



FEATURES

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Garcia pledges millions for new YMCA

■ Speaking at a town hall meeting, Rep. Robert Garcia reiterated his support for a new Downey YMCA.

By Alex Dominguez
Staff Writer

DOWNEY — At a town hall address Monday, Congressman Robert Garcia (CA-42) assured that the Downey YMCA would receive significant federal funding for its current demolition and reconstruction project.

Standing in front of a crowd of some of Downey's elected officials, business owners, volunteers, and community leaders inside Downey Fire Station 1, Garcia relayed many of the undertakings currently taking place in Congress.

Notably, he reaffirmed that the YMCA — which closed its already deteriorating facility during the Covid-19 pandemic — would receive funding for its current rebuilding endeavor.

"We were really excited right now that at the federal level, there's enormous amounts of federal funding that is just being made available for programs, for grants, for different types of activities," said Garcia. "One of the opportunities that we have which we're doing this year is we are, at the federal level, going to be providing major grant support to the Downey YMCA to actually reopen and rebuild their facility."

Garcia added that it is currently unknown "what the final number will be," however said that it would be up to the \$3 million that the Downey YMCA had requested.

"Best case scenario, we'll get the full \$3 million," said Garcia. "If for some reason we don't get the \$3 million, it will still be substantial to get them to that number."

Garcia also expressed interest in supporting Downey's library and fire departments.

"Downey has needs that relate to if there's ever a major emergency in the future, as it relates to having an operations — whether it's center or vehicle — that can handle a major catastrophic event in the city of Downey," said Garcia.

Continued on page 2



Rep. Robert Garcia speaks at a town hall meeting Monday in Downey.

(PHOTO BY ALEX DOMINGUEZ)

Downey teen overcomes homelessness to earn full-ride college scholarship

■ Armando Ramirez worked three jobs and slept on friends' couches and still graduated with top honors.

By Alex Dominguez
Staff Writer

DOWNEY — Following a year of unexpected tribulation and hardship, recent Downey High School graduate Armando Ramirez has been awarded the Minute Man Scholarship from the U.S. Army, worth \$250,000.

The Minuteman Scholarship is a U.S. Army Cadet Command initiative to offer Guaranteed Reserve Forces Duty (GRFD) scholarships to candidates who self-select for service in the reserve component, providing full tuition and fees for up to four years at a public or private school.

Ramirez, 18, will pursue accounting and finance at Loyola Marymount University on a full-ride and will participate in Reserve Officers' Training Corp (ROTC) at UCLA. Upon graduation, he will serve as an officer in the United States Army with no college debt.

Eventually, he wants to pursue a master's degree.

It was not an easy road for Ramirez to get to this point, however, as he was forced to endure tragedy and resulting hardship at the start of the school year.

"In August, my grandfather passed away, and he was the sole provider for my family here in Downey," said Ramirez. "Once he passed away, it was kind of the domino effect: Okay, there goes the house. Then my mom and my little brother, they ended up moving to Texas leaving myself and my older brother here, so we were kind of like, 'We need to make this work, we need to find a place to go.'"

Ramirez says that going to Texas with his mom and younger brother was not an option.

"I couldn't move. Before Downey High School I was moving every year," said Ramirez. "Downey was going to be my first school where I finally put my foot down and I said, 'I'm not leaving.' No matter what, I'm going to just be here, and I'm going to make it possible for me to stay at a school for the whole term."

Staying with his brother wasn't likely either.

"When you have two in the package, it's a lot harder to ask for a room," said Ramirez. "We kind of just understood that, 'Hey, you're going to do your thing, I'm going to do my thing, but we've always got each other's back.'"

Ramirez was able to stay afloat surviving on money he had saved from a summer job doing groundskeeping and irrigation around Downey Unified School District, all while couch-surfing between "four or five places" between Norwalk, Downey, Lynwood, and South Gate.

He continued to pick up other work where he could, when Downey High School Principal Tom Houts — who had helped Ramirez get his first summer job — checked in with a new opportunity at Robert F Jacobs Law Office.

"Right now, I'm just doing legal assistant work," said



Armando Ramirez, center, was awarded a U.S. Army Minuteman Scholarship worth \$250,000. Ramirez completed his senior year at Downey High School homeless and working three jobs.

(PHOTO BY ALEX DOMINGUEZ)

Ramirez. "The law firm specializes in immigration and criminal law, so I hear a lot of stories of immigrants coming to America and trying to obtain their visa."

"I take the steps that are needed to legally process them into America. It's very much a fulfilling job, when you complete a whole client's story, and you do all the application process for them, and you see them be able to reap the rewards, it fulfills you as a person. Like, okay, what I'm doing is actually making a big difference in a lot of people's lives."

Ramirez spent most of his time after school at work. The law office wasn't open on weekends though, and Ramirez still needed to make as much money as he could. So he picked up yet another job, this time trucking out of a port in El Monte.

"You gotta be willing to sacrifice some things to be able to accomplish the things that you need to accomplish," said Ramirez.

Still, the wear and tear of his work-heavy life took a toll, which Houts took notice of.

"He pulled me in one day because he started noticing first period I'd be coming late pretty often, and he's like, 'Hey man, what's up? Some of your grades are slipping.' I was like, 'I'm just tired. I'm exhausted.' I felt beat, but I'm trying to show up every day..."

"He helped me out here in school, fixed my schedule around to allow me more time to breathe and work if I needed to work and get extra hours."

Houts even gave him back his old groundskeeping job.

And if this wasn't enough, Ramirez did this while balancing high level and AP classes, while also being an active member of the student body, participating in Key Club, ASB, and football.

"It was definitely a challenge, but I look back now and it's just like, 'Wow, at least I got through it,'" said Ramirez. "It was really cool to feel that, especially graduating and knowing, wow, I for sure did this."

The scholarship is being awarded to Ramirez by Civilian Aide to Secretary of the Army (CASA) Mario Guerra. Guerra

has given 15 scholarships since being appointed CASA five years ago, but never to a student in his hometown of Downey.

Guerra said he has "been looking forward to this day."

"After facing the tragic loss of his grandfather, who was his caretaker, this exceptional young man was faced with the challenge of finding a stable living situation," Guerra said. "However, the Downey community rallied together, embracing him with open arms and providing unwavering support, ensuring that he could complete his senior year of high school just as he had started it: as an outstanding student, athlete, and all-around remarkable individual. He took honors classes and excelled with an amazing GPA. He even worked three jobs during his senior year. Before being sworn in last week he recorded some of the highest testing available in our Army. He basically can choose any of 150 different careers paths available to him. He chose to study finance."

