



VALLEY LIFE: MURAL PAINTING STUDENTS PAINT MURAL TO SUPPORT THE UNDOCUMENTED COMMUNITY.



SPORTS: WOMEN'S SOCCER LADY MONARCHS SOCCER TEAM NOTCHES ITS FIRST WIN OF THE SEASON.

Unity Center not deterred by vandals

Flag torn down but the fabric of Valley College's community remains strong.

BY KENYA HARRIS
STAFF WRITER

With four pride flags at the ready The Rainbow Pride Center is prepared to withstand future hate crime attacks.

Over the summer, vandals ripped the LGBTQIA+ Pride flag off its post in front of the Unity Center. The Rainbow Pride Center reported the act of vandalism and the destroyed flag was replaced within two days.

“Up until that point, I had felt this was a welcoming campus. In the back of my mind, I still knew some people would go out of their way to do something like that,”

- Rainbow Pride Center Counselor and Coordinator Natalie Guerrero.



ASTRID CORTEZ | VALLEY STAR

Pride: Unity Center employee Alej Contreras stands in front of the building where vandals tore down the Pride flag over the summer. The campus replaced the flag in a show of support and there are four more Pride flags at the ready.

“Up until that point, I had felt this was a welcoming campus,” said Rainbow Pride Center counselor Natalie Guerrero. “In the back of my mind, I still knew some people would go out of their way to do something like that.”

The crime was discovered on the morning of Aug. 2 by the center's student equity secretary and was reported to the sheriff. In the days after the vandalism, mea-

sures were taken to ensure the safety of the LGBTQIA+ community on campus.

“At the beginning, I felt shocked,” said center employee Alej Contreras. “You didn't expect it. It reminds me to be careful about my surroundings.”

An emailed statement was sent out to the campus community from President Barry Gribbons condemning the

attack and reaffirming Valley's “undeterred support for our LGBTQIA+ community.”

Crimes against the queer community have been on the rise in the United States. The Anti-Defamation League and GLAAD recorded 356 anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes between June 2022 to April 2023. That is more than double the number of incidents recorded within the same time period in 2020.

“We want our students to know that we are actively taking steps to make our campus a safe place,” said Guerrero.

Guerrero added that part of the work in making the campus safe is outreach at community events and education. Holding events like student panels where people can come together regardless of their identity and engage with the community on campus is an important part of building sup-

port for those who need it most.

“And so it's a daily choice and part of our activism and social justice that we have to keep moving forward,” said Guerrero, who keeps the extra pride flags in a drawer at the center. “Our community is very strong, especially with the hate crimes that sometimes happen in our country... our students feel like it's scary, but we cannot go into hiding.”

Arrests made on campus

MILAN RAFAELOV
MAXINE IBRAHIM

The LAPD arrested three suspects in the Valley College parking structure Tuesday and found a loaded firearm in their vehicle.

“We got a call from LAPD dispatch saying there was an off-campus assault, road-rage incident,” said Deputy Jorge. “The witness saw a white truck, gave the license plate and saw [the car] turn on the street here on Ethel [Avenue], possibly coming to Valley.”

Valley sheriffs identified the vehicle inside the campus parking structure and detained the suspects.

“One of our officers was able to locate a vehicle that looked similar to it, in the parking structure through cameras,” said Jorge. “The deputies and officers went, verified the license plate, and conducted a traffic stop. We detained them until the LAPD arrived.”

A handful of officers searched the white pickup truck while the perpetrators sat in the back of a police cruiser, in handcuffs. Officers escorted a number of students to their vehicles as they were leaving their afternoon class. A loaded firearm was confiscated and at 11:23 a.m., a tow truck hauled the vehicle away.

“I think the move was maybe to go to the college because the individual was trying to escape from the victim in this incident,” said Detective Cheun from the Van Nuys Police Department.

Valley sheriffs have since increased patrols and an email sent out to students, giving assurances that there was no further threat to the campus.

FAFSA gets a facelift

BY MAXINE IBRAHIM
STAFF WRITER

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form is getting a major makeover and will be available in December instead of October for the 2024-2025 award year. Changes to the form include reducing the number of questions required to answer and updating the formula used to calculate aid to expand eligibility for key student populations.

