

Sandpiper

DEL MAR'S COMMUNITY JOURNAL

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AL FOR ALS CURE

by Betty Wheeler | Seaview Ave.

A \$2 million gift to UC San Diego from longtime Del Mar resident Stephanie (Steve) Tarkington is not just a significant tribute to her husband, Al Tarkington, who died in 2024, but also a reminder of the significant roles Steve and Al have played in Del Mar for decades, bringing an inspiring teamwork model to their lives and to their community-serving roles. This teamwork was in full force as they responded to Al's diagnosis with ALS, but it was finely honed throughout their 63 years together.

Their focus on Del Mar has been equally impactful – including championing the City's acquisition of what is now Powerhouse Park and the Del Mar Powerhouse Community Center; Al's service on Council and as Mayor; and working to preserve and enhance nesting opportunities for ospreys at San Dieguito Lagoon – a project Al worked on until the day he died, and that Steve continues to work on today.

Steve says, "We always considered that we might die on a plane flight together as we loved to travel. Never was ALS even a consideration." But when Al was diagnosed with ALS, he and Steve responded with the same focus and teamwork they brought to everything in their lives.

And now, Steve's gift to UCSD will serve as an enduring legacy to Al, accelerating research on ALS, and establishing the Al Tarkington Endowed Lectureship in ALS. In making this exceptionally generous donation, Steve said, "By investing in research and care, I hope to help advance new treatments and bring us closer to a cure."

Asked about Al and his many accomplishments, Steve had plenty to say, but she ended by saying, "Mostly, Al was genuinely a nice guy." No surprise that it was that quality that Steve most admired. And it seems fitting to observe that Steve is a genuinely nice person. Those who know her will put that at the very top of a very long list of her accomplishments and qualities. ■



Al and Steve Tarkington. Photo courtesy: Steve Tarkington

Steve recalls a literal example of their tandem life: "We rode our tandem bike thousands of miles, through many states and one time we spent a year biking around the world, on 6 continents." They experienced the world and other cultures "up close and personal," and in beautiful harmony. Al was an outstanding triathlete; in 2019, he completed his 10th Ironman Triathlon in Kona, Hawaii.

Together, Steve and Al supported environmental organizations preserving open space, making land acquisitions, and providing animal corridors, along with humanitarian groups like Doctors Without Borders and The Bail Project.

IN BRIEF

JUNGLE PRIMARY COMING

The primary election for candidates for Governor and other state positions is nearly here. Mail ballots arrive the week of **May 4th** and the election is on **June 2nd**.

Known as a "jungle ballot" because the top two vote-getters will face off in the November general election, regardless of party affiliation. Because there are more viable Democratic candidates than Republican, the result could be a November runoff between two Republicans and no Democrats.

A DEAL IS A DEAL

As a condition of the SANDAG Del Mar Bluff Phase 5 stabilization project, currently nearing completion, the California Coastal Commission approval required three mitigation measures: 1) a 0.8-mile trail from Seagrove Park to 4th Street; 2) a legal rail crossing between 7th and 11th Street; and 3) an access trail from the rail crossing to the beach.

The original estimate for these mitigation projects was \$8.3M. At a March 17th SANDAG presentation to the Del Mar City Council, the estimated cost had ballooned to \$50M. No funding source currently exists to complete the required mitigation, and it sounds like no detailed planning has even begun. SANDAG Executive Director Mario Orzo spoke at the meeting, and he talked about “finding a middle ground.” SANDAG Senior Director Clint Peace, who made the presentation, was non-committal about completing mitigation. Neither Orzo nor Peace provided any answers to challenging questions from the council or the public.

During the council discussion, Deputy Mayor John Spelich said, “A deal is a deal.” The Sandpiper agrees. There should be no way for SANDAG to renege on a condition they agreed to when the bluff stabilization project was approved. Considering the ugliness of their destruction of the natural bluff, avoiding mitigation is adding insult to injury.

