

CONCERT VENUES: WEATHERING THE COVID CLOSEDOWN • TASK FORCE: REOPENING STATE ECONOMY

IRVINE

# WEEKLY

APRIL 22, 2020 • VOL. 2, NO. 13

## Checking in with Irvine's Service Industry

BY TARA FINLEY

# IRVINE WEEKLY CLASSIFIEDS

## EMPLOYMENT



### Principal Hardware Engineer:

Research and Develop digital H/W for RF sys; B.S. in EE or equiv. & 2 yrs exp. in EE req'd; Send resume to GigaTera Communications; 1818 E. Orangethorpe Ave., Fullerton, CA 92831

### Consultant III,

multiple openings in Irvine, CA & various long term unanticipated worksites. MS in Chemical Engineering. Will work at various long term unanticipated worksites with option to relocate throughout the U.S. Mail resume to: Azzur of California LLC, 3200 El Camino Real, Suite 230, Irvine, CA 92602.

### BUSINESS DEVT MGR

sought by Sunpin Solar Development, LLC in Irvine, CA. Plan, direct, & coord bus devt activities re: supp chain solar PV cells. REQ: MA/MS in Business, Mgmt, Mktg or rel + 1 yr bus devt, sales/proj mgmt or rel exp. Send CV to: Rachel Cummings, 2020 Main St., Ste. 300, Irvine, CA 92614.

### IT

City National Bank has an oppoty in Los Angeles, CA for a Info Security Engr IV. Mail resume to Attn: I. Markaryan, 555 S Flower St, 18th Fl, Los Angeles, CA 90071; Ref #LAVGU. Must be legally auth to work in the US w/o spnsrshp. EOE

### E-Commerce Marketing Manager:

develop & manage a comprehensive online strategy to improve sales, ux, marketing roi & customer satisfaction. Master's in Comm. Mgmt. Mail Resume to: Instaco LLC, Attn HR: 2030 E. Vista Bella, Rancho Dominguez, CA 90220

### Developer Advisor

sought by Anthem, Inc. in Cerritos, CA to provide maintenance and production support for a self-service business intelligence environment and to establish methods for tracking data quality and improvement. Apply at [www.jobpostingtoday.com](http://www.jobpostingtoday.com), Ref# 66358.

### Senior Logistics Manager

sought by BBC Freight Line, Inc. in La Puente, CA. Mng & motvte 3 dirct rep. Dvlp, st-dize, & dploy Logistics struc that is integ w/in globl supp chain & min tot cst while provding supr cust serv. Use conts impvmt & KPI's to drive & quant cst opt & eff. Id & impl initiatives 4 tact opt of daily ops that impv eff & reslt in opt trans mode & wrehouse cap. Partner w/ mngt in resce plan & proc exec, regarding sales forecast, inv lev & supp chain mngmt. Dvlp/mng stratgic alliances w/ 3rd prty logistcs serv 4 trans & wrehousing. Est metrics, track KPIs & ensure timely & acc rprting to supp biz needs. Mont transactional & cntrct expen & all csting data, perf trend anly track & rep cst savngs & eff impvmt. Posit will supv. 3 subords. Req: Master's in Mngt/Logistics/Supp Chain. Prof. in SAP syst, SQL, Lean, & Six Sigma. 10% Domestic Travel Req. Mainly to NY & Chicago. Each Trip w/in 1 Week. Apply: Mail CV to J.Chen, 13936 Valley Blvd #A, La Puente, CA 91746.

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Zeco Systems, Inc. dba Greenlots has openings in Los Angeles, CA. Product Mngr, Smart Grid: Develop analysis, create frameworks & solutions (May be assigned to various, unanticipated site throughout the US). Sr Quality Engr: deploy pipeline, review code + mentorship. Submit resume (principals only) to: [drivera@greenlots.com](mailto:drivera@greenlots.com) & include recruitment source + full job title/s of interest in subject line. EOE

### Accounting Clerk.

Req'd: Bachelors in Accounting, Business Administration, or related. Mail Resume: MAX IGL, INC. 1250 W. Artesia Blvd. Compton, CA 90220

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### MARKETING

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### Fujitsu Glovia Inc.

has a System Engineer (Job Code #FGI00077) job opening in El Segundo, CA: Support the current HTML5/CSS3/JQuery/Java Scripts/MVC based products. Mail resume to attn: HR Shared Services Staffing, 2821 Telecom Pkwy, MC-C1A, Richardson, TX 75082. Must include job title and job code to be considered.

