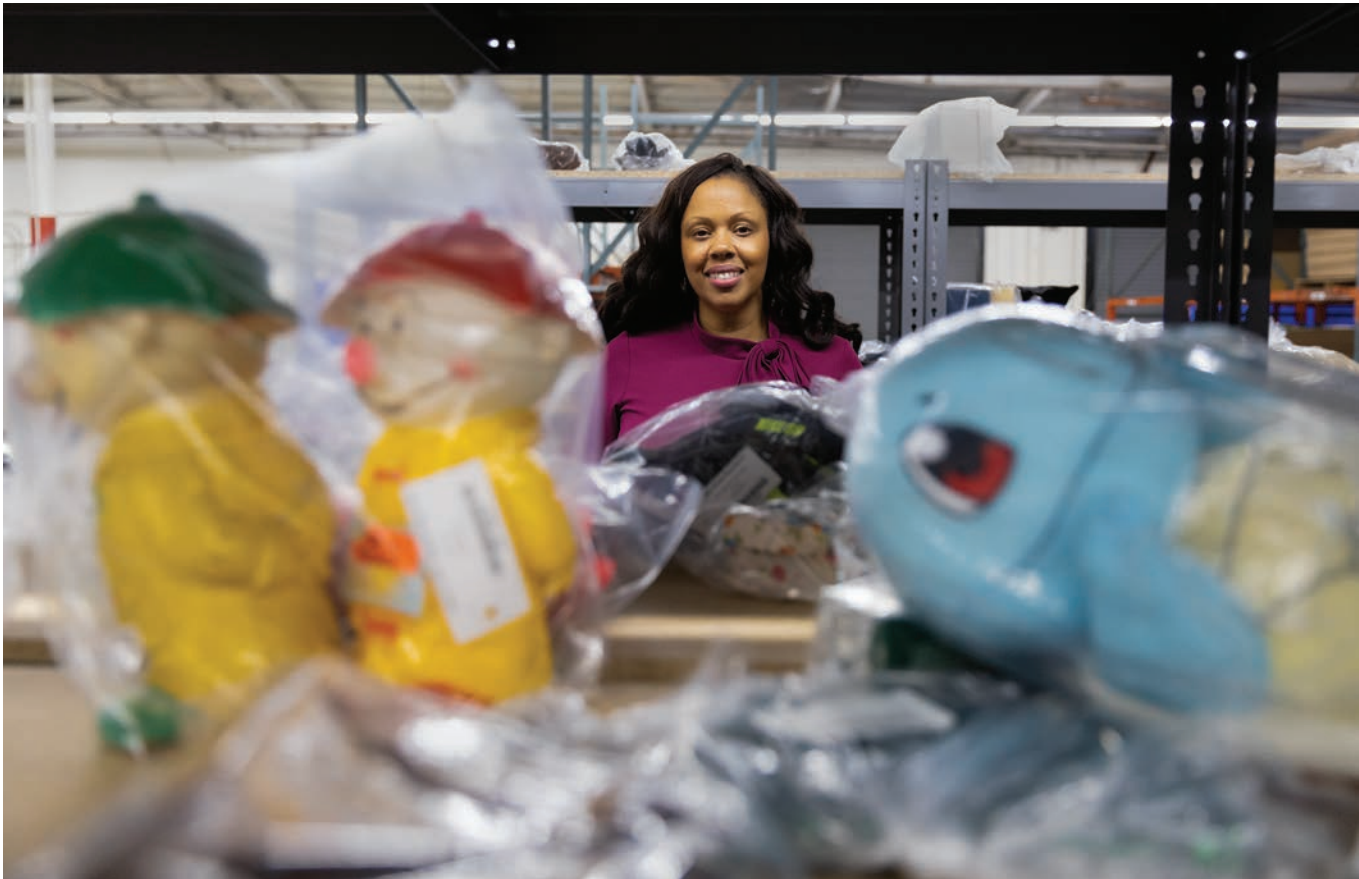


LONG BEACH  
BUSINESS JOURNAL

An edition of the Long Beach Post



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Kimberly Hall, president and CEO of Goodwill's Southern LA County region, is pictured inside the company's online auction warehouse on Pacific Coast Highway near the 710 Freeway.

Goodwill lifts people up by removing one barrier at a time

By Brandon Richardson

At 20 years old, Tiarra Hammond was living in Las Vegas with her high school sweetheart. She had given birth to their daughter only months before but knew she had to flee the abusive relationship. Hammond packed a suitcase, borrowed a family member's car and told her boyfriend she was taking the child to see her doctor in California. "I already had planned never to come back," Hammond said. "I was just kind of winging it." Hammond's aunt had put her on

the waitlist for a Section 8 housing voucher months before, but when she arrived in California, she was still without housing. So she improvised. After her baby fell asleep, Hammond's sister would help her sneak into the house where she was staying. When that system failed, she and her daughter would stay with friends in surrounding cities. Some nights, they slept in the car. "I couldn't [work], there was no way," Hammond said. "I was just focusing on where to sleep at night." Finally, after months in limbo, she was notified that a unit in Long Beach opened up for her through the

Section 8 program. Shortly after the move, Hammond was pregnant again, despite having an IUD. The revelation crushed her. She recalled thinking her and her children's lives were going to be "messed up" forever. "I was stuck," she said. When she was seven months pregnant, Hammond walked to a nearby convenience store to get snacks for her and her firstborn, who was now over a year old. She was walking by a small Goodwill office when a woman hailed her and talked her into taking an assessment. Based on the results of the assessment, Hammond was persuaded to begin the Goodwill's certified nurse assistant training program once her baby was born. "I wanted to give my babies a better life," Hammond said. The CNA program was completely free at the time, Hammond said. She worked her way through it, during which time staff at local nursing facilities where she had to log hours told her to continue her education to get a higher paying job. So she did.

Long Beach Gives returns this month

By Christian May-Suzuki

Long Beach Gives is back. The annual day of giving returns to the city officially on Sept. 22—but Long Beach Gives Campaign Manager Matt Guardabascio works well beyond that single day to ensure that the participating organizations are given the tools they need for a successful campaign. This year, 233 nonprofit organizations are being featured in the Long Beach Gives event, which continues a steady increase after having 204 organizations last year. "We are providing people and businesses with the opportunity to really do the research," Guardabascio said, "and determine which organization or cause speaks to them." The event started as a project for Julie Meenan as she pursued a master's

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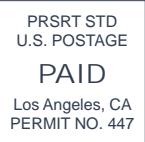
New program recognizes city's long-standing businesses

By Christian May-Suzuki

Long Beach Heritage has a new program to recognize the city's long-standing businesses. After years of work, the organization's Legacy Business Program officially kicked off at the nonprofit's July 31 annual membership meeting, where the first 10 businesses were accepted into the program. But work on the program began long before that summer meeting. Joe Mello—who is part of the Long Beach Heritage Board of Directors—first got the idea for a legacy business program from a trip to San Francisco, which has a similar program that recognizes over 300 establishments as legacy businesses. The program provides a map of those businesses on an online registry, something that Mello and Long Beach Heritage are working to bring to Long Beach. It was a program Long Beach Heritage could replicate locally, Mello thought. The nonprofit was founded in 1982 with a focus on historical and architectural protection, but the group grew more active after the

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LEGOs are one of the more popular items at Goodwill in Long Beach, according to staff.  
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# Sunstone offers \$175K in grants to foster entrepreneurship in Long Beach, statewide

By Brandon Richardson

Private capital firm Sunstone Management donated a total of \$175,000 to the Long Beach Accelerator, which focuses on fostering tech start-ups, and Cal State Long Beach last month.

The company announced the \$100,000 grant for the accelerator to partner in the creation of a model for the implementation and operation of a network of nonprofit, community-based technology startup accelerators.

“Based upon the results from the first cohorts in the [Long Beach Accelerator] program, the model has been impactful,” LBA Board Chair Wade Martin said

in a statement. “This grant will allow us to document the LBA model and transfer that success to other communities ... [and] increase opportunities for many underrepresented entrepreneurs.”

The grant will assist the accelerator in furthering its mission to cultivate early-stage technology startups by providing “access to capital, networks, technical assistance” and more, according to the announcement. The organization offers a four-month program.

Once the model has been created, Sunstone will collaborate with the accelerator as well as local and county governments to implement it in communities that lack such programs to support entrepreneurs and economic development.

“The Long Beach Accelerator is a vital resource for the creative entrepreneurs in our city and region,” Sunstone CEO John Keisler said in a statement.

The Aug. 29 announcement came exactly two weeks after Sunstone announced a \$75,000 grant for the Cal State Long Beach Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. That money will fund university-based activities that promote entrepreneurship at California State University campuses across the state.

The programs will help early-stage entrepreneurs access resources and increase awareness, according to the announcement.

“Mentorship and aiding university-based entrepreneurs is vital to growing and maintaining the pipeline of founders and innovators

in our state,” Keisler said. “The [Institute] is a key resource for students and academics interested in founding their own businesses, and we are pleased to support their expanding efforts.”

Under the partnership, the institute will coordinate activities in Long Beach and five other campuses: Dominguez Hills, Fullerton, Los Angeles, Northridge and Pomona. More schools are expected to be added in the future, according to the announcement.

“The collaborative effort to build awareness and engagement across the CSU community of campuses and programs is a unique opportunity,” Martin said. “This initiative will result in growing the entrepreneurial ecosystem on each campus and in the surrounding communities.” ■



Courtesy of Long Beach Gives

Nonprofit representatives pose for a picture during a Long Beach Gives working session.

## Long Beach Gives

Continued from cover

degree in social work at Cal State Long Beach. Meenan—who serves as the executive director of the Josephine S. Gumbiner Foundation—was told about a similar fundraising program in Monterey County back in December of 2017, and she began doing research to try and figure out how to bring an online fundraising event to Long Beach.

Its first iteration was held in 2019, with 93 nonprofits listed on the Long Beach Gives website. That year, the event raised over \$800,000 for those organizations.

This year, the goal for Long Beach Gives is to raise \$2.2 million—a number that was chosen based on data from previous years while accounting for the larger number of organizations this year. Guardabascio admitted that he had hoped to set a

higher goal but was not comfortable going higher given the precarious state of the economy right now.

“I would love to be at over [\$2.5 million] this year, truthfully,” Guardabascio said.

Still, the goal and the number of participating organizations continues a trend of growth for the event.

“Long Beach Gives is really the best nonprofit directory for the city of Long Beach,” Guardabascio said.

Last year, Long Beach Gives not only met its \$2 million goal but slightly exceeded it, with \$2.05 million raised.

For Guardabascio and Long Beach Gives, though, the fundraising is not just limited to a day. Early giving starts on Sept. 15, and the fundraising continues through 10 a.m. Sept. 23.

And the work itself goes far beyond that; applications opened in March.

The event has yet to reject an organization, unless it does not fall under the basic set of criteria that Long Beach Gives requires. All

nonprofits need to do to qualify is:

- Be a 501(c)(3) or working under the umbrella of one;
- Have been in service for at least three years; and
- Contribute directly to the Long Beach community.

“We have some organizations that are based outside of Long Beach,” Guardabascio said, “but they are actively serving residents, so we’re allowing them to participate and benefit from this because they’re helping the city.”

