

# AROUND ALHAMBRA



MAY 2024 | GATEWAY TO THE SAN GABRIEL VALLEY

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## Young Asian Entrepreneurs Make Their Mark in Alhambra

By Jaimie Ding, Editor

Ashley Xie and Hedy Yu were born two years apart, at hospitals 25 minutes away from each other in Monterey Park and South Pasadena.

They grew up going to the same Chinese language school in Diamond Bar, and the same elementary, middle, and high schools. Xie, 28, likes to say she's known Yu, 26, "since she was in a car seat."

It only seems fitting that the two would start a company together, one that would honor their Asian American heritage by blending nostalgic flavors from their childhood and turning them into delicious pantry staples.

Rooted Fare's first product is the Black Sesame Crunchy Butter, inspired by the sweet tang yuan dessert they ate growing up. They've also had limited edition flavors like Pineapple Cake Cashew Butter and will be releasing Chinese Almond Cookie Butter in May.

"It's been a homecoming journey by launching our own brand that celebrates what our parents fed us and taught us," Xie said.

Xie's mother had a restaurant on Valley Boulevard that runs from Los Angeles to

Alhambra – the "Gateway to the San Gabriel Valley." It's a street where many Asian immigrants found their American dream through entrepreneurship.

Xie grew up in that restaurant, and her whole family on her mom's side were restaurateurs. The food business was often the only kind of job available to immigrants, many who faced language barriers and discrimination arriving in the U.S.

"That taught me that I loved food ever since I was a little kid," Xie said. "I wanted to become a chef like my mom."

However, her mother was clear she didn't immigrate all the way to the U.S. for her daughter to go into the difficult food business just like her. Go to college first and explore some other things, she told Xie.

So Xie attended John Hopkins University, where she studied public health and biology. Still passionate about food, however, Xie then went to New York University for her master in food studies. She dreamed up Rooted Fare as a school project during her last semester of her studies... >> **Young Asian Entrepreneurs Make Their Mark, p7**



Empowered and Inspired: AUSD students partnered with community leaders to navigate the path to safer driving and riding practices. (Photo Credit: Grant Sapcharoenlert and Ricardo Padillo)

## Be The Change Summit Empowers AUSD Student Leaders

In an effort to combat car crashes – the leading cause of serious injuries and fatalities among young people – Alhambra Unified School District joined forces with Impact Teen Drivers, Safe Kids Worldwide, and the California Highway Patrol to empower students to educate the community and to keep each other safe. Over 100 student leaders (primarily from San Gabriel High School along with Student Advisory Council members from each high school), community advocates, and elected officials participated in the April 2nd *Be The Change* Student Fellowship Summit, which coincided with California Teen Safe Driving Week and National Distracted Driving Awareness Month.

In the morning, students heard powerful speakers share how they were personally

impacted by car crashes. That was followed by a media event which opened with a welcome from Justin Wang, AUSD's Student Board Member. With his newfound awareness, Justin spoke passionately about the urgency of sharing information about the dangers of being a distracted driver or passenger with his peers. "I now realize that it is extremely important that I not only speak up, but also encourage my friends to speak up too," he shared, highlighting the need for collective action.

The summit served as a platform for student empowerment, equipping them with the tools and knowledge to influence positive changes in their communities. Through "Positive Community Norming,"...

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# AROUND ALHAMBRA

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We welcome comments, press releases, and community interest stories and will make every effort to include all appropriate information.

**Articles submitted to and printed in *Around Alhambra* do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Alhambra Chamber of Commerce or its Board of Directors.**

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## Mayor's Corner

By Mayor Ross J. Maza

April was another busy month around Alhambra, with so much work taking place to improve our already great city.

On April 11th I had the honor of delivering the annual State of the City at the beautiful Granada Building on 1st Street. It was a privileged opportunity for me to reflect with the community on the many achievements over the past 12 months. We reviewed the accomplishments and milestones that have shaped our city's landscape, and discussed the roadmap for Alhambra's growth moving forward. From advancing our City Council's Strategic Planning initiatives, to advancements in infrastructure, public safety, and sustainability, each achievement reaffirms our commitment to enhancing the quality of life for all who call Alhambra home. We reviewed our City Council's plan for the future of Alhambra. Much of this future planning is done by way of our Annual Strategic Plan which currently has 6 main goals. These goals are, 1) To Enhance Public Safety, 2) To improve Infrastructure & Mobility, 3) To Create a Strong Financial & Economic

Base, 4) To Enhance Transparency & Open Governance, 5) To Promote Sustainability, and 6) To Improve Housing Opportunities. Along with city staff who works tirelessly on these goals and their execution, the City Council is committed to making sure these goals are achieved.

I'd like to thank every single member of our Alhambra staff (almost 550) for another tremendous year of hard work. There are so many more highlights and accomplishments to mention, so I encourage you to review our Annual Accomplishments Report, which can be found on the City's website. Hard copies are also available at various City facilities, including City Hall. As Mayor of this great City, it was a tremendous honor to be able to highlight our efforts, and our accomplishments. I'm extremely proud to represent a city so committed to the constant growth and improvement for each of our residents. I'd also like to thank everyone at the Alhambra Chamber of Commerce for the hard work in organizing this event, and for their ongoing partnership with the city



Mayor Ross J. Maza

of Alhambra, and the local business community.

In closing, as Memorial Day draws near, I'd like to express my gratitude to every member of our armed forces who have so valiantly served our nation for the preservation of the freedoms we enjoy every day. Let us pay respect to those who have sacrificed their lives, and to their families. THANK YOU!

## Alhambra City Council Passes Ceasefire Resolution in Gaza Conflict

By Jaimie Ding, Editor

On March 25, the Alhambra City Council unanimously passed a resolution advocating for a permanent ceasefire in the Gaza humanitarian crisis.

Alhambra joins more than 100 cities around the country that have formally called for a ceasefire in Gaza, while the federal government continues to provide financial and political support to Israel. Other local cities that have passed a ceasefire resolution include Pasadena, Long Beach, Montebello, Cudahy, El Monte, Santa Ana, Bell, and Pomona.

The vote came after nearly two hours of public comment, during which more than 80 speakers advocated for the resolution at the meeting.

"We want to make clear as a city of Alhambra, as a city of the San Gabriel Valley and as a state of California that we want a ceasefire for Gaza," said Brenda

Chi, a Chinese Vietnamese artist and resident of Alhambra.

Several speakers asked for a wording change in the resolution from "peaceful resolution" to "permanent ceasefire," and to add details about the Palestinian death toll of over 32,000.

"We ask you to have the moral clarity that currently our congressional elected officials don't have yet," said Tracy Zhao, another Alhambra Resident.

The topic was initially discussed during the January 22 city council meeting, where Mayor Ross Maza and council members discussed support for peace in the Middle East. Maza then sent letters to U.S. Congresswoman Judy Chu, State Senator Maria Elena Durazo and Assemblymember Mike Fong encouraging federal support for peace, ceasefire, and safe return of hostages in Gaza and Israel.

The resolution was initially titled, "Resolution Supporting A Peaceful Resolution to the Ongoing Conflict and Humanitarian Crisis Impacting Gaza and Israel."

After public comment concluded, the council reconvened at around 11 p.m. Vice Mayor Sasha Renée Pérez mentioned she also received 900 emails on the issue, and proposed an amendment to change "peaceful resolution" to "permanent bilateral ceasefire." Maza also proposed an amendment within the resolution text to include language regarding the "safe return and release" of all hostages.

On the same day, the UN Security Council passed a resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan. It called for the immediate release of hostages and expansion of aid into Gaza.

## Chamber Presents 2024 State of the City With Mayor Ross Maza

By Jaimie Ding, Editor

The Alhambra Chamber hosted Mayor Ross Maza at the 2024 Alhambra State of the City earlier this month.

The lunch, hosted April 11 at the Granada LA, brought together over 100 elected officials, business leaders, and community members for an afternoon of celebration and connection.

Maza gave an overview of city governance structure and Alhambra's 2023 Strategic Plan goals, which included enhancing public safety, improving infrastructure and mobility, creating a strong financial and economic base, enhancing transparency and open governance, promoting sustainability, and improving housing opportunities.

"As Mayor, I am truly honored to reflect on the progress and to celebrate the achievements that we've made as a community over the past year," Maza said.

Some initiatives the city has taken to

meet its goals are the Walk, Bike, Move Alhambra plan adopted last month and recently constructed affordable housing units on Chapel Avenue. Alhambra recently adopted an updated zoning code and 2021-2029 housing element, reflecting its commitment to creating new housing opportunities.

The city is exploring possibilities for a permanent dog park after the success of its "Paw-Pup" Dog Park at a temporary location for residents to visit and give feedback on. Planning and conceptual design for the 710 Mobility Improvements project are in progress, with the city council receiving concept options for various transportation projects in Alhambra.

Maza also reflected on some of the events that have given residents opportunities to come together, such as the city's annual float in the Rose Parade, the Alhambra Lunar New Year



Festival, and the Active Streets Mission-to-Mission events.

He highlighted the work of the Alhambra Police Department, which responded to over 52,000 calls for service, and its Homeless Outreach Mental Evaluation (HOME) Team which is fully funded for the next five years. The Alhambra Fire Department made over 7,600 emergency responses. Finally, he showcased some of the projects residents can look forward to..

>> *continued on page 8*

The Chamber View

# Reflecting on Civic Engagement in Alhambra and AAPI Heritage

By Christopher Teng Balmaseda

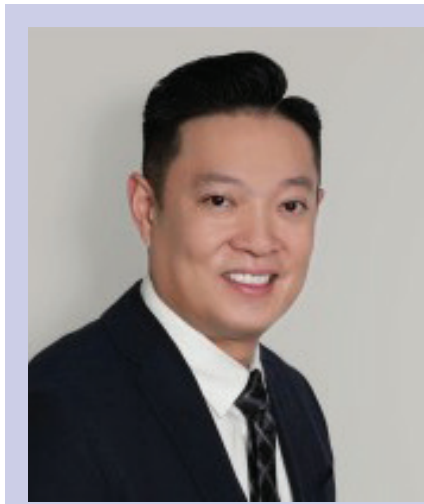
I often get asked why I got involved with the Alhambra Chamber. Normally, I give a brief answer like “support local business” and go about my day. However, as we celebrate Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May, I feel the urge to reflect deeper on what really drives my passion for civic engagement. Growing up the child of immigrant parents in Ohio in the early 80’s, I was surrounded by classmates who didn’t share the same appearance or cultural background. There was anti-Asian sentiment due to Japanese competition in the auto-industry. Beyond skin color, the language I used and the food I ate brought curious stares on some days, but more often mean, unwelcome comments constantly reminding me I was on the outskirts and didn’t belong. I had no voice.

Fast forward to college at UC Berkeley, to a student body composed of every race, religion, color, and creed, I not only found my voice, but was encouraged to use it. Graduate school at Caltech brought me to Pasadena where I lived for a number of years, but when I decided to open a business, Alhambra – for its proximity to downtown LA, diverse population, and of course amazing food – was at the top of my list. I’ve had a business in Alhambra

for over 10 years and it’s been a great place to attract regional talent with its vibrant community and great schools.

However, with changing demographics, I sensed a growing tension between the communities that have been in Alhambra for decades and newcomers from overseas. I attribute this to a combination of nostalgia for the past, communication gaps, and lack of familiarity. The Chamber offered me the perfect opportunity to be able to interact with people of all ages, backgrounds, and communities in a way that unifies people, their pocketbooks. There is nothing like attending community events to meet new people and the Chamber has provided me with the opportunity to work to bridge the gap between people who would otherwise never interact with each other and engage.

