

Downtown is Calling

Good Times Await



December 2024

Bulletin

Riverside Downtown Business Improvement District

2024 Festival of Lights

The 2024 Mission Inn Hotel & Spa Festival of Lights in Downtown Riverside's Arts and Culture District continues until December 31st although the Mission Inn Hotel & Spa lights stay on until January 7th. In addition to the lights and food vendors along Main Street, festival visitors will be able to enjoy amusement rides located in the lot at Mission Inn Avenue and Lemon Street, community entertainment, and skating on the ice rink located on the west side of The Cheech.

The "Merry Art Market" is a two-week event featuring various artists, live art demonstrations,

and community performances. It showcases a diverse array of artists, each featuring their unique works. Visitors can explore and purchase original pieces in various styles and mediums, participate in interactive workshops, and enjoy live entertainment. It is located on Main Street between 9th and 10th Street and runs from Sunday, November 24th to Sunday, December 8th. The Merry Art Market is a collaboration with the City of Riverside, the Riverside Arts Council and Division 9 Gallery. The Merry Art Market will be closed on Thanksgiving.



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There will be no luncheon in December 2024.

Join us for the RDP luncheon at Noon on Tuesday, January 28 at Palenque Kitchen
More details in the January 2025 issue



Enclosed with our compliments: What's Up with RDP in 2025 Calendar



Metrolink's Holiday Express Train

The Holiday Express Train comes into the Riverside-Downtown station on Saturday, December 7th and is expected to draw up to 2,000 guests to enjoy a festive ride with visits from Mr. and Mrs. Claus, beloved holiday characters, and cheerful carolers. Before they leave the Riverside-Downtown station, they will be welcomed with family-friendly activities and booths hosted by local organizations, music, and the Miracles and Dreams Foundation Polar Bear! Families can attend the welcome

event at 9 am and then board the train at 10:30 am, or the welcome event at Noon and board the train at 1:30 pm. RDP will have an information table at the Holiday Express Train event this year so drop off your flyers or special offers to us so we can include them at our information booth.

For more information, visit <https://metrolinktrains.com/schedules/holiday-express-train/>



13th Annual Miracle on Main Street

On Sunday, December 15th, the 13th Annual Miracle on Main Street will take place from 10 am to 2 pm on Main Street between 6th and 5th Streets. The event will include Santa distributing toys, a Healthy Kids Zone featuring games and prizes, and free health screenings for adults and children in attendance. Last year's event provided toys, health screenings, and a day of fun for well over 1,000 families. Pre-registration is required.



For more information, call 951-899-4244 or www.miraclesanddreams.org.




Supervisor's Message – Kevin's Corner



It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year! Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all those that celebrate anything you want to celebrate. The City is always beautifully decorated this time of year, and it is rarely over 100 degrees, making it the perfect time to get out and enjoy all that Downtown has to offer.

More March Flights? – This issue has been a head scratcher for me. The local brass at March Air Reserve have been weighing in with STRONG desires to ratchet-down future increases of private sector air flights in and out of the military base by the March Joint Powers Authority (JPA). They have also shared concerns over private sector access onto the base. As I have shared in previous articles, in the 90's when the former Air Force Base was being substantially downsized to a "Reserve" base, and the community was afraid we'd be left with a gigantic economic black hole as a result, the military agreed to allow up to 21,000 private sector flights per year. Fast forward to today's new political and international challenges in the Pacific Theater, there had been a mutual understanding that the total number of private sector flights would need to be in the 7,000 or 8,000 range going forward. Well... that understanding was good right until the March JPA commission meeting last

Contributed by Supervisor Kevin Jeffries
month, when the JPA Commission was asked by JPA staff to approve a new long term airport infrastructure development plan. The JPA agenda presentation pointed out THREE (3) times that the JPA would proceed with long term planning and federal grant funding requests to build out the airport infrastructure to accommodate – you guessed it - up to 21,000 private sector flights! The new plan was unfortunately approved on a 6-2 vote (I was one of the "no" votes), with no explanation provided for abandoning the 7,000 to 8,000 limit.

