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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONDAYS

1st, 6:00 p.m. - Public Safety meetings - Council Chambers

TUESDAYS

8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. - Farmers Market - Excelsior High School
12:00 p.m. - Rotary - Doubletree Hotel
1st & 3rd 6:00 p.m. - Toastmasters Meetings - Registrar Recorder/County Clerks Office
1st & 3rd, 6:00 p.m. - City Council - Council Chambers
3rd, 5:45 p.m. - Housing Authority - Council Chambers

WEDNESDAYS

1st, 12:30 p.m. - Soroptimist International - Soroptimist Village
1st & 3rd, 7:00 p.m. - Lions Club - Bruce's Restaurant
2nd, 10:30 a.m. - Norwalk Woman's Club - Masonic Lodge
2nd & 4th, 1:30 p.m. - Alondra Senior Citizens - Social Services Center
2nd & 4th, 7:30 p.m. - Planning Commission - Council Chambers
4th, 11:30 a.m. - Coordinating Council - Arts & Sports Complex

THURSDAYS

7:00 p.m. - Boy Scouts Troop 924 - Norwalk United Methodist Church
2nd, 7:30 p.m. - Golden Trowel -Norwalk Masonic Lodge
3rd, 8:00 p.m. - American Legion Post No. 359 - 11986 Front St.

SATURDAYS

2nd, 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. - Pancake Breakfast - First Christian Church of Norwalk
Have an event you want listed? E-mail news@thedowneypatriot.com

On This Day...

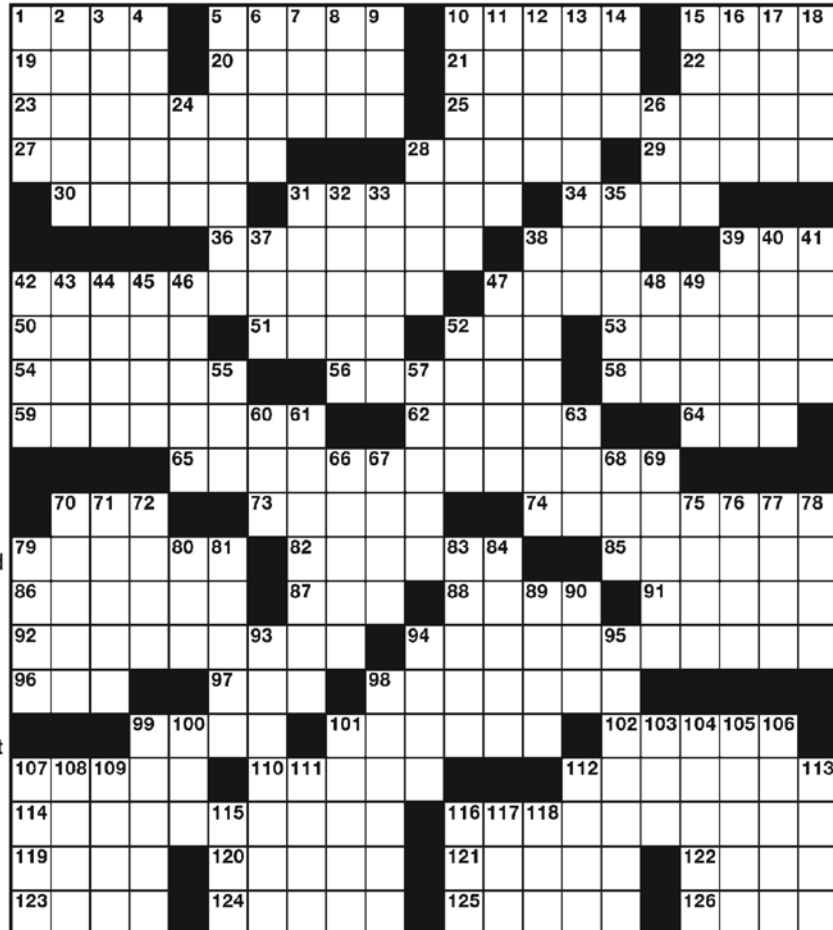
Oct. 18, 1767: The Mason-Dixon line was agreed upon. It was the boundary between Maryland and Pennsylvania.
1967: The American League granted permission for the A's to move to Oakland. Also, new franchises were awarded to Kansas City and Seattle.
2013: Saudi Arabia became the first nation to reject a seat on the United Nations Security Council. Jordan took the seat on December 6.

THE NEWSDAY CROSSWORD

Edited by Stanley Newman (www.StanXwords.com)
SPARSE SET: Explained at 116 Across
by Gail Grabowski

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You can contact puzzle editor Stanley Newman at his e-mail address: StanXwords@aol.com. Or write him at P.O. Box 69, Massapequa Park, NY 11762. Please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you'd like a reply.



