

OPINION

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION



RICK MCKEE

Philanthropy section returns, thanks to community support

Kate Franco
Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

This is the story of how two organizations came together through philanthropy to do the right thing for the community.

This isn't the first time something like this has happened in the Coachella Valley — a special place that is known for its stunning natural beauty as much as its giving spirit — and it certainly won't be the last.

But because of a collaborative effort between The Desert Sun and the Inland Empire Community Foundation, I am pleased to announce that Desert Scene and Giving, a long-running section in the Sunday Desert Sun, will be returning on Oct. 22. Tasked with reviving and nurturing this section is a familiar person to those in the community. Winston Gieseke has been rehired in the role of philanthropy editor and has been hard at work since the beginning of September to create a new and improved section that he is excited to debut.

For those who might not be familiar, Desert Scene and Giving is a place where we feature news about nonprofit donors and volunteers, and the important work they do in the community. We preview upcoming activities and events for a wide variety of organizations, regardless of their marketing budgets, in both story and calendar form. And we report on local grant and funding opportunities as well as changes in leadership at nonprofits.

Gieseke put it well: “Giving’ is about so much more than donating money. People can give with their time or their expertise. Just showing up can make a world of difference for someone.”

Fittingly, this has been made possible because this community cares.

Staff cuts and a way forward

So, how did we get here? Let me back up a bit. The Desert Scene and Giving section went on hiatus in December 2022 due to staff budget cuts. Knowing how important this section is to the community — and the volunteers, donors and organizations who operate in the philanthropic sphere — former Executive Editor Julie Makinen and I partnered with Brie Griset-Smith at IECF with a challenge in mind: to find a way to bring the section and its editor back and then

work to ensure its future. Our guiding principle? Our hard work will serve to lift the voices of others' hard work.

Over the course of nearly a year, Griset-Smith and I have had the privilege to talk with so many of you who feel as passionately as we do.

The **Coachella Valley Firebirds, Bank of America, Ann Sheffer** and the **CIELO Fund @ IECF** — along with many other individuals from across the community — answered the call, going on record that they believe in community journalism and the power of the pen in lifting up the stories of those who are doing good for their neighbor.

Eye to the future

But there's a common refrain in the philanthropic community that applies here, too. Our work is not done.

The Desert Sun and IECF have a lofty goal of ensuring the future of this section beyond just a single season or a year or two years. And we're not there yet.

We know there are more heroes in this community. Gifts to the Inland Empire Community Foundation to support this effort are tax-deductible and can be made to the Community News Fund @ IECF. A full list of IECF's funds, including the Desert Community News Fund, can be found at <https://inlandempire.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/list?showlist=1>. Donations to the Desert Community News Fund can be made through this link: <https://tinyurl.com/35rbscwh>. IECF also accepts contributions by check.

Those may be addressed to IECF, with “Desert Community News Fund” in the memo field. The address is IECF, c/o Desert Community News Fund; 3700 Sixth St., Suite 200; Riverside, CA 92501.

Gifts directly fund the salary for the editing and management staff necessary to produce this weekly section.

“One of the things I most enjoy about working on the Desert Scene and Giving sections is the opportunity to put happy, uplifting stories in the paper,” Gieseke said. “With all the negativity in the world, it's nice to publish stories that make people feel good.”

Now more than ever, we need a bright spot and some hopefulness.

Kate Franco is executive editor of The Desert Sun. Reach her at kate.franco@desertsun.com.



Your Turn
Ron Oden
Guest columnist

‘Our dreams will be realized with COD’s West Valley plans’

If you take away a young person's education, you take away an important asset that will shape their future — an asset they cannot get back.

Too often, College of the Desert students struggle to get the classes they need to complete their education. Too often, because of course availability, it takes COD students four years to earn their two-year degree. Too often, COD students are discouraged and drop out.

No campuses = no degrees. That is a tragedy. We at COD need to do better.

For too many years, COD has been promising Palm Springs and Cathedral City campuses, yet nothing has been built. Twenty years ago, during my dozen-year tenure as councilmember and mayor of Palm Springs, the original COD construction bond measure was passed by voters. The comprehensive Palm Springs campus is fully funded, yet the campus is still not open for educating our students.

