Fellow Laderians,

After watching the video numerous times, there's no doubt in my mind that New York City police officer Daniel Pantaleo committed murder when he use an illegal choke hold on Eric Garner. The president of the NYPD Union says because he was obese and asthmatic that Garner contributed to his own death and that he shouldn't have resisted arrest. But there's nothing on the videotape that indicates he was "resisting arrest," which, like "disorderly conduct," is the verbal equivalent of a "throw-down gun" that corrupt cops use to cover their crimes.

When Mr. Garner left his home that morning, he certainly didn't expect to be murdered by a police officer for such a petty offense as selling untaxed cigarettes. He should have been given a summons, like a parking ticket, to answer the charge in court . . . not a death sentence administered by judge, jury, and executioner Daniel Pantaleo, all out in public view in just a few minutes.

Officer Pantaleo has had numerous complaints and lawsuits filed against him, all of which have been settled in favor of the plaintiffs (some are still pending). He has been charged with such offenses as "using excessive force" – a/k/a "police brutality" – false arrests, and degrading public strip searches, all involving minorities. While Mr. Garner was lying on the ground dying, Officer Pantaleo was not rendering urgent care to revive him. Instead, he was on his cell phone calling his union rep.

Not too many years ago before everyone was armed with a near-broadcast-quality video camera with their smart phone, we gave police officers a wide berth when it came to charges of criminal or abusive behavior. Now what we are seeing is slowly awakening the public's eye to what's really going on by rogue cops in our communities.

Now I have to add the caveat that everyone professes: I do believe the overwhelming majority of police officers in this country – including Orange County – are honest, law abiding citizens in genuine service to the people they pledged to serve and protect. Leadership, training, and holding officers to an extremely high standard are key. Orange County Sheriff Sandra Hutchins has done an exemplary job cleaning up a corrupt department handed to her by former-Sheriff Michael Carona, who actually went to jail for his crimes.

That said, why have we never seen a division of police officers parading against the criminal rogue cops in their organizations? Is that thin Blue Line more important to protect than the lives of the citizens they serve? Or are they, themselves, afraid of what the criminal element among their ranks could do to them for being "disloyal."

I'd like to believe honest, law-abiding police officers would want this low-life criminal scum out of their ranks. Instead of whining about how they're the scapegoats, they could show solidarity – and courage – by marching with the citizens they pledged to protect! That'll go a long way toward improving relations with the public!

Jim Schmitt, Editor and Publisher

About the Cover – The beautiful baby ushering in the New Year is my grandson Evan Scholze, one of two baby boys born into our family in recent months.
Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

As I glanced over the December Ladera Times with its cheerful cover of Santa and the words “Happy Holidays,” I did a double-take when I noticed on the first page a photo of a smiling woman holding a sign “No Panhandling in Ladera Ranch.”

After having read the letter, I found myself both disturbed and saddened. For one, the last thing I would expect to read about in a local paper in an affluent community such as Ladera Ranch during the holiday season is an article stating basically “How to get rid of people begging for money in our neighborhood.” Is this not the season of reaching out to others, the season of giving? Isn’t this the time of year to uphold the timeless message of “Peace on Earth, Goodwill to All?”

I am by no means saying that everyone needs to give money out to someone panhandling in the neighborhood. But let’s be real, with the exception of a few, most people asking for money have hit rock bottom and have no other resources. What a terrible situation to be in and how humbling to be on the streets.

Social services and shelters are not readily available or even in existence in many communities. According to the National Coalition for the Homelessness, the number of homeless people greatly exceeds the number of emergency shelter and transitional housing spaces.

Shelters are often filled to capacity and people are turned away. Even those with a roof over their head may be in dire straits. In 2012, 46.5 million Americans were living in poverty. Of these, 3.9 million households often could not provide adequate amounts of food to their families.

So instead of focusing on the problem, let’s be part of the solution. Volunteer at a shelter, donate money to social services, or simply show compassion for your fellow human being.

There are so many ways to give this season, the season of love and like Mother Teresa once said, “Love is not patronizing and charity isn’t about pity, it is about love. Charity and love are the same – with charity you give love, so don’t just give money but reach out your hand instead.”

Cindy Hodges
Ladera Ranch
By Amy R. Spurgeon-Hoffman

Debbie Avoux, local artisan to the stars, celebrated the one-year anniversary of her Ladera-based art studio “Debbie Avoux” in December – primarily hosting weekly children’s canvas paint classes – and by winning the LARCS annual Neighborhood & Home Holiday Decorating Contest!

The longtime Ladera resident – shown above with her children, Reed (left), 9 1/2, and Brielle, 7 – opened her studio doors in late 2013 in the Bannister Street Business District off Eton Place. She offers extracurricular activity with her professional one-hour paint sessions for children and adults of all ages.

To mark the holiday season, she began sketching her vision of a winter wonderland back in August – detailing measurements, researching supplies and perfectly hand-painting a life-size canvas gingerbread house cover for her studio, complete with giant size lolipops, candy canes. Simply put, every-child’s dream of what they would want their home to look like during the holiday season!

“I see the kids walking by and they get so excited,” smiled Debbie. “There’s a 3-year old boy that walks by daily and he just squeals in delight!”

Debbie took the opportunity to make the massive home transformation a family affair!

“Helped judge the house as she decorated it!” smiled Reed. “Some parts I said to change, but mostly I said, ‘That is sooo good!!!’

Already planning additions for the newly minted Ladera must-see home for the 2015 holidays, Debbie envisions more lights, more candy canes and other gingerbread-themed decorations.

“Just got the tree last week!” she laughed, just days before Christmas.

Debbie is proof that Laderians can follow their dreams and teach their children that practice makes perfect.

