



COASTAL COSPLAY



A surfer dressed as a gladiator rides a wave at Tourmoween, an annual costume surf session at Tourmaline Surf Park in Pacific Beach, on Saturday. The free-for-all surf event attracts hundreds of surfers with prizes for best costume and party wave. **K.C. ALFRED / U-T**

Cal State offers AI training ground to Big Tech

Career building is the aim; critics call it a marketing tool

By **Natasha Singer** & **Philip Cheung**
THE NEW YORK TIMES

On the first day of AI Camp, a new summer program at California State University, Savannah Bosley got a hands-on introduction to Amazon Bedrock, a system for building artificial intelligence apps.

“I figured it wouldn’t hurt to put it on the résumé, to learn a new tool that’s maybe marketable,” said Bosley, a computer science major who graduated this year from California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo.

Dozens of students attended the five-day program, which was held on the Cal Poly campus and “powered by” Amazon Web Services, the e-commerce giant’s cloud computing division. Students scooped up

See **TRAINING** on Page A10

Prop. 36 leaves drug users to find their own treatment

County officials say they lack funds to offer more support

By **Kelly Davis** & **Teri Figueroa**
UNION-TRIBUNE

It’s a Wednesday afternoon in Department 1203 at the Central Courthouse, and the man in the defendant’s chair is anxious.

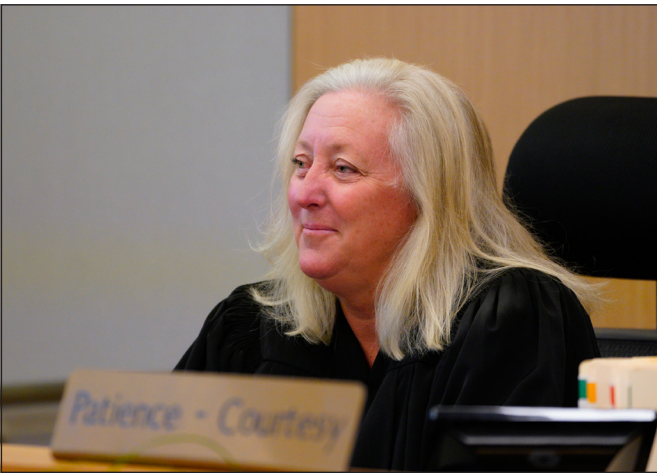
The next morning, he’ll be released from jail and expected to put his name on a waiting list at a drug treatment program. He has no car, no cellphone, no money for cab fare, and, he tells Superior Court Judge Cindy Davis, a poor sense of direction. “I’ll end up in an empty lot,” he says.

Davis asks her clerk to print out a map. She includes notes to make sure the directions are clear and adds a Post-It with the date of the man’s next court appearance, when he’ll need to provide proof that he’s in treatment or on a waiting list. He’s already had two warrants for failing to show up in court. This, she warns him, could be his last chance.

He tells her he’ll fold up the map and stick it in his sock to make sure he doesn’t lose it.

“It ain’t going to be easy,” Davis told him. “It’s a day-by-day thing.”

The man was one of 15 people scheduled to appear in Davis’ downtown courtroom



Judge Cindy Davis presides over her courtroom at the Central Courthouse in San Diego, where she tells defendants they need to enroll in drug treatment programs. **NELVIN C. CEPEDA / U-T**

that day under a new state law that shifted certain drug and theft crimes from misdemeanors to felonies for repeat offenders. On the ballot last November as Proposition 36, the measure was pitched to voters as a way to address retail theft. But of the more than 3,100 people arrested since the law took effect 10 months ago, roughly 77% have been for drug possession.

Proposition 36 was built on the idea that consequences would drive recovery, but it came with no funding to expand treatment slots or coor-

dinate referrals. Meanwhile, the law is scooping up people with long histories of addiction, repeated jail stays and failed attempts at sobriety.

County officials say they want to offer more support but lack the resources. For now, the burden largely falls on defendants — many still deep in addiction, many who are homeless — to find and secure treatment on their own.

Several in Davis’ courtroom described the challenge of finding a treatment slot.