But that is the past. I want to focus upon how we may shape a positive *future* for Coachella Valley students.

In June of this year, I joined the COD board of trustees after my 33-year career as an adjunct professor at COD. I have perspective about COD's strengths, successes, weaknesses and missed opportunities. Over the past several months, I have seen encouraging progress toward building West Valley COD education facilities.

The Cathedral City Roadrunner Motors Auto Tech school is back on track and its Perez Road location is an example of “right place-right time” planning. The Roadrunner Motors Auto Tech school is walking distance from the greatest concentration of car dealerships and state-of-the-art service facilities in the valley. The campus will provide training and opportunities for local well-paying jobs for skilled COD graduates.

The Palm Springs campus site is a perfect location for providing opportunities for Coachella Valley students — one of the leading reasons the campus has enormous community support. The Palm Springs campus benefits include:

- Adjacent to Palm Springs High School.
- Near the Police Station for public safety training.
- Students pursuing nursing and health care careers will benefit from the campus' proximity to Desert Regional Medical Center.
- The Architecture program with Cal Poly will support students seeking careers in architecture and design.
- Palm Springs Airport has hands-on training opportunities for commercial and private aircraft maintenance.
- Near the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership Innovation Hub.
- Countless hospitality industry businesses for students seeking management careers in the tourism and hospitality.
- Improved transportation to and from COD will benefit neighboring communities.

The Palm Springs and Cathedral campuses will not duplicate the setting of the primary Palm Desert campus — they will complement the traditional and innovative technologies combined with in-person learning experiences these college centers creatively provide.

We at COD are responsible for upholding our commitment to Coachella Valley taxpayers, voters and

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EDITORIAL PALM SPRINGS DESERT SUN

Palm Springs’ new street vendor rules an opportunity for innovation

The advent of street vendors in Palm Springs presents an opportunity for the city to broaden access to its tourist-heavy downtown while providing necessary rules that ensure public safety.

California legalized street vending in 2018. Five years later, the proliferation of these micro-businesses has left many cities in the Coachella Valley scrambling to catch up with sensible rules and regulations.

Palm Springs City Council recently instituted various requirements for street vendors, including obtaining city permits, keeping a path open on sidewalks so pedestrians can pass and, most controversially, staying off high-traffic downtown streets during the busiest hours in tourist season.

The city council began discussing regulations last year after receiving complaints from some residents and business owners about what they said were issues with the vendors, including that they had blocked access to businesses.

From a health and safety standpoint, the rules are needed. Palm Springs must manage a myriad of is-

suues, from food cleanliness to where trash goes. From a safety perspective, downtown Palm Springs has a ton of foot traffic and the advent of street vendors could be a logistical nightmare: Blocked sidewalks are extremely unsafe.

Yet street vendors should not be kept out of Palm Springs most highly-trafficked areas during the tourist-heavy high season.

And the conversation should move away from inadvertently pitting brick-and-mortar businesses against street vendor businesses.

How? Palm Springs should use this as an opportunity to get creative with outdoor spaces and work with these micro-business owners to enable their success. The city could designate specific areas in the popular downtown thoroughfare specifically for vendors — perhaps on Museum Way near the “Forever Marilyn” statue.

Picture it: an outdoor night market in downtown Palm Springs, distinct from Thursday night's VillageF-

est. Other Coachella Valley cities do this well — think Indio's Food Truck Fridays.

Food trucks in Palm Springs are a separate issue — the city council is still in the process of establishing a separate set of rules around food trucks. Currently, food trucks are limited to operating either on public roads with speed limits of 35 mph or less or private property, with a land-use permit required for the latter.

Dealing with one issue at a time is OK, but now that street vending rules are established, Palm Springs could experiment with outdoor spaces that have health and safety standards *and* enable micro business owners to succeed.

This would incentivize a younger, more diverse — more local — demographic to Palm Springs' bustling downtown.

With more accessible options to everyone, especially families who are looking to spend an evening in downtown Palm Springs without breaking the bank, the city would be investing in a more diverse downtown that better reflects where we live.

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YOURVOICE



PAT BAGLEY

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why not move the ‘Forever Marilyn’ statue over?

The controversy over the location of “Forever Marilyn” has an easy solution. Simply move the statue a few hundred feet onto the newly graded park area immediately adjacent. It’s still centrally located and the street can be opened.

