



Social Capital

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Housing Corporation
of America

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Building Better Communities

Social Capital

Volume VI

Contributors:

Nuri Amanatullah

Lusia Gualy

Corey Heimlich

Krystle Tugadi-Isberto

Nicole Weinstock



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A Word from Resident Services



Housing Corporation of America (HCA) is a non-profit 501(c)3 that is committed to providing quality affordable housing to the 90+ communities they serve.

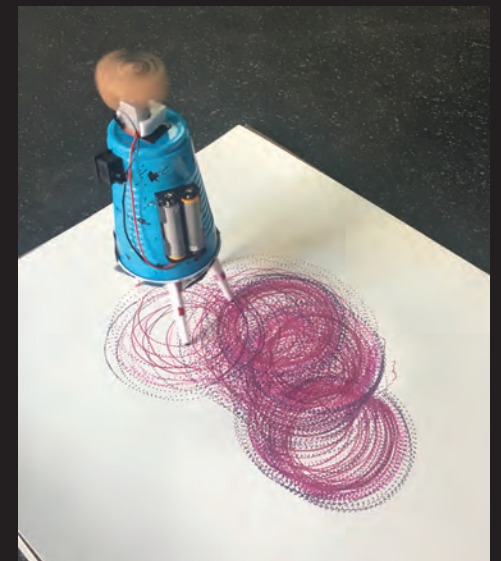
HCA's Resident Services Department is dedicated to offering quality educational programming and resources to residents of its communities that are both accessible and free of cost. HCA believes that by making these programs within reach, residents can be actively involved and engaged in their community. This publication is an overview of just some of the individuals, organizations, and programs that help make this happen. This is *Social Capital*.



DOODLE BOTS



On the heels of HCA's partnership with the Columbia Memorial Space Center, the Doodle Bots was an all ages art and S.T.E.M. program at four communities in the Antelope Valley: the Arbor at Palmdale and Longhorn Pavilion in Palmdale, and the Arbor on Date and Village Pointe in Lancaster. A handful of residents from each property constructed a "doodle bot" to assist them in the creation of an original piece of artwork. Each piece was then hand-embellished by each participant. The program provided local youth and adults exposure to foundational S.T.E.M. principles and allowed for countless iterations depending on construction factor such as marker spacing and motor placement. Participants were then instructed to hand-embellish their artwork by continuing the marks made by their doodle bots or by adding new marks, patterns, or images.



DOODLE BOT CONSTRUCTION

LEARN HOW TO MAKE YOUR VERY OWN DOODLE BOT!

MATERIALS NEEDED:



x1 MOTOR
(1.5-3 V)



x1 BATTERY HOLDER



x1 PLASTIC CUP



x3-4 MARKERS, PENS,
PENCILS OR CRAYONS



x2 AA BATTERIES



x1 ROLL DUCT TAPE



x1 LARGE PIECE
OF PAPER



x1 SCISSORS



x1 CORK



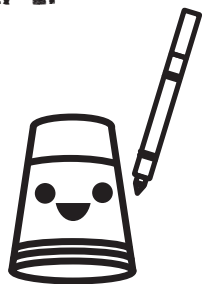
x1 ROLL ELECTRICAL
TAPE (OPTIONAL)

x1 EXTRA WIRE
(OPTIONAL)



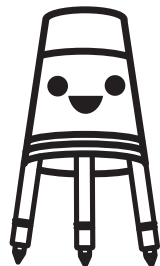
x1 ON/OFF SWITCH
(OPTIONAL)

STEP 1:



USE A MARKER OR SHARPIE TO DECORATE YOUR BOT WITH DESIGNS OR PATTERNS

STEP 2:



SELECT 3-4 MARKERS AND USE DUCT TAPE TO ATTACH INSIDE OF THE CUP WITH THE TIPS FACING DOWN

STEP 3:

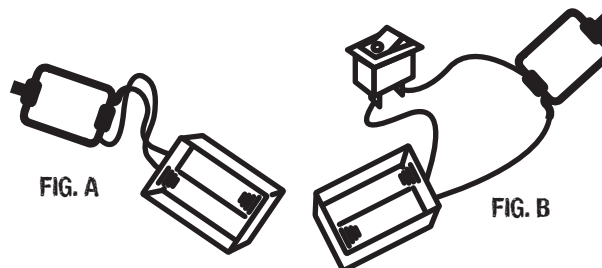


FIG. A

FIG. B

FIG. A: IF YOUR BATTERY PACK HAS AN ON/OFF SWITCH, SIMPLY ATTACH THE WIRES TO THE MOTOR.

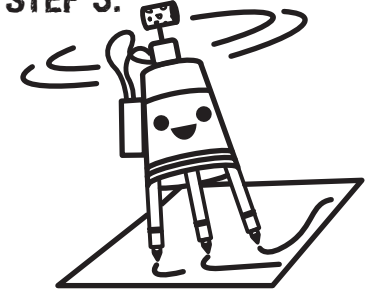
FIG. B: IF YOUR BATTERY PACK DOES NOT HAVE AN ON/OFF SWITCH, YOU CAN ATTACH ONE BY CONNECTING ONE WIRE FROM THE BATTERY PACK TO THE MOTOR AND ANOTHER WIRE FROM THE BATTERY PACK TO THE SWITCH.

