

Orcutt PUMPKIN FREE

Orcutt News for Orcutt Folks • Orcutt, California • October 2023 • Circulation 17,000+

Station 21 Firefighters Protect Orcutt Homes and Families



County Fire Station 21, built in the 1960s, located at Gray and Union Streets in Old Town Orcutt.

At the beginning of the century and for the first thirty years of Old Town Orcutt's history, the booming oil town was surrounded by scores of drilling wells and struggled with the ever-present threat of fires. Wooden, tinderbox buildings presented a constant fire hazard.

In 1908, crossed electrical wires caused two Union Oil tanks to catch fire and two men lost their lives. In 1903, gas in a tub ignited in a home and tragically the explosion took the life of five-year-old Sarah Billington. Her mother was severely injured.

In those early years, kerosene lanterns and gas stoves were the only sources of heating and lighting. According to the book *Old Town Orcutt, a Small California Oil Town Remembered*, "no building remained on the 100 block of East Clark after the Coleman Fire of 1922. Joe Coleman owned a pool hall, barber shop and restaurant on that block, and he lost everything." According to resident Willard Forbes, "It started about six o'clock and by 6:20 it was down to the ground, the whole block."

Orcutt firefighter Brett Pickett began as a volunteer with the Orcutt Fire Department in the 1990s. Since then, he has been with the County for 17 years as a firefighter and former chief of local Station 21. He recounts the history of fire protection in Orcutt and

says Union Oil organized and "mustered its own little fire brigade in the late 1920s."

For a town so vulnerable to fires, that protection was hardly adequate. Marion Capitani is quoted in the aforementioned *"Old Town Orcutt"* book saying, "pushcarts were purchased [by the fire department], and they used to throw them behind a vehicle or would hand-push them." The fire department she said, "amounted at the time to almost a bucket brigade."

It wasn't until the mid-1950's that Orcutt received a fire truck from the County, and the State of California approved the formation of a fire district which allowed taxes to be assessed to support the station. A three-person board was elected to administer funding and run operations.

Pickett says in the mid-1960's land was donated at the northwest corner of Union and Gray streets in Old Town Orcutt and construction began for the Orcutt Fire Protection District, Station 1. The station remained all volunteer averaging 30 volunteers until 2008. Then the Santa Barbara County Fire Department consolidated with the fire district resulting in 24/7 paid firefighter service to Orcutt. Pickett says the cost of running the district, with equipment and training costs rising, was more than the assessed income.

The consolidation was initiated by

Firefighter Ron Bennett with Pickett serving as interim chief until the consolidation was complete. Pickett then became a member of the County Fire Department. Since the consolidation in 2008, the station has been administered by the Santa Barbara County Fire Department and consolidated with Station 21 which was moved from the Santa Maria Airport to the current location.

Station 21 is currently headed by Engine Captain Damien Manuele, one of the captains of three 24-hour shifts. Each shift has a captain, an engineer, a firefighter/paramedic, and a firefighter. All are emergency medical technicians (EMT).

Captain Manuele, who grew up in San Luis Obispo, lives with his wife and two children in Grover Beach. He graduated from the fire academy in Visalia, worked in a city department and with the US Forest Service before joining the Santa Barbara Fire Department 18 years ago.

Three firefighters working with Captain Manuele alternate three 24-hour shifts in a week; they spend one-third of their life at the station. On shifts A, B, and C, there is a total of twelve rotating firefighters at the Old Town Orcutt station. The four rotate every day. However, Manuele says, most firefighters work more than the 24-hour shifts, "Emergencies come up, fires elsewhere or accidents. We cover stations on the Central Coast that are working an incident and vice versa. We all are available; if I must leave a beach picnic with my family, I respond. It's not mandatory; we just do it."

At the time of this report, Manuele was in the middle of a 72-hour shift.

There is a gym at the station. Manuele says the firefighters spend 90 minutes daily keeping in shape. "Reduces injuries," he says.

