

LOCAL EXTRA



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CARL LOVE

DINNERS SERVE MORE THAN FOOD

One was launched in the most modern of ways, a Facebook post. Jimmy Canales' friend, Leslie Kussman of Menifee, was looking for a way to teach her kids the spirit of giving, not receiving. Where locally can you go volunteer at Christmas time to help the needy, she asked.

The other was started 17 years ago after Buck Kemmis' mom passed. Kemmis, a Temeculan, and his family used to always spend Christmas day with his mom. Now where would they go?

Thus two southwest Riverside County Christmas Day dinners, one hosted by Canales and others, the other at the Temecula Community Center put on by Kemmis, his family and tons of other volunteers.

In these times of economic collapse, the meals take on a more special meaning. Nobody is immune.

Canales had his house foreclosed on and had to give back a vehicle he was behind on. Now he rents, works as a fence company salesman and doesn't consider himself among the legions of needy.

That Facebook post from Kussman in early December 2010 made Canales realize there was no community event in Menifee to get a Christmas meal. In just a couple weeks they organized a dinner that served about 150 people and distributed another 150 packaged dinners and goodies to about 80 kids — amazing in so short a time.

"That was my hope," he says. "I knew (the less fortunate, the lonely) were there. I was one of them."

This year they're expanding their operation, preparing to serve about 300 from 2 to 5 p.m. today at the Marian Ashley Community Center, 25625 Briggs Road in Menifee. Everybody is welcome, from the less fortunate to those separated from loved ones. Another batch of packaged dinners and toys also is available.

An event flier proclaims it "Menifee families helping the Menifee Valley," meaning Kussman's family and about 75 others no longer have to leave the area to realize the value of community giving.

As for the Kemmis dinner, let's just say it takes a huge extended family to serve the 1,700-plus people expected this year from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Temecula Community Center, 28816 Pujol St.

For instance, about 25 people were booked just to carve the turkeys. About 225 volunteers help out, and for Kemmis, a retired grading contractor, and his wife, Kathi, it's been pretty much an around-the-clock operation the past month. Not to mention his brother Tim, his nephew Josh, his son Jimmy and Jimmy's wife, Kelly. No doubt Kemmis' mom would be proud.

He says he was surprised at that first dinner 17 years ago by how many people showed up, several hundred he recalls. Somehow in our area of nice tract homes and sprawling shopping centers, it seemed the legions of needy were surely not amongst us.

Yet as Kemmis and now Canales realize, they're here, as deserving of a Merry Christmas as anybody. Reach Carl Love at carllove4@yahoo.com



Maura Ammenheuser, right, and her mother, Mary Ann O'Brien, in a photo taken shortly after O'Brien was diagnosed with cancer in 2009.

A HOLIDAY GIFT FOR MY DYING MOTHER

I didn't know what to give my mother for Christmas this year. She is dying of breast cancer.

My mother no longer needs cute earrings, kitchen gadgets or new ski gear. She loves wine, but stopped drinking it when she started chemotherapy 15 months ago, so no wine bottles under the Christmas tree. A few months ago she got too fatigued to cook much, so no fancy gourmet ingredients by mail. Mom and Dad squeezed in lots of travel early this year, rushing through her "bucket list" while she was still strong and functioning more or less normally. But by this



Maura Ammenheuser
Momarama
blogs.inlandsocal.com/moms

Christmas I couldn't send a gift card to her favorite restaurant, because they no longer even go out to SEE **MOMARAMA/C6A**

MARINES DELIVER TOYS FOR TOTS

Norco military facility has annual bash for preschoolers

NAVAL SURFACE WARFARE CENTER, CORONA DIVISION, PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Thanks to the Marine Corps Reserve's Toys for Tots, Santa had some bright red packages to hand out last week at the Corona-Norco Family YMCA as part of the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Corona Division's annual holiday event that adds an extra "merry" to Christmas for many preschoolers who need it most.