The new formula makes modifications to the definition of family that will determine financial aid by student/parent tax returns and calculates aid using tax data directly from the IRS. FAFSA will also expand eligibility for the Federal Pell Grant according to family size and federal poverty level.

With the new FAFSA, students will have fewer questions to answer, streamlining the application process by reducing the original 108 questions to approximately 36. However, FAFSA's Student Aid Index (SAI) will replace the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) which removes any sibling affiliation or sibling discount. Instead Federal Pell Grants are now determined by separate eligibility criteria.

Students and families are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the updated policy in accordance with their own circumstances. Until then, applicants can make Federal Student Aid ID usernames and passwords before the December opening date. Due to the changes and later than usual release of the form California has pushed their FAFSA application deadline to April 2024.

Valley College sees double digit growth

Student enrollment increased 13 percent for the fall semester.

BY STAR EISENBERG
ONLINE EDITOR

California colleges saw record declines during the pandemic. However, Valley College is seeing a double-digit bolster in student enrollment with first-time students up 34 percent and returning students up 29 percent. Campus officials credit a large part of the uptick to outreach, financial aid, marketing, and dual enrollment.

“We're really intentional about making sure that students not only enroll but complete the classes successfully,” said Valley College President Barry Gribbons. “We have been working with LAUSD and growing dual enrollment in a really robust way.”

Dual enrollment provides high school students with the opportunity to take college courses that are taught by college instructors. Valley increased the number of dual enrollment classes at select high schools, which means that more students are currently enrolled.

“Former dual enrollment students have shared with me that this program prepared them mentally for the juggle of work, school and friendships that tend to occur in college,” said Dylan Altman, adjunct professor of English and dual enrollment instructor.

Valley spent about \$1.1 million on advertising this year. Over the past two years, Valley amped up local advertising and launched a rebrand. Advertisements can be spotted on Metro buses and billboards in the area, social media platforms and Google keywords. Valley also actively email-nudges students reminding them to enroll.



MARCUS THOMAS | VALLEY STAR

Fest: A high number of students at College Fest, an annual event with many university representatives and programs.

“Having that big increase in new students is a really positive foreshadowing of next semester and next year, and that's heartening,” said Gribbons.

The impact of enrollment growth can be felt across Valley's academic departments. New degrees are being offered, existing programs are expanding and more faculty positions have been added.

“Valley's student enrollment increases have been fantastic for our Media Arts department,” said Jason Beaton,

Professor of Media Arts and Broadcasting. “We recently were given the opportunity to hire three new full-time professors in Broadcasting, Cinema and Photography. Broadcasting also now has a fully-online AA degree with all classes transferable to a UC and CSU.”

Valley College has three strategic goals: access, equity and success. President Gribbons stated that he wants to make sure that young adults from all of our local communities have access to higher education, that students are performing

at a high level, and that Valley has one of the highest completion rates in the state.

“The probability of somebody going to college should not be dependent on what zip code they come from,” said Gribbons. “Everyone should have equal access, and we're working hard to make sure that happens.”

These features and more can be found in full @ www.thevalleystarnews.com



VIOLETT DEJEAN | VALLEY STAR

MURAL- Monarchs come together to create a mural with many bright colors. The event was hosted by ASU, the Dream Resource Center and the Rising Monarch Club.

Undocumented Unapologetic Unafraid

Students united through art while raising awareness for those undocumented.

JASMINE ALEJANDRE
VALLEY LIFE EDITOR

For Undocumented Student Action Week, faculty and student leaders gathered to advocate for those undocumented students who are part of the Valley college community. ASU, the Dream Resource Center, and the Rising Monarch Club created an event and space to support undocumented community members on campus with mural making.

Gianella Urtecho, ASU's fine arts commissioner, was the student who thought of and planned the mural project.

"Undocumented people are underrepresented and it's important to raise awareness and represent their rights," said Urtecho. "It's important for my community and my friends who are undocumented."

Undocumented Student Action Week is from Oct. 16 - 20, and its pur-

pose is to inform colleges and their attendees about the support available for undocumented students and faculty.

