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IRVINE WEEKLY

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BREAKING GROUND

CONSTRUCTION APPROVED FOR NEW \$1 BILLION UCI MEDICAL CENTER

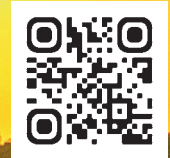
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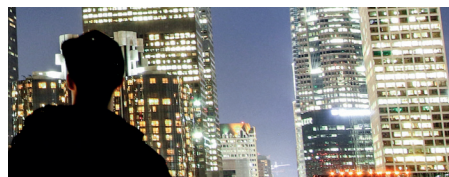
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The Flaky Apple Pie Co.:
Page 12



NEWS: 5

Construction approved for \$1 billion UCI Medical Center Irvine-Newport.
BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

COMMUNITY: 7

Concordia and 360 Clinic are shaping the future of local health care.
BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

NEWS: 10

COVID-19 vaccination update: Low supply slowing the process.
BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

NEWS: 11

Wild Rivers Water Park breaking ground in April.
BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

FOOD: 12

The art of pie making at Flaky Apple Pie Co.
BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

ENTERTAINMENT: 14

Movies for Valentine's Day: The shades of love on screen.
BY MICHAEL SNYDER

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On Thursday, Jan. 21, the University of California Board of Regents approved construction for the \$1 billion UCI Medical Center Irvine-Newport project, which is now scheduled to break ground later this year.

This is a major milestone for the UCI Medical Center Irvine-Newport, which will become a state-of-the-art medical campus, featuring a 144-bed acute care medical facility.

As Irvine's newest medical project moves to break ground in the coming months, Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan said she is already having discussions with UC Irvine about the potential impacts on the city of Irvine. With a few hundred residences near the project site, Khan said traffic mitigation had already become a topic of discussion in Irvine's conversations with UCI.

While Khan explained the meetings are in the preliminary stages, she said she expects the city and UC Irvine to reach agreements on traffic mitigation in the coming weeks.

"We'll continue meeting to resolve some of these issues, and I'm hopeful that we'll come to some sort of agreement," Khan explained in an interview with *Irvine Weekly*.

The UC Irvine Medical Center Irvine-Newport will become the home of the Center for Children's Health, and will also be designed to offer urgent care and emergency services.

Construction will begin in late 2021, beginning with the UCI Health Center for Advanced Care, which will eventually be the location for the Center for Children's Health.

Slated for completion in 2025, the UCI Medical Irvine-Newport complex becomes Irvine's third large medical installment since 2019, including the City of Hope's first Orange County-based cancer care facility, along with UCI's Center for Advanced Care.

UC Chancellor Howard Gillman said the addition of the Irvine-Newport medical center will not only bring more robust medical care to Orange County, but it further institutes Irvine as a central location for providing the highest caliber of academic institutions that will inspire medical students for generations.

"With today's approval by the regents, UCI takes a giant leap toward fulfilling the visionary expansion of our campus and enhancing service to the community," Gillman said. "Once this project is completed, the UCI health care system will be unparalleled in this region, with



CONSTRUCTION APPROVED FOR NEW UCI MEDICAL CENTER

THE \$1 BILLION MEDICAL CAMPUS WILL BE LOCATED ALONG JAMBOREE ON THE IRVINE-NEWPORT BORDER.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

two advanced medical centers, nationally recognized research units conducting hundreds of clinical trials, and a network of community locations stretching to all corners of Orange County."

Spanning more than 800,000 square feet, the UCI Medical Center Irvine-Newport and UCI Health Center for Advanced Care are the final building blocks to UCI's Presidential Gateway, a 202-acre project within the San Joaquin Marsh Reserve.

Chad Lefteris, CEO of UCI Health, said that the combination of exceptional patient care, the most advanced technology, an accessible location, and proximity to research and innovation will truly benefit the residents of coastal and southern Orange County.

"No other health system in the county is powered by one of the world's finest



PHOTOS COURTESY OF UCI MEDICAL CENTER IRVINE-NEWPORT

academic research institutions: the University of California," he said. "Our goal is to make this expertise easily available to everyone in Orange County."

Lucy Dunn, president and CEO of the Irvine-based Orange County Business Council said this project will help anchor Irvine as a central hub for innovative health care services in Orange County, while creating workforce longevity for the local medical industry.

"What I really love about this project is that it's a series of great health care and health innovation projects in Irvine, and particularly Orange County, where we'll be becoming a great leader in health care services," Dunn said in an interview with *Irvine Weekly*. "You have UCI, which has been a hub of innovation for years, along with our entire medical device industry. We're the capital of the medical device industry in the world – it all happens around UCI – and now to add a health center – it's not just more jobs, but high paying jobs."

As the \$1 billion UCI Medical Center Irvine-Newport project gets underway, Dunn added that this project will create an immediate economic impact on the local community.

Considering the economic hardships created by the COVID-19 pandemic, Dunn says that while the construction jobs may not be permanent, these municipal and environmental jobs are what help create long-term economic stability.