Both Reed and Brielle are so proud of their Mom, who they lovingly and kindly share each week with all the children in Ladera lucky enough to be in “Ms. Debbie’s” paint class. For more info, contact her at debbieavoux@yahoo.com, phone: (949) 283-8407, website: www.debbieavoux.com.
Looking Ahead to 2015

After being overwhelmingly elected November 4 by South County voters as your new 5th District Supervisor, I was honored to be sworn-in Tuesday, December 2, before an overflow audience of supporters at a Special Meeting of the Orange County Board of Supervisors.

Administering the Oath of Office was my dear friend and mentor, the Honorable Marian Bergeson – former State Senator, Secretary of Education, and 5th District Supervisor.

I was pleased to take office a month early to fill the unexpired term of Supervisor Patricia Bates, who was chosen by voters in the same election to represent the 36th Senate District.

During my campaign for Supervisor, as I traveled across the 5th District, making my case to residents and humbly asking for their vote, I reflected on the County’s mission statement, which is:

“Making Orange County a safe, healthy, and fulfilling place to live, work, and travel.”

As I join a new Board of Supervisors that will lead the County in the coming years, it is important to reflect on this mission and these values.

I am enthusiastic to begin this journey and look forward to working with my colleagues on the Board of Supervisors to continue making Orange County an efficient, fiscally responsible, and safe place to live, work, and travel.

I am also pleased to report that this week, the Board of Supervisors adopted a Resolution to Approve the Orange County Traffic Committee Report. This will establish an intersection control at the intersection of Narrow Canyon Road and Aura Lane in Ladera Ranch. I would like to thank OC Public Works, the community of Ladera Ranch, and Goddard Elementary for working collaboratively and achieving this positive outcome.

Now that the long race is over, I will continue to focus my attention to representing the people of 5th District.

You have my solemn commitment to continue to strive to achieve the most positive and productive results possible for the residents I serve, much as I did as the former Mayor of the City of Dana Point.

Needless to say, I have extremely big shoes to fill after the well respected and passionate public servants who held this seat before me, including former Supervisors Tom Riley, Marian Bergeson, Tom Wilson, and Patricia Bates, who now represents us in the State Senate.

Senator Bates and those before her worked diligently to leave the 5th District better than when they began representing it; and I will endeavor each and every day to do the same.

I am privileged and humbled to represent the Fabulous 5th District and hope you will join me and my Board colleagues in working to make Orange County, America’s 6th largest county, a place all of us can be truly proud of!

I would also like to wish you a safe, happy, and wonderful Holiday Season! Please don’t hesitate to contact me at (714) 834-3550 or Lisa.Bartlett@ocgov.com if I can ever be of assistance.
Toy Town Is Back!

by Amy Spurgeon-Hoffman

Toy Town, the toy retailer—a little bit Broadway and a little bit “The Little Engine That Could”—that graced our community since 2004 can now be found online at www.mkt.com/toytown.

Bookmark it now before you forget!

Laderans tried but couldn’t save their beloved toy store almost a year ago when store owners Josh and Irene Vecchione reluctantly announced the store would be closing its doors in Mercantile West after many attempts to remain open. Josh and Irene, also founders of the only performing arts theatre group here—Ladera Performing Arts (LPA)—used the back half of the Mercantile West toy store as a “theatre” for LPA children aged four thru 18.

The closing of the physical location didn’t just break the hearts of locals used to shopping there for toys, or just stopping in to say hello to Josh or Irene, but disheartened hundreds of theatre based children.

Luckily, the Vecchiones stayed in Ladera by continuing to hold LPA production rehearsals at Chaparral and Oso Grande Elementary schools.

LPA not only hosts a number of classes, workshops and camps for theatrically based children, but puts on detailed and highly professional productions at Tesoro High School twice a year. Visit www.laderaperformingarts.org to find out more. Laderans can now shop online at Toy Town and continue to support the Vecchiones’ vision for Ladera’s children by not only providing high-quality, discounted and classic toys, but help raise much needed funds for our budget strapped public schools and LPA since 20% of all Toy Town profits go back to Ladera schools or organization of your choice.

“Ten-years of building our family business didn’t just close down when we shut the doors for the last time,” the uber-optimistic Josh said. “When one door closes, another one opens. And I get to wear my Toy Town logo shirts again! I have 37 of them!” Josh said.

Get shopping—www.mkt.com/toytown, email ToyTownInc@gmail.com, Phone (949) 525-6309

“Toy Town” is the brainchild of Josh and Irene Vecchione’s vision for Ladera’s highly professional, highly detailed and highly based children, but puts on detailed and highly professional productions at Tesoro High School twice a year. Visit www.laderaperformingarts.org to find out more. Laderans can now shop online at Toy Town and continue to support the Vecchiones’ vision for Ladera’s children by not only providing high-quality, discounted and classic toys, but help raise much needed funds for our budget strapped public schools and LPA since 20% of all Toy Town profits go back to Ladera schools or organization of your choice.

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People ask Melt Ladera Hot Yoga at 27742 Antonio Parkway, Suite K3 & 4, in Mercantile East, Ladera Ranch, if they’ve never done yoga, can they take a hot yoga class? The answer is “Yes!”

What’s great about hot yoga is that someone who has never had any exposure to yoga can take a class and feel comfortable and most of all confident.

One long-time customer said, “A few years ago I took my first hot yoga class at MELT and loved every minute of it, especially the heat, which surprised me. Afterwards, I felt like I had worked out, taken a nap, and mediated all at the same time.

“Even though I could not touch my toes, I felt welcomed and comfortable. The teacher gave different levels of each pose geared for beginners all the way up to advanced yogis. “There were also other beginners in the room and plenty of different body types. I expected everyone to be 90 pounds with toned arms and stomachs. This definitely wasn’t the case—there were all shapes and sizes, including about 1/3 men.”

“After my first class I was hooked. I even cancelled my gym membership that I have had since I was 12 years old. You do not need to be a contortionist or someone who has been doing yoga for years.”