We urge everyone in Del Mar to pay attention to this issue and insist that SANDAG honors the commitment they made to the Coastal Commission. □



7th–11th Streets:
Legal rail crossing
and improved access
to the beach

Required legal rail crossing. Source: SANDAG’s March 17 report to Del Mar City Council



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The Sandpiper is published by the Del Mar Community Alliance, a 501(c)(4) non-profit. Its purpose is to advocate the Del Mar Community Plan, to foster informed public and government decision-making regarding issues affecting the community of the City of Del Mar, and to encourage a social and political climate favorable to the protection of the community character of the City of Del Mar and its environs.

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The Sandpiper’s Leadership Donors

Over the years, hundreds of Del Mar citizens have donated generously to the Del Mar Community Alliance (DMCA) in support of the Sandpiper. Since 2018, a total of \$296,400 has been contributed by Del Mar citizens, making it possible to bring the Sandpiper to every Del Mar family at no cost, via their mailboxes and online. The list below represents the community’s cumulative leadership giving to DMCA between 2018 and February 13, 2026. Thank you!

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FAIR BOARD EXEC X'D

Carlene Moore, Chief Executive Officer for the Fairgrounds, was fired after a closed session on April 14 lasting more than four hours. The Board of Directors for the 22nd District Agricultural Association (the Fairgrounds Board) voted 8-1 to fire Moore, and to appoint Board Chair Sam Nejabat to serve as interim CEO effective immediately. It is unclear what impact this action will have on Del Mar's efforts to secure a Fairgrounds site for affordable housing. The Sandpiper's April 16 report on this firing, including City Manager Ashley Jones's response, is here: delmarsandpiper.org/2026-04-16-update



Carlene Moore at a 22nd DAA board meeting. Photo: Betty Wheeler

ROVING TEEN REPORTER: HUNGARIAN HOPE REVIVED

by Viktoria Kiss | Torrey Pines High School Junior

Last month's Hungarian elections concluded with a new Prime Minister a revived Parliament, and a new future for the people of Hungary, most prominently the youth. Péter Magyar, President of the Tisza party, won with a 53.6% popular vote majority, having emerged as a leader in 2020, exposing governmental corruption under Orbán. He campaigned on a platform of repairing trust with alliances, improving societal conditions, and the economy. For Hungarians all over the world, Magyar's victory came with a new hope and perspective on the future for their nation.

Szonja Balász is a student at the University of Southern California and grew up in Hungary. She remarks on the joy the results brought out among Hungarian people. In past visits, she found Hungary "depressing," with "such a negativity in the air, especially when it came to politics." She noted that if winning this election "brought people together, it's a sign that we can do anything as a country."

Zalán Herman is a high school student in Hungary whose first who voting was in the recent election. He says he would like to see improvements in healthcare, stronger child protection systems, and better infrastructure, including road development. He noted that he "basically lived [his] whole life during the Orbán era," so this election played a prominent role for him.

Dani Ambrus, a sophomore at Torrey Pines High School, said his family was "cheering for Magyar to win and hoping that Orbán would be brought down." When thinking about his future, he says he would consider moving to Hungary in his future, and his family was "pretty excited" about the results.

Olivia Szófia, a San Marcos High School sophomore born in Hungary, began learning about Hungarian politics from her parents and social media.

"My parents left because they didn't want to be, like, a part of this ... But now that it's a new Prime Minister, like, it's gonna be so much better. And now it's definitely, it's always been in the back of our minds, like moving back.

But like now it's like even more of an opportunity."

Speaking on behalf of Hungarian youth raised abroad, this election truly put our lives into perspective: why we consider ourselves lucky and unlucky at the same time to not live in Hungary. Still, a new hope has emerged, making the possibility of returning to our homeland more prominent than ever. ■

Ed. Note: This article offers a platform for voices of young Hungarian people who have spent their entire lives under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's rule.

PLASTIC PERILS

by Jennifer Anderson | Serpentine Drive

Plastics have infiltrated our daily lives. They end up in our oceans and on our beaches, and break down into microplastics that get everywhere. Chemical additives in plastics can leach into what we eat and drink when our food and beverages are packaged in plastic (e.g., bisphenol A and phthalates - which make plastics rigid or flexible).

