



## YAMATO: the Drummers of Japan Return to The Soraya

The Drummers of Japan will tour North America with their new show, Hito no Chikara. Yamato will perform at The Soraya at 3 p.m. on Saturday, March 22- SEE PAGE 8



## DMV's written test can now be taken online

The Department of Motor Vehicles' written test can now be taken online — or skipped all together for some by replacing it with a 45-minute, online course.- SEE PAGE 3

# THE PAPER

THE VOICE OF THE FOOTHILLS

MONDAY, MARCH 31, 2025

COVERING THE FOOTHILLS REGION FOR OVER 20 YEARS!

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## FEMA is giving some property owners more time to apply for debris removal help after the devastating wildfires

By David "Doc" DeMulle'

During a press conference Friday, Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger said the agency extended the deadline for owners of commercial and multi-family residential properties to apply for the debris removal program.

This includes condos, apartments and townhouse properties. Owners will now have until April 15 to submit a Right of Entry (ROE) form.

"Up until this moment, they were not included in the ROE process, and I'm grateful to FEMA for recognizing that we need additional time now that they are going to be allowed to be cleared by the [The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,]" said Barger.

The deadline for homeowners and renters impacted by fires to opt into the free federal program is Monday.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is leading the government-spon-



Photo by David "Doc" DeMulle'.

FEMA rep Brandi R. Thomas, US Army Corps of Engineers Col. Eric Swenson and Supervisor Kathryn Barger address the community members.

sored debris removal program, cleaning up properties impacted by fires free of charge.

County officials encouraged all homeowners to file ROE forms, even if they decide to opt out of the

program.

But county officials urged that all homeowners opt in to the program, which could allow the USACE to clear debris much more quickly by clearing full sections or blocks of

neighborhoods in coordinated operations.

Please see **FEMA is giving some property owners more time** on Page 5



Photo by Joan Slater

Lots of creative people make you smile in Altadena

## Altadena is not for sale!

Several hundred protesters gathered at Fair Oaks Avenue on Altadena's west side on Sunday, March 29, to echo a mantra that has blanketed the town since the Eaton Fire broke out on Jan. 7: "Altadena is Not For Sale."

The rally, amid the the hustles and bustle of a farmer's market at nearby Fair Oaks Burger, drew more than 500 people, said organizers with My TRIBE Rise, a Black-led organization, started in 2019, that focuses on promoting social welfare and social justice, said co-founder Heavenly Hughes.

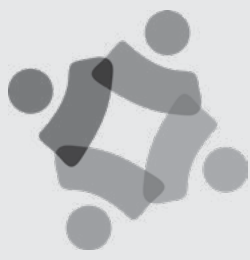
"When this catastrophe happened, we stepped right in to provide what we have already been providing, which is housing and food, and focusing on insecurities that happen in our community," Hughes said.

Since the early aftermath of the fire, "Altadena is Not For Sale" has been a rallying cry that echoes throughout the neighborhood, whether on yard signs, t-shirts, fliers, or social media.

Please see **Altadena is not for sale!** on Page 8

Check out The Foothills Paper interactive website: [thefoothillspaper.com](http://thefoothillspaper.com)





# COMMUNITY NEWS

## UKRAINE REFUGEES ARE COMING

Guest editorial by  
Dr. Glenn Mollette

America has been good to help people and more are on the way.

Refugees from Ukraine are coming to America, up to 100,000 would be welcomed as recently

announced by President Biden. The population of some communities will grow depending on where the federal government places these people.

Since the passage of the refugee act there are already over 3 million refugees in America. They are located throughout the United States with large populations in some towns and cities.

A refugee is “a person who is unable to return his or her country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.” A refugee legally resides in the country of resettlement and is eligible for federally funded cash assistance for up to 8 months. Refugees are resettled in the United States by the federal gov-

ernment and are afforded specific refugee assistance to help them rebuild their lives in America. This federal funding is limited in both duration and amount.

It is important to note that most refugees arrive with very little in terms of possessions, beside a few bags of luggage, and if they are lucky, all of their family members.