Once the participating nonprofits are officially announced in May, Long Beach Gives offers resources to help them fundraise, including professional development training sessions that focus on topics like peer fundraising and social media campaigning.

On the peer fundraising front, Long Beach Gives provides extra assistance through a system that allows individuals to set up their own pages on the campaign’s website. The feature allows individuals to go beyond simply donating to a business by letting them create a page and share personal stories about what the work of a particular organization means to them.

“Tichenor Clinic contributed tremendously to my older brother becoming the independent adult he has become today,” a peer fundraising page to support the Tichenor Clinic for Children reads. “Thanks to Tichenor, I found my passion for water safety...I want to give back a little of everything our family has received from this unique nonprofit organization.”

Another page looking to raise \$500 for the Long Beach Chorale & Chamber Orchestra says, “The Long Beach Chorale is an organization close to my heart—in my 7 years with the group I have met friends, found colleagues, and developed myself as a musician.”

Long Beach Gives offers financial support, as well, in the form of small

cash prizes—a total of over \$16,000 that’s divided up mostly into \$500 chunks—that recognize achievements like bringing in the most money or attracting the most donors.

“They’re just kind of a way to gamify and just make it a little bit fun,” Guardabascio said of the prizes. “Give them some goals that they can shoot for to try and get a little extra into their campaign.”

These prizes—which are doled out for achievements but also via random drawing—are given in three categories based on size to encourage fairness and highlight nonprofits both large and small.

And once the campaign wraps up, Long Beach Gives will host yet another training session in October, which Guardabascio said will focus on stewardship and thanking donors. He is also planning to implement a new session in January, but the details of that have yet to be finalized.

Moving forward, Guardabascio hopes that this steady growth will continue for Long Beach Gives. The organization is currently looking for even more ways to get the message out and encourage more donations.

“We have billboards up in the city for the first time ever,” Guardabascio said.

Long Beach Gives has also improved the website to make donating even easier. One of the new features is a shopping cart that allows people to make donations to multiple organizations at once. Donations can also be made through Google Pay and Apple Pay this year, and plans are underway to add other convenient methods in the future, such as donating via text.

“As we move forward, there continues to be a need for digital fundraising,” Guardabascio said. “We are looking at what the next steps are, and how we move beyond where we are at.” ■



## FROM THE EDITOR: HAYLEY MUNGUIA

# Old and new: How two pillars of Long Beach's business scene approach philanthropy

When Laserfiche, the Long Beach-based software company, formalized its corporate social responsibility program in 2019, the company had no idea that a global pandemic would soon upend the way people interact—and the need for charitable giving.

The company's charitable donations continued throughout COVID, but according to the program's manager, Noel Payne, its volunteer program had to shift.

The company's philanthropic "strategy hasn't changed, but the way we gave back has changed," she said. "The pandemic didn't hinder us from giving back, but employees started to volunteer remotely or with social distancing out in the community."

Some events—like a monthly dinner that Laserfiche employees serve at the Long Beach Rescue Mission—at times had to be canceled or rescheduled. But Payne said that when employees couldn't safely serve the meal in person, Laserfiche still made sure to sponsor the meal.

I spoke to Payne because I was curious about what a relatively new philanthropic effort in one of Long Beach's best-known companies looks like right now.

But I also wanted to hear about charitable giving from one of Long Beach's oldest companies.

Daniel Walker, CEO of the 115-year-old Farmers & Merchants Bank, and Christine Walker-Bowman, co-president of the F&M Bank Foundation, told me that COVID helped sharpen the focus on the community's biggest needs.

The pandemic "didn't impact us—it more motivated us to understand that the work environment had changed," Walker-Bowman told me, "and we needed to figure out how we could best aid the nonprofits that were having to interact with the public."

Every year, the foundation—which was launched in 2012, Walker and Walker-Bowman said, as a way to formalize the bank's century-old commitment to giving back—picks a focus area for its philanthropic efforts. This year, that focus is

human services, which Walker-Bowman said was chosen in part because of the pandemic's fallout.

"We chose human services as our focus for 2022 because we felt that's where we could make the biggest impact," she said. "So what that means is: We're looking at homelessness initiatives. We're looking at food service. We're looking at medical care for the disabled, and I think we're also looking at mental health."

Laserfiche, meanwhile, chooses which causes to support based on how they align with the company's mission.

"We support many local nonprofits," Payne said, "and kind of how we decide is that we look at partners whose mission and vision is in alignment with our mission and vision and our [corporate social responsibility] pillars, which are: diversity, equity and inclusion; the environment; and the next generation."

In terms of what that means in practice, Payne said Laserfiche has partnerships with organizations like the tree-planting initiative I Dig Long Beach, the LGBTQ Center Long Beach and the YMCA of Greater Long Beach.

Laserfiche's work with the YMCA in particular is wide-ranging. The company sponsors the lounge area in the nonprofit's new home in the Spark At Midtown and provides career and technology workshops there.

"I love the spark in the kids' eyes," Payne said of the YMCA's Youth Institute.

"They particularly focus on underserved communities and higher-risk youth," she added, "so I think that's a really impactful partnership."

That focus on the next generation is also apparent in Farmers & Merchants' partnerships.

Walker-Bowman highlighted the nonprofit Ground Education, which builds gardens in local schools to help facilitate science education in nature. This past November, the foundation funded and built raised garden beds at Roosevelt



Courtesy of Farmers & Merchants Bank

Farmers & Merchants Bank employees and their families volunteer with Ground Education at Roosevelt Elementary School to build a learning garden.

Elementary School in Long Beach through the nonprofit.

She also pointed to a long-standing partnership with the Long Beach Public Library Foundation. While the bank and the library foundation have a relationship dating back to 2005, Walker-Bowman said the most recent Farmers & Merchants initiative was to underwrite the donation of dictionaries to every third-grader in the Long Beach Unified School District.

Walker-Bowman said she got to see the impact of those dictionaries firsthand at Lincoln Elementary School.

"It was really enlightening to see," she said. "It was a tool that they really found value in."

While the two companies may represent very different aspects of the Long Beach economy—old and new, tradition and innovation—they're both pillars in this city, and they both take seriously their responsibility to give back to the community.

Laserfiche, for its part, has packed more than 2,000 boxes with the nonprofit Food Finders, picked up more than 200 pounds of trash from local beaches, diverted more than 20,000 pounds of e-waste from landfills and racked up more than 1,500 volunteer hours—all since its corporate social responsibility program was finalized in 2019.

The F&M Bank Foundation, meanwhile, has donated over \$2.5 million since its inception, including \$448,581 that went to 104 recipients last year, according to the bank's 2021 Community Impact Report.

For Walker-Bowman, the foundation's work is simply a continuation of the bank's philanthropic tradition.

"At the F&M Bank Foundation, our desire is to really extend our heritage that was created by [the bank's founder] C.J. Walker and make that last forever," she said. "He was a pioneer in thinking that he could make a difference when he saw that things were bad, and I think that at F&M, we want to be that source of light for the communities that we serve—that we can aid them in making a difference, help them in creating new products, new services and new places for people to enjoy."

"The foundation is focused on trying to make other nonprofits that are doing good have sustainability," Walker-Bowman added, "so that they can continue to do their good works for years to come. We're very blessed, and we feel a responsibility for those blessings to continue." ■



Courtesy of Laserfiche

Laserfiche employees work at the South LA Isabel Villas site with Habitat for Humanity in 2018.

## Able ARTS Work seeks to complete its ideal home



Courtesy of Able ARTS Work

A rendering of the new Able ARTS Work building at 3841 Atlantic Ave. in Bixby Knolls.

*The nonprofit, which provides art services to individuals with disabilities, purchased a new home this past spring at 3841 Atlantic Ave. for \$2.5 million.*

By Christian May-Suzuki

In 40 years of operation, Able ARTS Work has never quite found the right home for its services—but the organization is working to finally change that.

The nonprofit, which provides art services to individuals with disabilities, purchased a new home this past spring at 3841 Atlantic Ave. for \$2.5 million. Now, work is underway to turn the one-story, 7,000-square-foot building into the ideal space for the organization and its clients.

While the folks behind the organization previously announced that they hoped to begin renovation work in August, there have been some delays, primarily due to the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, Able ARTS Work is looking to kick off the construction some time this month.

In the meantime, fundraising—which made the building's purchase possible—continues.

Able ARTS Work's CEO and founder Helen Dolas has planned

a total of three fundraising rounds associated with the project. The first, which began in November 2020 and included a \$1 million grant from the John Gogian Family Foundation, provided the money for a \$1.25 million down payment, half the property's price.

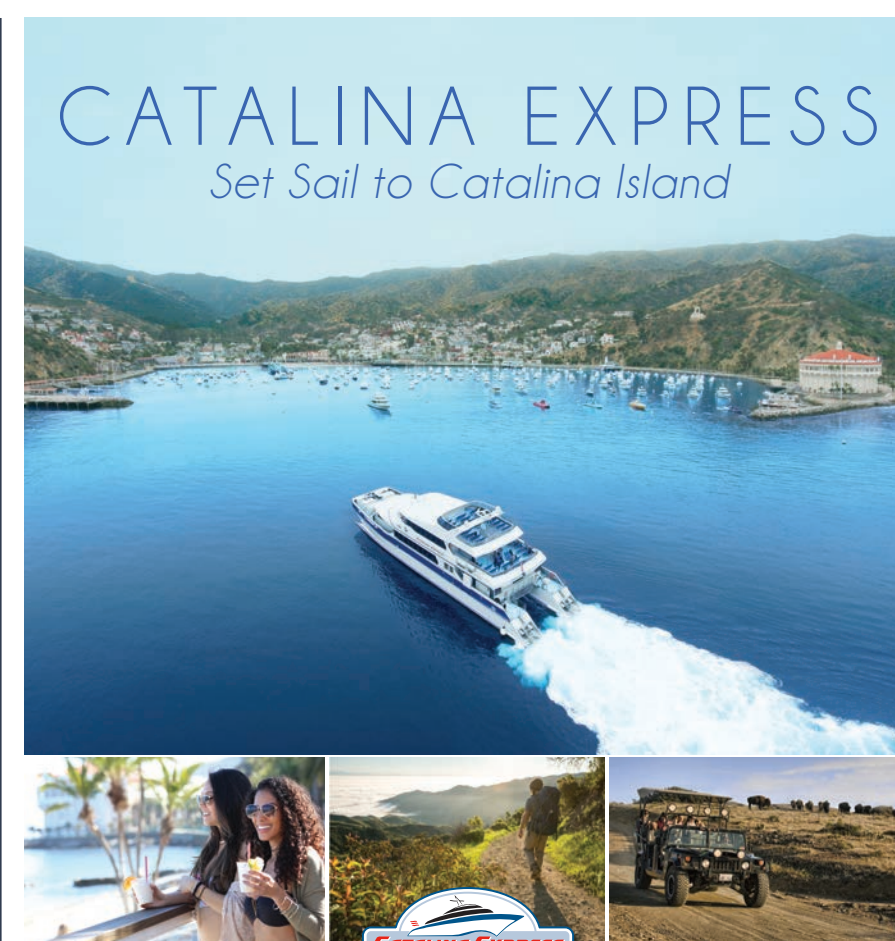
The second round, which is currently underway, seeks \$1 million for renovations, but only \$40,000 has been raised so far. The organization hopes to complete and move into its new building by April and hopes to complete fundraising by the end of the organization's fiscal year on June 30, with the organization's reserves covering the costs as the fundraising is underway.