Given that 44% of plastic litter in the ocean consists of takeout food and drink containers, restaurants are uniquely positioned to play a significant part in the solution. Many in Del Mar have already reduced their use of plastics and with new regulations that went into effect early this year, will continue to do so.

At the same time, restaurants are facing rising costs in food, labor, energy, and supply chain while often operating on tight profit margins. Here is what you need to know about the new regulations and how we can help support our restaurants and stores in making this transition:

Authored by State Senator Catherine Blakespear, SB1053 bans plastic carryout bags at checkout and applies to most grocery stores, convenience stores, food marts, and liquor stores throughout California.

A new Del Mar ordinance prohibits single-use, non-compostable food service ware citywide and single-use plastic beverage bottles at City facilities and City-sponsored events. The prohibition includes the sale of expanded polystyrene, or Styrofoam, coolers and ice chests. Effective February 6, 2026, enforcement is expected to begin in August.

The ordinance applies to all disposable, single-use food service ware that cannot be recycled and adds to existing bans: single-use plastic carryout bags (2016), Styrofoam and nonrecyclable plastic food service ware (2018), plastic straws and stirrers (2019), and balloons filled with gas lighter than air (2023).

You can help our restaurants and stores conform to these new rules:

1. Choose reusable over single-use items whenever possible
2. Bring a bag
3. Bring a bottle
4. Skip the straw
5. Forgo any Styrofoam containers
6. Choose disposables as a last resort (non-waxed and non-Styrofoam paper plates, cups, napkins, straws, bags, takeout containers, and 100% wood and bamboo utensils – although, no bamboo plates or bowls) ■

BUDGET TRANSPARENCY

by Neelum Arya | Zuni Drive

Marisa Janicek, the new Superintendent of Del Mar Union, launched “Shine, Shift, Dream,” a series of listening sessions to hear from students, families, staff, and community members in the Fall. One of the key themes to emerge from that initiative was the need to strengthen communication. In response, the Superintendent and Asst. Superintendent Chris Delehanty went on a Budget Roadshow this Spring educating families on the district’s financial priorities. It was refreshing to see a presentation clearly highlight the key policy choices DMUSD has made alongside their corresponding financial impact.

One of the largest budget items (nearly \$1.8M) involves extra staffing to support students who need extra educational support. These funds are presumably spent on staff needed to fulfill the District’s legal obligations under, but not funded by, the federal special education law. The second largest expense is the choice to operate two schools West of the I-5 (Hills and Heights), costing \$1.21M. Providing a school counselor at every school in the District (Hills and Heights share a single counselor) costs just over \$1M districtwide. Class size remains a high priority and DMUSD limits class sizes in grades 4-6 to a 25:1 ratio, rather than 27:1 as required by the contract with the teachers’ union (\$873K annually). DMUSD also provides all 6th graders in the district with Spanish at a cost of \$432K. Finally, DMUSD remains one of a few holdout districts in the state refusing to offer transitional kindergarten to all four-year-olds. Instead, DMUSD serves families who meet the criteria of being socioeconomically disadvantaged through a limited transitional kindergarten program, Leap Ahead, at a cost of \$228K annually. ■

DMUSD Policy Choices	Budget Impact
Intervention teachers to support students	\$1.79M
Operation of a ninth school in DMSUD	\$1.20M
School counselors at each school	\$1.04M
Class size for Grades 4-6 staffed at 25:1	\$835K
6th Grade Spanish language program	\$432K
Leap Ahead Program	\$228K

SHORES PARK MASTER PLAN

by Tom Neuman MD | DMF President

Del Mar City Council is currently working to complete the master planning process for Shores Park which includes the Del Mar Community Building (DMCB). In last month's Sandpiper edition, Joe Sullivan discussed the history and current progress associated with this important project. Today, I would like to expand on some thoughts regarding a redeveloped or new community building that is being envisioned.