It’s engagement that really makes cities work for their community. Through the Chamber, I have gotten to know more elected officials and government employees than I could ever dream of. These people work thankless jobs trying to make Alhambra a better place and I tip my hat to anyone willing to throw their hat in the ring. However, a city can only successfully support a community they understand. As of the last census, Alhambra has a 52.9% API and 33.5%



Christopher T. Balmaseda  
President, Alhambra Chamber of Commerce

Latino population, but the city and regional governments have much lower proportional representation. Immigrant communities are notorious for keeping their heads down, adapting to challenges, and to not make waves. Voter registration for AAPIs and Latinos remains the lowest in the USA. AAPIs make up 6.1% of the US population but only 0.9% of elected officials. During the month of May, I strongly encourage all people, regardless of political leanings, to register and vote. I encourage people to get active in the community either through the Chamber or other community organizations, and work to improve the place we call home.

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# Hundreds of Volunteers Leave Alhambra Spotless After Day of Service

By Jaimie Ding, Editor



On a crisp Saturday morning in April, more than 150 volunteers fanned out across Alhambra to participate in the annual Day of Service hosted by the Alhambra Chamber of Commerce Nonprofit Council.

Some donned bright orange vests at Almanson Park, Alhambra Park, Grenada Park or Story Park, picking up trash and scrubbing picnic tables. Others put on their gardening gloves at Alhambra Community Garden and Marguerita Elementary School, clearing plots of land and weeding.

Yet others were packing supplies for unhoused students and helping out with the nonprofit National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse.

"The Nonprofit Council is very grateful for the opportunity to be of service to the community and proud and thankful for the generous support of our community and volunteers," said Maria Gao, chair of the council.

One of the council's standout projects was creating Summer Send-Off Kits for unhoused students, a collaborative effort with the Homeless and Parent Engagement program at Alhambra Unified School

District.

In the back of the Alhambra Chamber office Saturday morning, four boys from Boy Scout Troop 139 were hard at work with their Scoutmaster Ron Lee, packing laundry sheets into Ziploc bags for the send-off kits.

"We thought it sounded like a good opportunity to volunteer in the community," said Cynthia Lee, Ron's wife.

Their son, Ryan Lee, is a seventh grader at Park Elementary School and said he tries to volunteer with friends to make it more fun.

"I like how it teaches you a lot of necessary life skills," Lee said, "like how to be a leader."

Keiko Rakin, a sophomore at Alhambra High School, worked with them to assemble the kits. The 15-year-old said she's passionate about education and is frequently involved in the community through the Student Advisory Council.

"I know some [students] who are homeless so I definitely want to help them," Rakin said. She believes civic engagement is an important part of learning empathy and

interacting with people different from you.

"A lot of times you don't put yourself in other people's shoes," Rakin said. "[Volunteering] gives you a broader perspective."

The plan was to assemble 160 backpacks for students ranging from elementary school age to graduating high school seniors. The project was made possible through the generous donations from local businesses and organizations, such as reusable mugs from Starbucks; backpacks with school supplies from Catalyst SGV; Target gift cards from the Alhambra Rotary; coupons from Raising Canes, Wendy's, and Shakeys; snacks from Trader Joes; and other various hygiene items and toys from KCAL Insurance, the Ratkovich Company (The Alhambra), and Chinese Bible Missions Church.

Alhambra Day of Service also attracts many residents who are getting involved with their community for the first time.

Kevin Choy, of Rosemead, said he has family in Alhambra and found out about the event through the Alhambra Chamber Facebook page.

"I never do any community work so I wanted to check it out," said Choy, 36. And he's already made friends – alongside him is 18-year-old Justin Chau, who said they just met that day but are now friends. The two worked together to clear the Almanson Park parking lot of leaves and debris.

Keith Ko, the English lead pastor at Chinese Bible Missions Church, was leading a group of volunteers at the Alhambra Community Garden. It's an important community resource, where

anyone can rent a small plot for only \$5 a month to plant whatever they want.

"When it's not taken care of, things just grow," Ko said.

Allison Truong and her friend Sharon Kuang, both seniors at San Gabriel High School, often volunteer together. One of Kuang's favorite parts of volunteering is meeting new people. "Different people come from everywhere to volunteer and it's nice talking to them," she said.

She and Truong both already love gardening; Kuang gardens at home and Allison is part of her school's environmental club.

Kuang believes it's important for young people to volunteer when they have time, because "it's students that have a bit more flexibility than other people to volunteer," she said.

Near the end of the event, a miniature oasis of flowers and native plants surrounded by fresh mulch lay gleaming at the back of Marguerita Elementary School while volunteers were putting the final touches on weeding underneath the rocks.

"It's a really cute garden," said Nancy Guan, an incoming student at Claremont Graduate University. "You feel really at peace just being here."

It's her second year participating in Day of Service with the Chinese Bible Missions Church. Guan said she received a lot of tutoring growing up through community-based non-profits and feels lucky to have had that support throughout her life.

"For me, the community was so involved in my life when I was young, so now I want to give back," Guan said.

## First All-Asian Firefighter Crew On Duty at Alhambra Fire Department

By Jaimie Ding, Editor

For the first time in the department's history, an all-Asian crew of firefighters were on duty at the Alhambra Fire Department Fire Station 71.

Though a momentous occasion, the sunny afternoon of Wednesday, March 27 was not unlike any other shift. The three men casually mulled around at the station, while ready to leap into action at a moment's notice should a call come in from around the area.

Binh Cody Vo was the captain, Vin Tran was the engineer – who drives the fire truck – and Vu Nguyen was the firefighter paramedic.

Tran, the oldest, joined Alhambra Fire in 2002 – he was the first Vietnamese firefighter hired to the department. He was born in the San Fernando Valley and raised in Simi Valley.

Before becoming a firefighter, he worked at a gym and always played sports growing up. Most of his family, on the other hand, worked in the aerospace industry.

"Being active, I wanted to have an active career, so I chose the fire department," said Tran, 45.

Vo came to Alhambra Fire in 2010, wanting to give back and help the community.

The first firefighter in his family, the 37-year-old was born to a fisherman father and seamstress mother in Thailand. He came to the U.S. at a young age and has spent nearly his whole life in the San Gabriel Valley.

Due to his parents' professions, he grew up learning how to trap fish and sew

and alter his own clothes.

Nguyen, the youngest, was born in Pomona and grew up in Ontario. He's worked with Alhambra Fire since 2018.

"I still remember when [he] came in to interview as a cadet," quipped Tran.

Nguyen, 32, originally wanted to be a doctor and went to school for a bachelor's degree in biology. Though he realized being a doctor wasn't for him, he still wanted to be in the medical field. Since emergency medical response is a major part of being a firefighter, he decided to go to the fire academy.

"We're pretty much nurses but we get to ride around in a big fire truck," Nguyen said.

Though his parents respected firefighters, they were initially devastated Nguyen didn't become a doctor. They were also worried about him finding a job, since they didn't see many Asians firefighters in general.

"But once they learned what the job really entailed, they're pretty proud of who I became," he said.

The other two men recalled pushback from their families when they initially decided to pursue the profession as well.

Vo remembers his parents telling him: "Are you sure, that's a dangerous job, can you handle it?"

Once they learned the training process and how the job worked, they were more understanding, he said.

Though there are several Asian American firefighters at Alhambra Fire Department, this is the first time they have been on a crew at the same time, due



to the way staffing requirements worked – having a captain, engineer, and firefighter paramedic for each crew.

Up until 10 years ago, there were few Asian American firefighters overall, according to Battalion Chief Mike Brown. More than 90% of firefighters are men and about 85% are white nationwide, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"There's been an increase of the AAPI into the fire service and we're able to diversify and relate to the community," Brown said.

Nguyen said that's one of the reasons that inspired him to become a firefighter.

"I didn't see many Vietnamese firefighters growing up so I was like, 'Oh it'd be kind of cool, to be a role model for the Asian community,'" Nguyen said.

Being able to speak Vietnamese has also helped bridge language barriers when responding to emergencies. While Chinese people are the largest Asian ethnic group in the area, there is a significant population of Vietnamese people as well.

"Every time we go on a call and there's

a Vietnamese person who called 911, they're all surprised that we're able to communicate with them," Nguyen said.

"The fact that we communicate with them in their own language, they're not hiding anything, they're giving us every detail they have," Vo added.

Brown said the community provides "unique challenges because of dealing with a very diverse group of cultures."

The department has four fire stations serving around 100,000 people, predominantly Asian and Latino, and receives about 8,000 calls a year.

They primarily recruit through junior college fire academies and an explore program primarily made of Alhambra and Mark Keppel high school students. In recent years, they've identified focus groups to reflect the community with their hiring practices.

"At the fire department, we make it an emphasis to educate our personnel to cultural experiences, language barriers, and respecting all different types of people," Brown said.



# Catalyst SGV Unveils Water-Wise Garden at Marguerita Elementary School

By Mark Paulson, Board of Directors, Division I – Alhambra San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District

An Earth Day celebration for the Marguerita Elementary School community came with the unveiling of a new water-wise garden on campus. This remarkable project, spearheaded by Catalyst SGV and funded by the San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District, represents a collaborative effort between community leaders, educators, and students. The garden's unveiling on March 30 marked a significant milestone for the school community, symbolizing its dedication to sustainability and hands-on learning. Through this outdoor classroom, students will not only connect with nature but also gain valuable insights into water conservation and desert-like ecosystems. We're grateful to all who contributed to making this vision a reality, and we look forward to the continued growth and enrichment this garden will bring to the school community and beyond.

### How to Apply for an O.W.L. Community Grant for Your School and Non-Profit Organization

If you are affiliated with a school or non-profit organization in Alhambra, Monterey Park, Azusa, or Sierra Madre (the District's member cities), you may apply for an education and conservation grant through the District's O.W.L. Community Grant Program (Opportunities for



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Water Leadership) which has supported the initiative and creativity of dozens of schools and non-profit organizations over the years. Please visit the District's website to learn more about the grant program, past grant recipients, and our on-line application form ([www.sgvmwd.com/water-conservation/#owl-grants](http://www.sgvmwd.com/water-conservation/#owl-grants)), and please consider scheduling an educational presentation by contacting Evelyn Reyes or Albert Lu, our External Affairs staff (626-969-7911; [info@sgvmwd.com](mailto:info@sgvmwd.com)). Thank you.



Representatives from Catalyst SGV and San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District Board members Mark Paulson, Steve Placido, and Mike Eng participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new water-wise garden March 30 with students, teachers, and administrators at Marguerita Elementary School.

## All Around the Town

# National Endowment for the Arts Honors Alhambra Woman

By Glenn Barnett



**Glenn Barnett**

Long-time Alhambra resident June Kuramoto was honored by the National Endowment for the Arts this year as one of 10 recipients of its National Heritage Fellowships program, the nation's highest honor for folk and traditional arts.



Since 1982, the program has recognized "artistic excellence, lifetime achievement, and contributions to our nation's traditional arts heritage."

The NEA notes that, "June Kuramoto... upon hearing the koto, a 13-string Japanese instrument, knew this would be her connection to Japan."