The move comes after decades of relocations. Each site had its own challenges, though high rent often topped the list. According to Dolas, rent is the organization's second-largest operating expense.

Able ARTS Work's journey began, 40 years ago, in the Veterans Park Recreation Center. But the lack of amenities—Dolas was forced to keep her office in a janitor's closet, for example—wasn't sustainable.

So Dolas and her team purchased a new property at 10th Street and Locust Avenue in 1988. This time, neighborhood safety was a primary concern, particularly given the community Able ARTS Work serves: Research shows people with disabilities are significantly more likely to be the victims of violent crimes than people without disabilities.

The nonprofit has since called two other buildings home, but rent has



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Goodwill

Continued from cover

Hammond enrolled at Long Beach City College, where she graduated as a registered nurse in 2014. Upon graduation, Hammond was offered a position at St. Mary Medical Center, where she has worked ever since.

**A wide range of services**

While each is unique, stories like Hammond’s are not uncommon at Goodwill offices across the country. The organization is broken up into 155 territories (13 in California alone), each with its own regional office, executives and board. For over 90 years, Long Beach has been home to the regional office responsible for 22 cities within Southern Los Angeles County, including Carson, Cerritos, Gardena, Torrance and Norwalk, among others. “We have the smallest geographic area,” Vice President of Workforce Development Ben Espitia said. “However, we have one of the largest Goodwill territories in terms of the dense urban population.”

While many simply think of the thrift stores that pepper communities when they hear the name Goodwill, the organization offers community members so much more than discounted clothes and goods. The nonprofit, for example, has partnered with the California Department of Rehabilitation and the Harbor Regional Center to offer part- and full-time jobs to people with developmental disabilities such as intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, epilepsy and autism. Last year, the territory served 932 people, including 256 who entered into job training programs, 126 who completed those programs and 182 whom the organization helped find employment. Throughout the Southern LA County territory, Goodwill employs 350 people, including 125 in Long Beach. While some are executives and other staff in the administrative offices, most work in the stores and other facilities dealing with the donations.



Tiarra Hammond, 34, works at a monkeypox vaccination site in Encino. Hammond’s journey to becoming a nurse started with Goodwill’s certified nurse assistant training program.

And while workforce development is a top priority for Goodwill, the organization aims to meet people where they’re at. If people have challenges that prevent them from being ready for employment, then Goodwill seeks to address those hurdles. To that end, the Long Beach-based Goodwill has partnered with Foodbank of Southern California to host a mobile food pantry on the fourth Thursday of every month. The pantry is set up at the Goodwill headquarters at 800 W. Pacific Coast Highway. The organization also offers a two-week life skills and employment preparation program for people experiencing homelessness. The program includes six three-hour classes that cover social interactions, financial literacy, stress/anger/ conflict management, ethics, and career development and legal rights.

Upon completion of the program, Goodwill staff assist people in their job search. That assistance can include everything from creating a resume to educating them in specific fields.

**Training programs**

The Long Beach-based branch is the only Goodwill territory in California to offer a certified nurse assistant training program—the same program Hammond went through. The organization runs about nine cohort classes per year, each with about 15 students, according to Espitia, who has been with the nonprofit for 22 years. Students gain 115 hours of clinical experience and, by the end of the program, are eligible to take the state nurse assistant certification exam. The CNA program often has a waitlist, Espitia said. The program is not limited to

people down on their luck, Espitia added. Goodwill has partnered with the Long Beach Unified School District and other schools to assist students interested in the field. Goodwill offers other programs, including a 40-hour security officer training course, a 10-week computer skills training program and a 10-week parenting class for fathers working to re-enter their child’s life, which includes employment services and case management. At the conclusion of all its job training programs, Goodwill holds a job fair to connect graduates with employers. Many graduates receive multiple job offers, Espitia said. “A lot of folks have barriers to employment,” President and CEO Kimberly Hall said. “And our job is to help alleviate those barriers.” Not all of Goodwill’s services are free, but they are offered at a

substantially reduced price. The CNA program, for example, costs Goodwill \$3,000 per student, Hall said. The organization, meanwhile, charges \$750, which covers a background check, physical, TB test, vaccinations, books, supplies, uniforms and state exam fee. There are further subsidies for lower-income people through Pacific

Winners of the auction then rummage through the bins, taking what they want and leaving what they don’t. Items disregarded even by bidders are then packaged with similar items and sold in bulk to companies for recycle and reuse. In the case of clothing, items are put through a baler and sold by the truckload. “All of this is about not sending

expanded 40% last year, which necessitated an increase in the number of workstations and a 100% increase in storage capacity. Last year, the top sales were a Super Nintendo with games for \$2,751 and a rhinestone brooch for \$2,651. The more creative revenue stream, though, is the organization’s LINKS sign language and interpreting

is dedicated to assisting as many as possible. Hall said staff is working to build four career centers throughout the territory to take services directly to the people rather than them having to travel to Long Beach. The organization also is working to expand existing training programs and introduce new ones. “We need more staffing and with more staffing comes more costs,” Espitia said. “So we have to find a way to create more opportunities to expand our programs.”

**It’s all to transform lives**

For Hall, who assumed the position of president and CEO of the Long Beach-based territory in December after working within the Goodwill system for 12 years, the mission is to change people’s lives. “I’ve always had a passion to help people connect to jobs and careers,” said Hall, who worked as a corporate recruiter before starting at Goodwill. “The nonprofit space is where my passion lies,” she said. “Every single day we get an opportunity to see our work on display in individuals whose lives have been transformed by our work.” All of Goodwill’s efforts are worth it for the sake of people like Hammond.

Now 34, Hammond has been married for eight years, has four kids and still lives in Long Beach. She worked through the pandemic at St. Mary, where she continues her employment today. In 2016, Hammond was named the Goodwill Industries International Kenneth Shaw Graduate of the Year. She is an advocate for Goodwill and has traveled across the country to share her story on behalf of the organization that she said she owes her current life to. Most people never make it out of circumstances like hers, Hammond said, and she doesn’t know where she would be if not for Goodwill. “I think I would still be lost somewhere,” she said. “I was in this downward spiral, my life was out of control, and I didn’t know how to save it. It’s so easy to stay there.” ■

“Every single day we get an opportunity to see our work on display in individuals whose lives have been transformed by our work.”

- Kimberly Hall, President and CEO of Goodwill’s Southern LA County Region

Gateway, Espitia noted. As the city’s workforce development arm, Pacific Gateway will cover all fees for people who qualify.

**Balancing the budget**

For Goodwill’s part, the annual budget for the local organization is \$25 million, and it all begins with donations, Hall said. “Donations are extraordinarily important,” Hall said, adding that about 88 cents of every dollar for items sold goes back into the community. When items are donated, they are first put into one of the organization’s retail stores, of which there are five in Long Beach alone. Items that are not sold after five weeks in stores are moved back to the headquarters to be sold at its “outlet” at a more discounted rate. The outlet is particularly popular with flippers who buy items and then refurbish them, Hall said. Items that are not scooped up at the outlet are then auctioned off in large lots in the same fashion as the reality show “Container Wars.” Items are placed in large bins, and people bid on them based on what can be seen without sifting through them.

anything to the landfill—that’s our goal,” Espitia said. “We have to get the biggest bang for the buck because that’s what the community gave us that donation for.” The organization received 12.8 million pounds of donations last year. It diverted over 4 million pounds of material from landfills, and collected 711,000 pounds of recycled material and 189,999 pounds of e-waste. “We have to be stewards of that donation,” he added. “We take all of our donations seriously.” But the territory’s small geographical size makes it impossible to rely on donations alone, Espitia explained, as the organization can only set up stores within its boundaries. So the team has come up with creative ways to diversify its revenue streams. One way to generate extra income is to identify donated items that are worth substantial sums, including vintage toys and jewelry. These items are brought to a warehouse at the Long Beach headquarters, cleaned up, photographed and put on shopgoodwill.com, which uses a bidding process like eBay. The e-commerce operation

and document translating service, Hall said. The service, which is not offered by any other Goodwill in the nation, supports 35 languages and American Sign Language. Hospitals, schools, businesses and more contract Goodwill for interpreting and translation services. The organization then pulls from a pool of trusted providers for the jobs. Last year, Goodwill had over 5,800 assignment requests, with a 93% fill rate. LINKS generates about \$2 million annually, Espitia said. The organization also contracts for janitorial services, Hall said. For example, Goodwill has a contract with the city of Carson to clean the city’s bus stops. Janitorial services make the organization money while also providing jobs, she added. Long Beach, and Los Angeles County as a whole, is certainly a high-needs region, Hall said. In Long Beach alone, homelessness has increased 62% since early 2020, according to city data. While unemployment has dropped to pre-pandemic levels, many people remain out of work. While there will always be more people to help, the team at Goodwill



People dig through the bins in the Goodwill outlet. If items do not sell inside its regular stores after five weeks, the organization brings them to the outlet to sell at a greater discount, which is popular with flippers.



A Goodwill employee takes pictures of jewelry to be posted on the organization’s online auction page.



John Joseph transfers used clothes from one bin to another before they are rolled into the Goodwill outlet.



A Goodwill employee throws old clothes into a baler, which compresses them into large cubes to be sold cheaply to companies that repurpose the materials.



New Program

Continued from cover

demolition of the Jergins Trust Building in 1988. Long Beach Heritage’s members have upheld that mission ever since, often formally supporting or opposing projects that come before the city’s Cultural Heritage Commission. The nonprofit also owns and maintains the Bembridge House, a Victorian House built in 1906 that offers tours on Tuesdays. As for the Legacy Business Program, a subcommittee within the nonprofit consisting of four volunteers—Mello, Mauna Eichner, Lee Fukui and Manny Valenzuela—was formed to try and create the program back in 2018. It would take more than four years for the program to come to life.

One of the more important steps in that journey was setting the criteria for businesses to be accepted. The first path to recognition is straightforward: having served as a business in Long Beach for 35 years or more.

But the subcommittee didn’t want to lock out younger businesses that have other attributes in their favor. So its members also came up with another route to acceptance.

Businesses that have not hit the 35-year mark must meet two of the following criteria:

- Having been in service for at least 25 years;
  - Contributing a sense of history in the surrounding neighborhood;
  - Having distinctive architecture or other features; and
  - Supporting the neighborhood’s cultural life, diversity or identity.
- “Really, [it’s] if your business is important to the neighborhood,” Eichner said, “although we don’t want someone that’s only 5-years-old.”

Some of those standards are obviously subjective, so the subcommittee hopes that businesses will be able to make an argument for which criteria they meet.

As for acceptance, three

separate bodies within Long Beach Heritage get a say in who meets the requirements: The subcommittee review comes first, then the advocacy committee weighs in, and finally, the organization’s board of directors gets the final say.

With the parameters for the program in place, the subcommittee began looking for the businesses to get the program off the ground in 2019. The goal at the time was to launch the program during Architecture Week in June 2020.

To find businesses to apply for a program that was not yet public, the four members divided the city up into chunks. Each member drove around their designated area, searching for the distinctive features that would make a business a suitable candidate for the program. The subcommittee also reached out to the city to ask for a list of potential businesses.

“I found myself looking at historic neon signs or landscapes,” Valenzuela said. “We really did try to make it a broad search to try and plan these businesses.”