All refugees arriving in the United States are entitled to 8 months of Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) from the date of their U.S. arrival. The RCA amounts vary based on the size of the family: Single person (\$230/month), Family of

2 (\$363/Month), Family of 3 (\$485/month), Family of 4 (\$611/month), etc. If a family qualifies for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), offered by the State Department

*All refugees arriving in the United States are entitled to 8 months of Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) from the date of their U.S.*

of Health and Human Services, they will not receive RCA funds, but will immediately begin receiving TANF funds, which provide the same amounts of funds as outlined above for families (Refugee or American), yet unlike RCA, there is 5 year time limit to their receipt of funds which can be reviewed and extended depending on need. All TANF recipients must be

participating in verified educational courses, volunteer placements, and/or employment searches in order to access these funds. Source: Catholic Charities

The Ukrainian people appear to be hard working people. Once they make it to America I would not be surprised if some of our worker shortage will start to disappear. These people have nothing. If you still want a job you probably should take one and go to work.

At this point we have no choice but to help these people as the economy and infrastructure of the countries surrounding Ukraine cannot absorb them all.

Can you imagine if Russia and China combined to attack America? What if we had to run to Canada to survive? We would appreciate anything anybody would do to help us. ■

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## [LETTER TO EDITOR]

Dear Editor:

According to recent polling, 84% of voters—Republicans and Democrats alike—agree that no president, regardless of party, should be able to obstruct and undermine the will of the American people or exploit weaknesses in our political system for their personal gain. In our polarized politics, that bipartisan support is a huge deal.

So what can we do to protect our democracy from presidential corruption? Pass bold legislation like the Protecting Our Democracy Act. If passed, it would prevent future abuse of presidential power and corruption, increase transparency, and ensure presidents of either party can be held accountable.

If the average person used their public office for personal gain, they'd go to

jail. So why should the president be allowed to act with impunity?

That's why I'm urging Congress to pass the Protecting Our Democracy Act. We must prevent future presidents of any party from abusing the power of their office.

Sincerely,  
Delia Cuellar  
91331 ■

**Those who advertise in  
*The Foothills Paper*  
support the community!  
Those who read it ARE the community!**

If I wasn't so tired, I'd jump up and down and shout Huzzah! Yes, I stole that from the series, "The Great." Wow! Could they drink vodka. But something has got to be done to make life easier for my readers here. Things are actually starting to look up, as long as you squint your eyes and click your heels twice.

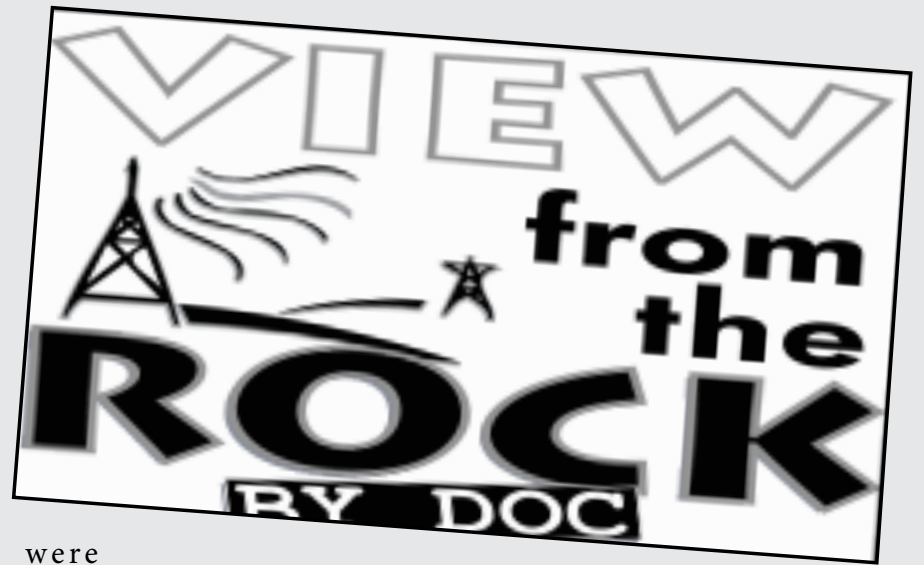
I can't believe how many NEW businesses are starting up here. Personally, I don't care how many duplicate businesses there are, just as long as they do it pre-pandemic right. Our neighborhood council's Land Use Committee is for all intents and purposes, dead in the water. No one starting a business really cares what they think. And then of course, even our councilmember rodriguez won't talk to them either. Boy/girl/LGBTQ.... Talk about being alone.