There are two main paths for becoming a firefighter. A prospect may work for the Forest Service, Cal Fire, or even the Santa Barbara County Fire Department hand crew. The other path involves following paramedic training and working on an ambulance.

If accepted, the prospect attends the Santa Barbara County Academy, an

Halloween Haunts

Make some memories with your family and friends! See page 5 to view a map of some safe and scary places to visit this Halloween.. Thank you, Jason Turner, for making it happen.

18-week program centered in Lompoc and accredited by the California State Fire Marshall as a Firefighter One Academy. Upon graduation the prospect begins a year of probation at a County station.

At Station 21 there is one fire engine (which also carries Santa Claus in the annual Orcutt Christmas parade) which responds to medical, structural, and accident incidents. There is also a four-wheel drive brush engine which has medical equipment and tools for wildland fires.

The station responds to about 25 incidents a week, mostly paramedic calls.

Currently, Orcutt is served by Station 21 and Station 26 at Tiffany Park Circle and Stillwell near Highway 101. The County also plans to build Station 25 on a five-acre lot off Union Valley Parkway (UVP) about a quarter mile east of Hummel Drive.

Also on the construction table is the new dispatch center in Santa Barbara. Manuele says that when completed, sometime next year, all 911 calls will be funneled through the new facility with all resources available to handle an emergency regardless of municipal boundaries.

Regarding its future, "Station 21 is twelve steps to its next-door neighbor, and we need to replace it," said County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig when the new Station 25 was announced. Hartwig said eventually the station will be moved west toward Highway 1.

In the meantime, Captain Manuele insists he is very happy where he is. "Even though it's a small station, I love the community feel. You really feel like you are part of the community here."

Steve Southwick reporting

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To the Editor

Desalinated Water an Option?

The Governor and whole State are "whistling past the graveyard" on the issue of water. We've been lucky the last 20+ years because in its long history California was a very dry place.

Of course, for a long time the area had a small population to support- but now we find ourselves with 40 million plus large industries including agriculture.

Were you aware there was a new, nearly completed plan to bring desalinated water from Diablo Canyon's long operating desalination plant to coastal communities? Pipe was ready to be laid for the project.

Then the plan was dropped when PG&E suddenly decided to close Diablo Canyon. Later that closure decision was just as abruptly also reversed. No clear reason was given.

I think I know the reason they can't close Diablo (whether they admit it or not).

I'm former president and founder in 2013 of Californians for Green Nuclear Power. During my close association with Diablo Canyon, I'm aware of several times the ISO (Independent System Operator) had to urgently ask Diablo Canyon to postpone a fueling shutdown due to an expected high heat wave wherein the demand for electricity would skyrocket due to massive demand for air conditioners,

freezers, etc. Without Diablo Canyon's large, reliable input of electricity the heat wave could cause large, unacceptable blackouts throughout the State.

Due to the plant's methods of refueling the plant could always accommodate the ISO requests.

This fact of the ongoing threat to the State by blackout made plant closure a permanent nonstarter. All talk of closure of Diablo Canyon quickly and completely faded from the scene.

But what about the great idea of sharing the desalination plant water with coastal communities? The idea of restarting the project wasn't discussed to my knowledge.

Someone needs to bring the desalination project up. Growth of nearby communities like Orcutt need that desal water! The Diablo Canyon desal plant can be expanded greatly to increase water produced.

I would be happy to meet with the parties to relate the information above.

My long-term vision for more water for California is more of this type of solution. More power plants along our State coast with desalination capability to keep the State in sufficient water while providing electricity at the same time.

William P. Gloege

Classified Ads

Sell items for free. Free ads can only be accepted via email to info@orcuttpioneer.com with "classified" in the subject line. 25 word limit. All ads must be received by the first Monday of the month. Business ads only \$25/25 words. Mail payments for business ads to Orcutt Pioneer, PO Box 2545, Orcutt CA 93457.

