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NO. 7 VOL. XXXIV



## SAN DIEGO COUNTY'S 2019 MEN OF INFLUENCE



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# "THERE'S A SMILE ON EVERY FACE"

- *Bing*

FRI NOV 8  
OPENING DAY

SAT NOV 30  
THE WIZARDS FAIR

SAT NOV 9  
RUSSELL DICKERSON  
CONCERT\*   
TOYOTA

SUN DEC 1  
HOLIDAY AT THE RACES  
POP UP FESTIVAL

*Uncorked:*  
DERBY DAYS WINE FEST

EVERY SUNDAY  
FREE & FUN SUNDAYS  
TASTE OF THE TURF CLUB

SAT NOV 16  
THE WAILERS CONCERT\*   
TEQUILA PATRÓN.

SAT NOV 23  
CRAFT BEER FESTIVAL

THURS NOV 28  
FAMILY MILE FUN RUN  
THANKSGIVING *at the* TRACK



BING CROSBY SEASON

NOV 8 *thru* DEC 1

DelMarRacing.com    

\*Concerts are 18 and up shows. Pre-paid tickets, complimentary tickets and season passes will not be accepted for admission after the last race. Event lineup is subject to change.



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and San Diego—to  
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**COVER STORY:**

**San Diego County's 2019 Men of Influence**  
Introducing our selection of this year's Men of Influence, individuals who are making important contributions to the region. Pictured: Gabe Wright.



**Safety and Education Professionals Stress Proactive Plans**

Locking doors and assessing at risk behavior costs nothing, but is priceless when it comes to school safety, said Jeff Kaye. A retired Reno, Nev. police officer of 25 years, Kaye spent nearly a decade as director of public safety at Desert Sands Unified School District and is passionate about improving school safety.



**Qualcomm Institute's Virtual Reality System Expands**

Tucked into a cozy-feeling room on the first floor of the UC San Diego Qualcomm Institute's Atkinson Hall are 70 screens, bundles of cables and 35 computer nodes that make up a powerful system that can process massive amounts of data transmitted over the Internet from researchers all over the U.S. or even Antarctica.



**Local Scholar Wins Hat Trick of Prestigious Awards**

Saw Paw Kay ended the last school year with a bang, racking up three major awards for his community engagement and academic excellence. The sophomore at e3 Civic High was awarded an Honorary Certificate for the Princeton Prize in Race Relations, a scholarship from the American Civil Liberties Union to attend the weeklong Summer Advocacy Institute in Washington, D.C., and a fall semester study with the School of Ethics and Global Leadership in Washington, D.C.

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# SAN DIEGO SCENE

Rendering of UC San Diego Design and Innovation Building. (Courtesy of UC San Diego)

## UC San Diego breaks ground for new Design and Innovation Building

When UC San Diego officials broke ground for a new Design and Innovation Building, they said it was part of a “grand entrance” to the campus that also will include an adjacent amphitheater and park and connection to the university Blue Line Trolley extension. The multipurpose space is expected to be finished in spring 2021, months before the first riders will travel on the Blue Line Trolley. The university sees this as an inviting “foyer,” welcoming everyone to the campus.

The Design and Innovation building and the adjoining amphitheater and park will also be a connection hub for our campus, industry partners, and the greater community. It was conceived with the goal to encourage collaboration between Jacobs School of Engineering, Visual Arts, Cognitive Science, the Office of Innovation and Commercialization, alumni, and the greater community. These collaborative spaces between these various units and academic disciplines is designed to further foster’s UC San Diego’s “entrepreneurial spirit.”

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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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## San Diego author releases new book on childhood loss

By the time Madonna Treadway was eight years old, both of her parents had died. She moved in with family members and went on to lead a successful life, but always felt a void. That void was not only from the loss of her parents at such a young age, it stemmed from the absence of processing her grief. No one talked about her sadness, anger, or sense of abandonment.

Still, as an adult, Treadway finds that people feel uncomfortable talking about death. “I get it. Talking about death can be difficult,” says the author of the recently published self-help book *SIX HEALING QUESTIONS :A Gentle Path to Healing Childhood Loss of a Parent*. “Part of the reason it's hard is that we have little experience having these conversations. When I was a child, adults spoke in hushed tones about death or never spoke of it at all. I wondered if there was something



Author Madonna Treadway

shameful, or morally questionable, about dying. And no one ever asked me about my feelings of loss, guilt, and anger over my parents' deaths.”

