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Long Beach Women Visionaries: Inside The Unique Ideas Of Five Local Women Determined To Make A Difference

By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR



Cheri Bazley



Marcelle Epley



Julia Huang



Kerstin Kansteiner



Erin Sommerville

2018 has been called “the year of the woman,” but throughout the nation women live each year of their lives with purpose, vision, grit and determination. It may have taken until 2018 for them to be recognized with their own year, but women have been striving to advance themselves, their communities and this country before it was even founded.

The Business Journal has been profiling local women in business for decades, working to ensure that the stories and efforts of women leaders in our community are told. In this edition, we selected five women that we, and many others in the city, consider to be visionaries. These are individuals who started with unique ideas and seized upon opportunities to bring them to fruition for the betterment of the Long Beach community or their industries at large.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a visionary as “a person with original ideas about what the future will or could be like.” The five women highlighted within these pages were chosen because of the magnitude of impact their ideas are making on the community. Each of them works or lives within Long Beach.

From the creation of a unique effort that brought the city’s largest publications together for an award-winning series, to the early adoption of green business practices, to forward-thinking holistic cancer care, to the creation of an event that has brought in millions to help families in need, and even a program that brought massive works of art to city streets, the women’s visions have had far-reaching impacts. They are: Cheri Bazley, executive director of Long Beach Ronald McDonald House; Marcelle Epley, president and CEO of the Long Beach Community Foundation; Julia Huang, president and CEO of interTrend Communications; Kerstin Kansteiner, owner of Portfolio Coffeehouse, Berlin Bistro and Portfolio Fit; and Erin Sommerville, mind-body oncology coach at MemorialCare Todd Cancer Institute.

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Rethinking Local Journalism

Expanded Long Beach Post Hopes To Crack Sustainable Model

By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

In Late June, local investment firm Pacific6 purchased the Long Beach Post, immediately doubling its newsroom – in part by snagging staff from the Press-Telegram – with the intention of providing daily, expanded coverage of the goings-on in the City of Long Beach. Pacific6 co-founder John Molina felt that Long Beach – a city with a larger population than Atlanta, Miami and St.

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New Regs For Trucks

Port Service Trucks Must Be 2014 Or Later

By **ANNE ARTLEY**
STAFF WRITER

Harbor commissioners at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles have approved a policy that mandates new trucks registering for service at the ports must be model year 2014 or later. This ensures that they meet the clean engine standards set

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After A Decade, The College Promise Has ‘Exceeded Expectations’

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Long Beach College Promise, a program put in place to increase access to higher education for all Long Beach students regardless of race, gender or socioeconomic status.

A report was released earlier this year to show the progress of the program and showed large gains in several indicator areas for all three educational institutions involved: Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), Long Beach City College (LBCC) and California State University, Long Beach (CSULB).

“I would say it has exceeded expectations,”

Reagan Romali, superintendent-president of LBCC, said. “When we saw how successful it was, particularly the graduation rates here and . . . at Long Beach State – it’s groundbreaking. It’s changing the shape of education today.”

The College Promise introduces the idea of attending college at an early age, with all

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MILLENNIAL PULSE

By Editor Samantha Mehlinger

So You Just Turned 30 . . . Now What?

Two days before I turned 30, my car broke down. As one does, I took it to my car guy.

He opened the hood, got behind the wheel and hit the gas while it was in park. The engine looked

like it was going to jump right out of the car. “All your engine mounts are broken,” he said. “ALL of them?” I asked, not sure how many engine mounts there were or exactly

(Please Continue To Page 5)

PortSide Keeping Up With The Port Of Long Beach

For Port of Long Beach Senior Program Manager Monique Aguilar, overseeing the port's Middle Harbor Terminal Redevelopment Project is the kind of venture that "engineers dream of working on." The project involves combining and upgrading two container cargo terminals to create a more efficient and environmentally safe facility. The \$1.3 billion endeavor is slated for completion in 2020. The port's goal is to cut air pollution by half, and generate 14,000 jobs in Southern California through an increase in trade. Before joining the port 10 years ago, Aguilar started her career as a bridge engineer in Florida. "That has been my passion," she commented. "Ever since I was a little girl I wanted to design bridges." She was drawn to the port because she wanted to work in the public sector and "heard about all the amazing projects" there. In her role, Aguilar is responsible for managing the project's schedule, scope and budget. She oversees the contracts and design process, from the initial stage of putting together the plans and specifications, to working with the contractors and engineers on implementation. She said her favorite part is working with "incredibly talented" people. "Learning from them is amazing," she remarked. Aguilar described her position as "all-encompassing civil [engineering] work." She added that, "You get to design wharves, buildings, rail . . . I'm designing trains. You get to do every type of civil engineering work in one place. It's very rare to do that. It's the type of project you could write books about."

— Article and Photograph by Staff Writer Anne Artley



Lea Eriksen To Lead City's Tech Department

City Manager Pat West named Lea Eriksen, who has been serving as interim director of the Long Beach Technology and Innovation Department since January, to the permanent position. She oversees a staff of 143 employees and manages a \$44 million office budget. A four-year employee of the city, Eriksen previously served as budget manager and assistant finance director. Prior to that she worked for 16 years with the City of Cincinnati. She earned her master's degree from Xavier University and a dual bachelor's degree from Miami University.

Development Services Department Promotes New Planning Bureau Manager — Christopher Koontz, who has been serving

as the advance planning officer for the City of Long Beach, is the new planning bureau manager for the development services department. In his tenure as advance planning officer, Koontz has helped implement projects such as the Southeast Area Specific Plan, Midtown Specific Plan, Climate Action and Adaptation Plan and the Land Use Element update. The planning department collaborates with community groups, residents, business owners and city leaders to improve neighborhoods.

P2S Inc.'s Kevin Peterson Named Among Top 50 CEOs — P2S Inc. CEO Kevin Peterson won a Glassdoor Employees' Choice Award honoring this year's top 50 CEOs in the U.S. Small and Medium Companies category.

Glassdoor is a job and recruitment website. Peterson received a 98% approval rating based on anonymous reviews made by P2S employees on Glassdoor.com during the past year. The average CEO approval rating is 69%. P2S Inc. provides mechanical, electrical, plumbing, energy and technology engineering services, as well as commissioning and construction management services.

Fourth Street Business Improvement Association Elects Co-Presidents — The 4th Street Business Improvement Association has named two co-presidents: Jim Ritson, the owner of 4th Street Vine, located at 2142 E. 4th St., and Jennifer Hill, the owner of Songbird, located at 2240 E. 4th St.

Signal Hill Petroleum VP Honored With In-

augural Oil Industry Award — Debra Russell, Signal Hill Petroleum's vice president of community relations and real estate operations, was awarded the inaugural Emma Summers Award by the California Independent Petroleum Association. Members of the association will confer the award annually to a woman who "has played a leadership role in the viability of California's independent crude oil and natural gas producing industry," according to the announcement.

Local Design-Build Firm Celebrates 30 Years — Long Beach-based design-build firm Zieba Builders, Inc. celebrated its 30th anniversary this month. The company provides residential remodeling services in coastal communities, and has earned multiple awards.

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(Continued From Page 1)

what an engine mount was, although I could guess.

After he engaged in some contemplation under the hood, I followed him back to his office. He wrote down some notes while I peeked over the counter, reading his scribbles upside down. He then spent an awful long time typing up estimates. By the time he was halfway done, so much time had passed that I knew it was bad. Then again, I guess I already knew it was bad when the car began to groan and bump about a month ago but, hey, denial is a powerful mistress. Or mister. Whichever floats your fancy.

"It's a lot, isn't it?" I asked. He looked up at me sympathetically, and I knew it was probably more than the car was worth. It was. "And that's only before I really get in there to work on it. Who knows what else I'll find," he said.

I asked him if he could fix anything so it wouldn't fall apart on me as I inevitably drove to the nearest dealership for my next steel steed. "I'll tell you what I'd tell my own daughter — she's 30, I'm sure you're much younger than that," he said. "Go lease yourself a new car."

"Actually, I'm turning 30 on Thursday," I said, "But thank you."

He gave me the go-ahead to drive around my crusty 2006 Nissan Altima, weathered from beach fog and 12 years of service, until I could get a new car.

As I drove her around all week with the "Service Engine Light" on, I kept thinking how I got her as a hand-me-down at 19, my first car. And there I was, hitting a milestone that by all accounts fully cements one into adulthood, and my car was dying on me.

"Should I look for a metaphor in this?" I wondered. "Is the car me? If the car is me, what will my next car be?"

As you can see, these rivers run deep. Visions of Dodge Challengers, Ford Mustangs, Nissan Zs, Chevy Camaros, began dancing in my head.

I went to some dealerships and drove an Altima and a Civic, and left disappointed in myself, wondering, "Am I an economy car?" My three-decade crisis was playing out in hot parking lots.

They say the 30s are the new 20s, the 40s are the new 30s, and so on. They also probably say that because they are getting older and would like to delude themselves. . . . "They" are also me.

Then again, it's really not just me. Due to the Great Recession, which hit when many Millennials like myself were coming of age, life milestones that historically have occurred in the early 20s have been delayed for our generation.

The Stanford Center on Longevity studied this very topic by surveying 1,716 people in different age groups of adults — 48% of whom were women, 28% non-white, 52% college educated —

about the age they wanted to hit certain life milestones like marriage and buying a home, and the age they actually achieved those milestones.

On a chart depicting the ideal age and actual age the different generations had for buying a home, all age groups charted points for both, with older groups experiencing less of a gap between the ideal age and actual age. People aged 65 to 74, for example, said the ideal age to buy a home was 27, and that they actually bought one at age 29. When it came to buying a house, Millennial respondents aged 25 to 34 indicated that the ideal age to buy a home was 27. No plot point for the actual age that Millennial respondents had achieved this goal was included, because most haven't been able to buy a home yet. Incidentally, I haven't bought a home either. I wasn't making enough to do it when the market was affordable, and now it's out-of-control expensive. Probably a common experience.

When it comes to marriage, Millennial respondents said the ideal age to get hitched was 26, but the actual marrying age of those who had tied the knot was 29. The U.S. Census Bureau found that we are getting married later than other generations. Data collected between 2009 to 2013 found that three in 10 young adults were or had been married during that time, down from six in 10 young adults in 1980. As you may

have guessed from my columns referencing the frustrating and stupid realm of online dating, I'm not married either.

"For every subsequent age group, we found a linear decline in the percentage of people meeting their ideal for these three milestones," the Stanford study stated. "This suggests that despite age group similarities in ideal milestone timelines, younger age groups are increasingly less likely to experience milestones at the age they want, if at all." Ouch.

Here's the thing. I'm not the only Millennial who has found delays in certain lifetime milestones to be a point of stress, or to at least cause some age-related reflection, as 30 hit. In fact, there are so many of us that Vanity Fair has created a campaign around the topic directed at young women called #INeverExpire, a beautiful sentiment meant to convey that just because we haven't met society's expectations for certain age-related milestones, does not mean that we have expired like unwanted, misshapen produce. Man, I wish I had come up with that.

So, fellow Millennials, as you find yourself looking at apartments instead of a condo or house, still dating (probably online) instead of walking down the aisle, still not making the wages you really should be earning by now, or shopping for a sedan when you really want a sports car, guess what? A lot of us are right there with you. ■

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Five years after opening his first restaurant in Long Beach, Buffalo Spot – which has grown to 15 locations in three states – Ivan Flores celebrated the opening of his new concept, Organic Fork, at 5726 E. 7th St. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Pat Flynn)

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

New Organic Food Option Opens In East Long Beach

For five years, Ivan Flores has operated The Buffalo Spot across the street from Wilson High School. On June 13, he celebrated the soft opening of his latest concept, Organic Fork, just up the street at 5726 E. 7th St.

As the name suggests, the menu puts an emphasis on healthier organic options, including gluten free and vegetarian dishes. The meats served at Organic Fork include grass-fed grilled steak, organic turmeric ginger chicken, carnitas and seared Baja Yellowtail. Flores said the most popular dish is his torta, which is served with a choice of meat, jalapeño aioli, bean puree, avocado cream, white sharp cheddar cheese, romaine lettuce, onions and tomato.

"I've always liked eating healthier but it's been hard because I'm always on the road. There are only certain locations you can go to find good, healthy food," Flores said. "That's why I decided to create this concept five years ago, actually while I was building The Buffalo Spot. But I was just focusing on The Buffalo Spot until I

perfected the menu and the branding. We perfected it about a year ago and we started looking for Organic Fork locations."

