

# Out and about in the County

Through Dec. 31: "Wings & Snow" Sophie's Annual Holiday Show featuring angels, winged mosaic pieces and more. A great place to shop for that unique holiday gift. Sophie's is located at 109 Rea Avenue in downtown El Cajon. Call (619) 593-1105 for more information.

**Through Jan. 2: The Legend of the Ice Princess** at 7:30 p.m. nightly in the Show Court at Viejas Outlet Center, Alpine. All performances are free and open to the public. The holiday show tells the story of Crystal, a young fairy princess whose magical powers bring winter to the

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holiday season amidst amazing pyrotechnics, dancing fountains, lasers and incredible special effects.

**Through Jan. 3: Viejas ice skating.** Enjoy Southern California's largest outdoor ice skating rink at Viejas Outlet Center. The rink measures 70' x 140' and is open 5 - 10 p.m. Monday through Friday through Dec. 18, noon to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday Dec. 21 - Jan. 1, 2010 and noon to 10 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The rink will be open at 4 p.m. on Christmas Day. Visit www. viejasoutletcenter. com for more information.

**Dec. 10: 17th Annual Traditions of Christmas — A Musical Spectacular** kicks off at the East County
Performing Arts Center at 10 p.m. in El Cajon. For
tickets or more information call (619) 588-0206 or (800)
696-1929. To purchase tickets online visit www.tickets.
cyt.org.

**Dec. 11: 14th Annual Alpine Village Christmas Parade of Lights & Snow Festival.** Parade starts at 6:30 p.m. at Victoria Drive and Alpine Boulevard. The Snow Festival will be at the Alpine Creek Town Center. Santa will be at the Snow Festival. For more information, Call the Alpine Chamber at (619) 445-2722.

Dec. 11: Christmas Concert at 7 p.m. at Lakeside

Community Presbyterian Church on 9909 Channel Road, Lakeside. The theme is an International Christmas with songs from all over the world.

**Dec. 11: Holiday Home Tour** – 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. – \$20 – This tour of country homes in the Julian area is an annual event sponsored by the Julian Woman's Club. Transportation is provided by the club members. For information call: (760) 765-3647 and tickets (760) 765-0832

**Dec. 11-12:** La Mesa's historic shopping district will be transformed into a Victorian Wonderland from 6 - 10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. There will be strolling minstrels and carolers, horse drawn carriages, live music, bonfires on La Mesa Boulevard. Kids will enjoy carnival rides, puppet shows, and Santa Claus. Visit www.lmvma.com/lmv\_christmas.html

**Dec. 12: Last Comic Standing.** Doug Williams will be performing at Sews and Shows, 7860 Golden Avenue in Lemon Grove on Saturday at 7:30 p.m. For tickets or more information call (619) 460-7469.

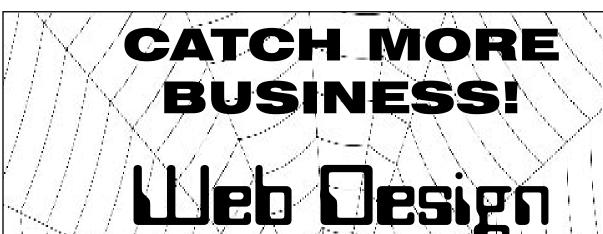
**Dec. 13: Breakfast with Santa** at the Pine Hills Lodge – 9 a.m. to 12 Noon. \$15.95 adults, \$10.95 children 10 & under, \$5 for a high chair. Please call for reservations - (760) 765-1100, www.pinehillslodge.com

**Dec. 19: Hometown Christmas Concert** featuring the Holiday Sounds of the Ramona Town Hall Brass Band at the Ramona Mainstage, 626 Main Street. Special guests Santa Claus. Free admission. Canned good donations accepted for the Ramona Food and Clothes Closet. For more information visit: www.ramonatownhall.com

#### ONGOING

Julian Doves & Desperados every Sunday (weather permitting) 1 p.m., 2 p.m., 3 p.m.: Historic comedy skits located at the stage area between Cabbages & Kings and the Julian Market & Deli. For more information

ON THE COVER: Jeff Skowron stars as the Grinch and Shea Starrs Siben sing as Cindy-Lou Who. Photo Credit: Craig Schwartz.



