

Older Adults

from front page

Health Care, Kiwanis, Soroptimists, and the City of Manhattan Beach.

Also on May 15 is the Marine Band Parade in Torrance honoring Armed Forces Day. Dial-a-Ride will be offering transportation. For information or to reserve space, call 310-802-5447.

Something new and exciting: Every other year, the Los Angeles Opera Company offers free tickets to selected senior centers that qualify for the dress rehearsal of an opera at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Thanks to the efforts of the Senior Resource Committee and MB Resident Darryl Kim who is Director of the Costa Mesa Senior Center, MB was given 40 tickets for Verdi's *La Traviata*, May 19. Last I heard, reservations were full, but you could call for last minute cancellations. A docent is scheduled to lead a discussion on the opera at Joslyn on May 14 at 2 p.m.

Another new program is Mah Jong, that ancient Chinese game the ladies played in Amy Tan's book and movie, *The Joy Luck Club*. It has become the rage around the country and has just started up at Joslyn on Wednesday afternoons from 1:30-3:30 p.m. So come join in early while people are just learning to play.

In honor of seniors this month, lunch will be free Wednesday, May 6 at Joslyn and Monday, May 11 at Manhattan Heights! Plus, don't forget The Lunch Bunch group which meets every Tuesday. Everyone is enjoying the camaraderie of new or old friends and a tasty healthy lunch for just \$3. Reservations are needed: 310-802-5477.

Mystery trips are a big favorite. A surprise destination is selected. You won't know where until you show up. Transportation by Dial-a-Ride is \$1, with time for lunch at a nearby restaurant. Past trips have included the Long Beach Art Museum, Long Beach Museum of Latin American Art, Doheny's

Greystone Mansion, Tall Ships of San Pedro, and Historic Tour of San Pedro. The trips are usually on the third Saturday of the month, but call at the first of the month to reserve space. They fill up early. To reserve, call 310-802-5447.

The Manhattan Beach Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Association are in the process of organizing an Older Citizens Appreciation weekend, where discounts will be offered by stores and restaurants. The date is not yet set. Be on the lookout for this weekend and for the results of the Senior Survey.

Besides the ongoing activities mentioned above, as well as bridge, pinochle, petanque (the French game similar to lawn bowling or bocce ball) crafts, movies and Dine 'n Discovery, other activities are being looked at for the future, either for day or evening outings. They include lecture series, evening concerts, movie documentaries, table games, stamp and coin collecting, ping pong and computer classes. To get these going, volunteers are needed to facilitate. The Administration on Aging (AOA) acknowledges the relationship between volunteering or serving others, and improved physical and mental health. What easier, more fun way to serve than by doing something you already would like to do. If you have an area of interest in which you would be willing to help, call Jan Buik at 310-802-5447. Come help the program grow with activities you want.

Spotlight on Seniors, a frequent column in the *Manhattan Sun*, profiles older adults who have led fascinating lives and brought something special to the city. Madonna Newburg, Melen and Patrick McBride, and Evelyn Frey have been featured. If you know someone you would like to read about in this column, contact, me, Karen Russo at kkrusso@aol.com. •

Political Penguin

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dad is hitting the talk show circuit, telling the fossil Larry King that his access to his son has been limited. "I can go over there and see him" Johnston told the many, many-times divorced King, "but it's now you know, an uncomfortable thing for me to go over there."

Wonder if the elderly King and the kid swapped war stories about their women? And I wonder if Sarah Palin's advisors, who want to keep her in the national spotlight as they float a possible presidential run in 2012, wish that young Mr. Johnston would just go away? You betcha!

A friend of the Penguin mentioned that I should check in on the escapades of the veteran Cali Senator Dianne Feinstein and her better half, one Richard Blum. According to the *Washington Times*, seems that Lady Di "introduced legislation to route \$25 billion in taxpayer money to a government agency that had just awarded her husband's real estate firm a lucrative contract to sell foreclosed properties at compensation rates higher than the industry norms."