Paving The Holes – You may recall a few months back I took issue with the deteriorating condition of the I-215 freeway road surface from Perris to Riverside City. Numerous residents had been writing to our office seeking help with the embarrassing condition of the State owned highway. Well, the good news is that Cal-Trans heard from everyone loud and clear and is kicking off the rehabilitation work. And, of course, the bad news is that the already over-whelmed freeway will have new delays during construction hours (Monday to Friday days 6:30 am to 3:30 pm, Nights 9 pm to 5 am). It is long overdue – so just bear with them. For more information, and to subscribe to regular updates on the 215 repairs: <https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-8/district-8-current-projects/interstate-215-pavement-repair>. 

Mayor's Message - Local Leaders Take on Riverside's Rising Expectations



In a recent survey, Chapman University researchers found that Americans' number one fear is corruption among government officials. This fear of corruption cuts across all political parties and ideological lines. Americans do not trust their political leaders with one exception: local elected leaders.

Several studies have found that while people distrust their national and state representatives, a large majority still have faith in their City Councilmembers and Mayors. In fact, a recent poll by Gallup found that 72% of US adults say they have a "great deal" or a "fair amount" of trust in their local government.

These survey results illustrate a basic problem of our time: Our society is undergoing seismic shifts, creating huge social and cultural changes that cause us to feel more anxious, worried, and uncertain about the future, but we don't trust our state and federal leaders to guide

Contributed by Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson
us on the right path. So, increasingly, people look to their local officials to quell their anxiety and fix the complex problems facing our country, even though the ability to address those problems is often not within the local elected officials' control.

While the faith that people have in local governments is encouraging, it can sometimes come with unrealistic expectations of what local government can do for its people.

So, what can local government do? You can check out our city charter to really understand the roles of the City Council, Mayor, and City Manager and how we exercise our powers, but I'm just going to summarize the duties and powers of the Mayor and City Council in this article.

As Mayor, my primary roles are to be the chief communicator and to advocate for the best interests of Riverside. This advocacy helps bring resources to the city to address the pressing issues that Riversiders face every day. The City Council is the decision-making body that has the power to deliberate and vote on issues

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such as budgetary concerns, city-wide practices, local initiatives and so much more that affect Riversiders' quality of life.

The powers that the City Council and I have are dictated not only by our City Charter but also by State and Federal laws. Though limited, when we exercise the powers that we do have at the local level, we accomplish great things for this City.

For example, in my first four years, I've used my advocacy role to regularly work with our County Supervisors and state and federal legislatures to get funding and pass bills important to Riversiders. Working with the City Council and City Manager, we've been able to secure historic state and federal funding for public safety, infrastructure, workforce & economic development and homelessness.


And our influence continues to rise.

Last month I had the honor of being selected as Chair of the Big City Mayors, a coalition of California's 13 largest cities. As Riverside's first Mayor to lead this coalition, we will be a leader in tackling the housing crisis, needed reforms in mental health treatment, and criminal code

enforcement through collaborative efforts with other Big Cities across California. These efforts provide Riverside with the opportunity to secure additional resources and millions of dollars for the City Council to then address these issues within our city's borders appropriately.

While we strive to advocate for meaningful change beyond our immediate control our focus is primarily on the residents of Riverside.

And the most important aspect of all of this is you. We could not exercise these powers without your ultimate approval at the ballot box. And while voting for your local officials is important, there is more that you can do to steer our city in the right direction. Attending city council meetings, volunteering for local initiatives, and joining local boards and advocacy groups helps us elected officials do our jobs better.

In this uncertain time in our nation's history, let's remember that we are all in this together. Working together, and working through our differences, builds a stronger and more resilient Riverside. . 

COUNCIL CORNER

Ward One Council Update

Contributed by Councilmember Philip Falcone


At a recent Land Use and Security committee meeting for the Partnership there were questions about roadwork and repaving happening in the downtown as we approach the new year. First, I begin by sharing that majority of our annual roadwork occurs between May and October when the weather is better suited for repaving—less wind and rain. This fiscal year (July 2024-June 2025) the City Council and Mayor have invested more money in road improvements than we previously have in the last fifteen years. In 2025 we will see work on Orange, Main, Almond, 12th, 11th Streets and I am strongly advocating for 6th, 10th, 14th, and University—among others.