Kuramoto was born in Japan and moved to Los Angeles in the 1950's with her mother and three siblings. Her mother was part of a social welfare organization called "Sakura Kai" that helped families from Japan assimilate to America. At one of their gatherings, a woman played the koto – Kuramoto immediately fell in love with the sound and music. She asked her mother if she could learn to play it. The woman, Kazue Kudo, had just come to the United States and was looking to teach koto. Kuramoto's mother offered her house to teach in exchange for lessons for her three daughters. Kuramoto's sisters quit within a year, but Kuramoto continued to learn.

She received her "natori" – professional teaching status – from the Miyagi School of Koto in Tokyo in 1969 and became a teacher of koto herself.

When Kuramoto studied to be a legal secretary, she found that her skill on the koto helped her to become skilled at typing. She was also a child of her times. Fascinated by other stringed instruments, she would see both Jimmy Hendrix and classical guitarist Andre Segovia in concert. She became involved in the anti-war movement during the Vietnam War, protesting with "Asians for Peace" and advocating for health care for senior citizens.

Her young peers made fun of her for playing "Grandma's music," the traditional Japanese style. But she knew that if the koto could be put in a contemporary setting, a wider audience would hear and appreciate its beautiful sound.

One day, she learned of a band of Asian Americans called Hiroshima playing their own contemporary style of music. She approached the band leader Dan Kuramoto about adding her and her koto to the mix. They began to jam together and the band changed its direction to accentuate their Japanese roots. June Kuramoto has played with Hiroshima for over 40 years. With her, they received two Grammy nominations, the Soul Train Award, and more. Their music can be found on YouTube.

Kuramoto, who has made her home in Alhambra for 40 years, continues to give lessons to koto students in the classical Japanese style and mentors others who share a sense of pride in their culture and identity. She says of her instrument, "It is a living thing and must be loved, held, played, respected and appreciated." Congratulations to Kuramoto on her accomplishments.

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## Republic Services Celebrates AAPI Heritage Month

As May marks the celebration of AAPI Heritage Month, it's a fitting time to reflect on the rich tapestry of cultures and the impactful leadership that defines this diverse community.

Reagan C., a Recycling Coordinator with Republic Services whose roots span both Chinese-American and American cultures, offers a unique perspective on his AAPI identity and experience.

"Being an Asian American Pacific Islander, specifically Chinese-American, has given me the opportunity to see things from both cultures," Reagan shares. This sentiment encapsulates the multifaceted identity many AAPI individuals navigate — a delicate balance between honoring heritage and embracing the American ethos.

Indeed, Alhambra serves as a microcosm of the broader AAPI community, showcasing a mosaic of traditions, languages, and perspectives. From streets adorned with signs in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Tagalog to vibrant community centers fostering

cultural exchange, the AAPI presence in Alhambra is palpable.

Reagan's words underscore the importance of recognizing the diversity within the AAPI community.

"Chinese-American or AAPI is not one single group, but a mixture of wonderful cultures coming together to be a part of this country," Reagan emphasizes. "So much has been shaped by my parents, family, friends, and my Chinese heritage but also by my American culture."

This duality of influence informs Reagan's approach to leadership—rooted in cultural pride and a commitment to making a difference in the community.

At Republic Services, we respect the unique perspectives that our employees bring to work. Our team that serves Alhambra and surrounding communities is diverse and inclusive. We know this makes us all stronger and better at what we do every day.

To learn more about the services we offer in Alhambra, visit [RepublicServices.com/municipality/alhambra-ca](http://RepublicServices.com/municipality/alhambra-ca).

## Looking to Ship Across the World? Pack and Ship Solutions Can Handle It

By Jaimie Ding, Editor

Couches. Motorcycles. Medical equipment. The old grand piano that's been in your family for decades.

If you can think of it, Mazi Yar can probably ship it for you. His business, Pack and Ship Solutions, has served the Alhambra community since 2016. But before that, it was called QuickMovers, which was started as a pick up and delivery service.

He quickly developed reliable clients that also needed packing, crating, and shipping — so that's what he did.

"For many years QuickMovers was not only a moving company and a delivery service, but also was doing packing, crating, and shipping," Yar said. Eventually he separated the two companies.

Yar said a major issue he found in the shipping business was the lack of follow-up after an item is shipped to ensure that it reaches its final destination safe and sound, especially when it comes to shipping overseas.

"They just leave you hanging, unless you go to really major companies like UPS and Fedex, and then the prices are so crazy and high," Yar said.

Yar said he provides the same reliability as those major companies, but "you can talk to me directly, at the same time I charge less than they do."

He stays connected to the shipping process from beginning to end as items transfer hands between different freight companies and in-country delivery services, making

sure he's done everything he could for his clients. They can handle customs clearance for any country and in some cases can deliver all the way to the door.



They mostly ship furniture, but also do pianos, heavy machinery, motorcycles, antiques, art, and other delicate items. Yar said they can ship "everything you need" — he doesn't like to say no. Difficult shipping jobs intrigue him.

"Then I gotta use my brain and figure it out for them," he said. That's how the name Pack and Ship Solutions came about: "We're in the solutions business."

Before the logistics industry, Yar worked in entertainment. He enjoys talking to people as part of his job. With his current business, he's kept clients from 20 years ago and prides himself on the relationship he's built with them.

"They trust me," Yar said. "And it doesn't matter if I know them for a long time ... I try to give the same service to everyone."

## Savant of Alhambra Brings New Standard of Care for Seniors

By Jaimie Ding, Editor



When Savant Senior Living took over the senior living community just off Garfield Avenue and Main Street in July 2023, they wanted to give it an upgrade.

"We recognized that the community was underperforming, the previous owner/operator did not provide adequate services to the level of care," they said.

Savant Senior Living is a regional owner operator of 10 assisted living and memory care facilities in LA and Riverside. With 1600 residents across the company, they're experienced in employing the caregivers and providing the activities and culinary services seniors deserve.

Their executive director, Lisa Pham, has been with the company since it opened its first facility in 2016, starting as a nurse and being quickly promoted.

Pham, 37, initially spent seven years in the hotel industry, where she grew her customer service, sales, and marketing skills. When her little sister got sick, she went back to school for nursing. Her first

job was at a senior living assisted facility.

"I thought I was just going to be there for six months," Pham said. "I fell in love with assisted living and I've never left since."

The newly rebranded Savant of Alhambra has about 80 residents, and what makes this particular location special is the diversity of cultures. There are Chinese Mandarin and Cantonese speakers, as well as Japanese and Vietnamese. To serve those communities, they strive to staff multilingual caretakers and program activities like mahjong, Chinese dancing, and more.

"My mom, she tells me that, all these years we take care of you," Pham said. "When we get older, we hope our kids take care of us. That's what I see in seniors — when they get older, they need somebody to take care of them."

She said the owners of Savant strive to make their facilities accessible to lower income seniors by having a MediCal assisted living waiver.

Though Pham lives in Long Beach, she drives to Alhambra frequently and is considering moving. She worked at another Savant location before taking over the Alhambra one.

"I love it, I actually love it," she said of her new location. Pham is Cambodian but her family is from Vietnam, and she's enjoyed picking up bits of the language from her residents.

"My residents are teaching me so that's amazing," Pham said. "When they bring food, they make you eat, you can't say no to them."

**What values do you want to instill in your child?**



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## Young Asian Entrepreneurs Make Their Mark in Alhambra

from Page 1

When the pandemic happened, Xie ended up reconnecting with her childhood friend Yu, who happened to be doing marketing work.

Yu was a “natural-born storyteller,” Xie said, a skillset that she didn’t have. After participating in some business pitch competitions, they decided to found the company together.

Because of pandemic constraints, they were only able to sell 10 jars per month when they first launched online.

Now, Rooted Fare is selling 3000 jars of its Black Sesame Crunchy Butter per month and are selling at several in-person retailers, such as Bristol Farms and Sesame LA.

Xie and Yu hustled to get the word out, selling at pop-up markets and gathering emails to build their customer base. They moved to Alhambra a few years ago and have been roommates and business partners since.

An important part of their initial cold-pitching process in LA was offering samples to introduce their product to people who may not be familiar with black sesame.

“If people are just open-minded enough to try it, that’s all I’m really asking,” Xie said. “Most people love it – it’s basically like peanut butter 2.0.”



At the age of 22, Julius Wong has already worked in the restaurant industry for six years.

His first job was at a Korean restaurant, where he wanted to be a server but his friend offered to teach him how to cook. He was hooked.

“I kind of like the feeling that people like your food, when they tell me the food is good,” Wong said. “It makes me feel I’m doing something that’s actually serving other people.”

He eventually worked at a Michelin Guide sushi restaurant for a year where he learned the ins and outs of sushi before starting his own sushi catering business.

Now, he’s jumping into the world of boba with Formosa Aroma on Main Street, which he opened last August with three other business partners. Wong is in charge of operations and marketing, while his partners handle the accounting, inventory, and recipe-testing.

“To me it’s like a new challenge,” said Wong. “I want to train my taste buds to be able to taste something and let you know what’s inside.”

Wong was born and raised in Hong Kong and came to Alhambra when he was 16. After attending Mark Keppel High School, he went to Cal State LA – but dropped out after one semester. He realized school was not for everybody, he said.

“I have greater ambitions, I want to

do something myself – I don’t want to work under anybody,” Wong said.

A naturally charismatic person, Wong made connections in the business world, eventually starting his own ventures. While his father was an executive of an insurance company, Wong was left to provide for himself and his sister when he came to the U.S.

“All this stuff is because I want to take care of my family, that’s it,” Wong said.



Wendy’s may be the world’s third largest hamburger chain, but for Lawrence Cheng, it’s always been a small family business.

His parents, both previously flight attendants for Cathay Pacific, opened their first location in Garden Grove in 1992. Since then, they’ve opened six other locations and have another one coming next year.

Cheng, 30, grew up in Rowland Heights and went to Westwood College for a degree in business management. He’s worked in his parents’ stores since he was 10 and watched as they grew their business into a local enterprise.

“I saw how hard and how much effort [my parents] had to put in,” Cheng said. “A lot of the business is kind of a learn-as-you-go type of thing, just habits.”

Cheng was put in charge of his first Wendy’s store when he was just 22. He had graduated college on a Friday, and his father asked him what he planned to do next week. He said he didn’t know.

“Ok, you’re going to start running Garden Grove next week then, you start on Monday,” his father said.

Though it was difficult at first, Cheng took his responsibility seriously. His store went from making \$20,000 a week when he started to doing \$46,000 a week consistently, he said. When he was able to find someone to take over as general manager, he became more involved with the overall family business. It took his father at least five years to fully trust him and step back, he said.

“It wasn’t so much a choice,” Cheng chuckled. “Honestly it’s fun, if you like customers and working with people. It’s [also] very very stressful, I don’t downplay it at all.”

A lot of his general managers and crew have been working for the family for more than 20 years. They watched as the senior Cheng passed the growing business to his son, who worked hard to earn their respect while taking over the company. His parents have now fully retired.

“I want to take it, continue to grow,” Cheng said. “They left me a really good foundation, I just have to build a tower on top of it.”



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## Local AAUW Branch Celebrates Success of Charity Fund

By Jackie Fisher, AAUW

AAUW Alhambra-San Gabriel Branch convened its annual event, "An Afternoon of Learning, Comradery and Food," at the First United Methodist Church of San Gabriel on Saturday, March 16 at 1:00 p.m. Members and guests mingled with mocktails concocted by Veronica and Randy Alvarez and nibbled on appetizers made by Karen Levin, Gerry Kreger, Delora Brown, and Cheryl Plotkin. They renewed friendships and got acquainted with new members while playing an M&M Guessing Game thanks to Lyda Chee.

