

# The Eastsider

SPRING 2021

YOUR COMMUNITY NEWS SOURCE

## Home Sweet Home

Home has never been more important than over the past year. When the pandemic sent us to the safety of our homes, these places where we live took on new dimensions as offices, schools, gyms, theaters, and much more. For many of us, we got to know our neighbors for the first time because we took up walking or gardening.

Like most of you, I am eager for the many opportunities that await us in

2021, but I don't want to forget the lessons of 2020. I want to continue to recognize our hometown heroes and thank our essential workers. I want to keep in touch with my neighbors. I want to celebrate the relationships I've formed based on the Little Free Library in my front yard. And I hope that we all continue to be grateful for these homes where we make sourdough bread or crafts as well as memories, homes where we work, learn, and play, homes where we find shelter for our bodies and spirits. Homes that are truly sweet homes.

We are fortunate to make our sweet homes in Eastside Costa Mesa. This new publication, "The Eastsider," is being written by the people for the people of Costa Mesa to promote the wonderful people, businesses, and organizations found here. My volunteer service group, dubbed "Doing Good in the Neighborhood," will be sharing stories that will bring a smile to your face, educate you on the happenings in our great city, and inspire you to get more involved in our community.

I look forward to sharing "The Eastsider" with all of you and welcome future stories and ideas from or by you, so please reach out. We want to hear from you!

~ Renee M. Pina, Your Neighborhood Realtor®



## A Family Man's Passion for Building

One of the many reasons I love the Eastside is the walkability of our neighborhood, with tree-lined streets, lush green parks, and an assortment of beautiful vintage-style homes with historic architectural styles, like an American Craftsman, Spanish Revival, or even rarer, a Queen Anne, all dating back to the turn of the century. It is a perfect walkers paradise!

A few years back, while strolling through the neighborhood with my dogs, I spotted a grand American Craftsman style home on the northeast corner of Cecil and Elden. I was mesmerized by the magnitude of the home, which features five bedrooms, three bathrooms, 3,815 square feet, and a three-car garage. This seeming historic gem looks as though it was built in the early 1900s, a creation of the Greene brothers themselves.

Recently, I was given a tour and interview to learn about the purchase, planning, and construction of this magnificent home, which was built with such care and the details of a historic period home.

In showing me around, the homeowner, Doug, said, "Even when this was dirt, I could shut my eyes and envision this whole place. It was easy to build because it was already all in my head."

Perhaps the six-page personal letter about building a home for his family that was included with his offer touched the heartstrings of the short sale bank representative, because, despite fierce competition among local builders, Doug was able to purchase the parcel in July of 2011. His vision for the house became a plan, which made it through the permit process in four short months. It took another 10 months to construct the home so that his family could move in.

Every detail was carefully planned, bringing his vision for his family home to life. He spent days selecting just the right boulders and working with his contractor to place all 2,000 of them on site. He laid the clinker bricks and built the stone and brick columns himself. The custom paint colors are named after his children. And in room after room, his

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Off Market Opportunities

In my 30 years in real estate, I've been through two serious downturns in the market. Even with the uncertainties brought about by the pandemic and resulting quarantine, I believed the market would stay strong. After all, the pandemic meant more time at home, more activities taking place in the home, and sometimes more family members living at home, all of which meant many people needed more space. So as the months of quarantine stretched on, we entered one of the most unique real estate markets of all time with a low supply and a high demand, compounded by new challenges in how we list, show, negotiate, and even close on homes.

Today, buying the right home for your family may mean finding that home before it ever hits the market to avoid a bidding war. Chances are, I already know of a home that would meet your needs, but it's just not on the market. Many homeowners are choosing to sell "off the market," meaning they are willing to accept offers but don't have the

home officially listed on the market, posted online, or advertised by a sign in the yard. Both sellers and buyers often find that there is less stress and more flexibility in these deals.

Whether you are thinking of selling your home or looking to buy, you need a proactive Realtor working for you. I am hitting the streets, with my ears open and feet on the ground, identifying available homes before they go on the market and then matching willing sellers with eager buyers.

Are you curious about selling "off market"? Let's chat about your needs.



