



OJAI VALLEY NEWS

REPORTING FOR THE PEOPLE SINCE 1891

130TH YEAR, No. 28

OJAIVALLEYNEWS.COM

FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 2021

Granny flat rules fixed to comply with housing law

Perry Van Houten
pvh@ojaivalleynews.com

Ojai Valley Sanitary District has updated its rules on accessory dwelling units to bring them in line with state laws to help ease the housing crisis in California.

At its April 26 meeting, the District's Board of Directors unanimously approved and adopted an ordinance that simplifies definitions on ADUs, or "granny flats," that are exempt from connection fees, also known as "capacity charges."

Under the new rules, an ADU is exempt from connection fees if it's an "attached" ADU located within an existing residential dwelling and is no more than half the square footage of the existing dwelling.

Also, an ADU is exempt from connection fees if it's created by converting an existing accessory structure on the property, and the conversion does not require the expansion of the structure by

Granny flats: Page A9

County plants butterfly crop

Perry Van Houten
pvh@ojaivalleynews.com

The county of Ventura has adopted a new policy aimed at protecting and supporting habitat for monarch butterflies.

The iconic orange and black insect, which historically numbered in the thousands while overwintering in coastal groves of Ventura County, has seen its numbers declining over the past 20 years, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

By recent population



Photo by Perry Van Houten

Monarchs need help.

estimates, the species will likely become extinct in the next 20 years unless

Butterfly crop: Page B4

Cool classes set for summer

Austin Widger
awidger@ojaivalleynews.com

For the second straight year, Ojai Unified School District will offer comprehensive summer school classes.

This year, there will be even more offerings, particularly at the middle and high school levels, such as drum line camp, athletic strength and conditioning camp, digital photo and video, game design and more.

"This is our second year of this new-to-Ojai way of

Summer school: Page B4

County reports under 200 active COVID-19 cases

As of April 29, there were 80,597 people who ever were diagnosed with COVID-19 in Ventura County and 182 active cases.

This was a 21-case increase from the day before and a 199-case increase from the week before.

Out of these 80,597, 1,004 were in Ojai and 372 in Oak View.

Fifteen people were in the hospital with COVID-19 countywide as of April 29.

Two were in intensive care units. More than 28% of ICU beds were available countywide.

A total of 1,008 people are reported to have died from the virus in Ventura County as of April 29. Twenty-seven were in Ojai and five in Oak View.

Six new deaths were reported across the county this week.

WATER LEVELS	
SEASONAL YEAR-TO-DATE RAINFALL TOTALS FROM OCT. 1	
Matilija Canyon	7.98"
Soule Park	4.94"
Casitas Dam	6.39"
Oak View	5.94"
Upper Ojai	5.71"

LAKE CASITAS VOLUME	
Oct 1, 2020	97,958 acre-feet
April 29, 2021	90,587 acre-feet
Current volume	38.1 percent

Donna Sallen
Realtor®
(805) 798-0516

RE/MAX Gold Coast Realtors
www.donnasallen.com
donna4remax@aol.com
License # 01488460



Ojai Valley News photos by Austin Widger

Wyatt Amend demonstrates to Gray Duncan's Nordhoff High School class how he throws a clay pot.

Ceramics artists inspire students

Austin Widger
awidger@ojaivalleynews.com

Nordhoff High School's Hall of Character and Achievement went on the road April 28 to Wyatt Amend Ceramics in Ojai.

Amend and Nordhoff ceramics teacher Gray Duncan Zoomed into Duncan's class to talk about Amend's work and his chosen character trait: genuine.

This was part of the Hall of Character and Achievement, an idea brought to life by Nordhoff junior Jennifer Donohue and senior Kolbe Fink. It provides any and all Nordhoff alumni the chance to be recognized and speak at the school.

Amend is a young potter in Ojai who works out of his home studio, shows his work at gallery shows and gets hired by artists to throw pots for them.

He was a four-year ceramics student at Nordhoff in Duncan's ceramics class before attending Sonoma State University. "I found a school that had a ceramics program that I could really use and a ceramics program that I got along with very well," Amend said. "He was able to push me in ways that I never thought of," Amend said of his high school teacher, "and I had a studio that I utilize all

Hall of Achievement: Page A9



Wyatt Amend and Gray Duncan speak to Duncan's class via Zoom from Amend's studio.

Ojai C.R.E.W. captures county Earth Day award

Perry Van Houten
pvh@ojaivalleynews.com

The Ventura County Board of Supervisors honored Ojai-based The C.R.E.W. April 27 with a 2021 Earth Day Award.

For the seventh annual awards, supervisors from each of Ventura County's five districts picked individuals or organizations in their district to honor as environmental champions.

"Each honoree today has contributed to making our world a cleaner and greener place to live, and we celebrate them and their extraordinary work," said 2nd District Supervisor Linda Parks.

