

INTERVIEW: MAYOR-ELECT FARRAH KHAN • IRVINE WEEKLY'S HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE • INSPIRING IN THE ARTS: OC MUSIC & DANCE

IRVINE

WEEKLY

NOVEMBER 27, 2020 • VOL. 3, NO. 2



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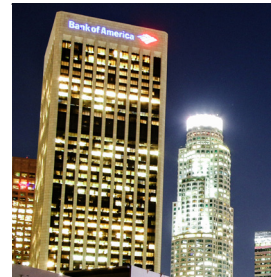
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Farrah Khan



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FEATURE

WOMEN OF INDUSTRY

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BY TARA FINLEY

Throughout Orange County, female leaders of industry are taking the professional world by storm. Powerful role models, these women in business have risen to the top of their career fields through hard work, grit and determination.

No matter your gender, the following stories of achieved dreams and the roads that led them there will serve as inspiration in a time where motivation may feel stagnant. While success may be hard-won, these incredible women prove that the endeavor to do so is always worth the effort.

Here are Irvine Weekly's Top Women in Business 2020:

Lynn Jochim

Every once in a while, a role model emerges that takes root in their given industry, sure to be looked up to and admired for years to come. In the world of development and beyond, Lynn Jochim

is that role model.

As the Chief Operating Officer and Vice President of FivePoint Holdings, LLC, Jochim oversees the operations and execution of land development plans and entitlements for all company projects in California. Given that FivePoint is one of the largest developers of mixed-use communities in coastal California – responsible for icons like the Great Park Neighborhood, OC's Great Park, Valencia (formerly Newhall Ranch) and now San Francisco's Candlestick and Shipyard projects – her responsibilities are no small task.

She's hit so many milestones already. In fact, her Valencia project is groundbreaking, on track to become the most sustainable master planned community of its size in the nation, with zero net greenhouse gas emissions. Coming from a background in agriculture and sustainability – she grew up helping out on the family farm in Central California –

this is an achievement that means a lot. "It's a respect for the land and a respect for nature," she explains. "It is pretty magical to be a part of. I know we all feel this responsibility that it's really about us being stewards of the land and stewards of the environment."

With so many goals realized, what other accomplishments does she look forward to?

"Ones I don't know yet," Jochim answers. "Because it always seems like I could never guess what that next step or stage is going to be. And so, I don't know what they are."

One of her greatest joys has been the Orange County Great Park, and she loves to see what it's become. "It's the greatest compliment of all, that people find it a wonderful place to gather," she tells us, after having worked so hard to design and build it.

When it comes to opportunities and challenges, Jochim has this philosophy: "We can control our own destiny by being open to it and being respectful of those around us."

"I think sometimes the greatest example of what you would say your 'opportunities and challenges' are, is how you see your own children deal with issues," she continues. "Both my girls, neither one of them see their gender as an obstacle, or a challenge, or an opportunity. They just see themselves as having opportunities as humans, being able to go and

explore the world."

A strong mother and a strong leader, Jochim is thankful for her mentors and colleagues for making work such an enjoyable and productive space. "We are all part of a group that's doing great things," she says.

From managing her team through a pandemic, to leading the development of iconic communities, Jochim has a lot of wisdom to share. Her advice to young professionals?

"Always be comfortable asking questions," she advises. "I know I ask a million questions. ... I ask questions all the time. And I think that young people need to ask questions. They need to make sure that they're experiencing life for themselves, feeling comfortable about what they're experiencing and finding a group they can share those experiences with. Because it is from experience that you're going to find opportunity."

Barbara Johnson Bechthold

Barbara Johnson Bechthold is the kind of person you want to have breakfast with. Not brunch, not dinner, but breakfast.

Why? Her energy is unmatched. Contagious and motivating, a conversation with her – no matter how brief – will leave you feeling like you can conquer the world just as she did. Any day begun with a word of encouragement from this energetic, educated and

Lynn Jochim



Barbara Johnson Bechthold





Clean Energy[®]

Barbara

Your commitment and dedication to our organization is one of the important reasons we are successful. As Vice President, Administration, our company relies on your expertise in mitigating risk, managing safety and directing Human Resources. In your position you touch every facet of what keeps our company moving forward and we appreciate everything you do.

Know that you are well respected and admired by us all and congratulations on this nomination!

Andrew J. Littlefair, President and CEO
And all of us at Clean Energy Fuels!



FEATURE

dedicated professional will no doubt be a day of accomplishments.

As the Vice President of Administration for Clean Energy, Mrs. Johnson Bechthold has had a long career of rejecting gender roles. Historically, the energy industry has been male dominated, though today, gender is no longer the divider it once was. This is due, in part, to pioneers like Bechthold.

