



Alive! 911

LACERS

Home At Last

Retirement system's new HQ could be the future of City spaces.

— PAGE 10



Outside LACERS' new headquarters on North Broadway are some members of the team who helped design the new building (from left): Heather Ramirez, Sr. Benefits Analyst II; Tiffany Obembe, Sr. Benefits Analyst I; Neil Guglielmo, General Manager; Todd Bouey, Assistant General Manager; Rod June, Chief Investment Officer; Kristen Szanto, Management Analyst; and Isaias "EZ" Cantu, Sr. Management Analyst II. All are Club Members except Todd and Rod.

Alive! photo by Summy Lam



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A Bright and Colorful Future

A long odyssey is finally over ... and a new era for City buildings might just be dawning, thanks to the hard work and foresight of our friends at LACERS, the City retirement system.

The new LACERS headquarters building, years in the finding and making, impressed us on our recent visit with its innovation, wellness focus and flexibility while still being aware of municipal

budgets. Customer service for Retired City employees, and productivity and comfort for a new era in staffing, were the focus. I say they succeeded.

Most impressive of all is how staff members were given real input and responsibility into designing their new home. Long-time friend and General Manager **Neil Guglielmo** assembled a headquarters team that included **Isaias "EZ" Cantu, Horacio Arroyo, Kristen Szanto, Tiffany Obembe, Todd Bouey** and **Rod June**. Well done, all!

I save a special shoutout for **Heather Ramirez**, Club Member, who patiently kept us apprised of LACERS' journey to the new facility and then helped coordinate our visit.

Congratulations, LACERS, on a job well done, now and for future City employees and Retirees.

Goodbye to Debbie: Among the City Retirees this month is **Deborah Winger**, who gave decades of service to the City, and who contributed many years to the Club, too. Debbie, who just retired from Power Transmission at the LADWP, served the Club over many years as a department rep, a movie reviewer, and most recently as a Club Ambassador. Thank you, Debbie, for all you have done. You have made

a difference, and we send you deepest wishes for a wonderful and fulfilling retirement.

Back to Baker to Vegas: No sign that things have returned to normal is any clearer than *Alive!*'s annual coverage on Baker to Vegas, am I right? We cover it like no other source that I know of, and check out the big story produced as always by our very own **Arlene Herrero**, Club Vice President of Business Development, and **Dylan Herrero**. The pages are bursting with excellent photos; be sure you head over to the *Alive!* website for all of them. Dig in and enjoy!

Worth Considering: Kindness and gratitude go hand in hand. I suggest you take a moment to appreciate the people who have touched your life with their love and care. A simple "thank you" can make someone's day brighter.

Finally, after our very wet winter and cool spring, I say welcome to summer! May it bring you closer to your family and your purpose.

¡Gracias por leer!

Robert Larios



Robert Larios (right) with (from left) Isaias "EZ" Cantu, Heather Ramirez, Kristen Szanto, Rod June, Tiffany Obembe, Neil Guglielmo and Todd Bouey.



#ClubMobile Schedule*

The Club Mobile Team will bring Club benefits and authentic Los Angeles City apparel for purchase at Club prices (hats custom-made on site). It's one of the best ways for staff to feel appreciated. Your employees will be grateful!

The Mobile Team sets up in the Harbor area the first Wednesday of every month:

Wednesdays: June 7, July 5, and Aug. 2
Harbor Boys and Girls Club
 100 W. Fifth St., San Pedro • 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

ADDITIONAL VISITS:

Saturday, June 3
LADWP Retiree Picnic
 Whittier Narrows
 750 S. Santa Anita Ave., Arcadia
 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Monday, June 5
North Central Sanitation
 452 N. San Fernando Rd.
 7 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 6
LADWP Valley Power
 14401 Satcoy St., Bldg. 3
 7:30 – 9:30 a.m.

Monday, June 12
LADOT Crossing Guard Mtg.
 830 W. 77th St.
 Time TBD

Wednesday, June 14
LACERS HQ
 977 N. Broadway
 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Thursday, June 29
LAPD Mission Wellness
 22601 Santa Susana Pass Rd.
 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Monday, July 3
North Central Sanitation
 452 N. San Fernando Rd.
 6:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

* Mobile Team site visit dates are subject to change due to the pandemic. Make sure to check with your supervisor to confirm dates and times, up to and including on the scheduled day itself.

Schedule a Site Visit

Contact Lupe Lira, Club Store Manager:
 (213) 819-0350, or mobile@employeesclub.com



At a recent Mobile Team site visit.

Follow Club social media for other days, times and locations as they are scheduled.

- @EmployeesClub
- Employees Club of California
- @theClubofCA

For your continued safety: The Mobile Team is accepting only outdoor set-ups for now.

ATTENTION SUPERVISORS:
 Raise employee morale! Bring the Club to your worksite!



LACERS Home at Last

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Get more Alive! content at alive.employeesclub.com

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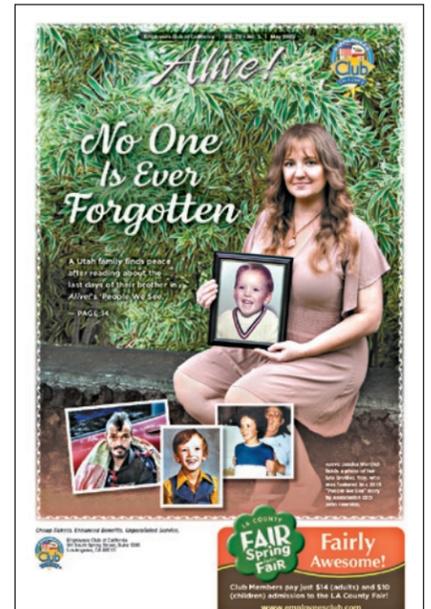
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LETTERS

About Troy



Dear readers, last month's cover story, "No One Is Ever Forgotten," inspired Members to respond. Here are some of those responses. – Ed.

Hi Employees Club Members and Alive, I wanted to express my heartfelt thanks for all of your stories associated with our unhoused population. I very much appreciate you personalizing the crises for City employees. These are very important articles. And your last article regarding Troy Mertlich and his family brought me to tears. We need the LA Times and others to write more stories like this to really personalize the tragedy and somehow better connect our unhoused populations with their families before tragedy occurs. Thank you!

— Stephanie Clements, Assistant Director, Public Works/StreetsLA

Dear Mr. Hawkins and Fellow Team Members of the Employees Club of California,

Thank you for your recent article concerning Mr. Troy Mertlich, and all you did for him and continue to do for the homeless. I was deeply moved by the article. Sincerely,

— John Miller, Retired, LADWP

[It was a] very moving article on Troy and his family. Thank you for caring. I recall years ago, I wrote to James Hahn who was the mayor that the City should utilize Channel 35 with a segment on the homeless titled "Everyone Belongs to Somebody." This story clearly demonstrates that families are looking for their loved ones. [I'm] happy the family has some closure.

— Deb M-v, via Facebook

Glad you could offer them some comfort!

— Feta Nela, via Instagram

Amen.

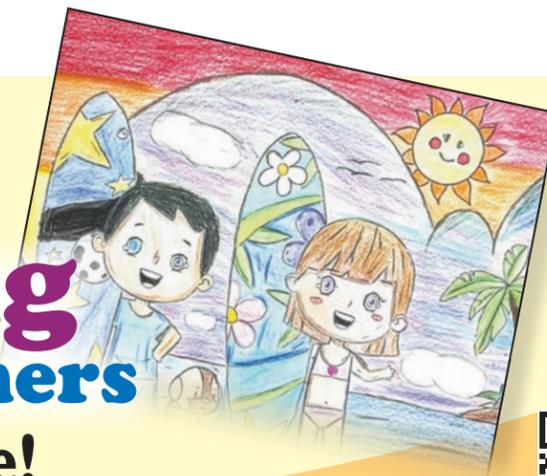


— Anrios55, via Instagram



Kids Coloring Contest Winners

See them online!



GO TO:
alive.employeesclub.com/kidscoloringwinners-202306



ATTENTION SUPERVISORS:

Raise employee morale! Bring the Club to your worksite!

#ClubMobile

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The Club Is Here to Help

Club staff is dedicated to helping our members receive the maximum benefit from their membership. If you have questions, concerns or suggestions about your Club, our counselors are ready to help.

Contact the Club

if you have an event you want covered in *Alive!* or if you have questions about insurance.

help@employeesclub.com
(800) 464-0452

The Club Store Online
Open 24/7: employeesclub.com

Alive!

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In addition, the Club strives to publish only those elements that are produced by the Club itself, are in the public domain, or whose rights have been negotiated.

Club Members who have questions on these points may write to: alive@employeesclub.com

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Meet the Club Team

The Club Team is here to help you receive the full power of your Membership and bring value, financial confidence and fun to your families. We honor your hard work and service! How can we help you? Contact us, and we'll be in touch with urgency. It's our promise to you!

Contact our help desk for all your Club needs:
help@employeesclub.com

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Brian Trent
Chief Financial Officer



Tuyet Pham
Senior Accountant



"Your presence in our lives has brought so much happiness, joy and love to our world. Thank you for all our wonderful vacations and great memories together."
— Ross Fink, Retired, LADWP

Happy Father's Day

Here are the personal messages sent to *Alive!* by some very loving and grateful children who wanted to pay tribute to their dad.

Send in your **Father's Day** tributes!

GO TO: alive.employeesclub.com/fathersday

It's not too late! Pay tribute to your dad, granddad or the dad in your family, and surprise him on his day on the *Alive!* Website and social media!

DEADLINE:
JUNE 14
to appear
online



"Happy Father's Day! We appreciate everything you do for us! You're the best and we love you."
—For David Soto, LADWP



"Happy Father's Day to the hardest-working dada! We love you."
— Marvin Magana, LADWP



"I am such a happy and proud Papa because of my wonderful Isabella. Every day is 'I'm a Happy Father's Day' Day."
— Rodney Bernaldo, Public Works/ Sanitation and Environment



"Thank you, Dad, Marco Trinidad, for your love, guidance, faith and sense of humor. We miss your smile and stories. Happy heavenly Father's Day!"
—Rachel Griffin, Retired, Convention Center



"Love you so much, now and always. Your youngest daughter, Deborah Jean Williams."
— Deborah Jean Williams For Col. Joseph Post Williams, US Army



"Happy Father's Day, Dad! We love you and appreciate everything you do!"
— Adrian Richardson, Airports, for Leonard Richardson, LADWP



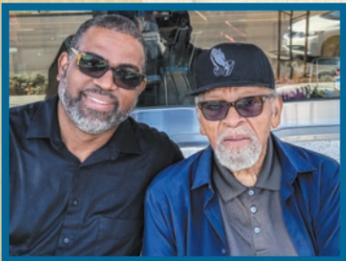
"Elvis Murray is a father, grandfather and great-grandfather. The Lord has blessed him with a long life to see the birth of his legacy. We all love him."
— Sarah Richardson, LAPD



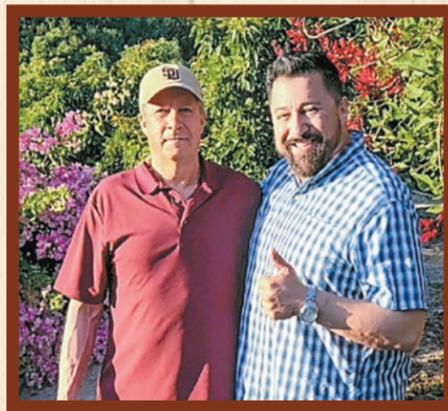
"Dad, thank you for supporting me in all I do. I wouldn't have been able to make it this far without you."
— Jason Oja, LADWP



"Daddy, I miss you every day! You live in my heart, and that makes me smile."
— Rose Serrato, LAPD



"Happy Father's Day, Dad. It has been great having you here in Los Angeles full-time."
— Jansen Hodge, Personnel



"Rafael Larios is my dad. Native intelligence, superior work ethic, strong faith, an expert avocado and citrus farmer, entrepreneur, and an immense love for his family. As of May 2023, he retired after 45 years in the farming profession in California. If I can be half the man my dad is, I'll be twice the man I ever thought I could be. Congratulations on your retirement and Happy Father's Day!"

Rafael Larios es mi papá. Inteligencia nativa, ética de trabajo superior, fe fuerte, un experto agricultor de aguacates y cítricos, empresario y un inmenso amor por su familia. A partir de mayo de 2023, se retiró después de 45 años en la profesión agrícola en California. Si puedo ser la mitad del hombre que es mi padre, seré el doble del hombre que alguna vez pensé que podría ser. ¡Felicitaciones por su jubilación y feliz día del padre!

—From Club CEO Robert Larios



"Our dad is fabulous in all he is, and we wish him a big, gigantic love hug from all of us! He works and lives for us! Happy Father's Day, Dad, with amor!"
— Louie Ramos, ISD San Fernando, County of Los Angeles



"Happy Father's Day, Dad! Thank you for always supporting me and being a great role model."
— For Burt Smith, Public Works/Sanitation and Environment



"Dad, there are no perfect words to say we love you and appreciate all that you did for Mom and my siblings. Thanks for all your hard work and dedication."
— Andy Morales, Public Works/ Sanitation and Environment

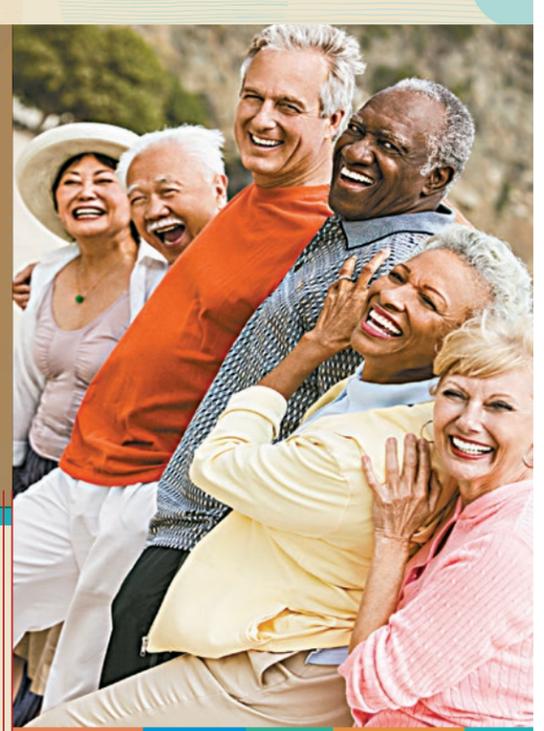


"Happy Father's Day to our hardworking dad. Thank you for your love and care, and being a good father to us. We love you. Love, Whitney and Sadie."
—For Charles Dirden, LADWP

READY FOR RETIREMENT



Resources for Club Retirees or Those About to Retire



YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO INSURANCE

By Noelle Kauffman, Director Of Sales

CA LICENSE NO: 0H45598

Club Life Insurance Designed for Retirees

Spring cleaning also means evaluating the coverages you have on yourself and your spouse to ensure peace of mind and protection.

