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ORANGE COUNTY



PHOTOS BY JEFF GRITCHEN — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Susan Samuelli, the Anaheim Ducks co-owner and prominent Orange County philanthropist, is a speaker during Next, a discussion Wednesday held in Costa Mesa about issues related to human trafficking.

PHILANTHROPIST FIGHTS TRAFFICKING

Education? Technology? Shaming the customers? Susan Samuelli suggests all are important, achievable goals in renewed effort to end sex and labor exploitation

By Andre Mouchard
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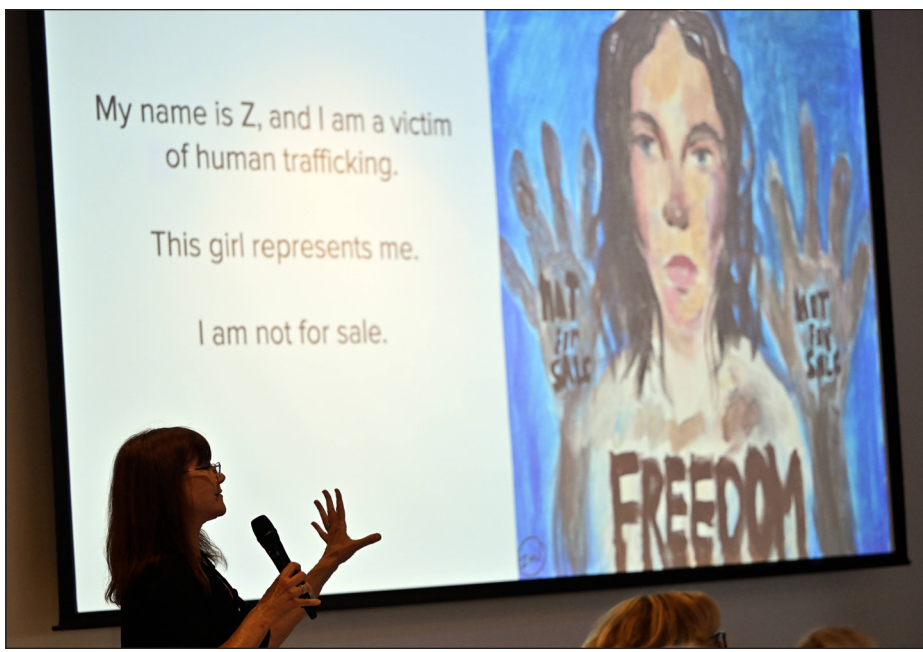
"I don't know how you can not be interested in solving this."

Susan Samuelli, a longtime Orange County philanthropist, was referencing human trafficking, the practice of forcing people into sexual or manual labor for the financial benefit of others. In recent years this ancient social scourge has been kicked into hyper-drive by factors as modern as high-speed Internet and the pandemic to a rising sense of economic desperation.

But the issue, for the Anaheim Ducks co-owner, seems less about data and trends than it is about simple decency.

"I have daughters," Samuelli said, her voice trailing off.

TRAFFICKING » PAGE 11



Samuelli co-founded the Ending Human Trafficking Collaborative. The wife of Broadcast co-founder Henry Samuelli joins a growing effort to combat trafficking.

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

Will \$500,000 in OT inflate firefighter's pension?

We've been telling you about the city firefighter who made nearly \$700,000 in one year, most of it in overtime. And the county firefighter who made just shy of \$600,000 in one year, most of it in overtime.

This haul has sparked righteous outrage from readers. Our email inbox — a jungle on the best of days — has been groaning ever since.

"Unfortunately you've only exposed the tip of the

iceberg!" one impassioned reader said. "Your even bigger expose will be when you investigate & report on how all this overtime pay inflates RETIREMENTS! That's why the state of California pension systems are on the brink."

A more dispassionate



Teri Sforza
Columnist

reader asked simply, "Is their overtime pay, in addition to their regular pay, used by CalPERS and other similar agencies to calculate these employees' monthly retirement pensions?"

Glad you asked. The answer, mostly, is no. Most overtime is not used for pension calculations — a safeguard against "pension spiking." But things get technical.

For details, we turn to Amy Morgan, spokesperson

for the giant California Public Employees Retirement System.

Enter here the Fair Labor Standards Act, which calculates some extra time toward pensions — but only when the employee's normal work week is way more than the standard 40 hours.

Stay with us here.

"The FLSA states that pay for firefighters must be paid on all hours worked above 53 hours per week, up to

SFORZA » PAGE 11

CALIFORNIA

Major climate bills beat deadline

As legislative session ends, many laws pushed by environmental groups await Newsom's signature

By Brooke Staggs
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California lawmakers passed some precedent-setting climate and environmental bills before the clock ran out Thursday on the 2023 legislative session.

That includes a first-of-its-kind bill to make big corporations disclose their greenhouse gas emissions. Others would make it harder for oil companies to drill along the coast or abandon old wells, and still others would make it easier for offshore wind projects to advance.