The city of Riverside has nearly 900 miles of paved roadway. Most of these roads need some kind of work due to their current condition. There are two main repair methods: repaving and preservation. Repaving a road is when we grind down the top layer and reduce it to the gravel substrate before we pour a new, 3-or so-inch layer of asphalt. When a street is repaved, we also go in and make minor concrete repairs to sidewalks, curbs, gutters and replace faded or outdated street signage. This fiscal year we have allocated \$27 million towards this work. Due to the high cost of materials, road repaving costs approximately \$900,000 per mile of road—meaning this will only get us about 27 miles of new road.

The other repair method is called preservation. Preservation is what many of us know as applying a "slurry seal" on the roadway. This seal is a thin layer of asphalt that is applied on top of existing minor cracks and damaged roadway. A much more affordable method, preservation also helps prolong the lifespan of the asphalt beneath the slurry seal to save us from

having to do a full repaving sooner. This fiscal year we are spending \$26 million in preservation work. Many residents explain to me their frustration when they see a road in moderate condition be "repaved" while a road in dire condition is left untouched. The reality is, this is not "repaving," rather, it is preservation

and saves you money in the long run. The tough decision we must make is if it is more valuable to use funds for a lot of preservation work or use funds for a little repaving work. The answer is we need to do both, but with 900 miles of road it will continue to take us years to get where we need to be. In a perfect situation, preservation work on a road should occur about ten years after being repaved and a road should be repaved every 25 years—this can differ based on how much or little traffic a road receives, of course.

I have always said I am a city services councilmember—focused on roads, parks, public safety and other core responsibilities of local government. My dedication to these causes will continue as I continue to advocate for more funding for road improvements and Public Works projects for Downtown—for the creation of a better environment for our businesses, our locals, and our visitors. 



RDP Welcomes New Businesses to Downtown

Bernadette Annette Photography
Mission Inn Candy Lane
Poppy's Lounge

Arts Corner - Riverside Artswalk - Artist Spotlight – Artists on Main

Contributed by Rachael Dzikonski, Executive Director – Riverside Arts Council




As we reach December, we wonder how the year flew by so quickly and offers us a moment to reflect on all we have accomplished in 2024. Riverside Artswalk has grown exponentially, and it is hard to believe we are moving into the third year of Artists on Main after relocating from the small parking lot. First Thursdays are one of the liveliest evenings we have regularly Downtown, and it is incredible to see how much it has grown since its original conception.

Riverside Artswalk began in 2001 and was initiated by the efforts of Cosme Cordova of Division 9 Gallery and Mark Schooley from Riverside Community Arts Association. It started with a few galleries and museums staying open late for the one night a month and a few young, hungry artists setting up on the sidewalk of University Avenue between Lemon St and Orange trying to sell their artworks. Fast forward 10 years, artists would start arriving as early as 2 in the afternoon to get the prime spots. By this time there were artists lining both sides of the sidewalk making it difficult for event attendees to walk between them. It was at this time that the Riverside Arts Council was asked to step in to help organize the individual artist vendors and gave them space in the parking lot on a first come first served basis for only \$5 which increased shortly after to \$15 where it remains today.

In 2020, one year before the 20th anniversary of Riverside Artswalk, the event was put on hold due to the

pandemic. To keep the spirit alive for the fifteen months that in-person events could not be held, the Riverside Arts Council worked with the local artists, galleries and museums to spotlight the arts on social media, through sharing stories highlights. This helped to keep the community engaged and when the event started back up in person on July 7, 2022, the arts community was able to celebrate once again. Toward the end of 2022 the Riverside Arts Council discussed expanding the Artswalk by moving the artist vendor area to Main Street to help connect more of the galleries and museums and provide room for more vendors.

In January of 2023 Artists on Main was launched offering more room for the event to grow. The new layout has offered more opportunities for the Riverside Arts Council to showcase the talented artists in our community. Each month a participating artist is spotlighted from a gallery, museum, vendor or muralist for one of Downtown's incredible murals and a band is spotlighted and performs during Artswalk on the Benjamin Franklin Stage. With over 120 artisan vendors and live painters, downtown comes to life showcasing our vibrant, talented arts community and offering a free family friendly event for all ages to experience and participate in the arts. The Riverside Arts Council is honored to have been selected for the Business Activity Award by the Riverside Downtown Partnership for the Riverside Artswalk expansion on to Main Street.


