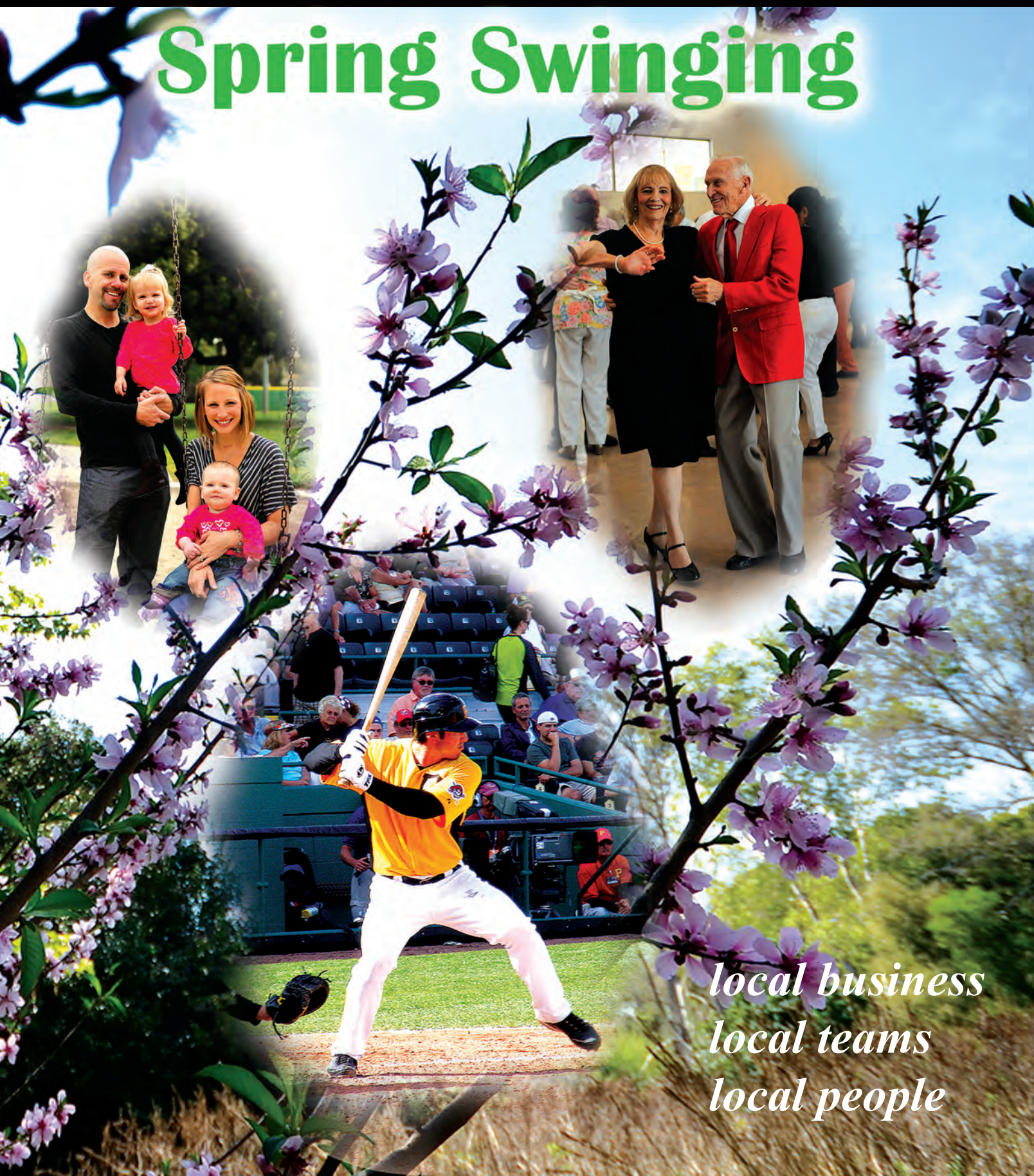


Spring 2013

Long Beach 908 Magazine

Spring Swinging



*local business
local teams
local people*

Long Beach 908 Magazine

local business, local teams, local people

Inside: Aaron Hicks, Chase d'Arnaud, James McDonald, and Travis d'Arnaud look to represent Long Beach in the MLB this year. Also, Spring Swinging, Nature Blooming, and Home Improving!

