OUTDOORS

Avoid Black Friday stress by taking a hike

By Ladan Connelly

There’s nothing like enjoying a hike to set the mood for the holiday season, when there are some of the best hiking trails in Southern California for the season. The Orange County Veterans Study, a landmark report on the well-being of veterans, shed some light on the stress of the holiday season. The report found that veterans who engaged in outdoor activities reported feeling better overall. This is a great opportunity to explore the great outdoors and enjoy the beauty of nature. There are plenty of trails to choose from, ranging from easy strolls to more challenging hikes.

STUDY

OC vets find gradual success

An updated report shows there is better cooperation and more trust, which are key to helping service members transition to civilian life

By Theresa Walker

The number of military veterans on Orange County — about 130,000 — has held steady in the last three years, according to a new report from the OC Department of Veterans Affairs. The report found that there was a gradual increase in the number of veterans transitioning to civilian life. This is a positive trend, as it suggests that more veterans are making the transition successfully.

PANDEMIC

Scientists: Closures of schools could cut life spans

Study links longevity to educational attainment

By Linh Tat

Elementary school-age children in the United States whose education has been disrupted by school closures during the 2019-20 academic year by the coronavirus pandemic could lose a year of life spans, according to a new study published in the American Medical Association. Researchers analyzed the relationship between school closures and reduced educational attainment. The study showed that an estimated 2.5 million children ages 5 to 11 attended U.S. public schools that were shut down in the spring, resulting in a year of missed school and test scores.

ELECTION 2020

Trump: I will exit if Electoral College gives Biden the win

By Jill Colvin

President Donald Trump said Thursday that he will leave the White House if the Electoral College formalizes the election results, even as he insisted such a decision would be a “disaster.” He also said he would contest the election result, as some legal experts have suggested that “certain fraud” and other errors in the vote counting process could be used to challenge the result. However, he added that he would continue to fight for the results and that any challenges to the election would be brought to the Supreme Court.

As shopping shifts, stores try to keep up

Brick-and-mortar retailers work to stay relevant this holiday season as more customers turn online, supply chains are interrupted amid pandemic

By Kevin Smith

As COVID-19 tightened its grip on the nation’s economy, Southern California retailers are bracing for the holiday shopping season. The pandemic has forced many stores to cut back on in-store sales, so they are trying to adapt. For example, Tiddlywinks Toys & Games in Orange is offering curbside pickup and custom order shopping. They are trying to keep up with the increased demand for online shopping.

Gift Giving

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Jeanie Viveros, co-owner of Tiddlywinks Toys & Games, in Orange last week. Viveros, like other Southern California retailers, is bracing for a holiday shopping season as the pandemic continues. Viveros said, “We were able to create custom Easies baskets this year, and we’re going to try to keep up with the increased demand for online shopping.”

TODAY’S FORECAST

Coastal: High 74/Low 40
The 2015 report, the Orange County Veterans Initiative, the new analysis, conducted by Harden+Company Community Research, found that local organizations need further support and coordination to ensure that their services help veterans transition to civilian life. The report was expected in late December. It was commissioned by Orange County Community Foundation, the same philanthropic engine behind the Veterans Initiative since 2013.

Luke Hixson is experiencing the benefits of that. Hixson, 22, a U.S. Navy helicopter crew chief from Oklahoma, hopes to segue from his military role as a lab corroborator for a medical device company to admissions and position to a four-year university and become a doctor.

Many of the programs have been enhanced by the recent partnership of the Warrior-Scholar Project at UC Irvine, funded by Orange County social services.

This summer, Hixson attended the Warrior-Scholar Project’s summer program in New Mexico and a boot camp, held virtually this year due to concerns about the coronavirus pandemic, that helped him finish the second year of the academic rigor that will be expected if he attends a four-year school. He’s applied to about a dozen schools, including UCs, several by League schools, Stanford and UC Berkeley.

Hixson, adopted by missionaries in China and raised in Tennessee, said the Warrior-Scholar Project helped him understand how ideas can be exchanged and explored in college, and how to line up for college.

“With the Warrior-Scholar Project, you get help from people that help veterans with civilian life,” said Luke Hixson, who lives in Oklahoma during the week and at his girlfriend’s family home in Fountain Valley on weekends. “In the military, if you disagree, it’s ‘Let’s argue.’ Then and now.”

The 2015 study reviewed 1,226 service members to get a more in-depth look at their circumstances. It found that veterans face disproportionately from post-9/11 veteran, focused on significant struggles in transitioning from the military to civilian life. Many reported trouble securing housing and dealing with health issues.

But Hixson’s personal experience — though positive — also reflects the work that still needs to be done to make veterans more aware of community programs and services that can help.

Luke Hixson is entering his four years of service in the U.S. Navy and hopes to transition to a four-year university and eventually attend medical school. His college dreams got a boost of confidence in a survey through the Warrior-Scholar Project at UC Irvine, funded by Orange County Veterans Initiative.

Veterans and family members also can get plugged into the Tierney Center through the 211 Orange County social services referral agency and their information is entered into a “Warrior Serve” database maintained by Goodwill, Ferguson said.

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Over all, according to the Veterans Initiative, 97% of respondents said they received grants that strengthened with money. Two local programs that the Veterans Initiative helped launch have become self-sustaining on their own. A free dental service offers veterans a boost of health and outreach access through Goodwill and a Tierney Center through the 211 Orange County social services referral agency and their information is entered into a “Warrior Serve” database maintained by Goodwill, Ferguson said.

“The$4 million helped about 25,000 veterans and family members through 17 programs. Those include a free dental service offered through Goodwill and a Tierney Center through the 211 Orange County social services referral agency and their information is entered into a “Warrior Serve” database maintained by Goodwill, Ferguson said.

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