Deanna Arthur, the branch's vice president, spoke about the AAUW Fund and its purpose. A multitude of beautiful door prizes, contributed by Kathleen Doty, Veronica Alvarez and Deanna Arthur were raffled off, and

everyone left in good spirits.

The AAUW Fund is one of the best independent charities in America and has awarded \$6 million in fellowships and grants to more than 320 outstanding women and community projects in the 2022-23 academic year. Other options supported by the fund are the Greatest Needs Fund, the Education and Training Fund, the Economic Security Fund, and the Leadership Fund. All these paths support AAUW's Mission: To advance equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy. For more information about the AAUW Fund, visit [ca-online.aauw.net/about-us/join-us/aauw-fund](http://ca-online.aauw.net/about-us/join-us/aauw-fund). For more information about AAUW's Alhambra-San Gabriel Branch, visit [alhambrasangab-ca.aauw.net](http://alhambrasangab-ca.aauw.net).

Your Insurance



# Can You Really Save if You Choose to Bundle Insurance?

By Regina Talbot  
State Farm Insurance Agent,  
Insurance License # 0G05807



**Regina Talbot**  
Talbot Insurance Agency  
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**What is bundling insurance?**

The technical term is “multi-line discount”, referring to the purchase of more than one policy (usually two). But don’t worry – if you say, “Maybe I should bundle auto and home insurance,” your agent will know exactly what you mean.

**Why should I consider bundling my policies?**

That’s a two-word answer: simplicity and savings. Let’s say you have auto insurance and homeowners insurance from two different companies. This means you’re dealing with two different agents. You’re paying two different bills, probably at two different times. And chances are, you’re paying more than you should.

Bundling is a way to simplify that picture, bringing all your coverages together in one place to save you time, effort and

money. Bundling insurance is a step many insurance companies advise their customers to take, for a lot of very good reasons.

For example, if you decide to bundle home and auto insurance, you’ll get the coverage and service you want, plus other advantages you may not be enjoying now.

- More money in your pocket
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- A single company to provide all-round service

For more information, contact Regina Talbot at (626) 357-3401.

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### 2024 State of the City With Mayor Ross Maza from Page 2



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...including the new Alhambra Community Center, EV charging stations, groundwater capture projects, and more.

Sam Yue, with financial services company Primerica, said he enjoys attending the event every year to meet people and hear updates from the city.

“I’ve been a Chamber member for 15 years, Yue said. “It’s important for me to know what’s going on with the city of Alhambra.”

Other elected officials in attendance

include City Council members Jeff Maloney, Sasha Renée Pérez, Katherine Lee, and Adele Andrade-Stadler, and several members of the Alhambra School Board and San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District Board. Representatives from the offices of Congresswoman Judy Chu, Assemblymember Mike Fong, and Supervisor Hilda Solis were also present. The presenting sponsor for the event was Transtech Engineers.

Mayor Maza’s address can be viewed on the City of Alhambra Facebook page.





## Free Spirited Brings Expertly Crafted Sober Cocktails to Alhambra

By Jaimie Ding, Editor

After working as a server, chef, bartender, and sommelier, Amber Pennington had one thing left to do – open her own restaurant.

But not just any restaurant. She and her now-husband, Arleo De Guzman, dreamed up a place that served high quality alcohol-free cocktails and delicious food that anyone could eat, regardless of dietary restrictions.



Less than a year later, Free Spirited came to life. The new restaurant and cocktail lounge opened on Main Street in January, taking over the location previously occupied by Caramba Mexican Restaurant. It was after searching all over Los Angeles and Santa Monica that they found the perfect spot in Alhambra.

“We understand we’re a very niche concept, but we also know there’s a lot of need for our restaurant,” said Pennington, 32.

The couple has over a decade of combined experience in the restaurant industry, covering everything from fast food and dive bars to fine-dining and Michelin-rated establishments. The two have lived in

Temple City for four years now, making their new restaurant conveniently close to home.

When they got married last February, they had three things on their wedding registry: Help them start a restaurant. Help them buy a home. Help them pay for their honeymoon.

They thought their first request was the least likely, but it came true first.

The non-alcoholic concept was inspired by Pennington’s own experiences growing up with alcoholism in her family and being hit by a drunk and high driver six years ago. Her partner, De Guzman, has also struggled with his own alcohol addiction.

“We are here for people going through addiction recovery,” Pennington said. “They can have a safe space without that temptation there or without that reminder.”

There’s a total of five non-alcoholic bars in California, according to Pennington, but they’re the only 100% alcohol-free one that doesn’t use non-alcoholic spirits, a term that can be used to describe anything under 0.5% ABV.

Free Spirited’s food menu is almost entirely vegan, and everything is gluten-free. Their non-alcoholic spirits, made in-house, include flavors like citrus rind, spiced molasses, and aloe herb. Pennington and De Guzman developed the menus together with their respective expertise in fine dining and bartending.

“We work really hard to make sure our cocktails don’t just taste like water,” Pennington said.



## Dodgers' Mookie Betts Visits Alhambra Raising Cane's

By Jaimie Ding, Editor

Hundreds of fans dressed in Dodger blue flocked to Raising Cane’s in Alhambra Wednesday morning for a chance to meet Dodgers shortstop Mookie Betts.

Betts worked the counter and greeted fans to raise money for his nonprofit 5050 Foundation, which works to build sports programs at inner city schools.

Fans began lining up at Raising Cane’s as early as 9 p.m. Tuesday night. By the time Betts arrived for his shift at 10 a.m., more than 700 fans were waiting in line, the restaurant estimated. People drove in from as far as West Covina and beyond for the event.

“We’re very lucky,” said marketing manager Lauren Greenwood. “The Alhambra community has been wonderful to us. It was awesome to see everyone show up for us.”

Only the first group of fans were able to enter and order from Betts, but staff handed out Dodgers jerseys and posters

for others in line. Betts came out briefly on stage to greet fans, leaving around 10:30 a.m.

Alhambra resident Dillon Pineda and his son Alexander showed up a little after 10 just to catch a glimpse of Betts from a distance.

“It was pretty cool just to see Alhambra in a sea of blue,” Pineda said. He comes from a whole clan of devoted Dodgers fans, including his father, who collected baseball cards and hats. They go to four to five games a year, with nine-year-old Alexander already well-educated in Dodgers history.

Alexander said he was able to see “a little bit” of Betts, one of his favorite players along with Will Smith and Shohei Ohtani.

When Pineda first heard Betts was coming to Alhambra, he was shocked.

“Normally stuff like this we get excluded,” Pineda said. “It was nice having it out here.”

## NEWS & NOTES

### > Starbucks to Open at Former Ritters Location

Starbucks recently started construction for a drive-thru location at the former Ritter’s SKC restaurant location on Valley Boulevard. Additionally, the Starbucks location at Atlantic and Valley is temporarily closed while under renovation.

### > For the Win Signs Lease at Former Grill ‘Em All Location

For the Win, a local smashburger chain, has signed a lease on Main Street at the former location of Grill ‘Em All, an Alhambra establishment that closed in January after a 10-year run. Look out for the opening of For the Win this summer!

### > Alhambra Modern Dentistry Celebrates Grand Opening

Joined by U.S. Congresswoman Judy Chu, the city’s newest dental office held its grand opening ceremony April 6. Alhambra Modern Dentistry offers specialized care for patients old and young and is dedicated to bringing smiles to every family in Alhambra.

### > Call for Volunteers for 2024 Neighborhood Cleanup

The city of Alhambra is looking for volunteers for its 2024 Neighborhood Clean-Up on Saturday, May 18th from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Help your neighbors do some spring cleaning by assisting with disposing of bulky items and yard work. For more information, visit [www.cityofalhabra.org](http://www.cityofalhabra.org).

### > Apply for APIFM Environmental Justice Summer Institute

The Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement (APIFM) is hosting its Environmental Justice Summer Institute, a two-month program to equip Asian and Pacific Islander (API) youth aged 14-22 in the West San Gabriel Valley with the skills to become effective advocates for environmental health in their communities. Participants will engage in lectures, field trips, and activities alongside partners from local organizations working on environmental justice issues. While the program is designed with API youth in mind, it’s open to all local SGV youth passionate about making a difference. Apply by May 31, 2024 at [APIFM.org/ESJI](http://APIFM.org/ESJI).

### > APIFM Holds Air Quality Workshops for High Schoolers

APIFM is also holding air quality workshops for local teens as part of their Clean Air SGV campaign. Students will go on a short walking tour where they will use a portable air quality sensor to collect real-time data. The tours will take place in Alhambra by the I-10 Freeway Fremont exit, and teens will engage with research partners at USC’s Southern California Environmental Health Sciences Center (SCEHS). For more information, visit [bit.ly/sgvcleanair](http://bit.ly/sgvcleanair).

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Alhambra Health Center, circa 1935 (left) and present day (right). The approved design for Alhambra's new community center proposes the preservation and adaptive reuse of a portion of the historically and architecturally significant former Alhambra Health Center located at 612 West Shorb Avenue.

## Alhambra City Council Votes Unanimously to Preserve 1930 Alhambra Health Center

By Joyce Amaro, Alhambra Historical Society

May is National Preservation Month, a time set aside by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to discover and honor the unique heritage of our communities and promote the value of preserving historically, architecturally, and culturally significant places. To celebrate National Preservation Month, we have some important news to share regarding the preservation of the Alhambra Health Center, one of Alhambra's most important historic resources!

In a unanimous 5-0 vote at its March 25 meeting, the Alhambra City Council adopted the proposed community center design Alternative II for the future Alhambra Community Center. In selecting this design, the City Council voted to preserve and adaptively reuse the northern-most two-story portion and most architecturally and historically significant part of the former Alhambra Health Center.

"We celebrate this victory for historic preservation in Alhambra," said Christine Olson, president of the Alhambra Histori-

cal Society. "We are extremely pleased that Alhambra's City Council voted to validate their strategic planning goal of preserving Alhambra's historic resources. And, we look forward to working with the design team to ensure that the character-defining features of the Alhambra Health Center are retained in the final design of the new community center."

The Alhambra Health Center, located at 612 West Shorb Street in Alhambra, was built in 1930 and boasts a classic Monterey Colonial Revival architectural style. Unfortunately, due to decades of neglect by the County of Los Angeles, the structure is in a state of disrepair. Despite its current condition, the Alhambra Health Center is listed in the California Register of Historical Resources. A 2023 Alhambra Historic Resources Survey Report designated it as one of four Alhambra structures eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

"When it was built by LA County, the Alhambra Health Center was part of a \$1

million countywide program to construct satellite health care facilities," said Oscar Amaro, president of the Alhambra Preservation Group. "As a then state-of-the-art facility, the Alhambra Health Center provided health services and community resources to San Gabriel Valley residents — its original name 'Plaza Community Center' is still stenciled over a doorway. It is fitting that the original Alhambra Health Center will see new life...again, as a community center."