"It's the multiplier effect of the businesses that it will create around it. During construction, there are going to be high-paying construction jobs, dirt movers, earth movers – they make very good money. And to make sure that the San Joaquin Marsh reserve is protected, there will be good environmental jobs," Dunn explained. "So it's that multiplier effect – the hospital, the health care

NEWS

PHOTOS COURTESY OF UCI MEDICAL CENTER IRVINE-NEWPORT



and the innovation – those are the permanent jobs. But even the short-term construction jobs and environmental jobs help a sputtering economy come back to life.”

Tom Vasich, Senior Director of Communications & Media Relations for UC Irvine, said bringing UC Irvine Medical into the South County region of Orange

County will help better serve the community’s health care needs.

“I think it’s going to be a great community resource, there’s quite a need in this particular area for more health care options for people. At our Orange hospital – our main medical center – we’re pretty much full – and it’s not because of COVID-19. This central, South County

area, all of our research and working with consultants determined that a medical complex, like the one we’re doing, would be very beneficial to the community.”

Vasich added that another major component of this project will be to preserve the natural areas of the San Joaquin Marsh Reserve, which includes natural wildlife habitats, a bird sanctuary, along with potentially historic Na-

tive American artifacts.

“We’re working closely with the city of Irvine, the county and the city of Newport Beach to address issues like traffic, noise and environmental concerns,” Vasich explained in an interview with *Irvine Weekly*. “We’ve done a lot of work already, to reach out to the community in order to address concerns that they might have. One example is that we’re actually working with local Native American groups, because that site may have artifacts, from previous tribal encampments.”

Prior to the establishment of Orange and Riverside counties, the portion of land surrounding the San Joaquin Marsh was occupied by the Juaneno Band of Mission Indians, along with the Gabrieleno Band of Mission Indians.

“We’re working with them on an archeological basis, to make sure we’re handling any archeologically sensitive materials responsibly, and in line with the wishes of these Native American groups,” he said. “This whole area, called the UCI Presidential Gateway, there’s going to be a minimum of a 50-yard buffer between any parts of the UCI Presidential Gateway – including the hospital project and the marsh – in order to protect the environment there, and also the animal life there.”





PHOTO COURTESY OF 360 CLINIC

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE

360 CLINIC AND IRVINE'S CONCORDIA HELP PROVIDE REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCES TO NURSING STUDENTS.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

With the help of 360 Clinic, an O.C.-based health care provider, nursing students at Concordia University in Irvine have transformed the COVID-19 pandemic into a real-life learning lab.

Facing never-before-seen circumstances, some nursing students at Concordia have opted to join the COVID-19 frontlines – eager to bring much needed reinforcements to their exhausted, certified peers in any way possible.

Still, they are students, nonetheless.

Through a unique partnership with 360 Clinic, the company selected to manage multiple COVID-19 testing sites in the county, Concordia University students are now working the COVID-19 frontlines – working to help test, diagnose and in-take potentially symptomatic COVID-19 patients at testing sites across Orange County.

Dina Neeman, an instructor at Con-

cordia University, Doctorate of Nursing, Registered Nurse, Public Health Nurse, and Chair of the Orange County Long Beach Nursing Consortium, said in order to protect student nurses, both legally and physically, during the pandemic, student nurses are unable to work on their clinical hours inside hospitals – due to COVID-19.

This is a problem Neeman said is currently impacting all levels of nursing. Mainly, she added that the closure of clinical sites for students to work off their clinical hours has become a bottleneck, as students wait for clinical sites to reopen.

"Hospitals are just starting to open up, and slowly try and bring back some students. Most of Orange County and Long Beach nursing students are not graduating on time, because they're not being able to get their clinical hours in, which is a requirement," she said. "360 Clinic has been amazing, because with them coming up, we've

been able to utilize those for clinical hours."

Vince Tien, 360 Clinic Chief Operating Officer and co-founder, said while these students are bringing help to the frontlines, they are simultaneously shaping what could become the future of health care.

"Here, we not only have clinicians on site, but we also have clinicians that will call and follow up with you if you test positive – that's where the future of medicine is going. You don't have to go to a traditional doctor's office, wait like an hour or so to sit down and meet the doctor for five minutes," he explained. "Here, it's going to be scheduled tele-health calls, via phone and Zoom, and they get the convenience of a doctor's visit on their own schedule."

Tien added that this illustrates the concept behind 360 Clinic, and the potential it has to bring new methods of care into the community.

"360 Clinic was really born out of the pandemic and the need for the community to get testing. Previously, we were visiting patients at their home, so we faced lots of lock down, quarantine and isolation. A lot of the nurses couldn't come to a patient's home," he said.

Considering the impact the virus has had on the health care industry as a whole, Concordia and the 360 Clinic are providing real world experiences to nursing students in Irvine, at a time when the medical industry has never been more impacted.

Irvine resident Andrew Komoto, a student in Concordia's nursing program, who also earned a bachelor's degree from UC Irvine, said given the unprecedented circumstances the COVID-19 pandemic implemented, in terms of restrictions, his options as a student – and a nurse – have been extremely limited.