### Civil Engineer. Req'd:

Bachelor's in Civil Engineering or related. Mail Resume: ANGELES CONTRACTOR, INC. 783 Phillips Dr. City of Industry, CA 91748

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### Responsive Technologies Inc

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Req'd: Bachelor's in Multimedia Design, Art, Film, or related. Mail Resume: LIME 'N' CHILI, INC. 800 E. 12th St. #112, Los Angeles, CA 90021

# IRVINE WEEKLY

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SOKA UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER  
PHOTO COURTESY SOKA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

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EVERYDAY EATERY

## CHECKING IN WITH IRVINE'S SERVICE INDUSTRY

### RESTAURANTS CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THEIR WORKERS AND COMMUNITY IN A VARIETY OF WAYS.

BY: TARA FINLEY

The service industry and the restaurants that feed us are among the many things that make Irvine great. With establishments as varied and diverse as our community, you can find a five star meal of any cuisine close by. A favorite pastime for many of us has been trying new dishes and dining at our favorite local haunts. Since the era of COVID-19, many owners have had to temporarily – perhaps permanently – close their doors as the economy struggles and public health is threatened.

Despite the challenges, a tenacious group has remained determined to continue their operations by shifting

to a takeaway-only business model. From keeping Irvine fed to ensuring their staffs' income, we asked some local eateries why they have remained open, what challenges they are facing, and how they can be best supported.

"We feel, given our safety protocols and procedures, the lack of touch points within our establishment, we are a safer alternative to shopping at grocery markets. In addition, seafood is a proven immune and mood booster, so it's important people stay healthy in the midst of this crisis," says founder, CEO and executive chef of Slapfish, Andrew Gruel, when asked for his reasons for continuing service.

Lazy Dog Restaurant and Bar on Jamboree believes that comfort is key in times of uncertainty. "Serving the community is the foundation upon which Lazy Dog was built," they explain. "We believe we are in a place to continue to provide comfort and good food to help people through this and we are doing everything we can to serve our guests with takeout/delivery options, affordable family meals and pantry essentials."

The choice to keep the lights on was not one that was taken lightly, as concerns about operating costs, safety and the ability to adapt to pandemic protocols weighed heavily on owners

and managers.

"We wrestled with the decision to stay open," shares Nasim and Brian Clark of Everyday Eatery. "We know that our staff need hours to pay their bills, and that our community needs healthy food options for takeout and delivery. We have a number of medical centers and hospitals in the area, and many of those nurses and doctors are our regular customers, and sometimes our food and coffee are the highlight of their day. Our main concern was that we didn't want to encourage people to gather around our restaurant, as we usually have long lines and a fun social atmosphere, but we felt that if we could institute excellent safety protocols we would be able to continue serving our customers and staff in a healthy way."

In order to provide the best service possible, many have been reaching out to their customers for feedback on what they need most, modifying their business model to fit consumer demand. Some are offering groceries, others are ensuring out-of-school kids are still being fed.

"We heard from our guests how hard it is right now to get groceries so we've

# FOOD

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started the Lazy Dog home essentials pack," reports Barbara from Lazy Dog. "For \$40, you get eggs, milk, bread, butter, rice, vegetables, chicken and yes, three rolls of toilet paper. Guests can pre-order and reserve their curbside pick up online at lazydogrestaurants.com."

"We are offering 'Kids Eat Free' seven days a week, all-day due to schools being closed," adds Slapfish's Andrew Gruel.

Tim Ho Wan, one of our favorite spots for Cantonese-style dim sum, is cutting costs to make their menu available to everyone. "We offer many deals on our third parties' takeout, currently we have DoorDash, Postmates, Fantuan and GrubHub," explains manager Teddy Wiwat. He hopes that everyone will practice social distancing, stay home and order delivery for their needs as much as possible.

Everyday Eatery knows that groceries are an essential need, and is concerned about the crowding seen at local markets. "It's shocking for us to see long lines to get into empty supermarkets," says owners Nasim and Brian



PHOTO COURTESY OF TIM HO WAN

Clark. "We are making our wholesale supply available to our customers by purchasing groceries in bulk, and breaking them down into smaller lots for our customers to order. We are making things like bread, cheese, rice, grains, tomatoes, fruits and vegetables, berries and nuts, and many other grocery items available that can be very hard to find right now. This is all

new to us and not a profit-center. We are just making sure we can pay for the packaging and labor, and provide supermarket-competitive pricing for those unable to find essentials."

