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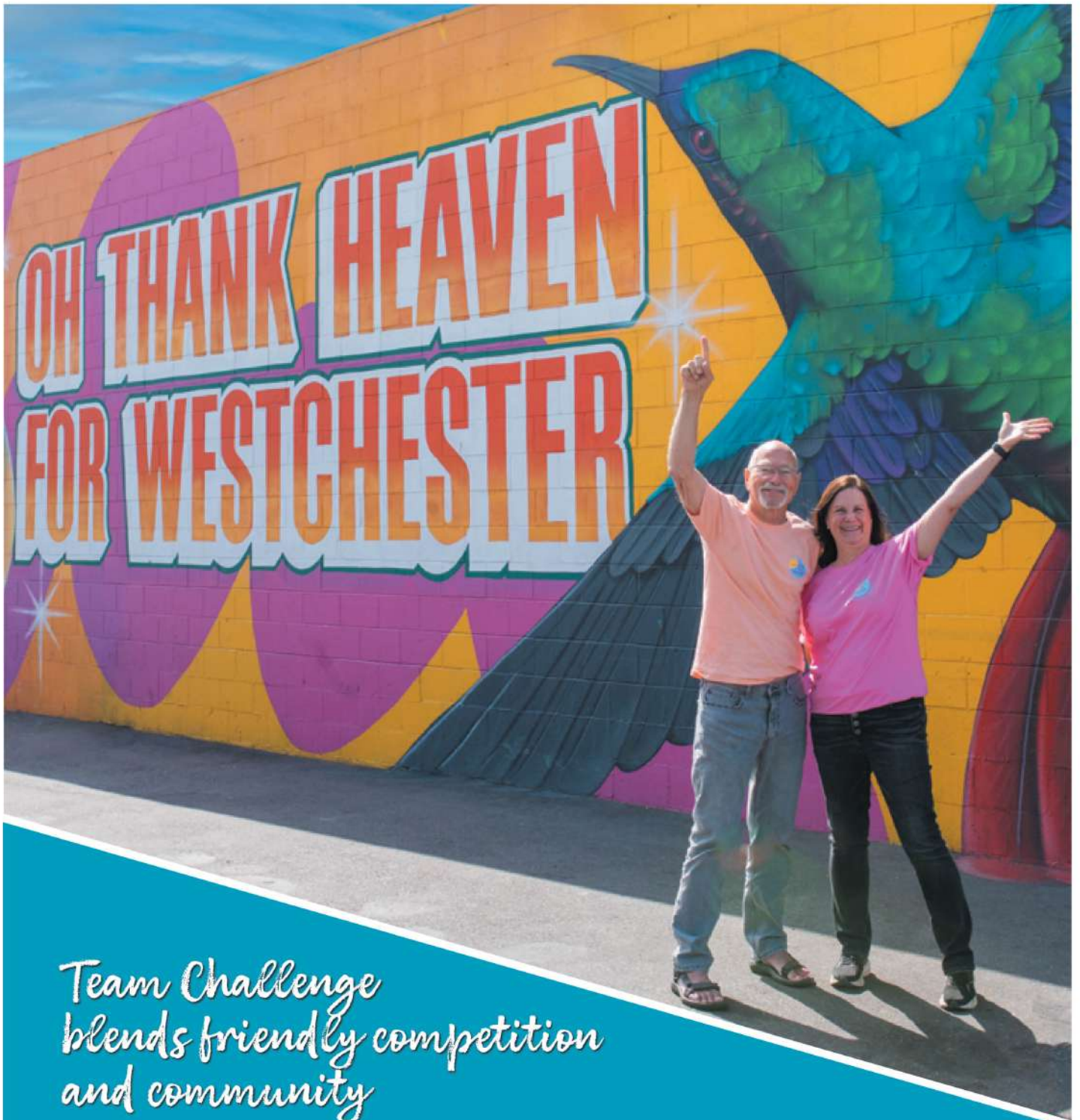
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YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

NEWS

May 2025



*Team Challenge
blends friendly competition
and community*

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Photo by Zsuzs Steiner

Westchester Team Challenge blends community and competition

By Shanee Edwards

What started as an idea Grant Francis had while traveling abroad has grown into one of 90045's most spirited and impactful fundraising events. Now entering its fourth year, the Westchester CA Team Challenge (WCTC) is a half-day celebration of community, camaraderie and creativity—all in the name of beautifying the streets of Westchester.

