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Donna Wilson



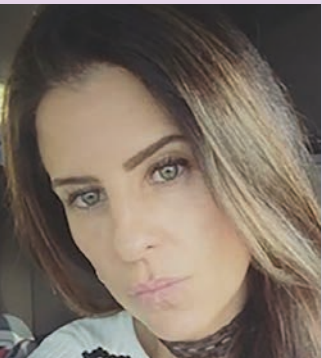
Danielle Humphries



Haley Howe



Amelia Sanchez



Annie Tame

## WOMEN IN BUSINESS 2024



Ada Laura Duff



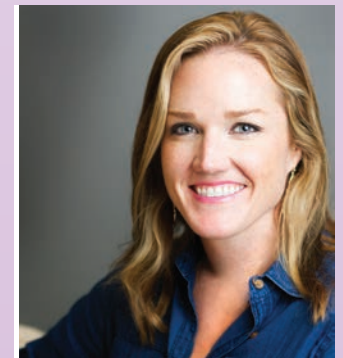
Priya Huggett



Lori Wilson



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WOMEN IN BUSINESS: THE BEST OF SAN  
DIEGO WOMEN IN BUSINESS**



**THE MISHMASH OF FOOD RETAILING IN THE  
POST-PANDEMIC, INFLATIONARY ECONOMY**



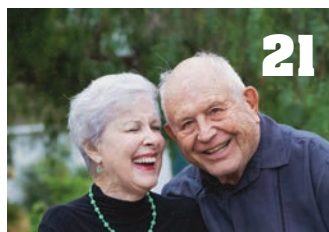
**WHAT'S BEHIND ALL THE POLITICAL  
THEATER OVER CALIFORNIA'S HIGH  
GASOLINE PRICES?**



**I'M A TRUE-BLUE DEMOCRAT – BUT I'VE  
JOINED THE GOP AND BACK DONALD TRUMP**



**WOULD YOU BELIEVE THAT IT'LL COST MORE  
THAN \$100 BILLION TO END HOMELESSNESS IN  
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**A SAN MARCOS COUPLE IS HELPING AFRICAN  
CHILDREN FINDING HOPE INN LESOTHO, ONE  
OF THE POOREST NATIONS IN THE WORLD.**

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# Alaska Airlines adds new non-stop routes

The U.S. Department of Transportation announced that it has tentatively granted Alaska Airlines slot exemptions at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) to introduce nonstop daily round trip service to San Diego (SAN). This brings us one step closer to offering the only nonstop service between these two major markets. Alaska urges DOT to finalize the selection of our application to serve San Diego as soon as possible. Alaska is proud to connect these two critical markets and looks forward to providing our premium service to guests in San Diego, Washington, D.C. and across the West Coast.

“Leadership from all industry sectors and communities across the San Diego region have spoken up in support of nonstop air service between DCA and SAN. We appreciate that DOT’s thoughtful analysis supports restoring service between the nation’s largest unserved aviation market. We look forward to the final order to cement the service that both San Diego and Alaska Airlines have been advocating for more than ten years,” said Kimberly J. Becker, President and CEO of the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority.





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Ronson J. Shamoun, Principal Attorney and CEO of RJS LAW, is an Adjunct Law Professor at the University of San Diego-School of Law where he teaches a Tax Practice and Penalties class. He was recently presented with the following awards:

- San Diego Metro Magazine- Best Attorney 2016
- San Diego Magazine- Top Attorney 2016
- San Diego Business Journal- Best of the Bar 2014, 2015 & 2016
- Martindale Hubbell's- AC Preeminent Rated 2014, 2015 & 2016
- San Diego Daily Transcript- Top Attorney 2014 & 2015
- San Diego Metro Magazine- 40 Under 40 - 2015



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# WOMEN IN BUSINESS 2024



## Donna Wilson

In an industry typically ruled by the status quo, Wilson does not follow the herd, leads toward the horizon, embracing change and fostering transformation at every level. She is one of the few LGBTQIA+ women leading an AM Law 200 firm, which has grown steadily in every metric under her stewardship. She has been managing partner and CEO since 2019. Guided by her unparalleled legal and business acumen, with an eye toward innovation, Wilson built Manatt into a legal and consulting powerhouse. She is a proud member and advocate of the LGBTQIA+ community. Under her guidance Manatt earned Mansfield Certification for the first time and the Women In Law Empowerment Forum Gold Standard Certification, recognizing law firms with strong representation of women as equity partners. Her emphasis on creating a culture of collaboration and inclusivity has also resonated across the firm's ever-growing roster of every generation, including a talent pool of young attorneys, consultants and professionals entering the market. She is a member of the board of directors for the nation's provider of pro bono services, Public Counsel. She is a graduate of The George Washington University with her law degree from the University of Virginia.



## Danielle Humphries

Humphries is a partner at Hahn Loeser & Parks LLP and is Chair of the firm's San Diego Trust & Estates Practice Group. She has earned a stellar reputation as a trusted legal advisor with experience, insight and sophistication. She serves as general counsel for families, managing a multitude of legal issues, including trust and estate related issues, wealth preservation and protection, philanthropic planning and tax planning. She has extensive experience representing fiduciaries and beneficiaries in complex trust and estate administration and litigation. Her representation of fiduciaries includes advising individual and corporate fiduciaries on risk mitigation and their duties and responsibilities in the administration of trusts and estates. She is an extraordinary role model and advocate for gender parity in the legal profession. She is an influential community member and lends her legal and business acumen to local charitable causes. She is a board member of Promises2Kids. She has been recognized as a Woman of Accomplishment by SD METRO Magazine and is a Super Lawyers' Rising Star. She has both her law degree and an LLM from the University of San Diego.