The menu also includes plates, bowls, a variety of salads, grains and legumes, soups and sides, including a half avocado with an organic fried egg. A big seller for Flores is his homemade aguas frescas, non-alco-

holic beverages made from fruits, cereals, flowers or seeds with sugar and water.

Flores' first concept, The Buffalo Spot, has expanded to 15 locations in three states. When he was looking for his flagship location five years ago, he said he was unfamiliar with the Los Angeles area, having grown up in San Diego. He accidentally exited the 22 Freeway into Long Beach and continued driving down 7th Street – lost. Flores said he and his wife stopped at a traffic light near Wilson, saw a For Lease sign, loved the location and quickly made an offer.

Fast forward to one year ago, when it came time to find a location for Organic Fork, Flores and his wife agreed there was no better spot than in Long Beach.

"Long Beach is very important to me since I had my first restaurant here," Flores said. "The community has been very good to me. They have welcomed us with open arms. We just love the community and this area."

The restaurant is currently open from 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day. However, Flores and his team are in the process of developing a breakfast menu that will launch in the coming weeks with operating hours beginning at 7 a.m.



The 127-unit Patio Gardens apartment complex, located at 4874 Los Coyotes Diag. near the Long Beach traffic circle, recently sold for \$50.8 million. (Photographs provided by Stepp Commercial, which handled the transaction.)

Stepp Commercial Closes \$50.8M Deal In Long Beach

Stepp Commercial Principal Robert Stepp represented the seller, a Long Beach-based private seller, in the \$50.8 million sale of the Patio Gardens apartment complex at 4874 Los Coyotes Diag. "Aside from downtown, Patio Gardens is one of the largest multi-family properties in Long Beach and it is also within the Traffic Circle area, one of the market's most desirable rental areas," Stepp said. "There is an abundance of new commercial development happening near Patio Gardens, and the majority of the neighboring properties are currently being renovated. This Long Beach submarket is truly undergoing a transformation and, as a result, the value of this asset rose substantially over the past two years." The 1958 complex is comprised of 19, two-story buildings with 127 units on nearly six acres. In 2016, Stepp represented the same investor for the purchase of the property for \$35.3 million. The complex consists entirely of two-bedroom units. Units average 1,000 square feet and about

80% of the units include an outdoor patio. The complex includes laundry facilities, a fitness center and parking garages.

Long Beach Architecture Firm Leases Larger Location

M. Grisafe Architects, a Long Beach-based architecture firm, on July 11 announced that it moved its home office to 3750 Schauffele Ave. at Douglas Park. "It was definitely the right time for our firm to make this move," owner and architect Mark Grisafe said. "The home office space we had been working out of was never intended to be a long-term solution and, with our growing staff, we just needed more room." Grisafe is sharing office space with Overland, Pacific & Cutler (OPC), a right of way and real estate services company. The space occupied by Grisafe was previously unused by OPC and includes a dedicated office space and several cubicles. The architecture firm also has access to the buildings' conference room and break room. "This new space definitely allows us to make a great

Realty Views Commercial Bank Loan Volume Declines



By **TERRY ROSS**

It might not get the notoriety that home mortgages get, but the bulk of bank lending is done in the commercial real estate arena – and right now, at least for banks, that part of the market is in a declining state.

According to statistics compiled by BankRegData and discussed in an FDIC industry conference call, the rate of growth in commercial lending by banks – called CRE – has dropped to its lowest level in at least three years – and the number of loan transactions in this sector has declined considerably.

"If you go back a year and a half or so, originations are down maybe 30 percent," said Robert Reilly, the chief financial officer at the \$368 billion-asset PNC Financial Services Group in Pittsburgh.

Both owner and non-owner commercial properties are seeing the decline, according to the numbers released, and the reasons are varied. First of all, non-banks – such as private equity funds – have come in and aggressively gone after the business and will do deals that banks won't. Some observers see this trend as part of the market stabilizing after years of pent-up demand increased the bank volume on CRE loans. Credit unions are moving into this category as well.

With the regulations that banks must operate under, they are by nature more risk-averse than private lenders, and many believe this to be one of the major factors in this trend. Another is that, for small loans, non-bank lenders are a quicker and easier solution in many cases.

But there are some big-picture trends that are scaring banks away from commercial loans – and these are systemic changes that have been many years in the making and are now taking their toll on commercial properties.

The overall demand for office space is shrinking. In some quarters it has led to loan delinquencies that are starting to scare off lenders – especially banks, who tend to be more conservative. Early-stage delinquencies are on the rise, noted Doug

Ressler, the director of business intelligence at the real estate data provider Yardi Matrix. CRE loans that are between 30 and 89 days late rose 26% to \$4.5 billion from the fourth quarter to the first quarter. Lenders are taking notice of the trend.

Of course, the traditional office has been under transformation for well over a decade – and it is having an impact on demand in today's world, that much is certain. Workers are using more shared spaces and mobile work arrangements, and the need for flexible space is changing the face of commercial real estate. Then you throw in the problems that giant malls are having and the retail revolution that is being spearheaded by companies like Amazon where consumers don't get out and shop – ordering most of their goods online – and it isn't hard to see how the most conservative of lenders are going to be taken aback by the changes to the commercial landscape. No one seems to have a handle on how much office and retail space is going to be needed moving forward. Some owners and developers are repurposing commercial space these days with an idea towards creating entertainment and dining experiences as opposed to retail.

The CoStar Group, one of the leading

commercial real estate data firms, notes that all commercial transactions fell by 6% last year from 2016 to \$582 billion. The company reports that 2015 was the peak year for commercial real estate loans and 2016 remained a high point as well. Total commercial real estate loan volume rose less than 1% from the fourth quarter of last year to this year's first quarter to \$1.4 trillion, compared with a 1.6% increase during the same period a year earlier, according to BankRegData.

The interesting scenario that could unfold is that the non-bank lenders take an increasingly larger share of CRE loans while banks pull back and look to other areas of the market that fall more in line with the risks that they are willing to take under current regulations. Then again, the regulations may be loosened and that could increase the appetite for banks to get more aggressive in commercial loans. There are a lot of scenarios that could play out, and much of it depends on government regulations that banks work under.

(Terry Ross, the broker-owner of TR Properties, will answer any questions about today's real estate market. E-mail questions to Realty Views at terryross1@cs.com or call 949/457-4922.)

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first impression on our clients who come to us for meetings. It has all of the sophistication that you would expect from an established Long Beach architecture firm. It also comes with many other benefits for both our clients and our staff.”

CBRE Sells Multi-Family Property For More Than \$3M

CBRE announced the sale of Belmont Shore Oceanfront Apartment Homes for \$3.1 million, or \$387,500 per unit. Dan Blackwell and John Montakab of CBRE represented the buyer, a private investor, in the all-cash deal. “This property is located in the ideal live-work-play environment which will ultimately draw and retain tenants,” Blackwell said. “In the dynamic and growing Long Beach market, the surrounding community offers this trophy coastal asset an array of contemporary dining and retail options while retaining a quaint, small beach-town feel.” Located at 5281 E. Ocean Blvd., the two-story property consists of eight units across the street from the beach. The building has a mix of studios, one- and two-bedroom units and a rooftop deck.



This eight-unit apartment building across from the Pacific Ocean sold recently for \$3.1 million. (Photograph provided by CBRE, which handled the transaction.)

Lee & Associates Closes Nearly \$2M Industrial Deal

Brandon Carrillo and Garrett Massaro, principals with Lee & Associates Commercial Real Estate, recently completed the sale of an industrial property located at 2310 Long Beach Blvd. to Alligator Vending Systems. The property is 12,971 square feet, including warehouse space and 4,400

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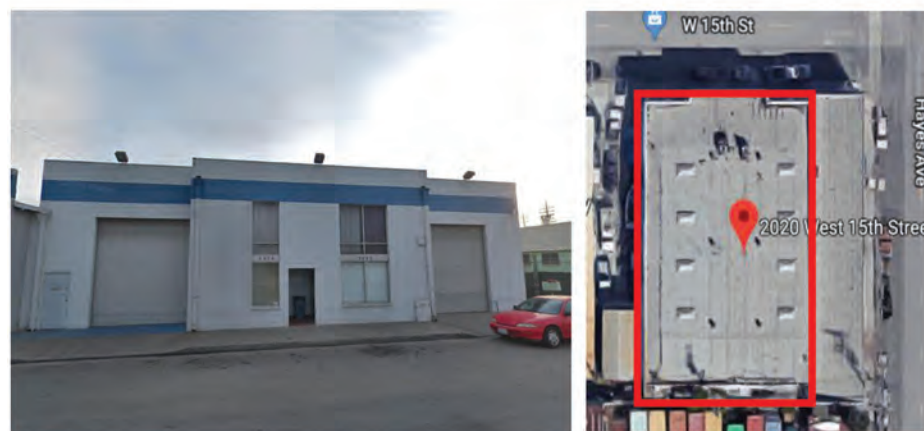
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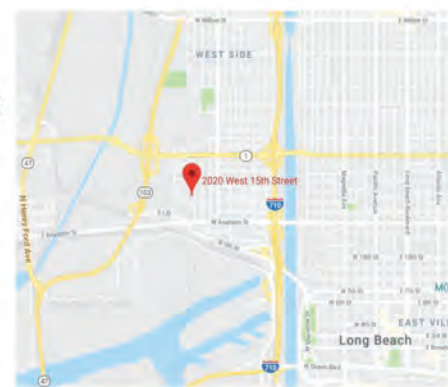
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TITLE	BID NUMBER	DATE
15th Street Bicycle Boulevard of Parks	R-7075	07/18/2018
Airport Economic Impact Analysis & Report	RFP AP18-111	07/18/2018
Work Gloves (Citywide)	ITB LB18-066	07/19/2018
Belmont Shore Sidewalks Pressurized Steam Cleaning	ITB EP18-115	07/20/2018
Solid Waste Handling Services	RFP PW18-098	07/24/2018
Citywide Custodial Services	ITB LB18-082	07/24/2018
Audit of Current Plans & Policies for Persons with Disabilities, Access, and Functional Needs	RFP DC18-120	07/24/2018
Window Glass	ITB LB 18-069	07/26/2018
On-Call Public Health & Human Services Community Partners	RFQ HE18-099	07/31/2018
West Seaside Way Storm Drain Project	R-7104	08/01/2018
Turkish Wiping Rags	ITB LB 18-117	08/02/2018
Lake Water Quality Management	RFP PR18-113	08/02/2018
Overhead Electric Door & Rolling Gate Maintenance	ITB LB18-116	08/03/2018
Rental of Portable Chemical Toilets (Citywide)	ITB LB18-114	08/07/2018
Hazardous Waste Removal Services	ITB LB18-119	08/07/2018
Westside Storm Drain Phase 3	R-6751	08/08/2018
Annual Contract for Curb Ramp & Related Improv	R-7125	08/09/2018
Installation of Traffic Signal Inductive Loops	ITB PW18-105	08/10/2018
Professional Engineering Design Services for Anaheim Street Corridor Improvements	RFP PW18-107	08/14/2018
Sand & Gravel (Citywide)	ITB LB 18-068	08/14/2018
Alamitos Tank No. 4 Rehabilitation Project	WD-07-17	08/16/2018
Qualification and Selection of Peer Reviewers	RFQ DV17-112	Continuous

Some of the listed projects have scheduled mandatory pre-bid meetings which may have already occurred due to publication lead times

Bidder Registration

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(Continued From Page 7)

square feet of office. The building was refurbished one year ago, including the office space, parking lot, security gates and the exterior facade.

What's New On 4th Street

Known for its quirky shops and quirkier patrons, 4th Street is an ever-evolving small business district lined with bars, food and shops. Following are some of the recent changes to the area:

- HoboJane Boutique relocated to 412 Cherry Ave. from its previous location on 7th Street where it had opened two years ago. The 700-square-foot new and vintage women's clothing shop celebrated its grand re-opening on June 22. The store also sells gift items, jewelry, candles and cards created by local Long Beach artists. The store promotes an empowering message for its shoppers: "Live your dream, be kind to others and have that 'too glam to give a damn' attitude."