Guerra continued:

"Congratulations to him and our DUSD family who embraced this young man and nurtured his great potential. The leadership at DUSD and Downey High are to be commended. This is a great story of perseverance combined with attitude, effort, and opportunity. And what a small helping hand can mean to a special young man. Armando clearly deserves this scholarship and I look forward to seeing the many great things he will accomplish in the future. And I couldn't be prouder to be

part of the journey for such an outstanding young man."

The Army wasn't necessarily on Ramirez's radar, however, he said he's happy to do what needs to be done to set him up in the best position.

"It's kind of like everything else in my life. It's like, I don't really think about it twice; it's just the next thing I've got to do, okay let's knock it out," said Ramirez. "What's it going to give me in return? I'm never going to do something that's not going to eventually benefit me, you know what I mean?"

"When it comes to school, work, anything like that, if you're investing your time for so long into something, you want to make sure it gives you something back."

Despite all he's been through, Ramirez continues on with a smile. He says it's the best way to go about life.

"I've always been a positive person. I love positivity. I love to radiate positive energy, and surround myself with positive energy," said Ramirez. "I feel like if you're not enjoying your life, all the problems are going to seem a lot more apparent. Things start to seem like they're worse than what they are."

"Even going through all this couch-surfing stuff, and homeless, and having to work a lot, being stressed out from school, it's just, when you're in a happy moment, enjoy it, because you don't know when the next time you're going to get a happy moment is."

Concerts in the Park

When: Wednesday, August 2

Time: 7 pm

Where: Furman Park

Performing: Downey Symphony

The Downey Symphonic Society was founded in 1958 by a group of public-spirited citizens with the goal of bringing symphonic music to the Greater Downey community.

Sharon Lavery's extensive career has led her to conduct in distinguished concert halls across the United States. Since 2007 she has been music director of the Downey Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Lavery also serves as resident conductor of the University of Southern California Thornton Symphony, Chamber Orchestra and Wind Ensemble.

Weekend at a Glance

Friday 91°

Saturday 93°

Sunday 93°

ON THIS DAY

1890: Impressionist painter Vincent Van Gogh shot himself in the chest; he died two days later at age 37.

1919: The Chicago Race Riot of 1919 was ignited after a young Black man was stoned and drowned in Lake Michigan for swimming in an area reserved for whites.

1929: The Geneva Convention of 1929, dealing with treatment of prisoners-of-war, was signed by 53 nations.

1940: Warner Brothers released the Looney Tunes animated short film "A Wild Hare," featuring the debut of Bugs Bunny in his familiar incarnation.



1953: The armistice agreement ending the Korean War was signed at P'anmunjom in central Korea.

1959: The Continental League was announced as baseball's third major league; the league disbanded in 1960 without playing a single game as part of negotiations with Major League Baseball to expand to incorporate at least eight new teams.

1974: The House of Representatives Judiciary Committee voted 27 to 11 to recommend the first article of impeachment (for obstruction of justice) against President Richard Nixon.

1996: A pipe bomb exploded in Olympic Centennial Park in Atlanta, killing 1 person and injuring 111 in the first terrorist attack at the Olympics since the 1972 Games in Munich, West Germany.

2003: Entertainer and comic actor Bob Hope, who was known for his rapid-fire delivery of jokes and one-liners, died at age 100.

Birthdays

Wrestling executive **Triple H** (54), comedy actress **Maya Rudolph** (51), retired baseball player **Alex Rodriguez** (48), former Dodgers pitcher **Max Scherzer** (39), "1000 Lb. Sisters" star **Tammy Slaton** (37), and golfer **Jordan Spieth** (30).

Kassandra Saldana is a baker and entrepreneur on the rise

Garcia hosts Downey town hall



of being able to market her business due to them having a collective 50 years of experience owning their own successful businesses.

Along with the help of her family, Warren High School has supported Saldana's ventures by facilitating access to digital platforms that she might not otherwise have access. These include programs such as Canva and Lightroom, the same platforms that she, and many other entrepreneurs utilize, which have truly helped her business flourish since she started.

Although the school provided Saldana access to these platforms, it was up to her to learn the skills she knows today in order to create posters, digital business cards and other important marketing tools.

Saldana is a young, innovative business owner as well as a member of the Warren Bears Dance Team. Her time management skills have improved due to the additional responsibilities beyond the Dance Team. These include academics, sports medicine club, and of course, owning a small business... Not to mention the juggling that came into play when online schooling became a reality due to the pandemic and managing the many homework assignments and meetings.

Warren High School is always looking to support its Bears, even helping Saldana and her fellow Bears promote

their small businesses through various avenues. As a Dance Team Member, the team advisors/captains have provided her with the opportunity to be a vendor at Warren High's dance events. The support doesn't stop with Warren High School either.

Across the district, Downey High School holds its annual spring flea event that showcases the work of DUSD's student entrepreneurs. You can find Saldana at this event and many other events across the district where she promotes her business.

In addition to school support, many students have supported Saldana, showing how even classmates are willing to purchase from her business for their birthdays, quinceañeras, graduation parties, holidays and any event where some sweets may be needed.

When asked if she had any tips /or tricks to give to her peers or any upcoming entrepreneurs, Saldana shared, "One crucial tip I would give any small business owner is to never give up. There may be days or even months when no order

is received, but the important thing is the determination and dedication you put into your business and the growth that you can accomplish through that."

Along with utilizing the resources that her school provides; she was able to build confidence within herself with the support of her friends and family.

The way that Saldana has created her small business through her commitment and determination is a true testament and should be an example to any high school student who is interested in starting and growing their own business.

Kassandra Saldana is just one of many students enrolled in Downey Unified who have the drive, commitment, and confidence to start their own business. Never giving up is an essential piece of advice that every fellow business owner and entrepreneur should abide by, regardless of how challenging things may become, how difficult maintaining your commitment to your enterprise may be, or even how old you are.

■ Only 16, Kassandra Saldana is owner and operator of Baked Sweets by Kas, selling custom treats and bakery items.

baking business, Baked Sweets by Kas, which continues to grow through her various efforts that include promotions on social media, local pop-up events and advertisements through Warren High School's yearbook.

DOWNEY — A young creative entrepreneur and business owner on her journey within Downey Unified, upcoming Warren High School 12th grader, Kassandra Saldana, shows one of her many talents through her baking skills.

Although she is only 16 years old, Saldana has started her own

Saldana shares, "The businesswomen in my family inspired me to start a small business; my mom and my grandma, who are both business owners, encouraged me to begin my journey in the business world and I can't thank them enough." She also credits her mother and grandmother for the support and knowledgebase

Kassandra Saldana's bakery business can be found on Instagram by searching Baked Sweets by Kas



Continued from page 1

"That's been a request that your council has talked about. These are some of the issues and possible funding opportunities that we would be very happy and excited to help with."