## Haley Howe



Starting her career as a call taker at Bill Howe Plumbing, Howe has risen through the ranks to become the operations manager of the Restoration and Flood Division. As the company's General Contractor license holder, she oversees both commercial and residential construction projects. She has made her mark in an industry traditionally dominated by men, driving 209 % revenue growth within her division and managing a team of 61 employees with an annual revenue base of \$11 million. Her leadership has resulted in a consistent 10 % annual growth in team size, and she has restructured the division to create long-term paths for employees. She is a certified Water Restoration Technician. She has introduced a new project management system to streamline operations across the division. Beyond her professional achievements, she volunteers with the San Diego Food Bank and Father Joe's Villages, and she has built shelters in Tijuana, applying her welding and concrete construction skills. She is a dedicated mother of two and was a competitive figure skater for eight years. Passionate about her role in the family business, she takes great pride in creating rewarding career opportunities for the community.

## Amelia Sanchez



Sanchez is a partner with Crosbie, Gliner, Schiffmsn Southard & Swanson LLP (CGS3), a recognized leader among Southern California commercial real estate law firms. She has more than 20 years of experience in handling sophisticated commercial real estate transactions. She successfully represents national, regional and local companies in all asset categories. She is senior counsel at CGS3. She is highly regarded for her deep expertise in advising business clients on leasing transactions that include retail, office, financial, life science, mixed-used, industrial, telecommunications and solar leases and on purchase and sale transactions. She has handled a variety of business and transactional matters. Prior to joining CGS3 she was in-house senior legal counsel at Cricket Communications, Inc. (now Cricket Wireless). She is co-founder of the SES Tennis Center, a nonprofit, supporting the building of public tennis courts and the children of Tecate, Mexico. She earned her undergraduate degree in psychology from Dartmouth University and her law degree from the University of San Diego.

## Priya Huggett



Huggett is a partner with Crosbie Gliner Schiffmasn Southard & Swanson (CSG3). She has over 20 years of broad-based experience in commercial real estate comprised of acquisitions, dispositions, development, leasing, finance and operations covering multifamily, retail, residential, hospitality and office assets. Her practice emphasizes a variety of corporate/commercial and real estate transactions, particularly private equity, joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions and commercial contracts. In respect to real property, her focus is on purchase and sale, commercial leasing, subdivision easements and licensing, financing and related business matters. She also served as general counsel and executive vice president for Kelly Investment Group and as senior vice president/general counsel for Sea Breeze Properties. She launched her legal career with Propocio. She is a board member at the San Diego chapter of NAIOP. She graduated with a degree in criminology and political science from Simon Fraser University and earned her law degree from the University of British Columbia.

## Lori Wilson



For over 28 years, Wilson has worked in the financial services industry as an advisor, specializing in insurance, investments, and comprehensive financial planning. During this time, she helped countless clients navigate their financial journeys while witnessing firsthand how many struggled with limited financial knowledge and the complexity of managing their finances. The experience led to a pivotal shift in her career, moving from financial advising to private coaching. Now, she focuses on empowering clients by providing personalized, one-on-one guidance without the pressure of selling financial products. She is dedicated to helping individuals improve their financial literacy, understanding that too many people are unprepared for both retirement and managing their day-to-day finances. She believes that financial anxiety stems from a lack of education, as financial literacy is rarely taught in schools or by parents. Her mission is to provide the knowledge her clients need to make clear, confident and informed money decisions. Her book, *Where Are You Financially?* is available on Amazon.

## Nicole Hagaman



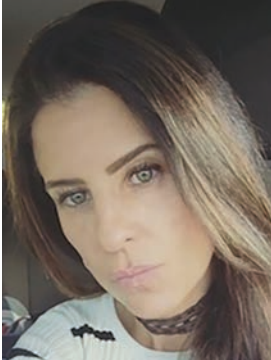
Hagaman is at the top of her profession. She founded Strategic Strategies and owns TW2 Marketing, a leading San Diego PR, marketing and video company. With 25 years in the marketing industry and with an MBA with emphasis on Entrepreneurship, she is passionate about helping companies and nonprofits create and implement a strategic roadmap to drive awareness, spur growth and create lasting success. She founded Strategic Strategies in 2016 after a successful run as an inhouse marketing manager for Moss Adams, a national accounting firm. She works closely with clients to create and implement marketing campaigns with their business goals and objectives. Her results-oriented, creative strategies boost clients' visibilities, sales and revenue. Acquiring TW2 allows her to combine her two companies to create a powerhouse organization, focused on exceptional client services and results-oriented marketing and PR planning and implementation. She is a board member of Serving Seniors, a graduate of Sonoma State University and holds an MBA from San Diego State University.

## Porsha Vogt



Vogt is the heart and soul behind Golden Care Home Care, where she combines professionalism with genuine compassion to ensure the highest standard of care for each client. With years of experience in the industry, her approach to caregiving goes beyond routine tasks. She believes in creating a warm, supportive environment that feels like family. Her journey began with a deep-rooted passion for making a positive impact on others' lives, which has since blossomed into a thriving career dedicated to helping clients maintain independence and dignity at every stage of life. She values building real, lasting relationships, not only with her clients but also with her team and the La Mesa and Carlsbad communities she proudly serves. She listens with empathy and leads with kindness, infusing every interaction with her signature warmth. With her at the helm, Golden Care isn't just a service. It is a source of true comfort and trusted support.

# Annie Tame



She is the founder and owner of The Equestrian Catalog, a six-year-old, high gloss, San Diego-based magazine growing rapidly beyond its Southern California roots. She learned the publishing business as a young graduate of the University of San Diego by selling advertising for the Rancho Santa Fe Review and Carmel Valley News. Her career then leaped to magazine publishing as she joined Modern Luxury Riviera magazine for five years. After two other magazines which she started were sold, she launched the upscale Equestrian Catalog. With its quality content and distribution, it is now a national publication with advertisers from across the country. She has merged her two passions, a love of horses and publishing into a very successful career while at the same time being a very loving and caring mother of two young children.