Those bills need signatures from Gov. Gavin Newsom by mid-October to become law. If they aren't vetoed, they'll be added to the list of climate bills Newsom signed earlier in the session, including one that lets California regulators penalize oil companies found to be gouging drivers

CLIMATE » PAGE 14

ORANGE COUNTY

How an illegal jailhouse snitch scheme derailed a murder conviction

By Tony Saavedra
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Days before suspected killer Paul Gentile Smith arrived at Orange County jail in June 2009, sheriff's investigators were already plotting to put him with a group of informants.

Cold case investigators had used DNA evidence to link Smith to the 1988 killing of his childhood friend and sometimes marijuana supplier, Robert Haugen, in Sunset Beach. Orange County sheriff's investigators arrested Smith in Nevada, where he was in custody on a domestic abuse charge.

According to court papers, investigators Raymond Wert and Donald Voght drove Smith from

OPERATION » PAGE 14

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

UCLA routs North Carolina Central and moves to 3-0 in the young season



KEITH BIRMINGHAM — STAFF

SPORTS: Running back Anthony Adkins of UCLA runs for a first down against North Carolina Central on Saturday. Adkins ran for 96 yards and a touchdown.

PAGE B1

INDEX

Earthweek.....A6 | Local.....A3 | Obituaries.....A16,17 | Playlist.....C1
Focus.....A18 | Lottery.....A2 | Pets.....A4 | Real Estate.....Y4-10

TODAY'S FORECAST
Coastal: High 74/Low 66
Inland: High 78/Low 61
Full weather report A21

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Trafficking

FROM PAGE 1

“It’s such a despicable problem.”

It’s also a long-time local cause, particularly in Orange County.

The county’s stark mix of extreme wealth and poverty, combined with large international communities and lots of tourism, has made Orange County a national hotspot for certain types of human trafficking. And many local programs to fight it — from the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force to trafficking-focused programs at the Orange County District Attorney’s Office and the Orange County Sheriff’s Department — are considered national models.

Still, as established as the issue is, trafficking is getting a new turn in the spotlight.

In recent months a series of unrelated events — an Orange County Grand Jury report, new data about trafficking activity, a slow-building effort to legalize prostitution — have prompted advocates, led by Samueli, to suggest that now is a smart time for a new community conversation about the issue.

Essentially, Samueli says they want people to know that even though trafficking is a complex and entrenched problem, it can be vanquished if we care enough to do so.

“Somehow, we have to make the public become more aware of what trafficking really is,” Samueli said.

“Awareness, in this case, really could be a powerful factor.”

That was one of the messages Wednesday, when about 100 advocates, experts and politicians gathered at the Orange County Museum of Art to hear about human trafficking from people who, in different ways, work on the issue’s front lines.

The meeting, led by Samueli’s group, Ending Human Trafficking Collaborative, presented a wide range of myth-busting information about trafficking.

For example, experts pointed out that trafficking isn’t primarily about foreign nationals being brought to the United States to work in the sex trade against their will. In reality, other types of forced labor — from nail salons to car washes to the people who make the low-priced shirts and shoes worn by at least some of the people in the audience — is at least as big a part of the trafficking world as sex work.

And, the experts added, victims of all types of trafficking tend to be domestic,



PHOTOS BY JEFF GRITCHEN — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A human trafficking discussion panel held Wednesday in Costa Mesa, was moderated by Maria Hall-Brown, executive producer with PBS SoCal. The panelists are Melissa Farley, a clinical psychologist, researcher and anti-prostitution activist; Anh Truong, supervising attorney of the Los Angeles City Attorney’s Office’s Sex and Labor Trafficking Unit; and John Richmond, former ambassador-at-large on human trafficking with the State Department.

not foreign nationals.

Last year, in fact, 78 of the 85 children identified as “commercially exploited” victims of sex trafficking in Orange County were locals, said Sandra Morgan, a professor at Vanguard University and leader of the Global Center for Women and Justice who helped organize the event at OCMA.

Morgan said such statistics show how the Internet and widespread child exploitation — and, recently, the isolation of the pandemic — have combined to produce a huge recent spike in sex trafficking.

“During COVID, vulnerability was amplified and online recruiting grew exponentially,” said Morgan, a former nurse who has worked as a federal advisor on human trafficking.

“It’s an educated guess; I don’t have a lot of new data and I don’t trust the data that I do have,” Morgan added. “But it matches what law enforcement and others are seeing.”

That last point — a lack of centralized, reliable data about all levels of human trafficking, from victims to perpetrators to customers — was a subject in a June report from the Orange County Grand Jury titled “Human Sex Trafficking in Orange County.”

The Grand Jury wrote: “A specialized law enforcement human trafficking database is needed that can track the different, but cor-



Kelsey Morgan is co-founder and chief program officer of EverFree, a globally focused anti-trafficking organization with its offices in San Juan Capistrano.

related information on human trafficking. A database is an essential component to the fight against human trafficking. For example, such systems are in place to combat gang suppression and car theft activity in Southern California. A similar system should be in place to combat human sex trafficking.”