The new community center will offer 17,000 square feet of event space and is made possible through a \$25 million California grant secured by California Assemblymember Mike Fong (D-Alhambra) and state Senator Susan Rubio (D-West Covina) as part of the 2022-23 California state budget. The approved design of the new Alhambra community center, appropriately named "Connecting Gems," will connect the Alhambra Health Center's historic past with the future. It will pair the original Monterey Colonial

Revival architecture with newly-designed structures. The design proposes that Shorb Street to the north of the site will be vacated to create more green space. It will feature a courtyard, pergola, and pedestrian and bike path, which will run parallel to Moor Field between Sixth and Seventh streets. A parking lot will be located to the south of the facility.

The Alhambra Community Center project is subject to California Environmental Quality Act requirements and will undergo an environmental impact report (EIR) process, which will begin in the coming months.

If you'd like to learn more about the history of the Alhambra Health Center and Alhambra's history, please visit the Alhambra Historical Society Museum, located at 1550 West Alhambra Road, Alhambra, CA 91801. The museum is open from 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. on the first and third Saturday of every month.

Email [alhambrahistsoc@att.net](mailto:alhambrahistsoc@att.net) with any questions.

## Soroptimist Awards Five Women Education Grants at Live Your Dream Luncheon

By Julie Carlson, Soroptimist International of Alhambra, San Gabriel, San Marino



Present at the Live Your Dream Awards Luncheon were from left: LYD Chair, Jane Carlson; U.S. Representative Judy Chu; Top Winner, Mercedes Ramirez with daughter, Aubrey; Renee Randolph, ELAC CARE Coordinator; Kenia Benitez, Award winner with daughter, Gabriella; Savannah Sunez, 2015 Camino Real Region Top Winner with daughter, Layla; SI Alhambra President Barbara Messina; and Alhambra mayor, Ross Maza.

Soroptimist International of Alhambra, San Gabriel, San Marino awarded five outstanding women — who have overcome many obstacles in their life — a Live Your Dream Award on Saturday, March 16.

President Barbara Messina, along with members of the local club, gave each winner an award grant to use in helping them continue their education. The awards luncheon was held at Ramona Convent Secondary School and catered by Charlie's Trio Italian Restaurant.

Soroptimist's Big Dream Goal is to help 500,000 women and girls through access to education by 2033. Community dignitaries were

present to hand out Certificates of Merit: U.S. Representative, Judy Chu (D-Monterey Park); Alhambra mayor Ross Maza; San Gabriel mayor Dr. Steven Huang, Sister Kathleen Calloway, President of Ramona School, graciously hosted the awards luncheon.

The local club Top Winner is Mercedes Ramirez, a single mother and current student at East Los Angeles College majoring in Forensic Psychology.

Every year, Soroptimist International distributes more than \$2.9 million in education grants to about 2,000 women all over the world. Over half of the recipients are survivors

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of domestic violence, trafficking or sexual assault. Nearly all of them have overcome enormous obstacles including poverty, teen pregnancy, and drug or alcohol addiction. Soroptimist believes that education equals empowerment. When women and girls go to school, they are more likely to reach higher levels

of education, are more likely to get higher paying jobs, and likely to help their countries have greater economic growth.

For more information, please visit: [www.soroptimistalhambra.org](http://www.soroptimistalhambra.org). If you are interested in becoming a member please email: [soroptimistofalhambra@gmail.com](mailto:soroptimistofalhambra@gmail.com).



# Ramona Rampage Robotics Team Finishes Season Strong at Regional Competition

The Ramona Convent Secondary School Robotics team, Ramona Rampage, recently completed a highly competitive season at the Los Angeles Regional competition.

Ramona Rampage played 11 matches against other teams in one weekend and placed 24th overall out of 60 teams. At the end of the competition, the team was informed they won the 2024 Imagery Award through their strong spirit and amazing presentation. The Imagery Award focuses not only on the imagery of the robot but also on the team itself including their emphasis on attractiveness in engineering and remarkable visual aesthetic integration of machine and team appearance. They were commended on their originality and

theme alignment with the FIRST Robotics Organization Core Values. Ramona Rampage members showed off true spirit! Although their season is over, they have already started preparing workshops and demonstrations for next season.

Ramona, celebrating a legacy of 134 years of distinction, is a welcoming Catholic college-prep high school for young women committed to excellence in education. Graduates are empowered, resilient, socially conscious leaders well-prepared to meet the challenges of life as contributing members of the global community.

Ramona Convent Secondary School, 1701 W. Ramona Rd., Alhambra, CA 91803, (626) 282-4151 or visit [www.ramonaconvent.org](http://www.ramonaconvent.org).



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# Thank you



Dear AEF,  
Alhambra Unified School District (AUSD), parent chaperones, certified staff, classified staff, and administrators, Thank you for giving us all the opportunity to venture out of our schools to Outdoor Science Camp!

With much appreciation, AUSD 6th Graders ♡



# MEMORIES made here last a LIFETIME



A special THANK YOU to the Boy Scouts of America Greater Los Angeles Area Council, for your partnership that has created lifetime memories!



## Be The Change Summit Empowers AUSD Student Leaders

from Page 1

...students were encouraged to lead by example and foster a culture of responsible and safe driving and riding practices.

Throughout the Summit, students participated in informative sessions, interactive activities, and discussions aimed at providing the skills and resources needed to make meaningful changes. From peer-to-peer engagement strategies to community service projects and social media campaigns, students demonstrated their readiness to take on the challenge of promoting safer roadways and communities.

These newly-trained *Be The Change*

leadership fellows will serve as student advocates to their peers and the community to address this and other critical issues. SGHS is the first AUSD high school recipient of a Community Schools grant. Principal Debbie Stone is excited to utilize these students as part of SGHS' Community School outreach projects. "I feel fortunate to have over 90 San Gabriel students trained in Positive Community Norming," reflected Principal Stone. "This large group of student leaders will be a powerful force for positive changes on our school campus and in the larger community."

## AUSD Students are Standouts at Congressional Art Competition



Three of AUSD's finest artists, Jocelyn Alvarez, Tiffany To, and Mai Lai (L-R) pose with Congressman Judy Chu. Their winning art pieces appear above each artist in the group photo.

Alhambra Unified School District students showcased their exceptional talents in this year's Congressional Art Competition, with three students among the Top Five: Tiffany To, Jocelyn Alvarez, and Mai Lai. This annual competition serves as a platform to celebrate and acknowledge the creativity of high school students nationwide. A panel of judges selected the winners based on various elements such as style, technique, originality, and creativity, and the awards were announced at an April 8th ceremony at The Huntington Library.

Rep. Judy Chu, expressed her admiration, stating, "The young artists we highlight in Congress' annual Artistic Discovery competition, including ones here in the San Gabriel Valley, have all reached into their creative souls to make something new and authentic for the world, using art to tackle societal problems, portray complex emotions, and inspire us all to pursue a better version of ourselves."

Tiffany To from Mark Keppel High School took the top honors, with her piece, Year of the Rabbit 2023 – a tribute to the 11 victims of the Star Dance Studio shooting and to the resilience of Monterey Park. Rep. Chu shared that the judges appreciated that Tiffany's art spoke to a narrative bigger than herself, and an event that impacted the San Gabriel Valley and Asian Americans across the country. They also appreciated that this memorial piece honored the victims in a beautiful and joyful way.

Fellow MKHS student Jocelyn Alvarez claimed third place with her emotionally resonant piece, Revisiting Memories,

which depicts her last memories of visiting her grandmother before she passed away from cancer. The judges believed what elevated Jocelyn's piece was its reflection and intentionality. Rep. Chu pointed out that while the artwork reflected a profoundly sad moment, Jocelyn intentionally chose to memorialize the happy memories they had together.

Finally, Alhambra High School's Mai Lai (who was also in the Top 10 last year), earned fifth place with her introspective piece, Pulled Apart. As she grew up, Mia lost confidence in herself and was jealous of the outgoing and free-spirited child she once was. She created her artwork to convey the feeling of breaking out of a shell to illustrate that the person she wants to be has always been a part of her. The judges thought it was a beautiful, mature piece that was technically refined and effectively conveyed Mai's feelings.

Tiffany will travel to Washington DC, where her artwork will be displayed in the US Capitol for a year, while Jocelyn's and Mai's artworks will be displayed in Rep. Chu's Pasadena office. All three students also received scholarships as part of their recognition.

AUSD superintendent Dr. Denise Jaramillo praised the students for their impressive achievements, emphasizing the significant impact of their work: "All three artists created inspiring pieces that not only showcase their immense talent but also remind all of us of the powerful impact art can have in expressing inner emotions, capturing memories of loved ones, and in advocating for change."

**Congratulations to the Class of 2024!**

<b>Alhambra High School</b> May 24, 2024 1:00pm	<b>Mark Keppel High School</b> May 24, 2024 6:00pm	<b>San Gabriel High School</b> May 24, 2024 8:00am
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**For the fourth year, we are excited to hold our high school commencement ceremonies at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena!**

**ROSE BOWL**

**ALHAMBRA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**PROMOTION CEREMONIES 2024**

<b>Baldwin</b> Almanson Court May 24th 9:00am	<b>Garfield</b> Alhambra Park May 24th 10:00am	<b>Monterey Highlands</b> Monterey Highlands May 23rd 8:30am	<b>Park</b> Alhambra Park May 24th 8:00am
<b>Brightwood</b> Almanson Court May 22nd 9:00am	<b>Granada</b> Alhambra Park May 22nd 8:30am	<b>Moor Field</b> Moor Field Campus May 22nd AM Class 9:00am PM Class 12:00pm	<b>Ramona</b> Barnes Park May 22nd 9:00am
<b>Emery Park</b> Alhambra Park May 22nd 10:00am	<b>LIFT</b> LIFT Campus May 23rd 9:30am		<b>Repetto</b> Barnes Park May 24th 8:45am
<b>Fremont</b> Alhambra Park May 23rd 11:00am	<b>Marguerita</b> Alhambra Park May 23rd 9:30am	<b>Northrup</b> Alhambra Park May 23rd 8:00am	<b>Ynez</b> Barnes Park May 23rd 9:00am

*Congratulations!*

## May Brings a Month of AUSD Graduation and Promotion Ceremonies

Alhambra Unified School District is excited about the upcoming culminations for our schools. This month, we will see graduation commencements for our high school seniors and promotion ceremonies for eighth graders, Moor Field preschoolers, and LIFT adult learners. Mark your calendars for these milestones of achievement and transition! Detailed information regarding each ceremony will be provided by each school directly to their families.



## AUSD Female Leaders Gather for LACOE's Leading The Way In Education Conference

The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) hosted its annual Women's Leadership and Empowerment Conference (Leading the Way in Education) at Almanson Court in March, and Alhambra Unified School District was well represented. LACOE superintendent Dr. Debra Duardo hosted a panel of accomplished district superintendents from throughout the county, including AUSD's own superintendent, Dr. Denise Jaramillo. There was also a strong presence from AUSD in the audience, with 14 AUSD female leaders in attendance to support Dr. Jaramillo, engage in enriching discussions with fellow educational leaders, and learn from the valuable insight and wisdom of the panelists. The event was a fitting celebration of International Women's Day and Women's History Month, and was a dynamic day of conversation, leadership, and empowerment!



The celebration continued for Alhambra High School's Academic Decathlon team who won first place in the Los Angeles County competition, and then followed that up with an impressive third place win amongst all California competitors.

