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Transgender teen stands up for NLMUSD Wellness Centers

■ Damien Berry has defended the Wellbeing Center in NLMUSD while navigating his own journey of self-discovery and acceptance.

By Vincent Medina
Contributor

NORWALK - Damien Berry, a 15-year-old sophomore at Norwalk High School (NHS), listens as over a dozen people voice their transphobia and spread misinformation about the Wellbeing Center at John Glenn High School until it is finally his turn to make a public comment. The Norwalk La Mirada Unified School District meeting room is silent as Berry explains that, as a trans person, he feels it is important kids have somewhere to go where they feel safe if they don't feel they can talk to friends or family.

Members of MassResistance, a group that was labeled a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, have been coming out regularly since June to protest the center with like-minded anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQIA+ advocates. The organization spreads the unfounded claim on social media that Planned Parenthood trained the staff at the center to push abortions and an agenda of "sex mutilation" on students to become transgender.

Erin Berry, Damien's mother, learned of the group and their activism and spoke out against them during a school board meeting in August. She later told Damien about the group's messaging, and he decided to get involved. He and his friends went to a meeting in September, where he defended the center and his trans community.

"People were getting a lot of misinformation and they didn't understand why the Center was there," Damien said. "I thought it was important to show people [the center] could help kids and it was actually a good thing the center was there."

The Wellbeing Center provides substance use prevention, mental health support, sexual health education and support to students. It also includes parent education workshops to teach parents how to communicate sensitive topics to their children effectively.

"I don't like bullies, and I don't like when people attack something just because they don't understand everything or agree with everything," Erin said. "I saw they were posting online that 'no one is born gay,' 'No one is born trans' and it made me pissed and

scared for kids who are."

In school and growing up, Damien explained something was different between him and his peers. After discovering his love for theater and finding friends he could relate with, he still felt he was missing something.

"I knew I was different in one capacity, but I didn't know if it was because I liked guys and girls or if it was because I didn't fully feel comfortable in my body," Damien said. "I was different from people, but I didn't know exactly how different until I realized that I was trans."

Damien began to understand he was transgender in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As his knowledge of the LGBTQIA+ community was very limited, Damien did not know a person could be transgender. He struggled to describe how he felt until he discovered the trans community on social media and people whose stories heavily reflected his own. Damien resonated with their discussions of feeling like they did not belong anywhere, feeling uncomfortable in their bodies, and feeling they were not their gender assigned at birth.

Not ready to accept that he was transgender, Damien experimented with different names and pronouns, trying to find which felt more comfortable to him. He described the process as "picking different ice cream toppings then realizing you don't need all of them until finally, you find the perfect base."

He tried using gender-fluid pronouns they/them and the name Alchemy. He found it fitting as alchemy is defined by Merriam-Webster as the medieval chemical process of transformation, where base metals were turned into gold.

Damien received support and acceptance from his mother. However, Erin asked him for patience as she adapted to the new name and frequently changed pronouns, explaining his pronouns would change as he figured out what felt best.

"It didn't necessarily get me confused, it was just it was a lot to go from something that changed all the time," Erin said. "It was kind of overwhelming, and I messed up the name a lot, but when he told me he wanted to be called Alchemy and his pronouns, I said, 'okay' and accepted it."

She found that switching from calling him by the name he was born with, his dead name, to Alchemy was easier than switching from calling him



Damien Berry began to understand he was transgender a year ago, and has received support from his friends and the Wellness Center at Norwalk High School (Photo by Vincent Medina)

Alchemy to Damien.

A year ago, Damien accepted that he was transgender instead of gender fluid. He took on the pronouns he/him and the preferred name Damien, with Alchemy as his middle name.

Erin and Damien agreed that his younger brother Jeremiah was the most accepting, expressing he had forgotten Damien's dead name because he is used to calling him by his chosen name. Jeremiah began calling him Alch, short for Alchemy, and then Dami for Damien.

However, his father was not as understanding of Damien. Initially coming out to him as gender fluid, Damien said he and his father argued about his gender identity, and it shattered his confidence.

"I told him, 'I think I'm gender fluid,' because I wanted to lay it down softly on him. Then he went, 'Honestly, I don't think you are,' and I could not talk to him for three days," Damien said. "I ended up talking to him about it and saying, 'This is who I think I am. I may not fully know yet, but I know I'm not [deadname]. So, I just wanted to tell you because I trusted you.'"

Damien is also worried about how the rest of his family would react, as they are very conservative. He and Erin are working out the right way to tell them.

At school, his friends do their best to support him and understand what he needs to be

comfortable.

Erin and Lydia Wackerman have been friends for years, and subsequently, their children also became friends.

Paul Wackerman is a junior at Norwalk High School, but he and Damien first met in elementary school when they had to attend a PTA meeting with their parents. As their friendship grew, Damien confided in Paul when he was gender-fluid and again when he realized he was transgender.

"Nothing changed for me, they are now he," Paul said. "He's still my friend, that's not going to change anything."

Lydia explained she has always taught her kids to be open and accepting of others and to be an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community.

"I was a Scoutmaster, and one of the kids came out to me, and I was worried if the boys were going to share a tent with him, but Paul had no problem with it," Lydia said. "I love the younger generation because it seems to be more accepting."