"I earned my bachelor's degree at UCI. I studied cognitive psychology and business management, so it was a little bit of a jump, moving to the health field," he said. "I wanted to do something a little bit more rewarding, a little bit bigger than myself, and to apply those skills of nursing to my family."

Komoto has enlisted himself on the front lines, working to help test potentially positive COVID-19 patients. However, in the early days of the pandemic, he was struggling to find a way to help his community.

"In the start of March, everything shut down, all of our clinicals were

stopped, and there was pretty much a temporary delay in our education," Komoto said in an interview with *Irvine Weekly*. "We [nursing students] understood the challenges facing the hospitals with the lack of PPE, and just the uncertainty of the epidemiology of the virus. Unfortunately, for the safety of the students, we were not allowed to be in the hospitals – and that was hard."

Despite this setback in his education, Komoto remained optimistic. In his downtime, Komoto said he began volunteering at the Costa Mesa Soup Kitchen, but decided to remain flexible as the circumstances were out of his control.

"I spent a lot of time at the Costa Mesa Soup Kitchen, even though that wasn't exactly the sort of help I wanted to provide for the community as a nurse," he said.

Between March and September, Komoto and his classmates at Concordia found themselves unable to serve the community as nurses, but eventually, with the help of 360 Clinic, may have ended up acquiring what could become the most extensive real-world training to date.

"I think we're all very eager to get us much experience as we can to help prepare us for the next level, and I think that's where the 360 Clinic really comes in," he explained. "In short, we didn't have any experience at all, other than just reading information and learning about it in class – it's a lot different, when you're going out into the community and taking precautions – and now you're working with hundreds of patients a day, that could be potentially positive. So I think you really have to have that mindset of patient safety."

As Orange County begins to distribute the COVID-19 vaccine to tiered groups across the county, Concordia University and 360 Clinic are currently working to get Irvine nursing students working at Super PODs throughout the county.

"To have an extra pair of hands in there, right now – these nurses are working in seven day shifts, 12, 14, 16 hours a day – they need help," Neeman said. "We're working with the Orange County Health Agency to get students out there and get them to Disneyland and Soka – and students want to be out there and helping. That's the first thing they want – not many are afraid of the coronavirus."

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O.C. COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE

LOW SUPPLY NOW SLOWING LOCAL VACCINATION PROCESS.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

After 50 days, California's regional stay-at-home order limiting non-essential travel was lifted on the morning of Monday, Jan. 25, giving retail, food and personal care businesses in Irvine the green light to reopen, with Purple Tier modifications in place – once again.

Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan said the state's announcement caught her by surprise, especially considering she has weekly calls with County Health Officer Dr. Clayton Chau.

"I thought it was a little early, and it didn't come with much messaging as to why the sudden change," Khan said in an interview with *Irvine Weekly*. "Our numbers haven't decreased, our [ICU] capacity is still at zero percent, so I didn't understand where that was coming from."

Others suggested that the Gov. Newsom's regional stay-at-home order may have been too strict in targeting specific services, like outdoor dining, while failing to give more comprehensive guidelines for reopening.

Lucy Dunn, president of the Irvine-based Orange County Business Council, said the lack of guidance has created confusion for businesses of all sizes in California.

"Disneyland is the largest single site employer in the state of California, and the largest in Orange County. For it to be shuttered for six months, with no guidelines for reopening, is crazy," Dunn said in an interview with *Irvine Weekly*.

Dunn said that Newsom presented no science to base closing outdoor dining, saying shutting people out of outdoor dining does more harm than good, especially when businesses already spent money to implement modifications.

"By eliminating [outdoor dining] you've forced people to party in their homes," Dunn said.

Now that California's regional stay-at-home order has been lifted, Orange County has been eager to vaccinate those who wish to become vaccinated, with a county-wide goal of accomplishing this feat by July 4.

However, the state's low vaccine supply continues to hinder the city of Irvine's ability to administer vaccines, or even establish a Super POD (Point of Distribution). Irvine has been eager to host a Super POD site, specifically an indoor vaccination site at the Orange County Great Park inside Hangar 244.

In fact, the city worked with the county to present a license agreement to the Irvine City Council that would establish a partnership with Orange County and the city of Irvine to utilize the Great Park as a COVID-19 Super POD.

However, before the Irvine City Council could vote on the license agreement authorizing the use of Hangar 244 as a third Super POD site in the county, the item was pulled from the agenda prior to the Jan. 26 meeting, at the request of County Executive Officer Frank Kim.

During the meeting on Jan. 26, Irvine City Council Member Larry Agran voiced frustration over the fact that the Great Park POD site license agreement was delayed, prior to the meeting. Agran said this situation should be treated like a local emergency.

"Our long-standing offer of using the Great Park as a vaccine mass distribution site has been ignored or rejected for far too long by the county and by the health department. It looked like we were going to sign a license agreement to see to it that the Orange County Great Park became a mass vaccine site," Agran said. "To hear that this was pulled from the agenda because the county pulled the plug on this project is outrageous – and kind of beyond belief."