Visit MELT Ladera Hot Yoga to give hot yoga a try. Check online at www.meltderahotyoga.com or see their special ad on page 10 of this issue of the Ladera Times for their best introductory offers. They even have warm, kids, and free classes!
I'm Grateful to Serve – Kristin Vellandi

In November, Kristin Vellandi was elected President of the Board of the Ladera Ranch Maintenance Corporation (LARMAC). We sat down with Kristin to talk about her new role, her goals for our community and what makes living in Ladera Ranch so special for her and her family.

LT: CongratulationsKristin on being elected President of the LARMAC Board. Tell us a little about yourself and the Vellandi Family.

My husband, Alex, and I moved to Ladera Ranch from Irvine in 2004 and purchased our home in Oak Knoll in 2006. We have three children – an eighth grade daughter, Racquel, who is busy with refereeing for AYSO soccer, playing soccer with ESL, horses, and her own charity, Treats for Charity; fifth-grader Jacqueline, who does everything creatively and recently starred as Tiny Tim in South Coast Repertory’s A Christmas Carol; and Carlo, our third-grade son, who is all sports all the time, including AYSO soccer, Ladera Little League and recently Ladera’s National Little League. As a family, giving back is very important to us so we’re very involved in several organizations including our children’s school, Scout Troops, Orange Coast College’s Horticultural Program, Canine Angels and, of course, LARMAC here in Ladera Ranch.

Professionally, I’ve worked in strategic communications and public affairs my entire career – either for corporations or candidates looking to build support and convey a winning message. As a Board, we take this responsibility very seriously. I’m glad LARCS exists as a community services arm for Ladera Ranch, and the Civic Council serves a role in interfacing with County government on behalf of our residents.

LT: What do you value most about living in this Ladera Ranch?

We were drawn to Ladera Ranch because of its sense of community. We couldn’t believe the neighborhood gatherings and the friendly, caring people who call Ladera Ranch home. Its amenities are second to none, and its landscaping is beautiful. Ladera Ranch is a special place and a wonderful place to raise a family.

LT: What made you decide to run for the LARMAC Board?

It’s about giving back to the community my family calls home and wanting to make Ladera Ranch the best it can be for all our families. I campaigned on three things: fair allocation of facilities, maintaining amenities without increasing dues, and identifying parking solutions. This is my third year of a three-year term.

LT: What’s in the Report Card on these issues?

I believe LARMAC has made great progress in all three areas: I’m looking forward to additional changes at the upper Cox Sports Field parking lot to ease parking and sports drop-offs, I’m pleased with the new efforts to enhance the landscape along Crown Valley Parkway with updates at the Clubhouses, and will continue to support only neutral budgets as LARMAC remains in very good shape. BTW, we have more Ladera Ranch kids on our sports’ fields this Fall than ever before.

LT: As the new LARMAC President, what are your key goals?

I intend to protect this HOA’s strong amenity position by working with Board Members on vendor contracts and relationships to make sure Ladera Ranch is getting the most bang for its buck. I also look forward to building on our Neighborhood Representative System. Nearly half of our neighborhoods in Ladera don’t have a current Neighborhood Rep – that role is so important for LARMAC to help get information out to residents, run elections and serve our membership in general.

LT: Do you feel residents understand the role and responsibilities of the LARMAC Board?

It’s sort of fascinating to me that in a dynamic community like Ladera Ranch, I’m the first woman elected to the LARMAC Board. (Editor’s Note: In early days, the Developer required a seat on the Board. This was held by a woman, but it was not an elected seat.)

There’s no question men and women have different perspectives. I do believe I am more open and willing to communicate more thoroughly on an operation. This has resulted in more information going out to the community on a regular basis. I also think women busy with careers and family demands can better appreciate some of the little daily hassles we’ve addressed such as making homeowner entry to the Big Bucket Waterpark and sports fields easier. I’m proud this LARMAC Board came up with those solutions.

LT: What skills do you look for in a LARMAC Board member?

It’s important to have diversity; Ladera Ranch is a broad and deep community and I value different opinions. I’m very excited about this current Board. Newly elected Board Members Marc, Miles, who has an important background as a litigator, and Joe Riboto, a former military man and grandfather of grandchild living in Ladera.
Many residents and the Civic Council provided letter of support for the project, as did the Ladera Times, which lobbied for this initiative going back several years. This was in favor for the community as this intersection has presented a safety hazard for years. At this time, a schedule for the work is not available but it should be completed in the early months of 2015.

Take the Community Survey!

The LRCC Community Survey will be concluding in January so, if you haven’t taken it, don’t wait! The Community Survey is designed to help key decision-makers at the County consider important decisions about the future of Ladera Ranch. Specifically, the survey will identify areas of focus that the County may use to benefit our community. This may include, for example, enhanced traffic improvements, police enforcement, fire safety, efforts to help the business community, or providing opportunities for enhanced local services. The survey will remain open until mid-January to allow residents time to take the survey. It is important we get good participation to ensure we get a good cross section of the Community to respond so, if you haven’t already done so, please take the survey which is available at the Council’s website at www.lrciviccouncil.org.

Make your voice heard by taking the survey.

Civic Council Goals For 2015

The Civic Council adopted goals for 2015 with some being updated from 2014, but a few new important goals added.

The Council is forming new committee to address the expanding issues the Civic Council addresses. The committees include Public Safety/ Traffic, Public Works/Land Use, Community Relations/ Communications, and Governance. The Council will be adopting charters for these new committees and seeking members during the first quarter of 2015. Another important goal is the future governance document which will outline a vision of the future of Ladera Ranch and governance options. This will be based on the LAFCO document that the Civic Council has been working with them on for the past year. The Civic Council will also be looking to engage other community group in discussions about the future of Ladera Ranch and address today’s issue. For the full list of Goals, go to the Civic Council’s website: www.lrciviccouncil.org.