These feelings can be exacerbated during the holiday season when everyone else seems to be joyously celebrating with their loved ones. “Loss is always difficult for children, but can be especially emotionally challenging during the holiday season,” says Treadway.

Treadway says she wrote her book with two readers in mind: those who experienced loss of their own parents during their childhood, and people who want to support children who have experienced loss. “I hope that the years of research I have done offer comfort and guidance to people struggling with loss,” she says. “The loss of a parent leave deep wounds, but that doesn't mean we have to experience grief for the rest of our lives,” she says. “There are ways to honor, commemorate, and celebrate our loved ones in a way that empowers and heals us.”

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## Cubic to become first corporate partner to be recognized within UCSD's Franklin Antonio Hall



Rendering of Franklin Antonio Hall, courtesy of UC San Diego. (Photo: Business Wire)

Cubic Corporation announced its philanthropic support of UC San Diego's Jacobs School of Engineering, and will be the first corporate partner to be recognized within the university's new engineering building project — Franklin Antonio Hall.

“With recognition in Franklin Antonio Hall, Cubic is helping us to create an exciting new ecosystem built around an optimistic, human-centered vision for the digital future,” said Albert P. Pisano, dean of the UC San Diego Jacobs School of Engineering.

Franklin Antonio Hall, named in honor of UC San Diego

alumnus Franklin Antonio, is a 186,000-square-foot university building being designed from the ground up for open, collaborative research and active learning.

Within the building, large and open collaborative research spaces, called “collaboratories,” will house multiple professors and their students. This design will encourage the diverse and interdisciplinary systems-level collaborations necessary to solve the toughest challenges facing humanity, said university officials.

## Morris Cerullo's Legacy International Center set to open in Mission Valley this winter



Evangelist Morris Cerullo's long-planned but controversial religious tourism and conference center project — Legacy International Center — is to be unveiled this winter in Mission Valley.

The \$131 million project was approved by the San Diego City Council in 2017 over the objections of the local gay and lesbian community, who raised traffic concerns. It covers an 18-acre site formerly used by the Mission Valley Resort.

“San Diego has been my home since 1959 and I'm thrilled to bring this vision to life in such a beautiful and vibrant community,” said Cerullo in a prepared statement. “San Diego is an incredibly diverse city and we look forward to welcoming people of all cultures, faiths, and backgrounds to experience the Legacy International Center.”

The acreage includes five buildings, including a 126-room hotel and conference center, the International Experience Center, a 500-seat performing arts theater, and a 110-foot-long Western Wall, made from authentic Jerusalem Gold limestone from Israel that will pay tribute to the famed Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.

Among the features of the project:

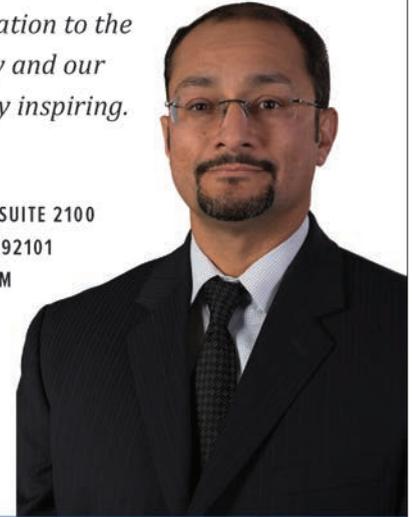
- An 18-foot-tall interactive globe that gives visitors the chance to learn about different cultures -- a feature that won the “2019 Product of the Year” at the National Association of Broadcasters Convention in Las Vegas.
- A series of galleries that offer immersive stories told in two- to three-minute increments via floor-to-ceiling video projections.
- A 4-D, 100-seat motion theater, conceived by former Disney Imagineers, where guests can experience “Wings Over Israel,” a full sensory “hang gliding” tour of Israel complete with sights, sounds and scents.
- An underground maze of stone chamber catacombs where massive original works of biblical art by world-renowned 3-D illusion artist Kurt Wenner will line the walls.
- A curated botanical garden for moments of quiet reflection.
- An open-air plaza – The Legacy Plaza, will serve as the center's gathering place for visitors.