Photo by Angel Mazariegos

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# Costa Mesa Do-Gooders

When asked to acknowledge a hero on a community Facebook thread, one Costa Mesa resident described their nominated person as “community-minded, hardworking, and has a full heart.” This column is dedicated to our very own Costa Mesa Do-Gooders, with a focus on shedding some much-needed light on some very deserving people: We see you.

## Ana Fuentes

### In Loving Memory of Adriana Fuentes

Coordinating donation pickup times, raising money for donations, hosting people on Sundays for prayer, and sheltering survivors until finding a safe location for them are just some of the selfless deeds that former Costa Mesa resident Ana Fuentes performs. A domestic violence survivor, Ana has experienced homelessness, extreme poverty, placing her children in foster care, and saying good-bye to her parents and sister, Adriana Fuentes. Adriana was a domestic violence victim who inspired Ana to make changes in her own life. In 2017, Ana was finally approved for housing and was reunited with her children.

“My kids were in about 15 different homes and a lot of those homes were with good people in Costa Mesa,” said Ana. “I am just so grateful.”

Ana also received a lot of aid through a community Facebook page, The Costa Mesa Buzz, which helped with items



Photo by Angel Mazariegos

such as clothes, food, furniture, basic hygiene supplies, and more. These community efforts are what helped Ana survive, not only physically but also mentally. She often describes Costa Mesa residents as “my angels of hope,” because they exemplified love and light in a very dark time of her life.

Ana wanted to find even more ways to help “people like her.” She believes that there is no greater gift than giving. So she and her husband created a private Facebook page, Nueva Esperanza De Luz (New Hope of Light), specifically for survivors of domestic violence who need mental and financial support. Through the page, survivors can access immediate assistance and resources donated by the community.

“Thank you, Costa Mesa, for being the angels of hope that so many of our families have needed,” said Ana.

## Ekrem Ozturk

Another Costa Mesa Do-Goooder, Ekrem Ozturk, is an amazing human and family man, as well as the owner of Kabob Republic on Newport Boulevard in Costa Mesa. In his free time, Ekrem has offered sandwiches to people who could not afford food, offered Thanksgiving meals to families in need, fed frontline healthcare workers, and given masks to neighbors. He even reached out to our other Costa Mesa Do-Goooder, Ana Fuentes, and offered food for domestic violence survivors. We love it when our heroes work together!

“He’s a very kind and supportive community member,” said one Costa Mesa resident. “I can’t think of a better Costa Mesan who exemplifies what it means to be benevolent during one of the darkest times in human history.”

Another resident shared her story, explaining how Ekrem brought her hot meals and fresh bags of produce while she was going through cancer treatments and then continued to check up on her throughout the pandemic.

“He never asks for anything in return,” assured another resident.

If you go into Kabob Republic, you will leave with a smile on your face thanks to hospitality and delicious food.

Although there are many mouthwatering options, we wanted to share Ekrem’s favorite dish: The Iskender Kabob. This plate consists of thinly sliced, grilled Tri-Tip with melted butter, hot tomato sauce, yogurt, and sliced pita, priced at \$19.99. Personally, I always love to order the hummus and pita; it’s a perfect snack any time of day.

Thank you, Ekrem, for everything you do!

~ Kim Ramos, Westside Costa Mesa Resident



In September of 2020, I moved from Seattle to Southern California. I’d wanted to move here for years, ever since I was younger, and now it had finally happened.

It was my first major, permanent move ever. I had just graduated from the University of Washington and I was seeking a dramatic change. It felt like the right time for a new start. I am happy to announce my newest ZIP code is 92626.

Dedicated to the newcomers in town, I will walk you through my experience as a newcomer to Costa Mesa, offering insights into the city’s unique appeal, major local attractions, and recommendations of ways you can feel a part of this community.

The size of a city has a huge impact on how you experience it. I would consider myself a city person and find

## New in Town

large cities stimulating and exciting. However, I don’t necessarily like to live in a major city, but rather near one. Costa Mesa is the perfect central location between Los Angeles, San Diego, and the Pacific Ocean.

Living near the ocean offers a sea breeze that keeps a comfortable temperature year-round. The Pacific Coast Highway, or what the locals call the “PCH,” offers many restaurants and shops waiting to be explored, just a short one mile from the southernmost border of Costa Mesa.