Representing the Ojai Valley, 1st District Supervisor Matt LaVeré selected for the award The C.R.E.W., an acronym for Concerned Resource Environmental Workers.



Photo by The C.R.E.W.

C.R.E.W. members play tug-of-war with a tree for a project last year.

The nonprofit organization founded in 1991 provides paid employment for young people ages 16-25, who gain experience through hands-on environmental and community service work.

"The C.R.E.W. got its start by teaching teens how to work on backcountry trails in Los Padres National Forest, and through hard work in

the outdoors these C.R.E.W. members learn new skills, confidence, discipline, respect and the value of hard

Earth Day award: Page A5

SHANGRI LA CARE CENTERS

Come Find Your Shangri La

408 Bryant Cir. Suite G Ojai, CA 93023 • (805)640-6464 • www.SLCC.org

Must be 21+ with valid ID or 18+ with valid medical rec. and ID

CANNABIS DISPENSARY

@ShangriLa_Cannabis
Facebook.com/SLCCojai
@SLCCojai

STATE PERMIT # C10-0000474-LIC

48241
50873

CMH celebrates National Donate Life Month

Community Memorial Hospital hosted a flag-raising ceremony at the hospital on April 20 as part of its celebration of National Donate Life Month.

Donor transplant recipient Jennifer Vasilakos of Ojai was in attendance, along with speakers, the Rev. Curtis Hotchkiss, CMH's director of Spiritual Care Services; Diane Drexler, CMH's vice president of Patient Care Services and chief nursing office; and Alexa Delima and Angela Bolaris of OneLegacy.

The celebrations are designed to help encourage Americans to register as organ, eye and tissue donors and to honor those who have saved lives through the gift of donation. "Our team sees firsthand the lives saved by the willingness of others to give life," said Drexler. "The flag-raising ceremony is an opportunity to recognize the generosity of families who have offered this gift to others while experiencing a profound personal loss."

At 9 a.m. on April 20, CMH, in partnership with OneLegacy — the world's largest nonprofit organ, eye and tissue recovery organization — hosted the flag-raising ceremony to highlight the importance of donation and celebrate donors and re-



Photo courtesy CMH

The CMH flag-raising ceremony at its Ventura hospital on April 20 was part of the celebration of National Donate Life Month.

ipients.

A single organ donor can save the lives of up to eight people and improve the lives of up to 75 more people by donating their corneas and tissue, according to OneLegacy. Nearly 40,000 life-saving transplants were performed in the United States in 2020, according to the organization. It also notes that over 107,000 people are on

waiting lists for a donated organ in the U.S..

To become a donor, register with the Department of Motor Vehicles or online at www.OneLegacy.org/Register. To help facilitate organ recovery and placement, CMH is one of more than 200 hospitals and nine transplant centers in Southern California that works directly with OneLegacy.

CMWD criticizes state draft flow recommendations

Casitas Municipal Water District has responded to the recently released state Department of Fish and Wildlife draft flow recommendations for Coyote Creek and the lower Ventura River with several concerns.

They include:

— Hydrology omits long-term drought cycles known to occur.

— Proposed Coyote Creek flows exceed historic flows and would cause significant water supply impacts, and ignore steelhead needs.

— Unsuitable habitat in Coyote Creek would be more costly with less benefit compared with more suitable habitat in San Antonio Creek and Ventura River.

— Potential unintended consequences of Coyote Creek flows have not been fully disclosed or analyzed.

— Proposed lower Ventura River flows exceed historic flows and would cause significant water supply impacts.

CMWD has been serving its customers for more than 50 years, providing water supply directly and indirectly to more than 60,000 people and hundreds of agricultural ranches in western Ventura County, according to a district press release. It continued that, while CMWD values cooperation with other agencies, "The CDFW's recently released Draft Flow Recommendations for Coyote Creek and the Lower Ventura River are a unilateral departure from the collaborative nature of the relationship Casitas and the CDFW have enjoyed over the last 20 years, evidenced by work on water supply and environmental viability of the Ventura River ecosystem through the Robles Biological Opinion."

CMWD's comment letter on the draft instream flow recommendations can be viewed online at: <https://www.casitaswater.org/Home/Components/News/News/119/17>.



The General Plan Update is on the Planning Commission agenda in May...

Housing Element Kickoff: May 3, 6:00pm

Veronica Tam & Associates will provide an update on Housing Element requirements and what they mean for housing in Ojai.

Vision & Guiding Principles: May 5, 6:00pm

The Planning Commission will review the draft Vision and Guiding Principles for the General Plan, which were developed based on community surveys and the recent visioning workshop held on March 10.