4 Aaron Hicks
Minnesota Twins

8 Chase d'Arnaud
Pittsburgh Pirates

**11 A Timeless
Celebration of Music,
Dance, and Longevity**
El Dorado Swing Dancing

**16 House to Home
Furniture**
Business Profile

Happy Spring from the Long Beach 908 team! When I think of Spring I think of baseball--the great American Sport. The early 20th century ballplayer, Rogers Hornsby put it this way: "People ask me what I do in winter when there's no baseball. I'll tell you what I do - I stare out the window and wait for Spring." I may not be that crazy, but I did think it was high time we take a look at some of the local Long Beach products who are making their way into the Big Leagues. There are six guys with a great chance at playing the season in the Majors, as well as a whole slew of others (listed on page 30) whose trip up from the minors could occur this season, or one soon hereafter.

We may have changed Spring Cleaning to Spring Swinging to talk about baseball and the hundreds of local seniors who swing dance at El Dorado Park every week-- and by the way it really is one of the coolest sights I've seen-- but we did not totally forget about the Spring concept of sprucing up one's home. In our ongoing effort to promote small businesses in the community, we bring you a story on two brothers whose family has been selling quality furniture in Long Beach for over four decades. Anyone looking to make some Spring home improvements should definitely check out House to Home Furniture on Lakewood and Stearns. And our pictures on the El Dorado Nature Center should spur you to visit this local treasure soon.

Special thanks to staff writers Halle Kohn, Jonathan Murrietta, and Adonis Voulgaris, and staff photographer Nick LaRoque. Enjoy the issue and contact us with any questions or comments.

John Grossi
Editor/ Publisher

18 James McDonald
Pittsburgh Pirates

**20 The Perfect
Urban Oasis**
El Dorado Nature Center

28 Travis d'Arnaud
New York Mets

**30 Other Locals to
Watch for...**

Cover Photo:
by Nick LaRoque
El Dorado
Nature Center



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...From Wilson High to the Minnesota Twins

Aaron Hicks



It's no surprise that the Minnesota Twins named Long Beach product Aaron Hicks their starting center fielder for the 2013 season. For a good portion of spring training, Aaron led the Majors in both home runs and RBIs, building upon last year's breakout season in the Double A minors where he hit .286 with an on-base percentage of .384.

Aaron's success in baseball is nothing new. He was a big part of LB Wilson's CIF Championship in 2007, and an even bigger part of Wilson's run to get back in the 2008 title game, his senior year. Playing in Dodger stadium as a high school student – twice – was an unforgettable dream come true. "Being part of that '07 Wilson High School team when we were considered best in the nation is still one of my fondest memories," Aaron revealed in a phone interview. Playing Dodger Stadium was the cherry on top of a robust youth sports career that took him from Los Altos Little League through Whaley Pony to the Wilson Varsity team. Of course, his childhood wasn't all about baseball. Until the age of 12, Aaron spent time happily playing basketball at the YMCA and hanging out with friends at Tincher K-8 school. But it's a good thing he listened, as a 12-year-old, when someone told him to pick up a bat.

Near the end of Hicks' senior year at Wilson, he was drafted by the Twins as the 14th pick overall, and over the past five years has steadily worked his way up in the Minors, improving in strength, patience from both sides of the plate, and overall baseball maturity.

Aaron enjoys the extensive traveling that's part of a professional ballplayer's life, but no matter where he spends the baseball season, each winter he feels blessed to return to Long Beach, where he loves to catch up with friends and former coaches over a meal at Super Mex.