PIH gets approval to expand in Uptown Whittier

The City Council approved PIH's request to add workers to its Uptown Whittier offices, but only after PIH threatened to move to Downey.

By Eric Pierce
Editor

WHITTIER - PIH Health received the go-ahead last week to expand its administrative presence in Uptown Whittier but only after threatening to take its nearly 300 workers to nearby Downey.

Council members voted 4-0 to allow PIH to house up to 297 employees at its Uptown offices with the stipulation that PIH hire security personnel to escort its workers to and from the Uptown parking structure.

PIH took over the former Meyers Department store at 6557 Greenleaf Ave. in 2009 and had operated with a permit limiting its number of on-site employees to 225.

After acquiring Cerritos-based Pioneer Medical Group earlier this year, PIH sought to bring its 72 new employees to Uptown Whittier to consolidate operations.

The move was opposed by the Whittier Uptown Association, however, which voiced concerns that the increased number of workers would take up coveted parking on Greenleaf Avenue.

Council members said they shared the same concerns, especially since PIH workers were

bypassing the existing parking structure located a half-block away out of safety concerns.

James West, CEO of PIH Health, said his employees spend an average of \$15 per day in Uptown Whittier, pumping nearly \$1 million into the local economy on an annual basis.

"What [Whittier] was missing nine years ago was a daytime group of people who were consistently here to spend money in the morning and through the day," West said. "You can't keep a restaurant open if there's nobody to go to it in the daytime."

West said he was being courted by Downey officials to move his administrative operations to its downtown. PIH operates a hospital in Downey.

"The city manager of Downey, who lives in Whittier, is begging us not to move the employees up here. They want us to move employees to Downey," West said. "They want employees in their downtown area in Downey to help them revive their economy."

City officials acknowledged that enforcement of existing traffic laws could help alleviate some of the parking troubles plaguing Uptown. In a recent enforcement operation targeting parked vehicles in Uptown, officers issued "about 140" citations in one week for various parking violations.

"We issued that many citations because we do not do consistent enforcement in that

area," said Whittier Police Chief Jeff Piper. "The fact is we're not up there because we can't be because I don't have enough staff to do that."

Council members eventually voted in support of PIH's request but acknowledged that the parking situation in Uptown Whittier requires a long-term fix.

"I don't like that we are effectively holding PIH responsible for something that is not really under their control," said Councilman Henry Bouchot. "We can manage our parking better. That's our responsibility, not PIH's...Uptown is a very mom-and-pop shop place and don't think we should be the bad guys for trying to protect that."

Mayor Pro Tem Fernando Dutra said what Uptown ultimately needs is more parking.

"Somebody can say, 'Well, you gotta manage it better. It's about the management.' Once again, that is very weak and it doesn't have any substance behind it," said Dutra. "Because really what the issue is, it's the number of parking stalls. That's what it comes down to. We need parking stalls to accommodate what we want to happen in Uptown Whittier. And we don't have it."

"The science supports providing more parking stalls so that we can increase business in Uptown Whittier."

Before the vote, Councilwoman Cathy Warner warned that denying PIH's request for more employees would be a "grave mistake."

"It saddens me to think that if we don't have at least three members voting for this that your decision might be to pull everybody out and move them to Downey, and that saddens me greatly," Warner said, directing her comments to James West. "If for any reason we do not have three votes to affirm this action tonight, I think we are making a grave mistake and we are not being supportive of probably the largest employer in our area."

Earlier in the same meeting, the city council delayed a decision on a proposed \$13.3 million tri-level parking structure in Uptown, partly over concerns that it would primarily be used by PIH employees.

"You can easily see 200-plus employees filling up that parking structure," said Bouchot. "I am not for a big public gift to PIH, to real estate developers, or to anybody else, especially not one that comes at this tremendous cost."



PHOTO BY ERIC PIERCE

PIH Health took over this building at 6557 Greenleaf Ave. in Whittier in 2009.

Mayor Joe Vinatieri disagreed. "I don't see this as a public gift to PIH and I don't think that's appropriate to characterize this as a public gift to anyone," he said. "Because this is Uptown and this is a public parking lot and we own all the public parking up town."

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The Pain is Still Present

Short Stories

By Yolanda Reyna
Contributor

The worst day of my life was hearing the news of the death of my younger brother Louie. It's been five years and the pain is still present.

He was only 53 years old and sadly, he died in his sleep. The knife is still wedged in my heart, and each time I think about him, it jabs me deeper and deeper.

I still recall that day of receiving the news. It is something I will never forget. It was a Friday morning, January 3, 2014. A new year had just rolled in. I had awoken early and, from my bedroom, I made my way to the living room. I

sat on my recliner and with technology these days, you don't necessarily have to turn on the T to hear the news. You can just turn your smart phone on, which is what I did.

