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# YEAR *in* REVIEW

Laguna Beach Magazine takes a look back at 2012—the good, the bad and the funny.

*By Debbie Lavdas*

DISTILLING A YEAR IN LAGUNA BEACH DOWN TO A FEW PAGES IN A MAGAZINE IS MUCH LIKE choosing just one Rooftop mojito on a cocktail menu of many worthy choices. The stories around town are abundant, the events are plentiful and the people are characters. That said, we took a broad look at life in Laguna Beach, and by broad, we mean everything from love and money, to crime stats and marine safety, to new haunts and mountain lions. The year was chock-full of goodwill and hard work, as well as that which we might not be so proud to admit. The temperatures were up (ridiculously up), equity looks to be on the rise and plastic bags are on their way out. From the monumental to the incidental, here's a review of 2012. Raise your mojito, mai tai, bloody mary or beer, and enjoy this Laguna Beach retrospective.



Clockwise: More than 250 couples married at Tivoli Terrace and Tivoli; home equity is on the rise (pictured: a mansion on Hill Street); beach construction

JERI KOEGEL, JODY TIONGCO

## LOVE IN LAGUNA

Tivoli Terrace and Tivoli Too! set a benchmark in the wedding scene by together marrying more than 250 new couples in 2012. "While we did have our share of intoxicated bridegrooms/brides, we also had four couples that came back for a renewal of vows—three of whom were married here 35, 25 and 10 years ago," says business manager Eric Wolocatiuk. The more, the marrier.

## EQUITY'S ON THE RISE

Through September 2012, there were more closed sales, higher sold prices and a very healthy number of homes in escrow, based on the MLS. "One of the big stories of the year is that the

really amazing, and high-priced, oceanfront mansions are coming on the market," says Donna Pfanner of Coldwell Banker. "Owners have held back on listing these homes until a 'better market.' My sense is that they are starting to release these properties as they see the market conditions finally increasing on the high end." Homes on the market in Laguna Beach include those for \$38.5 million on the MLS, and Donna shares news of a property that is a "pocket listing" private sale asking for \$65 million. "This follows our highest sale of the year for \$20 million. We haven't seen these big numbers in years, as well as this much inventory in Laguna Beach above \$20 million."

## BIG PICTURE FINANCE

"It's been a year of many improvements, and the city's financial outlook is encouraging," says Assistant City Manager Christa Johnson. "The city council's aggressive efforts to control spending over the last several years coupled with modest economic growth have resulted in a balanced budget for fiscal year 2012 – 2013."

The city completed (under the \$3.7 million budget) the replacement of the 80-year-old Main Beach sewer lift station, which pumps 250,000 gallons of sewage each day—forgive the mental picture. The replacement is part of a larger, \$5.5 million construction project that includes

## 2012 CLOSED SALES

Laguna Beach closed sales for 2012 (Jan. 1 to Sept. 27):  
311 (last year, same period: 229)

Up to \$1 million:  
127 (2011: 110)

\$1 million to \$2 million:  
116 (2011: 74)

\$2 million to \$3 million:  
36 (2011: 24)

\$3 million to \$15 million:  
30 (2011: 21)

Over \$15 million: 2 (2011: None)

Source: MLS

Source: Realtor Donna Pfanner of Coldwell Banker Previews Int'l, Laguna Beach, per MLS

## LABOR DAY WEEKEND 2012

RESCUES:	493
PREVENTATIVE ACTIONS:	9,258
MEDICAL AIDS:	140
ECOLOGICAL ENFORCEMENTS:	540

## TOTAL 2012 NUMBERS TO DATE (ESTIMATE)

RESCUES:	3,400
PREVENTATIVE ACTIONS:	220,000
CITY ORDINANCE	
ENFORCEMENTS:	86,000
MEDICAL AIDS:	5,600



the building of a new lifeguard headquarters and public restroom facility at Main Beach. Projected completion for the project is December 2013. Construction is also wrapping up on an updated Main Beach playground (a \$250,000 budget), which is modeled after the Main Beach lifeguard tower.

### COPS, ROBBERS AND MOUNTAIN LIONS

What happens in Laguna, stays in Laguna—or maybe it should. While crime levels in Laguna Beach were about the same as last year's, there were some crazy calls and crimes in 2012. Laguna Beach police Lt. Jason Kravetz shared some of the activity—from Superman to bomb squads.