When asked about the homelessness crisis, Garcia said that the state has to do "a dramatically better job at building housing," while also providing mental health care, job opportunities, and assistance and support.

"I believe that every single person that is homeless is a human being, deserves dignity, and somewhere, they have family or had family at one time, and are suffering, often times from severe crisis at no fault of their own," said Garcia. "I also believe that as a mother or a family member, you should be able to feel safe to have your son or daughter walk to school, and not feel that you cannot send your kid on a safe walk to school because something is going to happen, or someone is unwell."

"One that is happening right now is this idea it is also unsafe to allow someone who is suffering, who is extremely mentally ill or suffering to be out on the street without assistance or support. So, this idea is that we should be looking at building housing that also includes a medical support component..."

He continued:

"We're trying to look and find people that are experiencing homelessness, that can also receive medical attention where the state can be more involved in it. We deregulated that a long time ago, and unfortunately, we're not able to help people who need our support. So, these changes to California law should hopefully allow us to do a little bit more."

Garcia represents the communities of Avalon, Long Beach, Signal Hill, Lakewood, Bellflower, Downey, Bell Gardens, Commerce, Cudahy, Bell, Maywood, Vernon, Huntington Park, Walnut Park, Florence-Firestone.

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MAYOR'S CORNER

Hello Downey,

I hope you are enjoying the summer months and you are joining us every Wednesday through August 16th for Concerts under the Stars (Summer Concerts Series) at Furman Park beginning at 6pm, concerts begin at 7pm.

As we continue with hot days, please stay hydrated and do not forget to check on your elderly neighbors. As a reminder, we do have cooling centers in our city at the Barbara J. Riley Community and Senior Center located at 7810 Quill Dr., Downey 90242, and at our Downey City Library next to Downey City Hall on 11111 Brookshire Avenue.

Community Engagement:

As I always say, engaged communities are strong communities. There are many activities coming up for our community residents to join us over the next few weeks.

First, join our police and fire departments next week on Tuesday, August 1st from 5:30-8:30pm for the 10th National Night Out outside our Civic Center Plaza. There will be K-9 and fire rescue demonstrations, free hot dogs, music, and activities for the family. A great opportunity to come together as a community and interact with our first responders.

Rocket Fever returns on Saturday, August 12th at our Columbia Memorial Space Center with activities for the entire family. It all begins at 10am

The Annual GOOD (Gangs Out of Downey) Backpack Giveaway returns Saturday August 12th at 2pm at Golden Park. Over the years this event has grown and thanks to the efforts of GOOD and many volunteers, hundreds of children and families have been blessed with new backpacks and school supplies in time for the new school year. I look forward to seeing you there!

The Mayor's Movie night is Saturday August 12th, at 6pm at Golden Park, following the GOOD backpack giveaway. There will be activities for children and families, music and we will end the day with an evening movie, Luca.

Because our youth matter, we are offering two separate workshops for 7th-12th graders.

Young Men Rise Up one-day workshop makes its debut on Saturday August 19th at the Downey City Library. Topics will include building confidence, interviewing skills, healthy relationships, mental health, personal finance, and social media/cyber bullying. For registration information, ymriseup@downeyca.org

Girls on Fire returns for a one-day workshop at our Downey City Library on Saturday August 26th from 8:30am-4pm and topics on mental health, personal finance, healthy relationships, self-defense, social media/cyber bullying, and healthy lifestyle tips will be covered by great speakers. For registration, email girlsonfire@downeyca.org

Transient Activity, Public Safety & Quality of Life:

We are seeing increased transient activity throughout our city; this has become a greater concern over the last several weeks. I appreciate our residents for notifying us of issues related to homeless encampments and/or criminal activity.

Clean ups will continue in coordination with LA County Dept. of Mental Health, LA Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), PATH and DPD. As I reported last month, we approved a Homelessness Solutions Manager position to assist with these efforts. As this situation continues to worsen (there are currently 60,000 homeless people in the City of Los Angeles, and another 12,000 in surrounding cities in Southeast Los Angeles), Downey must become proactive and aggressive in its efforts to curtail homelessness activity and its impacts on the quality of life for our residents and impacts to our businesses.

As your mayor, alongside our City Manager, we will be discussing efforts to open a Homeless Center with services in Downey. We can no longer stay idle and hope the "clean up" efforts work. As we look at alternatives and common-sense approaches to address this growing concern, my goal is to protect the quality of life for our residents and tackle the safety concerns. I know my council colleagues will agree, our quality of life and public safety are of paramount importance. Stay tuned, I will update you on the developments.

To assist us, please visit www.la-hop.org to dispatch a homeless services outreach team to your area and, if you know of

someone that needs shelter, visit www.lahsa.org/get-help.

On Speed Enforcement & Criminal Activity at Mall:

Traffic accidents in Downey due to speed and erratic driving resulted in fatalities. The most recent collision occurred along Imperial Highway last weekend as a vehicle was traveling at high rates of speed. A portion of Imperial was closed for several hours due to the fatal accident.

With summer out and additional young drivers on the road, DPD will continue to conduct speed enforcement activities throughout our city and look for illegal street racing and individuals utilizing empty parking lots/areas to do donuts. Drivers involved in street racing will have their vehicles impounded and will face steep fines.

Our PD is working with the Mall Management and will also continue to conduct extra patrols in and around the Stonewood Mall.

Community/Economic Development

For our small businesses: In collaboration with the Southeast LA County Workforce Investment Board (SELACO), we are offering monthly Small Business Assistance Workshops at Golden Park from 5:30-7:30pm on the following dates: July 26, August 23, and September 27. For more information, contact Jessica Flores at jflores@downeyca.org

Downey continues to be an aspirational city where residents take pride in their homes, home values and neighborhoods. Special attention will be placed on unkempt yards/lawns, cars on lawns, tents or structures erected on front lawns (this is against city code). Additional focus will be on illegal dumping and excessive trash and debris around neighborhoods and commercial properties. It is up to all of us to continue doing our part to maintain a clean city.

