

HEALTHY LIVING

MARCH 2022

A climate change crusade ▶ Page 10



Shahir Masir, an air pollution scientist, has made it his life's mission to combat climate change by informing people about the impacts of climate change. Here he is pictured with this wife Athina. Photo courtesy of Shahir Masir.



Claremont's newest personal trainers are ready to assist seniors

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Things looking up at retirement communities

▶ Page 4

Bonnie Britt, left, Eleanor Loeliger and Rex Britt enjoy a warm afternoon on the front porch of the Britts' home in Pilgrim Place retirement community. They said a slow return to normal has been well appreciated but the community still remains vigilant, masking up when in group settings. Part of living at Pilgrim Place means you have a responsibility to care for your neighbor, so the community still has pretty tight restrictions on visitors. COURIER photo Steven Felschundneff

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Top Right: Upland resident Cynthia Pye uses the technology found in the Nucleus abdominal and back machine to fine tune her tricep and back workout last Friday at the Exercise Coach in Claremont. Pye focuses on keeping the yellow line on the screen in the indicated green zone which indicates she is doing the exercise correctly. COURIER photo/Andrew Alonzo



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Resident Carlynn Christian enjoys keeping fit while bicycling around the 31-acre Gardens' campus.



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Pandemic struggles aside, things look brighter at retirement communities

by Steven Felschundneff
steven@claremont-courier.com

This past week marked the second anniversary of that day in 2020 when the first stay-at-home order was announced, upending the lives of 40 million Californians. Since then, it's been quite an odyssey, complete with a new vocabulary including "socially distanced," "positivity rate," "herd immunity" and "variant of concern." During the ensuing 24 months, we've had surges of cases followed by relative calm. We've had our hopes raised that the pandemic's end was in sight, only to revert back to our lives at home.

In March of 2021, four residents of Pilgrim Place ventured out of their isolation to share a meal in Memorial Park. This gift of moderate freedom was granted by the somewhat looser restrictions at the retirement community due to the COVID-19 vaccine. A year ago, only the most vulnerable Los Angeles County residents were eligible get the vaccine, which included people over the age of 65.

At the time, two of those Pilgrims, Bonnie and Rex Britt, expressed their appreciation to the retirement community for keeping all of the residents safe, a sentiment they willingly repeat today.

"Pilgrim Place has kept us all safe, but it's been a tough year for several reasons," Bonnie Britt said. "When you come in here, you know this is not the usu-

al type of retirement community ... we come in with a commitment to take care of each other. In most [continuing care retirement communities], the administration takes care of the residents. And that is true here too, but we are committed to taking care of each other above and beyond."

Pilgrim Place is a continuing care retirement community and its response to the pandemic was, and continues to be, governed by Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, which has strict rules.

"Because of that, we are still under more control than some of us would like to be," Pilgrim Place Moderator Eleanor Loeliger said. "We are not yet allowed to bring anybody on to the campus without strict regulation of checking their documents and checking their temperatures."

As the moderator, Loeliger serves as a leader on campus and facilitates the community's town meetings.

Prior to the pandemic, the Britt's volunteered at Urban Mission in Pomona, working in the food bank, but had to stop due to the tight restrictions at Pilgrim Place. They are clearly not alone, because it's a core part of the Pilgrim community to serve others and to work for peace and justice.

But any sacrifice of personal freedom is well worth the price if it keeps another Pilgrim safe, which is part of their commitment to look out for one another. They have returned to the common dining room which was sorely missed during the total lockdown of

2020.

"So, we are eating together and reestablishing that very important part of our community," Rex Britt said.

"Which is huge," Bonnie Britt agreed, adding that one Pilgrim in particular, who has extremely compromised health, could not join the group meals if there was a risk of contacting the virus.

"So, all of us are careful going out into the community, because we want her to be able to eat with us," she said.

The Britt's will venture out for the annual family reunion in August, and plan to take a cruise in May, provided that the COVID numbers still look good. When they return from any trip, they must get tested, and quarantine for a period of time before returning to normal life at Pilgrim Place.

"This is a community of travelers, so that has been one of the hard things. Not just being able to see your family, but not being able to travel," Bonnie Britt said. Residents are beginning to travel, however, with one couple currently in Peru right now, and another in the Galapagos Islands.