Additionally, Agran said an email, obtained by *Irvine Weekly*, between the City of Irvine and the county indicated that there were last minute concerns about traffic in relation to Hangar 244 as a vaccination site in Irvine.

The email also indicates, in addition to traffic concerns, that the county stated that it was unfortunate that the city of Irvine made the announcement of the Great Park as a vaccination site "public" prior to an agreement being finalized.

"It is unfortunate that this site was made



PHOTO BY DANIEL SCHLUDION UNsplash

public before it was fully finalized," Thomas Miller, the county's Chief Real Estate Officer, wrote in an email to Irvine City Manager Marianna Marysheva. "But after the various calls and communications on Friday, we are sure that you understand this ongoing process and the various concerns that still exist."

Marysheva explained that the city is still currently working with the county to examine other potential vaccination sites in Irvine.

Marysheva is optimistic that the city of Irvine can reach an agreement for an Irvine-based Super POD by February.

"The site selection is the county's decision, and the city continues to stand ready to provide any necessary logistical support to get our residents vaccinated," Marysheva wrote in an email to *Irvine Weekly*. "I hope that the site selection will be made in the upcoming couple of weeks, and definitely by February 10."

As of Monday, Feb. 1, a total of 264,703 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been administered in Orange County, according to the Orange Health Care Agency. However, Irvine leaders continued to reiterate the need for more vaccines.

Khan said she has weekly conversations with the governor to emphasize Irvine's need for an increased supply of vaccines.

"The backup in opening new sites is almost three fold," she said. "One is getting more vaccines in and the state has a new level they want every county to meet – and that's the equity level [factor] – where counties can get more vaccines depending on how well they are handling equity in administering the vaccine."

Khan said Irvine's main goal is to help the county distribute as many vaccines as possible.

"We're hopeful that by mid to late February, we're hearing that maybe Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca might get authorized by the FDA," she said. "If that hap-

pens we are looking at possibly doubling the amount of vaccines that are coming into the county."

As more people become vaccinated, attention surrounding the death of a 60-year-old health care worker, who died hours after receiving a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, has created national headlines.

Tim Zook, a resident of Orange, who worked at Santa Ana Medical Center died on Jan. 9, at UC Irvine Medical Center, after receiving a second dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

While the Orange County Coroner has yet to determine if the vaccine played a role in the man's death, some experts caution the assumption the vaccine should be quick to blame.

Andrew Noymer, Associate Professor of Population Health and Disease Prevention Public Health at UC Irvine, said while he understands how the circumstances surrounding this fatality could cause the public to question the safety of the vaccine, he said based on data from the United States Actuarial Life Table, natural causes should not be dismissed.

"If you have 10,000, 60-year-old males and you go through an observation period of two weeks, you can expect about 4.6 deaths – and that's just based on life, basically," Noymer explained in an interview with *Irvine Weekly*. "Yes, it's high – death is actually more common in that demographic than people internalize."

Considering that nations are undertaking the unprecedented task of vaccinating entire populations, Noymer said that the public should be prepared for unintended consequences.

Locally speaking, Noymer added that while Irvine and Orange County are a pin drop in the vast scope of vaccinations happening globally, deaths will occur, regardless of the vaccine.

"Sooner or later some of these deaths are going to filter up to the public's attention," he said.

As of Tuesday Feb. 2, the Orange County Health Care Agency continued to report downward trends in terms of hospitalizations and positive cases, in comparison to the January spike.

On Tuesday, Feb. 2, HCA reported 792 new COVID-19 cases, bringing Orange County's total to 13,641. Countywide, hospitalizations have seen a sharp decline from a month prior. On Jan. 2, there were 2,136 COVID-19 patients hospitalized in Orange County, with 487 in the ICU.

On Tuesday, while intensive care unit capacity remained at zero percent, as of Feb. 2, hospitalizations decreased to 1,363 patients, of that total 384 were in the ICU.

Wild Rivers Water Park
Rendering (City of Irvine)



WILD RIVERS WATER PARK

PROJECT EXPECTED TO BREAK GROUND IN APRIL AT THE GREAT PARK.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

The Wild Rivers Water Park project, Irvine's soon-to-be waterpark, slated to be located inside the Orange County Great Park, is expected to begin construction in April, according to Wild Rivers President Mike Riedel.

"We're just going through the process, finishing up construction documents, finishing up all the things we need to close our loan," Riedel said on Tuesday, Jan. 26, during a phone interview with *Irvine Weekly*. "We're hoping to be in the ground probably April-ish – and then open in May 2022."

Despite the fact that construction is still a few months away, Riedel said his days are only getting busier.

"It's actually crazy busy now. We're working on getting the website back up. The way I focus on stuff is like the next hurdle, so I don't really plan two, or three hurdles down the road," Riedel said. "The first step, obviously, is continuing on with the construction drawings so we can go in for permits. We've already submitted a rough grade demolition permit – we need permits to be able to

start the buildings and attractions – it's kind of a miss-mash but everything is intertwined."