On Dec. 19 Santa came in the front door, instead of down the chimney, to surprise the first group of shy 4-year-olds who stood in line to whisper their special requests that probably won't end up under the Christmas tree. But they did get something of their own that could be their only Christmas gift. Thankfully, Joyce Ramirez, 4, was gently talked out of a puppy by Santa, who promised her a stuffed toy dog instead.

"If it wasn't for this gift, they most likely would not get anything for Christmas," said Monica Hunter, YMCA program director.

NSWC Corona's commanding officer Cmdr. Eric Ver Hage toured the facility and chatted with the children and their teachers along with two of his Navy chief petty officers and a Marine sergeant who helped Santa distribute gifts.

"This is a great program here at the Y. It is nice to have the opportunity to make a difference for these



Naval Surface Warfare Center, Corona Division, Chief Petty Officer Andre Hall, right, gives a gift to Melody Meister, 4, during the center's annual NSWC children's Christmas party at Corona-Norco Family YMCA.

children and to give back to the community," Ver Hage said. He called the gift-giving scene "priceless."

More than 170 youngsters received gifts through the generosity of base volunteers.

Santa was joined by base employee Brian Sabino, who performed juggling tricks for the wide-eyed youngsters, and Navy Chief Petty Officers Andre Hall and Shawn Mellenberger, and Marine Master Sgt. Neal Chandler, who donned

their most formal military uniforms — which were almost as impressive as Santa's red suit.

"They know a Marine Corps uniform," said Chandler, who led the effort at the Navy base not far from the first Toys for Tots program that started in Los Angeles as a pilot project in 1947 and was formally adopted as a national campaign in 1948.

The animated faces of 4-year-olds as they sang "Jingle Bells" to Santa was a special high-

light that they will take home and share with their families, who also will get holiday food packages and presents for their brothers and sisters, said Yolanda Carrillo, Y executive director. The preschool program is funded by the state and aimed to assist families at or below the poverty level, she said.

"The kids are so appreciative of anything you do, and we so appreciate the Navy base," she said. "We will make sure their families have a SEE **MARINES/C4**

Infomercial pitchman is sold on environment

Mike Miller created Big MaMa Earth, a costumed character that advocates "reusing, reducing and recycling"

BY BRIAN ROKOS
STAFF WRITER
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Mike Miller made a fortune in the infomercial business by selling you the Master Mop, Total Gym and Tony Robbins' Credit Dynamics.

But wait — there's more! Miller has a new pitch: saving the Earth's environment one child, one

skit, one recycled bottle, one energy-efficient light bulb at a time. No need to call before midnight tonight; just listen now.

"We're in a real predicament here," Miller, 63, said while nestled into his Canyon Lake living room couch alongside his wife, Cathy, and fluffy shelter cats Tara and Tigie. "We could be the sixth extinction of our planet. Our planet will be around for probably a billion more years. But will we?"

He said ocean reefs, which provide some of the Earth's oxygen, SEE **MAMA EARTH/C7**



Mike Miller, of Canyon Lake, poses with his creation, Big MaMa Earth, outside of Quail Valley Elementary after a performance Dec. 17.

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HOW THEY VOTED

Here is how area members of Congress voted on major issues in the week ending Dec. 23.

SOCIAL SECURITY TAX HOLIDAY: Voting 89 for and 10 against, the Senate on Dec. 17 sent the House a bill (HR 3630) to extend through February the temporary tax holiday and economic stimulus under which 160 million U.S. workers are contributing 4.2 percent of their pay to Social Security, down from the standard 6.2 percent. To offset the projected \$40 billion in lost revenue, the bill raises fees charged by the housing agencies Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The bill also sets a two-month deadline for an administration decision on whether to approve or reject the proposed Keystone XL oil pipeline between tar sands in Alberta, Canada, and refineries in Texas. Additionally, the bill provides at least two more months of extended jobless benefits for those out of work 26 weeks or longer.

A yes vote was to pass the bill. Voting yes: Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., Barbara Boxer, D-Calif.

FISCAL 2012 APPROPRIATIONS: Voting 67 for and 32 against, senators sent President Obama a bill (HR 2055) to appropriate \$915 billion in fiscal 2012 for the 10 cabinet departments and numerous agencies that still await regular budgets for the fiscal year that began three months ago. This completes regular funding of the government through Sept. 30.

