

The Desert Sun

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SPECIAL SECTION INSIDE

FREE-ISH

THE RICH BUT CONFLICTING
HISTORY OF JUNETEENTH



Colorado Rockies catcher Brian Serven hugs Maureen Arcand, the mother of his Palm Desert High teammate Kelly Arcand, after playing for the Rockies at Petco Park in San Diego on June 11. The Arcands were part of a large group of family and friends who attended the game to watch Serven play.

ANDY ABEYTA/THE DESERT SUN

‘I belong here’

Catching up with Palm Desert native Brian Serven, now in majors

Shad Powers Palm Springs Desert Sun | USA TODAY NETWORK

Brian Serven used to attend Padres games at Petco Park in San Diego as a kid, but he never had a vantage point quite like he did on Saturday, June 11. • Serven returned to Petco Park, but this time, the 27-year-old Palm Desert High graduate was stationed behind home plate as a catcher for the Colorado Rockies.

Called up to the big leagues by the Rockies in May, Serven made his 11th major league start, but the closest one to his Southern California home. That’s why there were about 15 family members and 40 or 50 friends in attendance.

“It is a little bit surreal, I can’t lie,” Serven told The Desert Sun in an exclusive interview in the Rockies clubhouse before the game. “I came to games at Petco, Angel Stadium, Dodger Stadium and to be playing in a

stadium like this where I came and watched games as a kid, it’s going to be, yeah, it’s going to be surreal, that’s the best way to put it.”

Indeed. It’s a Southern California baseball full-circle moment for Serven. Born in Palm Desert, he learned the sport on youth diamonds around the Coachella Valley and was part of two Palm Desert teams that

See **SERVEN**, Page 7A

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK 2022

Local nonprofit wins \$2 million for Hispanic entrepreneurship

James B. Cutchin and Eliana Perez
Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

A majority of the Coachella Valley’s population — about 52% across its nine cities according to the latest census data — are Hispanic or Latino. More than 40% of these adults live below the federal poverty line, according to a 2016 study by Palm Desert-based research group Harc Inc., compared with about 15% for non-Hispanic adults.

One man believes entrepreneurship is the way to change that.

Armando Ehrenzweig, founder of the Palm Desert-

More inside

Find additional stories about the USA’s changing hiring dynamics.

based nonprofit Get in Motion Entrepreneurs, has been holding events and publishing Spanish-language content to help current and aspiring entrepreneurs establish and grow their small businesses for more than a decade. His organization recently won \$2 million to fund training, technical assistance and microgrants for small businesses as part of a coalition of

See **NONPROFIT**, Page 14A

Soho House planned for Palm Springs’ Colony 29 site

Plans show event space will be turned into ‘modern’ swim club

James B. Cutchin
Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

Soho House, a posh private-member club with locations in major cities around the world, could be coming to Palm Springs in early 2024.

Representatives for the club submitted documents to the Palm Springs Planning Commission this week detailing plans to turn the Colony 29 event space into a “modern-day swim club” operated by Soho House.

Soho House’s Head of Communication in the Americas Jakob Hesketh wrote in an email that the development would add limited new construction to the existing Colony 29 site, rehabilitate its existing facilities and “ensure integration and preservation of the historic character of Colony 29.”

According to the submitted planning documents, the new swim club would operate from 7 a.m. to 2 a.m. daily and host up to 350 day-use guests. It would feature a new swimming pool, deck area and “Swim Club Building” located next to the pool. Although the plans describe the Swim Club Building as a single building, they detail multiple structures within it consisting of three main components.

These include an entry area with two stucco and tile buildings with clay tile roofs that will house a kitchen and mechanical equipment, a two-story stucco pool house with an exposed wood beam and truss ceiling and a second-floor terrace with a bar, and a row of 13 cabanas incorporated into a stucco archway wall along the south side of the pool.

The plans describe the proposed club’s design as “a modern interpretation of the Spanish Colonial Revival style compatible with the character of the historic buildings on the Project Site and appropriate to the distinct desert sensibilities of Palm Springs.”