Downey's anti-litter campaign #BINIT:

Residents may call CalMet/ Athens services at 562.259.1239

to arrange a bulky item pick up. Additional important numbers to save on your phones:

- Graffiti Hotline: (562) 923-4484
- Abandoned Shopping Carts: (800) 252-4613
- Illegal Dumping: (562) 904-1161

Neighborhood Watch group in your neighborhood:

This is a wonderful way to connect with neighbors and watch for suspicious activities. If you see something, please, say something. Currently, we have over 230+ groups throughout our city. To find out more information or to apply, please contact Neighborhood Watch Coordinator Stephanie Arroyo at (562) 904-2374 or sarroyo@downeyca.org

As we continue to see a rise in crime in every city, increased thefts with no consequences for criminals, remember those who change policies on crime are those people WE elect to office.

As our communities' struggle, let us pause and remember, policies soft on crime and soft on criminals will continue to put our communities in danger and diminish our collective quality of life. Let us think about that the next time we vote!

Lastly, I wanted to share with all of you I had the opportunity to attend the 40th Annual NALEO (National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials) in New York City alongside my council colleagues.

I am pleased to report I was voted back to the NALEO Board of Directors and once again voted to the position of Secretary on the Executive Board. I also had the pleasure of co-emceeding one of the morning sessions and meeting and introducing three White House cabinet secretaries to the conference: Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra, Department of



Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and US Small Business Administration Secretary Isabella Casillas-Guzman who has family ties to our beautiful Downey! I am honored and humbled to represent Downey on a national board and contribute to the bipartisan dialogue on important policy issues that affect our communities across the country.

I welcome appointments for in-person visits. You can also follow my Facebook page for regular updates at Claudia M. Frometa Mayor, City of Downey, along with our City's Facebook page, City of Downey

Government Agency, for regular updates. Please also download the Downey App on your mobile device. Through this app, you can immediately report illegally dumped items, street repairs, trash, graffiti removal, neighborhood light repairs, etc.

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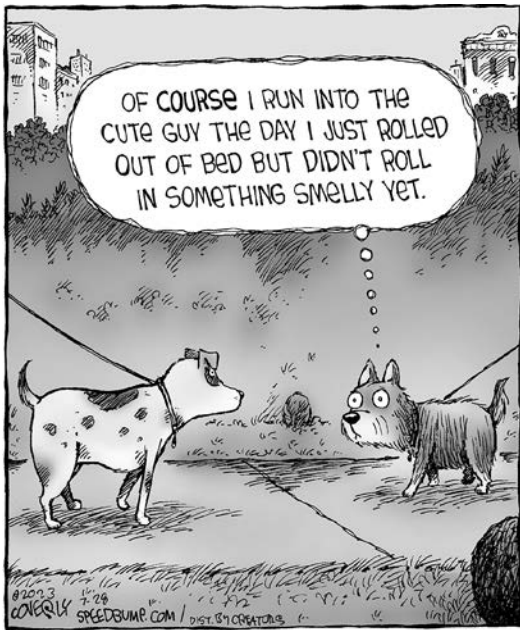
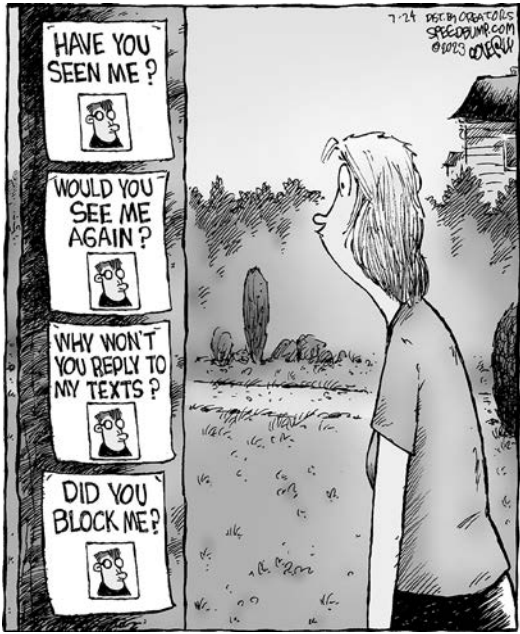
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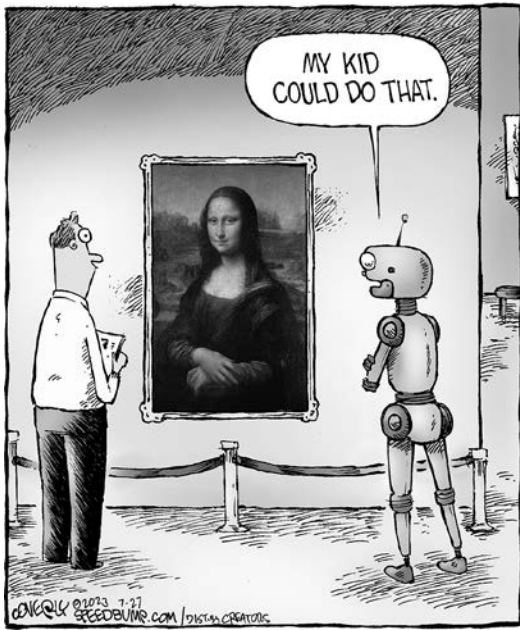

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SPEED BUMP



DAVE COVERLY



Downey Community Calendar

CITY MEETINGS

1st & 3rd Wednesday, 6:30pm: Planning Commission, Council Chamber at City Hall.
 1st Tue., 4:00pm: Recreation and Community Services Commission, Council Chamber, City Hall.
 2nd & 4th Tue., 6:30pm: City Council, Council Chamber.
 3rd Tue., 6:00pm: Library Advisory Board, at Downey City Library.
 3rd Thurs., 6:30pm: CERT, at Downey City Council Chamber at City Hall, for more info call 299-5462.
 4th Mon., 5 pm: Green Task Force, at City Hall.

Regularly Scheduled Meetings

MONDAYS

7 pm: Boy Scout Troop 2, at Downey United Methodist Church, call 869-6478.
 4:30 pm: Courage Forward Meeting, at 10829 New St, 2nd Floor, call 213-545-6810.
 4th Mon., 7:30 pm: Downey Numismatists, at Downey Retirement Center, call 862-6666.