The Pilgrims are returning to normal in other small ways, such as hosting concerts and the Saturday night movies. However, they still cannot invite friends or family from outside the community to join in the fun.

"Going back to face-to-face meetings, oh, that is so much better than Zoom because that is who we are, we are people who like to be together," Bonnie said. "I think people are hoping to get back to normal soon. Let's face it, we are older, we know our time is short-

continued on next page



Claremont resident Lee Jackman poses with her standard poodles Tache and Ruche in her home located in the Cottages area of Mt. San Antonio Gardens retirement community. Jackman has done some traveling since she first received the vaccination over a year ago and has plans to go to Europe. She does miss some aspects of her life before COVID like being able to spontaneously join friends at the Gardens' dining room, which now requires planning and reservations. COURIER photo Steven Felschundneff

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er. It's not like we have a whole long lifetime to do all these things."

Unfortunately, and in spite of all their efforts, the couple did end up getting infected.

"Rex and I had COVID in January. How we got it, we do not know because we have been so cautious," Bonnie said. "We were tested on a Monday and did not know Rex was positive until Friday. So, it scared us to death. I caught it, too, in those five days, but nobody else got sick."

Less than a mile from Pilgrim Place, Mt. San Antonio Gardens resident Lee Jackman spent the last year learning more about herself.

"It has been very good year, I have learned that I love solitude, Jackman said. "And I have learned that I don't want a life as busy as it had been pre-COVID."

She spent part of the year writing her second play, "Mega Star Search," which

will be presented in September by her fellow thespians at the Gardens. Her first play, "Reginald and Bambi's Grand Adventure," was staged last year.

"We had all Gardeners acting, and most had never acted before, though some had, but my gosh they were terrific. They really stepped up to the plate and it was just grand," she said.

Jackman has spent her time at home streamlining her life, cleaning out closets and cupboards, giving away clothes and things she did not need. She also discovered an affinity for projects such as a play over committee work, which is ongoing.

The hardest part for Jackman has been the restrictions in the dining room, which make it more difficult, and less fun, to participate in group meals. In the past, one could venture down and grab any available seat, strike up a conversation, and have a wonderful time. Now reservations are required, and state which people you



Longtime Claremont resident Lee Jackman has spent this last COVID year remaining adaptable and flexible which has helped to navigate the constant changes the pandemic has brought. She continues to work on "projects" including writing a new play which will be produced at Mt. San Antonio Gardens where Jackman lives. COURIER photo Steven Felschundneff



Last March, Pilgrim Place residents Lew Fry, left, Mary Fry, Bonnie Britt and Rex Britt take an evening meal at Claremont's Memorial Park. At that time, residents of Pilgrim Place had been slowly venturing out into the world after spending most of the previous year confined to the retirement home's campus. Now they have more freedom to get out but still have restrictions on who can visit Pilgrim Place. COURIER photo/Steven Felschundneff

will eat with, which has taken all of the serendipity out of dinner.

A year ago, her husband, retired educator Duane Jackman, moved to the Gardens' skilled nursing facility because of dementia.

"I have just learned so much about dementia, And it's curious about how the brain works, because he was [home] for dinner and he regaled us with all his teaching and what he did in leadership and education, and it was absolutely fascinating. But if you ask him if he had breakfast or lunch, he can't tell you.

"I have had to deal with that. I have had to grieve. I have learned that this is not like death grief, but it is grieving nonetheless. He's not the person he was. So, that has

been a big lesson. A huge lesson for me. Essentially saying goodbye to him while he is still here," she said.

Jackman has the company of her two standard poodles, Tache and the puppy Ruche. She takes the dogs to see her husband every day, but says she's not as visible around campus as she was pre-COVID. She is also making some plans for travel both near and far.

"I am talking with my son and daughter-in-law about making a trip to Denmark. I feel that at 81, I can have one more European trip. I don't want to push the envelope too far, but right now I feel as though I would like to do one more."

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EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Claremont's newest **personal trainers** are ready to assist seniors

by **Andrew Alonzo**
 aalonzo@claremont-courier.com

Upland resident Cynthia Pye is always looking for ways to improve her health. The 60-year-old has been active for as long as she can remember and sticks to health basics such as eating right and exercising regularly.