**Super Freaky:** In August near Hill Street, two people were concerned about a subject in a vehicle heard moaning the night before and suspected he was

deceased. A sergeant investigated and saw the man was soaking wet from sweat, pale and couldn't stand. The guy had taken a "Superman" form of Viagra and placed a 2-inch diameter metal ring on his, uh, "little Superman" three days before. The fire department explained to him that the ring could do permanent damage. Faster than a speeding bullet, a tube of lubricant solved it all, and the man drove himself to the hospital.

**Mountain Lion on the Loose:** In July, a woman reported seeing a large mountain lion sleeping on her neighbor's patio. After a couple of minutes on the phone with police, she saw her neighbors drive up and said she had to go warn them. The police had officers and animal control responding. It turns out that it was a stuffed animal.

**Bombs Away?** This summer, officers responded to a call near

Glenneyre Street for a possible explosive device found in a garage, where the previous resident was a World War II veteran. A bomb squad arrived with the necessary equipment to render the device safe.

**Check It:** At this fall's AIDS Services Foundation Orange County Red Ball II event at the Festival of Arts, someone purchased a \$5,000 table and a silent auction item for \$2,480, and then bid \$9,000 (and won) on a live auction prize of a New York trip. He paid for everything with a check. And—you guessed it—the check didn't clear.

### BUSY AT THE BEACH

While you may have been filling your Instagram feed with Main Beach antics, the city's lifeguards were in rescue mode. "Labor Day weekend, we were the busiest in Orange County with rescues," says Marine Safety Captain Tom Trager.

"The whole year was busy year for the Department of Marine Safety. We had summer-like crowds through October, warm water and large surf."

### DAY IN THE LIFE

Leave it to a Lagunatic to sum up 2012 with this: "The other day I was driving to [No Square] Theatre, and I saw a guy get off the bus, stop, then pull out his iPhone and take a picture of Cindy (the city's self-appointed greeter)," says Bree Burgess Rosen, vice president and founding artistic director of No Square Theatre. "She was very cooperative and posed for all his shots. And all I thought was how he was going to go home and tell his family about all the crazy people that live in Laguna Beach."

### SEA LION SAVES

The Pacific Marine Mammal Center is fully recovered from the



Left to right:  
Diver rescued by  
Laguna Beach  
lifeguards;  
Yappy Hour;  
McMurray  
family; PMMC  
sea lion rescue;  
Cindy, the city's  
self-appointed  
greeter

devastating flood of 2011. "Pacific Marine Mammal Center is better than ever," says Michele Hunter, PMMC director of animal care. "[This year] was a slower year for marine life rescue. Our average rescues are between 200 and 250 animals a year. This year, the year-to-date number is 100."

The center responded to three whale entanglement rescue calls during March and April; two of the three rescues were successful. One standout sea lion rescue included Russell, a sea lion in desperate need of help on a rainy St Patrick's Day. In bad shape and barely breathing, PMMC's Wendy Leeds and Meredith Rivin rushed to warm the ice-cold Russell. Russell was a fighter and was released after rehab.

#### GATHERING OF GOODWILL

The McMurray family of the local Penguin Cafe was hit by tragedy this year when their

11-year-old son William was diagnosed with an inoperable and fast-growing brain tumor. The Laguna Beach community united to take care of one of its own, with hand-delivered meals, get-well cards and fundraisers. William has had roller coaster weeks and radiation treatments, as well as grinning good times at Angels baseball games.

#### TOURIST TIDBITS

The Laguna Beach Travel Info Mobile App made its debut this year as the official insider's guide to the city and later took home a silver Magellan Award for Best Mobile App for a destination. The app, created by the Laguna Beach Visitors & Conference Bureau, pulled more than 5,000 downloads in the first eight weeks, making it the No. 1 destination app nationally. Other news? Hotel bookings in 2012 surpassed those in 2011, The Inn at Laguna Beach

and The Laguna Riviera enjoyed hotel beautifications in town, and Umami Burger also opened.