For more information about Riverside Artswalk visit www.riversideartswalk.com or @riversideartswalk on IG. For more information on the Riverside Arts Council visit www.riversideartscouncil.com or @riversideartscouncil on IG. 

Save the Date - RDP Celebrates Downtown Achievements

The Riverside Downtown Partnership (RDP) will host its 37th Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony on Thursday, February 20, 2025 in the Raincross Ballroom of the Riverside Convention Center. This annual event recognizes outstanding individuals and organizations for their excellence in leadership and service to the downtown community.

Award recipients will be UCR Arts for the Arts and Culture Award, the Riverside Arts Council's Artswalk for the Business Activity Award, the Miracles and Dreams Foundation's Backpack Giveaway for the Downtown Event Award, The Mark residential development for the Downtown Improvement Award, and National Night Out for the Safety and Security Award. Rose Mayes will be

recognized with the Chair's Award in consideration of her many contributions to Riverside, particularly in the area of civil rights and fair housing. The annual Roy Hord 'Volunteer of the Year' Award will also be awarded.

The RDP Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony begins with a no-host reception at 5:30 pm, followed by dinner, the awards ceremony, and then recognition of RDP Board members. Sponsorship opportunities are available. All proceeds raised are used to offset the costs of the Annual Meeting and Awards. For more information about the event, or to enquire about sponsorships or donations for the opportunity drawing, contact Janice Penner at the RDP Office at 951-781-7339. 

20th Annual Chanukah Festival

The 20th Annual Chanukah Festival will be on Monday, December 30th from 6 pm to 8 pm at the Riverside County Historic Court House at 4050 Main Street. Activities include a Grand Menorah Lighting, live music, traditional foods, and family friendly activities. The event is free and all are invited to attend.

“Chanukah represents the universal message of light triumphing over darkness, good overcoming evil, perseverance and hope defeating adversity”, said Rabbi



Shmuel Fuss of the Chabad Jewish Community Center of Riverside, which sponsors the festival. Other sponsors include Chabad of UCR, the City of Riverside, Blumenthal & Moore Law Offices, Supervisor Karen Spiegel, and RDP.

For more information visit www.chanukahfestival.org or call 951-222-2005.



Roy Hord ‘Volunteer’ of the Year Award Nominations

The late Roy Hord was a former RDP board member who faithfully served the community of Riverside for over 25 years. RDP established the Volunteer of the Year Award in his memory in 2003. The award is given to those individuals who exemplify his spirit of volunteerism and presented each year at RDP’s Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony. The 2025 event will be held on February 20th at the Riverside Convention Center.

RDP is now accepting nominations for this award and will do so until Monday, January 6, 2025. Nominees

should be dedicated to the community and have a history of volunteerism, particularly with youth. Nomination forms can be downloaded from www.riversidedowntown.org under RDP News or obtained by emailing Janice Penner at Janice@riversidedowntown.org.



BUSINESS BUZZ

Hard vs. Soft Email Bounces: What They Are and How to Avoid Them

by Jamie Johnson

A hard bounce means an email can't be delivered for permanent reasons, while a soft bounce indicates a temporary issue. Learn the differences between the two and how to minimize bounces.

How to improve your email bounce rate

Email marketing campaigns are effective only if your intended recipients actually open and read the content. But sometimes, emails never reach a user’s inbox, and this can have serious consequences for your email marketing strategy. To give your campaigns a chance at driving results, you must strive to minimize these bounced emails.

Thankfully, there are many strategies for limiting bounced sends. Below, we'll look more closely at what a bounced email is, why hard and soft bounces happen, and how to avoid common email marketing mistakes that result in bounced emails.

What is a bounced email?

A bounced email is one that was never delivered to your intended recipient because it was rejected by the

mail server, either temporarily or permanently. When this happens, you typically receive an auto-response informing you that the email bounced.

There are a few reasons an email may bounce. Sometimes, it's because a subscriber gave you an incorrect email address. Other times, it's due to server outages or because the recipient's inbox is full.