In addition to belonging to a gym closer to home, Pye also makes the drive twice a week to Claremont's newest personal training facility, the Exercise Coach. There, she engages in a personalized, 20-minute workout routine, which according to Pye, feels like 10 minutes and is a lot of fun.

She admitted the short, signature routine was what initially intrigued her about the personal training facility, which advertised that it could provide the same results as a regular gym session.

"I came in [and] thought I'd just check it out," Pye said.

At the beginning of February, Pye met Adam Smith, the Exercise Coach studio manager.



Sixty-year-old Upland resident Cynthia Pye completes a set of bicep curls during her 20-minute fitness session last Friday at the Exercise Coach in Claremont. Studio manager and personal trainer, Adam Smith, provides words of encouragement as Pye focuses on finishing the set. COURIER photo/Andrew Alonzo

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Smith explained what the center and its certified personal trainers had to offer, and after Pye did some further research, she gave the training a go.

“Today is I think the second day of my second month,” Pye said after her 10 a.m. session last Friday. “I’ve been here over a month and I do feel the progress.”

“It sounds like an advertisement,” Pye added, but “it feels like having a personal trainer every time I come in.”

Founded and launched in Chicago in 2000 by Brian and Gerianne Cygan, the Exercise Coach is essentially a downsized membership-based personal training franchise where, well ... exercise coaches work one-on-one or in groups with clients to achieve their fitness goals.

“It doesn’t matter where they are [in terms of fitness]. If they’ve never worked out in the past or if they work out all the time, we can individualize the workout for them so they can get the most out of it,” Smith said. “We are just focused on strength training, it’s only 20 minutes [per session] and we recommend [sessions] twice a week as that’s when you see the best results ... In that time we do seven or eight strength training exercises and a little bit of cardio as well.”

The studio serves all ages, with the 50 and up range being the franchise’s target market, according to its website. Smith said that in Claremont, however, the average client age is about 60, with a few older members in the bunch. The facility can



Adam Smith, is the studio manager at the Claremont location of the Exercise Coach which is a small membership-based personal training gym where coaches work one-on-one, or in groups, with clients to achieve their fitness goals. COURIER photo/Andrew Alonzo

also accommodate individuals with screws or full replacements in their knees or other pivotal joints.

“We have clients in their 80s though.

We’ve got clients in wheelchairs, clients on walkers, and we have a blind client who comes in with his dog over in Glendora,” Smith said. “The biggest thing is that it’s

individualized for them ... everything is tailored to where their fitness level is.

“Really for the older generation, we’re looking at just maintaining and even re-

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Upland resident Cynthia Pye closes out her morning session with a set on the Sci-Fit Pro 2 medical total body exerciser last Friday at the Exercise Coach gym. COURIER photo/Andrew Alonzo
continued from page 8

gaining that muscle that you naturally lose as you get older if you don't keep those muscles active in a meaningful kind of way," Smith said. "We also focus on some exercises that help with balance and just general strength. As you get older, just getting that strength [back] helps people."

Aside from the personalized fitness sessions, what makes the Exercise Coach unique is its use of Exerbotics machines, the latest in fitness technology, provided ex-

clusively to the franchise. The use of familiar machines such as leg press, chest row and other standard gym equipment with a high-tech twist are what gives the Exercise Coach its nickname, the "smart fitness studio."

"The technology sometimes can be a little intimidating, especially to the older generations sometimes, but it's very engaging and very straightforward," Smith said. "[Clients] tend to really enjoy it once they see it because it does give you realtime feedback."

"Plus, you have the trainers always giving you feedback and doing form checks and that sort of thing but the equipment itself, I mean it shows you exactly where your effort level is at every second of that workout versus where your goal is," Smith added.

The Claremont facility is still fairly new, having just opened on January 10, according to Smith, who runs the Claremont location with his wife, Jennifer. It is located on the southeast corner of the Claremont Heights Shopping Mall off Base Line Road, between the Claremont Village Cleaners and Kumon tutoring.