Clean Energy is a natural gas fueling solution that has been established in its industry for decades. Born out of a vision for a better tomorrow by entrepreneur and energy pioneer T. Boone Pickens, it is the culmination of Pickens' career pursuit of clean energy.

Mrs. Johnson Bechthold has worked with Pickens and his natural gas endeavors for over 27 years now, first starting out at his former business, Mesa Petroleum. At the time, Mesa was one of the most sought-after employers in Texas, and securing a position there was no easy feat for a young woman.

"Mesa Petroleum was a highly respected employer in Amarillo, Texas," she explains. "Positions did not open often and were in high demand when they did become available."

Despite the odds against her, Bechthold is the kind of woman who makes things happen. She wanted on the team, and would start at the bottom if that's what it took. She applied as an executive assistant, knowing that with her foot in the door, she would soon figuratively and literally be climbing the ladder on her way to the top.

How did Mrs. Johnson Bechthold have to adapt as a young, ambitious woman climbing a professional ladder catered towards men? "I learned that 100% was never enough," she answers. "My contribution had to be significantly more than the basic requirement. Thankfully, I enjoy a challenge."

A great representation of this 110% work ethic is her willingness and ability to throw on work boots and lead the way up a rig, surely a physical manifestation of her aptitude for all facets of her field and that same commitment to team. In fact, her well-rounded experience and expertise in the energy field has earned her valuable relationships with the U.S. Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the California Energy Commission.

It can be said that the work she does is of vital importance to not only the health of the planet, but the health of its people and future generations. Was this always a passion of Bechthold's?

Cheryl Osborn



"I always wanted to work for a company that made a difference and the energy business provided an opportunity for me to contribute toward that cause," she confirms. "I hope that in my role, I demonstrate that being ethical, respectful, faithful and loyal coupled with hard work brings success."

If this woman in business could give future female leaders a piece of professional advice, what would it be?

"Determine what your talents are and select a career that will enable you to use those talents," she wisens. "Spend time with other professionals to learn more about the career you are considering. Follow your passion: do what you know you are good at doing, rather than follow someone else's dream."

Cheryl Osborn

Cheryl Osborn builds dreams, a career she is all too qualified for after spending her professional life architecting her own.

As the President and Founder of Casco Contractors, an Orange County based Commercial Tenant Improvement Construction and Design Solutions firm, Osborn has over 30 years of construc-

tion experience under her belt.

Today, the industry is still thought of as predominantly male. But 30 years ago? A female boss at the jobsite was almost unheard of. But Osborn knew who she wanted to be and what she wanted to do. Not satisfied with stopping at designing, she wanted to build from the ground up.

Thankfully, she had an excellent mentor in her early years. A father of daughters, this seasoned professional wanted to show to the world that women belonged in construction and he had the good judgement to recognize Osborn as the person to prove it.

"He ended up hiring me and giving me way more autonomy than I could have imagined," she remembers. "I was basically thrown in the fire *and I loved it.*"

With that same fire lighting her way, she began collecting experience after experience, constructing her resume. When she was pregnant with her second child, Osborn got fed up with the gender discrimination she faced at other companies, so she decided to create her own: Casco Contractors.

"I call it my ignorance and persistence 'thing.' I was so ignorant about starting

my own business, but I jumped in with two feet," she says. "I started my company with a baby and a laptop in my kitchen and went from there."

A very persistent person, she just put one foot in front of the other and began to build her empire. It's grown organically from there.

"I think women are particularly good in construction because they are so organized and detail-oriented," she describes. But don't abuse those innate skills. "Don't ask me to take notes because I have a uterus, I'm willing to do my share but I'm not going to do all of it."

Does she feel that throughout her career, she's had to work harder than her male counterparts?

"Absolutely," she answers. "I constantly had to prove that I knew what I was talking about, had the experience that I actually had, and was qualified."

"Even bankers and accountants were reticent at first to deal with me until I went the extra mile to prove to them that I was capable," she furthers. "I got asked all the time 'where is the man behind this business?' I would reply - 'it's just me.'"

Her advice for all those starting out

who feel they aren't being heard?

"Don't have a chip on your shoulder. People will figure out that you know what you're doing, and you'll earn their respect," she advises. "You have to prove yourself, but you don't have to prove it the first time you meet them."

Andrea Maticauda

Andrea Maticauda is someone who can do it all.

"I am the General Counsel at Calnetix Technologies. Calnetix develops and manufactures state-of-the-art, high-speed electric motors, generators and systems, based on our proprietary technologies, for a host of applications, from power generation, to motorsports, to medical, to defense," describes Maticauda.

"I am responsible for all legal activities across the company, including intellectual property portfolio licensing and acquisition, commercial agreements, mergers and acquisitions, subsidiary formation and exits, equity/debt financings, tax restructurings and governance matters," she continues.

