

## Old Town Market Sold; New Owner Hopes For Marijuana Dispensary



An Orcutt grocery store with a history in the community that goes back more than 70 years will soon be shutting its doors for good.

The Old Town Market building was sold in late April to Helios Dayspring, who hopes to operate a cannabis retail store in the location. He currently owns Natural Healing Center (NHC), a dispensary in Grover Beach. Once Santa Barbara County lifts its coronavirus stay-at-home order, a 90-day eviction notice becomes effective, according to Mark Steller, owner of the market. He explained he that was not given the opportunity to purchase the building prior to receiving the eviction notice.

Since the announcement, many community members have shown an outpouring of support in various ways, one of which is visiting the store. When Steller announced the closure, he said the store needs to be completely empty after the 90 days, and he encouraged customers to stock up on products and "take a piece of Old Town Market home with you forever." So far, they have been doing just that.

"I'm overwhelmed," Steller explained.

"It's heart-wrenching and heart-touching. I expected to get some support, but I'm overwhelmed by how much there has been."

In contrast, there are many opponents of the the site becoming a cannabis store for several reasons including the sudden displacement of an established business that provides staple food supplies to many Old Orcutt residents.

According to a statement released by NHC, Dayspring offered to assist Steller with the moving costs of Old Town Market, including a three-month credit against the cost of rent and a "substantial relocation package."

Steller rejected this offer, explaining that it'd be impossible to move a grocery store in three months.

"From a financial and legal standpoint, it's impossible," he said. "I couldn't accept it on that regard, let alone any kind of conditions."

Asked why the Stellers have been evicted before a permit to operate a cannibus dispensary has been issued for the location, Joe Armendariz, spokesperson for NHC, said, "The rent is far below market rate, and

improvements on the property are easier to be made if the property is vacant."

Dayspring needs a permit to operate in Orcutt which has not yet been issued, according to County 4th District Supervisor-Elect Bob Nelson. He added that the zoning for the property could allow a dispensary if a permit were approved, but the permitting process is extensive and community input will play a large role in it.

"To date, neither the County application or the process where the community can provide input has started," Nelson said. "Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, that process was planned to start this month. Needless to say, that has been delayed."

In his statement, Nelson expressed his disappointment about the closure and reminisced about his fond memories of the market throughout the years.

"There are very few that have given more to our community and Old Orcutt

than the Stellers', and we all know they deserve better," he said.

Steller, an Orcutt native, bought the market in 2004. After more than 20 years as a Longs Drugs' employee, he was looking for a change. He had a vision of a family-oriented shopping experience, and took skills he learned from Longs and applied them to Old Town Market. He was specifically attracted to the location because of the Orcutt Community Plan.

"I took a chance on Old Town and it rewarded me, but now for me it's all for naught," Steller said. "Even if I'm not the owner, I think the town deserves a market."

Steller will keep the community updated as to when the 90 days will begin.

In an email statement regarding the purchase of the property, Mr Dayspring says, "NHC is more than willing to address the residents of Orcutt's concerns. Questions and comments should be sent to: [orcutt@nhcdispensaries.com](mailto:orcutt@nhcdispensaries.com). We will make every effort to respond to each of your questions or concerns."

*Jamie Guista reporting*



Valerie Prancevic and Phyllis Irwin show their support for Old Town Market.

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# During COVID Orcutt Christian Church Enjoys Drive-In Worship Services

Worship services have been drastically affected during COVID 19. But members of Orcutt Christian Church have been blessed with continuing faithful messages from their dedicated minister. Through the the creativity of Pastor Archie Miller of Orcutt Christian Church on Patterson Road, the congregation enjoys services in the parking lot of their church on Patterson Road.

The eighty-four year old minister, who has been serving the local congregation for twenty three years, has built a



About twenty vehicles Sunday March 9 in the parking lot of Orcutt Christian Church worshipping inside their vehicles

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stereo transmitting system which meets standards of a professional radio station so that members can meet in the church parking lot and remain in their vehicles to sing hymns, pray, take communion and hear a weekly message from their minister. Each Sunday, the 10:15am religious service is heard on the FM dial at 94.7.

Pastor Miller says after two weeks of the pandemic restrictions and Easter approaching, "I had a meeting with two sergeants from the Santa Barbara County Sheriffs station and told them Easter was one of the most sacred days of the year. And when I told them I had a trasmitting system meeting the guidelines of the Federal Communications system,

they said 'do it.'" So on Sundays law enforcement drives by and sees lots of cars in the church parking lot, and importantly they see folks are observing COVID 19 restrictions.

"It's such a blessing," says one-hundred-one-year-old Geneveve Williams. "I have been in this house so long. I can at least wave at friends. I don't have a drivers license and my daughter takes me to church every Sunday. I am so thankful."