It is the second Exercise Coach franchise the Smiths have opened along the foothill corridor in just two years, the first being in Glendora.

"Now, I don't know there's nine or 10 either open or in the process of opening in California, so you'll see more of us popping up," Adam said.

Since its inception, the franchise has opened over 100 locations across the United States.

Smith said the community response to the Exercise Coach has been remarkable. He shared that seniors in particular should take advantage of the high-tech facility as it can help improve their overall quality of life.

"We can get you strong again and have you healthy throughout the day," Smith said. "A lot of our clients are just happy it's easier for them to get in and out of the car, it's easier for them to carry groceries, it's easier for them to play with their kids ... They can go for walks without getting winded with their kids or grandkids."

"Everyone's win is a little different," Smith said.

For more information, stop by the studio at 578 E. Base Line Road or contact the Claremont group at (626) 788-2360. Visit exercisecoach.com for more details and pricing, and to claim two free sessions at your local Exercise Coach franchise. Smith said the Claremont location is currently offering a discount of \$100 off your first month of one-on-one sessions.



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One man's crusade to educate us on climate change

by Peter Weinberger
pweinberger@claremont-courier.com

Climate change has been a hot topic for so long now, that the majority of Americans recognize the need to lower our carbon footprint. While we still argue exactly how and what needs to be done, most agree climate change creates weather anomalies, which cause enormous damage to the earth ... and the people who live on it. Remember the 112-degree summer day in Claremont and all those wildfires the past few years?

With such a huge task in front of us, sometimes it's hard to figure out exactly what to do, especially for people who want to help. Luckily for us, we have a person who's willing to make climate change his life's mission, and is ready to act to make a difference.

Shahir Masri is an air pollution scientist at the University of California at Irvine. He also teaches at the Schmid College of Science and Technology at Chapman University. When it comes to climate

change, it doesn't take a scientist to figure out that this gent knows what he's talking about. And he's willing to travel the country to share what he knows and how people can help.

In 2018, Masri launched a national grassroots advocacy project called "On the Road for Climate Action," which focused on education and outreach. He spent months traveling the country, discovering the impact of rising temperatures, while promoting real solutions to solve the climate crisis, which he shared through public presentations. Now, four years later, Masri is still speaking out to groups near and far, while creating a website, shahirmasri.com, to answer the public's questions.

Currently, he also is involved in studies investigating exposure to harmful combustion-pollutants in the U.S. and China, as well as a project to quantify the health effects associated with mercury and fish consumption.

Last week, Masri was the guest speaker at the Rotary Club of Claremont, spreading the word that there's still time to impact the future of our kids and grandkids. He has also written a book, "Beyond Debate," which answers 50 of the most common misconceptions about climate change. Masri simplifies the science to resolve confusion, so everyone better understands the issues — both true and

false.

In his book, Masri literally goes through a detailed laundry list of misconceptions that have been promoted by conservative groups throughout the country — fake news such as:

- Earth's natural cycles explain recent warming.
- Scientists are "in" on a climate hoax!
- Extreme weather is old news and is not due to climate change.

- Who care about 1-2 degrees of warming?
- Plants and animals will adapt.
- Some areas are getting colder, so where's the global warming?
- Electric cars are not all that green.
- Green energy is killing jobs!

Here's a Q & A with Shahir Masri:


1) What were the key factor(s) that convinced you to take this personal ap-
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Shahir Masri is a pollution scientist at the University of California at Irvine. Photo(s) courtesy of Shahir Masri.