## AHS AcaDec Team Celebrates 3rd Place Finish in State Competition

### San Gabriel High School also shines in California's virtual competition

After winning the Los Angeles County Academic Decathlon in February, Alhambra High's AcaDec team set high expectations for themselves as they prepared to challenge other teams from throughout California at the State Academic Decathlon at the end of March. This was the culminating event for the team, and they did not come home empty-handed from Santa Clarita, as they won third-place in the state. Once again, AHS was the highest-scoring Los Angeles County team, and was also the top non-charter school in the state.

The team studied all year – focusing on the theme of Technology and Humanity, and covering a variety of subjects, including math, science, literature, music, economics, art, and much more. The long study sessions and dedication to each other paid off in the end. “Our

students have worked tremendously hard every day and every weekend to be able to win the LA County Championship and now place third in state,” reflected Jose Sanchez, AHS social science teacher and Academic Decathlon coach. “While it still feels surreal for my students and I, all of us are incredibly inspired by these amazing students and their dedication.”

Despite their success this year, the team is hungry for more. Team captain Kevin San, who finished with the second-highest number of points in the state, is so proud of his teammates, saying, “I cannot express adequately how much pride I have for our team's accomplishments. This was only possible because my teammates sacrificed their blood, sweat, and tears, and pushed themselves to fight on and do their very best,” and then added, “...and I know next year, we will do even better!”

His twin brother Kevin San also ended up with a Top 5 individual score. The San brothers are only juniors, so expect them to lead a formidable team next year and to best this year's score of 43,000 with a haul of 18 medals. AUSD superintendent Dr. Denise Jaramillo was in Santa Clarita for the final days of the competition and beamed with pride at the team's results. “To say that I am proud of the 2024 AHS Academic Decathlon Team is an understatement. They are an incredible group of young people who work hard individually and support one another as a team. Add their phenomenal coach Mr. Sanchez to the mix and it's no surprise the team did so well at such a highly competitive level. Our entire community has much to celebrate.”

AHS principal Diana Diaz-Ferguson echoed these sentiments and reflected

on the legacy Coach Sanchez is building at AHS. “The Alhambra High School Academic Decathlon team is a beautifully diverse community of incredible young leaders. I am so proud of this team and their coach Mr. Sanchez who has built something very special.”

AHS is not the only school whose AcaDec team has something to celebrate. San Gabriel's team qualified for the state's Virtual State Competition, the “Octathlon,” where the nine-member team secured second place and 12 medals. Despite the challenges posed by the virtual format, the SGHS team demonstrated resilience and determination, showcasing their intellectual abilities and a commitment to excellence. Keep your eyes open for what the AUSD teams will accomplish in next year's Academic Decathlon competitions!

## SGHSs Barrio Block Party was a Celebration of Latinx Culture and Arts Accessibility



San Gabriel's campus was transformed into a Barrio Block Party to celebrate Latinx culture, the successful production of “In the Heights,” and the important role the arts play in bringing the community together. (Photo credit: Grant Sapcharoenlert)

A vibrant community celebration took place at San Gabriel High School as the auditorium lobby and the front of the school transformed into its Barrio Block Party. The April 13th festival, which preceded a special pay-what-you-can performance of

the Tony Award-winning musical *In the Heights*, drew in community members of all ages who enjoyed a day filled with music, dance, food, and artistic expression.

From noon until 2:00pm, SGHS was filled with those who

came together to enjoy delicious food, creative entertainment, and informative community resources. The Alhambra Latino Association and the Alhambra Educational Foundation were among the community partners who connected

with attendees while they enjoyed the richness of Latinx culture through lively performances of music, dance, and puppetry.

Following the Block Party, attendees eagerly made their way to the school's auditorium for the much-anticipated pay-what-you-can performance of *In the Heights*. The Tony-award winning musical, with its exciting Latin rhythms and heartfelt storytelling, resonated deeply with the audience. The crowd was drawn into this ambitious production as they journeyed with the talented cast through the streets of Washington Heights, and followed the characters' pursuit of their dreams and changing bonds with their families.

SGHS' production of *In the Heights* featured an extremely talented cast and crew, and served as a reminder of the power storytelling

has to unite communities and celebrate diversity. By offering an inclusive pay-what-you-can performance, SGHS drama director Kelsey McNeilly wanted to increase access to theater and ensure that everyone, regardless of financial circumstances, could experience the magic of a live performance. “This theater belongs to you,” reminded McNeilly at the end of the show. “Thank you for coming and supporting us today!”

Live theater in AUSD is thriving with all three of our high schools outdoing themselves with their ambitious spring musical productions. The performances will resonate long after the curtains fall and the productions will continue to serve as reminders of the transformative power of the arts to inspire, uplift, and unite.



The Congressional Women of the Year, including AUSD superintendent Dr. Denise Jaramillo, were recognized at a special ceremony on April 13th. Dr. Jaramillo's friends, colleagues, and family members were in attendance to cheer her on as she received this well-deserved recognition.

## AUSD Celebrates Superintendent Dr. Denise Jaramillo as Congressional Woman of the Year

Dr. Denise Jaramillo, Alhambra Unified School District superintendent, was honored last month as a Congressional Woman of the Year by Representative Judy Chu (CA-28). This prestigious recognition was awarded at a heartfelt ceremony, reflecting Dr. Jaramillo's dedication and commitment to excellence in education and her transformative impact on our community. Under her leadership, AUSD has seen significant advances in student achievement and well-being and improvements in facilities and programs, while always remaining fiscally sound and responsible. Representative Chu praised Dr. Jaramillo for her collaborative leadership, her outreach to the larger community, and her commitment to shaping students into future leaders.

"I'm deeply honored to receive this recognition, but I know it's truly a reflection of the hard work, dedication, and collective effort of our employees, students, families, and partners," commented Dr. Jaramillo. "I humbly accept this recognition as a reflection of all of them."

But Board of President Bob Gin is quick to point out that the district's success is explicitly tied to the hands-on leadership of Dr. Jaramillo. "It's hard to imagine AUSD without also picturing Dr. Denise Jaramillo. Her fingerprints are on decades of successful accomplishments of the district," reflects Gin. "She is incredibly intelligent and creative, but also warm and compassionate. That's a rare combination to find, and that is what makes her such an amazing leader."

## Science Wizard Captivates Emery Park Vikings



opportunity for our students to engage with science in a fun and interactive way. It was inspiring to see the students so enthusiastic about learning STEM."

The "Extreme Science" assemblies were about more than just watching the Science Wizard in action. It was also an opportunity for students to be actively involved. When Hagerman called for volunteers, several students eagerly raised their hands to be on-stage assistants and observe the "magic" up close.

The assembly created more excitement about future fields of science and gave adults and students alike a newfound appreciation for the wonders of science.

Emery Park School was filled with excitement on March 18th as students gathered in the auditorium for a spellbinding assembly from *America's Got Talent* alumnus David Hagerman. His science and math-based show encouraged students' curiosity in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) fields.

"Technically, I'm a real modern-day wizard, using science and math to achieve illusions," said Hagerman. "Through my spectacle and performance, my real goal is to wow and inspire kids to consider science and mathematics as a future. It can be hard to get kids excited about STEM fields today and considering that science and technology are our future right now, through wizardry, I am happy to show them the awe and wonder behind the science."

Hagerman captivated the students and sparked their curiosity with his science experiments – students were in awe as they attempted to determine how the "magic" was done. Principal Linh Ly was delighted with her students' reaction to the performance, remarking that, "David Hagerman's magical assembly was an incredible



Emery Park students enjoyed a day of magic and learning with David Hagerman's "Extreme Science" assemblies. (Photo credit: Linh Ly)

## Mark Keppel's *Mean Girls the Musical* is a Triumph



Mark Keppel High School's spring production, *Mean Girls the Musical*, was a huge success! It was a monumental undertaking that featured 40 actors, 30 technical students, and 50 musicians. All three Alhambra Unified School District high schools launched ambitious musicals this spring, but unique to MKHS' production was the incorporation of a full orchestra playing the score live. Congratulations to the entire talented cast, crew, and orchestra of *Mean Girls*! Special kudos to teachers Tim Gillette, Justin Lee, Marcelo Martinez, and Page Phillips for their leadership and guidance, and for providing students with amazing opportunities and experiences like the spring musical. As you can tell from these photos, the production was so FETCH! (Photo credit: Grant Sapcharoentert)







## Principal Linh Ly is the Latest Excellent in Leadership Recipient

This month we are spotlighting Emery Park principal, Mrs. Linh Ly, who has been named the most recent recipient of the Alhambra Unified School District's Excellence in Leadership award. On April 10th, Mrs. Debbie Stone, San Gabriel High School principal (and the previous month's recipient), presented Mrs. Ly with this well-deserved accolade. In doing so, Mrs. Stone praised Mrs. Ly's dedication and hard work, and said she selected her because she is an inspiration to other principals. The Excellence in Leadership award is a peer-to-peer recognition that was developed as a way for principals to honor a colleague who excels in his/her profession. Mrs. Ly's trophy is proudly displayed in her office and will remain there until the next principals meeting, when she will select the next deserving honoree. Congratulations, Mrs. Ly!

## Student Exchange Program Strengthen Global Connections Between AUSD And South Korea



During spring break, Alhambra and Mark Keppel students immersed themselves in both the historic and contemporary aspects of South Korea. (Photo credit: @AlhambraAbroad and @MKExchangeProgram. Visit their Instagram accounts to see many more photos of their adventures.)

## Don't Miss The AUSD Parent and Caregiver Empowerment Summit!

The Alhambra Unified School District is hosting its first-ever Parent and Caregiver Empowerment Summit (PACES) this Saturday, May 4th from 8:30am to 12:00pm at San Gabriel High School. This free special event is designed to provide parents and caregivers with practical skills to help them feel empowered in their relationships with themselves and their children.

The theme for this inaugural summit is "Fostering Connectedness and Belonging." Throughout the morning, parents will learn strategies to strengthen family bonds and nurture a sense of community for their children. They will experience expert speakers, resources, vendors, snacks,

giveaways, and much more.

"We want to equip our parents with the tools they need to create supportive home environments where students can thrive," said Lindsey Ma, assistant superintendent of Student Support Services. "When parents feel empowered, it allows them to better empower their children, and in turn strengthen our entire community."

Don't miss this amazing opportunity open to all parents and caregivers in the district to gain the knowledge to help them feel empowered in their relationship with themselves and with their children.

There's still time to register at [ausdpaces.my.canva.site](https://ausdpaces.my.canva.site). See you there!

AUSD's PACES will be an exciting day focused on helping parents connect with each other and with their children. Register or get more information at [ausdpaces.my.canva.site](https://ausdpaces.my.canva.site).

As part of our continuing cultural exchange partnerships, students from Alhambra High School and Mark Keppel High School hosted students from South Korea earlier in the fall. Spring break offered a perfect time to reciprocate, so the two groups and their chaperones embarked on a week-long journey to South Korea.



The partnership originated with AHS prior to the pandemic, and restarted again last year. It was so successful, it expanded this year to include MKHS. The goal is to continue expanding the program to allow even more students to participate in the future.

The student exchange program not only strengthens the relationship between the participating schools and families, it builds a foundation for future learning collaborations, and for the students, it builds life-long friendships across the sea. When students returned home to the US, they brought with them souvenirs and memories, but also new ideas and a broader understanding of the world.



## AHS Sports Hall of Fame Inductees Announced

Submitted by Mike Koski, President  
Alhambra High School Sports Hall of Fame Committee

The 2024 AHS Sports Hall of Fame Inductees were chosen recently by the Alhambra Athletic Alumni Foundation. These inductees will be honored at the Hall of Fame Induction Luncheon to be held at Almansor Court on Sunday, October 20th.