You'll find him at Blair Field, Long Beach City College, and Wilson High, taking batting practice and receiving mentoring from his former Wilson coaches, Andy Hall, Jeff Bombeck, and Mike Pagnotta. As he puts it, Long Beach is, "Home, of course." Speaking of courses, when Aaron's not swinging the bat at a local field, you'll likely find him at SkyLinks or El Dorado swinging his irons. Either way, Aaron certainly fits our bill of Spring Swinging in Long Beach. ■

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...From Los Al High to the Pittsburgh Pirates Chase d'Arnaud



Amid the bustle of spring training, it's the thought that he's rising to play baseball that propels local product Chase d'Arnaud out of bed at 5:30 in the morning. His days are 12 hours long under the Florida heat, but hard work has been his mantra thus far in his illustrious career. Chase is no rookie at the Big League level, as this is his third trip to the Pittsburgh Pirate's spring training camp. Though he started the past two years in the AAA farm system, he finished both seasons in Pittsburgh.

Before Chase attained his ultimate goal of playing in the majors, he learned the game of baseball at Lakewood Village Little League (LVLL), where his top concern was making the All-Star team, with the dream of reaching its mecca, Williamsport—a dream that fell only a few tournaments short of coming true. While his childhood triumphs have been eclipsed by more recent success, there is no doubt that a smile would escape Chase reminiscing about Opening Day, standing on the base line facing Carson Street, reciting the LL pledge: "I trust in God, I love my country, and will respect its laws. I will play fair and strive to win, but win or lose, I will always do my best."

At the end of his Little League career, Chase moved next door to the Heartwell Pony diamonds. This easy transition also moved Chase into the hands of one of his most influential coaches, Toby Hess, wearing the white and orange of the Heartwell Orioles. Chase so admired the coaching of Hess that he followed him to high school, choosing to attend Los Alamitos rather than nearby Lakewood High. While this move seems heretical to those of us in the East Long Beach area, and especially those with affiliations to Heartwell Pony, it proved the right move for Chase.

At Los Al he continued his play for a highly talented team under the coach he loved, while at the same time focusing on academic achievement. With an educator for a mother, there was no option other than classroom success; but success on the field came at the price of hard work, work that resulted in great team camaraderie. Chase credits the work ethic he learned at Los Al for helping him arrive where he is today. He and his teammates spent countless hours working on their game – at the end of the scheduled practices and after the coaches left the field.

Through high school, Chase's successes on and off the field began to offer a glimpse into his future, as opportunities to pursue a career in pro ball unfolded. Chase's handiwork at shortstop caught several scouts' attention, and he was told to expect a third round draft straight out of high school. However, with the guidance of his family and others in the Long Beach area, he also kept the door open by seeking a higher education and spot on the roster at Pepperdine University. Acceding to his mother's wishes, Chase ultimately turned down a late-draft offer from the Los Angeles Dodgers in order to pursue success on the collegiate front.

The college game introduced the idea of baseball professionalism to Chase. He was no longer playing just for the sheer fun of it, but now had standards and expectations to live up to, as this game was paying for his education, and could become his career. Fortunately for Chase, his dorm room at the hilly Pepperdine Campus was a mere 100 yards from the baseball diamond, with the only obstacle in his way a single staircase. Climbing those stairs presented a common challenge to students attending the Malibu university,



as Chase claims he can identify any fellow Pepperdine alum based solely on the size of their calf muscles. Consistent with the trend in this story, Chase's tour of Pepperdine was characterized by hard work and great success, which led him to a 4th round draft pick (114th overall) by the Pittsburgh Pirates in 2008. A few weeks after receiving the fateful call, he signed his first major league contract and was shipped to Short Season A ball in State College, Pennsylvania.

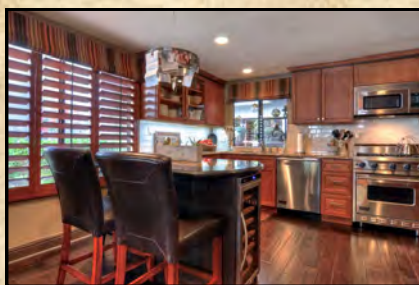
came early last season when he was hit in the head by a 96-mph fast ball, which knocked him out of the game for two months. And in the waning days of March, he suffered a thumb injury during a training drill, requiring surgery which put him on the 60-day disabled list just as the 2013 season opens. Chase, however, wants to make it clear to all who support him that he didn't come this far only to get this far; and he will not rest until he is an everyday major leaguer. ■

Despite his enormous success, Chase has hit a few setbacks since becoming a professional. One of the scarier instances