Next Meeting

The LRCC’s next meeting will be at 7:00 pm on January 19 at the Santa Margarita Water District building. Help your Civic Council help you. Your membership will ensure you have a voice in your community’s future and keep you informed on community issues.

Join today at www.lrciviccouncil.org. Membership is FREE. The Civic Council is over 1,000 members strong and growing.

For more than 26 years, The Goddard School® has been a trusted name among parents and families. Its classrooms are safe, nurturing environments for children six weeks to six years, offering age-appropriate opportunities to explore and discover.

Put on your lab coats and goggles because it’s time to get scientific! Little scientists at The Goddard School located in Ladera Ranch have been hard at work conducting experiments, recording their observations and more. See what they have created while enjoying refreshments and fun activities for all ages! Check out the Science Fair Open House on Monday, February 2 - Thursday, February 5 from 4pm to 5pm. Enroll that day and receive free registration.

The Goddard School focuses on academic, social, creative and physical development to provide a well-rounded experience and ensure children become respectful, confident and joyful learners. Its F.L.EX.® Learning Program (Fun, Learning Experience) is based on accepted research that shows children experience the deepest, most genuine learning when they are having fun. A chess program was recently added to the curriculum to foster the development of critical thinking skills for preschool, pre-k and kindergarten students.

For more information, please visit www.goddardschool.com or call 949-218-6200. The Goddard School located in Ladera Ranch is located at 1 Aura Lane, Ladera Ranch, CA, 92694.
Team Nikos Basketball was honored by the community of Ladera Ranch, LARCS and LARMAC late last year as the special guests at the grand opening ceremony of the new Ladera Ranch community basketball court at the Avendale Clubhouse.

The teammates and their coaches Steve Williams and Jameel Mamud were recognized for winning the 4th Grade 2014 AAU National Championship earlier last year in Sacramento, California.

The full sized basketball court, located next to Avendale Clubhouse, is the first and only public court in Ladera Ranch that is not part of a school facility. It was built for community use. “We at Team Nikos would like to thank LARCS, LARMAC and all of our Ladera Ranch families for blessing us with this opportunity to be recognized, and allowing our talented young athletes to take the first shots on the new community court,” said Coach Steve Williams.

“It’s exciting to see the community honor these boys and their hard work. I know this beautiful new court will see some great pick up basketball games here in Ladera Ranch for years to come.”

To learn more about Team Nikos Basketball and local AAU and NBJ youth basketball opportunities for boys and girls go to www.teamnikos.com.

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The Best Things You Give Yourself

As the holiday season heats up to full force, it is likely your halls are decked, your stockings hung by the chimney with care or perhaps your Hanukkah preparations are all set in stone and running full force.

For a season that lasts just a small portion of the year, it seems we sometimes spend months and an inordinate amount of our incomes in order to capture the memories, feel the spirit and, worst-case scenario, keep up with the neighbors.

While we may be entirely aware of this phenomenon, we nonetheless are often swept away in it. Even with the most satisfying holiday traditions, at the end of them we are regularly worn down and worn out.

It was last year when I came screeching out of the holidays and firmly into the New Year that I finally recognized a pattern that has haunted me for years. My business had virtuous, but when January was to roll up my sleeves and dive full on into the career that brings me so much joy. I was looking forward to the end of the rich foods and the leisurely days of vacation. Armed with some killer New Year’s resolutions and a box full of P90X wellness, the future looked fit and productive. Without the holiday distractions I imagined spending all of my time and energy in a state of personal wellness.

And January came and well, it went. I had my aggressive plans and rather than rolling up my sleeves, what happened was extended couch time and a full schedule of Netflix watching. I cannot recall what it was I watched.

This was not my first go round with January and it seems every year I spend the entire month trying to garner back the energy so carefully thrown about during the holiday season.

As a woman, and a life coach, I know well the demands we put upon ourselves. Unreasonable demands. And because those demands are unreasonable, if we persist in raising the bar every single year we will tap out. Or at least lay on the couch covered in chocolate and shame throughout the coming month.

As you ride your own personal whirlwind through the holidays of your heritage and choice, I propose caution and self-care. While we all know that more does not mean better and busier does not equal happier, we are each prone to those pitfalls and we become victims of our own, unrelenting expectations.

With just a few simple strategic shifts in how you use your resources, it doesn’t have to be this way.

Your holiday guests will enjoy the gift of your company far more than an elaborately decorated home. Your family will relish the gift of a loving and relaxed wife and mother. Time and energy are your most important resources and guarding them and using them with care benefits family, business and your well being.

Slow down, my friend. Take a deep breath. Spend less, love more and if you do end up on the couch, keep the chocolate and throw out the shame. That’s the best gift you could ever give yourself.

(Michelle Patterson is the CEO of Women Network LLC, a media and production company giving women a voice to share their message. Women Network’s “umbrella platform” shines a light on organizations and corporations who empower women and bring them together as a community to experience “We are Better Together.” Women Network is creating the largest community of women globally. They are the exclusive event producer of the California Women’s Conference. This fortunate relationship allows Women Network to provide additional promotional benefits to the California Women’s Conference through its array of web media functions.

She is also the founder of Global Women Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit public charity created to bring women together to create global change by empowering them to transform their communities. Its mission supports women to effectuate this change through serving as a world-wide conduit for connecting community, mentoring, education, and financial support. Mrs. Patterson lives in Ladera Ranch, California with her husband of nearly twenty years, Eric, and their two children, Jaclyn and Chase.)
Haggen to Acquire Pavilions & Albertson’s

Pacific Northwest grocery chain Haggen has entered into an agreement to acquire 146 stores as part of the divestment process brought about by the Federal Trade Commission’s (FTC) review of the Albertson’s and Safeway merger.

The acquisition will include the Pavilions’s and Albertson’s supermarkets in Ladera Ranch.