As the project moves forward, Riedel said the process has been smooth thus far, adding that getting approval from the Irvine Planning Commission in November was a big step in keeping the construction timeline on track for early 2021.

"I wouldn't say that we're behind. The construction documents have moved more quickly than we thought. It's such a fluid, dynamic situation to tell at this point and time, if we're really behind,"

he said. "There's a bunch of things we had to do. I think getting the planning commission approval in November was really helpful."

For now, the focus for Riedel is on permitting, but he's excited to debut Wild Rivers' long list of attractions.

"We're going to start with four six-person, family raft rides – which is unprecedented, I think, for a new park to have that many," he said.

In terms of rides, in July, Rieder was excited to announce the new Wild Rivers design includes some old favorites from

the original 1986 design.

However, there will be significant upgrades to the look and feel to the new Wild Rivers Water Park.

"We brought back the Bombay Blasters slide, which is an iconic Wild Rivers ride. It's a tube slide that goes underneath the ground. And a ride that will be called 'Switzer,' which was kind of a transitional ride for the little kids, before they start riding the bigger rides."

In September, Wild Rivers broke its social media silence, showing off the new Wild Rivers logo, along with a logo for a new ride called Tortuga.

On Tuesday, Jan. 26, the subject of Wild Rivers Water Park appeared on the Orange County Great Park Board meeting agenda.

Joel Belding, Deputy Director of Planning and Development for the city of Irvine provided a project development progress report for the Wild Rivers project.

During his update, Belding echoed Riedel's comments, adding that FivePoint Holdings is also involved to add an extension to Great Park Blvd. in order to accommodate the increase in traffic that this project will create.

"They've been working on the construction drawings and financing to advance their project, as a part of that FivePoint Communities will be constructing a portion of Great Park Blvd. that extends along the north boundary of their project," Belding said.

Belding also added that Irvine will be working with a parking lot designer to help the construction and landscaping of a 1,200 space parking lot that will be utilized by Wild Rivers and the Orange County Great Park.

"There's a city aspect to that, too. There's a parking lot with about 1,280 parking spaces that will be built adjacent to that, that will provide parking for Wild Rivers when it's in operation, and then supplementary parking for the Great Park when it's not."



For Irvine resident Brooke Cazier, owner of the Flaky Apple Pie Co., a unique, web-based pie shop that specializes in homemade, ready-to-bake pies, the art of pie making has always been in her genetics.

In fact, Irvine's existential pie lady experienced the art and tradition of pie making firsthand, as Cazier's family owned the Huntington Beach Pie Co. for several years.

Given the family lineage of pie making expertise, one would only assume Cazier's Flaky Apple Pie Co. could simply be an inherited slice of her family's metaphorical pie.

To the contrary, however, for Cazier, pie was just dessert.

After pursuing a career in interior design, Cazier explained that while she never expected pie-making to be a way to make a living, she would offer help to her mom at the Huntington Beach Pie Co.

But, when her family's pie company closed in 2002, Cazier says she first began making pies for the community in Irvine, as a way to fundraise for family trips, and even to help pay down her daughter's orthodontist bills, but never saw it as a way to make a living.

"Making pie is a lost art," Cazier admits. "I had never made pie in my life – I would bake at home, but never like a job. I was an interior designer – it was different being on the other side. Once our shop closed, I still was yearning for being at home with my kids, but having a creative outlet."

Cazier explained that her business, the Flaky Apple Pie Co., began to attract attention over the summer, as the COVID-19 pandemic forced non-essential travel restrictions, and the closure of many services in Irvine.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE FLAKY APPLE PIE CO.

THE FLAKY APPLE PIE CO.

IRVINE "PIE LADY" HAS BEEN THERE, DONE THAT – BUT IS BACK FOR SECONDS

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

Having had the company name for a few years, Cazier said the legal process surrounding the business was long and drawn out – finally completing in early 2020, only to be timed with the beginning of the pandemic.

As it turns out, Cazier's frozen, ready-to-bake pies might have come at the perfect time.

"Fast forward to April. I decided to try, and had a huge success – more so than I was expecting, I think, because people

wanted to be home," Cazier said. "I had one lady come and buy six large chicken pot pies – she's like, 'I'm stockpiling!'"

With these closures, Cazier said her role as Irvine's pie lady began to take shape.

Now, with a newly designed website and partnerships with local businesses – including the popular Atomic Creamery – Flaky Apple Pie Co. is on the map.

"We just started a collaboration, over Christmas, with Atomic Creamery, where you can get a pie and two pints of ice cream. We deliver in Orange County and L.A. – and now we're shipping nationwide for Valentine's Day."

While the idea of opening a storefront seems daunting to Cazier, considering her family's history with pie-shop ownership, she still finds herself working in her Costa Mesa-based commissary kitchen space more than five days a week.