Her responsibilities are many – including several cornerstones of company



success. What was her path that led her to become such a trusted member of the executive team?

"I started my legal career at Latham & Watkins (LW), a first tier national law firm. All LW new associates were 'unassigned' which essentially meant that newbie lawyers didn't have to specialize immediately, but instead were exposed to all types of work and clients. This broad experience gave me a strong legal foundation," she explains. "I believe my willingness always to learn new areas of the law and to think strategically and creatively have enabled my long career as General Counsel of Calnetix."

Maticauda is the kind of woman you want on your team. Never one to back

down from challenge, proving herself was just another rung to ascend on her ladder to personal success.

"The legal profession, in general, is very embracing of women. However, at least when I started, the billable hours culture at the big law firms was not in line with my expectations for a work/life balance. And while that balance has continued to be elusive at times, it was in search of that balance that pushed me to pursue a career in-house where I felt I had more control," she asserts. "When I started at Calnetix ... there were few women, and none on the executive team. So, I do think I had to work hard to prove my capabilities, and to expand the management team's expectations of the type of work and strategic advice that I could provide."

Her strong, calm leadership has paved the way for other female lawyers not only looking to get a seat at the executive table in predominantly male-dominated industries, but for general counsel as a whole to be included in the executive team fold.

"I believe that I am an example of a more integrated, strategic general counsel, one focused on the whole arc of the company, not just its pure legal contracts," she says. "I am also a strong advocate for workplaces and positions that promote flexibility."

This ties into Maticauda's key advice for young professionals: "Seek a job that enables flexibility! I find that women who have achieved great success in their fields often had positions that enabled flexibility. Ironically, I think that COVID's acceleration of the remote workforce and video technologies will make this easier for women and men."

Lynne Foose

Lynne Foose is the kind of woman that'll teach you a lesson. Often mistaken for being just the beauty of the operation as Chip Foose's wife, those that discount her soon find that she is the brains as well.

"I am the Vice President and Corporate Financial Officer," introduces Lynne. "Which means, I make all the decisions related to anything and everything legal, financial and administrative."

Lynne and Chip started Foose Design in 1999, the same year their first child was born. A graduate of Western State College of Law and young business owner herself, Lynne was a natural choice to helm the company while her husband let his creative juices flow. A new mom with a raw and fierce apti-

Lynne Foose



tude for business, she was a force to be reckoned with.

A force indeed, as today, Foose Design is a multi-million dollar business, widely known for being the focal point of the reality television show *Overhaulin'*.

"I think it's very true when people say that life takes you in directions you never saw coming," Lynne tells *L.A. Weekly*. "If you had told me that I would've spent my life self-employed and building a worldwide brand, I would've laughed at you. Today, one of my biggest goals would be to make the car building side of our business as profitable as the licensing and spokesperson side of our business."

As a female leader in a stereotypically male industry, did she face any gender discrimination while building up the brand?

"Within the context of the male dominated custom car industry, I can say with a resounding yes, I did experience

discrimination in this industry," she answers. "I definitely got the feeling that in this industry, women were to be seen and not heard."

Citing her mother as a strong role model and mentor, Lynne had to find the confidence within herself early on in her career in order to ensure Foose Design's success. "You have to know your worth," she advises. "You have to be willing to say 'no' when others don't value your worth."

Her advice to other young women out there, hoping to become leaders in their industry as well?

"My advice to young women would be to remove all emotion from business. I always knew that my emotions had no place in the business world," says Foose Design's VP and CFO. "I could not get hurt or offended if someone didn't see the value in our brand, and at the same time, I had to have the courage to demand what I thought we were worth."

Farrah Khan
PHOTO BY DARRICK HUMPHREY



IRVINE'S NEW MAYOR-ELECT

FARRAH KHAN SHARES HER INSIGHTS AND GOALS FOR OUR COMMUNITY.

As Farrah Khan, Irvine's new mayor-elect, prepares for a smooth transition into the role of mayor, she shared her election night experience, as well as some insight to her goals as Irvine's new mayor, in an interview with *Irvine Weekly*.

On election night, Khan said she spent a good amount of time at Irvine City Hall, talking to voters.

"I think by the afternoon we realized that people were done answering the phone and text messages. I was like, 'I need to talk to people, I can't just sit here!' So, I decided to talk to some voters that were waiting in line [at City Hall], and have some good conversations."

As the polls closed, Khan said she was on a Zoom call with her campaign volunteers as the initial returns came in and had no idea what to expect.

"That was a surprise," Khan said. "I

thought we were going to be neck-to-neck, because it was hard to gauge where everything was. By 9:00 p.m., the second update came through, and it was quite amazing."

