

SCENE

Children’s Charity Gala

Father Joe’s Villages’ black-tie event raises over \$1 million

BY U-T STAFF

Father Joe’s Villages held its 37th annual Children’s Charity Gala on May 7 at the US Grant Hotel in downtown San Diego. The black-tie event, called Hope Blooms, supported services for more than 450 families and more than 900 children served by Father Joe’s Villages annually. The services include housing, food and health care, as well as therapeutic childcare, academic support, tutoring and family

counseling. The gala raised more than \$1 million, a first for the event. This year’s gala honorary chairs were Qualcomm’s CEO Cristiano R. Amon and his wife, Adriana. At the event, Ed and Ann Witt and Mike and Celia Schleyhahn were recognized for their commitment to helping San Diegans experiencing and overcoming homelessness. The Witts received the inaugural Father Joe Carroll Award. The Schleyhahns received

the Bishop Maher Award. If your organization has held a philanthropic event, you’re welcome to email a high-resolution photo along with information on the event to society@sdunion-tribune.com. Please clearly identify those in the photo, make them aware their image might appear in print and online, include the photographer’s name for credit and be sure to include the who, what, where, when and why information on the event.



NARRATIVE IMAGES

About 350 people attended the Father Joe’s gala at the US Grant.

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

LET’S REIMAGINE POLICING IN THE POST-FLOYD ERA

Nearly two years have passed since the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin. The pain of that day revealed a need to rethink policing and how to deliver what the public wants: a feeling of safety.

In the immediate aftermath of Floyd’s murder and following Chauvin’s conviction and sentencing, there were loud calls to reform or defund the police. Some progress has been made, with state legislatures passing laws that create baseline standards for police accountability and behavior. These laws take a number of important steps — addressing police use of excessive force, for example — and require officers to intervene when their colleagues cross the line.

And several cities across the country have shifted funding from their police departments to public health and social service agencies that are more capable of addressing the underlying issues that lead to the presence of police — like poverty, homelessness and a lack of access to mental health care. Just last week, San Diego

County Board of Supervisors Chair Nathan Fletcher announced that all 11 law enforcement agencies in our region will now be able to refer mental health crisis calls to a county-sponsored, 24/7 mobile crisis response team. For years, law enforcement officers have responded to these calls — difficult work that they’re not trained to do.

But the drumbeat to defund the police has been drowned out by the reality of rising crime rates in cities around the country. In New York City, for example, there were 1,531 shootings in 2020, more than twice the number in 2019. In 2021, 1,562 shootings were recorded, the highest number since 2003.

San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria recently announced a \$14 million increase in the fiscal year 2023 police budget, to \$584 million — reflective, he said, of San Diegans’ desire to keep safe and improve police response times.

The budget covers costs for police personnel, equipment and facilities. Part of it will go toward pay raises to improve the recruitment and retention of officers. Their last pay hike was in 2017.

With retirements and departures outpacing new hires, the San Diego Police Department is nearly 200 officers short of its staffing goal.

Retired Vacaville Police Chief Bob Harrison is an adjunct researcher with RAND Corp. and course manager for Command College, a 15-month graduate program for aspiring police executives.

Last year, he wrote a commentary for RAND saying that the public’s dissatisfaction with our current models of policing has created a “generational opportunity” to improve public safety.

Nationwide data show that police make contact with about 60 million people age 18 and older each year, with only a fraction of those contacts resulting in violence or injury. Still, Harrison wrote, we have a crisis of confidence. According to a 2021 Quinnipiac poll, one-third of Americans say they disapprove of the way police are doing their job. Two-thirds of Black Americans agree. Support of police at the local level is stronger than it is for law enforcement in general.

The findings shouldn’t be surprising, given the problem of systemic racism in policing. A report released last month by the Minnesota Department of Human Rights concluded that the Minneapolis Police Department allowed a culture of racist policing to flourish for more than a decade. Officers stopped, arrested and used force more often on people of color than on White people.

And The New York Times just reported that a state audit of five California law enforcement agencies found troubling bias among officers, including social media posts and conversations among officers mocking transgender people, women, Latinos, Black people and immigrants. The auditors recommended that the agencies diversify their hiring practices and screen applicants’ social media accounts for bias, among other changes.

Harrison thinks that most chiefs would support ways to screen out candidates with known biases and troubling affiliations. But Harrison’s reimagination of policing goes further. “We need to attract more outliers to the pro-

fession,” he told me. “We can teach them the police work.”