- California Drifters opened at 2714 E. 4th St. in a 360-square-foot space. On April 27, the apparel store expanded into the neighboring space, which used to be home to 7th Wave and Pretty Nails, making the store 885 square feet. The store's owner, Cassandra Malone, focuses on eco-friendly, U.S.-made apparel, with minimal and modern accessories, and desert-inspired home decor by local craftsmen.

Browning High Construction Suit Settled For Over \$1M

More than \$1.1 million in wages and

penalties has been secured by California Labor Commissioner Julie Su from a settlement for a prevailing wage assessment against San Diego-based contractor TB Penick & Sons Inc. and its subcontractor, Newport Beach-based Champion Construction.

Penick hired Champion, a drywall and framing contractor, for its Browning High School construction project in Long Beach. Champion kept false payroll records over a six-month period, covering up wage theft affecting 103 workers who were not paid prevailing wage and fringe benefits.

"Prevailing wages create a level playing field for all contractors bidding on public construction projects," Su said. "This case clearly demonstrates that general contractors who select contractors that don't play by the rules will pay a heavy price. Under the law, they are responsible for the wage theft of their subcontractors."

The Carpenters Contractors Cooperation Committee reported a public works violation in March 2016, which opened the investigation. The initial civil wage and penalty assessment was more than \$1.7 million but Penick entered into a settlement agreement to pay the nearly \$1.2 million. The 103 employees received an average of \$7,228. The settlement included over \$8,000 for required apprenticeship training funds and nearly \$450,000 in civil penalties.

All employees on a public works project must be paid the prevailing wage by law. Champion was found at fault for wage theft violations against 47 workers on an El Segundo project last year. ■

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New Port Service Trucks

(Continued From Page 1)

forth by the Clean Air Action Plan (CAAP) Update passed in November 2017. The regulation, expected to receive final approval this month, goes into effect October 1.

“Over the coming months, we’re planning to make sure we’ve got a good outreach campaign to let the industry know about the change,” Port of Long Beach Environmental Planning Director Heather Tomley said.

The regulation applies only to new trucks entering service. Older trucks currently registered in the Ports Drayage Truck Registry are allowed to continue service. However, CAAP guidelines will require every truck to pay a fee starting in mid-2020, unless they are zero or near-zero emissions, Tomley said. She added, “By 2035, when our goal is to have all trucks meet zero emissions standards, the only way not to pay the rate is to be a zero-emissions truck at that point.”

California Trucking Association (CTA) Director Alex Cherin said the organization is “generally supportive” of the new clean trucks program. CTA is the state’s largest trucking trade association.

“To give you some context, we’ve invested about \$1 billion in newer, cleaner trucks during the first iteration of the CAAP and the clean trucks program,” he said. “As an industry, we’ve shown that we’re willing to embrace new technology.”

But Weston LaBar, CEO of the Harbor Trucking Association (HTA) based in Long Beach, said his organization is not “one hundred percent happy” with the regulation. “If the goal is to meet emissions standards, we really should be testing the emissions of trucks and not just picking arbitrary years to say, ‘this truck is clean,’ and ‘this truck is dirty,’” he commented. HTA

is a partnership of L.A., Long Beach and Oakland intermodal carriers.

LaBar said that, while he does not have much concern about any cost to the trucking industry in October, the real issue may come about in 2020 because the zero-emissions technology is not commercially available at the present time. According to LaBar, this includes battery electric vehicles and vehicles powered by hydrogen fuel cells. However, several companies, such as Tesla and Toyota, are already testing these technologies on the road.

“Although some will become commercially available this year, when you have a fleet of over 16,000 vehicles registered in the San Pedro Bay ports, there becomes a much bigger issue when you start to look at who’s being charged with what fees and which trucks you can use,” LaBar explained. “You’re starting to shrink the availability of [trucks] to a situation where there may not be enough commercially available trucks for companies to meet those deadlines [that aren’t] subject to fees.”

LaBar also expressed concern that trucking companies could miss out on grant funding through the ports or agencies such as the South Coast Air Quality Management District if they upgrade now at their own cost. “Many companies and drivers are looking at holding onto the equipment they have today because, what systematically happens, if they voluntarily turn over their fleet to a newer fleet, they may find themselves next year being unable to upgrade.”

Tomley said the emissions goals are part of the overall program efforts of the Clean Air Action Program. “By 2050, we’d like greenhouse gas emissions from ports at 80% below 1990 levels. We’ve also adopted the 2030 standard of 40% below 1990 levels.” ■



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Long Beach Post

(Continued From Page 1)

Louis — has lacked the daily news coverage it deserves, and he wanted to see that change. So he did something about it.

In a new office at 211 E. Ocean Blvd. (where Pacific6 is also based) the Long Beach Post now boasts 12 full-time reporters, and counting. They are faces known in Long Beach for having covered the city for years both at the Post and the Press-Telegram, and as Publisher David Sommers pointed out, they come from different generations, backgrounds and work environments. At the Post, they now benefit from health plans, a 401K plan that kicks in after six months, and steady coverage opportunities. Sommers and Molina intend to land on a sustainable financial model to keep those opportunities alive by rethinking the traditional way news publications have been funded.

The model of the Press-Telegram is one that is rolled up into that of Southern California News Group (SCNG), its owner Digital First Media, and parent company Alden Capital, a hedge fund. That model, by many accounts documented throughout the country and here in Long Beach, has been to cut back newsroom staff and cross-pollinate content across regional publications, resulting in a reduction in local coverage. Seeing what this model had done to the Press-Telegram, a historic paper in Long Beach, got Molina thinking.

“When I saw that they kept laying people off and laying people off, I had a cup of coffee with Tim [Grobaty] . . . in February or March,” Molina said in an interview with Sommers at the Post’s new office.



Under the new ownership of Pacific6, the online news outlet Long Beach Post has expanded its staff. The Post’s leadership intends to create a sustainable model for local journalism. Pictured are some of the staff, which includes 12 full-time reporters and counting. From left are: Valerie Osier, reporter; Andrea Estrada, advertising manager; Stephanie Rivera, diversity and immigration; Tim Grobaty, opinion editor; David Sommers, publisher; Jeremiah Dobruck, breaking news editor; Dennis Dean, managing editor; and Thomas Cordova, visuals editor. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Samantha Mehlinger)

Grobaty was a 42-year columnist with the Press-Telegram, and jumped ship with co-workers Jeremiah Dobruck and Melissa Evans to join the Post. They left behind a newsroom with one reporter left standing, according to Grobaty.

Molina asked Grobaty if he thought the

owners of the Press-Telegram would sell it to him. He made an overture, but never received a return phone call. His next move was to assemble a team of individuals — Grobaty, Dobruck, Evans and Sommers, who had been doing communications work for Pacific6. They ultimately decided that, rather than starting a new publication, having an existing platform to work with would be better. Molina approached Cindy Allen, president of advertising firm ETA Agency and then-publisher of the Long Beach Post, and they made a deal.

“I cannot say enough good things about Cindy Allen,” Molina said. “First of all, she shepherded the Post through a lot of ups and downs, especially in the beginning when she took over. The handoff and the way she treated her employees through the transition was great.”

The deal was finalized on Friday, June 15. The Post debuted under new ownership the following Monday with Sommers at the helm as publisher. The Post staff stayed on under the new ownership, and the three former Press-Telegram writers joined the team as well. Former Long Beach Post Executive Editor Brian Addison, who had been running his own blog, Longbeachize, also joined the team. Others followed in the coming weeks, and more are still to come, according to Sommers.

Sommers has a long history in journalism and personal ties to the Post. He studied journalism and government at California State University, Sacramento, where he became friends with Shaun Lumachi, who eventually co-founded the Post with Mayor Robert Garcia before Garcia entered local politics.

As a journalism student, Sommers covered a football game during which a man was arrested. He was subpoenaed by the man’s attorney for his photos and notes, and was held in contempt of court for six months for not complying. “I was 19 years old. And I was one of the youngest journalists to ever be held in contempt,” Sommers

said. He received free representation from the California News Publishers Association, and won recognitions from the Society of Professional Journalists.

Sommers went on to work for various NBC affiliates for years before moving into communications as former Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe’s director of communications. He then worked at Molina Healthcare until last year when John Molina and his brother, Mario Molina, were asked to leave the company as CFO and CEO. Others were let go as well. Sommers took an exit package rather than stay on.

“The personal part of this for me is Shaun Lumachi was my best friend,” Sommers said. Lumachi was killed when a truck driver fell asleep at the wheel and struck his vehicle in 2011. “I officiated his wedding. He was the best man at mine. He was one of the first people to hold my son. I had to call Deziré [Lumachi’s wife] and his parents when he was killed because [City Manager] Pat West called me and said, ‘Will you do the next of kin notification?’” Sommers recalled. “One of the things that is most exciting to me about this is to help bring my best friend’s vision full circle. The Post was started in his kitchen at his apartment on 2nd Street. And here we are now.”

The new ownership and leadership of the Post said they have a responsibility to provide a good work environment to their employees. “This is a challenging industry. And this work is not cheap, so we’re not going to cheapen the work by providing an environment that is anything less than a place for reporters to shine, to grow, to be mentored,” Sommers said.

“I think it has been working very well, particularly considering that the week after we acquired it we were right in the middle of the worst tragedy to hit this city in many years,” Sommers reflected, referring to the murder of Long Beach Fire Capt. David Rosa in early July.

“We need to create a new model for local journalism. The sort of old model where it’s

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a newspaper and you sell ads doesn't appear to be sustainable," Molina said. Sommers indicated that, in addition to selling advertising, the Post may venture into holding community forums and events with opportunities for sponsorships. The Post has also continued to operate a donation system on its website, which started under previous ownership earlier this year. "We have several hundred people who are now recurring patrons, like monthly contributors," he noted.

Before landing on a new financial model, the first priority is to grow the outlet's audience, according to Sommers. "This isn't cheap, what we're doing," he said. "But by making such an investment in it and seeing the digital audience follow, there are new revenue streams that we are bringing online that will hopefully fill that gap."

In terms of coverage, the Post is focusing on breaking news, arts and culture, underrepresented neighborhoods and city hall, Sommers noted, adding that he expects to add more city hall-dedicated reporters in coming weeks. Investigative reporting will also be a focus. "Cities need watchdogs. And that's where we can help, and we will," he said.

Pacific6 and John Molina have other investments in the City of Long Beach that the Post will have to report on. Molina is a part of another group that intends to take over Community Hospital Long Beach, and Pacific6 is redeveloping the Ocean Center and Breakers buildings in downtown. Molina said that, while he may occasionally give ideas to the Post and its staff (with no mandate to follow through), he would never tell the Post not to pursue a story related to him or any of his investments in the city.

"Before a single story was written, an extensive ethics policy was developed that every single person here has signed. And it talks about the relationship between Pacific6 and the partners and us," Molina said. "We have a higher burden to the public trust to make sure the people understand that, just because we have a corporate owner, that doesn't mean that they are in here dictating coverage. That doesn't happen."

Reflecting on his staff, Sommers said, "This is a crazy team of individuals. These are people who could go off and make a lot more money doing a lot of other things. But they are here with us on this journey because they are passionate about this city and their work."

Stephanie Rivera and Dennis Dean are two of the Post staffers who have transitioned under new ownership. Both expressed excitement at the ability to pursue more opportunities due to the expanded staff and funding.

"Knowing the potential that it would mean for the residents and the community, and them being really covered in a way that we haven't been able to do before, that just kind of made me excited even more," said Rivera, who is dedicated to covering diversity and immigration.

"Obviously, the old Post people and the old SCNG people have kind of two different styles of doing things," Dean, director of operations, said. "So kind of pulling those strengths from each and figuring out how that all works together is really exciting."

Addison, who has been his own boss as the producer of Longbeachize, said he was

happy to be back in a newsroom. "It's wonderful. That's the essence," he said. "Hearing this converging of all these different minds and ideas actually makes for better news, on every level: whether it's cultural, whether it's breaking."

Grobaty and Dobruck expressed that they had both loved working at the Press-Telegram and had no issues with their immediate management, but that, ultimately, joining the Post was a better opportunity than continuing to work for the shrinking paper. Dobruck said that the faceless, corporate ownership of Alden Capital was bad for morale at the Press-Telegram. "It's exciting to be somewhere where I feel like what we're doing is valued," he said.