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Friends of Orcutt Library BOOK SALE: November 4, 10am-1:30pm. Books, DVDs, CDs, Games and more! All proceeds go to support your local Orcutt Library.

COMMUNITY YARD SALE (Rice Ranch - Meadows & Groves) Saturday, November 4 | 8AM - 2PM. Near Orcutt Community Park Cross streets: S. Bradley and Sage Crest - follow the signs.

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Orcutt's Linda Hearn Debuts Local History Novel, *Branded*



Local history comes alive within the pages of local Orcutt author Linda Hearn's new book entitled *Branded*. Self-published in July of this year, Hearn's ability as a writer takes younger and older readers alike onto the dusty trails of Alta California during the war between Mexico and the United States. She recounts Santa Barbara County history from 1846-1848 during the period of the California missions and rancheros. Does the name Benjamin Foxen ring a bell? How about William G. Dana or maybe John C. Fremont? Heroes and villains alike come alive in this novel of historical fiction for young adults.

Hearn, the wife of retired Santa Maria school superintendent Jeff Hearn, is a former teacher, a history lover and now an author. She taught for 32 years in three districts and at four local schools including 10 years teaching in Los Alamos. Although she retired in 2009, her time on the Central Coast started way before

that. She grew up in Manhattan Beach and arrived on the Central Coast while in the 4th grade. She attended Righetti High School where she worked on the school newspaper. She later went to Hancock and then Spalding College in Kentucky. She has a master's degree in reading and is a trained reading specialist. She has been married for 54 years and has 2 children, a son and a daughter.

Once told, "write the book you want to read," Hearn began researching the history of the Benjamin Foxen family from books written in the 1950's. Wanting to bring this exciting and relevant history to her students, she contacted her friend, Ramona Foxen Wickenden to come to her classroom. Ramona spoke about the small town of Sisquoc and the Foxen family ranch. "The students were mesmerized," Hearn says.

Branded focuses on the exploits of the Foxen family for a period of about 18 months between the years 1846 and 1848. The protagonist is Benjamin Foxen's 13-year-old son, Guillermo, who becomes a guide for commander John C. Fremont's numerous companies of foot and calvary soldiers in the Mexican American War. Anticipating an ambush on the Gaviota Pass, Guillermo (William "Bill" Foxen) redirects Fremont's troops over the then narrow Indian trail of San Marcos Pass where they are successful in lending

support protecting the citizens of Santa Barbara by routing the Mexican army. San Marcos Pass had its beginning, according to Hearn, as a dangerous trail where Fremont's army lost over 100 horses who fell off steep cliffs during a rainstorm.

Hearn leads her young readers through some rough territory as Guillermo faces difficult questions as he transitions to adulthood. Is he a traitor for siding with the "Americanos" against his "paisanos" who are loyal to Mexico? He struggles with his identity as the son of an English sea captain and a mother of Spanish descent. Most inspiring is the wrestle Guillermo has about protecting his family from horse thieves, cattle rustlers, the natural elements and finally his own paisanos. Hearn blends this into a compelling story of human dignity, great courage and vulnerability, weaving in touches of geography, and indigenous plant and animal life. It sparks the interest not only in local history but in the backdrop of many central California communities.

Reflecting Hearn says, "It wasn't easy to become a writer." She felt she was too slow and often had to review and rewrite her manuscripts many times. Poor health slowed her down for months. She wondered if she would ever finish. She wrestled with fears like those of her main character, Guillermo; was she up to the task? But her daughter told her, "don't

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worry Mom, the day will come when you will pick it up again." With renewed strength, she finished and published her book. In a final word of encouragement to others, Hearn says, "being retired is a wonderful opportunity; a golden time to do the things we dream about." For her, a dream come true with *Branded*.

Branded may be purchased on Amazon by searching Branded Linda Hearn.