"Because my family had a pie shop – been there, done that – and know what it takes, I know that it's a huge commitment, and I don't know if I'm ready and willing to sacrifice that much," Cazier explained in an interview with *Irvine Weekly*. "I'm here like five to six times a week, and when I'm not in the kitchen I'm doing so much behind the scenes. You always have an idea of how much work it's going to take to start a business, then once you're

in it's like, 'What was I thinking?'"

On most days, the Irvine pie lady can be found working inside the Hood Kitchen, a commissary kitchen space in Costa Mesa, where she spends hours constructing edible experiences for her pie-loving patrons.

Another interesting aspect to take note of is the absence of baking in Cazier's pie-making process, something she says is all by design.

"I don't really see myself baking a ton of pies ... it takes away from what I was looking to create, which was also to give people an experience," she said. "We know that so many memories are also passed through smell and I feel, as they're baking their pie, hopefully they're exposed to some of that."

The streets of Irvine are talking, as even some members of the Irvine City Council have expressed their love for the Irvine pie lady's ready-to-bake pies. Anthony Kuo, who always showcases delicious snacks around Irvine on social media, has claimed his love affair with the Flaky Apple Pie Co.'s chicken pot pie with brown gravy.

"She makes these delicious pies and freezes them and gives you the instructions on how to make them at home," Kuo said. "I literally keep a dessert pie in my freezer, and she makes delicious chicken pot pie with brown gravy – so I keep one of each of those in my freezer at all times."

Kuo added that having access to homemade pie has become a perk, considering the impacts the pandemic has had on various services around Irvine, and statewide.

"It's very much, in my mind, a COVID-19 themed food service, because she doesn't have a restaurant."

Storefront or not, Cazier is back for a second serving of family pie shop ownership. As a small business, Cazier explained that she is not expecting to be "rolling in the dough financially" – her commitment to the community is currently Cazier's biggest priority.

"This is it, I'm not doing anything else," Cazier said. "I see a ton of long term potential – it's hard when I have to wear so many hats, but I'm just starting out. I don't have the funds to necessarily constantly hire help out or outsource things."

Nonetheless, considering the dedication to her craft, drive to serve the community, and love for pie, these efforts may very well be enough to solidify Cazier as Irvine's official pie lady.

"I love pie and I love eating pie," she said. "Where do you go to get pies – there's not a lot of places anymore – and good pie at that."





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“If not for Keith’s compassion and superior defense strategy, we might have lost all of our hard-earned retirement savings to a very opportunistic claimant. The stress prior to retaining Keith was nearly unbearable.”

- Jim and Carol Hoffman

Stanley Tucci and Colin Firth star in *Supernova*.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BLEECKER STREET

Since celluloid began threading through projectors, the movie industry has banked on exploiting our love of love stories. That's continued today as digital code translates into sound and light for the purpose of making our hearts swell and tear ducts leak. Over the decades, there's been no shortage of feature films about couples coming together in amusing or stressful circumstances, traversing comedic or dramatic gauntlets and, more often than not, attaining happy endings of one sort or another. And frequently the studios and distributors take the obvious route of releasing such projects on or around Valentine's Day.

Movies about lovers are as de rigueur in mid-February as bouquets of flowers and boxes of chocolates. Director Garry Marshall actually built his 2010 ensemble comedy *Valentine's Day* around the holiday. Perhaps hedging his bets, he also top-loaded it with star power: Julia Roberts, Jennifer Garner, Anne Hathaway, Shirley MacLaine, Bradley Cooper, Jamie Foxx, and a few more big names or talents on the rise. Not that the final product was anything beyond mediocre. But it was released on Feb. 12, two days before Cupid's big blast, and went on to gross over \$215 million. Pretty good numbers for a romantic comedy –

THE SHADES OF LOVE ON SCREEN

SUPERNOVA AND TWO OF US HEADLINE A BEVY OF VALENTINE'S DAY MOVIE RECOMMENDATIONS.

BY MICHAEL SNYDER

especially a tepid one.

People have their favorite romance movies and are known to watch them over and over. For instance, when my sister wants to get a dose of cinematic lovey-dovey, she goes for the classics. Her motion pictures of choice are the elegant 1957 weepy *An Affair to Remember* with Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr and the 1980 sci-fi fantasy *Somewhere in Time* with Christopher Reeve and Jane Seymour. And she has at least one less-heralded go-to in the genre: the sweeping 2008 historical saga *Australia*, starring Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman. At almost three hours in length, this Down Under epic is a bit of a slog and also

suffers from odd shifts in tone, but my sister adores Jackman and Kidman and eagerly watches their affair evolve when she craves a shot of onscreen passion.

These days, you'd expect a market clamoring for the sort of escapism promised by Hollywood tales of love, but the most significant relationship films that are coming out in the general vicinity of Valentine's Day 2021 are two rather dark dramas about older couples in crisis. For all their downbeat aspects, *Supernova* and *Two of Us* address the capacity of love to foster devotion, in line with the familiar marital vow promising steadfastness "in sickness and in health."

