

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS BEGIN

The road to winning a CIF-SS championship gets underway
SPORTS

Palos Verdes' Ryan Rakowski is tackled by Mission Viejo's Jonavan Asuncion, left.



PHOTO BY PAUL RODRIGUEZ

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HOSPICE



PHOTOS BY MARK RIGHTMIRE — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

London Hamilton, left, a certified nursing assistant, with Archie Cachola, a former pediatric doctor at CHOC, in his room at The Heavenly Home in Mission Viejo on Oct. 26. Cachola, who loves to cook, talked about his career as a doctor and his love of cooking during a conversation at the residential facility dedicated to end-of-life hospice care.

'Taking care of family'

The Heavenly Home embraces end-of-life patients and their loved ones for comfort in time of grief



There is a backyard and patio at The Heavenly Home in Mission Viejo that residents and their guests can spend a moment or a day enjoying the outdoors.

By Theresa Walker
Correspondent

It didn't take long for Joanne Saxe to ease into The Heavenly Home in Mission Viejo.

Heidi Emmert describes her 83-year-old mother's amazement when she brought Saxe to the board-and-care home on a quiet cul-de-sac off La Paz Road. Saxe saw the room designated for her — at the front corner of the house, with a spacious private outdoor patio — and instantly felt at home.

"She said, 'Is this my bed? Can I get in it right now?'" Emmert recalled seven months after her mother's passing, unable to hold back tears.

Saxe had been diagnosed with small cell lung cancer on March 1, a terminal disease so aggressive it quickly overwhelmed her family. The retired teacher was suffering so terribly, she had become too

HOSPICE » PAGE 8

MIDDLE EAST

Israel resists 'pause' in war

U.S. presses to let humanitarian aid into Gaza, but Netanyahu insists hostages must be freed

By Josef Federman, Bassem Mroue and Lee Keath
The Associated Press

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL » Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday pushed back against growing U.S. pressure for a "humanitarian pause" in the nearly month-old war to protect civilians and allow more aid into Gaza, insisting there would be no temporary cease-fire until the roughly 240 hostages held by Hamas are released.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken made his third trip to Israel since the war began, reiterating American support for Israel's campaign to crush Hamas after its brutal Oct. 7 at-

WAR » PAGE 10

MAINE

Biden visits sites of mass shooting, says to residents: 'You're not alone'

By Fatima Hussein, Patrick Whittle and Colleen Long
The Associated Press

LEWISTON, MAINE » President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden stood for a moment of silence and placed a bouquet of white flowers at a makeshift memorial outside Schemengees Bar and Grille, one of the scenes of the state's deadliest mass shooting.

Biden then bent to hug Kathy Lebel, owner of the bar where eight people died in the Oct. 25 massacre. Seven more died at the nearby Just-

SHOOTING » PAGE 12

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Finding beauty in distinct styling

Queer and transgender clients gain safe space for hair and personal care

By Victoria Ivie
vivi@scng.com

Stylist LuJuana Woods, who has specialized in giving Black hairstyles and cuts for two decades, has long felt compelled to help those in the queer and transgender community look and feel their best selves.

"It makes a difference in how people feel, how they look at themselves," Woods, an ally, said. "We're a huge community, so why not do something for somebody else?"

Like Woods, many hair stylists and salons across Southern California are leading the charge in centering LGBTQ+, nonbinary and gender-nonconforming people, at a time when these commu-



TERRY PIERSON — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Cal State San Bernardino grad student Savannah Hull smiles in a mirror as she sees her new hairstyle by stylist Emily Castaneda of Gods and Heros Salon of Riverside in San Bernardino on Oct. 18.

nities' rights and gender-affirming care are being challenged nationwide.