STEP 4:



TAPE THE BATTERY PACK TO THE SIDE OF YOUR BOT AND TAPE THE MOTOR ON THE TOP MAKING SURE IT HAS ENOUGH ROOM TO SPIN FREELY. ONCE PLACED, PUT A CORK ON THE TOP OF THE MOTOR.

STEP 5:



PUT BATTERIES INSIDE OF YOUR BOT AND TURN IT ON. IF IT DOES NOT TURN ON, CHECK TO MAKE SURE THE WIRES ARE ATTACHED. YOU CAN USE ELECTRICAL TAPE TO SECURE THE WIRES IF THEY ARE LOOSE. PLACE YOUR BOT ON A PIECE OF PAPER AND HAVE SOME FUN!



CAUTION!

THE ENGINE AND BATTERY PACK CAN GET HOT!

Wellness & Movement

at William Penn Manor

Gloria Redondo is one of the first residents downstairs. She takes a tennis ball and leans against the wall, carefully massaging those hard-to-reach knots in her upper back and shoulders. This trigger point technique, which aims to release muscle pain by applying gentle pressure, is one of her favorites. She learned it and practices it every Wednesday in her “Wellness & Movement Class” at William Penn Manor, a Thomas Safran and Associates property for senior citizens.



Mercedes Giron (left) and wellness instructor Luisa Gualy (right).

Gloria has had to live with fibromyalgia for many years. But her pain doesn't stop her from joining this HCA class—in fact, it motivates her. “I just feel so good at the end of class,” she says when asked why she's so committed. “I really notice the difference in my body the weeks when I come to class. It eases the pains I have, so I keep coming.”

By the wall next to her stands another regular of the class, Mercedes Giron. Every week, during the self-massage section of the class, participants share the latest news about their daughters or grandsons, and wisdom about herbs, house remedies, and lunch recipes. Mercedes tell us, “I've been coming to this class for a long time, and I absolutely love it. I love doing yoga and stretching ... and I like the self-massage too!”

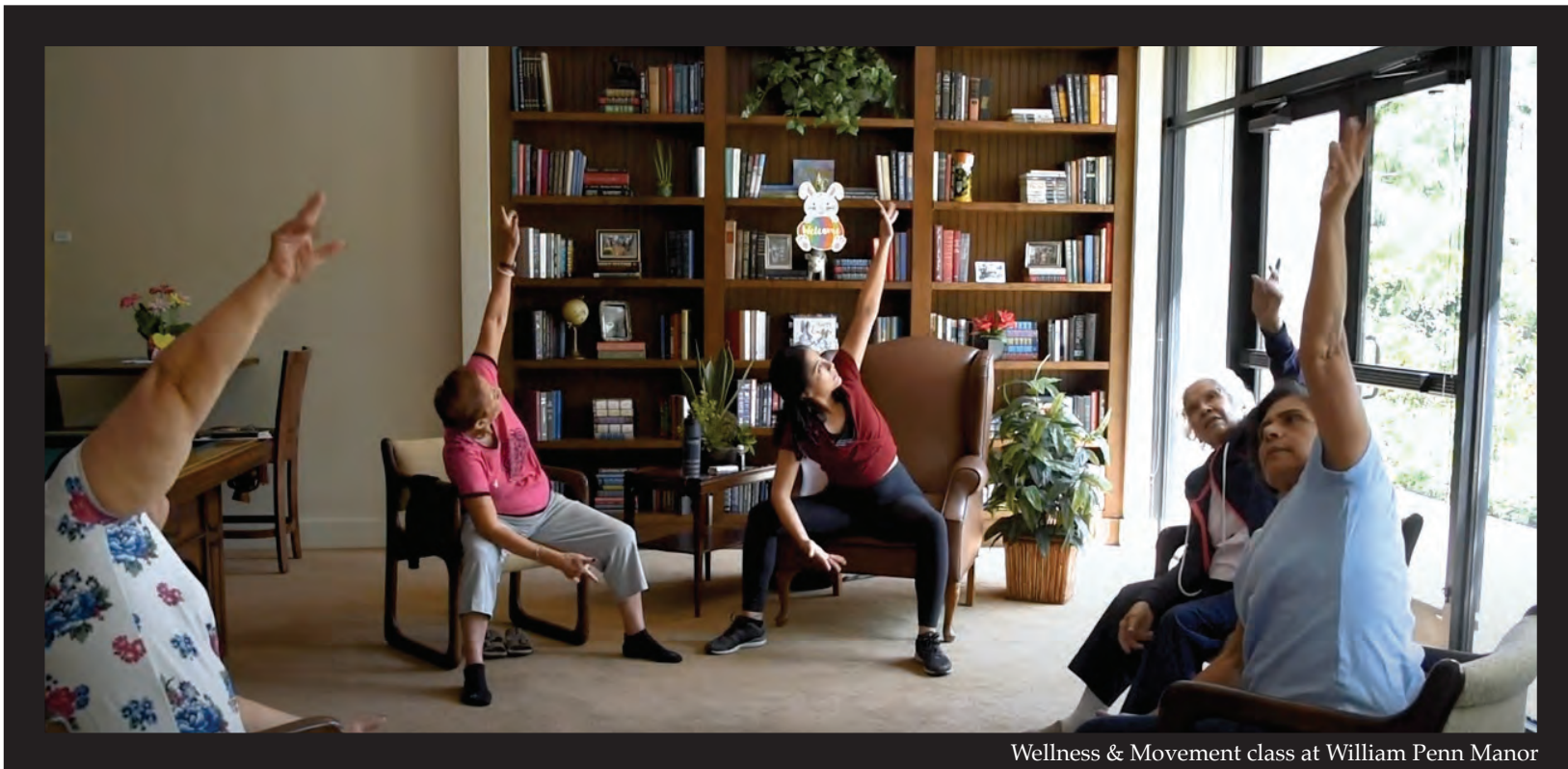
“I just feel so relaxed at the end of this class. I always feel the difference.”