"I saw a group of people playing games in a park in China, just laughing and having fun, and I thought, 'Why can't we do this back home?'" says Grant, a longtime community volunteer, and founder of Clean Up Westchester.

Wanting to launch something similar in his own neighborhood, Grant reached out to fellow community leader Amy Frelinger, a well-known local real estate agent and LAPD Neighborhood Watch block captain. Together, they launched the WCTC: a fun, non-impact sporting event where neighborhood teams of 10 compete in friendly games like cornhole, bocce ball, and football toss—all while raising money for the Westchester Streetscape Improvement Association (WSIA).

The event, which takes place this year on Saturday, August 2, from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., is open to all Westchester and Playa del Rey based-organizations, businesses and residents, ages 18 and over. Teams are made up of friends, neighbors, and even local groups like Rotary Clubs, the Elks Lodge and neighborhood watch groups. As part of the registration fee, each team receives color-coordinated T-shirts, and part of the fun is coming up with a team name that represents the group, like "The Wammers," or the "Bad News Hughes." Some competitors even bring cheerleaders—pom-poms and all—hoping

to win the coveted "Community Spirit Award," and all the bragging rights that come along with it!

"We added a cheerleader alley last time so that everyone, even those who don't want to compete, can get involved and root for their team," says Amy. "It's casual cheerleading, not short skirts and gymnastics. Just people showing up with big energy and big smiles."

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It's about creating an experience, enjoying your friends and neighbors, giving back to the community and leaving our streets better than we found them.

Behind all the fun is a meaningful mission: supporting WSIA, the nonprofit responsible for maintaining the landscaped stretch of Sepulveda Boulevard from the 405 freeway to Manchester Avenue, and arguably Westchester's most traveled thoroughfare.

"That area is the gateway to LAX," says Amy. "Seventy-six million travelers a year drive through that corridor, and most don't realize how much money and effort it takes to keep it beautiful."

Originally spearheaded by local resident John Ruhlen, WSIA ensures the sidewalks are safe, the walls are painted, and flowers and trees are planted and maintained. The City of Los Angeles does not fund this upkeep. Vandalism, theft and storm damage only add to the challenge.

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Photos courtesy WCTC



At top: Amy and Grant show their enthusiasm for the event in front of a Westchester-themed mural.

Middle: The Team Challenge co-founders pose for a photo with Councilwoman Traci Park and Field Deputy Sean Silva.

At bottom: The LAX Coastal Chamber team has some fun at the last competition.

Team Challenge (cont'd)

(continued from page 4)

"All of this costs hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. Our goal is to raise awareness and support for this often overlooked, but essential work," says Amy.

Last go around, the WCTC raised \$10,000 for WSIA, and this year, organizers have set an ambitious goal to more than double that amount, aiming for \$25,000. Several sponsors have already come on board, including the Drollinger Family Charitable Foundation, SoCalGas and Jeff DeLarme's Wealth Management Group.

Individual donors called "Neighborhood Angels" can donate starting at \$50, with corporate sponsorship levels starting at \$500. All contributions are tax-deductible through WSIA's nonprofit status.

For those who participate, event day is filled with positive vibes, lighthearted competition and plenty of community pride. Teams register at 8 a.m., receive their shirts, and warm up before competing in a rotation of events. A scoreboard tracks team standings throughout the day, and awards are given, not only for athletic skill, but also for camaraderie and teamwork.

To keep teams balanced, all teams must have both male and female participants, and everyone loves an upset. One year, a block team from

87th Street surprised everyone by winning one of the events, beating out several of the big, organized community groups.

"It was a real underdog victory. That's the kind of thing that makes this event special," Grant says.

Amy adds, "We want people to walk away with a smile, whether they win or not. It's about creating an experience, enjoying your friends and neighbors, giving back to the community and leaving our streets better than we found them."

Amy and Grant, both longtime Westchester residents and active, engaged community members, encourage their neighbors to take an interest in their hometown and get involved to make a measurable impact.

"Knowing how precious time is, a little community involvement goes such a long way to feeling connected. To be able to admire our neighborhood is at the heart of why we are so proud to call Westchester our home," says Amy. "Our hope is that more people will get involved as players, sponsors or simply as supporters."

Mark your calendars for August 2 and get ready to play, cheer and support the beautification of Westchester—one game at a time!

For more info, visit westchestercateamchallenge.com.



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