

# PRESIDIO SENTINEL

Volume 22, No. 2

Serving the Heart of San Diego

February | 2021

## KENNY LOGGINS

Donates Custom  
Theme Song to  
San Diego Zoo  
Kids Channel

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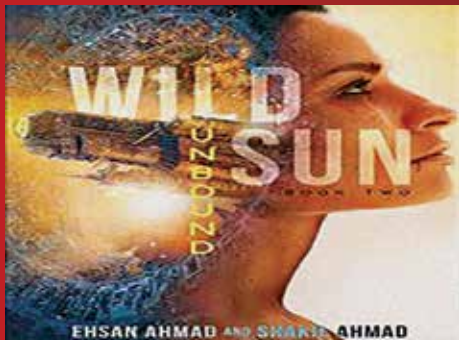
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## Coming Together for a Common Cause

By Patty Ducey-Brooks



Last month I shared a story about Barry Soper, who befriended two homeless men and helped to turn their lives around. Soper, who hadn't planned on focusing his life on the homeless, suddenly became an advocate for those who needed a voice.

Ironically, when Soper and I met, we learned that we have lots of similar history and connections. It's people, as ourselves, that when we come together for a shared cause, we ultimately learn that we have a past with common relationships, and life experiences.

This past month I met with Dijana Beck, chief agency operations for the County of San Diego-HHSA, Central & South Regions; and Jonathan Herrera, interim housing programs manager and policy advisor at the San Diego Housing Commission. This virtual meeting allowed me to learn that city and county organizations, and non-profit groups have been working closely together during the pandemic to assist homeless individuals.

What both of them emphasized is that "collaboration" has become the new norm. Meaning, there is a realized value and benefit to sharing resources, connections and experiences to deal with fixing the homeless situation for the city and county.

As most of us know, who live in the heart of San Diego, there has been a significant increase in homeless of all ages, backgrounds and demographics. In this issue, we share different articles about the causes and the opportunities that can change someone from existing on the streets, to having a fruitful and meaningful life.

Thankfully and hopefully, because of the shared effort of several organizations, including ePATH, which operates throughout Southern California, there may be notable changes to occur this year that may significantly impact the homeless scene.

According to Herrera, there are going to be two goals put in to practice for the homeless. First, is a non-uniformed, rapid-response dispatch team that will communicate directly with people living on the street.



**A shopping cart contains the life-sustaining goods for a homeless person.**

Second, is a mobile, neighborhood based, care management program that assesses the needs of those on the streets, and takes steps accordingly. According to Beck, HHSA will be supporting these efforts by providing access to public assistance programs and other county services

To further this discussion, I spoke with Hanan Scrapper, regional director for ePATH, to have her provide information on this collaborative effort and the plans for 2021.

She shared with me that ePATH has been operating in San Diego for the past eight years. The last couple of years, the organization has focused on individuals who are "high users" of emergency services.

During this time, they have expanded the programs and doubled the

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## From Survivor to Caretaker

By Ginny Ollis

Caitlin is the oldest of three girls who did not know their fathers. These men were absent because they had been murdered, were in prison or were just not around. Which puts the question of life and death forefront in your life very early.

The absence was normal but not safe. Mom was an alcoholic and mostly absent, and moved her three daughters around a lot, changing households, always living in shared spaces. Caitlin was first molested at 7, and by 12 had been in eight schools in four states. By the time she was 13, Mom was gone for weeks at a time, abandoning her girls in sketchy places. Her little sisters, 10 and 5, were Caitlin's responsibility. At 13 Caitlin became a child prostitute. Working El Cajon Boulevard, drinking, doing drugs, rape was normal to her. To her, her story was not unusual. At 15 she was picked up by vice, taken to juvenile hall and became a ward of the court. For 890 days, almost three years, she had no power over her life.

But Caitlin didn't collapse. She grabbed the educational opportunities, read a great deal, earned her GED and started community college courses on line while in custody. She was released to a group home in Los Angeles, but not ready to accept help, she ran away, and got hooked: cocaine, then crack, then a mixture of meth and heroin. She lacked self-acceptance, didn't know where she fit, but liked being free from restrictions, was proud of her survival.

Her grandmother had taken her two younger sisters and then moved to Maryland. By 2015 Caitlin was living between two shopping carts under a blue tarp with a needle in her arm every day. She was numb. Her life seemed over. It didn't matter. Then in October 2016 she learned she was pregnant and had to find the power in herself to change. That day she quit all drugs cold turkey, found a couch in a dope house, where, although she was no longer participating, she was welcomed because she cleaned and was useful.

She met Roy, a wheelchair-bound Viet Nam Veteran on the street, who had severe PTSD/dementia, but was nice, and Caitlin was immediately attracted to someone for whom she could serve a purpose and help, and who was not a threat. They began a mutually supportive friendship. The V.A. had provided an empty apartment to Roy, no furniture, but a safe place. He needed feeding, bathing, medications, and trustworthy companionship.

Caitlin moved in and took over his care. She took him on wheelchair walks, bringing them back into the clean outside world where they learned a new environment. She worked with the V.A. to obtain a service I.D. at minimum wage. She now had someone besides herself to take care of. Soon after, she had suspicions and went to a clinic on El Cajon Boulevard that confirmed she was pregnant again. They referred her to the Jacobs Center in La Jolla where, seven months later, she gave birth to a healthy baby girl, Tommi Marie, which Caitlin describes at the best thing that ever



*Caitlin is shown with her daughter, Tommi.*

happened to her. After her daughter was born, she became recognized for her exceptional care and purpose by the V.A. They upgraded their housing to a two bedroom unit, so that she and her daughter had their own room.

When Tommi was 2, Caitlin heard about Just In Time for Foster Youth on the radio and went to see them. They gave Caitlin incredible support. New furniture was delivered to the barren apartment that she and Ron had furnished with "finds."

About three years ago (the older of Caitlin's sisters) moved back to San Diego.

Caitlin encouraged her sister to qualify for paid home care service by the V.A. They now divide the care of Ron into day/night shifts, and her sister has enrolled in nursing study at Grossmont College. She too is thriving.

Today Caitlin's well-earned confidence, articulate voice, and enormous personality and gratitude for her own achievements and blessings make her a standout in any environment. She is a gift to know. Her dream is to stay in school for as long as she can afford and paint murals across the city while continuing to advocate for foster youth and other marginalized people in her community.

She was given stipends to attend financial literacy workshops and gained tools needed to be independent and secure. She also learned about checking and savings accounts and how to invest. Caitlin was encouraged to apply to San Diego State University where she was awarded a full tuition scholarship to the Fowler College of Business and is taking online classes. She now shares her time for studies towards her degree, and Roy's home care responsibilities.

Most important to her, Just in Time for Foster Youth (JIT) has provided professional counseling, mental health resources and wellness services that have influenced her healing through group therapy, supportive mentorships, and fitness. Caitlin is now an employee of JIT where she is the investor outreach coordinator and speaks to groups on behalf of the organization. She also works with other foster youth who are entering their independent and adult years.

Just in Time for Foster Youth (JIT) provides a supportive community for youth exiting the foster care system to build the confidence, capability, and connection necessary for personal success. For transition age foster youth, 18 to 27 years of age, JIT creates a community of caring adults, long-term coaching relationships, and coordinated resources to address the root cause of trauma and empower youth to achieve self-sufficiency and wellbeing. To learn more about these life-transforming services, visit [www.jitfosteryouth.org](http://www.jitfosteryouth.org).



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## Grammy Award-Winning Singer-Songwriter Kenny Loggins Donates Custom Theme Song to San Diego Zoo Kids Channel

Kenny Loggins, one of pop music's greatest hit makers, offered a special treat to young patients and their families at Rady Children's Hospital San Diego — along with viewers from around the globe — when he presented "The Great Adventure," a custom theme song recorded by Loggins for the San Diego Zoo Kids Channel, this past month.

San Diego Zoo Kids is an innovative, closed-circuit television adventure channel with programs produced primarily for medical facilities that serve pediatric patients and their families. The channel, supported by generous donors, debuted at Rady Children's Hospital in 2013 and offers family friendly, animal-oriented stories that are both entertaining and educational.