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#### — IN CONCERT —

# Tower of Power appear at Viejas this weekend

by Diana Saenger

lower of Power began in the 1970s when Emilio Castillo got four of his Oakland, CA. neighborhood friends together to start a band called the Motowns. With a mix of soul and Motown sounding music the group gained fans. They quickly added five more members and Tower of Power was on its way with their first hit "You're Still a Young Man." They signed a recording contract in 1970 with Bill Graham's San Francisco Records, and that same year debuted the album East Bay Grease. Tower of Power will perform at the DreamCatcher at Viejas, Saturday, Dec. 12.

Success continued throughout decades including the 1972 Bump City featuring classic hits; the 1973 self-titled release "What Is Hip?;" 1974's Back to Oakland; Power (1987); Souled Out (1995); Rhythm and Business (1997); Oakland Zone (2003); The East Bay Archive: Volume 1 (2008) and their newest album released this year, The Great American Soulbook.

Fewbands
bands
have sustained a
notable
presence
in the music world
for decades and
Tower of
Power
is one
of those
groups.

They have backed some of the biggest bands including Elton John, Santana, Bonnie Raitt, Huey Lewis, David Sanborn, Aerosmith and Rod Stewart. Castillo said it's surprising that the group is still a viable and popular band 40 years later.

"But we are a good band, and I'm very proud of it," he said. "We're very blessed. There's a million bands that come and go every six weeks, and we're amazed at our longevity. We perform a specialized kind of music; it's soul music, but it's our own brand."

The 10 members of the group – Adolfo Acosta, Larry Braggs, Emilio Castillo, David Garibaldi, Mick Gillette, Mark Harper, Doc Kuaka, Tom E. Pulitzer, Rocco Persia, Roger Smith – all live in different parts of the United States so getting together to rehearse

and traveling to performances is complicated.

"In the first 10 years we rehearsed five days a week," Castillo said. "But after many years everything became global. We started living and flying all over the world. To rehearse we have to rent cars go bus, train, plane, limo, rent rooms and rehearsal space and people to run the equipment. So we only rehearse when we have something special, like for the recording of our 40th anniversary show we recently did at the Fillmore. We usually just rehearse at sound checks or when we audition a new

More than half of the current band players are original members. Castillo said they worked hard on the new album – The Great American Soulbook. "Because of that we've been getting more attention than we have in years. We've basically been ignored by the radio for years, other than our old stuff, but this album hit the billboard charts for 18 weeks. We did a bunch of Tower Power style old music and people seem to like

CONCERTS-TOGO

Who: Tower of Power

doors open 7 p.m.,

Tickets: \$25, \$30, \$35,

8 p.m. event

When: Saturday, Dec. 12,

Where: The DreamCatcher

at Viejas, 5000, Willows Rd.,

(619) 659-1996, (619) 220-TIXS

That's not surprising since the album includes collaboration from some of music's top icons includ-

ing Frank Zappa keyboardist George Duke, vocalists Sam Moore, Joss Stone, Sir Tom Jones and Huey Lewis. Castillo laughed when I asked if it was easy to get them all onboard.

"No," he said immediately. "By the time we were ready to record not one of them had agreed. Joss Stone was the first, and she's incredible, adding two songs to the list. Tom Jones wouldn't commit until I remembered we had worked with his manager – his son – years back. One call and that happened. Slowly the rest fell into place."

Castillo likes that their sounds appeal to both old and new audiences. "We have a unique segment of the public that are really into us, and then there's a whole bunch of people who don't know who we are," he said. "On a recent



Top Row: Larry Braggs, David Garibaldi, Roger Smith, Rocco Prestia, Mark Harper; Bottom Row: Adolfo Acosta, Mic Gillette, Doc Kupka, Tom E. Politzer, Emilio Castillo Photo credit: Tom Walko

plane trip one person who didn't recognize the Tower of Power name asked if we had ever played at the Holiday Inn in Poughkeepsie? Another passenger said, 'Tower of Power are you kidding me?' We're doing total world domination in increments.

