

Parks and Community Services presented with prestigious award

Costa Mesa Parks and Community Services staff attended that California Park & Recreation Society (CPRS) annual conference in Long Beach to pick up a big statewide award during the closing gala.

The Costa Mesa staff was one of only seven agencies presented with an “Award of Excellence” for creating community through innovative programming.



The city won the award for its Ranch Afterschool Program, which is a collaboration with the OC Fair & Event Center and the Newport-Mesa Unified School District.

During this unique after school experience, students focus on

agricultural concepts like gardening, livestock, and leather working.

The students have a hands-on experience caring for animals on the Farm which includes: chickens, sheep, pigs, goats, llamas, cattle, and horses.

They learn responsible animal care by cleaning stalls, grooming, and exercising the animals.

Additionally, the Farm dedicates land for each student to create and maintain an individual garden. Students' gardening responsibilities include planting, watering, fertilizing, weeding, inspecting for pests and harvesting their plot.

Agricultural education helps children learn about healthy food choices and teaches them different ways to access fresh fruits and vegetables. Most importantly, students begin to understand the deep impact agriculture has in their lives past, future and present.



"This free program is a true collaboration and would not be possible without the support of the Orange County

Fairgrounds,” said Ashley Ocasio, the city’s assistant recreation supervisor. “This strategic partnership provides many Costa Mesa youth the opportunity to experience an unique after-school program, in which the focus in on agriculture and farming”

The California Park & Recreation Society awards program recognizes outstanding achievement in the areas of facility design, park planning, marketing and communication, and community improvement and programming through demonstrating the principals of resourcefulness, execution, accomplishment and alignment with the parks and recreation mission.

Veterans of all stripes attend Heroes Hall groundbreaking

On Wednesday morning March 16, several hundred civic, business and elected leaders, dignitaries and war veterans celebrated the groundbreaking of the new Heroes Hall veteran exhibit that have a permanent home at the OC Fair & Event Center.

“This is dedicated to the honor and sacrifices to those who served our country,” said Michele Richards, the vice president of business development for the fair and event center.



Richards was one of a number of speakers who included board members Doug La Belle and Nick Beradino and Bolton Colburn, who runs the Exhibits and Education Department at the fair and event center.

The groundbreaking duties for what will be the county's first museum dedicated to veterans fell to those who served in wars from Afghanistan to World War II.

Those veterans included one of the last remaining Tuskegee Airmen, Robert Friend, Korean War vet Robert Dugan, Vietnam vet Frank Orzio, Desert Storm vet Douglas Wooley and Claudia Acosta of the U.S. Army.

The OC Fair & Event Center was once part of the Santa Ana Army Air base, a 1,300-plus acre training facility that was active during World War II. That base is now home to the fairgrounds, Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa High School, Davis Elementary

and TeWinkle Park.

“As the former home of the Santa Ana Army Air Base, the OC Fair & Event Center is a natural fit for the Heroes Hall Exhibit. We are honored to host this historic exhibit and look forward to seeing it become a reality in the coming months,” the fair’s CEO Kathy Kramer said in a statement.

The exhibit is expected to encompass more than 12,000 square feet with indoor/outdoor exhibit space. The former “Memorial Gardens” building will be relocated and reconstructed as part of the overall exhibit, which will also include memorabilia and tributes to California veterans.

Crews are expected to break ground in March with an expected completion date of Veteran’s Day, Nov. 11, 2016. The exhibit is expected to attract more than 1.5 million visitors each year.

In 2015, the OC Fair & Event Center Board voted in favor of a \$2 million contribution to start the funding efforts for Heroes Hall.

The Board also approved the creation of the Heroes Hall Veterans Foundation to lead in fundraising for the ongoing maintenance and operation of Heroes Hall.

The city of Costa Mesa donated \$25,000 toward the project, one of many local entities who have showed their support.

To learn more about how to donate and for periodic updates on the Heroes Hall exhibit [click here](#).

Mayor's award goes to longtime education leader Kirk Bauermeister

Life-long Costa Mesa resident and Newport-Mesa educator and coach Dr. Kirk Bauermeister received the Mayor's Award at the Tuesday March 15 City Council meeting.

In his 18 year career with the Newport-Mesa Unified School District, Bauermeister is the only person to serve as principal at all four of Costa Mesa's secondary schools, TeWinkle and Costa Mesa middle schools as well as Estancia and Costa Mesa high schools.

Prior to that, he was a coach and the athletic director of Costa Mesa High School.