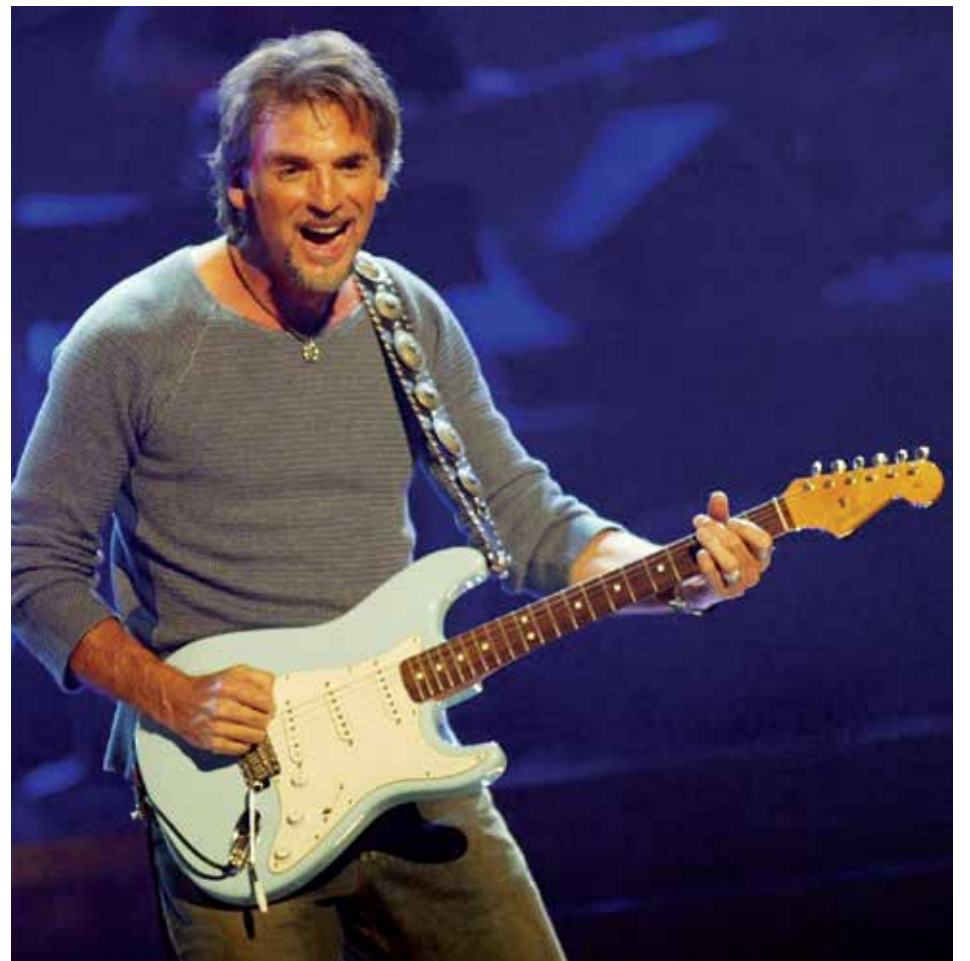
"I'm thrilled to partner with San Diego Zoo Kids in their efforts to bring laughter and joy to children who need it most, in children's hospitals and Ronald McDonald Houses around the world," said Kenny Loggins. "I hope my music puts a smile on their face in their time of healing, and soothes their parents' souls."

Loggins, a Grammy Award-winning singer and songwriter with over 25 million albums sold worldwide — and a deeply committed environmentalist with a long history of advocating for the planet — recorded "The Great Adventure" for San Diego Zoo Kids, with proceeds from the sale of the song being donated to the channel. In addition to the original theme song, Loggins also has donated three songs from his catalog — "I'm Alright," "Danny's Song" and "Go Fish" — to be used for wildlife videos, exclusive to the channel.

"San Diego Zoo Global is beyond grateful to Kenny Loggins for his extremely generous donation, and we are humbled and honored to welcome him to the San Diego Zoo Kids family," said Paul A. Baribault, president/CEO, San Diego Zoo Global. "Kenny's contribution of his songs to the San Diego Zoo Kids channel provides an innovative way to allow us to further connect children and their families with wildlife when they are unable to visit our facilities. This incredible gift of music from Kenny not only highlights his many talents as an iconic musician, but shows the world his passion for inspiring children to appreciate wildlife and their natural habitats. We extend our deepest gratitude to you, Kenny."

"All of us at Rady Children's Hospital are proud of our longtime partnership with San Diego Zoo Global," said Dr. Patrick Frias, president and CEO, Rady Children's Hospital. "Being part of the San Diego Zoo Kids family provides our nurses, doctors and child life specialists — and those at other medical facilities around the world — an important tool that allows them to bring happiness, health and hope to children and their families, when they need it the most. Adding Kenny Loggins to this family is a true honor. His uplifting and inspirational music will bring further comfort and positive diversion to our patients and families. Kenny, we are most grateful for your generous donation of your time and talent."

In addition to wildlife stories, the San Diego Zoo Kids channel also offers quizzes about animals and habitats, and a wide variety of short video vignettes. Viewers can see best-of videos from the San Diego



**Kenny Loggins has donated several songs to San Diego Zoo Kids channel.**

Zoo's and San Diego Zoo Safari Park's many online cameras, as well as content from over 45 zoo and aquarium partners from around the world. The stories told on the channel aim to inspire a lasting connection between people and wildlife, and help children learn how they can help protect the planet.

The San Diego Zoo Kids channel's new theme song, "The Great Adventure," will be available to the public on Feb. 5, and can be purchased and downloaded at [orcd.co/thegreatadventure](http://orcd.co/thegreatadventure).

Since its debut in 2013 at Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego, San Diego Zoo Kids channel has been installed in 355 children's hospitals and Ronald McDonald Houses in 48 states across the U.S. and the District of Columbia, and in facilities in 13 countries including Australia, Curacao, Canada, India, Kenya, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, Pakistan, Qatar and the United Kingdom.

San Diego Zoo Kids provides free and discounted education programs in San Diego that meet LEAD standards for science curriculum and provides teacher training [Kids.SanDiegoZoo.org/Grownups](http://Kids.SanDiegoZoo.org/Grownups). The San Diego Zoo Kids channel [SanDiegoZoo.org/KidsNetwork](http://SanDiegoZoo.org/KidsNetwork) broadcasts television programming in more than 350 children's hospitals and Ronald McDonald Houses around the world, providing joy, comfort, laughter, and learning to children and their families who are experiencing challenging times.

## Coming Together for a Common Cause ► Continued from page 1

By Patty Ducey-Brooks

services to the chronically homeless, as well as worked to observe barriers and bridge gaps. To again emphasize the collaborative process, their programs are now inclusive of community care coordinators, criminal justice liaisons, mental health providers, and the sheriff's department and public defenders.

The primary objectives for all of this is a person-to-person approach with a rapid response team to handle emergency cases; and a mobile homelessness, street-based care management program with outreach specialists for each community.

What I also learned is that ePATH has been awarded a contract with the San Diego Housing Commission to begin this program, starting with a soft roll out in February. She said that based on their findings and assessments, adjustments will be made to further its effectiveness and success. And, to provide a transparent approach, they will collect and share data on the program and its services.

And though ePATH does provide housing as a part of their program, Scrapper also mentioned a strong relationship with Veteran's Villages of

San Diego, and Father Joe's Villages, again emphasizing the benefits of shared resources and services.

It was reassuring to hear Scrapper's enthusiasm for what's to come, and for her to state that this is a "shift from survival to a new world" for the homeless.

We shared our own personal experiences of helping homeless people, the challenges and reasons. And we agreed that it requires special skills, compassion, and fortitude to be an outreach specialist, who will not only work with the homeless, but within the communities (businesses and residential) where they have set up residence.

I applaud this new approach to helping the homeless, because it isn't a quick fix. Based on what I heard and learned from Dijana Beck, chief agency operations for the County of San Diego; Jonathan Herrera, interim housing programs manager and policy advisor at the San Diego Housing Commission; and Hanan Scrapper, regional director for ePATH, this is a work in progress, especially when you attempt to address and correct San Diego's homeless situation today and in to the future.

## 28th Annual Fostering Hope Golf Classic Benefits Voices for Children

Show your support for thousands of children in San Diego County foster care by participating in Voices for Children's 2021 Fostering Hope Golf Classic on Monday, May 17, chaired by Rolf Benirschke, Dave Bialis, Bill Sailer, Katie Sullivan, and Dale Yahnke. Hosted at the beautiful La Jolla Country Club, golfers will tee off for an 18-hole tournament featuring creative opportunities to learn about and support the children we serve, followed by an awards ceremony.