- Gloria

When it's time to move on with the class, they take a seat and get ready for the aromatherapy meditation that follows. Every participant receives a few drops of an essential oil in their palms, a different blend each time. As the lush aroma drifts up and soft Celtic music begins, they bring their nervous systems to a more peaceful state, connecting with their breath and slowing down.

It is from this place of release and grounding that the class moves on to chair yoga, a gentle form of yoga where postures are done while seated, or while using a chair as a prop. Residents follow the lead of Luisa, their instructor since 2019. They synchronize their movements with their breath, asking themselves “What does your body need today?” Their answers guide each of them as they move at their own pace and start a dialogue with their bodies. Meanwhile, Luisa shares variations for each yoga pose, enough to accommodate each and every participant. After all, everybody and every body is different.

Of course, joy and laughter aren't missing from this class either. Residents exchange smiles throughout the class, and occasional jokes give everyone an extra boost of core exercise. Enedina Calderon, another participant, laughs and says, “I really like everything about



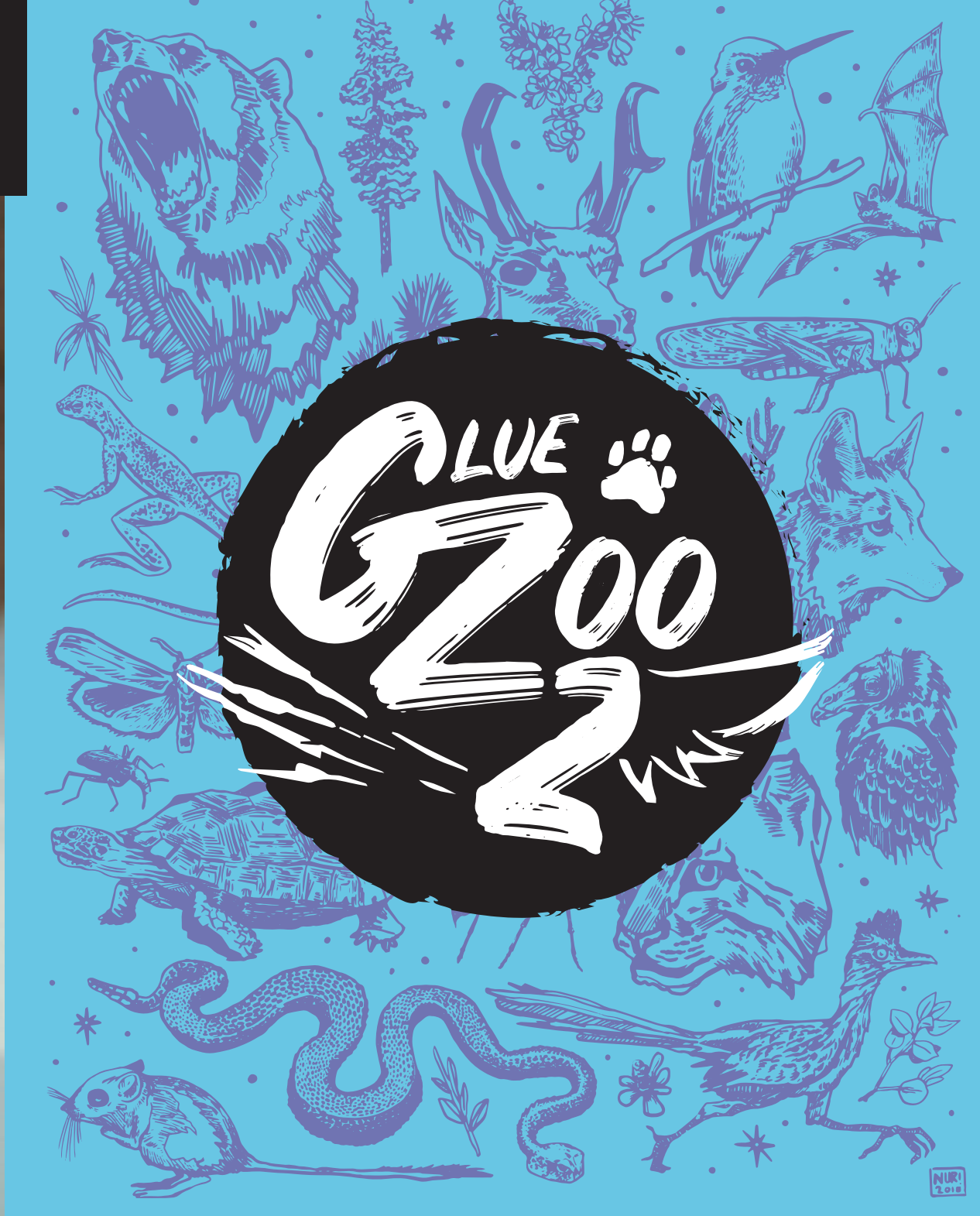
Wellness & Movement class at William Penn Manor

