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County Nixes Cannabis Retail Sales at Old Town Market

Five of Six Applicants Still in Running for One License

And then there were five.

Late last month Santa Barbara County announced that five locations in Orcutt passed Phase II of the cannabis dispensary vetting process that included submittal of a business plan. The five applicants scored at least an 85 percent score on the County's list of criteria. The five locations, two in Old Orcutt, two in the Evergreen Shopping Center and one near Highway 101 are:

155 East Clark Ave. (Empty building next door to Kay's Country Kitchen)

235 East Clark Ave. (Orcutt Chiropractic

Health Center)

3596 Orcutt Road (Medina Tire Shop in front of Spencer's Market)

3550 Orcutt Road (Diamond Nails behind Spencer's Market)

1604 East Clark Ave. Building B, Ste 1 (New shopping center at Stillwell and Clark Ave.)

Not making the cut was the Natural Healing Center's effort to locate in the Old Town Market.

The next step, Phase III, for these five include site inspections and a review of the County-prepared "Neighborhood

Compatibility Proposal." A scoresheet is used to review applications where twenty percent is the maximum score on the site visit, five percent on a customer education plan, five percent on a community education plan, thirty-five percent on the community involvement plan, neighborhood design fifteen percent, odor control five percent and parking fifteen percent.

The applicants will then be ranked one through five. The top-ranked applicant will be eligible to apply for the one available permit and business license. If that applicant is not successful or withdraws,

the next ranked applicant will be able to apply.

The highest scoring applicant will then go through a rigorous permitting process and must be approved by the County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. Requirements vary according to where the proposed site is located. Sites outside Old Town Orcutt require a Land Use Permit, but those in Old Town Orcutt require a Conditional Use Permit which has more conditions prior to approval.

Steve Southwick reporting

Owners of Old Town Market Adding Restaurant, Upgrading Market

"Hopefully we will be going strong by Christmas," says Nabil Fidel who, with his



brothers Tony and Sam, purchased Old Town Market from Natural Healing Center (NHC) late last year. Conditions of the sale were that if NHC received a permit for a cannabis dispensary, the building would be sold back. NHC did not pass muster with the County so the Fidel brothers are now free to upgrade the building.

Fidel says an architect is working on

interior plans for a food court and market.

The food court will be added to the north side of the building with a complete menu including Mexican, Greek and Indian specialties with vegan options.

A sit-down eating area will be added to the front of the building with dining available inside and out. Near the southern door a bakery with pastries and coffee is planned.

The market will offer groceries, local seasonings and an expanded produce section with fruits and vegetables from local growers. Much of the

meat and cheeses will come from local producers.

"Being involved and giving to the community is high priority," says Fidel. The brothers have already sponsored fundraising events with proceeds donated to the Orcutt Children's Arts Foundation (OCAF) and the OASIS Senior Center.

Steve Southwick reporting

Volunteers Add Spring Color to OASIS Senior Center



Volunteers Sprucing Up OASIS Senior Center.

Thanks to more than 30 hardworking volunteers, the west side of the OASIS Senior Center on Dyer Street in Old Orcutt received a landscaping makeover on Saturday, March 6 and 13th. A cadre of students from St. Joseph High and Orcutt Academy Schools, volunteers from the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints and lots of the senior center regulars combined their efforts to

weed, trim plants, paint mulch and even relocate a huge storage shed.

The Saturday work project was organized by OASIS programs director Amy Lammert. She says she is so grateful for the incredible support. OASIS Executive Director Michelle Southwick expressed her thanks to volunteers who

pulled out weeds, painted steps and created a new home for the storage shed, "I was amazed at how much was accomplished in so little time. Orcutt volunteers turned out in force and our senior center is so much improved."

Steve Southwick reporting

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The Orcutt Library: Meeting the Needs of Learning Lovers During a Pandemic



The Orcutt Library has been creative in meeting the challenges of the pandemic and has created a "virtual" smorgasbord of events and projects for all ages. Many happily download digital books and audiobooks via apps on phones, and the Orcutt Library calendar has many extra options that educate and entertain. Go to www.cityofsantamaria.org/library and then to the "calendar." On April 1, see "Youth Spring Reading Program," a month

long program that started in mid-March and gives prizes for reading books, and an "Adult Activity Kit" can be picked up, a craft activity with recycled books and supplies included. On April 7 at 2pm there will be a zoom get-together so everyone with a kit can do the craft together.