The Wackermans were there to accompany Damien when he defended the Wellbeing Center in September.

Damien explained Norwalk High School's wellness center can help him when he becomes overwhelmed. The on-site counselor he can talk with to manage his anxiety, usually during pep rallies when it is too loud.

"I could remember having

a big panic attack, so last year we decided that whenever a pep rally happened, I would just go to the Wellness Center," Damien explained. "It was way too loud. I could feel everything, and I realized that my brain just shut down. I talked to a school therapist about it, and he said that a major contributor to everything was my anxiety and depression."

The Wellness Center at NHS focuses more on mental health, while the Wellbeing Center at John Glenn High School offers more services for mental health, education and therapy. Damien is passionate about fighting for it so others like him can access its resources.

After graduating high school, Damien hopes to continue pursuing theater and advocate for the transgender community. He also hoped to connect with more members of the LGBTQIA+ community over the summer.

MassResistance has expressed their desire to continue protesting against the Wellbeing Center during Norwalk La Mirada Unified board of education meetings, which they believe is pushing "transgenderism" on students.

Damien hopes to be there to speak against them.

"There is an argument that kids are not born gay, but that would also mean kids are not born straight," Damien said. "I would also argue that if kids are not born trans, then they are not born cis."

Days away from parade, Downey Rose Float makes finishing touches

■ For the first time ever, Downey's Rose Parade float will include a live performing band.

By Alex Dominguez
Staff Writer

DOWNEY - With just a few short days before the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade, the Downey Rose Float Association is hard at work putting the finishing touches on its 2024 entry.

This year's parade theme is Celebrating a World of Music. Going along with that theme, Downey's entry - called Rhythm of the Caribbean - will feature five large flamingos, 10 animatronic butterflies, Ms. Downey and her court, and steelpan drum band The Islanders, who will be playing live.

The float was designed by

Jason Redfox.

"The float's got that touch of the Caribbean with the flamingos and the tropical look, and of course the live steel band playing," said Construction Chair Kelley Roberts. "It's going to be a very musical, fun, colorful, floral float to see in the Rose Parade."

According to Rose Float President Jeremy Clifton, The Islanders have been "playing together and by themselves for several decades."

"Cecil Frances, the gentleman I spoke to to kind of get the ball in motion with it, has been playing the steel pan for 60 years," said Clifton. "He started at 8 years-old out of Trinidad. Each one of those individuals, there's four of them, are originally from the island."

"They've played in different symphonies around the world,"

added Roberts. "They've taught steel pan, they've done productions, they've done Carnival, they've been everywhere."

The Islanders are donating their time and their performance to Downey Rose Float.

Downey Rose Float Association also has a relatively new source of help in an annual \$30,000 grant from the city that was approved in August.

Clifton called it "truly a blessing."

"Fundraising hasn't been as great as it should be," said Clifton. "As most people know, every single one of us works a full-time job, things have changed in a lot of our jobs, and so we - I don't want to say lack of interest - but lack of time and [we've] been priced out of a lot of venues to do

our fundraisers at.

"With the city helping, it is a tremendous relief on the burden on all of us, but we still do fundraise to get to where we're at."

Downey Rose Float association opened up their barn to community volunteers on Tuesday for their annual "Dec week." Prior to its start, Clifton and Roberts said they were ahead of schedule if they "keep their foot to the pedal." Decorations actually started a week before Dec week.

"We're usually the other way around," joked Roberts.

There won't be any relaxing until Jan. 5, when everything is said and done and the float returns to the barn and "back home." Still, despite all the hard work, long nights, and heaping

amounts of stress that come with building a float, there's a sense of pride and legacy that comes with seeing it roll down Colorado Boulevard that makes it all worth it.

"We're a legacy float; we're only one of six that are actually designed, built and decorated solely by volunteers in the granddaddy of them all, Rose Parade," said Roberts. "That's pretty special. It is very special to be one of the six, and now with more support from the city, it's helping us tremendously."

"Even the support with Los Angeles County, it's like Jeremy said, it's been a blessing. Because a lot of this stuff could not get done or would not get done without everyone's support in making this float happen."

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at a Glance

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Saturday 63° ☁

Sunday 64° ☁

ON THIS DAY

1813:

The British burn Buffalo, New York during the War of 1812.

1835:

Trail of Tears: The Treaty of New Echota is signed between the US government and representatives of a minority Cherokee political faction to cede all lands of the Cherokee east of the Mississippi River to the United States

1845:

Texas is admitted as the 28th state of the Union.

1851:

The first American Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) chapter opened in Boston, Massachusetts

1902:

Scot Joplin copyrights "The Entertainer" and several other piano rag compositions through the US Copyright Office.

1930:

Fred P. Newton completes longest swim ever (1826 miles), when he swam in the Mississippi River from Ford Dam, Minnesota, to New Orleans.

1937:

Lou Thesz beats Everett Marshall in St Louis, to win NWA World heavyweight title - the youngest ever.

1939:

New York Yankees owner Jacob Ruppert refuses to release future Baseball Hall of Fame slugger Babe Ruth to manage the Cincinnati Reds.

1967:

Star Trek's "Trouble With Tribbles" 1st airs.