*Congratulates Joseph Martinez on being named among San Diego's Men of Influence.*

*Your dedication to the community and our firm is truly inspiring.*

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# **SAN DIEGO COUNTY'S 2019 MEN OF INFLUENCE**



## **ERIC HEPFER**

Eric Hepfer, as a director of Hines and in charge of Hines' San Diego office, is building a more livable San Diego. He oversees the company's innovative Riverwalk project which reimagines 200 acres of San Diego's Mission Valley. Riverwalk will transform an existing 27-acre golf course into a livable, mixed-use community with a new large public park, residential living, community-oriented retail uses, office space and new mass-transit access. At a time when San Diego faces an enormous shortage of market-rate and affordable housing, the development includes 4,300 apartments, nearly 400 of which will be designated as affordable housing. It also includes 150,000 square feet of neighborhood-serving retail space, including a pharmacy and grocery store, and 1 million square feet of office space along Friars Road and Hotel Circle. Before joining Hines in 2012, Hepfer served five years as a submarine officer, including 3.5 years on sea duty and five strategic deterrent patrols. He is a two-time Navy achievement winner. He is a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute and the Harvard Business School.



## **MIKE FORD**

Mike Ford is the managing director and founding member of PBO Advisory Group (formerly ProBackOffice), one of San Diego's leading outsourcing and business consulting firms. He holds more than 30 years of management consulting, business advisory and outsourcing experience, and has provided services to over 500 clients throughout the West Coast. He is well-versed in management consulting and has founded numerous finance and accounting consulting start-ups that he has seen through to successful exits (IPO, ESOP and sale) including Temecula-based NBS Government Finance Group, which he sold to the company's employees through an ESOP arrangement. PBO's success is largely due to Ford's vision of creating a company that is built on a team environment. His generous nature and passion for charity led him to mentor PBO's philanthropic committee PBO Serves. He volunteers at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Lakeside, is a former planning commissioner for the city of La Mesa, former trustee and board member for the Leukemia Society and has been a guest instructor at San Diego State University. He has also co-authored two books: "Brotherhood of the Pigskin: A Fantasy Football Nov," and "The Blue Bombers: the True Story of the 2009 Little League Champions."



## **GABE P. WRIGHT**

Gabe Wright is a natural leader who serves as the co-chair of the Hahn Loeser's San Diego Litigation Practice Group. He is a member of the firm's finance and strategic planning committees and leads the firm's recruiting efforts. His litigation practice is specifically focused on real estate, class-action and commercial matters in which he zealously advocates for his clients. His client base is broad, ranging from commercial real estate developers and commercial property owners to entrepreneurs and renowned comic book publishers. Wright defeated class certification of a California statewide class action alleging violations of the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act against his client. He therefore eliminated any ability for the remaining plaintiff to obtain an injunction against his client that would have had an adverse impact throughout the client's industry. He actively volunteers and supports Promises2Kids, is a mentor to a Guardian Scholar and a graduate of the Washington & Lee School of Law.



## **NATHAN SCHMIDT**

Nathan Schmidt is one of San Diego's top marketing executives with over 20 years of financial services and management and marketing experience. He is responsible for strategic planning, marketing, digital channels, product development, business development and community and media relations for San Diego County Credit Union, the 15th largest credit union in the country by assets and largest locally-owned financial institution in San Diego. A cornerstone of Schmidt's dynamic leadership is an unwavering focus on continually raising the bar on creativity, services, strategy and execution, resulting in exponential growth for SDCCU and impacting the overall credit union movement. His approach to leadership and marketing materializes into an execution that leverages all resources to maximize results and awareness of the SDCCU brand. He spearheaded the creation of a new 3-D light up billboard to further showcase SDCCU's leading brand and elevate awareness of SDCCU's auto loan program. Schmidt is SDCCU's executive vice president for brand strategy and digital channels, holds a B.A degree from Cal State Sacramento and an MBA from St. Mary's College in Moraga, Calif.



## **NAVEEN WANAY**

Naveen Waney is president and co-owner of Platt/Whitelaw Architects Inc., one of San Diego's oldest architectural firms. Since its founding in 1955, the firm has focused on promoting sustainability within public and community-facing projects, a strong legacy that Waney continues. He is primarily responsible for the firm's infrastructure practice, which includes many water and wastewater treatment projects, arguably some of the most important facilities San Diego municipalities operate. He is responsible for several award-winning building designs for treatment plants. One building won the American Public Works Association competition for the best design in California. Waney started with PWA while attending classes at the New School of Architecture, where he graduated as valedictorian of his class. His design work helped Encina Wastewater Facility in Carlsbad win a Concrete Masonry Association of California and Nevada honor award.