On April 3 a "Lego Pack" is available for kids 6 to 17 with legos, challenge cards and a list of activity ideas. For future writers there is a "Youth Writing Pack" which includes a journal, and activities to inspire and encourage future writers.

There's more: a "Teen Mini Masterpieces Pack," an art project for teens with all the supplies available starting April 10th, a zoom book club for adults on April 6 (Reading Faulkner's, "The Sound and the Fury.") Movie Talk (monthly) happens April 8th, discussing "The Grand Budapest Hotel." For young kids there's Story Time Live every Wednesday, alternating English one week and Spanish the next. It includes interactive stories, songs and fingerplays. Register directly from the calendar! On

Saturday, Apr. 17, celebrate the 51st annual Earth Day with an Earth Day Creation Family Pack which includes activities for all ages. It's a collaboration of Adult and Youth Services with supplies to create crafts together as a family. Also starting April 17 teens can pick up an Anime Club Pack, for fans of Manga and Anime which includes something bookish, crafty, and "yummy." Registration includes a link to the monthly Anime Club Zoom Meeting on April 26th. The month ends with a pack dedicated to El Día de los Niños/El Día de los Libros (Children's Day/Book Day), a celebration of children, families, and reading which culminates annually on April 30. The Día Pack contains craft supplies to create a bell tota, a notebook, coloring and activity sheets. No registration required for the Orcutt branch.

"The packs have been popular," says librarian Dawn Jackson, who supervises Youth Services Outreach and the Orcutt Library Branch. She plans to continue the packs and possibly add more virtual programs.

The library is located at 175 S. Broadway, and hours are Monday through Friday 1-5 PM and Saturdays 10-2. Services include access to books, a copy machine, computers, DVDs and a digital library with e-books and audiobooks.

As of March, eight masked people can browse inside the library at a time, and those numbers will increase as rules relax.

Katy Jacobson reporting



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COAST World Premiere at Santa Barbara Film Festival

Feature Film Written About and Filmed Around Orcutt & Santa Maria



COAST, a feature film that takes place on the Central Coast, will make its world premiere at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival. In COAST, a 16-year old named Abby is desperate to escape the trappings of her small coastal farming town when she falls for the lead singer of a touring rock band and must decide whether to leave her family and friends behind. With live music performances and an exciting ensemble cast, COAST is about female friendships, finding your truth and letting the music take you home.

The film stars Fatima Ptacek, Mia Frampton, Mia Xitlali, Kaylee Kamiya,

Kane Ritchotte, Ciara Bravo, Eduardo Roman, with Cristela Alonzo & Academy Award-Winner Melissa Leo. Producers include Dani Faith Leonard, Alex Cirillo, Wendy Guerrero, and

Sonya Lunsford. NY-based directors Jessica Hester and Derek Schweickart will join local screenwriter Cindy Kitagawa at the Santa Barbara premiere.

The 36th Santa Barbara Film Festival will run from March 31st-April 10th with a hybrid format that includes online screenings and in-person screenings at beachside drive-in venues. Tickets are available for the virtual screenings and the drive-in events will be free to the public. Tickets can be purchased and drive-in spots can be reserved here: <https://sbiff.org>

"It's exciting to share the film in

Santa Barbara, not only because of the amount of support we received from the community, but because it's a special place that we fought very hard to capture. Not only the landscape, but the energy of the people and the community. We wanted that to be on the screen, so to be able to give it back to the community is fun and very rewarding." - Jessica Hester & Derek Schweickart, directors of COAST

COAST was filmed in and around the cities of Santa Maria, Guadalupe, Grover Beach, and Avila Beach, California, with additional scenes shot in upstate NY. In addition to the film's writer, Cindy Kitagawa, and producer, Wendy Guerrero, the cast is peppered with local faces performing alongside well known actors, like Academy Award-Winner Melissa Leo. The filmmakers worked with local companies including Picture Stable Productions, The Resistance, The Santa Maria and Guadalupe Chambers of Commerce, along with local investors to bring this film to fruition.

COAST began as a conversation between childhood friends and Santa

Maria natives, writer Cindy Kitagawa and producer Wendy Guerrero. The two, reflecting on their non traditional paths in life, decided to explore how the unique experience of growing up in their small town had played a role in informing their lives and the women who they have become.