1984:

Wayne Gretzky scores his NHL career 32nd hat trick & adds 3 assists in Edmonton's 6-3 win over Detroit Red Wings for his 100th point in just 35 games; second fastest in history - recorded 100 points in 34 games in 1983

2007:

Tom Brady sets a then-NFL record, throwing his 50th touchdown pass, and the New England Patriots become the first team in NFL history to finish the regular season 16-0

BIRTHDAYS

Actor **JON VOIT** (85), actor **TED DANSON** (76), Actor **DIEGO LUNA** (44), pop singer **ROSS LYNCH** (28) and actor **RAPHAEL LUCE** (17).

Warren's JROTC is first high school in country to complete AI course

■ Students discussed AI and its implementations, pros, cons, and ethics.

By Alex Dominguez
Staff Writer

DOWNEY - Students in Warren High School's JROTC program were recognized Tuesday for their completion of their Introduction to Artificial Intelligence Course.

The curriculum was a condensed, pilot version of the usually two-semester course from The Coding School. Major Victor Shen described it as "a quick introduction of data sets, machine learning, and how artificial intelligence on the back-end works."

"The significance of artificial intelligence, as we all know with technological advances, is so important that young people understand and learn the foundations of it and get exposed to it early," said Shen. "The first time that they should be exposed to it is as

early as possible, and so this is a great setting.

"Whether or not they use it today, we know that they'll use it tomorrow, and so it's extremely important to understand the good, the bad, the ethics behind it, but also the foundations of it."

Warren's JROTC is the first high school JROTC program in the nation to complete the course.

According to Lt. Col. (retired) Melissa Gardner, the senior army instructor for Warren's JROTC program, the Army JROTC program has been making moves more towards STEM-oriented curriculum.

She said having the opportunity to have an AI course "has been phenomenal."

"In preparation for this class...We talked about, 'Where is AI in our everyday life,' and then we talked about the ethical considerations," said Garner. "Once you start

looking at it, it's amazing, every single day you see multiple articles and things happening with regards to AI."

This is still just the first year that JROTC has been offered at Warren. Principal Carrie White expressed enthusiasm for the program's continued growth.

"I'm really excited to see the growth in just a short period of time," said White. "I think hiring Lt. Col. Gardner has allowed us to jump in and expose our students to an AI course in their first semester of the program is a phenomenal feat. I'm excited to see where this program will be a year to four years from now, because our students are our future leaders, and to know that they are getting up-to-date, relevant, critical information that is impacting education and the military, as well as our communities and our overall lifestyles is really encouraging."



Downey Unified School District Assistant Superintendent Dr. Roger Brossmer hands freshman Melanie Garcia her certificate of completion of the AI course. (Photo by Alex Dominguez)

Civilian Aide to the Army Mario Guerra commended Downey Unified School District for being "amazing in promoting the educational opportunities for their kids."

"There's no other school in the country that's getting this, nobody else has that infrastructure, has the support from the principal, from the school district," said Guerra.

"This is amazing. Our kids are going to be better off for having this."

Cerritos College Police go completely digital

NORWALK — Cerritos College Police Department (CCPD) has gone completely digital, in favor of spending more time enhancing campus safety by helping and engaging with the community out in the field.

Earlier this month, Mark43, the leading cloud-native public safety software provider, announced that the CCPD has deployed the Mark43 Public Safety Platform, including its Records Management System (RMS), Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) and Analytics.

This significant upgrade

provides CCPD's 38 personnel, including 19 sworn officers, with a premier technology platform that will help in their mission of keeping the Cerritos College community safe. Prior to deploying Mark43 technology, Cerritos College used pen and paper for dispatch and report writing. Now, they have a premier computerized system that has transformed how they are able to support their campus community.

Don Mueller, Chief at the Cerritos College Police Department said, "We are excited to be using this modern

technology so we can spend less time on report writing and spend more time engaging with the campus community. I am beyond impressed with the professionalism and involvement of the Mark43 team during this entire process leading up to the deployment. I have dealt with many a vendor during my time in law enforcement, and I have never seen a company like Mark43 be so involved in meeting the end goal of getting us to the finish line."

Matt Polega, Mark43 Co-Founder and President said, "Chief Mueller and

the Cerritos College Police Department have been fantastic partners, and we are thrilled that they are using the Mark43 Public Safety Platform to help keep students, faculty and staff safe across the Cerritos College campus. Our proven technology will provide CCPD personnel with the tools they need to ensure faster emergency response and to collect and analyze information so they can seamlessly put it into action. We are proud to be a trusted partner for campus safety and to have delivered the technology solution CCPD was looking for."

School campuses face heightened expectations of safety and require modern technology that local law enforcement counterparts use on a daily basis and

which students, staff, and faculty expect. The CCPD was seeking a technology system that was easy to use, had intuitive workflows, and the ability to use data in real time to support compliance. By providing users with the Mark43 Records Management System — a comprehensive platform for report-writing, investigations, and data sharing — the administrative burden on staff will now be reduced, freeing them to pursue proactive policing, engage with the campus community, and address public safety challenges.

CCPD is also now equipped with Mark43 Analytics, a platform that will enable them to better focus on prevention and response. The new tool will also help maintain compliance with the Clery

Act, which requires colleges and universities to disclose campus security information including crime statistics for the campus and surrounding areas.