A bounced email may also indicate a problem on your end. For instance, it could mean you've been flagged as spam too many times or have a restrictive DMARC (Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting and Conformance) record and your email doesn't pass the DMARC policy.

How to calculate your email bounce rate

Here is the formula for tracking your email bounce rate: (Bounced emails ÷ Total emails sent) x 100 = Email bounce rate.

Although a certain number of bounced emails is inevitable, a high bounce rate could indicate a problem.

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On average, your bounce rate may be anywhere between 2 percent and 65 percent, depending on your industry — but the lower, the better.

Soft bounce vs. hard bounce

Your email bounce rate is a way to gauge the health of your email marketing list. An important part of analyzing bounced emails is understanding the differences between a hard bounce and a soft bounce.

Hard bounce

A hard bounce is an email that can't be delivered for permanent reasons. This is usually because the recipient's address is invalid or no longer in use. The subscriber could have mistyped their email address, or the domain may not exist. Hard bounces are a problem because they can hurt your email deliverability rate and sender reputation.

Soft bounce

A soft bounce is an email that wasn't delivered due to a temporary problem. Soft bounces can happen because the recipient's inbox is full or due to an issue with the receiving server.

Because a soft bounce is temporary, you can retry the email a few times. If the email still fails to be delivered, consider it a hard bounce and remove that subscriber from your list.

To comply with Google's and Yahoo's sender requirements, verify your identity with DKIM (DomainKeys Identified Mail), DMARC and SPF authentication; include list-unsubscribe headers; and honor opt-out requests within two days. You also must maintain a spam-complaint rate of less than 0.3 percent.

How to improve your email bounce rate

It's helpful to track your email bounce rate, but it's even more important to take proactive steps to keep your email bounce rate low. Here are some tips for reducing your email bounce rate.

Require a double opt-in.

One of the best ways to improve the quality of your email list is to require a double opt-in for new subscribers.

With a single opt-in system, a new subscriber is added to your list immediately after they enter their email address on an online sign-up form. With a double opt-in, a subscriber enters their email address and then receives an email with a link. Once they click the link and verify their email address, they are added to your list.

Some businesses resist implementing a double opt-in because it takes longer to build a contact list. But if your subscribers verify their email addresses, you'll have a higher deliverability rate and a more engaged audience.

Clean up your list regularly.

High bounce rates typically happen because your list is too cluttered. You may have started building your list years ago. In that time, many of your subscribers may have moved on or gotten new email addresses.

That's why it's essential to update and manage your email marketing list regularly. A simple data check will help you weed out email addresses with typos or

misspellings. It's also a good idea to check your feedback loops periodically and remove any subscribers who complain about you or report you as spam.

Every so often, go through your list and remove inactive subscribers. This can feel counterintuitive, but it can be beneficial to remove recipients who don't engage with your emails. This ongoing process ensures that your list stays healthy and that you're sending emails only to people who want to receive them.

Don't send emails from a free service.

Never send marketing emails from a free email service, such as Gmail. For one thing, sending business emails from a free email account looks unprofessional and can hurt your brand.

The other issue is that free email domains often don't pass the DMARC policy, so you'll likely experience more hard bounces. Send emails from a custom email address instead.

Send emails consistently.

One of the best ways to maintain a low bounce rate is by emailing your list consistently. If new subscribers sign up and then don't hear from you for months, they may forget they subscribed in the first place and mark your emails as spam.

To avoid this, email your subscribers at least once a month and at maximum twice a week. Consistent contact will keep them engaged and ensure that you continue building a relationship with your subscribers.

Verify your domain.

DMARC, SPF and DKIM are the three primary ways to authenticate your domain. Authenticating your domain will lower your email bounce rate and improve your deliverability rate. It will also prevent security alerts from popping up when subscribers open your emails.

Avoid spammy language.

Spammy language could be another reason for a high email bounce rate. That's because email providers look for specific words, images and phrases to label emails as spam. For instance, if you regularly include the following phrases, your emails may go straight to the junk folder:

- "50% off"
- "Act now!"
- "Free offer"
- "Make money"
- "Drastically reduced"

Any excessive use of the dollar sign will also likely flag your email as spam.