# Ada Laura Duff



She started Ada Duff Interior Design over thirty years ago in Mexico City before expanding to the United States 20 years ago. Her firm is where creativity meets functionality and dreams are transformed into tangible realities. With a passion for design and attention to detail, she is committed to providing exceptional solutions that elevate spaces and inspire emotions. She believes that every project has a unique story to tell. With skilled craftsmen work, she brings these stories to life, crafting environments that seamlessly blend aesthetics, functionality and purpose. From residential spaces to commercial establishments, Duff approaches each space with a fresh perspective and a commitment to exceeding expectations. She has done designs for the Ronald McDonald House Charities in San Diego, a Mexican-owned cruise ship, commercial properties in Austin, Texas, and residential homes in San Diego and San Antonio, Texas. She can be reached at [adaduff@gmail.com](mailto:adaduff@gmail.com)

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# Big-Box, Online and the Smaller One:

The Mishmash of Food Retailing in the Post-Pandemic, Inflationary Economy

By Douglas Page

The country's more than 96,000 grocery stores and supermarkets, generating about \$1.1 trillion in annual revenue, are undergoing a metamorphosis attributed to events they never expected – a global pandemic and inflation – leaving them vulnerable to being bushwhacked by financially formidable competitors and acquired, too.

That's the case with Winn-Dixie and Harveys supermarkets, once owned by Southeastern Grocers. German discount grocer Aldi, a privately held company with more than 2,000 stores in the United States, purchased the Jacksonville, Fla.-headquartered

entity in March, picking up nearly 400 stores in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. Financial details were not released.

Closer to San Diego is the potential merger between two grocery entities, Kroger and Albertsons, which the Federal Trade Commission attempted to stop with a lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Portland, Ore., saying it's "anticompetitive," and will lead to "higher prices for groceries and other essential household items for millions of Americans."



The trial ended Sept. 17th, but Judge Adrienne Nelson, who oversaw it, didn't commit to issuing her ruling on the tie-up on a particular date, saying, instead, "she would work as quickly as possible on her decision," a published report said. There's an expectation that she may likely issue her ruling the week of October 21.

Another trial over the merger is underway in King County Superior Court in Seattle. Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson filed an antitrust lawsuit against the merger, saying, according to a news release from his office, "it will severely limit shopping options for consumers and eliminate vital competition that keeps grocery prices low."

Kroger attorney Mark Perry, in opening comments, replied the merger will help the two companies compete against larger rivals, like Walmart, Costco and Amazon, saying Kroger and Albertsons face "an existential threat" if the merger isn't allowed, according to a published report.

A third trial against the merger, and the last one underway, recently started in Denver. The State of Colorado filed an antitrust suit against the merger. The trial started at the end of September and is being held in Denver District Court.

California Attorney General Rob Bonata is also opposed to the merger and recently sought a temporary injunction against it.

In addition to California, Colorado and Washington State, the attorneys general of Arizona, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon and Wyoming joined the FTC's lawsuit against Kroger's \$24.6 billion purchase of Albertsons. The two companies have about 5,000 stores, but 579 will be sold if the merger is approved.

In February, Kroger announced it would "invest \$500 million to lower prices" with its merger with Albertsons. Bloomberg News reported in August that Kroger would cut grocery prices by \$1 billion if the merger goes through. Phone calls and emails to Kroger and Albertsons about the merger weren't immediately returned.

Given recent trends – people attempting to extend their food budgets by shopping at large, discount grocers due to heightened prices – neighborhood grocery stores and supermarkets around the United States could see a curt future,



David Livingston



Joseph Welsh, a Las Vegas-based grocery consultant.



Christopher Jones



Craig Rosenblum, of Columbus Consulting

says a financial analyst requesting anonymity.

As David Livingston, a consultant with many years of working with grocery stores and supermarkets, sees it, today's grocery market took root 40 years ago.

"It goes back to the '80s, and then, by the early '90s and 2000s, Walmart was in every county, city and town in the country," he said. "And they drove a lot of stores off of Main Street and caused a lot of bankruptcies."

"Walmart operates supercenters and hypermarkets as does Costco so, originally, groceries were sold there to increase basket size (the number of items a consumer buys), but now they sell a significant number of groceries, so they're a true competitor," said Joseph Welsh, a Las Vegas-based grocery consultant, also known as "Joe the Grocer," whose industry experience started 46 years ago, when he was 13.

He recently testified at the trial about the Kroger-Albertsons merger in Seattle.

"Ninety percent of America lives within 10 miles of Walmart," Molly Blakeman, the company's spokesperson, told SDMETRO. "We serve about 145 million customers a week in the United States, and (during COVID-19) online pickup and delivery really took off in the grocery space."

### Where Grocery Dollars Are Spent

Between March 2020, when the pandemic closed many offices and schools across the United States, and last year, Walmart's annual grocery revenues jumped from \$208.4 billion to \$264.2 billion, an increase of nearly 27%. The company generated almost 25% of all "food-at-home" spending in 2023 as measured by The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which says more than \$1.1 trillion was spent for "food-at-home" in the United States in 2023, up from \$1 trillion in 2022.

If last year's grocery sales from Sam's Club are added in, Walmart's grocery sales grew to \$320.6 billion, an increase of nearly 28% from 2020 when Walmart's and Sam's Club grocery revenues were a combined \$250.5 billion. They could be higher, but Walmart doesn't break out its revenues by category for its namesake stores in Mexico, Central America, Canada, China and the United Kingdom.

Walmart reports its U.S. grocery revenues for its

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namesake stores separately. Sam's Clubs grocery revenues are also reported separately but not by country origin. There are over 4,600 Walmart stores and 599 Sam's Clubs in the United States, the company says. Walmart also has 170 Sam's Clubs in Mexico and another 44 in China.

In comparison, Walmart's nearest U.S. competitor among supermarkets with a sizable national footprint, Kroger, with over 2,700 outlets, making it the largest supermarket chain in the United States, did \$133.4 billion in 2023 in grocery sales, according to its annual report, up just over 8%, from \$123 billion, in 2020.

