process that will likely last, at minimum, six-to-12 months before the property owners can obtain permits to begin demolition, according to Long Beach Development Services spokesman Rick de la Torre.

Waterford’s co-founder John Drachman declined to share the team’s plans for the rest of the property, including which tenants will remain. Other members of the development team could not be reached for comment.



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal
A man walks by The Found Theatre at the corner of Sixth Street and Long Beach Boulevard.

Representatives for other businesses in the impacted area, such as Jean Machine, as well as other City Place businesses, including Ammatoli, Mitaki and Milana’s New York Pizzeria, also could not be reached for comment.

But the folks behind the Found Theatre have been open about what the new plans mean for the Long Beach institution.

The theater’s executive director Virginia DeMoss said the developers have given her team until March 31 to vacate the property. A “Found Farewell” party is scheduled for March 13.

For the Long Beach theater community, it will mark the end of an era.

“The theater means the world to me,” DeMoss said. “I spent almost 50 years of my life doing it.”

Act 1
The Found Theatre had humble beginnings, started by Cynthia Galles and several friends fresh out of the University of California, Irvine in 1974. The first show the group ever performed was in a church, but soon the thespians got their own official theater space.

It was nothing remarkable, just one of many humble properties in a strip mall on Seventh Street and Orange Avenue. It was next to a laundromat, and performances would sometimes be disturbed by the rattling of the defunct change machine being hammered by frustrated patrons.

After a decade, the Found was forced out when the strip mall was demolished, so the theater found its way to another space on Seventh Street and Long Beach Boulevard.

But DeMoss—who joined Galles

and the Found Theatre in 1975 and has been one of the driving forces behind the theater—said its growth soon necessitated another move.

“We really loved that space, but [Galles] wanted something bigger with higher ceilings,” DeMoss said. “We looked at a ton of buildings and potential things, but none of them ever worked out.”

Eventually, a new development just a few blocks away at Fourth Street and Long Beach Boulevard set the stage for the Found to get the type of dedicated theater space it

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Southwest, American get more flights; international travel could come to LGB

By Brandon Richardson

Southwest and American airlines were awarded additional flight slots at Long Beach Airport after Delta Air Lines relinquished them in December, officials announced last month.

Southwest was awarded two additional slots, while American was granted one. The additional slots take Southwest's allocation up to 37 of the 53 total daily flights allowed at the small municipal airport.

"There's always strong demand for flight slots at the Long Beach Airport," Mayor Robert Garcia said in a statement. "Having them be consistently filled speaks to the strength of our airport and our city as a travel destination."

American has four of the remaining slots, while Delta has nine, Hawaiian Airlines has two, and UPS has one.

Southwest and American were on a waitlist for additional slots, which officials use to reallocate any that

are relinquished by other operators. Airlines interested in launching new operations out of Long Beach may also join the waitlist.

Swoop, an "ultra-low-cost" Canadian airline, has expressed interest in coming to Long Beach and will be at the top of the waiting list for the next available flight slot, airport officials said. The list also includes, in order: American, Hawaiian and Southwest.

The WestJet-owned Swoop is based in Calgary and would utilize the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Preclearance program in Canada, which allows passengers to be screened before boarding their U.S.-bound flight, rather than upon arrival. The usage of preclearance means Long Beach could receive the international flights without the need for additional facilities or infrastructure improvements, officials said.

In 2015, JetBlue, which used to be the most prominent operator at Long Beach Airport, formally



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal
A Southwest Airlines plane takes off from Long Beach Airport.

requested the city begin the process of establishing a customs facility to allow international flights.

The request led to heated debates between officials as well as residents, with the City Council ultimately voting down the proposal.

After the council's decision, JetBlue slowly began pulling back on its Long Beach operations. The airline began underutilizing flight slots and relinquished them a handful at a time before finally withdrawing from the

city entirely in 2020.

In JetBlue's absence, Southwest quickly established itself as the city's most prominent carrier.