After more than four months of campaigning, Khan said she felt a great burden lifted off her shoulders, and said the following day was a day of rest. However, once the first weekend post-election night came to a close, Khan said she was eager to get to work.

As of Friday, Nov. 13, Khan led incumbent Irvine Mayor Christina Shea by more than 13,000 votes, according to the Orange County Registrar of Voters.

One of her main priorities will be finding strategies to help residents and local businesses recover financially from the pandemic. Khan also has plans to help reduce the spread of COVID-19, while keeping local businesses thriving.

"What I will be rolling out soon is an Economic Recovery Plan that's really looking into what our resources are here locally, what we're expecting from the state or federal government to help our residents," Khan explained. "A lot of our residents have deferred their rental payments, and we know once the pandemic is over, they're going to be in sort of a financial bind paying their current rent and their back rent. We want to see what kind of funds are available to help them out, and we want to make sure that none of our local businesses are closing their doors."

With Orange County recently saw more than 2,000 new COVID-19 cases in one week, and with cases rising in Los Angeles County, Khan admitted that it would be difficult to circumvent the closure of local businesses, if recommended by state and county health officials.

"That's the hard part, finding creative ways, and looking outside of Orange County and maybe even other countries to see what they have done in these dire times," she said. "I keep in close contact with Dr. Chau from the Orange County Health Care Office because I think it's important for us to know exactly where the trend is moving and be ahead of it, not behind it. So, if there's things we can do preemptively, we need to do those now, before we're seeing our numbers rise even more."

Another aspect of her transition will include a city-based health care task force, which will aid in helping Irvine navigate the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

"Putting together a small task force of health care officials that will really guide us on best practices, as we move out and reopen. We're hoping to move into the Orange Tier later this month, if all our numbers stay constant," she said. "But, it's very important for us to have the backing of health care professionals, to make sure the steps we're taking are in line with their recommendations, just to keep our community safe and make sure we're not taking any steps that push us backwards."

After initially planning not to run for office, Khan described this experience as "a whirlwind." However, she explained that she felt compelled after seeing the community engagement following the Black Lives Matter protests in Irvine.

"Especially following the BLM protests we had in our city, I felt like our leadership lacked the sense of understanding who our residents were and what our residents were saying," Khan explained. "Really, all our residents were saying is that 'we know our city is wonderful,' 'we understand the police department does an excellent job,' but there are still gaps where we need to fix things."

While Khan does not think she turned Irvine blue, she said that this election proves that there is a shift happening.

"I think it was just the public wanting change," Khan explained. "If anything, the residents here really wanted someone that was going to show the leadership that the city deserves, someone that was going to be honest with them, someone that understood the changing demographics in our city, and responds accordingly. I really hope that our communities here in Irvine feel like their voice will be heard. For me, it's really important to hear from the community whether it's good things or bad things."

ORANGE COUNTY FORUM CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF RENOWNED SPEAKERS IN 'THE COUNTY'S LIVING ROOM'



Then California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger addresses the Orange County Forum on September 26, 2005 in Irvine.

DAMIAN DOVARGANES — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



From left, former Anaheim Councilwoman Kris Murray, former Supervisor Bill Campbell, Supervisor Don Wagner, former Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez, and President of the OC Forum Paul Stover.

DAMIAN DOVARGANES — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BY JENNIFER KARMARKAR

2020 WILL FOREVER be remembered as the year the world was upended by a pandemic. As the nation began a systematic shutdown, some nonprofits floundered as they saw outreach opportunities shrink. Rare was the organization that seized the moment to elevate dialogue, to connect with a broader audience, and to meet community members where they were during those first uncertain days, and beyond.

The OC Forum did just that. The region's premiere nonprofit, nonpartisan current affairs organization mustered the firepower to quickly regroup to a virtual format and present one of the county's first programs on the coronavirus — hosted by some of UCI's top medical experts — to an audience hungry for information.

"That was a pivotal moment, because with that we determined that it was time to look to the future and not look to the past," says the **OC Forum's president, Paul Stover**. "We realized this was an opportunity to really look ahead and get the community looking with us to where we are going — and where we are going together."

That event in March drew more than 6,000 viewers and gave birth to "The Future of" series, which has featured topics on such timely issues as race relations, mental health and affirmative action. "Now, after 10 virtual programs, we've literally had thousands and thousands of people viewing our programs, which is phenomenal," Stover says.

The OC Forum was founded in 1990 by a group of local business leaders who sought a channel to discuss current events taking place in Orange County. The inaugural event featured Robert H. Smith, president and CEO of Security Pacific Corp., who addressed the state of the nation's banking industry and the ongoing recession.

The organization's aim since inception has been to keep Orange County residents informed, Stover says. "The OC Forum really has become the county's living room. This is where we have these genuinely great

conversations, and the Forum never tires of responding to the needs of the community."

