

# THE CUENCA DISPATCH

Ecuador's Original English-Language Newspaper

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## A New Entertainment Treat Awaits You!

by Irene Gardner

Be sure to check your calendar! For a limited time, a new production of "Morning's at Seven", by playwright Paul Osborne, will be offered at the Azuay Community Theatre (ACT)! Written in 1939, "Morning's at Seven" focuses on four aging sisters (the Gibbs sisters), ages 65 to 72, who live in a small Midwestern town in 1928, and the theme deals with ramifications within the family when two of the sisters begin to question their lives and decide to make some changes before it's too late.

Debuting in her role as a director for the ACT with "Morning's at Seven", Paula Bailey commented, "I feel the story is a reflection of the lives of every man and every woman—a vignette of that time in U.S. history. As the sisters look back at their lives, they try to determine if the choices they made resulted in lives well-spent, and, if not, what can they do to feel more fulfilled at this late stage in their lives."

The catalyst for the soul-searching by the sisters is a visit by Myrtle, the fiancée of 12 years to Homer, the son of one of the sisters. No one in the family had ever met Myrtle during her years as Homer's fiancée. Remarked Bailey, "Every character changes his or her life at some point during the play—some changes are pronounced, some more subtle."



Peter DeLaurier, Marcia Saunder and Janis Dardaris in 'Morning's at Seven'  
PHOTO: MARK GARVIN

Living in Cuenca since October 2016, vBailey did not become involved in the ACT until after a chance meeting with Deana Culp, who encouraged Bailey to become involved and submit some of her ideas for the ACT.

Bailey has quite a distinguished and accomplished background in theatre, which began when she was eight years old. She continued performing all through her school years, cont. page 5.

## Parque Calderon was once Parque Vargas Torres



Did you know that before being called Parque Calderón, the central square of Cuenca was called Vargas Torres? No? Well, don't feel alone. Even most Cuencanos don't know it. But if you take a look at the monument at Sucre and Benigno Malo, next to the Municipality of Cuenca, you'll see why.

Luis Vargas Torres was one of Eloy Alfaro's (leader of the Ecuadorian Liberal Revolution that overthrew a conservative government that had ruled for decades) most trusted men and officers, who helped finance Alfaro's revolution during Alfaro's exile.

During the revolution (that started on June 5, 1895), Alfaro chose Vargas Torres to lead the invasion of Ecuador from Piura (in northwestern Peru) in November of 1986. After several cont. page 7.

## BUSINESS HIGHLIGHT

### New real estate company focuses on accessibility and design



Alex Galvez has always been passionate about decorating her own homes and helping others decorate theirs. So, when she decided to launch a new career as a real estate agent, she knew precisely what her focus would be. Helping clients with handicaps find the homes that were designed specifically for them in mind.

"What I saw when I came back to my country, was that, even though it's the law, many of the new businesses haven't addressed the accessibility issues that many of Cuenca's residents and visitors need. They think a ramp into a building solves all the potential problems, cont. page 4.

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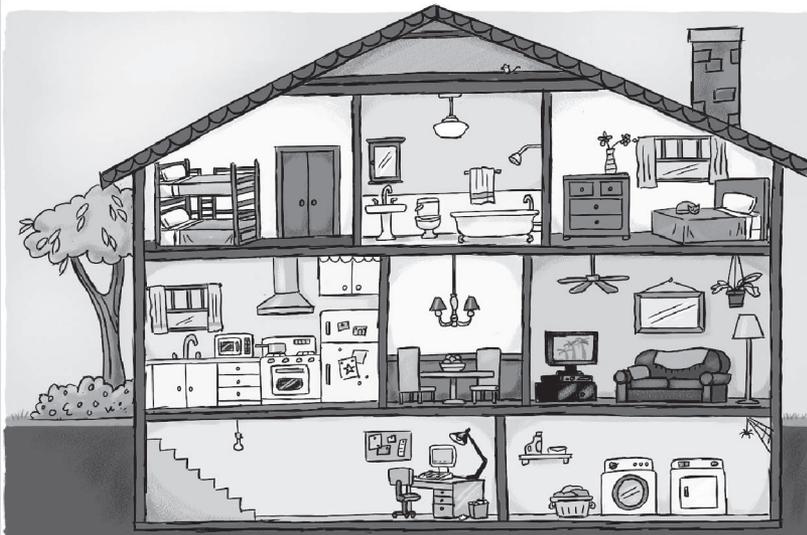
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# I'M JUST SAYIN'

By Michael Soares

## I miss my friend

A very good friend of mine in the US committed suicide about 8 weeks ago. I had seen her only a month or so before that. She seemed more upbeat than she had been in the past year or so. I'm at a loss to understand it and for a long time I will wonder, "what did I miss?" And I'll think, "is there anything I could have said that would have prompted her to talk to me about this?"

Part of me is angry at her for doing this. I knew she had been struggling for a while—and before you ask, yes, she was under mental health care—but when we last had breakfast together, she seemed to be hopeful about the future. I'm angry because I didn't see this coming. So, I guess I'm really angry at me.

She was a wonderful person and someone I really cared about. Codie and she got along great. We were both very sad for some time about this. I hesitated to write about what happened because it's a private part of our lives. And because our friend's tragedy is not something I was ready to use as "inspiration" for my column. But there is also something here that I wanted to unravel a little bit. And it seemed time to write about it.

You see, what I am going through is the natural part of the grieving process called "acceptance." I've accepted that our friend has died and that I won't see her again. And because I've reached that stage, I don't think about her as often. And I feel guilty about that. She was such an amazing person and I feel she deserves more than 2 months of my attention.

How can it be that I've pushed it to the back of my mind and that I only bring out memories of her in very private moments, and not all that often now? I don't talk about her with Codie. I don't think about her unless something reminds me of her. I've just moved on in my life and put the memories of her in a "mental jar," to be pulled out and looked at occasionally, but not regularly.