this class: the essential oil, the massage, the movement, everything.” Indeed, every part of the Wellness & Movement Class—the self-massage that loosens tight muscle knots, the relaxing aromatherapy, the chair yoga—is tailored for rejuvenation, health, restoration, joy, and self-care.

The class starts to come to an end when participants are asked to get to a comfortable position in their chairs. They lengthen their arms and legs and soften or close their eyes for the final meditation: three minutes of silence where they are invited to focus on their breath and check in with themselves to see how they feel after the last hour.

Self-care—the actions we take for ourselves to cultivate our physical and mental health—is important at all ages. But for senior citizens, self-care is fundamental for preventing and managing illness and pain. The weekly regulars of this class know this well. “I just feel so relaxed at the end of this class. I always feel the difference,” says Gloria.

Slowly, as they wiggle their fingers and toes and softly open their eyes, the students each take one last full body stretch. They are renewed and motivated to move on with their day. Or as Enedina puts it, “Now I feel good and energized, like it gives me more energy for living.”



Nearly three years after the first Glue Zoo program, the popular papier-mâché sculpture program made its return to eight communities in the Antelope Valley: the Arbor at Palmdale, Arbor Grove, Arbor Court, Arbor Gardens, Arbor on Date, Village Pointe, Longhorn Pavilion, and Sagebrush Apartments. In addition to the AV communities, Glue Zoo 2 also included artwork from the The Villaggio in Carson, CA making it the first HCA programs exhibition to bridge communities across Los Angeles County.

Combining art, design, and science, participants of the program utilized recycled and crowd-sourced materials to construct sculptures of local flora and fauna. Under the guidance of HCA instructors, the sculptures of animals local to the Antelope Valley and greater Southern California area were made from an assortment of materials including newspaper, cardboard, wire, and glue. While designing in 3D, students of the program also learned about the animals they were creating.



The paper menagerie boasted creatures big and small: assorted hummingbirds, a coyote, vulture, wild boar, mountain lion, coyote, raven, golden eagle, and many more. The collection even featured a Joshua tree that towered above 12 feet.

To build the sculptures, participants used crumpled newspaper and plastic bags to create a rough shape. Once the form was found, the piece was wrapped in masking tape and then covered with layer after layer of newspaper dipped in wallpaper paste. Other animals were also created out of cardboard and even crocheted.

At the end of the program all of the creations were transported to the Museum of Art and History in Lancaster for an exhibition that opened on March 9th, 2019. Museum-goers were able to walk through a veritable ecosystem and look at many of the creations eye-to-eye while reading facts about their backyard neighbors. The show was so popular that after the exhibition, select pieces were moved to be displayed at the Elyze Clifford Interpretative Center at the Prime Desert Woodland Preserve, a protected desert sanctuary operated by MOAH and the City of Lancaster. The pieces remain on display there to this day.

COOKING

with Soul

There is a magical element in food that transcends space and time. From bringing you back to a sweet memory from your childhood to transporting you to a country you have always wanted to visit, the mystical marriage of ingredients and flavors captures stories and histories that not only bring joy to our taste buds, but inform and unite. At the Gardens on Garfield in Glendale, residents spent half the year immersed in learning the culinary techniques of different countries they were interested in learning about. “Cooking with Soul” was the community’s group passport tethering them to the hearts of different communities around the world and one another.

Here are some thoughts from our culinary travelers about the class:

“It’s very good that everyone gathered together. We tried and tested other cultural foods together and took what we learned in class to implement it back home to share with our own families.”