CCPD has also deployed Mark43 CAD, which provides emergency dispatch software that pinpoints exact caller and responder locations and share critical, life-saving data with all nearby responding units to enhance safety for emergency responders and ensures the right units are deployed to the right location. The cloud-native technology provides best-in-class security and reliability, meaning that CCPD users can now access vital data quicker than ever, significantly improving officer safety, situational awareness, and their ability to serve the Cerritos College community.

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Musical shines light on life and music of George Michael

CERRITOS — The late Grammy winner and Rock & Roll Hall of Famer George Michael still ranks on Billboard's "Greatest Hot 100 Artists of All Time" list as well as Rolling Stone's "200 Greatest Singers of All Time" list.

"The Life and Music of George Michael" chronicles the singer-songwriter's amazing journey with music and his illustrious career. It comes to the Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts (CCPA) on Friday, Feb. 2 at 8

pm. Ticket prices start at \$38.

Michael rose to fame as a member of the British Pop duo Wham! in the early '80s, selling more than 115 million albums with the international hit songs "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go," "Careless Whisper," "Last Christmas," "Freedom," "I'm Your Man," and "Everything She Wants."

The resounding success catapulted Michael into an even more successful solo run with one of the biggest-selling pop albums of all time: Faith, which featured the No. 1 hits

"Faith," "Monkey," "Father Figure" and "One More Try."

A new theatrical concert event, "The Life and Music of George Michael" uses staging and lighting to capture the performance and sound of the late legend who over the course of his illustrious career collected two Grammys, three BRIT Awards, three American Music Awards, and four MTV Video Music Awards.

For tickets or more information, call (562) 916-8500 or go to cerritoscenter.com.

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California is doing just fine

Don't let the naysayers fool you; the grass isn't always greener in Florida and Texas

By **Froma Harrop**

Follow Froma Harrop on Twitter @FromaHarrop. She can be reached at fharrop@gmail.com.

There's a neurotic need in the right-leaning media to declare that California is going down. The future belongs to Texas and Florida, where "woke" is a discouraging word — and climate change is somebody else's problem, if it is a problem.

California has lost population in each of the last three years, while Texas and Florida are growing fast. The "story" is that high taxes are driving the rich out of California. And it's true that some high-profile California magnates have left for Texas and Florida, neither of which tax income.

But that's only a piece of the truth. The number of millionaires in California is actually surging as global wealth continues to flood into the Golden State, according to Bloomberg News. From 2019 through 2021, California's population of millionaire taxpayers has grown by 116,000. The number of residents pulling in more than \$50 million surged 158% to 3,182!

Nonetheless, every time a company moves from California to Texas, Gov. Greg Abbott crows that his

state's lower taxes and laxer environmental laws are draining California's economic might. Texas does regulate businesses with a light touch. Different story if you have a woman's body.

Same goes for Florida, which, like Texas, has virtually banned abortion. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has made a specialty of attacking local businesses for oddball reasons. He pushed through a law forbidding employers to require proof of vaccinations from their workers. And he reserves special punishments for Disney, his state's largest private employer, for daring to disagree with him on gay rights.

Losing population is not always a bad thing. The raps against California include the high cost of housing and brutal traffic. Fewer people means less competition for real estate and fewer cars on the road. Meanwhile, the cost of housing in Austin and Miami has shot skyward.

With 39 million people, California still has 10 million more residents than does Texas, the second most populous state — not that this should matter on the individual level. What does the population race have to do with the quality of life?

That's not to say all is nifty in California. The Californians going elsewhere tend to be middle-class or

poor. Many end up in next-door Arizona or Nevada. The result has been a growing and concerning disparity in wealth.

California still has nice weather and, for those who care about show business, Hollywood. But its great draw is brain power supported by top universities and the tech magnet of Silicon Valley.

Right-wing politics can turn off rich people more than low taxes turn them on. Dave Nixon of the Patriotic Millionaires, a group of well-to-do business leaders who advocate for "fair" taxation, moved back to California in 2022 after selling his St. Pete Beach home in Florida.

San Francisco Mayor London Breed said she knows "several" people who recently returned from Austin for similar reasons. This is clearly anecdotal evidence, but one can believe that a sharp right turn in local politics could get some former Californians down.

There's no point, though, in playing one cultural preference against another. People may go to Florida or Texas — or stay in California — for different reasons. And even some progressive-minded people dislike some of the silly woke stuff or flashy esthetics coming out of Southern California. They would include liberals in Washington state. But suffice it to say, California's economy is doing just fine. A new members-only club demanding initiation fees as high as \$100,000 is opening in San Francisco. Core's backers are assuming that the city's stressed downtown will be coming back.

"If people were telling us, 'I'm planning my exit,'" a club spokeswoman said. "We wouldn't come here."

Will anyone step up to Donald Trump?

Despite him being "out of control," it remains to be seen if anyone will challenge Trump come the Republican Primary

By **Susan Estrich**

Accusing his political opponents of being "deranged" and "thugs," Donald Trump delivered his Christmas message on Truth Social: "May they rot in hell." Trump is totally out of control. His rhetoric is that of an unstable man. In words that sound like Hitler, he accused immigrants of "poisoning the blood of our country." This is a man who is leading the polls to be the Republican nominee for the presidency. Facing 91 criminal counts, he clearly cannot control himself. The question is who will take him on.