Grobaty said that the prospect of a raise

at his former paper had become laughable. "Here, this morning, we were talking about the Christmas Parade. And I was like, 'You know, it costs \$500 to sponsor a band.' It was like, 'No problem,'" he recounted. "We're not here to raid John Molina's bank account, but it's part of getting involved with the community. Certain things cost a little bit of money. And John wants to make a really good paper out of this," he said.

While Grobaty corrected himself about calling the Post a paper – as it is now solely online – Molina said he does intend to start a print version in the future.

"We're trying to map all of this out," Sommers said. "Going from an initial idea in February to having a publication in July, it's kind of amazing." ■



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Something Old, Something New: More Couples Put A Twist On Old Traditions

■ By **ANNE ARTLEY**
STAFF WRITER

From geode wedding cakes to a ceremony officiated by friends, Long Beach hospitality industry representatives have found that couples are reworking certain traditions while doing away with others.

“Large bridal parties are a thing of the past,” Lisa Lyons-Gentile, the senior catering executive at Renaissance Long Beach Hotel, commented. “People are moving toward smaller, more intimate ceremonies with maybe their sister, brother or best friend. The maid of honor doesn’t even have to be a woman, it could be a best friend who’s a man.”

Lisa Duncan, the director of catering and convention services at Hotel Maya expressed agreement. “Bridal parties tend to be on the smaller side, more intimate,” she said. She added that couples are deviating from playing the traditional wedding march at their procession. Instead, they are selecting a song that has a personal mean-

ing for their relationship, or one that represents their cultural backgrounds.

Leslie Boutillier, sales and catering manager at the Santa Catalina Island Company at Two Harbors, has found that more guests are using friends and family to officiate the ceremony instead of ministers and priests. “I think that has to do with it being so easy just to jump online and get ordained,” she said. “That seems to be a really common trend.” She noted that, as well as a decrease in formality, couples are also cutting ceremonies short. “The party is the primary focus these days.”

While Boutillier also observed a trend toward smaller weddings, she clarified that the village of Two Harbors on Catalina Island tended to attract couples seeking a more intimate experience, with around 20 to 50 people. She said the Santa Catalina Island Company venues in Avalon are more conducive to large gatherings.

According to Lyons-Gentile, one tradition that seems to have gone by the wayside is the custom of the bride’s family

paying for the wedding. “That’s a very outdated mentality,” she said. “It comes from [the tradition of] a dowry and what the family had to offer.” She added that more families are splitting the bill or couples are funding their own wedding.

As for wedding dresses, hotel industry representatives have seen a blend of both old and new customs. “A white or ivory wedding dress is always beautiful and elegant,” Lyons-Gentile said. “But, for next year’s weddings, people are going with more hints of color, like antique pink, light lavender, or even something like a wedding pantsuit rather than a dress.”

But Daisy Prestwood, the catering and sales manager at the Long Beach Marriott, has seen a return to a more classic look. “Ladies are looking at lace on dresses, older things like a 1960s look, [rather than] ‘bling’ or diamonds.”

Lyons-Gentile said that “elegance is making a comeback.” She noted that this is a reversal of a trend toward simplicity she had noticed the past couple of years.

“I think people are getting more into details,” she continued. “A big trend with cakes is detail. [Couples are] moving away from simpler cakes. They are not too over the top, but they are bringing back a sense of elegance.”

Still, at Hotel Maya the trend toward “naked cakes” is still alive and well. “Wedding cakes are becoming more creative and interesting,” Duncan said. “[Couples are] not so stuck in traditional white frosting and flowering cakes. Geode cakes are also very popular.” This style of cake has a section lined with rock candy designed to look like the mineral formation. Duncan also described another cake that was designed to look like a marble countertop. “It was very sleek and cool looking, but it was still very much a wedding cake,” she remarked. “It fit the couple’s personal style.” Duncan said couples are still interested in the customary cake-cutting ritual even with a nontraditional confection.

Across the water on Catalina Island, “wedding cakes are kind of on the way out,” Boutillier said. “People are getting creative and doing dessert bars and custom cookies and desserts as opposed to a traditional wedding cake.”

The tendency toward ingenuity extends to decorations as well. “Instead of the traditional escort card displays, we’re seeing really creative ways for guests to find their seat,” Duncan remarked. “We’ve seen huge mirrors with a calligraphy artist who has come in and written everyone’s name on the mirror. We’ve also seen flower walls that have tags indicating which table you’re sitting at, and rustic doors propped up with multiple keys telling [guests] which table they are at.”

Prestwood said she noticed more couples bringing the outdoors inside and replacing flowers with leaves as centerpieces. “I had a client who brought an arch [made of branches] indoors and put tea lights on it,” she said. Although outdoor weddings are still popular, Prestwood said celebrations at hotels are making a comeback. “More peo-



More couples are opting to put a new spin on old traditions. In this photo, keys arranged on a door let guests know where they are seated (Photograph courtesy of Hotel Maya)



Couples are injecting personal touches into wedding food and decorations (Photograph courtesy of Hotel Maya)

ple are starting to come back to hotels,” she said. “They want it outdoors, but the hotels are better at putting it together. The past couple of years [couples were] moving to the beach scene.”

According to Lyons-Gentile, couples are replacing wedding favors with enhanced creativity at the reception. “Instead of stressing about something to give to their guests to take home that they probably wouldn’t need, they’re exchanging it for something they could enjoy while they’re there,” she said. This could include a unique snack, late-night menu or dessert.

Duncan has noted this trend as well. “We don’t see as many couples offering takeaway favors. That was one of the top things you [previously] thought about while planning a wedding,” she said. “We’re also seeing late-night cocktail parties maybe at 10 p.m. We bring out our made-to-order taco station or our cookie and milk shots, which are popular here. There’s even a food truck that will come in as a send-off.”

The send-off is another aspect of the wedding where couples are applying out-of-the-box ideas. Duncan said she has seen more sparklers and color bombs instead of rice or bubbles.

“People are getting away from limousines and not worrying about having a wedding car,” Lyons-Gentile said. “Some people are decorating wedding carts, doing electric cars like Teslas. People are more or less making it their own experience, having fun and making it their character.” ■



Long Beach Marriott Catering and Sales Manager Daisy Prestwood has noticed a return to more classic weddings and elegant touches. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Anne Artley)



Lisa Lyons-Gentile, Renaissance Long Beach’s senior catering executive is pictured at the hotel’s pool area, where many of its weddings take place. “Elegance is making a comeback,” she noted. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Pat Flynn)

Weddings



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Couples Serve Up Creativity And Wellness Through This Season's Wedding Menu Choices

■ By **ANNE ARTLEY**
STAFF WRITER

Long Beach catering and wedding venue executives agree that, when it comes to dining trends this season, informal settings, healthy options and creative concoctions are in, while sit-down dinners and surf 'n turf menu options are out.

"People prefer the type of interaction where they walk around and there's a more reception type setting rather than banquet tables," Yamid Duarte, the Aquarium of the Pacific's catering sales and marketing manager, noted. She added that her venue, which hosts weddings, lends itself well to that type of setting as it allows guests to wander around different exhibits while grazing on food.

"People are moving away from a plated meal," Duarte continued. "It's more about food stations and creating a customized menu. People just want to have their guests interact while getting their picture taken."

Another trend executives all touched on is the popularity of vegan, vegetarian and health-conscious options. "While a buffet is still popular, we're now seeing fresher food options," Jeanette Schelin, the senior director of Earl Burns Miller Japanese Garden, said. "An interest in fresh, local and

regional food is a trend that's been going on for years now, and one that's been getting stronger and stronger."

Ronald Nelson, the Long Beach Museum of Art's executive director, expressed agreement. The museum is used as a wedding venue with catering provided by Claire's at the Museum Restaurant. "We're noticing vegetarian options are important to the bride. In the past, it's been surf and turf or chicken. People are asking if the chicken is free-range. There are more questions of how and what they're eating. Also, how the food is raised and gathered for the purpose of their meals."

Premier, the catering service for the Aquarium of the Pacific and the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, sources food from local growers and emphasizes sustainability. According to Duarte, the chefs at the Aquarium are working on a farm-to-table menu. "We've noticed in California people are more aware of what they're eating," she said. "For example, they're eating a lot of organic food. They're also more aware that [wedding] guests might have an allergy or be gluten-free."

Ivan Smic, Premier's assistant general manager, had a similar assessment. "Needs are more diverse nowadays," he com-

(Please Continue To Next Page)

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Combining different cultural cuisines is a trend for weddings this season (Photograph by Premier)

(Continued From Previous Page)

mented. “When it came to appetizers, people would go for protein options in the past. Now we’re seeing a trend of picking items that satisfy every type of dietary need. Gluten free, vegetarian and vegan have definitely been a trend. . . . Surf ’n turf is definitely old school.”

According to Queen Mary Director of Catering Sabine DuBois, who provided comment by e-mail, prime rib is another example of a wedding dish that has gone out of style. Nelson, too, said the museum receives fewer requests for heavier fare such as large beef dishes and hamburgers. Fried food is also losing popularity, he noted. “People are more concerned about what they’re putting into their bodies,” he said.

At Grand Food & Beverage, Director Dan D’Sa finds more couples are blending cultures and pairing conventional wedding food with something more unique. “A lot of people are starting their celebration with a



Long Beach catering executives have found healthy and sustainable food is replacing heavier fare such as hamburgers and Beef Wellington. (Photograph by Premier)



Premier, the catering service for the Aquarium of the Pacific and the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, sources food from local growers. Chefs are putting together a farm-to-table menu to accommodate a growing trend of healthy food at weddings. (Photograph by Premier)

more diverse menu. Then they might go on to the traditional surf ’n turf,” he explained. “We’re seeing a lot more people expanding their horizons and taking risks. Indian food in the past 10 years has really taken off. I think people are just kind of bored [with the more customary offerings.]”

Other industry representatives spoke to an increasing trend of ethnic food. “Long



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The Business Of Weddings

Beach has such a diverse population and has access to so many different kinds of food, like Cambodian, Indian and Peruvian," Schelin said. "We're really such a diverse community that it gets people thinking about what's out there." She added that, "a lot of couples come to the [Earl Burns Miller Japanese] garden because it's a place all ethnicities feel comfortable."

Ethnic dishes D'Sa has found popular at weddings are chicken tikka masala skewers, egg rolls, ramen noodles and ahi poke. Poke, a raw fish salad, is a Hawaiian delicacy. "People are trying to be as true to a cultural dish as they can," he said. "We've brought in cultural chefs and had trainings in our kitchen. We've sent our staff out to take cooking classes. We take the time to respect the culture [a couple] is coming from. We dive in to give it as much respect as we can."

Couples are also more frequently choosing to express their personalities through the menu. "A couple will work with our catering and sales manager and bar department to create a signature drink," Duarte said. "Sometimes the bride would like a vodka drink and the groom wants to do a whiskey drink, so we might do a signature drink for her and him."

Nelson, too, said the Long Beach Museum of Art is putting more of an emphasis



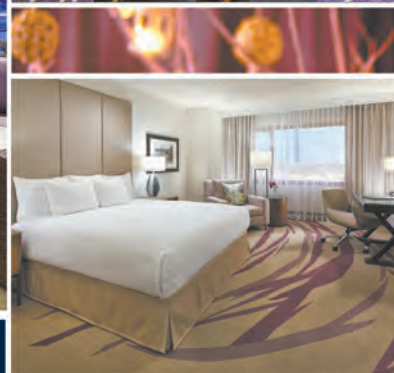
More hotels and wedding venues are placing an emphasis on decorative cocktails. Caterers are adding touches like small flowers or branches of rosemary. (Photograph courtesy of the Long Beach Museum of Art)

on cocktails due to popular tastes. "People really love the way something looks," he commented. "We put small flowers or little branches of rosemary in our cocktails. They love that blend and those subtle flavors. A cocktail can be \$12 to \$14, so you want to make sure it's pretty good. A lot of food gets put up on social media."

At the Japanese Garden, Schelin reported a rise in non-traditional cake and dessert stations. "We once had a bride that did wedding pies," she said. Schelin credited the increased creativity to the popularity of food shows on TV. "I think people at a younger age are getting into food," she commented. "It has been a real topic of interest among celebrities and what we see on the Food Channel. [The shows] encourage people to think about food in different ways and experiment with it."

Schelin said the Earl Burns Miller Japanese Garden has five caterers to sit down with couples to create a memorable experience based on their interests and budget. "Brides are personalizing things, not feeling like they must do food the traditional way."