TUESDAYS

9 am: Quilters group, at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, call 803-4459.
 9:30 am: Downey Seniors Club, at Apollo Park, call Irene Vallini at 328-7039.
 10 am: Downey Bocce Club, at 7850 Quill Drive, call John Fiorenza at 652-4399.
 12 pm: Rotary Club, at Rio Hondo Events Center, call Mel Sanchez 562-665-4125.
 6 pm: Toastmasters Club 587, at First Baptist Church, contact Salvador Cervantes: tmsalcuede@gmail.com.
 7 pm: Downey Knights of Columbus Bingo, at 11231 Rives Ave., call 923-1932.
 7 pm: Boy Scout Troop 441, at Apollo Park, email scoutmaster@downeyboyscouts.com.
 7:30 pm: Downey Master Chorale, at Cornerstone Church, contact info@downeymasterchorale.org.
 1st Tues., 7:30 am: Gangs Out of Downey, at City Hall training room.
 2nd Tues., 6 pm: Downey Fly Fishers, at Apollo Park, call 425-7936.
 3rd Tues., 12 pm: Downey Newcomers Club, call Marilyn 928-2623.
 3rd Tues., 6:30 pm: Community Emergency Response Team meeting, Fire station 1, 12222 Paramount.
 3rd Tues., 6 pm: American Legion #270, at Sizzler Restaurant, call 544-0372.
 Tues., Thurs. & Sat., 10 am: Downey Bocce Club, at 7850 Quill Drive, call John Fiorenza 652-4399

WEDNESDAYS

7 am: Kiwanis Club, at Rio Hondo Events Center, call Steve Roberson at 927-2626.
 10:30 am: Ballroom dance class, at Downey Community Center, call 776 7270.
 1 pm: Women's Bocce Club, at 7850 Quill Drive, call Marie Puch at 869-4366.
 7 pm: Royal Rangers Outpost 132, at Desert Reign Church, call 562-861-6011.
 1st Wed., 11 am: Woman's Club of Downey, call Cheryl Olson 833-8954.
 1st Wed., 11:30 am: Downey Coordinating Council, Community Center, call Bobbi Bruce 440-5416.
 1st Wed., 7:30 pm: Downey Stamp Club, at Maude Price School cafeteria, call 928-3028.
 2nd Wed., 11:30 am: Christian Women's Club, call Marilyn 928-2623.
 2nd Wed., 3:30 pm: Keep Downey Beautiful, at City Hall, call 904-7102.
 2nd Wed., 7 pm: Downey Model A Club, at Gallatin School Cafeteria, call 484-8415.
 3rd Wed.: Downey Dog Obedience Club, for information please call Gina 869-5213 or Valerie 420-2972.
 3rd Wed., 10 am: Los Angeles County Quilters Guild, at Women's Club, call 860-8821 or 927-3635.
 3rd Wed., 6:00 pm: Sister Cities of Downey, at Barbara Riley Senior Center, call Gloria Nezhualcoyotl (562) 776-6136.
 4th Wed., 7:30 pm: US Coast Guard Aux. Flotilla 5-10, First Presbyterian Church, call Brian 419-5420.
 Wed. & Fri., 10:15 am: Senior Bingo, at Apollo Park, call 904-7223

THURSDAYS

7:30 am: Connections Networking, at Bob's Big Boy, for info., call Nick Smith, 861-5222.
 7:30 am: Soroptimist Int'l of Downey, for information, call Mia Vasquez, 806-3217.
 9:30 am: Take off Pounds Sensibly, at Barbara Riley Senior Center, call (800) 932-8677.
 12 pm: Bingo, at Woman's Club of Downey - Proceeds benefit Rancho.
 12 pm: Optimist Club of Downey, at Rio Hondo Events Center.
 6:30 pm: Downey United Masonic Lodge # 220, 8244 3rd St., call 862-4176.
 7 pm: Boy Scout Troop 351, at Furman Park, contact 562-500-5093 for more information.
 7:30 pm: Downey Elks Lodge #2020, call 803-3557.
 1st Thurs., 6 pm, All other Thurs. 12 pm: Kiwanis Club of Downey, at Rio Hondo Events Center, call Roy Jimenez 283-2335.
 1st Thurs., 7:30 pm: Downey Amateur Radio Club, EOC room Downey Fire Station #1, 12222 Paramount Blvd.
 2nd Thurs., 12 pm: Creative Purposes, call Bill Wallace 923-2311.
 2nd Thurs., 7:30 pm: Beaming Rebel Foxes Collectors Club, call Carl D. Jones at 923-2400.
 2nd & 4th Thurs., 6:30 pm: Downey Lions Club, at Mimi's, call Lenora (310) 283-9825.
 3rd Thurs., 4 pm: Public Works Committee, at City Hall Training Room.
 4th Thurs., 10 am: Assistance League, at Casa De Parley Johnson, call 869-0232.
 4th Thurs., 7:30 pm: Downey Historical Society programs, at Community Center, call 862-2777.

FRIDAYS

7:30 am: Pro Networkers, at Mimi's Cafe, call Barbara Briley Beard at 869-7618.

SATURDAYS

9 am: Farmers Market, Downey Avenue at 3rd Street, call 904-7246.

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THE NEWSDAY CROSSWORD

Edited by Stanley Newman (www.StanXwords.com)
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 by Mark McClain

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Lakes region. women through woods in the Great (75 Across), Natty Bumpo guides Cooper novel THE PATRIOT, NBA draft. In the James Fenimore as the first overall pick in the 1995 drafted by the Orlando Magic Shaquille O'Neal (63 Across) was from the Greek for "unequal." Specifically, a SCALENE triangle

Why a third-party 2024 presidential ticket is a dangerous gamble

By John Avlon

John Avlon is a journalist and author of “Lincoln and the Fight for Peace.”

Here’s a bit of mind-blowing data: The number of self-identified independent voters hit a record high of 49% in a March 2023 Gallup poll — meaning that there are essentially as many self-identified independent voters in the United States as Democrats and Republicans combined. And in 2022, there were nine states where registered independent voters outnumbered Democrats or Republicans.

We spend a lot of time dividing American politics into a bitter, zero-sum struggle between Democrats and Republicans. That’s definitely true in Washington, DC, but it misses the reality that political beliefs are a lot more nuanced in most people’s lives.

In fact, if you put aside the play-to-the-base horseshoe and pay attention to actual election results, you’ll see that independent voters ultimately decide who wins major American elections. And the number of independent voters has grown precisely as the two parties have become more polarized over the last 15 years.

What’s far less established is the wisdom of running a third-party bipartisan ticket for president — with an eye toward appealing to those independent voters — especially when former President Donald Trump, now a leading GOP presidential primary contender, could be the unintended beneficiary of that effort.

That potential is driving the increasingly heated debate around a possible third-party presidential run by the organization No Labels, which I helped co-found in 2010 as part of a bipartisan group trying to depolarize our politics (though I haven’t been involved since 2013).

Controversy and confusion abound around these two entwined topics, so let’s define our terms.

Independent voters are the subject of endless debate in political circles. Some beltway analysts deny their existence, arguing that they are not really independent but closeted partisans who lean one way or another. But around election time, some of those same voices will focus on independent voters as the essential bloc to win — which has the added advantage of being true.