- *Hilda Khachian*

“I really enjoyed the cooking time I had with everyone. There was a lot of laughter and smiles while we learned. We would get recipes and a list of ingredients each class so I knew what to buy when we went to the grocery store! That really helped!

- *Haggouhi Mehrabi*

“Everything was wonderful. I remember the Zuppa Toscana from Italy and the Chicken Adobo from the Philippines was very tasty. Very grateful for learning these recipes!”

- *Zartar Manogian*

“I loved going to class and the different foods we tasted each time. It was different from the Armenian culture, but I still enjoyed tasting the different flavors.”

- *Mary Baghdarsarian*



PAINTING *Los Angeles*



A long-time staple of HCA programming, painting classes are offered free of cost at a number of apartment communities in the Antelope Valley. Residents of all ages from five of these participating communities (Arbor at Palmdale, Village Pointe, Arbor Court, Longhorn Pavilion, and Arbor on Date) created Los Angeles-inspired work for HCA's Painting LA program.

Participants were asked to prepare artwork representing their thoughts, memories, and perceptions of Los Angeles using a variety of painting techniques. Paying homage to LA's vibrant history of street art, murals and graffiti culture, some of HCA's classes focused on creating designs that were turned into stencils that were used to spray paint on their canvases. Other participants explored traditional acrylic painting as well pour art.

1.



2.



3.



5.



4.



6.



1. Los Angeles inspired spray paint on canvas courtesy of Emilee from Arbor at Palmdale. 2. Arbor at Palmdale resident Jocelyn sprays her canvas. 3. Justin from Longhorn Pavilion shares his finished piece. 4. Finished works on exhibition at MOAH. 5. A museum goer looks at HCA artwork. 6. Arbor Court resident, Donna, holds up her painting of the entrance of her residence. The painting, one of two pieces for the exhibit, were themed around the notion of "home."



📷 Photos courtesy Sam Allen

*E*ach year the Dream Big Scholarship grants senior residents opportunities to engage and explore their interests beyond what HCA provides on-site. Scholarships have awarded funds to support dance lessons, art classes, and music classes among other things. In the fall of 2019, however, five recipients of the HCA Dream Big Scholarship used their awarded funds for a very unique educational pursuit.



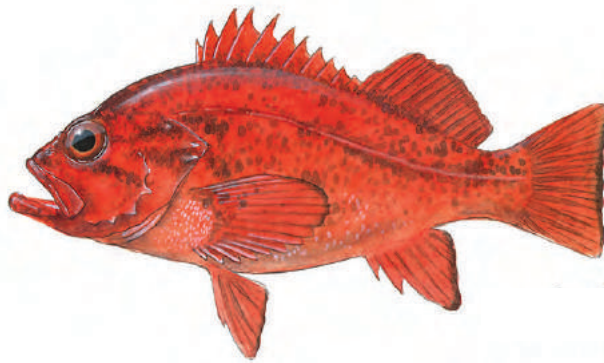
Arbor Court residents with Big Willie Mayes of Amaysing Fishing Bait and Tackle (second from right)

Residents Jack, William, Robert, Charles, and Derrel applied to the Dream Big Scholarship, not for the usual enrichment classes, but for an opportunity to spend a morning fishing off of the coast of Los Angeles—a far cry from the dusty high desert. Organized with the help of Big Willie Mayes, owner of Amaysing Fishing Bait and Tackle in Lancaster, the fishing trip allowed residents to get back to doing what they loved. Conveniently located right across the street from Arbor Court in the retail section of sister-property Arbor Grove, the shop's close proximity has allowed anglers from both properties to keep up with their hobby, even in the landlocked Antelope Valley.

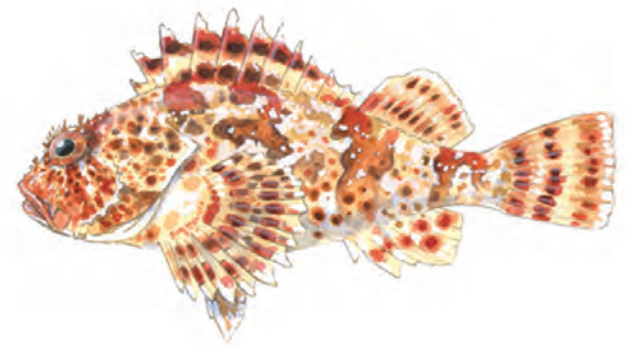


The morning of September 20th the group carpooled 75 miles to Marina Del Rey and boarded the New Del Mar, a 75 foot, aluminum hull sportfishing vessel. Casting their lines, the group caught a number of rockfish and sculpin, common bounty off of the Southern California coast.

