

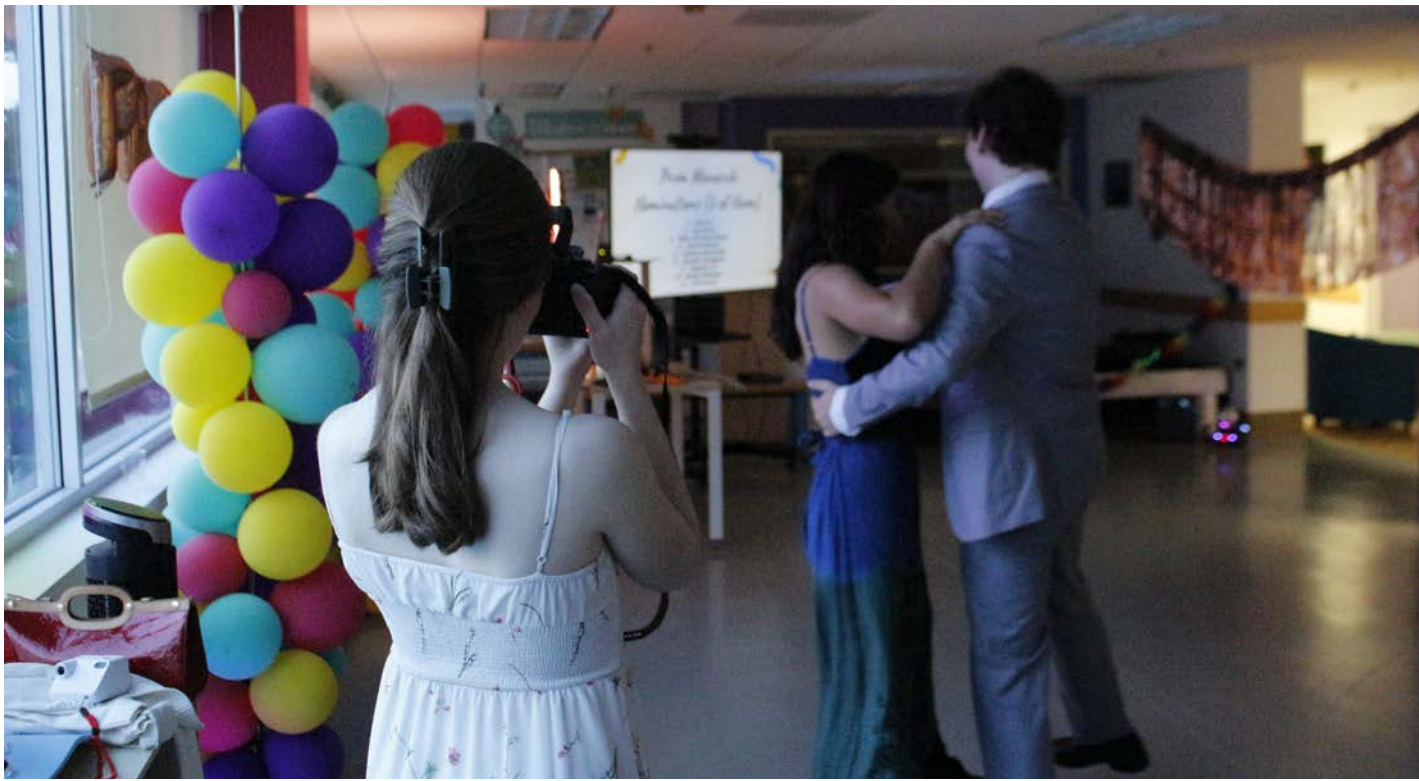
THE BEACH REPORTER

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SOUTH BAY

Queer prom looks to be integral part of teen culture



A queer prom hosted by juniors at Mira Costa High School May 22 at allcove Beach Cities allowed South Bay LGBTQ+ teens to be themselves freely, attendees said, something that traditional prom doesn't historically offer. **TYLER SHAUN EVAINS — STAFF**

Event was attended mostly by Mira Costa, Redondo Union high schoolers at allcove youth center

By Tyler Shaun Evains
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No limousines, no champagne parties, no pressure to show up with a date.