Along with Javier Carbajal-Ramos, the Dream Resource Center counselor, Urtecho came up with ideas of what the mural would consist of. She thought of drawing the Statue of Liberty because to her it represents freedom. Ramos thought of the slogans: "Undocumented Unapologetic Unafraid" and "Education For All".

Alongside of Alej Contreras, president of the Rising Monarch Club, and the club's secretary, Evelyn Sambrano, each outlined the final design of the mural.

"It's important to outline the connections we have as a community for

"It's important for my community and my friends who are undocumented"
- Gianella Urtecho, ASU fine arts commissioner

undocumented students," said Carbajal-Ramos. "It means a lot that people are coming together to support."

At the event, students could choose from many paint colors and brushes. The mural was outlined on a tarp on the floor so it was more accessible to all participants. The drawing's outline consisted of the Statue of Liberty with many butterflies around her. There were also fists drawn to represent fighting for rights and power. There was music by different Latin artists

playing for students to listen to as they painted and lunch was provided by ASU. The mural will be displayed next

week outside of the Unity Center during Action Week. The Unity Center will also be hosting events for this important week, including a self defense workshop and a financial aid workshop.

"This event was cool and I really liked the music," said Yao An Lin, English major. "I'm not undocumented but I'm half Chinese and half Latino, so I stand with my brothers and sisters."

Urtecho says this topic matters to her personally because she is from Peru but moved to the U.S. due to the political crises experienced in her home country.

"I hope people understand that being an undocumented student is not something you need to be ashamed of. Most of us are first generation and it's something that we need to embrace," said Urtecho. "You're still here and you're still fighting for your educational rights and your future. I want people to take that home and know that in Valley, they have a sense of community."

CAMPUS HEALTH

Raising hopes and moods with BrandElsa

The Rainbow Pride Center hosts a stilt-walking leader.

KENYA HARRIS
OPINION EDITOR

BrandElsa Pereira A nonbinary stilt-walking performer and motivational speaker ran a free mental health workshop to empower and foster hope among queer students. The Rainbow Pride Center hosted the workshop and provided food and drinks for attendees during the event inside the Unity Center.

Pereira began the workshop with a dance performance to Beyonce's "Cozy" followed by a breathing exercise and an icebreaker activity.

Elsa encouraged shy attendees to join in on the conversation. "Showing up as your true self is brave," said Elsa.

As a nonbinary performer, BrandElsa has faced scrutiny from

people about how they should fit into the gender binary. Although Brand came out at 17, not everyone in their family was okay with that.

"My mother's world was shattered," said Elsa.

Pereira first began performing in 2008, as a theater arts major. They learned stilt-walking and performed over several years as a cast member for both Disney

parks and the Sesame Workshop. Their costume and stilt-walking has evolved into a motivational performance over the pandemic. "I found a group of people who showed me it's okay to be myself and

create my own expectations," says Elsa. Pereira took a moment to purposefully stumble on their stilts and used that to teach students that getting up from a fall is like getting back up again in life: the fall may be scary, but it does not have to be the defining moment.

"Embrace risk, conquer fear, and step onto the stilts of life," Brand said. They emphasized the importance of building community and connections to remind students of their strengths and then touched on how control and choice can affect mental health. Brand closed the presentation with their six pillars

"It's okay not to be okay, but understand that there are people around you to lift you up."
- BrandElsa

of resilience: growth mindset, emotional intelligence, community connections, self-expression, embodiment, and choice/control. "It's okay not to be okay, but understand that there are people around you ready to lift you up. You just have to look for them," said Brand. After the applause, students flooded Brand with appreciation following the end of the presentation. "This event was the best part of my day. It was inspirational to see someone stepping out of the box and to be so confident. That energy rubbed off on everyone in the room. We're very lucky to have seen this today," said business major Nicole Shadi.

American Red Cross on campus

The American Red Cross blood drive took place on Sept. 21 giving students from all over campus a chance to save lives.

"Each bag of blood can help three people," said Brittany Ductoc, a registered nurse who works for the Red Cross. "Every person donates one unit of blood, one pint of blood, and that can be separated into the three components: the red blood cells, the plasma, and the platelets. That's three different people that it can help."