It all reminds me of the transience of life and the fact that while most of Western society doesn't like to think about, or talk about death very openly, it is the conclusion that all of us must face eventually. We are all here for a very short time in comparison to the universe. And after we go, over time everyone who knew us will go as well. So, we will be an imprint on time, maybe remembered digitally, but not personally and not for any real length of cosmic time.

And while that may sound morose, what it really says is that while we are here, we owe it to ourselves to make an impact. To do something that matters now. And by that I don't mean a job. I mean something personal. Something that interconnects us with other people so that we have used this gift that was given to us in a way that meant something to others.

I think I live my life that way. I think I bring people together, make their lives better, or add to their enjoyment. Whenever I go back to Denver, there is always a good group of people want to get together with me. I hope that means I'm living a life worth its value.

I know my friend did that. She was always someone I wanted to make time with on my trips back to the US. Even if it was just for coffee or a drink. I tried, she tried, to make our schedules work so that we could meet.

So even though she is gone now, I am thankful that there are memories of her in that mental jar. I'm glad I knew her and I'm glad that I meant something to her.

It's because of who she was and the kind of person she tried to be that made me so sad when she died. She was one of those

people who made the world a better place.

And that's what I wish for all of you that are reading this. I hope that you're living a life that will make people sad when you're gone. I hope that you are making a positive impact on people every day. I hope the world is a better place because of you.

Because if you are, that's going to be the most successful life of all.

The World Health Organization estimates that each year approximately one million people die from suicide, which represents a global mortality rate of 16 people per 100,000 or one death every 40 seconds.

Ecuador's suicide prevention hotlines are (593) 2 6000 477 and (593) 2 2923327

# SUDOKU

### Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love Sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your Sudoku savvy to the test!

### Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9X9 grid, broken down into nine 3X3 boxes. To solve a Sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the number will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

				9				3
6		9	2					4
7				8	6	5		
4					3		1	
		2				4		
	8		4					6
		6	3	1				2
1					8	6		5
5				4				

See answers on page 11

## New real estate company focuses on accessibility and design (Cont.)

but they don't even consider how to get a wheelchair, walker or stroller through a door!"

For Alex, this is a personal issue. When she married her husband Craig in Portland, Oregon, 6 years ago, he had already been wheelchair bound for 24 years. When the couple began looking for a home to call their own, she was shocked to find that there was very little inventory in Portland to accommodate their needs.

"Aside from being confined to his wheelchair, Craig is very mobile. He has good upper-body strength to go along with his "no-quit" attitude. So, I thought it would be easy for us to find something that we could "make work" for him. I soon found that that was not reality," said Galvez. "What we found were a lot of two-story homes with no way for Craig to get to the upper level. And even the single level homes we found had small doorways and kitchen and bath counters that would not accommodate a chair. And forget about ramps for entrances from the streets!"

Upon moving back to Ecuador in 2015—after living 14 years in the United States—Alex decided that she and Craig would live in a home that was built completely to his needs, while remaining stylish at the same time.

"When we came to Cuenca, we bought a condo in the early stages and were lucky enough to find an architect who really understood our needs. He and I worked closely together and what we ended up with was exactly what we needed." Alex's efforts paid off and she and Craig now have a beautiful 1,800 square-foot home that has everything he needs to live his life comfortably. The recessed area under the cooktop lets him cook them dinner, the extra-wide doorways easily allow his chair through and even the roll-in shower make daily personal care much easier.

"Even though we would say we got 100% of what we wanted, I found that some of the providers we were using hadn't really been exposed to installing accessible options. But once I was able to explain why we needed, what we needed, they were anxious to show me how good a job they could do. I think it comes down to this, if someone wants an accessible home here in Cuenca, they can get it. And I can help them with that. I want to help them with that," says Alex.

"Our ensemble of the building team was open to all of the changes we wanted. They saw how easy it can be to incorporate accessible living into every home they build. And with my personal experience, I was able to show them how to make that happen without it even being noticed. To make it simply part of the décor of the home."

Having built numerous contacts throughout the home and condo construction industry here in Cuenca over the last four years, Alex wants to be able to help all buyers who may have even the slightest need for accessible features. That might mean helping them work with a builder from day one to ensure that their design needs get done correctly. Or, it might mean helping a buyer see how easily a non-accessible condo can be remodeled to work for them.

"Almost any home can be converted into a more accessible environment. Even two-story homes now have good options for conversion. I know I can help anyone who is handicapped now or who has fears of physical limitations in the future. I've been through it. And I live with it with my husband every day. Being handicapped does not mean having to live in an unaccommodating place."

Raised in Quito, Alex moved to the US in 2001, then moved back to Ecuador and settled in Cuenca in 2015. When she came back, she realized just how unaccommodating the city was. While Cuenca has made an effort to put in ramps at sidewalks, many of the businesses and condominium buildings on those same streets have done nothing to accommodate wheelchairs, walkers or even baby strollers.

"One thing I want people to know is that an accessible home is not "inaccessible" to someone who doesn't have mobility issues. It's now easy to incorporate accessible features that simply look like parts of a home's design. In most cases you won't even notice they are there. In some cases, they make a home even more attractive. People always comment on how beautiful our oversized entry door is. They don't even think about why it's there until they meet my husband. Then it clicks for them that this beautiful feature also has an important lifestyle aspect to it."



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Alex says that in reality, everyone should be thinking about accessible features when they buy their home or condo in Cuenca. Because at some point, accessibility will be an issue for every homeowner. Even those people who won't need a wheelchair may need a walker at some point. Or maybe even just a cane to walk with. If they buy an accessible unit today, they won't have to worry about moving because of a handicap in the future.

Even younger families can benefit from accessible design. When they welcome that baby to their life, they will be extremely thankful for wider doors, roll-in showers, extra outlets on the island and so on.

Alex says, "I want people to know that I am an advocate for accessibility. I have fought the fight and know how to get the builders and craftsman to see what my clients need. "

"That also means that I fight for every one of my clients. Whether they want accessibility features or not. The skills I've gained here in building design since I returned from the US bring value to every one of my buyers."