DuBois expressed a similar sentiment. "Brides are straying away from the traditional food look preparation [to] more culinary artistic items [and] nicer presentation," she said. ■



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Wedding Cruises Help Couples Sail Into Marriage

■ By **ANNE ARTLEY**
STAFF WRITER

Long Beach’s seaside location lends a unique opportunity for couples who want to get married on the water. Harbor Breeze Cruises , Hornblower Cruises & Events and Carnival Cruise Line offer wedding packages for those who wish to sail into happily ever after.

“You can’t beat a wedding on the water,” Jane Waters, the Hornblower weddings & school sales manager for the greater Los Angeles area, said. “These days our brides are thinking outside the box. They want something completely different.”

Hornblower wedding cruises depart from Rainbow Harbor. “We have two of the largest yachts in the area: Endless Dreams and Entertainer,” Waters commented. “Both of those have open-top decks, so our couples are literally getting married between the sky and the water.”

Wedding packages include a ceremony service with the captain as officiant, a wedding planner, food services and accessories such as silverware and centerpieces. Waters



A couple exchanges vows on board a Hornblower ship with the Queen Mary in the background. Hornblower provides several wedding packages that include amenities such as customized cakes, a DJ and a buffet or seated meal. At right is a dining room on a Hornblower vessel. The company offers separate brunch and luncheon wedding options. (Photographs courtesy of Hornblower)



said each package allows for flexibility.

“We encourage [couples] to put their own stamp on it,” she said. “They can customize any package.” This includes bringing a priest, rabbi or other clergy on board to perform the ceremony.

According to Waters, Hornblower is currently specializing in Indian weddings and working with local hotels like the Hyatt Regency Long Beach. “Persian and Armenian

weddings are also very popular [with us] at the moment,” Waters said. “We love [working with] different cultures.”

Food options include a toast with champagne or sparkling cider, a customized wedding cake, buffet or seated meal, and different types of drinks including soda, juice, coffee and alcohol. Hornblower also offers packages for a luncheon and a champagne brunch. “The food is amaz-

ing,” Waters commented. “We have a team of chefs that travel with our couples on board. Everything is cooked fresh. If our couples want a food tasting ahead of time, we encourage that.”

Waters also encourages brides to pre-board an hour and a half before the event to dress on the boat or add decorations. This service is included in the packages. As for entertainment, Hornblower’s DJs reach



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out to couples ahead of time to plan a selection of tunes.

Waters said Hornblower aims to provide a “one-stop shop” for couples planning their big day. “Couples are so busy that the way forward at the moment is the all-inclusive package,” she said. “We can help them with anything from photography drones to any kind of entertainment. We just add it to their main account for them to pay 10 days before [the wedding]. She emphasized that all-inclusive does not equate to “cookie-cutter.”

“As soon as you set sail, you see the guests just smile and appreciate the views,” Waters described. “It’s so relaxing, so magical. There are no walls holding you in. That’s what they enjoy the most.”

For a longer experience on the water, Carnival Cruise Line offers wedding cruise options. Boats departing from Long Beach sail to Baja California, the Mexican Riviera, Hawaii and, occasionally, Alaska.

Carnival wedding experiences include an embarkation day celebration, which allows the couple to celebrate with family and friends before leaving on their excursion. Couples also have the option of tying the knot onboard the ship at a port of call, or at the cruise’s final destination. Starting this August, Carnival is also offering a wedding at sea.

According to Keta Burke-Williams, the marketing and business development manager for Carnival Cruise Line, the most popular package is the Carnival Classic Gold. This option provides for up to 50 non-sailing guests, a pre-cruise wedding planner, a cake, a toast, photography serv-



Capt. Dan Salas, founder and CEO of Harbor Breeze Cruises based in Long Beach, is pictured in front of *Sir Winston*, the newest addition to the company’s fleet. The vessel is 132 feet and accommodates up to 500 passengers for weddings, corporate events and convention/trade show attendees. (Photograph of Salas by the Business Journal’s Pat Flynn)

ices and a honeymoon dinner. The cruise line also offers separate services for renewal of vows. Other amenities are discounted “prenuptial” spa treatments for the couple, as well as for the bride and groom separately. Wedding video services are also offered at an additional cost.

“It’s interesting, because people cruise and get married with us for different reasons,” Burke-Williams said. “If they’re looking for a destination option, the feedback we get is that they’re surprised at how easy it is to coordinate. If they’re doing it through us, they’re not coordinating it on their own

through a vendor [at the destination] and also booking separate transportation.”

Carnival Cruise Line is debuting a new ship, Carnival Panorama, in Long Beach at the end of October 2019, and Burke-Williams said couples are already booking weddings. According to Burke-Williams, three ships currently operate out of Long Beach: Inspiration, Imagination and Splendor. “Our most popular one in Long Beach for both renewal of vows and weddings themselves is Imagination,” she said.

Harbor Breeze Cruises is another cruise service operating out of Long Beach, and

it’s based in the city. Last week, the company acquired a new boat. While its other vessels are able to hold up to 150 passengers, the new *Sir Winston* has a capacity of 500 and is available for weddings, according to Nilda Langston, vice president of operations at Harbor Breeze Cruises.

At 132 feet long, the *Sir Winston* has five decks, eight bars and a dining room that seats 250 people. It is accessible to guests with disabilities as the elevator provides service to all the decks. “Even when it’s raining, we can have a wedding on the new boat,” Langston said. “You don’t even need to use the outdoor space of the boat if you don’t want to. We have a sky lounge and sunset decks where people can enjoy the view.” She added, “The boat has staterooms where bridal parties can actually prep and do makeup.”

The Harbor Breeze wedding package includes a selection of hors d’oeuvres, bar and dinner options, a wedding coordinator, ceremony officiant, a champagne toast and cake. Weddings usually total around 50 to 100 passengers, a number Langston predicts will increase with the arrival of *Sir Winston*.

Harbor Breeze has a fleet of nine boats, and attracts mostly locals, although Langston said the company has had some international clients. “Setting up a wedding on a boat is not the same as at a venue where most wedding planners have experience,” she said. “Our planners can walk them through their process to work with them on their budget and needs. Most of our positive reviews are on the experience from beginning to end.” ■

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Salon Soma

Salon Soma owner Tula Trigonis began experimenting with hairstyling due to her own bad experiences in the stylist's chair. "When I was little, I had very curly hair. It was always butchered," she said. "So I started cutting my own hair, my brother's hair and my dolls' hair." When she grew older, her parents encouraged her to become a business owner, and she saw hairdressing as an opportunity. After attending California State University, Long Beach for a couple of years, Trigonis took a year off to attend the Career Academy of Beauty in Seal Beach. She worked as a hairdresser for six years before she got a chance to purchase her current space in Belmont Shore. In addition to cuts and coloring services, Salon Soma offers waxing, makeup application, weave extensions and eyelash tinting and coloring. Trigonis said her favorite part of the business is the personal connection she has with her clients. "I've seen people get married and divorced, have a couple of kids," she said. "You really become a part of all these people's families. You see them go through life just like you are. It's really amazing that they trust you with their personal information." According to Trigonis, the fact that the industry is always changing is what makes it exciting yet challenging. "One thing I pride myself on is that I've tried to stay trendy and current," she said. Salon Soma is located at 203 Glendora Ave. For more information, call 562/987-4799 or visit salonsoma.com.

Domenico's Italian Restaurant

Mike Rhodes, the owner of Domenico's Italian Restaurant, started out in the restaurant industry "the old-fashioned way" by working as a cook when he was in high school. "I moved my way up the ladder pretty quickly," he said. "By the time I was 19, I was the general manager of a restaurant." He eventually worked his way up to owning 14 restaurants. "I sold my interests in those companies in the mid-1990s," he said. About 15 years ago, Rhodes got the chance to take over Domenico's when the former owner wanted to retire. "I loved the fact that it was an iconic restaurant in Belmont Shore and had very loyal customers." The oldest restaurant in Long Beach, Domenico's opened in 1954. "Domenico's is a very special place," Rhodes said. "It's so close to a lot of families who've spent birthdays here and special occasions. I can't tell you how many people I've met who've had their first date or gotten engaged here. It's a big part of the community." When he took over, Rhodes expanded the hours to include lunch. Domenico's serves Italian fare including a selection of soups, salads, pasta, pizza and sandwiches. According to Rhodes, it was one of the first restaurants to serve pizza in California. "We're famous for our pizzas," Rhodes said. "One particular pizza that's a bestseller is the ground pepperoni. We actually grind the pepperoni on our premises." Domenico's Italian Restaurant is located at 5339 E. 2nd St. For more information, call 562/439-0261 or visit domenicorestaurant.com.



Sweet Threads

Shella Garcia, the owner of children's clothing store Sweet Threads, got her start by selling her wares out of a Volkswagen bus at Long Beach flea markets. Garcia's background is in the fashion industry, as a product developer for denim companies. "I knew I wanted to become my own boss at some point. I had a [business] partner at the time who had the idea of doing kids' clothes. I love vintage, so we kind of collaborated. We knew there wasn't a big market for vintage kids' clothing yet," she said. Garcia opened her first brick and mortar store on 4th Street in 2013. She decided to relocate to her current Belmont Shore location last August. "I started the business before I became a mom. Now it's even more rewarding," Garcia commented. Sweet Threads carries clothing and shoes for infants and children up to about 10 years of age. It also has a selection of bags and accessories such as hats, jewelry and sunglasses. In addition, the shop has its own in-house, vintage-inspired clothing line called Paush. "That does really well," Garcia said. "It's really unique and special." The store also hosts events, such as story time and indoor picnics. "I'm so happy I'm able to offer something I like that for the community," Garcia said. "My motto is, 'when everybody's going right, I go left.' I don't want to do what everyone else is doing." Sweet Threads is located at 4812 E. 2nd St. For more information, call 562/439-7933 or visit shopsweetthreads.com.

Small Business Dollars & Sense

How To Keep Your Finances Organized During Summer Travel

For many small business owners, the summertime is a great time to close shop and recharge. Whether your business will remain open or closed during your time off, we're fortunate to live in a digital world where virtually all of your financial travel arrangements can be made in the palm of your hand. From scheduling bills due, to initiating a travel plan to prevent card disruptions, mobile banking apps give convenience a whole new meaning. While mobile banking is more convenient, there are simple steps business owners should take to help stay on top of your finances and ensure you don't fall victim to scams.

Below are three tips to help keep your finances organized and secure as you travel this summer:

Start with a travel notification – Most banks and card issuers will temporarily turn off your card if they notice suspicious activity, such as a large purchase or charges in an unusual location. While it's actually a good thing, it can be frustrating to deal with, especially while traveling abroad. To help your bank monitor your account appropriately and ensure consistent card access, place a travel notification on your bank account and credit cards before you hit the road. Some banks are making this step easier than ever.

Be prepared in case of fraud – Unfortunately, scammers have long preyed on unsuspecting travelers. It pays to plan ahead and be vigilant to avoid costly mistakes while traveling. When it comes to getting cash, avoid standalone ATMs as these are primary targets for skimming devices that can steal your card's information via a card reader. Only withdraw cash from ATMs inside banks or via cash-back options at merchants. Also, beware of bogus Wi-Fi networks. When using a public network, say at a hotel or café, play it safe by asking an employee for the specific name of their network, and whether they require a security key for access – it's a good idea not to access your banking apps from any unsecured network.

It's important to keep credit and debit cards with you at all times, or locked in your hotel room safe. If at any time you misplace your card, or realize you accidentally left it somewhere, act quickly to help prevent fraud. For Wells Fargo customers, it's as simple as accessing the card "on/off" feature via your mobile app. Once the card has been recovered, you can simply turn it back "on."

Review your purchases when you get home – If you're a seasoned mobile banker, you likely monitor account and card activity from your mobile app frequently, and while traveling. If you see any unusual activity or unauthorized transactions, alert your bank and card issuer right away to resolve disputes and request replacement cards. It's also worth keeping an eye on your accounts for any delayed travel-related fraud for a short time after returning home.

By keeping these tips in mind, it's easier than ever to keep your finances organized and secure whenever, and wherever your travels take you. A little thought and planning on the frontend can save you time and money in the end.

(Natasha Mata, a 22-year veteran of Wells Fargo, is region bank president of the greater Central Los Angeles Area, which includes Long Beach and some North Orange County cities.)



By NATASHA MATA

“That every day we make a significant impact for these families.