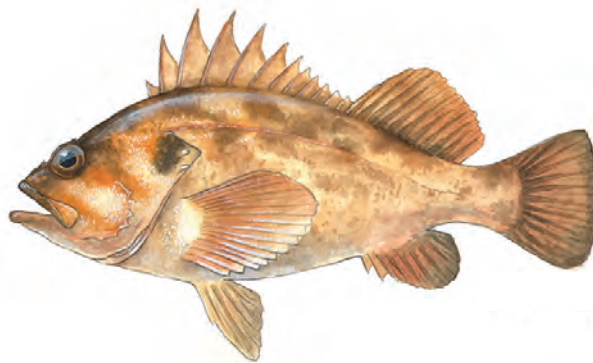




Vermillion Rockfish
Sebastes miniatus



California Scorpionfish aka Sculpin
Scorpaena guttata



Brown Rockfish
Sebastes auriculatus



Grass Rockfish
Sebastes rastrelliger





WOVEN STORIES

Knitting and crochet have been a cornerstone of HCA programming in the Antelope Valley featured at three communities in the downtown Lancaster district: Arbor Gardens, Arbor Court, and Arbor Grove. Senior residents had an opportunity to hone their art and forge bonds once a week over a pile of fibers. These fabric arts were highlighted as part of MOAH's Woven Stories exhibition May of 2019. In addition to a variety of shawls, hats, and many more woven arts, other fiber-based projects were created at HCA communities in both Palmdale and Lancaster. These included plaster of paris masks cast of residents' faces and painted fabrics.





1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



1. Assorted garments and fiber art installed at MOAH. 2. Arbor Court resident Nancy applies matcha and other teas to “sculpted canvases.” The Woven Stories exhibition opening coincided with the museum’s annual Mother’s Day tea party and the teas used on Nancy’s project subtly tinted the canvas. 3. Masks from Arbor at Palmdale and Village Pointe flanked by shawls made in crochet class. 4. Painted canvas bag and assorted crocheted items courtesy of Arbor Grove and Arbor Gardens. 5. Program instructor Melinda Johnson discusses the work with museum goers.

Sugar Rush

COOKIE, CAKE + CONFECTION
DECORATING CLASS
SPARKS INTEREST IN
YOUNG BAKERS





*W*hile many kids have fond memories of cartoons and cereal on Saturday mornings, a few residents at Arbor at Palmdale found a much sweeter way to spend the early hours of the weekend.



Sugar Rush was a baking and decorating program giving residents an opportunity to learn how to prep, bake, decorate, and of course, eat assorted baked goods. For three hours every Saturday morning residents joined instructor Kaelyn Brown, a professional cake decorator, to learn all of her sugary secrets.

Cookies, cupcakes, and the occasional cake were baked and decorated based on specific themes, such as animals or holidays. Participants learned how to use common decorating tools as well as techniques used to make confections that look as good as they taste. Residents also got to take whatever they made home with them. That said, Sugar Rush was not just an excuse to eat cupcakes and cookies all morning. The program emphasized cleaning and kitchen prep as much as it did icing and decorating. The classroom's kitchen was adorned with signs reminding participants about cross-contamination, kitchen cleanliness, and allergy alerts. Students were also taught how to measure ingredients and plan out baking in batches.



Instructor Kaelyn Brown helps an Arbor at Palmdale resident



"I'm sure all of the parents loved me sending their children back home full of sugar," states Kaelyn, half-joking. "But as ordinary as cookies seem, there's a lot of lessons in baking. They learn a practical skill that requires precise measurement and they also get to use their imaginations."



Sugar Rush usually had a class of about 10 - 15 students, and outside of parent participation every once in a while, the age of each student was rather young. For many it was their first exposure to a lot of the tools used in decorating. "A few had helped their mom bake cookies, but they had never used piping tools or fondant," continues Kaelyn. "They did great though. Even the projects that didn't go as expected were still eaten so it's a win-win."

While Sugar Rush was bouncing-off-the-walls fun, Kaelyn did her best to instill a sense of responsibility in the classroom kitchen. After each session, time was dedicated to clean up. Each week a batch of cookies or cupcakes was walked to the

manager's office as a thanks for the continued support of the program. It turns out the hard work was rewarded. For every participant's birthday that occurred during the program Kaelyn baked a custom birthday cake. Sugar Rush ran for approximately six months. While the program has shuttered for now, there's hope that the smell of cookies will waft through the community room at Arbor at Palmdale again, sooner than later.



In the heels of HCA's partnership with the Columbia Memorial Space Center, Flight Club was a hands-on S.T.E.M. and art program designed to be an introduction to aerospace science and astronomy. Consisting of two main activities, participants painted 3-D printed planes and mapped the stars while learning about constellations. The strong aerospace presence in the Antelope Valley made the program a hit with both youth and adult residents from three apartment communities: Village Pointe, Longhorn Pavilion, and Arbor at Palmdale. The month-long program culminated in an exhibition at MOAH Lancaster on February 8th, 2020. Ultimately, Flight Club ended up being the last exhibition in the Fran and Hernando Marroquin Classroom at MOAH before the COVID-19 pandemic.



Top Left: An Arbor at Palmdale resident performs a "flight test" of a 3D printed plane.
 Bottom Left: A Longhorn Pavilion resident poses with his painted planes. Above:
 Village Pointe residents at the Flight Club exhibition at MOAH.