"What's really powerful about Walmart, whether it's in expansionary or recessionary times, is that people need things, and we're an everyday, low-cost retailer," Blakeman said. "Customers are also coming to us in times where they may be a little more stressed about their finances, and we're here to deliver, no matter the time period, no matter how they're feeling about their wallet."

And, indeed, consumers may have felt stressed about their finances because, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, grocery prices rose about 25% between March 2020 and August

2024.

"A lot of people perceive our customer as a lower-income American, and it is, but we also continue to gain relevancy with middle-income and higher-income customers," Blakeman said. "Everybody likes to save money."

Walmart isn't the only competitive threat to the neighborhood grocery store and supermarket. Other big-box and warehouse-size retailers, plus a significant online player, too, are also taking market share.
















Costco, a warehouse-size retailer offering discount prices, with 614 warehouses in the United States and Puerto Rico, saw its food and grocery sales jump to \$128 billion last year, up 11.3% from 2022's \$115 billion. Costco doesn't separate its category revenues by country origin. Food and grocery revenues constituted more than 50% of Costco's annual revenues over each of the last three years.

Target, another discount retailer, saw its grocery revenues advance from \$18.4 billion in 2020 to \$24.3 billion last year, about a 32% increase. CEO Brian Cornell said in August

# 1. 20 YEARS AGO, SUPERMARKET GROCERS COMPRISED 10 OF THE TOP 15 U.S. GROCERS

(\$ In Billions)

## U.S. GROCERS – 2003

Ranking	Company	Grocery Sales	% Market Share
1		\$73	16%
2		\$49	11%
3		\$32	7%
4		\$28	6%
5		\$24	5%
6		\$20	4%
7		\$14	3%
8		\$14	3%
9		\$11	2%
10		\$10	2%
11		\$10	2%
12		\$10	2%
13		\$8	2%
14		\$8	2%
15		\$7	1%

## NOT ON THE LIST



### National / Discount Grocers



Source: Company filings and publicly available information.  
Note: Represents U.S. grocery sales only and excludes pharmacy, fuel and other non-grocery categories.

Private and Confidential

there’s “significant opportunity for growth in that space.”

Seven years ago, Target purchased Shipt, a same-day delivery company, which allows it to deliver groceries and other products to consumers the day they’re ordered online.

Amazon doesn’t break out its grocery sales – from either its online platform or its Whole Foods subsidiary – in its annual report, but eMarketer estimates it will see about \$40 billion in online grocery sales this year, up from \$25 billion in 2020.

In addition to the companies mentioned, Numerator, a Chicago-based market research firm, reports that between 2020 and 2024 consumer grocery revenues also increased at Albertsons, Aldi, Dollar General, 7-Eleven, Trader Joe’s and Dollar Tree.

But food selling isn’t limited to those companies alone.

Statista points out the food retail industry is fragmented and includes “convenience stores, drug stores, mass merchandisers, and food service facilities,” plus specialty food stores, grocery stores and supermarkets, estimating they did a combined \$8 trillion in food sales last year.

“Everybody sells groceries,” Welsh said. “You can buy bread, eggs

and soft drinks at the convenience store. During COVID-19, some restaurants offered groceries to make their numbers.

“Then you’ve got online sellers (like Amazon) invading the space, too. Brick and mortar (grocery stores and supermarkets) is being attacked from many different directions,” he added.

### The New Normal

Not only did the pandemic change shopping habits, but so did inflation. People bought items in bulk, like paper towels and toilet paper, from Walmart, Costco, and other big-box and discount retailers, while local grocery stores and supermarkets were trafficked for items that would sooner perish, like meat, vegetables, dairy, and fruit.

“That part of the store we call the ‘center store,’ and that typically relates to the non-perishable items, the club stores and dollar stores (like Walmart, Costco, and Dollar General) have taken many of those purchases out of the supermarkets and, unfortunately, those are good profit categories,” Welsh said.

The National Grocers Association (NGA), an industry group of

## FOOD RETAIL

about 21,000 independent grocery stores, sees new purchasing habits, too.

“More consumers are willing to go to dollar stores, willing to travel a little bit further to go to Walmart, are willing to look at other options on omnichannel, e-commerce type of platforms,” said Christopher Jones, NGA’s chief government relations officer.

As a result, supermarkets and grocery stores were forced to change.

“They’ve learned how to provide curbside pickup service,” Welsh said. “Some who fought online selling are engaged in it, not so much as a profit center but as a defense mechanism to prevent attrition from their store to someone else’s.”

Another consultant says the pandemic was a watershed moment for supermarket and grocery executives.

“COVID took 20 years of change and put it into two,” said Craig Rosenblum, of Columbus Consulting. “Everybody began to realize if they couldn’t provide shoppers a way to buy online, pick up in store or deliver products, they were going to lose out.”

The average grocery store is about 40,000 square feet, so he sees some of the space being repurposed for e-commerce, in-store pickup, food service, or other products that allow a grocery or supermarket to differentiate from larger competitors.

Another way grocery stores stand out is by the products offered on the store’s perimeter.

“They need quality baked goods, produce, meats, deli and seafood,” said NGA’s Jones. “Consumers often equate the quality of the store with those kinds of items, which are outside the center of the store.”

Even Walmart, says Rosenblum, is responding to its changing consumer profile by improving the look and feel of their stores and offering better produce and baked goods.

There’s an additional way to compete, too, suggests Livingston, and it might be one few consider. Consumers judge in-store grocery shopping by the entire experience, including the checkout counter.

“When you can do the whole package – competitive prices, good customer experience, good exit experience, decent parking and the other perks, like delivery – you stay competitive,” he said, adding that one of his clients wanted to install self-checkouts to save on labor costs.

“And I said, ‘I don’t think you want to do that. You’ve attracted some of the best cashiers in the city. The customer’s exit experience is going to be way better in your store compared to Walmart. If your cashier is the last person they have contact with at the store, and they leave feeling better about themselves than when they came in, you’ve accomplished your job.’”