Rep. Debbie Dingell, the congresswoman from Michigan and the widow of John Dingell, the longest-serving member of Congress (59 years), did on CNN, and she got the Trump treatment. She told CNN, rightly, "I think it was one of the most pathetic Christmas greetings I've heard when a former president of the United States who wants to return tells people on Christmas Day that they can rot in hell. He is contributing to the divisiveness and division in this country."

Hours later, Trump went after her. Returning to a grudge he has held since she voted for his impeachment in 2019, he attacked her and her late husband. "When I gave, as President, her long serving husband, the absolute

highest U.S. honors for his funeral, a really big deal, she called me, crying almost uncontrollably, to say that she couldn't believe I was willing to do that for a Democrat," Trump wrote on Truth Social. "She thanked me profusely. Two months later, she was back on the trail ranting and raving about 'TRUMP.'"

It was a repeat of his earlier rebukes of Debbie Dingell, who he excoriated in 2019, complete with attacks on her late husband who he said was "looking up" from hell. As she told CNN, "After he went after me, quite frankly, there were men outside of my house with assault weapons, and I have had threats." His comments on Tuesday no doubt will produce more threats, which didn't slow him down.

Who will?

Not Nikki Haley, at least not yet. The woman who is emerging as Trump's leading challenger for the Republican nomination is pursuing a strategy that commentators generously call "playing it safe." She is, depending on which poll you believe, leading the pack of Republicans who are trying to catch Trump, who, despite being out of control, is still well ahead. Haley has yet to call him out for the divisiveness and ugliness that Dingell took issue with. "He was the right president for the right

time," she says of Trump, who she announced at the first debate she would support even if he was convicted of criminal charges. "The thing is, normal people aren't obsessed with Trump like you guys are," she told one reporter earlier this month.

The strategy of not taking on the front-runner may make sense in a Republican primary, but it is not a sign of courage or leadership. Whether or not "normal people" are obsessed with Trump, the fact is that he poses an existential threat. What a president says matters, and having a president who is as out of control as Trump clearly is poses real dangers. Imagine what would happen if Joe Biden talked like that. He would be accused of having "lost it" completely. Trump gets away with it because those who know better don't dare to speak up, lest they offend his base and get the Trump treatment, complete with assault weapons at their door. Haley, known as a disciplined campaigner who sticks to her scripts, is letting the most undisciplined man to contend for the highest office get away with murder.

Is she running for president or for a place on his ticket?

Donald Trump Jr. was busy this week trying to stop the buzz about Haley joining the ticket. "I wouldn't have her and I would go to great lengths to make sure that that doesn't happen," he told Newsmax. Maybe not. But would his father? The test for Haley in the weeks between now and the voting is whether she will step up to the challenge of running against a man who she herself acknowledges brings "chaos" in his wake, or continue to play it safe. Debbie Dingell has courage, which is what we should expect of our leaders. Does Nikki Haley?

Public shift on crime may be Gascon's downfall

By **Debra J. Saunders**

Debra J. Saunders is a fellow at the Discovery Institute's Chapman Center for Citizen Leadership. Contact her at dsanders@discovery.org.

In 2020, after Los Angeles County District Attorney George Gascon won office with nearly 54% of the vote, advocates for so-called reforms in the criminal justice system could exhale.

When he runs for reelection in 2024, however, Gascon's sweet ride may come to an abrupt halt. During his tenure, Angelenos have become more concerned about crime, not less. Incarceration is not the dirty word it once was.

According to the Public Policy Institute of California, violent crime in California rose by 5.7% between 2021 and 2022.

Critics point to Proposition 47, a ballot measure approved by voters in 2014 that reduced penalties for nonviolent crimes and downgraded theft under \$950 from a felony to a misdemeanor. A shorthand description of

Prop. 47 would be: Steal a gun, don't go to prison.

Gascon, then San Francisco District Attorney, was a co-author of the measure. He can't escape history, so he's repeating it.

Gascon just named a new chief of staff, Tiffany Blacknell, a former public defender who, as the 2020 George Floyd riots erupted, posted an expletive-laden rant on the platform then known as Twitter.

"So please don't come on my page complaining about protesters or looters," Blacknell wrote. Blacknell, who is Black, also described America as "a country where your people are murdered by a militarized police force paid to control YOU."

Morale has not been particularly high in law enforcement of late. So, what does Gascon do? He hires as his chief gatekeeper someone who defended looters while she trash-talked police.

And he has done so with the arrogance of a politician who hasn't really paid for his mistakes. Yet.

Gascon is a political animal. He had the right progressive politics as he rose in office. Ergo, in 2011, he was appointed to serve as San Francisco district attorney after (now Vice President) Kamala Harris was elected state attorney general.

Unlike Harris, Gascon had yet to try a case in court — but that didn't stop then Mayor Gavin Newsom from making Gascon the city's top prosecutor.

The savvy politician sees how public opinion changes — slowly, then all at once. But Gascon doesn't seem to see where this likely ends.

You've heard the saying that a conservative is a liberal who got mugged.