See **PROP. 36** on Page A8

Growing number of lawmakers question cartel war

Wider military campaign with no congressional oversight draws dissent

By **Robert Jimison** & **Megan Mineiro**
THE NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — A growing number of lawmakers on Capitol Hill have raised concerns about President Donald Trump’s expanding campaign against drug cartels carried out without consultation or authorization by Congress, and Republicans and Democrats are both pressing for more information and involvement in a mission whose legal basis remains murky.

Most Republicans raising concerns have so far not expressed explicit opposition to the military strikes that have been carried out so far against boats in the Caribbean Sea and, this past week, expanded to the Pacific.

The vast majority of Republicans have enthusiastically rallied behind them, and this month, all but two of them voted to block a measure that would terminate the president’s campaign.

But the growing skepticism reflects a rare and potentially significant bit of dissent over a widening campaign.

Since early September, the U.S. has launched 10 known lethal strikes, resulting in at least 43 deaths, on vessels the Trump administration said were trafficking drugs, and has deployed more than 10,000 troops as well as aircraft across the region. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, carrying out orders from Trump, has framed the mission as a fight against “narcoterrorists.”

But the absence of a formal congressional authorization to use military force and questions about the intelligence underpinning the strikes have prompted calls for oversight.

“We have oversight responsibilities,

See **CARTELS** on Page A8



HAYNE PALMOUR IV / FOR THE U-T

BUSINESS

Tariffs having varying impacts on merchants

In San Diego, the way tariffs are impacting small businesses varies broadly, as a visit to a recent San Diego Made Market and to other local merchants illustrates. Some merchants exposed to tariffs have raised prices. Some have tried to re-shore their suppliers or manufacturing but found local options lacking. One business has decided to shut down. **C1**

Rule may tame Pure Water behemoth

But a more direct sewage recycling method comes with its own set of challenges



Construction continues at the North City Pure Water Facility chemical tank farm on Wednesday in San Diego. **K.C. ALFRED / U-T**

By **David Garrick**
UNION-TRIBUNE

San Diego may shift the second phase of the city’s Pure Water sewage recycling system to a more efficient purification method that could save billions of dollars, preventing steep jumps in local sewer and water bills.

The new method could dramatically change the size, scope and cost of the massive project’s Phase Two, which had been expected to be almost twice as large as the nearly complete first phase.

City officials say it could let them avoid building expensive pipelines to either San Vicente Reservoir or Lake Murray from a new purification plant to be built in Mission Valley.

That change is possible because Cali-

See **WATER** on Page A9

HAPPY WHO-LOWEEN!

from The Old Globe

Dr. Seuss's
How The GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS!

November 5 – December 31

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90
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U-T INDEX

Crossword F2
Dear Abby F3
Editorial B7

Markets C4
Obituaries B4
Opinion B6

Television E11
Travel E9
Weather A11



A PATH FORWARD STEVEN P. DINKIN

Dialogue, respectful debate alive and well on college campuses

There seems to be a lot of pessimism about Generation Z and their readiness to lead our country, when the time comes. Gen Z includes people born between 1996 and 2010, meaning they're 15 to 29 years old. This generation of "digital natives," as it's often called, has never known a world without the internet or smartphones.

If you read between the lines, you might infer that Gen Zers are screen-focused and social media obsessed. And you might guess they're not skilled at communication basics, like dealing with conflict or even having a conversation.

But I'm pleased to say, there's a movement underway to equip this next generation of leaders with these bygone skills. Colleges and universities around the country, in blue states and red, are offering students the opportunity to learn what it means to have a productive conversation

with someone when you disagree or see the world differently.

It's work the National Conflict Resolution Center has done for more than a decade. On the University of California San Diego campus alone, we have trained more than 12,000 student leaders to have these difficult conversations with confidence.

Last Monday, we had the opportunity to showcase what's happening at other schools. NCRC, along with UC San Diego, hosted a national conference to showcase findings from a two-year study called "Building Next-Gen Leaders: Empowering Students to Navigate a Divided World."

The study was led by a team of researchers under the auspices of the Applied Research Center for Civility, a joint initiative of NCRC and the university. Nearly 200 people were in attendance, representing 27 states and more than

60 universities, college campuses, partner organizations and foundations.