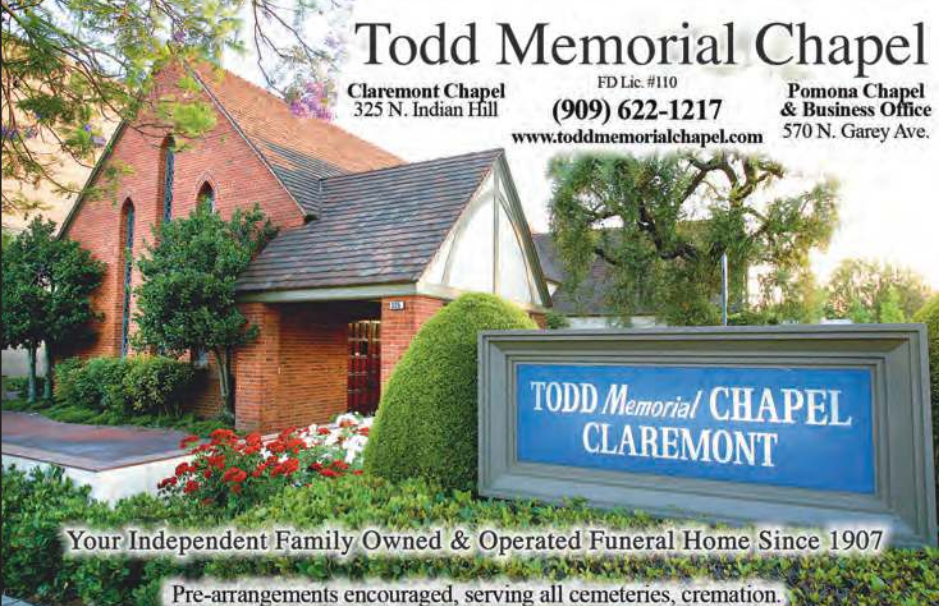


Examples of the impact of climate change were easy to find during his travels around the country.



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Shahir Masir has spent many hours on the road to promote climate change solutions. He is shown here with his wife, Athina.

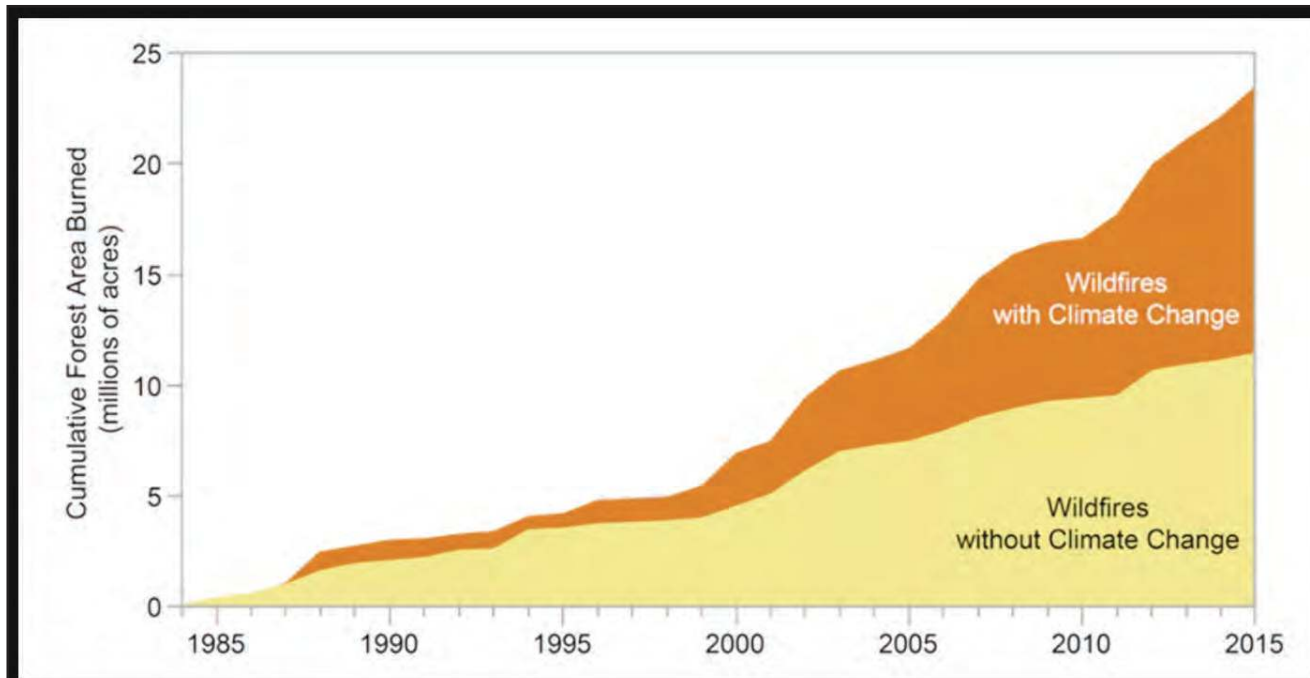
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proach to speaking up about climate change? Why are you doing this?