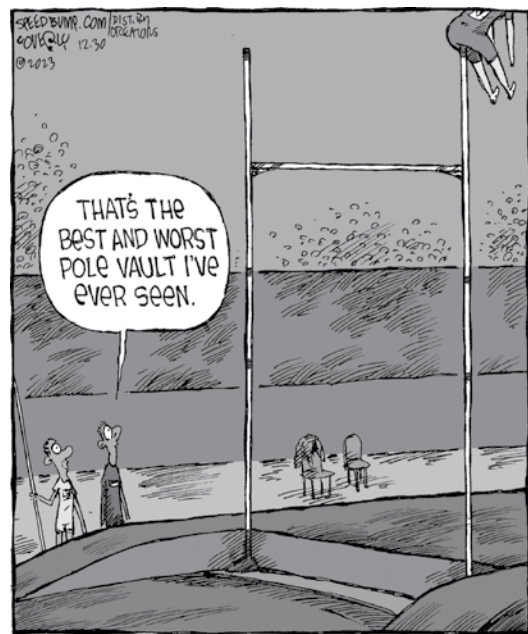
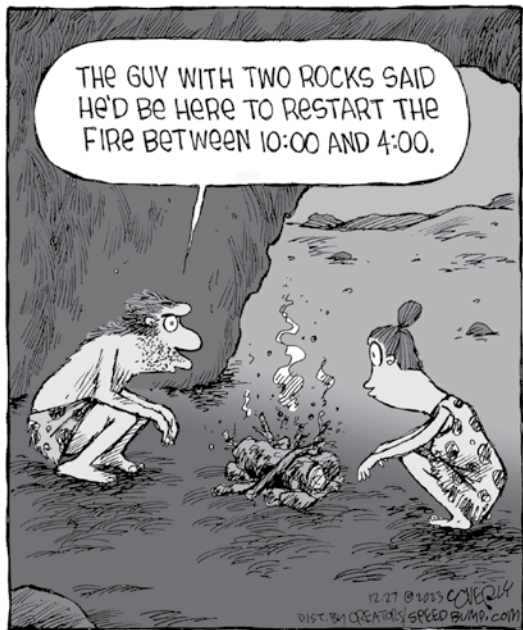
California voters don't want to think they were wrong to pass Prop. 47, which is why past attempts to shave it back have failed. But they also don't want to be afraid to go out at night.

If someone must be afraid to venture forth, let it be shoplifters and burglars. Because they're not afraid now.

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SPEED BUMP DAVE COVERLY



Norwalk Community Calendar

MONDAYS

1st Mon., 6 pm - Public Safety meetings - Council Chambers
 2nd Mon., 7 pm - Relay for Life meetings - Mr. Rosewood Family Restaurant

TUESDAYS

9:00 a.m. - 1 pm - Farmers Market - Norwalk City Hall
 1st & 3rd Tues., 6 pm - Toastmasters Meetings - Registrar Recorder/County Clerks Office
 1st & 3rd Tues., 6 pm - City Council - Council Chambers
 3rd Tues., 5:45 pm - Housing Authority - Council Chambers

WEDNESDAYS

1st & 3rd Wed., 7 pm - Lions Club - Bruce's Restaurant
 2nd Wed., 10:30 am - Norwalk Woman's Club - Faith Church
 2nd & 4th Wed., 1:30 pm - Alondra Senior Citizens - Social Services Center
 2nd & 4th Wed., 6 pm - Soroptimist International - Via Zoom
 2nd & 4th Wed., 7:30 pm - Planning Commission - Council Chambers
 4th Wed., 11:30 am - Coordinating Council - Arts & Sports Complex

THURSDAYS

7 pm - Boy Scouts Troop 924 - Norwalk United Methodist Church
 2nd Thurs., 6 pm - 605 Kiwanis Club - Mr. Rosewood Family Restaurant
 2nd Thurs., 7 pm - American Legion Post No. 359 - 11986 Front St.
 2nd Thurs., 7:30 pm - Golden Trowel - Norwalk Masonic Lodge

SATURDAYS

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. - Farmers Market - Norwalk City Hall

SUNDAYS

12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. - Food Pantry - 12201 Firestone Blvd., Norwalk, CA 90650

Would you like an event listed in the community calendar?
 E-mail news@thedownypatriot.com