Eventually, the subcommittee landed on 28 businesses and began reaching out to them to gauge their interest. But that was in February 2020. The subcommittee was quickly forced to put its efforts on hold in mid-March 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Launching the program during Architecture Week was no longer a viable plan, but the subcommittee pressed on. That summer, members began working with the nonprofit Project Equity, which now also serves as one of the program’s sponsors. In addition to the 28 businesses that Long Beach Heritage initially identified, Project Equity suggested nine more minority-owned businesses and 20 other city-recommended businesses.

Long Beach Heritage did not consider those 29 businesses for the program’s first cohort, but some have been added to a list for future consideration. And beyond that, the partnership has proven fruitful. Project Equity helped shape the program’s vision and offered



University Trophies & Awards, which was owned by Shawn Fitzpatrick’s parents before he took over, was recently honored as part of Long Beach Heritage’s Legacy Business Program.

advertising opportunities to the Legacy Business Program at no cost.

“Project Equity—they helped bring us into thinking about other minority-owned businesses and women-owned businesses,” Fukui said.

While the COVID delay allowed the subcommittee to spend some time working on the program with Project Equity, the pause also created communication issues with the businesses Long Beach Heritage hoped to honor.

While the nonprofit’s initial contacts with businesses indicated interest and enthusiasm for the program, Fukui said it became harder and harder to maintain that contact.

Eventually, the 28 initial prospects winnowed down to the final 10 that were recognized in July, along with eight others that Long Beach Heritage is still in discussions with.

The subcommittee has a couple of theories as to why this may have occurred. One is that, for business owners, simply staying afloat during the worst of the pandemic took priority, and many may have forgotten to apply. Another is that many businesses may have ignored or rejected interactions because they believed that Long Beach Heritage was soliciting donations.

“It was very hard to get them to sit down and talk to us,” Fukui said. “Following up, I noticed I couldn’t contact a lot of the businesses.”

Still, 10 businesses were interested enough to apply—and now have been rewarded for their effort.

For Shawn Fitzpatrick, owner of University Trophies & Awards owner—one of the inaugural 10 businesses—this was a unique opportunity to be recognized. He had worked with Long Beach Heritage in the past and was eager to participate in the program.

“We were used to doing things for others that are given recognition,” Fitzpatrick said. “We don’t get recognized often, so for them to reach out and think of us was an honor in itself.”

As its name suggests, University Trophies & Awards has made plaques, trophies and other types of awards since it opened in 1970. The business

has also made the plaques for the Legacy Business Program, which he says is an exciting opportunity to give back to the community.

Another business that has joined the program is Tuttle Cameras, which opened in 1946 and was one of the first shops in Long Beach that offered overnight photography development. Tuttle Cameras owner Eric Vitwar, who took over the business from the Tuttles in 1998, said he did not remember having any issues with the application process.

“They came in and we talked, and I want to say I filled it out like a week later,” Vitwar said.

While the first cohort was recognized all at once, the subcommittee said that there will not be a traditional application cycle moving forward. With the program now in the public eye, the subcommittee and Long Beach Heritage hope other businesses will be inspired to submit applications and make their cases to be recognized as legacy businesses.

Applications are open year-round, and the subcommittee estimates it will take about one month for submissions to be approved by the Long Beach Heritage Board of Directors.

There are no hard deadlines, although the subcommittee members noted that they hope to print a legacy business guide—which will include a list and map of the recognized businesses—after the program grows a bit, possibly when 25 businesses have been honored.

The organization hopes to distribute these brochures through sources like the Long Beach Conventions & Visitors Bureau, Architecture Week, at hotel and motel lobbies and in the businesses themselves, among other avenues.

The subcommittee is also working on a website that will host a map of the legacy businesses in a similar manner to the San Francisco site. There is no current set date for its release, but subcommittee members said it could be up in a month or two.

Businesses interested in applying for the program can do so online at [lbheritage.org/legacybusiness](http://lbheritage.org/legacybusiness). ■

Mothers gain confidence and support through M.O.R.E. Mothers nonprofit

The nonprofit, founded in 2020, offers a delivery service for essential baby items, as well as educational programming, workshops and support groups.

By Tess Kazenoff

Toi Nichols knows that motherhood takes a village, and she hopes that through her nonprofit organization, M.O.R.E. Mothers, moms in need will find community to lean on.

The nonprofit, founded in 2020, offers a delivery service for essential baby items, as well as educational programming, workshops, support groups and connection to resources for Long Beach mothers.

Nichols is familiar with the financial and emotional difficulties that motherhood can bring—when she gave birth to her first son in 2018, she experienced a traumatic nerve injury leaving her in a wheelchair for about eight weeks.

Not only was she unable to care for her child in the way she’d originally anticipated, but she lost her job, and in turn, her insurance.

As Nichols struggled to navigate finding financial support, eventually receiving Medi-Cal benefits, she began to recognize the unmet need within her own community.

Not only were resources difficult to find, but the process felt disempowering, Nichols said.

“When I did have to go down to the Department of Social Services, it wasn’t glamorous,” Nichols said. “I wouldn’t feel good about myself when I left out of there.”

As Nichols both physically healed and regained financial stability, she began to find new purpose in her work after leaving behind a career in the fashion and entertainment industry.

Inspired by the idea to create an organization that empowered women while linking them to resources, M.O.R.E. Mothers (“motivation, opportunities, resources, empowerment”) began to take form.

“You could be flying high one day, and then just the bottom fell out for me, and I really never looked back at what I was doing, because I was so passionate about what was in front of me and what I had been through and what so

many other women are going through,” Nichols said. She enrolled in business courses at Long Beach City College when her son was 6 months old, graduating with an associate’s degree in 2020, and she began connecting with mothers throughout Long Beach. Whether it was helping them receive their paid family leave or applying for CalFresh, Nichols made sure to leave each woman feeling better than before their conversation, she said.

“Motherhood can be lonely, pregnancy can be lonely,” said Nichols.

For many new mothers, it can be difficult finding their voices in their new lives, she said.

“That’s something that we really tried to focus on, like, ‘Mom matters, and you still are you after you have the baby,’” Nichols said.

Channeling her creative energy into her organization, Nichols is a strong believer of, “you look good, you feel good,” she said. Presentation is important in every aspect of M.O.R.E. Mother’s services, from the delivery items to the workshops, all aimed at making moms feel special, she said.

“I was able to take something that was very traumatic for me and build something beautiful out of it,” Nichols said.

In the organization’s short lifespan, its delivery service has grown from Nichols and her husband delivering diapers, wipes, and other essential items three times a month to a full-fledged service called Motherhood Together, serving 148 women and children in the month of June 2022.

“I just feel like I’m here to serve other women, and I had a lot of women that helped me and I’m in turn just trying to do the same,” she said. “It warms my heart, every minute, it’s the most rewarding work, it’s a huge part of my healing process because it was tough going through what I was going through ... mentally, physically, emotionally tough, and the birth of M.O.R.E. Mothers, which I call my third child ... really helped me blossom and bloom into a Toi 2.0.”

M.O.R.E. Mothers is extremely personal, Nichols said, and she is constantly trying to gauge the needs of her community and tailor services based on that.

“Everyone’s situation is different, but I’ve been somewhere on their journey ... of trying to get resources, looking for them, stressing about how to pay for something, all while trying to raise a child,” said Nichols, who gave birth to her second son



Courtesy of Toi Nichols

Baby2Baby was M.O.R.E. Mothers’ first large sponsorship and allowed its delivery service, Motherhood Together, to expand. About 80% of items included in the delivery service come from sponsorships such as Baby2Baby, while the other 20% come from participating moms, such as when a child grows out of a certain diaper size, explained founder Toi Nichols.

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Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Shawn Fitzpatrick, University Trophies & Awards owner, holds up his Legacy Business plaque, given to him by Long Beach Heritage.



# Long Beach Community Foundation adds new scholarship

By Tess Kazenoff

This spring, the Long Beach Community Foundation awarded over \$180,000 in scholarships, nearly doubling the \$100,000 granted to students last year.

The increase is largely due to the addition of a new scholarship, the Early Childhood Educator Scholarship, established by the Rudolph J. and Daphne A. Munzer Foundation, and awarded to employees of Long Beach child care centers who are pursuing continuing education in early childhood development.

This year, 30 students were awarded scholarships, for amounts ranging from \$4,000 to \$12,000, said president and CEO Marcelle Epley.

“Educational costs are increasing, and so is the amount of the scholarships,” Epley said.

While the Long Beach Community Foundation began in 1996 with just a \$1,000 donation from founder Jim Worsham and his wife, by the time Epley joined the organization eight years ago, the foundation was managing \$24 million in assets.

Through efforts to expand community awareness about the organization’s services, the foundation now manages \$70 million, and \$30.1 million has been distributed to charitable organizations across the country, said Epley.

Founded by a group of leaders and philanthropists, “it was a group of people that really wanted to make sure that nonprofits were supported in Long Beach, and that philanthropists and people wanting to give and make the community better had a trusted source, and a way of organizing their giving,” Epley said.

While the organization primarily manages and administers donor-advised funds, which function similarly to a private charitable checking account that is invested and earns income, it has also

managed scholarship funds since 1998, beginning with the Patricia K. Buck Scholarship Fund that supports graduating seniors from Wilson High School.

“I’d like us to work with more corporations and organizations that are looking to provide a benefit to their employees, or fund particular groups of students that need additional assistance or might not navigate the system as well,” Epley said. “There’s a lot of young people falling through

*“Educational costs are increasing, and so is the amount of the scholarships.”*

- Marcelle Epley, Long Beach Community Foundation President and CEO

the cracks that need help navigating what resources are available, so I’d like to think that we are accessible and inclusive enough that everybody has an opportunity to apply.”

Since 1998, \$654,700 has been offered in scholarships to 77 students (excluding repeat recipients), including the scholarships that have been awarded this year.

However, \$518,500 has been awarded so far, as many of this year’s recipients are pending proof of enrollment before being sent the funds.

“Offering scholarships is an important part of our mission because it’s a belief that education is what can bring people out of poverty, and not everybody has access to education, not everybody has access to trade schools or four-year institutions, in terms of the payment and resources required,” said Epley.

“And if we can support young, deserving students that are trying to make a better life for themselves through education, there’s no reason why we shouldn’t support it.”

For many students, such as

scholarship recipient Bayleigh O’Briant, receiving financial support from the Community Foundation has made a significant impact on their educational journeys.

O’Briant was the recipient of the Ensemble Scholarship Fund, which was created by the Ensemble Hotel chain to support its employees and their children, which was the case for O’Briant, whose mother is the director of sales and marketing at an Ensemble Investments, LLC-owned

hospitality and a focus on her true passion: Event planning.

“On small scale things, I like to plan parties for my friends, like their birthday parties, or I like to plan all of us girls going out to brunch,” O’Briant said. “I found happiness and passion in things like that.”

This is actually O’Briant’s second time receiving the scholarship—the first time was a couple of years ago when she was studying at her community college.

While the first award was for around \$800, now that she is at a university, the scholarship was a total of \$10,000, distributed over the course of two semesters, she said.

As a full-time student who has had to navigate balancing studying while working full-time at a restaurant to support herself, O’Briant felt “extremely proud of myself and relieved,” to earn a scholarship that has substantially alleviated financial stress, she said.