Our local chamber of commerce continues the smoke and mirrors about how they are re-opening

next month, next month, next month, for the past 4 years. Next month never comes, but when it finally does, it's going to be a fine month and everyone will jump UP and shout HUZAZH!?! LOL

I gave up waiting for them to re-open and went ahead and joined the Crescenta-Canada Chamber of Commerce that has never stopped helping their members during the pandemic, and they are getting new members every week. Our community needs a chamber of commerce and there is no one that they will allow to re-create it and help the community. Another dead-end for S-T. There is, one bright shining local oligarch here though, that against all odds, is making a real difference here, creating new businesses and hiring people.

ARNO ABRAHAMIAN is our Entrepreneur Of The Year. Sure, he has his faults, like how many of you have had explosive devices thrown at your shop while you



were still in it? But that's Tujung. It goes with the territory.

We should get him to help work out the horrible accidents on our Foothill Death Blvd. I don't even cover them anymore, and the LAPD doesn't have the manpower or the will to buck City Hall and stop the carnage. Like good soldiers, they just follow the orders of our councilmember and continue to continue not seeing the problem. There are solutions, but as long as we let vested

interests guide us, nothing is going to happen.

I'm not a religious man, but I am spiritual, and I truly believe that if our local churches got their collective acts together, they would be a force to reckon with, and maybe with spiritual guidance, we could solve our communities' problems. Think about that this Easter, maybe there is an answer, and no, you can't say "It's The Water." ■



## DMV's written test can now be taken online

By HUNTER LEE

The Department of Motor Vehicles' written test can now be taken online — or skipped all together for some by replacing it with a 45-minute, online course.

Generally, the test that the DMV calls the "driver's license knowledge test," is required for those getting their license for the first time and motorists every five years after turning 70 years old.

For drivers, the agency says, tackling the test at home will save significant time at the DMV field office, which still must be visited by many to get a photo and thumbprint taken and to complete a vision exam. (Because of the pandemic, most drivers 70 and older can renew totally online this year.)

"This is one more example of how the DMV is modernizing to add more convenient services online that used to be only available in an office," DMV Director Steve Gordon said in a statement. "We continue to incorporate ways to bring DMV services to our

customers when and where they want."

The online test is offered in 35 languages and will look roughly the same as an in-person test, said Chris Orrock, a DMV spokesman. The test is available between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding state holidays. Participants verify their identity by submitting a photo of themselves to the DMV, Orrock said. A webcam is required for test takers, along with a browser extension that must be installed on their computer; sound and keyboard entries are monitored to ensure honesty.

It can't be taken on a tablet or mobile device. Customers who fail the test twice must go to a DMV office and pass it in person. The online course can be taken on a computer, laptop, tablet or mobile device and is offered around the clock, though it is currently available only in English.

It includes quizzes and takes approximately 45 minutes. This option is not offered to those getting their driver's license for the first time.

For information: [dmv.ca.gov](https://dmv.ca.gov). ■

## GOT JUNK? THEY'LL TAKE IT!

Spring cleaning is a time to dispose of large bulky household items, hazardous waste, tires, yard cleanup, and other unneeded items in your home. Keeping our community clean takes teamwork. Do not dispose of your items in the public-right-of-way.

Illegal dumping poses a safety hazard to our neighborhoods, and it's against the law. The City of Los Angeles and LA Sanitation and Environment (LASAN) Department offers free, convenient services to dispose of items you no longer need.