John Chamberlain reporting

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Orcutt Schools Update

District Honors Media Specialist Team

Dr. Holly Edds, Superintendent, OUSD

This month, we have positive news from around the Orcutt Union School District:

At the September school board meeting, our group of media specialists was recognized with the district's #WeAreOrcutt Award for exemplifying Orcutt's "Kids Come First" credo. Our media specialists consistently help and support each other, and they can be commended for gracefully taking on new duties such as technology device distributions and makerspace activities while continuing to promote reading and literacy in their libraries. Congratulations to Suzanne Butler, Ginny Flegel, Courtney Grimnes, Kara Lane, Sharon McGinnis, April Meehan, Kathy Milo, and Rosemary Weddle for being an exemplary team! ...

The Old Town Orcutt Chalk Festival on October 7 drew huge crowds to Broadway and Union Avenue for chalk art, performances, vendors, and more. Big thanks to the Orcutt Children's Arts Foundation, OASIS, Old Orcutt Merchants Association, and Old Town Orcutt Revitalization Association for collaborating on the event. As in past years, the happiest

participants were children creating their own chalk pictures on the pavement. ...

The Orcutt Academy High School Band enjoyed an eventful weekend on October 7 and 8. On Saturday, the OAHS musicians performed in San Luis Obispo at a Cal Poly home football game for Cal Poly's annual Band Day. On Sunday, the Spartan Band played a set on West Main Street in Santa Maria's Open Streets event. We are proud of the way teacher Josie Coburn and her students seek out audiences all over the area. ...

Our school's PTA and PTSA units continue to find ways to engage students and families in their schools. On the morning of October 4 the Ralph Dunlap School PTA organized an observance of National Walk to School Day that had groups of students walking to school together. Parent volunteers spoke with students about pedestrian safety and safe routes to campus. ...

Now in its second year, the district's partnership with the Santa Maria Valley YMCA on swim lessons for fourth graders continues to delight students with its four days of instruction in water safety

and swimming basics. One parent wrote, "Thank you for giving my son and his classmates this great opportunity to swim and learn how to float, dive, and jump from the diving board. My son was always excited to tell us what he learned and looked forward to another day in the pool." Special thanks to the YMCA and its staff for excellent work with our students. ...

Our Child Nutrition Program is incorporating more scratch cooking into its menu. New scratch-cooked items entrees made in the program's central kitchen include Pasta Marinara, Pozole, Santa Fe Spicy Chicken Salad, and Bean & Beef Tostada. Students are enjoying these new meals and demand has been strong! ...

A happy development this school year was the expansion of our earliest grade level, transitional kindergarten. The age eligibility window expanded, and as a result we now are educating 153 TK students! We also brought TK programming to four additional schools (Alice Shaw, Patterson Road, Pine Grove, and Ralph Dunlap) so it now is offered at all of our elementary sites. ...

The Orcutt Academy looks forward to accepting enrollment applications for

the 2024-2025 school year. An online enrollment form for Orcutt Academy High School and the Academy's K-8 campus will go live on Monday, November 6. Watch the district's website (www.orcuttschools.net) for updates. ...

Have a wonderful autumn, everyone!!

Superintendent Dr. Holly Edds can be contacted by phone at 938-8900 or by e-mail at heds@orcutt-schools.net. She can be followed on Twitter at @hce101.



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Farm Day Underscores Ag Importance



Rancho Laguna Farms in Orcutt hosted a tour of its organic blueberry farm guided by manager Brett Ferini, as part of Santa Barbara Farm Day on September 23rd. Rancho Laguna Farms owns 2000 acres in Orcutt, Santa Maria, Lompoc and Los Alamos where they grow blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, lettuce, broccoli, celery, cauliflower and cilantro.

Participants of all ages received containers to pick blueberries as they toured the aisles and talked under the big white hoop tents that protect berries from sun, rain and wind while increasing ambient temperatures. The berries were large, round and delicious.