As the demographics of Orange County have changed, so, too, has the leadership of the organization, says **Mike Ruane, the OC Forum's longest-serving member**. "We have a more diverse board, and we have a younger board — both of which are important."

Modeled in the tradition of venerable groups like the Town Hall of Los Angeles, the organization has hosted appearances by some of the nation's most knowledgeable and distinguished leaders in an interactive environment. "One of the things we've always done well is we're bipartisan, and we've always had speakers that offer different perspectives," Ruane says.

Stover agrees. "We really are the home of civil discourse and, in my opinion, I think we do this better than anyone else in the country. We can be a model for others to look at how you can have different opinions, different views, different people in the same room and speak to one another with decorum. We pride ourselves on that and we hope we maintain that."

The OC Forum has attracted presidential candidates, U.S. senators and California governors. Prominent speakers have addressed wide-ranging topics in economics, housing, religion, politics, sports and world trade.

"I am very proud of how we responded this year, and I think we really found a wonderful cadence to the programs we offered and how we offered them," says **Kate Klimow, the OC Forum's incoming president**. "It allowed us to dive deeper into a subject in a different way than we had in the past."

Klimow says she expects the organization to continue to present relevant programs next year and beyond. "We'll be responsive to what's happening whether we're hosting conversations through a live stream, in person, or some interesting hybrid."

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30th OC FORUM

"The Future of: Orange County"

presented by UCI & UCI Health

Tuesday, December 8, 2020 • 12 noon – 1 pm

Moderated by Orange County Business Council President and CEO Lucy Dunn, "The Future of Orange County" is the culmination of yearlong series with insights from prominent business, nonprofit and elected leaders. A special panel will focus on four pillars influencing OC's future — innovation, education, wellness and economic growth.

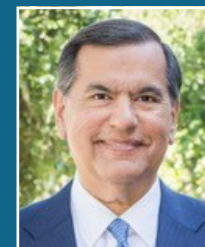
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Chairman and CEO
Of Fivepoint



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Hon. Gaddi Vasquez,
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Sen. Dianne Feinstein
Sen. John McCain
Gov. Gavin Newsom
Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger
Gov. Pete Wilson
Gov. Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
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Rick And Kay Warren
Peter V. Ueberroth
Henry T. Segerstrom
Gen. William Lyon
James Doti
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HOLIDAYS

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CropSwap

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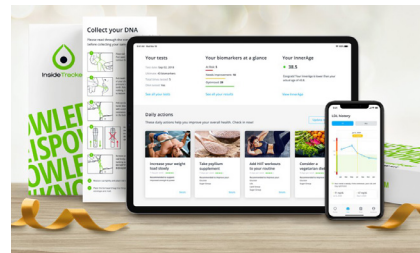
IRVINE WEEKLY'S HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

BY IRVINE WEEKLY

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BY IRVINE WEEKLY

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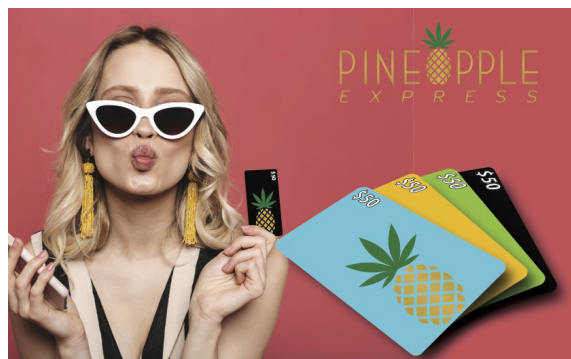
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CUP OF SUSHI

NEW IRVINE TAKE-OUT CONCEPT BRINGS FORM AND FUNCTION TO JAPANESE CUISINE.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER



Subconsciously inspired by the novelty and trend of boba-style beverages, the Irvine-based Cup of Sushi, a new Japanese take-out concept, serves delicately layered, culinary mosaics of Japanese-inspired cuisine – in a clear plastic cup.

For now, customers will find spicy tuna, salmon, yellowtail, rice and vegetable combinations. Munetatsu Go, manager at Cup of Sushi, explained that during conceptualization, boba became a direct line of inspiration, considering its popularity across the globe.

"I think unconsciously, we get some inspiration from boba, which was kind of like a super trend last year in Japan," Go said. "We are not trying to do authentic, traditional Japanese, but we kind of did a mixture, and fit it to the general American fusion-type of sushi. California Roll, Dragon, Rainbow, Spicy tuna – those are born in the U.S. so we started to take that and refine it."

With a roster of different seafood, rice or noodle and veggie-filled cups, the Cup of Sushi team explained that each cup is designed to take the customer on a culinary journey through the different layers within each Cup of Sushi.