With this acquisition, which is subject to FTC approval, Haggen will expand from 18 stores with 16 pharmacies to 164 stores with 106 pharmacies; from 2,000 employees to more than 10,000 employees; and from a Pacific Northwest company with locations in Oregon and Washington to a major regional grocery chain with locations in Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada and Arizona.

“With this pivotal acquisition, we will have the opportunity to introduce many more customers to the Haggen experience. Our Pacific Northwest grocery store chain has been committed to local sourcing, investing in the communities we serve, and providing genuine service and home-made quality since it was founded in 1933,” said John Caple, chairman of the Haggen board of directors and partner at Convest Partners, a private investment firm that owns the majority of shares of Haggen.

“We will continue our focus on sourcing and investing locally even with this exciting expansion.”

After the close of the transaction early this year, Haggen will convert all of the acquired Albertson’s and Safeway stores into the Haggen banner.

Haggen plans to retain the current store management teams.

“We warmly welcome these new employees and stores into the Haggen family. The stores are well run and very successful, thanks to the dedicated store teams,” said John Clougher, Haggen CEO, Pacific Northwest.

“We want to retain these existing teams while allowing our growing company to build on their past successes. We plan to adopt the best practices of our new stores to offer a superior shopping experience for our valued customers in all of our stores.”

“We committed to this acquisition because we knew we had the experience, talent and drive to get it done,” added Mr. Caple.

“The strength of our management and store support teams, combined with the talent of the store teams at each of the new store locations, will enable Haggen to be a successful West Coast grocer.”

Founded in 1933, Haggen is one of the Pacific Northwest’s leading grocery chains. The Bellingham, Washington, based company operates stores in Washington and Oregon under the Haggen Northwest Fresh banner.

It is the state’s sixth-largest private company with the majority of shares owned by Convest Partners. Haggen is dedicated to providing its customers with the best of the Northwest.

For more than 80 years, it has supported regional farms, ranches, fisheries and other businesses, creating a lasting and sustainable local food economy.

Haggen is also deeply rooted in the communities it serves, providing support to local events and partnerships.

Email Your Stories to LaderaTimes@cox.net

individuals or organizations, such as sports leagues, clubs, non-profits, businesses, etc. with a newsworthy story should email LaderaTimes@cox.net.

The story should answer the questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How.” Photos should be 200 pixels per inch or at least 6” wide. The Ladera Times is published the Thursday on or about the first of every month, so stories for that issue should be submitted by the 15th of the prior month.

Laura’s House Honors Exceptional Volunteers at Appreciation Event

Laura’s House, a non-profit devoted to ending the cycle of domestic violence, recognized nine volunteers for their dedication to the organization.

Volunteer Appreciation event at the Laura’s House Resale Store in San Juan Capistrano.

More than 50 supporters were on hand to honor the standout individuals who worked year-round to support Laura’s House initiatives – from its Resale Store, counseling and resource center, emergency shelter, 24-hour crisis hotline, events and more.

Through October 2014, more than 400 volunteers have provided Laura’s House with nearly 9,200 hours of unpaid service – leading into the nonprofit’s busiest time for volunteers – and a 6.4 percent increase from 2013. Volunteers served in various critical positions, including administrative, I.R.E.A.R.T. program advocates, legal services, hotline support, childcare, case management, house coordinator, resale store customer service and product preparation, events, promotions and as board members.

The Laura’s House volunteer program is currently in the certification process.

New Year’s Resolution, Life And a Rookie Firefighter . . .

We always start a recruit fire academy every January. Like a New Year’s Resolution, it’s traditional.

Before recruits learn basic firefighting skills, the first thing they learn and develop are fire academy “Integrity Agreements.”

Actually our Fire Academy Integrity Agreements are like “New Year’s Resolutions.” We develop and own these agreements while holding ourselves accountable for success.

If you don’t live up to the agreements, you have no one to blame but yourself. You own them, custom made to fit your life.

The first one is to have a positive attitude. If your attitude is negative, it’s certain you won’t succeed. Support and help each other. Firefighting is a team effort and it’s life. No one can do it alone, no one!

Don’t judge. There’s an old saying “when you spot it, you got it.” What you dislike in others is likely something that resides within yourself that you don’t like. Give grace and learn a little patience for both yourself and others.

Don’t gossip. If you have an issue with someone or something, the only one that can do something about it is yourself and the other person. Go to that person and discuss it with them not others.

If you make a mess, clean it up! If you spilled milk, what do you do, clean it up or it gets harder to clean the longer you wait. The same goes when you make a mess with another person. Clean it up and say I’m sorry. Don’t wait too long or you’ll create lasting damage. Being prideful makes even the best looking appear ugly.

These are a few examples of Integrity Agreements that work for the Recruit Firefighters. Your probably not much different with your New Year’s Resolutions.

What are some Integrity Agreements or Resolutions you’ll make in 2015?

Happy New Year, Fire Chief Sam DiGiovanna

Ladera Times

January 2015
All schools in the CUSD are on holiday recess opening on January 5, 2015. Prior to the holiday recess all students were enjoying Holiday events including Holiday Concerts, Father Daughter dance, and so on.

The 5th grade Ladera Ranch Elementary School Students had their outdoor Science camp during the first week of December. As usual the students enjoyed the time away from their homes, away from parents. It is a great experience for our students.

The Ladera Ranch Middle School students collected donations for about 75 JoyJars for Jessie Rees Foundation, Never Ever Give Up, fight against cancer organization. A very good deed, and it will be remembered by all concerned.

During the December 10 CUSD Board meeting one reelected Board Member, Lynn Hutton-Hudson, and two newly elected Board Members, Martha McNicholas and Gila Jones were sworn in. Lynn said that since her children will be out of school by the end of her term, this will her last four years on the Board.

As per the State Education code, the Board was reorganized. Lynn Hutton-Hudson was selected as President, Amy Hanacek is the new Vice President, and Martha McNicholas is the Clerk of the Board. Past President John Alpay was presented with a plaque for his past two year’s service as President.

