



## LAEF King and Queen of Hearts Royal Court announced



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## Los Al captures two tourney titles



See Page 9

## Long Beach Firefighters brings Christmas to kids



See Page 11

## Send us pet photos



Got a pet? Want its photo in the paper? Send it to us! The News Enterprise will highlight local pets from the community in our weekly ongoing feature—Pet of the Week.

Send a photo, brief biography, name, and breed of your pet to [editor@newsenterprise.net](mailto:editor@newsenterprise.net). See this week's Pet of the Week on page 2.

## Send us letters



Got an opinion? Send your letters to the editor of the News Enterprise: [editor@newsenterprise.net](mailto:editor@newsenterprise.net)



Courtesy photo

The Christmas season is here and homeowners are decorating record numbers taking advantage of the Southern California climate. Rossmoor, for instance, has been transformed into a Winter Wonderland (just without the snow). The Rossmoor Homeowners Association (RHA) has hosted their Christmas Lights Hot Spots Celebration for 11 years, and is honored to create the Rossmoor Christmas Lights Hot Spots Map for families to enjoy the decorated homes. The RHA announced this year's winners on their website at <https://rossmoor-rha.org>, where you can download the map in PDF format, or you can click on a link to an interactive map showing the exact address of the Honorable Mentions and images of the Recognition Award winners.

## Blackhawks from JFTB at war with 'Thomas' fire

By DAVID N. YOUNG

The Blackhawk helicopters are on the pad, all painted up and ready for war.

In fact, they are currently in a war with a wildfire that has destroyed 750 homes, 1,000 structures and threatening to become the largest wildfire in the state's history.

According to Lt. Col. Aaron Schilleci, a small Blackhawk battalion from the California Air National Guard has been shuttling back and forth between the Joint Forces Training Base (JFTB) in Los Alamitos and Camarillo airport. Schilleci commands the 1-140 Assault Helicopter Battalion, nicknamed the "Archangels."

He said the choppers make the 45-minute flight every morning to Camarillo airport where they coordinate with fire authorities and begin their daily water drops. Each Blackhawk can make up to 75 water drops per day using hanging buckets, he added.

The wildfire assistance illus-



Photo by Col. Rick Lalor

These Blackhawks, painted with 'war paint,' stand at the ready at JFTB as they cross the state every day to wage war against the "Thomas" fire. At press time, the "Thomas" wildfire was slightly more than 50 percent contained.

trates the critical importance of the JFTB mission, said Col. Rick Lalor, public affairs spokesman. The Los Alamitos base has a vital mission to train guardsmen yet also support the state's overall emergency management needs.

In a speech earlier this year, newly installed JFTB Commander Julian H. Bond reaffirmed the critical role the JFTB plays in all natural and other emergencies. Few people realize how much training and support the base provides in every critical situations, both staging and

deployment, the commander said.

The JFTB is today the only strategically significant base for the U.S. Department of Defense and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services. Its role is critical because it is the only active military airfield between the Channel Islands Air National Guard station in Ventura County and the Marine Corps Air Station at Camp Pendleton.

"I am really proud of them," said Schilleci of his squadron, adding

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## Los Al Racetrack to act as ground zero for Lilac wildfire donations

Los Alamitos Race Course encourages anyone interested in helping the victims of the Lilac Fire that engulfed San Luis Rey Downs, in Bonsall, California on Thursday to donate funds through the California Thoroughbred Horsemen's Foundation, Inc. at

[cthfcares.org](http://cthfcares.org).

A donate button is located near the top of the CTHF homepage. When donating, please select "Add Special Instructions to Seller." Once this tab has been selected, donors can type in the words, "For victims of the SLRD

fire," or something similar. Regardless, all money donated will go to assist victims of this tragic fire. No amount is too small.

The CTHF is a non-profit foundation that supports over 5,000 California Horse Racing Board

See Lilac, Page 10

## Los Al grants Santa ordinance exemption

Old Saint Nick could receive a gift-wrapped fine or a night in jail when he appears above the City of Los Alamitos, if an important vote at the Monday, December 18, 2017 City Council meeting does not go in his favor.

The Council's first Agenda item for the night starts with a vote on whether "Mr. S. Claus" should receive certain exemptions from City law.