In addition to providing wholesale grocery options, they are also honoring those who are working the front lines of the pandemic.

"If you're a doctor, nurse, or medical technician in the area dealing with everything that is happening now, come get a free coffee or iced tea. You've earned it," appreciates the team at Everyday Eatery.

Lazy Dog is doing something similar. "Now you can sponsor a meal for a frontline health care worker. Guests can go to the Lazy Dog website and contribute to buy meals for those who are healthcare heroes who are helping patients," explains the team. "Lazy Dog locations are delivering meals to hospitals and now guests can help support this."

Lazy Dog is also offering Family Meals that feed five for \$30 and under. For every meal ordered they donate one to an organization serving those in need. To date, more than 10,000 meals have been donated.

In order to stay open, Irvine establishments have had to adhere to strict safety protocols, including the use of masks, gloves and constant sanitization – all while remaining six feet apart.

"We heavily sanitized door handles, any high-point contact area," explains Teddy of Tim Ho Wan. They also change their sanitizer constantly, wear masks and practice a vigorous hand washing routine.

Slapfish, Lazy Dog, and Everyday Eatery are all doing the same.

"Our owner was previously a practic-

ing dentist for more than 10 years, and is extremely familiar with cross-contamination and safety and sterilization procedures," explains the staff at Everyday Eatery. "We restrict entry to one customer household at a time, and have moved our counter to block further entry into the dining area. We sterilize our counter, tables, payment systems and all surfaces regularly and often, and ensure the door is propped open so that no contact is required to enter the restaurant. We have a dedicated contactless pick-up table, and can take orders and deliver curbside with our mobile payment processing. Our staff always wear gloves, and we have hand sanitizer available for all customers. These are all in addition to our usual hand washing and sanitizing routines."

Despite their determination to practice business as usual as much as possible, times are still hard for those still open.

"We are all concerned for our families, our teammates and their families and the community," shares Barbara with Lazy Dog. She remains hopeful, however, saying, "this is a time for us to use our resources to help people in the community today and throughout this challenging time. We know that guests will gather around our tables again and enjoy comforting foods with people they care about. We all look forward to that."

Tim Ho Wan's manager acknowledges that times are tough. "This situation has impacted the restaurant industry heavily, many restaurant(s) have to close down and some may never open back up even after this pandemic. We are grateful that we can still offer take out and most importantly, [are] able to keep some of our team members working. This has definitely been one of the hardest times for the industry we are in, but we have to be strong and support each other to beat this pandemic," confides Teddy.

How can the community help the service industry? By listening to the advice of the CDC and health agencies and practicing social distancing as much as possible, says Brian with Everyday Eatery. "If you would like food or coffee from us (we appreciate the support of our business) consider placing an online order through our website for contactless pick-up, or a phone order for faster service. Delivery is also a great option. Use contactless payment or credit card whenever possible."

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Governor Gavin Newsom announced Friday the creation of a new Task Force on Business and Jobs Recovery meant to aid in reopening California and ensuring the state's economic stability. Comprised of state leaders in labor, health care and the business community, the task force will work together to strategize short and long-term solutions for business and job recovery.

"I am honored that dozens of leaders in business, labor, health and philanthropy are stepping up to meet this moment by committing their time and talent to lift up all Californians," Newsom said. "Through their leadership, and the leadership of California's 40 million residents, I have no doubt we will emerge stronger from this crisis."

Emile Haddad, the Chairman and CEO of FivePoint Communities, was one of the individuals invited to be a part of the group organized to aid in California's recovery from the COVID-19-induced recession. Haddad accepted Newsom's invitation, telling us he is eager to do whatever he can to help in developing options that help California's communities.

"Anything I can do to help," says Haddad.

Calling the development of the Task Force a "very smart and responsible move" by the governor, Haddad acknowledged that Californians are currently afloat in uncharted waters, an issue that the recovery team will have to adapt to as it evolves.

"We have to go into it with open-mindedness and a lot of flexibility because we are going to have to adjust in real-time based on what the data is telling us," explains Haddad. "No one is going to be able to unilaterally turn the ship, this is going to be a group effort where everybody adds incremental value."