"Airlines and travelers see Long Beach as a preferred gateway to Southern California," Long Beach Airport Director Cynthia Guidry said in a statement. "Our airport is in a strong position to retain and attract airlines that connect our great city to visitors and new, exciting destinations." ■

Alamitos Bay office building sold for \$41M to be redeveloped into housing

By Brandon Richardson

Congressional Place, a two-story office building near the Alamitos Bay Marina in Southeast Long Beach, sold for \$41 million for future housing development, global real estate firm Newmark announced late last month.

"With its prime coastal location, outstanding area demographics and strong multifamily market fundamentals in the region, Congressional Place received intense investor interest," Chris Benton, senior managing director at Newmark, said in the announcement.

The 73,769-square-foot property sits on a 2.35-acre parcel at 6700 E. Pacific Coast Highway, directly across East Marina Drive from Schooner Or Later. The future homes also will be a short distance from the 2ND & PCH retail center and other Alamitos Bay restaurants and bars such as the San Pedro Fish Market, The Crab Pot, Ballast Point, Malainey's Grill and Boathouse on the Bay.

Benton, along with Newmark's Anthony Muhlstein, Kevin Shannon, Bill Bauman, Ken White and Sean Fulp represented the seller, ValueRock Realty, an Irvine-based real estate investment firm. ValueRock purchased Congressional Place, which was originally built in 1983, for \$24 million in 2017.

It is unclear how much the firm invested in the property after it took over, but it remains fully leased by

financial firms Stanley Morgan and Wells Fargo.

The buyer, Holland Partner Group, has plans to redevelop the property with a multifamily residential project, according to Newmark. Details of the project were not available, and Holland did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Based on the city's land-use guidelines for the area, however, the project height cannot exceed five stories.

Holland Partner Group is not new to residential development in Long Beach. Last year, Holland, in partnership with North America Sekisui House, completed construction on the Volta on Pine, a two-building project with 271 units and ground-floor retail in Downtown Long Beach.

Less than six months after opening, the developers sold Volta for \$156 million to regional real estate investment and asset management company Gelt Inc.

Congressional Place is the second Southeast Long Beach property to be sold for residential redevelopment in less than three months. In early December, Newmark announced the \$67.9 million sale of the Marina Shores retail center, which is directly across North Studebaker Road from the office building.

Both properties were among several identified in the city's Southeast Area Specific Plan as potential sites for multifamily redevelopment as a means to meet state mandates for increased housing development. The plan was approved by the City Council in September 2017. ■



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Inflation hits small businesses

The U.S. has seen the highest year-over-year inflation growth since the early 1980s.

By Christian May-Suzuki

Coming out of 2020, Johanna Moynahan had to face the facts: Things were not looking great.

The owner of Far Outfit on Retro Row, which sells recycled vintage clothes, saw her sales drop and her costs continue to rise. Things were getting too expensive for her to keep up.

As the pandemic dragged on through 2021 and into 2022, costs kept increasing.

Moynahan isn't alone in her plight. Small businesses across the country are facing the consequences of a skyrocketing inflation rate.

"I noticed a shift near the end of last year," Moynahan said. "Food costs were going up, and rents were

Continued on page 21

Renewable energy tech firm to open Long Beach plant

By Brandon Richardson

Heliogen, a renewable energy technology company, has begun site preparation and setup for its first full-scale manufacturing facility, which will be located at Douglas Park in East Long Beach, the firm announced late last month.

Production lines are slated to come online at the 90,000-square-foot facility in the third quarter of this year.

"We believe our state-of-the-art heliostat manufacturing facility is the world's first and only purpose-built facility for high-volume heliostat production," CEO Bill Gross said in a statement.

A heliostat is a device that

continually tracks the sun to reflect sunlight to a single point. The Heliogen "sunlight refinery" uses artificial intelligence and computer vision to control thousands of mirrors to concentrate sunlight on a specialized tower, which would produce heat upward of 1,000 degrees centigrade, according to the company's website.

The heat is transferred to a tightly packed rockbed, where it can be stored and used to generate heat and/or electricity. The energy also could be used to split water and create 100% clean hydrogen.