O’Briant, who plans to graduate in 2024, is looking forward to the opportunities that her degree and experiences at San Diego State University will bring her, she said.

“I’m not nervous or anxious that I won’t find something because I know that regardless, I’m going to find something, whether it’s my dream job or something close to it,” O’Briant said.

The L. Robert Payne School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, O’Briant’s school at San Diego State, has a 99% job placement rate, she said.

“I’m very hopeful,” O’Briant said.

After graduating, O’Briant hopes to translate her love of planning to large-scale festivals, with aspirations to work for the Calabasas-based festival company, Insomniac, as part of the productions team.

“It’s bringing people together in a place that makes everybody happy,” she said. “Watching the reaction of people attending, how there’s happiness on their faces, if I could play a small role in causing that, that would be amazing.” ■

# Outside firm hired to manage \$20M gift to LBCC



People walk through Long Beach City College’s Liberal Arts Campus.

Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach City College awarded a contract late last month to a wealth management firm that will oversee the investment of \$20 million that the college received last year from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott.

The LBCC board of trustees awarded the five-year contract to Graystone Consulting, a subsidiary of Morgan Stanley, to manage the funds for the college, which hopes the investment returns will be able to extend the life of the gift.

LBCC was one of hundreds of institutions to receive a gift from Scott. The college received a total of \$30 million, but trustees agreed to set aside \$5 million for the LBCC Foundation to build up an endowment to benefit vulnerable students and another \$5 million to fund grants and to other needs of the college.

The college started a search process earlier this year for a firm to manage the remaining \$20 million. School officials hope that investing the money can garner somewhere between \$350,000 and \$1.4 million in capital gains annually. In return, Graystone will be paid up to \$850,000 over the life of the contract.

While Scott’s gift had been a point of celebration for the college and it dedicated multiple public meetings, formed advisory groups and even solicited public opinion on how to spend the funds, the awarding of the contract was listed on the board’s consent calendar, which is typically reserved for routine items that can be approved with one vote and no discussion.

Trustee Sunny Zia asked for the contract to be removed from the consent calendar at the Aug. 24

meeting to ask questions about the firm, including how the fees were decided on and why there wasn’t a presentation being given.

Superintendent-President Mike Muñoz declined to answer questions about the contract, noting that Zia had been provided

written responses earlier in the day. Muñoz added that it was also not part of the trustees’ role to “get into the operations of the organization.”

Trustees are the governing body of the college and are tasked with numerous things like approving or denying contracts, approving the college’s annual budget and placing bond measures on the ballot.

In a statement, the college said that the decision to place the issue on the consent calendar was made because it was not a “board-driven process.”

“The procedure to select a firm, like any other consulting or management business that the College hires, was conducted in accordance with our district process,” Stacey Toda, a spokesperson for the college, said in an email. “As this process is a district process and not a board-driven process the role of the trustee in the selection of this firm is limited in its scope.”

However, the board did have the authority to deny the contract.

Now that the contract has been approved, college officials are expected to meet with Graystone to form a socially responsible investment plan. ■



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Courtesy of Aquarium of the Pacific  
Several of the recipients of the 2021 African American Scholar Program, a scholarship initiative that supports African American college students studying aquarium-related careers.

# Aquarium of the Pacific offers scholarships for African American college students

By Cheantay Jensen

African American college students pursuing aquarium-related degrees can apply beginning Sept. 9 to win thousands of dollars in scholarships through the Aquarium of the Pacific’s African American Scholar Program.

Any African American college student in California studying aquarium-related careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is invited to apply. That includes fields such as ocean education, animal husbandry, water quality, building maintenance or facilities, microbiology and business management, among others.

The program, now in its third year, was created to lower barriers to African American students through financial support and networking opportunities. Each recipient is awarded \$10,000, but the number of recipients varies each year depending on the applicant pool and dollars raised in support of the program, according to a spokesperson for the aquarium. Last year the program awarded \$10,000 to 11 students, for a total of \$110,000.

“The Aquarium of the Pacific is committed to creating pathways for African American students to pursue careers in our field, and it has been very gratifying for us to collaborate with the scholars from this program as they engage in the Aquarium’s work,” said Anthony Brown, a member of the selection committee. “This has included developing new initiatives and serving as a platform for the scholars to connect with other scientists and the next generation of students.”

In addition to scholarship money, recipients will have opportunities to engage in various aquarium programs, such as writing for the aquarium’s member magazine or serving as judges in an environmental film festival for high school students. Winners are also invited to attend a fall symposium designed to strengthen their relationship with the aquarium and each other. The symposium usually entails activities such as meeting aquarium staff, hearing from a panel of STEM professionals and connecting with high school students from the Long Beach Unified School District.

Applicants of any age may apply but must be California residents of African American heritage, provide proof of acceptance or enrollment at an accredited university, community college or trade school studying the aforementioned fields and hold a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher from the most recent academic year. They must also provide a resume/CV, two letters of recommendation from a non-aquarium affiliated professional or instructor, and include a 500-750 word essay describing what inspired the applicant to pursue an education in their field of study. Graduating high school seniors headed to college are also welcome to apply.

Applications for the 2023 African American Scholar Program are due by Nov. 25. Recipients will be notified by Jan. 20 2023, and awards will be presented to the recipients at the aquarium’s 21st annual African American Festival on Feb. 25, 2023. For program details and submission guidelines, visit [aquariumofpacific.org/multimedia/africanamericanscholar](http://aquariumofpacific.org/multimedia/africanamericanscholar). ■

## Able ARTS Work

Continued from page 5

continued to be a challenge, along with the fact that these sites did not have the dedicated spaces for services that Dolas hoped to provide.

Now, Dolas is optimistic that none of those old challenges will be an issue at the Atlantic Avenue building. Bixby Knolls serves as a safe, arts-focused community—an ideal environment for Able ARTS Work. Features like an accessible stage area and administrative offices for Dolas and her team are among the planned renovations for the building.

The inclusion of a clinical area for children to promote early childhood intervention and a new technology lab where people can be taught about podcasting and video creation are some of the other amenities the building will offer.

“Everything in the building is going to tell a story of accessibility and inclusion,” Dolas said. The reason “everything is being chosen will have to do with the story behind it, whether it’s a floor covering or an accessible bathroom.”

And as Able ARTS Work owns the building, the organization is slated to save around \$76,000 in rental costs annually.

But the nonprofit needs to complete its current fundraising round to turn those plans into a reality. Dolas said the organization is eyeing several prominent sources of funding to reach the \$1 million mark, the largest of which is a community grant from Rep. Alan Lowenthal. Able ARTS Work has submitted a request to Lowenthal’s office for \$980,000 from the 2023 cycle.

The organization is also looking at other opportunities, like a \$125,000 grant from the S. Mark Taper Foundation, as well as smaller private donations and contributions from community members or businesses.

As a perk for those who contribute, Able ARTS Work plans to install a donor wall in the finished building.

Once this round of fundraising has been completed, a third and final round will look to pay off the \$1.25 million bank loan that was used to purchase the building, which Dolas said will likely take two-to-four years, once that phase begins.

It’s an ambitious, long-ranging plan, and the folks behind Able ARTS Work acknowledge there may be more delays beyond the pushed-back construction timeline. But contractor bids for the project are already out, and Dolas and her team believe the renovations can wrap up in March or April. ■

## M.O.R.E.

Continued from page 9

in January, and understands the experience of being pregnant through COVID-19, she said.

With support from sponsorships such as Baby2Baby and guidance from the Black Health Equity Collaborative of Long Beach, the nonprofit has grown to offer even more to mothers.

Apart from the delivery service, moms receive education with a quarterly program, covering everything from finding resources, healthy living, maternal health care, lactation and baby basics, plus safety.

Mothers can also attend workshops based on topics they’ve requested, ranging from CPR training to fitness, or receive support through “S.O.U.L. Circle”—support and group therapy sessions that the organization is aiming to offer each month in addition to a monthly workshop.

Nichols hopes that in the future, the organization will be able to offer programming specifically for teen mothers, and that it will someday have its own resource center to call home.

“I just want to continue and see M.O.R.E. Mothers really

have an impact for women in this community,” said Nichols, who hopes that the organization will play a role in improving maternal care for women of color in particular.

For the women who receive services or attend workshops or support groups, Nichols hopes that they leave feeling more confident, whether it’s about their labor and delivery, or about their motherhood, she said.

“My hope is that they get a really good experience and feel good about themselves as a woman after being a part of M.O.R.E. Mothers, and that they feel like they’re part of a community, part of the village, part of our family, and that they have someone they can turn to,” Nichols said.

As part of the village mentality, the women of M.O.R.E. Mothers frequently step up for each other, whether it’s sharing resources, connecting over common experiences, or donating items themselves when they’re no longer needed, said Nichols.

“I have a lot of love for the city, I reside in the city, raising my kids in the city now too, and it just seems like this is where I need to be,” Nichols said. “As we continue to have so much support behind us, I know I’m doing the right thing.” ■



Courtesy of Toi Nichols  
Toi Nichols founded M.O.R.E. Mothers in 2020 after experiencing a traumatic nerve injury that left her in a wheelchair for around eight weeks after she gave birth. The organization aims to empower women, while connecting them to resources, offering a delivery service, and providing monthly workshops and support groups.



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# Cutting cannabis taxes will cost the city—but business owners say it can save the industry



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

A person trims the leaves from a nug of weed at the Fresh Baked cannabis growing facility.

By By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach may look at lowering taxes on some cannabis businesses, but how big the cuts end up being will have a big impact on the city's

annual budget, which is projected to receive about \$12 million in taxes from the industry.

Late last month, the City Council's Budget Oversight Committee heard potential options for lowering the tax rates

in the city, which are currently 8% for adult-use sales, 6% for medicinal sales and \$13.41 per square foot of cultivation.

City staff laid out options on Aug. 23 for the committee to consider including eliminating some taxes completely, which would create a large hole in the budget; the city has depended on this revenue since cannabis sales fully came online.

This year's budget is proposing using cannabis tax revenue to fund things like a new REACH Team and other homeless services, including encampment cleanups. It also calls for about \$2.2 million to pay for code enforcement, fire inspections and city management salaries.

Some of the conservative options would cap the amount of cannabis tax revenue the city takes in, potentially at \$12 million, with any additional revenue being refunded to businesses or reducing tax rates for equity business operators.

Councilmember Suzie Price, who was one of the more vocal critics of legalizing cannabis sales, said that when the council pushed Measure MA, a city-backed tax structure approved by voters in

2016, it did not know how much money the city would need to ensure that illegal operators did not pop up across the city.

After years of quiet operations in Long Beach, the city now has a better idea of what it needs to police the industry, but the revenue generated from cannabis taxes is now being used to fund a host of city services.

"We're basically taxing this industry to pay for things that we need to cover as a city simply because of the product they are selling," Price said.

State lawmakers agreed to eliminate a statewide cultivation tax and to pause an excise tax paid to the state at 15%, but operators still pay local taxes like those established by Measure MA as well as regular sales taxes that all retailers pay.

Reducing the adult use retail sales rate from 8% to 6% would result in a loss of about \$2.4 million, according to the city presentation.