The Great American Soulbook

"You Met Your Match"
 By Stevie Wonder

2. "I Thank You" - By Sam & Dave (our version features Tom Jones in a duet with our singer, Larry Braggs)

3. "Loveland" - By The Watts 103rd St Rhythm Band

4. "It Takes Two" - By Marvin Gaye & Kim Weston (our version features Joss Stone in a duet with our singer, Larry Bragge)

5. "Me & Mrs. Jones" - By

#### **CROSSWORD SOLUTION PAGE 7**

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Billy Paul

6. "Star Time" - James Brown Medley with 4 songs: "It's A New Day," "Mother Popcorn," "There It Is", and "I Got The Feeling"

7. "Mr. Pitiful" - By Otis Redding (our version features Sam Moore) 8. "Heaven Must Be Missing an Angel" - By Tavares

9. "Since You've Been Gone (Baby, Baby, Sweet Baby)" - By Aretha Franklin

10. ("Heaven Must Have Sent) Your Precious Love" - By Marvin Gaye & Tammi Terrell (our version features Joss Stone in a duet with our singer, Larry Braggs)

11. "634-5789" - By Wilson Pickett (our version features Huey Lewis in a duet with our singer, Larry Braggs) 12. "Who Is He (and What Is He To You)?" - By Bill Withers



#### — DINING —

### Viejas' Far East Winds a pleasant place to dine

by Diana Saenger

he Far East Winds (formerly China Camp) restaurant inside the Viejas Casino is a pleasant experience and a nice addition to the many eating options inside the Casino and the Viejas Outlet Center.

The décor of the Far East Winds is striking. Spacious round tables that seat five or more as well as roomy booths are upholstered in a reddish/maroon leather. The tables have plenty of room between them so there's no feeling of

your neighbor listening to your conversation. It's hard to take eyes off of the decorative red carpet with its striking black inset design. Around the walls are various art objects that set the mood for an imaginary dining experience in the Far East. Everything from big sculptures to black and red art laced panels offer inviting table conversation while listening to the serene background music.

The Asian cuisine encompasses the past, present and future offerings of the Chinese culture. The vast menu features dishes from the four main

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regions of China: Cantonese (Southern China); Szechuan (Western China); Mandarin (Northern China); and Shanghainese (Eastern China).

Maria was our exceptional waitress on the night our party dined. She was at our table within minutes of sitting and very attentive the entire night. We also enjoyed informative conversation with her about the restaurant and her suggestions and information about certain dishes. December specials at the Far East Winds are only \$7.95 and offer selected entrees served



Far East Winds Grand Opening. Photo courtesy: Viejas Casino



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with Steamed Rice, Egg Roll and Cup of Soup. One of our party ordered this choosing the General Tso's Chicken. He was surprised at the generous portion and enjoyed his dinner immensely. Another diner had the Cashew Chicken which came with big chunks of chicken and was loaded with cashews all in a rich flavorful sauce and accompanied by steamed rice.

Seafood items on the menu include Pecan Shrimp and Salt & Pepper Fillet of Fish. Selections on the chicken menu include Cantonese Roast Duck and Thai Crispy Chicken. Beef entrees feature a Braised Brisket of Beef and there are pork, vegetarian, noodle and salad dishes as well. We were offered a selection of delicious deserts, too

Dining in the Far East Winds was an enjoyable mellow experience. We didn't even remember we were inside a casino until we walked out the door and heard the announcement of winning players. The restaurant hours are: Monday – Thursday, 5 p.m.-1 a.m.; Friday, 5 p.m.-2 a.m.; Saturday: 2 p.m.-2 a.m. and Sunday: 2 p.m.-1 a.m. For more information call 800-847-6537.



# 'Invictus' is inspiring and uplifting



Director Clint Eastwood gives Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon advice in *Invictus*. Photo credit: Keith Bernstein / Warner Bros. Pictures

#### Review by Diana Saenger

ince trailers of the movie Invictus began showing, many moviegoers have had the impression that the movie would be a Nelson Mandela biopic. Starring Morgan Freeman as Mandela, Invictus is based on John Carlin's book Playing the Enemy. The movie is not a biopic but more of an inspirational sports film based on one event that Mandela contributed to shortly after his release from prison in 1990.