Since residing here, I have learned that Costa Mesa’s

official motto is “City of the Arts,” which comes from the array of art galleries, performance halls, repertory theatre, and sculpture parks that are scattered around the city.

Visiting a farmers’ market is a great way to support small local businesses and at the same time mingle with the locals. SoCo Farmers’ Market takes place every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. I hope to see you there!

Whether you are new to Costa Mesa or a longtime local, I encourage you to get out, explore this beautiful city, and find opportunities to give back to the community or support a local business in some way. I have personally found this has been a great way to meet new people and feel more at home.

~ Ashley Hay, Mesa Verde Resident



## Adopt – Don’t Shop!

I adopted Piper in April 2009. I saw her picture online and knew that we had to meet her. I contacted the shelter and was put on the waitlist. A week later, the shelter contacted me to let me know that I could meet her.

Our first meeting was not perfect. It took the staff 30 minutes to get her to the visiting room. When they brought her in, she was the opposite of outgoing — she was anxious and scared and wanted nothing to do with me. Despite this unsociable greeting, I knew instantly I had to take her home with me.

After I brought her home, I saw more of her personality shine each day. She loves to go on new adventures, car rides, lay outside in the sunshine, eat human food (she is a foodie), and snuggle under the

blanket. Piper is a fast learner and loves to show off her tricks for treats. In 2017, we moved to the OC. We love the SoCal weather, and Piper’s favorite place is the beach.

More than 11 years later, I truly can’t imagine a better companion and best friend. I honestly believe we were meant to be matched.

If you are considering adding a new furry friend to your family, I hope my adoption story inspires you to adopt instead of shopping.

For more information about pets available at the local animal shelter in Costa Mesa, please visit Priceless Pet Rescue and OC Humane Society.

~ Michelle Hay, New Mesa Verde Homeowner

# Looking for Work During a Pandemic

When I found myself without employment at the end of 2020 in the middle of a pandemic, it was, to quote Charles Dickens, “the best of times and the worst of times.” There were many programs available for support: postponing mortgage or car payments, increased unemployment benefits, and affordable healthcare through Covered California. However, I also found more people applying for the same jobs, specific industries negatively affected (entertainment, hospitality, food), and companies hesitant to hire or putting projects or expansions on hold due to overall economic uncertainty. Here’s what I’ve discovered so far in the job-hunting journey:

- **Rediscover and reinvent yourself** – Explore what you want to do or never considered doing. Start by taking the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) at [www.16personalities.com](http://www.16personalities.com). I also recommend the book, “Do What You Are,” which helps in understanding what we do best naturally.
- **Resume** – Most companies use applicant tracking systems (ATS or “bots”) to filter applications based on given criteria, such as keywords or skills. There are resume assessment and builder tools available

that will help you develop an ATS-friendly resume. Look for ones that will provide a free first assessment, such as Top Resume.

- **Network and connections** – Reach out to people you know and let them know you are looking for work. Ask them to pass your resume along or recommend you to the company’s recruiters. Also, network within any organizations you belong to, whether professional or personal.
- **LinkedIn** – Recruiters and potential employers look at LinkedIn first, so make sure your summary and profile will help get you noticed. Many companies post available positions on LinkedIn. LinkedIn also offers resources for job seekers.
- **Recruiters** – Staffing companies are industry-specific and each company may have multiple recruiters. If you are working with one and see another opportunity, ask which recruiter has that project. Company recruiters are listed on LinkedIn.

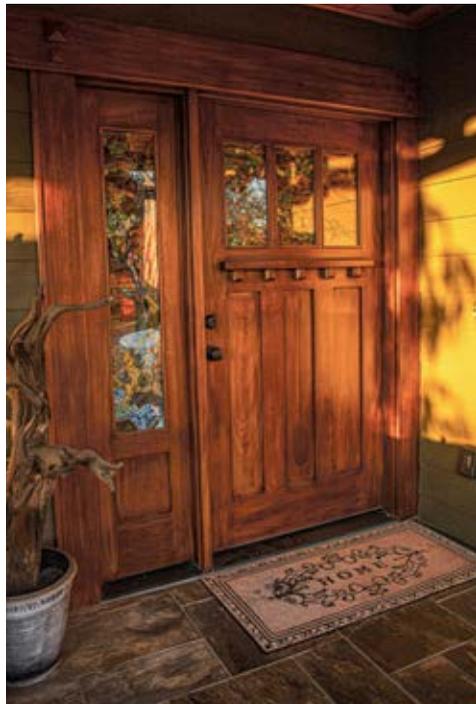
Take this time to figure out what you want to do and increase your odds of getting noticed (and eventually hired) through ATS-friendly resumes, networking, and working your recruiters.