"Our ability to manufacture Heliogen heliostats in the facility enables a significant cost advantage compared to earlier heliostat production, which was done in

Continued on page 20

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Found Theatre

Continued from page 15

deserved. In a turn of luck, developers in the city were required to donate 1% of project costs to the arts—and the new City Place complex was so large that 1% of the cost was sufficient to build a new theater.

The resulting space was one made just for the Found, adorned with a logo and the classic cinema letter board. But for Galles and DeMoss, the interior—which Galles helped design—was what really defined it.

“It has super high ceilings, and the floor is a sprung floor, not cement,” DeMoss said. “It’s hollowed out, and it’s filled with sand and covered with wood, so it is great for dancing and all that other stuff.”

The Found put on the first show in its new space at 599 Long Beach Blvd.—titled, “Hitler in Love”—in early 2005, and the future looked bright for the experimental theater.

But tragedy would soon follow.

Act 2

Galles had a true passion for the theater and what it represented. But at times, that passion could burn just a bit too bright. DeMoss remembered watching Galles working long and hard hours for the theater, ignoring signs of a growing threat.

A cancer she once fought off had returned, and this time, it took a

toll. As ever, the theater came first for Galles—but that attitude only exacerbated the spread of the disease.

“It came back partly because she was working around the clock for this show,” DeMoss said. “She ignored the signs, and by the time she made it to the doctor, it was too late.”

Galles died in November 2005. Her legacy loomed large.

“She was on stage maybe three weeks before she passed away, and that was a really tough one for everybody,” DeMoss said. “It was a really emotional time for us.”

DeMoss and the rest of the team kept the theater running, but Galles’ absence left a gaping hole.

“We couldn’t keep up the production schedule that she had for herself,” DeMoss said. “She had five shows a year and directed them and hung the lights and did everything.”

“It took a whole lot of people to not even be able to fill her large shoes.”

In time, though, the Found survived. Troupes came and went throughout the years, and the theater cemented its place in the broader Long Beach community, in part through its fundraising efforts for charitable causes.

“After the Haiti Earthquake, we put together a fundraising variety show in just three days,” DeMoss recalled, “and we raised \$4,000 in one night, which is incredible.”

Act 3

The Found Theatre would face

more challenges as the decades passed.

The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, wrought havoc on the arts as a whole. But the Mid-World Players, a troupe that came to the theater in 2019, helped the Found weather the storm.

The troupe performed shows at the theater throughout the pandemic, streaming them live to eager audiences at their homes. DeMoss said the Mid-World Players’ presence helped reassure her.

For a moment, it felt like kismet to DeMoss, who is ready to retire at age 73.

“After working with them and seeing how responsible they were and how good they were and how much knowledge of theater they have,” she said, “I thought, ‘OK, this is the solution. I can feel OK retiring and leaving these people in charge.’”

But the new property owners had other plans.

Drachman, with Waterford, said that while he sympathized with the folks behind the Found Theatre, he hopes the property’s redevelopment will ensure success for new tenants.

“We want all the tenants at the project to be viable, and we view this as a strong project for Downtown Long Beach,” Drachman said, “and so we want all of our tenants there to be successful.”

DeMoss, for her part, said she explored what options were available to try to save the space, but was told by her pro bono lawyer that she

would have to fight the city. That’s a fight, DeMoss said, that she just doesn’t have in her.

While DeMoss mourns the loss of the precious theater space Galles designed all those years ago, she said a bigger concern of hers is where the Mid-World Players will now call home.

“My biggest hope is that they will be able to find a space,” she said. “I am hoping maybe some other developer or existing place in Long Beach will realize the potential and pick up these kids and provide them a space.”

Until that happens, DeMoss said, the intimate theater experience the Found offered will be missed.

“Nothing is more joyous than bringing people into a room together, not just staring at a screen,” she said. “It is my favorite thing in the world. I love going to other theaters and just sitting there and feeling the togetherness with strangers and people working their hearts out for you, live on stage.”

The way DeMoss sees it, what makes the theater experience so special is its ephemerality.

It’s a quality the art form, it seems, now shares with the Found itself.

“It is something that is not going to last,” DeMoss said, “like a movie.”

“It’s a transitory experience.”