### AI and New Employees

Today’s challenges are bringing about hiring changes, too.

“Typically, the kid who was the best stocker was the one that got promoted to assistant manager,” Welsh said “Then, if he held on

long enough, he’d become the store manager.”

These days, he says, grocery stores are seeking different employees, those with accounting, information technology and marketing skills.

Plus, Welsh says, because grocery stores are now adding a variety of ready-to-go meals, they may need a very different kind of talent.

“If a store had just a deli, you needed someone back there who could learn how to fry chicken, prepare French fries, stir up mashed potatoes. But when you have meal solutions that are crafted in the store or you have sushi bars, you may need a sous chef or a sushi chef to prepare those meals,” he said.

Welsh says if online selling becomes a larger part of the grocery store industry, it will need to find new and creative ways to increase foot traffic into the stores.

“Twenty or 30 years ago, we didn’t co-brand inside the store,” he said. “Today, you have Starbucks kiosks and Little Caesar’s pizza. We’re doing everything we can at the store level to keep our foot traffic up.”

Artificial intelligence, says Rosenblum, will have a role.

“It will allow executives to forecast their decisions whether they’re looking to improve margins or increase sales,” he said. “They’ll still have to guide it and provide the insight of what they’re trying to achieve.”

### The German Invasion

Aldi, started as the world’s first discount grocery store in 1961 in Germany, is owned by the Albrecht family, the world’s 11th wealthiest family, says TheStreet.com.

“Right now, from a value standpoint, Aldi’s the one grocery executives need to be the most aware of,” said Rosenblum.

Aldi, which opened its first U.S. store in Iowa in 1976, has more than 2,000 stores across 36 states. It’s the world’s fourth largest grocer, with more than 13,000 stores around the globe.

The company picked up nearly 400 Winn-Dixie and Harveys supermarkets in March, with plans to convert some of them into Aldi stores over the next several years, according to a published report.

There are 16 Aldi stores in San Diego County.

Another German grocer in the United States, Lidl, with more than 150 stores between New York’s Long Island and Virginia, is also a discount operation, with more than 340,000 employees around the globe.

### The Numbers

Solomon Partners’ Scott Moses, in a report about the state of the grocery industry, shows how much it’s changed over the last 20 years.

In 2003, the country’s top 10 grocers were, in order, Walmart, Kroger, Albertsons, Safeway, Ahold, Costco, Delhaize America, Publix, Target and Winn-Dixie.

Twenty years later, the top 10 players are, in order, Walmart, Kroger, Costco, Albertsons, Amazon, Target, Ahold Delhaize, Publix, Dollar General and H-E-B.

In the last four years, there's also been sizable value changes in some of the country's leading grocers and big-box retailers.

In late March 2020, shortly after COVID-19 struck, Amazon's market capitalization (the value of its stock times the number of shares outstanding) was \$972.91 billion. In early October 2024, it was nearly \$2 trillion, growing more than two times in just over four years.

Costco, during the same time frame, went from a market capitalization of \$125.91 billion to nearly \$400 billion, an increase of more than three times.

Walmart saw its market capitalization double, from \$321.8 billion in March 2020 to \$650.62 billion in October 2024.

Target's went from \$46.57 billion to \$71.88 billion, a 54% increase between March 2020 and October 2024.

Kroger's market capitalization increased 70%, from \$23.43 billion in March 2020 to just over \$40 billion in October 2024, while Albertsons' market capitalization went up about 40%, from \$7.55 billion to \$10.59 billion.

"Wall Street expects the biggest players to take share (from smaller grocers) and dominate the industry," said another financial analyst requesting anonymity. "That's how it sees where things are going."

### Value Proposition

The NGA's Jones and Solomon Partners' Scott Moses say the value of the local grocery store and supermarket is greater than their commercial purposes.

"What helps independent grocery stores maintain their customer base is a virtuous cycle of reinvestment in the community," Jones said. "They're supporting local Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, sponsoring Little Leagues. They're also partnering with local universities, local farmers and ranchers to get locally grown and raised products on their shelves. That's what keeps them relevant in a market where they can't compete in the center of the store."

"Supermarket grocers have been pillars of thousands of American communities for generations," wrote Moses in a report in December 2023. "But they cannot magically – without sufficient scale – continue to provide better prices, better wages and benefits, to a largely unionized employee base; offer more local and sustainable food options that support local farmers; be a community pillar; offer engaging first jobs or great careers to millions of people; and be there to sustain us in the next crisis."

Douglas Page can be reached at [dp@sandiegometro.com](mailto:dp@sandiegometro.com)

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## What's behind all the political theater over California's high gasoline prices? **By Dan Walters**

California's governors and legislators often do things that defy real world rationality and can only be explained, if not justified, in political terms. This month's exercise in political theater over gasoline prices is an extreme example.

California's gas prices are, as every motorist knows, much higher than those of other states. Just driving into Nevada and Arizona for a fill-up will likely cost a dollar per gallon less than it would in California — even though the fuel probably came from a California refinery.

The vast majority of that differential is explained by California's unique gasoline blend, mandated to fight smog, and its highest-in-the-nation direct and indirect taxes.

In a 2023 paper, Severin Borenstein, a UC Berkeley economist regarded as the state's leading expert on the issue, pointed out that California's direct and indirect taxes on fuel amount to nearly \$1 per gallon — 70 cents higher than the national average of such taxes — and the unique fuel blend adds another dime. Borenstein has also called for a deeper review of what he's dubbed a "mystery gasoline surcharge," which two years ago averaged 65 cents.

Despite those high prices, gasoline is still a relatively small segment of what it costs to live in California. Driving 240 miles a week in a car that gets 20 miles to the gallon might cost \$12 more than it does in another state.

