

# Looking back on 2016



Fallbrook VFW Post 1924 celebrates its 75th birthday.

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Although not quite over, 2016 was a memorable year in many ways with residents involved in many issues and events through nonprofit organizations as well as groups formed to lobby against changes to the community landscape.

Among the dozens of news subjects, the biggest stories involved the fate of two properties which was resolved after much turmoil.

Starting in January, the sale of Fallbrook Golf Club was an ongoing tale involving several potential buyers and the possibility of a housing development replacing the course. With Gird Valley residents forming



Healthcare Hero Terry Silva



Sullivan Middle School valedictorians are, from left, Madison Prince, Kate Calhoun, Keely Powell, principal Joseph Clevenger, Erin Kennedy, Rebekah Tran, and Connor Newton.

SaveFallbrookGolfCourse.com to facilitate the search for a buyer, a sale finally went through Nov. 15 to local residents Jade and Julie Work. The Works are turning the 116-acre property into a winery and have also earmarked some of the real estate for a public park.

Two days later, another ongoing real estate saga finally ended on Nov. 17 when the Pala Band of Mission Indians purchased the land which was targeted for the planned Gregory Canyon Landfill, thereby protecting a Luiseno sacred site on Gregory Mountain as well as the surrounding environment.

There were at least three nonprofits which celebrated

noteworthy milestones in 2016, two others that merged together and at least one that disbanded.

While Fallbrook VFW Post 1924 celebrated its 75th birthday in January, Fallbrook Village Rotary turned 70 in February as did the Fallbrook Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) in June. Topping them all, Fallbrook Garden Club marked its 85th birthday in March. [The oldest nonprofit in town, the Fallbrook Woman's Club, will be turning 110 next year.]

The Reche Club and the Fallbrook Historical Society completed their merger in 2016 with the historical society taking over the upkeep of the historic Reche Schoolhouse. Faced with declining membership, the Soroptimist International of Fallbrook disbanded this year (handing over the Miss Fallbrook Scholarship Pageant to Fallbrook Village Rotary).

There were also several significant happenings in the area of education. Fallbrook Union High School District received approval from the United States Marine Corps to offer a Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps Program (JROTC) in April. When the new school year began, the program had a full enrollment of 120 students.

In May, Fallbrook High senior Ashley Romo was named a Gates



Healthcare Hero Mary Ramsden

Millennium Scholar, only the second time a local student has been so honored. (The first was Elizabeth David in 2005.) High achievers were also recognized at Sullivan Middle School in June when six eighth graders were announced as co-valedictorians.

In October, a teacher was honored as well when Amy Schwenke, a kindergarten teacher at Fallbrook Street School, was one of five San Diego County teachers at the 26th annual "Cox Presents: A Salute to Teachers" to be named as a Teacher of the Year.

In the field of sports, Fallbrook and Bonsall residents were able to see three local athletes compete in the Olympics in the same year for the first time. Bonsall resident Carli Lloyd competed on the USA volleyball team which won the bronze medal. Fallbrook resident Richelle Stephens was the youngest member of the women's rugby team playing in Rio while Bonsall resident John Nunn competed in the 50,000 meter race walking event.

Due to issues that race organizers had with county regulations, Fallbrook's own race, the Avocado Half Marathon, was first postponed from May to September

major use permit for an AT&T unmanned telecommunication site on Alta Vista Road, amidst the cheers and applause of residents from the Alta Vista neighborhood.

In August, the application for the cell phone tower which was planned for installation in the Winterwarm/Jackson neighborhood was withdrawn after the resident changed her mind about having the tower on her property.

In September, a Verizon Wireless Community Master Plan was presented to the Fallbrook Community Planning Group, with six sites proposed for cell towers and two being proposed for small cell towers. Strongly opposed by a group of citizens, the county dropped the plan in October.

SR-76 improvements continued in 2016 with slope blasting early in the year to remove a layer of hard rock at the park 'n ride location at 76 and Old Highway 395. By August, the eastbound lanes between South Mission Road and Interstate 15 were opened and traffic in both directions was switched over to those lanes. Work is continuing on the old lanes to convert them to be the new westbound lanes.



State Route 76 opens new eastbound lanes for traffic both ways.

and then moved to Murrieta, where it will be run Feb. 25. Another controversial change was made in October when Fallbrook Union Elementary School District officials decided to no longer allow schools in the Bonsall Unified

School District to send teams to the annual Dornon Games after 44 years of competition.

Several notable events involved the Fallbrook Healthcare District (FHD). Its new executive director, Bobbi Palmer, started working in January. She rolled out a plan for the community, "Call to Activity - Wellness - One Step at a Time."

This year's Healthcare Heroes Terry Silva and Mary Ramsden, DC were honored in March. Silva is the community manager of an affordable senior housing development while Ramsden is a local chiropractor.

FHD put Fallbrook Hospital up for sale in April (it is still unsold), and presented Community Health Contracts totaling \$681,186 to 18 nonprofit organizations in July. Then in December, the district changed its name to Fallbrook Regional Health District.

The Fallbrook Pregnancy Resource Center also made some changes in 2016, temporarily moving to LifePointe Church on Pico Avenue while its new building is being renovated. The fund drive for that expansion is ongoing.

In other concerns, cell phone towers were a hot topic, raising opposition from a large number of area residents. In February, the Fallbrook Community Planning Group (FCPG) moved to deny a



Carli Lloyd makes Olympic volleyball team.

decrease from 2015-2016. In terms of property crime, which includes burglary, larceny and motor vehicle theft, Fallbrook saw a 17 percent decrease from 2012 to 2015, and stayed the same from 2015-2016.

On a lighter note, this year's Avocado Festival drew a record-breaking crowd for its 30th anniversary (more than 100,000 people). On the other hand, the Grand Tradition announced in October that it will no longer host its July 4th fireworks event due to safety concerns with fallout (shells from the fireworks drifting and falling onto neighboring properties) and noise complaints.

Residents came together in December as Homes for Our Troops (HFOT), a national nonprofit organization, broke ground for its fourth building project in Fallbrook, a home for Marine Private First Class Isaac Blunt. Local builder Youngren Construction is heading up the project as Fallbrook welcomes another veteran to the community.

Readers are welcome to add to this list of memorable events at [www.thevillagenews.com](http://www.thevillagenews.com).



Gregory Mountain is bought by the Pala Band of Mission Indians halting the Gregory Canyon Landfill project.

At the beginning of the year, five males were stabbed in a span of eight weeks starting with the fatal Jan. 22 attack on 33-year-old Hugh Pettigrew. Three suspects are still in custody awaiting trial for this case. The other victims all survived.

Despite that spike in violent crime, according to the SANDAG Criminal Justice report, Fallbrook saw an 18 percent decrease in annualized FBI index crime rates per 1,000 population from 2012 to 2016.

In terms of violent crimes, which includes homicide, rape, robbery and aggravated assault, Fallbrook saw a 21 percent decrease from 2012 to 2015, and a 12 percent



Richelle Stephens goes to the Olympics in rugby.



John Nunn competes in race walking in Rio.



Fallbrook Hospital sits waiting for a buyer.