NAVIGATING LOVE AND LOSS

Supernova, written and directed by Harry Macqueen, concerns the committed partnership between Sam, a well-known concert pianist played by Colin Firth, and Tusker, an acclaimed author played by Stanley Tucci. These companions of 20 years have been out and proud, and now they're taking a road trip through the British countryside on their way to a special recital by Sam. Rather than a joyful getaway, the journey, including stopovers with friends, is fraught with trepidation because Tusker is grappling with dementia. It doesn't take long to realize that there's a crossroads ahead, and an emotional collision is inevitable. To the actors' credit, they never overplay the situation and still earn our concern. Tucci, in particular, is marvelous as Tusker confronts the possibility of losing so much so soon and worries how it will impact Sam. The depiction of fidelity and the potential for tragedy are palpable and powerful.

Supernova is in theaters and will be available via digital platforms on Feb. 16.

As for the twosome of *Two of Us*, their coupling is a problem in itself. The drama, France's submission for the

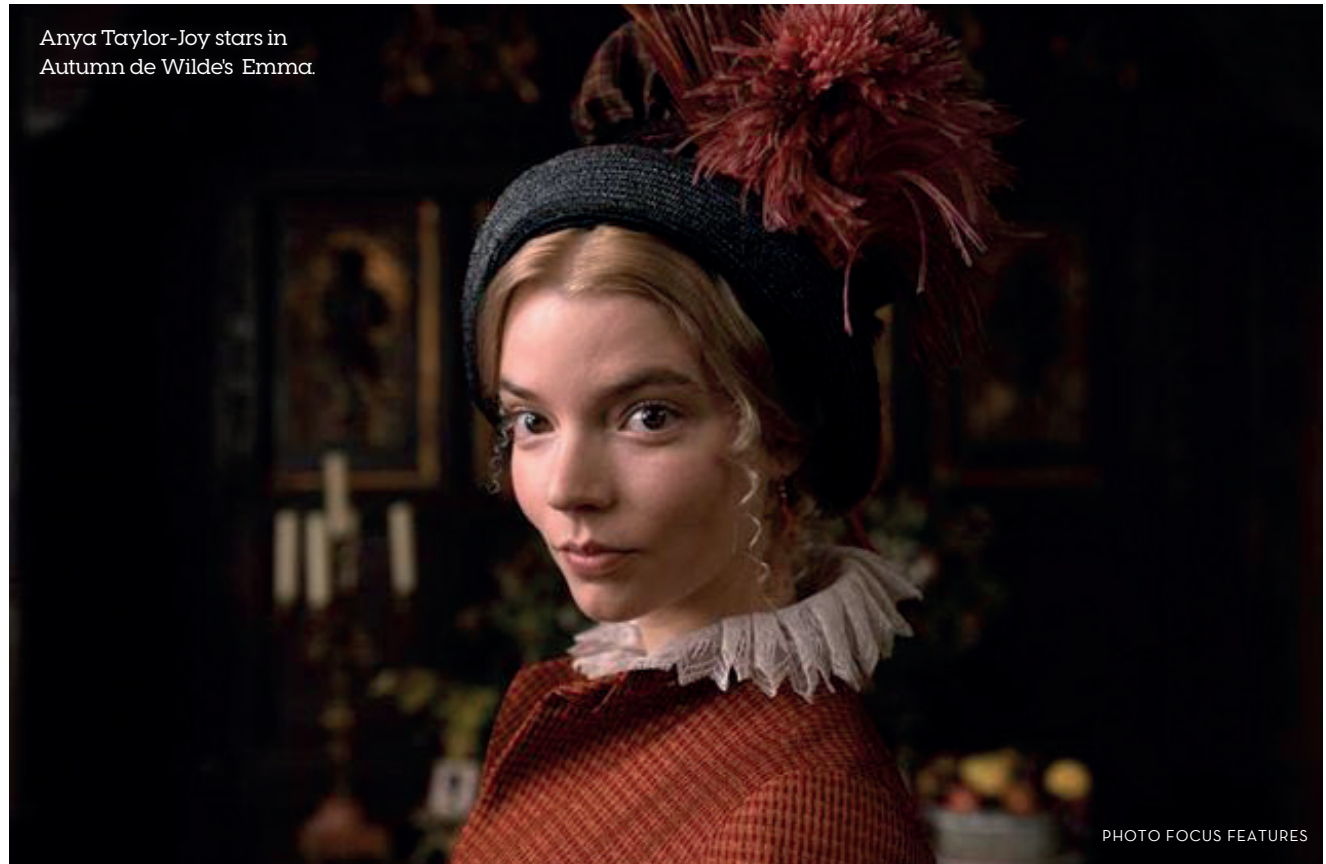
upcoming Academy Awards, finds the clandestine love between Nina (renowned German actress Barbara Sukowa) and Madeleine (Martine Chevallier of the Comédie-Française) threatened by multiple crises. For years, these two women have lived in separate apartments across a hall from one another, but they've been lovers on the down-low the entire time – and careful not to tell the family of the once-married Madeleine. Now retired and longing to live openly, Nina and Madeleine plan to leave France for Rome and move in together, until unforeseen developments force them to dig deep in different ways and somehow salvage their shared future. Neither character is above reproach in the way they react to the challenges they face; Nina is particularly desperate. Nonetheless, Sukowa and Chevallier keep them genuine and sympathetic.