That what we do is life changing, and that on my most challenging day I leave feeling like it really matters.”



Cheri Bazley Long Beach Ronald McDonald House

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

Cheri Bazley uprooted her professional career to help others when she first started working for the Ronald McDonald House (RMH) in Orange County in 2006. About five years later, she found out the organization – whose theme is “helping to bridge access to health care around the world” – wanted to open a new house in Long Beach and uprooted herself again, moving to the city in the hopes that she would be chosen to lead the house as executive director. She was ultimately chosen from a pool of 75 applicants.

When the Long Beach RMH lost one of its largest sources of funding after Mayor Bob Foster left office and his annual charity golf tournament was retired, Bazley stepped up again to create a new fundraising event – one she never dreamed would become as successful as it did.

The Long Beach Ronald McDonald House is a 23-room home for families of patients of MemorialCare Miller Children’s & Women’s Hospital Long Beach who need overnight accommodations. The house asks families to donate \$25 per night for a regular room or \$35 for suites. But the total cost of housing a family is \$125 per night, and about 50% of guests cannot pay anything, according to Bazley. Fundraising is crucial in balancing the budget.

In Foster’s last year in office, Long Beach RMH received a \$100,000 donation from his golf tournament. “That was a tough act to follow,” Bazley said. “I had to come up with an idea to replace those funds in the budget for the following year.”

At an RMH conference in Florida, Bazley learned about other fundraising best practices of other houses across the country and was inspired to create a new annual event to help fund the organization’s efforts in Long Beach. “We tried this idea of honoring gentlemen, not necessarily for their support of the Ronald McDonald House but for doing good works and giving back in the community – hence the name, ‘A Few Good Men,’” she said, referring to the name of the annual gala that will have its fifth anniversary in October.

The A Few Good Men Gala debuted in 2014 at the Pacific Room at the Long Beach Arena. It honored men who contribute to Long Beach through their work and charity, such as community event organizer Justin Rudd and then-Molina Healthcare CFO and Aquarium of the Pacific boardmember John Molina.

At each year’s event, honorees film short spots about what inspired their work in the community, put together packages for a live auction and participate in an entertaining fashion show before attendees. “That’s definitely out of the ordinary. And each year the gentlemen make their catwalk debut in different ways,” Bazley said of the fashion show. “One of our inaugural class honorees was Justin Rudd. Justin pulled his bulldog in his red book wagon down the cat walk,” she said. Rudd is known for his free library of books in Belmont Shore, where anyone can take a few copies from his wagon home to read. John Molina chose to strut down the walk with a penguin to highlight the Aquarium.

“We solicit sponsors for the event. We have table sales. There is a silent auction as well as a live auction,” Bazley said of how the event raises funds. What has proven to be one of the most touching moments of the night is a segment called Fund a Family, in which a family that has stayed at RMH shares their experience.

Last year, a family spoke before an audience of the largest-ever attendance of 900-plus people. Ten minutes later, an additional \$194,000 had been raised, Bazley recalled. “It’s powerful. For me, it speaks to the power of this community,” she said. “It really speaks to the mission and people recognizing how important the work is.”

After the inaugural year in 2014, honorees have been asked to suggest the men to be honored at the subsequent year’s gala. “We get recommendations and then we look to try to identify gentlemen from all walks of the community,” Bazley noted.

Last year, the A Few Good Men Gala raised \$750,000. It is the single largest source of funding for the house. In four years, it has brought it more than \$2.3 million for the house.

Under Bazley’s leadership, the Long Beach Ronald McDonald House has hosted 4,179 families since opening in 2011.

Asked what she loves most about her work, Bazley replied, “That every day we make a significant impact for these families. That what we do is life changing, and that on my most challenging day I leave feeling like it really matters.” ■

"I would say that every single resident in this community has an opportunity to make it better. There is no deed or task too small."



Marcelle Epley Long Beach Community Foundation

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

Nearly two years ago, Long Beach Community Foundation President and CEO Marcelle Epley convened Long Beach's four largest publications for a collaborative effort that ultimately produced an award-winning series about the city's digital divide and that got the local government talking about the issue. Last year, she initiated Around the Table, an event that brought 3,000 residents together at gatherings throughout the city to talk about ways to build a better Long Beach. The effort revealed new data about city residents and what matters to them.

Epley is a resident of Bixby Knolls, where she lives with her husband, two children and two dogs. A graduate of California State University, Long Beach, Epley's first local job was at the Press-Telegram in 2000, where she served as director of marketing. In 2006, she took on the same position at Long Beach Transit, which she held until she took over leadership of the Long Beach Community Foundation four years ago. The foundation is a nonprofit organization that helps individuals, agencies, nonprofits and others manage their philanthropic giving through charitable funds.

In her role at the community foundation, Epley saw an opportunity to convene and gather organizations within the city toward common causes.

As a former newspaper employee, Epley has observed local publications struggling to produce as many in-depth pieces as they had in previous years, and decided to address the issue.

"When the Knight Ridder newspaper group broke up, the Knight brothers, John and James, formed the Knight Foundation and created endowments in each of the cities that a [Knight Ridder] newspaper existed. Long Beach is one of those cities via the Press-Telegram," Epley said. "They have long been interested in finding a sustainable model that newspapers could use to grow and thrive and serve a community."

Epley decided to try to convince the four largest Long Beach news publications to collaborate on an in-depth series, on the condition that she secure funding from the Knight Foundation. The Long Beach Business Journal, Long Beach Post, Grunion Gazette and Press-Telegram agreed, forming the Long Beach Media Collaborative

(LBMC) and working together to produce a series on the city's digital divide. The topic was inspired by a Census statistic that revealed about 20% of Long Beach residents did not have Internet access. Epley secured a grant for the project from the Knight Foundation, and the publications got to work.

"The hope in bringing the newspapers together was to increase the coverage and quality of journalism in Long Beach," Epley said. "I think the litmus test for success was the fact that the mayor and our city council in the end said [that] this is important and it's a priority, and we've got to take a look at making it better." Epley has been given the go-ahead from the Knight Foundation to fund a second LBMC project.

Epley debuted another new concept to Long Beach last year with Around the Table, a one-day event that brought community members together around tables in backyards, at coffee shops, libraries and restaurants in each of the city's districts.

To get the initiative going, Epley partnered with the local nonprofit We Love Long Beach, which has an existing network of active community members throughout the city. "What came out of it was a real documentation of the love that residents have for their city," Epley said of the event, held last September. Data collected from surveys taken during the event is available at aroundthetablelb.com.

"The actionable piece is the fact that the majority of residents expressed serious concern about the issue of housing and homelessness," Epley said. As a result, she is working to figure out how the community foundation can help connect residents to entities working to address the issue.

Epley's next big idea is already on its way to becoming fruition: extending the Long Beach College Promise, which guarantees qualified Long Beach Unified School District students a free year at Long Beach City College and enrollment at California State University Long Beach, to incorporate a workforce component.

A program designed to connect graduates with local employers is debuting soon. "We're calling it the Long Beach College Promise Fellowship Program. The first class will be in spring 2019," she said.

In closing, Epley reflected, "I would say that every single resident in this community has an opportunity to make it better. There is no deed or task too small." ■

“Long Beach is self-contained in a sense that people don’t know what a cosmopolitan or international city it is. Long Beach should be a city that is known around the world. It has to live up to its potential.”



Julia Huang **interTrend Communications**

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

After its fourth year, 73 large, colorful works of art cover otherwise empty and wasted wall space throughout the city thanks to the POW! WOW! Long Beach festival. The history of the art festival in Long Beach can be traced back to a single individual with an idea – Julia Huang.

President and CEO of Long Beach-based interTrend Communications, Huang knew POW! WOW! founder Jasper Wong and experienced the art festival in Hawaii and East Asia. After seeing the transformative ability of the festival in the Kaka‘ako area in Honolulu and in Taiwan, she believed it could have a positive impact in Long Beach.

“I saw firsthand how the artists got together and revitalized art,” Huang said. “The energy of art was just pure magic in the places that POW! WOW! went.”

At the time, interTrend was doing work in support of the Long Beach Art Museum, so Huang brought her notion to Ron Nelson, the museum’s executive director. Nelson liked the idea and introduced Huang to Steve Goodling, president and CEO of the Long Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, who also got on board.

With the help of Nelson and Goodling, Huang was able to bring her idea to Mayor Robert Garcia, who she said loved it. Huang explained that having city support made it much easier to navigate the process of bringing the festival to Long Beach. Without Nelson, Goodling and Garcia, she said the festival would not have reached its current scale.

interTrend, which works with companies such as Toyota and State Farm, was founded in Torrance in 1991. It moved onto the ninth floor of a Long Beach office building on Ocean Boulevard more than 15 years ago. Huang said that she is slightly embarrassed to say that for the first 11 years in Long Beach the company did not interact with the city, but rather was just an “office dweller.” However, in 2012, the company purchased a historic building at 228 E. Broadway in an attempt to engage more with the commu-

nity. After spending millions to renovate the property, interTrend’s approximately 80 staff members have occupied the space for several years.

“Placemaking is just so important. We saw firsthand, coming from the ninth floor to street level, how interaction at the street level is so important. We thought that by bringing a street art festival like POW! WOW! we would . . . make it easier for people to interact with art,” Huang said. “Art isn’t just for consumption in a gallery or museum. It should be public in that people should be able to consume it and enjoy it at the street level for free.”

In addition to her community-centered POW! WOW! work, Huang has served on the Downtown Long Beach Alliance board and was appointed to the Queen Mary Land Development Task Force in 2015. The task force made recommendations for the development of land surrounding the ship to Los Angeles-based Urban Commons, which holds the lease for the site. Huang and her company also focus on social issues affecting the city, primarily homelessness and mental health.

“Rather than taking a board seat, we have a tendency to support whatever comes to our attention. It’s easiest to write a check . . . but we have an organization called IT Cares within the company that is staff driven,” Huang said. “They get together and do a lot of volunteer work. We have been doing work with a couple of organizations within Long Beach.”

The firm’s community service mentality starts from the top down, Huang said. She tries to lead by example and works to create an environment that allows her employees to engage in these activities. Part of that environment is inclusiveness. Huang explained that, when it comes to supporting organizations and movements, those related to women, Asian Americans and the LGBT community are always at the top of the list.

“Long Beach is self-contained in a sense that people don’t know what a cosmopolitan or international city it is. Long Beach should be a city that is known around the world. It has to live up to its potential,” Huang said. “I think that I should work to make people understand that Long Beach is a great place to live, a great place to work, it supports business, it supports art, and it shouldn’t be just a best-kept secret.” ■

“That is kind of what attracted me to Long Beach – there are like-minded people who are interested in improving the community. It was cool.”



Kerstin Kansteiner Portfolio Coffehouse, Berlin Bistro, Portfolio Fit

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

Sheer coincidence led to the establishment of the 4th Street staple, Portfolio Coffehouse. Born in northwestern Germany, Kerstin Kansteiner moved to Nuremberg for college and then landed a six-month internship in 1989 with a shipping company based in Long Beach.

“It was not love at first sight. I came here, I didn’t own a car, I had a crappy internship and I did not like it, honestly,” Kansteiner said. “In Europe, a café is the first place you go to because that’s where you meet people. . . . The whole European thing just didn’t exist here. Then through meeting people at Midnight Espresso [a former coffeehouse in Belmont Shore], I thought this is kind of cool, kind of interesting and then I really felt like all of a sudden I was able to integrate myself into Long Beach.”

By late 1990, Kansteiner had met and married her first husband, and the pair opened Portfolio. By 1992, the couple decided marriage and a business partnership wasn’t for them. He moved to San Francisco and she decided to stick it out with Portfolio for the sake of her employees.

In the early days, Kansteiner noted that there were only two other coffeehouses operating nearby, both owned by women. The three owners would meet at Portfolio once a month and began doing cleanups of the area, now known as Retro Row, on their own.

“That is kind of what attracted me to Long Beach – there are like-minded people who are interested in improving the community. It was cool,” Kansteiner said. “It was rough around the edges at the time but there was something there, so I felt like there was a genuine heart – people were here and had a passion.”

That passion ultimately led to the formation of the 4th Street Parking and Business Improvement District (BID), for which Kansteiner served as president for more than 15 years. Even after the formation of the BID, she said the business owners did all the investment and work without city assistance. She explained that this allowed for the area to develop in the direction the businesses wanted – namely avoiding commercial

influences that have impacted Belmont Shore and the downtown area. This strengthened the bond between businesses, she added.