"And my background can help my sellers see how they can make their properties attractive to even one more sector of the market."

With the increasing population of expats in Cuenca, most of who are in their late 60's and early 70's, Alex possesses an entirely different skillset that no other realtor is offering. She is letting buyers look ahead to long-term living in their home. Helping them buy a property that will suit their needs as they age, without compromising on what they live in today.

That's a sector that Alex is happy to be leading.

Alex can be contacted at:

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## Guayaquil Airport airstrip refurbishing complete

For the past year, the Jose Joaquin Olmedo Airport in Guayaquil has had multiple airstrip enhancement works. The most significant effort started on August 31st and has continued for the past four weekends. This last stage of airstrip maintenance has reached its end. The estimated investment was for the complete project was \$24 million.

The works including the re-pavement of the runways, intersections and taxiways. Also, there were enhancements to the boarding areas for both the national and international sections. The former had a new luggage system installed with capacity for 500 suitcases and also had its porcelain floors replaced. The airport is also getting a new wind vane soon.

The manager of the Guayaquil Airport Terminal, Angel Cordova, said that all the works were scheduled in coordination with the airlines in order to affect as few flights as possible.

The airport's runways have been overhauled 3 times in the past: once in 2004, another time in 2008 and once more in 2012.

Extracted from EL Telegrafo

## A New Entertainment Treat Awaits You! (Cont.)

and, while still in high school, was the Assistant Director to the acting teacher, and she received a grant for Theatre to be an apprentice at the Tappan Zee Playhouse in Nyak, NY.

Bailey then attended the Easton School of Music to study voice as an undergrad. She later received her Master's of Vocal Performance from Stonybrook University on Long Island. During the 11 years she lived in New York City, Bailey sang with the Light Opera of Manhattan, the Lyric Theatre of New York, and for the Lincoln Center Library Concert Series.

After leaving New York City to live closer to her brother and his family in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Bailey met her then-husband, and their daughter was born during their years in Minneapolis. In 1993, Bailey and her husband, himself an actor, successfully produced the show "Our Town" at their church theatre and later produced "A Christmas Carol".

The 1993 church theatre work rekindled Bailey and her husband's desire to go back into the theatre on a more in-depth basis, which, at that time, meant working with the Minneapolis Community Theatre. The two would later use the Minneapolis Community Theatre model for their own theatre company, Iron Mountain State Company, located in upstate New York, which was incorporated as a non-profit company in 1994.



Cast of "Morning's at Seven", The Lincoln Center / Photo by Sean Carter photography

During the period that Bailey and her husband owned and ran Iron Mountain Stage Company in upstate New York, the theatre won many state-wide community theatre awards. Paula herself has won "Best Director" awards for "Steel Magnolias" and "Oliver!", and awards for "Best Music Direction" and "Best Lighting and Sound Design" for other productions.

While working with Iron Mountain, Paula held many positions, including Artistic Director, Stage Manager, Choreographer, and Music Director, as well as an Acting and Performance Teacher. Paula was even an Orchestra Conductor for a 13-piece orchestra for productions of "My Fair Lady" and "South Pacific".

For "Morning's at Seven", Bailey says she is supported by a talented and technically skilled stage crew for this production. The stage crew includes Regina Potenza (lighting); Roger Appel (music production); Sandy King (Stage Manager and who will be directing the next ACT production); Pat Dorsett (backstage work); and Kathleen O'Neil of Idiom Art, whose artistic vision brings the stage setting to life. Diana Hamm, who has been one of ACT's former stage managers, Deana Culp and Bailey provided the majority of the costumes for the play. Another contributor is Eric Henderson.

The cast of "Morning's at Seven" includes Ray and Linda Lewis, Joy Broomfield, Charlean Born, Lovey Hendon, Bob Metcalf, Markku Sario and Terri Drake, as well as Kenny Riemer, who was cast in the role of "Homer" during the auditions this past August.

To accommodate this production at the ACT, a new set design and many other changes and improvements had to be made to the stage, the lighting, and the sound equipment. Some of the improvements include painting the stage black and adding dimmers to the stage lighting.

Tickets go on sale on 24 September for performances of "Morning's at Seven". Performances are slated for 7:00pm on Friday, 11 October; 4:00pm on Saturday and Sunday, October 12 and 13, and 4:00pm on Saturday and Sunday, October 19 and 20. The ACT theatre opens 1 hour before curtain time.

## Thousands of volunteers cleaned Ecuadorian beaches



In commemoration of the International Beach Cleanup Day on September 21st, nearly 30,000 volunteers gathered in 250 bathing and tourist spots in Ecuador to clean up piles of trash and accumulated waste. In some tourist spots, the volunteers collected over a ton of waste products. The Ministry of Environment (MA), the Scouts Foundation and Nestle Ecuador organized the volunteer program this year.

One group consisting of 750 volunteers from 24 schools in the Santa Elena province headed to Ballenita, the main beach attraction of the province. They collected almost one ton of trash and debris.

Locally, Cuenca organized a minga with the aid of the MA branch of Azuay with 232 volunteers, who covered 10 kilometers of riverbank in the Machangara river. They managed to collect over two tons of solid waste.

The tourist road known as 'Ruta Spondylus' was the zone with the most solid waste pollution. "We even found vehicle tires and other waste that we know come from visitors that come and leave their trash," said Ivan Proaño, Executive Director of the Scouts Foundation of Ecuador. "They only need to bring a plastic bag with them and use it to put their waste and take it with them. It's not that hard," he added.

The Ministry of Environment said that in 2017, volunteers collected around 390,000 lbs. of waste. In 2018, the trash collected decreased to 281,440 lbs. The amount collected this year has not yet been reported, but the Under Secretary of Marine and Coastal Management, Vicente Zavala, is worried about the continuous disposal of solid material in the country's landscapes by visitors.