### Bulky Item Drop-Off

You can drop off bulky items today at the East Valley District Yard (11050 Pendleton Street, Sun Valley, CA 91352) from 8 AM - 4:30 PM. If you miss today's drop-off, the bulky items collection happens every second week of each month. For more information visit <https://bit.ly/3t4pNM9>.

### S.A.F.E Collection Centers

Use S.A.F.E. (Solvents/Automobile/Flammables/Electronics) centers to dispose of hazardous material. The nearest S.A.F.E collection center for the 7th Council District is located at 11025 Randall Street, Sun Valley, CA 91352. It is open on Saturdays and Sundays from 9 AM - 3 PM.

To learn more about S.A.F.E. Collection Center visit <https://bit.ly/3w5875f>.

### Bulky Item Collection

LASAN can pick up your large/bulky household items such as mattresses, couches, doors, carpets, toilets, electrical waste, and other furniture. To schedule a pickup day, please call the LASAN Customer Care Center at (800) 773-2489 at least ONE DAY BEFORE your regular collection day. Please have an itemized list of your items ready when calling or submitting your request.

If you witness illegal dumping or locate items that have been illegally abandoned in the City's right-of-way report it by calling MyLA 311 or <https://bit.ly/3pUGR5z>. ■







# Terence Blanchard

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## FEMA is giving some property owners more time

*continued from page 1*

Residents who opt out of the program can hire private contractors, with the cost paid out-of-pocket or through their insurance companies.

According to Supervisor Lindsey Horvath - who represents the Pacific Palisades, Malibu, and other cities and unincorporated areas of the

county impacted by the Palisades fire - homeowners who are moving forward with private contractors should still file forms and opt out.

More than 6,000 ROEs have been submitted, but another 3,400 homeowners have yet to respond.

Horvath also reminded small businesses that March 31 will be the final day to apply for a U.S. Small Business Administration loan. City News Service, Inc. contributed to this report. ■

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## ANOTHER DAY IN THE HOOD

# Tough Times Are A-Comin'



Photo by David "Doc" DeMulle'.

Trying to save Zorthian Ranch at the top of Fair Oaks.

By David "Doc" DeMulle'

Allstate Corp. will end its years-long pause on underwriting in California as soon as the state regulator adopts proposed regulatory changes to make it easier for insurers to raise rates, according to a company spokesperson.

"If the regulations were in effect today, we would begin selling new homeowner insurance policies tomorrow," said Gerald Zimmerman, senior vice president of government

relations for Allstate, in a proposed public hearing on April 23.

"Let me repeat that: As soon as we can use catastrophe modeling and incorporate the net cost of reinsurance into our rates, we will be open to business in nearly every part of California."

The company will offer coverage "in nearly every corner" of California, Zimmerman said.

The testimony marks the first time a large property insurer has publicly promised a return to the market in the disaster-prone state if the new

regulations are implemented.

More than half of the major property insurers in California have cut back on business in the state in recent years in response to the increasing severity of wildfires, as well as state regulations that limit the cost of policies. Allstate confirmed in a statement to Bloomberg News that it seeks to increase its market share in California, but rates must "fully reflect the cost of providing insurance to consumers" before agreeing to lift its current restrictions. The new

rules will allow for rate increases that the company says will ensure they can pay customers' claims in the event of a fire, according to the statement.

Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara says the proposed reforms, which would not need legislative approval or to be signed by the governor, represent the biggest changes to the state's insurance market since 1988. Specifics have been scant and the overhaul is still in draft form, but Lara expects the process to be complete by the end of the year. ■

## Updated fire maps show fire danger zones increase 76%

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection released updated fire-hazard severity-zone maps for Los Angeles County for the first time in over a decade on Monday, adding more than 440,000 acres to the county's hazard zones, including a 30% increase in acres zoned in the highest severity rating.