**The 2024 Inductees are as follows:**

- Zion Babb** – Football/Track & Field
- Anthony Brown** – Football
- Erik Daniels** – Baseball
- Arath De La Torres** – Football/Basketball/Track & Field
- Luis Gomez** – Baseball
- Mike Macias** – Baseball/Football
- Scott Mena** – Basketball
- Gary Ottoson** – Football/Track & Field
- Collette Sequine** – Basketball/Softball
- Louie Torres Jr.** – Football

- Jack Gardiner** – Basketball Coach
- Lou Torres** – Football/Track & Field Coach/Athletic Director

In addition the following individuals will be recognized as “Distinguished Alumni”:

- Ke Huy Quan** – Academy Award Winning Actor
- Steve Bisheff** – Award Winning Sportswriter & Author
- Gerald Petievich** – Award Winning Author

The luncheon is our biggest fundraiser with 200-300 people in attendance. The cost of the luncheon will be \$70 which includes a seated lunch with choice of Chicken Chardonnay or Carne Asada. For more information and to get on our mailing list, please email us at [ahssportshalloffame@gmail.com](mailto:ahssportshalloffame@gmail.com).



Emmaus 8th grade boys first place relay team



Emmaus 7th grade girls second place relay team

## Emmaus Lutheran School Shines at Track and Field Meet

Emmaus Lutheran School in Alhambra recently showcased the athleticism and sportsmanship of its students at the annual Track and Field meet. The event saw students from grades 5 to 8 engage in a myriad of running and field events, embodying the spirit of teamwork and dedication.

Students were given the opportunity to select their preferred events, allowing them to explore their athletic abilities and interests. From the adrenaline-pumping sprints of the 50, 100, 200, and 400-yard dashes to the precision of field events like shot put and long jump, and many competing in the longer one-mile run, Emmaus students left no stone unturned in their pursuit of excellence. Collectively, the students came home with 15 third-place ribbons, 32 second-place ribbons, and 30 first-place ribbons!

A particular highlight of the day was the fiercely contested 4 x 100 relay race, where teams of four students from each grade level showcased their coordination and teamwork. The baton exchanges and determination culminated in resounding victories and great efforts put forth by all the students, especially with the 5th, 6th, and 7th-grade relay teams all securing 2nd place and the 8th-grade boys clinching the coveted first-place position.

There were many great achievements by students, but one standout performer of the day was Colin Lonneman, an 8th grader. Lonneman placed 1st in the mile with a time of 5 minutes 35 seconds, 1st place in the long jump, 2nd place in the 100-yard dash, and anchored the boys'

relay team which got first place in the 4 x 100 relay race. Colin is just one example of the athleticism the Emmaus Comets displayed that day.

Teacher Rebekah Marousek reflected on the event, expressing her delight at witnessing students thrive not only academically but also on the track. She remarked, "It's incredible to see our students excel in the classroom and then translate that same passion onto the field. The joy and excitement radiating from our students, especially those experiencing their first track meet, were truly contagious."

Beyond the thrill of competition, the event also underscored the importance of sportsmanship and camaraderie. Students showed exemplary behavior, cheering on competitors from other schools and gracefully accepting victories and defeats alike. Marousek emphasized, "Sports teach our students valuable lessons about resilience and humility. It's not just about winning; it's about the journey and the character it builds along the way."

Emmaus Lutheran School, nestled in the heart of Alhambra, is known for its commitment to providing a well-rounded education rooted in Christian values. Beyond athletics, the school offers many opportunities for students to explore their passions, including music, drama, student government, and more.

On or off the track, the students' achievements serve as evidence of their unwavering dedication, resilience, and spirit of unity. To learn more about Emmaus Lutheran School visit [www.EmmausAlhambra.org](http://www.EmmausAlhambra.org) or call (626) 289-3664.



## It's a (Partial) Total Eclipse of the Heart: Alhambra Library Holds Viewing Event for Residents

The Alhambra Library distributed eclipse viewing glasses April 8 for residents to catch a glimpse of a rare total eclipse crossing a swath of North America – though Californians were only able to see a partial eclipse.

The moon began covering the sun at 10:06 a.m., with the eclipse peaking at 11:12 a.m. according to the Griffith Observatory. It was over at 12:22 p.m.

The library received a grant from the Solar Eclipse Activities for Libraries (SEAL) program, administered by the Space Science Institute, to give away sun-viewing glasses and hold educational programs related to the annular eclipse Saturday, October 14, 2023, and the total eclipse last month.

An annular solar eclipse occurs when the moon does not completely cover the sun, leaving a bright ring visible at the outer edge.

The library said about 450 people stopped by on the day of the eclipse to grab glasses. They also had snacks and kids activities like chalk, crafts, coloring pages, and lawn games.

Previous events hosted with the SEAL grant included a portable planetarium event and a night-time telescope viewing.

The last total eclipse that crossed the U.S. was in August 2017, and it was the first total solar eclipse visible in the U.S. in 38 years. The U.S. won't see another total eclipse until August 2044, but the next partial eclipse visible in the Los Angeles area will be on Jan. 14, 2029.

Ask Dr. Dara, D.D.S.



# The Importance of Saliva

by Dr. Krasnodara Gashparova, DDS  
(also known as Dr. Dara)

**Why is saliva important?**

While we think about saliva just as water in the mouth, it quietly makes many aspects of our lives possible. Our saliva is 98% water. The remaining 2%, however, contains electrolytes, mucus, antibacterial compounds and various enzymes. The body makes up to two to four pints of saliva a day!

Here are some of the amazing things saliva does for us:

**Lubrication:** Saliva protects the oral tissues from mechanical damage while speaking, eating, and swallowing.

**Helps you chew your food, taste it, and aids in swallowing:** Salivary enzymes start breaking carbs and fats to help digestion.

**Prevents bad breath:** Saliva washes away plaque and food particles.

**Fights germs in your mouth to prevent infection:** Saliva washes away sugar and food particles and prevents the overgrowth of microbes, bacteria, and yeasts in the mouth.

**Remineralization:** It helps keep the surface of your teeth strong by providing high levels of calcium, phosphate, and hydroxyl ions that constantly repair the damage from the acids in our food.

**Retaining dentures:** In case of wearing removable top dentures, saliva allows the top denture to suction onto the hard palate.

Dry mouth, also called xerostomia, causes multiple dental problems. The three most significant ones are fast developing tooth decay, gum disease and candida (yeast infection).

Without saliva's protective factors in the mouth, the teeth are drastically more prone to cavities and the overpopulation of bacteria and mouth infections.

**Symptoms of dry mouth**

- Thick or foamy saliva
- Creamy white cover on tongue, palate, or cheeks (candida or yeast infection)
- Metallic taste or no taste at all
- Altered sense of smell
- Bad breath (halitosis)
- Burning or tingling sensation in the mouth

**What causes dry mouth (Xerostomia)?**

- Mouth breathing
- Dehydration

**Medications:** This is the most common cause of xerostomia, or chronic dry mouth. Nearly 30% of Americans currently suffer from xerostomia. Many prescription and over



**Dr. Dara, D.D.S.**  
Advanced Dentistry Alhambra  
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the counter medication can cause dry mouth; for example, drugs used to treat depression, anxiety, pain, allergies, and colds (antihistamines and decongestants), epilepsy, hypertension (diuretics).

**Sjögren's Syndrome:** This autoimmune disease damages the glands that produce saliva and tears. People with this disease suffer from chronic dry mouth and eyes.

**Radiation Therapy:** Irradiation of the head and neck in case of cancer treatment can destroy the salivary glands. Their salivary glands either no longer function at all or produce such a reduced amount of saliva as to render it ineffective.

**Diabetes:** This is due to more frequent urination and the medications taken.

**Does dry mouth need treatment?**

The need for dry mouth remedies will vary depending on the severity of the condition. There are rinses, gel, spray, and lozenges. Here are a few brands to consider.

- Biotene: Toothpaste, oral rinse, spray, gel
- Oasis: Rinse, spray
- ACT: Rinse and lozenge
- TheraBreath: Rinse and lozenge
- Colgate Hydris: toothpaste and rinse
- Oracoat Xylimelts: long time-release discs that secure to the cheek and constantly release moisture in the mouth.

There are several lifestyle changes you can make to help alleviate symptoms of dry mouth, including drinking plenty of water, using a humidifier, quitting smoking, addressing mouth breathing, and reviewing medication with your doctor.

*This column is provided to Around Alhambra by Dr. Krasnodara Gashparova, DDS who is responsible for the content. Around Alhambra does not endorse medical advice or any remedies recommended by this author or any other provider.*

# Confused By Medicare?

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Disclaimer: We do not offer every plan available in your area. Any information we provide is limited to those plans we do offer in your area. Please contact Medicare.gov or 1-800-MEDICARE to get information on all your options.



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Your Insurance



# How to Get Prescription Drug Coverage

By Katherine Yu Simms

Medicare drug coverage helps pay for the prescription drugs you need. It's optional and offered to everyone with Medicare. Even if you don't take prescription drugs now, consider getting Medicare drug coverage. If you decide not to get it when you're first eligible and you don't have other creditable prescription drug coverage – like drug coverage from an employer or union or get the Extra Help program – you'll likely pay a late

penalty if you join a plan later. Generally, you'll pay this penalty for as long as you have Medicare drug coverage. To get Medicare drug coverage, you must join a Medicare-approved plan that offers drug coverage. Each plan can vary in cost and specific drugs covered.

**There are two ways to get Medicare drug coverage:**

**Medicare drug plans.** These plans add drug coverage to Original Medicare, some

Medicare Cost Plans, some Private Fee-for-Service plans, and Medical Savings Account plans. You must have:

**Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) and/or Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance)** to join a separate Medicare drug plan.

**Medicare Advantage Plan (Part C) or other Medicare health plan with drug coverage.** You get all of your Part A, Part B, and drug coverage, through these plans. Remember, you must have Part A and Part B to join a Medicare Advantage Plan, and not all of these plans offer drug coverage.

To join a Medicare drug plan, Medicare Advantage Plan, or other Medicare health plan with drug coverage, you must

be a United States citizen or lawfully reside in the United States.

If you need assistance in evaluating your current plan, please reach out to me for a free consultation. I'm here to help you navigate and find the most appropriate plan that fits your needs.

Only some plans are available in your area. Any information provided is limited to plans offered in your area. Please contact Medicare.gov or 1-800-MEDICARE to get information on all your options.

*This column is provided to Around Alhambra by Katherine Yu Simms who is solely responsible for the content. Around Alhambra does not endorse the advice from this author or any other provider.*

## SIGN UP FOR MEDICARE COVERAGE!

- 1 How well does my current plan meet my needs?
- 2 What are my other Medicare plan options?
- 3 I'm turning 65 soon, where do I go and what do I do?
- 4 What is the difference between Original Medicare and Medicare Advantage?