The Norwalk Patriot STAFF

JENNIFER DEKAY
 Publisher

JULIE LEDESMA-AZIZ
 Display Advertising

LINDA LARSON
 Classified Advertising

JONATHAN FOX
 Production

KEITH DURFLINGER
 Photographer

ERIC PIERCE
 Editor

ALEX DOMINGUEZ
 Staff Writer

JOHN M. SHERRARD
 Contributor

VINCENT MEDINA
 Contributor

CAROL KEARNS
 Contributor

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PUZZLE OF THE WEEK

THE NEWSDAY CROSSWORD

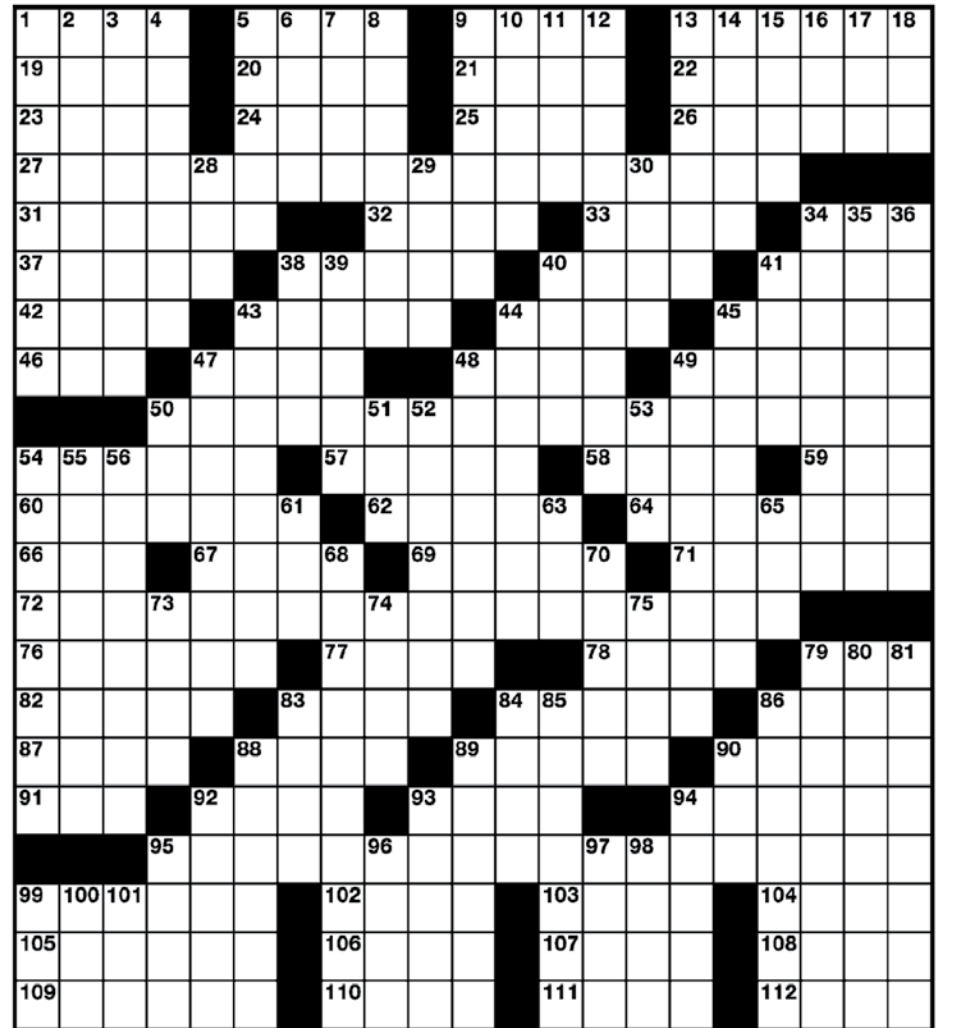
Edited by Stanley Newman (www.StanXwords.com)
 CAROL SING-ALONG: You know the words
 by S.N.

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.

You can contact puzzle editor Stanley Newman at www.StanXwords.com

- ACROSS**
- 1 Beauty salon sweeping
 - 5 Rope fiber
 - 9 Dishonest imitation
 - 13 Sci-fi mind reader
 - 19 Cathedral section
 - 20 Higher than
 - 21 Ziti shape
 - 22 Brunch fare
 - 23 Astrological feline
 - 24 Tequila cocktail, for short
 - 25 Designer Cassini
 - 26 Irish province
 - 27 "Deck the halls with boughs of holly, _"
 - 31 One of the Musketeers
 - 32 Puts frosting on
 - 33 Poker winnings
 - 34 Burglarize
 - 37 Made reference to
 - 38 Thick heads of 1 Across
 - 40 Goddess of victory
 - 41 Sticky sealer
 - 42 Swamp stalk
 - 43 Jazz instruments
 - 44 Ankle-length skirt
 - 45 _ one's time (waits)
 - 46 Double-curve shape
 - 47 Perform silently
 - 48 Socks
 - 49 Pop star Dion
 - 50 "'Tis the season to be jolly, _"
 - 54 Get smaller
 - 57 Easel, for instance
 - 58 Read rapidly
 - 59 _ for tat
 - 60 Clasps for cravats
 - 62 _ salts (bath additive)
 - 64 Part of the pelvis
 - 66 First Breaking Bad ailer
 - 67 Stylist's creation
 - 69 Heartthrobs
 - 71 Tied up at a dock
 - 72 "Don we now our gay apparel, _"
 - 76 Became fluid
 - 77 Former Tonight Show host
 - 78 Grape plant, e.g.
 - 79 Food additive letters
 - 82 Facilitates
 - 83 Hastened away
 - 84 Admiral's armada
 - 86 Cylindrical conduit
 - 87 Bakery loaves
 - 88 Sharp criticism
 - 89 Budweiser rival
 - 90 Subatomic particle
 - 91 Stockholm-based fier
 - 92 Misfortunes
 - 93 Voting alliance
 - 94 Faint in color
 - 95 "Troll the ancient Yuletide carol, _"
 - 99 How wholesalers buy
 - 102 Academic hurdle
 - 103 Roman formal wear
 - 104 Lyft alternative
 - 105 Adventurous pursuits
 - 106 Red Muppet
 - 107 Deserve to receive
 - 108 Semester
 - 109 Apt to achool
 - 110 Gaze (at)
 - 111 Where Mt. Rushmore is
 - 112 Other than that
- DOWN**
- 1 About 20,000 square feet
 - 2 Honey sources
 - 3 Sets apart
 - 4 Dubbed differently
 - 5 Circle dances
 - 6 Diabolical
 - 7 What Facebook, Inc. was 4 Down in 2021
 - 8 Nutty confection
 - 9 Shoulder wraps
 - 10 Luau dances
 - 11 Genesis 4 birth
 - 12 Digital camera measures
 - 13 Liken
 - 14 Thinks (over)
 - 15 Galileo's hometown
 - 16 Conduct oneself
 - 17 Fill in _ blank
 - 18 That ship
 - 28 Saucepan topper
 - 29 Heroic pilots
 - 30 Marvel mischief maker
 - 34 Household hisser
 - 35 Available call-in channel
 - 36 Judge's instruction
 - 38 Cry from a crib
 - 39 Skater's jumps
 - 40 Launch agency
 - 41 Cash drawer
 - 43 Ancient Eurasian trade route
 - 44 Neighbor of Romania
 - 45 Tall, thin person
 - 47 Handcuffs
 - 48 Sci-fi smuggler/hero
 - 49 Benefits seeker
 - 50 Minor untruth
 - 51 Devoured
 - 52 Scandinavian region
 - 53 Austrian interjection
 - 54 Group on the payroll
 - 55 Everest, for instance
 - 56 Hermits
 - 61 Part of RSVP
 - 63 Brooks or Gibson
 - 65 Sort of snake
 - 68 Doze
 - 70 Bank patron
 - 73 Handled choppers
 - 74 Garlic cousin
 - 75 Is situated
 - 79 Tag incorrectly
 - 80 Plot twist giveaways
 - 81 French cop
 - 83 Pet parasite
 - 84 Put something over on
 - 85 Tracks down
 - 86 Make unclean
 - 88 Sociably rural
 - 89 Hue and cry
 - 90 Ram remark
 - 92 Triple-time dance
 - 93 Hold responsible
 - 94 Broad board
 - 95 Firecracker cord
 - 96 Wheel shaft
 - 97 Take on cargo
 - 98 Taj Mahal city
 - 99 Smartness stats
 - 100 Convent resident
 - 101 Picnic pest