## JASON HARTLEY

Jason Hartley is the founding partner of Hartley LLP and active in many professional and community organizations. For over 20 years he has represented plaintiffs in commercial contingency representation, class actions, antitrust, and unfair competition. Hartley's clients include many Fortune 500 companies in cases alleging breach of contract, sham patent and antitrust claims. He has served as lead counsel and in senior litigation roles in numerous cases that resulted in some of the largest antitrust settlements ever, netting billions of dollars for plaintiffs. Hartley is a long-time board member of Balboa Park's Museum of Man, the Consumer Attorneys of California and the American Association for Justice. His peers have recognized him as a San Diego SuperLawyer for years, he speaks regularly at seminars and serves on the ABA Class Action Institute's Planning Committee. But perhaps his favorite extracurricular activity is serving as chief of his son's YMCA Adventure Guides tribe.



## JOSEPH MARTINEZ

Joseph Martinez is a shareholder at Seltzer Caplan McMahon Vitek practicing in the areas of real estate and business transactions. He has more than 20 years of experience representing real property and business owners, investors and managers as well as developers, landlords, tenants, borrowers and lenders. Fluent in both English and Spanish, he is also the leader of SCMV's Cross Border practice group, practicing in the areas of inbound U.S./Mexico real estate and business transactions. Martinez is a member of the San Diego Padres Hispanic Community Advisory Council (HCAC), a member of the board of directors for Sharp Chula Vista Medical Center, a vice president and member of the board for the Southwestern College Foundation and is active in local professional organizations. He was named one of SD METRO Magazine's Best Attorneys in 2017. He is a graduate of Harvard University with a degree in economics and holds a Juris Doctor degree from the Harvard School of Law.



## ROGER DENNING

Roger Denning, who leads Fish & Richardson's office in San Diego, is a nationally recognized trial lawyer specializing in complex litigation, including patent infringement and other technology-related cases. He has tried patent cases to verdict throughout the country, particularly in the patent-heavy dockets in California, Texas, Delaware, as well as the International Trade Commission. Denning also has tried to verdict a number of complex commercial cases, including in the areas of product liability, unfair competition and the False Claims Act. An engineer by training, Denning's unique background allows him to teach juries and judges about a wide variety of technologies.



## SCOTT JABLOW

Scott Jablow, a tax partner at Lavine, Lofgren, Morris & Engelberg, holds more than 25 years of experience in assisting clients with their tax compliance and planning needs. His wide range of experience includes high net-worth individuals, partnerships and closely held corporations. Much of Jablow's focus is on the taxation of real estate professionals, real estate transactions, like-kind exchanges and tenancy-in-common issues. While Jablow's expertise may lie in tax planning, his business development skills are also impressive. Not only has he brought a record number of clients to the firm, he also played an instrumental role in LLME's acquisition of two small accounting firms this past year.



## REGINALD JONES

Reginald Jones is president and CEO of the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation, a nonprofit with a master plan to revitalize 60 acres of land in City Council District 4. Jones steers all efforts fore real estate and economic development and community engagement. Since 2012, Jones has worked daily with culturally diverse residents, organizations, political leaders and private entities to foster understanding of the organization. Previously, Jones developed the Town Center Master Plan to guide redevelopment work, and true to the mission of Jacobs Center, involved 1,300 residents to provide input on the plan and ensure it reflected community interests and needs.



## ADAM HARRIS

Adam Harris is the co-founder and CEO of Cloudbeds, a hospitality software company that was launched in 2012 and has since raised over \$21 million and acquired two additional companies. To date, he has grown the company to 275 employees in 38 countries and his platform is used by more than 22,000 customers in 152 countries. With Harris at the helm, Cloudbeds has won a variety of awards, such as placing 75th in Inc Magazine's 5000 fastest growing companies in 2018, being named to Forbes Magazine's 15 Technology Companies to Watch in 2018, and being named to Hotel Tech Report's 10 Best Places to Work in Hotel Tech 2018 & 2019.