"The people need to know the importance of keeping your landscapes and tourist venues clean. It's vital for the environment and in order to keep drawing tourists into these areas. It's always the locals who have to organize and clean up, and it's not fair," he said.

## Cuenca's first KillaRaymi fair attracts 80 delegations

On September 23, people from many indigenous nations gathered in Cuenca for the first fair of the KillaRaymi (also KullaRaymi or the Festivity of the Moon, in honor of creation and feminine fertility). This holiday is historic and was always celebrated during the winter equinox. Nevertheless, formal festivities had never been organized.

The Azuay prefect, Yaku, along with the Ministry of Culture and Patrimony (MCP) and the Federation of Indigenous and Farmer Organizations of Azuay (FOA) brought this formal celebration to Cuenca.

Most of the indigenous organizations that participated are descendants of the Cañari nation; Azuay and Cañar. There were also representatives of the AmarunSamanaWasi community from Pastaza, the Macabeos from Morona Santiago, the Puruhaes and Duchicelas from Chimborazo, and the Shuar from Zamora Chinchipe. Each indigenous nation dressed in their traditional and distinctive outfits.

Perez said that this was the start of making these festivities an ongoing part of the region's calendar. Other regions have their 'Raymis' (Festivities) as well. Those have been going on for years and people have put a lot of effort in keeping them organized.

In total, over 150 men and women represented 80 cont. next page



delegations that attended the feast. They had their traditional inauguration ritual on Monday morning. They also marched through the Solano avenue with dances and music. After they reached Parque de la Madre, they held a prayer in gratitude to the great Creator.

In the tents prepared for this fair, indigenous people displayed their typical crafts and food and even held cleansing ceremonies for the visitors. The different indigenous cultures even displayed their sigils (a symbol used in magic) of snakes, birds and even images of a chola (indigenous woman in skirt and with the traditional toquilla straw hat). The 'choclo' (local corn) was also displayed all around, because it symbolizes the Andean indigenous world view; its culture, its prosperity and its former vastness.

"This season is going to depend on what we do today. If we are generous with our food, joy and sentiment, then 'Mama Killa' will also be generous with the crops," said Yaku Perez, last Monday. "Today is a woman's day. We thank the moon which is a symbol for femininity and fertility. It's the powerful womb from where we all come, and to where we all go," he continued.

## Esmeraldas tourism is getting back on its feet



Due to the violence and tension in the recent years near Esmeraldas, tourism dropped significantly in 2017 and 2018. Added to that were the continual recovery the 2016 earthquake. However, in 2019, tourist spending has increased 67% compared to 2017.

In 2017, there was a lot of tension between the newly elected administration and the drug cartels/Colombian paramilitary groups in the Colombian-Ecuadorian border. This conflict reached its peak in 2018, when three journalists from the El Comercio newspaper were kidnapped while working at the border; months later their deaths were confirmed.

Now, the economic picture is looking brighter as the Esmeraldas beaches have been filling up more and more in the recent vacation season. According to the Chamber of Tourism, during the First Independence Day holiday and the vacation season for the sierra (July-September), around 90,000 tourists visited the province. The full year data is not yet complete, but according to the Chamber and the Ministry of Tourism, this year they are expecting a significant increase on 2018 numbers.

Part of the policies that drove people to consider places like Atacames, in Esmeraldas, for example, is the alliance between the hotel and tourism companies with the local police to reduce petty thievery on the beach. "People were vulnerable when they walked through the shore.

They used to be mugged and have their cellphones, tablets and other personal objects stolen," said Santiago Gavilanes, Lieutenant of the Police Command in Atacames. The police identified critical sectors for crime and placed a specialized patrol in those areas. "We manage to take control of these points and we apprehended the individuals behind these crimes," he continued.

In places like the Same and Tonchigue beaches, a citizen safety program was also put in place. Brigades of citizens were organized to keep tourist areas safe. "There are around 20 people in the sector, all with mobile radios that are in frequency with the local Police," said Lieutenant Gavilanes. "They warn us on suspicious movement so we can neutralize possible threats early. This year there have only been two robberies and both suspects have been processed and are in jail," Lt. Gavilanes finished.

The Atacames Vice Mayor, Edison Manjarres, stated that there is a plan to declare the entire canton as the safest tourist venue in the country. The goal is to have the area bar and hotel owners install 1,000 security cameras. These will be connected to the monitoring center of the municipality.

The Ministry of Tourism has other plans and programs planned for the region, with support from the Organization of American States, the United Nations Crime and Justice Information Network and the Canadian Government. These programs will eventually bear fruit in the other areas that are still dealing with reduction in tourism, like Rio Verde and Eloy Alfaro.

Extracted from EL Comercio

## Small town citizens create a digital photo book to promote their culture and tourism



"Memorias de Playa" (Beach Memoirs) is the name of the digital photo book created by the townspeople from Valdivia and Dos Mangas, in the Santa Elena province. This initiative was created by students from the Universidad Casa Grande. The project aims to rescue the customs and cultures of these coastal towns, and draw the attention of potential tourists.

Students Stephanie Iperti, Maria Sol Rosero, Josemaria Gutierrez and Diego Cortez started the project by training 21 townsfolk on digital media, photography and social media management. The idea was to teach them how to capture best the daily customs and activities of their towns along with the local fauna and flora.

"They can use digital media to preserve their ancestral knowledge and show that these towns are much more than just beaches," said Maria Sol "Knitting toquilla straw hats, fishing methods and farming skills are just part of the culture that these townspeople have to show the world."

The photo book was launched on September 12th with a launching event that was widely received. The students exchanged a lot of information with the people who participated in the digitalization of the towns' life. "We're already spreading this through social media with the tools the students provided us. Now, we must keep united and boost the project even more," said Anabelisa Gonzales, a 28-year-old inhabitant of Dos Mangas who participated in the photography and social media promotion of her town.