Let's Discuss Retiree Life Insurance
A life insurance benefit can help pay for things including final expenses, outstanding debt and loss of income.

Life insurance can also be used to replace all or a part of your spouse's pension benefits.

Have peace of mind knowing that your loved ones will be taken care of in

the event of your passing.

The Club provides Group Rated Term Life Insurance for its Members, convenient payroll deduction, and an in-house claims department that works directly with your loved ones to make sure the claims process is as seamless as possible.

Did you know that, as a Retiree, you are entitled to other Club benefits including Long-Term Care Insurance, Funeral Pre-Planning, and the popular MetLife Legal Plan?



Contact the Club today to speak with our Retiree Specialist for guidance on life insurance and other Retiree benefits.

For Retirees, or Those About to Retire: Take the First Step to Retirement Success

Let's stay connected! Staying informed on your Membership and insurance details is key, so make sure you share with us your personal email address and phone number to ensure nothing slips through the cracks. Retirement doesn't have to mean disconnection – get in touch now for peace of mind tomorrow.

Please email info@employeesclub.com or call (800) 464-0452 to speak with a Customer Service Representative to update your current contact information.

Retirement should be a stress-free process, and the Employees Club of California can help you make it just that!

Get expert guidance from our team so you can start your retirement journey with peace of mind.

You've worked hard for retirement – now let the Club help you enjoy it fully! Speak

with one of our Retiree Counselors and take advantage of group-rated Life Insurance benefits, Accidental Death and Dismemberment coverage, Pre-Funeral Planning services, Long-Term Care protection and exclusive access to MetLife Legal Plans. What better way is there to start your golden years on solid ground? Schedule an appointment today with

a Retirement Specialist and learn why life insurance remains so important in retirement.

Ready to take the next steps in your financial independence journey? Our Retirement Specialists can give you an edge – book a consultation today and start planning for tomorrow!

With their help, you'll be well on your way towards achieving financial security and living out the retirement of your dreams. Don't wait – secure your future now.

Staying informed about your Membership and insurance details is key, so make sure you share with us your personal email address and phone number to ensure nothing slips through the cracks.

JOIN THE CLUB

As a Retiree, you are entitled to group rated insurance benefits including life insurance, accidental death and dismemberment, pre-funeral planning, long-term care, and our popular legal plan by MetLife.

SIGN UP ONLINE



LACEA Insurance Services, Inc. (Employees Club of California) is a licensed insurance agency offering insurance benefits to qualified Club members. The Club's CA DOI Lic. is #0B98000.

Retired or Retiring Soon?

Call for a FREE insurance benefits consultation with Member Services Counselor:



Cheryl Martin

(800) 464 -0452, EXT. 136

Work cell: (213) 819-0794

23 years of insurance experience

CA LICENSE NO: 0C12823

2023 Events

June 3 LADWP Employees Assoc. Picnic (for LADWP retirees)

Whittier Narrows Recreation Area (The Meadows)
750 S. Santa Anita Ave.
South El Monte
9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

June 7 LARFPA Annual Picnic and Benevolent Fundraiser

Almanson Court
700 S. Almanson St., Alhambra
Noon – 3 p.m.
\$10 admission
Reservations:
events@larfpa.org

Contact Information

Employees Club of California

Club contact:
help@employeesclub.com

Los Angeles City Employees' Retirement System (LACERS) (City Dept.)

(800) 779-8328
lacers.services@lacers.org

LADWP Retirees Association

Dolores Foley, *President*
(949) 388-1206
vincedolores@gmail.com

Fire and Police Pensions (City Dept.)

(844) 885-2377
pensions@lafpp.com

LA Retired Fire and Police Association (LARFPA)

(888) 288-5073
membership@larfpa.org

Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc. (RLACEI)

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FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

Are You Ready for Retirement?

Here are some current programs to help with your planning:

Webinars

Learn about your retirement options and benefits at an upcoming Planning for Retirement webinar, hosted by the LACERS Member Engagement team. Register via your MyLACERS account. Upcoming dates include:

Sat., June 10 (in-person)

Thurs., June 29 (webinar)

Sat., July 15 (in person)

Sat., Aug. 12 (in person)

Wed., Aug. 16 (Tier 3) (webinar)

All webinars/events begin at 9 a.m.

Applying for Retirement Online

Members are encouraged to submit their retirement application 60 days before their retirement date when using LACERS' new Retirement Application Portal (RAP). The RAP is a great asset to LACERS Members that helps to streamline the retirement process. While the filing period is within 30 to 60 days of your retirement date, starting your application early and submitting it on the first day you can at the 60-day-prior mark, will allow for a couple of benefits. These include having ample time to discover any complications and address them without having to move your retirement date, as well as ensuring LACERS staff has time to meet your retirement date request.

For example, if your desired retirement date is Sept. 23, 2023, you would have aimed to submit your retirement application in the portal on July 25, 2023. For more information, please visit lacers.org/applying-retirement.



RESULTS OF THE BIG RACE

Story and photos by Arlene Herrero, Club Vice President of Business Development, and Daniel Wang of Business Development. Photos by Dylan Herrero



SAVE THE DATE:
The 2024 B2V Race will take place
March 23-24, 2024. See you there!

CITYWIDE

BAKER to VEGAS

LAPD overall winner as Club celebrates 19 years of sponsoring teams in this popular desert footrace.

Over 100 More Great Photos on Web Alive!



The 39th annual Baker to Vegas Challenge Cup Relay grew in its second year after a hiatus during the recent pandemic, and the Club was there for all the action!

The race was held from the desert to Las Vegas April 1-2.

This amazing footrace is an annual event for public safety organizations throughout the world. The relay race is a 120-mile, 20-stage footrace between Baker, California, and Las Vegas and is considered the "Super Bowl" of law enforcement; the champions are the best, in terms of physical fitness and logistics the police world has to offer. The race was created by and is managed by the Los Angeles Police Revolver and Athletic Club, and the Employees Club is grateful for their leadership.

This year was another outstanding year for police runners, where more than 230 teams participated. The New York Police Dept. returned for the first time since 2016 and finished in second place (13:29:46), followed by the LA County Sheriff's Dept. (13:34:24), The LAPD Citywide team avenged its loss to the Sheriff's Dept. team last year, winning the overall title this year (12:51:06).

The Club once again was on the race-course to capture as much of what unfolded as possible. Runners enjoyed exceptional weather this year; Baker to Vegas is known for its sometimes harsh conditions. Last year, strong headwinds outside Baker and the pavement temperatures hit a high of 105 degrees, and the race had to be halted so that the medical teams could be deployed to render aid to a struggling runner.

The Club sponsored six teams from different agencies:

- **Team 70 LA Airport Police** (15:39.34), taking second place in their overall 800 category and bringing home a covered mug
- **Team 167 LA Port Police** (17:04.48, earning a mug)
- **Team 195 LADOT** (19:28.16)
- **Team 129 LAPD Communications Division/LAPD SECS** (17:26.24, earning a mug)
- **Team 84 LA County Probation** (17:49.05)
- **Team 210 State of California Metropolitan State Hospital** (20:17.21)

Here are some notable takeaways from a few of the Club's sponsored teams:

"This year, our team ran in memory of DSO Wall, Chief Leyva and in hope for a healthy recovery for our teammate, SDPO Cope. We competed in the mixed division, improved on our time from last year and came in 16th in our division. With 27 runners and alternates, more than 30 volunteers and our gracious sponsors, the 2023 Baker to Vegas race was a huge success."

- **DPO II Paul Chavez, Probation Training Center, team liaison, Club Member**

"At LAXPD, we have a great support group, but it has been dwindling throughout the years. We started recruiting using new technology and new registration forums to gain interest from different outlets. We lacked interest in runner participation from our agency, therefore, we personally started recruiting Officers. Our elite team included LAXPD and LA Park Rangers male and female runners. Most importantly, for the first time in our history, we placed second in our category."

- **Co-captains Roxanne Carlos, Daniel Gardea and Greg Iwamiya, Club Members**

THANK YOU! The Club couldn't produce this comprehensive Baker to Vegas review without the big help of the following: Sgt. Latisha Vargas, LADOT; Officer Jose Verbera, Harbor; SDPO Gus Mojarro and DPO II Paul Chavez, LA County Probation; Officer Daniel Gardea, Airport Police; Francisco Sarabia and Lidia Marcial, LAPD Communications/SECS; and Jeff MacDuff, State of California Metropolitan State Hospital. We also thank the Los Angeles Police Revolver and Athletic Club for its leadership and assistance.



Thank you to the LAPRAAC Board!

Team 260 Team Australia runner with a kangaroo makes their way to the finish line.



Team 41 Rampart-LAPD Leg 2 runner.



Team 41 LAPD Rampart.



LA Police Emerald Society Pipes and Drums.



Also competing in the 800 Category was Team 70 LAX placing second with Los Angeles Airport Police Chief Cecil Rhambo, Club Member, as their team finish at 15:39.34.



Cooking with the Club

with Chef Robert Larios



Photos: Patty M. Larios



From May 2019

Vegan Kale and Farro Caesar Salad

Can I tempt your taste buds? While there is nothing like the classic Caesar salad, a vegan version might be an incredible surprise. Feast your eyes upon this vegan Caesar salad – a delectable adaptation of the original you know and love. And oh, what a dreamy dressing you can make! I'm telling you; it's fit for a Roman emperor – or just you at home because it takes only 15 minutes of prep time. Whip up your own from scratch or pick up vegan Caesar salad dressing at your local market if that suits your culinary whimsy. However, if you option to make yours, be sure to give it a whirl – that impressive flavor will guarantee satisfaction!

¡Buen provecho! *Chef Larios*

Vegan Kale and Farro Caesar Salad

INGREDIENTS: Serves 2

- ½ cup farro or similar grain
- ¼ pound organic grape or cherry tomatoes
- 1 head organic artisan or other lettuce
- 4 or 5 sprigs organic fresh dill
- ¼ cup pine nuts
- 3 ounces organic baby kale or other leafy greens
- Vegan Caesar dressing (almond milk, cashew butter, lemon juice, Dijon mustard, capers, vegan Worcestershire, kosher salt, nutritional yeast, garlic, black pepper, onion powder) (Make it or buy ready-made vegan Caesar dressing at a store)



DIRECTIONS:

- 1 Wash produce before use.

- 2 Cook the farro: In a small saucepot, combine the farro and 1.5 cups lightly salted water. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, and cook until the grains are tender, 12 to 15 minutes. Drain the farro. While the farro cooks, prepare the remaining ingredients.



- 3 Prep the remaining ingredients; toast the pine nuts: Cut the tomatoes in half. Trim the root end from the lettuce; coarsely chop the leaves. Coarsely chop the dill. In a dry medium frying pan over medium-low heat, toast the pine nuts, stirring often, until lightly browned and fragrant, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to a plate to cool.

- 4 Assemble the salad: In a large bowl, combine the tomatoes, lettuce, dill, pine nuts, kale and farro. Add half the Caesar dressing and toss to coat (set aside the remaining dressing for serving). Season to taste with salt and pepper.



- 5 Serve: Transfer the salad to individual bowls and serve the remaining dressing on the side.



HELLO FRESH

MEMBER DEAL

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Join Chef Larios by making your own HelloFresh meals delivered to your home. Sign in to the Club website and access your Entertainment/My Club Deals to receive 16 free meals with promotional purchase, including free shipping on the first box!

Food Lover's Dictionary:

Caesar salad [SEE-zer]

A salad consisting of greens (classically Romaine lettuce) tossed with a garlic vinaigrette dressing (made with Worcestershire sauce and lemon juice), grated Parmesan cheese, croutons, a coddled egg and sometimes anchovies. It is said to have been created in 1924 by Italian chef Caesar Cardini, who owned a restaurant in Tijuana, Mexico.



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Cooking Tidbit - Monitor the pine nuts closely while toasting, as they can quickly burn, and remove them from the heat when they turn light brown and emit a buttery aroma.

Food Quote - "At first, people think about vegetarian food like, 'Here are some veggies. Here is some pasta.' But there's so much more you can do in the vegetarian and vegan world." – **Guy Fieri**

Photos courtesy LAPD

Off to Washington

TWO HEAD TO NATIONAL POLICE WEEK MEMORIAL.



Officers Carballo and Kassis were met in Washington, DC, by Capt. Mohammadi



From left: Officers Carballo and Kassis.

LAPD: Officers Carballo and Kassis from North Hollywood pedaled their way to Washington, DC in May as part of the Police Unity Tour, to honor all those who have fallen in the line of duty. Every year, members of law enforcement, along with survivors of line-of-duty deaths from across the United States unite for a massive ride that pays tribute to fallen law enforcement officer heroes. The ride's motto: "They ride for those who died." The Unity Tour culminated in an arrival in our nation's capital on May 12, in time for National Police Week and ceremonies honoring those fallen in the line of duty. Well done, Officers! ●

Sal to Lead

LAPD: Congratulations to Sr. PSR I Salvatore Tillit, who was promoted March 7 into a leadership position, leading the PSRs of Communications Division. Well done, Sir! ●



From left: Sr. PSR I Salvatore Tillit and Capt. Alejandro Vargas, head of LAPD/Communications.

Serving the Southwest

TWO HONORED IN SOUTHWEST DIVISION.

LAPD: In a pandemic catch-up, two leaders at Southwest Division received their certificates for previous honors. Sgt. Jose Campos was recognized as the Patrol Sergeant of the Year for 2022. Lt. Jason Adkins was recognized as the South Bureau Specialized Supervisor of the Year for 2020. Congratulations, Sgt. Campos and Lt. Adkins! ●



From left: Sgt. Jose Campos with Capt. I James Lopez.



From left: Lt. Jason Adkins with Capt. I James Lopez.



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ALIVE! FEATURE



Home at Last

The new headquarters for the Los Angeles City Employees' Retirement System could be the future of City spaces.



Inside the boardroom of LACERS's new headquarters are members of the team who helped design the new building (from left): Isaias "EZ" Cantu, Sr. Management Analyst II, 21 years of City service, Club Member; Heather Ramirez, Sr. Benefits Analyst II, 16 years, Club Member; Kristen Szanto, Management Analyst, 4 years, Club Member; Tiffany Obembe, Sr. Benefits Analyst I, 8 years, Club Member; Neil Guglielmo, General Manager, 33 years, Club Member; Todd Bouey, Assistant General Manager, 22 years; and Rod June, Chief Investment Officer, 28 years.