## JACOB BATES

Jacob Bates is chief executive officer of CommonGrounds Workspace, a collaborative office workspace that serves as an accelerating platform for small businesses to grow. In January 2019, Bates raised \$140 million in Series A funding for expansion and growth plans. And in the first half of this year, he increased staff by 220 percent across the United States with just over 100 employees. Earlier this year CommonGrounds Workspace was named 2019 Business of the Year for Beat the Odds from the Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce. The firm transacted over 1,000 commercial real estate properties in more than 70 countries.



## YEHUDI "GAF" GAFFEN

Yehudi "Gaf" Gaffen founded Gafcon Inc. in 1987, a globally respected program/construction management consulting firm. As CEO, Gaffen has worked with owners on hundreds of projects including the \$12 billion Shanghai Zizhu Purple Bay master plan; the \$135 million AltaSea project at the Port of Los Angeles; the \$100 million redevelopment of the Los Angeles Forum; and \$46.25 billion in California education bond programs. Gaffen's ultimate vision is to turn Gafcon over to its employees. He has had many companies approach him to purchase Gafcon, but has always declined, saying, "It would be like giving my kids up for adoption." His son, Josh Gaffen, has been a significant leader in the organization for the past 10 years.



## RYAN HILL

Ryan Hill is owner of Hill Construction Co., recognized as one of the top luxury residential builders on the West Coast. The company has been featured in numerous magazines and has a large and growing collection of industry awards. This year, its project, "The Verge House," a Coronado custom home, received top honors as the Best Custom Home under 4,000 square feet at the 2019 national God Nugget Awards. Hill's outstanding vision and leadership have grown the family company to its top position in the industry today.

**CONGRATULATIONS  
GABE WRIGHT!**

Hahn Loeser congratulates litigation partner Gabe P. Wright for his selection as one of *San Diego Metro's Men of Influence* for 2019. Both in business and in his community endeavors, Gabe is a natural leader who invests in the success of his clients, friends, and colleagues. Congratulations to Gabe and all of the other 2019 honorees!



**Hahn Loeser**  
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Congratulations to our Managing Director and Founding Member  
**Mike Ford**  
on being selected among San Diego's **Men of Influence.**

*We're proud of all the work you do for our clients and community.*



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# Safety and Education Professionals Stress Proactive Plans

By Cecilia Buckner

Locking doors and assessing at risk behavior costs nothing, but is priceless when it comes to school safety, said Jeff Kaye. A retired Reno, Nev. police officer of 25 years, Kaye spent nearly a decade as director of public safety at Desert Sands Unified School District and is passionate about improving school safety.

Kaye co-founded the International School Safety Institute ([www.SchoolSafetyOps.com](http://www.SchoolSafetyOps.com)), which hosted its annual school safety conference this fall in the central area of San Diego for the first time in the conference's six-year span.

"Our goal every year is to provide the best training we can for educators, school districts, education safety folks and law enforcement without spending a lot of money," said Kaye.

One aspect of the institute's training relates to active shooters. When it comes to school violence, it requires a multi-faceted approach, but most importantly — being proactive, not reactive — saves lives, said Kaye.

We need to "get away from all the rhetoric we hear, like arming teachers, and get on to what we need to do with programs, like violent predator risk assessment, watching that behavior from first grade or kindergarten, getting public, private and community involvement," Kaye said.

San Diego County Office of Education



Safety Coordinator Tim Ware echoed Kaye's sentiments. "It's a natural instinct . . . to think about external measures . . . the more fences we put up . . . more security guards . . . those things are necessary — but we're really going to get the best bang for our buck by investing in the heart of our kids," Ware said.