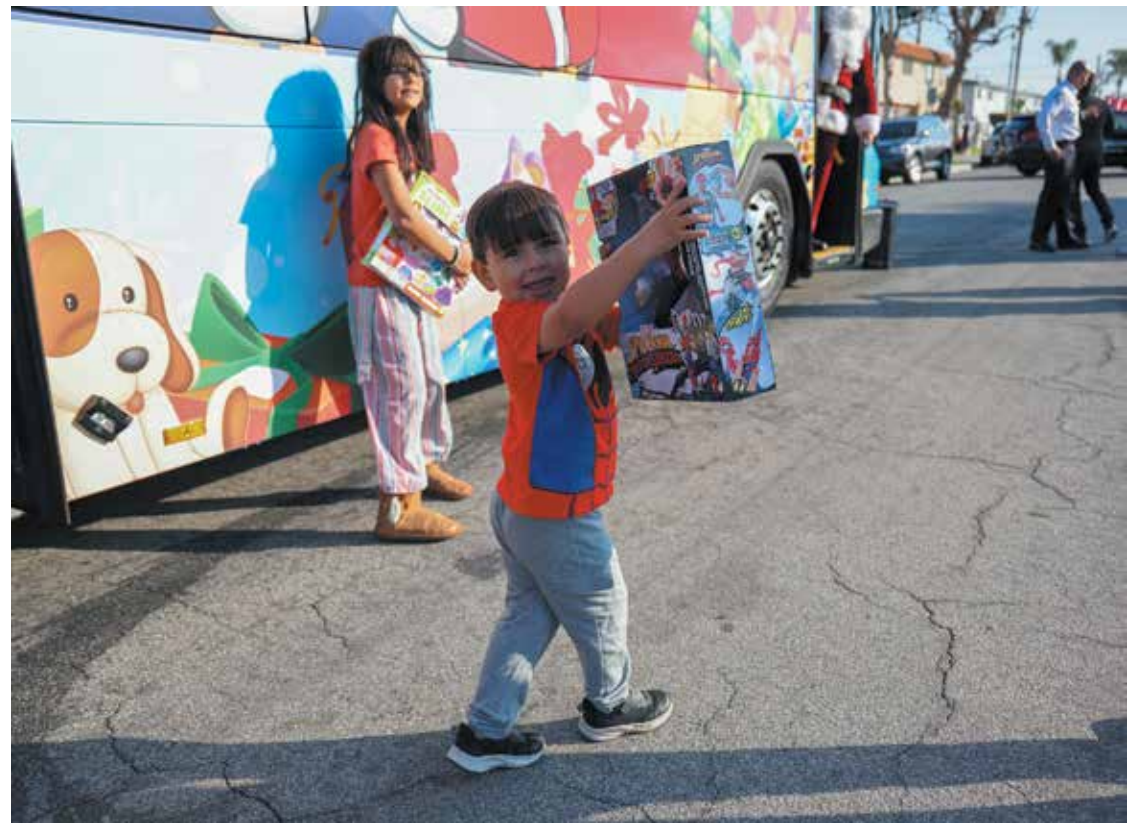
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First Responder Toy Giveaway 2023



City of Norwalk photos