Such comparisons suggest how authorities still underestimate or understate the damage of human trafficking. That, too, was a theme of the event at the Orange County Museum of Art and something Samueli and others said they hope

to change.

After telling the audience that human trafficking affects about 28 million people around the world and generates at least \$150 billion a year for the people who control them, John Richmond, a former federal prosecutor who from 2018 through 2021 served as the U.S. Ambassador at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, drew a few gasps when he said the United States “spends more to combat wildlife trafficking than it spends on human trafficking.”

Richmond, who noted

that only in the last few years has every nation on earth explicitly outlawed slavery, said that even though the United States is getting better at combating human trafficking and generally is viewed as an international leader on the issue, it’s still largely a version of prosecutorial whack-a-mole.

Samueli, among others, said one issue that could change the dynamics of human trafficking is to focus as much on consumer demand as on the victims who are forced to be suppliers.

“I don’t understand why we just can’t stop the people

who are buying trafficked services. If you get your nails done, or people doing your yard work, right now people have no idea if the people they’re hiring are working voluntarily,” she said.

“And when it comes to trafficking girls. I would put the photos of the buyers up at the airport,” Samueli added. “I think that would send the message of, ‘If you don’t want this to happen to you, then don’t do this.’”

Samueli, wife of Broadcom co-founder Henry Samueli, suggested everything from new technologies (“an app that could help tell consumers about the labor behind a certain product”) to political action against a new push to create legal red-light districts in San Francisco could be on the table for her group going forward. She also said she isn’t sure of the specific next step for her group, but more public awareness events are coming.

That, on its own, might help.

Richmond, who has prosecuted federal trafficking cases in Santa Ana and now leads the nonprofit human rights organization Libertas Council, said change on human trafficking will come only if the public — as consumers, as voters, as advocates — takes the issue seriously.

“The question is going to be this: Do we care more about people than traffickers care about profits?”

Sforza

FROM PAGE 1

what is considered ‘normal’ for employees on a full-time basis,” Morgan said.

“Since most fire safety members work a 56-hour schedule per week, only the hours above 53 would be reported as pensionable and the rest becomes overtime pay (not pensionable). That means that only the three hours between 53 and 56 hours would be factored into their pensions, because 56 hours is considered their normal schedule per week.”

So, those 56 hours are paid as straight time, as part of their regular earnings, but three hours (via FLSA) would be reported for pension purposes, she said.

If they work more than their regular full-time schedule of 56 hours, that becomes overtime pay and is not reportable for pension purposes.

Which is to say that, even if our firefighter worked 70 hours in that week, only the three hours between 53 and 56 would be calculated for pension purposes. But everything over 56 would be paid at overtime — “and NOT factored into their pension calculation (not reportable),” Morgan wrote.

‘On the brink’

If public retirement systems are “on the brink,” you can’t really blame overtime. You can, how-



Firefighters battle the Silverado fire on Oct. 26, 2020, along Alton Road in Lake Forest. Reports of Orange County fire personnel racking up hundreds of thousands of dollars in overtime have readers asking whether pensions are bumped up.

MINDY SCHAUER STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

ever, blame your elected representatives.

Big pension debts are a function of generous retirement formulas approved by state and local officials in the halcyon days after 1999, when markets were booming, retirement systems were “super-funded” and actuaries said sweetened benefits would cost next to nothing, because earnings on investments would pay for them.

Officials signed on with gusto, especially in the wake of 9/11, when they were “stepping over each

other to bestow wage increases and higher pensions to all first-responders,” as one critic said. Toss in “pension holidays” (when funds looked so healthy that officials quit putting money into them, sometimes for years), a crippling recession, lengthening life spans, a spike in retirements and reductions in what pension plans expect to earn on investments, and you get a hole hundreds of billions of dollars deep.

The law says governments can’t scale back pension promises once they’ve

been made, so there’s no choice but to pay. That has been sucking down money that would otherwise pay for public services. (More on that to come soon.)

Right now, depending on who you ask, California’s public pension plans have some \$174 billion to \$269 billion less than what they need to pay their workers. That’s actually an improvement.

You might want to thank former Gov. Jerry Brown for that — he muscled through reforms to the system in 2013 that are starting to

bear fruit.

You might also want to blame Brown as well: In 1975, he signed a bill allowing public workers to

unionize — creating “a political monster... that dominate(s) Sacramento through ... pressure tactics, underwriting of political campaigns, and the swaying of hearts and minds through funding or fighting against numerous ballot measures,” the conservative Hoover Institution said.

Of course, big corporations had been doing the same for years.

Anyway, CalPERS, the largest public pension system in the nation, has enough money to cover about 72% of its future obligations. A lot of pension-manager types like to see these systems at least 80% funded.

Local agencies are getting notices from CalPERS this fall, telling them how much more they’ll have to pay in each of the next couple of years to help fill the pension holes.

Many are cringing. We’ll tell you more about that, and how much it will cost your city, special district, etc., soon.

Meantime, keep those cards and letters and questions coming.



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