Appointees to the group come from all over the state and represent a broad cross-section of backgrounds. From the business community Haddad is joined by Apple CEO Tim Cook, Chipotle CEO Brian Niccol, and Bob Iger, the executive chairman of the Walt Disney Company, among others; the labor community is represented by Mary Kay Henry, president of SEIU; Doug McCarron, president of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and E. Toby Boyd, president of the California Teachers Association, to name a few; and political representation includes Anthony Rendon, speaker of the California State Assembly, Tony



APPLE CEO TIM COOK WITH GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM (VIA @GAVINNEWSOM ON INSTAGRAM)

## REOPENING THE STATE ECONOMY

### GOV. NEWSOM ANNOUNCES TASK FORCE TO HELP GET CALIFORNIANS BACK TO WORK.

BY: TARA FINLEY

Atkins, president pro tempore of the State Senate, Shannon Grove, minority leader of the State Senate and Marie Waldron, minority leader of the State Assembly. The co-chairs of the effort are former presidential candidate, businessman and activist Tom Steyer and Ann O'Leary, the governor's chief of staff. The full list of members can be found online.

"In the coming weeks and months, we will bring together the public and private sectors, outside experts, organized labor, environmental groups and activists to develop recommendations for a recovery plan that works for all Californians, with an emphasis on those communities hardest hit by the pandemic," according to Steyer. "Our goal is to present Gov. Newsom with tangible actions that leverage the task force's ex-

pertise to rebuild California, emphasize smart, green technologies and provide a model for just economic development for our country."

While talks of reopening are promising, the effects will not be immediate.

"We should not be assuming that this is going to be like, 'let's just ring the bell and everyone just goes back to class.' This is going to be a very systematic, phased and thought-through process for us to start reopening the economy without putting people's health at risk," shares Haddad.

"I think that if the numbers keep on trending in the right direction in the coming couple of weeks, that maybe by the first or second week of May we will start seeing the beginning of what could start being open," Haddad hopes.

"I think that there has to be a lot of things that have to be thought through and put in place before we do that."

Newsom's recently unveiled six-part plan to reopen the economy includes increased testing availability, the ability to trace the virus, and enhanced social distancing measures that allow for certain businesses to begin operating again.

"All Californians depend on our state's economy. This public health crisis has battered it, and going forward nothing will be more important than acting to restore our businesses and our jobs. This team of influential leaders should help point the state in the right economic direction, while we continue working to control the pandemic," says Speaker Rendon.

When it comes to preserving the health of the people along with the health of their finances and the state's economy, the task force will have a lot to consider. COVID-19 has hit California's economy hard, with more than 2.8 million unemployment claims filed since March 12.

Haddad provided us with some insights as to what must be discussed, saying, "the rest of the world is balancing the health of the economy with the health of people as to how to open and when to open. We also have to balance something that the rest of the world might not be as sensitive to and that is the constitutional right for privacy."

While many countries are seeing success with mandatory tracking and medical record disclosure, America does not demand the same involuntary actions of its people. Because we don't have a culture of that kind of loss of liberty in this country, the task force will have to consider how to embolden communities to come together and help each other stay safe through voluntary testing and tracking.

As a whole, Haddad hopes that the working group will provide the solutions Californians need.

"I'm always a strong believer that in situations like this, if you focus on taking care of the weakest link, the people who need help the most, then you speed up the recovery, in a meaningful and lasting way," he shares. "The strongest support the weakest. If we can think about things that way, I think that we are going to be able to go through this with the least amount of casualties, both economic and otherwise."

The task force will be meeting twice a month throughout 2020.

PHOTO COURTESY OF COACH HOUSE (BOB STESHETZ)



## PANDEMIC SOUNDCHECK

### HOW IRVINE-AREA CONCERT VENUES ARE WEATHERING THE COVID CLOSEDOWN.

BY: PAUL ROGERS

Under normal circumstances, I'd be writing my usual previews of Irvine-area concerts for the coming month. It's usually a challenge to pick just seven or eight live music events from literally dozens of diverse choices in Irvine and surrounding cities. But the prohibition on gatherings caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has changed all that.

Scouring the web today revealed only postponed or canceled concerts, and shuttered venues. It began in early March with individual shows being rescheduled due to concerns about coronavirus. Then, as the implications of the pandemic became horribly clearer, entire tours got pulled. Soon venues were closing their doors, at first for just weeks, and then indefinitely. A shudder

went through SoCal's concert industry.

Writing at the expected peak of America's COVID-19 outbreak, it's clear that there will be long-term, industry-wide ramifications from venues being closed for extended periods. Some smaller facilities may simply not make it; others may struggle to recover for months. Because even after lockdowns are lifted, music fans may be uneasy about assembling in large numbers.

We spoke to Irvine-area music venues about how they're weathering these unprecedented circumstances, and to poll their predictions for both their own businesses and across the wider SoCal music scene.