If the vote passes, Santa Claus will receive a variance allowing him to enter homes without permission, make noise at any hour, and buzz through the sky without requesting additional clearance. The resolution further grants Mr. S. Claus the right to disregard the City's animal regulations. On top of the waiver of City law, Mr. Claus would receive a free business license to operate as a non-profit organization.

The Resolution, does state that staff directed Mr. Claus to get a valid vehicle registration from the Department of Motor Vehicles; an employee audit to verify his elves receive minimum wage from the Department of Health and Welfare; and a check from the Air Quality Management District to "ensure a safe and clear sleigh ride."

Granting Mr. S. Claus this request serves a public purpose in that it allows Mr. Claus to continue the tradition of spreading holiday cheer and merriment to the good children of the City of Los Alamitos.

The variances have no fiscal impact. Mr. Claus was not available for comment.

# Angel of Long Beach supports the most challenged souls

By DAVID N. YOUNG

To hundreds of people in Long Beach, Kristine Engels could be considered an angel. For almost five decades, she has tirelessly worked to improve the lives of thousands of developmentally challenged residents.

For her, it was love at first sight; not in the traditional sense but recognized a passion to help.

Accompanying her mother to a mental hospital, Engels vividly remembers that day as if it were yesterday. As a young lady, she remembers walking into Fairview Mental hospital not really knowing what to expect. Engels saw people of all ages with severe developmental challenges all around her.

Instead of being afraid or repulsed, a feeling of odd comfort came over her. "I don't know what it was. I can't explain it. I just knew there and then that this was where I needed to be. This was my chosen profession."

She literally went back to Fairview to work in a starter job. Engels worked her way through school and up the ranks to eventually become President & CEO of Life Steps Foundation in Long Beach.

According to laws that govern mental health, they are only five types of developmental disabilities; autism, cerebral palsy, intellectual disabilities, seizures or any developmental halt caused by trauma.

In days past, people affected with severe developmental disabilities were mostly institutionalized. Today, however, since the passage of the Frank T. Lanterman Act, efforts are now being implemented to give challenged adults a chance to live "a relatively normal" life.

Engels and her staff of 120 caregivers work tirelessly from a relatively small corner office complex in the city of Long Beach. Every day, dozens of her "clients" come to the office, most alone, some escorted by their caregivers. Some have chores; others have jobs and most just want to hang out. In most every respect, it could be normal "day at the office."

Engels, and her dedicated staff, has found a way to allow each of her clients to fully express themselves, display their personalities, reveal their joys and, like the rest of us, learn a little bit each day.

One man of about 40 years old, smiles as he points to the wall mural in the lounge. He smiles because he painted it. Another man, shorter and stockier, attracts our attention to the healthy fish in the aquarium. He's happy because it is his job to feed them. Six young men and women sit around the table playing cards. Two couples, in their 20's, sit on the couch in the corner, apparently whispering to each other.

For them, though challenged, they have each found a safe place to call home. Through Life Steps and the programs cemented by Engels' dedication, they now have a community to which they can happily belong.

The vast majority of her community needs help with "supportive living," Engels said. Caregivers teach their clients do simple, basic things that most unchallenged adults do almost without thinking such as shopping for groceries, taking a bath and

writing their names.

Others have behavioral problems associated with their developmental challenges but for Engels, the more difficult the challenge, the sweeter the victory. For her, learning that a client has learned to do simple things like brushing their teeth, or making a bed is considered a major win.

"They do the same things we do but just need help learning them," says Engels.

To be sure, there are many families who do accept the responsibility and very lovingly care for family members with challenges.

For instance, this year's CNN Hero Award was presented this week to a woman whose two youngest children were developmentally challenged. To show those who think otherwise, she actually founded a very successful coffee shop to employ mostly developmentally disabled residents.

Oftentimes, however, there is no such support from families, at least for the hundreds of people Engels now has within her care.

"Sometimes we get help from the family," she said, but most of the time it is "you take them," says Engels. Of course she does, and with grace and charm.

Especially with the high cost of housing affecting everyone in California, her clients are more dramatically affected.