Today, Kansteiner also owns and operates Berlin Bistro, a coffeehouse and café adjoining Fingerprints record store, and Portfolio Fit, a small coffee shop inside Olympix Fitness. With all her businesses, Kansteiner is an environmental leader when it comes to operations. Her facilities have not used Styrofoam packaging in years – well before the city instituted a ban on the product – opting for compostable alternatives, including straws. Additionally, all coffee grounds are gathered and made available as compost for local farmers. Kansteiner also participated in a pilot program with the city to collect kitchen waste to be used as compost.

“It comes from my family background and growing up in Europe. In Europe you just grow up with a lot more environmental causes,” Kansteiner said. “I came here and saw that it didn’t exist. I always felt strongly about it and the argument that a small business can’t afford it – sometimes someone has to just step up and do it.”

In order to bring the prices of eco-friendly products down, they must be used, Kansteiner said. She explained that these products today cost mere pennies more than their plastic counterparts, which can be rolled into product prices with little notice by the customer. Kansteiner added that she is willing to help other businesses make the transition.

Kansteiner married her second husband, a local developer and builder who had previously purchased the Art Theatre, which was renovated and reopened in 2008. Since reopening, the pair have transitioned the business into a nonprofit, which Kansteiner said allows it to better serve the community. As a nonprofit, the theater can negotiate discounts for newly released films, leverage additional funding, act as a community meeting space, show municipal debates and build a more customizable entertainment program for residents, Kansteiner explained.

“Ten or 15 years ago, I never would have thought that I would sit outside of the Art Theatre at 9 p.m. and have a glass of wine. I would have been scared for my life. It was not a safe area,” Kansteiner said. “[The theater] just really changed things by having people out and about. It’s a huge transformation. It’s great to see people interact and go to dinner and talk about a film.” ■

“It was pretty tough at first, but now there are oncologists who send patients to me because they see the change. I feel like this is my destiny.”



Erin Sommerville

MemorialCare Todd Cancer Institute

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

Picturing the inside of a hospital, most people would imagine stethoscopes and needles, doctors in white lab coats and conversations between doctors and patients about their health issues. At MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center, patients can also be seen meditating in a rooftop garden, heard laughing or talking about their lives – not their illness – with Erin Sommerville, a mind-body oncology coach at the hospital.

Over the last eight and a half years, Sommerville established and developed one of the country’s first in-hospital Mind-Body Cancer Coaching Programs at the MemorialCare Todd Cancer Institute in Long Beach.

“We created it. There are mind-body departments or something along those lines in big hospitals now because people are demanding it – mindfulness and meditation – because we can see its effects,” Sommerville said. “To have someone [working] full-time as a coach here, that did not exist before I came.”

For more than 30 years, Sommerville has educated people about the importance of mind-body wellness. In the 1980s, she launched a conference called “The Healing Power of Laughter and Play” aboard the Queen Mary. The conference ran for 15 years across the country and parts of Canada, where Sommerville is originally from.

“It was really on how laughter and play support your immune system,” Sommerville said. “Not only that, but you have a better quality of life. [The conference] was for doctors.”

Through her work, Sommerville met Dr. O. Carl Simonton, a radiation oncologist who helped popularize the mind-body connection when treating cancer in the late 1970s and 1980s. They worked together for 25 years hosting professional training retreats on mind-body medicine around the world.

Throughout her time in the field, Sommerville said she has had many mind-body wellness teachers, including a Lakota-Sioux shaman in South Dakota and healers in Thailand. The focus of her work is not the illness, but rather the patient’s life.

“Our ability to play and create are instinctual. That’s how I coach people – with a sense

of humor and lightheartedness. I want to empower you to believe that you have possibility. Right now, with your challenges, you’ve got to live fully each and every day and focus on that,” Sommerville said. “If you talk to the oncologists, they will say that, after a patient sees me, often their chemotherapy will go better, or they’ll have less pain or their attitude is really different. It’s exciting.”

There is science to support her work, Sommerville said. She explained that feelings of love, gratitude and happiness cause cortisol (a hormone the body releases in response to stress) levels to decrease and endorphins (a hormone that activates opiate receptors and relieves pain) to increase. These chemical changes affect the mind in a positive way, which has a direct impact on the immune system, Sommerville said.

At the American Cancer Society’s 43rd Annual Long Beach Cancer League Gala in June, Sommerville was recognized as a “Star” for her leadership in the fight against cancer. She described receiving the award as a “beautiful, perfect moment in time,” noting that some people work their entire lives without receiving recognition. Next month, Sommerville is speaking at a TEDx salon. She said she is nervous but that it is a great opportunity to further put mind-body wellness in the spotlight.

Sommerville’s ultimate goal is to see her ideals integrated fully into modern medicine, including being taught at medical schools. “I think it’s happening,” she said. “You can see it in all the books on happiness, you can see it in hospitals – we will become more and more aware of how very important the mind and emotions are to health and well-being in general.”

Outside of the hospital, Sommerville offers private and group coaching. She said she has hosted a seminar on stress and its impacts on health and happiness for Long Beach-based tech company Laserfiche. She also gives a presentation called “Growing Young” at senior centers. She encourages more individuals, companies and groups in Long Beach and the surrounding area to visit her website at happinessheals.com to see if they can benefit from her experiences.

“It is a passion and a purpose for me. When I get the letters sometimes that [say] I have really changed someone’s life, that is such a gift,” Sommerville said. “It was pretty tough at first, but now there are oncologists who send patients to me because they see the change. I feel like this is my destiny.” ■

The Long Beach College Promise – A Decade Later

(Continued From Page 1)

LBUSD fourth graders taking a field trip to LBCC and all fifth graders taking a field trip to CSULB. This past school year, LBCC hosted more than 5,000 fourth graders, Romali said, noting that for many it was their first time on a college campus.

For LBUSD, much of the work fueling the success of the college promise is done at the high school level, according to Christopher Lund, assistant superintendent of research, planning, evaluation and school improvement for the district. Rather than taking a \$60 SAT test at a dif-

ferent school on a Saturday as was done in the past, LBUSD high schoolers take it for free during the school day. Advanced placement (AP) classes are also more accessible, with the district charging students \$5 for each test, rather than the full cost of more than \$90.

The overall graduation rate for LBUSD has increased each of the last five years. The current high school graduation rate for the district is 84.2%, which is higher than Los Angeles County and state levels at 81.3% and 83.2%, respectively. Because of the SAT and AP support systems, Lund said more students than ever have met university requirements and have earned college credits by the time they graduate.

“Prior to doing in-school testing, we would only end up with about half of our students with an SAT score. So, right off the bat, we had a large number of students who couldn’t even apply to a four-year institution because they didn’t take the appropriate tests,” Lund said. “And over half of our students now, by the time they graduate high school, have taken at least one AP course.”

Four years ago, 39% of LBUSD students met the minimum eligibility for CSULB, Lund explained. After the completion of the 2017-2018 school year, that number had increased to 55%. When LBUSD students graduate, Lund said they are 10 times more likely to attend LBCC than any other community college. He added that CSULB receives more of LBCC’s students than any other four-year institution.

For both the city college and university, enrollment of Long Beach Unified students is at a 10-year high. Enrollment from LBUSD to CSULB has increased 71% under the college promise. Enrollment from LBCC to CSULB has increased 55%.

The number of first-generation students enrolling at CSULB has increased 151% from 166 individuals in fall 2008 to 417 in fall 2017. Students who are college-ready upon entering CSULB increased from 43% in 2008 to 65% in 2017.

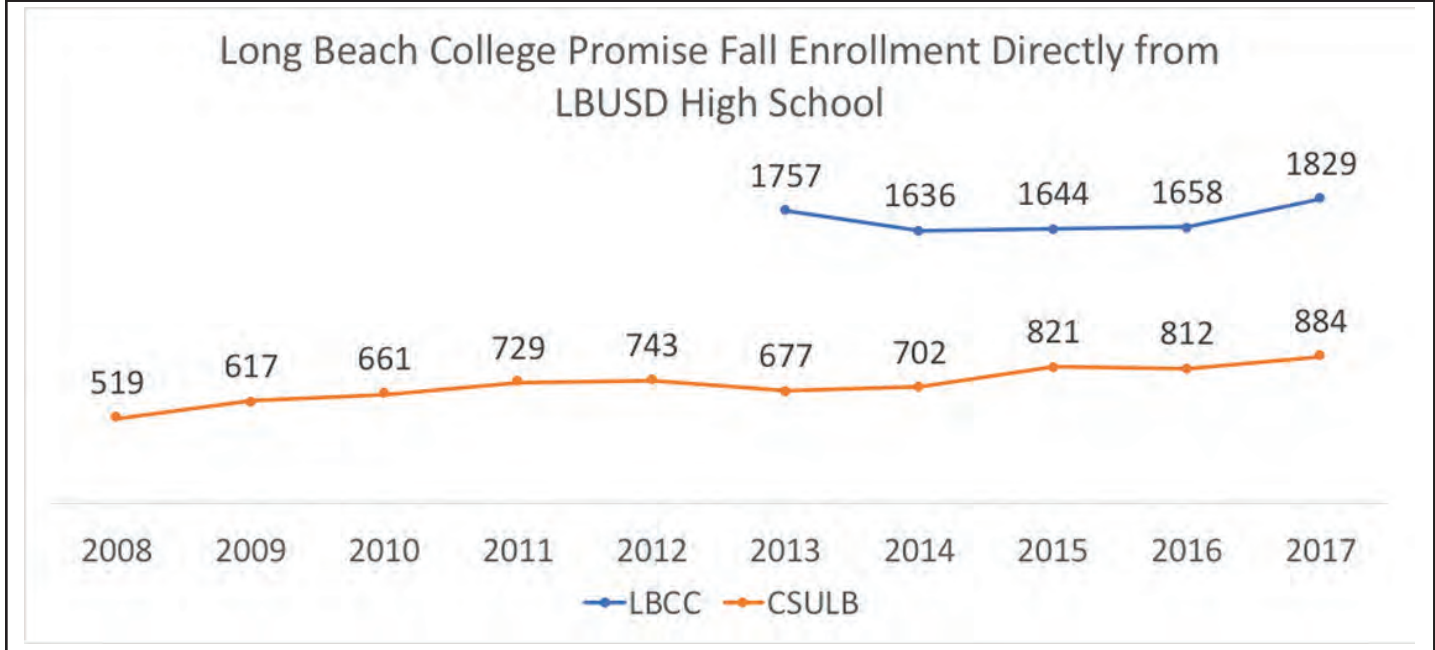
To support students under the college promise, LBCC offers one year free tuition for those who enroll directly out of LBUSD and meet certain requirements. More than \$500,000 in Long Beach College Promise scholarships were given out to LBCC students in 2017. By reducing some of the financial burden of college, Romali said graduation rates are increasing. In the year that Romali has been president, graduation rates increased more than 20% and the number of certificates issued increased over 40%, she said.

Data sharing between LBUSD and LBCC is another factor related to increased graduation rates and the college’s attempt to graduate students in less time. When a student graduates high school and enrolls at LBCC, rather than simply taking math and English placement tests, the college considers the student’s grade point average and performance in previous classes to determine the best placement. This approach reduces wasted time spent in courses students do not need, allowing them to reach graduation more quickly, Romali explained.

Length of stay at LBCC is anywhere from three to six years, Romali said. She explained that the longer a student is in college, the less likely they are to graduate. Additionally, if students take more than three years to graduate from a two-year institution, the financial benefits of a free year are less impactful because additional time means additional money. Romali said



An examination of The Long Beach College Promise 10-year report shows positive growth on Long Beach Unified School District’s graduation rates, as well as Long Beach City College and California State University, Long Beach, enrollment and graduation rates. Christopher Lund, pictured left, assistant superintendent of research, planning, evaluation and school improvement for the district, and Hilda Martinez, director of public engagement for The Long Beach College Promise at the university, agree that the promise has met and exceeded expectations over the last decade. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Pat Flynn)



the current time frames are not acceptable and that the college is working toward the goal of two to three years for students to reach graduation.

Romali said the school is taking a 15- to 20-pronged approach to strengthen the performance of the college both in terms of academics and student services. The college promise is the foundation of positive change for the college.