Spending 27 years in an African prison has given Mandela plenty of time to think about his release. Although he's been elected South Africa's president in the aftermath of apartheid, nothing about his country is settled, and Mandela's decisions about his next moves are not easy ones to make. His countrymen are as hot as a branding iron about how the country should be run.

Having watched various sports on TV while in prison, Mandela saw something beyond politics or economics that united the African people - rugby.

One fateful day Mandela gets a call informing him that the South African Rugby Board is about to abort the Springboks name and emblem because they have only one African on their team and the Springboks have been viewed as elitists. He immediately summons a car and heads to the meeting where he becomes a voice of reason that sets the course for his country to come together. "What's past is past; we look to the future now," he declares.

Springboks coach, Francois Pienaar (Matt Damon), knows his men try, but they can't catch a break. Maybe it's the constant negativity from fans that keeps them from giving their best on the field. Mandela, who has already racially integrated his office and his security staff, comes up with a PR idea which might earn the Springboks favor with fans. He sends the team on a bus tour to dirt fields where neighborhood kids play rugby with whatever tools they have at hand. When the real pros show up loaded with equipment, that does the trick. Next. Mandela has to motivate François to inspire his team -- and he does so through the poem "Invictus," (which means unconquered) by William Ernest Henley.

Clint Eastwood directs Invictus. He and Freeman have worked together on two other movies – *Unforgiven* (1992) and *Million Dollar* Baby (2004), which earned Freeman a Best Supporting Actor Oscar. While Eastwood may have wanted to do a biopic starring Freeman, after several years in the works, it became clear that wouldn't work. With Invictus, Eastwood never gets schmaltzy or overgood job focusing on the event nation together.

wisdom in incorporating sport to reconcile his country. He knows he needs to pull everybody together, to find a way to appeal to their national pride – one thing, perhaps the only thing, they have in common at that time. He knows the white population and the black population will ultimately have

to work together as a team or the country will not succeed, so he shows a lot of creativity using a sports team as a means to an end.'

Freeman tackles the limited scope of his character well. Mandela does inspire François who visit's the man's prison cell to get inside Mandela's mind - to get his team, "to be better than they think they

"This is an important story about a world-shaking event that too few people know about," Freeman said. "I cannot think of any moment in history when a nation coalesced so suddenly and so completely.

I was proud to have the opportunity to tell this story.

Even though Damon had little script to work with in this film, he worked out hard doing weightlifting and boxing to be physically fit for the role. You have to give him accolades for carrying off his role and enduring the physically brutal aspects of rugby.

Everyone loves a David and Goliath tale or one where the underdog gets a real chance. Invictus tells such a story. It should appeal to viewers who enjoy Eastwood's work as well as to sports enthusiasts and to Freeman and Damon

### A sign of the times



George Clooney and Vera Farmiga star in Up In the Air. Photo credit: Dale Robinette / Paramount Pictures

#### Review by Diana Saenger

ovies can become very formulaic but nothing about Jason Reitman's films are mechanical. His quirky and offbeat coming of age Juno won him the Oscar for direction. Reitman's satirical comedy about a tobacco lobbyist, Thank You For Smoking, topped many critics best of lists. His new film, Up In the Air, is anything but formulaic. It touches on a subject that's at the top of current conversations about social media's negative aspects - a lack of personal connection among

Ryan Bingham (George Clooney) thinks he has the perfect job. A confirmed bachelor, Bingham spends his life flying from one town to another to handle the unpleasant task corporate CEOs dislike -- firing people. He's proud he can tell someone face to face they're about to experience the worst

time of their lives while handing them a useless move-onwith-your-life booklet.

What he does rates as less significant to Bingham than "how" he lives his life. His pleasure zone? Airports, and Bingham explains in his voiceover which tells much of the story throughout the film - that he spent 322 days in an airplane last year. It's from hundreds of impersonal hotel rooms that Bingham begins his morning ritual - dressing in a classy suit, packing minimal personal items in his perfect suitcase and hitting the road with his forever pasted-on smile. Even when those he faces are reduced to tears or threaten suicide, Bingham's eyes dart around the room while assuring them their life is just beginning.