Most of them live on a total income of \$600-900 per month. By the time they are able to afford housing,

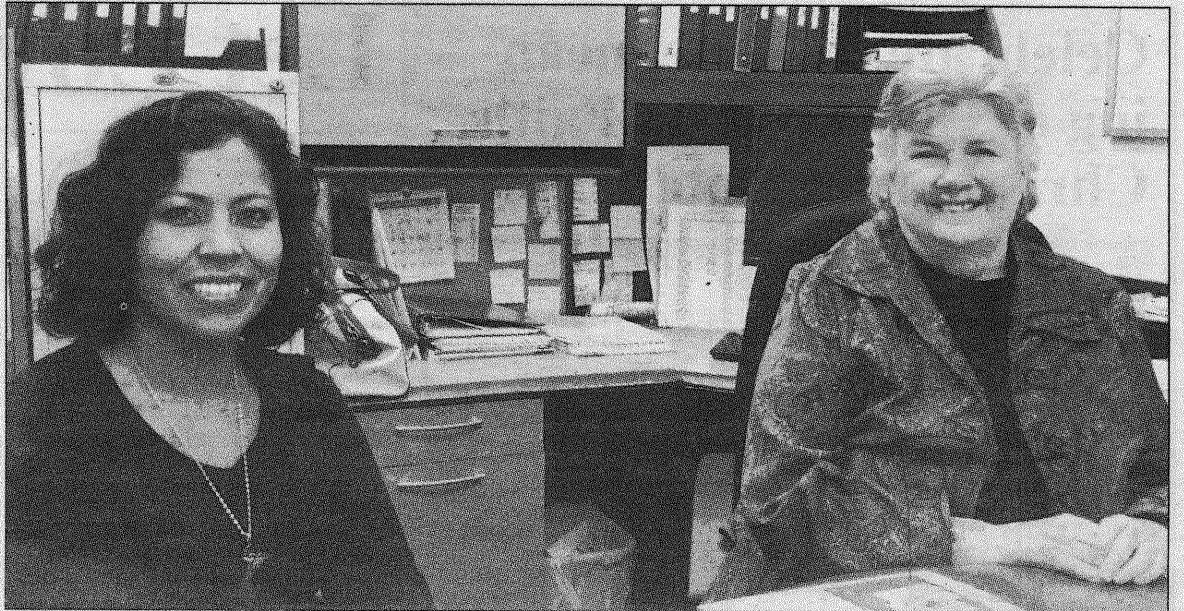
"there's nothing left for anything else."

"So we fight on," says Engels, and "somehow we make it work."

Sadly, when asked to list "next of kin" on forms, most have no choice but to list their immediate caregivers, she says. At the end of their lives, there is too often no one there to claim the bodies or to put together services. So for Life Steps, it is a lifelong struggle.

"We have to be very resourceful to try to give them a respectful funeral," she adds.

Engels and her deputy, Patricia Flores, supervise a staff of caregivers who help their mentally challenged clients independently do all the little things that make life worth



For more than 50 years, the angel of Long Beach, Kristine Engels(right), has passionately served the needs of many society otherwise left behind. Engels is President and CEO of the Long Beach chapter of the Life Steps Foundation. Seated to her left is the associate director and successor to Engels, Patricia Flores.

Photo by David N. Young

living.

Despite some sadness and the difficulties, there is so much happiness. Amazingly, the Life Steps program has been approved to have some caregivers attend college with their clients, taking notes for them when they can't. The Long Beach office now boasts of four college graduates.

Only God knows how many thousands of little victories must have filled this woman's heart since she began her work 49 years ago. Still, she truly takes pride in every single one of them.

Until Christmas, Life Steps is desperately trying to raise \$2000 to buy gifts for many in their challenged community that would otherwise "have literally nothing for Christmas" if not for the donor gifting program. "It really doesn't take much to make them happy," she smiles. "We can get them anything with a brand name, like Coca Cola," she said. "They get so excited," she smiles.

Without missing a beat, Engels juggles the drama of hundreds of developmentally disabled people every single day, making little things possible that brings immense pleasure to their lives. It's why to many, she's like the angel of Long Beach, who cares deeply about those society tried to leave behind.

Since her first visit to a mental hospital 50 years ago, Kristine Engels has brought happiness and joy to thousands of lives that truly mattered; if only to her, her team and more importantly, to those whose lives have been forever changed.

Note: Anyone interesting in helping may contact the Life Steps Foundation, Inc. (562) 366-7131

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