Gender-affirming care — which

includes medical care, mental health, social and even cosmetic services — can include any care or

HAIR » PAGE 7

SPORTS



JEFF GRITCHEN — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Inaugural girls flag football ends historical season

This year, girls had their own CIF-sanctioned flag football. Dozens of teams formed in the state for the inaugural season. PAGE A11

Set clocks back one hour



INSIDE

The time adjusts early Sunday morning

How does change to standard time seriously affect your health? Experts say the twice-yearly ritual can have more serious effects on human health. PAGE A8

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TODAY'S FORECAST

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TIME CHANGE

Fall back: How move to standard time can affect your health

By Associated Press

Brunch dates and flag football games might be a little easier to get to this Sunday, when phones grace early risers with an extra hour of rest before alarm clocks go off.

The downside: Next week across most of the U.S., the sun will set well before many folks step foot out of the office, leaving them to run errands or take walks in utter darkness. Come Sunday, Nov. 5, daylight saving time is out and standard time is in, and will last until March 10.

No need to wait until the midnight hour to prepare for the time change that clocks in early Sunday, when 2 a.m. becomes 1 a.m. Before bed beckons Saturday night, rewind the clock on the microwave, oven, car, or any other device not yet clever enough to make the leap on its own.

Besides scheduling stumbles and sleep habit disruptions, experts say the twice-yearly ritual can have more serious effects on human health.

Many Americans are already sleep-deprived, and a change in time messes with sleep schedules

even more, says Dr. Phyllis Zee, a sleep researcher at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago, although she says “falling back” and gaining an extra hour is generally easier on the body than “springing forward” and losing one.

Chronic sleep deprivation can increase levels of stress hormones that boost heart rate and blood pressure, and of chemicals that trigger inflammation, research suggests.

“Just that one hour can change the amount of sleep you get, the quality of sleep that you get,” Zee said. Off-kilter sleep can af-

fect people’s ability to multitask, stay alert, and even maintain their balance, making them more prone to accidents.

Molly Hart, spokeswoman for AAA’s Auto Club Group, warned that there may be an uptick in accidents on the road following the time change.

“With daylight savings coming to an end, what people really need to be focused on is their driving now in the afternoon when it’s darker earlier,” and when they may be feeling drowsy, she said.

Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and most of Arizona do not observe daylight saving time.

Some members of Congress have pushed to end the back-and-forth and make daylight saving time permanent.

The U.S. Senate in March 2022 passed a bipartisan bill named the Sunshine Protection Act, but it stalled in the House.

The bill was re-introduced by Sen. Marco Rubio in March of this year, then referred to committee, where it has remained idle.

Hospice

FROM PAGE 1

scared to leave her house in San Juan Capistrano.

Moving to The Heavenly Home hospice house brought peace to everyone.

Emmert said her mother was able to spend her last days in comfort at The Heavenly Home, a non-profit residential care facility whose six beds are dedicated exclusively to the elderly who are dying.

It’s among a mere handful of hospice-focused board-and-care homes in California.

Saxe died the morning of March 28 — five days after arriving — in the bed she couldn’t wait to climb into, loved ones at her side.

She was only the second resident at The Heavenly Home, which opened its doors in early February after several years in development.

Emmert, who works full-time, felt relieved to have found such a welcoming place with 24-hour caregivers her mother had come to love.

“Honestly, this is where you want to spend the last days of your life,” Emmert said.

“It is so peaceful.”

‘They are the best’

The Heavenly Home is operated by the nonprofit Southern California Hospice Foundation, an organization fueled by community donations, a dedicated staff and board, and the persistence of Executive Director Michelle Wulfestieg.

The foundation has helped people in need of support since its start in 2002. That outreach has included financial and other basic assistance, from food deliveries to transportation, and granting the wishes of the dying, such as a last-minute wedding ceremony.

But the foundation itself is not a hospice service, which provide end-of-life care to people deemed to have six months or less to live. The six residents of The Heavenly Home are served by six different hospice services.

Government programs, such as Medicare and Medicaid, or private health insurers typically cover most of the cost of hospice service, which largely involves symptom and pain management. It also can include emotional, mental and spiritual support. A social worker may be involved.



An angel sits on the patio outside the room where Heidi Emmert brought her mother.. MARK RIGHTMIRE STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

It’s been Wulfestieg’s mission for the foundation to open an affordable respite for the dying. Every day, she said, she turns down desperate people calling on behalf of a family member. All six bedrooms have been occupied since June.