Career Transition Counseling (CTC) sees Bingham as their poster boy – so he thinks. But there comes a day when

See 'UP IN THE AIR' page 6



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spinach.... Saturday:

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Invictus

**Studio:** Warner Bros. Pictures

Gazette Grade: B

MPAA Rating: "PG-13" for brief strong language Who Should Go: motion-capture animation fans

Up in the Air

**Studio:** Paramount Pictures

Gazette Grade: A-

MPAA: "R" for language and some sexual content. Who Should Go: Reitman and Clooney fans

burdens his story and does a that brought the South African "This story takes place at a critical point in Mandela's presidency," Eastwood said. "I think he demonstrated great

### — ON STAGE —

# Christmas and stage plays not to miss this month



Jonathan McMurty in A Christmas Carol.

#### by Diana Saenger

ow lucky San Diegans are to have a culturally rich community and one that boasts some of the best theatrical companies in the nation. There are a host of good performances going on in town, so take a break from those never-ending tasks and enjoy them or give some tickets as a special gift.

### Up In The Air ...

#### Continued from page 5

Craig (Jason Bateman), his boss, introduces him to the young efficiency expert, Natalie (Anna Kendrick). Fresh out of college, Natalie believes she's the one that will mainstream the company by being able to fire people from their own office on a video screen. When Craig insists he actually take Natalie with him to show her the ropes, Bingham is absent-mindedly sure he'll prove she's wrong.

Once on the road, Bingham teaches the newbie how to be a professional traveler. But he soon realizes Natalie is even more convinced her new idea will work perfectly for CTC. As Bingham faces a disruption in his rigid work life, he's also experiencing a personal meltdown. Bingham's only family is a sister he barely speaks to. He's proud he has no commitments, no home, and no "things" to clog his life. He's even a part-time motivational speaker and pushes his book about how people should put everything in their lives in a backpack and discard the rest. All this comes before the ultra sexy Alex Goran (Vera Farmiga) enters an airport bar and sits next to Bingham.

Alex, who also wants no entanglements, begins a passionate affair with Bingham, and both of them check their calendars for what airport their paths will cross next. In between, they engage in erotic conversations on their cell phones. Never imaging he would fall in love, Bingham begins to question his empty life and to wonder if Alex might be worth the risk.

Up in the Air is loosely based on Walter Kirn's book of the same name. Reitman and Sheldon Turner have written a brilliant screenplay that seems to be about people losing their jobs, but is really about people losing their personal connection with those around them. Superb casting enhances the story. Reitman had Clooney in mind when he wrote the script, and the affable actor - who could smile while directing traffic at Times Square - delivers another flawless performance. "The role was tailor made for him." Reitman said. "and it was probably one of the most exciting moments of my life when he finished reading it and said to me, 'Jason, it's great."

Farmiga (Orphan, The Boy in the Striped Pajamas) lights up the screen in every scene. She and Clooney achieve terrific sexual chemistry throughout the film. Kendrick (The Twilight Saga: New Moon) is equally refreshing in her turnabout character.

*Up in the Air* is a fresh, somewhat humorous and entertaining movie perfect for this time in our lives

**A Christmas Carol** – North Coast Repertory theatre in Solana Beach

Nothing says Christmas like a the Dickens' A Christmas Carol and seeing it on the live stage is a cherished tradition. Returning to the NCR stage for the fourth year, the play this year is directed by Matt Thompson who says this year's cast is the best he's ever directed. Playing the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge is well-known actor Jonathan McMurtry who will bedazzle young and old at this year's show, which will also feature a bit of snow. Don't miss out, get tickets now; December 11 -27, (858) 481-1055 or <a href="https://www.northcoastrep.org">www.northcoastrep.org</a>



#### Australia's world renowned Ten Tenors – Broadway San Diego, Civic Theatre

One only has to hear the superb voices of this internationally renowned singing group to be hooked. What's not to adore about the masterful voices in "World Anthem," the nostalgic heart-grabbing tones of "Danny Boy," feeling the dance grove of those high pitched voices in the "Bee Gees Medley," or getting goose bumps during their sobering and powerful salute to heroes in "Here's to the heroes that change our lives." The Ten Tenors will perform their Holiday show at the San Diego Civic Theatre from December 8 -13.