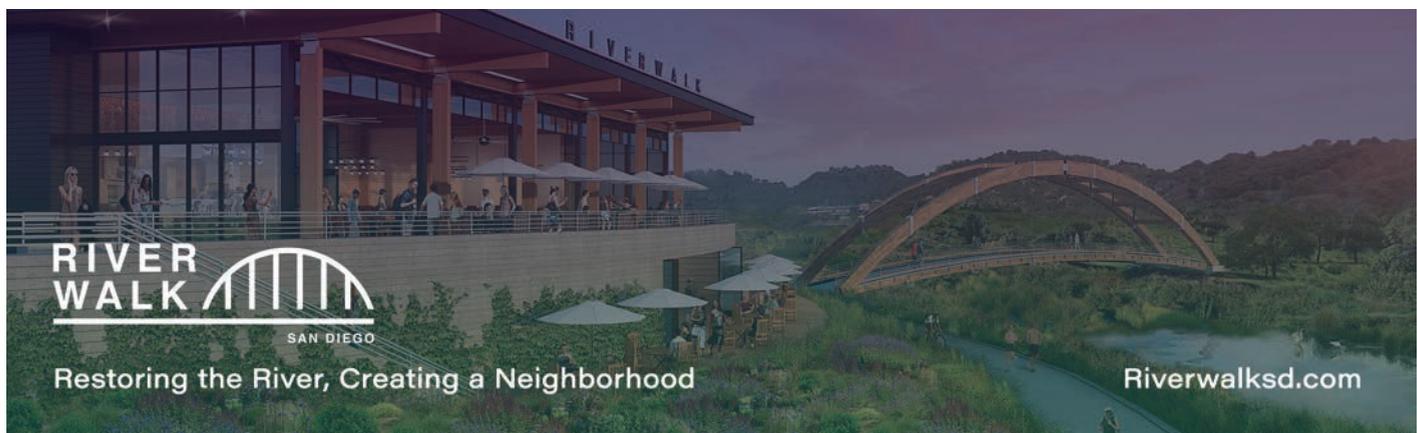
More counseling resources need to be allocated to address the kids' issues, said Santee middle school teacher Chris Stanley. Stanley was 8 when the principal of Grover Cleveland Elementary School was shot and killed just feet in front of him. "Here we are more than 40 years later and we're still talking about it. It shouldn't be a conversation anymore. We talk about gun violence, gun control . . . What about taking care of the kids' mental health? I think if we are going to do this the right way, we need to make sure that children have what they need to unpack their social and emotional baggage. If you don't afford

them that opportunity, then it's only going to compound and eventually they're going to harm themselves or harm others," Stanley said.

The San Diego County Grand Jury recommended in a May 21 report that districts in the region increase funding and resources to handle active school shooter situations, and that substitute teachers receive the same training on active shooter awareness and response as other school staff.

The fall school safety conference hosted a team of law and education professionals, including Kaye. The agenda included a newly-introduced parental workshop and workshops aimed at assisting educators and law enforcement professionals to improve school safety.

Kaye, president of School Safety Operations Inc., a school safety consulting firm, helps educational professionals assess safety needs and devise plans.





## From Star to Sun: Qualcomm Institute's virtual reality system expands

By **Katie E. Ismael**

Tucked into a cozy-feeling room on the first floor of the UC San Diego Qualcomm Institute's Atkinson Hall are 70 screens, bundles of cables and 35 computer nodes that make up a powerful system that can process massive amounts of data transmitted over the Internet from researchers all over the US or even Antarctica.

It can also take you, virtually, into worlds as varied as a temple in Egypt, an ancient copper smelting site in Jordan or an underwater cave system on the Yucatan Peninsula. Or even into the abdomen of Crohn's disease patients.

Front and center in the room is a 360-degree sphere-like scaffolding covered in screens called the SunCAVE—the world's highest resolution walk-in virtual reality (VR) environment. It's one that doctors, archaeologists, musicians, computer scientists and students are using to create new means for discovery, healing and understanding.

Two years ago this summer, the Qualcomm Institute's CAVE (or Cave Automated Virtual Environment) morphed from the StarCAVE, as it was known, into the SunCAVE. Its physical shape changed, as did the technology running it behind the scenes.

Tapping into the power of cluster computing, the SunCAVE today offers much more than just visuals; it's become a powerful tool for machine learning and data analysis as well. Think of it as your TV being equipped with a supercomputer, becoming a visualization system that can also compute what it's seeing. Only much bigger, brighter and faster—and connected to a host of other computers worldwide at speeds more than 1,000 times faster than your laptop.

"It's a beautiful object, a giant gem. There's nothing like it in terms of intensity and resolution," said Tom DeFanti, a research scientist at the Qualcomm Institute, the UC San Diego Division of the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology (Calit2).

"The fact that we can use 35 PCs and 70 game-class graphics cards (GPUs) and memory together makes it a computer cluster that also happens to immerse you in realistic 3D pictures,

algorithmic visualizations, and even MRI-scans of human brains and other organs," he said. (See the graphic at the end of the story for more specs.)