With tee times in short supply at courses across San Diego, this is a chance to enjoy one of the city's most beautiful courses, all while supporting children in foster care in San Diego County.



*Rolf Benirschke is at the podium speaking about Voices for Children during the 2019 Fostering Hope Golf Classic dinner.*



*The La Jolla Country Club provides a perfect setting for friends to enjoy golf and contribute to an important cause.*

Provide additional support to youth in San Diego County foster care by becoming a sponsor of this year's Fostering Hope Golf Classic. Your investment into the event will ensure that children in need will be paired with caring Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers. In addition to supporting at-risk children in San Diego County, your sponsorship offers high-level visibility to prominent members of San Diego's business and philanthropic communities, recognition during the event, golf tournament registration, and more.

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## San Diego Zoo Safari Park Gorillas Recovering After SARS-CoV-2 Diagnosis

The gorilla troop at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park is recovering following the diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in several troop members earlier this month. San Diego Zoo Global is relieved to announce that the eight-member troop is eating, drinking, interacting and on their way to a full recovery, thanks to the incredible work of wildlife care professionals, the veterinary team, and collaborations with a wide array of colleagues and partners who ensured that the highest standard of care was given to the affected gorillas.

The conservation organization joined forces with many local, state and national leaders in the medical, scientific, zoological and public health communities. In addition to providing the best care possible for the gorilla troop, this ongoing teamwork could contribute to a deeper understanding of the impacts of this virus on animals and people worldwide.

These colleagues include professionals from San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency, UC San Diego Health, Rady Children's Hospital-San Diego, the Scripps Research Institute, California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory System, California Department of Food and Agriculture, California Department of Public Health, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Department of Agriculture National Veterinary Services Laboratories, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Food and Drug Administration Center for Veterinary Medicine, The Great Ape Heart Project based at Zoo Atlanta and Chicago Zoological Society Radiology Consulting Service.

Despite team members going above and beyond all recommended biosecurity precautions, several members of the Safari Park gorilla troop tested positive for the virus on January 11. The troop was infected with the B.1.429 lineage of the coronavirus, which has been increasingly identified in California and may be more contagious than other strains. The troop has remained under close observation since the diagnosis, when some gorillas showed symptoms including mild coughing, congestion, nasal discharge and intermittent lethargy.

Due to advanced age, symptoms including cough and lethargy, and a concern for underlying medical conditions, the silverback, Winston, underwent a diagnostic examination under anesthesia. Veterinarians confirmed pneumonia and heart disease. Following consultation with




Winston and Imani are recovering with the help of a vaccine.  
Photo courtesy of the San Diego Zoo.

specialists, treatment was initiated, including heart medications, antibiotics and monoclonal antibody therapy. The monoclonal antibody therapy originated from a supply that was not permitted for human use. Treatment with these synthetic versions of the body's natural defenses is thought to be effective in diminishing effects from the virus. The veterinary team who treated Winston believe the antibodies may have contributed to his ability to overcome the virus.

The network of collaborators has also provided San Diego Zoo Global veterinarians with a limited supply of a recombinant purified spike protein vaccine, intended for use in protecting animals against SARS-CoV-2. The vaccine doses originated from a supply strictly intended for nonhuman use. San Diego Zoo Global teams have already begun identifying animal candidates for vaccination at the San Diego Zoo and San Diego Zoo Safari Park.

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**Carson**

Meet Carson, a three-year old, hound mix. Carson is a shy guy who has made enormous progress in our care and in his current foster home. Carson's comfort and success lies in having a well-matched doggie companion in his new home. Carson prefers a dog that is extremely respectful, and rough and tumble play is not his desire. With patience, love and time, Carson is coming out of his shell and realizing that the world isn't as scary as he once thought. Are you interested in providing a supportive home for this deserving dog?

Carson is currently in foster care through the Oceanside Campus of the San Diego Humane Society. **To schedule an appointment, visit [sdhumane.org](http://sdhumane.org). The shelters are open Tuesday through Sunday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. by appointment only.**

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**Boots is a seven-year old, domestic short hair, an extra-large fella with a sweet personality.** He can be pretty shy and nervous at first, but he warms up with patience and time. His ideal home is a quiet one, with humans that just want to lounge around with him all day. He doesn't like change very much, so a stable environment would be best for him. He can be fairly independent, but he loves getting attention from humans that he has a close bond with. Boots is a clean guy that enjoys being brushed frequently to help with some dermatitis issues.

Boots is currently in foster care through the San Diego Campus of the San Diego Humane Society. **To schedule an appointment, visit [sdhumane.org](http://sdhumane.org). The shelters are open Tuesday through Sunday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. by appointment only.**



**Boots**

## SPCA

## Love Yourself

By Blake Beckcom



Blake & Gwen Beckcom

If you're familiar with the phrase "you can't pour from an empty cup" then you understand the reasoning behind caring for yourself first. You have to be whole to be helpful. These days, people are busier than ever, and when you have a spouse, relatives, coworkers, friends and children in the mix, your responsibilities to others can make you feel pulled in many directions. And while it may seem like giving everything you have to everyone around you is the answer

to keeping those in your life happy, it's actually the opposite that can truly make sense. Invest in yourself first.

You have to love yourself to be able to give maximum love to others. It's a simple concept. The better I feel about me; the better I feel about life. The more I love me, the more love I can give. I love more, when I love me more. Let's face it; no one is harder on you, than you.

This is a universal truth. We are always trying to measure up: to work pressure, to internet and magazine images, or, what we think others think about us, and to what we think about ourselves. Our looks, hair, height, weight, age, name it; we beat ourselves down about it. All of our cups are in fact half full, but we usually look at them as half empty. Come on, you know it's true. What we think about ourselves impacts how we connect and how we love.

This month at Fitness Together, we're focused on finding the "Strength to Succeed" in life, at work, at love, and that means giving yourself all the tools you need to feel good, including proper self-care. We're of the mindset that a well cared for human being who is healthy and feels good in their own skin is in the right position to serve others. This means, when they are the very best version of themselves you can be more giving.

How do you do it? Focus on treating yourself kindly and being as healthy as you can through the following three ways.

Make time for fitness, and invest in your workouts.

Working out is not selfish. It's quite the opposite. When you improve your health, mobility, energy and overall fitness through regular workouts, you are better able to show up for the people in your life. You just plain feel stronger and more confident. A fit and functioning person who can tackle what life presents is much preferable to a tired and sedentary person who isn't ever up for a challenge. If you want to be able to play with your grandchildren, take a bike ride with your friend, or join a recreational softball league with your coworkers, you need to make sure your body is able and strong by participating in a regular exercise routine. Everyone around you benefits

when you are your strongest and fittest you can be.

Choose healthy food, and invest in high-quality nutrition.

Grabbing fast food in the car on the way to work is not doing you or anyone around you any favors. When you don't eat properly, your energy level and mood are bound to suffer — and that's likely going to also be apparent to those around you. Instead, fueling up on whole foods, healthy fats, fruits, veggies, complex carbs and lean proteins can make you feel great. It's a worthy investment to grocery shop for the right foods, prepare them at home and eat when you're hungry. When you've given your body the right amount of calories from the best kind of food you can get your hands on, you'll be glowing, energized and well positioned to be there for others in your life. And you may even inspire others to also eat healthier food.

Prioritize your wellbeing, and invest in your self-care regimen.

While we understand that it's not always possible to get a massage, meditate, take a bubble bath, and make perfect healthy choices every single day, we do know that every little bit helps. That's why you should make it a point to schedule time regularly to do something that recharges you. In fact, if you give yourself at least five minutes a day to either enjoy peace and quiet via a morning meditation or devotional, to hitting the gym, cooking a delicious meal, seeing an acupuncturist, going on a nature walk, or applying your favorite facial mask, you are telling yourself that you are worth it — and that means a lot. People who spend time caring properly for themselves are said to be happier, more confident, more energetic and overall stronger people. They also tend to share that positivity with those around them — ultimately benefiting everyone.