Beyond a quiet lobby door was a first-of-its-kind party on a recent Friday night. South Bay teens got to be themselves during a queer prom at the allcove youth center in the Beach Cities Health District, hosted by Mira Costa High School juniors.

About 30 freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors attended the budding tradition in dresses of all lengths, high heels and boots, sneakers and suits — a spectrum of formal wear.

“Even though we face adversity as LGBTQ youth in the South Bay, it’s harder for those in other states,” organizer Jonah Segil said on prom night. “I wanted to acknowledge that

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2026 ELECTIONS

Voters have their say on L.A. County’s sheriff, assessor and Measure ER

By Steve Scauzillo
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Voters on Tuesday cast their final votes on an array of key Los Angeles County government races, and one measure that during the campaign garnered major push-back from local cities.

The races most-relevant to the South Bay were sheriff and the assessor’s office, as well as Measure ER, the proposed half-percentage point sales tax to create a stop-gap fund of about \$1 billion a year for county healthcare services.

The registrar’s semi-official results were released early Wednesday, and contained every vote-by-mail and in-person Vote Center ballot through Election Day. Outstanding ballots, such as VBMs that were postmarked by Election Day but have not yet arrived or conditional ballots that need verification, will be tallied in the coming days. The registrar’s office was scheduled to release its next update on Wednesday afternoon, after this publication’s deadline.

Sheriff Robert Luna jumped into the lead over his challengers with 44.04% of the vote, according to the semi-official results. Former Sheriff Alex Villanueva was at 24.43%, with Eric Strong, Karla Carranza, Oscar Antonio Martinez, Mike Bornman, Andre N. White and Brendan Corbett at 11.26%, 5.90%, 4.64%, 4.46%, 3.86% and 1.42%, respectively.

In the assessor’s race, incumbent Jeffrey Prang — who has been in office for nearly 12 years, having won the seat in 2014, and subsequently reelected in 2018 and 2022 — led with 56.77%. Sandy Sun had 15.68%, Rob Newland had 12.53%, Stephen Adamus had

See **VOTERS** on Page A12



In this photo illustration, a view of official vote-by-mail ballots and voter materials for the 2026 California primary election on May 4 in Pasadena. **PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MARIO TAMA — GETTY IMAGES**



The LGBTQ+ Pride flag flies over city hall after its official raising in commemoration of Pride Month in Hermosa Beach on Monday. **PHOTO BY AXEL KOESTER**

Hermosa Beach kicks off Pride Month

By Kristy Hutchings
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It’s officially Pride Month, and Hermosa Beach celebrated the occasion by raising the Pride flag at City Hall on Monday.

Pride Month, which takes place each June, is celebration of the LGBTQ+ commu-

nity. The inaugural Pride Month was held in June 1970 to mark the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising in New York City. That seminal event in the fight for LGBTQ+ equality, which began at the Stonewall Inn,

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Inside

Art talk: World-renowned sculptor Eugene Daub will present a free program about his historical artworks next week at the El Segundo Public Library. **Page 5**



Baseball: Mira Costa defeats Agoura, 9-7, to capture the CIF-Southern Section Division 3 title on Saturday. **Page 10**

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MANHATTAN BEACH

3 rehabilitated sea lion pups return to the sea

Marine mammal center nurses ailing trio back to health with mashed fish and some medicine

By Donna Littlejohn
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Three once-ailing sea lion pups brought back to health by the Marine Mammal Care Center in San Pedro were released Friday morning near the Manhattan Beach Pier with Mayor Joe Franklin on hand for the happy ending.

It was the first sea lion release in Manhattan Beach.

MMCC is Los Angeles' only year-round marine mammal rehabilitation center and rescues more marine mammals per mile of coastline than any other organization in the U.S., according to the facility.