Currently, the DMCB is home to three of Del Mar's non-profits: Del Mar Community Connections, Del Mar Historical Society, and the Del Mar Foundation. The DMCB was created in 2012 after DMF secured an agreement for community use of the building. With donations from DMF and DMCC, as well as scores of volunteer hours, the building was renovated for its current use. Over the last 14 years, these three organizations have grown in scope and outreach with the current building's layout and size limiting desired goals of activities and programming for our community.

As the master plan process evolves with the advisory committee and City Council, a new or redeveloped/enlarged Community Center is imagined in a similar location. Goals are to have modern, up-to-date community gathering spaces, opening to outdoor spaces providing increased opportunities for in-house programming and events for all ages. Multipurpose rooms would be available for use by other non-profits and community groups in Del Mar.

DMF supports this vision for a new or redeveloped Del Mar Community Building that will serve as multigenerational resource for our community. Let your thoughts and ideas be known by participating in upcoming advisory committee meetings.



Del Mar Community Building at 225 9th St.

by Ashley Simpkins | Executive Director

Huge thanks for a successful Senior Fair!

We want to extend our deepest gratitude to the Del Mar Farmers Market, the City of Del Mar, and the many volunteers and nonprofit exhibitors that helped to make the first-ever Del Mar Senior Fair, held on April 18, an enormous success. A few stats: 35 nonprofit organizations and government agencies were there to share word of their important services available to Del Mar older adults or family caregivers. 14 people baked Del Mar lemon cakes for us to hand out for free as we shared the word about DMCC's activities and services. 30+ volunteers did labor-intensive tasks like helping the exhibitors unload their vehicles and pop up their canopies, encourage attendees to sign up for our email list, or do a demonstration of our activities. And attendance? As of writing this column, we're still tallying, but we can confidently report that it was in the hundreds.

If you attended, we hope you had a great time and learned something new. If you missed it, no worries: we'll do it all over again, so stay tuned!

I Scream, You Scream!

You won't want to miss the 2026 Ice Cream Social on May 8! The Social Good Times committee led by Ann Feeney is planning a celebration that will outdo last year's. You can select your favorite treat from an ice cream truck, and be entertained by a barbershop quartet. The best part is meeting up with longtime friends and neighbors while enjoying a gorgeous ocean view at the Del Mar Civic Center. Visit dmcc.cc/icecreamsocial to sign up for this fun – and free – event! (Bring a friend!)

Volunteer of the Month – April

DMCC's Volunteer of the Month for April 2026 was Linda Pinney. Linda is DMCC's head Tech Coach and is an important staple of the team, helping older adults to do things like use features on their smart devices, connect their phones/computers to other home technology, strengthen their online security, and more. Last year, she was also one of eight volunteers that contributed to the first phase pilot of our neighbor-to-neighbor Connect Team initiative. Linda recently won recognition for State Senator Catherine Blakespear's office as a "Woman Who Inspires" for her service to DMCC and the wider community. DMCC Secretary Phyllis Mirsky nominated Linda for Volunteer of the Month because "She takes the time to understand the person she's helping—not just the problem they're having with their device. Her warmth and friendliness make the difference."

PET TAINMENT

by Julie Maxey-Allison | 10th Street

Owning a pet comes with responsibilities: maintaining the pet's general wellbeing. The list includes caring for health, safety, food, training, exercise, socializing, day care, fashion, grooming, as needed vet visits. And, one more. What about those extra hours your pet is at home —with or without you? What about entertainment? Know that there are abundant solutions accessible via various screens devoted to your and your pets real or imaginary needs. Videos on television channels and You Tube offer a plethora of choices. Many are directed to human viewers, but as science writer Emily Anthes reported in the New York Times "TV, It's Not Just for Humans Anymore." Clearly. Videos have evolved that singularly focused on attracting and amusing pets.