One of the common themes in fitness is the "feel good" outcome. Momentum builds as we get fitter. Our nutrition choices also experience an improvement. All of which combine to give us the "feel good" result. When you feel good, and are strong and svelte, all of those little things you beat yourself up over tend to diminish. And, it is a continuum, in that the more you live the fitness lifestyle, the better you eat, the less you drink, the better you sleep, the less you fret, the more you love, and ultimately, the happier you are. Your life attitude gets a big upswing. Everything in life looks, feels, and is better when you are toned, fit and healthy.

Remember, you are the only person who has to live with you and your choices every single minute of every single day. Never underestimate the power of caring for yourself in the right way. And if you do, you will definitely have the strength to succeed!

Fitness Together Mission Hills offers personal training with qualified professionals by regular appointment in private suites. Exercise and nutritional programs are custom designed to fit your needs and abilities. Call (619) 794-0014 for more information or to schedule a free fitness diagnostic and private training session. See what others are saying about us on Yelp.

## Investing is Not A Game

By Rick Brooks



By now, you've almost certainly heard something about the rise (and most likely by the time you read this, fall) of the stock in the company GameStop.

GameStop is a "brick and mortar" retailer that sells video games, both for console systems like Microsoft's Xbox and Sony PlayStation, as well as board games, puzzles, etc. They also sell collectible items like action figures and other game and movie memorabilia. They have an internet presence, but most of their sales are from people walking into a store and buying something. The company has been hurt badly by COVID, which has damaged in-person retail sales broadly, but they were in trouble long before that.

GameStop's main problem is that everything they sell is available somewhere else at the same or lower cost. Video games are mostly downloaded from the internet today. Most of the console equipment they sell is available from larger retailers like Best Buy, Walmart and, of course, Amazon. As a result, the company's sales have been in decline for years. Experienced and professional investors have noted this trend and reacted accordingly, by selling the stock from their portfolios, resulting in a stock price that has been in steady decline for some time.

As a result of the steady decline in the company's prospects (and stock price), a lot of professional investors and hedge funds were betting against it. In a nutshell, these investors were carrying what are called short positions, where you borrow a stock from someone, sell it, and hope to buy it back later at a lower price. You then give the stock back to the person you borrowed it from. The profit is made in the difference between when you first sold the stock and the price you pay to buy it back.

What's happened recently is that a lot of individual "retail" investors, folks who may not have much investment knowledge or experience, seem to have decided to try to punish hedge funds that were betting against GameStop's stock. When these individual investors got together to start

buying the GameStop stock, it pushed the price up instead of down, forcing the hedge funds to close out their short sales. In closing their short positions, the hedge funds are forced to buy the stock, driving the price higher still. This is called a "short squeeze" and is a fairly common occurrence, though rarely to this degree.

GameStop is a relatively small company, and its stock represents barely a rounding error on the value of the entire stock market: \$10 billion out of about \$50 trillion. There is not systemic danger to the whole market here. Period.

The problem is that a lot of people who bought the stock thinking they were supporting a company they loved or "sticking it to the man" are going to lose a lot of money. As I said, there's a reason the company's stock has been falling: it's a failing business. Like Blockbuster (the video rental business), GameStop's business model has come and gone.

GameStop's stock —price closed on January 27 at \$347.51. A year ago, GameStop stock was trading around \$5 per share. Without radical changes to the business, it is likely the price will return to that level in due time. The hedge funds that were forced out of their short positions will reinstate them at the higher price, and most of these individual investors will probably lose their shirts.

Fads like GameStop are interesting, but a lot of people will be hurt as the stock price comes back down to earth. Investing isn't a game, even if apps like Robin Hood are trying to make it appear like one to entice more customers to their service. Investing is a great way to build wealth over time, and to keep your purchasing power ahead of inflation. Speculation is a very risky way to make (OR LOSE!) money very quickly. They are not the same thing at all.

This column is prepared by Rick Brooks, CFA®, CFP®. Brooks is director/investment management and an owner of Blankinship & Foster, LLC, a wealth advisory firm specializing in comprehensive financial planning and investment management. Brooks can be reached at (858) 755-5166, or by email at [brooks@bfadvisors.com](mailto:brooks@bfadvisors.com). Brooks and his family live in Mission Hills.

# Missing the Seasons and Especially Peonies

By Barbara Strona



Although I have lived in California almost 70 of my 80 years, I am a native Californian and have been a San Diego homeowner since March of 1968. Nevertheless, from 1942 until

1953 I lived in the Midwest: Ohio and Michigan where it may snow as early as late October; I do remember snowstorms in May. Of course, a child is not forced to drive in the snow. Walking in it is fun. In fact, each season has great attractions.

In summer the heat and humidity bring rainstorms, which are fun to play in. On sunny days, climbing trees, building forts, trying to fry eggs on the sidewalk, or sailing on small lakes are great summer activities. Even cutting the grass (pre-motorized lawn mowers) was fun and smelled divine, as did the various species of flowers, which bloomed profusely from spring until late autumn. We could even grow some vegetables during our relatively short growing season,

Fall meant eating apples straight from the trees; the sugar maples' leaves turned red; the oaks' leaves turned yellow, and there was an entire palette of color on which to feast your eyes until the frost stripped the trees and left pencil drawings of branches set against the sky. At this point, the last of the fall flowers froze and died, creating skeletons in the garden until the winter snows cloaked them in white.

Winters involved the neighborhood kids. We frooze the street and driveways before the water in the hoses' froze. (This did NOT please our parents who drove home only to skid off the street or driveway



**Peony plants offer an incredible bloom of flowers that are enormous and full of color and texture.**

onto someone else's property!) We skated in the street or skated on the nearby lake, which was on our way home. The fire department's station was on the lake. The firemen plowed an arena so we could skate and play games like Rover, Red Rover, Red Rover, Come Over and Crack the Whip. Not only did the Fire Department clear a good skating rink for us, we could also call them to find out how thick and how smooth the lake's ice was.

They let us leave our books, boots and shoes at the station after we had put on our skates before going out to skate, knowing our stuff would be safe until we returned. Each year the firemen also provided a wooden walkway from the station to the dock to protect our skates from the concrete. We could skate across the lake and back and maybe have time for a quick game of Crack the Whip before we had to head home.

The scariest part of lake skating was avoiding holes made by ice fishermen. Once in a while we could hitch a ride on an iceboat.

Spring brought green buds, and charming flowers. Tulips and daffodils naturalized as did iris and a host of other perennials. Pussy willows dropped their fuzzy bumps and sprouted leaves. Apple trees turned into magic castles of white flowers, great for pretending to be a princess in a tall tower amid all the blossoms and marvelous scent, Forsythia and lilac gave bursts of bright yellow and purple and added to the general perfume of the air. But the flower I loved best came in late spring: the peony.

The peony may be found on a tree, but the ones I remember grew on a bush with long stems ending in an enormous fluffy bloom: white, pink, deep pink, red, and even yellow (although I have never seen

a yellow peony). Some have just a layer or two of blossoms around a yellow center. The favorites look like the skirt of a doll with myriad lacy petticoats holding her skirt away from her body. These peonies are many layered and large. Their stems must be sturdy to bear their weight. If we picked them for our mothers, we were sent to take them outside and remove all the ants, which love the nectar that collects on the buds. We were told that without ants' presence, buds wouldn't open. (This is not true.)

Costco sells peony bulbs every winter. For many years I firmly believed they were designed for San Diego; why sell them here if they wouldn't bloom? I tried planting them several years, but mostly nothing happened. One year, I refrigerated the bulbs for a few months. If it works for tulips, why wouldn't it work for peonies? The answer is it doesn't. I even tried dumping ice on the planting spot every morning, but the plants were not fooled. Twice I grew a bush with some leaves, and one of those years two tiny buds appeared. One actually opened half-heartedly; the other remained tightly closed.

This year I heard that a species called Itoh blooms in San Diego. Toni Palafox of Mission Hills Nursery told me it was probably a waste of money. A woman at Walter Anderson's said if I had a huge disposable income, I could order blooming plants. Any peony needs a few years to really get established and produce the flowers I long for. The ones I'd pay a fortune for would only last one blooming season, and probably never to bloom again, therefore, not a wise purchase.

Trader Joe's carried peony stems early this year. COVID-19 depression convinced me I deserve peonies. Thus, I purchased three bunches (expensive for five stems) but of each bunch only two buds opened. I didn't get them ants, but following another theory, I did let them rest in warm water twice. I peeled a couple of stubborn buds, but they remained tight and uncooperative.