A yes vote was to pass the bill. Voting yes: Feinstein, Boxer.

AMBASSADOR MARI CARMEN APONTE: Voting 49 for and 37 against, the Senate on Dec. 16 failed to reach 60 votes for ending a Republican filibuster aimed at removing Mari Carmen Aponte as U.S. ambassador to El Salvador. She has held the post for 15 months as a recess appointee not subject to Senate confirmation. That appointment is set to expire Dec. 31. Republicans oppose Aponte mainly because she was romantically involved in the 1990s with a Cuban national alleged to work for a Cuban spy agency. Democrats say the charge has been debunked, that a few GOP senators have been allowed access to her FBI file to prove that point and that she has served admirably as a recess appointee.

Voting yes: Feinstein, Boxer.

HOUSE

FISCAL 2012 APPROPRIATIONS: Voting 296 for and 121 against, the House on Dec. 16 sent to the Senate a bill (HR 2055) to appropriate \$915 billion in fiscal 2012 for the 10 cabinet departments and related agencies that have not yet received regular appropriations three months into the budget year. Among the bill's many policy changes are ones to delay new energy-efficiency standard for light bulbs and bar the District of Columbia from using its own funds to finance abortions. The bill grants major spending increases to the Pentagon and Securities and Exchange Commission while imposing flat, reduced or only slightly in-

creased budgets on most other departments and agencies. When combined with regular appropriations enacted last month, the bill raises total 2012 discretionary spending to the \$1.043 trillion mark set by last summer's bipartisan deal on raising the national-debt ceiling.

A yes vote was to pass the bill. Voting yes: Jerry Lewis, R-Redlands, Ken Calvert, R-Corona, Mary Bono Mack, R-Palm Springs, Darrell Issa, R-Vista, Joe Baca, D-Rialto.

SANCTIONS ON IRAN: Voting 410 for and 11 against, the House on Dec. 14 sent the Senate a bill (HR 1905) to toughen existing U.S. economic sanctions on Iran. The bill would deny access to U.S. financial markets to any global enterprise whose investments and commercial activity help sustain Iran's nuclear weapons program. For example, the bill targets firms that supply Iran with refined petroleum products or technology that further its weapons programs. The bill also duplicates sanctions in the fiscal 2012 military budget designed to separate the Central Bank of Iran from the global economy.

A yes vote was to pass the bill. Voting yes: Lewis, Calvert, Bono Mack, Issa, Baca.

2012 INTELLIGENCE BUDGET: Voting 396 for and 23 against, the House on Dec. 16 sent to President Obama the conference report on a fiscal 2012 budget (HR 1892) of about \$55 billion for U.S. intelligence agencies, up 4 percent from 2011. When certain military outlays are counted, the total U.S. spy budget for 2012 is expected to top \$85 billion. While most provisions of the bill are classified, lawmakers disclosed it establishes burial benefits for CIA employees killed in the line of duty and clarifies rules for the receipt of gifts by injured and killed CIA employees.

A yes vote backed the conference report. Voting yes: Lewis, Calvert, Bono Mack, Issa, Baca.

SOCIAL SECURITY TAX CUT: Voting 229 for and 193 against, House Republicans on Dec. 20 rejected a Senate bill (HR 3630) to extend through February Social Security payroll-tax cuts, long-term unemployment benefits and current Medicare reimbursement levels for doctors — all paid for by increases in fees charged by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The vote embraced a rival House version of the same bill that would extend the three measures for one year and pay for them with cuts in domestic spending. The vote also requested a conference committee to negotiate the competing House and Senate versions. However, all of this became moot three days later when House Republicans reversed course and accepted the Senate bill without changes. The acceptance was by "unanimous consent" and did not involve a record vote.

Begun this year, the tax cut is an economic stimulus under which 160 million U.S. workers are

contributing 4.2 percent of their pay to Social Security, down from the standard 6.2 percent. For families earning \$50,000, the tax savings is about \$1,000 annually. The House and Senate early next year will seek agreement on extending the Social Security, unemployment compensation and Medicare initiatives through December.

