

Groves Cabin Theatre to reopen in Morongo Valley

Kevin Caparoso

Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

The show must go on. So the Groves Cabin Theatre will reopen on Oct. 28 in Morongo Valley with two showings for the price of one.

The one-act plays kicking off the 2022-23 season are both by Edward Albee — “The Death of Bessie Smith” and “Marriage Play” — and will be performed back-to-back with a general admission price of \$25.

“We are proud to reintroduce Groves Cabin Theatre with two plays that are provocative and ever relevant,” Abe Daniels, the venue’s new artistic director, said in a press release. “We thank our many supporters, as well as the pool of impressive regional talent we’ve been fortunate to tap, for investing their sweat and resources in our mission to return this beloved asset to the community.”

The double bill will be presented every weekend from Oct. 28 through Nov. 20. The shows will start at 7:30 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays and 2:30 p.m. on Sundays. The premiere showing on Oct. 28 will cost \$35 and will have food and beverages provided as part of a gala celebration.

Groves Cabin Theatre is an award-winning performing arts venue and tradition located 30 minutes north of Palm Springs. The intimate theater was founded by Bill and Joy Groves in the mid-1980s as an innovative showcase for the dramatic arts, and the small but mighty operation continues to offer community theater in the High Desert.

The venue is now under the umbrella of the Wind Walkers Medicine Wheel theatrical family that includes the Joshua Tree Summer Theatre.

For tickets and more information, visit: www.windwalkersmedicinewheel.com

Officials present \$79 million check to CSUSB Palm Desert

Jonathan Horwitz

Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

Elected officials gathered in Palm Desert Wednesday to celebrate the \$79 million state budget allocation to build a new student services building at the California State University, San Bernardino Palm Desert campus.

This is the state’s first major investment in the campus’ infrastructure. Previous buildings were funded by private donations and local governments.

Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, D-Coachella, said the investment was a critical step toward the Coachella Valley having an independent four-year university.

He and Assemblymember Chad Mayes, I-Rancho Mirage, pushed hard for the state funding with the backing of many Coachella Valley officials.

They spoke Wednesday along with mayors Jan Harnik, Palm Desert; and Steven Hernandez, Coachella.

Harnik said she’d like to see another \$100 million added to the check.

“We’re not going to take our foot off the accelerator,” she said.

Once complete in 2026 or 2027, the building will include centers for tutoring, career development, culture, health and recreation plus an expanded library, food services and bookstore.

Sarah Lopez, student body vice president, said it will monumentally change student life.

Currently, students have to commute to San Bernardino to access many services, and there is no gym or food services on the Palm Desert campus.

“It’s unfair,” Lopez said. “We pay the same fees and receive less services.”

The new building will expand the campus eastward on land CSUSB already owns.

It will be the first physical campus expansion since 2008, said CSUSB Palm Desert Dean Jake Zhu. Back then, CSUSB Palm Desert had fewer than 850 enrolled students.

Today it has more than 2,200, and the campus offers bachelor’s and master’s degrees, a doctorate in educational leadership, teaching credentials and certificates.

Still, Lopez said some classes required for degrees are only offered in San Bernardino, and many students struggle with a sense of belonging as they commute between both campuses.

By comparison, CSUSB serves more than 20,000 students in total.

While the campus has a long way to go before it possibly receives independent Cal State University status, longtime Coachella Valley politician and philanthropist Richard Oliphant, a visionary for the Palm Desert campus since the 1980s, left Wednesday’s announcement feeling determined and grateful as he reflected on the campus’ humble beginnings as a land lease for temporary trailers.

“The direction we’re going has far exceeded my original vision,” he said.

PSP Airport Commission OKs one artwork, postpones vote on second

Janet Wilson

Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Palm Springs Airport Commission on Wednesday night unanimously approved the continued display of a piece of art that has hung in limbo since 2020, but delayed approval of a second, much larger piece to give airport managers time to weigh in on an appropriate location at the bustling location.

The first piece, called “A Tale of Survival,” is comprised of four sets of brightly painted ping pong balls that dangle high above travelers’ heads in the Regional Concourse. The artwork was designed and created by Linda Maxson and Debi Grupe to be a bright counterpoint to political polarization, and to welcome tourists, members of the military and others arriving here.

A small sign below has long said it is on temporary display — until April 2020. But after Wednesday’s vote, and if the city council signs off as well, it will be fully accepted into the city’s permanent public arts collection and remain in the spot where it was installed.

“I think it’s perfect in its current location,” said commissioner Todd Burke. “I certainly would be delighted to continue that in its place.”

The second work, “Banned Booty,” bequeathed by the estate of artist Steve Maloney, stretches 22 feet long and a foot and a half wide, mimicking a section of airport runway topped with thousands of personal items confiscated by TSA agents. Maloney, who was executive chair of the Palm Springs Art Museum Board of Trustees, died in 2021.

The gift includes all installation and maintenance costs. Public Arts Commissioner Gary Armstrong said “the size is a challenger,” but a good possible location could be inside the front entrance of the main terminal along a currently blank wall.

But some of the airport commissioners, noting the facility has more upcoming construction projects, asked that the arts panel tour the facility with airport staff to determine the best location.

Airport General Manager Harry Barrett said the pieces and other efforts by the arts commission tie nicely into the facility’s desire to have a fuller art program, as long as they can be integrated with airline and passenger activity.