So, I am reduced to continuing to erase my prejudices against succulents and to revel in the strange colors and shapes they produce. It's not the same, but it's what there is. I need to focus on the beauty of nature's diversity and on plants that thrive in our environment. After all, nature knows better than I. I'll have to abandon my prejudices and live with reality.

The February 25 meeting of the Mission Hills Garden Club presents Adams Graves, who has spent the last five years as the director of the San Diego Zoo Horticultural Department.

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## In love in Mission Hills

By Dixie Hall, President Mission Hills BID and Dixie Pops Owner



By the time you read this, it is likely you have already returned to your favorite restaurant to sit down and legally eat outside, or had your hair or nails done in a real salon or been able to attend outdoor church services again. After seven weeks of closures, restaurants, museums, theaters and other businesses can resume outdoor operations under state guidance. Hair salons, barbershops, nail salons and tattoo parlors can open indoors. Hotels and other lodging can open to tourists visiting San Diego. Whew!

Like many of you, I live, work, and relax in our unique Mission Hills neighborhood. Did you know there are nearly 500 businesses located throughout Mission Hills Business Improvement District?

Residents of Mission Hills can find almost everything they need without leaving the neighborhood. This has been especially convenient during the COVID pandemic when everyone has been focused on staying close to home. In addition, Mission Hills is fortunate to have storefronts that offer great options for special occasion shopping when you want something different than what you can find at the mall.



*Billie Basil got assistance with her floral design from her mom, proprietor of Backbone Floral and Vintage's.*

Speaking of special occasion shopping, a February column always includes Valentine's Day and a reminder to tell the ones you love how much they mean to you with a little something from the neighborhood.

Flowers, chocolates or maybe a gift certificate from one of our many businesses are perfect ways to complete the Valentine celebration and at the same time support Mission Hills' small businesses. You can also never go wrong with a celebratory lunch or dinner. Nearly all of our

Mission Hills restaurants will be offering Valentine's Day meal specials. Keep in mind that with the recent re-opening for outdoor dining, advance outdoor reservations ought to be made as soon as possible and place your take-out dinner order well in advance too. And remember to also show love to your animals with a Valentine's treat.

So, while Valentine's Day is a favorite February holiday, don't forget the other days of celebration – which, while they might not involve a gift, can be celebrated with a meal out. For example, thanks to the combined birthdays of Washington and Lincoln, we have President's Day on February 12.

Have you ever wondered about lesser known holidays, such as National Freedom Day on February 1? This day honors the signing of a resolution that later became the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Abraham Lincoln signed the document that outlawed slavery on February 1, 1865. Although this resolution was ratified by the states later, it was the very first step to make all people, regardless of their origin and color of skin, free.

How about National Bubble Gum Day on February 5, started in 2006 by children's book author Ruth Spiro? Bubble Gum Day has become a sweet success for kids of all ages and has also been used as a fundraising tool.

One of my all-time favorite holidays is National Eat Ice Cream for Breakfast Day on February 6. This holiday was started by Florence Rappaport in Rochester, New York on a cold winter morning in the 1960s as a way to entertain her six children. It is now celebrated internationally and I think Mission Hills is a perfect location to do so, rain or shine!

I would like to report on the BID board's January Strategic Planning Workshop. This workshop is an annual retreat where the board of directors huddle and discuss plans for the coming year. Outcomes are then action items at our board of directors' meeting.

The BID is focused on rapid response and long-term solutions to help address the needs of concerned business owners with the growing presence of homeless individuals and escalating illegal behavior of these individuals which impedes the flow of customers into business establishments. The BID is planning a multi-community forum on homelessness impacting businesses. Plans are underway following discussions with the County, City and non-profit service providers. Look for announcements on social media.

The BID is also planning bi-monthly series of speakers on topics of interest to small business owners. The series will be lively and informative sessions and worth business owner's valuable time to attend. They will also be a great way to meet and network with the other small business owners in Mission Hills.

And, the BID is actively looking for wall space for murals. The projects will range from temporary to permanent installations, and from local to nationally recognized artists. If you have a wall in mind, please let the BID know at [MissionHillsBID@gmail.com](mailto:MissionHillsBID@gmail.com).

To the BID board of directors, Daniel Geddis, Team D&B at One Mission Realty; Sarah Church Mattia, Pizza e Birra; Rocky Rockhill, Coldwell Banker West; Audrey Patterson, Patterson Engineering, Inc.; and Jesse Zmuda, Backbone Floral and Vintage, my personal thank you for your continuing commitment of time and talent. I promise you, 2021 is going to be a much better year than 2020.

If you love the Mission Hills business neighborhood and have ideas and time to help promote it, the Mission Hills BID needs you. Don't be shy – you might also meet some new friends – I know I have.

**For the most up-to-date information and news on what's happening in Mission Hills, visit our website at [MissionHillsBID.com](http://MissionHillsBID.com).**

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# Enjoying Valentine’s Day in Little Italy



*Little Italy provides a lot of great options for Valentine’s Day.*

Italian culture is known for romanticism and San Diego’s Little Italy knows how to keep that romance alive. Spend the afternoon strolling the lively downtown neighborhood, exploring local shops and eateries and drinking in the sunshine with the ones you love.

**Romantic Stroll** – Spend a few hours taking in the vibrant sights of this bustling downtown neighborhood. Find yourself enveloped in the bay breeze and sunshine as you walk through the Piazza della Famiglia – the “heart” of Little Italy. Stop and take a moment to enjoy a local coffee from Café Italia or James Coffee Company. Don’t forget to document the moment by taking a picture in front of the iconic Little Italy Sign or the Big Red Chair.

**Prep for a Romantic Meal** – Reservations for two at home? Little Italy has all the accoutrements you need to create a special meal. Swing by Carruth Wine Cellars or Pali Wine Company to search for the perfect bottle of wine to accompany a decadent dinner. Stop into The Market by Buon Appetito where you’ll find a variety of meats and cheeses for your Valentine’s Day charcuterie board. For true, rustic Italian style bread and pastries, you won’t want to pass up Solunto Ristorante Bakery.

**Dinner Date** – Prefer to leave the cooking to the pros this year? Enjoy a romantic meal for two outdoors with the twinkling lights. Feast on everything from house made pastas at Barbusa and hand-tossed pizzas at Filippi’s Pizza Grotto to MICHELIN Guide recognized bento boxes at

Cloak & Petal, and fresh oysters at Ironside Fish & Oyster Bar. Little Italy has everything your culinary heart desires and then some.

**Shop Your Heart Out** – Make sure you take the time to spoil yourself or a loved one with a unique and thoughtful gift from the neighborhood’s one-of-a-kind shops. Show your love through pampering with luxurious soaps, fragrances, candles, and other apothecary and household items from Love & Aesthetics. Of course, every holiday deserves a new outfit or accessory. Find just the thing that makes your heart sing with a new outfit from Be Boutique. Accessorize your look with earrings, necklaces, and other accessories from Vocabulary. If you want to make this Valentine’s Day truly memorable, check out Ireliia Fine Jewelry for a little something that sparkles.

**The Sweetest Treat** – Who says you must wait until after dinner for dessert? Grab a scoop (or two) of ice cream from Salt & Straw or enjoy a scoop of gelato topped with espresso from Pappalecco. For something on the lighter side, check out Holy Paleta or Pop Pops Paletas for a variety of frozen pops made with all-natural ingredients or pick out an assortment of petit desserts from Extraordinary Desserts.

**Prosecco Toast** – End the night with a romantic stay at one of Little Italy’s romantic hotels: Porto Vista Hotel, Carte Hotel or La Pensione Hotel. Nothing like enjoying a nice glass of prosecco, while taking in the city views, to end your evening.

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## Cygnnet Theatre Presents *The Finish Line Commission*

Playwright Aurin Squire will workshop his play “Run/Fire,” which will be directed by Lamar Perry. The reading will be streamed online from Monday, February 8 through Sunday, February 14, 2021. A third commission will take place in the spring of 2021 and will be announced in the near future.

When a college student is implicated in a crime spree, his attempt to seek justice sets off a chain reaction that ripples across the entire town. What is real and what is not gets called into question in this timely play that forces us to ask, “Who are we to ourselves and to each other?”

