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PHOTO

THE FACES BEHIND THE BRIGHT SMILES



SHMUEL THALER — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Registered Dental Assistants Deserie Rios, left, and Perla Gonzalez bring their smiling eyes and compassionate care to young patients at Dientes Community Health. Since 1992, Dientes has worked to ensure that cost, insurance, income, race, language, and transportation don't prevent people from visiting the dentist by providing affordable, high-quality, and comprehensive dental care for 11,000 patients who are on public insurance or are uninsured. See more photos, page A3.

HELPING OUT

Creating connection: Downtown Senior Center and partners help community avoid isolation

By Melissa Hartman
mhartman@santacruzsentinel.com

SANTA CRUZ » Kelly Mercer-Lebov, the senior programs coordinator of the Downtown Senior Center at the Loudon Nelson Community Center, gets queries these days from eager seniors about when classes such as line dancing will be held in person again.

It wasn't always that way. Mercer-Lebov and her staff had been running more than 30 daily virtual classes since March 2020 and saw palpable tension and frustration from the elderly they check in with daily, especially around access to the coronavirus vaccine.

The seniors that took on-

line classes including memoir writing and yoga were used to using Zoom and other platforms to maintain some semblance of normal life, but many had friends and family with no access to the internet when vaccine doses were becoming available to them.

"It was virtually impossible for them to schedule (appointments)," Mercer-Lebov said Wednesday. "We were keeping our ears to the ground for any openings that could be able to help."

Eventually, representatives of the County of Santa Cruz Health Services Agency reached out to the Downtown Senior Center to help navigate the process. They created a simple

SENIORS » PAGE 2



DAN COVRO — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL FILE

Santa Cruz Parks & Recreation facility attendant employee Isaac Steinbrook teaches computer skills to a senior at Loudon Nelson Community Center in 2019. In the last year, the Downtown Senior Center has worked with local organizations to keep seniors online and connected.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Biden unveils big plan to 'win the future'

By Jonathan Lemire, Kevin Freking and Zeke Miller
The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH » President Joe Biden on Wednesday outlined a \$2.3 trillion plan to reengineer the nation's infrastructure over the next eight years in what he billed as "a once in a generation investment in America" that would undo his predecessor's signature legislative achievement of giant tax cuts for corporations in the process.

Speaking at a carpenters union training center in Pittsburgh, Biden drew comparisons between his hard-hatted proposed transformation of the U.S. economy and the space race — and promised results as grand in scale as the New Deal or Great Society programs that shaped the 20th century.

"It's not a plan that tinkers around the edges," Biden said. "It's a once-in-a-generation investment in America unlike anything we've seen or done since we built the interstate highway system and the space race decades ago. In fact, it's the largest American jobs investment since World War II. It will create millions of jobs, good-paying jobs."

White House officials say the spending would generate those jobs as the country shifts away from fossil fuels and combats the perils of climate change. It is also an effort to compete with the technology and public investments made by China, which has the world's second-largest economy and is fast gaining on the United States' dominant position.

BIDEN » PAGE 2

ENVIRONMENT

On tap in California: Another drought 4 years after last one

By Brian Melley
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES » California's hopes for a wet "March miracle" did not materialize and a dousing of April showers may as well be a mirage at this point.

The state appears in the midst of another drought only a few years after a punishing 5-year dry spell dried up rural wells, killed endangered salmon, idled farm fields and helped fuel the most deadly and destructive wildfires in modern state history.

"We're looking at the second dry year in a row. In California that pretty much means we have a drought," said Jay Lund, a civil and environmental engineering professor at the University of California, Davis.

DROUGHT » PAGE 2

ENVIRONMENT

Grizzlies expand turf but still need protection

Grizzly populations grew over the past ten years in the Yellowstone region and Glacier National Park. **PAGE A9**



COVID-19

Pfizer: Vaccine protects younger teenagers

In big announcement, firm claims its COVID-19 vaccine is safe and strongly protective for kids as young as 12. **PAGE A6**

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Young at Heart in Santa Cruz County



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The last Thursday of every month, the Santa Cruz Sentinel will bring you great resources for the 55+ community. Featuring local activities, shopper specials, health and fitness, medical resources and much much more! Don't miss the April edition in both print and e-edition April 29, 2021

To be included, please reach out to Steve Bennett at sbennett@santacruzsentinel.com or call your local sales rep today!

Santa Cruz Sentinel

PHOTOGRAPHER'S EYE



Dentist Hannah Mixer examines a youngster's panoramic x-ray with dental hygienist Yoselin Enriquez at Dientes Community Dental.

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Dientes registered dental assistant Deserie Rios examines David Rodger's mouth as the 6-year-old's mother Lydia Gomez looks on.

Building smiles

Dientes Community Dental Care provides access to high quality, affordable oral health care in Santa Cruz County and neighboring communities



Live Oak Elementary School fourth-grader Quincy Holt smiles as registered dental assistant Yoselin Enriquez moves the tube head of an x-ray machine during an exam at Dientes Community Dental's main clinic on Commercial Way. Holt was accessing dental care through an outreach clinic for students from Live Oak, Del Mar, Green Acres and Santa Cruz Gardens elementary schools. Founded in 1992, the nine full-time dentists and 160 dental and administrative staff at Dientes treat more than 11,000 adult and juvenile clients at their three clinics and 30 outreach sites each year. Most children seen through the program would normally get dental care at their own school when Dientes dentists and dental assistants arrive with their portable equipment. However, due to pandemic restrictions, the organization is making appointments for these young people to be seen at their clinics. The mission of Dientes includes working for social justice and addresses issues of inequities created by race, ethnicity, language, ZIP code, income, education, gender, and age by providing access to high quality, affordable oral health care. Dientes' website puts it simply, saying that everyone deserves "the dignity that comes from a healthy smile." Dientes, which also offers outreach services at Juvenile Hall and Housing Matters will offer future outreach days to students at other schools. Services offered by Dientes full-time staff and their part-time endodontist and oral surgeon include examinations, x-rays, cleanings, sealants, fluoride treatments and varnish. For information about Dientes visit www.dientes.org.

Dentist Hannah Mixer works on a young patient's mouth at during a clinic at Dientes.



A young patient at Dientes gets his teeth cleaned.

This photo page features the work of award-winning Sentinel photographer Shmuel Thaler. 'Photographer's eye' showcases Thaler's photos from around Santa Cruz County.