If someone would like to make a donation of their blood they must be aware of the qualifying factors. To qualify as a donor, participants must weigh over 110 pounds and be at least 5 feet and one inch tall for males and 5 feet and 5 inches for female donors. They must also prepare to provide a list of their current medications and medical conditions. This is done to ensure the safety of people donating blood as some patients may experience fainting or fatigue after which can be dangerous to those with certain conditions like anemia.

Participants can use a RapidPass to answer a questionnaire before they donate their blood. After that donors may wait outside and then will be given snacks and water until a spot in the American Red Cross bus becomes open for the donation process.

"The advice I would give to people is to not be afraid about the needles because I know that's mainly what the people are scared about," said nursing major Miribella Ambrosio. "Just simply breathe, think about all the people you are helping, the lives you are saving."

Students who gave blood said they didn't mind the process, and some even found it helpful.

"They actually said it's good for your body, it's like maintenance, like an oil change for yourself," said first semester student Brooke Zadra. "It helps so many people; for like 30 minutes total of your life, and you could save someone."

-Morgan Bertsch, Staff Writer

Karaoke returns for more hits

For students who did not get a chance to showcase their singing skills the first time around, ASU will host "Karaoke Night 2" on Oct. 12. The event runs from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. and the ASU will be serving pizza.

"Students were asking for another one," said ASU president Chris Robles-Garay, who added that around "20 to 30 students attended the first event."

This marks the fourth event this month for the ASU as they hosted an open volleyball game for students to destress as a part of Monarch Day.

The event, which took place at the North Mall on Oct. 3, gave students a chance to take a break in between classes with ASU supplying music and snacks.

The Monarch Day was inspired by similar events organized on campuses, like Berkeley, USC and UCLA.

"Why not do that in community college too," said ASU commissioner student life Julian Serrano, who came up with this idea.

ASU most recently also hosted their Noche de Fiesta and the Mural Painting Day.

-Maia Richaud, Staff Writer



ANDREW GONZALEZ | VALLEY STAR

MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER BRANDELSA PEREIRA GIVES A SPEECH WHILE STANDING ON STILTS AT THE MOSAIC CENTER ON THURSDAY.

CAMPUS PRIDE

Valley supports LGBTQ+ students

Unity Center will not wave the white flag, have four Pride flags at the ready.

ASHER MILES
OPINIONS EDITOR

The recent vandalism of the LGBTQ+ Pride flag at Valley College is not merely the result of the recent stagnation in acceptance of the community, but a symptom of a national growing repudiation of the rainbow coalition.

National proliferation of anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment coupled with an increase of hate crimes towards individuals questioning their gender identity has found its way to Valley College. What else can Valley expect after the national rise of misinformation on what it means to be trans, coupled with hysterics of the community grooming children?

"I was honestly shocked and it scared me," said registration worker Alej Contreras. "We know how society is and even though we are in 2023, it reminds me that I need to be careful about my surroundings. I don't feel as comfortable as before."

The truth is that the fight for LGBTQ+ and acceptance is not over and the tearing down of the Pride flag over the summer is symbolic of that.

The epitome of shallow logic is assuming that the mere presence of LGBTQ+ characters on television and the extension of marriage rights implies that all is well with how the community is treated. There is more to acceptance than what meets the eye.

During the 2020-21 school year, 68 percent of LGBTQ+ students reported facing a hostile school environment, as reported

by the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN). This was exacerbated by reduced social and instructional support due to the hybrid nature of online and in-person instruction.

"This is an important symbol of the campus in general, and the Unity Center in particular, being a safe space for members of our community that sometimes are our most vulnerable," stated President Gribbons in an email.

In confronting the challenges of a hostile school environment, the proliferation of grooming claims, and constant misinformation targeting the trans community, the LGBTQ+ community has now found itself engaged in a new battle. The desecration of Valley's Pride flag is symbolic of the new fight in a post Marriage Equality USA.

Let's be clear: incremental progress forward does not equate to full-blown liberation. This is akin to the misguided belief that racism ended in 1968 or that anti-Semitism vanished because the Holocaust is not recurring. The discourse must be elevated.

However, Valley's LGBTQ+ community refuses to back down without a fight.