This is clear in presidential years. For example, in 2016, Trump edged Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton by four points among independents, according to CNN exit polls. In 2020, Biden beat Trump among independent voters by a 13-point margin.

But it’s also true in midterm elections, where independent voters provide the swing needed to shift control of the House. In 2006, after former President George W. Bush’s Iraq War and Hurricane Katrina mishaps, independents swung to the Democrats by 18 points — making Democrat Nancy Pelosi the first female Speaker of the House. In the post-Obama Tea Party year of 2010, Republicans won independents by 19 points and returned to power. And, in 2018, bolstered by a rejection of Trump, independents swung back to Democrats by 12 points, giving them a large majority in the next congressional session.

But this is where things get really interesting, and we start to skate toward the current state of play. In 2022, Democrats defied recent pendulum swing precedent (and many pre-election polls) by narrowly winning independent voters by two points. It appears that independent voters punished the GOP’s continued embrace of Trump, his shambolic handpicked candidates (paging Georgia’s Herschel Walker) and the overturning of abortion rights after a half-century of precedent.

Which brings us to the question, what do independent voters believe? Contrary to the polarized perception of politics, many — if not most — Americans have political beliefs that do not reflect one party orthodoxy (and, as we’ve seen with Trump’s hijacking of the GOP, party beliefs can change as well). I’ve focused on independent voters and centrist politics for the better part of two decades, beginning with my first book, “Independent Nation,” so let me help clear up some myths.

It is true that independent voters are not a monolith. Some independent voters are on the far right and some are on the far left, dissatisfied with the Republican or Democratic Party because they are not extreme enough. But the majority are in the middle — and independent voters are more likely to describe themselves as moderate than either Democrats or Republicans.

Their political beliefs don’t fit neatly inside either major party. But they can broadly be described as fiscally responsible, socially liberal and strong on national security, as I explained in a 2008 Wall Street Journal column. Subsequent analysis of independent voters, done by Pew Research Center in 2019, shows that even as the nation has become more polarized, they have maintained many of their same moderate positions.

They are primarily frustrated by the inability of the two parties to find common ground on policy issues — such as gun reform and immigration reform — where the polls show the parties are more divided than the American people are.

That’s the good news: We are not as divided as we think we are. And that’s what No Labels is trying to hammer home with a newly released 67-page policy booklet called “Common Sense,” in which the organization delineates broad compromise proposals that could emerge if a commonsense majority of Americans were actually empowered to run our politics.

It’s easy to dismiss this all as pie in the sky, but that would be a mistake. For example, the booklet details what a grand bargain on immigration could look like — being tougher on border enforcement, while seeking a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and making it easier to have legal immigration so our economy continues to thrive.

This is not particularly controversial; it just doesn’t reflect special interest-driven ideological absolutism on either side of the aisle — which is part of why immigration reform, for example, has been stalled for decades.

But it needs to be said that President Joe Biden has proposed just this kind of a balanced deal in his most recent State of the Union. And that’s where the fundamental problem about asymmetric polarization becomes really important — and a

critical hurdle to No Labels’ efforts.

In Biden’s first two years, more than 300 pieces of bipartisan legislation were passed, including landmark laws like the Infrastructure Investment and Job Act and the CHIPS and Science Act, both major economic drivers for the country. In fact, the Problems Solvers Caucus in Congress, which was created, in part, thanks to No Labels, actually was instrumental in getting many of these bills passed.

No Labels’ Achilles heel in this presidential effort is that it seems to treat Biden and Trump as equally polarizing. While a Trump and Biden rematch would no doubt be unpopular with many Americans, to say that Biden and Trump represent equal threats to the republic does not reflect reality. Only one of them tried to overturn an election by lies to protect his ego. And only one party seems likely to renominate someone who’s been indicted at least twice.

I have no problem with the policies being put forward by No Labels, nor do I disagree with many of the sentiments expressed at their recent town hall event in New Hampshire featuring Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and former Republican Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman.

They’re absolutely right in pointing out that the twisted incentive structure of partisan politics has pushed our country to the brink. To the extent that No Labels can provide some muscle in the middle of our politics, it could represent the hopes of many independent voters who feel politically homeless across the political spectrum. And creating ballot access to seed a third party in solid red or blue states could help give voters an alternative choice on a statewide level, which would help heal our divisions on a microlevel down the line.

But the Electoral College mathematics of presidential elections suggest that a key way a figure like Trump — who remains deeply unpopular with the American people at large — could be reelected is if a third-party candidate plays spoiler. Even Republican senators are now warning that a No Labels ticket led by Manchin would hurt Biden and help Trump. That is an extraordinarily reckless risk at this particular time in our history.

There are concrete examples of this spoiler effect in our recent history. Consider Ralph Nader’s 2000 Green Party candidacy getting over 97,000 votes in Florida, a state that Bush won by 537 votes and, as a result, the presidency. Or 2016, when Jill Stein and Gary Johnson’s third-party campaigns arguably had a similar effect in that tight election, which also helps explain why GOP-backed operatives bolstered Kanye West’s absurd and aborted 2020 campaign, seemingly designed to siphon off Black votes from Democrats.

We are many moves away from the general election, and No Labels says it will pull the plug on its effort if it looks like the organization might unintentionally elect Trump. But, in general, independent voters want less polarization — and even the possibility of a Trump reelection promises to pour gasoline on the hyperpartisan fires that threaten to burn down our republic.

Fentanyl is killing a shocking number of young Americans

By Senators Joni Ernst and Tim Kaine

Sen. Joni Ernst is a Republican from Iowa. Sen. Tim Kaine is a Democrat from Virginia.

Illicit fentanyl that originates abroad is one of the most damaging weapons employed against our homeland, destroying lives and families across our country.

The drug is the leading cause of death for Americans ages 18 to 49, according to a Washington Post analysis. And based on figures released by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of 195 Americans died every single day in 2021 due to this lethal drug, which is primarily smuggled into the US from Mexico. To put that in perspective, that is about the equivalent of the death total on 9/11 about every 15 days.

Although they are a thousand miles away from the border, Iowa and Virginia — the states we represent — are feeling the impact. Among Iowans under the age of 25, drug overdose deaths have increased 120% in the last five years, according to the Iowa Department of Health. In 2012, there were 50 fentanyl overdose deaths in Virginia, according to the Virginia Department of Health; in 2022, that number skyrocketed, taking the lives of nearly 2,000 people.

The culprit is clear. Mexican transnational criminal organizations are sprawling enterprises that have diversified their illicit activities, which now range from drug smuggling to human smuggling, black market tobacco products and petty retail theft. Cartels’ fentanyl trafficking far surpasses the US government’s response. We must scale our efforts immediately to combat this national security threat.

