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NELVIN C. CEPEDA U-T PHOTOS

FLIGHT WORTH SEEING

Aviation fans enjoy Thursday's Blue Angels demonstration over Naval Air Facility El Centro, the winter training location. The Blue Angels did not perform in 2020 due to the pandemic. But the team has a busy schedule this year with an appearance set for September at the MCAS Miramar Air Show.



S.D. ZOO INOCULATES APES AGAINST COVID-19

Orangutans, bonobos — species most similar to humans — receive doses being developed for animals



K.C. ALFRED U-T FILE

Four orangutans were among the great apes at the San Diego Zoo that were vaccinated recently. Zoo officials are hoping to immunize more apes soon.

BY JONATHAN WOSEN

Nine great apes at the San Diego Zoo are the first non-human primates to receive an experimental COVID-19 vaccine, zoo officials said Thursday.

Four orangutans and five bonobos have been vaccinated so far, with the zoo planning to immunize another three bonobos and a gorilla soon. These species, along with chimpanzees, are the closest cousins to humans, placing them at risk of contracting a virus that has spread rapidly from person to person.

Case in point: In mid-January, the Safari Park reported that its troop of eight gorillas developed COVID-19 after exposure to a keeper who had the virus, even though the employee had no symptoms and wore protective equipment. "That made

us realize that our other apes were at risk," said Nadine Lamberski, chief conservation and wildlife health officer for the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance. "We wanted to do our best to protect them from this virus because we don't really know how it's going to impact them."

Many of the zoo's veterinarians and other staffers who work with animals have now been vaccinated against the coronavirus, but Lamberski says that wasn't the case in January.

At the time, she was already in touch with Zoetis, an animal health company once part of Pfizer. The company is developing a vaccine for animals that sparks immunity against the coronavirus by delivering a piece of the surface protein the virus uses to grab onto and infect cells. That's the same approach

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SOME S.D. COUNTY AREAS TO GET EXTRA VACCINES

State equity plan aims to send doses to poorest communities

BY PAUL SISSON

Those living in areas deemed to have some of the poorest access to healthy living conditions in the state, including hundreds of thousands in San Diego County, will have greater access to new doses of coronavirus vaccine due to a new allocation approach formally announced by the state Thursday.

In addition to percentages already set aside for teachers, law enforcement and childcare workers, the state will reserve 40 percent of its incoming vaccine supply for places listed in the bottom 25 percent of California's Healthy Places Index.

The set of statewide statistics attempts to identify, by ZIP code, which places are most and least conducive to good health and well-being, taking into account two dozen factors including educational attainment, employment, home ownership, household overcrowding, air quality and even the number of nearby supermarkets.

Those in the bottom quarter, said Dr. Mark Ghaly, California's secretary of health and human services, have suffered 40 percent of cases and deaths during the

SEE VACCINES • A6

SETTLEMENT CLEARS PATH FOR SPORTS TO RESUME

COVID tests will be required for youth, high school athletes

BY JOHN MAFFEI

All youth and high school sports in California, including those played indoors, will be able to resume when a county reaches an adjusted COVID-19 case rate of 14 or lower per 100,000, under terms of a lawsuit settlement announced Thursday morning.

High-contact outdoor sports such as football and water polo and all indoor sports will be subject to testing, with schools held to the same testing standards as college teams.

Counties that reach fewer than 7 coronavirus cases per 100,000 will not have to test. San Diego County's current case rate is 10.8 per 100,000. Just 20 of the state's 58 counties had case rates under 7 this week.

The lawsuit was filed last month in San Diego Superior Court by Nicholas Gardinera and Cameron Woolsey, football players from Scripps Ranch High and Mission Hills High, against the county of San Diego, the California De-

SEE SPORTS • A6

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER CRITICIZED FOR LINKING REOPENING TO RACIAL INEQUITY

Recall threatened after La Mesa-Spring Valley meeting comments

BY KRISTEN TAKETA

A school board member's recent comments comparing school reopening efforts with racism has ignited a political firestorm in San Diego County and highlighted racial tensions underlying the school reopening debate.

La Mesa-Spring Valley School Board Vice President Chardá Bell-Fontenot, the only Black member of the five-person board, said during a recent meeting that forcing staff to come back to school before the district could ensure they would be vaccinated is akin to White supremacy and slavery.

Since then she has become the subject of harassment and racist

death threats, said her attorney, Cory Briggs. He said Bell-Fontenot has filed a claim with the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District alleging that someone at the district leaked some of her confidential information, which is being used to harass her.

The district said in a statement it is reviewing her claim "but has no knowledge of any such legal violations at this time."

Meanwhile, Reform California, a political group backing a recall effort targeting Gov. Gavin Newsom, also is behind an effort to recall Bell-Fontenot because she has opposed setting a date for reopening schools in her district and because of her comments.

Carl DeMaio, founder of Reform California, held a press conference Thursday announcing the group is filing paperwork next week to begin the recall effort. "School board member Bell-

Fontenot not only voted to continue to inflict harm on our children by keeping La Mesa-Spring Valley schools closed, but her use of false, reckless and racially divisive smears to attack parents and other community members that support school reopening has created a hostile work environment in the district," DeMaio said.

About 20 people attended the recall press conference, held in front of the school district headquarters. Prior to that more than 4,400 people had signed a petition calling for Bell-Fontenot's resignation.

The La Mesa-Spring Valley district serves more than 11,000 students, three out of five of whom are socioeconomically disadvantaged. About half of its students are Hispanic or Latino, while a little more than a quarter are White and about 9 percent are African American.

SEE RACIAL • A7

PASSED OVER THREE TIMES BY MARINE CORPS, A BLACK COLONEL IS BEING PROMOTED

If confirmed by Senate, Henderson may have shot at highest ranks

BY HELENE COOPER

WASHINGTON

The Marine Corps is promoting Col. Anthony Henderson, a combat-tested Iraq and Afghanistan veteran, to brigadier general, a move that cracks the doorway for the service to potentially promote an African American to its most senior ranks.

The Marine Corps, which had passed over Henderson for four years, has placed him on a highly selective list of nine colonels to be granted a coveted one star that denotes general rank status — brigadier general. The list, which

was signed by President Joe Biden, arrived Wednesday evening at the Senate Armed Services Committee to start the required confirmation process, according to the committee's website.



Col. Anthony Henderson

Normally, such promotions would not garner much attention. But Henderson is a Black man with combat command experience in a service — the Marines — that has never, in its 245-year history, had a four-star officer who was not a White man. And even the one-, two- and three-star Marine Corps officer positions are predominantly White and male — particularly

SEE MARINES • A8



WEEKEND

SHE'S A FIGHTER

San Diego's Kelly Marie Tran battles for a better world as Disney's first Southeast Asian princess. E1

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