See **PLANS**, Page 22A

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Getting back out there after 2 years

Tips for restarting in-person networking

Rachel Lookk
Special to USA TODAY

You’ve heard it before: If you want to move up in your career or find a new job, networking with the right people is critical. You can get valuable information on career paths, and you’ll be more likely to hear about job opportunities before they’re posted.



Lookk Building rapport with others can be easier and more authentic in a face-to-face situation, leading to more spontaneous conversations. But after a two-year hiatus for many in-person professional meetings and events, getting back out there again can feel new again, and frankly, a bit daunting.

To get started, give yourself – and everyone else – a break. It’s hard to get back to networking, especially if it never felt easy to begin with. Even if you’re back in an office, many casual interactions in work life still aren’t there. So how do you push yourself to network and be intentional about it?

Know the goal. Networking is based on finding areas of common interest with someone and building a mutually beneficial relationship. It’s not just about reaching out to people who can help you



People are returning to in-person networking after a two-year hiatus. GETTY IMAGES

– think about what you can offer. Are there people on your contact list who might be interested in a job you know about or would benefit from being introduced to one of your colleagues? Reach out, and maybe they’ll return the favor.

Make a plan and hold yourself to it. Come up with a list of people you want to reconnect with and set specific goals. For example, give yourself to the end of summer to meet with three people for coffee or lunch and attend one organized event. After you meet with someone or attend an event, assign yourself action items –

like sending email follow-ups or connecting with new contacts on LinkedIn.

Start with something easy. Connect with a colleague you already have a relationship with, but haven’t seen for a while. Summer is a great time to meet outdoors, where it’s easier to feel comfortable. Consider taking the initiative at your current workplace to plan an outdoor get-together with co-workers.

Grab a friend. Some conferences are returning in-person. That can be a great way to network, but if going to a conference alone feels overwhelming, ask a

friend or a professional colleague to go with you.

Think small. If you’re reluctant to attend a big industry conference, try looking for smaller conferences at less-crowded venues. Oftentimes, a national organization will have regional chapters that host smaller gatherings. And check out what’s happening at your alma mater for smaller-scale networking opportunities. Things like alumni events or regional professional meetings can be a good way to reconnect or make new connections.

Make the ask. When you approach someone for an in-person meet-up, give the person an out. Phrase it along the lines of: “It’s been a long time since we’ve connected. I’d love to meet for coffee or lunch, if you’re comfortable getting together.” But don’t make assumptions that everyone is OK meeting in-person again.

There’s always Zoom. If someone isn’t comfortable getting together in-person, see if they are open to a virtual meeting or a phone call. The longer you let a relationships sit without any contact, the harder it can be to rekindle.

I’ve made my own goals to reconnect with more people in-person this summer, too. It’s a great time to get back out there, and you’ve got nothing to lose by trying.

Rachel Lookk is a career and leadership coach with the Office of Career Services at the University of Maryland’s Robert H. Smith School of Business.

Nonprofit

Continued from Page 1A

four nonprofits led by Palm Springs-based Caravanseraí Project.

Ehrenzweig said his own journey from working odd jobs as a newly arrived immigrant to being a business consultant and entrepreneur left him a firm believer in the power of entrepreneurship to change lives — and of the need for more Spanish-language support for small business owners.

“That’s why I’m so passionate about it,” he said, “because I was one of them.”

Making connections

Born and raised in Sonora, Mexico, Ehrenzweig said he immigrated to the U.S. in 2001 to be with his aunt in the Coachella Valley. Now 47, Ehrenzweig said he did a variety of jobs when he first arrived in the valley. This included everything from drawing landscaping and pool blueprints to washing RVs.

“We usually do what we see around,” Ehrenzweig said. “That’s why you can see so many people, ladies doing housekeeping and so many boys doing construction, because that’s what we see around.”

Eventually, Ehrenzweig grew tired of working for others and decided to build something for himself.

“It was more like becoming a self employee and trying to make more money,” he said. “But then you realize you don’t know the culture, you don’t know how the system works.”

The aspiring entrepreneur said he was able to find help and support through the U.S. Small Business Administration’s Small Business Development Center program, although he said his “super bad” English skills presented a constant obstacle in grasping the instructional content offered. This process helped nudge Ehrenzweig toward the idea of holding informational and networking events in Spanish for local entrepreneurs. He created Get in Motion Entrepreneurs as a sole proprietorship — the simplest type of business structure owned and run by one individual — and held its first event in November 2011 at the Heritage Palms golf club in Indio.