Craig Gibson, Palm Springs

Fix national debt with more taxes?

I would like to compliment Ingrid Jacques on her op-ed about the national debt. This was a Paul Revere type article warning the readers of the dangers of unsustainable federal debt of \$33 trillion plus. A trillion of anything is an enormous number. A trillion seconds is about 31,000 years.

Unlike a letter in Tuesday’s paper, I thought Jacques’ article was quite neutral; it simply presented the facts. The letter chided Jacques for not presenting solutions except to reduce spending – the writer correctly observed another solution would be to raise taxes, but only on the rich, a popular socialist



A security guard walks near the Forever Marilyn statue as rain falls in Palm Springs on March 1.

TAYA GRAY/THE DESERT SUN

mantra. The letter writer must be aware the

top 1% of income earners pay 39% of all taxes, the top 10% pay 70% of taxes and the bottom 50% pay 3% of taxes. Just how much should the rich pay, 99%? The letter writer goes on to give advice on solving the Social Security and Medicare which are separate from the general fund which is where deficits accrue and ultimately add to the total debt.

The last time the federal government had more income than expenditures was 1956 and 1957; we need to do better.

Paul Williamson, Palm Springs

It seems inflation will keep accelerating

The insidious thing about inflation is that it leads to strikes which lead to pay raises and work-load reductions, which cause inflation, which leads to... I was worried when school districts, fire departments, Hollywood types, hospital workers, bus drivers, aviation machinists etc. were successfully striking for wage increases. Now that national unions of several types are on or are planning strikes, I don’t see how inflation can ever stop accelerating.

That’s this man’s opinion.

Bruce L. Herrington, Palm Springs

Feinstein always did things her way



CalMatters Commentary

Dan Walters
Columnist

It won’t happen, but a fitting tribute to Dianne Feinstein, California’s longest-serving U.S. senator, would be to have someone sing “My Way,” the paean to stubborn individualism made popular in Frank Sinatra’s 1969 recording.

California has never seen a political figure as steadfastly insistent on doing things her way as Feinstein, who died Thursday night at her home in Washington D.C., at age 90.

Mostly, that was a good thing. As a San Francisco supervisor who succeeded George Moscone as mayor when he was assassinated in 1978, as a candidate for governor in 1990 and throughout her three decades in the U.S. Senate, Feinstein prioritized the job at hand, rarely distracted by political gamesmanship.

California has a decades-long tradition of having one senator who makes headlines and one who concentrates on pragmatic duties of representing the state’s interests and doing the nation’s

work.

Feinstein was always the latter, a trait that was particularly obvious when the other senators were Barbara Boxer and Kamala Harris. She was the one on whom California interest groups could depend to solve federal issues, and she was equally serious about matters of national importance, such as the CIA’s torture of suspected terrorists and gun control.

The latter was a particularly high priority for Feinstein, who authored the now-defunct federal assault rifle ban.

The strongest evidence of Feinstein’s independence was her stubborn refusal to cater to criticism within her own Democratic Party. When she was running for governor in 1990, for instance, she pointedly reiterated her support for capital punishment in a speech to a state party convention and was met with virtually unanimous boos.

Twenty-eight years later, while running for re-election, another Democratic convention snubbed her and instead endorsed then-state Sen. Kevin de Leon. Later, Feinstein handily defeated de Leon in the 2018 runoff election.

Feinstein’s insistence on doing it her way, despite what others in her party wanted, was on stark display when she

began experiencing ill health, lost her husband, Richard Blum, and exhibited symptoms of cognitive decline. Although she finally announced this year that she would not run again in 2024, she stubbornly refused to resign.

The situation is a big headache for Gov. Gavin Newsom — one of his own making — because he must quickly name someone to fill out the remaining 15 months of Feinstein’s term because of the Democrats’ paper-thin Senate majority.

In 2019, when Harris resigned from the Senate after becoming vice president, Newsom appointed then-Secretary of State Alex Padilla to fill out her term and endured a torrent of criticism for not naming another Black woman to the Senate.