Nevertheless, gas prices command an inordinately high level of public attention as a symbol of anxiety about living costs in general, and therefore are ripe for political exploitation.

Gov. Gavin Newsom has been gaslighting Californians about gas prices for the last couple of years, bypassing the simple fact that taxes and other mandated costs are key factors in high prices and insisting that refiners are gouging motorists.

He never offered proof — nor have legislators insisted that he provide it — before enacting new laws that he says will prevent price spikes. The latest, finalized on Monday, requires refiners to hold more fuel in reserve to ease the impacts of maintenance shutdowns.

At best, having more gas in reserve might shave a few pennies from a gallon of gas, but it could also increase prices, as the California Energy Commission conceded. In a recent analysis, several commissioners wrote that Newsom's proposal could "artificially create shortages in downstream markets" and "increase average prices."

So is there more to Newsom's demand that the Legislature convene a special session on gas prices than just election-year grandstanding?

There is a noteworthy back story: The state has vowed to completely wean itself off carbon-based energy, eventually



Lawmakers during the California Senate committee hearing on fuel supply and price hikes at the Capitol Annex Swing Space building in Sacramento Oct. 7, 2024. Photo by Fred Greaves for CalMatters

shutting down its remaining nine refineries but still maintaining a supply of gasoline during the transition.

Last year, the California Air Resources Board published a report on the interim step of adopting a so-called Low Carbon Fuel Standard to provide “the economic incentives to produce cleaner fuels like electricity, hydrogen and biofuels that are needed to displace fossil fuels and reduce transportation sector emissions.”

The report said that adoption could immediately increase gas prices by 47 cents a gallon and then, “on average, from 2031 through 2046 the proposed amendments are projected to potentially increase the price of gasoline by \$1.15 per gallon, potentially increase the price of diesel by \$1.50 per gallon and fossil jet fuel by \$1.21 per gallon.”

The report generated a flurry of adverse media and political attention and CARB backed off somewhat. It now refuses to put a number on the program’s effect on gas prices. Nevertheless, it’s apparent that the transition from gasoline-powered automotive travel will hit consumers hard.

Perhaps the performative legislation adopted Monday is aimed at diverting attention from the larger effects of transition or portends ever-increasing state micromanagement of refineries to avoid sudden closures that would lead to shortages and serious price spikes.

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# I'm a true-blue Democrat — but I've joined the GOP and back Donald Trump

By Gloria Romero

I walked away from the Democratic Party and joined the Republicans. I will vote for Donald Trump for president.

I've been a true-blue Democrat, a former California state senator who chaired its Senate Democratic Caucus and served as Senate Majority Leader.

I was a Democratic National Convention delegate for Jesse Jackson and Barack Obama, and state co-chair for President Obama's re-election.

But I've said goodbye, adios, I've had enough. This is not the Democratic Party I once championed. I don't recognize it anymore.

The so-called "party of democracy" eradicated 14 million votes, including mine, to install Vice President Kamala Harris as its nominee.

Like a banana republic, the dedazo was used by political elites to tap the candidate they chose. Essentially, they executed a political coup.

As California's attorney general, Harris was unimpressive.

She made an intentional choice to hitch herself to the powerful teachers' union and was clearly being coddled by a power elite that was even then shaping her political future.

Her manipulated rise is in line with the Democratic Party's giant leap toward authoritarianism and censorship.

President Ronald Reagan warned that if fascism comes to America it will come as liberalism, and he was right: I have witnessed individual freedoms being trapped, silenced, censored.

## Has the Democratic Party changed

### for the worse?

I've seen the terrifying modification of language that condemns me for saying that I can define a woman and can distinguish between biological sex and gender identity.

I am a mother and refuse to call myself a "birthing person." I'm pro-choice, but I do not support abortion till birth. What happened to "safe, legal and rare"?

The Trump-led Republican Party has become the party of peace, while Democrats have marched toward endless war.

Harris has refused to speak the names of the 13 American soldiers whose lives were sacrificed for a photo-op in the botched withdrawal from Afghanistan, but she has run from the blood on her hands.

The Democratic Party has turned its back on the working class.

Democratic leaders lecture us on sacrificing our liberties under the burdens of COVID and climate change and inflation, while they feast with their friends and donors at the French Laundry.

Kamala Harris (R) listens to American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten speak to the media after speaking to members of the AFT in Detroit, Michigan, U.S. May 6, 2019.

As a Mexican-American, I have long embraced pathways to citizenship, but I reject the mockery of throwing open our southern border to all comers.

People around the world flock to America — we should insist on maintaining what citizenship means.

Perhaps my biggest disillusionment with Democratic Party has been its refusal to embrace school choice and good schools for

all.

Harris proclaims she was a prosecutor, but she used her power to do the bidding of the teachers' union and overturn a court victory won by mostly low-income, minority parents and kids seeking vital education reforms.

Meanwhile, she sought prosecution of parents for not forcing their "truant" kids to attend those chronically failing schools.

Today, in Harris' hometown Oakland school district, 75% of both Latino and black students are not proficient in basic reading or math.

I watched the Oct. 7 terror attack on Israel with horror.

The Democratic Party has forsaken our ally to placate the pro-Hamas wing and win a swing state.

I have seen the best of America: a nation that went to the moon and beyond.

But our American landing has become like quicksand under a Democratic Party that is sinking the hopes and lives of Americans.

So I finally walked away. I stayed for as long as I could: I tried reforms, I spoke out, I voted.

Today, I turn toward the future — an America that still shines, despite inequities that need change; a blessed land of opportunity — and join the party of the greatest American, Abraham Lincoln.

The challenges of rebuilding our republic will take all of us.

I join the Republican Party to make America great again. I am free at last.

Gloria Romero is a former California state senator.



# Four San Diegans appointed judges to San Diego Superior Court bench



Newly appointed judges, from left: Jami L. Ferrara, Rachel L. Jensen, Devon L. Lomayesva, Catherine A. Richardson

Gov. Gavin Newsom has appointed four San Diego County residents as judges to fill vacancies on the San Diego Superior Court bench.