Extracted from EL Telegrafo

## Parque Calderon was once Parque Vargas Torres (Cont.)

days of battle near Catacocha, Vargas Torres and 80 of his men were captured by General Antonio Vega Munoz and a superior force of soldiers.

Vargas Torres was jailed in what is now the Cuenca Municipality building. He was court-martialed and sentenced to death along with three of his lieutenant colonels and two master sergeants on March 2, 1887. History tells us that Vargas Torres managed to escape from prison the night before his execution, but when he realized his men would not be able to join him, he returned and faced his punishment the following morning.

On March 20, 1887, Vargas Torres, was shot in front of a crowd made up of children, youth and adults, while the priest blessed the host in the church. The monument that stands today is believed to be the spot where Vargas Torres was executed. History also tells us that Vargas Torres did not turn his back or close his eyes before he was shot.

After Alfaro's victory on June 5, 1895, he issued a decree that the square that is now Parque Calderon bear the name Parque Vargas Torres.

In 1920, the park was renamed the Plaza Abdón Calderon, in memory of Abdón Calderón Garaicoa, a Cuenca native and hero of the battle of Pichincha who died on June 7, 1822 in Quito.

On March 20, 1936, a group of citizens erected the monument to Vargas Torres that, despite being in the heart of Cuenca, often goes unnoticed.

Photo Credit: Diario El Tiempo

## Ecuadorian National Assembly approves use of medicinal cannabis



On Tuesday, September 17th, with 85 votes in favor, 23 against and 23 abstentions, the National Assembly in a plenary session approved the use of medicinal cannabis in Ecuador.

This measure reforms the Organic Penal Code (COIP) in order to not penalize the cultivation of medicinal marijuana plants with less than 1% of THC composition (hemp). The derived products should not surpass the same proportion of TCH. Now, the Ministry of Public Health (MSP) will regulate and monitor the importation, production, commercialization, distribution and retail sales of any medication derived from cannabis.

Back in 2018, the Organic Code of Health had been reformed to include the use of this non-psychoactive drug as a palliative treatment for chronic diseases. The Health Commission of the National Assembly had already drafted the reform and turned it over to the parliament, where it needed to be approved in plenary session.

According to this new reform, the MSP will determine which diseases are eligible to be treated with this medicinal plant product.

Additionally, it is important to take into account that in 2015 the first steps were taken to slightly decriminalize the use of cannabis by creating a differentiation between consumer amount and micro-dealer amount. But, despite the promises to move forward legislation for medicinal cannabis, three years passed by without progress on the issue. Because of this, many people defied the legislative silence and actively searched and purchased marijuana derived products to treat themselves or family members.

Nelly Valbuena is one of the founders, alongside her husband, of the Support Group for Patients and Family Members of Chronic Disease, and they have mobilized, informed and trained people in the use of medicinal cannabis. "I suffered breast cancer myself. After the surgery to remove the

tumor, I was diagnosed with metastasis in various organs," she commented. "When I couldn't handle the pain I was prescribed morphine patches, but it got to a point where I couldn't get them easily. Then, I was introduced to medicinal marijuana by a naturopathic doctor. It seriously changed my life," she said.

Mrs. Valbuena and her husband, Alexis Ponce, have been pushing for the legalization of medical marijuana in Quito since 2017. "The change is real now. Doctors can prescribe it, and we'll be able to access it," Mrs. Valbuena added. There are 250 families comprising the support group. "However, there are many more families are not officially with us, because they were afraid to join due to the legal status of marijuana," said Mr. Ponce.

Mr. Ponce also researched this medicine to help his daughter to recover from many of the cerebral palsy symptoms and conditions. His previous wife gave birth to Tais Ponce. Tais would wound herself and suffer pathological laughter (a type of seizure) often. The use of medicinal cannabis greatly reduced these symptoms without the heavy side effects from clonazepam and benzodiazepine, which were her previously prescribed drugs. "She gets the same soothing effect, but she's no longer drowsy and sedated, like with the other drugs," said Anaite Vargas, Tais' mom.

For many proponents, like Abdón Calderon—an ancestral medicine healer in Cuenca—this new motion is a step forward. "This is a sacred plant. This plant, just like the coca plant, provides powerful preparations for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis and bronchial afflictions," he stated.

Another Cuencana ancestral healer, Delfalñamagua, is still unsatisfied with the current status given to the plant as a palliative, due to the fact that it is a treatment that can genuinely provide cure if used properly. "It's been given a bad reputation due to the irresponsible consumers and the transnational companies that profit from keeping us without natural cures," she said.

Nelson Guerrero, a Cuenca local, had also been skirting the law over this issue. His grandfather, Jorge Gavilanes, was suffering from prostate cancer in 2000. In 2001 Mr. Gavilanes went through chemotherapy, which brought terrible side effects along with the reduction of the cancer. But, 10 years later the cancer came back even stronger. He was reluctant to have chemo again. "I saw what chemo ended up doing to many of my friends and colleagues. I didn't want to go through that again," said Mr. Gavilanes.

Nelson, knew about medicinal cannabis, and went through the toughest process of using medicinal cannabis on a family member; sitting down and talking through the family's prejudice against the plant. "My grandfather was not eating or getting any sleep. He was in pain. He didn't want to do chemo. So, I said, 'why shouldn't give this a try, if we're soon to lose him anyways?'" mentioned Nelson. He managed to convince his parents and close relatives to give the medicine a try. "And here we are, 4 years later since my grandfather was given 6 months of life. He still has cancer, but his quality of life has improved tremendously," Nelson finished.

So, what's next? The COIP has been drafted and now needs to be published in the Official Gazette. The MSP also needs to draft its own regulations on cannabis use and cultivation. "The main discussion point for the health code is under what conditions can people grow the plant, in addition to the licenses," said Gustavo Chiriboga, parliamentary legal advisor.

"We have to remember that the plant that can be grown will be hemp. The strain cannot hold more than 1.00% THC, in dry gross weight," he continued.