"In Japan, we say veggie first. The way we recommend is to start with vegetables, at the top, with a small portion of protein," Go said.

After months of research, Cup of Sushi opened its first location in October as a takeout and delivery-only concept in Irvine. Using an Irvine-based cloud kitchen, Cup of Sushi allows customers to visit the store in person, but all the food is served to-go.

Yet while the concept as a whole is seemingly game-changing in terms of "sushi-portability," getting the food in the cup was the easy part considering the limitations brought on by COVID-19, according to Thomas Buckley, owner of Cup of Sushi.

Headquartered in Tokyo, Buckley alluded to an ocean-wide door of challenges the team needed to pass through in order to bring this concept to an Irvine-based brick and mortar.

"The pandemic was beginning to really look more and more serious, and we were looking at restaurant trends, with increasing numbers of orders being taken as delivery or takeout only," Buckley explained in an interview with *Irvine Weekly*. "It was definitely affecting the percentage of orders for dine-in – and that trend was accelerated by the pandemic."

After a month of being open to the pub-

lic, Buckley explained how Cup of Sushi plans to target a specific audience in Irvine. Buckley also shared his thoughts on opening a brand new concept in the midst of a pandemic, and how this unique concept-in-a-cup was created.

"It was not a straight line to that particular form factor. We spent a lot of time thinking about the target demographic and we used principles of design thinking and lean project management to go on a path of customer discovery: Who is our target demographic?" Buckley said. "So essentially, what we discovered, they love having beautiful food that's Instagrammable, but they also want it to be healthy and nutritious, and they love novelty."

Through this ideation process, the team incorporated a unique Japanese catch phrase to help guide the direction of the menu.

"Nutritious things are beautiful, and beautiful things are nutritious," Buckley said. "That's kind of the rough translation of the Japanese phrase, and we wanted to do both – have something that's very nutritious, but also looks really almost like a work of art."

Considering the attention to detail required to construct these edible artworks, assembling each "dish" at Cup of Sushi requires precision in order to consistently deliver the ideal textures and properly execute the flavorful experience.

In describing the method the Cup of Sushi dishes are built with, both Go and Buckley agreed that the delicate cup building process mimics building a ship in a bottle.

"We really care about the beauty of the layers," Go explained. "We make sure that the line cook and the chef take

time to make beautiful layers, so they use spoons and tongs to not mess up everything. That's how we prepare right now."

Recently, Cup of Sushi added Kara-age fried chicken and some additional desserts to the menu. While the idea of custom cup orders is something on the mind of every food blogger, Go explained the bandwidth for customizations is not quite in-sync, for now.

"We really appreciate the voice of the customer, and we will release new items based on it. On our road map, we're really interested in a custom cup [concept] as well."

Sushi fans can get their fix by ordering directly from Cup of Sushi, and can also use third party delivery apps like Yelp and Postmates. Or check out the Cup of Sushi cloud kitchen in Irvine at 17951 Sky Park Circle, Unit F, Irvine, CA 92614.



PLAYING TO ITS OWN BEAT

IRVINE'S OC MUSIC AND DANCE SCHOOL IS HELPING STUDENTS PURSUE THEIR ARTISTIC PASSIONS.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

PHOTOS COURTESY OC MUSIC & DANCE

The Orange County Music and Dance school has demonstrated that despite the COVID-19 pandemic – the show must go on.

OC Music and Dance was founded in 2017 by Orange County businessman and entrepreneur Charlie Zhang, who is also the founder of the well-known Pick Up Stix franchise.

While Students in Orange County, and across the nation, have needed to rely on distance learning for the majority of 2020, Douglas K. Freeman, Executive Chair of the OC Music and Dance, said although the pandemic has shifted the school's models for education to a more digital approach, the focus is still set on delivering OC Music and Dance's three core philosophies – proficiency, literacy and versatility – in all styles of music and dance.

"Only a small percentage of the kids who ever study music end up as profes-

sionals, but the other 98 percent of the kids love music and they appreciate it, and they support it, they attend it and they contribute to it," Freeman explained. "So when you give kids this range of experience, they can understand music and play music. We give kids a well-rounded experience, and that well-rounded experience makes for some fantastic artists."

Through online resources and extreme attention to detail from instructors, OC Music and Dance has created an environment for students to continue pursuing their artistic interests and passions – and it's not all virtual.

In an interview with *Irvine Weekly*, Freeman discussed the creative ways the OC Music and Dance has strategized safeguards, which include making their own sanitizers, along with the installation of HEPA filters against the pandemic to allow young dancers and musicians to continue mastering

body knows somebody who has been affected by it – jobs, travel, everything," Freeman explained. "We knew in March, when we closed, that when we came out the other side of COVID, we were going to be different – as was the community. We actually worked off a white paper I wrote, called "Recovery, Reopened, Reimagined."