The “Found Farewell” party is scheduled for 4 p.m. March 13 at 599 Long Beach Blvd. Send an email to DeMossatvdmoss@aol.com to RSVP for the event. ■



A man walks by the Prospector on the corner of Junipero Avenue and Seventh Street.

Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

COLUMNIST: TIM GROBATY

The Prospector is for sale at \$3M.
Is it another end of an era?

Excuse my deep spiral into pessimism, but one of the last remaining nails could soon be driven into the coffin containing the dwindling remains of the Long Beach nightlife scene.

This sad and perhaps premature note comes with the announcement that Haskell’s Prospector, the historic and more than venerable Long Beach bar, restaurant and music venue, is for sale.

Three million dollars buys you the restaurant, its attendant entertainment and liquor licenses and the cabin/house next door that the Haskell family once lived in.

The Prospector’s owner is Luis Lemus, who began working at the restaurant in the kitchen and worked his way up to ownership, overseeing the place’s transition into a performance venue for local and touring acts, turning it into a sort of kitschy and cool dive. While Lemus could not be reached for comment, Chris Livingston, the broker handling the sale, said Lemus wants to retire, primarily because of the difficulties these days of running a restaurant due to a worker shortage and rising food prices. He’s had to go back to working as chef to keep the place going.

Most longtime Long Beachers have some sort of memory of the place, stocked with its busy collection of Western decor—posters of Annie Oakley, sombreros, Calistoga wagons, cowboy paraphernalia, Indian artwork and other trappings of the West.

For years, following its opening in 1965, the

Prospector was a hangout for the old-timers who came in for the rotating daily special meal, a glass of whiskey and to smoke a pack of cigarettes while listening to the piano stylings of Judy Pierce and singing along.

“Judy would wear gloves while she played the piano,” recalled Tom Holland, a longtime Long Beach performer with his band lovingkindness. “I’d sing with her often, usually things from the Great American Songbook, like ‘Moon River.’”

“I’m sad to hear that the place is being sold. It’s the last soldier standing in terms of old fashioned steakhouses, and one of the last places for live music.”

Chris Hanlin, a former Long Beacher now living in Northern California, was the guitarist and vocalist for Bourbon Jones, a blues band that played Sunday afternoons for years at the now-shuttered Blue Cafe. “The Prospector was the first place Bourbon Jones played publicly,” he said. “It was around 1994 and they didn’t have an entertainment license, but Luis was bartending back then and he let us play. The place was so legendary. It was part of what made Long Beach so special.”

If this sounds like an obituary for the Prospector, it likely is. According to the broker, they checked people who had expressed an interest in buying the place and had no takers.

Plus, historically, when Long Beach’s best music spots have closed, there has always been the hope

that a buyer would swoop in and continue the tradition. Bogart’s, once the best concert spot in Long Beach, is now subsumed by businesses in Marina Pacifica. The legendary Foothill? Condos, now; same with Java Lanes, a once-dependable home for local and occasional touring bands. The mighty Blue Cafe is gone. Fender’s is gone. The Hillside is gone, so is the Rumbleseat Garage. There’s more: The Marina Palace, the Cinnamon Cinder, all the jazz clubs along Atlantic—and even music stores like Gilmore’s and World of Strings.

“Everywhere I look there’s something gone,” said Robbie Allen, who’s been involved with several bands based in town, including Tender Fury, Rob Rule, Thermadore and Gypsy Trash, playing alongside such nationally renowned musicians as Pearl Jam’s Stone Gossard, vocalists Jack Grisham and his sister D.D. Wood and drummers Chad Smith of the Chili Peppers and Josh Freese, who’s played with everyone.

Allen reckons that his band Cowboy and Indian, with drummer Antoine Arvizu, has played the Prospector about 30 times, always booked by the late bartender Nancy Pena, who died three months ago. “She was the heart and soul of the place,” said Allen.