For humans there is advice on how to handle concerns about pets for most anything, some said to be scientifically based. Subjects range from how to keep a (specific) pet happy and healthy through food, supplements, stimulation, socializing, behavior analysis and communication interpretations to explain what a pet's actions actually mean. Plus, animated shorts present positive life changes that a pet can bring to a human to reduce anxiety, loss, loneliness, or to provide inspiration, or whatever else might be a help or relief. For pets the focus is on entertainment with the goal of alleviating loneliness and/or to prevent under stimulation. Programs aimed at dogs offer videos for individual breeds, for daytime hours, for bedtime calming, and such. Mostly dogs seemingly like to watch other dogs rather than other animals or cars. Of course, it all depends on the pet's personality—bold, timid, anxious, etc., on what content may be best suited to entertain or relax the pet rather than cause stress. It isn't just sights, it is also the sounds. Pets are individuals and can't be categorized as even being slightly the same. Cats are just as complicated. Shows of birds, mice can entertain. Some may prefer to watch a show simply of string running across a screen. While the majority of shows are made for dogs and cats, birds, especially cockatoos, may enjoy other birds or music. There are videos of and for rabbits, squirrels and others though there is less information on interest or attention spans. For the foreseeable future it will be humans, hopefully attuned to the pet's interests, in charge of what videos to play and when. Are pet controlled remotes next? ▣

DOGS OF DEL MAR: LOLA

by Glenn Chong | Caminito Cantaras

Lola is a six-year-old mini Sheepadoodle who came to Del Mar at twelve weeks of age during the COVID epidemic. Lola has walked and explored all parts of Del Mar including the hills, the beaches, Powerhouse Park, Camino Del Mar, the Civic Center, Del Mar Plaza, and the Fairgrounds. In her younger days, she loved to run on the beach north of 29th street-chasing and being chased by other dogs. Now a bit older, she is content walking along Ocean Front and peering out at the beach and ocean from one of the beachside walls. She is probably best known for her toothy smile which can be scary if you've not met her before you'll soon realize it's an invitation to be her friend.

The local crows and seagulls are not Lola's friends, and she truly believe she can catch one or at least put them into their place with her barking. We've heard that crows hold grudges but so far we've managed to avoid any bird retaliation.

Lola is keenly aware of every business that shares dog treats. She seek out those stores so she can be "rewarded". She will perform one of her patented tricks (sit, shake, spin) as a means to the reward. And Lola thanks all of the generous Del Mar merchants for their kindness! ▣



Lola. Photo: Glenn Chong

COVID "CICADA"

by Don Mosier | Rimini Road

As of April 2026, a highly mutated COVID-19 variant, BA.3.2, nicknamed "Cicada," is spreading in the US and Europe, exhibiting potential for immune escape due to 70–75 spike protein mutations. While detected in wastewater across dozens of US states and in Europe, it does not currently appear to cause more severe disease than previous Omicron strains. The "Cicada" nickname comes from the variant first being detected last year in Northern Europe, then disappearing, and then re-emerging this year with more mutations and a wider distribution. Let's hope that naming virus variants after insects is not a growing trend.

Despite all the new mutations, the current recommendation is that the 2025-26 COVID vaccine should provide some protection against severe disease or death. BA.3.2 infection rates are currently low, but past Omicron variants have caused waves of infections in the summer. For older adults, where vaccine protection virtually disappears after 6 months, another booster is recommended.

If BA.3.2 Cicada becomes the dominant variant this summer, it would be prudent to develop a new mRNA vaccine that matches the spike protein sequence used by the virus to infect human cells. Whether that will happen under the restrictions imposed by the current administration is an open question. ▣

NATURAL SHINE

by Julie Maxey-Allison | 10th Street

Shine Natural Market has expanded from its Encinitas location to Camino Del Mar. The shop is set up with sustainable products for your body, home and pantry.