Ten CUSD seniors were named Scholars in the National Hispanic Recognition Program. San Juan Hills and Tesoro each had one student, Kayvon Mahmood Zadeh and Brandon Bannigan. Congratulations guys.

On January 15, 2015, 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm, the Transitional Kindergarten Parent Information night will be held at the Ladera Ranch Elementary School.

Beginning Monday, March 2, students in Capistrano Unified School District can apply for School of Choice. The School of Choice window will close March 27. Applications will not be accepted after that date.

The School of Choice process provides parents with the ability to apply to a school outside of their child’s attendance area on a space-available basis.

The list of schools open to School of Choice will be provided in January.

Ram Mukherje is a former Trustee of Tri-City L.A. County Unified School District and Past President of Ladera Ranch Maintenance Corporation.

Laura’s House Receives Grant from Bank of America

Laura’s House, head quartered in Ladera Ranch, has received a $5,000 grant from Bank of America $5,000 to support its domestic violence emergency shelter services. “When the people of Orange County have access to affordable housing, jobs, and basic nutrition, Orange County succeeds,” said Allen Staff, Orange County market president, Bank of America.

Accepting the check from Eric Chamberlain, Senior Vice President, Bank of America are, Andrea McCallister (left), Director of Development & Communications, Laura’s House, and Margaret Bayston, CEO and Executive Director of Laura’s House.
**Monthly Real Estate Activity Report by Cathie Berlin**

**Ladera Ranch Recent Sales Activity - 30 Days Ending December 30, 2014**

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*Based on information from the Association of Realtors/Multiple Listing as of 12/30/14 and/or other sources. MLS data is deemed reliable but not guaranteed accurate by the MLS. The Broker/Agent providing the information contained herein may or may not have been the listing agent.*

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**Tips 4 Cleaning Up Your Credit Score**

by Cathie Berlin, Real Estate Editor

Your credit score has a huge impact on just about everything you do. Whether you are trying to get an approval for a home loan, credit card or buying a car, it makes sense to work on cleaning up and maintaining a good credit score in 2015. Here’s how:

1. **Start** with getting a copy of your credit report to see your credit score and what is showing on your report. You can order a free copy of your report from www.annualcreditreport.com. You are entitled to one free credit report from each of the three national credit reporting agencies every 12 months.

2. **Make sure** all of your accounts are in good standing, which means you have paid at least the minimum on every account every month.

3. **Make sure** there are no inaccuracies. Errors in your credit report could mean you’ve been a victim of identity theft.

4. **Make sure** any negative info – such as late payments, collections, or bankruptcies have fallen off your credit report after the appropriate amount of time.

5. **Fix any inaccuracies** and outdated information. If you find an error in your credit report, you can file a dispute – either online or by mail, with the credit agency that reported the error.

6. **Once your dispute** is filed, the credit reporting agency will investigate the issue within 30-45 days. The agency will notify you of the outcome after the conclusion of the investigation. Take detailed notes that include the names of the people with whom you speak and the dates of the conversations. Make sure you follow up to confirm the changes have been made to all three credit agencies.

7. **Pay your bills** on time. Paying down some debt could reflect positively on both your credit report and credit score. If you have any late payments or accounts in collection, create a budget that will help you pay off the debt as soon as possible.

If you are considering selling, now is a great time to list your home.

If you have any questions or would like more info about selling or buying real estate, please feel free to contact me at 949-291-1959, or email me at: cathieberlin@cox.net, or contact any Realtor® of your choosing, including one of the several advertising their services in Ladera Times.

You can also find me on Facebook at: Ladera Ranch Homes-Cathie Berlin.
Following are highlights from the Orange County Police Blotter. For more, go to LaderaTimes.com.

December 31
9:49 am, first responders rushed to a home when the mother said her 15-month-old son locked himself in the closet, however the child eventually left himself out, Sam Street.

December 29
1:31 pm, woman reported packages stolen from her front porch, Wedgewood Lane.
1:20 pm, woman reports that someone slashed the tires on her vehicle and suspects her estranged husband, who is under a restraining order, may have done it, Tisbury Way.
1:05 pm, man is reported circling around the cul-de-sac a couple times, driving slowly and stopped in front of informant’s house and started to get out of the vehicle but drove off when he realized someone was in the house, Lewiston Court.
12:58 pm, a woman is at Wells Fargo in Mercantile East disputing charges on her account for TV repairs.

December 28
7:34 am, man says his neighbors are away on vacation but their front door is open, Francis Court.

December 25
9:16 pm, a woman reported a court order violation, Thalia Street.
9:01 pm, a patrol car was called to the parking lot of the Flintridge Clubhouse swimming pool to quiet the occupants of a white pick up truck who were being too loud, Vineyard Drive and Caldwell Lane.
4:34 pm, a man and a woman are reported having untoward relations in a Mercedes sedan in the Mercantile West parking lot.
2:04 pm, a woman called to say that an identity theft report only included her husband but it actually involves both she and her husband, Kent Court.

December 27
10:26 pm, a man says kids are repeatedly ringing his doorbell, Laurelhurst Drive.
1:43 pm, two people, one with a skateboard, were reported screaming at each other, Weldon Heights and Flintridge Avenue.
12:39 am, informant says neighbors at Laurel Terrace Apartments are laughing too loud, 2000 block of Corporate Drive.

December 26
1:31 pm, a male and a female with three small children were reported panhandling and loitering in front of the McDonald’s, Mercantile East.
10:46 am, a woman reported a child custody violation, Bower Lane.
9:16 am a man has reported a greenish gray Jaguar with extensive front end and axle damage, parked in the Albion’s lot and may be a stolen vehicle, Bridgepark Plaza.
2:35 am, a suspicious 5’10” white or Hispanic male is trying to open car doors, Lone Oak Circle.