Over the subsequent years, the organization’s events grew to include larger audiences and partnered events with organizations such as the Small Business Administration and the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership.

‘Everything for me changed after taking those classes’

People also began hearing about Get in Motion through word-of-mouth: Alejandra Chavez, 54, said a friend of hers who is also an entrepreneur told her about the nonprofit in 2013. At the time, she was looking to learn how to properly pay her employees after her housekeeping business was audited by the Employment Development Department because she had accidentally been processing payroll incorrectly.

“We know how to do the work, but often we don’t know the legal terms and conditions that come with a business,” Chavez said, elaborating that she had been using 1099 forms, meant for subcontractors, to pay her full-time employees when she started her company in 2011. “Once I found (Get in Motion), I started organizing my business and the

payroll with all the correct government requirements,” she said.

Chavez is originally from Mexico City and she said finding the tools and resources she needed to be an entrepreneur in Spanish was key. “At this point, English is not a barrier for me, but understanding everything that I needed to was easier in my native language,” she said.

She also described having more confidence to ask questions in Spanish as opposed to English, which she did not know as well during the earlier years of her business. She said learning about entrepreneurship in Spanish eliminated the intimidating factor that may have made her “stay in doubt.”

As Chavez continued to attend workshops and classes offered by Get in Motion, she became aware of the benefits of establishing her business as a corporation, which she said included certain protections under the law as well as being taken more seriously by clients. It is registered under Ally Cleaning Services Inc. and operates as Alejandra’s Cleaning Service. Chavez said she also learned about creating a website and growing her company’s social media presence through Get in Motion. “I began to work with a woman at one of the workshops to create my company logo. That’s another benefit, that you start meeting all types of entrepreneurs,” she added.

Though her initial intent was not to grow her business, Chavez said it was a side effect of her new business savvy. When she began Get in Motion courses, Chavez had two employees. She eventually expanded to 14, additionally hiring seasonal workers to clean short-term vacation rentals during busy festival months or to provide cleaning services following large outdoor events.

She noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic, she lost half of her full-time staff, but that the business flow has been steadily recovering. “There is more work than employees right now,” she said.

“Everything for me changed after taking those classes,” Chavez said. “There comes a point where you ask yourself, ‘Did I really do all that?’”

COVID pivot and \$2 million boost

Get in Motion Entrepreneurs incorporated as a nonprofit in 2017, recruited a board of directors and by 2019 was hosting events with hundreds of attendees. Ehrenzweig continued to work full time to pay his bills, although he was able to upgrade his job to something more aligned with his interests and Get in Motion’s mission.

“One of my facilitators that I had been collaborating (with) a lot, she invited me, ‘Armando, I have my agency. You’re amazing what you do with your nonprofit ... Come, let’s work together. Let’s join forces,’” Ehrenzweig said.

The Get in Motion founder said he joined an agency focused on providing business consulting services to Hispanic and Latino business owners, aptly called Hispanic Business Group — a role he still holds today.

“It’s helping me to really shape the nonprofit better,” Ehrenzweig said. “Being in an agency where everything is paid, you realize Latinos have more money than they had in the past. But they need help. They need a lot of help.”

Ehrenzweig said the majority of the Latino businesses Get in Motion sees are service businesses in areas such as housekeeping, construction, or tax. “Concrete block, roofing, dry wall, landscaping, most of them are services,” he

said.

That observation broadly aligns with national trends, according to a 2020 Stanford report on Latino entrepreneurship, which found that the number of Latino-owned employer businesses grew the most in the construction and finance industries between 2012 and 2017. Employer businesses, as the name suggests, refer to businesses that have employees beyond the single owner of the business. The report found that the number of such Latino-owned businesses grew by 14% between 2012 and 2017, more than twice the national average of 6% growth.

Latino-owned businesses that participate in formal business organizations — such as trade associations — are more than twice as likely to get the funding they need to run and grow their businesses than those that don’t participate in networking activities, according to the Stanford report, suggesting a key role for groups like Get in Motion.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the long-running disruption to in-person events created an existential problem for Get in Motion Entrepreneurs.