When Harrison describes the perfect cop, that person sounds a lot like one of our mediators at the National Conflict Resolution Center — which makes perfect sense. He believes that a transformation of policing is possible if people would “search for ways to resolve conflicts, empathize with one another, and focus on the humanity of every person served.”

This is a two-sided proposition. Harrison knows that most of us don’t want to be policed. But we need to become informed consumers — and to keep in mind that most police officers want to do good, because they do.

Let’s honor the memory of George Floyd and continue taking steps to build a system of public safety that truly protects all people.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCRC’s programming, visit ncrconline.com

QUEST • Building ship has been decadeslong dream for San Marcos resident

FROM B1 stad ship for the 1,000th anniversary of Erik the Red’s landing in Newfoundland. After the ship, named Munin, was built, Kottmeier served as its skipper for its first season. Ever since then he has been deeply interested in Viking boat-building, history and culture.

Kottmeier said the Vikings started exploring in dugout canoes around 400 A.D., and over the next 500 years they perfected their nautical technology, using boat-building skills and vocabulary that are still in use today. Kottmeier said Vikings were the first seafarers to create a gull-wing-shaped hull that stabilized the boat from tipping over and the first to create their distinctive trapezoid-shaped sails that allowed boats to better sail into the wind. Their long wind- and oar-driven boats were also extremely fast — so fast that no other country’s navy could catch them on the water after a raiding expedition.

“My heritage is Swedish, and I have always thought the Vikings were part of my ancestry. Their curiosity and spirit of exploration, and their ingenuity in shipbuilding, navigation and trading, have always inspired me,” he said.

Kottmeier was born in Argentina to Swedish parents and moved with his family to Vancouver as a boy, where he plied the waters



CHARLIE NEUMAN FOR THE U-T

Tom Kottmeier is building a replica Viking ship he intends to send to Sweden and sail through Stockholm harbor in 2024.

frequently on his father’s motorboats. He built his first of many sailboats at age 17 and sailed frequently throughout his adult life while running a technology sales company in Vancouver. After his year of skippering the Viking boat Munin in Vancouver, he and his wife and fellow Swede, Pia, moved to Santa Barbara in 2003, where he started another technology company. In 2018, he retired and they moved to San Marcos to be closer to Pia’s youngest son,

who lives with his family in the 4S Ranch area.

Kottmeier said he talked about building his Viking ship for decades, but he didn’t have a place to do it. Then in January 2020, the Sons of Norway Lodge in Vista offered to let him build the boat on its property, so he got started. Using the plans for Munin, Kottmeier drew up his own design for Sleipnir, which included reducing its size so it could fit inside a 40-foot container for shipment to Sweden.

Kottmeier called the building process a “3D puzzle” that has come with multiple setbacks because he’s an amateur shipwright. Many times his plans haven’t penciled out properly and he’s had to dismantle and rebuild parts of the boat. Pandemic-related lockdowns also repeatedly shut down the project. But he’s happy with how things have turned out.

Eighteen months into the building project, Kottmeier gave a presentation on the

project at a Sons of Norway Lodge dinner and asked for volunteers. Seated at the same table with the Kottmeiers was Ivar Schoenmeyr, a 73-year-old veteran sailor who was born and raised in Sweden and moved to the U.S. nearly 50 years ago. Ever since he met Kottmeier that evening in July 2021, Schoenmeyr has driven down two days a week from his home in San Juan Capistrano to work on the boat with Kottmeier.

“It’s been a learning experience, but it’s very creative work,” said Schoenmeyr, a semi-retired engineer. “We work from a plan, but we make mistakes. It can be a bit frustrating, but it’s enjoyable to see the fruits of one’s labor.”

Last fall, the lodge asked Kottmeier to find a new home for his project because it needed the land to host public events. After posting a notice on the Nextdoor app, Kottmeier got numerous offers from homeowners offering their land. He ended up choosing a family of Scandinavian heritage, who have lent a portion of their backyard to Kottmeier for free.

Every weekday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Kottmeier works on the ship. The boat, which is 7 feet, 4 inches wide, has a white oak keel, overlapping Port Orford cedar planking held together with 1,500 copper rivets, and a 27-foot fir mast that is reclaimed wood from a former

church building.

Upon completion, Sleipnir will weigh from 2,000 to 2,500 pounds. Kottmeier ordered from Hong Kong a trapezoid-shaped 300-square-foot Dacron sail with Viking-style vertical maroon and cream stripes. He’s also planning to attach the figurehead of a horselike Sleipnir to the bow.