December 25
8:39 pm, a man who works for a repo company wants a deputy to standby while he attempts to repossess a vehicle from a resident who has been extremely hostile during a prior attempt, Moonlight Isle.
9:16 am, a man reported his laptop was lost or stolen at John Wayne Airport, Becker Drive.

December 24
9:35 pm, two drunk men are in a physical altercation in the street, Martinio.
12:22 am, informant says he was going through the McDonald’s drive-thru and saw a 0’ thin white male in a black shirt with an American flag bandana covering his mouth opening the cash register but when the manager was contacted he said the male with the bandana was an employee, Mercantile East.

December 24
9:55 pm, a man and a woman are reported to be in a physical altercation in the street, Thalia Street.
2:39 pm, a suspicious 5’10” white or Hispanic male is trying to open car doors, Lone Oak Circle.
10:26 pm, a man says his neighbors are away on vacation but their front door is open, Francis Court.

December 23
9:16 am a man has reported a greenish gray Jaguar with extensive front end and axle damage, parked in the Albion’s lot and may be a stolen vehicle, Bridgepark Plaza.
2:35 am, a suspicious 5’10” white or Hispanic male is trying to open car doors, Lone Oak Circle.

December 22
11:49 pm, a man with suspicious activity was reported, Thalia Street.
5:10 am, a man at the McDonald’s drive-thru and saw a 0’ thin white male in a black shirt with an American flag bandana covering his mouth opening the cash register but when the manager was contacted he said the male with the bandana was an employee, Mercantile East.

December 21
1:11 pm, a man and a woman are reported to be in a physical altercation in the street, Thalia Street.
2:39 pm, a suspicious 5’10” white or Hispanic male is trying to open car doors, Lone Oak Circle.
10:26 pm, a man says his neighbors are away on vacation but their front door is open, Francis Court.

December 20
10:26 pm, a man says kids are repeatedly ringing his doorbell, Laurelhurst Drive.
1:43 pm, two people, one with a skateboard, were reported screaming at each other, Weldon Heights and Flintridge Avenue.
12:39 am, informant says neighbors at Laurel Terrace Apartments are laughing too loud, 2000 block of Corporate Drive.

December 19
9:35 pm, two drunk men are in a physical altercation in the street, Martinio.
12:22 am, informant says he was going through the McDonald’s drive-thru and saw a 0’ thin white male in a black shirt with an American flag bandana covering his mouth opening the cash register but when the manager was contacted he said the male with the bandana was an employee, Mercantile East.
Calendar of Events

Dates, times, locations, and events are subject to change without notice so double check before setting out to attend an event. Events can be added to the Calendar by emailing details to LaderaTimes@cox.net. For a more extensive list of events, go to www.LaderaTimes.com.

Tuesday, January 22 – FREE Teen Self Defense Workshop from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm at the Oak Knoll Village Clubhouse on O’Neill Drive and Chantilly Lane. Attendees will learn how to use verbal boundary-setting and de-escalation techniques, how to avoid being an “easy target,” and how to assess when a physical response to aggression is required. Maximum of 25 teens, grades 7-12. Advance RSVP required: events@laderalife.com.

Wednesday, February 11 – LARMAC Executive & Open Session Meeting, Avendale Clubhouse on Daisy, beginning at 5:00 pm.

Saturday, February 21 – Ladera Ranch Little League Opening Day from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm at Founder’s Park at the corner of Avendale Boulevard and Daisy. Entertainment and food vendors are wanted.

Those interested are asked to contact Courtney Lima at 949-545-1066.

Wednesday, April 15 – LARMAC Executive & Open Session Meeting, Avendale Clubhouse on Daisy, beginning at 5:00 pm.

Ladera Joy Luck Club, A Chinese Cultural Group, Celebrated Holiday Season with A Fusion Of Eastern and Western Styles

By: Pearleen Wang, Ladera Ranch Middle School 8th Grader

Established in 2007, the Joy Luck Club of Ladera Ranch helps many first generation Chinese-Americans adapt to western society.

By combining Chinese customs with western practices, Joy Luck Club effectively allows Chinese-Americans to stay true to their roots while experiencing American culture.

On December 13, the club’s annual Winter Party, attended by over 90 people of all ages, once again successfully fused western and eastern traditions.

The efforts of the younger generation were widely used in the planning of this event. Including the second generation Chinese-Americans gives them a chance to learn the ancient eastern customs they do not experience in the western world.

During the music program, astonishing performances of the ErHu and Souna, both customary Chinese instruments, were followed by the swing of modern pop songs and passion of classical masterpieces.

A special guest also appeared that night and, much to the children’s delight, Santa Claus arrived in a flying red Toyota to direct games and pass out gifts!

The joy of holiday spirit reached every person as they celebrated the season among friends and family.

While preserving ancient eastern customs, the Joy Luck Club will simultaneously continue helping first generation Chinese-Americans adjust to the western way of life.

Ladera Joy Luck Club, A Chinese Cultural Group, Celebrated Holiday Season with A Fusion Of Eastern and Western Styles

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While preserving ancient eastern customs, the Joy Luck Club will simultaneously continue helping first generation Chinese-Americans adjust to the western way of life.
Stage Depot Wins $18,075 in Gov. Contracts
Thanks to US Federal Contractor Registration

The Stage Depot, of Ladera Ranch, has won three government contracts for a total of $18,075 thanks to the Federal Simplified Acquisition Program and the guidance of Peter Lanore.

The Stage Depot has been a Verified Vendor with US Federal Contractor Registration since January 2014 and immediately began working with Acquisition Specialist Peter Lanore to find a government market-

registration, federal small business database profiles, lists of government buyers and prime vendors, a government formatted website, and a customized government business plan.

The Stage Depot worked with Peter to create a customized marketing strategy that will be used when reaching out to government buyers. Strategies such as developing an elevator pitch and learning how to write a government bid proposal are two key components in government contracting.