It's been a long time coming. But now it could spell the future for very long time.

At long last, the Los Angeles City Employees' Retirement System – one of three City pension manager departments – has found a home. The new LACERS headquarters on the edge of Chinatown looks to do things differently, including wellness initiatives, technology, remote work readiness, emergency preparedness and collaboration.

But mostly it's about customer service for all City employees who are nearing retirement, and those already retired. The headquarters building is the central spot for the next chapter of your life, and the building and staff are ready for you.

Read all about the new LACERS headquarters, including an interview with the core team that contributed to its design and management, in this month's feature.

The Club thanks Heather Ramirez, LACERS Sr. Benefits Analyst II and long-time liaison between the department and the Club, for her assistance in coordinating this story. ●

INSIDE THE NEW HEADQUARTERS

RECEPTION AREA



ABOVE: This reception area and entrance lobby might become a familiar space for City employees who are soon to retire, and those already retired. Individual counseling rooms and a member check-in station are just off to the side. From left: Julie Guan, Management Analyst, 12 years of City service (who was also on the staff team that helped design the building); Isaias "EZ" Cantu; Kristen Szanto; Heather Ramirez and *Alive!* editor John Burnes.



LEFT: Staffing the reception area are (back) Nathan Romero, Sr. Administrative Clerk, 2 years of City service, and Jesus R. Navarro, Sr. Administrative Clerk, 12 years.

BOARDROOM

The new LACERS boardroom and adjoining multipurpose room offer flexible areas for a variety of functions.





LACERS new headquarters: 977 N. Broadway

The *Alive!* Interview

The Future of City Buildings

On April 20, Club CEO Robert Larios and *Alive!* editor John Burnes interviewed the team behind managing the design and opening of Los Angeles City Employees' Retirement System's (LACERS) new headquarters building in Chinatown. The team includes: Neil Guglielmo, General Manager, 33 years of City service; Isaías "EZ" Cantu, Sr. Management Analyst II, 21 years; Kristen Szanto, Management Analyst, 4 years; Heather Ramirez, Sr. Benefits Analyst II, 16 years; and Tiffany Obembe, Sr. Benefits Analyst I, 8 years. All are Club Members. Neil served as a Club Board Member.



Thanks for joining us today to talk to *Alive!* about your new headquarters.

Isaías "EZ" Cantu: Consider me a fan. I read *Alive!* every month, I go through it, look at the content, and then I take a look at who's retiring. I think, did we serve them well? I hope so.

I'm sure you did. We've been talking with Heather for months now about doing a story on your new headquarters. We're glad it's finally opening!

Heather Ramirez: We just opened it a few weeks ago. This is perfect timing.

Great. First question: How did you get to your current position? What was your journey? Let's start with Neil. We've known you a long time, Neil, as you were on our board. Has it been a decade?

Neil Guglielmo: I think that is pretty close, yes.

I started with the City when I was just graduating high school, working for Rec and Parks as a part-timer. I was an Assistant Park Services Attendant II, and I loved my job. I went to college and graduated, worked in the private sector briefly for one year, and then I was able to take a position as a Management Assistant with the Dept. of Aging. Since then I've worked in nine departments in 33 years. I've done lots of different kinds of work. I've loved every minute of it, but I'm loving LACERS the most.

Great. Excellent. Okay, EZ.

Isaías "EZ": I've worked at many different City departments, including City Clerk, Airports, Finance, Controllers' Office and Personnel; those are the ones I can remember. Generally I've worked on implementing large-scale projects, including their evaluation, development, incorporation of efficiencies and technology to streamline projects. I've been with LACERS for the last five years, and it's head and shoulders above all other departments I've worked for. I love LACERS and the team here.

Kristen Szanto: I came to the City after 15 years of project management and visual design in the private sector. I started in the film industry at Paramount Pictures, and then I jumped into design. I worked with clients like Best Buy, Epson, Nutribullet and Discovery Channel, among others. And then I stumbled into my City career like most people – I met someone who worked in the City. When we were comparing war stories, his were never as bad as mine, no matter how he tried. It made us laugh. I remember saying to him, "Even with your worst example, at the end of the day, you go home knowing you have a greater purpose and that you served the community." I was just making a rich person richer. Once I said that out loud I couldn't shake it. It took me about a year to finally say, yes, I needed to join the City. I took a pay cut, and I started from the bottom. Now here I am, and it's the best decision I've ever made. I love it here.

What a great story. Tiffany?

Tiffany Obembe: My background is in broadcast journalism, and I never thought I'd work for the City. Both my parents were City employees, and it wasn't my thing. But lo and behold, out of college I needed a job, and I started off as a Relief Retirement Worker here at LACERS, and I quickly became invaluable. But then my part-time hours ran out, and I had to leave. I worked at a couple other agencies for a while, but eventually I landed back with the City. I've worked for only two departments with the City – Personnel Employee Benefits for a little while, before LACERS picked me up as an Administrative Clerk. Since then I've been at LACERS making my way to where I am now over the Member Engagement team. I like where I am, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

You mentioned your parents. In which City departments were they?

Tiffany: My dad worked for Public Works/Sanitation, and my mom worked for the Office of Finance. She did business tax licenses. I'm City born and raised.

Finally, Heather.

Heather: I was fresh out of college working at Disneyland, and my dad played basketball on Saturdays with someone who worked with the LADWP. He told my dad, "Why doesn't your daughter take an exam for the City?" My dad came home with the information and I signed up to take the Clerk Typist exam. About six months later I got a job at Airports/Human Resources. I worked up to Personnel Analyst there, and stayed there for about seven years. I've been at LACERS since 2014.

The New HQ

First, in general terms, describe your exciting new headquarters building.

Isaías "EZ": This has been a three-year project, a labor of love. We've loved every minute of every day working on this project. 977 N. Broadway was built in 1983. It's a five-story building totaling 64,000 square feet of office space, with a 120-space subterranean parking structure. LACERS bought the building in October 2019 as a parent home for LACERS to provide Member services, the Board a place to meet, and then for staff to have a space to perform their work.

The building has 253 workstations, including 64 private offices and 189 cubicles, all including ergonomic furniture, sit/stand desks for all, and hardware and equipment that are ergonomic and promote wellness for our staff. The building has a boardroom; an emergency operations center in case of emergencies for business continuity; a training multi-purpose room; six conference rooms; five collaboration spaces; four counseling rooms; and a green wellness terrace. The building is fairly close to Union Station and also contains bicycle parking, so we can accommodate trains, automobiles and bikes – take whatever you want to get here. And last but not least, we also continue the work of designing the building for the future by preparing a 10-year capital plan for improvements. We want to make sure we incorporate eco-friendly and sustainable practices now and in the future.

— CONTINUED PAGE 12



Robert Larios



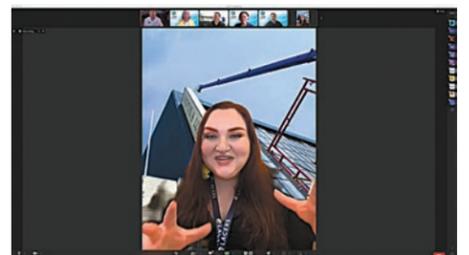
Isaías "EZ" Cantu



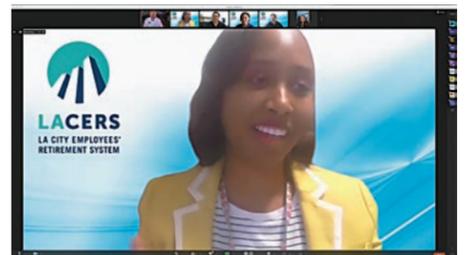
Heather Ramirez



Neil Guglielmo



Kristen Szanto



Tiffany Obembe

ALIVE! FEATURE

LACERS Home at Last

The *Alive!* Interview — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Kristen: 977 N. Broadway is a very distinctive-looking building. It's a blue cube that complements the beautiful array of colors in old Chinatown. The building itself is stunning. It's a mid-rise, a tiny skyscraper. It's meant to be a permanent home to serve the lifelong needs of our members – City employees, Retirees and their loved ones. And it's also intended to stop draining administrative funds from leasing commercial space near City Hall, since market rates are heading toward a million dollars a year for a department our size and would only continue to rise; that's money you don't get back when you lease. Everything that we put into the initial purchase of the building is still preserved in its current value, which we know has already increased since we purchased it.

Tiffany: In the simplest terms, it's a place for my team. In the old building we didn't have a place where all of us could be in the same area; we were spread out just because of spacing issues. Here, all of us can meet literally in the same area and be able to see each other and interact. We can feel that team mentality. It gives us a bonding area where we can get together and complete our everyday tasks and work, and it just feels more comfortable. I am definitely a big supporter and a fan of the work EZ and Kristen did, and how everything came together.

Heather: I oversee the team that has first contact with the members – our Member Service Center team, and the work that EZ and Kristen did to make that space on the first floor where members meet our staff, is beautiful. It looks amazing. Our presentation to our members is pretty awesome now, and I'm very excited for our members to see it for their first time.

Neil: The lease space we were in at the former LA Times property was I think a 10-year lease. We had negotiated good lease rates, below market. But the building was very old, and we were lacking a number of things. The vast majority of the staff was located in the central core of one of the buildings where there was no access to natural light, so you had to actually leave the offices to get access to natural light. And there wasn't a great place for staff to get together – we had a relatively small board meeting room and some limited conference space, but we didn't have great staff training or education space. There was no collaboration space. The previous headquarters lacked a number of things.

The lease was going to be up, and the building ownership had gone through the process already to approach the City about demolishing the building and the adjacent parking structure. Their plans are to build some large towers there, so there was no long-term perspective for that property for us anyway. And as Kristen mentioned, when you're paying a lease you're not building equity in anything. You don't have any ownership rights, and you don't have control over the property. And so for us it was important to own a building and not have to constantly move from lease space to lease space because we serve a lot of active and Retired members. We don't want them to worry where we're going to be in two years. So now members will know where we are.

Our building has all these great elements to it. But when you go inside the building, that's when the magic happens. When you go inside and go to each floor, you see that the offices are on the interior, and all the staff cubicles are by the windows. That means everybody has access to natural light.

The health and safety aspect of the building is top-notch. We survived the pandemic, and who knows if there are going to be more pandemics in the future. But we looked at all the design elements so that we have a lot of touchless services. We have great cubicles that have a kind of Plexiglas that provides still more natural light coming in, but dampens the noise. Everything is ergonomic. We have sit/stand desks for everyone and ergonomic chairs, and everything was designed to be as user-friendly as possible. I couldn't be happier, and I'm happy for the staff because they finally got the space that they deserve.

Was the board involved?

Neil: Definitely. An ad hoc committee of the board met regularly to discuss various aspects of the search for a building. We had talked about leasing versus procuring the building, the benefits of each. Some financial analysis had been done by one of our real estate consultants as well to assist with the math, and ultimately the decision was made by the board. Staff made recommendations, and in October 2019 the board approved it, and we signed off and purchased the building.

Certifications and Designs

Speaking of retrofitting, I presume it meets all modern certifications for renovations.

Isaias "EZ": LA's building code incorporates LEED requirements as the minimum benchmark. The building meets all LEED certification levels. Although we're not formally certified, it does meet all of the levels. Additionally, we are Fitwel certified.

Fitwel is a healthy building certification system.

Kristen: Yes. Fitwel is like LEED certification, but more. It's a program that's also about employee wellness. We had to go through a rigorous amount of things to make this happen, but we earned two out of the three stars possible. Some of the innovations include the ergonomic furniture we've been talking about, and details like beautifully painting the stairways to encourage walking. It's a lot more than updating fixtures to energy efficient ones like with LEED. Fitwel

— CONTINUED PAGE 13

INSIDE THE NEW HEADQUARTERS

LIGHT



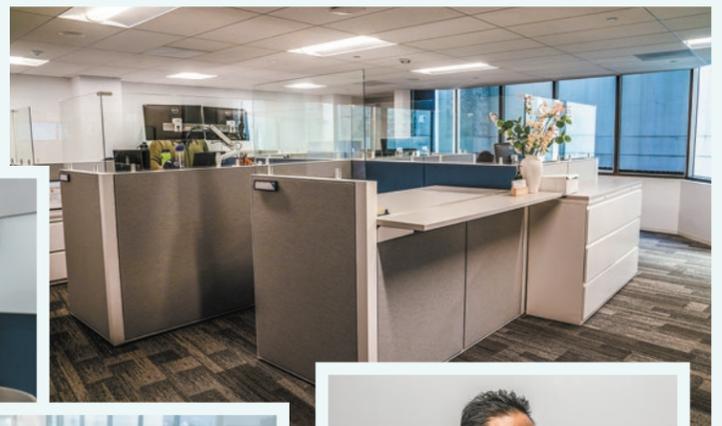
Club CEO Robert Larios (left) and Neil Guglielmo in the light of his office. The previous two buildings that served as LACERS headquarters were not light-filled, according to GM Neil Guglielmo, so adding light to the new HQ was a priority.

PERSONABLE CUBICLES

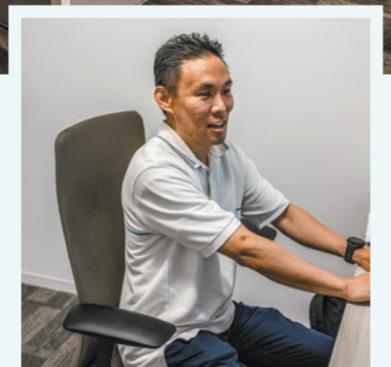
Cubicles provide individual space with glass tops for collegiality.



Horacio Arroyo, Sr. Management Analyst I, 9 years of City service, Club Member, was the co-lead on the staff team that helped design and build the new headquarters.



Angela Peyton, Benefits Specialist, 6 years of City service, has customized her cubicle



Kevin Hirose, Sr. Benefits Analyst I, 20 years of City service, Club Member, in his space.

TECHNOLOGY



Staff-programmed monitors throughout the building are just one aspect of the technology revolution in the new HQ.

CONFERENCE ROOMS



This executive conference room is one of six conference rooms.

The *Alive!* Interview — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

gets into things like indoor air quality policies, walkability of the neighborhood, and even the design of the pest control program, encouraging integrated solutions that minimize staff exposure to harmful insecticides. Every piece of this building is motivated to improve the wellness and wellbeing of staff.

Our building was built in 1983, so it was often a challenge to incorporate Fitwel standards, but we did it.

Neil: One thing that was neat was having our architectural design firm work with the staff to come up with color palettes and textures, to bring this space alive. So many buildings have white walls and a gray floor; it's boring and doesn't speak to its inhabitants at all. There's color here, and the color ties to each of the different work units and divisions we have. It flows in a cool, creative way.