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...Swing Dancing at El Dorado

A Timeless Celebration of Music, Dance, and Longevity

By Jonathan Murrietta



The Fountain of Youth truly does exist—in the ballroom at El Dorado Park West Community Center every Wednesday afternoon from 12:30-2:30 PM – where those seeking youth, reinvigoration, and newfound health will find a 20-piece dance band that transports one's soul to another time and place (a 10-piece band plays Mondays from noon to 2 p.m.). The music played by the Long Beach El Dorado Park Swing Band instantly induces images from the Big Band era, and just like that senior citizens experience the nostalgia of crowded dance floors from days gone by, when people were dancing the Lindy Hop all across America. Each week, one of four exceptional band leaders plays a variety of selections to an appreciative audience that simply loves to dance. This event is one of the few venues at which a senior may be sitting in his wheel chair one moment, and dancing the next, exhibiting the same youthful energy with which he graced the dance floor in years gone by.

A new era of popular music was born when Benny Goodman, an American jazz and swing musician, performed with his band at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles, California on August 21, 1935. His exciting and enthusiastic performance gave thousands of young people in the live audience a thrilling introduction to The Swing Era. Millions more listened to the upbeat rhythms over a radio broadcast of the performance that launched the accented and jazzy sounds of African-American band leader Fletcher Henderson. Swing took the country by storm! Not only would the new brand of music dominate the music scene in the late 1930's to early 1940's, it lives on today in the hearts and souls of acolytes at the El Dorado Park West Community Center, where "Come rain or come shine," seniors gather every Wednesday, keeping the swing scene alive in Long Beach.



Members of the El Dorado Park Big Swing Band are mostly Long Beach locals whose wealth of musical talent enhances the listening experience for dancers and spectators alike. Most are long-time professionals, having performed in the Big Band Era with Swing and Jazz greats. John Christensen, the band's drummer and one of four band leaders, says "There is nothing like a killing brass section." He has been with the band for 20 years. Born and raised in Long Beach, John loves to promote the dancers' enjoyment while using the weekly sessions to keep his own musical chops in shape. "Once you get that sound of swing in your head, you can't get it out." Bonnie and Ron, now regular dancers at the "Every Wednesday" gatherings, recall their first time exposure to the band, when they were astonished by the talent and quality of the music. John Ward, the bass trombonist, has been playing for 60 years. As the senior pastor at First Southern Baptist Church in Gardena, he appreciates the "soul connection" between the audience and the music.

Ceci Julian, the band vocalist, has been performing and singing her heart out for 85 years, ever since signing her first contract with the Hal Roach Movie Studios at the tender age of 5. Ceci, born in Birmingham, Alabama, moved with her family to Long Beach in 1933, where by the early 40's, she was singing with Big Swing Bands. After the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Ceci became a riveter installing pulleys and cables in the inner wing of the B-17. As one of the few women hired to work in the shop area, Ceci recalls, "They weren't prepared for us; all of the restrooms were for men. So every 2 hours, we stood guard to use the facilities—no men allowed!" Ceci was also vocalist with Ziggy



Elman's Sixth Ferrying Command Band. She remembers when downtown Pine Avenue was blocked off for a huge war bond rally, singing, "Any Bonds Today?... Bonds of freedom, that's what I'm selling. Any bonds today?" At war's end, Ceci sang with the Long Beach Port of Embarkation Big Swing Band, called to entertain the thousands of GIs returning from combat aboard the APA Troop Transport Ship. She has especially fond memories from that performance. "We were transported by barge to meet the ship in the outer harbor, escorting thousands of troops to the dock. All the GIs were crowded on the decks waving their arms and throwing kisses as I greeted them singing, 'I can't give you anything but love, Baby.' They loved that song. I was the first woman they saw in Long Beach, and I was honored to welcome the troops home."

