

Plans for the Ranch advance

Unveiling of makeover at the O.C. fairgrounds' Equestrian Center comes at a bumpy time as some boarders sue.

BY SARA CARDINE

Orange County fairground operators Thursday unveiled plans for the Ranch — a makeover of the site's Equestrian Center that includes after-school programs, exhibits, private boarding and equine therapy — to the delight of board members wishing for a more public-facing facility.

But the road to fulfilling that happy vision may be a bumpy one, as two groups that board horses at the Costa Mesa site have filed a lawsuit over what they describe as “unconscionable” rental agreements, threats

See **Ranch**, page A4

State adds key O.C. case to textbooks

Legislation requires public schools to teach landmark decision that outlawed education segregation in California.

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Lessons about a landmark court case in Orange County that led to school desegregation in California will now be taught in the state's public schools.

On Sept. 20, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed AB 1805, a bill requiring Mendez, et al v. Westminster School District of Orange County, et al be included in the state's history and social science curriculum standards.

Starting on Jan. 1, the law directs a state commission to consider adopting new instructional

See **Case**, page A4



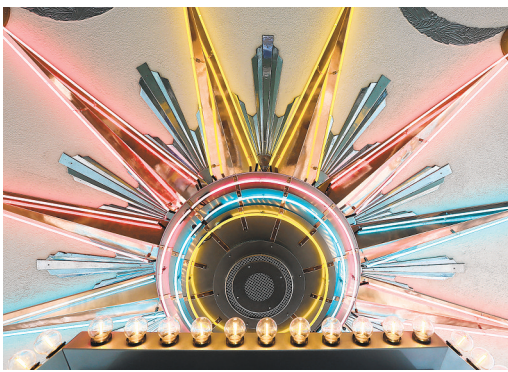
Photots by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

GENERAL MANAGER Ines Gandal stands in the lobby of the iconic Lido Theater. The movie theater originally opened in 1939 and maintains an air of Old Hollywood glamour with its Art Deco architectural details.



AFTER BEING closed for restoration, the iconic Lido Theater will reopen in time for this year's Newport Beach Film Festival.

THE REFURBISHED neon light marquee star at the iconic Lido Theater.



Lido Theater is ready for its third act

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Director and producer Joseph McGinty Nichol, known professionally as McG, believes the best seat in the house at Lido Theater in Newport Beach is right in the center.

“I think that is the finest seat. That is where I like to sit, when I test [my own films],” McG said.

McG has had a successful career as a record producer and director of music videos and films like “Charlie's Angels,” “Terminator Salvation” and Netflix's “Uglies.” Now he's getting into another part of the entertainment industry with his company River Jetty Restau-

rant Group as the new operator of the iconic landmark Lido Theater. Carefully restored by the Fritz Duda Co., the theater will reopen in time for this year's 25th annual Newport Beach Film Festival.

McG is a Newport Beach native who frequented the theater as a teenager and credits it for inspiring him to pursue a career in entertainment.

“I grew up going to the Lido Theater, and I have tremendously fond and passionate memories about looking at worlds that were larger than my own on that glorious screen. It awakened a dream life in me and I never looked

See **Theater**, page A2

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Sarah Mosqueda

'OCVIBE UNVEILED' SHARES A LOOK AT ANAHEIM'S FUTURE AS ORANGE COUNTY'S 'NEW DOWNTOWN' PAGE A5

OLIVE CREST BREAKS GROUND ON O.C. APARTMENTS FOR TRANSITIONAL YOUTH IN NEED PAGE A3

Newport Rib Co. pays back for its 40th

BY ANDREW TURNER

There have always been those who believed that community came about by breaking bread together.

In the Newport-Mesa area, many might agree that it is a dish best served with a slab of ribs.

Newport Rib Co. marks its 40th anniversary in business next month, and to celebrate, the family-owned-and-operated eatery is prepared to give back to the community.

The restaurant will donate 20% of its dine-in and takeout checks to local and national charities from Oct. 1 through Oct. 20. The chosen charities benefit animals, children, health-related causes, veterans and more.

See **Rib**, page A10



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

OWNER JOHN URSINI will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Newport Rib Co. with a “20 Charities, 20 Days” campaign at his longtime barbecue restaurant in Costa Mesa.



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RIB

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Guests will have the opportunity to decide which charity to donate to through the program, a concept that Newport Rib Co. has brought back every five years since its 20th anniversary.

“I would say this is a unique way that we are able to give back to the community that has really been giving back to us since we opened,” said John Ursini, proprietor of Newport Rib Co. “It’s such a two-way street, and sometimes, I don’t think everybody gets that.”

“Our parents, since we were young kids, were always involved in whatever thing that we were involved in. They were always on the board. ... We’re fortunate we have a restaurant, and it’s easy to be able to give back to the community, and this is just an easy way and an important way for us to do that.”

Newport Rib Co., which originally opened on Newport Boulevard, has operated out of its current location at 2196 Harbor Boulevard in Costa Mesa for the past 25 years.

Ursini said planning for a reunion of staff at the end of the 40th anniversary celebration is underway. In reconnecting with former employees and seeing how their families have grown, it has brought the passage of time into perspective.



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

OWNER JOHN URSINI and sister Laura Marroquin, son and daughter of Newport Rib Co. founder Fran Usini, are marking the 40th anniversary of the restaurant with a “20 Charities, 20 Days” campaign.

Laura Marroquin, Ursini’s sister, said the restaurant’s longevity has created a “legacy.”

“Not only do we have employees who have been here, but now we’ve employed their children,” said Marroquin, the community relations and catering manager. “Our dad is the founder, and now we’re his children, and now his grandchildren have been working here.”

“To be a part of this community for 40 years and see so much change and still be a constant in

the community, it’s really special and unique, I think.”