The medical cannabis industry will be allowed to grow similar to the tobacco and alcohol industries; without the use of public ads or commercials. However, the important difference is that medicinal marijuana products will only be distributed by pharmacies and through medical prescription. Licenses will also be given to produce marijuana plants for academic and medicinal research purpose.

The road is a lot clearer now for many of the patients in dire need of an alternative route for pain and chronic conditions.

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## Vaping use and related deaths raises concern in Cuenca



Replacing tobacco use with electronic devices such as vaporizers, vapers and electronic cigarettes is a common practice. About 60 percent of tobacco addicted patients are using these systems as a solution to stop smoking, according to Milton Capón, zonal director of the Health Promotion, who warns that it is not healthy.

He points out that there is a warning from the World Health Organization that advises against the use of electronic nicotine administration systems, which for a long time were recommended as an alternative treatment to quit smoking.

Capón says that these are also generally addictive and are dangerous because they are used in enclosed spaces and also affect passive smokers.

### Risks

Among the risks associated with these nicotine administration systems are cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and cancer, because they contain 20 carcinogenic substances. There are also reports coming in from all over the world of "vaping related illness," that is causing serious lung damage and even death.

These systems administer can administer nicotine into the bloodstream quite quickly; after 20 minutes of vaping, blood pressure and heart rate are both increased

Capón warns that the consumption of these substances is common in young people, noting that by the age of 14, many kids are already a consuming nicotine through electronic devices.

The World Health Organization (WHO), in a report presented this year in Rio de Janeiro, warns: "These are products that have become a gateway for tobacco for young people. Our recommendation to governments is to treat and regulate them as tobacco products."

WHO also mentions that "all forms of tobacco use are harmful, including heated tobacco products."

The Ministry of Health is already working on prevention programs for these devices, but Capón says that a regulation of these is necessary in the country.

## More competition and routes have had little effect on airline ticket prices

Despite the arrival of new airlines to the competition and improved routes, flight tickets in Ecuador have not had a significant decrease in price, and in some cases, they've gotten more expensive.

The executive director of LATAM, Daniel Leng, has stated that the in order for ticket prices to go down, two things are needed: more competition, which is happening, and education of the users who are looking for better prices. Also, the high fees and taxes imposed by the government and the airports play a significant role in the high prices of airline tickets in Ecuador.

A round trip to Bogota from Quito, initially costs \$438 dollars. Adding in the fees for gasoline taxes (Ecodelta tax) and fuel-related charges, it goes up to \$622. Then, with the value added tax and other fees, it increases to \$863. Basically, the price almost doubles. And, it's a very similar story for a Guayaquil-Bogota round trip.

The president of the Airlines Association of Ecuador (Arlae) does consider the new policy of 'open skies' implemented by the current government administration to be a positive move forward. "This has allowed premium companies to enter the market, such as Air Canada, Qatar, Gol, Air France



and Plus Ultra," he said. He also emphasizes that people should take into account the particular dates they are looking to fly when they are purchasing tickets, as some dates (e.g., Christmas travel) are in higher demand and therefore do cost more. Purchasing tickets well in advance can also help reduce the cost. However, he said regardless of any efforts by the consumer, taxes and airport fees always increase the price considerably.

"Taxes can represent about 30% of the price of the flight ticket. This is not something we can control. As airlines, we simply comply with the country's regulations," said Felipe Gomez, Income Optimization Manager at Avianca.

LATAM is estimating a 10 to 30% reduction in many of their fares due to opening new national routes, including flights to Manta, and increasing frequency in flights to Galapagos and Cuenca.

Extracted from EL Universo.

## Banco Pichincha among the 30 banks who draft the Principles of Responsible Banking

Banco Pichincha was the sole Ecuadorian financial institution to participate in the drafting of the Principles of Responsible Banking. This document is part of the United Nations Environmental Program Financial Initiative. Thirty banks began work on these principles back in November of 2018. The principles were officially presented at the Climate Action Summit of the United Nations on September 22nd.

Another 100 banks joined the initial 30 banks, adding up to \$47 billion in assets. By adhering to the Principles, these banks promise to align their businesses with the Sustainable Development Objectives and the Paris Accords on Climate Change. The premise is that by adhering to these Principles, the banks will be a positive factor in economic change for societies and they will reduce the risks in their financial dealings. "We commit to identify, measure and increase our positive impacts derived from our operations. The financial sector moves the economy, and we can be a multiplier of productivity," stated Antonio Acosta, president of Banco Pichincha.

The six principles in the document are:

1. Alignment: to align business' strategies with the society's objectives as expressed in the Sustainable Development Objectives and the Paris Accords.
2. Impact and set of objectives: to continuously increase the positive impacts and reduce the negative, as well as setting objectives for the most



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✉ dentalsmile77@hotmail.com

relevant impacts.

3. Clients: to work responsibly with clients to generate shared prosperity for both current and future generations.

4. Stakeholders: to consult, involve and collaborate with different relevant interest groups to achieve the goals of society.

5. Government and culture: to compromise through effective responsible banking, governments and culture.

6. Transparency and responsibility: to show transparency, assuming responsibility for positive and negative impacts.

Extracted from EL Universo

## CRIME REPORT AND ACCIDENT REPORT

### Cuenca Area Traffic Accidents

\*Two young people died as a result of traffic accidents in Cuenca and in Chordeleg that occurred on Monday.

On Tuesday morning, Juan Pablo Brito, 25, died, at the Vicente Corral Moscoso hospital, after suffering serious injuries from an accident he was in on August 28, on Paucarbamba and Los Fresnos avenue.

The accident occurred when a Ford F-150 truck lost control and crashed into the enclosure of a house.

Another accident at 1:15 p.m. on Monday took a life, on the Chordeleg-Principal road, Porrión sector, when a motorcycle with two occupants crashed into a rock.

Rescuers from the Fire Corps of Chordeleg confirmed that Holger Quinde Criollo, 26, died at the scene of the accident due to serious skull injuries. The victim was a native of the Joyapa community, Puzhio parish.