For years Ceci represented the Long Beach Yacht Club, entertaining 8,000 Long Beach Marathon racers at the end of Appian Way. Signs along the race course pointed the way: "It Don't Mean a Thing if it Ain't Got that Swing—Ceci Julian, Vocalist." With the stage set close enough that racers could high-five her, some paused for a photo or chat; others stopped to Swing Dance. Ceci recounts one youngster yelling, "What kind of music is that?" "Swing. When you get home, ask your grandma about it." The following year he was back. "Hi Ceci, it's me; my grandma says hi and told me all about the Big Band Era. Now I'm hooked!" Ceci has performed in Long Beach nightclubs including the Sky Room, Club Moderne, and the former Leilani Hut, now Legend's Sports Bar on 2nd Street in Belmont Shore.



Mike Henshall, the trombone player, has lived in the Belmont Shore area since the mid 70's. Although he was born at the tail end of the Swing Era in 1948, he comes by his heritage honestly - Big Band music was all his family ever played. Mike taught band for 35 years as an elementary school teacher for the Cerritos ABC Unified School District, all the while playing with multiple groups including his current 9-piece band. Now retired, he loves playing El Dorado where, "There is a real sense of community and it provides such a great social event for these seniors."

Perhaps most inspiring are the jubilant and fulfilled seniors who gather each week for the music. In this ballroom, one cannot help but reminisce about the "good ole' days" when

Swing music reigned. Celeste remembers listening on the radio while growing up in the Philippines, and has fond memories of dancing with her siblings. Later she traveled the world with her first husband, spreading the joy of Swing – even teaching dance steps to little children in Japan! Today, she brings Al, her husband of 10 years, to dance and rehabilitate his severe arthritis. Sure enough, once he started moving in rhythm with the music, Al's arthritis began to subside. The couple enjoys dancing every week as a wonderful form of exercise. Al, from New Jersey, has lived in Long Beach since 1931 and has fond memories of jazz nightclubs. He especially recalls how music brought people together for the war effort, when the sorrows of war could be temporarily alleviated by the upbeat rhythms played by Big Bands.



Shirley and Mike are excited to get out on the dance floor every Wednesday. The Navy brought Mike to the Long Beach area. Now retired in Naples, Mike's dancing days began after he responded to a Parks and Recreation flyer, began classes at El Dorado Park, and soon became a regular. Shirley remembers dancing the Jitterbug as a teenager, and looks upon dancing as the "one sport men and women can participate in together, and as an expression of love." The couple loves their dance life—the exercise, socializing, and seeing younger generations enjoying "their" music. Vince and Elidia Macias come simply to enjoy listening to the wonderful music, performed by top-notch musicians.

Bonnie and Ron reflect on the health transformations that dancing can bring – from a senior hobbling into the center, into an energized Swing dancer. As if it were scripted, Ron pointed out an older gentleman walking slowly into the ballroom, where moments later he was dancing like a young swain. It is quite a beautiful thing to witness. Bonnie says many of her friends have Alzheimer's disease, yet they can still remember the dance steps and have a great time. Indeed, El Do provides one of the few places where a wheelchair cannot stop a man from dancing with several different women at once.

Clearly the El Dorado Park Big Swing Band event is better than a fountain of youth. For some, it provides the opportunity to perform and share musical talents. For others, it serves as great exercise and an opportunity to socialize. For all, it's a timeless celebration of music, dance, and longevity.

The 20-piece band performs every Wednesday from 12:30 PM to 2:30 PM, and a smaller 10-piece band performs every Monday from 12 PM to 2PM—Come Rain or Come Shine! ■

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Pictured above: Jan's sisters Jacki, Marilyn, and herself (left), Jan and her two children, Josh & Lauren (right)

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House to Home Furniture



Brothers Kent and Gregg Munro, owners of House to Home Furniture in East Long Beach, have been in business on the corner of Stearns and Lakewood since each was 14 years old. Their parents and grandparents started Wall Units in 1965, in the location where the Bank of Long Beach once stood; and the young Munro brothers helped grow the store into a full-service furniture business.

Beginning from a small location, Wall Units expanded into a 20,000-square foot showroom on Stearns and Lakewood, and eventually another whole store across the street called Munro's Furniture. The Munro family later opened two more locations in nearby cities. As demand increased over the years for the family's knowledge and personalized service, the Munros always retained a commitment to value and hands-on customer engagement.