The release — which includes all of Southern

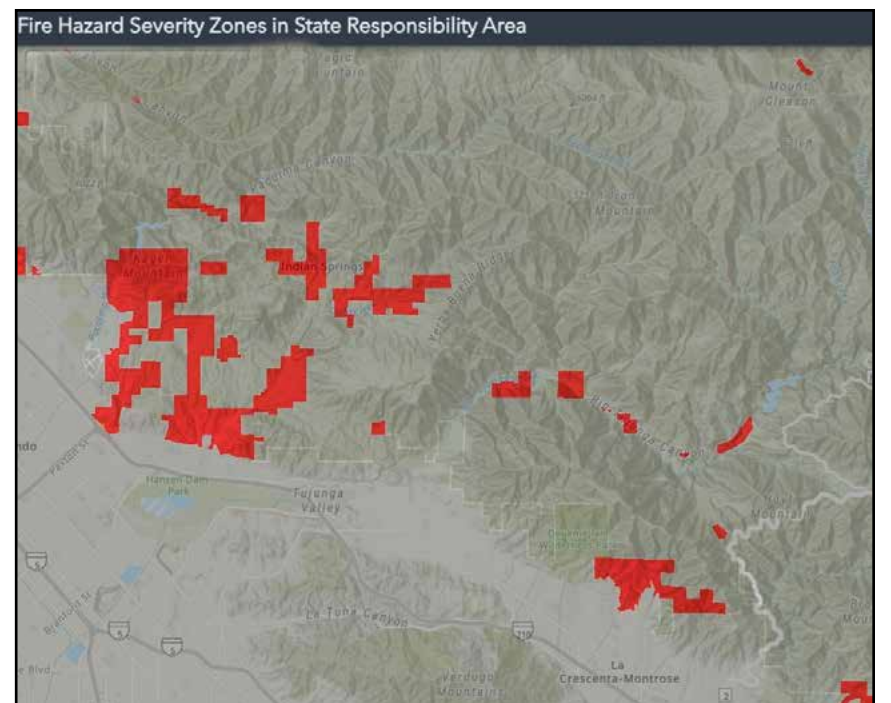
California and marks the end of the agency's two-month, statewide roll-out — sets off a roughly five-month clock for L.A. city and county to receive public input, make adjustments, and begin enforcing heightened fire-safety regulations within the new zones.

The new Cal Fire maps are only for areas where local fire departments, like the Los Angeles Fire Department and Los Angeles County Fire

Department, are responsible for responding to blazes. Previously, Cal Fire only mapped the highest severity rating, "very high," for these local responsibility areas. The new maps include Cal Fire's "moderate" and "high" zones as well.

Local governments now have until July 22, 2025 to adopt the new maps as their own designations.

Continued Next Edition. ■



Using data on variables such as climate, vegetation, terrain and fire history, Cal Fire calculates whether the probability of wildfire in a given area is moderate, high or very high.



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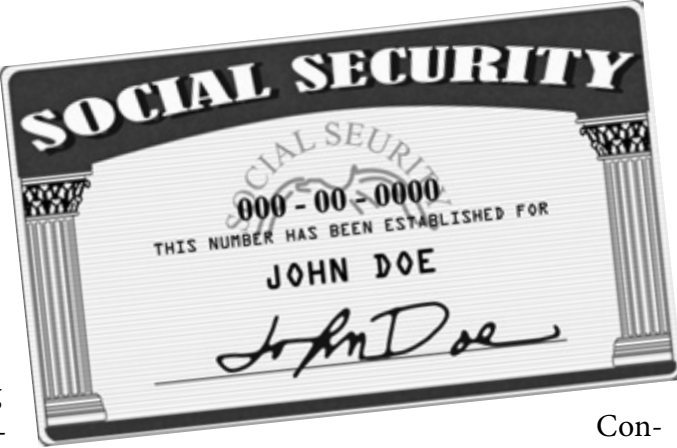
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**ASK RUSTY**

By AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor Russell Gloor, Association of Mature American Citizens.

## Should I Claim Early Due to Social Security's Financial Condition?

because her benefit as your widow will be the amount you are receiving at your death. I'll try to put all this into perspective for you.