Another member, Ben Colon, an emergency room nurse at Marian Medical Center, says the congregation has grown since the drive in services have begun. "Everybody takes part

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# OASIS Major Fundraiser Goes Virtual During COVID



The annual Spring Gala Dinner and Auction benefiting OASIS (Orcutt Area Seniors In Service) was shifted to an online event due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year's Roaring 20's-themed fundraiser was planned for March 20, just one day after Governor Newsom ordered California to "Shelter-in-Place." With no time to reschedule, OASIS President and CEO Doug Dougherty and his team went to work, spending countless hours individually calling their 1400 members and adapting the event. "We got it online. We had a silent

auction and some other opportunities to donate," Dougherty said. The OASIS staff worked with caterer Cool Hand Luke's to coordinate meals and vouchers with members and sponsors who purchased event tickets. "We couldn't have worked with a better organization. They were

amazing. Short-staffed like everybody else, and they managed to pull it off," Dougherty said.

The annual fundraiser is a big event for OASIS, accounting for about one-third of the nonprofit organization's yearly revenue. Dougherty understands it is difficult to ask for donations during an economically uncertain time, so he was happy with the outcome. "We raised a little more than half of what we usually raise, and that, for what our expectations were, for the community to come rally around us that way, our hearts swelled," Dougherty said.

OASIS serves members of the community's aging population through classes, activities, and services. According to Dougherty, the senior center is a "home away from home" to many of their members. The facilities have now been closed for over two months, and Dougherty is concerned.

"It's scary because of the mental side of things. We may not get people back out of their houses again if depression is allowed to set in," Dougherty said.

During normal circumstances, as stated on the OASIS website, they "work especially hard to prevent the conditions that may lead to our seniors becoming inactive, lonely, neglected or abused." Dougherty says he has seen a large increase in depression and anxiety among seniors because of the quarantine. "For OASIS, this is tragic. Not only are seniors the most at-risk for contracting COVID-19, they are now being forced into isolation, the very condition the senior center is there to prevent," Dougherty said.

OASIS is beginning to slowly reopen their doors with limited class sizes by invitation and maintaining social distancing practices. "We're doing a

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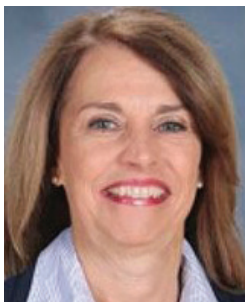
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## Orcutt Schools Update

# Online Education Changing the Look of Learning

*Dr. Debbie Blow, Superintendent, OUSD*

As readers know, the Orcutt Union School District took teaching and learning online when schools needed to be closed in mid-March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two months in, teachers, students, and parents are finding that the adaptations and changes they have made may just be transforming education forever.

"We've had to learn a totally different way of teaching," says Cheri Craft, a sixth-grade teacher from Ralph Dunlap School. "But a lot of the things I am doing will have a place in my teaching in the future."

Craft and other teachers districtwide have needed to adopt a new process for communicating with students and assigning work. Google Classroom and the Seesaw application are the most popular platforms for assignments, while most teachers also host class meetings via Zoom online videoconferencing.

With this foundation, teachers can give tasks and projects that students

do at home. Craft, for example, embeds assignments on Google Slides and sends out links to online components of district-adopted textbook programs.

Teachers also have been able to experiment. Amy Ruth, who teaches a 4/5 combination class at Alice Shaw School, used Pear Deck for Google Slides to take her class on a virtual field trip to the Atlanta Aquarium. More recently, Ruth launched a private YouTube channel where students could subscribe to videos of math lessons she recorded.

"I joked with my students that they are making me into a YouTube star," she laughs.

Joslyn Hodson, a sixth-grade teacher at Patterson Road School, is another online innovator. Hodson records directions for assignments on the Screencastify application and then quizzes her students via Edpuzzle. She also set up a private online Padlet bulletin board onto which students have

uploaded photos of their work.

"The Padlet adds a social dimension to learning," says Hodson. "Students had fun posting photos of what they were wearing on St. Patrick's Day and how they were using fractions in the kitchen. The Padlet gives our class a sense of community, which we need right now."

Students, meanwhile, are participating in a transformed learning experience. Nicole Ante, an eighth grader at Olga Reed School in Los Alamos, likens online education to "a normal school day, except you are doing the work more on your own." Ante, who uses a Chromebook on loan from the district, does around four hours of work a day and consults with her teachers when needed. "I miss being in the classroom, but I do feel like I can get help when I need it," she says.

As for parents, they also are making adaptations. Britini Osmonson, who has a son in first grade at the Orcutt Academy's K-8 campus, has learned to

break up online work into segments of 30 to 40 minutes each, with time allotted for "brain breaks" and outdoor recreation. She also has become more patient as a home teacher.