The ship is 90 percent complete. Kottmeier and Schoenmeyr are now finishing the interior framing. Then they will clean up the hull and check for leaks. After that, they’ll build the deck and benches, attach the rudder and oars and give everything a few coats of varnish. Hopefully sometime this summer, they’ll tow the boat to a nearby harbor and take Sleipnir on her maiden voyage to test her seaworthiness.

Kottmeier has created a website, vikingshipsleipnir.com, where curious hobbyists can follow his progress, as the privately owned location of the ship-building project is secret. On the new website he wrote about the reason for this labor of love.

“Guess I was a little boy who wanted to show I could achieve what the big boys did, the Vikings,” he wrote. “Guess I am a bit of a pig-headed Viking, too. Of course I can build a Viking ship!”

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SMOLENS Rep. Issa’s claims false, dangerous

FROM B1 about protests that have been peaceful to date.” “We certainly continue to encourage that outside of judge’s homes.”

The emphasis was added by Wilcox, who then wrote: “Perhaps you didn’t consider the above and were not aware of these Psaki quotes that unequivocally do not call upon the protesters to stop what they’re doing and by any objective measure encourage more of the same.”

By any objective measure, Psaki is encouraging protesters to remain peaceful, as they have been. The contention that not urging people to stop a peaceful protest amounts to backing threats of violence is beyond absurd.

It’s worth pointing out that while Issa concocts a

story about the Biden administration supporting violence, he has never condemned former President Donald Trump for inciting the Jan. 6, 2021, violent incursion into the U.S. Capitol. Issa was among the House Republicans who voted to overturn President Joe Biden’s legitimate election, which was the goal of the rioting insurrectionists.

Issa and other Republicans have sought to shift the focus away from the pending Roe v. Wade ruling by expressing outrage that the draft opinion was leaked, and now about the protests outside the homes of Supreme Court justices.

At least the second part of that strategy seems to be having an effect. Some Democratic lawmakers have urged protesters not to get out of hand, according to The Washington Post. On Monday, Psaki reiterated the White House position on Twitter.

“@POTUS strongly believes in the Constitutional right to protests. But that should never include violence, threats of violence, or vandalism. Judges perform an incredibly impor-



KENNY HOLSTON NYT

Demonstrators march to Justice Samuel Alito’s house in Alexandria, Va., on Monday.

tant function in our society, and they must be able to do their jobs without concern for personal safety,” Psaki wrote.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York was asked if he was comfortable with the protests outside justices’ homes.

“If protests are peaceful, yes,” he said. “My house, there’s protests 3-4 times a week outside my house. That’s the American way, to peacefully protest, is OK ... So as long as they are peaceful, that’s OK with me.”

Wilcox did refer to a

thoughtful analysis by the Post’s Aaron Blake that suggested all may not be OK when it comes to demonstrating at the justices’ homes, according legal experts.

“But while protest is indeed ingrained in American democracy, legally speaking, the comparison between protesting a politician at home and a member of the judiciary at home is inexact,” Blake wrote. “And experts say the latter category of protests is probably illegal regardless of how peaceful the demon-

strations are.”

Blake speculated that advocates for abortion rights might believe that the protests are a justified form of civil disobedience, even if they are illegal. The punishments include a fine and up to a year in prison. As of Friday, neither the Biden administration nor the Justice Department had addressed the legality of the protests.

The battle over abortion has a violent history. Doctors who perform abortions have been harassed, assaulted, shot and murdered. Health clinics have been bombed, set on fire and been the target of demonstrations that sometimes required escorts to help patients gain entry.

It’s not one-sided. Police in Wisconsin last week were investigating an arson fire at the office of a group that opposes abortion rights. Police said a Molotov cocktail was thrown in the building but didn’t ignite and remnants of another one were found. No one was reported injured.

A group that calls itself “Jane’s Revenge” promised more attacks if such organi-

zations do not disband nationwide, according to madison.com. Similar incidents were reported in Oregon, where two Molotov cocktails were thrown into a building where a group opposed to abortion was located, and in Colorado, where two churches were vandalized, including one known for annual anti-abortion displays.

Tension is high and false claims don’t help. These days, some people seem to say anything they want in pursuit of a political agenda, regardless of whether it’s unmoored from reality.

Issa cynically created a fiction that could inflame a situation already on the verge of exploding.

That’s dishonest and dangerous.

Tweet of the Week

Goes to Marie Coronel (@10NewsCoronel).

“Leading cause of US child death found to be guns since 2017, surpassing car accidents, per a study from the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.”

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