Location, Location

What's special about the location?

Neil: We're a great anchor at the end of Chinatown, a beautiful location. We share a wall with Phoenix Bakery. It doesn't get much better than that. Staff can walk very short distances to great restaurants. With all the culture, shopping and people, it's a great feel. And we're helping revitalize that end of Chinatown as well. And we can look northwest and see Dodger Stadium, and that's inspirational – who doesn't love the Dodgers!

Isaias "EZ": It's a cliché, but location, location, location. The building is smack dab in LA's vibrant Chinatown. It's a stone's throw away from the Civic Center, which makes it convenient for meeting with the City departments and City Hall. It's also close to Union Station, and along many

commuting vines that staff and members use to come to the office. And the view of the LA skyline from the roof and from many windows inside the building is breathtaking. Seeing it for the first time sealed it for me. I didn't have a vote, but if I had a vote, I sure as heck would have chosen this as our new home.

Kristen: The view of City Hall is stunning. The colors from our angle are unlike any view I've ever seen of the LA skyline, with the candy-colored pinks and the yellows, terra cottas, the pastel skyscrapers. When you see the view you know instantly why LACERS pulled the trigger on this building. It's inspiring to see the community we serve.

Heather: Our team was the first to move here in February 2020. Just being the first group over here, seeing the freshness of the building and seeing how different and how much more modern it is than our previous location, it put a smile on my face; it was just amazing.

Tiffany: Moving in here made me feel like a cool hipster. It's unlike any City office that I have ever seen.

Tech and Fresh

What does the new HQ allow LACERS to do that's innovative?

Tiffany: LACERS is transitioning into a new age of adopting technology. Before the pandemic, we switched over to laptops instead of desktops, and to using more remote-type technology. I looked forward to coming back from the pandemic into this new space that I knew would be modern, pretty and aesthetically pleasing.

We have video screens on every floor, and we... can program them. For Women's History Month

The *Alive!* Interview
CONTINUES PAGE 26

INNOVATIVE COLOR



From left: Kristen Szanto, Heather Ramirez, *Alive!* editor John Burnes and Isaias "EZ" Cantu.



From left: Isaias "EZ" Cantu, *Alive!* editor John Burnes, Heather Ramirez and Kristen Szanto.



Robert Larios and Neil Guglielmo.



Long Journey Home

By Tom Moutes, *RLACEI* Director

AS LACERS MOVES INTO ITS NEW BUILDING AT 977 N. BROADWAY, HERE IS A RETROSPECTIVE OF LACERS' VARIOUS HEAD-QUARTERS BUILDINGS.

EDITOR'S NOTE

In anticipation of the opening of LACERS's new headquarters, Retired LACERS GM and current RLACEI Director Tom Moutes, Club Member, wrote a history of the department's search for a new home. The following originally appeared in the RLACEI section of the April 2023 issue. We reprint it here. – Ed.

Decades ago, LACERS was housed in City Hall South. The City, needing more office space, asked LACERS to move out. I'm not sure if LACERS had any other headquarters before moving to the Brunswig Building at 360 E. Second St., but it was located at that address for decades.



LA Times Building

Over the years, we discussed many options for a permanent headquarters building for LACERS. The proposals included purchasing the Brunswig Building; purchasing various small buildings proximate to City Hall; integrating into what is now Blossom Plaza in Chinatown; building a structure east of the Chinatown "L" line (formerly the Gold line) or at Union Station; and purchasing part of the Los Angeles Times complex. The City also tried time and time again to have LACERS purchase Figueroa Plaza from the City. With Figueroa Plaza's lack of proximity to City Hall and terrible parking situation, there was no way LACERS was going to purchase it! When none of those options came to fruition, LACERS had to decide what to do with its expiring lease at the Brunswig Building.



Brunswick Building

While negotiating a lease extension, LACERS became aware of space for lease at the Los Angeles Times complex. At first, LACERS just wanted to use the availability at the Times building as leverage to negotiate an extension to our existing lease, but the more LACERS looked at the Times building, the more it made sense to move there and take advantage of a below-market-rate lease we were being offered.

When LACERS took the Times lease proposal to its Board for approval, the City Administrative Officer (CAO) made an impassioned plea to our Board to not adopt the staff recommendation, but instead become partners in the new building the City was planning to build at the old Parker Center site. Ultimately, the LACERS Board agreed to the lease at the Times complex, which was a good thing as that was many years ago and the new City building was never built! The City was interested in having its pension funds pay for the building. I was LACERS' General Manager at the time; I told the City that the only way we could have that conversation was if the City would agree to long-term leases at market rates. That was the last I heard of that proposal!

LACERS was the first outside entity to lease space at the Times complex, and it was an improvement over the Brunswig Building. However, LACERS continued to look for a permanent location, including the possibility of purchasing a skyscraper in the downtown area and leasing most of the building to other tenants.

Fairly recently, LACERS purchased and renovated the building at 977 N. Broadway. While I'm sure there will be some limitations to the new headquarters, as there were with all of the buildings and sites LACERS considered over the years, I'm sure there will be some great features, too. It is great to see LACERS finally have its own building, and I look forward to visiting it soon! It has been a long journey to get to this point. ●

PERSONAL SPACES



The staff meditation terrace area was just beginning to be furnished and landscape-designed when *Alive!* first visited.



The new HQ includes lactation privacy spaces. "They were front and center in our design process," says Kristen Szanto. "Never an afterthought."



John's Picture Perfect Contest

John Hawkins, Association President

WIN A \$25 AMAZON E-GIFT CARD



“Cold sunrise morning at Zabriskie Point, Death Valley National Park.” – **Alex Andrews, Building and Safety**

John's comment: Stunning! I have seen this, but not from this angle. A drone, I assume? The textures and shades are simply incredible. What a world we live in – that a place that's so inhospitable also contains such incredible beauty. Thanks for submitting!

This month's theme was: OPEN

NOTE TO READERS:

I received lots of outstanding photos in this competition. Thanks for making my month! If we have extra slots in the coming months, I'll slip in a few more winners from this contest's "open" category. – **John Hawkins**



See more Picture Perfect winners and contest rules.

“This shot was a mistake. She was distracted at midflight when her hat tilted downward, so she wasn't able to act like a funny cartoon character running above water. She perfected the pose on the second shot but I prefer this Happy Accident instead.”

– **Dominique Daito, LAPD**

John's comment: Great to see your photos again, Dominique. Your mistakes are better than my masterpieces!



“Love me some baseball! I snapped this shot of this year's Whitney baseball program in Rocklin, Calif., one of the best teams in Northern California. Baseball is a really fun sport to watch.”

– **Ike Dodson, Correctional Health Care Services, State of California**

John's comment: Outstanding form from this young hitter! The angle from the ground is superb. Thanks for submitting, Ike!



“A winter sweatshirt evening. Standing in awe atop the cliff. The winter swell marching in order, having their cadence called out upon each break. Such a conflict free, harmony of sound and vision to put you at peace.”

– **John Nance, Retired, LADWP**

John's comment: My goodness, John, what a stunningly clear and gorgeous image. I can feel this, I can hear this, I can smell this. You know it's an awesome photo when that happens! Thanks for sending it in!



“The Malibu beach RV resort at sunset.”

– **Chermaine Fontenette, Public Works/Sanitation**

John's comment: Classic Southern California! This is what it's all about. Thanks, Chermaine!

3 Open Houses Remain

SANITATION'S POPULAR OPEN HOUSES CONCLUDE THIS MONTH.

PUBLIC WORKS: Public Works' Sanitation and Environment concludes its Open House schedule for 2023 with three remaining locations.

The Open House program showcases Sanitation's residential curbside collection programs with the promotion of proper recycling practices and information about bulky item collections. Each event will feature trash truck and equipment demonstrations in addition to facility tours, information booths, recycling games, and refreshments.

There is no charge for admission and all ages are welcome, but Sanitation requests that pets be left at home for safety.



At the West LA Open House.



Will Brown, RCTO, 8 years of City service, and his son, Carter, 6 years old, with a young neighbor in the cab.

Public Works/Sanitation Open Houses:
Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

West Valley Yard

June 3

8840 Vanalden Ave.
Northridge

South LA Yard (Expo Center)

June 10

Expo Center
3990 Menlo Ave
Los Angeles

West LA Yard

June 24

2027 Stoner Ave.
Los Angeles



John's Picture Perfect Contest

The Club's online photo contest, organized by Association President John Hawkins

Submit your best photos, and be in the running for a prize.

This month's photo contest theme:

Red, White, Blue

The Club's online photo contest, organized by Association President John Hawkins, has a monthly theme. For the next contest, we've chosen a patriotic one: red, white and blue.



DEADLINE: June 15

Submit your best photos online here:
alive.employeesclub.com/pictureperfect/
Club Members only. Good luck!



WIN \$25 Amazon e-Gift Card

Gathering to Learn, Honor

CLUB HOSTS FIRST SEMINAR AND GROUP RETIREMENT PLAQUE PRESENTATION.

THE CLUB: The Club held a Retiree insurance seminar and retirement plaque presentation Monday, April 24 at the California Endowment downtown.

The event was hosted by Club CEO Robert Larios. Club Counselor Cheryl Martin presented an informational seminar for Retirees and near-retirees to learn about Long Term Care and how to insure against its financial challenges.

As part of the seminar, seven Club Members who had retired recently were honored with Club Retirement Plaques.

This was the first event of its kind and marked the growth of the Retirement Plaque program – it was the first time Retired Club Members had gathered for a seminar and award presentation.

It's important for the Club to honor our Retired Members and thank them deeply for their many years of dedicated service to the City. Their careers have made a difference in the life of the City, and they leave legacies of purpose and significance. Thank you, Retired Members!

To receive a Club Retirement Plaque and be honored for your career, apply here (Members must have at least five years of Club Membership to apply): <https://aliveemployeesclub.com/retirement-plaque/>



Dennis Waters Jr.
LADWP, Retired after 35 years of City service.
(Dennis retired in January 2023.)



Steve Barraza
LADWP, Retired after 33 years of City service.
(Steve retired in July 2020.)



Julia Crowder
Rec and Parks, Retired after 26 years of City service.
(Julia retired in June 2018.)



Teresa Casas
LAPD, Retired after 36 years of City service.
(Teresa retired in March 2021.)



Karen Kishita
Public Works, Retired after 35 years of City service.
(Karen retired in December 2022.)



Bill Martin
ITA, Retired after 43 years of City service.
(Bill retired in March 2023.)



Mark Lehner
Rec and Parks, Retired after 35 years of City service.
(Mark retired in March 2023.)



All recipients display their Club Retirement Plaques at the first-ever retiree insurance seminar and plaque presentation, held April 24 at the California Endowment.

Larios In the City

By Robert Larios, Chief Executive Officer



Robert Larios, Club President and CEO, honors Club Members with the coveted Club Retirement Plaque.



James E. Robins
General Services,
Retired after 41 years of City service.
(James retired January 2, 2010.)



Christopher R. Rodriguez
LADWP,
Retired after 36 years of City service.
(Christopher retired in May 2023.)



Randal A. Ayers
Airports,
Retired after 23 years of City service.
(Randal retired in October 2022.)



Caroline Gonzales (Tavares)
Fire and Police Pensions,
Retired after 39 years of City service.



Leonor V. Garcia
LADWP,
Retired after 35 years of City service.
(Leonor retired in February 2023.)



Calvin Davis Jr.
LADWP,
Retired after 43 years of City service.
(Calvin retired in January 2023.)

Correction

In last month's "Larios in the City," we misstated the number of years of service of Christine Reed. The correct number is 27. We apologize to Christine, and we reprint the correct version below. – Ed.

Christine W. Reed
ITA, Retired after 27 years of City service.
Christine retired July 26, 2006.

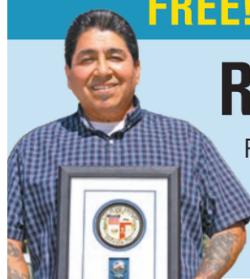


FREE! * CLUB RETIREMENT PLAQUE

Retiring soon?

Receive your own personalized Club Retirement Plaque, free! (Must be a Club Member for at least five consecutive years.)
* \$499 value!

Get started here:



Alive! AROUND THE WORLD

Banff



David and Rose Rojas, both Retired Management Analysts at the LAPD, enjoyed Lake Louise in Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada.

Captain's Log

Traveling with Capt. Michael Barnes,
Retired, Harbor



Letter From MOROCCO, Pt. 4

Hot-Air Balloons and Ships of the Desert



Up up and away

Our once-in-a-lifetime experience of taking a hot-air balloon ride began when we were picked up well before dawn in a minibus and driven some distance across the dark countryside before arriving at the launching point in the desert. Hot tea and coffee were served around a blazing fire which provided welcome heat to ward off the early morning desert cold while we watched the crews inflate the balloons to ready them for takeoff.

Although I am no stranger to balloon rides (having spent my youth jumping out of them while training to be a paratrooper in the British Army), the ascent was the highlight of this trip to Morocco.

When the balloon was fully inflated, boarding had to be done very quickly due to the high wind; it was no easy task as it entailed scrambling over the very high sides of a moving basket. Once airborne, the pilot explained the safety rules above the roar of the hot air flame blower, and explained how the balloon

was made from the same fireproof material as firemen's safety suits (a comforting thought!).

The cold morning seemed to disappear in the excitement of leaving the ground and the heat from the central motor's flame. Soaring to the dizzying height of 3,500 feet enabled views of other balloons gently rising in the distance and racing away across the early morning sky. Slowly the red sun rose over the Atlas Mountains, covering the landscape below with a stunning soft dusty red hue stretching all the way to Marrakech in the distance.

The views from the flight were amazing, and there was ample time to take lots of photographic memories. The landing was very fast and smooth, and the equipment-retrieval vehicles and return transportation appeared like magic, making the ride back to camp brief and taking no time whatsoever. A wonderful breakfast spread of special pastries and fresh fruit awaited us in a beautiful carpeted tent lit with candles and oversized Moroccan lamps.

To complete the experience, not only did the white-clad servers ensure everyone's plate and tea glass were always full but presented every male with a red fez to wear for photo opportunities.

Ships Of The Desert: The Mighty Camel

There is only one way to explore the Sahara desert and that is by camel, from one to ten days and beyond. My personal boyhood fantasy was riding a camel in the desert like Lawrence of Arabia, charging headlong into the sand dunes shouting unintelligible battle cries and waving a scimitar at some invisible enemy, not exactly what took place on this little adventure. Although a camel is the most graceful way to traverse the desert's vast spaces, getting on and off for the first time is anything but graceful...

It is also not the best time to dress to impress, as loose, stretchy long pants are so much more suitable and comfortable than tight jeans, shorts and skirts;...