Surviving the coronavirus pandemic instilled a confidence like never before.

“The COVID thing kind of kicked us into high gear,” Ursini said. “You had a choice. You could sit on your hands — like a lot of people did, or were forced to do, or thought that they needed to do — and we literally, within two days, we were doing deliveries. We pivoted, and we were hustling, and no one missed a beat, and we

all kind of came out of that like, ‘Yes! We are Rib Co.’”

Ursini graduated from Estancia High in 1982 and Marroquin in 1987. Their brother, Dave, who runs the Long Beach-based Naples Rib Co., graduated from the same school in 1985.

Newport Rib Co. has made a significant contribution to the crosstown rivalries in Costa Mesa (Battle for the Bell) and Newport Beach (Battle of the Bay). The winners of those series have often been treated to catered feasts.

“Athletics is a big part of who we are and who our customer base is,” Ursini said. “I think we’ve built a pretty strong loyalty through doing things like the Battle for the Bell, the Battle of the Bay, team banquets, sponsoring team meals, and that’s been a good foundation for us, in a lot of ways.”

Patrick’s Purpose, among the list of charities included in the event, has recognized those who may have spent less time in the spotlight. Kim Turner formed the foundation after losing Patrick, her son, to suicide at the age of 16 in January 2018. Turner expressed gratitude for having the foundation be a part of the event, calling Newport Rib Co. a “pillar” of the community.

In the letters he left behind, the family found that Patrick longed for those with good character to be recognized like the star athletes and the straight-A students

were. His message was one of inclusion, hoping to engage others in the conversation and look for opportunities to perform acts of kindness.

The foundation has since put “buddy benches,” designed with a purpose to always have more than one person on them to serve as conversation starters, at multiple Newport-Mesa schools.

“We started by offering scholarships to kids who decide to go to a community college or a trade school because in Patrick’s letters that he left for us, that was a huge issue with him,” Turner said. “He couldn’t stand how everybody was judged on their GPA and their test scores and what college they went to. He really said, ‘What about the nice kid? What about the kid with character? Why aren’t we celebrating those kids?’”

“So that’s kind of been the foundation of what we started to do, and the scholarship program has been very successful, and it’s been really fun to see these kids go [into fields like] culinary school or aviation mechanics. Somebody went to clown school this year. That was really cool. Patrick would love that.”

For more information on the selected charities for Newport Rib Co.’s 40th anniversary event, visit ribcompany.com/40-year-celebration.

andrewturner@latimes.com
Twitter: @AndrewTurnerTCN

MAILBAG

Continued from page A8

part, Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley and Mayor John Stephens gave my bees a stay, while the beekeeping ordinance was revisited by staff. Supervisor Foley encourages replacing lawns with native pollinator plants, and Mayor Stephens could see the absurdity of asking people to plant natives, only to require them to kill any pollinators that decide to stay. My bees had lived without incident in that trash can in my atrium for 10 years. If you have native gardens, you will have bees, and if you have bees you should have a beekeeping ordinance. QED!

Lovers of bees who wish to attend or participate in

the City Council meeting in person or via Zoom can find the agenda with detailed instructions and information at: costamesa.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx.

Costa Mesa City Hall is located at 77 Fair Drive. The meeting starts at 6 p.m. Emails to the City Council must be received by 12 p.m. on Oct. 1 at cityclerk@costamesaca.gov.

Priscilla Rocco
Costa Mesa

The power of showing up

Back in 2016, just before the election, our Unitarian Universalist church in Costa Mesa became a place where many of us, myself included, found comfort, connection and purpose during a really divisive

time. Our congregation grew, not just because people were feeling anxious about politics but because we all felt the importance of taking part in something bigger than ourselves.

Throughout American history, when people have come together to act and advocate, they’ve helped make huge strides toward justice and equality.

But in recent years, we’ve seen a drop in the kind of involvement that once brought people together. In the book “Bowling Alone,” Robert Putnam talks about how fewer people are joining community groups, social clubs or even just getting together with neighbors. This decline weakens the bonds that hold our communities together.

Thankfully, things are

turning around. What we saw in our UU community after 2016 mirrors something bigger happening nationwide. Elections stir a new sense of responsibility among us. By getting involved with UU the Vote, we’ve been able to live out our democratic values and help in the ongoing fight to create a truly diverse and just democracy. Our growth as a congregation isn’t just in numbers but in how much more connected and engaged we’ve become.

This shift highlights how important places like churches, community centers and local organizations are for fostering participation. They provide the spaces where we can come together, share ideas and work toward common goals. In a world where so much of our interaction is

digital, these face-to-face connections are more important than ever.

Civic engagement doesn’t have to be complicated. It can start right where you live. On our cul-de-sac in Newport Beach, we’ve got a text thread where we help each other with everything from finding lost pets to sharing extra produce and addressing safety concerns. This simple communication brings us together for block parties and gatherings, showing that even with our different backgrounds — religious, political or financial — we can find common ground. Now, more than ever, knowing your neighbors and building local connections is crucial.

As a parent, I feel this call to action deeply. We’ve seen what happens when people

don’t engage and we know how important it is to get involved. It’s up to us to set an example, showing that being active in our communities isn’t just a responsibility but also key to a healthy democracy. To the younger generation, I urge you to join us. Together, we can face the challenges ahead — whether it’s political division or social injustice — and create a future that reflects our shared values.

So, let’s not let “Bowling Alone” become our reality. Let’s stay committed to civic engagement, strengthen our communities, support our institutions and get involved in the democratic process. Our democracy’s health depends on it.

Nina Smith
Newport Beach

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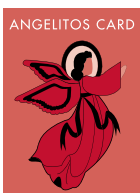
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