- Jami L Ferrara, a sole practitioner since 2001, was a trial attorney at Federal Defenders of San Diego Inc. from 1997 to 2000. She earned a Juris Doctor degree from George Mason University Law School and fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge John S. Meyer. She is a Democrat.

- Rachel L. Jensen has been a partner at Robbins Geller Rudman & Dowd LLP since 2008 and an associate from 2004 to 2007. She served as a law clerk for the Office of the Prosecutor at the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in 2003 and the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in 2002. Jensen earned a Juris Doctor degree from the Georgetown University Law Center in 2000. She fills the vacancy created by the appointment of Judge David Rubin to the Court of Appeal. Jensen is a Democrat.

- Devon L. Lomayesva has been chief judge at the Intertribal Court of Southern California since 2016. has been a Sole Practitioner since 2014. Lomayesva was a pro tem judge at the Intertribal Court of Southern California from 2015 to 2016 and tribal attorney for the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians from 2013 to 2014. She was Executive Director at California Indian Legal Services from 2007 to 2012 and in-house counsel for the Iipay Nation of Santa Ysabel from 2004 to 2007. She earned a Juris Doctor degree from the California Western School of Law, and fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Harry Powazek. Lomayesva is a Democrat.

- Catherine A. Richardson has served as a commissioner at the San Diego County Superior Court since 2024. She served as a senior chief deputy city attorney at the San Diego City Attorney's Office from 2014 to 2024, and was senior counsel at Klindinst PC from 2011 to 2014. She was, a partner at Thorsnes Bartolotta

McGuire from 1997 to 2005. Richardson earned a Juris Doctor degree from the University of San Diego School of Law, and fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Carlos O. Armour. Richardson is a Democrat.

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A man pushes a wheelchair near an encampment in Skid Row on July 5, 2024. A report says Los Angeles needs to dramatically increase its annual spending by the billions to house its homeless population. Photo by Etienne Laurent, Reuters

**By Dan Walters**

Multiple state agencies spent nearly \$24 billion on housing and homeless programs in the first five years of Gavin Newsom’s governorship, but the number of people without homes continued to grow, rising by 20% to more than 180,000 in the most recent federal count in 2023.

State Auditor Grant Parks cited that stunning level of spending this year in a sharply worded report concluding that the California Interagency Council on Homelessness, Newsom’s umbrella agency that’s supposed to coordinate and track state programs, has utterly

failed to do so.

Parks said the agency “has not aligned its action plan for addressing homelessness with its statutory goals, nor has it ensured that it collects accurate, complete, and comparable financial and outcome information from homelessness programs. Until Cal ICH takes these critical steps, the state will lack up-to-date information that it can use to make data-driven policy decisions on how to effectively reduce homelessness.”

City and county governments have spent additional billions of dollars on homelessness, which stands at the top of the list of

worrisome issues continuously cited by California voters in polls.

If spending of that magnitude — probably \$30 billion-plus by now — has not made noteworthy progress on reducing homelessness, one must wonder how much it would cost to provide shelter and necessary support services for every homeless person in the state.

No one in Newsom’s administration or the Legislature has ventured into that analytical territory. As Parks says, state officials don’t even know how well their current programs are working, and until they do, the state cannot chart a comprehensive and realistic plan for ultimate success.

Nevertheless, a report presented to the Los Angeles City Council by the city’s homelessness services agency gives us a rough idea of what it would cost and it’s a truly stunning number, something north of \$100 billion or more than \$500,000 for each homeless person.

Los Angeles has a quarter of the state’s homeless population, about 45,000, and the staff report calculated that it would cost \$2.2 billion a year for 10 years, of the city’s own funds and support from federal, state and county governments, to build enough housing for everyone now on city streets and expected to become homeless during the decade.

To make it happen, the report says, the city would have to

increase its spending from the current \$1.4 billion over 10 years to \$4.7 billion and garner matching increases of \$2.5 billion from the county, \$3.7 billion from the state and \$3.3 billion from the federal government for housing, plus another \$3.7 billion from the county for 9,000 additional “higher level of care” beds.

Margot Kushel, a professor of medicine at UC San Francisco and director of the school’s Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative, told the Los Angeles Times that the report’s figures appear to be a realistic cost to “counteract decades of starved funding” for low-income housing and social services.

“In some ways, it’s an eye-popping dollar amount,” Kushel said. “In other ways, it doesn’t seem that eye-popping to me for the scale of the problem.”

Projecting the report’s estimates to the entire state, California would have to commit about \$10 billion a year for a decade — and that’s just for housing. The social and medical services that are vital to prevent newly housed people from once again dropping out would cost many billions more.

Californians consider ending homelessness, particularly the proliferation of squalid encampments, to be a very high priority. But are they willing to spend the big bucks to get it done, and are their elected officials willing to divert the funds from other programs, or raise taxes, that a successful program would require?

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# FINDING HOPE

## African Children Find Hope through New School Supported by San Marcos Couple

By Marlise Kast-Myers

Lesotho, a landlocked country in Southern Africa, is one of the poorest nations in the world. Yet, they place a tremendous value on education. In fact, Lesotho actually spends a higher proportion of its GDP (13%) on education than any country in the world. Despite this investment, free education is only available for students through primary school. As a result, only 24% of Lesotho's learners are able to receive a secondary or high school education.

Predominantly an agrarian culture, Lesotho is so impoverished that many men leave home for extended periods, to work in the South African mines just to provide for their families. In such an environment, education is regarded as the only way for the next generation to break the desperate cycle of poverty.

This story is nothing new to David and Gretchen Kast, a San Marcos couple who have dedicated their lives to educating children in Lesotho. The son of Swiss missionaries, David was born and raised in Lesotho, while Gretchen, was just two years of

age when her family sailed from California to spend a lifetime of service in Ghana.