PROJECT 1: FLIGHT DESIGN

Participants of Flight Club painted 3D printed models of two of Lockheed Martin's most iconic stealth planes: the F-117 Nighthawk and the F-22 Raptor. These planes, among others, hold the distinction of being produced by Lockheed's advanced programs division, Skunkworks, located in Palmdale, CA. In fact, one of Flight Club's participating communities, Arbor at Palmdale, is a stone's throw from Skunkworks HQ at the Air Force's Plant 42. Residents affectionately referred to it as "the skunk building."



PROJECT 2: STAR MAPS

Each participant of Flight Club selected a constellation to construct. Some of the selections were based on the students' personal zodiac sign; others were based on the subject matter of the constellation itself. Some were chosen completely at random.

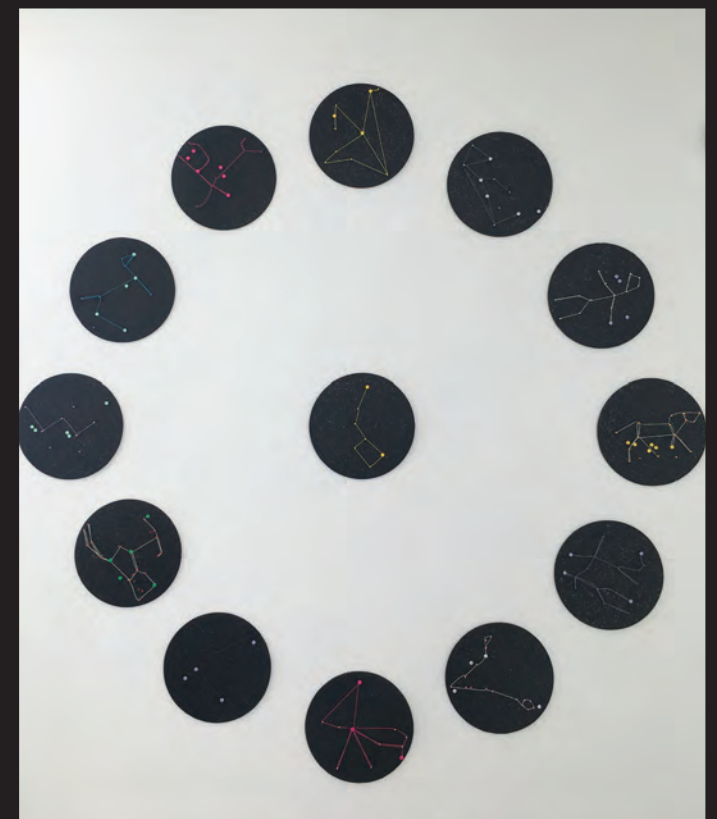
Each student began with a circular, wooden board and then painted it with "moon dust" paint, a mixture of chalk paint and glitter. The location of each star was then plotted on the wooden board and a pin was placed at each chalk point. After all pins were placed, students connected each star with string carefully looking at their star map to ensure the proper stars were being connected.