We're at a crossroads in which climate action is now absolutely essential. If we wait another 10 years, efforts to mitigate climate change will be much more difficult and less effective. On that note, climate communication is critical if we're going to effectively pressure our elected officials to pass the types of policies needed to avert the climate crisis. Hence, our climate action tour, in order to communicate this important message and help mobilize the public.

2) Why did you take to the road for climate change, and what did you learn while talking with others around the country?

We took this journey for the reasons just described. That is, because there is no time to wait, and because the media isn't sufficiently publicizing the topic on television. Climate change should be a nightly news topic. Thus, grassroots communication is needed. In conducting



Source: U.S. National Climate Assessment, 2018

our journey, we learned that the torch of climate action is being marched forward, not only by the Greta Thunbergs and Al Gores of the world, but by thousands of passionate individuals most people will never hear about, who are dedicating their lives to community organizing, outreach, and political activism. Second, climate impacts are not a distant and next-generation threat, but are happening here and now. Through my website, I am continuing to publish videos from our journey, which share the stories of climate change as its impacting communities across the U.S.

3) You mentioned that anyone can get involved to make a difference. If someone wanted to help with personal actions, what would you recommend?

I look at climate action through my "3 Pillars of Climate Action," which is a three-tier hierarchy describing the individual-level actions I believe are essential to addressing the climate crisis. Ranked in order, this includes:

- Civic duty (e.g., voting, letters to Congress, etc.).
- Outreach (e.g., public presentations, social media, talking with friends).
- Personal Carbon Footprint (e.g., flying less, adjusting the thermostat, adopting a more plant-based diet, etc.).

Go to <https://shahirmasri.com/book-1> to purchase his book.

Want to support Shahir's work?

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You can't help but worry about the COVID generation

by **Mick Rhodes**
mickrhodes@claremont-courier.com

There are so many things I took for granted when I was young: that my family would be there, school was a refuge and source of a social life outside the home, and the rituals and rites of youth in Southern California would be there for me when the time came, just as they were for my forebears.

When I think on what my life would look like today with just one of those formative experiences removed, it's unimaginable.

What if they all turned to dust?
That's what so many of our kids have

experienced these past two terrible years, as COVID hijacked their childhoods.

Most every family has lost someone. We all know some, or many, among the 969,114 COVID deaths recorded in the United States since March 2020.

Most kids missed nearly two years of in-person instruction. For some of them, the much anticipated rituals — proms, graduations, award banquets, academic and extra-curricular “career” capping events — are gone forever.

Friend groups they once leaned into to bear the sometimes emotionally brutal middle school years disintegrated.

Worst of all, kids on the cusp of medicating themselves in order to endure the



pressure gave in, and dove into the deep end. Most tragically, some are gone now, official victims of mostly fentanyl overdoses. Digging deeper though, those overdose deaths are casualties of the pandemic as well.

All this doom isn't just hyperbole from this alarmed dad of four, with two kids still in Claremont schools.

Recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention statistics paint a bracingly grim picture: emergency department visits for suspected suicide attempts among adolescents increased by 31% in 2020 over the previous year's totals. Even more alarming is that in February and March 2020, emergency department visits for suspected suicide attempts were 51% higher among girls ages 12 to 17 than during the same period in 2019.

In October, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Children's Hospital Association declared a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health, noting “The pandemic has struck at the safety and stability of fam-

ilies,” and advocating for a host of legislative, regulatory and societal changes to address the morass.

What's happening here?

“We just now are seeing the beginning of what's to come with student mental health,” Claremont Unified School District Mental Health Coordinator Lisa Banks-Toma told me.

And since CUSD students returned from their winter break on January 3, the need has skyrocketed.

“That goes all the way through the entire district: K, even pre-K, to twelfth grade,” she said.

I've seen all this for myself. The very fabric of childhood broke down over these past two years. Many kids were in emotional freefall, with no clear indication as to when they'd return to a semblance of normal.