"It was important to me to tell a story about girls from communities that I didn't get to see on screen when I was growing up." - Cindy Kitagawa, writer of COAST

The music in the film was composed by Christian Zucconi & Hannah Hooper (Grouplove), Alex Walker (Family of the Year, Alope), with additional music by The Ceremonies and Black Match. The Ceremonies also serve as the fictional band in the film, Piñata Jones, with performances by local Central Coast bands Dog Party, Haley & The Crushers, and Pancho & The Wizards.

More than just a coming-of-age film with a killer soundtrack, COAST also explores the meaning of home and the importance of family. The Santa Barbara International Film Festival is home for now.

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Orcutt Schools Update Students, Staff Happy to be Back Together on Campus *Dr. Holly Edds, Superintendent, OUSD*

Pine Grove School first-grade teacher Julie Silva says she was a bit “nervous” in the hours before her students returned to school on March 12.

“But when the students arrived, it was just so great to actually have them in person,” she says. “They were excited to be back, and I was happy to see them. It was really nice.”

The jubilant meeting of teacher and students in Silva’s classroom is representative of what is happening all over the Orcutt Union School District in the wake of our phased re-opening. Due to improved COVID-19 metrics in our county and revised guidelines from the state, we brought back transitional kindergartners and kindergartners on March 9 and scheduled a sequential return of grade-level groups leading up

to secondary students coming March 25 and 26. As we have written in previous columns, students have returned for blended learning, which consists of two days of in-person instruction and three days of remote instruction. Distance learning has remained available to families wishing to keep their children at home at this time.

“My students could not have been more excited to be back in school,” says Olga Reed first- and second-grade teacher Jessica Villasenor, who welcomed her students on March 11. “There was laughter and spirited chatter throughout the day. One of my students who I had from last year walked in and said, ‘We’re finally home again!’”

Vanessa Paul, mother of Orcutt Academy transitional kindergartner

Kingston Paul, shares a similar anecdote.

“Kingston did well on Zoom because he wanted to talk to people, but when he went back to school, he was SO excited,” she says. “When I asked him what his favorite part was, he said, ‘Everything!’”

Re-opening was the product of months of work by employees of the district and schools. Maintenance and grounds employees collaborated with school custodians to prepare our facilities and grounds. Health services staff supplied personal protective equipment including masks and thermometers. School administrators, teachers, and Classified employees developed plans for arrival, recess, dismissal, and pedestrian traffic so as to enable all on campus to follow health guidelines. Teachers prepared getting-to-know-you and team-building activities so students would feel comfortable being back in the classroom.

“Hats off to all of our employees at school sites and in our support departments for the way our gradual re-opening has gone so smoothly,”

says Nick Taylor, the district’s assistant superintendent of business services. “Something like this doesn’t happen overnight. We’ve been preparing for this since summertime.”

“Teachers have been working for this for a year,” adds Patterson Road School Principal Julie Kozel. “They spent a lot of time getting their classrooms and their lessons ready.”

Our re-opening came almost exactly a year after we needed to close our schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The months since have taught us many lessons, not least of which is a deeper perspective about the importance of what we do.

“We keep focusing on what this generation of children has lost,” says Villasenor, “but I think it’s important to highlight a very positive thing I think they did gain for this experience: an appreciation for learning.”

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



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High Schools Start Sports Programs



With spring sports well underway, Kevin Barbarick, Athletic Director at Righetti High School, says the kids "are excited about the opportunity to compete and be together normally again after a very abnormal year."

Barbarick says 18 varsity teams from Righetti are getting ready to compete including football, baseball, softball, swimming, water polo and track.

It's the same at Orcutt Academy High School. Athletic Director Chad McKenzie says, "When all is said and done, eighty percent of our sports programs will be underway this school year."

Athletic Director Tom Mott at Saint Joseph's High told the Orcutt Pioneer that sixteen sports will be going simultaneously. "It's going to be a challenge for kids to do multiple sports, but we are trying to make up for lost time."

Orcutt American and National Little Leagues are both organizing with sign-ups and practice games. Tentative opening day for Orcutt American Little League is

April 17th. Babe Ruth games, according to President Bryn Smith, will hopefully begin on April 9th.

Steve Southwick reporting

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