Aurin Squire is an award-winning playwright, reporter, and multimedia artist. He is a two-time recipient of the Lecomte du Nouy Prize from Lincoln Center and has received residencies at the Royal Court Theatre in London, Ars Nova, Lincoln Center Lab, National Black Theatre, the Dramatists Guild of America, and Brooklyn Arts Exchange.

In the 2018-2019 season, Squire had six productions in Chicago, North Carolina, Seattle, Dallas, and Miami, including world premieres of “Fire Season” and “Confessions of a Cocaine Cowboy” (which he co-authored with documentary filmmaker Billy Corben). He won the 2017 Helen Merrill Prize for Emerging Playwrights and the Emerald Prize from Seattle Public Theatre for his new drama.

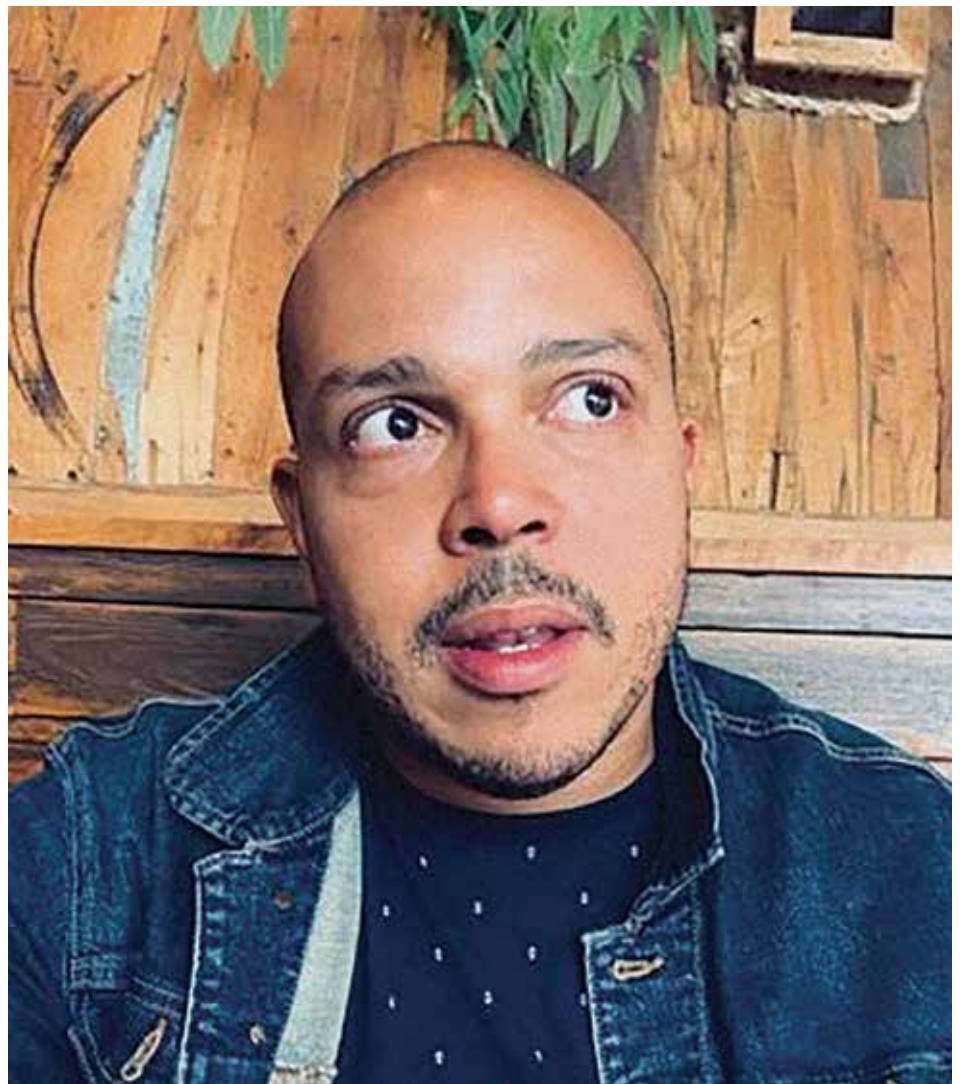
As an independent reporter he has written for The Miami Herald, Chicago Tribune, The New Republic, ESPN, Talking Points Memo, FUSION, and many other publications around the country. As a multimedia artist, Squire wrote “Dreams of Freedom,” the multimedia installation video about Jewish immigrants in the 20th century for the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia. “Dreams of Freedom” won three national museum awards and is in the permanent exhibit at NMAJH.

In TV, Squire has been a writer for the CBS political satire “BrainDead,” and the NBC family drama “This is Us.” He is a producer/writer for the CBS show “The Good Fight” as well as the supernatural drama “Evil.”

In his spare time, he’s a theatre podcast co-host of Maxamoo, writes reviews of new plays, meditates, studies religion. He is a graduate of The Juilliard School, New School University, and Northwestern University.

Led by Associate Artistic Director Rob Lutfy, The Finish Line Commission supports the theatre’s commitment to new theatrical works, written by groundbreaking local playwrights as well as nationally recognized playwrights. Rare for a national new play program, all of the plays selected each year have never before been produced.

Director Rob Lutfy states, “Bill and Judy Garrett understand that the biggest thing that we can do as a theatre community is to continue to find ways to support the theatre makers. While we cannot gather in person, we must still find ways to adequately compensate artists for their work and continue to find ways to amplify BIPOC (Black, Indigenous,



*Aurin Squire is an award-winning playwright, reporter, and multimedia artist.*

and People of Color) voices. We have stayed true to the mission of the program: to provide the time, flexibility, energy and resources to enable playwrights to push their play to the final draft.”

Plays awarded The Finish Line Commission are given a week-long workshop culminating in a public reading, a financial reward, and an assurance that the play will have a shot at a world premier production at Cygnnet.

The Finish Line Commission is made possible thanks to the contribution of long-time donors Bill and Judy Garrett. “Playwrights are masters of helping us see the world through new and different eyes. 2020 has been an extraordinary year for all of us — with a pandemic, thousands of deaths, school and social upheavals, fear and occasional acts of overwhelming generosity — and it will be refreshing to view it all through the perceptive eyes of some of our most observant playwrights,” explained Judy Garrett.

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**Happy Valentine's Day**  
From  
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# Houdini the Husky Performs His Best Trick

By Yvette Urrea Moe

Houdini the Husky has performed his best trick yet with the help of a professional magician. The dog who needed a home after being adopted and returned seven times has vanished from the San Diego County Animal Shelter and is now in the loving and capable hands of his new best friend, a Las Vegas headlining magician.

Animal Services staff sorted through more than a hundred interested applicants for Houdini, a three-year-old Husky who earned his name for being an escape artist at some of his previous adopter homes, before making a magical decision.

"I am happy that we have found an adopter for Houdini. We talked at length about the seven adoption returns and what Houdini would need to prevent any further such things from happening. He was incredibly understanding, and I feel that he is willing to put in the work required and has researched what will be needed," said Donald Davis, supervising animal care attendant for the shelter.

New owner, Steve Wyrick, is thrilled to find a new best friend. He said he had been looking at animal shelters to find a dog but had not yet settled on one. Then he came upon an article online about Houdini, and it just clicked with him.

"We sometimes forget that our imperfections are the very things that make us special," said Wyrick. "In Houdini's case, the seven different families that returned him to the shelter had various reasons why he wasn't a perfect fit. Animal Services of San Diego shared with me a list of those reasons. What I discovered were the traits that made him challenging to some, in fact, made him so special to me."

"Apparently, he likes to escape from things, and I've been escaping from handcuffs and hanging boxes for years. Maybe he can teach me a few new tricks!" he said.

While Wyrick is certainly a showman by nature and is up for having some fun with the fact that a magician was selected to adopt Houdini, he knows it will take patience and love. He doesn't have any plans to put Houdini in his show. He is looking simply for a personal companion. Since there are no shows going on in Las Vegas during the pandemic, he plans to drive Houdini to his lakeside home in the Midwest. He has already hired a dog trainer to help him work out some of Houdini's behavioral issues and has plans to run along the lake with him to keep him active. He feels in his heart



Steve Wyrick and his newly adopted dog, Houdini, share a skill of escaping.

that he will be Houdini's eighth and forever home.

"The number eight is associated with infinity and infinite love. Now he's going to have a magical life," Wyrick said.