Two of Us will open in theaters and be available digitally on Feb. 5.

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF ROMANCE

Although the mix of sad and sweet provided by *Supernova* and *Two of Us* can be satisfying, you may be seeking a lighter mood in the spirit of Valentine's Day. Consider this pair of recent movies concerning the things we do for love – or what love does to us. **Emma** is the latest screen adaptation of the eponymous 1815 novel by Jane Austen. Even if the material is familiar, director Autumn de Wilde has delivered a fresh, delightful interpretation of Austen's 19th century comedy of manners about a good-looking, well-to-do, and clever young woman whose desire to meddle in the romantic lives of her friends prevents her from realizing there could be an ideal partner for her in close proximity. Anya Taylor-Joy, currently reaping kudos for her performance in the binge-spurring miniseries *The Queen's Gambit*, is adorable as Emma, the perfect blend of sophistication, smugness, and genuine decency. Her supporting cast, including Bill Nighy as her father, Johnny Flynn as the aristocratic boy-next-door, and Mia Goth as the dear friend Emma wishes to assist, are just right.

In a more contemporary vein, **Plus One** tags along with two young, recently single friends, Ben and Alice, who decide to escort one another to the summer's string of weddings because everyone around them is getting married. Their plan is for Ben to be Alice's wingman and vice versa as



Anya Taylor-Joy stars in Autumn de Wilde's *Emma*.

PHOTO FOCUS FEATURES

they each try to hook up with someone new and wonderful. The result is a fine rom-com. The leads are played by a couple of show-biz legacy kids: Jack Quaid, son of actors Dennis Quaid and Meg Ryan, and Maya Erskine, daughter of jazz drummer Peter Erskine. They're both really good, and Maya is a genuine discovery – brash, sometimes profane, yet lovable. *Plus One* may seem like a trifle at first. Still, it has so many honest moments about modern relationships and the waver-ing line between friendship and love that it is, in fact, quite a gem.

VINTAGE LOVE FROM THE VAULTS

As alluded to in this piece, there are many vintage romantic movies that deserve a revisit and are available on cable outlets or via the streaming services with deep libraries. On the classic comedy side, you'll find Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert bickering and falling for one another during a road trip in Frank Capra's adorable 1934 rom-com *It Happened One Night*. How about *The Lady Eve*, the piquant, surprisingly moving 1941 screwball comedy about a female con artist (Barbara Stanwyck) trying to fleece the nerdy heir (Henry Fonda) to a brewery fortune – a masterpiece from the mas-

terful filmmaker Preston Sturges? Also of this wacky ilk: *The Shop Around the Corner* (1940), *Bringing Up Baby* (1938) and *His Girl Friday* (1940).

Legendary tear-jerkers in the manner of *An Affair to Remember* include the 1942 wartime gem *Casablanca* – pure power and passion in a tale of reunited star-crossed lovers Rick (Humphrey Bogart) and Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman) who try to survive treacherous circumstances in the exotic North African city of the title. Along similarly heart-breaking lines: the evergreen *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *A Matter of Life and Death* a.k.a. *Stairway to Heaven* (1946) and *Brief Encounter* (1945).

Roman Holiday, Audrey Hepburn's delightful 1953 coming-out party, is a chaste pleasure wherein she plays a princess who meets a smitten newspaperman (Eddie Albert) and goes among commoners for the first time. The grandiose 1967 adaptation of the best-selling novel *Doctor Zhivago* presents suave Omar Sharif and dewy Julie Christie as its lead lovers amid snowy post-Russian Revolution landscapes. For fantasy fans, Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* is the artist's visionary, dreamlike 1946 take on the *Beauty and the Beast* fable.

MAKING YOUR HEART SING

You can even go the musical route

with the brightly-colored 1964 French bauble *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, starring a young Catherine Deneuve and featuring the bittersweet songs of Michel Legrand. And *West Side Story* – the 1961 movie of the Broadway hit – moves Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* to New York's inner city neighborhoods and updates it with enduring music by Leonard Bernstein and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim.

Great couples and great couplings abound in the studio vaults: Bogie and Bacall in *To Have and Have Not*, Woody Allen and Diane Keaton in *Annie Hall*, Patrick Swayze and Demi Moore in *Ghost*, Richard Gere and Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman*, Jack Lemmon and Shirley MacLaine in *The Apartment*, and Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet in *Titanic*. And if you're feeling particularly randy, the go-to comic couple is Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal in 1989's *When Harry Met Sally*; the orgasm-at-a-deli scene will either quell your erotic impulses or fire you up, even as it makes you laugh.

Michael Snyder is a print and broadcast journalist who covers pop culture on Michael Snyder's Culture Blast, via GABNet.net, Roku, Spotify, and YouTube, and The Mark Thompson Show on KGO radio. You can follow Michael on Twitter: @cultureblaster

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