The adventures of
Michael Barnes continue on
PAGE 25

Send in a travel picture
holding *Alive!*



- Snap a high resolution photo of you holding *Alive!*
- Go to: alive.employeesclub.com/alivearoundtheworld You'll find a convenient online form to send your text and pics for publication.



FOR ACTIVE AND RETIRED MEMBERS

LACERS is Open at its New Headquarters

As you have read in this month's cover story, LACERS has recently moved to its state-of-the-art building in Chinatown. LACERS is once again able to assist active and retired members with their retirement needs in-person from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday- Friday. No appointments are needed. Visit lacers.org/contact-us to learn more about the building at 977 N. Broadway.

Please note: A current government-issued photo identification or City employee badge is required to enter the building except when attending public meetings of the LACERS Board of Administration. Also, parking is not available at the building. Paid parking lots, public transit, and street parking are available nearby.

Additionally, *online options* will continue to be available.

- Use the LACERS' Secure Document Upload found at lacers.org/secure-document-upload to submit forms or required documents
- Visit the LACERS website at LACERS.org to obtain benefits information; log onto your MyLACERS account at <https://mylacers.lacers.org> to view your account details; and
- Visit the found LACERS' YouTube channel at youtube.com/lacersyoutube where you can find a wealth of benefits videos.

Stay up to date on LACERS announcements by checking the website periodically at LACERS.org, contacting by email at lacers.services@lacers.org, and by phone at (800) 779-8328.

FOR RETIRED MEMBERS

Cost of Living Adjustment Is Effective July 1

The LACERS Board of Administration has approved the maximum allowable Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for eligible LACERS Retired Members and Beneficiaries at 3.0 percent for Tier 1 and Tier 1 Enhanced Members, and 2.0 percent for Tier 3 Members.

The COLA is based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in the Los Angeles area, which has been determined to be 7.4 percent for 2023. The maximum COLA is set by the City of Los Angeles Administrative Code at 3.0 percent for Tier 1 and Tier 1 Enhanced Members, and is set at 2.0 percent for Tier 3 Members. Tier 1 Retirees who have been retired for a full year or more will receive a 3.0 percent increase. The remaining 4.4 percent will be banked and applied in the future when the COLA is less than 3.0 percent.

According to LAAC § 4.1080.17, the Tier 3 COLA benefit is capped at 2.0 percent, and there is no banked benefit. Therefore, Tier 3 retirees will receive a COLA of 2.0 percent.

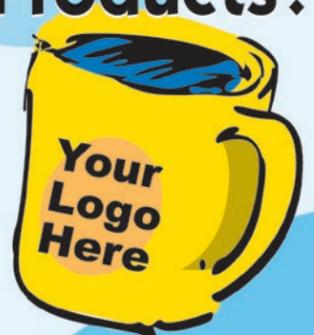
All Tier 1 and Tier 1 Enhanced Members who retired after June 30, 2022, will receive a COLA of 1/12th of the 3.0 percent for each full month of retirement completed by June 30, 2023. Similarly, all Tier 3 Members who retired after June 30, 2022, will receive a COLA of 1/12th of the 2.0 percent for each full month completed by June 30, 2023. The COLA will be included in all eligible Retired Members' and Beneficiaries' July 31, 2023, printed check or direct deposit.

Since the average CPI increase for last year exceeds the COLA caps, the LACERS Board of Administration has requested that the City Council review granting a discretionary COLA to its Members according to LAAC § 4.1023 and § 4.1080.17(c). Should the City Council decide to consider this item, it will be agendized and discussed at the City Council. LACERS continues to monitor this issue. ●

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Photos courtesy Leonor Garcia

Leonor Rides Away

LEONOR GARCIA, LONGTIME LEADER FOR WOMEN AND HISPANIC PROGRESS, RETIRES AFTER 35 YEARS OF CITY SERVICE.

LADWP: A grand retirement party March 11 marked the celebration of the retirement of Leonor V. Garcia, longtime Club Member. She retires as a Management Analyst in LADWP's Corporate Strategy and Communications Division with 35 years of City service.

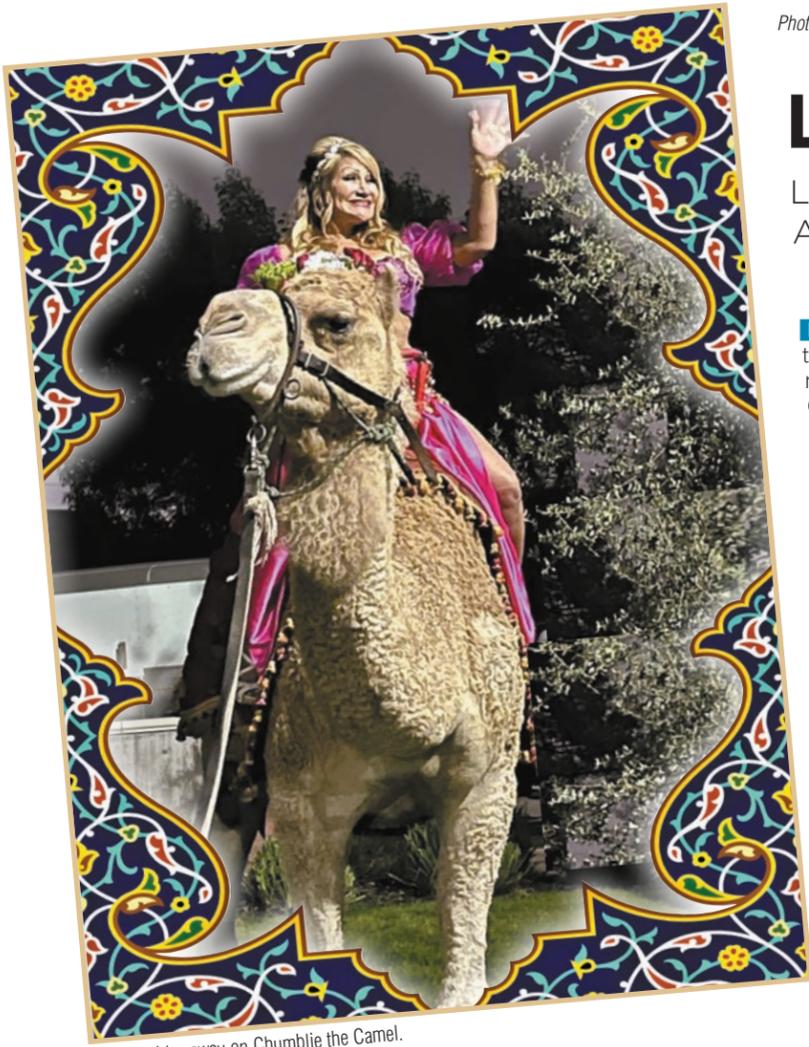
Over the years, she proved influential far beyond Water and Power. She was Vice President, Executive Secretary, Executive Secretary and Recruitment Chair during her 25-year voluntary career with the groundbreaking LA City Employees Chicano Association (LACECA); served as an Affirmative Action Association for Women (AAAW) Member; and was an LADWP Committee Chair.

"As I look back at my time at LADWP, I am endlessly grateful for the unforgettable memories and eternal friendships I made throughout my time with the department," she said. "I wish a heartfelt thank you to LADWP for blessing my family, and I wish abundance."

The Club thanks Leonor for her many years of support of the Employees Club and her assistance in numerous Club activities and programs. Her many years of service to numerous groups speaks to her generous spirit. She improved most everything she touched. Well done, Leonor! We wish you many years of fun and discovery. ●



Robert Larios, Club President, presented Leonor with the coveted Club Retirement Plaque. Leonor retired after 35 years of City service. (She retired in February 2023.)



Leonor rides away on Chumbie the Camel.



The scene of Leonor's retirement party, which carried an Arabian Nights theme.



Leonor Garcia (fourth from left) with Retired LADWP friends Veronica Mendez, Alma DeGarcia and Vivian Davalos; and current LADWP employees Sammie Mendez and Freddy Mendez. Leonor Garcia (fourth from left) with Retired LADWP friends Veronica Mendez, Alma DeGarcia and Vivian Davalos; and current LADWP employees Sammie Mendez and Freddy Mendez.



Leonor Garcia (third from left) with family members Frank, Yasmin and Moses.



Leonor with her husband, Mike Safaie.



Pamela Brown, Retired, PSR, LAPD, and a graduate school classmate of Leonor's.



Leonor with Jack Waizenegger, Retired, Assistant Director, Power Engineering, LADWP.



Leonor Garcia (right) with her cousin Nely Morales and Aunt Lydia Kelly.



Family members enjoy the party.



Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc.

RLACEI For Retired Club Members

CONTACT INFORMATION

Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc. (RLACEI)



Ruth B. Perry

Ruth B. Perry, President
Terminal Annex
P.O. Box 86264
Los Angeles, CA 90086
PHONE: (800) 678-4145, ext. 717
EMAIL: Ruth.Perry@RLACEI.org
ON THE WEB: www.RLACEI.org

2022 Executive Board of Directors

- Ruth B. Perry, *President*
- Beverly J. Clark, *First Vice President*
- Mark Blunk, *Second Vice President*
- Loucin (Lucy) Artinian, *Treasurer*
- Nancy Hammoudian, *Secretary*
- Beverly Anderson, *Nominations Chair*

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Dial (800) 678-4145 plus extension

- Beverly Anderson, *Director* Ext. 702
- Loucin (Lucy) Artinian, *Treasurer* Ext. 718
- Mark Blunk, *Audit Chair* Ext. 704
- Beverly J. Clark, *Publicity Director* Ext. 716
- Nancy Hammoudian, *Secretary* Ext. 705
- Tom Moutes, *Director* Ext. 710
- Verkin (Vicki) Keoseian, *Director* Ext. 719
- Ruth B. Perry, *President* Ext. 717
- Ann Seales, *Membership Director* Ext. 706
- Elizabeth Torres, *Entertainment Director* Ext. 703

RLACEI RETIREE HELPLINE: (800) 678-4145, Ext. 0

For retirement assistance, call the Retiree Hotline and leave a message. A Director of RLACEI will return your call and assist you with your concerns.

RLACEI WEBSITE

Visit the RLACEI website www.RLACEI.org to find the latest news.
Call (800) 678-4145 Ext. 0 to make suggestions.
EMAIL: Contact@RLACEI.org

MAILING ADDRESS:

Retired Los Angeles City Employees Inc.
Terminal Annex
P.O. Box 86264
Los Angeles, CA 90086

Change of Address?

Please notify Ann Seales, Membership Chair, at (800) 678-4145 ext. 706 or Ann.Seales@RLACEI.org for a change of address or to add or change your email address. Also notify LACERS, ACEBSA, LAPCU, and LAFUCU as applicable.



Beverly J. Clark

Send in your Interesting News Contributions!

Contact: **Beverly J. Clark**, Publicity Director
Email: Beverly.Clark@RLACEI.org
Phone: (800) 678-4145 ext 716

RETIREE EVENTS

- June 8 RLACEI 50th Anniversary Party**
Stevens Steakhouse
5332 Stevens Place, Commerce
11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Phone reservations will not be accepted
- TBA Annual Picnic**
Friendship Auditorium
3201 Riverside Dr.
Time to be announced
- Dec. 14 Holiday Party**
Friendship Auditorium
3201 Riverside Dr., Los Angeles
Time to be announced

RLACEI EVENTS RESERVATION LINE:
(800) 678-4145, ext. 701



Beverly J. Clark

RETIREES ON THE MOVE

by Beverly J. Clark, Publicity Director

Retiree on the Move: Tim Stratton

In March 2018 after 31-and-a-half years, Tim Stratton retired from the Los Angeles Convention Center. He started with the City in 1986 as a Mechanical Helper. In 1987, he moved to the Los Angeles Convention Center starting as a Mechanical Repairer I and advancing as Mechanical Repairer II, Sr. Mechanical Repairer I, Sr. Mechanical Repairer II, and retiring in 2018 as a Building Repair Supervisor. Tim and his wife, Catherine Hagopian, have been married for 29 years and have two daughters and two sons.

What hobbies and activities do you enjoy in retirement?

"I enjoy working with my son, David, on my '65 Chevy pickup and his pickup, gardening, and woodworking. I also enjoy ATV off-roading. I usually travel to Northern Arizona and Central Colorado. In 2022, we visited Lake Tahoe and Virginia City; Wendover, Utah, and the Salt Flats; Cheyenne, Wyoming; and the Frontier Days Museum. We also visited the Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado."

What agencies and/or organizations are you involved in since retiring?

"I am very involved in various organizations that keep me busy and fulfilled. I am a member of RLACEI, of course, and I have been a Commanding Officer for 16 years with the Santa Clarita Valley Young Marines. I am a member of President Ronald Reagan Detachment #597 of the Marine Corps League; a member of Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW); LA County Chapter of Marines and FMF Corpsmen; and a member of Valencia Hills Community Church."

Are there any words of wisdom you have for those about to retire?

"Find something you like to do, stay busy, but not too busy, and travel if you can to places you haven't seen, even if it is local."

What was the smartest thing you did to prepare for retirement?

"I was able to participate in reciprocity by buying back four years of my active-duty time in the Marine Corps early and stayed in the Marine Corps Reserves until retirement as a Master Sergeant. This enabled me to retire at 55 years old!"



Tim Stratton in Iraq, 2003

Tim Stratton at a Young Marines graduation ceremony.



What do you miss or don't miss about your years of service with the City of Los Angeles?

"I do miss working with the good people at the Convention Center. Some of us had worked together for 20 to 25 years."

As you reflect on your City career, would you have done anything differently?

"Looking back on my career, I think it went really well. I was able to work with various City departments while at the Convention Center. I enjoyed my job(s), which allowed me to work with the public and to be able to see and participate in so many different events."

How do you fill your days in retirement?

"Our days are pretty full. We have a son who is autistic and is still in school, so he keeps us pretty busy."

If you could change one thing about retired life, what would it be?

"There really isn't anything I would change. I get to sleep in until 6 a.m. and can spend more time with my wife and son."

Since the onset of COVID, how has life changed for you?

"COVID really didn't change our lives in the long run, just during the lockdown period. We are pretty much back to normal." ●

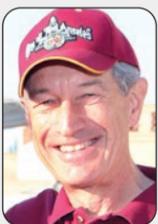


Tim's family: wife Catherine; sons DJ and David; and family pets Buddy and Dipstick.

LACERS BOARD UPDATE

How Defined Benefit Plans Help Our Economy

Michael R. Wilkinson, LACERS Commissioner • Email: MikeWilkinson4LACERS@gmail.com



Michael R. Wilkinson

I don't know about you, but to me it seems that so much of the news coverage on public pensions is negative and stresses the taxpayers' burden and leaves out the positive aspects of these pensions you have earned over a work lifetime.