Freeman, who was recognized as one of the 500 Most Influential People in Orange County in 2016, added that OC Music and Dance serves the community in numerous ways.

"Pre COVID-19 – end of 2019 to early 2020 – we had over 450 kids and 45 teachers. We taught music in every instrument, we had dance programs in virtually every style – Asian dance, Indian dance, and of course western styles from ballet to hip hop, jazz to modern and contemporary – we grew pretty fast," he said. "Our philosophy as a school is actually quite different from the philosophy of most music or dance schools, and that's important to be recognized because we're not here to win lots of competitions. Our kids are going to win competitions, and they have, but that's not our goal."

In addition to preparing students for the next level of performing, OC Music and Dance is also working to help socialize the youngest sets of students – toddlers – which is unique considering a pandemic. Speaking on the importance of socialization, Freeman pointed out that most of these young families have spent the majority of their lives in quarantine, due to the pandemic.

"We've created an early childhood music program for toddlers – that young. And we put 3, 4, 5 kids on the floor in our dance studio, very spread apart, with Mom, and we're giving

their crafts, regardless of the limitations brought on by COVID-19.

"Understand that COVID-19 has an impact on every single person, whether they're ill because of it or not. Every-



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them rhythm, and giving them singing and cooing and pounding on a little stick and we're giving them socialization and creativity," Freeman explained.

In some cases, Freeman added, these socialization classes are the first social experiences for some of these families.

The pandemic has undoubtedly created turmoil in every aspect of life, and for aspiring dance and music majors looking to move on to college, they must do so digitally, and away from the comfort of playing with an ensemble.

When asked what the forecast was like for music students looking to get into college, Freeman said that colleges are now requiring music majors to send in audition tapes, which is difficult for students to accomplish on their own.

"They're panicking," Freeman said bluntly. "What's happened is that to get

into a conservatory, by the end of November you must have turned in your auditions. We've been preparing the kids, two to three days a week recording. The other thing that's missing in the schools is they can't play with anyone – we can. I can put 10 kids, six feet apart, with screens and masks – and we jam."

Most of all, Freeman added, thanks to the great efforts put forth by the staff and the willingness of the students to learn outside of their comfort zones, the opportunities for young dancers and musicians is not lost due to the pandemic.

"They haven't lost the opportunity to perform, it's just a little different. And sometimes they can have 5,000 people watching them, because we can broadcast, and the world can see it," Freeman said.



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IT'S TIME TO BOW DOWN BEFORE THE CROWN

BY ERIN MAXWELL

Ever since it debuted in 2016, Netflix's *The Crown* has set itself as the gold standard of streaming service original content, pushing out award-worthy performances, riveting storylines, and impeccable writing with each season. Now back for a fourth turn, the twisted true tales of the Royal Family delves tiara-head first into the '80s, where audiences are introduced to an Iron Lady and a People's Princess, as well as a focus on the diminishing faith in government and the toxicity of a family who was born to serve.

Olivia Colman as Queen Elizabeth II once again leads an impressive cast, this time including Gillian Anderson as former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. A polarizing figure in British (if not world) history, Anderson puts her weight into the performance allowing small moments of vulnerability to seep into Maggie the Great. As she is bullied and patronized by her cabinet, it is difficult not to feel for the character, despite what one might think about her policies. In all honesty, it is a bit of a hat trick to get American audiences to feel for a politician who had a chip on her shoulder regarding the blue-collar sect.

Season four also acquaints audiences with Diana Spencer, the Princess of Wales (Emma Corrin), who is first introduced as a gangly teen dressed like a dancing tree. This is a new take on Princess Di that most American audiences are unfamiliar with, as our perception of the princess involves her white, billowy wedding gown or high fashion moments, not the roller skating Duran Duran fan who was slowly crushed by a loveless marriage.

Watching Princess Di slowly suffocate under the pressure of public and private scrutiny is akin to torture porn, like a British version of *Martyrs*, but instead of flaying, the royal family skins her spirit. Most of the season is spent watching Di struggle to hold on to her individuality as it is ripped from her being day by day. Thatcher and the Princess of Whales



played a major part in changing attitudes towards Crown and Country in the '80s. The former seen by her critics as the embodiment of everything wrong with government, and the latter, immensely beloved by the public to the point that her shabby treatment was viewed as everything wrong with the royal family.

In addition to the notable names, the show also explores the virulent nature of the period and the consequences of these important figures' choices on others. From being born imperfect into a family that demands perfection to one man's attempt to set his life straight by meeting with Queen Elizabeth, the residual effect of bad policies – be it political or private – is recreated and revealed.