Although Social Security is facing some future financial issues, it will never go bankrupt and be unable to pay benefits. The worst that could happen, if Congress takes no action beforehand, would be that benefits will be cut by about 22% if the SS Trust Fund is fully depleted in 2033 (right now, reserves in the Trust Fund are used to supplement SS expenses because SS revenue is currently less than program costs). If that happens, Social Security can only pay out as much as it brings in. But that almost certainly won't happen, because Congress won't permit it to. Congress already knows how to fix Social Security's financial issues - they just currently lack the political will and bipartisan spirit to implement the changes needed. But there's little doubt that they will fix the issue before allowing an across-the-board benefit cut to over 65 million beneficiaries (because seniors vote). FYI, there was \$2.9 trillion in reserves in the Social Security Trust Fund at the end of 2020.

I don't recommend you make your Social Security claiming decision based on fear of the program going bankrupt - it won't. Even if

Congress doesn't act and a benefit cut is imposed in 2033 (which is highly unlikely), a 22% cut to your age 62 benefit amount would be more painful than a 22% cut to your benefit at your full retirement age (FRA) which would be about 30% higher than your age 62 benefit amount. The longer you wait to claim, the higher your benefit, and your wife's survivor benefit, will be - even in the unlikely event of a later cut in benefits. Instead, I suggest you make your claiming decision based only upon your personal circumstances. If you wish to increase your wife's survivor benefit, then waiting longer to claim is the way to do that. If you retire from working at age 62, Social Security's earnings test won't apply to you (the earnings test limits how much you can earn while collecting early SS benefits), thus you can certainly claim at 62 if you so wish. But it's important to consider the consequences of claiming early (including a lower survivor benefit for your widow) and make a decision based on facts, not fear of Social Security going bankrupt - because it won't. ■

**Dear Rusty:** I plan on retiring at 62, one year from now. I have been coached to (if financially possible) leave my Social Security earnings for my wife to collect in the future if I die, considering that she was a homemaker for the majority of her income earning years. My instinct is to get Social Security coming (I understand I'm settling for a lesser amount at age 62) as soon as possible considering the forecast of our government's inability to fund Social Security for the rest of my life. No one has a crystal ball, and no one knows what our government will or will not be able to fund even into next week, so we weigh what we know and see, and then decide. Is my question clear? Signed: Skeptical

**Dear Skeptical:** Well, your question is clear but contains two opposing factors - you say you wish to provide well for your wife if you die, but also say you wish to claim at age 62 because you're not confident that Social Security (SS) will be there in the future. Yet claiming at age 62 will mean the lowest possible survivor benefit for your wife



Water geyser makes for a good photo.

## Mc Groarty Park Gets New Water Feature!

**A** old water main in McGroarty Park blew up at the valve and LAFD was called to contain the water until DWP arrived. With hundreds of gallons of water shooting to the sky, the firefighters did what they could to turn off the broken valve, but couldn't. It was actually a pleasant relief from the 90 degree weather we had, and one by one, the firefighters ended up getting soaked. A fun time was had by all as they waited for the DWP to arrive. ■



Firefighter assesses the amount of water flowing.



# YAMATO: the Drummers of Japan Return to The Soraya with New Program

*Hito no Chikara – The Power of Human Strength*



**Y**AMATO: The Drummers of Japan will tour North America with their new show, *Hito no Chikara – The Power of Human Strength*. Yamato will perform at The Soraya at 3 p.m. on Saturday, March 22. The “simply captivating” (The Evening Post) Taiko troupe has reached nearly 8 million people globally in over 4,000 performances throughout their thirty-two-year history, adding to that number this season with seven performances in Canada; and 29 venues throughout the United States from New England to California.

“YAMATO believes that the drumbeat, like the heartbeat, is the very pulse of life and the epitome of the Japanese spirit,” says the troupe’s Founder and Artistic Director Masa Ogawa. The physically powerful cohort of musician-athletes work and live together as a community in the Asuka Village, said to be the birthplace of Japa-

nese culture. There they create their own musical compositions, theater productions, sets, lighting design, choreography, performance techniques, costumes, makeup, stage settings and props.

