

Segerstrom Center for the Arts Offers Sensory-Friendly Programming

As part of its 2015-2016 Family Series, the Segerstrom Center for the Arts is presenting a series of sensory-friendly performances with the hope that everyone in the community will have the opportunity to experience the joy of attending a live performance.

Showing in the month of March are “Big Bad Wolf” and “Egg,” both performances specially designed for sensory sensitivity.

These shows are designed specifically for patrons on the autism spectrum, and others with sensory sensitivity, to enjoy with their families; this is the perfect opportunity to introduce young children to live theater.

Sensory-friendly precautions are taken to help patrons enjoy their theater experience:

In advance of each performance, families will receive a social story—a visual introduction for the child of everything he or she will encounter so nothing is a surprise. From a picture of the parking areas to ticket takers and the inside of the theater, everything will look familiar when they arrive.

□ They will also receive information about the show itself so they know what to expect from the performance.

Various components are highly considered and alterations are made in areas such as: lighting, sound, seat configuration, staff training and being relaxed when it comes to movement and speaking during a performance.

For more information about the Center’s sensory-friendly performances, visit their website at

www.SCFTA.org/sensoryfriendly, or email Access@SCFTA.org.

Gordon Bowley presented with Mayor's Award

Longtime Costa Mesa resident Gordon Bowley was presented the Mayor's Award on Tuesday March 1 as a way to honor and thank him for his years of service to the community, especially in the areas of youth and high school sports.

Bowley has been actively involved in a number of different community groups and organizations, including the Costa Mesa Chamber of Commerce, the Hoag Hospital Foundation, St. Andrews Church and the YMCA to name a few.

But it has been his work with Costa Mesa United and the Costa Mesa Youth Sports Council where his impact has been felt the most, Mayor Steve Mensinger said as he presented Bowley with the award, which included a key to the city.

Bowley served as both the president of Costa Mesa United and as Chairman of the Youth Sports Council, and he has been an instrumental figure in the growth and success of the Mesa Verde Classic Golf Tournament, which is the largest fund raising event for youth sports in Costa Mesa. This year's event raised more than \$90,000.

"For your years of service to this community, and your outstanding leadership, it is my honor and privilege to

present you with the Mayor's Award," Mensinger said.

Second Harvest Food Bank at Adams Elementary

Every school day at Adams Elementary is filled with services to help students learn and grow.

This year thanks to the extraordinary coordination efforts of school community facilitators, Adams has added another service for its school community to expand its wrap around services.

The Second Harvest food bank is a monthly program where families come to the school and participate in a farmers' market style food pantry.

There is no cost for the program, and families leave with more fresh fruits and vegetables than they can carry.

Additionally, representatives from The California Champions for Change provide families with healthy recipes and training on reading nutrition facts on food labels.

Each month, the food bank becomes a gathering place for families to meet each other, connect with their children's school and develop healthy habits that will last them a lifetime.

The food bank is run by volunteers from within the Second Harvest organization and parents from Adams Elementary School.

To find out more about Second Harvest at Adams, please contact Ilse Tabora in the Adams front office.

CMPD Park Ranger Returns from Deployment

January was a month of achievement and celebration for the Costa Mesa Police Department with several new hires and promotions.

In addition to four new officers joining the department, on Jan. 21 the CMPD welcomed home Park Ranger Lorna Lyttle who had been deployed to Bagram, Afghanistan as a member of the U.S. Army Reserves.

Lyttle joined the CMPD Feb. 19, 2006 and worked for the department as a park ranger for four years before her decision to enlist with the U.S. Army Reserve. Her service in the Army Reserves began on May 17, 2010 and she was deployed to Bagram Afghanistan in April of 2014.

“You don’t feel the full affect until you land and realize where you are,” she said.



Lyttle spent a year as a convoy escort protecting and assisting with the move of fuel and U.S. military equipment between bases.

Lyttle is glad to be back, "It was an experience that I will never forget and now that I am home, I am just trying to get back to the daily grind and back to living life as I knew it before I left with a whole lot more gratitude for being a US Citizen."

When she is not working Lyttle enjoys spending time with her family, relaxing and going for a good drive.

Lyttle's long term goal is to further her education and promote through the army ranks. She currently holds a sergeant title and hopes to attain rank of an officer.

In the meantime, she is happy to be home and back with the CMPD; her other family.

"They are my other family, you see them every day and spent a lot of time together," she said.

Jessica Mejia gets February CEO Leadership Award

At the February Meet and Greet last Thursday Feb. 25, City CEO Tom Hatch presented Deputy City Clerk Jessica Mejia with the CEO Leadership Award.

"The City Clerk's Office is right on the front lines of City Hall," Hatch said. "We have a great team in that office who help the public with all their requests on a daily basis and Jessica is a big part of that team."

