

CARMEL VALLEY NEWS

AN EDITION OF The San Diego Union-Tribune

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2025 | DELMARTIMES.NET/CARMEL-VALLEY

Volume 27, issue 37

Local rowing duo wins U.S. Rowing title

Gabriella Bigler, who is legally blind, earned an invite to U.S. Rowing's Paralympic Development Camp

By Karen Billing
KAREN@RSFVIEW.COM

Two local Carmel Valley students and rowers Gabriella Bigler and Kate Rasmussen won a national championship at the 2025 US Rowing Youth Nationals this June in Sarasota, Florida.

Gabriella, a 16-year-old junior at Canyon Crest Academy, and Kate, a 16-year-old junior at Cathedral Catholic High School, are both members of the San Diego Rowing Club based in Mission Bay. Together they raced and won in the Women's Youth PR3 Inclusive 2X division. In the inclusive division, an athlete with a physical or visual impairment is paired with an able-bodied rower in a 2,000-meter double skulls rowing race. Gabriella, who goes by Gabby, was born with Aniridia, a rare eye condition where the iris and other eye functions are not developed—she is legally blind.

While both rowers had qualified for Nationals by competing in regional regattas in Sacramento earlier in the year, Nationals marked the first time Gabby ever partnered with Kate, a converted cross-country runner who has been rowing for the past three years.

Together, they made for a strong team.

That day in Florida it was not only hot and muggy but it was windy, which can make a smaller skulls boat harder to steer.



Gabriella Bigler and Kate Rasmussen win a National Championship at the 2025 US Rowing Youth Nationals. COURTESY KANDISS BIGLER

"There was a decent amount of wind, which made things really tricky but we kept our composure in the boat and rowed well through the conditions, it didn't stop us from having a good race," said Gabby. "This team and that experience

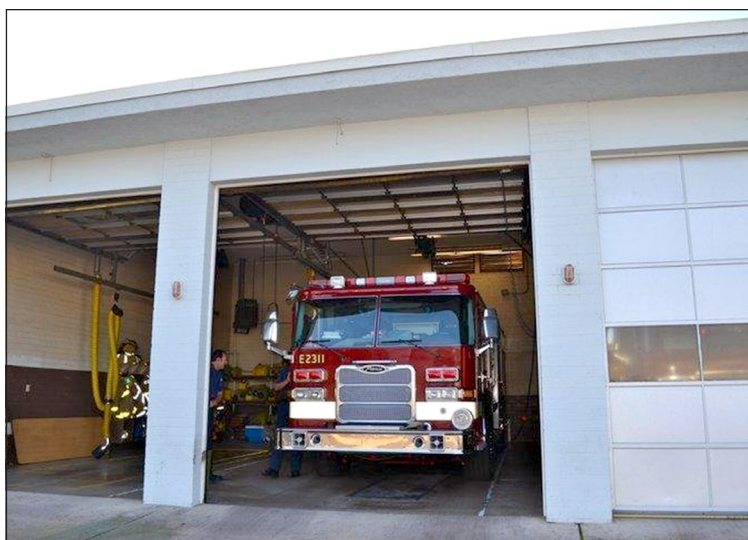
helped me realize the love I have for this sport. I enjoyed the opportunity to row together to the finish line," Kate said. "After we crossed the finish line, Gabby and I just hugged, and it is something I will always remember."

The teammates also competed in the able-bodied women's youth second varsity 8+ division for San Diego Rowing Club and finished 18th. In the 2,000-meter 8+ race, Kate and Gabby shared the boat with a total of eight rowers plus a

coxswain who steers the boat and sets the cadence.

"This really was something to cheer about, for our club and for Gabriella and Kate winning

See **ROWERS** on Page A6



Firefighters prep a fire engine at Fire Station No. 1 in downtown Encinitas. JARED WHITLOCK — U-T FILE

Three North County coastal fire agencies are heading toward a spring breakup. Now what?

Encinitas voted this summer to end a cooperative fire management services agreement with Solana Beach and Del Mar signed in 2009

By Karen Kucher
UNION-TRIBUNE

A cooperative management agreement in place for more than 15 years that called for shared management of the fire agencies in Encinitas, Solana Beach and Del Mar will end next spring, and officials are trying to determine how they'll proceed after the breakup.

The agreement, signed in 2009 and enacted in 2010, called for the three cities to split the cost of one fire chief and top managers who oversaw the departments. But in June, the Encinitas City Council

voted to end its participation in the agreement, with officials setting a March 31 deadline to leave.

Fire Chief Josh Gordon said the decision wasn't the result of any ill will among the three departments but rather reflected the needs of a growing city that wants to focus more on its own priorities.