What grabbed my attention was the death of a well-known actor, James Avery. The father of a popular sitcom, The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, a show I always watched and enjoyed. He died of a heart attack. It saddened me to hear the news of his death; the irony of my own brother dying of a heart attack soon afterwards.

After reading the news, I adjusted my recliner to get some more sleep, but my cell phone started to ring and I didn't answer the call because I didn't recognize the number. But little did I know, the call was coming from Kansas City where my brother had been

living. I received a message and these are the words I will never forget. The message said: "Hello Yolanda, this is Shelly. I don't know if you know but Louis passed away."

I immediately tossed my phone out of my hand, and I felt an adrenaline come over my entire body. It felt like I was coming up from water. I gasped and I jumped up and went to my son Daniel's room.

I said, "Daniel, your Uncle Louie passed away." He said, "What?!" My heart was pounding terribly and I was trembling.

I said, "Daniel, please listen to the message and tell me if it's true." He listened and he said, "Mom, it was Shelly, and she said Uncle Louie passed away."

The shock was too much for

me to handle. I started crying and crying and I could not stop, then I began to scream and scream! My knees buckled and I fell to the floor. I continued to cry for what seemed like an eternity. At that moment, I felt like I was drowning in my own tears.

After all the weeping, I called Shelly asked her what happened. Shelly was a close friend of my brother. She said she had dinner with him New Year's evening at his place and she had left around 7:30 pm. He walked her to her car and as she drove off, he waved goodbye to her. She watched him from her rearview mirror.

I started thinking when I last talked to him and I recalled the last text message I sent him. I texted him on New Year's Eve: "Have a Happy and safe New Year's brother, I love you." He replied, "I love you too, sis."

After I hung up with Shelly, I called the mortuary to get some information. I was having these crazy thoughts that maybe it wasn't my brother, or maybe he staged his own death. Did he commit suicide? I was having these insane thoughts as to what could have happened.

I wasn't able to go to Kansas City until five days after his death due to bad weather. I asked the mortuary to send me a photo of my brother so that he could be properly identified. I had to ask if they there was any sign of a struggle when they found him. I thought maybe he tried to get up from bed. But they said he was lying on his back with the covers on him. It seemed he went to sleep and he never woke up.

Shelly said he was found by the maintenance man. He didn't show up for work that day and his boss got worried

and sent someone to check on him.

When I received the photo of my brother from the mortuary, I could not look at it, and each time I tried to bring myself to look at it, I would feel anxious and start to tremble. I asked my older brother Ricky to look at it, and he said, "Sis, that's our baby brother."

I could never bring myself to look at the photo until recently, after five years. What I saw in the photo was my brother. He just looked like he was asleep.

It's been five years and the pain is still present.

Yolanda Reyna is a member of the writing class offered through the Cerritos College Adult Education Program. It is held off-campus at the Norwalk Senior Center.

Jars, Rags and a Sleeping Bag

Short Stories

By Sharon Benson Smith
Contributor

I'll never forget the Christmas that Dad told the family all he wanted that year were empty jars. I passed the word around to all female family members to save jars for me to give to Dad at Christmastime.

Dad's garage had every tool available for the weekend handyman jobs he had lined up. All he wanted were jars so he could organize his nails, nuts, bolts, and screws by size. Over the counter or his work space in the garage he built a contraption of slats that suspended from the ceiling. He nailed the lids of the baby food jars to the slats then just screwed the jar into it. Dad was genius at this type of thing...his

garage was neat and clean and well organized at all times. Any mess he created was cleaned up as soon as he was finished with the project at hand.

The family sure came through with the jars (especially those sisters of mine). I wrapped them in tissue to keep them from clanking and breaking, and he had the largest box to open under the tree. We shared in such family joy and laughter just watching dad fumble to open his humongous box of jars.

The following year, he exclaimed to the family that all he wanted were rags. Again, I passed the word to the family, gathered and cleaned rags all year long, then presented him once again with the largest box under the tree. This year too, the family shared in the fun and jocularly created when dad opened his Christmas "gift wish" of a load of rags.

The first year that I worked

my "real job" and received a paycheck, I bought a very extra nice gift for each family member. My special gift to Dad was an all-weather super deluxe sleeping bag. He loved it and was so proud of it that he kept it in his car at all times.

He had that sleeping bag for years until he had to go to a union meeting in Los Angeles. His car was broken into and the sleeping bag was stolen. He was quite upset about it for the longest time.

I'm so glad, dad, that after all you gave to me, I could at least come through for you with a few jars, rags and a sleeping bag.

Sharon Benson Smith is a member of the writing class offered through the Cerritos College Adult Education Program. It is held off-campus at the Norwalk Senior Center.

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