They make their own bachi sticks used to play the traditional Japanese instruments, beginning each show by hitting a Wadaiko drum weighing half a ton, made from a single piece of wood from a 400-year-old tree. In every program, the drummers play 35-40 different Japanese drums, which are divided into four types: Miya-daiko, Hirado-taiko, Okedo-daiko and Shime-daiko, each varying in size and tone. Additionally, the troupe play Japanese instruments including the Shamisen, Koto, Chappa and Shinobue. Ogawa explains, “after composing each song, I give a score to the drummers.

From that point, YAMATO’s true creation begins. The drummers put their thoughts and spirit into each note. We open the eyes of the heart to

find a sort of synchronicity with the other drummers. Our final purpose is to connect to the heart of the audience.”

This season’s new program entitled *Hito no Chikara – The Power of Human strength* examines humanity’s ever evolving relationship with technology and artificial intelligence. Masa Ogawa wonders, “Will there ever be a machine that can play Taiko with unparalleled accuracy? Will advanced algorithms make them sound human-like?

Will people be used by the tools they have created, or will we no longer need people in the future? What will happen to Taiko drumming?” Ogawa concludes, “Let us beat the Taiko as we are YAMATO. We do not know when the end of humanity is, but we will strike until that moment. The sounds struck by the heart, resonating with each other, will become “*Hito no Chikara – The Power of Human strength*.” ■

## Altadena is not for sale!

*continued from page 1*

The slogan is a response to opportunistic developers from outside of Altadena offering pennies on the dollar for burned-down properties, and an affirmation that Altadena residents will come back and rebuild their homes.

“We want to be sure that the buying and selling is happening within the community,” Hughes explained. “So that’s what start it out, is being able to let the community know we’re here if you want to buy, we’re here if you want to sell,” said Hughes.

The mammoth fire destroyed more than 9,400 residences and consumed 14,000 acres. Weeks later, the first vacant lot sold for \$550,000 cash, \$100,000 above the asking price.

More than a dozen more sites

would also sell, several of them reportedly to developers or investors, including several from outside the U.S., according to reports.

There’s concern that amid the frenzy to buy up property, longtime owners in the area will get pushed out, drastically changing the character of the area, long known for its relatively high Black homeownership rate. My Tribe Rise also invited those affected by the Eaton fire to share stories about their neighborhood and print pictures of what they lost. Organized by Los Angeles-based photographer Sam Comen, a digital archive of the photos will be accessible to residents in the coming weeks.

“Altadenians” don’t feel like we left Altadena because we feel like we take Altadena with us,” said Hughes. “We had to evacuate, but we are Altadena.”

“Altadena!” Hughes cried out. “Not for sale!” the crowd chanted back.

The rally featured an eclectic mix of local artists including Bredman & HashMo and okay coleman! as well as surprise big-named artist Aloe Blacc, who performed his hit song “The Man.”

“We will help one another, we will strengthen one another, we will encourage one another, and we will build back better because the creator God is inside of us, and we see your creative miracle working power,” said Pastor Kenebrew.

“It’s important that we understand it is necessary that we not only come together and unify, but strategize, especially those of us that are leaders, in coming up with the resources and the solutions that we will face as a community over the next several years,” said Pastor McFarland.

Pastor McFarland stressed the importance of preserving the heritage, legacy and wealth of the Black and brown communities of Altadena, a neighborhood that once served as

a haven for Black families to own property in the 1960s and 1970s when redlining laws prevented them from building elsewhere.

Since the first free community farmer’s market at Fair Oaks Burger, which opened on March 7, several local vendors have showed up to support wildfire victims by providing food, clothing and household items. Local Altadena-Pasadena nonprofit, Side Street Project, invited youth to make their own “zines” about Altadena and what they love about their community.

Now, as residents prepare to move through phases of rebuilding, vendors are also providing logistical information on debris removal, contractors, and mortgage loans.

Together We Rebuild encouraged rally attendees to go to their Eaton Fire Recover event on May 10, where they can learn more from specialists on navigating the rebuilding process. ■