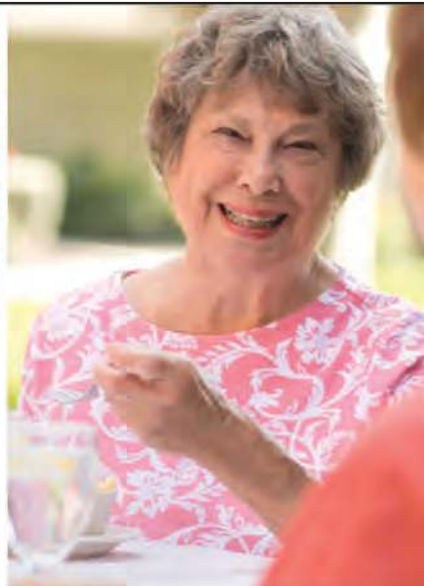
Yes, students are back in class now. But those 18 months or so of trauma are just now manifesting, and it's crashing the system.

“It almost seemed to me like students had to get comfortable again being on campus, and get comfortable with all their adults again, before we could get to that genuine place of, ‘I need help.’” Banks-Toma said.

I know firsthand that mental health professionals are inundated. Young people — my kids among them — are waiting weeks or months to see a therapist, psychologist or psychiatrist.

My ex and I have good health insurance through Kaiser. It's served us well on the

continued on next page



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medical side as our kids have made their way through typical stuff like broken bones and ear infections. But we are in a constant state of all-hands-on-deck scramble to try to match our fully insured kids with mental health professionals.

It's a terrible confluence of an unforeseen, tragically unplanned for global event swamping our resources. And it's had real-life consequences. For any kid in crisis, it's just not enough.

Claremont Unified School District has done its level best.

It is now offering new afterschool groups at Claremont High: one on depression and grief, another on stress and anxiety, and a third, "seeking safety," which deals with substance abuse. So far despite its outreach to students, they haven't yet caught on in large numbers. Groups are also taking place during the school day on depression, anxiety and LGBTQI support. And there's hope that a new program in conjunction with Baldy View ROP bringing mental health first aid to CUSD students will help stem the tide.



Lisa Banks-Toma is the Mental Health Coordinator for Claremont Unified School District. COURIER photo/Matt Weinberger

continued on next page

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A LOCAL NONPROFIT NEWSROOM

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But resources are stretched. And CHS, with its well-intended and potentially valuable new programs, is but one of 10 CUSD campuses.

Anxiety is the number one concern across the district, followed by depression, Banks-Toma said.

“And then we go on from there. There’s been a lot of grief that’s happened as a result of this pandemic,” she said. “Everyone’s dealing with loss in their families, which has been very difficult. What else? Trauma. There’s just so many different things.”

The district has a gang of mental health service interns, some post-associate level and some post-master’s level interns, and 15 trainees from university programs. Each of the district’s 10 schools has an assigned school psychologist.

And they’re all very, very busy, Banks-Toma said.

But the crush of mental health referrals is such that CUSD has not had time to compile the numbers to quantify the increase.

“I will tell you that we’ve never had the numbers we’ve had,” Banks-Toma said. “I’m just seeing the increase everywhere in the district.”

I asked Banks-Toma, a mother of two grown adult children, if she worried about what school-aged kids are going through. She sighed, seemingly from the weight of it all, and paused.

“You know, I am really concerned about how kids are doing,” she said. “I think for me what I continue to try to focus on is just really providing that support. And as long as the district is responding and that we can basically still provide the support we need to be providing, I guess that gives me hope and I’m just grateful for that.”

“But, I am concerned. And it makes me wonder: have we seen the worst of it? Every day is kind of like, what’s going to happen today?”

Yeah. What’s next for these kids, for my kids? I fear for the long-term.

Am I overreacting? Will this terrible trauma steel them against adulthood’s unavoidable heartbreaks and challenges? Maybe.

But when I think about their futures, I worry. I guess every parent since forever has worried, but this COVID worry feels unique in our modern history.

World War II must have put parents in a similarly dark place. But COVID has already doubled that awful war’s U.S. death toll, and before it’s done it might just triple or quadruple it.

In that light, it doesn’t seem indulgent to worry, to mourn for those lost experiences and the effect all that missing data will have on this COVID generation’s relationships, their careers, and eventually, on their own kids.