A 25-year-old companion was injured and was taken to Moreno Vázquez hospital, in Gualaceo canton, where he was admitted with a reserved prognosis.

\* On Tuesday morning, September 24, 2019, at kilometer 11 of the Cuenca-Azogues road, a woman was seriously injured after being hit by a vehicle.

The accident happened around 9:00 a.m. According to witnesses, the accident occurred when the 57-year-old woman was trying to cross the road and was hit by a car. The car involved fled the scene.

\*Several accidents happened on Saturday, September 21st, in different areas of Cuenca.

One accident happened around 5:30 p.m. on González Suárez Avenue and Paseo Milchichig when a vehicle lost control; two people were injured.

Later, at 6:55 p.m., another accident occurred on Ordóñez Lasso Avenue and Camino del Tejar.

Four people injured in the accident that happened when a car lost control and crashed and overturned.

Also, at 8:15 p.m. an accident was reported at Avenida de las Américas and Mexico. EMOV and IESS resources arrived at the accident and treated an injured person at the scene.

### Cuenca and National Criminal Activity

(Cuenca) On Wednesday afternoon, September 25, 2019, Citizen Guard personnel arrested five suspected criminals in different sectors of the city for alleged assault and armed robbery.

The first arrest was made at 1:00 p.m. at Amazonas and Avenida de Las Américas near Feria Libre. Three women tried to rob a citizen who was traveling through the market. The victim was physically attacked and received scratches on her face. She was treated by first aid personnel.

The second arrest was carried out at 2:30 p.m. on two alleged thieves in the vicinity of the 10 de Agosto Market. According to municipal police,

moments before the subjects stole a cell phone from a student, who was stabbed with a screwdriver in his left arm.

In both cases, the five alleged criminals were handed over to the National Police personnel of Ecuador to continue due process.

(Cuenca) On Friday afternoon, September 20th, a security camera recorded the a robbery made by two people who were traveling aboard a motorcycle.

The images were registered by cameras located in the immediate vicinity of the February 27 Market, and were made public by a user through the social network Twitter.

The video shows how the victim is surprised by the subjects. Only one of them descends from the vehicle to intimidate him and take away his property. It is clearly seen how the subject checks all the victim's pockets. After robbing the victim, he fled on the motorcycle with his accomplice.

A similar event occurred 10 days ago at the intersection of Tungurahua Street, between Guayas and Carchi streets, where two subjects aboard a motorcycle assaulted a pedestrian with similar actions.

(Cuenca) Mobility Company (EMOV EP) police, of the Municipality of Cuenca, arrested 37 drivers during operations executed between last Friday night and Sunday morning. Of them, 36 of them were booked for drunk driving and one for not having a driver's license.

The stops were carried out mainly in areas of Bajada de Todos Santos, Gil Ramírez Dávalos, Los Andes, Tres Puentes, on the road to the parish of El Valle and in the Los Tótems sector.



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To subscribe to the Cuenca Medical Services website and receive future updates and information, go to <http://eepurl.com/gx5AMP>



## A night of theater beckons all

Cuenca becomes a city of theater! This past Wednesday marked the beginning of XIII edition of the International Festival of Performing Arts 'Scenarios of the World.' During this year's festival, the scenic expressions of eight countries will be performed until October 6h.

Of the works being presented, 15 are national proposals and nine are from Cuenca. The groups that represent the city will be Tecla Theater, Clowndestinos, Pie Theater, Vertigo Air Dance, Zebra Circus, Pan and Guineo Circus, UBU Theater, humorist Alfredo Campo and magician Juan Estrella, according to Juan Andrade Polo, director of the festival.

Obviously, there are more than enough acts to find something that will suit your fancy! Tickets for the plays are available at Librimundi in the El Centro (Hermano Miguel and Mariscal Sucre), at the Mall del Rio and at the Miguel Illescas Gallery, Calle Larga and Miguel Ángel Estrella. The cost of individual tickets is \$7.00. Or you can buy tickets for 3 shows for \$15.00, 5 shows for \$20.00 or 8 shows for \$25.00.

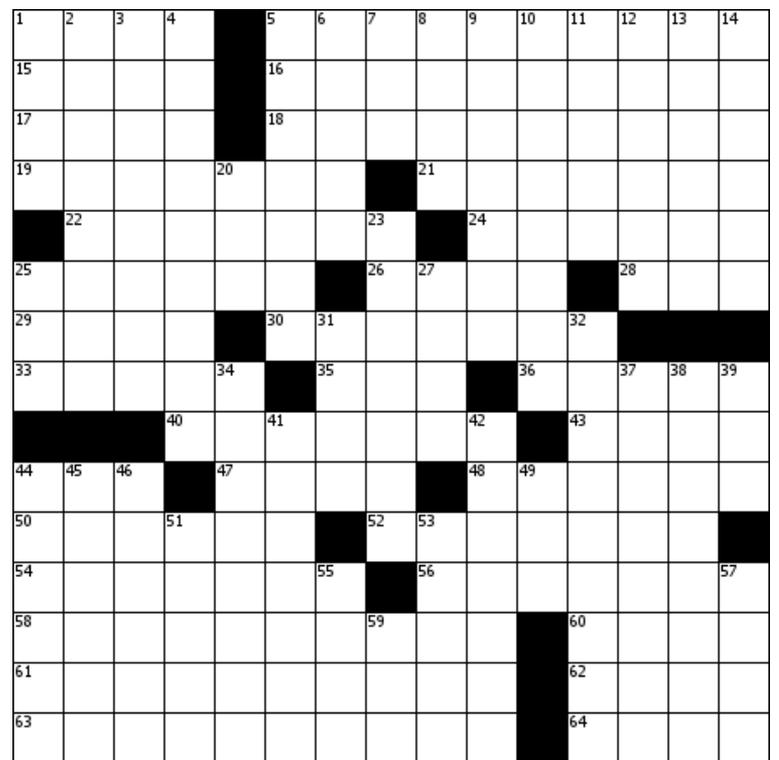
Another way to see the shows is to download the application 'Visit Cuenca,' where you can see the schedule of activities and buy your tickets. Or, visit the festival website at <http://www.escenariosdelmundo.com>