But eliminating it and the cultivation tax, one scenario presented to the committee, would not only reduce cannabis tax revenue by about 90%, it would also require a vote of the people to raise rates in

Continued on page 18

Since 2020, Long Beach's annual budget for homeless services has risen from \$10 million to \$76 million.

During that same time, the number of people in our community who are unhoused has grown by 62%.

For the third year in a row, the Long Beach Post is partnering with the Local Media Foundation to bring you a tax-deductible option to fund our investigative reporting. This year, contributions to this fund will help directly support our team's deep dive into the city's growing housing crisis and the successes—or shortcomings—of programs designed to aid unhoused members of our community.

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## Long Beach unemployment rate remained flat in July

By Brandon Richardson

Long Beach unemployment remained essentially flat in July, inching down from 5.3% to 5.2%, according to state data released late last month.

The news, though, may be welcome after data released in July showed an uptick in June after 10 straight months of decline. In May, the city's unemployment reached a low of 4.6%—lower than it was just before the pandemic began.

Long Beach's unemployment rate remains higher than 67% of Los Angeles County's 124 cities and unincorporated areas, according to data from the California Employment Development Department. Only 37 areas have higher unemployment.

Three cities—Los Angeles, Norwalk and Pomona—have the same unemployment rate as Long Beach.

Countywide, the unemployment rate dipped to 5% in July. After reaching a low of 4.5% in May, the county's unemployment rate jumped

to 5.2% in June.

After a small uptick in June, the state's unemployment rate inched down from 4% to 3.9%, while the national rate sits at 3.5%.

"California is getting very close to fully recovering all the jobs it lost due to the pandemic," Taner Osman, research manager at Beacon Economics and the Center for Economic Forecasting, said in a statement.

The county labor force increased by 14,100 people in July to 4,974,600, according to state data. The labor force was 5,218,500 in February 2020. The number of unemployed people in LA County decreased by 6,100 to 250,600.

In Long Beach, meanwhile, the labor force increased by 800 people in July, reaching 230,400, state data shows. Prior to the pandemic, the labor force was 243,400. The number of unemployed people in the city in July was 12,000, a decrease of 100 people.

Statewide, the largest job gains continue to be seen in the sectors hit hardest by the pandemic, though they remain below pre-pandemic



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Gerard McAvoy, manager of Anna's, a new bar on Pine Avenue in Downtown, pours a beer

levels, according to a Beacon analysis. Health care led the state, adding 16,900 positions, followed by leisure and hospitality with 14,900 and construction with 11,400.

At the county level, due to the usual summer recess, the government section—mostly educational services—saw the largest decline at 44,400 jobs, the EDD reports. Professional and business

services saw the largest month-over-month gains, increasing payroll by 6,900 jobs.

From July 2021 to July of this year, nonfarm employment in LA County increased by 174,000 jobs, a 4% boost, according to the EDD. The leisure and hospitality sector posted the largest gains at 37,600 jobs, accounting for 22% of the total year-over-year payroll increase. ■

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# Dave & Buster’s opens this month in Long Beach, bringing nearly 200 jobs to the city



Workers unload dozens of video games from semi-trucks at the Long Beach Towne Center in preparation of the opening of Dave & Buster’s later this month.

By Brandon Richardson

Fans of video games and adult beverages—especially when they are paired—will have a new haunt when Dave & Buster’s begins doling out food, drinks and game cards at the Long

Beach Towne Center later this month. The popular arcade and restaurant chain is slated to open its doors in Long Beach on Sept. 19 with around 185 employees, according to the company. “I’m excited,” the site’s general manager Stephen Allison said in an

interview. Allison, who has worked for the company for 22 years and has lived in Long Beach the last eight years, said he passed on other opportunities, waiting to work closer to home. “I have been holding out for Long Beach for quite some time,” he said. The long-awaited Long Beach location, first approved by the Planning Commission in August 2019, is the midway point between the two other nearest Dave & Buster’s locations in Torrance and Orange, which are 22 and 17 miles away, respectively. While those and other “legacy stores” are about 65,000 square feet, Allison said most new locations, including Long Beach, will be smaller. The Towne Center site is just over 41,000 square feet and replaced the retail center’s food court and several small businesses, including Islands Fine Burgers & Drinks. The space will feature around 180 games, Allison said—most, if not all, of which will be the same as other Dave & Buster’s locations. Among the games will be a four-player virtual reality attraction, he said. Players put on VR goggles and use a controller to play various games such

as “Transformers” and “Top Gun.” Allison said the VR game is updated regularly. Like the games, the Long Beach location’s menu will be the same as other sites, Allison said. “We try to keep it fresh as much as possible,” he said. “We don’t want the menu to get stale for our guests.” The menu includes new limited time offers about every three months, Allison said, with the current offering being the Oktoberfest Burger—a cheeseburger topped with bratwurst. For sports fans, Allison said the space will feature a 40-foot-wide, ultra-high-definition LED screen that can show multiple channels at once. “Come by at 10 a.m. on Sunday morning during football, and you can sit in one chair and not have to move your head more than 15 degrees to see every single football game,” Allison said. The Towne Center location also will include space for private events, Allison said, which can be separated into three rooms or opened up into one large area for over 100 people. The leadership team is in the process of hiring, with the store about 60% staffed as of Aug. 24, Allison said. The company is hiring everything from bartenders to servers to custodial staff. Each Dave & Buster’s location also employs its own game technicians, Allison said. The company offers on-the-job training, which will teach entry-level technicians how to repair and maintain the video game consoles. The company’s culture is what has kept him on board for over two decades, Allison said, first as an hourly employee working his way through college and then becoming a manager 11 years ago. He has worked at the Irvine location for the last 10 years. Allison met his wife while she also was a manager of a Dave & Buster’s location. He also met his best friends, who went on to be his groomsmen. Flexibility for its employees is a priority at Dave & Buster’s, Allison said, adding that it is an ideal workplace for people in school or as a second job. When it opened in 1999, the Long Beach Towne Center instantly became a hotspot for shopping and entertainment. Over the last decade, however, its popularity has somewhat waned, plagued with vacancy and business turnover. “We’re hoping to liven the Towne Center up and make it a hoppin’ place again,” said Allison, whose wife is a Long Beach native and told him about the early days of the retail complex. “It’s lost its attraction a little bit, but Dave & Buster’s will help revitalize things.” ■



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# Aerospace firms aim to streamline career paths for students

By Brandon Richardson

Sixteen Long Beach Unified School District teachers toured some of the city’s aerospace manufacturing facilities last month to kick off a partnership with the goal of developing a streamlined pathway for students from local schools to one day have careers in the growing industry. In partnership with Pacific Gateway, the city’s workforce development network, the Space Beach Teacher Externship Program kicked off on Aug. 9 with a three-day workshop that took educators to the Boeing, Relativity Space, Rocket Lab, SpinLaunch and Virgin Orbit facilities in Long Beach. “Through this collaboration, teachers are able to see how skills taught in the classroom are applied in real-world settings,” said LBUSD Assistant Director of Career Pathway Development Renee Shipman. The teachers from Cabrillo, CAMS and Sato Academy high schools learned about aerospace manufacturing, rocket launch trends, work environments and the types of careers their students may want to pursue in the industry, according to a city announcement.



One of Rocket Lab’s Electron rockets blast off from New Zealand.

They participated in workshops with industry leaders, discussed workforce needs within the sector and gained hands-on experience to help contextualize academic content. The externship program cost the city \$35,000 and was funded using Long Beach Recovery Act dollars, according to Pacific Gateway Special Projects Officer Eli Romero. “Virgin Orbit is enthusiastic about the opportunity to ... host educators at our Long Beach factory and for the

chance to inspire the people who are inspiring the future of aerospace,” Johanna Kent, the company’s vice president of people and culture, said in an email. The externship program is part of a space workforce initiative by Pacific Gateway to engage students, teachers and aerospace employers in work-based learning activities, including speaker series, field trips, competitions, mentorships, internships and, ultimately, long-term

employment, according to the city. Through this initial investment, the three schools will work with Pacific Gateway and the space companies to develop a “multi-disciplinary, cross-career academy project-based learning activity aligned with STEM and college-based standards” that will culminate in a STEM/aerospace conference next year. The Space Beach program aligns with the city’s Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initiative by “eliminating social and economic disparities in communities most impacted by racism,” the city announcement states. The initiative also supports the city’s Strategic Plan for Youth and Emerging Adults by providing inclusive academic and job training. In May, the Long Beach Department of Economic Development and Pacific Gateway received a \$1.6 million grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. The money will support the Space Beach program. “There is so much talent in our own backyard,” Kent said, “and when we look at the capability and diversity of that talent, supporting the teachers who will support these students to strengthen the pathways into future employment for LBUSD students into entering a career in aerospace benefits us all.” ■

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# State bill to increase oil well abandonment funds for Long Beach is on its way to Newsom’s desk



A family enjoys Alamilos Beach in Downtown with a backdrop of one of the city's oil islands.

By Brandon Richardson

When Long Beach’s more than 2,400 active and idle oil production and injection wells are tapped out, it will cost over a billion dollars to properly cap and abandon them. The state is required to pay the lion’s share, but its dedicated fund is currently capped at less than one-third of what the state will owe.

A bill proposed by state Assemblymember Patrick O’Donnell that would eliminate the fund’s cap, however, passed the state Senate late last month and is on its way to Gov. Gavin Newsom’s desk for consideration.

“Our community and environment must be protected when it comes time to safely close down the Tideland oil wells,” O’Donnell said in an Aug. 24 statement. “Long Beach and its residents should not be left holding the bag to pay for the cleanup costs when that inevitable time comes.”

Within the next 10-15 years, the state will have to pay an estimated \$967 million toward safely abandoning oil wells in Long Beach, according to Bob Dowell, the director of the Long Beach Energy Resources Department. The city, meanwhile, will pay \$133.3 million and private owners will pay \$116 million, Dowell said.

The total cost of abandonment is nearly \$1.22 billion.

The state’s Oil Trust Fund, which was established in 2005 to address well abandonment in the Long Beach Tidelands, has been capped at \$300 million since its inception. The fund has been stagnant for eight years, according to O’Donnell, while abandonment draws ever nearer.

Several attempts at setting aside additional funds have failed, O’Donnell said in an email to the Business Journal.

If signed by Newsom, Assembly Bill 353 would remove the fund cap. “This is the furthest we’ve come,” he said. “This is a positive step especially given the 2021 Orange County oil spill that highlighted the importance of this issue.”

The bill was first proposed by O’Donnell on Jan. 10, and it passed the state Assembly two weeks later on Jan. 24.

Through the end of fiscal year 2021, the city had saved \$59 million to put toward abandonment, according to an April presentation to the City Council. Dowell said that, because oil prices are higher than what staff had budgeted for, he expects to add an additional \$10 million to the fund this fiscal year.

Dowell praised O’Donnell’s bill, saying that he could not understand why previous attempts had failed despite state officials’ knowledge of the impending expenses.

“[The bill] ensures funding while revenues are still being realized to cover their responsibility,” Dowell

said. “It assures our partner in this, the state, is moving in the same direction we are.”

In addition to its portion of the abandonment funding, the city also will pay to mitigate subsidence, which is the gradual lowering of the earth’s surface due to oil or gas extraction. To counteract subsidence, water will be injected into the reservoir area for an additional 5-15 years after the wells are decommissioned, according to a staff report.

The city’s subsidence liability is about \$180 million, which is already set aside, Dowell said.

