

# Seaside Courier

Your Voice in the Community

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December 2015

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Volume 2 - Number 12

HOLIDAY GUIDE - 4, 5

## Local growers keep Encinitas poinsettia history alive

Maggie Avants  
Editor



**P**oinsettia plants — 1,000 of them — will adorn Legoland for the holidays this year. In Little Italy, 1,500 poinsettias will deck the streets.

The poinsettias will come from Weidner's Gardens in Encinitas, where because of the Ecke family, the plant became widely known as the Christmas flower and the city became known as the "Flower Capital of the World."

"The reason the Weidners came to Encinitas is because they were friends with the Eckes in Los Angeles and they dragged them down here," said Oliver Storm, head grower and co-owner of Weidner's Gardens.

That was in the 1920s, and nearly 100 years later, business is still flourishing, some would say. Although Paul Ecke III sold the family business in 2012, he said the company that purchased it is still breeding poinsettias in Encinitas.

"And the company has bought other companies and morphed into more poinsettia breeding going on here than ever," said Ecke, 60, who took charge of the family business in 1992.

His grandfather, Paul Ecke, Sr., is the

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## 'Real Santas' infiltrate farmers' markets

Sustainable Santa is one of dozens of Santas welcoming children to a healthy future with open arms this year. The effort is expanding with even a "Lady Santa" in the farmers markets' in Sebastopol and Santa Rosa in Northern California. (Courtesy photo)

Helen Nielsen  
Contributing writer

**W**hat started two years ago in Carlsbad is now spreading throughout the state.

An organization called Real Santas United to End Childhood Obesity deploys: "with three here along the coast: markets in Oceanside on Thursday morning, Lucadia on Sunday morning and Carlsbad on Wednesday morning.

Founded by former mall Santas concerned that the image and message of Santa Claus had become one that both promotes and perpetuates unhealthy eating habits by passing out sweets and encourages shop-till-you-drop unsustainable lifestyles, they decided to take positive action.

The current epidemic of unhealthy children is the last thing America needs, with children in elemen-

tary school facing dramatic increases in metabolic diseases of which obesity is a key symptom, according to Sustainable Santa, the group's founder.

"These are serious illnesses, created by the added sugar and other chemicals found in fast and processed foods. And the food courts in our neighborhoods are loaded with places presenting these unhealthy offerings," Sustainable Santa said.

The group's efforts have caught the attention of doctors at the UC San Francisco School of Medicine, whose foundation, The Institute for Responsible Nutrition — founded by Dr. Robert Lustig, neuroendocrinologist at UCSF — has been tracking the Real Santas United movement and its efforts to expand beyond San Diego and Riverside counties to statewide.

"That's because these Santas are making the culture shift that is essential for the future of a healthy America," said Wolfram Alderson, executive direc-

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## Kindness meters around town

It All Starts With a Sign...

Carlsbad is a world-class city with a world-class community and 7 miles of gorgeous California coastline. The only thing missing was a city sign that mirrors the beauty of our city and our people. For years, rumors have circulated that Carlsbad once had a sign that hung over Historic Route 101 similar to our neighbors in Encinitas and other locations throughout the county such as Hillcrest and North Park.

In late 2014, the Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce took up the cause to resurrect this fabled sign. While the original design featured Darlene the Dolphin, who was created by world-renowned oceanic artist, Wyland, the final design includes only the city name. The design is reminiscent of Carlsbad's heyday during the 1920s and '50s.

## Kindness Meters Around the City

Along with the vision of a beautiful sign, we also have a vision of making Carlsbad "America's Kindest City." To achieve that goal, there will be seven solar-powered Kindness Meters at the base of the new sign and around the city of Carlsbad. Visitors and community members will be able to donate coins or dollars to the Kindness Meters and "Feed Darlene," a reference to the dolphin that was featured in the original design. ■

## 85/15 Plan: Carlsbad City Council calls special election to end 'divisiveness'

Thomas K. Arnold  
Contributing writer



**C**arlsbad voters will get to decide the fate of a proposed development on the south shores of the Agua Hedionda Lagoon sooner rather than later.

After hearing more than 40 speakers, the Carlsbad City Council on Nov. 17 voted to put the controversial Agua Hedionda South Shore Specific Plan on



Rick Caruso of Caruso Affiliated (right) speaks at a press conference Aug. 25, 2015. Joining him are supporters Carlsbad Mayor Matt Hall, Carlsbad Strawberry Company owner Jimmy Ukegawa and Agua Hedionda Lagoon Foundation Chairman Maureen Simons. (Photo by Maggie Avants)

the ballot in a special election scheduled for Feb. 23, the earliest possible date allowed by law.

"I understand that's going to make some people happy and some people

unhappy," Councilman Keith Blackburn said. "But I want you to know that a lot of thought and consideration went into making that decision."

Scheduling a special election was one

of four options the Council could take after a referendum overturned its Aug. 25 adoption of the plan. The three other choices were to rescind their approval and effectively send developer Caruso Affiliated back to the drawing board; put the issue on the June 2016 primary ballot; or wait until the November 2016 general election to allow voters to weigh in.

In the end, the Council chose to call a special election, even though the cost could be as much as \$500,000 more than waiting until regularly scheduled elections in June or November.