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LITERAR

**ESCENARIOS DEL MUNDO**  
13º FESTIVAL INTERNACIONAL DE ARTES ESCÉNICAS DE CUENCA  
25 SEPT. - 06 OCT. 2019

**¡Disfruta 12 días de teatro genial!**



See answers on page 11

### Across

1. Engage in logrolling
5. Check out
15. Bailiwick
16. Russian czar who fought Napoleon
17. Alpine site
18. Learn about in a new way
19. Almost ready to deal
21. Solid alcohols
22. They're for starters
24. Single-principle philosopher
25. Less certain
26. Norwegian hero
28. Start of a Midwestern capital
29. Plains natives
30. Extended
33. Laid-back
35. Brown is one
36. 1986 Indy 500 winner Bobby
40. One who can face facts
43. Hall of Fame safety Ronnie
44. Warmer
47. Secluded spot
48. Centers
50. Tough-sounding yarn?
52. Sugary and spicy, maybe
54. Rivers run through them
56. "The Thorn Birds" novelist McCullough
58. "Well, if you're gonna look at me like that ..."
60. Guns
61. Initial representation?
62. Come across
63. Postponed and restarted
64. Protester

### Down

1. The Tide
2. Pittsburgh nickname
3. 1988 Burt Reynolds film
4. One slow to get up
5. Collects
6. Lament
7. United Airlines affiliate
8. '40s foe
9. In mid-spring of 2005
10. Quick job
11. Deck out
12. Lacking, with "of"
13. Blackmailer's words
14. Breakthroughs
20. '50s slogan name
23. Putting letters in boxes?
25. URL part
27. Puts down
31. Carpet quality
32. 1989 Peace Prize recipient
34. "Go easy"
37. Trainers, jockeys et al.
38. Where to see Whistler's "Lady in Gray"
39. Sgt.'s superiors
41. Contended
42. Pitcher
44. Cut corners
45. Essential RNA component
46. Sparks setting
49. Angled extension
51. Verbose
53. "Where \_\_ from ..."
55. Prefix with gram
57. Denier's comment
59. Service abbr.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND TOWN AND BEYOND....

"What's Happening..." is updated weekly with a large variety of events that both ex-pats and Ecuadorians will enjoy. If you have an interesting event you would like to publicize, email [info@thecuencadispatch](mailto:info@thecuencadispatch) for consideration.

### Classifieds and Events

#### CLASSIFIEDS

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Address: Av. Ordoñez Lasso y los Olivos. (Near the front of the Oro Verde Hotel)  
Hours of operation: Monday to Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Saturdays from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Sundays from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
Contact: +593-74-08-6331, +593-98-458-4915

##### From Tuesday to Thursday 2x1 in kafta shawarma

El Jeque, is a small restaurant of Mediterranean food, specialized in shawarmas, falafel, hummus, pita bread, tabule and some dishes of Lebanese food. This month we have 2x1 on offer the kafta shawarma from Tuesday to Thursday for only \$ 5. Come and enjoy our delicious traditional food, with good attention and a lovely place. You can also enjoy our delicious burgers.  
Contact: 0984367127

##### Green pizza!

Want to taste something different and delicious?... Keydi, Jesus and Ricardo have the best pizzas in town! "Pizzas de Verde"...yes! Verde (with green banana). They don't prepare the pizzas with flour, but with Verde. The juices...wow! no words for that! Combine your healthy pizza with the different flavors of juices! They also prepare hamburgers and lasagna (you have to ask for the lasagna previously). Enjoy with your friends at Cocoscafe!  
Address: Calle Larga 4-42 and Mariano Cueva (In front of Todos Santos church).  
Contact: 0962038891

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Tutto Matto has a promotion that you can't miss! We are so pleased to offer 20% off on our Large Specialty Pizzas every Wednesday from 9/18/19 - 10/30/19. From Tuesday - Saturday 11:30am - 3pm / 5pm - 9pm. \* We close between 3pm and 5pm. Hope to see you soon!.  
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Phone: (07)2882494

### Worship Services

#### The International Christian Community

What: We are open to Christians of all backgrounds and our main goal is to love one another in the Lord. Come and enjoy "God With Us".

When: Every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. (in English). Coffee fellowship after the service.

Where: Nicanor Aguilar and Solano (one block north of Monte Sinai Hospital).

Contact info: Email [info@internationalchristiancommunity.org](mailto:info@internationalchristiancommunity.org)

#### Calvary Chapel Cuenca this Sunday - English and Spanish Services

What: Calvary Chapel has been formed as a fellowship of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When: Sunday's service in English at 9:30 a.m., in Spanish at 8 a.m. and also at 11 a.m.

Where: Our location is at the western end of bus line #22, Juan Pio Montufar and Primera Convención

Cost: Free

Contact: **Roger Quilty** 098 032 6390

I	R	L		G	E	T	A	L	O	A	D	O	F	
R	E	A		A	L	E	X	A	N	D	E	R	I	
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C	A	R	K	E	Y	S		M	O	N	I	S	T	
I	C	I	E	R		O	L	A	V		D	E	S	
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Solution to Crossword puzzle on page 10

Solution to Sudoku puzzle on page 3

2	1	8	5	9	4	7	6	3
6	5	9	2	3	7	1	8	4
7	3	4	1	8	6	5	2	9
4	7	5	9	6	3	2	1	8
3	6	2	8	5	1	4	9	7
9	8	1	4	7	2	3	5	6
8	4	6	3	1	5	9	7	2
1	9	3	7	2	8	6	4	5
5	2	7	6	4	9	8	3	1

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monileonera@yahoo.com

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