A couple of years ago, when their father had to close his furniture stores, Kent and Gregg decided to lease the original location and continue the Munro tradition at Stearns and Lakewood. As Gregg puts it, "The furniture business is all we know." Having started in the store as high school freshman, the brothers have at one time or another participated in every aspect of the business, from loading trucks, to selling furniture, to accounting. Among the first decisions they faced prior to opening in February 2011 was

how to condense the plethora of product lines, selecting and keeping only the absolute best. This was a grueling process but Kent and Gregg were up to the task – having an accustomed "eye" for quality furniture. Despite running the biggest, and only full-line furniture store in Long Beach, Kent and Gregg still take the time to visit the manufacturers they represent, and select every couch, table, bed, mattress, chair, desk, and bookcase they sell on their floor.

At least half of the furniture at House to Home is made in America. Kent and Gregg fly to North Carolina, Phoenix, and Indiana among other places at least once a year to maintain relationships with their manufacturers. Some of their most popular and highest quality lines come from the Amish in Indiana and Ohio, who build custom furniture out of your choice of wood. The House to Home customer can specify their dream dining table's color, wood, length, style, or any other detail, which Kent or Gregg will then relay on an order form to Indiana or Ohio.

The Amish lines are more expensive than dining sets from offshore manufacturers but will last generations longer. One of Kent's favorite aspects of owning a third-generation family business is listening to tales of customers who visit from time to time, bearing news about furniture bought decades ago. "My dad bought a table from your



dad in the seventies and now my cousin has it in his new home.”

Not only is half of the furniture at House to Home made in America, but 25% is from California. Gregg says that if they can find quality stuff locally they'll buy it. Some of their offshore furniture includes the state-of-the-art “Ekonnes” line from Norway. As with the American products, Kent and Gregg have visited the factory in Norway and have handpicked their selection of chairs and sofas that are extremely popular in Europe. The unique design of each Stressless chair fits to a different size and body type so that everyone can enjoy a stress-free sitting sensation.

Kent, Gregg and their five longtime local employees are eager to serve the Long Beach community in any given capacity. They are in the store 7 days a week and ready to provide the type of service that you can't get in a chain store. At House to Home, the owners consult with you every step of the way toward making your purchase the perfect fit for your home. They know how Long Beach homes function, having been here for over 4 decades,

and Kent mentions that sometimes they will even go on location to help determine the best possible fit for a living room set-up.

20,000 square feet is a lot of room, and House to Home definitely fills it with everything you might need. Their living room specialties include leather and upholstered furniture, as well as occasional tables and entertainment. The huge mattress selection at House to Home is another big selling point, along with beds, motion furniture, and book cases.

The Munro family has put its heart and soul into their furniture store on Lakewood and Stearns for years. Chances are you've driven by it more than a couple of times. It is impressive to realize how hard the family works to consistently give East Long Beach the best prices on the biggest selection. Kent and Gregg say that they don't carry the very highest or the very lowest lines of furniture, but if you're looking for everything else in between, House to Home is the place to be. This is the perfect spot to kick-start your Spring home improvements! ■

...From Poly High to the Pittsburgh Pirates

James McDonald



ers, this group includes his bullpen coach as well as friends Matt Kemp and Clayton Kershaw.

Though happier career-wise to be located in another state, James has nothing against Long Beach, and in fact, can't stop talking about everything this city has done for him. He starts by mentioning his days at Stanford Middle School, and English teacher Mrs. Burnett. "She's the first teacher who really showed me she cared about her students." He remembers Mrs. Burnett canceling her after-school plans one day to stay and help him in a subject that she didn't even teach. Mr. Naulls (Stanford's long-time basketball coach) was another who really impacted James in a positive way and made him understand the importance of school.

During the off-season, James spends quite a bit of time at Poly, his Alma Mater, where he enjoys watching his brother play. James is great friends both with his old baseball coach Bill Powell, and basketball coach Sharif Metoyer.