First unveiled in 2007, the StarCAVE was designed by a team of scientists and Internet and virtual reality pioneers: DeFanti, who coined the term CAVE while a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago for its VR room, Greg Dawe, a Qualcomm Institute principal design engineer, Ramesh Rao, the Qualcomm Institute director, Larry Smarr, the director of Calit2, and Qualcomm Institute research scientist Jurgen Schulze, who developed the software to run it.

The Qualcomm Institute's current CAVE, the SunCAVE, was built ground up, panel by panel, by Dawe and UC San Diego Visual Arts alumnus Joel Polizzi '14. Polizzi, a visualization engineering technician at the Qualcomm Institute, is now helping the SunCAVE enter the next generation with fellow Visual Arts alumnus Isaac Nealey '18, a visualization software developer at the institute. They have integrated additional applications and tools such as ParaView and Unreal Engine to create more dynamic scenes and realistic, 3D video game experiences.

By offering its cluster computing capability to a variety of researchers, the SunCAVE is uniting a community of users who can tap into this Kubernetes-orchestrated system to use and share resources. (Kubernetes is Google's popular open-source software for making large numbers of diverse computer platforms work together. The Qualcomm Institute was an early adopter.)

The SunCAVE was built with funds from National Science Foundation.

Katie Ismael, the writer, is a media communications specialist/public information officer for UC San Diego's Qualcomm Institute. She has been a writer and editor for University of the Pacific in Northern California, University of Redlands and UC Irvine's business school. She started her career as a reporter for The Press-Enterprise newspaper in Riverside.



**LEFT:** Katie Ismael **MIDDLE:** Visualization, Internet, and supercomputing pioneers and builders of 28 years of CAVEs, Larry Smarr (left) and Tom DeFanti, in the SunCAVE. **RIGHT:** Joel Polizzi '14, visualization engineering technician at the Qualcomm Institute, stands in the middle of the SunCAVE that he helped construct (Photo courtesy of Falko Kuester)

## Local Scholar Wins Hat Trick of Prestigious Awards

By Katie E. Ismael

Saw Paw Kay ended the last school year with a bang, racking up three major awards for his community engagement and academic excellence.

The sophomore at e3 Civic High was awarded an Honorary Certificate for the Princeton Prize in Race Relations, a scholarship from the American Civil Liberties Union to attend the weeklong Summer Advocacy Institute in Washington, D.C., and a fall semester study with the School of Ethics and Global Leadership in Washington, D.C.

“We are so proud of Saw Paw,” said Dr. Helen V. Griffith, executive director of e3 Civic High, the public charter school located in the San Diego Central Library Downtown. “Our scholars apply their coursework through active engagement in the community and Saw Paw really embodies this value.”

Saw Paw is a Karen refugee from Mae La refugee camp located between the borders of Myanmar and Thailand. The young teen talked about what his people went through, “My Karen people were forced to flee from their original home country, Myanmar, due to one of today’s longest civil war that involved corrupted Burmese soldiers who mass genocide my people.”

The City Heights teen is being recognized with the Princeton Prize in Race Relations for a project he launched in his community. “A Taste of Culture” is a monthly event in which members of the multi-cultural City Heights community gather to learn about a region of the world and sample its cuisine from a mother-son cooking team in the neighborhood. Saw Paw brought his mother on board to help with the inaugural event: a taste of Karen, his ethnic background.

“Most people have never heard of the Karen people, who live in Southeast Asia, in the mountains of Burma. This was a

way of raising awareness about my culture by sharing our history, food, and journey to the United States,” he says. “I learned a lot from my mom too. People were really moved and started comparing our food and culture to their own people.”

Saw Paw spent the first five years of his life in a refugee camp in Thailand after his family fled from Burmese violence against the Karen people, a persecuted ethnic minority in the country renamed Myanmar.

Saw Paw oversaw four more cooking events featuring the food and culture of mother-son teams from Mexico, Syria, Ethiopia, and Somalia. “This was a way to bring people together to learn each other’s stories in a safe environment and to share great food.”

Saw Paw’s two scholarships to the prestigious summer and fall programs in Washington, D.C. were awarded for the scholar’s academic performance and community engagement. He says he looks forward to learning more about political activism to help shape public policy and foster positive foreign relations. “These programs will help change me so I can bring positive change to the world.”



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