Shortly after its launch, the study's context changed markedly. The Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel and subsequent war in Gaza led to turmoil on many campuses, involving students, faculty, staff and administrators who were hyper-focused on the situation — and hyper-polarized in their views. But while protests and encampments got the most attention, researchers observed that "tremendous work" was being done to bring campus communities together in productive dialogue, using the tools and resources that higher education is uniquely positioned to provide.

A second contextual shift occurred with the presidential election in November 2024 and inauguration of President Donald Trump in January 2025. Many colleges and universities remained steadfast in

their commitments to civil discourse, creating opportunities for people to talk across political differences.

In their Impact Paper, the Center for Civility research team wrote, "Researching civil discourse at moments of heightened social conflict and political tension reveals two important lessons. One is that responding to current issues is easier with established and well-developed dialogue programs and a culture of dialogue already in place." When their commitments are highly visible, campuses may be more likely to garner buy-in, even when the community is divided.

The second lesson is that civility is not a replacement for politics, even in its messiest forms. Researchers said, "Civil discourse programs cannot and should not replace political conflict, contestation, or activism. They are complementary and additive to other forms of civic engagement, ideally

making that engagement more productive."

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a pro-Palestine encampment — calling for university divestment from Israel — tested leadership. On day three, Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin authorized a police raid of the encampment; nine days later and the night before graduation, an agreement was reached to end it.

Mnookin was keynote speaker at the conference. Rather than lamenting the protests, she spoke with passion about the need to disagree productively. Mnookin shared her concern about a survey in which half of students said that someone with an offensive, counter point of view to theirs should not be invited to speak at the university.

"We don't want to be a monoculture," Mnookin said emphatically.

Utah Valley University was not a part of the study,

but the school — which was the site of Charlie Kirk's assassination — sees free expression as a way to strengthen community bonds. As Dr. Leana Wen noted recently in The Washington Post, "grief and reckoning are still unfolding there."

But rather than responding with anger, the university's president, Astrid Tuminez, is encouraging dialogue. No one should be afraid to speak, she believes; to that end, UVU is expanding its mediation and conflict management coursework. It will also host community-wide healing conversations and organize public forums to model civil disagreement.

As Wen concluded, "Courage doesn't always take the form of confrontation; it can also be exemplified through care, empathy and respectful conversation."

It's a worthwhile message for everyone, from every generation.

Utah prosecutors drop case against former San Diegan

By Alex Riggins
UNION-TRIBUNE

Prosecutors in Utah have dropped a criminal case against a college student who grew up in San Diego after he was charged last month with making a terror threat in connection with a video he made following Charlie Kirk's shooting death.

County prosecutors in the Park City area had charged Blake Francis Rogers, a 20-year-old who grew up in Scripps Ranch, with making a threat of terrorism that caused an emergency agency to act. Despite the charge being a misdemeanor, it drew national news coverage because of its connection to the Sept. 10 killing of Kirk, a conservative media figure and political organizer, at Utah Valley University.

Prosecutors moved last week to dismiss the case, writing in a motion that a dismissal would be "in the interest of justice," a generic phrase that prosecutors often use when seeking to drop charges against a defendant. Prosecutors in Utah's Summit County declined to comment Friday on their specific reasons for dropping the case.

A judge granted the motion Monday, dismissing the charge without prejudice, meaning prosecutors could re-file a case in the future.

"I want to express my sincerest gratitude to everyone who has stood by me during this incredibly difficult time," Rogers told the Union-Tribune in a statement. "Those who know me personally understand that this was a stupid edgy joke made by a naive kid. I deeply regret my actions and have learned an important lesson about digital responsibility. I'm grateful that the case has been dismissed and look forward to moving on and putting this experience behind me."

Sheriff's deputies in



Flowers at Utah Valley University after Charlie Kirk's death. A case related to an alleged threat made after the slaying was dropped against a former San Diego man. **AP FILE**

Summit County, a mountainous region east of Salt Lake City, arrested Rogers on Sept. 16 at his family's home in Park City, about an hour northeast from the campus where Kirk was fatally shot. Rogers attends college in Pennsylvania but was visiting family in Utah, where he moved while he was in high school.