Well, I came across a great study called Pensionomics 2023 prepared by the National Institute of Retirement Security (NIRS) that helps to provide

balance to this story. NIRS is a nonprofit research group that supports education on public and private defined benefit plans around the country.

The 2020 report covered the United States as a whole as well as itemized reports by state. California made the largest contribution to the total.

While Pensionomics does not provide reports about LACERS specifically, the totals include the LACERS payments and the structure of where funds come from to pay

for LACERS pensions is the same. Statewide the pension payments consisted of 12 percent employee contributions, 61 percent investment earnings and only 27 percent employer contributions.

In 2020, more than 1.5 million Californians received \$61.5 million in pension benefits from state and local pension plans. This supported a total of \$76.1 billion in total economic output using the ripple effect of spending. From these benefits, \$3.7 billion in federal taxes were paid and \$8.1 billion state and local taxes.

Retiree spending supported 381,038 jobs at a time when California's unemployment rate was 10.2 percent. Pension-supporting jobs were two percentage points of that total.

So, the next time someone makes a snide remark about undeserving public employees who get great pensions, just remember that you could say "you're welcome" to the unstated "thank you for your years of public service." Well, you could, but you shouldn't. However, know that your pensions are an important part of the local economy. ●

EVENT REMINDER



RLACEI 50th ANNIVERSARY Celebration

Thursday, June 8, 2023
11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Stevens Steak House
5332 Stevens Place, Commerce, CA 90040

Please Note: Event ticket purchases are non-refundable. If unable to attend the event, please consider your purchase a donation to the Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc. (RLACEI)

No young children at this event, please.

Questions? Please call (800) 678-4145 Ext. 701

RETIREES UPDATE

DOES YOUR VOTE MATTER?

by Tom Moutes, RLACEI Director
Email: Tom.Moutes@RLACEI.org



Tom Moutes

Recently, an election was held for one of the active member (currently working) LACERS Board seats. Only 5.47 percent of eligible voters cast ballots – that’s right – about one of every 18 eligible members! This is by far the lowest turnout in recent LACERS history.

Reasons Why Members May Not Vote

Here is a partial list of reasons why some members may not vote:

- Didn't pay attention to the mail with the ballot until it was too late;
- Didn't know who to vote for or were uninspired by the candidate choices;
- There are many retirement issues over which the LACERS board has no or little say, like the level of benefits a member may be eligible for; and/or
- Everything seems to be working okay already.

Reasons Why Members SHOULD Vote

The mayor selects four of the seven LACERS board members. Active members get to elect two members, and Retirees get to elect one member. The mayoral selections frequently are a mixed bag of good, okay, and bad board members. If you want the LACERS board to have a majority of good members, you need to vote to make sure the elected representatives are good members!



It is true that there are many things related to LACERS benefits over which the board has no or little control. However, there are many things over which the board has a lot of control – such as the investments LACERS makes. Those investments help ensure there will be adequate funds to pay for all of our retirement benefits. The LACERS board also selects the general manager, and the investment, actuarial, audit, and healthcare consultants. Further, the board adopts the annual COLA – I almost didn't include this as the COLA adoption is almost automatic based on the actuary's calculations, except that fairly recently a board member suggested not adopting the annual COLA! The board also adopts actuarial assumptions – such as pay, life expectancy, etc., all of which help ensure our plan's fiscal health.

Don't just assume that you can just trust what is going on! Before I worked at LACERS, I just assumed I could trust the system. I didn't hear about anything bad going on, so I just assumed everything was okay. Also, I didn't understand much about LACERS, so how would I even know?

To help minimize the possibility of bad board decisions and inappropriately influenced board decisions, we need very good board members. The only board members we get to have a say in are the elected board members – so we have to vote! ●



RLACEI MEMBERS

Not an RLACEI member?

Join and like us on FACEBOOK

Call (800) 678-4145 x717 or visit our website at RLACEI.ORG

Become an RLACEI Member!



RLACEI is dedicated to advocating for retiree interests. We are over 6,300 strong! Members of the Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc. enjoy all RLACEI events such member picnic and holiday party with FREE membership to the Employees Club with access to all group benefits (insurance, discounts, etc.).

Call (800) 678-4145 Ext. 717, or visit our website at RLACEI.ORG and join today!

Looking for a Board Member With Computer Skills



Computer savvy RLACEI Board Director needed! Experience and skills in Webpage maintenance, Facebook management and extensive Microsoft Office proficiency particularly wanted. Other computer skills greatly appreciated. If you enjoy working with and assisting City Retirees, join us.

For more information on this position contact: Beverly Anderson at:

Phone: (800) 678-4145 ext. 702
Email: Beverly.Anderson@RLACEI.org

{Who are the people you see every day?}

No. 109
in a series.



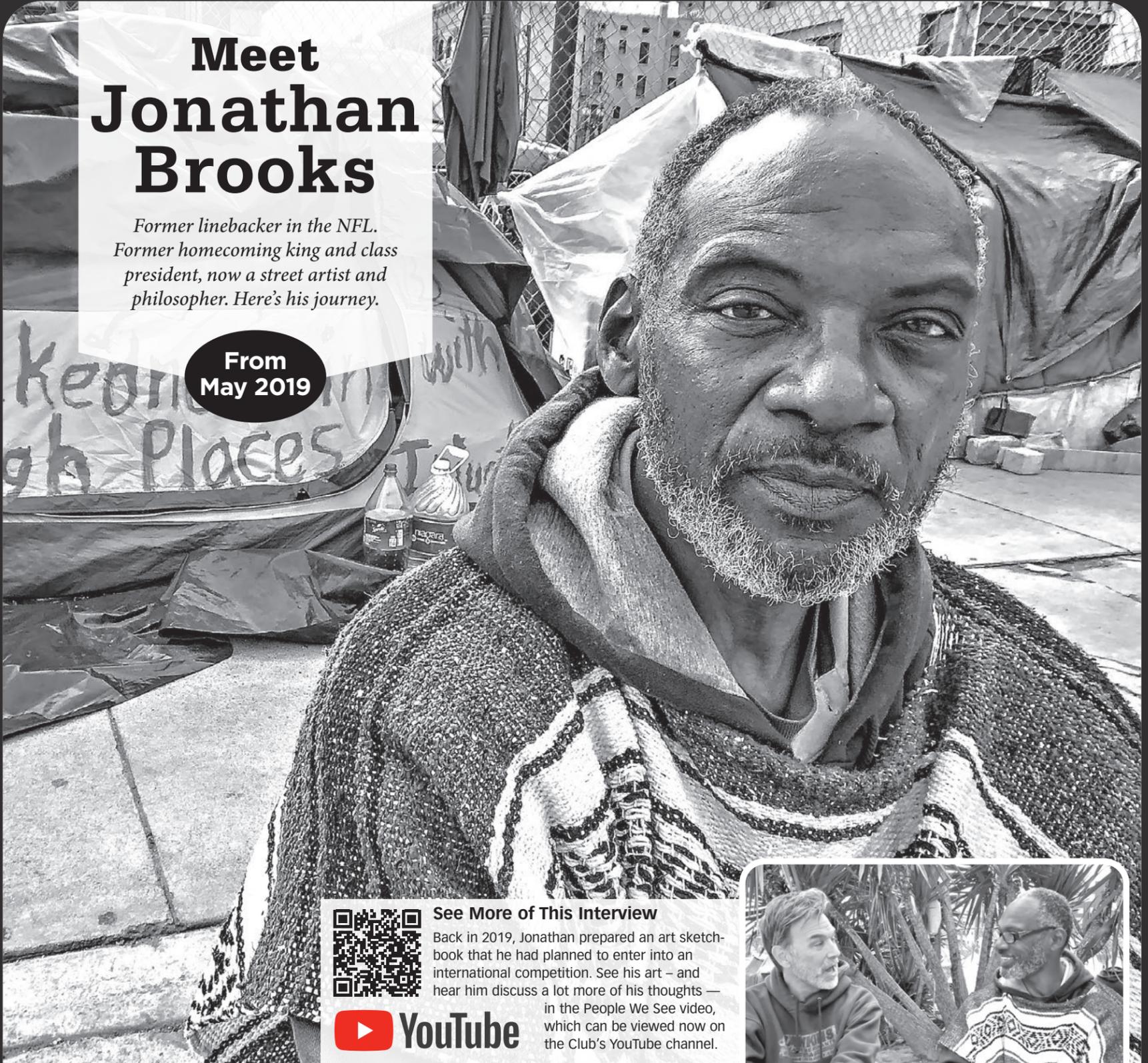
People We See

Shelterless in Los Angeles.

Meet Jonathan Brooks

Former linebacker in the NFL. Former homecoming king and class president, now a street artist and philosopher. Here's his journey.

From
May 2019



See More of This Interview

Back in 2019, Jonathan prepared an art sketchbook that he had planned to enter into an international competition. See his art – and hear him discuss a lot more of his thoughts — in the People We See video, which can be viewed now on the Club's YouTube channel.



Jonathan Brooks (right) with Association President John Hawkins.

INTERVIEW

John Hawkins of the Club gave Jonathan bottled water and \$20 for food. The interview, conducted by John Hawkins, took place March 5, 2019 on Main and Third Streets downtown.

Age: 61 (in 2019)

Came to L.A. "Eight years, off and on."

Family: Married/separated, with children and grandchildren.

Education: Attended Clemson University. "I was one of the adventurous ones who experimented. I got introduced to drinking and smoking marijuana and other drugs from my first day in college, and I kind of yielded to the peer pressure more than I should have. I got drafted by Detroit into the NFL in the fourth round, and never went back to finish my degree. That's one of the reasons that my life has been kind of helter-skelter since, my fatal mistake."

NFL career: "I was with the Detroit Lions first. Then the Atlanta Falcons,

then the Cardinals out of St. Louis. Then Philadelphia in the USFL. Then I ended up getting married and having a family, and that kind of changed things."

Other jobs since: Construction, auto sales.

Prison: "I did a little prison time in Phoenix. I studied science and history the whole time I was there."

Religion: Humanitarian Faith, his own spiritual organization. "During my research [in prison], I came to the conclusion that the major religions were just fake, especially Christianity and Islam. They had no foundation in the history of science. So I started my own, to just believe in mankind to do the right thing, to make the world better for each other. It's not

enough to criticize something, you've got to have something to fill in. It's all on my Facebook page."

If you were mayor: "I have a plan. I call it co-op investing, a dollar-a-day plan. You take 40 million poor people in America, and have everybody [in the country] [invest] a dollar a day in businesses, job creation ... and that's the people's money. That's the poor people's money. You give 40 million people the interest off that, and they'll be financially secure."

Favorite candy: "Snickers."

Discovering art: "I started promoting myself. I was a walking billboard, mostly with philosophy at first. Then I met this girl last year, and she gave me a lot

of paint brushes and markers and stuff. I started working with it, and I found myself liking it ... loving it!

"I've got a painting in my tent now that reads, *Fight Wickedness in High Places.*"

Viewing the poor: "You see so many homeless people go through so much money buying drugs. I'm not trying to judge them or look down on them for it, because of the situation they grew up in, we can't relate to it. You can't judge them until you've been in their situation. They've been through a lot, and a lot of them just called it quits."

Club Members: Do you know Jonathan?

Have you seen Jonathan on the streets of LA, or we hope, sheltered? Please let us know: admin@alive.employeesclub.com

{ In this feature, Association President John Hawkins introduces you to people you see every day, but you might not know who they are. The Club reminds you that we all have names and our stories to tell. }

Final Call for Club Scholarship '23 Applications

APPLY BY 11:59 P.M., JUNE 30, 2023.

CLUB: Applications are now being accepted for the Joannie Mukai Memorial Club Scholarship on the *Alive!* Website. They are due at the end of this month.

The Club has increased the number of awards to be given – at least 30 – and the amount given to each awardee – \$750, up from \$500.

Those eligible for the scholarship program include Club Members; their spouses; their children, grandchildren, step-children, and foster children; and nieces/nephews who are in college or will be attending an accredited college or university in Fall 2023. There is no age limit for Member or spouse, but all others must be under 25.

All materials must be completed on the *Alive!* Website and submitted electronically by 11:59 p.m. June 30, 2023. Winners will be notified by July 31 before school starts.

The Club expects to award each recipient a stipend of \$750.

INTERESTED CANDIDATES MAY BEGIN THE PROCESS DIRECTLY ON THE ALIVE! WEBSITE AT:

alive.employeesclub.com/scholarship

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

- All Club Members and their spouses of any age; and children, grandchildren, step-children, foster children and nieces and nephews of Club Members under the age of 25; are eligible to apply. Club Members must be in good standing.
- The successful candidate must attend an accredited four-year college or university full time in the fall semester 2023. Current high school seniors matriculating to a four-year school in Fall 2023 are eligible.
- Candidates will be judged for academic excellence, community service and financial need.
- Scholarships are expected to be awarded in equal amounts of \$750 (each).
- Deadline: Applications must be completed online at the *Alive!* Website and submitted electronically by 11:59 p.m. **June 30, 2023.** All applications must be completed in their entirety and submitted at that time to be eligible. Sorry, but the Club is not responsible for delays in delivery.
- Decisions will be made by Club personnel and will be considered final.
- Incomplete applications will not be accepted.



Cameron Palacios incoming student at UCLA, and son of Shirley Palacios, Harbor, City of Los Angeles, received a stipend last year as part of the Mukai Scholarship Program.

\$750
\$500
Club Scholarships
APPLY NOW!

ABOUT JOANNIE MUKAI

Joannie Mukai was a pioneer as the LA Port's Director of Construction and Maintenance. A passionate supporter in the Employees Club and long-time Association Board Member, she died in March 2010. The Club's annual scholarship program was named in her honor. "She believed in education and training, and in preparing for success," CEO Robert Larios said. "That's what the Club Scholarship is all about, and we're delighted to name it after her. It's a perfect way to keep her memory alive."



Apply Today

on the *Alive!* Website:
alive.employeesclub.com/scholarship

DEADLINE
11:59 p.m.,
June 30, 2023

Send questions to the Club Scholarship Committee:
scholarship@employeesclub.com
or call: (213) 873-1843

Goodbye to Two Giants

FORMER MAYOR RIORDAN, COUNCILWOMAN MOLINA WERE INFLUENTIAL CITY SERVANTS



Richard J. Riordan when he was Coliseum Commissioner, 1987. Courtesy the Herald Examiner Collection/Los Angeles Public Library



Gloria Molina. Courtesy USC

MAYOR'S OFFICE, COUNCIL: Two major figures who helped shape the modern City of LA and its government recently passed away.