**Bonnie & Clyde** – La Jolla Playhouse's world-premiere

This is an exhilarating show from beginning to end, and one of the best I've seen in San Diego. Frank Wildhorn's music, lyrics by Don Black, music supervision and direction by John McDaniel and direction by Jeff Calhoun are so impressive. It's hard not to be awed when Stark Sands (Clyde Barrow) and Laura Osnes (Bonnie Parker) sing their duet "The World Will Remember Me" or Mare Winningham (as Bonnie's mother Emma) lets go with her soulful rendition "The Devil." Do not miss this show! Now – Dec. 20, 2009, (858) 550-1010 or online at <a href="https://www.lajollaplavhouse.org">www.lajollaplavhouse.org</a>



**Dr. Suess' How the Grinch Stole Christmas!** – The Old Globe Theatre

The Grinch's heart might be two sizes too small, but that won't be the case for anyone who sees this holiday classic. The delightful show with its amusing looking costumes on the Who-ville people, the ornery but funny Grinch (Jeff Skowron) and watching and hearing Shea Starrs Siben sing as Cindy-Lou Who, are all show stoppers. This is a must for all ages. Now – December 27, (619) 234-5623, www.oldglobe.org

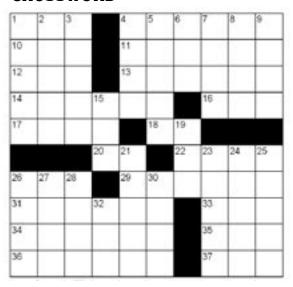


It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play – Cygnet heater

Everyone knows the wonderful 1946-released story of George Bailey who is suddenly unable to support his family and considering drastic options resonates with people of all walks of life. Until George's guardian angel needs to earn his wings and comes to his rescue. But how about watching the play unfold as a 1940s live radio broadcast. Patrons watch characters at a microphone play out the story with sound effects and terrific actors. Now – December 27, (619) 337-1525, www.cygnettheatre.com

### Puzzles & Comics

#### **CROSSWORD**



#### **Across**

- Teaspoon (abbr.)
- City
- 10 Sky
- 11 Elaborate
- 12 Pressure unit
- 13 Addled
- 14 Shirk
- 16 Choose
- 17 Dam
- Albuquerque locale
- U.S. Air Force
- 26 Chicken creation
- 29 Harden
- 31 Japanese entertaining girl 33
- Before, poetically 34
- Set in wood strips
- 35 Tell a tall tale
- 36 Reconcile
- 37 Headed

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- Vice President Al
- Submerge
- Colony insect
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- Stair
- Clark \_(Superman)

- 15 Chop down
- 19 Silent
- 21 Type of alcohol
- Give the letters of a word
- Eagle's nest
- Released
- 26 Aeais
- 27 DNA component
- Gold 28
- 30 Move carefully
- 32 Rested
- Solution on page 3

### OUTZKIRTS By: David & Doreen Dotson

I'M OFF TO THE GYM SEE YOU LATER,

HONEY.





### Moose Lake









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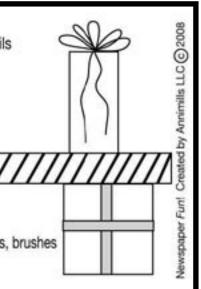
(619) 857-7272

### Put-Together Gifts

Not everyone likes to make their gifts for giving. Sometimes we just run out of time or our budgets are not as large as we would like. Here are some gifts that you can "put together." Think about some things that go well together - for example, a movie rental coupon and popcorn - and buy or gather them together. Next, find a box, bag, basket, tin or other container to put your gift



- 1. coloring or puzzle books, crayons or pencils
- tea bags, coffee, cookies
- jar of jelly, cheese, crackers
- car wash, polish, sponge or mitt, bucket
- 5. pine cone bird feeders, bird seed
- ink pads, rubber stamps, paper
- golf balls, tees, score cards
- 8. hot chocolate packets, marshmallows
- soaps, bath powder, wash cloth
- pears, apples, oranges, grapes
- miniature model of car, plane or train; paints, brushes
- 12. nuts, spicy snacks, chili mixes





# Holiday Fun for the Whole Family!

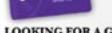
- So Cal's Largest Outdoor Ice Skating Rink NOW OPEN.
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