**Irvine Weekly: What is your operational status, and when/how do you**

**expect this to change?**

**Renee Bodie, general manager, Soka Performing Arts Center in Aliso Viejo:** We have postponed all remaining shows in our current season. We are working with artists and artist agencies to reschedule all postponed shows into our '20-'21 season.

**Eric Keilman, talent buyer at The Wayfarer in Costa Mesa:** Playing the waiting game like a lot of people are. It's hard to say when we are opening back up. We are pushing for May but want to make sure it's safe for everyone before starting shows again.

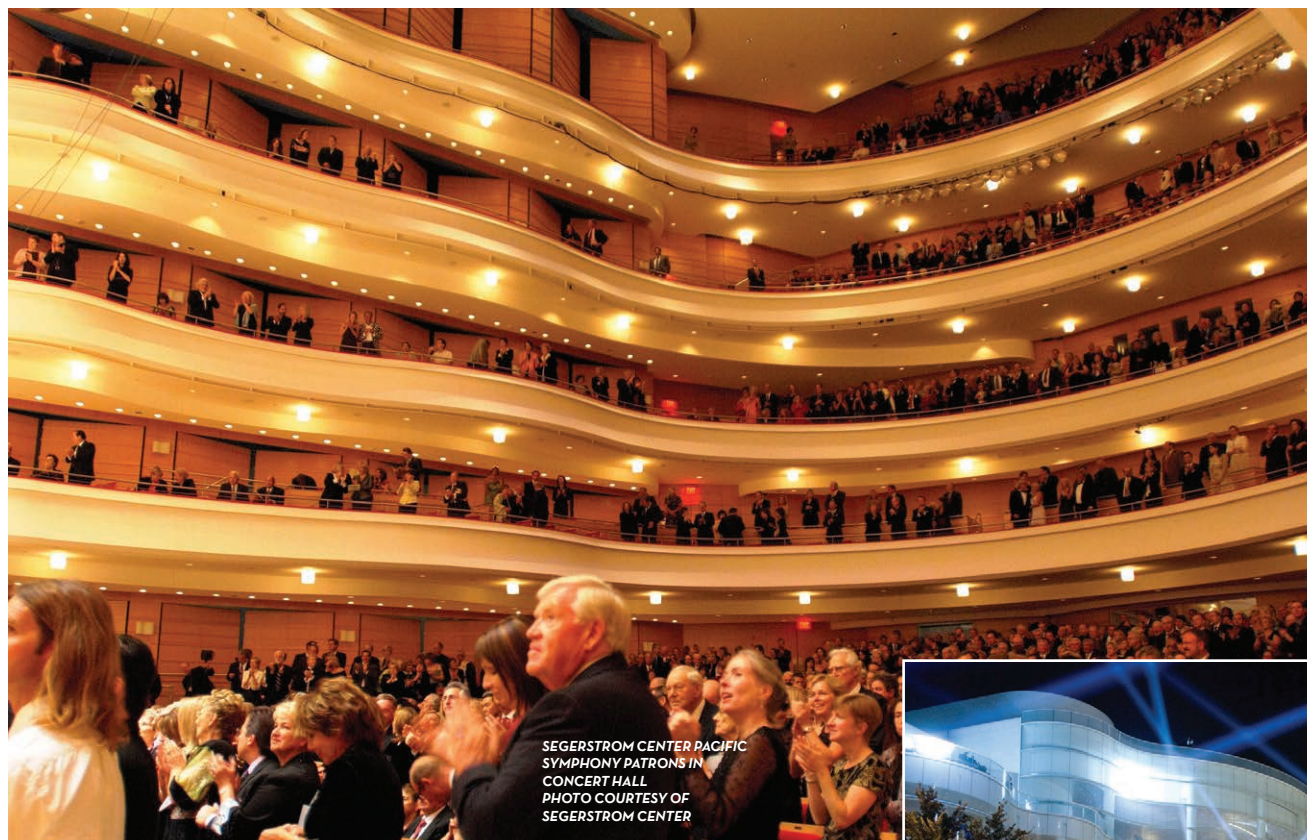
**Gabriela Luna, marketing director at The Coach House Concert Hall in San Juan Capistrano:** It is difficult to predict when our venue will be fully operational again ... We receive changes

to our schedule almost daily as many of our booked artists have decided to postpone their tours until later this year or until 2021.

**Casey Reitz, president of Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa:** We are working every day to reschedule as many shows and artists as possible as soon as possible. We are of the mind and tradition that the show must go on, and so it will at Segerstrom Center as soon as possible.