“I was this close, this close, to closing,” said Ehrenzweig, holding his fingers closely together. “It was just hard times, but then, somehow we survived it.”

That survival centered on a pivot to digital platforms. After experimenting with video content, the organization landed on a podcast format, which Ehrenzweig said has “been a hit.” The podcast posts new episodes at least twice monthly on platforms such as Spotify and YouTube with interviews with experts on subjects ranging from how to maintain sales records and navigate small business insurance to how to get paid to clean a house.

Ehrenzweig said the new format has allowed Get in Motion to reach more listeners — roughly 10,000, according to his latest count — and provide a greater volume of business education content.

“We used to only have one event per month because live events take time and energy for your team,” he said. “With the podcast we’re able to produce two episodes per month, which is allowing us to deliver more information in Spanish.”

One area where Get in Motion continued to struggle was with technical assistance for businesses in the wake of the pandemic. Funding to pay the relevant consultants on topics such as business tax was a constant challenge, according to Ehrenzweig.

This changed in late May when Get in Motion received a \$2 million grant from the Employment Training Panel of California as part of a coalition of nonprofits led by Palm Springs-based Caravanseraí Project. Founded in 2016, Caravanseraí supports social entrepreneurship in the region through a training and accelerator program, technical assistance and classes. The exact definition of a social enterprise varies, but such ventures generally involve a for-profit business that includes promoting some social good as a core part of its model. Some, such as Caravanseraí, take a broader look at the sector to include nonprofit entrepreneurial ventures. Get in Motion participated in the organization’s latest Social Entrepreneur Engagement and Development Lab, or SEED Lab, cohort, which graduated in May.

Caravanseraí partnered with three other regional nonprofits focused on economic development and entrepreneurship to create a program focused on supporting Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs

in the Inland Empire, regardless of their immigration status. These included Uplift San Bernardino/Make Hope Happen Foundation and Asociación de Emprendedor@s, alongside Get in Motion.

Mihai Patru, Caravanseraí’s CEO, said his organization asked Get in Motion to join in the collaboration early this year both to provide an opportunity to access significant funding that a startup might not otherwise have and in light of Ehrenzweig’s specific experience with the program’s target group.

“We knew he would be an excellent fit because of his work with Spanish speaking entrepreneurs in the Coachella Valley region,” Patru wrote in an email.

He added that the collaboration would be an “opportunity to achieve the social impact both organizations are committed to: support social entrepreneurs from historically marginalized and underserved communities in the Inland Empire.”

The majority — \$1.5 million — of the grant funding will be used to provide micro-grants of up to \$7,500 for graduates of business training programs that the group plans to organize for Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs. The remainder of the money will be used to fund the training and other elements of the program administration.

Ehrenzweig said participants will be selected by a committee organized by the nonprofit coalition. He said details about this committee and the program were still being worked out, but that the coalition hoped to have more details available and open the program for applications sometime this summer.

Get in Motion will use its platform to channel entrepreneurs toward the program, according to Ehrenzweig, who said it was a natural fit with his organization’s focus on connecting Latino entrepreneurs with funding and resources to help their businesses succeed.

He said both Get in Motion and the new program’s ultimate goals were not to make anyone rich, but to build up Latino business leaders that can give back to their communities.

“If we can help someone to make a living of \$50,000 to \$60,000 per year, they will be super happy. They will be OK,” he said. “This is what I wanted.”

“So many people live in the minimum wage levels; so many family members (are) living under the same roof because they don’t have enough money to pay for a house,” he added. “They’re just looking for a way to make more money.”

When asked about the biggest challenges facing Latino and Hispanic entrepreneurs, Ehrenzweig said simply “trust.”

“We have a hard time trusting,” he said. “There is a reason why, you know, so many bad things happening,” adding that areas like putting financial information online could be particularly challenging.

“It’s better than it was 5-10 years ago, but still, even us, if people ask me what you have been doing for the past 10 years, I’ve been building trust,” he said.

He said followers of Get in Motion regularly ask him why he is doing what he is with the organization and what the “catch” is.

“It takes time,” he said. “I totally get it. I was there. I’m still there.”

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