Richard Riordan, mayor from 1993 to 2001 when he left due to term limits, died April 19. He was 92. Gloria Molina, a longtime activist in the Chicana movement and the first Latina Councilwoman in LA history, served on the City Council from 1987 to 1991 before rising to higher office. She died May 14 of cancer. She was 74.

Riordan proved instrumental in the restoration of the City after the Rodney King riots in 1992 and the Northridge Earthquake in 1993; the LAPL Central Library restoration after its devastating fire of 1986; and he built up the LAPD during his tenure. After he left office, he worked, controversially to many City employees, to reform City pensions in 2012, but he withdrew that plan before it reached the ballot.

Gloria Molina served the City Council, the California State Assembly the LA County Board of Supervisors and the LA County MTA. She started as a young activist in her native East LA and was first elected to the State Assembly before coming home and being elected to the City Council in 1985. She left the Council in 1990 to for higher office in LA County, where she was a longtime supervisor. She ran for the City Council again in 2015, but lost the election.

LEGACIES

In addition to their innumerable legislative-based legacies, Riordan and Molina have been paid tribute in other, more public ways. The Richard J. Riordan Central Library in Los Angeles is named after him for his leadership in the building's restoration. This year, Grand Park downtown was renamed for Gloria Molina, as has been a stop on an MTA light rail line in her native East LA. The LA County Fair has named its annual quilt contest after her, an avid practitioner.

For more information on these two influential figures who loved and served LA, Club Members are encouraged to research them at the Los Angeles Public Library and through other City departments. ●



Life Insurance

FROM THE CLUB

If anyone relies on your income, you need Life Insurance.

Get it today. Here's why:

- Think about your mortgage, children's tuition, funeral expenses and serious unforeseen expenses
- You should be covered for at least four to five times your salary
- Life insurance pays in addition to your City benefits and any individual life insurance policy you have in force.

To learn more about your insurance options, schedule a visit with our Club's insurance expert:



Cheryl Martin
Member Services Counselor
cmartin@employeesclub.com
Work cell: (213) 819-0794
(800) 464 -0452, Ext. 136
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CA LICENSE NO: 0C12823



Phone and virtual meeting appointments available.

Email: help@employeesclub.com
Or call: (800) 464-0452

LACEA Insurance Services, Inc. ('Employees Club of California') is a licensed insurance agency offering insurance benefits to qualified Club members. The Club's CA DOI Lic. No. is 0B98000.

THANK YOU!

The Employees Club thanks the late Richard Riordan and Gloria Molina for their incredible service to helping build the character and quality of our modern LA.



Life's Important Moments



Share your news... and send in a photo!

Have you gotten married? Had a baby? Graduated? Is a family member in the military? Send in a photo and a paragraph, telling us the details. We love to share your good news.

Send your photos and text online:
alive.employeesclub.com/lifemoments



- Births**
- Weddings**
- Graduations**
- Special Achievements**
- Military Service**
- Tell Their Story**

Retirements*

Below is a listing of those who Retired from the City. To all we say, welcome to the best years!

We honor the people who have spent their working lives building, managing and imagining a better LA, and are now Retired. We thank and appreciate all you have done!

NAME	TITLE	DEPT.	YEARS	NAME	TITLE	DEPT.	YEARS	NAME	TITLE	DEPT.	YEARS
Aveson, David	Systems Analyst	Public Works	35	Hall, Monika R.	Power Engineering	LADWP	N/D	Meyer, Robert S.	St. Services Super.	Public Works	23
Biggs, Steven W.	Mgmt. Analyst	CAO	24	Hamil, Kent S.	Power C&M	LADWP	N/D	Mitchell, David L.	Supply Chain	LADWP	N/D
Blasquez, Pedro S.	ITS	LADWP	N/D	Hao, Judy Yenjih	Psychologist	LAPD	17	Montenegro, Sylvia A.	Mgmt. Analyst	Airports	29
Box, Stephen M.	Project Coord.	Neighbor. Empwmt	6	Hernandez, Everardo	Power Engineering	LADWP	N/D	Moore, Alma V.	Police Service Rep	LAPD	37
Calvin, Jackie D.	Mgmt. Analyst	Public Works	37	Hoy, Douglas E.	Mgmt. Analyst	Public Works	24	Moore, Justin	Metering Services	LADWP	N/D
Campana, Diana J.	Metering Services	LADWP	N/D	Jackson, Jimmy G.	Sheet Metal Worker	LAFD	20	Nunez, Daniel T.	Water Distribution	LADWP	N/D
Canales, Teresa	Special Prog. Asst.	Rec and Parks	4	Johnson, Petrona S.	Admin. Clerk	Library	26	Nunley, Phillip E.	Sr. Mgmt. Analyst	Public Works	19
Cole, Robert W.	Water Operations	LADWP	N/D	Jones, Kenneth D.	Legal Asst.	City Attorney	24	Perez, Renato C.	Power C&M	LADWP	N/D
Crisan, Melissa T.	Sr. Admin. Clerk	Public Works	27	Jones, Roberta R.	Customer Service	LADWP	N/D	Polizzi, Jacqueline J.	Sr. Admin. Clerk	LAPD	6
D'Braunstein, Kevin	Power Transmission	LADWP	N/D	Kirdsiri, Danny S.	Maint. Laborer	Airports	16	Price, David H	Security Officer	Airports	20
Davis, Keith E.	Power C&M	LADWP	N/D	Kurzahls, Kevin M.	Corporate Services	LADWP	N/D	Rayford, Kimberley C.	Traffic Officer	Transportation	34
De La Rosa, Gary R.	Human Rel. Adv.	Econ/Wrkfrc Dev.	24	Lehner, Mark P.	Plumber	Rec and Parks	25	Rodriguez, Christopher	Power New Business	LADWP	N/D
Dinsay, Kelly M.	Sr. Admin. Clerk	LAPD	30	Leopardi, David E.	Energy Support	LADWP	N/D	Rodriguez, Felix J.	Police Service Rep.	LAPD	35
Ehrlich, Anat	Asst. City Attorney	City Attorney	32	Lin, Charles Chi-Wei	Comm. Eng. Assoc.	ITA	15	Rosenthal, Walter A.	Construction Insp.	Public Works	14
Eng, Herman T.	Power Engineering	LADWP	N/D	Loprino, Mary E.	Gardener Caretaker	Rec and Parks	18	Silva, Frank M.	Gardener Caretaker	Rec and Parks	17
Estrada, Edwin E.	Water Distribution	LADWP	N/D	Lum, Edmund	Building Mech. Insp.	Bldg. & Safety	32	Tillman, Chrys M.	Pr. Clerk	LAPD	34
Fitzgerald, Matthew F.	Sr. Personnel Anlyst	Personnel	21	Luna, Albert D.	Warehouse/TR Wrkr.	Public Works	24	Tiongco, Edwin N.	Pr. Accountant	Econ/Wrkfrc Dev.	22
Galicia, Angeles M.	Admin. Clerk	LAPD	36	Madrid, Frank	Supply Chain	LADWP	N/D	Villa, Joaquin	Special Prog. Asst.	Rec and Parks	9
Gallie, Stephen B.	Sustainability	LADWP	N/D	Malacon, Eduardo M.	Power Engineering	LADWP	N/D	Villanueva, Rolando D.	Veterinary Technician	Animal Services	26
Geihm, Eric J.	Police Officer	Airports	30	Mangold, Steven L.	Director, Port C/M	Harbor	37	Wilson, Cecil R.	JFB/Facilities	LADWP	N/D
Go, Zenaida	Pr. Accountant	Housing	21	Martin, Bill R.	ITS	LADWP	N/D	Winger, Deborah L.	Power Transmission	LADWP	N/D
Gonzalez, Fernando F.	Wastewater Mgr.	Public Works	31	Maxey, Rhonda R.	Sr. Mgmt. Analyst	LAPD	30	Woodard, Michael P.	Police Officer	Airports	19
Grimm, John R.	Refuse Coll.Truck Op.	Public Works	16	Mayer, James E.	Power Transmission	LADWP	N/D	Zari, Ethelda B.	Sr. Mgmt. Analyst	LAPD	30
Guarnett, Victoria L.	Animal Keeper	Zoo	21	McClellan, Carol J.	Commercial	LADWP	N/D				
Guerrero, Robert B.	JFB/Facilities	LADWP	N/D	Merriett, Nobel M.	Equine Keeper	LAPD	16				

* **NOTE:** If you wish to have a listing deleted from our online posting of Retirement notices, please email us at admin@employeesclub.com, stating the name and department of the Retired person. The request must come from the actual Retired person. We derive our lists from official public records provided by the City and LADWP.

N/D = No Data

In Memoriam**

We honor those who have passed away and recognize their lifelong service to the City of Los Angeles. Their lives mattered to our City and our region. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of the following current and Retired City employees who were reported to have passed away.

DEPARTMENT	YEARS OF SERVICE	DEPARTMENT	YEARS OF SERVICE	DEPARTMENT	YEARS OF SERVICE			
ACTIVE		Crispi, Paul	N/D	Nicholasen, Lois M.	N/D			
Daze, David T.	City Attorney's Office	20	Davis, Juanita L.	N/D	21			
Fujimoto, Steven M.	LADWP	42	De Las Alas, Pedro M.	Gen. Services	7			
Herrera, Rene A.	LADWP	19	Dwyer, Raymond L.	Personnel	11			
Lewis, Lois K.	Transportation	29	Estrada, Ernesto H.	Rec and Parks	30			
Mendoza, Stella	CAO	15	Federoff, Mary A.	N/D	N/D			
Molina, Elizabeth M.	Airports	6	Ferguson, Ronald	Public Works	36			
White, Edgar E.	LADWP	25	Fisher, Lewis E.	LADWP	32			
Young, Adrian R.	Transportation	16	Funakoshi, Mitsuko	N/D	N/D			
RETIRED		Galassi, Nick D.	LADWP	30	Rada, Jeffrey R.	LADWP	12	
Adams, Maretha W.	LAPD	37	Gearin, Frank T.	LADWP	30	Ramirez, Fernando	LAPD	32
Austin, Richard A.	LAPD	14	Gilmore, Willie L.	LADWP	20	Reagan, Joanna	N/D	N/D
Avalos, Gilberto	N/D	N/D	Gray, Elizabeth J.	Library	12	Rivera, Mariana M.	LAFD	32
Barton, Shirley F.	Library	17	Harkless, Louis	N/D	N/D	Russell, Marilyn R.	N/D	N/D
Bell, Clifford W.	LADWP	9	Hurston, Alfred J.	Airports	9	Sherwood, Jerrell R.	LADWP	34
Bonham, Bennie J.	LADWP	40	Johnson-Bennett, Shirley	N/D	N/D	Simon, Julia L.	N/D	N/D
Bonus, William H.	LADWP	14	Kennish, Clifford	N/D	N/D	Summers, Edward L.	LADWP	43
Cabrera, Domingo S.	N/D	N/D	Knerr, Kenneth A.	LADWP	30	Swanson, William K.	LADWP	29
Caldara, Richard A.	LADWP	35	Kobayashi, Manabu	N/D	N/D	Werling, Iris	N/D	N/D
Cartwright, Kenneth O.	LADWP	28	Kuniyoshi, Douglas Y.	Gen. Services	11	Westphal, Carole Anne	Mayor's Office	11
Coronel, Hector	N/D	N/D	Lauderdale, Walter	Bldg. & Safety	32	Wilson, Dennis R.	Airports	31
Cowart, Dorothy D.	N/D	N/D	Littlefield, Barbara S.	Library	11	Wilson, Raymond J.	LADWP	17
Crawford, Milton	N/D	N/D	Luna, Julius P.	Public Works	18	Woodard, Jesse J.	LADWP	20
Crawford, Richard E.	N/D	N/D	Mcintyre, Roger P.	LADWP	30	Woods, Janet M.	Airports	37
			Miera, Antonio	Controller	39	Woods, Joanne R.	LADWP	29
			Mizukami, Satoru	LADWP	39			

** **NOTE:** Departments and/or years of service in italics are for Club Members and sourced from the Club's files. They are not official City records.

N/D = No Data

Congratulations!

CLASS OF 2023

Graduations



Talyn Knick
graduated from Great Oak High School in Temecula and plans to attend DePaul University in Chicago, majoring in marketing. She's the granddaughter of Larry Contri, Retired, LADWP.



Amanda Longoria
graduated with honors from Cal State, Northridge, majoring in criminology and justice studies. He plans to pursue a career as a special agent for the FBI. He's the son of Ross Alan Fink, Retired, LADWP.



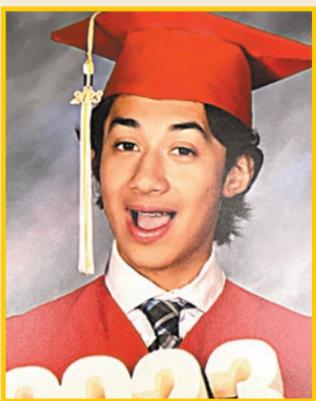
Caitlyn Hang
graduated from Gabriellino High School in San Gabriel and plans to attend the University of California, Berkeley, in the fall, majoring in finance and marketing. She's the daughter of Tri Hang, Rec and Parks.



Zorianna Garcia
graduated from Eagle Rock High School and plans to attend UCLA in the fall, where she was awarded a Regents Scholarship. She's the daughter of Carlos Garcia, LADWP.



Eirenne O'Neill
graduated from USC with a Bachelor's degree in international relations. She plans to continue her education at USC to pursue her Master's degree in public administration. Eirenne is the daughter of Juan Villar, LADWP.



Lorenzo Sanchez
graduated from Orange Lutheran High School and plans to attend Cal State Fullerton studying criminal justice. He plans to be a Police Officer. Lorenzo is the son of Sgt. Manuel Sanchez, LAPD.



Ryan Dru Alexander
graduated from Utah State University with a Bachelor's degree in physical science. He plans to study physical therapy at Rocky Mountain University in Provo, Utah. He's the son of Andrea Wilson, Public Works/Street Services.



Ailaine Rosales
graduated from Legacy High School in South Gate. As for her future plans: "Don't tell me the sky is the limit when there are footprints on the moon." She's the niece of Samuel Bacon, Gen. Services.

Happy Mother's Day

Two messages from last month got caught in our system. We publish them now and apologize to Anthony and Rosa. – Ed.



"Thank you, Mom, for everything you do for me, Breanna, and especially my children; your grandchildren! It does not go unnoticed! I love you!"

Anthony Richardson,
Rec and Parks-



"Dear Mom, Happy Mother's Day!"