Between the personal problems inside Buckingham Palace and the growing dissonance within the government, *The Crown* creates a bingeable hotbed of intense drama that feels real because it was. More than ever before, season four truly shines, taking familiar figures from history books and painting them with broad strokes of humanity for the small screen.

WHY THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT IS WINNING NETFLIX RIGHT NOW

BY ERIN MAXWELL

Netflix's *The Queen's Gambit* follows the trials and tribulations of chess prodigy Elisabeth "Beth" Harmon (Anya Taylor-Joy), an orphan whose love of winning is only matched by her love of mood-altering tranquilizers, booze, and non-committal sex.

The story of Beth and her rise, fall, and rise again to greatness is a classic hero's journey with a modern take and retro look. There is no clear antagonist in this tale, but it is nonetheless a powerful coming-of-age story about overcoming hurdles amidst dazzling set designs and killer looks.

Beth's early life is filled with all the tragic backstory markers: unstable family life, parental death, and years spent neglected in the system. But frequent chess games with the janitor and a childhood drug addiction help Beth grow into a very unique individual. In her teens, she's adopted as a companion for Mrs. Alma Wheatley, a housewife whose own considerable talents are pushed aside to appease the ambitions of others. Recognizing Beth's talent for chess (and its cash rewards), Alma takes the show on the road, allowing the girl to play professionally.

The Queen's Gambit manages to side-step all of the tropes we have come to expect from stories featuring orphans and child prodigies, the kind usually found in the pages of VC Andrews books, grammar school novels, or kiddie flicks aimed at little girls. Beth isn't a cliché. She doesn't use showy words to prove her worth nor does she own a dog named Sandy. She is smart enough to understand her situation and to know when to suffer in silence.

Taylor-Joy (who we last saw in the cinematic *Emma* reboot) is a marvel as a wide-eyed beauty who grows from gawky teen to rook-running stunner. She catches the viewer's eye and holds it captive for hours.



In addition to her own formidable talents, Taylor-Joy is supported by a hell of a cast, including Thomas Brodie-Sangster, Harry Melling, Moses Ingram, and Jacob Fortune-Lloyd. Each help Beth in their own way, through friendship, love, and support – all the tools she later needs to defeat her demons.

The Queen's Gambit is clearly not a cheap production. Every scene is eye-pleasing, a feast of color and pattern, fashion and scenery. There's not a hair out of place or unpleasant plaid styling to be seen here. Every sitting room, every hotel lobby, every sad single bed in the orphanage makes for thoughtful detail, enhancing the story and the viewer's experience, giving Netflix one of its most notable checkmates to date.

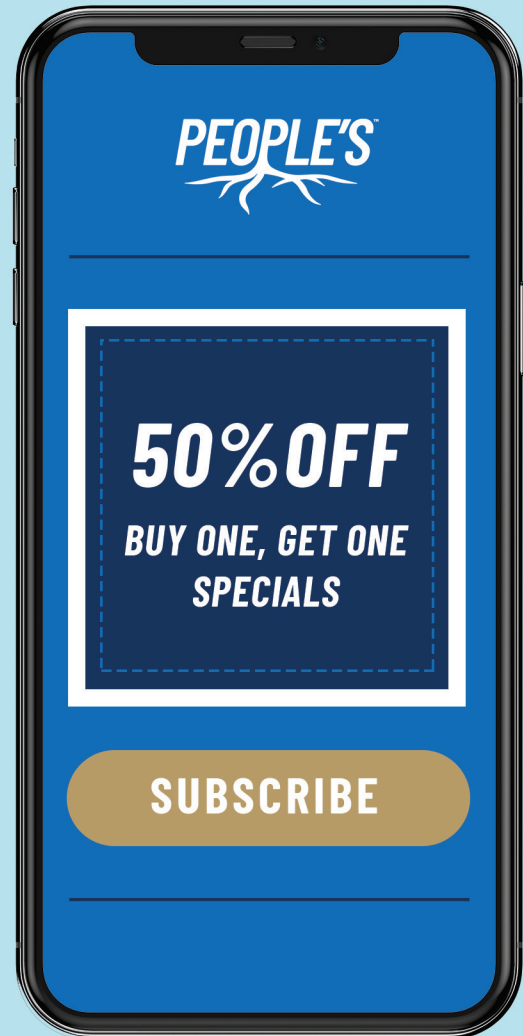
The tale of Beth Harmon is one of self destruction and also self-preservation, exploring how the people in our lives can sometimes hold us back, but also lead us onto paths that move us forward and keep us from driving off a bridge. While Beth is a victim of circumstance, plagued by inner turmoil and a constant flow of adults and men who don't understand her worth, this is not a tale of woe. It's a story of redemption, of overcoming odds, and in the end, a hero's journey played across a chessboard.



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