Times are tough out there. Nothing wrong with a wife trying to help out her hubby, right? Unless one happens to care about some of those pesky Senate ethics rules that seem to be applied willy-nilly. Like the rule stating that the lawmakers must not only avoid conflicts of interests, but sidestep even the "appearance" of said conflict.

The very, very dark-haired Feinstein and her husband both claimed that there was no linkage between the Senator's legislation pitch and the incredibly lucrative contract awarded to Blum's company. (Insert laugh track here!)

Last week I was lauding the three US Navy sharpshooters who took down the high seas pirates in the drama that unfolded Easter Sunday. The surviving bum, one Abduwali Abdukhayr Muse, is facing a lengthy and costly (for US taxpayers) trip through the US court system. And defense mouthpieces are already pleading the poor lad's case.

"You got an 18-year-old kid who has no education," said grizzled defense lawyer Martin Geduldig. "He's as poor as they come, and he got caught up with these pirates. In a sense, he's as much a victim as anybody else."

Aw, shut up, Mr. Geduldig. Same old crapola. Criminal as victim. Kinda makes you wish that there were four sharpshooters perched on that destroyer, armed with four bullets, doesn't it?

Thanks for taking the time to read the musings above. I hope to make *Political Penguin* a breezy read for all, with the focus on what I term "pop" politics. No deep, philosophical rants here; just what I hope are some entertaining thoughts on the people and the issues that are making the news. •

Senior Prom Sticker Shock

By Jason Alderman

Forget college – just paying for your kid's senior year in high school can break the bank if you haven't planned carefully. While it's always a challenge to deny your kids enjoyable experiences, today's tough economy is forcing many families to make difficult decisions regarding these once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

One of the costliest senior expenses is the prom. At the risk of dating myself, my prom set me back \$150, mostly for a tuxedo rental. These days, according to a *Your Prom* magazine survey, the average couple spends at least \$1,000 – many pay much more.

It all adds up. Consider: New prom dresses cost from \$100 to \$700 or more. Plan on another couple of hundred for shoes, accessories, flowers and professionally styled hair, nails and make-up.

A new tuxedo will set you back at least a few hundred dollars, not to mention the shirt, tie, studs and shoes you'll need. Even renting all this will likely cost \$150 or more.

Figure at least \$100 an hour plus tip to rent a limousine, for a minimum of four hours.

The national average for prom tickets varies from \$50 to \$150 per person, depending on venue, entertainment, meals, etc. And don't forget about commemorative photos.

The couple probably won't want to eat at McDonalds, so figure at least \$40 for a nice meal.

After-party. This could be anywhere from a few bucks at the bowling alley to hundreds of dollars for group hotel suites.

When Visa Inc. surveyed prom goers recently, 27 percent recalled having paid for everything themselves, 26 percent had parents who picked up the whole tab, 14 percent split

it 50-50 with their folks and 12 percent shared the cost with their date. Bottom line: Don't feel compelled to foot the whole cost. If your kids have skin in the game, they'll quickly determine what they can and can't live without. Here are a few cost-saving ideas:

Shop for formal wear at consignment stores or online at sites like eBay or Craig's List. As with tuxedos, many outlets rent formal dresses and accessories for one-time use.

Have make-up done at a department store's cosmetics department.

At the very least, split the cost of a limo with other couples.

Team up with other parents to host a pre-prom dinner buffet or after-party.

Take photos yourself – and buy disposable cameras for candid shots at various events.

Besides the prom, you should anticipate many other senior-year expenses. Talk to recent graduates and their parents about their lessons learned; then, before the school year begins, sit down with your child and hammer out a budget. Consider expenses such as:

College entrance exams, study guides and tutoring

College application fees and site visits

Senior portraits

Graduation announcements

Cap and gown

Graduation party

Senior trip

Use senior year as an opportunity to teach your kids about the importance of setting and sticking to a budget. Visa's free personal financial management site, Practical Money Skills for Life, features many easy-to-use budgeting tools and interactive calculators that can help (www.practicalmoneyskills.com/budgeting). •

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