“I’m sad that it’s being sold. There was always something happening there. It was about the last place that felt like it was part of the Long Beach scene,” he said. “I’m not even sure what the Long Beach scene is anymore.” ■

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Gerald Desmond Bridge demolition to begin first week of May

By Brandon Richardson

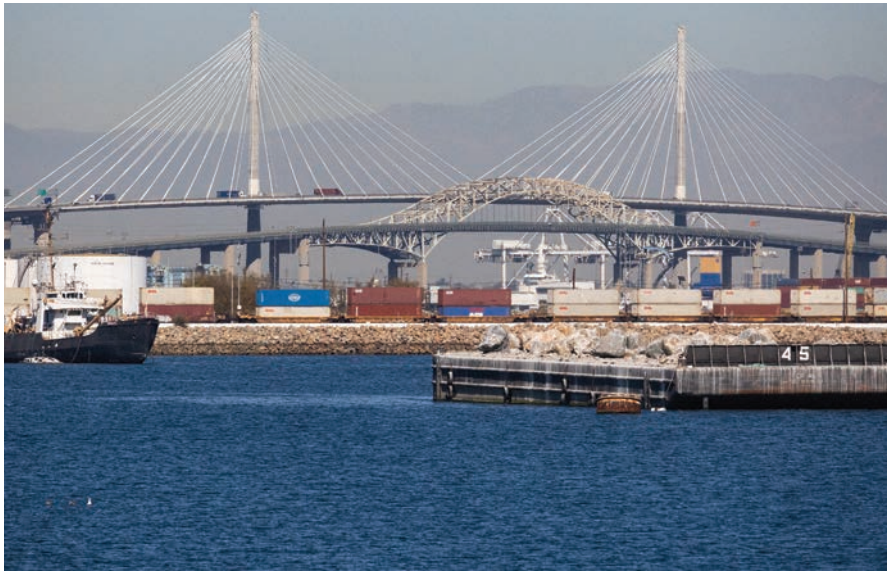
Demolition of the 54-year-old Gerald Desmond Bridge is slated to begin the first week of May, Port of Long Beach officials announced late last month.

The removal will kick off with a weekend-long closure of the back channel in the port complex from 6 a.m. Saturday, May 7, to 6 a.m. Monday, May 9. In that time, crews will disconnect the main span from its supports and lower it onto a barge below.

This is the only expected waterway closure resulting from the bridge demolition, according to the port.

The section will then be transported to another location to be disassembled and properly disposed of, according to port spokesman Lee Peterson. Materials will be hauled to a recycling site for salvaging and reuse, according to the announcement.

“The Gerald Desmond Bridge helped this port complex become one of the busiest in the world,” port Executive Director Mario Cordero said in a statement. “It helped us reach new heights during an era of incredible, transformative growth in international trade.”



Trucks and cars drive across the new International Gateway Bridge as the old Gerald Desmond awaits demolition.

In July 2021, the Board of Harbor Commissioners awarded the demolition contract to Vancouver-based Kiewit West Inc. The \$59.9 million project budget includes the \$27.5 Kiewit contract, a \$7.2 million contract with WSP USA for construction management, \$6 million for contract support, an \$8.6 million contingency fund, \$10 million in design costs that has already been spent and \$600,000 in bid and award costs.

Funding for the demolition was included in the \$1.57 billion budget for the new Long Beach International Gateway Bridge. The port will retain a small portion of demolition materials such as steel, but the rest becomes property of Kiewit and subsequent revenue generated from recycling materials stays with the company, Peterson said. The old bridge first opened in 1968 and crosses the port’s back channel

155 feet above the water’s surface. Its removal will allow for larger vessels to pass under the International Gateway bridge, which has a 205-foot clearance.