"I hope this inspires everyone to visit their local shelter and consider adopting a best friend. There are some amazing animals that need to be rescued and given a second chance, and a third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and an eighth chance," Wyrick said with a smile.

While Houdini has gained a new home, there are dogs, cats and other pets available for adoption. Call Animal Services to set an appointment at (619) 767-2675.

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## The San Diego International Film Festival Presents 2021 Re-Imagined Line Up



*The San Diego International Film Festival has just announced its robust programming for 2021 - leading up to the 20th Anniversary Film Festival in October.*

As The San Diego International Film Festival [www.sdfilmfest.com](http://www.sdfilmfest.com) prepares for the 20th Anniversary of the Festival this October 2021, Tonya Mantooth, CEO/artistic director announced the launch of MySDFilmFest, the SD Intl Film Festival Channel, ShortsFest and Town Hall Series.

According to Mantooth, "The work we did last October to present the Re-Imagined San Diego Intl Film Festival in our Virtual Village has truly transformed our organization from a primarily San Diego/Southern California based event to an international year round content provider focused on the power of cinematic storytelling. So as we're planning our 20th Anniversary Festival this coming October, we've built out our line-up with year-round memberships and programming."

The San Diego International Film Festival Channel will showcase films each month including live chats with the filmmakers. The channel will be an exclusive benefit for subscribers to the MySDFilmFest Membership – a global community of film lovers supporting international independent film. The Festival's Virtual Town Hall Series kicks off in April. This series features social impact films - pairing the filmmakers with community leaders in moderated Q & A panels. The festival is also launching the San Diego International ShortsFest May 21-23 – featuring short films, networking with filmmakers from around the world, panels and presentations representing the very best in short film storytelling. All

of the virtual programming culminates with the expanded 11-day 20th Anniversary San Diego International Film Festival October 14-24, 2021.

"The big question is whether or not there will be in-person events by the October 20th Anniversary Festival. As for the return of the physical events, we're all hopeful. We'll more than likely be hosting Drive-In Movies again and perhaps there will be other live events. Either way, we'll have a full year of presenting films, doing live chats with international filmmakers and building a community of film lovers from around the world," said Mantooth.

### **The New San Diego International Film Festival Channel (year round)**

This channel provides access to international features, documentaries and shorts curated by Tonya Mantooth, San Diego International Film Festival CEO/Artistic Director. In keeping with the Festival's mission, selected films will provide perspectives designed to start conversations on topics that illuminate our shared humanity. A feature film or documentary will be presented along with a short each month, followed by a Q&A or Panel with the Filmmakers and/or other influentials. Access to the SD Intl Film Festival Channel is an exclusive benefit to MySDFilmFest Members.

**Dates: Once a month on third Thursdays (starting in February)**

**Time: Screening Available for 24 Hours**

**Place: Virtually - in The Festival's Virtual Village**

### **The Town Hall Series (debuts in April, 2021)**

The Festival's Town Hall Series provides three screenings throughout the year focusing on social impact films affecting our lives. The filmmakers are paired with community leaders in moderated Q & A panels. This virtual structure provides an opportunity for us to examine impactful topics as a community with the leaders who have the ability to listen to community voices and institute change. MySDFilmFest Members have complimentary access to the Town Hall Series.

### **The San Diego International ShortsFest (Debut May 21-23, 2021)**

Join us online in the Festival Virtual Village for three days of international short films, networking, panels and presentations representing the very best in cinematic storytelling. We're big fans of the short films. It's amazing how much storytelling and creativity can be packed into a film averaging about 20 minutes in length. Early Bird Deadline for filmmakers: <https://filmfreeway.com/SanDiegoInternationalShortsFest>.

### **MySDFilmFest Membership**

Subscribers receive exclusive access to the San Diego International Film Festival Channel, the Townhall series, surprise screenings throughout the year, discounts to the San Diego International ShortsFest in May, the San Diego International Film Festival in October and more.

MySDFilmFest Subscription: Enjoy films and discounts all year. <https://sdfilmfest.com/passes-tickets-2021/>

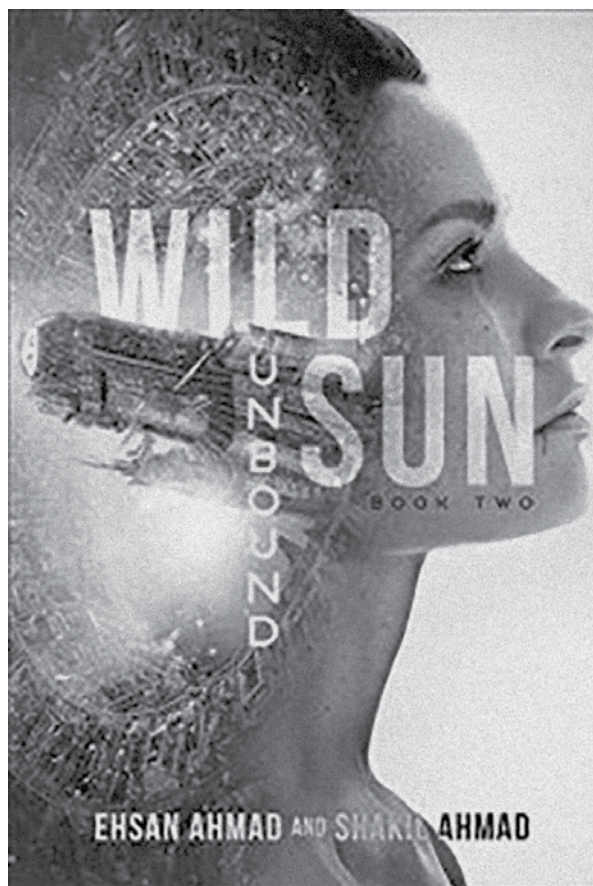
## Mysterious Galaxy Presents a Virtual Release Party for "Wild Sun: Unbound"

At 5 p.m., Tuesday February 16, Mysterious Galaxy is holding a virtual release party for "Wild Sun: Unbound," a captivating, high-stakes interplanetary epic from brothers Ehsan and Shakil Ahmad, in which a strong, resourceful woman discovers both enemies and allies as she leads a band of fellow escaped enslaved people through a forest and beyond the stars on a deadly race to freedom.

Brothers Ehsan and Shakil Ahmad grew up in New York City as the first-generation American children of immigrants from Pakistan. Ehsan spent his early twenties traveling across four continents to meet the people of countless cultures, while Shakil earned degrees in psychology and social research. In their late twenties, the brothers reunited in Pennsylvania to start a wedding film company. Ehsan also spent those years writing lyrics and playing bass for an alt-rock band, recording three studio albums. In their thirties, they sold the film company and returned to the city of their birth to work for separate tech startups and collaborate together continuously on screenplays and novels.

### **Synopsis for UNBOUND:**

In this classic yet contemporary interplanetary epic, which hearkens back to the golden age



*"Wild Sun: Unbound" is the inspiration of brothers Ehsan and Shakil Ahmad.*

of vintage sci-fi/fantasy adventures, the flames of hope for our heroes cannot easily be extinguished. After three years of forced labor in the mines, Cerrin is free at last. Now she leads a band of escaped enslaved people on a deadly race for freedom across an endless, ancient forest. At her heels are soldiers of the most powerful, most advanced, most ruthless empire the galaxy has ever known. Leading the pursuit is Count Talazeer himself, a vicious nobleman driven by a personal vendetta against Cerrin and a desperate need for redemption in the eyes of his family and his people.

Every day of survival is a victory. Fighting back against their enemy remains an impossible dream. And yet, even as death claims them one by one, the formerly enslaved cling fast to faith in their gods and, above all, in Cerrin. And she's about to discover strange new allies and enemies are waiting for her people amid the trees and beyond the stars.

They'll be in conversation with fellow fantasy author Jamie Thomas.

**The event is free and open to the public. To register, visit [www.mystgalaxy.com](http://www.mystgalaxy.com).**

## Miracle Babies Extends Free Diaper Drive-Through Program



Diapers will be distributed by Miracle Babies in February and March.

Miracle Babies, a non-profit organization, based in San Diego, whose mission is to unite families with their critically ill newborns in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) by providing transportation and supportive services, will be hosting its first diaper drive-through distributions of 2021 in February and March. Free diapers will be available on a first come first registration basis to all San Diego families in need during this difficult time. Diapers will be loaded directly into the families' vehicle for a safe, no-contact experience.

