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DIANE BELL

Columnist

100+ skydivers 60 and older will try for world record

Imagine jumping from a plane at 1,800 feet and linking up with 100 people in a giant snowflake formation, then scooting away from traffic to open your parachute in time to land safely.

That is what 100 to 110 senior skydivers are planning to do in early April at Skydive Perris 20 miles north of Temecula in the hope of setting a world record. Ejecting from five planes, they will exceed 120 mph and have 60 seconds to find their assigned link-up partners and grab arms and legs for a historic moment.

This feat takes cloudless skies and clear minds capable of spur-of-the-moment decisions.

What makes this more remarkable and world-record worthy is that all these jumpers are in their 60s and 70s. The eldest are a man and a woman, both 78. The skydivers hope to break the record of 75 jumpers age 60 and older set in 2018 in Illinois.

Six of them are from San Diego County. They will gather at the Perris skydiving facility from across the world — as far away as Australia, Scandinavia and South America.

They represent diverse backgrounds and professions (from which most are retired): doctors, nurses, researchers, rocket scientists, venture capitalists, accountants, teachers, a roofer, a missionary and a mailman. The oldest, Betty Bennett, was an Olympic diver.

The local skydivers are: Bob Bonitz, a robotics engineer who worked on Mars rovers; Steve Briggs, a UC San Diego distinguished professor of biology; Cathy Coon, a cyber security systems engineer; Dr. Charles “Fess” Edwards, a Scripps Health-affiliated ob-gyn; Chula Vista Carmen Irene, a Caltrans training manager; and contractor Dillon Smith.

The parachuting veteran—SEE DIANE BELL • B8

SAN DIEGO CITY COUNCIL RACES SET

Former Assemblymember Saldaña is challenging incumbent Campbell

BY DAVID GARRICK

SAN DIEGO

Last-minute scrambling before the filing deadline in San Diego City Council races has set up a major showdown in District 2 and paved the way for Democrats to take away the Republicans’ only remaining council seat.

With the fields finalized for all four city races in the June 7 primary, former Assemblymember Lori Saldaña is mounting a late Democrat-versus-Democrat challenge to incumbent Councilmember Jennifer Campbell in District 2.

Meanwhile, the only Republican with strong backing from party leaders has dropped out of the race in District 6, where Chris Cate — the council’s only remaining Republican — can’t run for re-election because of term limits.

District 4 incumbent Monica Montgomery Steppe is facing two

challengers who haven’t begun raising money. They are Gloria Evangelista and Tylisa Suseberry.

District 8 incumbent Vivian Moreno is facing a rematch against fellow Democrat Antonio Martinez, whom she beat by 549 votes in 2018 — 14,950 to 14,401.

In each race, the candidates who finish first and second in the June primary will advance to a November runoff — even if the first-place finisher in the primary receives more than 50 percent of the vote.

The Campbell-versus-Saldaña battle in District 2 prompted the

county Democratic Party to decline, for the first time in at least two decades, to endorse an incumbent San Diego City Council member who is a registered Democrat.

Campbell, who beat back a recall effort last year, is also being challenged by former city administrator Joel Day, neighborhood leader Mandy Havlik, dentist Linda Lukacs and apartment owner Daniel Smiechowski.

Day has a large fundraising advantage over the other challengers, but Saldaña has name recognition—SEE SAN DIEGO • B3



BILL WECHTER PHOTOS FOR THE U-T

RESTORATION OF WETLANDS MOVES ALONG

Above: an excavator works on Phase II of the San Dieguito Lagoon Wetland Restoration Project in North County on Wednesday. One of the things the project will do is convert around 84 acres of former agricultural land into tidal wetlands. Right: Caltrans North County Corridor Director Allan Kosup talks Wednesday about continued work on the \$86 million project, which is expected to take three years to complete.



FORMER ASST. CITY ATTORNEY WINS SUIT

Jury awards \$3.9M in case that argued wrongful termination

BY MORGAN COOK

SAN DIEGO

A jury on Wednesday awarded former San Diego Assistant City Attorney Marlea Dell’Anno \$3.9 million in her wrongful-termination lawsuit against the

city and former City Attorney Jan Goldsmith.

The jury found the city liable for about \$3.4 million in past and future economic losses and awarded her \$500,000 for non-economic damages, including emotional pain.

Compensation for attorney fees and other costs have yet to be determined.

The verdict came after a trial that stretched for almost six weeks. Dozens, including current and former city prosecutors, testified.

SEE LAWSUIT • B8



MARLEA DELL'ANNO



JOHN GIBBINS U-T FILE

A man died after he jumped off this building in University City.

MAN WITH PARACHUTE DIES IN JUMP FROM HIGH-RISE

He used roof of University City apartment building

BY DAVID HERNANDEZ

SAN DIEGO

A 48-year-old man died Tuesday night after his parachute failed to open when he jumped from a high-rise apartment building in University City, San Diego police said.

The incident happened about 10:30 p.m. at the Palisade UTC, a 23-story, upscale apartment building on the corner of Lombard Place and Nobel Drive near the Westfield UTC shopping mall. According to police radio traffic, one 911 caller heard a loud pop that sounded like a gunshot, stepped onto a balcony and saw the man bleeding on the ground.

Officers and paramedics gave the man CPR, but he died before he could be taken to a hospital. His name was not released.

Capt. Scott Wahl said the man’s 16-year-old daughter witnessed the incident.

“It’s not just one life lost, it’s an—SEE DEATH • B2

Create a hunger-fighting action hero, win Comic-Con ’22 badges



KARLA PETERSON

Columnist

Strength under pressure. Extraordinary vision. A super-sized heart with a soul to match.

These are the qualities that Feeding San Diego is looking for in the hero who will help put the squeeze on the county’s hunger crisis. The same goes for the young person who is going to create the new food champion.

In a collaboration with the Comic-Con Museum in Balboa Park, Feeding San Diego is launching “The Hunger Action Hero Art Contest,” which challenges the county’s K-12 students to design an action hero who will fight to end hunger by rescuing extra food from grocery stores, hotels, restaurants and other businesses and getting it to the people who need it.

“Hunger is a reality. It is something people here in San Diego live with on a regular basis,” said Rita Vandergaw, executive director of the Comic-Con Museum. “Wouldn’t it be wonderful to find a way to truly wipe hunger from the world? That takes a lot of superheroes.”

For the Hunger Action Hero contest, entries consist of original artwork depicting the new character, along with a brief paragraph explaining what the hero’s superpowers are, where they got them, and how these superpowers will help the world end hunger through food rescue.

The deadline for submissions is April 22. A panel of judges will pick the top 10 submissions, and the community will vote on those to determine the winner.

The winning entry will be announced May 13. The winner will receive badges for themselves and three guests to attend this year’s Comic-Con. The winning superhero will be brought to life through a costume designed by Allan Lavigne, head of the Bronze Armory Studios and a prop designer and costumer who has worked on Marvel’s “Iron Man” and “Captain America” film franchises.

The costume will make its public debut during a Comic-Con Museum panel at Comic-Con. It will also be on display during July at the museum, where the student-creator’s vision of a hunger-fighting hero will make visitors think about what kind of actions they can take.

“From an organizational standpoint, we are hoping this helps drive awareness for Feeding San Diego,” said director of marketing and communications Dana Williams, who came up with the contest idea.

“A lot of people haven’t heard of us and are not aware of the resources, whether it is the opportunity to get help or for people who want to give help. We hope this opens up a conversation about hunger in our community, what we can do to support people who need extra help, and what we can do to celebrate those who take action.”

SEE PETERSON • B8