"First and foremost, the relationship and the collaboration with Solana Beach and Del Mar has always been great," the chief said. "It has nothing to do with any city politics or degradation of any kinds of relationships — it really is focused on Encinitas growing so much and having a lot more responsibilities that have been placed on public safety here."

Gordon said the devastating Palisades fire, which destroyed more than 6,800 homes in Los Angeles after igniting Jan. 7, prompted some city officials to look closer

See **FIRE** on Page A6

Solana Beach addresses immigration enforcement following recent Encinitas ICE arrest

By Luke Harold
LUKE.HAROLD@
DELMARTIMES.NET

The Solana Beach City Council offered a community forum during its Sept. 3 meeting about the ongoing immigration raids throughout Southern California and the concerns they have generated.

The agenda item, titled "transparency and values in government," was prompted by the recent ICE arrest of a father at Park Dale Lane Elementary School in Encinitas during school dropoff on a Wednesday morning in August.

"Many of us fear it's only a matter of time before we see this same activity at Solana Beach schools," Solana Beach Mayor Lesa Heebner said during the meeting.

Council members agreed that they wanted to support pending state and federal efforts that would take measures such as requiring federal agents to better identify themselves when they are out in communities.

The city also wanted "to provide an overview of the present methods and legislative actions the City implements to ensure transparency and prioritize and protect all Solana Beach residents," according to a council agenda report.

"The federal enforcement activities occurring in our region, and most recently, near our City, highlight how free speech, clear identification of governmental staff and vehicles, and due process at all levels of government is fundamental within our governmental structure," the agenda report reads. "While immigration enforcement and activities fall outside the City's jurisdiction, the City's role in promoting safety and trust for all residents is paramount."

Solana Beach resident Lisa Montes, who lives in the city's



Solana Beach City Hall. KAREN BILLING

historically Mexican La Colonia neighborhood, said the "fear" has been pervasive.

"You don't see people gather on Sundays to go out to eat, to enjoy each other's company," Montes said during public comment. "This summer, many of our kids were too fearful of going to the beach because Border Patrol was parked at our beach."

Residents and council members also expressed concern that the annual Dia de los Muertos celebration at La Colonia Park would be a target, and that many in the community might not risk attending.

The council also discussed filing Freedom of Information Act requests to document any federal enforcement actions within the city, although agencies including

ICE and Border Patrol can take months, even years, to fulfill a single FOIA request.

"The City of Solana Beach stands united with our community, and we are committed to advocating for our residents, supporting peaceful expression, and keeping our community informed and united," the council agenda report added.

The League of Women Voters of North County San Diego sent in a letter of support for the agenda item.

"We support the City's commitment to open meetings, peaceful expression, public safety for all residents, and legal coordination with other governmental agencies," Marian Vega Clancy, the chapter's president, said in the letter.

DEBBIE CARPENTER
LUXURY COAST GROUP
BARRY ESTATES

DRE#01461472
858.735.0924
DEBBIE92014@GMAIL.COM
Visit: www.12973ViaLatina.com

JUST SOLD!

ANOTHER HAPPY BUYER

"Debbie thrilled us as we purchased our first home! She gave constant, responsive communication with no pressure, local expertise, resources, and guided us through careful contingency removals and timing challenges. For a great purchase experience - choose Debbie!"
- Bennett Kissel & Luna Izpissua

ROWERS

From Page 1

a gold medal at Nationals, especially as they were competing in two races and the conditions were challenging,” said San Diego Rowing Club Coach Patrick Kington.

A former competitive swimmer, Gabby found rowing when she was 13 years old. She had wanted to try a new sport after her family moved to San Diego from Bakersfield.

“At first like every new thing you’re not the best at it, it’s a pretty big learning curve. I got a lot better and fell in love with the sport,” Gabby said. “It’s a very rewarding sport in the sense that you get to push your mind and body to its absolute limits, and the feeling of knowing that you’ve done that is very, very euphoric. It can



Gabriella Bigler at US Rowing’s Paralympic Development Camp in Boston. COURTESY KANDISS BIGLER

be a team sport or individual sport but when you’re in the boat and suffering, it’s a very special feeling where

you just feel horrible but also amazing because you’re feeling horrible with some of your best friends.”

With San Diego Rowing Club, she is on the water training four to five days a week, balancing school work

and sleep. On her own, she is training every day, lifting, biking and running to make sure her legs are strong and in shape. While Gabby has competed individually, in a pair, and in the 8+ boat she doesn’t really have a preference for what she’s racing: “I love to row any boat and I love to row any seat in any boat.”

After the Nationals, Gabby experienced the huge honor of being invited to attend U.S. Rowing’s Paralympic Development Camp in Boston to train with fellow athletes who share the goal of making the national team and eventually competing at the 2028 Paralympic Games in Los Angeles.