After working in an East London bank to earn enough money to get to the States, David left Africa to attend college in Santa Cruz. Ironically, also around that time, Gretchen left Ghana to attend the same college. It was there that they met and fell in love. The couple married one week after their graduation and immediately left California to take up residence in David's childhood home of Mount Tabor in Lesotho.

Moving to Lesotho as a newlywed, Gretchen drew on her degree in education as she taught students from kindergarten through high school over a 9-year period. The couple also provided basic medical and dental services in that remote setting since the nearest hospital was several hours away on dirt roads.

At that time, six out of every 10 babies born in Lesotho died before the age of two. Moved by this tragic statistic, Gretchen crossed the border to South Africa to undertake an intense course





David and Gretchen Kast,

of midwifery training. Upon her return to Lesotho, she began a bare-bones maternity clinic, eventually delivering over 100 healthy babies—and pulling over 1,000 teeth. Meanwhile, David founded five schools and constructed 18 buildings—all of which are still standing today.

Little did the Kasts know they had only planted a seed of hope. Nearly a decade later, the couple returned to California where David began his doctoral studies, Gretchen worked in finance, and they raised two daughters—both now based in San Diego. All the while, they continued to raise funds for their village back “home” and committed to visit Lesotho every few years.

Since retiring from 50+ years in the ministry and academia, David's primary focus has turned to his lifelong passion for landscape design. After settling in San Diego County in 2003, he obtained his State Contractor's License and launched Swiss Gardens. Realizing the greater impact they can make from afar, the Kasts created the business to invest profits from his firm to underwrite his continuing interest in projects in Africa.

Now in their mid-80's, David still works full time, helping his customers fulfill their landscaping dreams, while Gretchen manages administration for both the business and their non-profit. To date, the couple has donated the bulk of their earnings, and time, to the next generation in Lesotho.

But now, comes their greatest legacy.

Introducing Hope English High School in Mafeteng, Lesotho. With a current enrollment of 1,200 eager students, Hope School, offers an inspiring story of determination and hard work.

Formed as an extension of Mount Tabor High School—founded in 1968 by David and Gretchen—Hope started at a “grass roots” level by volunteer teachers. For years, students gathered under make-shift corrugated iron structures that lacked insulation from the heat or cold. Despite such limited facilities, Hope School consistently produced excellent academic results.

One of the unique features of Hope School is that it is an English-Medium campus, meaning that all subjects are taught in



English. Lesotho's secondary schools cover a five-year program and students must pass the nationally-administered Cambridge Overseas School Certificate to progress further.

The students of Hope School are motivated by a dedicated staff of 30 teachers. Unfortunately, Lesotho's Department of Education currently funds only two of those teachers. Consequently, most of the teachers are paid from school fees collected from the students and their parents.

Currently under construction is a double-story Learning Center that will provide eight classrooms, in addition to the administration office, registration office, faculty room, and



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The Learning Center

dispensary. This month, (even while construction continues on the upper level), students have moved into the ground floor classrooms of the Learning Center.

In consideration of Hope School's limited resources, the Board and administrators are determined to complete the building without incurring any indebtedness. Although this pay-as-you-build approach has slowed construction, it is representative of the financial stewardship which has been a hallmark of the Hope School story.

With the help of family and friends, the Kasts have invested over \$80,000 into the construction project at Hope School, regularly donating some of their profits from David's landscaping firm. The estimated cost to complete the Learning Center will be approximately \$60,000.

To help make the campus more self-sustaining, Hope School

has initiated several student-led programs. These projects encourage the students to develop their agricultural skills, while growing vegetables in on-site gardens and raising livestock, chickens and eggs, both to sell and to supplement their diet.

The life-altering future of Hope School is almost limitless. Adjoining the existing 3.5-acre campus is an available 4.5-acre lot. Negotiations are currently underway to purchase that site for future expansion.

The ultimate vision is to develop a trade school on the property and, eventually to add dormitories, athletic fields, a health clinic, and similar service projects. Given such far-reaching ambitions, it seems fitting that this campus was given the name, Hope School.

To learn more about their vision, or to contribute to their nonprofit, contact the Kasts at [dgkast2@gmail.com](mailto:dgkast2@gmail.com).



New adjacent center under construction



## Visualizing the Busiest Ports in the World

In 2024, nine of the world's 10 busiest ports are located in Asia, underscoring the eastward shift in global trade flows.

Due to supply chain shifts and deeper integration, intraregional trade within Asia has grown significantly. In the 1990s, over 70% of Asian exports by value went beyond the region, with containers being shipped back mostly empty. By comparison, roughly 60% of exports in Asia are traded within the region today.

This graphic shows the busiest ports in the world in 2024, based on data from Ship Technology.

### Busiest Ports in the World

The above graphic shows 10 busiest container ports in the world by annual TEU traffic in 2023. TEU stands for twenty-foot equivalent unit, a general unit of cargo capacity.

As we can see, seven out of the 10 busiest ports in the world are located in China, illustrating its central role in global manufacturing and trade.

Since 2009, the country has been the largest exporter of goods in

the world. The expansion and modernization of China's port network are pivotal to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As a global infrastructure development strategy adopted by China in 2013, the BRI is aimed at expanding connectivity and trade between Asia, Europe, and Africa through creating extensive networks of railways, energy pipelines, highways, and shipping routes.

Standing as the second-largest port globally, the Port of Singapore recorded 39 million TEU in 2023. Each year, 130,000 vessels enter the port, which is connected to 600 ports across more than 120 countries worldwide. Not only that, 1,000 vessels are located at the port at any given time in the day.

Beyond Asia, the Port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands is the leading hub in Europe. With origins tracing back to the 15th century, the port spans about 40 km (25 mi) long and 10 km (6 mi) wide. More recently, the Port of Rotterdam is working on autonomous shipping projects with several partners, allowing vessels to be operated remotely with the use of cameras and sensors, serving as the ships' eyes and ears.

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