# Los Angeles Times

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MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

## Christmas Eve merry, bright in Southland

**THE MANHATTAN** Beach Pier, seen above on Christmas Eve, will be decorated with holiday lights until the end of the holiday season. At the Grove, right, Ricky Rivera holds his 11-month-old son, Deni, up to a Christmas tree on Sunday. It's the child's first Christmas.

DANIA MAXWELL Los Angeles Times

# News on street: Medi-Cal will expand in '24

Taco sellers and other vendors help publicize benefits open to all regardless of immigration status.

BY EMILY ALPERT REYES, MELISSA GOMEZ AND PRISCELLA VEGA

As parents hustled to pick up their kids from a school in South Los Angeles, Juana Dominguez greeted one after another with the same question in Spanish: "Do you have Medi-Cal?"

"Don't be afraid to get it," she urged mothers pushing strollers in the afternoon sun. She paused to chat up street vendors hawking raspados and hot dogs, encouraging them as well, as she handed out fliers.

Many already knew Dominguez from the brightly painted Paloma Market nearby, where she can regularly be found selling tacos at a table out front. On this stretch of Main Street, she also dishes out health information through a program that turns vendors into "community messengers."

Dominguez is on a mission to make sure her neighbors know that "papers or no papers, you're going to get help from Medi-Cal." That's because in January, the state will open its Medicaid program to anyone whose income is low enough to qualify, no matter their immigration status.

It's the culmination of a steady expansion of the California health insurance program, which has already grown to include children, young adults and seniors regardless of their legal status. As of last year, the uninsured rate among immigrants in California without U.S. citizenship was estimated to be 21% — lower than in 36 other states, according to a KFF analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

Next year, California will extend Medi-Cal benefits to the last remaining group of undocumented people — those ages 26 to 49 — in what

[See **Medi-Cal,** A9]

# Doctor might have a snakebite remedy

Venom kills thousands every year, but a pill could buy victims at least enough time to get to a hospital.

BY LOUIS SAHAGÚN

SAN FRANCISCO — John Heenan knows the terror of feeling a sting on his foot, then looking down and seeing two bright red puncture wounds about an inch apart and a massive rattlesnake slithering away into tall grass.

It was a summer morning in 2017, and the 74-year-old horticulturist was carrying a box of fruit in a Marin County orchard when, he said, "I stepped right on him, then called out to a partner, 'Hey, I've been bitten by a rattlesnake.' "

It's a snapshot imprinted in Heenan's brain. "The fangs struck a vein, and I could feel the venom moving throughout my system," he recalled, wincing at the memory. "I started seizing up, and struggled to breathe as though I had the wind knocked out of me."

Heenan was rushed to a hospital, where he spent the next four days in a coma. During that time, he was administered 28 vials of antivenom intravenously at a cost of $3,400 per vial.

When he regained consciousness, there were two people at his bedside, his wife and expedition doctor Matthew Lewin, who smiled and said, "You are one lucky guy."

Heenan would later learn that Lewin was hot on the trail of a novel treatment for the long, agonizing and often deadly effects of venomous snakebites: It's a pill that he says "is intended to at least buy victims enough time to get to the hospital."

Snake venom is a complex cocktail of toxins, amino acids and proteins that evolved primarily to immobilize and kill prey, but it also prepares tissues for digestion. In humans, venom causes severe swelling and instability of blood pressure, neuromuscular weakness and paralysis, hemorrhaging, and the death of skeletal

[See **Snakebite,** A12]

# L.A. philanthropists loosen grip on funds

## More foundations trust nonprofits to spend money as they see fit

BY CORIE BROWN

Fernando Torres got his first gang tattoo when he was 15, a rite of passage among some members of his family.

"I thought it was an honor to die for your gang," he says.

Acknowledging that he was quick to throw a punch, he says he was soon expelled from high school. But two years later, Torres, then 17, was enrolled at FREE L.A. High School, a charter school affiliated with decarceration activists at the Los Angeles-based Youth Justice Coalition.

It wasn't a smooth transition. It took an arrest for carrying a loaded handgun and the threat of prison time, he says, before he finally started to listen to FREE L.A. teachers and staff — several of whom had been incarcerated — and extracted himself from gang life.

"They see themselves in us," says Torres, who is now 22 and works in construction, "and want us to have a better outcome."

For 20 years, young people like Torres have had their lives turned around by the Youth Justice Coalition, an organization that relies on support from California philanthropies. The key to that success has been no-strings-attached grants,

[See **Philanthropy,** A6]

MEL MELCON Los Angeles Times

**FERNANDO TORRES**, 22, is a former gang member and a graduate of FREE L.A. High School, a charter school affiliated with the Youth Justice Coalition.

ANALYSIS

# All in the corporate family? Not anymore

Success of 'Suits' and other licensed content indicates a shift in the major streaming services' business model

BY RYAN FAUGHNDER

When Disney+, HBO Max (now just Max) and other streaming services were launched, the idea behind their strategies was simple enough. The entertainment companies took what was essentially a "walled garden" approach by having a bunch of content from the same company, new and old, streaming in one place. A closed ecosystem, more or less.

This was a significant departure from Hollywood's traditional and lucrative strategy, which goes like this: Once a show runs its course, keep selling it and reselling it to other networks and services for as long as possible. This is how something like "Seinfeld" keeps generating returns for years and years after its original lifespan.

Lately, though, the walls around the streamers' orchards have started to crack. Executives have become increasingly willing to license titles from their libraries to third parties, including Netflix, as studios mine their catalogs for much-needed cash.

Certain acclaimed HBO shows that once streamed exclusively on Max, including "Six Feet Under" and "Insecure," now are also available on Netflix. Past seasons of the Warner Bros. Television sitcom "Young Sheldon," which debuts its last season on CBS next year, are also streaming on Netflix. (To be sure, though, HBO and Max are keeping "Game of Thrones" and other blockbuster series to themselves.)

[See **Streaming,** A12]

### Fighting in Gaza spills more blood

Slain Palestinian refugee camp residents and Israeli soldiers are among the latest casualties. **WORLD, A3**

### How homeless people spent aid

Researchers say those who received a $750-a-month stipend used almost all of it on basic needs. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

**Weather**
Lots of sunshine.
L.A. Basin: 67/50. **B6**

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