**I speak Mandarin and Cantonese**

**Katherine Yu Simms**  
Medicare Insurance Agent  
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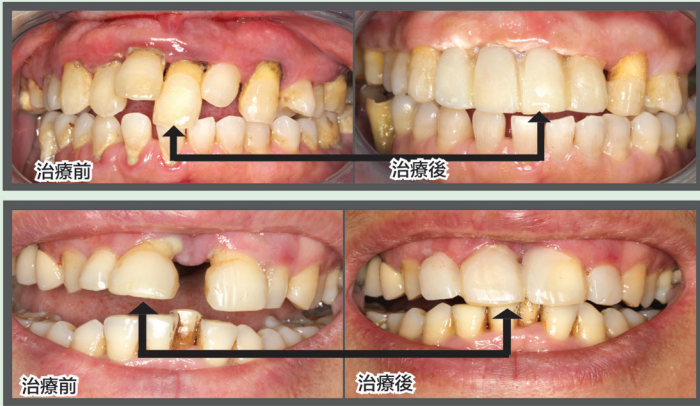
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趙企安醫生

John Chao, D.D.S.

Research Assoc. Prof., Post-Grad Periodontics  
University at Buffalo, SUNY  
Adjunct Asst. Prof., Behavior Science, USC  
畢業于USC  
美國紐約州立大學牙週病研究教授(SUNY)



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## Freedom Martial Arts Holds Boxing Program For Those With Parkinson's

April is Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month. Parkinson's Disease, or PD, is a neurodegenerative disorder that inhibits dopamine production. Often called the "feel-good hormone," dopamine is a neurotransmitter that plays a role in movement, memory, mood, and more.

PD is typically characterized by a lack of dopamine which manifests in several symptoms. Although all Parkinson's patients are different and display different symptoms, the most common symptoms are tremor, slowness of movement (bradykinesia), rigidity, and postural instability. Additionally, non-physical symptoms, like depression, loss of interest, and cognitive impairment may also be present.

Currently, there is no cure for PD and it is a degenerative disease. However, there are a number of treatments available to help slow the progression or dampen the symptoms. Medication is typically the first step taken, while some surgical procedures, like deep brain stimulation, are also available. Many studies have shown that certain types of exercise can delay the progression of the disease and sometimes

improve various symptoms.

Freedom Martial Arts & Fitness, Inc. launched its Rock Steady Boxing program, a wellness program designed for those with PD, almost a year ago and its members have been enjoying the benefits.

"[The] RSB program at the Freedom Martial Arts & Fitness has been a game changer in my battle against PD," said Sujata Ghosh. "The trainers led by head coach Adam are experts in fitness and compassionate allies who understand our unique challenge. Through boxing drills, agility exercises and strength training we push ourselves beyond perceived limitations and weaknesses of PD. There is an invaluable sense of camaraderie fostered here and every day I feel remarkable improvements in my mobility and attitude! I can't recommend this place highly enough, it's a renewed lifeline."

For more information on Parkinson's Disease, visit the Parkinson's Foundation at parkinson.org. For more information on the FMAF Rock Steady Boxing program, visit freedomrsb.com.

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- Lot size: 7,948 sf

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**Option 1:**

- Move-in ready**
- New roof
  - New HVAC
  - New hardwood floors
  - New kitchen
  - New windows
  - Interior/Exterior newly painted

**Option 2:**

- Add square footage**
- Make this property a 3 bedroom/2 bath
  - Opportunity to extend kitchen
  - Build your dream primary ensuite

**Option 3:**

- Add an ADU**
- Garage conversion
  - Build separate ADU
  - Recent comparable sold for \$2.4 million

## Real Estate

### Buyer Inspections of Homes

By Gary Frueholz  
Engel & Volkers Real Estate

A critical step in the process of purchasing a home is the inspection of the property. The Residential Purchase Agreement used in California addresses the rights and responsibilities of the buyer and even attaches a separate form entitled Buyer's Investigation Advisory to clearly outline these points.

The forms define the various inspections as being the buyer's responsibility, but in reality, the buyer will have to employ professionals to perform many of these inspections. Some of the inspection work such as obtaining past building permits from a municipal building department can be done by the buyers. So, buyers need to rely on competent inspectors and professional real estate agents who can help connect them to experienced inspectors, and buyers need to be prepared to pay for the majority of these inspections.

Inspections are generally performed during what is called a "contingency period." Another way to think of a contingency is that it is a backout clause. If inspections find legitimate repair issues, the buyer can negotiate with the sellers to correct the deficiency or withdraw from the transaction and receive back their good faith deposit.

There is a continuum between legiti-

mate repairs and upgrades. Sellers usually will not pay for upgrades. A very legitimate repair would be a plumbing leak in the crawl space of the property. When the offer was constructed and presented to the seller's agent, this most likely would not have been known. An example of an upgrade that sellers would not be willing to pay for is requesting a different interior color for the home. I say continuum since some items like ground fault interrupters can be argued either way and may be considered legal non-performing since at the time of construction of the home, the building codes in effect did not require this device.

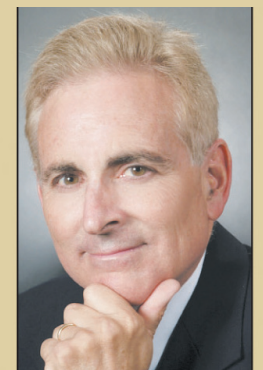
Some of the most basic and important inspections that buyers should consider are the following:

1. The initial physical inspection. This provides an overview of the condition of the property and covers plumbing, electrical, foundation, roofing, heating, air conditioning, and general structural condition. It may recommend additional inspection by licensed contractors. Your inspector should be licensed by CREIA (California Real Estate Inspection Association).
2. Wood Destroying Pest Report. This will cover not only termites, but also wood rot, wood-boring beetles, insects that destroy wood, and fungus. Sellers sometimes will provide this report and certification, but if not, buyers need to have this done.
3. Sewer Scope Inspection. This inspection will place a camera into the sewer line to check for root intrusion. This is highly recommended since a bad sew-

- er connection can cause toilet backup.
4. HVAC inspection. This may be part of the initial physical inspection, but if not, have it performed. Ducting should also be inspected since ducting can lose heat through leaks. Also, once air is initially cycled into the home, interior air should be recycled and cooled even more.
5. Roof inspection. Determining roof leaks requires a trained professional. Generally, the initial physical inspection will not give a definitive opinion on this.
6. Chimney Inspection. No component of a home has had more changes to building codes in California during recent years than chimneys. This is because chimneys possess a significant fire hazard.

The Buyer's Inspection Advisory outlines a series of inspections and reports that buyers may benefit from considering. The value of some of these really depends on the specific location and construction of the property. Some reports, documents, and inspections can often be obtained by buyers through contacting city building and safety departments or accessing municipal websites, while some require professional assistance.

Various documents and additional inspections of potential value are: soil analysis, square footage recorded by government agencies, boundaries of the property's lot, public water and sewer connections, reports on the history of environmental hazards documented by city reports, flood zone documentation, fire hazard potential



**Gary Frueholz**  
Engel & Volkers Real Estate  
(626) 318-9436

and its effects on insurance premiums, past building permits, potential government zoning changes, rent control restrictions, and any crime statistics which law enforcement may have access to.

Not all of these issues apply to every home being purchased. However, a thoughtful and thorough approach to inspections and existing reports can greatly increase a buyer's understanding of the home they are about to buy.

**Gary Frueholz is a realtor with Engel & Volkers Real Estate, a past member of the Alhambra Planning Commission, a Certified Senior Real Estate Specialist, Certified International Property Specialist, and can be reached at 626-318-9436. See his stories at www.garysstories.com.**

*This column is provided to Around Alhambra by Gary Frueholz, who is solely responsible for the content. Around Alhambra does not endorse the advice from this author or any other provider.*



## News from The Alhambra

Safety first! 43 attendees recently participated in Fire Extinguisher Training at The Alhambra on April 16. Conducted by the Alhambra Fire Department for tenants of The Alhambra campus, this fun and informative training session allowed participants to use an actual fire extinguisher and put out a real “controlled” fire. Knowing how to use a fire extinguisher is a crucial skill that can save

lives and prevent property damage.

All work and no play is not our philosophy. The Alhambra has added a new amenity to their game room — a half-size ping pong table! Other fun activities include a shuffleboard, foosball, a puzzle table, and puzzle exchange set up. Taking a break is great for socializing, and healthy too!



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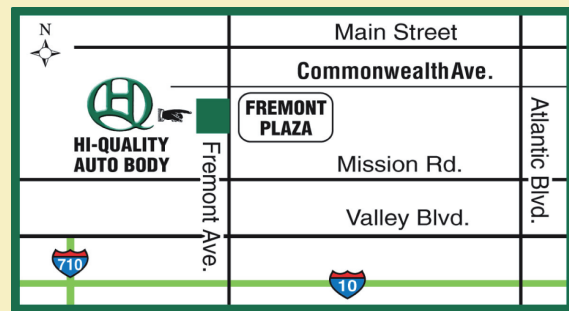
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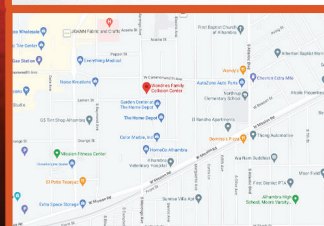
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**\$9.95** for small 12 oz bowl  
**\$11.95** for regular 16 oz bowl

Mention "quickbites" to claim the promo.

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VitaCane  
9 W Main St, Alhambra, CA 91801



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**\$14.00**

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**Curry Combo**  
Delhi Belly  
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## VISIT ALHAMBRAEATS.COM/QUICKBITES FOR MORE DETAILS!



Enjoy delicious, local cuisine!

The Alhambra Restaurant of the Week (ROTW) highlights the unique flavors of our community. Every week, we showcase a diverse culinary offering that represents the best of local dining in the City of Alhambra!

- April 29 to May 5**



**Min Min Pie House** is a cozy spot loved for its tasty dumplings and meat pies. Despite its small size, Min Min keeps things easy with app and QR code ordering. Try favorites like their housemade beef noodle soup and pan-fried buns. Authentic and affordable, this is a great spot for any meal, though bear in mind they make everything fresh so it can take longer for food to come out. Closed Wednesdays.  
**Visit them at 405 W Main St, Alhambra**


- May 6 to May 12**



**Panda Express** in Alhambra offers a haven for those seeking a quick, delicious meal infused with the essence of Asian culinary traditions. With its signature orange chicken and an array of savory dishes, Panda Express embodies both convenience and quality, serving as a go-to spot for families, friends, and solo diners craving a taste of familiar favorites with a touch of oriental flair.  
**Visit them at 15 E Main St, Alhambra**


- May 13 to May 19**



**Ba Le Sandwich Shop** was founded almost 40 years ago by an Asian-American couple from Vietnam. Their passion to provide the best quality ingredients inspired them to travel to France and improve their quality of Pate and French Baguettes. Over the years, they have tweaked the original recipe to what we all enjoy today.  
**Visit them at 1426 S Atlantic Blvd, Alhambra**


- May 20 to May 26**



**Popping YoLK cafe** is the haven for brunch lovers and breakfast enthusiasts alike. This charming cafe offers an array of dishes crafted with passion and precision. From classic favorites like waffles and savory omelettes to innovative creations bursting with flavor, each bite at Popping YoLK Cafe is a journey worth savoring.  
**Visit them at 119 W Main St, Alhambra**


- May 27 to June 2**



**Kopan Sushi & Ramen** offers a signature Tonkotsu broth simmered from a meticulous 16-hour process, producing a rich, full-bodied broth that takes center stage in every bowl. Crafted from pork bones, fat, and collagen, their ramen broth boasts a hearty, creamy texture that sets it apart. Their Alhambra location also offers a range of customizable styles and toppings to suit every palate.  
**Visit them at 645 E Main St, Alhambra**