"If someone pulls your flag down, you put one right back up," said coordinator/counselor of the Rainbow Pride Center Natalie Guerrero. "We have four more flags. We are here to stay."



ASTRID CORTEZ | VALLEY STAR
VANDALISM- A Pride Flag was torn by vandals from the front of the Unity Center back in August, but four more still remain.



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GOT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?

Letters to the editor can be submitted online at www.thevalleystarnews.com. Letters must be limited to 300 words and may be edited for content. Full name and contact information must be supplied in order for letters to be printed.

Writers triumph

Hollywood's WGA finally achieves a deal.

ASHER MILES
OPINIONS EDITOR

The conclusion of the five-month WGA strike serves as a poignant reminder of the significance of the art of collective bargaining and unionization.

As Tinseltown's second-longest writers' strike comes to a close, the big wigs in major media conglomerates have acquiesced and scurried back to the negotiating table.

The new writers' agreement features robust restrictions on AI usage, success-based residuals, assurance of writers' retention throughout productions, and script fees for staff writers.

While corporations repeatedly belt out the same old tune about cost concerns, sluggish decision-making and the supposed risk of losing their competitive edge as reasons to steer clear of unions, let's not forget: solidarity among workers from various sectors remains essential.

Despite the fairytale notion spun by Warner Bros. Discovery's CEO, David Zaslav, about "A love of working" bringing back striking workers, the reality is that love doesn't pay the bills.

"There's a level of expectation that they have, that is just not realistic," said the business executive with a \$690 million net worth.

According to him, the worker's expectations are just a tad too high and adding to the drama the entertainment business is already facing. Eye-roll, anyone?

More importantly, the new three-year contract achieved by the WGA will hasten the end of SAG-AFTRA's walk-out. In fact, 99 percent of WGA members voted in support of the contract, ratifying it on Monday. The terms of the agreement will be from Sept. 5, 2023 to May 1, 2026.

Nevertheless, timing holds significance now. Boo Hoo Drew is grappling to find writers for her show after she crossed the picket line 10 days too early and all three of her writers refused to return.

Workers across all sectors are taking a stand, demanding their rights through strikes. The era of corporations toying with people is officially on its way out.

Goodbye to affordability

Cal State universities put budget woes on burdened students.

KENYA HARRIS
OPINIONS EDITOR

The CSU's approved tuition hike leaves students to pay down a \$1.5 billion dollar debt over the next five years. This burden is too big to shoulder with current costs facing students and their families. Gas, groceries, rent, and other necessities all cost more today than ever. Now CSU tuition is set to increase 6 percent annually, for at least the next five years.

The first of these hikes begins in the fall 2024 semester, with tuition set at \$6,084. There is a discrepancy between funds available and what it actually costs to run a campus, where they can afford to pay their staff fairly, and afford to give out financial aid. The increase will provide \$280 million earmarked for financial aid. This price increase will generate \$860 million and of that sum, salaries and executive budgets will only be 0.2 percent of the budget.

Around 40 percent of CSU students come from California community colleges, and a staggering 68 percent of students are facing some kind of insecurity of income, according to a 2023 study of community college students car-

ried out by the Community College League of California. To think that \$860 million will be coming out of students' pockets; it is unreasonably high.

The biggest categories of insecurity are housing and food. Fifty-two percent of students facing food insecurity, and 69 percent facing housing insecurity, work 30 or more hours per week. Working or not, housing and food prices pose a conundrum for many students and these financial struggles do not stop simply because a student has moved on to a four year university. The length of the hikes is a proposed five years but they may go on longer. By 2029 the tuition alone will be \$8,133 and who knows what the costs for transportation, food or rent will be by then.

The continuation of financial stress in a world where everything is only getting more expensive, will worsen the pressure many students are already under. The money for deficits cannot come from those already financially stretched. These students likely just don't have that kind of money. The five years of undue burden on students

will surely decrease the number of people finding the CSU system an affordable option.

The heart of the CSU system has always been a model of affordability and its relationship with the California community colleges. This tuition increase is a good way to ruin that relationship for good and push students further away from their goal of a university education.

VALLEY VIEW | WITH TUITION INCREASE AND INFLATION, HOW DOES THIS IMPACT YOUR PLANS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION?