The Agua Hedionda South Shore Specific Plan is for a 203.4-acre property east of Interstate 5, between the south shore of the Agua Hedionda Lagoon and Cannon Road. The plan calls for developer Caruso Affiliated to buy the property from its present owner, San Diego Gas & Electric Co.,

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► **SANTA, FROM PAGE 1**

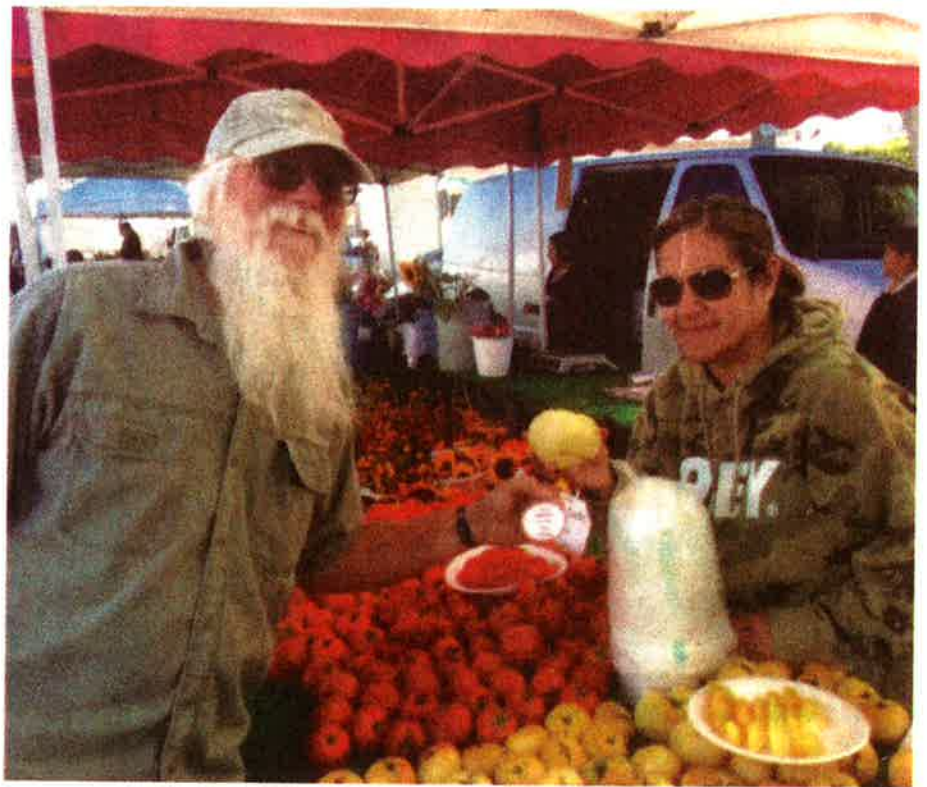
tor of the IRN. “The major food and beverage corporations and government policymakers have changed our food landscape from a cornucopia of healthy food to a garbage dump; one that fosters illness instead of wellness. The importance of what the Santas are doing cannot be overstated.”

According to Alderson, the IRN has documented dramatic increases in metabolic diseases over the last 30 years. A primary cause of these health issues lies in industrial processed foods, where fiber and nutrients are removed and unhealthy food additives are added, resulting in chronic metabolic disease. Sugar is the leading marker of processed foods, now added to 74 percent of foods sold in the United States. The result is that \$1.4 trillion in healthcare costs are wasted due to preventable and chronic metabolic diseases fostered by the food industry.

In farmer's markets, Real Santas United approach this challenge in three ways. In addition to providing an opportunity for a holiday picture, which parents take with their own camera, the Santas all distribute cards containing “Santa’s 3 Food Rules” — rules designed to guide children and their parents away from the habit of eating unhealthy snacks, fast, processed foods, sodas and the many other chemical and sugar-loaded and fried items which have become the staple of American fare.

Best of all, the Santas then send the children into the farmer’s market looking for “garden bites.” These are tastes of real food — fresh, raw or fermented — supplied by farmers and vendors.

“It’s like a treasure hunt for healthy food,” said Sustainable Santa®, who is the Santa at the Leucadia Sunday Farmers’ Market.



Santa Mark briefs Lulu Medina, the farmer’s daughter at Valdivia Farms, about how to display a “Try a Santa’s Garden Bite” sign at the Oceanside Thursday morning market held at City Hall. (Courtesy photo)

“Many children have never tasted fresh wholesome fermented cabbage, or kombucha, or the many other fresh and often probiotic foods available at farmers’ markets, which boost their immune system,” said the Carlsbad Market’s Santa. “Instead, they have been eating fast-food fried chicken made from chickens raised on doses of antibiotics — and most often also doses of arsenic — needed to reduce illness in concentrated animal feeding operations, which dominate as meat sources among fast-food offerings.”

At the farmer’s markets, real food grown on a plant, not manufactured in a plant is, available, according to Real Santas United. Meats from animals humanely raised in natural settings without growth hormones or antibiotics are available, too, the Santas pointed out.

This year, the Santas involved in the

effort are encouraging children and parents to “eat the rainbow.” Literature listing the vitamin and mineral contents of the different food colors is presented.

“It’s another game you can play with your kids at the farmers’ market — looking for fruits and veggies in their favorite colors,” said Sustainable Santa®. “It makes healthy eating that much more fun.”

Bring your camera, but don’t expect to find any snow globes or picture frames for sale.

“What we are selling is promotion of healthy kids in conjunction with IRN’s Real Food Impact Campaign — where the future of our children and the integrity of our food system is given top priority.”

For more information on IRN’s Real Food Impact Campaign go to: [Responsiblefoods.org/real\\_food\\_impact\\_letter](http://Responsiblefoods.org/real_food_impact_letter). ■