If your email looks spammy, 78 percent of people will mark it as spam, causing your marketing strategies to reach only 22 percent of respondents.

Segment your list.

It's not enough to build an email list; you must get to know your audience and send personalized, relevant content. Personalized emails get opened 82 percent more than generic emails, and 28 percent of users don't care about email length as long as the content is personalized.

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The easiest way to deliver personalized content is to segment your subscriber list. Group subscribers based on factors such as their locations, interests and preferences, and then send each segment relevant emails.

If you're new to customer segmentation, it's OK to start small. For instance, you can begin by segmenting your customers based on the types of products they've bought or how long they've been customers.

Monitor your email deliverability.

Just because something is working well for you now doesn't mean it will continue to work. That's why it's essential to monitor your email campaigns and deliverability rate continually.

Continue A/B testing your emails so you're aware of the type of content that resonates with your subscribers. Keep an eye on your bounce rates, open rates, and the number of subscribers who have complained or marked your emails as spam.

If you track these metrics, you can spot and address issues early on before they turn into significant problems.

Use a preference center.

As your email list grows, it will be harder to manage your subscribers and ensure that their information is up to date. At that point, you might want to add a preference center link to your emails.

A preference center is a place where your subscribers can add new information and update their email preferences. This ensures that your data is accurate, and

it gives your subscribers more control over the emails they receive and the information they share with you.

A basic preference center gives subscribers the option to update their email address, choose how often they want to receive your emails, and opt out of receiving emails.

Key Takeaway

Although email marketing offers many benefits to small businesses, a high email bounce rate indicates an unhealthy marketing list. Reduce your email bounce rate to improve customer engagement and encourage successful outcomes.

Nurturing your email lists for maximum impact

Growing a healthy email list is an essential part of building your business. Email is one of the most effective marketing strategies and has an incredibly high return on investment.

However, you don't want to do the hard work of building an email list, only to end up with a high bounce rate. There's no way to prevent all bounced emails, but you can minimize hard bounces.

Focus on removing inactive subscribers from your list and on maintaining personalized and consistent contact with your subscribers. If you take those steps regularly, you should be able to keep your bounce rate below 65 percent and reap the benefits of email marketing.

Source: <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/16294-bounce-rate.html>



SECURITY CORNER

How to avoid holiday scams

Note: Many of the tips below can apply to businesses as well as individuals. "Buyer beware" is especially true in today's digital age.

Being aware of common scams can help you avoid them. However, scammers are always coming up with new tactics. That's why it's important to take additional steps to protect yourself this holiday season.

- **Beware of deals that are too good to be true.** Unreasonably low prices—especially on hard-to-find items—are a red flag for scams.
- **Stick with retailers you trust.** One of the best ways to avoid scams is to shop only with well-known retailers. If you see deals advertised online for retailers you're not familiar with, search the company names online along with the word "reviews," "scam" or "complaint." Also, visit BBB.org to see reviews of companies.
- **Don't click on links in emails or text messages,** even if they appear to come from trusted retailers. Visit retailers' sites directly to see if you can find the deal that you've been notified about. And if you've ordered items online, use the package tracking information that you were provided in your purchase confirmation email.

- **Don't click on ads for discounted items.** Instead, go directly to the retailer's site. If you don't find the advertised deals on the official site, the ad likely was fake.†
- **Make sure websites are legitimate and secure** by checking the URL for misspellings and extra letters or characters (for example, a fake Dick's Sporting Goods URL might appear as d-sportinggoods). Look for https:// and a padlock symbol. Also, look for customer service contact information. If you can't find any or if it directs you to a generic email address, avoid making purchases from that site.
- **Use a credit card for online purchases.** Credit cards offer more protections than other forms of payment if you need to get your money back for fraudulent transactions and for purchases that merchants aren't willing to refund.
- **Monitor bank and credit card accounts for unauthorized charges.** There's still a chance that scammers could get your credit or debit card information even if you take the steps above to stay safe. Consider signing up for a service that can provide 24/7 monitoring of your bank and credit card accounts for unusual or fraudulent transactions, as well as credit and identity monitoring. †



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*From the Board of Directors
and staff of the
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