"You have to wait for that 'a ha' moment," she says. "It is very special for me as a parent to witness my son when something clicks for him. You need to wait for those breakthroughs – they are worth it."

As of this writing, we do not know how schools and classrooms will need to operate at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. Whatever our situation, we know that the development of our teachers, students, and parents are experiencing will improve education for everyone.

"I'm growing so much, and my colleagues are growing as well," says Hodson. "The good part about all of this is we all will be better teachers next year."

*Superintendent Dr. Debbie Blow can be contacted by phone at 938-8900 or by e-mail at [dblowl@orcutt-schools.net](mailto:dblowl@orcutt-schools.net). Follow her on Twitter at @debblow.*

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# Orcutt Christian

Continued from page 2



Pastor Archie Miller in the corner of the Orcutt Christian Church building where he conducts his services by radio.

in communion as the emblems of our Savior's atonement are given in paper bags as congregants drive into the lot. We see each other; we wave. Fellowship is wonderful." Ben Colon is the faith community nurse for the church. He

has taught nursing at Allan Hancock and Santa Barbara Colleges.

The Orcutt Christian Church has about 40 members and has been in its current Patterson location for 63 years. Prior to Pastor Archie Miller's service in Orcutt, he served with Pastor Charles Gibbs of First Christian Church in Santa Maria.

*About Pastor Archie Miller*

Pastor Miller was Raised in Tuskegee, Alabama. In his teens, his propensity for "all things radio" propelled him as a ham radio operator to set up a radio repair shop. When he joined the Marines in 1953, the Eagle scout was assigned to communications training. During the Korean conflict, Pastor Miller was a combat engineer and helped distill water for jet planes used on take-off and created drinking water for combat troops. The Marines then sent him to a school to be an atomic biological chemical warfare instructor.

After Pastor Miller's Marine service he began his education and eventually earned two doctorates. He received a bachelors degree in theology at Cincinnati Bible Seminary and then went to Earlham College in Richmond Indiana, a Quaker school for ministerial training. He achieved his Masters in counseling at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California. He then studied at

the University of Southern California School of Medicine and received certification in psychiatry and served as chaplain.

In the late sixties the Air Force requested him to serve as a chaplain. Following his second stint in the Armed Forces he accepted a pastoral position at Pacific Grove Christian Church in Monterey, California. He then moved down the coast to Santa Maria where he was invited to take a position at an electronics personnel firm. Soon after he became general manager of Caps Communication in Santa Maria. During this period he mentored with Pastor Charles Gibbs at First Christian Church in Santa Maria before assuming his current position at Orcutt Christian Church in 1997.

Pastor Miller actually built the stereo transmitting system years ago for people who may not be able to always be in the chapel during services. "When the pandemic kept us from church the weeks before Easter, We knew the drive in concept so people could worship in their cars was the way to go. And Heavenly Father has so blessed us."

The Orcutt Christian Church is located at 204 Patterson Road. Worship and Communion Sunday is at 10:15am. Bible study is Thursday's at 5:30pm.

*Steve Southwick reporting*

# MOXIE Café Helps with Meals for Hospital Workers



On Monday, April 20th, MOXIE Café teamed up with South Valley Community Church for the first of a series of weekly meal donations to the Critical Care Unit at Marian Hospital. The unit that includes doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, and aides are on the front line caring for patients suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic. MOXIE Café prepared their famous B-17 breakfast burritos, as well as fresh coffee. "All the employee-owners here at Hardy Diagnostics and MOXIE Cafe are pleased to show our gratitude towards the wonderfully dedicated healthcare workers at Marian Hospital," said Jay Hardy, President of Hardy Diagnostics.

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# OASIS Gala

*continued from page 3*

pilot to see how it works. Everyone is wearing masks and maintaining more than six feet distance,” Dougherty said, “It was so sweet, because some of them are wearing their nice dress clothes to return and come to an exercise class. They were so excited and they said it felt like they were getting ready to go on a date. Tears in their eyes, cheering.” OASIS has also posted various class videos to their YouTube channel for members to access from home.

Looking forward, OASIS is anticipating their new, permanent facility on the corner of Clark Avenue and Foxenwood Lane which will be considered for approval by the County Planning Commission in upcoming weeks. The plans for the new site will increase OASIS’ facility square footage by three times. It will replace their current home which consists of portable trailer units intended to be temporary since the 1980’s. Dougherty is asking the community for letters to the County Planning Commission from the community in support of the new construction. Letters can be submitted to PAD@co.santa-barbara.ca.us.

*Lindsay Grabau reporting*

## Events

*To submit your community event, email 50 words or less to info@orcuttpioneer.com by the second Wednesday of the month. Be sure to include, in this order, the name of the event, location, time, a short description and contact information.*

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