

## Spotlight Shines On Local Gems Below The Radar



SDBJ INSIDER

Nels Jensen

**Project Concern International** is a humanitarian nonprofit with revenues of more than \$62 million that reaches nearly 19 million people a year through

programs in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Dr. **James Turpin** was a young physician in Coronado when he founded PCI in 1961.

Turpin was honored at the recent LEAD Visionary Awards at the **San Diego Marriott Marquis & Marina** for PCI's work in Tijuana and along the border. A common reaction from the crowd of about 800 was that people had no idea a group based here was having such an impact.

Turpin acknowledged how PCI flies below the radar locally but expects that to change with the recent appointment of **Carrie Hessler-Radelet** as CEO. Hessler-Radelet served as the director of the **Peace Corps** from 2013 until January 2017.

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As predicted by those who know her, local hotel icon **Anne Evans** made the best of her brief remarks in accepting LEAD's lifetime achievement honor. Still razor-sharp clever in her mid-80s, she said the recognition will "dress up my obituary."

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**Vineyard Grant James** in Ramona and founder **Susane Sapier** got a nice ride in Travel + Leisure magazine. They were rated No. 2 in the country for their wine-tasting experience. Sapier planted her first vines in 2011 on the Old Julian Highway property just east of town and opened the tasting room in 2013.

Before heading into the hills to check it out, be warned that they are only open Friday-Sunday.

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**Espinosa Vineyards** came in No. 6 on that list. It's on Bandy Canyon Road overlooking the San Pasqual Valley, southeast of Escondido. Grapes were first planted on the property in 1893, and a commercial winery opened in 1936, though it soon closed. **Roberto and Noelle Espinosa** planted grapes in 2008 following the wildfires and have built a highly acclaimed boutique winery.

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## Scaling Startup Week Begins with Bigger Crowds

**ENTREPRENEURS:** Event Expects 4,000 Attendees, Expands Beyond Founders

■ By BRITTANY MEILING

As San Diego continues to gain steam as a "startup city," the region's biggest annual gathering for fledgling companies is growing with it.

San Diego Startup Week, which runs

June 19-23, was once a small event, founded by a handful of young entrepreneurs back in 2012.

The idea was to build the tech scene by getting founders together. But in its first year, the event only attracted a couple hundred people.

Things have changed since then. For one, San Diego's startup standing has improved significantly. In a recent report by the **Kauffman Foundation** measuring startup activity, San Diego jumped ahead

of seven cities landing as the fourth most active city in the nation for starting up (ahead of New York City, Denver, and San Francisco).

"San Diego is one of the ecosystems bubbling up with a lot of investor and startup activity," said **Jay Zhou**, a venture capitalist with San Francisco-based **Walden Venture Capital**, in an interview earlier this month.

Last year's Startup Week managed to

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## Infrastructure Solutions Vexing to Politicians

■ By LOU HIRSH

Stadium and convention center space are no longer tied together into one project, as they were last fall in the former **San Diego Chargers'** failed attempt at the ballot box to get a downtown multi-purpose facility built.

But they still became entwined recently as the mayor and the **San Diego City Council** grappled over the upcoming electoral fates of the proposed SoccerCity development and a separate convention center expansion finance plan. And again, the heated debates came down to a lack of consensus on priorities and timing, including what constitutes an emergency in the eyes of voters.

The city council ultimately disagreed with Mayor **Kevin Faulconer**, deciding that a hotel tax hike of up to 3 percent – to fund a convention center expansion while also creating sidebar funding streams to address homelessness, street repairs and other civic needs – did not

warrant hurry-up treatment in the form of a special election this November.

At press time, the mixed-use SoccerCity proposal appeared headed toward the same 5-4 council decision on June 19 sending both matters to the November 2018 general election. However, proponents and opponents of the mixed-use Mission Valley project – calling for a soccer stadium, entertainment district, homes, offices and a river park – continued to bombard local media with ads aimed at swaying council members and their constituents.

Local observers said they are optimistic that the city can find consensus on key issues such as preserving the city's crucial tourism and convention industry and bringing economic life to the prime stadium location abandoned earlier this year by the Chargers.

### Not on the Same Page

But as usual in San Diego politics, multiple parties are not on the same page in

terms of how or when to deal with these matters, and the degree to which separate priorities – for instance, convention space and homelessness – should be mixed together to create a sense of urgency.

"The frustrating thing is that we agree on what we want," said District 3 Councilmember **Chris Ward**, who voted against a special election on the hotel tax hike.

"I have been a long-time supporter of expanding our convention center and strongly agree homelessness and infrastructure should be our top priorities."

**Miro Copic**, professor of marketing at **San Diego State University**, said project proponents and city leaders would be wise to heed lessons learned from the Chargers' failure at the polls last fall. One is that San

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Miro Copic

## Guild Mortgage Reports \$3.1B in Q1 Loan Volume

San Diego-based independent mortgage lender **Guild Mortgage** reached \$3.1 billion in loan volume in the first quarter of 2017, up 14.8 percent from \$2.7 billion in the same quarter in 2016, the company announced.

Guild said the growth was driven by record first-quarter purchase loan volume of \$2.4 billion, up 26.3 percent from \$1.9 billion in the same period in 2016.

Last year, the company set records with total loan volume of \$15.9 billion, up 15.3 percent from \$13.8 billion in 2015, and servicing volume of \$29.9 billion, up 34.1 percent from \$22.3 billion in 2015.

The company's continued growth can be attributed to several factors, including the options it provides to first-time homebuyers in a competitive marketplace and its efforts to make the loan process easier on the borrower, said president and CEO **Mary Ann McGarry**.

Guild, with more than 250 branches in 25 states, generated 162,168 loans during the quarter: 57.7 percent were conventional loans, 31.8 percent were **Federal Housing Administration**-insured loans and 10.5 percent were backed by the **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**.

The average size of a loan made in the first quarter was \$225,365, up 1.3 percent from the first three months of 2016.

Guild, founded in 1960, has more than 3,800 employees, about 650 of whom are based in San Diego.

Sarah de Crescenzo

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