#### DOGGONE 2012

It was a fine year for the dogs of Laguna Beach. "It's been fantastic," shares Deanne French, director of public relations at The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna-Niguel. The resort's Yappy Hour raised \$10,000 for the Laguna Beach Animal Shelter. Regulars and new faces came out in support, the annual Howl-O-Ween event brought stiff competition, and Raya's Chef de Cuisine Marissa Gerlach had to double the amount of bacon libations for pups due to popularity.

The Laguna Beach Pet Parade & Chili Cook-Off was also a pup-pleaser at Tivoli Too in September. Organized by the Laguna Board of Realtors and Affiliates, it raised more than \$15,000 with proceeds benefiting Laguna Beach Animal

#### CRIME STATS (TO DATE)

HOMICIDES:	1
RAPES:	6
ROBBERIES:	8
BURGLARIES:	115
ASSAULTS:	183
ARSONS:	4
LARCENIES:	364
AUTO THEFTS:	22
DRUG OFFENSES:	331
FRAUDS:	79
DRUNK DRIVING ARRESTS:	542
TOTAL ARRESTS:	1,912
CALLS FOR SERVICE:	39,208
TRAFFIC STOPS:	9,713
ACCIDENT REPORTS:	502
POLICE REPORTS:	4,440

Shelter, as well as Pacific Marine Mammal Center, the Blue Bell Foundation for Cats and Animal Crackers. The Best Chili Cook-off Recipe winner was Union Bank, Laguna Beach branch. Pooches also got awards in categories from most handsome to best costume.

Then, of course, there were the RUFF Easter and Thanksgiving events at Tivoli Too! And Tivoli Terrace—representing more successful fundraisers for animals.

Finally, French 75 went to the dogs with their Dog Days of Summer, which included a special puppy prix-fixe menu and human happy hour specials with proceeds benefiting Laguna Beach Animal Shelter.

#### TEENS BY THE NUMBERS

The 2012 film, “Behind the Orange Curtain” documented teen drug abuse in Orange County, and the 2012 Healthy Kids Survey brought those realities to Laguna doorsteps. Although fewer seventh and ninth graders in Laguna Beach schools reported alcohol and marijuana use this year than in 2010, 48 percent of 11th graders continue to report having drank alcohol one or more times and 25 percent smoked pot one or more times. In addition, 18 percent of 11th graders reported taking one or more prescription painkillers (19 percent in 2010), and 6 percent of ninth graders reported taking painkillers (16 percent in 2010).

A new “social host ordinance” was proposed this year, which will hold adults responsible for teen drinking in their homes. The City Council unanimously approved the ordinance on Nov. 13, but before taking effect, it will return to the council for a second reading and vote on Dec. 4.

On a separate topic, it's worth sharing that Laguna Beach youth were found to be among the fittest



Clockwise, top: Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Laguna Dance Festival; artist Michael Alten at the Plein Air Painting Invitational; Sawdust Festival

COURTESY OF LPAPA

in a study released in June by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and the California Center for Public Health Advocacy. The study reported on fifth, seventh and ninth graders, and found that Laguna Beach had the lowest percentage of obese kids in Orange County, at 14.3 percent.

#### ALL THE FESTIVITIES

It was a festive year of Sawdust artistry, wine and food, plein air painting and dance. “In March, the first Laguna Beach Uncorked! event was held at the Festival of

Arts grounds. [More than] 800 attended the Laguna Beach a la Carte event—a four-day wine and food experience,” says Judy Bijlani, president and CEO of the Laguna Beach Visitors & Conference Bureau.

Attendance was up at the Sawdust Art Festival—serving more than 200,000 guests. Art-A-Fair attendance was up 7 percent over 2011. And Festival of Arts welcomed approximately 222,000 attendees. Additionally, Laguna Dance Festival presented nationally known dance companies

to sold-out houses. And finally, the 14th Annual Laguna Beach Plein Air Painting Invitational featured 40 of the nation's top plein air landscape painters. Laguna Beach, indeed, lived up to its artistic reputation in 2012.

#### THAT'S A WRAP

2012 has indeed been a year of the good, the bad and the funny for Laguna Beach. That said, let's raise a cup of kindness yet (or your favorite Rooftop libation) for auld lang syne. We'll see you in 2013, Laguna Beach friends. LBM