"This was really an easy one to pick," said Mayor Steve Mensinger, regarding his choice of Bauermeister for this award. "I've never met somebody who is more committed to what he does. He gives us all inspiration."

Bauermeister, who was accompanied by his family, said from an early age he decided to follow in his father's footsteps and work in education.

"It's an honor to be recognized by a city that has done so much for me," he said.

That's A Wrap! Senior Center Bus Gets An Artsy New Makeover

The Costa Mesa Senior Transportation Program's bus has recently undergone a makeover. What was once a simple, traditional, white passenger bus is now a colorful piece of art that transports seniors to and from the Senior Center and to personal appointments throughout the City.

The bus has been coined as the "Costa Motion" and now bears the slogan of "Keepin' Seniors Moving."

The artistic design, which was created by City staff, incorporates an area for both City program advertising and Conference and Visitors Bureau advertising.

This is just another unique way to promote Costa Mesa as "the City of the Arts."

The Happy Feet Youth Running Club Sprints Back Into Action

The free fitness program for youth called the Happy Feet Youth Running Club allows local Costa Mesa youth to learn the basics in short and long distance running while participating in fun weekly practices and an end-of-season superhero themed 5K run through beautiful Fairview Park.

The program emphasizes teamwork, goal setting and healthy habits all while having fun exercising.



Each child will receive a free Happy Feet T-shirt as well as a complimentary entrance into the Costa Mesa Community Run.

The first practice and registration day are set to take place this Saturday, March 12 at Fairview Park.

How to deal with an increase in coyotes

With residents reporting a recent increase in the number of coyote sightings in Costa Mesa, we want to again share some tips on what to do to if a resident has a coyote encounter and how to make your home or backyard less inviting to these predators.

The public should keep in mind that historically, coyote

attacks upon humans are extremely rare. In a study presented at the 2004 North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, there were only 56 reported coyote-versus-human attacks resulting in injuries in Southern California in the previous 25 years.

This figure is extremely small when compared to an average 4.5 million people who are bitten by dogs nationally each year. While not normally a danger to humans, coyotes will display defensive behaviors if threatened or cornered. Therefore, it is important to leave a comfortable distance between you and a coyote.

Small pets can easily become coyote prey. Cats and small dogs should not be allowed outside alone, even in a fenced yard. It is highly recommended that small pets always be accompanied by their owner. Though coyotes generally hunt between sunset and sunrise, they can be observed at all hours of the day and will not pass up the opportunity for an easy meal. A dog or cat left in a backyard can be taken in a matter of moments.

Many steps can be taken to protect you and your property from nuisance animals like coyotes and other wildlife:

- Fence off animal enclosures (fully enclose if possible).
- Keep cats and small dogs indoors or in the close presence of an adult.
- Feed pets indoors.
- Store trash in covered heavy-duty containers.
- Keep yards free from potential shelter such as thick brush and weeds.
- Enclose the bottoms of porches and decks.
- Eliminate potential food and water sources, such as fallen fruit and standing water.
- Eradication and/or relocation of the urban coyote is not effective. These programs actually provide a vacuum in nature, causing these animals to have even larger litters, ultimately increasing the coyote population.

- Practicing these measures will help minimize the nuisances and losses caused by urban coyotes.
- If you locate an injured or potentially dangerous coyote in Costa Mesa, call CMPD Dispatch at 714-754-5252, or for general inquiries leave a message with Costa Mesa Animal Control Services at 714-754-5311.

For even more information, we encourage residents to watch the following Public Service Announcement regarding coyotes and ways to discourage them.

Prostitution Crackdown Results In 32 Arrests, Mostly At Local Motels

Costa Mesa PD Special Investigations Unit (SIU) made 32 arrests for prostitution over the last two weeks, according to Police Chief Rob Sharpnack.

The majority of these arrests have come from the Vagabond Inn and the La Quinta, Sharpnack said.

These arrests involved both in-person solicitations and meet ups secured through online advertisements, he said.

Additional investigation has shown the prostitutes have left for other cities and the word from multiple interviews is that the Costa Mesa Vice Unit is cracking down and Costa Mesa is not a safe haven for prostitutes.

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.

City joins in celebration of Tet Festival and Lunar New Year at OC Fair and Event Center

Council Member Sandra Genis and members of the city staff attended the opening of the 35th Annual USVA Tet Festival this past weekend at the OC Fair and Event Center.



Costa Mesa was once again home the world's largest Tet Festival, attracting over 60,000 guests to the three-day event.