Also on hand was Marine Mammal Care Center CEO John Warner.

Returning to their natural homes were:

-Tortellini, a female California sea lion pup rescued from Dockweiler Beach on April 12. So emaciated that her backbone was visible beneath her fur, she also was found to have some swelling in her jaw and discharge from one eye. A healthy diet of fish was needed and she was initially tube-fed a mixture of mashed fish, later transitioning to whole fish when she was stronger. Her right eye was swollen and had a lesion (a suspected scar). She was given anti-inflammatory medication and a vision supplement and the squinting improved. After six weeks of care, the eye issues were resolved and she had nearly doubled in weight.

-Rotini, a female California sea lion pup, was also rescued from Dockweiler on April 12 after a beach cleanup crew spotted her looking emaciated. Malnourished and dehydrated



Two sea lion pups make their way to the ocean in Manhattan Beach after getting nursed to health by the Marine Mammal Care Center on Friday. PHOTOS BY AXEL KOESTER



One of three sea lion pups makes its way to the ocean in Manhattan Beach after getting nursed to health.

when she arrived at the care center, she was tube-fed mashed fish and then transitioned to whole fish. After six weeks under care, she gained weight and was cleared for release back into the wild.

-Cavatappi, a male California sea lion



Volunteers with the Marine Mammal Care Center MMCC help with the release of three sea lion pups in Manhattan Beach on Friday.

pup, was rescued April 13 from El Segundo after appearing to be emaciated when spotted. Malnourished and dehydrated when he arrived at the hospital, he rebounded after a few days of care and being able to eat whole fish after being tube-fed. Some pox lesions



Two sea lion pups swim away in Manhattan Beach after being released by the Marine Mammal Care Center on Friday.



Volunteers with the Marine Mammal Care Center MMCC help with the release of three sea lion pups in Manhattan Beach on Friday.

on his neck resolved and after six weeks he doubled in size.

PROM

From Page 1

with queer prom tonight."

Mostly students from Mira Costa and Redondo Union high schools attended the May 22 prom, said Segil, a Mira Costa junior, but he hopes the event grows and expands to more schools in the South Bay and beyond in years to come.

Some may feel excluded from traditional prom, with its historically gender normative customs, said Mira Costa junior Max Zhang, who co-hosted the prom.

"Jonah and I noticed there weren't too many safe spaces for queer people" in the South Bay teen community, Zhang added. "We wanted to create an outside (of school) place where queer people could come together and have fun."

The end-of-high school dance, short for promenade, has roots in debutante balls, according to a Los Angeles Public Library blog, and was intended to present young women as available for marriage to young men.

The events, ironically, were referred to as "coming out" parties at the time.

But during that recent night in Redondo Beach, there was no need to "come out." And those who did decide to disclose their gender identities and sexualities to each other did so without apprehension.

Malia Goodman-Bhyat, a Mira Costa junior who attended the prom, said that while students aren't formally excluded from traditional prom, it's important to know that there's a celebration explicitly for queer high schoolers.

"I have a lot of support in my life, but I know a lot of people don't," Goodman-Bhyat said.

It's important "knowing you have a community around you who's willing to rally around you and support you publicly, that there is a celebration for you; that you deserve to be celebrated.

"As queer people," she added, "we want to celebrate high school and do the same traditional things (as anyone else) because we enjoy them."

Having a specific community of similar people around creates safety and support, Zhang said.

"If you're LGBTQ, it's important to find others who also are because it validates yourself," Zhang said. "It takes away any pressure



A queer prom hosted by juniors at Mira Costa High allowed South Bay LGBTQ+ teens to be themselves freely, attendees said. TYLER SHAUN EVAINS — STAFF

to conform to being heterosexual or any societal expectations with being heterosexual."

Unregulated joy filled the room, which was adorned with glittering lava lamps, fringe curtains and balloons.

Props and a ring light brought together the photo booth, and photo ops were also against a backdrop with balloons that spelled "PROM."