Mejia has been with the City of Costa Mesa for a year and a half. Prior to coming to Costa Mesa she worked for the cities

of San Dimas and Monterey Park.

She graduated from Cal Poly Pomona with a Bachelor's Degree in English. When she's not helping manage the City Clerk's office and marathon council meetings, she is running marathons.

She is an avid runner and over the last two years she has run 28 half marathons, and two full marathons, the L.A. Marathon and the San Francisco Marathon.

Mejia has been very helpful assisting all the new Committee and Commission secretaries on how to prepare agendas, comply with legal requirements and run the meetings.

She serves as a positive role model as she provides guidance, leadership and assistance to the secretaries.

In addition to Mejia, the city paid tribute to 10 newly hired employees as well as 11 who received recent promotions.

Summer Musical Theater Program for Students Returns to Segerstrom Center for the Arts

Segerstrom Center for the Arts is preparing for its annual Six Days of Broadway summer musical theater camp for middle and senior high school students. Students participating in these

week-long intensives are introduced to musical theater technique taught by some of the industry's leading professional artists and instructors.

Classes will cover topics including musical theater performance, acting, dance, audition technique, acting on camera and introduction to the business of acting. Sessions for students ages 11 – 13 will be held June 27 – July 2 and students ages 14 –19 will be held July 5 –10.

Enrollment is currently open and scholarships are available for both weeks of camp. These scholarships cover the full enrollment fee and are made available for families that require financial assistance.



(photo courtesy:
Seegerstrom Center for
the Arts)

Tony Award nominee and Broadway/film star Erin Dilly returns to lead the program along with Broadway veterans Stephen Buntrock, Danny Gurwin, Hank Stratton, Emily Rozek and other notable guest instructors.

The program culminates with the talented cast of students showcasing their week's efforts to invited family and friends. Classes will take place in the professional rehearsal and performance spaces of the Center's education center located in the Renée and Henry Seegerstrom Concert Hall.

For more information and to register, please visit www.SCFTA.org/SixDays, call (714) 556-2122 ext. 4333 or email

SCR's Junior Players Take the Stage

The Witches, adapted by David Wood from Roald Dahl's popular fantasy novel, and directed by Mercy Vasquez, will be presented by South Coast Repertory's Junior Players in the Nicholas Studio, March 12-20, 2016.

The cast are members of SCR's Junior Players (grades 6-8), chosen through audition after at least two years in the Theatre Conservatory. These young actors attend class twice weekly during the school year, with additional rehearsal time prior to their annual performance.

The Junior Players portray all the roles in Wood's stage version, and include Costa Mesa residents Sasa Klein and Caitlyn Roum in featured roles.

SCR's Junior Players (grades 5-8), Teen Players (grades 9-12) and Summer Players (grades 4-12) present three productions annually in the Nicholas Studio and Julianne Argyros Stage. Players are chosen through audition from students in SCR Theatre Conservatory's Kids and Teen Acting Classes.

Something for everyone at Segerstrom Center for the Arts

Segerstrom Center for the Arts will celebrate two milestones during the 2016 – 2017 Season: the 30th Anniversary of Segerstrom Center for the Arts and the 10th Anniversary of the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall and Samueli Theater, both in September 2016.

This momentous season will celebrate the many performances, artists and projects of the past and continue to add new, innovative and community-inspired programming. The Center invites the entire community to join in this season of celebration.

The Center presents a broad range of programming for audiences of all ages, including international ballet and dance, national tours of top Broadway shows, intimate performances of jazz and cabaret, contemporary artists, classical music performed by renowned chamber orchestras and ensembles, family-friendly programming, free performances open to the public from outdoor movie screenings to dancing on the plaza and many other special events.



(photo courtesy: Segerstrom Center for the Arts)

Segerstrom Center for the Arts is Orange County's largest non-profit arts organization. In addition to its six performance venues, Segerstrom Center is also home to the American Ballet Theatre William J. Gillespie School, where students ages 3 – 14 are taught by acclaimed teachers utilizing the renowned ABT National Training Curriculum in studios utilized by the world's greatest dancers and choreographers.

The Center's arts-in-education programs are designed to inspire young people through the arts and reach hundreds of thousands of students each year. In addition to the presenting and producing institution Segerstrom Center for the Arts, the 14-acre campus also embraces the facilities of two independent acclaimed organizations: Tony Award®-winning South Coast Repertory and a site designated as the future home of the Orange County Museum of Art.

Segerstrom Center for the Arts is also proud to serve as the artistic home to three of the region's major performing arts organizations: Pacific Symphony, the Philharmonic Society of Orange County and the Pacific Chorale, who contribute greatly to the artistic life of the region with annual seasons at Segerstrom Center for the Arts.