TEXT BY JASMINE ALEJANDRE PHOTOS BY SUEY HERRARTE



"It's a little bit more inconvenient cause you gotta think financially and also how far you plan on going. Location is also a high factor too. I still plan on applying but it does affect alot."

-ALICIA CHAVARRIA, NURSING MAJOR



"I feel like that impacts my plan because i'm going to spend a lot more each year. I feel like that's part of the decision on whether you're going to a university or not."

-MARLON GONZALEZ, COMPUTER SCIENCE MAJOR



"Maybe it'll be a little difficult so I'll definitely have to plan it out. I think it'll be more difficult with inflation and everything."

-SOFIA VARGAS, PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR



"Yeah. I think it changes my perspective on scholarships. I think I need more but I'm not going to take out a loan. School is expensive but I wouldn't do it."

-IZA COOK, THEATER ARTS MAJOR



Luis Gonzalez | Valley Star

Monarchs sophomore forward Karen Hernandez, center, takes on Owls freshman forward Stevie Spencer, left, during the second half of a home game at Valley on Tuesday, Oct. 3.

Soccer team scores first win

The women's soccer team is facing a number of injuries but had enough to squeak by visiting West L.A. College.

JABES PASCUAL
STAFF WRITER

The Valley College women's soccer team tightened up its defense and recorded their first win of the season against West LA. The Monarchs' 1-0 victory against the Cougars at home Tuesday improved the team's record to 1-4.

After allowing nine goals in their first soccer match of the season against College of the Canyons, Valley's defense only allowed West LA five shots on goal, which were all turned back by goalie Sarah Paul. The Monarchs took the field with 13 players as the team had a number of players sitting out due to injuries.

"Defensively, I think we are just a bit tired," said assistant coach Stacey Rodwell. "And because of that, we made some decisions that aren't normally made, but, overall, I think we deserve something out of the game."

The defensive contest and the game was sealed when Valley defender Andrea Martin placed the ball in the top corner of the net on a free kick from 28-yards out. She scored the contest's only goal a few minutes before the end of the first half.

"When I am going to kick it, I just stare at the ball," said Martin. "I have an idea, obviously, where I am going to kick it, but I just look at the ball and place it."

The Monarchs have relied heavily on the defense in the last four contests. They have allowed seven goals, while scoring only three. However, Head Coach Melissa Fernandez said she has confidence in her team's offense.

"It's just a matter of taking the pressure off," Fernandez said. "I know we can do it because 'I have seen it in practice.'"

Before the end of the match, the Monarchs had the chance to increase the lead by 2 but Martin missed a penalty that went wide left. After the match, she described the penalty miss. "Usually I have a set idea of where I'm going, but this time I didn't."

The Monarchs will be looking to ride the momentum of the team's first win as they visit Bakersfield College Friday for a 4 p.m. contest.

"Hopefully moving forward we have the same energy and better quality moving forward," Martin said.



Jack Vermanian | Valley Star

The Valley College football team will take its number two ranked defense in the state to Southwest College Saturday to face the Cougars at 6 p.m. The Monarchs are nursing a 3-2 record and are hoping to bounce back from its most recent loss, 7-3, to Santa Ana College. It was the second time this season that Valley failed to score in the double digits, the first coming in the opening game of the season against Chaffey where the Monarchs lost 34-9. Valley went on to rattle off three straight wins, defeating Compton, Victor Valley and West LA. In the three contests, the Monarchs outscored their opponents 84-35, which included a 23-17 win over West LA, a game the home team sealed in the closing moments of the game. Wesley Tshimanga connected on a touchdown pass to Keyshawn Parks for the game winner. The Monarchs return home on Oct. 12 to face Glendale College at 1pm.



Luis Gonzalez | Valley Star

(Left) KICKER - Monarchs sophomore defender Ruby Dunmore, center, clears the ball during the second half of a home game at Valley against the Antelope Valley Marauders on Friday, Sept. 29.

(Right) CATCHER - (R-L) Monarchs wide receiver David Reed successfully catches a pass over the heads of West LA Wildcats Jamier Flowers and Leo Carter during a home game.



Jack Vermanian | Valley Star