Some of the agencies that have awarded The Stage Depot government contracts from the outreach of the Simplified Acquisition Program include: the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and the Department of the Navy.

The Stage Depot is America’s portable staging authority, helping businesses choose the right stage system for each event based on the client’s needs and budget. Its staging experts are there to educate business owners about the best stage choices available. Every stage will serve and fit different functions.

The Stage Depot carries all the major brands of staging, choosing from a successful track record in international business growth, company turnarounds and business startups.

The new office is located at 1550, 15th Floor Eros Corporate Towers, Nehru Place, New Delhi 110019, India. Tel:+91-965-4516932. Media Contact is Christopher Lynch, DestinHaus LLC, (949) 388-0330. Email him at christopher.lynch@destinhhaus.com.

Ladera Times
January 2015
There are many different types of companion birds, and there are specific rules for the nutritional well-being of each species.

The following list is a basic guideline, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). For specific feeding recommendations, please consult your avian veterinarian.

1. Pellets for the Palate

Although seed has been the traditional staple of a bird’s diet, these days most experts recommend a high-quality pellet food that’s formulated for your bird’s species.

Seed mixes provide variety, but they do not always provide optimum nutrition.

If you want to feed seeds, offer them only in small quantities as treats.

2. Mix it Up

Pellets and seeds should not be the only foods your bird eats. Birds love variety, and enjoy searching to obtain food, just as they would in the wild. Otherwise, they can become bored and develop bad habits, such as overeating, feather picking and tearing up their surroundings.

“Fun” foods such as corn on the cob, leafy greens, broccoli, and oranges can provide distraction and entertainment for your bird.

Because birds have to “work” to get these foods – i.e. pull kernels off the cob and tear bites off of greens, broccoli and oranges – they stay occupied longer than when feeding on ready-to-eat foods.

For added variety, play with the placement of these treats. Hang food from the top or sides of the cage, weave through bars, or stuff pieces of food into toys.

3. In Living Color

Fruits and vegetables should be given twice daily. Appropriate fruits and vegetables for your bird include: corn, carrots, potatoes, squash, dark green leafy vegetables, broccoli, cooked sweet potatoes, melons, apples, oranges, berries, bananas, pears and peaches.

It is safe to use a powdered fruit preservative, such as “Fruit Fresh” so that you can put this produce in the refrigerator for storage without food spoilage.

Different types of birds require different amounts of food. Your veterinarian will be able to give you specific feeding recommendations based on the type of bird you have and your bird’s individual characteristics.

4. Their (Twice) Daily Bread

Bread and cereals should be given twice a day. Appropriate breads and cereals include the following: whole grain breads, unsweetened breakfast cereals, unsweetened granola, tortillas and pasta.

Ask your vet about specific feeding recommendations based on the type of bird you have and your bird’s individual characteristics.

5. Hi, Protein!

Protein should be given twice daily. Appropriate sources of protein include: cooked lean meats, tofu, low-fat cottage cheese, other firm light-colored cheeses, yogurt and cooked eggs.

Yogurt may contain friendly bacteria like acidophilus, which can help keep the ratio of good and bad bacteria in check. Be sure to read the label to make sure it contains live cultures and is low in fat.

6. Isn’t That Special?

Birds such as lories and lorikeets require specialized diets that are sugary liquids made from fresh fruit or formulated compounds. Softbilled birds may require mealworms, blossoms and leaves, diced fruit and nectar. Please note, these diets attract insects, and the feces of these birds are very messy.

7. Water

Fresh, cold water should be available to your bird at all times. Change it at least once a day, preferably twice, and clean the water bowls at least daily.

Vitamin and mineral supplementation is not necessary unless recommended by your veterinarian.

8. Freshen Up

Food that can spoil, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, should be left in the cage for no longer than 30-45 minutes at a time.

9. Weighty Matters

Like other companion pets, birds may become overweight. It’s a good idea to monitor your bird’s weight closely. Obesity can lead to health problems, including fatty liver disease and pancreas problems.

In addition to weighing your bird, you can perform the following checks to determine if he or she is overweight:

1. Looking at your bird from the front, you should see a bone running down his midline (the keel). There should be a rounded muscle to either side of the bone.

2. If your bird is too fat, bone won’t be the most prominent part of his chest.

3. If your bird is too thin, he or she will feel bony to the side of the keel; alongside the keel will feel concave (curved in).

You can also check the non-feathered areas alongside the neck and at the base of the jaw:

1. You should be able to see the jugular vein.

2. If you cannot see the vein, it is likely that your bird is overweight.

Please note, if your bird is either under- or overweight, a diet change may be necessary. Ask your vet or breeder about the correct way to gradually make this change.

10. It’s Only Natural

In the wild, birds eat about a half hour after sunrise and again at 5:00 to 6:00 pm.

Sticking close to these feeding times will be most natural for your companion bird. Larger breeds should have vegetables or fruits throughout the day for snacking and entertainment.

Smaller breeds can typically have seed/pellets left in the cage throughout the day. They need to eat more frequently due to their higher metabolic rate and energy needs.

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Maxine’s Family & Friends

There are many different types of companion birds, and there are specific rules for the nutritional well-being of each species.

The following list is a basic guideline, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). For specific feeding recommendations, please consult your avian veterinarian.

1. Pellets for the Palate

Although seed has been the traditional staple of a bird’s diet, these days most experts recommend a high-quality pellet food that’s formulated for your bird’s species.

Seed mixes provide variety, but they do not always provide optimum nutrition.

If you want to feed seeds, offer them only in small quantities as treats.

2. Mix it Up

Pellets and seeds should not be the only foods your bird eats. Birds love variety, and enjoy searching to obtain food, just as they would in the wild. Otherwise, they can become bored and develop bad habits, such as overeating, feather picking and tearing up their surroundings.

“Fun” foods such as corn on the cob, leafy greens, broccoli, and oranges can provide distraction and entertainment for your bird.

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