According to CBS News, Rogers had posted a 70-second video on YouTube in the days following Kirk's death in which he said in part: "I am now beginning my odyssey to Utah Valley University, to fulfill my lifelong duty, of finally killing woke. If you are receiving this video, it means that I did not make it back on this trip, and I was defeated by my mortal enemy, the woke mind virus at Utah Valley University, where Charlie Kirk was assassinated."

Andrew Young, a San Diego-based attorney who represented Rogers, said the video was satirical in nature.

"The video was intended as an inside joke to a few select friends," Young, a former federal prosecutor in San Diego, said in a statement. "Because of the size of the file, it was posted to a private link on YouTube. Even though it wasn't disseminated publicly, YouTube's threat algorithm picked it up and reported it to law enforcement which led to Blake's arrest."

In a news release at the time of the arrest, a sheriff's spokesperson in Park City said his office had been alerted to the video by the FBI.

"Obviously law enforcement needed to investigate it but I do not believe he should have been charged," Young said in his statement. "The joke did not target a specific person or group. He targeted the 'woke mind virus,' and it contained several tongue-in-cheek references to pop culture."

Young also questioned why "a misdemeanor charge was pushed as a national news story," Sgt. Skyler Talbot from the Summit County Sheriff's Office declined to discuss the dismissal of the case Friday, citing the potential for charges to be re-filed, but said his office issued a press release about the arrest only after dozens of media outlets nationwide had inquired.

Young said that "prosecutors recognized the case lacked merit and faced serious constitutional issues." He added: "Making a bad joke is still not a crime here."

Rogers was released from custody on bail shortly after his arrest but remained on pretrial supervision with a GPS ankle monitor until the case was dismissed. He is now facing potential discipline at his university.

Interim CEO given permanent role at S.D. Zoo Wildlife Alliance

By Karen Kucher
UNION-TRIBUNE

SAN DIEGO — Seven months after the departure of its CEO, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance has elevated its interim leader to take on the role permanently.

Shawn Dixon was appointed last week as president and CEO of the nonprofit organization, following a global search by consulting firm Korn Ferry, the organization said in a news release.

Dixon replaces former CEO Paul Baribault, who departed in March to pursue his "next adventure." Baribault had headed the organization since 2019.

Dixon is a former chief operating officer for the alliance, where he has worked for nine years.

The wildlife alliance said Dixon was a long-time advocate for wildlife conserva-



Shawn Dixon. **SDZWA**

tion who brings a wealth of experience, vision and a strong connection to the San Diego community.

The organization runs the San Diego Zoo and San Diego Zoo Safari Park, which attract 5.5 million visitors annually, and also partners with conservation organizations around the world.

"Shawn's deep roots in the San Diego community, combined with his exceptional leadership and

unwavering commitment to our mission, made him the clear choice to lead San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance," Steve Simpson, chair of the board of trustees, said in a statement.

Dixon also serves on the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Committee and the San Diego Tourism Authority, according to the news release. He is also a member of San Diego Rotary Club 33.

Before joining the organization, Dixon spent more than two decades in the hospitality and tourism fields, holding leadership roles with Hilton Hotels & Resorts and Vail Resorts Inc.

"I am deeply honored to lead San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance and to continue building on our legacy of conservation and community impact," Dixon said in a statement.



The main entrance at the San Diego Zoo in Balboa Park. **ALEJANDRO TAMAYO / U-T FILE**

Carlsbad seeks project bids on Veterans Memorial Park

By Phil Diehl
UNION-TRIBUNE

CARLSBAD — The City Council authorized staffers last week to advertise for construction bids on Veterans Memorial Park, which will be Carlsbad's largest at 94 acres and will include its first family bike park with jumps, a pump track and a slalom course.

"I'm excited to see this finally come full circle," said Councilmember Priya Bhat-Patel. "The bike park is a very exciting feature for folks."

Located along the north side of Faraday Avenue east of Cannon Road, the rolling terrain has sweeping view of Agua Hedionda Lagoon and the Pacific Ocean.