A yes vote was to reject the Senate-passed version of HR 3630. Voting yes: Lewis, Calvert, Bono Mack, Issa.

Voting no: Baca.
SENATE V. HOUSE TAX CUTS: Voting 183 for and 238 against, the House on Dec. 20 defeated a Democratic bid to instruct any conference committee that meets on HR 3630 (above) to favor the bipartisan Senate-passed version of the bill. Senators passed that version Dec. 17 with 96 percent of Democrats and 85 percent of Republicans supporting it. The rival House version was approved Dec. 13 with backing from 94 percent of Republicans and 6 percent of Democrats.

Republicans and Democrats differ mainly over how to offset the tens of billions of dollars it would cost to extend the tax cut, extended jobless benefits and Medicare "doc fix" from March through December. House Republicans voted Dec. 13 to pay for the extensions by steps such as raising Medicare premiums on seniors earning over \$80,000, freezing federal workers' pay; cutting the federal workforce and barring millionaires from receiving unemployment benefits or food stamps. The only "pay for" so far approved by the Senate is an increase in fees that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac charge the home-mortgage industry. Both the House and Senate versions of HR 3630 include essentially deficit-neutral language to advance the proposed Keystone XL oil pipeline between Canada and Texas.

A yes vote backed the Democratic motion.

Voting yes: Baca.
Voting no: Lewis, Calvert, Bono Mack, Issa.

REP. ALAN WEST, DEMOCRATS, JOSEPH GOEBBELS: Voting 231 for and 188 against, members on Dec. 20 blocked a bid by Democrats for the House to disapprove of Rep. Alan West's comparison of their party's political messaging to the propaganda of Joseph Goebbels, a Nazi minister who helped lead the Third Reich's "Final Solution" to eradicate European Jewry. As a privileged resolution, the measure (H Res 504) was not debatable. West, a Florida Republican, recently told reporters Goebbels would be "very proud of the Democrat Party because they have an incredible propaganda machine." He later repeated the comparison in a letter to Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich.

A yes vote opposed the Democratic motion.

Voting yes: Lewis, Calvert, Bono Mack, Issa
Voting no: Baca.



CONTRIBUTED IMAGE

Matt LaLiberte and Sgt. Terry Scanlon with the Temecula Police Department, helped give bikes to teens in the Police Activities League.

Temecula police program helps teens get bikes

CONTRIBUTED CONTENT

Some deserving teens with the Police Activities League program will be sporting a new ride for Christmas through the efforts of Sgt. Terry Scanlon, CSO Matt Alberta and volunteer Gerry Kristi with the Temecula Police Department. Kristi offered to repair some bikes at the station to be given to the youths.

When approached, Les Campbell, owner of Sociopath Bikes in Temecula, said he would be happy to check out the bikes and do a final tune so they were "Christmas ready" for the youth. Thanks to the kindness and generosity of the officers,

volunteers and business owners, six teens received an unexpected gift.

Safe Alternatives for Everyone offers the PAL Program because all children face difficult challenges in school, at home and on the playing field. The agency is

dedicated to providing programs and activities which offer all children an opportunity to participate with positive role models in a safe environment with caring adults.

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MARINES

CONTINUED FROM C1

good Christmas. We want to ensure it's a great holiday."

Some of the children stared at Santa in awe, while several were a bit unsure and moved to the back of line while they figured out their wish list. Each asked for only one item.

"You can tell by their faces

that they are not used to this attention," said Lani Banks, lead teacher, who mothered the happy kids as they savored frosted cupcakes after meeting Santa. "They are totally surprised."

America Barajas, 4, told Santa she wanted "a baby."

"You want a baby who walks?" Santa asked. She nodded, and said she preferred a baby girl. "And you

know what Santa wants?" Of course, she did. "Cookies," she smiled.

Isai Marques wants a computer PlayStation; Jonathan Diaz wants Power Rangers.

Their teacher, Katelyn Jordan, said this is her first Christmas at the school. "This is so special for them," she said, adding it was a pretty neat gift for her, too.

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