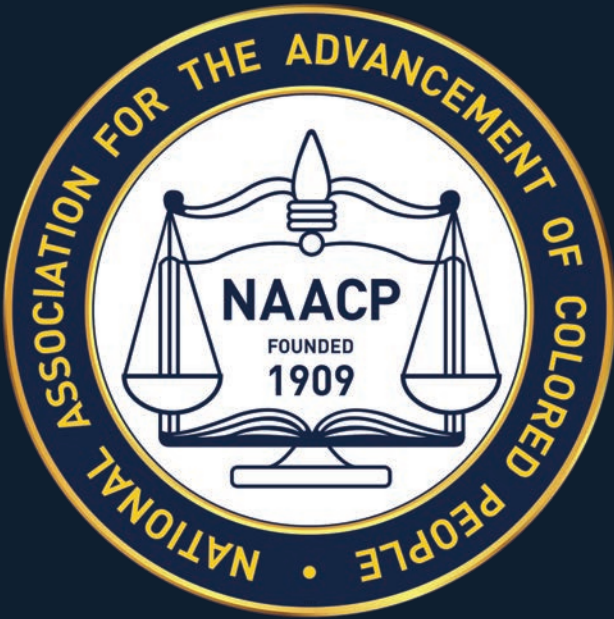
“The Gerald Desmond Bridge served this port, city and region well over 50 years,” Harbor Commission President Steven Neal said in a statement. “It was time to build a safer, taller and wider span that will allow the Port of Long Beach to remain a primary gateway for trans-Pacific trade well into the future.”

The Gerald Desmond, named after a former Long Beach city attorney who helped secure funding for the 5,134-foot-long bridge, was decommissioned in October 2020 when the new bridge opened. From planning to completion, the new bridge project was nearly two decades in the making, including seven years of construction.

The demolition of the Gerald Desmond is expected to be completed by the end of 2023. “The new bridge that replaced it is a fitting, and lasting tribute to the old span,” Cordero said. “We will bid a fond farewell to the Gerald Desmond, and honor the memory of the man for whom it was named.” ■

NAACP Long Beach Branch INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Cultivating future leaders in our community



Thomas Le, former Long Beach Branch NAACP intern

Thomas Le is currently an Associate Analyst at Edwards Lifesciences. He currently serves as Treasurer for the Long Beach Branch NAACP. In addition, he was a former college intern from 2012-2014. Thomas assists the Long Beach Branch with planning monthly membership meetings, event planning throughout the year, and works with President Naomi Rainey to perform the daily operations of the Branch.

During his internship with the Long Beach Branch NAACP, Thomas stated he gained invaluable experience as a lead intern for the Silent Killer Disease project, funded by Dignity Health - St.Mary’s Medical Center.



Leslie Loftis, former Long Beach Branch NAACP intern

Leslie Loftis currently serves as an intern with the Black Student Union of California United, where she works to support the social and emotional learning needs of African American students in California. She also serves as Teaching Assistant at El Camino College, helping students understand the sociological impact of race on American society.

Leslie worked as an intern with the Long Beach Branch NAACP from 2020-2021. There she assisted President Rainey with the NAACP Scholars Program. Leslie states that she “gained helpful life and work skills and believes that the Long Beach NAACP Internship Program is a great place for college students to learn about social justice, civil rights and cultural diversity.”

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR INTERNSHIP PROGRAM, PLEASE EMAIL US AT

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Join the Catalina community and businesses by visiting www.change.org/catalinaexpress to sign an important petition NOW to help us protect Catalina Island’s economy and vital tourism industry!

Catalina Express, the essential ferry service that transports passengers to and from the Island, is facing new regulations from the California Air Resources Board (CARB). Under CARB’s current proposed rules, which would take effect in 2023, Catalina Express ferries will again be required to modify the engines on all their vessels. The cost to repower an existing vessel is \$7 million but will displace approximately 50% of the passenger capacity. The cost to build a new vessel is approximately \$20 million, costing a combined total of upwards of \$120 million. State funding is needed to make this transition feasible. Without financial assistance from the State, these proposed rules will **significantly disrupt the transport of residents, visitors, and workers, while also negatively impacting transportation safety, efficiency, reliability, and affordability.**

Your voice makes a difference! As CARB plans to act on this important proposal in early Spring, express your support now for Catalina Express and share your concerns about CARB’s current proposed regulations that could harm Catalina Island tourism without new funding.



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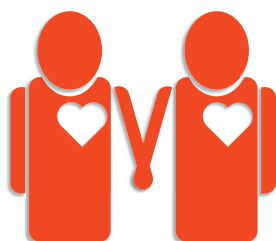


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