To truly end the fentanyl epidemic, the response must be proportionate to the problem. That is going to take a coordinated, whole-of-government approach that begins with prioritizing the issue, followed by strong interagency coordination. That’s why we introduced the Disrupt Fentanyl Trafficking Act of 2023 this week to direct more federal attention and coordination to deter the criminal networks responsible for trafficking.

The national security challenge of dismantling the cartels is daunting. US Northern Command estimates drug cartels operate widely in about a third of Mexico’s territory, and the International Crisis Group estimates that over 500 armed groups operated in Mexico between 2009 and 2020.

Fentanyl can be churned out quickly and cheaply, with precursor chemicals coming mainly from Chinese companies and the use of pill presses to create individual tablets. Cartels manufacturing fentanyl in Mexico then smuggle this deadly substance across the border into America.

Mexico’s leadership has not scaled military and law enforcement to respond, despite thousands of homicides linked to cartel violence in Mexico last year. In fact, the joint effort between the US and Mexico to fight drug trafficking has faced significant challenges since Andrés Manuel López Obrador became president in 2018. López Obrador has refused to acknowledge Mexico’s role in the crisis, insisting illegal fentanyl is not produced in the

country despite ample evidence to the contrary.

This denial has only exacerbated the situation. Between 2017 and 2021, the number of fentanyl trafficking offenders increased 950%, from 146 to 1,533 in the US. And there is no question as to who is trafficking these illicit drugs to our communities. Over the course of one year, investigators in the US Drug Enforcement Agency’s Omaha office linked 26 cases of drug and fentanyl trafficking in five states in our nation’s heartland directly to cartels. Curbing fentanyl trafficking and breaking up cartel networks demands an aggressive and clear approach.

As members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, we know the US Department of Defense plays a crucial role in the nation’s counter-drug intelligence and monitoring operations, and these operations are meant to provide federal law enforcement with actionable intelligence to further investigations. However, a lack of interagency cooperation has hampered our government’s counter-fentanyl efforts. And the ripple effects of failure are being felt in every single state.

To solve this problem, our bipartisan legislation would classify fentanyl trafficking as a national security threat to the US, encouraging the DoD to use resources like training and up-to-date information sharing to support counter-fentanyl efforts more actively, improve coordination efforts between Defense, State, Treasury and federal law enforcement agencies to address this crisis, and direct the Pentagon to develop a fentanyl-specific counterdrug strategy that includes enhanced cooperation with Mexican defense officials.

While recent talks with Mexican officials have been productive, more needs to be done. Mexico and the US need to be active partners in combating criminal organizations and curtailing illicit drug trafficking. Increased coordination between our countries will expand awareness of the problem and ultimately help ensure that cartels can no longer hide from justice. The more we coordinate with Mexico, the more the US can scale counter-cartel operations and build a more credible deterrent.

The DoD has a role to play in curbing the crisis. It’s time to put the Pentagon’s tools to use and save lives.

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Paging Dr. Frischer...

By Dr. Alan Frischer

Today's topic may sound like science fiction. Can we include meat (real meat) in our diets without farms and ranches, without killing billions of animals every year, and without contributing (as much) to global warming?



"Cultivated meat" is grown in a laboratory from animal cells. Think of brewing beer, but instead of growing yeast or microbes, animal cells are grown. In this field of tissue engineering, a scientist might perform a biopsy (typically harmless) to harvest tiny pieces of stem cell tissue from an animal; or use cells from a cell bank (cell banks already exist for medication and vaccine development); or use a fertilized egg.

These animal stem cells are placed into a large, clean, and controlled stainless-steel tank. They are bathed in vitamins, sugars, salts, amino acids, and fatty acids. Stem cells multiply and differentiate into muscle, fat and connective tissue. They take perhaps two weeks to grow, and the resulting product can be shaped into a variety of forms. There is theoretically no limit to how much meat can be grown from a single cell. The resulting product has been referred to as cell-cultivated meat, cultured meat, cell-based meat, cell-grown meat, or lab-grown meat.

The first lab-grown meat was developed in 2013 by researchers in the Netherlands. Currently, there are some 150 companies working on products including beef, chicken, pork, lamb, and fish. In June, the U.S. Department of Agriculture approved the sale of lab-grown chicken made by both Upside Foods and by Good Meat. At this time, Singapore and the United States (Singapore came first) are the only countries to have approved cell-based meat for consumer consumption. It can now start to appear in restaurants and

grocery stores.

What are some benefits of producing cultivated meat?

- Clearly, there is no need to breed or kill animals.
- Emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane are hugely reduced.
- Land isn't necessary for grazing, growing feed, or raising the animals, so clearing of land and forests is reduced.
- There is far less chance for contamination and variability. Currently, many animals are given high doses of antibiotics, and this can lead to antibiotic resistance. Many are raised with synthetic growth hormones.
- By adjusting nutrient profiles to achieve less saturated fat and cholesterol, or more vitamins and healthy fats, nutritional quality and impact on human health are improved.

The negatives?

- Due to the current manufacturing process, it's possible that cultivated meat may not provide significant savings in water or energy use, or reduced carbon dioxide emissions.
- Presently, the process is very expensive, and cultivated meat costs much more than meat from conventional sources.
- Studies are looking into long-term health effects, as well as the nutritional value.
- Does it truly taste like the real thing? I haven't tried it...yet...so I can't contribute my opinion.

Is lab grown meat suitable for vegetarians or vegans? It is indeed still animal meat, regardless of how it is produced. There are many reasons people choose a vegetarian or vegan diet; if it is due to animal welfare reasons, then cultivated meat might be acceptable. Whether this will be considered Kosher is yet to be seen!

It's difficult to predict future trends. It may be years before these products are commonly available, and decades before cell-based meat might replace a substantial portion of

the traditional meat industry. A major hurdle will certainly be consumer acceptance. For now, studies show that people prefer plant-based options when considering alternative forms of protein. Of course, very few people have actually tried it.

Finally, this new product is, well, weird. I have, however, discussed in past columns that due to climate change, increasing population, etc., our Earth may not be able to support continued animal agriculture. Instead, insects may become a widespread protein source. Call me traditional, but this option sounds far better!

Dr. Alan Frischer is former chief of staff and former chief of medicine at Downey Regional Medical Center. Write to him in care of this newspaper at 10927 Downey Ave., Suite C, Downey, CA 90241.