~ Merrie Lee Wooten, Eastside Costa Mesa Neighbor

## A Family Man’s Passion ... (Continued from page 1)

love of carpentry and his woodworking skill are on display in the stained maple millwork. He even made the front door and its stained glass, traveling to Seattle for a weekend to learn the technique and ensuring that every detail was custom and perfect.

The home features an expansive porch, a picturesque wide door with etched stained glass and side window, whimsical clinker brick and stone columns, and an open-air atrium, as well as an incredible, jaw-dropping office and study with a nine-panel coffered ceiling that took



years to perfect. The exact center of the house — of the property, in fact — is the kitchen where the family gathers to make meals together.

What I love most about the American Craftsman design is the careful attention to detail, the woodwork, the materials with their decorative elements, and the artisanal approach to surface decoration. These features are what make a true Craftsman shine. A harmonious integration with nature produces a masterpiece, worthy to be called a labor of love by this family man!

~ Renee M. Pina

Photos by Angel Mazariegos



# Cutting Back on Alcohol and Finding Healing During the COVID-19 Pandemic

“According to a new study among 2,000 U.S. people over the age of 18, binge drinking tends to increase the longer people are at home in lockdown. The researchers found that the odds of heavy alcohol consumption among binge drinkers rose by 19% for each added week of lockdown. They also found that the odds of increased drinking for binge drinkers was more than twice that of people who weren’t binge drinkers: 60% versus 28%.” ~ Healthline.com

That was me. Binge drinker. And then some.

“Never a daily drinker, though,” I’d reassure myself. So that made it all...OK. Or at least tolerable. I could stop, whenever I wanted to. Or so I’d tell myself — before, during, and after one of my booze benders.

But the truth is, I wasn’t tolerating it all too well. I’d stop, sure. Sometimes for months or even years at a time. But in 2020 — that loathsome, depressing, deeply disturbing year we’d all like to erase from our collective memory — things definitely took a turn for the worse.

So I tried to do just that — erase it all, with the aid of vodka and red wine and especially my festive “friend,” tequila. I’d “drink to forget,” as they say.

And such was the “quality” of my life as the pandemic deepened. I’d often find myself horribly hungover, deeply depressed, utterly racked by anxiety, muttering to myself, “This is no way to live.” But for some reason, I also chose

to keep “living” in this sad, shameful cycle of self-abuse.

Gradually, I came to understand that’s what this was. We had an abusive relationship, alcohol and I. And eventually, like the lucky ones who manage to escape an abusive relationship, I decided that I’d had more than my fill. I had to break up with the bottle.

But this time, I also did something different. I reached out for help. I read a *People* magazine story about Rob Lowe celebrating 30 years of sobriety, and I called the SAMHSA helpline (800-662-HELP) listed at the bottom of that story. Over the next few weeks, when I felt

really low, I’d call the line again. I also called the NAMI Orange County Warmline (714-991-6412) and interacted with the online community at SMART Recovery ([www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org)).

I was met with total acceptance. Helpful advice. A compassionate, open ear. A chance to build strength. I felt hopeful again. Hopeful and optimistic and

focused and motivated. If Rob Lowe could go 30 years without a drink, I could certainly manage 30 days. And before I knew it, I was there. I had hit 30 days. I shared my milestone on social media. I would love to be able to help someone else who can relate to what I’ve lived through, and continue to live — and grow and heal — through.