The city is in the process of determining how best to phase out its oil production economically by 2035, which is when the city’s wells are expected to become unviable—meaning they cost more to operate than they generate—due to the depletion of the oil field.

The city has set the 2035 deadline to have its abandonment funds in order, but Dowell said he is not sure if the state has a similar goal in mind.

O’Donnell, for his part, is imploring Newsom to sign the bill to ensure Long Beach and its coast are protected.

“I encourage the governor to sign this bill,” O’Donnell said in a statement, “and continue protecting our environment around Long Beach and its Tidelands by ensuring enough money is set aside to safely close down the wells when oil operations end.” ■

## Cannabis Taxes

Continued from page 15

the future.

Industry advocates have successfully pushed for the reduction of taxes in some corners of the industry, like testing and manufacturing, but the bulk of the \$12 million generated from cannabis taxes comes from adult use retail sales.

That accounted for about 81% (\$9.7 million) of the cannabis tax revenue received by the city last year, and retail storefront owners have said the tax structure will lead to closures as the illicit market continues to leach sales from legal operators.

Elliot Lewis, who owns multiple Catalyst brand dispensaries in the city, has forcefully called for a zeroing out of cannabis taxes charged to retailers, saying that it’s an existential issue for business owners who are struggling to survive.

Lewis said last month that there are things that cannabis taxes are paying for that should already be covered by the city’s general fund.

“The same guy that inspects my bar is the same guy that inspects my cannabis business,” Lewis said, referencing the nearly \$453,000 tied to Fire Department salaries.

Adam Hijazi, president of the Long Beach Collective Association, said that businesses are already seeing a decline in sales this year, some as high as 40%.

He pointed to other municipalities like Los Angeles and the county that are looking at tax rates that are about half of what Long Beach is and said the solution is not to tax certain parts of the industry differently.

“Pitting equity operators against others in the city is a really horrible way to go about it,” Hijazi said. “All businesses should be treated equally.”

Price asked that a report come back to the committee looking at how cutting retail taxes to somewhere between 4% and 8% would affect the city and how the city could find alternate ways of funding city services without as much cannabis tax revenue.

Other committee members were supportive of having other options presented to them, but the full City Council will ultimately be the body that decides on what future cannabis tax rates might be.

The council is currently in the process of approving the upcoming fiscal year budget that has been balanced with the help of remaining American Rescue Act dollars, but those are expected to be gone by next year.

The city is currently projecting a \$25.6 million deficit for the 2023 fiscal year budget that starts in October 2023, which could make large cuts to city revenue sources a tough decision for council members. ■

# COLUMNIST: TIM GROBATY

## Mid-Modern Realtors, Douglas and Rochelle Kramer, offer a pair of homes in the Ranchos and Naples

Douglas and Rochelle Kramer are the royal couple of Mid-Modern Realtors in Long Beach. If for no other reason, that title was earned by the Kramers’ sale of a pair of Edward Killingsworth classics, most notably his Frank House, or Case Study House #25, at 82 Rivo Alto Canal, along with Killingsworth’s model home on Ocean Boulevard for his planned but never built Marina Tower.

Both properties, particularly the Frank House, are among the finest examples of the Mid Century Modern style, and Long Beach’s Killingsworth is high up in the pantheon of the style’s architects.

The Kramers appreciate that, but their love of the style isn’t limited to the works of Killingsworth or Paul Tay or Richard Neutra. Their primary bailiwick is Rancho Estates, a massive collection of Cliff May-designed homes, with some 700 models in the Estates between Studebaker Road and the San Gabriel River and between Wardlow Road and Spring Street. It’s where the Kramers live and sell as well as maintain two authoritative websites devoted to the style, SoCalModern.com and RanchoStyle.com.

One problem that the Kramers and other Realtors in the Ranchos face is that residents in the

area seem to be pretty happy now enjoying their homes that are worth upward of a million and a half dollars these days. In the past few years, the popularity of the homes has skyrocketed, with prices far outpacing “regular” tract homes in the surrounding areas and barely pausing for breath as they surpassed the \$1 million mark last year. The result is low inventory and higher prices.

“The demand continues to grow along with the appreciation for the architecture,” said Doug Kramer. “Add to that the fact that the availability is low, and that drives the prices up.”

As of late last month, there were only three Cliff May homes for sale in the Ranchos, priced at \$1.2 million, \$1.3 million and \$1.5 million. The latter, at 7140 Metz St. is listed by the Kramers. There’s little about the home that sets it very far above the finest in the area, but it’s still a nice example of the architecture and, if you’re not overly strict about buying a stock model with the original birch wood and other May trimmings, it’s been thoroughly upgraded with central air and heating, terrazzo flooring and walnut cabinetry in the kitchen that has been opened up to the dining and living areas.

The home is nicely landscaped—a requirement

for the Mid-Modern style—with large shade plants and trees in the patio and a lawn and seating area in the back.

Meanwhile, the Kramers have once again ventured into Naples with a Mid-Modern home designed by Paul Neble in a style that owes more to Killingsworth and Tay than Cliff May with its strict horizontal lines and landscaping that’s so inseparable from the home’s interior as to be almost pleasantly invasive.

Located close to—but not quite on—the canal at 7 Corinthian Walk, the home, listed at \$1.75 million, has three bedrooms and three baths in 1,967 square feet.

The home, as you would expect, has post and beam architecture with open-beam ceilings. There’s a breeze block atrium entryway and outdoor space includes a private courtyard and an expansive upper deck. The stacked-block supporting structure creates an open two-story floor plan and some unique touches. The Mid-mod style staircase and triangular fireplaces in the living room and master suite add to the home’s charm.

The home hit the market late last month. It’ll go quickly if it hasn’t already. ■



The living room of the Naples home at 7 Corinthian Walk.



The Edward Killingsworth-designed Case Study #25 home in Naples.



This Cliff May home in the Ranchos is listed at \$1.5 million.



The Mid-Modern home at 7 Corinthian Walk is listed at \$1.75 million.



# New rules for food trucks coming to Long Beach

By Laura Anaya-Morga

The city will take a phased approach in establishing new rules for food trucks, with a draft ordinance expected soon that will start by focusing on health and safety.

The City Council voted late last month to move forward with recommendations contained in a consultant's report that details a two-step process to implement changes as to where and how food trucks are allowed to operate. Council members said they support the food truck operators who make up Long Beach's diverse food scene but agreed they must be mindful of the negative effects to brick-and-mortar restaurants that pay rent and utilities, and especially those that pay fees to operate in one of the city's business improvement districts.

"We want to keep them around," Councilmember Cindy Allen said during the Aug. 23 meeting. Allen acknowledged that food trucks often provide quick, low-budget food options for customers that other restaurants may not offer but said, "It's about finding a balance because we want everyone to work harmoniously."

Food truck vendors and supporters stayed at the City Council meeting until nearly midnight that night to plead their case and express concerns over their fate on Shoreline Drive, a popular hub for



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Families and individuals gather at the Pike Outlets to enjoy food trucks that line Shoreline Drive daily.

food trucks in Downtown, especially after receiving complaints from restaurants near the area.

A petition in support of food truck vendors received 2,500 signatures as of Aug. 25.

Isabel and Jorge Ramirez operate their funnel cake truck, Gloria's Funnels, in front of the Pike Outlets during the week. They told the council that they cashed out their 401(k) to open their business in 2018. "This is what we live off of," said Isabel.

"When we started working at The Pike ... it was empty and more trucks started coming in and now, The Pike is packed on the weekend," said

Jorge. "We are a big asset to the Pike and their business."

The same sentiment was shared by other food truck operators who said they sacrificed all they have to build their businesses and support their families.

"There is enough business for anyone," said Joshua Gonzalez, another food truck operator who did not disclose the truck he owned during the meeting. "We do sacrifice a lot of hours to run a business, and I feel like we should have the same chance as they do."

While no changes have been implemented to city policy yet, the

first phase of the process will require food truck operators to obtain a health permit from the city's Health Department in order to legally operate in the city. Currently, food trucks with health permits from the county can sell food in Long Beach and are not subject to city enforcement.

The new rules could also include aligning the city's municipal code with state legislation, removing obsolete sections of the code and establishing a clear definition for what a food truck is, differentiating them from ice cream trucks or other mobile food carts. Some of those changes, as established by state law, would require food trucks to operate within 200 feet of a bathroom or hand-washing facility or have permission from an adjacent business to use their facilities.

Phase two of the process will require more time and public outreach to determine specific regulations as to where in the city food trucks can operate or where they could be banned. Parking, noise and land use regulations will also be considered in the second phase, as well as establishing designated "food truck zones" that will allow the city to better enforce health codes in those areas. The city will also hire a food truck coordinator that will focus on enforcing new rules and will serve as the point of contact for all operators.

A draft ordinance outlining those changes is expected as early as next summer. ■

# City receives \$30.5M grant for homeless housing

By Brandon Richardson

The state has awarded the Long Beach Health Department a \$30.5 million grant to build tiny homes for people experiencing homelessness, officials announced late last month.

Funded through the California Department of Housing and Community Development, \$25.2 million will be used to build 30-35 modular tiny homes at the Multi-Service Center on the Westside as well as purchase another motel as part of the city's Project Homekey program.

"This generous grant will go a long way in helping reduce street homelessness in Long Beach," Health Department Director Kelly Colopy said in a statement. "As we continue to expand outreach, it is critical that we also can meet shelter needs for people who are ready to receive services."

The motel site purchase is being negotiated, according to the announcement. While the total number of interim housing units produced by the funding depends on which motel

site is selected, the number is expected to be more than 100.

Each unit will include furniture, linens and a private bathroom, according to the city. Staff and security will be on-site 24/7.

The remaining \$5.3 million will go toward operations and services for three years, according to the announcement, including supportive services to help people find permanent housing.

City staff is expected to bring the grant opportunity to the City Council in the fall for consideration, the announcement states. Once the council votes in favor of the grant and contracts are signed, it will take eight to 12 months for units to be available to those in need of shelter.

Since 2020, the number of temporary beds for people experiencing homelessness has increased from 60 to about 530, not including those that will be built with the help of the grant. Over that same period, however, the city's homeless population has exploded to 3,296, a 62% increase.

The city has 344 beds through Project Homekey and Project



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

One of the Long Beach Health Department's REACH teams gets into its van after speaking to a person who was previously unhoused but currently resides at the Colonial Motel through Project Roomkey.

Roomkey, the latter of which was established in March 2020 as part of the state's response to the pandemic and ends on Sept. 30.

The number of permanent affordable housing units in Long Beach also has increased since 2020, with 124 units being added through four development projects, including Vistas Del Puerto and the Spark at

Midtown. More than 200 more units are at various stages of development.