The gracious James was thrilled to complete this interview for our local magazine because he feels a real debt to this city. He has found that, because the city is so diverse, growing up and playing baseball in Long Beach prepared him for any situation. He was shocked at how many minor leaguers had never seen an African American or Hispanic baseball player before they were drafted. When time for the off-season rolls around, there is no question that James will be coming home to the city he loves. He can't wait to see his family and friends. And of course, no one can go a year without a trip to Roscoe's Chicken and Waffles. ■

**Find out when James plays against
Los Angeles and Anaheim at
www.facebook.com/lb908**

You Dodger fans may remember James McDonald's trusty bullpen relief during his first couple of seasons with the Los Angeles club back in '09 and '10. What you may not have realized is that the Poly grad probably traveled the same freeway route up to Dodger Stadium as you would, since he spent his first couple of Big League seasons living in a condo on Ocean Boulevard here in his hometown.

Playing for the local MLB team during his first years was both a blessing and a curse. While James definitely enjoyed the closeness to family and friends, it was tough for him to deal with the numerous requests for perks, and live up to hometown expectations of him as a professional athlete. Not everyone understood the tremendous pressure already on James just to prove himself in the Big League so he wouldn't be sent down.

Entering his fifth full season, James looks back and says it was probably good that he was traded to the Pittsburgh Pirates, where he feels a bit less pressure. In Pittsburgh he was given the opportunity to become a starter, and has proven himself worthy of steady play in Big League rotation. While enjoying his current position as starting pitcher for the up-and-coming Pirates team, James keeps in touch with those who have helped him along his journey. Among the Dodge-



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...*The El Dorado Nature Center*

The Perfect Urban Oasis

By Halle Kohn



With spring weather just around the corner, it's a great time to discover the El Dorado Nature Center, part of the large regional park in East Long Beach. Created from farmland in 1969, the Nature Center encompasses 105 acres from Spring Street to Willow and the 605 Freeway to the San Gabriel River.

The Nature Center parkland was once riddled with non-native plants and supported a sparse animal population. Over time, the Center slowly attracted a growing wildlife community—including Great Horned Owls, all kinds of mammals, reptiles, and insects. For the past 15 years, a major effort has been undertaken to replace nonnative plants with native species.

Among the most familiar Nature Center animals are the red-eared sliders, belonging to a species of turtle endemic to Asia. The turtles welcome visitors as soon as they cross the first bridge adjacent to the entrance, and on warm, sunny days, can be spotted sunning on wooden islands set up in the lake. Sometimes they even stack up like pebbles, one on top of another.

“Spring is probably the best time to visit,” says Park Naturalist Supervisor Meaghan O’Neill. “California native plants in spring are amazing.” O’Neill, an animal science major, has been office manager at the park for 10 years. “Come for a walk, let kids explore,” she suggests. One kid-friendly aspect of the park is the absence of poison oak and other plants that cause skin irritation. Parents need not worry about letting their children touch leaves or rub up against other plant parts. Feel the textures and smell the fragrance that clings to your fingertips—thyme is of the essence!

Another group that frequents the Nature Center consists of birders. These bird-watchers enjoy identifying the more than 160 species of birds that visit the park, including an impressive number of baby Great Horned Owls born in the past few years. An activity engaged in by many an elementary student during classroom field trips is the dissection of owl pellets, which teaches the youth about the diet and digestive systems of these majestic creatures living so close to their own backyards.

The Nature Center supports a range of activity and endur-





ance levels. The property includes 1- and 2-mile hiking trails, and a 1/4-mile concrete trail that is wheelchair friendly. All are scenic, and meander past meadows, wooded areas, lakes, and streams. The pamphlet offered as a guide for the 1-mile trail includes explanations tied to numbered posts that describe the plant and animal types specific to each location, including fish found in the fresh water stream, and names of the trees providing shade.

The trails offer plenty of sitting areas that invite the quiet contemplation and serenity so rarely enjoyed in the fast-paced, urban lifestyle of many in the greater Long Beach area. As a young girl, I remember walking slowly, enchanted by the sounds of birds, the rustling trees, and the sight of an occasional lizard or squirrels scurrying across the path. I found peace in pretending that the murmur of traffic on the 605 was actually the faint sound of a waterfall in the distance.

The center's museum and bookstore offer interactive learning experiences for visiting children, including bones and animal fur to be touched. The live reptiles (think snakes) and arachnids (tarantulas, scorpions, and more) are kept behind glass, available for a close-up view. Inside the shop, one can purchase stuffed animals, t-shirts, and books; and find informational pamphlets, guides, and calendars.