POET'S CORNER

Seven in the Woods

Am I as old as I am?
 Maybe not. Time is a mystery
 that can tip us upside down.
 Yesterday I was seven in the woods,
 a bandage covering my blind eye,
 in a bedroll Mother made me
 so I could sleep out in the woods
 far from people. A garter snake glided by
 without noticing me. A chickadee
 landed on my bare toe, so light
 she wasn't believable. The night
 had been long and the treetops
 thick with a trillion stars. Who
 was I, half-blind on the forest floor
 who was I at age seven? Sixty-eight
 years later I can still inhabit that boy's
 body without thinking of the time between.
 It is the burden of life to be many ages
 without seeing the end of time.

Jim Harrison, Dead Man's Float, Copper Canyon Press, 2016

Poet and novelist Jim Harrison spent much of his life in Michigan on a farm near where he was born, as well as Montana and Arizona. He connects with rural landscapes to explore human drives, and here he looks backwards and forwards in time. Poetry Matters is curated by Lorine Parks

Orchestra revives summer park concert tradition

Children will again be encouraged to help conduct the Downey Symphony Orchestra.

By Lorine Parks
Society Editor

DOWNEY — "I'm thrilled," said Sharon Lavery, music director of the Downey Symphony Orchestra, "that the kids of Downey will once again get the chance to conduct our talented musicians."

Mark your calendar for Wednesday, Aug. 2 at 7 pm, because that's when the Downey Symphonic Society presents another rousing Pops Concert in Furman Park. This year's theme is Broadway Celebration, and for the first time in several years, children of every age are again invited to come up and conduct the Orchestra in the evening's finale of Souza marches.

"There's nothing like seeing their bright-eyed faces," said Sharon, "when they step up onto the podium to lead our Downey Symphony."

Music is part of Downey's evenings at the park that include families picnicking on blankets, with slices of homemade coconut cake and lemon merengue pies for dessert provided by the Downey Rose Float Association. Pleasant twilight breezes drive away the heat and cares of the day.

What makes symphonic music different? The orchestra has all the band instruments, adds timpani in the percussion, plus the full range of strings: violins, violas, cellos, bass. The sound is fuller because the strings bring out the timbre, the tone color of each instrument. You can hear how each one sounds within the orchestral as a whole.

When the Orchestra plays this year's Broadway Celebration, the sound is extra rich. In Broadway on Parade, Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Phantom of the Opera" has that spine-tingling deep dark sound. The songs of Irving Berlin dance and shine. In Sound of Music Medley of Rogers and Hammerstein you'll hear every one of your favorite things, bright, mellow, fuzzy, and warm.

"Every year," said Sharon, "one of my favorite moments in the park concert is when we play American Salute by Morton Gould, and then Armed Forces Salute. We pay tribute to all those in the audience who have served, or who are currently serving, or who have family members currently serving in one of the branches of the United States Armed Forces. They stand while their service anthem is played. The rest of the audience applauds softly.

"We're grateful," added Sharon, "that the kids of Downey will once again get the chance to conduct our talented musicians, as the climax of the evening. After

several years of children not being able to share the baton because of precautions about Covid, every child will get a turn."

Leading a professional orchestra in a symphonic arrangement of Souza marches has to be a lifetime thrill. The Downey Symphony Orchestra is a professional regional group that has been acclaimed and has brought recognition to Downey throughout the Los Angeles basin.

Parents will be taking pictures, even of babes in arms, so the kids can relive their moment. The Orchestra plays on steadily as the parade of children climbs the steps to the stage and each gets their thirty seconds to make musical magic.

The Pops in the Park was started over 30 years ago under the baton of Dr. Tom Osborn. Dr. Tom loved donning a tall striped Uncle Sam hat and leading the children onto the stage and placing the baton in their hands. The DSS has always offered the free concert as part of their outreach to children and families in Downey.

The performing arts have taken a heavy hit from three years of Covid, and audiences and revenues have been slow to return. This year the City of Downey is helping the Downey Symphonic Society by sponsoring the DSS's presentation of the Symphony's summer concert. Being able to present a composer's composition

through a live performance by skilled musicians, is the highest expression of the art. The ripple effect on the audience is priceless.

Contributing to this Downey tradition is the City Council's way of continuing its dedication to the special quality of life in Downey.

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DOWNEY FOUNDATION FOR INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM

Dear Downey Patriot Valued Reader,

On behalf of The Downey Patriot, I am thrilled to announce the establishment of the Downey Foundation for Independent Journalism, a non-profit foundation launched by the Downey Patriot newspaper. As a cherished member of our community, I wanted to share this exciting news and invite you to be part of our journey.

For several years, the Downey Patriot has been dedicated to providing reliable and unbiased news coverage, championing the principles of journalism, and serving as a beacon of truth in our community. We strongly believe that independent journalism is a cornerstone of a thriving democracy, and it is with this conviction that we have founded the Downey Foundation for Independent Journalism.

The Downey Foundation for Independent Journalism aims to ensure the sustainability and integrity of local news reporting, fostering an informed and engaged citizenry. Our mission is threefold: to support the training and professional development of journalists, to promote investigative journalism, and to enhance access to reliable local news for all residents of our community.

To achieve these goals, we are seeking tax-deductible donations from generous individuals like yourself who share our commitment to independent journalism. Your support will play a crucial role in empowering local journalists, enabling them to cover important stories, hold those in power accountable, and provide unbiased information to our community.

With your contribution, we will establish scholarships and training programs for aspiring journalists, ensuring that the next generation is well-equipped to uphold the principles of ethical and accurate reporting. We will also dedicate resources to support investigative journalism projects, fostering in-depth reporting that uncovers truths, reveals corruption, and sheds light on critical issues affecting our community.

Additionally, the Downey Foundation for Independent Journalism aims to address the challenge of access to local news in underserved areas. We will explore innovative approaches, such as expanding our digital presence, partnering with community organizations, and launching initiatives to bridge the information gap for those who face barriers to accessing reliable news sources.

We kindly invite you to contribute to the Downey Foundation for Independent Journalism and become a vital part of our mission. Your tax-deductible donation, no matter the size, will make a difference in supporting local journalism and nurturing a vibrant democracy.

Thank you for considering our request and for your commitment to the ideals of independent journalism. Together, we can make a lasting impact and ensure that our community remains well-informed, engaged, and empowered. I am happy to answer any questions you may have or provide further information on how your contribution will be utilized. Please contact our office at (562) 904-3668 or jennifer@thedowneypatriot.com.

We look forward to your support and the possibilities that lie ahead.

Sincerely,

Jennifer DeKay

Jennifer DeKay
Chief Executive Officer
Downey Foundation for Independent Journalism

Donations can be mailed to:
Downey Foundation for Independent Journalism
10927 Downey Avenue, Suite C
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