"Ending homelessness is one of our top priorities in Long Beach," Mayor Robert Garcia said in a statement. "We are grateful to the State for this grant which will allow us to expand an incredibly successful program and create safe, supportive housing for people in need." ■

# 2022 Long Beach Branch NAACP 42nd Gala & Awards Presentation

Theme: *Harmony Eradicates Injustice.*  
~ Honorees ~



Sumer Temple, Owner  
Don Temple Storage  
*Zelma Lipscomb Award*



Jonathon Polk, Pres. & CEO  
Polk Funeral & Cremation Service  
*Ernest McBride Award*



Teresa Chandler, Dep. City Mgr.  
City of Long Beach  
*Lillie V. Grisby Award*



Richard Brown, Special Events Mgr.  
Keesal, Young, & Logan  
*Applause for Service*



Dr. Janice Filer, Retired Educator  
*President's Award - Youth Empowerment*



Robyn G. Peterson, Reired COO  
Long Beach Transit  
*President's Award - Peace & Goodwill*



Joyce Le, Exec. Asst. to President  
Long Beach Branch NAACP  
*President's Award - Youth Leadership*



Kaley Ervin, LB NAACP Youth  
*Youth Council Award*



Rich Chambers, President  
LB Police Officers Association  
*Youth Program Support*



Dr. Mike Muñoz, Supt-Pres.  
Long Beach City College  
*Education Award - Inclusion & Trades*



Steve Neal, President  
Long Beach Harbor Commission  
*Community Service & Religion*



Rhonda Love, CEO,  
DreamKreator Studio &  
Greg Johnson, CEO,  
Hannibal Media Group  
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Congressman Alan Lowenthal  
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# Long Beach receives additional \$13.1M to help more people pay back missed rent

*The city expects to help an additional 1,400 low-income residents pay missed rent and utility bills that were due on or before March 31.*

By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach residents struggling to pay rent and utilities due to the pandemic have received over \$58.8 million since the city's rent assistance program began in April 2021.

Now, another \$13.1 million in state loans will continue funding the Long Beach Emergency Rental Assistance Program, and the city expects to help an additional 1,400 low-income residents pay missed

rent and utility bills that were due on or before March 31. The new funding is expected to be disbursed by October.

Apart from the additional 1,400 households, there are currently 1,375 applications that have been processed and are awaiting final approval with \$9.6 million the city had remaining in the initial funding, the city said in an Aug. 15 update.

More than 34,000 people registered for the program, and just over 12,000 completed applications.

So far, 7,250 payments to landlords and utility providers have been made, city officials said. The city said roughly 97% of the payments were made on behalf of residents earning less than 50% of the area median income.

To qualify for the relief program, households had to have an income of no more than 80% of the area median income. For a family of four, the maximum threshold would be \$90,100.

"The pandemic is still having a financial impact on many residents and we must continue to get assistance to those most in need," Mayor Robert Garcia said in a statement.

"This funding will help us support more people here in Long Beach and we're grateful to the State for helping us expand these efforts."

The city received the \$13.1 million cash flow loan from the California Department of Housing and Community Development in July through Senate Bill 115, a state budget act that allows cities like Long Beach to request loans to be repaid using future federal funding.

Since the start of the program, the city has received over \$64 million to help renters who fell behind on payments during the COVID-19 pandemic, though the requests for funding have exceeded that amount significantly. The program closed its application window in March.

It wasn't immediately clear how

many people have benefitted from the program and how many are still awaiting approval.

The rental assistance program "has provided critical rental relief for individuals and families throughout the pandemic," said Long Beach Development Services Acting Director Christopher Koontz in a statement. "Our team remains committed to doing all that we can to offer support to renters and landlords in their greatest time of need, and we are thankful to the State for helping us achieve this goal."

A countywide eviction moratorium, which was renamed the COVID-19 Tenant Protections Resolution, was extended until Dec. 31 earlier this year. It will protect the county's poorest residents, those making less than 80% of the area median income, from eviction and rent increases. A family of four with a household income of \$93,500 or less would meet the upper threshold to qualify in LA county. ■

# Long Beach blocks JP23's business license

*The 6-0 vote likely closes the city process, but the bar's owner, Jacob Poozikhala, has not ruled out a lawsuit.*

By Jason Ruiz

After a contentious yearlong battle over whether Long Beach would issue a business license to the owner of a bar in Downtown, the City Council voted late last month to deny JP23 the ability to legally operate in the city.

The bar and restaurant had replaced the long-shuttered Cohiba nightclub at the corner of Broadway and Pine Avenue, but allegations of sexual assault tied to its Fullerton location cast a shadow over its opening in Long Beach last September.

On Aug. 23, community members called on the council to shut down the Long Beach location in the name of public safety while employees of JP23 argued the license should be issued so they can earn a living. After hearing from both sides, the council voted unanimously, without comment, to deny the permit.

The 6-0 vote likely closes the city process, but JP23's owner, Jacob Poozikhala, has not ruled out a lawsuit to obtain a business license or a civil case to recoup the money he spent trying to open the bar. Two council members (Daryl Supernaw and Stacy Mungo Flanigan) were absent for the vote and Councilmember Cindy Allen recused herself before the hearing at the request of JP23.

The denial of the business license comes after city officials said JP23 opened without proper permitting last year and continually broke city rules by hosting live events while operating under a temporary business license. Long Beach staffers say it never obtained an entertainment permit but allegedly hosted multiple live events over the past year.

According to the city, the establishment racked up eight criminal citations and numerous complaints from neighboring businesses and residents over the past year for loud music and unruly customers, which contributed to city staff's original decision to deny the business license in March.

That decision was appealed by the bar's owner, who said highly publicized accusations of rape connected to JP23's Fullerton

location were the real basis for the city trying to drive him out of town. He accused them of manufacturing a case to deny him a permanent business license.

"I wouldn't have violations if I had a business license," Poozikhala said. "This was on purpose; this was a setup because of what happened in Fullerton."

After a neutral hearing officer ruled that JP23 should be granted its license, the city sought a second legal opinion that said the hearing officer's logic was flawed because he ruled that past violations of city rules should not be considered when granting a new business license.

Christopher Pisano, an attorney with Best Best & Krieger, which recommended the council override the hearing officer, said that the opinion was fundamentally flawed and that the city has a right to use discretion when issuing business licenses.

The decision by the council to block the permit was cheered by community activists who had organized against the Long Beach



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal  
A cyclist rides past JP23, a bar and club that was recently denied its business permit by the city after operating for about a year in Downtown.

location's opening last year. They sent hundreds of letters to City Council members calling for them to vote against issuing the permit.

Other business owners cautioned that the council's decision to close down an establishment after the owner made major investments could send a bad message to other prospective operators looking to open in the city. ■

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Bid Opportunities

Title	Bid Number	Due Date
Lincoln 300 HE welder - Qty 6	FM-22-140	09/07/2022
Promotora Community Health Champions CBO RFP	HE-22-105	09/20/2022
Cannabis Equity Dispensary RFP	CM-22-125	09/21/2022
On-Call Utility Potholing Services	WD-22-018	09/21/2022
Large Potable Valve Replacement Project - Stearns St, Hathaway Ave, & Orange Ave	WD-22-017	09/21/2022
Transportation Mobility Supplies - Traffic Signs	PW-22-139	09/22/2022
Steel and Related Materials	CE-22-098	09/22/2022
Commercial Corridor Facade Improvement Program (CCFIP)	DV-22-101	09/26/2022
CS/MS Gas Chromatograph Mass Spectrometer Field Kit	FD-22-130	09/28/2022
On-site Vehicle Washing	PW-22-092	09/29/2022
Well Preventative Maintenance	WD-22-002	09/30/2022
As-Needed Fencing	CE-22-155	10/04/2022
R-7200 Terminal Roadway Improvements Project at Long Beach Airport	AP-22-152	10/05/2022

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The Queen Mary sits off the Long Beach coast.

# Port of Long Beach should reject Queen Mary control, Assemblyman says

By Anthony Pignataro

Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell wants port officials to say no to the Queen Mary.

O'Donnell, a Democrat who represents Long Beach in the state Assembly and is retiring at the end of his current term, is the highest profile official to criticize the city's proposed transfer of control over the ship to the Port of Long Beach.

On Aug. 25, O'Donnell, who chairs the Select Committee on Ports and Goods Movement, wrote in an op-ed published in the Grunion Gazette that the ship is a "well-documented voyage of mismanagement, missing public funds, structural deterioration and multiple bankruptcies" and a "failure as an attraction and as a public policy."

In his op-ed, O'Donnell said he opposes the city's plan, first floated last year, to transfer control of the ship to the port, saying it would detract too much from the port's current priorities.

Officials with the mayor's office and Port of Long Beach did not respond to requests for comment on O'Donnell's op-ed.

Specifically, O'Donnell wrote that the transfer would delay the port's "highly-touted Pier B railyard modernization and expansion project that will keep the port competitive amid soaring congestion

and record cargo demands."

In development for more than a decade, the \$870 million Pier B project in West Long Beach is scheduled for completion in 2032, after portions of tracks open in 2024 and 2030. The project's first phase alone will double the capacity of the existing Pier B rail yard.

"The main purpose of the port is not to provide entertainment," O'Donnell told the Business Journal.

Making matters worse, O'Donnell said the ship "has not proven to be a financially viable operation over the years."

Repairs to the ship have long been estimated to require hundreds of millions of dollars, O'Donnell said.

"Where will that money come from?" O'Donnell asked. If port officials were to assume financial responsibility for the Queen Mary, the ship would also draw resources away from efforts to reduce air pollution, O'Donnell added.

The ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles are responsible for emissions, on average, of about 100 tons per day of nitrogen oxides—more than that produced by 6 million cars, according to the South Coast Air Quality Management District. The pollution has plagued West Long Beach and surrounding cities for decades, leading to a higher incidence of lung diseases than in cities further from the port complex.

While the Port of Long Beach's

green initiatives have reduced emissions in recent years, progress slowed when freight congestion began building outside the port.

Later in his Gazette op-ed, O'Donnell added that, "Throwing taxpayer dollars at repairs that have been avoided for years is no longer a responsible option to fix the Queen Mary."

O'Donnell, who served on the Long Beach City Council from 2004 to 2014, includes himself in that assessment.

"The strategy for the Queen Mary has been hope, and we're running out of hope," O'Donnell told the Business Journal. "Could more have been done? Yes, but that doesn't mean [the ship] will be financially viable."

Before any such transfer of control takes place, O'Donnell's op-ed called for a full engineering and commercial review of the ship, conducted in an "open process."

O'Donnell defined this as a certified third party coming in and fully evaluating the status of the ship, then sharing their full report with the public, he said.

In late June, the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners approved contracts with Lloyd's Register Americas Advisory Services and ABL USA for \$127,795 and \$143,110, respectively, to assess the ship's condition. Lloyd's Register will conduct a historic document review, onboard inspections and strength

assessment, while ABL's scope of work includes naval architecture services, including stability modeling, calculations for longitudinal strength, ballast and tank inspection and engineering support.

The reports will take about a year to complete, according to port officials.

O'Donnell said he has not discussed his views with port officials, but added that "they would know my position from questions I've asked over the years."

O'Donnell has publicly alluded to his skepticism about the future of the Queen Mary for a few years. In April 2021, he tweeted about his visit to the Port of San Diego, jokingly adding that "no, they do not want the Queen Mary."

The Queen Mary, which was retired in 1967 following 31 years of service in peacetime and war, has been permanently docked in Long Beach ever since. Though owned by the city, the ship has been operated by a series of private firms, the last of which, Urban Commons, declared bankruptcy in 2021.

The ship has been closed to the public for more than two years, but city officials are planning to reopen the ship on Oct. 1.

Work has been ongoing through the year on \$5 million in safety repairs for the ship. In May, the city removed 20 of the ship's 22 badly corroded lifeboats, which were considered a safety hazard. ■



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