“We have seen the dire need for hospice to be a place, to be a home — because a lot of people can’t die at home,” she said.

“They might have difficult living situations, or they don’t have family and friends to care for them.”

Wulfestieg escaped death twice herself after suffering two strokes, at ages 11 and 25. Now in her early 40s, she became executive director of Southern California Hospice Foundation in 2010.

Being placed on hospice does not include a place to stay, nor does it pay for daily caregiving — cooking meals, bathing and attention to other personal needs. Most people eligible for hospice are being served in their homes and those of relatives, at hospitals or in nursing care and assisted-living facilities.

Residents of The Heavenly Home can stay as long as they are certified for hospice care. Under government rules, hospice eligibility is re-evaluated every six months.

Since the arrival of the first resident on Feb. 8, The Heavenly Home has taken in a total of 11 people. Five, including Emmert’s mother Saxe, died at the home.

The décor, furnishings and much of the labor that gives The Heavenly Home its comfy atmosphere — inside and out — was provided by donations and volunteers.

Fall decorations — pumpkins and gourds, faux autumn-colored leaves — accent the foyer and living room, where gentle piano music plays on a TV monitor. A cart with binders for each patient sits unobtrusively off to one side. A large soothing seascape painted by Orange County artist Andrea Moni graces a wall.

Estimated cost for this first year of operation is \$500,000.

One of the residents, Archie Cachola, is a pediatrician who once cared for children with cancer at local hospitals, including Children’s Hospital of Orange County and Miller Children’s and Women’s Hospital in Long Beach.

Now Cachola, 71, is dying from thyroid cancer that has spread to his bones.

A once-robust healer who for a time also ran his own catering service, Cachola needs help to move about, is hard of hearing and suffers severe pain in his back.

A native of the Philippines, he never married, never had children of his own. His dream had been to open a hospital to give free care — all volunteer — to sick kids, “my children,” he calls them. He had to retire two years ago, after his diagnosis.

Cachola was living alone in his apartment earlier this year when he had a fall. A home health service contacted The Heavenly Home. He came in May.

“I’m so lucky to be placed in this board and care,” Cachola said on a mild autumn day, resting on an outdoor couch beneath the gazebo in the home’s backyard.

“They are the best.”

He described the home as “comfortable and quiet” and the caregivers “excellent.”

“I’m really happy,” he said, adding with a chuckle, “my standard is very high.”

Wulfestieg stood to one side of him as he chatted and on the other sat his chief caregiver, certified nursing assistant London Hamilton.

Hamilton came to The Heavenly Home as a temporary worker through a registry service. She had worked at Children’s Hospital in the past and recognized Cachola. She knew well his reputation as a physician. Right away, she wanted to honor his lifetime of concern for children by caring for him.

“He set the bar for the other oncologists,” Hamilton said of Cachola. “It brings tears to my eyes because of all the wonderful things he did for so many

children.

“I wanted to be there for him in his time of need.”

Hamilton said she initially thought The Heavenly Home would be like any other board-and-care assignment. But she likes it so much she’s asked to become a permanent full-time employee.

“When you step through the door, you just get this positive vibe,” said Hamilton, who was pulling a double shift that day.

“It’s no longer work — it’s like you are taking care of family.”

Low-income patients welcome

The Heavenly Home employs 12 people, including a house manager and caregivers that rotate in and out, two always on site most of the time and one overnight. Some work full-time, some part-time, some per diem.

Wulfestieg says finding and keeping staff remains a challenge, as it has been throughout much of the healthcare industry since the pandemic.

On a sliding scale based on income, residents pay anywhere from \$40 a day for their board and care to up to \$425 a day. The standard industry cost for 24-hour care is about \$500 a day per patient, Wulfestieg said.

“It was really important to us that we were able to meet the needs of lower-income patients,” she said.

The shortest stay at The Heavenly Home was 15 hours; the longest has been that of a bedridden woman who arrived in early April.

One of the residents had been paying as much as \$30,000 a month for 24-hour in-home care in a previous residence, Wulfestieg said.