Featuring culturally enriching attractions, live entertainment, festive games and rides, a variety of ethnic foods, and a spectacular firecrackers show, the festival celebrated the Lunar New Year and the "Year of the Monkey."

UVSA is a 501(c)3 non-profit, non-partisan, community-based organization founded in 1982 to bring together Vietnamese American youth including students from different colleges and high schools throughout Southern California.

The festival serves as a vehicle to help develop student volunteers in the community to become well-rounded leaders with a strong sense of cultural awareness and civic responsibility to improve their communities.

Over the past 15 years, UVSA's members have awarded over \$1.25 million of festival proceeds as community grants to non-profit organizations across Southern California.

Fire battalion chief recognized for his work in terror attack preparation training

Battalion Chief Kevin Diamond was recognized recently as the Fire Terrorism Liaison Officer of the Year for Orange County at an annual meeting of the Orange County Intelligence Assessment Center.

The assessment center is responsible for assisting in keeping our Orange County community safe from terrorist attacks. The web page can be found [here](#).

Chief Diamond was instrumental in getting every member of the Costa Mesa Fire and Rescue certified as a Terrorism Liaison Officer.

These officers are trained to recognize possible indicators of terrorist activity, and then report such findings to assessment center.

Chief Diamond has been the coordinating officer for Costa Mesa Fire and Rescue and the assessment center.

Assistant CEO details challenges city faces on homeless issues

Costa Mesa Assistant CEO Rick Francis told attendees of the monthly Chamber of Commerce Breakfast Boost that the city is working hard through community outreach and with the help of clergy and others to address the problems of homelessness here.

“We are willing to do our fair share and we will never back down from that,” Francis told the group gathered at the Costa Mesa Country Club on Thursday morning. “But if every city took care of their own, this problem would be a lot easier to manage.”

Francis noted that recent counts of homeless in Costa Mesa show a 45 percent increase in that population, but his presentation highlighted the success of the city’s outreach efforts and the work of the Network for Homeless Solutions, a city-sponsored group that includes, clergy, code enforcement, police and city outreach staff.

For example since 2013, the city was able to house 122 homeless people and reconnect 31 people with family members. From June of 2015 through December, volunteers clocked upward of 880 hours helping the homeless.

He pointed out to the audience several of the factors that lead to homelessness, including the price of housing, underemployment, a dramatic increase in drug use and abuse, especially heroin, and sober living home operators who have clients that drop out and go back onto the streets.

Changes in legislation to address prison overcrowding have also led to problems as criminal offenders spend less time

incarcerated and are free to commit crimes more quickly.

Joining Francis at the breakfast were members of the city's Network for Homeless Solutions, including Bill Nelson of Fresh Beginnings Ministry, Ian Stevenson of Trellis and Muriel Ullman, the city's homeless liaison. City CEO Tom Hatch and Fire Chief Dan Stefano also attended the breakfast.

CMPD adds another officer this week

Costa Mesa Police Department brass and ranking city leaders welcomed new Police Officer Nick Wilson in a swearing-in ceremony early Tuesday morning.

Police Chief Rob Sharpnack officiated the ceremony with some welcoming words for the new lateral hire officer, who formerly worked as a Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputy. Sharpnack noted Wilson's already impressive career achievements.

"He really embodies what we embody as a city and a police department," Sharpnack said. "I'm excited to welcome Nick. We are fortunate to have him."

Wilson is one of three boys raised by John and Antonia Wilson in the small town of San Marino, nearby Pasadena. He is a graduate of San Marino High School, where he played high school baseball. He served as a cadet for San Marino Police Department from 2008-2011.

Wilson's father is a retired 31-year veteran of the California Highway Patrol and one of his brothers is an officer for the

San Marino Police Department. Wilson graduated from Rio Hondo with an Associates of Science degree in Administration of Justice in 2011.

Wilson was hired by the Los Angeles Sheriff Department in 2012. Since then he served in the custodial environment and is currently assigned to the courthouse in Compton.

Several family members attended the ceremony, including his father and brother. Also attending was his wife, who placed his badge on him after he was sworn in by City Clerk Brenda Green.



Mayor Steve Mensinger and Councilmember Katrina Foley, City CEO Tom Hatch and Assistant CEO Rick Francis, and several members of the police command staff were also in attendance.



The department's three new academy graduates, Brandon Kim, Tyrus Ranck and Matthew Richie, also made an appearance to support their fellow officer.

Chief Sharpnack noted that the department continues to move in the right direction with these new hires, which puts the staffing levels now at 112 sworn officers.