Miracle Babies has hosted 19 distributions, served over 5,800 families, and distributed over 486,000 diapers since May 2020. The diaper drive-throughs will provide registered parents with diapers and Miracle Babies will be holding its next two diaper distributions in the South Bay.

The next distributions will be on Saturday, February 13th, and Saturday, March 13th. Both distributions will take place at the National City Public Library. The February distribution will feature a special appearance by the San Diego Science Fi Coalition.

Registration for each individual distribution closes the day prior to each individual distribution at noon, or until supplies last. The February and March diaper distributions are sponsored by Frank Toyota.

Diaper donations are welcome and accepted at all distributions.

### Upcoming Distributions at National City Library 1401 National City Boulevard

**Saturday, February 13 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.**

**Saturday, March 13 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.**

To register for an upcoming diaper distribution or  
Donate visit: [www.miraclebabies.org](http://www.miraclebabies.org).

## Mother of Three Needs Donors with Rare Blood Type

Stacie Buechel, a San Diego mother of three was recently diagnosed with bone cancer and needs blood transfusions as part of her treatment. Unfortunately, her situation is complicated because she has a rare blood type. Stacie needs blood from donors who have A+ (A positive), O- (O negative) or O+ (O positive) blood that also lacks a protein called Kpb. Less than one percent of the population have this type of blood.

Anyone who would like to donate blood in Stacie's name can visit any San Diego Blood Bank donation location or mobile drive and note the donation code ESSB when registering.

San Diego Blood Bank is currently antibody testing each blood donation as part of their regular testing panel to qualify donations for COVID-19 convalescent plasma. Visit [sandiegobloodbank.org/COVID19](http://sandiegobloodbank.org/COVID19) for more information.

**To be eligible to donate blood you must be at least 17 years old, weigh at least 114 pounds and be in general good health. Appointments are required and available by visiting [sandiegobloodbank.org](http://sandiegobloodbank.org) or by calling (619) 400-8251.**



Stacie Buechel needs blood donors to help her survive.

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## San Diego Zoo and San Diego Zoo Safari Park Reopened



*The Zoo Koalas rely on visitors and supporters to protect and contribute to their future.*

In keeping with the latest guidance set forth from the Governor's Office, the San Diego Zoo and the San Diego Zoo Safari Park reopened to the public, ending an almost two-month-long closure that began December 7, 2020. Guests will have the opportunity to once again experience amazing wildlife with their families, stroll among diverse habitats and visit with the Zoo and Safari Park's many unique residents, take part in fun, educational activities, and learn about ways to contribute to wildlife conservation at home and abroad.

To ensure a safe and healthy guest experience, they have enacted extensive changes that comply with guidelines outlined by city, county and state health authorities. Similar to their previous reopening plan, both parks will resume operations in stages that will start with outdoor dining only, 25 percent capacity in their retail outlets, a reduced number of guests on grounds at a given time, one-way path modifications and barriers, required face coverings (regardless of vaccination status), observed social distancing practices, an increased number of handwashing and sanitizing locations, and robust cleaning routines by staff.

Currently, the Zoo's Guided Bus Tour, Kangaroo Bus and Skyfari Aerial Tram, and the Safari Park's Africa Tram will be unavailable. Activities that traditionally include larger numbers of guests — including some shows, tours and Safari experiences — will also be temporarily unavailable.

For added safety, the San Diego Zoo and San Diego Zoo Safari Park will implement a reservation system, required for entry. All visitors ages three and up are required to have either a ticket, or a membership and a reservation. Guest tickets will serve as their reservation and must be presented to enter the Zoo or the Safari Park. Members with a valid membership only need to make a date-specific reservation, and can secure their reservation online.

For more details on the San Diego Zoo and the San Diego Zoo Safari Park reopening — including yearly membership options and important information for guests planning their next visit — go to [SanDiegoZoo.org/Reopen](https://SanDiegoZoo.org/Reopen).

## Greater Good Charities and Actor Chris Pratt Raise Funds for Feed Thy Neighbor Initiative

Greater Good Charities and actor Chris Pratt award nearly \$650,000 after successful Feed Thy Neighbor initiative to combat food insecurity across the U.S. that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Hunger Site by GreaterGood and 12 Tomatoes covered all credit card processing fees so that 100 percent of every dollar given helps, and Greater Good Charities granted out 100% of the funding received.

"Feed Thy Neighbor was created as a result of the dual crisis effecting those trying to battle food insecurity that was caused by the coronavirus pandemic," said Liz Baker, CEO of Greater Good Charities. "First there is a meal shortage for food banks serving our most vulnerable; meanwhile, these same frontline groups are experiencing a decline in donations."

Feed Thy Neighbor was conceptualized by Chris Pratt and made possible by The Hunger Site by GreaterGood, 12 Tomatoes, and Greater Good Charities. Pratt donated \$100,000 in matching funds and encouraged people to donate for a chance to meet him via Zoom as well as hosted a star-studded New Year's Eve Instagram Live that included Robert Downey Jr., Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jamie Foxx and Bryce Dallas Howard.

"One in four kids in America this year may not know where their next meal is coming from," said actor Chris Pratt. "The need is real. People are in pain."

Half of all donations received from the Feed Thy Neighbor campaign went to Feeding America® to help address the meal shortage that is hitting our nation's food banks. The other half are provided as cash grants to front line hunger relief organizations in areas hardest hit by the economic impacts of COVID-19 to ensure they are able to sustain their operations to help people who need it most.

To see a complete list of grant recipients from Feed Thy Neighbor, visit: <https://feedthyneighbor.greatergood.com>

Greater Good Charities is a 501(c)(3) national nonprofit organization, with a 100/100 rating on Charity Navigator, that works



*Chris Pratt has been instrumental in raising funds for Feed Thy Neighbor Initiative.*

## Mission Fed Credit Union Presents “San Diego Go Red for Women” Campaign

Mission Fed Credit Union, San Diego's largest member-owned, not-for-profit, full-service financial institution exclusively serving San Diego County, is proud to be a local supporter of the San Diego Division of American Heart Association's (AHA) “San Diego Go Red for Women” campaign. Go Red for Women, which began January 18, 2021, includes National Wear Red Day on February 5 and runs through February 26, 2021 concluding



with a much anticipated Go Red for Women Digital Experience.

During this period, Mission Fed customers can donate online at [MissionFed.com/GoRed](http://MissionFed.com/GoRed) or text MissionFedGoRed to 71777. Mission Fed also encourages community members who wish to speak with a representative directly to visit one of its 32-branch locations, or call the Mission Fed Contact Center at 858-524-2850 to donate by phone.

The Go Red for Women Digital Experience serves as the cornerstone of this year's Go Red for Women campaign. Go Red for Women focuses on preventing heart disease and stroke by promoting healthy lifestyles, building awareness and raising critically needed funds to support research and education initiatives. Cardiovascular diseases, which include stroke, claim the life of a woman about every 80 seconds.

**For more information about the virtual luncheon, visit <http://sdgoredluncheon.heart.org>**

As a local supporter, Mission Fed is committed to assisting AHA carry out its mission. “I am personally passionate about the Go Red for Women movement; it's an inspirational and important message to raise awareness and encourage us to take care of ourselves and the women in our lives,” said Sherry Special, senior vice president, Consumer Lending & Branch Network of Mission Fed.

Go Red for Women is the American Heart Association's national movement to end heart disease and stroke in women. More women than men die every year from heart disease and stroke. The good news is that 80 percent of cardiac events can be prevented with education and lifestyle changes.

Supporting this cause will help advance the AHA's not-for-profit mission of building healthier lives, free from cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

Go Red for Women launched in 2004 and became a campaign to raise awareness among women about their greatest health threat – heart disease. Slowly, the campaign grew into a movement – one that has not only brought thousands of women together annually but also became the trusted, passionate, relevant force for change to eradicate heart disease and stroke all over the world. Go Red for Women provides a platform for women and their families to lead healthier lives and drive collective awareness and action for community transformation.

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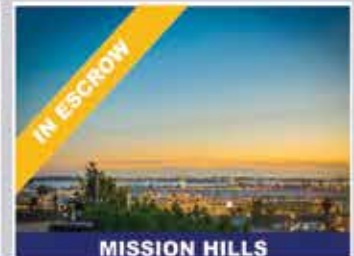
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