The Nature Center offers a variety of community programs. Fee-required class and workshop offerings include night walks; bird walks for beginners; drawing in nature; yoga; parent and me; and spring break programs for school-age and preschool children. Upcoming free events include Thursday evening (7:30 p.m.) meetings of the Audubon Society on April 18th and May 16th; Audubon Bird Walks (8 to 10 a.m.) on April 14th and May 12th; and the Turtle Show (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.) on Saturday, May 4th.

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There is an array of volunteer opportunities, including beach cleanups on the Belmont Pier, monthly wetland cleanups at the Golden Shore Marine Biological Reserve, and First Saturday stewards who work right at the Center from 10 a.m. to noon. Sturdy shoes are advised and rain cancels these events. Volunteers and donations are always welcome.



The trails are open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday, while hours for the Visitor Center housing the museum/bookstore are 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Entrance to the Nature Center is free; with no fee to pedestrians or bicyclists. Parking costs for automobiles vary depending on the day; annual parking passes are available. Please remember to leave pets, bikes, and food outside, and avoid smoking within the park.

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...From Lakewood High to the New York Mets

Travis d'Arnaud



These days it is a rarity to see Lance d'Arnaud without a broad, proud smile across his face as he realizes that he has raised two sons to become professional baseball players. His younger son, Travis, reached the Major League level a year before older brother Chase, as Travis chose to void his college commitment and accept a draft offer to the Philadelphia Phillies at age 18. Now with the New York Mets after a few high-profile trades involving players such as Roy Halladay and R.A. Dickey, Travis this past January was proclaimed the Number 6 Prospect in Major League Baseball.

Travis's journey to reach Baseball's highest level was a hard-fought on the battlefields of East Long Beach that include Lakewood Village Little League, Heartwell Pony/Colt, and the baseball factory that is the Moore League. After his 12-year-old season at Lakewood Village, Travis continued the d'Arnaud dynasty as a member of the Heartwell Orioles. Taking his older brother's place on this roster proved a fortuitous move as Travis put himself into the hands of one of his most influential baseball role models, Toby Hess.

Travis stated that his two-year tenure under the tutelage of Coach Hess made him, "[fall] in love with baseball" and proved to be incredibly developmental for him as a player. The team's on-field success and high level of competition throughout LB Pony League was evident as Travis and a band of fellow Heartwell-ers won the Pony World Series in Washington, Pennsylvania. The camaraderie and sense of community created by this experience inspired Travis to veer from the path that Chase took (at Los Al) and attend Lakewood High School to seek out a Moore League Championship.



Again, this proved to be an advantageous move as Travis found immediate success in his position as catcher, and he progressed through the system from one influential coach to the next. At Lakewood, Travis became acquainted with Steve Boaz and Matt Nunez, who propelled him to hone his abilities from those of a high school star to another level - those of MLB prospect. Travis made quick work of the Moore League and was certain by his junior year that he would soon be on a Big League club. This premonition came true as he became the 37th pick in the Supplemental First Round of the draft.

We at LB 908 wish Travis the best and hope that he quickly rises through the Mets ranks to become the Super Star that is the aspiration of Little Leaguers everywhere. Keep an eye out for Travis during the offseason, at his favorite Lakewood Village Eatery, Tokyo Hibachi. ■

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Besides the four ball players interviewed in this issue, don't forget about Chase Utley of the Phillies and Mike Carp of the Red Sox, who also proudly hail from East Long Beach!

Here are some other guys to watch out for in the minors:

Chase DeJong	Wilson	Blue Jays	Matt Duffy	Lakewood	Astros
Elliot Glynn	Wilson	Brewers	Ray Hanson	Wilson	Independent
Hunter Jones	Lakewood	Indians	Ryan Dent	Wilson	Red Sox
John Weber	Lakewood	Independent	Shane Watson	Lakewood	Phillies
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Thanks to Michele's professionalism and dedication, she not only closed a difficult sale, but managed to get us top dollar. I would definitely recommend her and her team. -Mat Gilling

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