For more information:

Lucas Seibert | (805) 646-5581 ext. 113
lucas.seibert@ojai.ca.gov
 Project Website: <https://ojai.ca.gov/gpupdate/>



How to Attend

Scan the QR Code below to register for the meetings:



or, visit

<https://ojai.ca.gov/gpupdate/>

Hall of Achievement:

Continued from Page A1

the time. I would go there at night, during the day, whenever ... and oftentimes I'd be one of the only people in there. I'd be listening to loud music in there and making pots."

After graduation, Amend went on to art schools he described as summer camps for adults. He couldn't afford the schools so he signed up to be an intern and dishwasher there. While at the school, he met an artist from Australia who he lived with for half a year to learn glazing techniques.

While in college, Amend demonstrated his genuineness to himself and to his passion for art. He said: "My professor realized I was really interested in production pottery, so he assigned a project where I had to make 60 pots,

and then he made me choose the three best pots. Then you throw all the other ones away. Then you make another 60, choose the best three and throw all the other ones away. Make 60 more of those best three, then you keep the best three of that last batch and those are the three that you're able to keep.

"Those are the three that you're able to recreate because you've ingrained the muscle memory into your hands to recreate the same piece over and over and over and over."

He recalled when Duncan presented him with his first scholarship in high school, where he won about \$100 for a vase he threw. It motivated him and pushed him even harder to persevere to the next challenge.

Amend said: "It hasn't all been flowers and success and happiness. Applying to all those schools that I went to, there's been a lot of rejection letters as well. Applying to shows to have my work seen and not getting in, it's brutal because I put so much work into my stuff. I love my stuff. But you've got to just keep at it.

"When you do eventually succeed and you get that acceptance letter and you get that scholarship or something, it feels that much better. You want to push even harder to get it."

To view the full presentation with Amend and Duncan, visit youtu.be/oh21UtzHWb0. To learn more about Amend and his work, visit www.wyattamendceramics.com.

Granny flats:

Continued from Page A1

more than 150 square feet.

Junior ADUs, defined as dwelling units no more than 500 square feet in size and contained entirely within a single-family residence, are also exempt.

An exempt ADU must also have exterior access and sufficient setbacks for fire and safety.

If the ADU fails to meet the conditions for exemption, it is considered nonexempt and is subject to proportional connection fees based on a count of drainage fixture units in the structure.

The ordinance meets the requirements of rapidly evolving changes in state law regarding ADUs, according to OVSD board chair Steve Quilici.

"We believe the new OVSD ordinance fully complies with the California Government Code as currently written," wrote Quilici in an email to the Ojai Valley News.

"That code covers ADU capacity charges (aka connection fees) and makes those charges proportional to the 'standard' residential charge, based on either the ADU area in square feet (compared to the primary residence) or the number of drainage fixture units in the design of the ADU, compared to the accepted standard of 25 DFUs," Quilici explained. "We do not have accurate data on the areas of all the primary residences in the District, so we will use the DFU count ratio."

The changes in the District's rules on ADUs are designed to address concerns raised by the state Department of Housing and Community Development, and similar comments about its ADU rules from the city of Ojai and nonprofit Californians for Homeownership, according to OVSD legal counsel Robert Kwong.

Since Jan. 1, 2018, when

the relevant portion of the code that included special districts such as OVSD went into effect, the District has received 78 requests for permits for sewer service. All but 10 were and are exempt from connection fees, Quilici stated.

By a vote of 4-3, the board on April 26 also selected Jan. 1, 2018, as the retroactive date for the ADU connection fee changes to take effect.

Quilici said new sewer service customers can pick between paying the capacity charge in a lump sum upfront, but many, if not most, opt for a five-year or 15-year, no-interest payment plan.

"So the District will be making some refunds to those

who made a lump-sum payment, and will be reworking the payment plans for those who opted to pay over time, which might involve refunds or reduced future payments," Quilici said.

The total of refunds and reduced payments is about \$100,000, he estimated.

While the ADU ordinance clarifies definitions of ADUs, it does not change any actual fees, rates and charges the District imposes. The board voted at its March 22 meeting to wait until the next fiscal year begins July 1 to have staff start work on medium- and long-term rate change studies and options.

The ordinance will take effect on May 5.

CELEBRATE AND HONOR OJAI VALLEY CLASS OF 2021

GRADUATION SPECIAL ISSUE - BUY SPACE FOR A SCHOOL, STUDENT OR CLASS. SHOW YOUR BUSINESS' SUPPORT FOR OUR 2021 GRADS.

4,000 Print copies, inserted into papers and at school sites
 FREE Digital Version, shared socially

SPACE AND MATERIALS DUE MAY 31 - PUBLISHED JUNE 11

ADVERTISING@OJAIVALLEYNEWS.COM | 805-646-1476

The future of community journalism rests with the people who live here.

If you live here, you get it.

Subscribe and support the Ojai Valley News.

WWW.OJAIVALLEYNEWS.COM | 805.646.1476