To quote one of my daughters’ favorite authors, John Green, from his 2012 YA hit, “The Fault in Our Stars”: “Don’t worry. Worry is useless. I worried anyway.”

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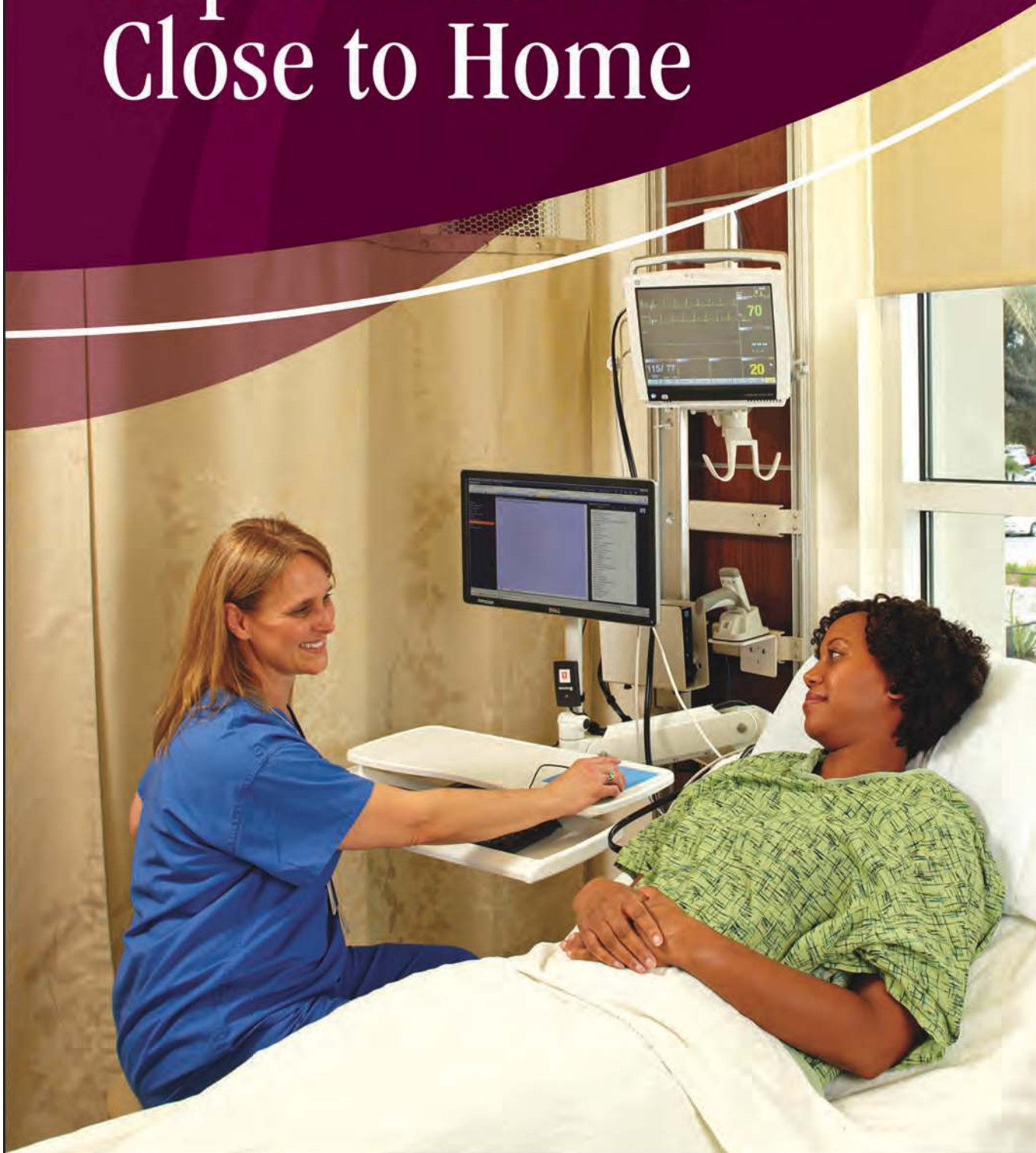
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