The Heavenly Home’s ability to cover the cost of care is helped by a special status granted by the state to care for low-income hospice patients who have what is known as an Assisted Living Waiver.

The waiver allows The Heavenly Home to bill Medi-Cal, the state’s version of Medicaid health insurance for the poor, for a portion of the care low-income residents receive. This is in addition to elderly residents on Medi-Cal turning over their monthly Social Security benefits — about \$1,300 — to pay for their stay.

Half of the residents are there on the waiver, the other half pay privately.

But that is still not

enough, Wulfestieg said. An endowment fund established with donations to Southern California Hospice Foundation fills the remaining gap.

So far, the foundation has raised a little more than \$2 million for the endowment fund, with a goal of \$5 million.

“People have been very generous in Orange County,” Wulfestieg said. “They’ve been very open to this idea.”

‘A sacred place’

Community support helps The Heavenly Home provide the little touches that can make someone’s last days among their best.

Cachola celebrated his birthday the last weekend of October by cooking a meal for the residents and a few invited friends, with “sous chef” Hamilton’s help. They wore matching aprons and chef’s hats.

Family members are encouraged to visit and be themselves.

Emmert said either she or her brother came every night to stay with Saxe. At one point during her mother’s stay, up to 22 family members — some from out of state — came together to celebrate Saxe, Emmert said. They set up a taco bar and barbecued on the backyard patio.

Emmert remains a dedicated supporter and regular visitor to The Heavenly Home. Sometimes she only goes as far as the front porch, to peek at the statue of an angel the family donated in Saxe’s honor for the patio outside her old room.

“This is a sacred place to me,” Emmert said.

On a recent afternoon, Dana Graff sat in a recliner as her mother, Marilyn Rosenlof, 87, dozed nearby. Her mother had been in an assisted living facility in Santa Barbara that was costing \$10,000 a month before she became bedridden.

Graff relocated her mother to a little house she and her husband purchased near their own home in Mission Viejo. Then Rosenlof went on hospice care in March.

“We were very naïve,” Graff said, “thinking we could keep Mom at home and help care for her.”

Rosenlof came to The Heavenly Home in mid-June, the last space that’s been available. Graff likes how the staff respects her mother’s own schedule.

“If she doesn’t want to wake up for breakfast, she doesn’t have to,” Graff said.

“They’re all so loving, and she loves them.”

Southern California Hospice Foundation hopes to open a second hospice house like The Heavenly Home. The state is reviewing a grant proposal to cover the cost of purchasing another house and funding five years of operating expenses.

“We’re really trying to help fill a huge gap for end-of-life,” Wulfestieg said. “It is caregiving and it is housing.”

Good days to come

The oldest resident, Jean Corcoran, has lived at The Heavenly Home since early May. Her 104th birthday will be Nov. 18. She has bouts of confusion and dementia.

On a warm afternoon last week, Corcoran barely moved in bed, tucked under several blankets. She was not at her sharpest at that time of day but told some of her life story, never lifting her head from her pillows.

Born in West Virginia, she lost her own mother in childbirth and, when she was 3, her father placed her in an orphanage.

She was a Rosie the Riveter welder in a Midwest factory during World War II. She had been a department store model. After coming to California in the post-war boom, she worked as a nurse. Her daughter is in a nursing home. Members of her church are steady visitors.

She is one of the lower-income patients with an Assisted Living Waiver.

Even in her diminished capacity, Corcoran maintains a stylish flair, Wulfestieg said: “This is a woman who still puts on makeup and does her nails. She’s a total fashionista.”

The day after Halloween, Corcoran was the guest of honor at a fundraising event for Southern California Hospice Foundation called “Dolled Up.” The outfit the foundation bought for her to wear included a white faux fur jacket, a shimmering top and sleek black pants, and a princess crown atop her newly coiffed white hair.

When she arrived at the event inside the Pacific Club in Newport Beach, Corcoran let out a “Wow.” There was vanilla birthday cake and “Happy Birthday to You.”

At the end, Corcoran expressed her gratitude with tears of joy and repeated over and over, “Thank you, thank you, thank you.”

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