Owner operator Cara Moon Schloss: "We are plastic-free. The majority of our products are organic and non-GMO free of artificial colors, flavors, and sweeteners." Offerings include soaps, shampoos, lotions and oils, cleaning solutions, brushes, superfood powders, snack foods, beverages plus some clothing items all sold with minimal packaging so no waste. The shop serves as a "refillery." Bring your own container or buy one at the site to fill up your supplies and your own bag to carry out. Container weight is removed from product price and can be added to your account for future refills. Open 10 AM-6 PM daily. 1438 Camino Del Mar. 858-353-8778. hello@shinenaturalmarket.com. ▣

GARDEN MAGIC

by Mary Friestedt | Bellaire Street

Crest Rim Trail Garden, between Klish Way and Amphitheater Drive on Crest Road, is a magical place to visit this time of the year. Whether walking your dog or enjoying the tapestry of native plants, the park brings joy to all. Recently, the Del Mar Garden Club was doing its bimonthly maintenance there when we spotted a magnificent Agave "Our Lord's Candle" (Agave whipplei) down in Crest Canyon. This led me to think about the native Kumeyaay people and how useful this plant is. Did you know that the flowers and seeds of this Agave are edible? Or that the Kumeyaay use fiber from the leaves and stalks to make ropes, carrying bags, and even sandals? The roots contain saponins and can be used to make soap.

Another botanical wonder in this garden is the rare Warty-stemmed ceanothus. In the spring, it is covered with white flowers that the Kumeyaay people have used for soap. The wood of this plant is useful as a club; the seed is edible and can be ground for food; while the leaf, berry, and sap can be boiled to treat an itch or poison oak.

For more information about the Del Mar Garden Club, visit our website: delmargardenclub.org. ▣



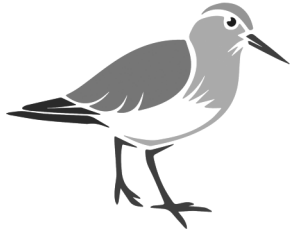
Shine Natural Market. Photo: Julie Maxey-Allison

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SANDPIPER

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DATED MATERIAL



www.delmarsandpiper.org

DEL MAR DEMANDS "NO KINGS"

by Arlene Prater | Zuni Drive

On March 28, 2026, Del Mar was one of twenty "No Kings" demonstrations taking place across San Diego County. In aggregate, an estimated 95,000 people participated - part of the 8 million who marched that day in the U.S. and around the world. For two hours, approximately 1,500 people lined Del Mar Heights Road near Del Mar Highlands, and made their opinions known with clever, witty, and pointed hand-made signs, chants, and costumes opposing the expansion of executive power, the cruel immigration actions of ICE, and the unsanctioned 2026 war with Iran. This march was part of the third nationally-coordinated demonstration against President Trump's actions and policies since he took office in 2024. Just a few examples of signs we saw:

- "Don't Make Me Repeat Myself." —Says History
- No Sign Is Big Enough To List All The Reasons I'm Here
- Stop Truth Decay
- Things Are So Bad Even The Introverts Are Here
- I'm an Unpaid Local Protester
- Only You Can Prevent Fascism (with a photo of Smokey the Bear)
- Make Orwell Fiction Again
- Only the Statue of Liberty Gets to Wear a Crown

Demonstrators ranged from babies being pushed in strollers to at least one centenarian, Betty Edwards (the author of *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*). A former Del Mar resident, she was there with her daughter, Anne Farrell, and Linda and Brett Castile, all long-time Del Mar residents. They joined many friends and neighbors from across Del Mar and Carmel Valley to make their voices heard. Among those in the crowd were the leaders of **Del Mar Democracy Defenders**: Shirley King, Linda Chisari and Deb Lyons, the organizers of the weekly demonstrations each Saturday at 11th Street.

IN BRIEF



NIGHT TO DAY

The Clean Energy Authority announced a new "Super Off Peak" rate for electricity used between 10 AM and 2 PM every weekday. This lower rate matches the current 12 midnight to 6 AM cost of CEA electricity and coincides with peak solar production, when energy generation exceeds demand.



Photo: Anne Farrell

For more information or to be added to the email list, reach out to shirleyking319@gmail.com. People Power!

Mark your calendar for the upcoming nationwide **May Day Strong (Friday May 1st) Strike/Boycott**. No work, no school, no shopping. □