Students from South Bay high schools mingled over Jersey Mike's sandwiches and chips, some meeting for the first time. By the mid point of the night, everyone was well-acquainted and ready to dance together. And that they did all night — until the very end, playing the video game Just Dance in a synchronized crowd. People even played board games like Connect 4 throughout the evening.

"It's nice to see people I know and also didn't know, without a formal introduction," Mira Costa junior Eden Avila said. "We were

able to have a good time together even though we don't know each other, but we know we all have this thing in common."

Many of the gender normative traditions were thrown out the window, making it a night to remember in a meaningful way. There was no theme, other than to give queer students a traditional prom experience catered to them.

When Segil turned up the music, everyone flocked to the dance floor, rocking to "Let's Dance" by David Bowie, "Dancing Queen" by ABBA and other familiar tunes, singing along all night.

Two prom monarchs were voted to take crowns during the night, something Zhang said was a gender-neutral step away from the distinctly masculine and feminine king and queen titles. No matter how one identified, they could rule the night.

"The traditional things of having prom king and queen put people into traditional boxes," Segil said.

Segil's generation has been passed the torch, he said, from as far back as leaders of the 1969 Stonewall Uprising, to continue being a beacon of hope for queer youth across the country.

He wanted to create something that would bring together LGBTQ+ teens in a setting other than their schools' gender sexuality alliance groups, and hopes to continue the local queer prom as an annual tradition, he added, connecting queer youth across L.A. County.

"I feel like it creates lasting connections that live on after the prom for queer youth across different schools," Segil said. "Allowing people to rely on and support each other."

"Queer prom brings the community together in a way that nothing has before."

Segil said he envisions queer prom becoming an integral South Bay event, something everyone knows to look forward to each year — becoming bigger and more impactful over time.

Segil and Zhang, who cofounded the South Bay Social Advocacy Coalition, and other peers started organizing the prom in January, Segil said, making it the coalition's big project, culminating the group's efforts throughout the school year.

The student-run alliance, founded last year, includes youth representatives from schools across the South Bay who advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights in the midst of a national rise in hate by promoting inclusivity and fighting discrimination, according to the coalition's website.

Segil has been part of Beach Cities Health District's youth advisory council for four years, and being involved in events there inspired him to plan his own.

Use of the space, along with admission, was free. Segil and Zhang, as well as donations from other members of the coalition, sponsored food, drinks and the rest.

Although Segil and Zhang spearheaded the event, Segil called it a collective effort, stemming from their own social needs and those of their queer peers.

The previous absence of queer prom had "been a concern for a lot of people," Segil said. "I talked to friends of mine who are trans, and they feel they can't be their true identities at prom even if people aren't overtly discriminatory; they feel they can't fully express themselves" because they may not be part of the event's majority.

"It's important to gather and know you have community with people," Goodman-Bhyat said.

"It can feel isolating when you're in spaces where there are not a lot of queer people."

Avila said that she usually skips school dances because it's hard to enjoy herself with so many people and things happening. But with the smaller group at queer prom, she felt she was able to participate in the night with ease.

"I'm glad a lot of people were able to come ... and be who they are," she added. "A lot of people might be embarrassed to go to (school-hosted) prom."

Zhang, after all, said he felt awkward attending his first homecoming dance because he didn't have a date.

"But this is inclusive of everyone, single or not," he said of the dance he organized.

"There's a lot more community than I'd expect at a traditional prom because it's a lot smaller and we're already supportive of each other," Zhang said.

We could "just be free, however we wanted," he added.

He foresaw himself being scared of being judged at traditional prom, Zhang said — but didn't feel any judgement at queer prom.

Goodman-Bhyat felt similarly. "I was able to be myself more here; I could dance how I wanted and exist how I wanted," Goodman-Bhyat said.

"I don't think people were judging me, but I feel I couldn't do some of the things maybe I wanted to, like singing loudly, dancing and acting (goofily)."