"We have made tremendous strides over the last year. That is all built on the base of the promise," Romali said. She added that other cities are using Long Beach as a model for education, bringing the promise to students across the country. That is why we do what we do — to help not only our own students but students far and wide. The numbers we will never see, people we will never know who will benefit from what we are doing here in Long Beach. That is the true magic of what we do."

Hilda Martinez, director of public engagement for The Long Beach College Promise at CSULB, said the program has met or exceeded all expectations. The main factor in this success has been the introduction of the concept of college at the elementary school level. Martinez explained that all three institutions are working to put in place a culture in which students expect to go to college, not just wonder if they can.

Graduates of LBUSD high schools are guaranteed acceptance to CSULB if they meet the minimum requirements, which can alleviate much of the stress and fears surrounding applying to colleges. By removing that stress, Martinez said stu-

dents are more likely to apply to college. The school is also working to assist LBCC transfers financially with awards to offset costs.

Under the college promise, CSULB has developed programs to give extra academic assistance to students prior to starting at the university. CSULB professors also work with professors and teachers at LBCC and LBUSD to streamline coursework, Martinez said. The instructors meet every quarter, and the collaboration makes transitioning between institutions seamless by ensuring students are not repeating courses. This accelerates their journey through higher education, she added.

"One of the big reasons the college promise is successful is the partnership [between the institutions]. We were lucky enough to have three educational institutions that had leaders who wanted to work together," Martinez said. "That may not seem like a difficult thing to do but it is. With the politics behind education, a promise isn't always welcome because there is a certain level of accountability. A lot of potential partners are unwilling to participate because they have to be very open about their outcomes."

Martinez said that the rate of students going to college among African Americans, Latinos and Asians is increasing. However, so is the rate among white students. Because of this trend, there is still a gap in enrollment rates. Martinez said if this trend continues, there is a question as to whether the rates of ethnic minority enrollment at CSULB will ever catch up

to that of white students. Regardless, she said the fact that enrollment rates are increasing among the minority groups is a positive sign.

After the City of Long Beach joined the college promise in 2014, Mayor Robert Garcia and LBUSD Superintendent of Schools Christopher Steinhauser began pushing for increased preschool and internship opportunities in Long Beach. While the district cannot afford free preschool for all, Steinhauser said the district will soon offer it to all students living in low-income households.

"We are not offering free preschool for middle- and upper-class families. We can't afford that," Steinhauser said. "But we can and we are 100% committed to offering a seat for every student who is on free and reduced lunch to go. And we are almost there. The mayor has been a great partner on the early childhood front and the Educare [facility] will be basically a beacon of this policy development for everybody."

In the coming months, Long Beach Unified will open an Educare facility at Barton Elementary in North Long Beach. The mayor said it will create nearly 200 seats for preschoolers in the underserved community. The facility is a public-private partnership between the city and Educare, which supports low-income neighborhoods with early childhood education. Garcia said it is a fully funded program, making it, essentially, a public preschool.

Garcia explained that educational research indicates that early childhood education, such as preschool, is key to a

child's future success. He said he still believes in universal preschool, but said the city and community would need to have a discussion as to whether or not to make the large investment to ensure every child attends for free. For now, he said the city is having great success expanding preschool opportunities on its own.

"Where we have the biggest gap [is] . . . middle class working families who don't qualify for government programs. But they may not make enough to fully fund their child into a program," Garcia said. "And so we need to get to universal pre-K and help more of those families. . . . We're not there yet but I'm hoping that's a gap we'll be able to close."

When he first became mayor, Garcia said that Steinhauser challenged him to double internships. Through its partnerships and its internship challenge, the city has doubled the number of internships, according to Garcia. With the addition of preschool and internship opportunities to the college promise, Long Beach is assisting more students from early childhood, through their educational careers and into the workforce.

"As proud as we are of the accomplishments over the past 10 years, we're still looking for additional opportunities to support our students within and across these institutions," Lund said. "The longer the relationship has grown, I think the more we realize the more that we can do. I think we've scratched the surface in many ways but we are looking at ways we can provide students additional support." ■

History of the College Promise —————>

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Mayor Robert Garcia recently visited Grant Elementary School in North Long Beach to read to school children. Garcia is an advocate for universal preschool, or preschool for all. Garcia is pictured with, from left: Gloria Guillen, teacher; Kimberly Kelly, coordinating teacher; and Felicia Fortenberry, teacher. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Pat Flynn)

The History And Future Of The Long Beach College Promise

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

The Long Beach College Promise is known throughout the country as a model for local education. According to its architects, it has influenced scores of similar pacts among school districts and colleges throughout the country, and played a part in President Obama's America's College Promise as well as the development of a California College Promise.

Since 2008, the promise program has afforded students enrolled in the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD)

the opportunity to attend Long Beach City College (LBCC) with one semester – and now, one academic year – free, and guaranteed a seat at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) for those who met certain requirements. In 2014, Mayor Robert Garcia made the City of Long Beach a signatory to the promise program, expanding internships for local students and adding more opportunities for pre-school education throughout the city.

The promise is a pact between students, the city and the city's three public education institutions. Students pledge to meet certain academic requirements, and, once

achieved, their educational future is guaranteed at the local college and university.

The promise grew out of a concept called seamless education that was introduced in the 1990s to help uplift the city, recalled Christopher Steinhauser, superintendent of LBUSD. Steinhauser is now in his 17th year in this position.

"The city was undergoing a massive loss of jobs, even more so than in 2008, because we lost the Naval shipyard, [and] McDonnell Douglas was basically being phased out and bought by Boeing at the time," Steinhauser said. "Within a period of a couple years, the community lost 50,000 jobs. And then of

course at the same time you had civil unrest. You had the riots of the early '90s."

Then-Mayor Beverly O'Neill and local businessman George Murchison brought the leaders of LBUSD, the city college and the university together to create "a world class educational system" that would attract businesses and jobs, and encourage residents to stay in the city, Steinhauser recalled. "We were in a room for three days locked up basically," he said. "And out of that came this whole idea of seamless education."

The concept of seamless education was for the institutions to work together toward certain goals. "We targeted how we could ensure that all kids would be reading by the end of third grade. We targeted how we could prepare more kids for college, and what would that look like. We started bringing people together," Steinhauser said.

This informal pact to work together eventually blossomed into the Long Beach College Promise. "That really formalized what the institutions were going to do for students," Steinhauser said. At the time, there were a few similar programs around the country, but Long Beach's was the first to have all three levels of education involved, he explained. "I would still argue that Long Beach's promise is probably the most detailed in depth," he said.

The original signatories to the promise for their respective institutions were Steinhauser, former Long Beach City College Superintendent-President Eloy Ortiz Oakley, and then-CSULB President F. King Alexander. Steinhauser is the last man standing, so to speak, of the original signatories. But, even with changes in leadership at the college and university, Steinhauser said the promise program has only grown

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Reagan Romali is the superintendent-president of the Long Community College District, which offers two free semesters of tuition through the Long Beach College Promise to students from the Long Beach Unified School District who meet certain requirements. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)



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The Long Beach College Promise – A Decade Later



Mayor Robert Garcia reads to school children at Grant Elementary School in North Long Beach as part of his Tour of Long Beach, in which he left city hall to visit each of the districts in the city. Garcia added the city government as a partner to the Long Beach College Promise in 2014 with a focus on early education and internships. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Pat Flynn)

(Continued From Previous Page)

for the better, with each new leader just as committed to the program as the last.

Current LBCC Superintendent-President Reagan Romali began her position with LBCC about a year and a half ago, after having worked at Harry S. Truman College in Chicago. "I see it as the great social equalizer," Romali said of the Long Beach College Promise. "Long Beach struggles with poverty. . . . And the one thing that pulls people out of given circumstances is education and then placement into a job. So the promise levels that playing field and allows them to get the education that they deserve, and then turn around and flip that into a job," she explained. "The promise translates into a more financially sound life. . . . I think it's really at the core of economic development and social mobility in Long Beach."

In the 2015-16 academic year, Long Beach City College expanded opportunities for promise students by extending a guaranteed free semester of tuition to two semesters. The college largely relies upon private donations to its foundation to fund these Long Beach College Promise scholarships. Some students also receive funds through the California College Promise Grant, formerly known as Board of Governors (BOG) fee waivers.

"Every year the foundation gives out about a half-million dollars in scholarships, and that has been going on since 2012," Romali said. "It comes through the foundation and it comes through local donors," she said, noting that a local couple recently gifted the foundation a house that was sold

for \$1 million to fund these scholarships. "It's really magical to see how generous people are with opening their wallets to help someone else get ahead," she noted.

Having the mayor add the city as a promise partner in 2014 made the program even more unique among peer programs, according to Steinhauser, who called Garcia "the education mayor."

"I always say I am an educator who also happens to be the mayor. And I will be an educator after," Garcia told the Business Journal. "That's really what I have built my life around. . . . And I think it actually guides how I lead."

One of the first steps Garcia took as mayor was to give a speech announcing his intention to make the city a party to the Long Beach College Promise. "Our focus has been on early childhood ed[ucation]. We have been working on expanding preschool seats, which we have. We have worked on building the preschool Educare center in North Long Beach, which will be the largest preschool in the city," Garcia said, referring to a new preschool slated to open soon.

Garcia also started the Mayor's Fund For Education, a nonprofit dedicated to funding early education efforts. "It's really important for people to understand that preschool is the absolute best investment in the education spectrum, and that's why it has been important for me," he said.

Since joining the promise, the City of Long Beach has doubled the number of internships offered to local high school and college students. "We always try to

focus on paid internships, unless there is some specialized college credit internship," Garcia said.

The promise has afforded opportunities to grow connections and inter-institution programming among the school district, college and university. For example, an emphasis has been placed on offering LBUSD students more opportunities to take dual enrollment courses at LBCC so that they can simultaneously earn high school and city college course credits, according to Steinhauser. "I probably have a couple thousand kids in dual enrollment right now. That will continue to grow," he said.

The school district also works closely with CSULB's College of Education because many of the teachers who graduate from that program end up working for LBUSD, the largest employer in the city. "I meet on a monthly basis with the dean of the school of education. So we are always on the cutting edge of new projects," Steinhauser said.

The Long Beach College Promise won the Governor's Innovation Award three years ago, an honor that included a grant to create an engagement campaign aimed at ensuring local families are aware of the promise program. Now in its third year, the effort will wrap up soon unless more funds are identified, according to Hilda Martinez, executive director of public engagement for the effort. Martinez is based at CSULB.

"The first goal really was to build awareness of the college promise so that everybody knew about it and was taking advantage of it," Martinez said. "And the

second goal was to reach out to socio-economically disadvantaged communities." Awareness of the promise was studied by zip code, and neighborhoods were then targeted for the campaign, she explained. "What we found, no surprise, is that the bulk of folks who didn't know about the promise lived in North and West Long Beach," she said. Martinez said she would like to partner with LBUSD to add questions to the its annual survey that goes out to local families in order to determine if the campaign is making an impact.

The next step for the college promise is debuting soon, and will focus on a new workforce component designed to place local graduates in Long Beach jobs. Beyond that, the details are hush-hush until a formal announcement is issued in the coming weeks.

"It's going to be another nationwide model that people are going to use as an exemplar and benchmark against how to take college and feed it seamlessly into a job," Romali said of what she calls Promise 2.0. "There is a meaningful connection where not only are we going to give you your diploma, we're going to place you in a job in your local community if that's where you want to live. We are going to have a model that's going to do that," she said.

"We want students who graduate out of Cal State Long Beach to get a job locally or to be able to stay here," Garcia said. "Right now we are losing and bleeding thousands of students who leave Long Beach and can't find a job here. . . . Ideally, if someone wants to stay in Long Beach they'll be able to."

Both Garcia and Steinhauser pointed out that the issue of housing affordability needs to be addressed in order for professionals to be able to stay in Long Beach. "We cannot sustain ourselves with housing that is unaffordable to working professionals," Garcia said. "We have got to keep building more at density, particularly in the non-suburban neighborhoods."

Steinhauser agreed. "The average house now is over \$500,000, probably closer to \$600,000. And that's a fixer upper," he said. "As an educator as well as a parent, I want my young people to be able to stay here and work here and live here and not be priced out of the community. Because that's going to be the strength of the community: the future generation."

Garcia said that the Long Beach College promise is the "best citywide program we have as a community." He added, "We are a national model when it comes to the education system." ■



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