More than half the park will be set aside as a nature preserve, and about 39 acres will be developed. A memorial plaza will honor the six branches of military service, and there will be parking, restrooms, public art, gardens, playgrounds and fitness areas.

Trails will loop through the park and its open areas, connecting with the nearby

Crossings municipal golf course and adjacent neighborhoods.

"It really is going to be a gem in our community," said Councilmember Teresa Acosta.

The layout for the bike park was developed over several years with input from the community and groups such as San Diego Mountain Biking Association.

The construction contract is expected to be awarded in December, and work could start next year. City officials estimate the total cost at about \$51 million.

Most of the money has been collected over the years from fees paid by developers into a community facilities district created in 1991. The project also has received about \$8 million in state and federal grants.

The contract includes improvements to Faraday Avenue, with enhanced bike lanes and turn lanes at the two driveways into the park.

The city advertised for "pre-qualifications" from potential contractors in June and received eight responses, according to a staff report. Five were

found eligible to submit bids: BrightView Landscape Development, Inc.; Clark Construction Group California, LP; Edwards Construction Group, Inc.; Hazard Construction Engineering, LLC; and Los Angeles Engineering, Inc.

The San Diego Association of Governments has identified it as a "regional open space park" with passive and active recreation opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.

The Carlsbad City Council approved a master plan for the park in 2022. In July 2024 the council approved a \$1.6 million contract with the Oregon-based company Romtec, Inc. for three pre-engineered buildings in "kits" to be erected in the park with restrooms, offices, and maintenance, concession and storage rooms.

Carlsbad has owned the vacant land since at least the 1980s. It was part of a 400-acre parcel that included pieces used to build Faraday Avenue and The Crossings 18-hole golf course that the city opened in 2007.

Today in history

SUNDAY, OCT. 26

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT
On Oct. 26, 1881, four lawmen, including Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday, exchanged gunfire with five outlaws, killing three of them, in the "Shootout at the O.K. Corral" in Tombstone, Ariz.

ON THIS DATE
1774: The First Continental Congress adjourned in Philadelphia.
1825: The Erie Canal opened in upstate New York, connecting Lake Erie and the Hudson River.
1861: The legendary Pony Express officially ceased operations, giving way to the transcontinental telegraph. (The last run of the Pony Express was completed the following month.)
1979: South Korean President Park Chung-hee was shot to death by the head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, Kim Jae-kyu.
1984: "Baby Fae," a newborn with a severe heart defect, was given the heart of a

baboon in an experimental transplant in Loma Linda. (She lived 21 days with the animal heart.)
2000: The New York Yankees became the first team in more than a quarter-century to win three straight World Series championships, beating the New York Mets in Game 5 of their "Subway Series."
2001: President George W. Bush signed the USA Patriot Act, giving authorities unprecedented ability to search, seize, detain or eavesdrop in their pursuit of possible terrorists.
2002: A hostage siege by Chechen rebels at a Moscow theater ended with 129 of the 800-plus captives dead, most from a knockout gas used by Russian special forces who stormed the theater; 41 rebels also died.
2020: Amy Coney Barrett was confirmed to the Supreme Court by a deeply divided Senate, installing President Donald Trump's nominee days before the U.S. general election.

2024: Israel launched predawn airstrikes against military targets in Iran in retaliation for a barrage of ballistic missiles the Islamic Republic fired on Israel on Oct. 1. It was the first time Israel's military had openly attacked Iran.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS
Musician Milton Nascimento is 83. Actor Jaclyn Smith is 80. TV host Pat Sajak is 79. Politician, diplomat and former first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton is 78. Musician Bootsy Collins is 74. Artist and filmmaker Julian Schnabel is 74. Actor James Pickens Jr. is 71. Actor-singer Rita Wilson is 69. Actor Dylan McDermott is 64. Actor Cary Elwes is 63. Singer Natalie Merchant is 62. Country singer Keith Urban is 58. Actor Tom Cavanagh is 62. Writer-producer Seth MacFarlane (TV: "Family Guy") is 52. Actor Florence Kasumba is 49. Actor Jon Heder is 48.

The Associated Press