Officer Rosa San Martin-Chavez,
Airport Police



Put your graduation photo in *Alive!*

Club members: Have you had a family member graduate from elementary school... high school...or college? Send us a photo, and we'll publish it in *Alive!*

Make sure you tell us:

- The name of the graduate.
- The school from which they graduated. If a college, tell us their major.
- Their future plans (briefly)
- The name and department of the Club member they're related to, and how they are related



To send a digital photo and your message, go to:



alive.employeesclub.com/graduations



An Employees Club of California Payroll Benefit

CLUB MEMBER EXCLUSIVE

SAVE 66% OFF

ALL FINE JEWELRY

CLUB MEMBER GIVEAWAY

SEE DETAILS BELOW

14k GOLD CUBAN CHAIN GIVEAWAY

INSTRUCTIONS:

Simply login or register at PaycheckJewelry.com from now through June 30, 2023. Then browse your favorite category. You'll be entered into the giveaway contest automatically. No purchase necessary.



VALUED AT \$1,275

14K GOLD CUBAN CHAIN

20 inch Length, 3.7mm Width
Lightweight Flat Cuban Gold Chain with Lobster Clasp Chain
(Item#: LCB100-20)

GIVEAWAY ENDS JUNE 30, 2023

Jewelry Generously Provided by



An Employees Club of California Payroll Benefit

The giveaway is open to all Los Angeles City or DWP employees (active or retired), and California State employees. To participate, individuals must be current members of the Club and have at least three months of consecutive payroll or pension deductions.

No purchase is necessary to enter or win. There will be one winner selected for each contest, and Corporate Jewelers will contact the winner at the end of the giveaway period. The giveaway item will be shipped securely to the winner at no cost, and tracking information will be provided at the time of shipment. For more details about Club Giveaways and Contests, please visit: <https://www.employeesclub.com/LACEA/contestRules.aspx>



Employees Club of California
Ticket Services: 888.777.1744
Insurance Services: 800.464.0452
www.EmployeesClub.com

OVERFLOW TO WEB

Alive! AROUND THE WORLD

— CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

socks are also a great idea as the camel's stiff straw-like hair will irritate the skin with its odd, side-to-side gait. A hat, bandanna or long scarf and sunglasses are also recommended.

Always approach a sitting camel from the side, slowly and with confidence, and try not to look it in the eyes if you're nervous. Mounting a camel requires the act of throwing one leg over the back of a very large animal to straddle it. This could prove difficult if you are physically challenged, and likely more difficult for the guys who, to be honest, are not as flexible as the ladies. Fortunately, there is usually a foot stirrup on one side to help with mounting as camels stand up with their back legs first, so lean back and hold on to the handle on the front of the saddle or you may well end up on the camel's neck.

Unlike the measured gait of a horse, a camel's walk is irregular, so crossing one or both legs over the saddle distributes the weight, and holding onto the saddle post for support allows for swaying with the camel's natural gait, and less sitting discomfort. Make sure any cell phones, wallets or loose valuables are secure and cannot fall out onto the desert floor; there is always the possibility of the following camel eating your backpack or spitting on you. If a camel becomes nervous or starts moving too quickly, stay calm and if possible, try to use the reins to pull the camel head into a circle and speak quietly until it calms down.

Dismounting is much easier: Wait until the camel sits back down, push up with the handle, swing a leg over the hump and jump off, quietly wondering if walking straight will ever again be an option. Feeling a little sore is all part of the experience, so it might be worthwhile popping an ibuprofen 30 minutes or so before the ride to help ease any potential discomfort.

Overall, my experience on a camel was more than a simple tourist activity; the ride taught me that sometimes your childhood dreams are better left unfulfilled. *Merci, Monsieur Camel.*

Jusqu'à la prochaine fois, voyagez maintenant payez plus tard.

— **Le Captain**



Colorful sacks of magic stuff in Marrakech souk.

Alive! with a camel.



Going up a Hot Air balloon on a Winter morning in Morocco.



Breakfast in Berber tent.

The *Alive!* Interview — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

we had a guest speaker from the LA Civil and Human Rights Dept. We advertised her visit with a photo and bio on those screens. And I made a video about Women's History Month honoring LACERS staff past and present, so it could play and everyone could watch in the kitchenettes on each floor. We plan to use that more and more for outreach and education to staff.

Heather: We programmed the video screen on the first floor to provide information to our members when they come to visit.

Neil: The amount of IT infrastructure installed into the building, it's night and day compared to what we had access to at the old property when we were leasing space. Our IT team worked with consultants to actually design a huge IT room with multiple redundancies. It looks like you're going into NORAD. It's going to be good for ... the next 20 years.

Isaias "EZ": There are two things that this building does that are fresh – one is incorporating wellness, and the second is incorporating technology to support productivity. The building provides the tools to enable staff to be productive. It's not just forcing people to work, work, work, it's supporting that work, that productivity.

In terms of wellness, again, we invested in employee wellness in Fitwel. We want to increase happiness, productivity and staff retention, because that's critical for every organization. Our design emphasizes the ability to support and retain that staff. We incorporated a staff meditation terrace in the design where staff can go outside and sit, eat and work because of the technology that we've incorporated. Our new technology allows staff to contribute and be productive anywhere in the building. They're not chained to their desk, they can go somewhere where they can breathe. They can pick up their laptop and work on the terrace, in a lounge area, or in a collaboration area. Employees decide where they want to be productive and how they want to contribute. That is a new concept we've incorporated in the whole building. That is a testament to all of the work that our system staff did to rethink how we will accomplish our work here at the headquarters.

Kristen: The amount of color we have in this building is exceptional. We have at least 20 different colors throughout the building: wall colors, floor colors, other colors. You'll never see another building like this; each floor has a feel of a neighborhood, and part of that is because the layout does somewhat repeat floor to floor, but now when you get off the elevator you know exactly where you are. That part is fresh and exciting.

For Members

How does this new building serve City employees who are soon-to-retire, and those who are already Retired who are coming in to visit you?

Neil: This is important to us. The whole ground floor level is accessible and open and is a great space for the members. Members have an area where they can sit down, interact with staff and go into an individual counseling room. And then as you come into the breezeway itself, there are restrooms to one side, a conference room, a

large lounge area, the multi-purpose room, and the boardroom. And we have these innovative partition walls that move in and out. If we're going to have a big group meeting, for example planning for retirement, and we're going to have a hundred people there potentially, we can set it up to accommodate that size, or we could break it up into three separate spaces – a lounge area, a staff training area, and a board meeting area.

And then we have large monitors and screens that come down and are fixed in place. We have sound throughout, modular seating and modular tables and couches and all kinds of cool features that make that space almost infinitely usable. The only thing I want to have staff program next for staff parties is a disco ball down in the ceiling that interacts with the music and speakers. That would be amazing! Tiffany's shaking her head no. Well, okay, maybe not.

Anyway, members benefit from this new space because when they come in, they can utilize it with a lot of natural light. I think it's amazing.

In addition, we have not just the breezeway that's open, but just behind that area is a large open courtyard. We're going to have patio furniture and things out there where people can sit outside with plants and greenery.

Tiffany: Our Division is in charge of the front desk reception area. We go out of our way to make sure that that front area is nice and welcoming. Literally when you walk in there it feels like a modern, comfortable day spa. It doesn't look like a government office. It feels like somewhere you want to be, and you feel welcomed once you get in there. We want our members to feel welcomed once they come in here. Our staff is ready to assist them.

We're always looking for new ways to make their experience better, so we're looking at more technology-friendly options.

Heather: We're going to have an iPad for check-in when you arrive, and an iPad for a survey as you exit.

Tiffany: There's a kiosk there, too, if they just need to log into their MyLACERS account to get quick information. We're trying to make everything accessible in one place so that they can get everything they need, even if they're here on their lunch break, they don't have to spend a ton of time. They can get what they need, speak to staff, and be on their way. Our front desk is very welcoming; the colors are welcoming, and it looks like a place you want to be and come back and visit.

Challenges

What main challenges does the headquarters face?

Isaias "EZ": I think LACERS faces the challenge of making sure that the building doesn't get older but evolves to meet the needs of our members, the Board, and the staff. I mentioned that we've developed a 10-year capital plan that includes modernizing the building, implementing eco-friendly technology to promote sustainability and reduce energy costs. These are in place to ensure that the HQ continues to help not just this generation and this staff, but other members who transition into Retired life.

Neil: Being a landlord and having to be responsible for our own property is both a blessing and a curse. We have to listen to staff and members, and

work with our contractors to make sure the building meets the needs of the department and the members coming to visit us. That's a challenge, but at the same time, it's also an opportunity to ensure that we are able to take care of things.

Another challenge is adapting to the changes that we're seeing in society. The pandemic has been a huge change on things. I've worked for the City for 33 years, and working remotely was never a big thing; it was extremely limited. Now, remote work has become an accepted method of how staff works. How do we deal with that? We've got a good start. We're going to be able to do whatever we need to do to work, stay healthy and safe, and serve the members.

Kristen: Every possible issue that happens in the building, now we have to figure out how to get it resolved. It's a change from managing the facility at the LA Times building as a tenant to managing this facility as an Owner-Occupier, but it's worth it, knowing how much improved our service to our staff and members is becoming.

Important to Remember

What do you wish people knew about LACERS that they don't know?

Heather: I wish that people knew that it's never too early to plan for your retirement. Too often, members don't come to us to learn about their retirement until they're about to retire, and they could have been planning their entire careers. We are here and available to them – through a phone call, an email, a visit, a YouTube presentation, or a seminar, they can learn how to plan for their future. I always say that even though employees have a defined department with the City, whether its Airports, Public Works, or whatever it is, we're your department for life. We are there for you and your loved ones until you've passed away. It's so important that our members know about their current and future benefits. We're here and available and ready to answer any of their questions.

Tiffany: I wish people knew that, yes, we have a fiduciary duty to process their benefits, but we're real people too, and we do care about them. When we're assisting them with their benefits, and yes, we're enforcing rules, but we do care about our members; we are trying to assist them and offer the best solutions we can. We are a caring group of staff here, and we are always keeping their best interests in mind. We're always on their side.

Kristen: One of our guiding principles is "kindness and caring." I was leafing through a LACERS brochure coincidentally while I was deciding what department I was going to pick. I had a couple of offers for my first appointment with the City, and one from LACERS. When I saw "kindness and caring" I thought, "That's really bold." It made me very curious about the leadership. I've never seen any organization put something like that out there. It's true. Kindness and caring is a central tenet of how LACERS operates.

Isaias "EZ": No bureaucrats here. The job we do every day is to make sure that each and every one of our LACERS team helps every member prepare to ride off into the sunset ... to enjoy the results and the benefits of the work that they've spent years doing on behalf of Angelenos. LACERS is not about bureaucrats. We don't have a job, we've got a purpose.

Neil: First and foremost in my mind is the experi-

OVERFLOW TO WEB

ence our members have. We want members to enjoy great benefits, retiree healthcare and pensions, and everything else that we offer. We want them to have a very positive experience. How can we improve our operations so that maybe we can reduce wait times, or another way to make that experience better for them? And so improving their experience is so critical for us.

Helping the Helpers

What do you love about what you do?

Kristen: I pretty much love everything I do at LACERS because the leadership has been enormously receptive to my past experience that I brought to the City, and a lot of the task work I end up with speaks to those skills and experience. I'm doing all these things I love. Work is work, but at the end of the day I now have a sense of purpose that I'm helping the community. And the staff at LACERS, they're not just my colleagues, they're not just my friends; it is definitely a family here.

Neil: I also like being in public service and helping others. We get to help people whose jobs are to serve others throughout the City, whether they're filling potholes, or doing streets, or helping people find housing, or so many other just wonderful things. Government is there to buttress society, to help society function, and we're there to help all those people no matter what level they are at in their career in the City, and it's awesome. I'm so happy with the choices I made to work in the City.

Isaias "EZ": I've worked at several different departments in the City. I love LACERS. I've never found a more supportive, more innovative and better executive group that pushes us to improve. I've never met a better team, a better department that nurtures the idea of one team – we're all in it together, we're all getting it done with a larger purpose. I've not seen it before, I've not seen anything like it, and so I'm very appreciative of the opportunity to work here.

Heather: I love the uniqueness of my job with the City. There's a stereotype out there about what government work is, and my job does not fit into that stereotype. I've worked over the past nine years with LACERS directly with members, both active and Retired. When someone tells me how happy they are to be with the City and being provided the benefits that they are receiving, it just feels so rewarding. I've had people tell me that they haven't found that at other places they've worked. You just don't find what we provide from LACERS to our Retirees anyplace else, whether it's wellness, or health, or customer service and caring for our members. It's so rewarding.

Tiffany: I enjoy the people I work with, and the interactions I've had with the active City employees through my planning for retirement seminars and other outreaches. It's rewarding, like Heather said, to educate our members about their benefits so that they have the best retirement possible.

But beyond that, this is like a family to me. As I mentioned earlier, I come from a family of City employees. Unfortunately, my mom didn't get to retire – she passed away before she could retire. LACERS was helpful in supporting me during that time, and I can't thank them enough; it was invaluable to me. My mom wasn't able to retire, so I take it as a special mission to help others learn about their benefits so they can have the retirement that she would've had. That's what I love most about what I do – the people I work with, the people I interact with, and the feeling that I'm making a difference.

This has been a very informative interview. Thank you all for your time.

Neil: Thank you, too. And to my team – especially Isaias "EZ" and Kristen – for their work on the building.

Take care, everyone.

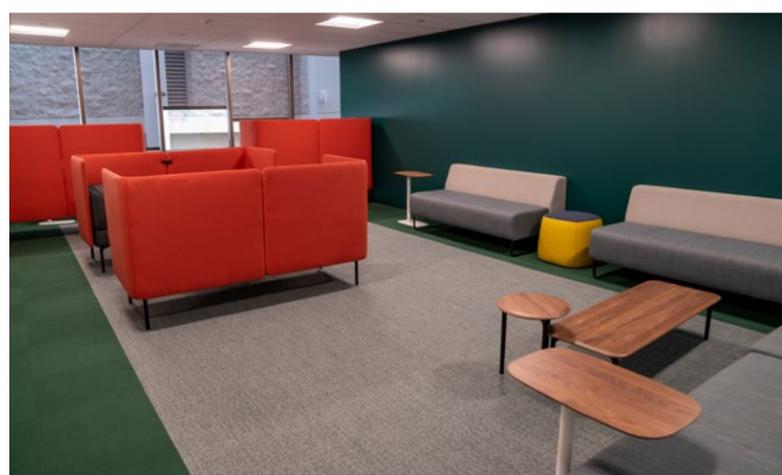
Tiffany: Thank you.

INNOVATIVE COLOR



Isaias "EZ" Cantu with a bit of "Miami Vice"-like color coordination. (It's one of his favorite shows.)

PERSONAL SPACES



Dealing with illness and death benefits can be stressful for staff. This staff lounge provides time and space for reflection and stillness.