She was the youngest of 11 camp invitees and spent a week training twice a day on the Charles River, absorbing the experience of accomplished para athletes.

“It was definitely hard,

but the people and the coaches were pretty amazing,” Gabby said. “It gave me a very clear roadmap of what I need to do to achieve my goals and what I need to work on. I came out of it very, very excited to race and to continue to better my technique and speed so that I can do these big things.”

As a young disability advocate, Gabby’s summer vacation also included attending the California Youth Leadership Forum for Students with Disabilities, where she connected with peers and met state policymakers. While her eyesight comes with its struggles, Gabby said she has managed to thrive despite everything. In addition to her achievements as a rower, she is also an artist, making and selling her own art on Etsy with her shop, Bodacious Bigler Art.

“I’m not held back at all,” Gabby said.

FIRE

From Page 1

at the agreement. Gordon has served as chief for three years.

“I think the Palisades fire really took the City Council and the mayor by surprise in a way that showed how the resources that the cities have really need to be focused on their jurisdictions,” he said. “With our development that’s been going on, we’ve had a lot of increase in residential homes, multifamily homes, some hotels are coming in... I think they wanted me as the fire chief and my leadership staff really to be able to focus solely on Encinitas because we’ve been growing so much.”

City officials also were concerned the current structure could create issues in the event of a large incident, Gordon said.

“The day-to-day stuff, I think we are doing great. Our relationships are good, we have great firefighters on the floor who do an amazing job, day to day,” he said. “But when that big event comes, one of the questions was asked — what (emergency operations center) would I be going to? And it’s hard to



Firefighters work next to homes that were evacuated near the end of Mira Montana as a brush fire burns in the Torrey Pines State Reserve Extension area in San Diego on June 25, 2024. HAYNE PALMOUR IV — FOR THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

answer that question when there are three of them that could be opened.”

When it was created, the cooperative agreement also included Rancho Santa Fe. The four communities agreed to split expenses using a weighted formula that considered each area’s population, geographic area, call volume and department staffing levels. Rancho Santa Fe left the arrangement in 2013.

These days, Encinitas runs

six fire stations with 52 firefighter personnel; Solana Beach has one station with 18; and Del Mar has one station with nine firefighters. The management staff includes one fire chief, one deputy chief, one administrative battalion chief and three deputy battalion chiefs.

In a report to the City Council in June, Gordon noted how much Encinitas had changed since the agreement was signed.

“Since 2009, Encinitas has

experienced a surge in residential development, tourism and aging population-related (emergency medical service) calls,” he wrote. “These trends have created a scale of service demand that far surpasses the shared model’s original design.”

The city now handles more than 6,500 emergency incidents, while Del Mar and Solana Beach together account for less than 2,300 calls, the report said.

When the agreement ends,

Gordon said his management team will focus more on Encinitas’ priorities, such as building new fire stations and increasing fire prevention efforts, as well as improving wildfire planning and pursuing grant funding. Gordon said other priorities include increasing public education and focusing on increased operational needs.

On the fiscal side, Encinitas will lose about \$850,000 in revenue it receives annually from the other two cities.

Solana Beach and Del Mar haven’t determined how they will operate once the management agreement ends.

According to Gordon, officials are considering a number of options, such as working under or contracting with a neighboring entity such as San Diego or Rancho Santa Fe, or perhaps forming a joint-powers authority or creating another management agreement so the two remaining departments could split the cost of a fire chief and leadership staff.

“They’ve got a lot of options on the table and they are right now kind of trying to get down and vet each one of those to see which is better for their cities,” Gordon said.

Del Mar and Solana Beach

managers issued a statement saying the cities are committed to maintaining exceptional fire and emergency response services for their residents and “supporting their fire professionals as each City determines the best fire management structure for their respective communities moving forward.”

Del Mar City Manager Ashley Jones said via email that the city is considering “all potential options” but that she didn’t have any specific details to share. She said public meetings will be held on the topic in the future.

For her part, Solana Beach City Manager Alyssa Muto said city leaders are “working to ensure that any transition is seamless for our residents and Fire employees.”

Members of a fire governance board, which includes two council members from each city, have been meeting regularly and seeking input from city officials to plan the transition.

“Right now it is a lot of meetings,” Gordon said, “and a lot of seeing what information, what programs and processes, and contracts all need to be moved over from Encinitas’ purview over to theirs.”

Wildfire Safety



Powering down can give communities a leg up on wildfire dangers.

Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) help protect those in high-risk areas from the threat of wildfires. That’s why when dangerous weather conditions occur during peak wildfire season, we may proactively issue a PSPS. Power will only be shut off in targeted areas and as a last resort. Once the threat has passed, we’ll work quickly and safely to restore power to affected communities. **That’s the power to help.**

Learn more at sdge.com/PSPS.