**Vanessa Kromer, vice president of communications, Nederlander Concerts:** City National Grove of Anaheim is working on virtual event programming, and we encourage fans to follow our social media platforms to stay informed and engaged. We look forward to presenting live entertainment in the future,

# MUSIC



SEGERSTROM CENTER PACIFIC SYMPHONY PATRONS IN CONCERT HALL. PHOTO COURTESY OF SEGERSTROM CENTER

and are committed to providing a safe space for fans to enjoy their favorite artists!

**How has this unique situation impacted your business? What have you been doing to mitigate these effects?**

**Keilman:** We've taken a huge hit. It takes a lot of work from a small, amazing team to run an independent music venue/bar/restaurant. The longer we are closed, the more of a chance we might not open.

**Luna:** We are currently brainstorming ways to maintain engagement within our community and we encourage people to support artists in any way they can.

**Bodie:** Our season ends early in May for the summer, so while we did have to postpone shows scheduled between March and May, that number is far less than many venues ... We are presenting lightly September through December, and scheduling the majority of events for the remainder of our season starting in January 2021.

**What are your predictions for live music in the Irvine area and beyond?**



SEGERSTROM CENTER PACIFIC SYMPHONY AND PACIFIC CHORALE

**How might the "scene" be different after the pandemic?**

**Bodie:** Live music will return – it will always return ... [But] I believe it may take some time for people to feel safe again, and for live audience numbers to return to "normal" levels.

**Tim Dunn, senior director, public relations at Segerstrom Center for the Arts:** It's likely that people will be cautious ... People may return to our free outdoor events on the Argyros Plaza first. And possibly people will continue with safe practices, such as wearing masks.

**Luna:** When government officials allow for regular operations, there may be different approaches on concert culture. For example, many people might be eager to connect with the concert scene and others may be more hesitant



SEGERSTROM CENTER JULIANNE AND GEORGE ARGYROS PLAZA (NICK KOON)

in order to protect their health.

**Keilman:** Good music comes from tough life situations. I am hoping to hear some great music and collaborations come out of this from the local community.

**Do you believe that some venues may have to close down altogether, if the lockdown continues much longer?**

**Keilman:** There is no question some venues will close down. We are pushing to be open but the longer this pandemic keeps us closed, the closer we will be to shutting down.

**Luna:** Smaller venues may be more susceptible to permanently closing if this continues for a few more months.

**Do you foresee a huge rush of interest from concertgoers, in the short**

**term at least, once venues re-open?**

**Luna:** I can see younger adults eagerly looking for events to attend after quarantine so I believe that their enthusiasm to reconnect will help heal the damage done to the entertainment scene. Older music lovers may remain a bit more cautious with large crowds in order to protect their health.

**Keilman:** Everyone's stir crazy right now, so people will want to get out when it's safe ... A small boom right out of the gate will help, but it's going to take a longer, consistent flow for venues to open and stay open.

**Bodie:** I am not sure I see a boom or huge rush in the short term. Our audience is an older demographic, and many may still be reticent to return to "business as usual" until they feel safe. Once that occurs, I believe we will see

a measured climb back to normal ... I would say it will likely take about a year and a half to see "normal" again.

**What would your advice be to readers looking to satiate their cravings for live music while self-isolating?**

**Luna:** Follow your favorite musicians on social media, as many artists have been virtually performing for their fans. As a music fiend, my favorite way to stay connected to music during quarantine is by searching for new music to listen by "crate-digging" on YouTube.

**Bodie:** Streaming, streaming, streaming! Take advantage of all the artists streaming incredible shows. Either for free or for a fraction of what it would cost normally to see these artists.

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## CORONAVIRUS AND BUDGETS

### THE CITY OF IRVINE EXCELS, IRVINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT IN BAD SHAPE.

BY: JOHN M.W. MOORLACH

As with a family or business financial plan, every government budget should include prudent steps to get through a major crisis. In analyzing their audited financial statements, the city of Irvine's finances are in pretty good shape to weather the coronavirus crisis, but Irvine Unified School District (IUSD) may be facing major problems.

In recent years I have issued reports on fiscal soundness based on the annual financial reports of California's 482 cities, 944 school districts, 58 counties, 72 community colleges, the university systems and the state itself. These are simple but profoundly useful proxies to how our various governmental bodies are doing fiscally.

From Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFRs), the metric I use

is the Unrestricted Net Position (UNP), which shows their bottom-line financial situation. The UNP can be positive (good) or negative (bad). Using census data, I derive the per capita UNP showing how much of the surplus or deficit belongs to each person.

For Irvine, the good news is the city's UNP as of June 30, 2018 is \$442 million, the highest of any city in the state. And its UNP per capita is \$1,601, the 35th best in the state. For Orange County, only Tustin is better, at \$1,835 per capita, and 32nd best in the state. Both cities are in my 37th Senatorial District.

For consistency in my latest City Report, which was released in January, I used data for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018. (Irvine already has compiled its report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019. It is substantially the same,

with a UNP of \$434 million. As soon as all of California's cities issue their June 30, 2019 CAFRs, I will publish a more current report.)

#### Irvine Unified's Status

Alas, the good news does not extend to IUSD. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018, its UNP was a negative \$254 million, or a negative \$1,283 per capita. That placed IUSD in 23rd place of the 27 Orange County public school districts.

It had an unrestricted net deficit of \$218 million for the year ended June 30, 2017. This gave it a per capita of (\$1,115) and placed it 744th out of 944 school districts.

For the year ended June 30, 2018, Other Post-Employment Benefit liabilities had to be included on the balance sheets of all municipalities. This increased deficits and created a large amount of movement in the rankings. These once-hidden liabilities for retiree medical benefits account for the \$36 million jump in IUSD's deficit.

Although IUSD increased its negative per capita to (\$1,283), it moved up in the statewide rankings to 706th place. But, the district's trend is not encouraging. And \$372 million in "aggregate net pension liabilities" is a heavy boat anchor to pull.

Since my California Schools report from last December, IUSD reported for

the year ending June 30, 2019 that the UNP has grown to \$277 million.

#### The Tax Temptation

IUSD will be tempted to deal with its impending fiscal crunch with a tax increase, such as Measure E in 2016. To pay for \$319 million in construction bonds, it increased taxes on real property \$29 per \$100,000 of assessed value. More realistically, in a city where the median home value is \$840,000, the tax increase was \$244 per home per year. Proportional costs are passed along to renters.

Measure E passed with 60 percent of voters, 5 points above the necessary 55 percent approval threshold.

Given the increasing financial pressures faced by many Irvine voters today, a tax increase would be unlikely to pass. Indeed, just a month ago on March 3, in Orange County all nine school bond measures lost. So did Proposition 13 for statewide school bonds.

#### What Is to Be Done?

Serious reforms need to be pursued, including considering moving from defined benefit pension plans to shared-risk plans. Given the power of the teachers' and classified workers' unions in blocking needed reforms, there's always the eventual chance of a state takeover of the district under what's called the "AB 1200 system."

It's named after Assembly Bill 1200 from 1991 by then-Assemblywoman Delaine Eastin. Since then, nine districts have had the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team come in as the elected school board was set aside. The districts were given emergency loans and their finances put under strict financial supervision by the state. The biggest loan so far was \$100 million to Oakland Unified in 2003.

Do duly elected school board members want to cede budgetary decisions and indiscriminate reforms to the state? Can teachers unions accommodate the needs of teachers, parents, students and taxpayers? Am I being too negative? Not in the least.

We are now at the beginning of a massive economic crisis. Let's admit that and start working to stabilize one of the finest school districts in the nation.

**John M.W. Moorlach, R-Costa Mesa, represents the 37th District in the California Senate, which includes all of Irvine.**



## COVID-19 AND SMALL BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

### MAINTAINING STRENGTH THROUGH A CRISIS.

BY: GRANT BROGGI

On March 17, 2020, my gyms were shut down when Orange County ordered us to stay home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I watched the news that night and thought about the impact it would have on people's lives.

People that would lose jobs, people that would be unable to pay their rent and people that would struggle to buy groceries.

My gym – The Strength Co. – helps people of all ages gain strength through resistance training because we believe improvements in physical strength can improve everyone's health and wellbeing.

That night, I not only wondered how a shutdown would affect the strength of my members – the thing we have directly helped them gain – but I also wondered how it would affect their minds. Strength training is not just a physical release for people, it's also personal growth. And now, more than ever, people were going to need to keep growing.

It wasn't about me anymore. It was about my members. It's always been about our members. In watching the news that night, it became very clear what had to be done.

*I needed to empty out my gyms and take the weights to the people.*

I am a former Marine Corps officer and current Marine Corp Reserve. In periods of crisis I can hear my training in my head:

*It's not about me, it's about the Marines.*

It was my job to take care of Marines. I took care of them on base as an officer and a leader at home. I took care of them in Afghanistan when we deployed. And I took care of them when they needed to get strong through barbell training. As I watched their lives transform through training, I became convinced that everyone needed this.