An Arbor at Palmdale resident plots her stars



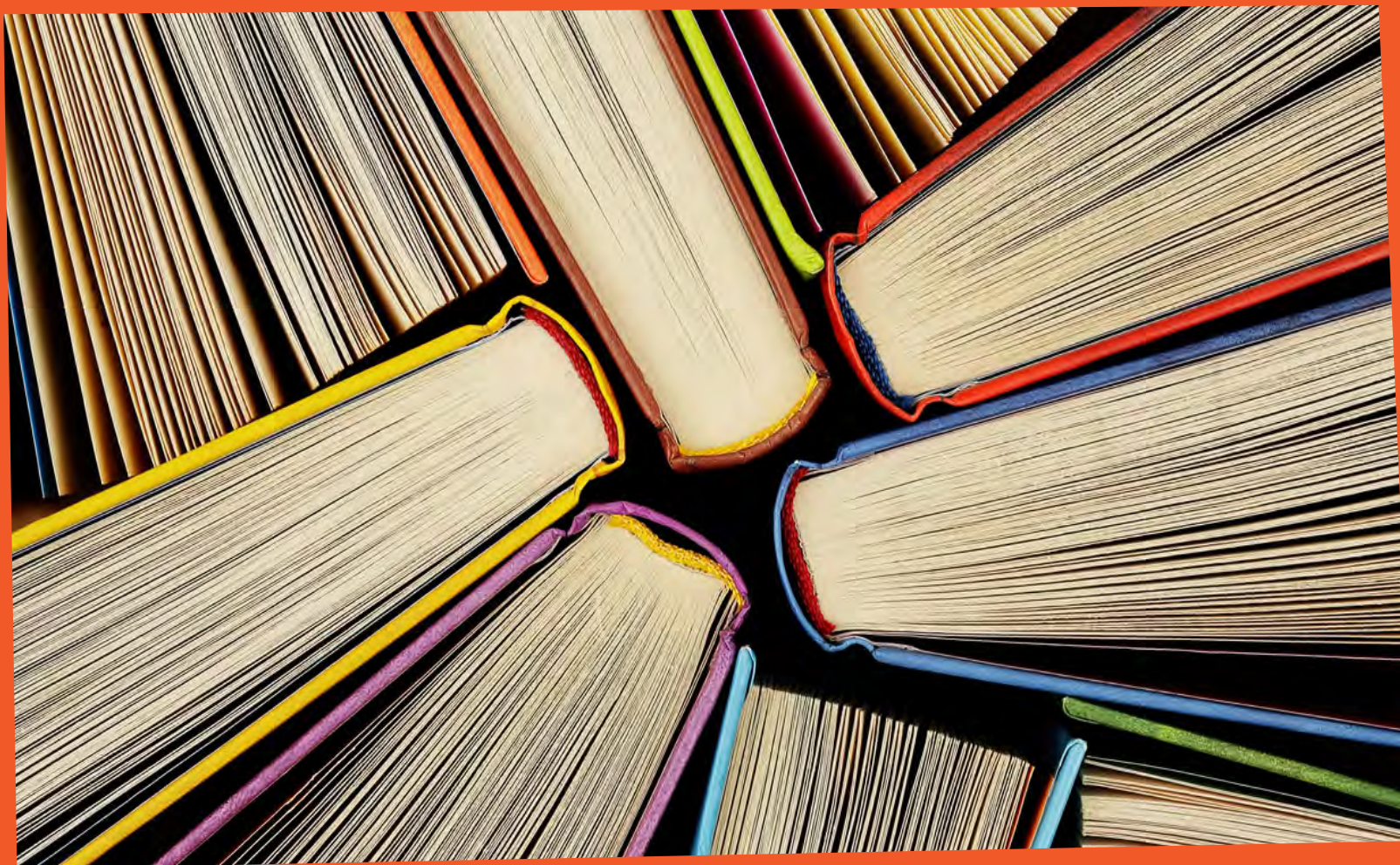
Village Pointe residents painting with "moon dust."



"Star Maps" on display at MOAH

THE UNBREAKABLE POWER OF TALL TALES





It is Thursday morning at The Woods at Playa Vista and the sound of footsteps begin to shuffle into the community room as the 11am hour approaches. One by one, residents convene in the community room, each with a book in hand. The air is full of anticipation as the clock ticks closer to an energetic discussion of pages, plots, characters, and events. Welcome to the Tiny Mugs and Tall Tales Book Club.

“

having such a passionate, animated, and interesting facilitator—it drew out my interest in wanting to read more.

”



The club has been around for some time, but adopted the name “Tiny Mugs and Tall Tales” in July of 2019. Members came together to create the personalized mugs that inspired the title, something to hold the warm beverages that accompany so many cozy hours spent reading. They started as a boon for the coffee and tea drinkers in the club. Over time, they evolved into so much more: an enduring symbol of literary kinship.

The club kicked off the second half of 2019 with *One More Thing*, a collection of short stories written by BJ Novak. The book’s dynamic perspectives on life, love, work, and everything in between sparked robust and diversified conversation.

At the top of 2020, the club sought a change from the short story variety to a single linear plotline. Over some brunch and discussion, members voted to read *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens.



From the start, this tall tale brought about a range of feelings. Vicki Castorena began this journey thinking, “This wasn’t going to be interesting. Crawdads singing? I couldn’t relate to that.” As they forged on however, the story ignited empathetic discussions and healthy debate. Later on, Vicki concluded, “In going through the book and also having such a passionate, animated, and interesting facilitator—it drew out my interest in wanting to read more.” As we grew close to finishing this read, Mildred Nichols shared that “this is one of the best books I’ve read.”

What's beautiful about the Tiny Mugs and Tall Tales Book Club is that everyone has their own personal tall tales and they allow us to view the stories we read through a variety of lenses. Gloria Thomas commented, "Exchanging ideas and different thoughts on stories and authors is great." Additionally, everyone finds and offers their own journey to the club. Bryan Du shared that "English isn't [my] native language, so [I] wanted to take advantage of learning English." He added, "This book club really helps me a lot. It makes me improve a lot."

Book club has also evolved into a valued social opportunity for its participants. April Colon shared in this sentiment by emphasizing, "It's great coming down to see our book club members and our coordinator. It's just wonderful." She then continued, "People have asked me to be in their book club, but I've always said 'No, I'm too busy.' But this book club has been so interesting that I will continue with it." Every week we don't just get to lean into these complex characters and storylines. We also get to lean into each other through vigorous and exciting exchanges about the stories we hold in our hands, and the stories we hold in our hearts.





**“Tall Tales and Tiny Mugs”
is concluded in Part II of
Social Capital Vol 6.***

*** Download Part I of
Social Capital Vol 6
to read how HCA adapted
its programming during
the pandemic.**