~ Dylan Barmmer, *Word Is Born*, [www.wordisborn.net](http://www.wordisborn.net)

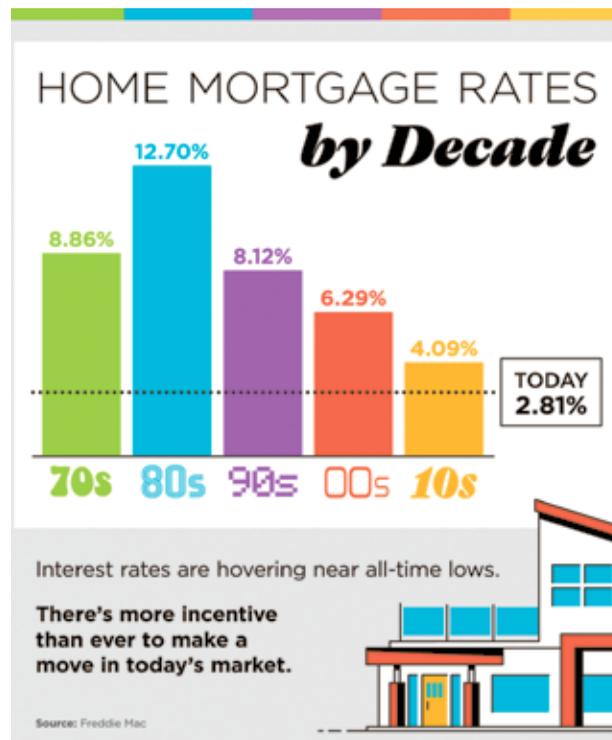


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# Thinking of Selling Your Home?

Over the past year, homeowners have gained an unprecedented opportunity to sell with great success as buyer demand soars. With homes selling twice as fast as they did last year at this time, getting multiple offers, and rising in price, homeowners are in the driver's seat. Let's connect today if you're ready to learn about the leverage you have as a seller in today's housing market. Contact me at 949-698-2003 or [renee@reneempina.com](mailto:renee@reneempina.com), or visit [www.reneempina.com](http://www.reneempina.com).



## What's Your Home Worth?

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# Costa Mesa Painted Rocks

The mission of The Kindness Rocks Project (TKRP) is: "One message at just the right moment can change someone's entire day... outlook... life." The Costa Mesa Painted Rocks Facebook group is part of the larger TKRP movement. I started it to connect with my granddaughters during COVID-19 lockdowns because I wanted a project that we could all enjoy.

Do you want to start painting rocks? Here are the supplies you'll need: river rocks (available at Home Depot, Lowe's, or Thompson's Landscape); spray paint; acrylic pens (available on Amazon or at art supply stores); spray sealant, such as Rustoleum 2X or resin; something to cover your work area; and something to hold your rocks while they dry (I use cookie cooling racks).

After you wash your rocks and let them dry, cover them with spray paint or acrylic paint. Plenty of people use bare rocks; however, I have found that my acrylic pens work best



when there is a base coat. Use your acrylic pens to decorate your rocks with an inspirational message, a design, and/or a drawing. Once your painted rocks are completely dry, seal them to protect them from the elements.

If you want to know where your rock ends up, who found it, or whether it travels, join Costa Mesa Painted Rocks or another TKRP group on Facebook. On the back of your rock, put "Costa Mesa Painted Rocks FB Group" and then post a picture. Now comes the fun part! Hide your rocks in plain sight or hide them well and give people clues as to where they might look for your rocks.

I have created a small rock garden for our essential workers in a planter area of my porch. Each delivery person is encouraged to take a rock to keep or share with someone else.

Happy rock painting!

~ Brigette Beisner, the Costa Mesa Painted Rock Lady

## New Business Spotlight

# LXRYOGA Brings Luxury Where You Least Expect It

We understand there is nothing "luxurious" about the yoga practice itself. LXRYOGA represents the feeling you experience when you give yourself the gift of renewal, physically, mentally, and spiritually. Give your mind, body, and soul the luxury of yoga — that amazing feeling carries along with you and to everyone around you.



Huy and Tess are both yoga instructors teaching out of Orange County. Their journeys crossed paths when they met in 2011, intertwined when they married in 2015, and expanded when they decided to give back their love of yoga to others and founded LXRYOGA.

The yoga practice has brought immense positivity and genuine self-growth into each of their lives throughout the years, so they feel it is only right to share that feeling with the world. The yoga community has given them the luxury of physical, mental, and spiritual health, a gift they strive to give back to the community.

"This is not about how or where we teach," said Huy and Tess. "This is not about our accolades. This is about all the amazing benefits yoga has brought to us, and we just want to share that with you. We hope to meet you in person on our mats."

Learn more at [www.lxryoga.com](http://www.lxryoga.com).

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