I opened The Strength Company in 2017. And I had one purpose in mind –

to help others get strong. The Strength Co. is not merely a place to "workout," or a place to "exercise." It's a place to help people get stronger. Everyone who trains there believes that they need to be strong – we help them get there.

*It's a different kind of place.*

It's not a big gym with men flexing in mirrors and dropping weights; it's a place where you take your mother because you want her to get stronger. And at The Strength Company, you know she'll be taken care of. It's a place where a 78-year-old woman claps for the 22-year-old man after he completes a weight he's never done. It's a place where a father and daughter train



together at 5 a.m. because they know they need to get stronger. She's there to be a better wrestler, he's there because of his back pain.

And it's a place where the coaches genuinely care about the people. Ron, Andrew, Elsa, Jules, Mike, Dylan, Jeff and Connor. Our coaches care about each lifter in their classes. When I began hiring staff, I sought out people who not only believed in strength training, but also genuinely cared for people.

*That's The Strength Company.*

After deciding we had to help our members continue to lift during this crisis, I went with a Marine buddy of mine to the gym and at 6:45 a.m. in the morning started taking everything apart. We unbolted racks, took the concrete screws out of the floor and disassembled everything.

*Everything.*

I took every fixed asset I had, around \$100,000 worth, and loaded it all in the backs of pickup trucks. Because we only had 8 racks in each gym, with only 2 gyms, we were only going to be able to outfit 16 homes. We have 160 members. We had to make a few calls.

We began calling warehouses. We began calling other gyms. We asked for

weights and squat racks as I realized barbells were becoming very valuable. Prices had been raised and people were being ripped off. On Thursday March 19, just one day after we had closed our gym's doors, I had purchased 3,000 pounds of weights.

We began delivering equipment and weights to our members, but ran into a problem when we ran out of squat racks. So we started building squat racks. We started building benches.

There we were, in the middle of a pandemic, not knowing when our business was going to reopen and we were giving things away.

Marine friends heard what we were doing and they came and helped. Coaching staff stepped up to the plate. It reminded me of my days as a Marine Corps officer, deploying artillery. The captain would head out first, secure the location and then call back to his men, "Come and execute the mission." It was the captain's vision, but his men executed it.

*This was my vision, but together my staff executed it.*

Coach Mike was in charge of setting up the installs. Coach Jules rode shotgun as we went house to house

delivering equipment in facemasks and gloves. Coach Elsa started calling each member every day to check in on them. Coaches Dylan, Andrew, Ron, Jeff and Connor began running the online coaching.

We immediately pivoted. Not only were we installing gyms in people's homes, we were giving them the same service they had when they were in the gym: live, one-on-one coaching.

A local business owner buddy of mine asked, "What are you going to do when this is all over? How are you going to get all your stuff back?" I told him I had no doubt that the day we say we need it back, every last pound will be delivered to the gym.

*We're family.*

*That's The Strength Co.*

*And this was the right thing to do right now.*

#### **OUR PEOPLE WILL BE STRONG**

Last month I had a business plan and was ready to sign a lease for what would have been my third gym's location in Lake Forest. Today, both of my gyms are completely empty. Well not exactly true, one of them is now manufacturing steel squat racks. But when

the shutdown order from the county arrived, I thought, "What do I need to do?"

I needed to do the same thing I would have done if I were in combat. I needed to take care of my people. I needed to lean on my staff and the people who believe in what we're doing. I needed to tell them that I needed their help.

I needed to continue keeping our members strong and improving people's lives, and I needed to provide a service and a value to my clients and members. That's why we're here.

I'm not here for the sales or to make a fortune. I truly believe in strength training, and that is at the heart of why I opened a gym. It's why my mom and dad train. It's why I was willing to empty my gyms and give away every fixed asset I had. I believe this isn't optional. If you want to survive, you must have strength and I had to keep my members training.

If this pandemic lasts for months, I can say one thing: our people will be strong. We've outfitted nearly 100 home gyms in Orange County and the L.A. area in the last three weeks. The Strength Co. family is a strong family – and it's always been about the members.



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“If not for Keith’s compassion and superior defense strategy, we might have lost all of our hard-earned retirement savings to a very opportunistic claimant. The stress prior to retaining Keith was nearly unbearable.”

- Jim and Carol Hoffman