“I’m not concerned about visibility (of art pieces), but I am in terms of circulation and potential con-



The Palm Springs International Airport has plentiful outdoor space and artwork beyond the TSA security checkpoint for passengers to enjoy, Sept. 1.
TAYA GRAY/THE DESERT SUN

straints,” said Barrett.

Armstrong said the public arts commission already has requests in to city staff to gain access beyond security checkpoints, where most of their long-displayed current works are located, and they would be happy to take a tour and work with staff there.

“My feeling is the art should be in the permanent collection, but not in a permanent location,” said Armstrong. “We can move things around as necessary.”

Some airport commissioners also asked that contracts or other arrangements be made to set defined periods of time that a piece would be on display, before being rotated out for fresh work.

While there are currently no set terms, that goal dovetails with plans by the arts commission to replace or supplement sculptures that have been on display at the airport for decades, and to more regularly rotate works.

Arts Commission Chair Russell Pritchard said he and Palm Springs Art Museum Executive Director Adam Lerner hope to tour the airport by month’s end to see what’s there and discuss possible loans from the museum’s collections.

Armstrong also noted that large sculptures set on gravel could make striking replacements for sometimes-dying patches of lawn on the airport grounds.

Janet Wilson is a reporter for The Desert Sun. She can be reached at janwilson@gannett.com or on Twitter @janetwilson66.

Brother of suspect in slaying of 4 in family pleads not guilty

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MERCED, Calif. — The younger brother of a man charged in the kidnapping and killing of a family in central California pleaded not guilty Thursday to charges he helped his brother.

Alberto Salgado was charged with conspiracy to commit robbery, accessory after the fact, and arson of property, the Merced County District Attorney’s Office said.

Salgado, 41, was arrested days after authorities arrested his older brother, Jesus Salgado, 48. The elder Salgado pleaded not guilty last week to kidnapping and killing an 8-month-old baby, her parents and uncle.

Alberto Salgado was appointed a public defender by the court. The Merced County Public Defender’s office didn’t immediately return a message seeking comment.

Jesus Salgado allegedly kidnapped the family at gunpoint from their trucking business on Oct. 3. Authorities say Salgado, a former employee with a long-standing dispute, likely killed them within an hour.

The victims’ bodies were found two days after the kidnapping. A farm worker in an almond orchard in the San Joaquin Valley, California’s agricultural heartland, discovered the remains of Aroohi Dheri; her 27-year-old mother Jasleen Kaur; her 36-year-old father Jasdeep Singh; and her 39-year-old uncle Amandeep Singh.

Surveillance video showed the family members were taken from their business in Merced, a city of 86,000 people about 125 miles southeast of San Francisco, by a suspect later identified as Jesus Salgado and driven away in Amandeep Singh’s pickup truck.

Firefighters found the truck on fire in the town of Winton, 10 miles north of Merced, hours after the kidnapping.

Woman charged with benefits scam using names of convicted killers

Don Thompson

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — A California woman was charged with using the names of convicted killers, including Scott Peterson, to collect more than \$145,000 in fraudulent unemployment benefits — a small but headline-grabbing part of more than \$20 billion stolen in similar scams during the coronavirus pandemic, prosecutors said Wednesday.

Brandy Iglesias made her initial court appearance Wednesday on 10 charges including grand theft, forgery, identity theft and making false statements, the California attorney general’s office announced.

Iglesias didn’t enter a plea. She was ordered held on \$20,000 bail pending an Oct. 26 court date.

An email seeking comment from her attorney, Ariana Alejandre, wasn’t immediately returned.

One set of charges was for using Peterson’s name to claim \$18,562 from the state Employment Development Department in June 2020. Peterson was convicted of murdering his pregnant wife and unborn child and dumping their bodies into San Francisco Bay on Christmas Eve 2002. But a judge is deciding whether Peterson must have a new trial because of juror misconduct.

Iglesias is also charged with filing for unemployment in the name of Cary Stayner in 2020, collecting \$20,194. Stayner confessed to killing three women who were sightseeing in Yosemite National Park in 1999.

Peterson and Stayner were among numerous inmates who had claims filed in their names, prosecutors said in 2020.

Iglesias was employed by a private company that contracted with San Quentin State Prison, where Peterson and Stayner are housed, and may have used her job to get access to prisoners’ personal information, prosecutors said.

“Don’t let the infamous names distract you from who this crime really hurt — the most vulnerable in our society.”

Rob Bonta

Attorney general

Iglesias allegedly collected the fraudulent benefits from April 2020 to September 2021.

She was arrested Saturday in Contra Costa County by a team of agents from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

“Don’t let the infamous names distract you from who this crime really hurt — the most vulnerable in our society,” Attorney General Rob Bonta said in announcing the charges.

Such thefts also harm “families in need, parents left without jobs during a pandemic, and Californians struggling to get by,” he said.

Iglesias also filed for jobless benefits under her own name, Bonta said.

She had a previous conviction for robbery in Contra Costa County in 2005, his office said.

California has one of the nation’s largest public benefit systems. More than 20 million people filed more than 60 million claims for unemployment, disability insurance and paid family leave over the past decade.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic — when many people were unable to continue working because of business lockdowns, it was sending out more than 600,000 application documents daily.

The California Employment Development Department has said the state stopped \$120 billion worth of fraud attempts in 2020 and 2021 but failed to stop \$20 billion in fraud.

That included \$810 million paid in the names of roughly 45,000 prison inmates who weren’t eligible.

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