Private Costa Mesa School Teacher named as one of the top 25 in county

Mariners Christian School of Costa Mesa announced that its beloved fourth grade teacher, Kristin Knecht of Mission Viejo,

was chosen as one of the Top 25 Teachers in Orange County for 2016 by OC Parenting Magazine.

The surprise announcement came in Knecht's classroom, who received balloons, flowers, and cheers from fellow teachers, administrators, and her students.

Knecht has over 20 years of teaching experience in fourth grade, four of them at MCS.



“Mrs. Knecht is dedicated to the idea of fostering creativity, imagination, and finding ways to apply content to the real world to motivate her students. She desires to know the unique dreams and aspirations of each student in the classroom in order to make learning come alive,” said Elementary Principal Reggie Biancalani.

One of Knecht's educational commitments is to model for her

students what it means to be a “lifelong learner” by pursuing professional development opportunities as often as she can.

From attending the California Math Council Conference so that she can teach her students to think like mathematicians, to the latest training on Literacy from Columbia University Teacher College Reading and Writing Program, Knecht is ready to implement top teaching strategies to benefit her class.

She understands the importance of assessing growth as vital data to ensure students are increasing their level of achievement.

Recently she helped implement a new national standardized assessment program called MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) geared towards identifying students’ strengths and weakness in the math, reading, and language.

This year, Knecht served on the school’s accreditation steering committee, the admissions committee, and she is instrumental in co-leading a group of 130 parents and 4th grade students to Sacramento and San Francisco each spring to make social studies come alive.

In addition to being a wife of 17 years and mother to her daughter Riley (an MCS student), teaching is truly Knecht’s passion, and it is not uncommon to find students from years past visiting her classroom for a hug and pep talk.

Developers break ground on new luxury living project at

580 Anton

To celebrate its soon-to-be-constructed 250-unit luxury apartment building, executives from Legacy Partners joined together with city and business leaders on Thursday Feb. 18 for a mid-morning Groundbreaking Ceremony at the 580 Anton Blvd. South Coast Metro location.

Standing in front of the active construction site complete with bulldozers, Timothy O'Brien, the managing director of Legacy Partners hailed the virtues of this new project and all it stands to offer the residents who will live within walking distance of world-class dining, shopping and entertainment.

"We set out to design something that is timeless, classic and beautiful," O'Brien said. "This is a fantastic place to develop a project."

O'Brien, a lifelong Costa Mesa resident who attended Estancia High School, also complimented the city employees who assisted him in getting this project approved, and he even went as far as calling Costa Mesa's staff the best in the state.



Costa Mesa Mayor Steve Mensinger and Councilwoman Sandy Genis also attended the event and heaped praise on the project and what it will mean to Costa Mesa.

“This project stands to create tens of thousands of jobs,” Mensinger said.

When complete, the building will yield more than 200,000 square feet of rentable space, which will have luxury amenities and appliances as well as a fully fitted clubhouse, a concierge entry, a dog-wash station, a fitness center with a lake view, a wine bar and much more.



Legacy Partners, a privately held real estate firm based in San Francisco, acquired the former retail center in May of 2015 in a joint venture with Prudential Real Estate Investors. The development is set to complete by fall of 2017.

Chief Sharpnack names Jennifer Ruffalo as new Communications Supervisor

The Costa Mesa Police Department continued a trend of new hires and promotions this Wednesday Feb. 17 as Chief Rob Sharpnack announced the promotion of Jennifer Ruffalo to Communications Supervisor at a swearing-in and badge-pinning ceremony outside his office.

“These promotions are so uplifting for our department,” Chief

Sharpnack said.

Sharpnack noted that the department's communication staff answered more than 120,000 calls for service last year. And he had high praise for Ruffalo, who began her career with Costa Mesa police in 2004. Two years later, she was already a training officer and shift lead.



“You gain such an appreciation for what these folks do day in and day out,” Sharpnack said. “Jennifer is a team player who always puts the organization first.”

In 2009, Ruffalo was working with a trainee who had taken a call from a person in distress who was unable to speak. Working closely with the trainee, they were able to assist the caller with their emergency situation.

Later that year, the trainee was given an Award of Recognition at the State 911 level for exemplary performance, and that 911 call is still used in the department's communication's training program.

Ruffalo had her badge pinned on her by her sister Courtney as several high-ranking officers, city staffer and members of the communications team looked on.

“I thank you all for your support,” she said.

Tips for Tree Care During Drought

The urban forest is a cherished resource that provides cleaner air, cooler temperatures, enhances public health and creates vibrant lively neighborhoods. As the climate becomes warmer and drier, saving our existing tree canopy and planting new trees is wise. [Click here for tips for tree care during the drought.](#) [Click here for additional information.](#)