During the one hour plus tour, Ferini explained that the blueberry variety he grows was developed by Driscoll's and released to commercial growers 5 years ago, specifically to ripen in the fall and compete with South American fruit. Most blueberries grown in the United States are harvested in the spring. Fall competition

comes from places like Columbia and Peru, and a fall crop will prolong the blueberry season and be lucrative for the farm.

Driscoll's, who market the blueberries, pays Rancho Laguna by the pound and pricing fluctuates with the market.

Ferini, whose father owns the farm, said that fruit pickers are paid \$3.85 for each 5-pound box they pick, and a harvester can pick 5 to 8 boxes an hour. For the 24 acres of blueberries in Orcutt, there will be a crew of 22 harvesters. Blueberries must be picked ripe since they don't ripen in the box like avocados and other fruit. Labor is half the total cost of production.

Ferini also rents 5 hives of bees per acre to help pollinate his blueberries, at \$30 a hive per month.

After they are harvested, the blueberries go immediately to a cooler. Distribution begins as early as 2AM in refrigerated trucks. Product is moved to retailers all over the United States and as far away as the Middle East and Asia. Driscoll's has many familiar contracts with large distributors like Walmart and Costco.

According to Ferini, the two biggest challenges are gophers and thieves. Gophers are mostly controlled by gopher traps, but since January, thieves have cost

the farm about \$125,000 in equipment, plants, plastic and tools.

In high school, Ferini, now 25, wanted to become a lawyer. But while working at the farm and connecting with the various managers, he realized that he likes "seeing the land go from poor production to healthy soils with high productivity." His workday starts at 4:30-6:30 AM with groundwork or releasing beneficial insects. The harvesters come at 7AM for 7-9 hour shifts, depending on production. Days are long and vacations come in the winter. Ferini hasn't had a vacation in a while, especially with the heavy rains last year, but hopes to enjoy a snowboarding trip in the near future. "Life as a farmer isn't easy," he says, "but it is rewarding."

Santa Barbara County Farm Day, created in 2013 and sponsored by Students For Eco-Education And Agriculture, hosted 5,100 people at its September 23rd event. According to its website, Farm Day "educates the community about the farm origins of their food in order to cultivate informal agricultural ambassadors." Seventeen farms and agricultural organizations offered activities including tours, exhibits, tractor rides, fruit picking and wine tasting.

Katy Jacobson reporting

Victorian Stained Glass Hosting 4th Stained Glass Challenge



Sheri Gasser, Debi Tucker and their new business partner Teresa Dunaetz are pleased to announce this year's glass challenge. "The challenge is our way of encouraging our students and customers to get out of their comfort zone and try something a little different," said Tucker. Each entrant receives a wrapped package of glass, so it's a blind challenge. They must use each type of glass they get and build a piece of stained-glass art of their own design.

"The competition has been close in the past several years, and we are looking forward to what this year brings," said Gasser. Prizes will be awarded in several categories, including most original design, technical excellence, and the "People's Choice" award. Members of the public are invited to stop by the studio from November 1-16 to see the entries and vote for their favorite.

You can check the studio hours at VictorianStainedGlass.biz or give them a call at 805-937-8234.

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*Annual Percentage Yield (APY) may change before CD is opened and funded. Unlike bank CDs, brokered CDs typically don't have early withdrawal fees, as they can be sold on the secondary market. It is possible to experience a loss of principal when investing in a brokered CD. If a CD is sold prior to maturity, the pre-maturity sales of the brokered CD may be more or less than its original purchase price. The secondary market may be limited or non-existent. FDIC insurance does not protect against market losses due to selling CDs in the secondary market prior to maturity. Federal deposit insurance generally covers deposits of up to \$250,000 in the aggregate for each depositor in each bank, thrift, or credit union. Please ensure you are aware of your aggregate deposits relative to this coverage.

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