Under fire, Newsom blurted to a television interviewer that if another vacancy occurred — essentially, if Feinstein died or resigned — he would appoint a Black woman. In the meantime, however, one Black woman, Oakland Congresswoman Barbara Lee, declared her candidacy for the Senate and is now running a distant third in the polls to two other Democratic members of Congress, Katie Porter and Adam Schiff.

Newsom will name someone but it’s a no-win task he didn’t want.

Oden

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students. We must build what was pledged when the voters funded COD campus plans and we need to honor our oath.

In the coming weeks I look forward to sharing with the entire Coachella Valley

community new designs as well as construction and completion schedules for our exciting new campuses.

I assure you that as a COD trustee and a member of our shared desert community, I will be a watchdog for these campus projects and a taskmaster for turning pledges into accomplishments.

Ron Oden was appointed as College of the Desert trustee in June 2023. Before

his appointment, he had a 33-year career as an COD adjunct professor as well as teaching roles at Chapman University. Oden served as a board member of Cal State San Bernardino’s Palm Desert Campus and executive director of Desert Career College in Palm Springs. From 1995 to 2003 Oden served as city councilmember and from 2003 to 2007 as Mayor of Palm Springs. Oden is an ordained minister.



Connecting California

Joe Mathews
Guest columnist

Which Californian is the worst owner?

In California, a land blessed with more than its fair share of winners, we learn our most important lessons by dwelling among the losers.

So, as the baseball season end, your columnist visited the bottom of the standings in American League West to ask: Which pro sports owner is the more instructive California failure — the failed heir fleeing Oakland, or the billboard billionaire sticking around in Anaheim?

Bay Area fans have their answer: John Fisher of the Oakland A’s.

The core allegation is that Fisher, youngest son of the billionaire Gap founders and philanthropists Don and Doris Fisher, is engaged in a ruthless campaign of sabotage — of his own team. His goal has been to alienate fans so that he can justify moving the A’s to someplace, where he could receive millions in public subsidies for a new stadium.

In service of that goal, he raised ticket prices, let the Oakland stadium fall part, and got rid of all players who would give the A’s any real chance to win.

As a result, they became the worst team in Major League Baseball. Fans stopped coming, allowing Fisher to justify his decision, announced earlier this year, to relocate the A’s to Las Vegas.

Fisher’s malperformance might seem hard to top, but he has real competition in Arte Moreno, owner of the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim.

Moreno, a Mexican American from Tucson, made his own fortune in billboards before buying the Angels in 2004.

After on-field success in Moreno’s early years as owner, the Angels have become one of the most puzzling failures in the sport.

The trouble in Anaheim was not Fisher-style sabotage. Moreno kept ticket prices affordable and spent money on his team.

It was how he spent that money that’s been the problem.

The best baseball teams are deep, with a mix of young players and old stars, and plenty of pitching. But Moreno was obsessed with giving big contracts to stars, established players he could promote — players who would be recognized on a billboard.

This strategy produced a familiar sort of California inequality. He spent big money on huge contracts to established players, while failing to develop homegrown talent.

The Angels became one of the most imbalanced teams in history. For the past 12 years, they have employed the sport’s two greatest players — superstar outfielder Mike Trout, and the Japanese superstar Shohei Ohtani, who is both a top-10 hitter and pitcher. Still, the Angels have been losers, making the playoffs only once since 2010.

Why? Because beyond these players, and one or two other expensive stars, the rest of the team is well below average. Moreno never invested in the young players and role players to support Ohtani and Trout.

As a result, the two superstars seem overburdened; both ended this year on the injured list.

Angels fans — including your columnist — rejoiced last year when Moreno announced he would sell the team. .

A sale promised a more balanced squad and a fresh start in the community. Moreno infuriated fans with his public backing of Donald Trump. He and the Angels were also at the center of an ugly public corruption scandal in Anaheim involving deals on stadium lease and development rights.

But Moreno earlier this year took the team off the market. The future is bleak. Ohtani, frustrated at the losing, is likely to leave for a team with better owners.

In the AL West, the A’s will finish last, and the Angels next to last.

This season, they have given us two California models of failure. Fisher, a rich man who refused to invest in the team that was his asset, is all too much like the state of California, which refuses to invest in infrastructure and its people. And Moreno, like this unequal state, devotes too much attention and money to the very richest players, even though California, like any team, only wins when its whole roster performs well.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.