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## Living

OCTOBER 2024



*Childhood Leukemia Society:*  
Fighting to Support Families Facing Cancer

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February 10 .....	April
March 10 .....	May
April 10 .....	June
May 10 .....	July
June 10 .....	August
July 10 .....	October
August 10 .....	October
October 10 .....	November
October 10 .....	December
November 10 .....	January

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## DEAR FELLOW MONROVIANS,

We're coming into Halloween season, a time for "good" scary things. But a cancer diagnosis can also be scary in a different way, and our cover story talks about a group dedicated to making a childhood cancer diagnosis less scary and less lonely. The Childhood Leukemia Society for the Benefit of Children with Cancer is holding a fundraising event on November 1, 2024, and we know you'll be interested in how you can help.

You'll also read in this issue about why you should get your teeth cleaned regularly, and then you'll meet another owner of a local auto detailer. You'll be reminded that it's time to get your HVAC system inspected for the cooler winter months, and we'll offer some ideas about fall books to cozy up with.

As we get ready for Halloween festivities, we also want to support those in our community who are facing difficulties. Philanthropist Albert Schweitzer said, "Sometimes our light goes out, but is blown again into instant flame by an encounter with another human being." Let's be watchful for those opportunities to lift one another up.

With encouragement for those who are struggling,



*Russell Hollinhurst*  
PUBLISHER



*Nan Kuhlman*  
CONTENT COORDINATOR

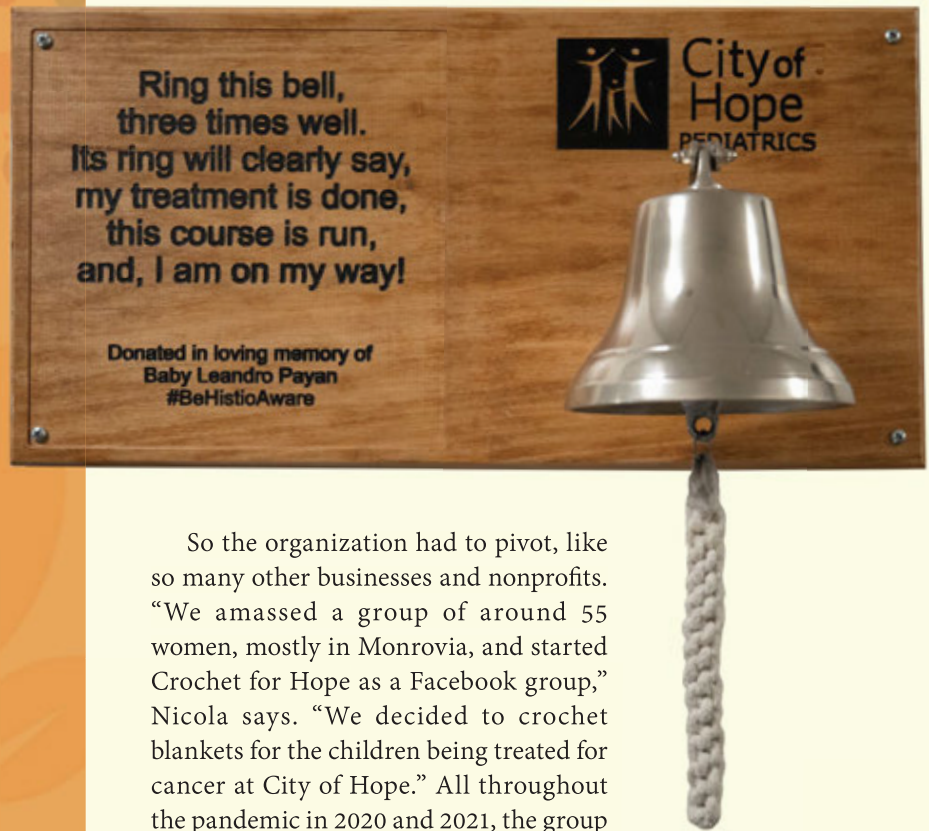


# Childhood Leukemia Society:

## *Fighting to Support Families Facing Cancer*

A cancer diagnosis can be devastating at any age, but it is especially difficult when children are affected. The Speranta family in Monrovia understands the challenges faced by families with children suffering from cancer. Their son James was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia in 2018, which sent them on a treatment trajectory that no parent or child ever wishes to travel. As first-generation immigrants to the US, the Sperantas had no nearby family to help, but they had the support of the Monrovia community. Meals were delivered, and employers permitted them to work remotely, which wasn't a part of the workplace conversation in 2018. Friends in the community and school reached out to support James's younger brother Andrew, rallying around him. James's parents, Cristian and Nicola, realized during his treatment at the City of Hope in Duarte that other families going through similar treatment journeys did not have that kind of support. And that birthed the James Speranta Organization, dba Childhood Leukemia Society, which will host its inaugural annual fundraiser to be held Friday, November 1, 2024.

The intent of the non-profit organization was to raise funds and support for families and educate parents about signs and symptoms to watch for. Nicola says, "We wanted to start doing annual fund-raising events, so at the end of 2019, we started planning. Then Covid hit, taking us out, and everything was shut down."



So the organization had to pivot, like so many other businesses and nonprofits. "We amassed a group of around 55 women, mostly in Monrovia, and started Crochet for Hope as a Facebook group," Nicola says. "We decided to crochet blankets for the children being treated for cancer at City of Hope." All throughout the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, the group delivered blankets on a regular basis to City of Hope. And some of the blankets were big, according to Nicola. "We're not just talking about young children. We're talking about young adults, and we didn't want to leave anyone out. I mean, you can have a six-foot, 16-year-old getting cancer treatment, and he needs a blanket, too," she says. The blankets brought a lot of comfort to the patients and their families for those two years.

After three and a half years of treatment, James Speranta was found clear of cancer in 2022. He rang the special bell in the children's cancer unit at City of Hope, and with the pandemic waning, the Sperantas and the nonprofit began to plan for the annual fundraiser. However, in January 2023, James faced serious complications that were a result of the cancer treatments he received. He underwent three surgeries and was intubated for five days, fighting for his life. As a result, the fundraiser planning was again put on hold until 2024. James has recovered, and though the nonprofit has had some sputtering starts to its fundraising efforts, the Sperantas are ready to move forward. "We're ready to do this and pay it forward," Nicola says. "We've planned our first fundraising event to be held Friday, November 1, 2024. It will be the beginning of an annual tradition that we will do every single year," she says.

The event will be held November 1 at the Doubletree Hotel, 924 W. Huntington Drive, Monrovia, from 6:30PM to 10:30PM. General admission is \$59 per person with all-you-can-eat tacos and hors d'oeuvres, and Golden tickets are \$99 per person which will enter you automatically into a raffle to win 7 days at a 5-star luxury



condo in Park City, Utah. VIP tickets include VIP table seating with champagne and a swag bag from local merchants. Center Stage and other local musicians will provide entertainment with Trevor Downs as the live auction director and MC. Cissie Andrews will run the silent auction, and tickets are being handled by Ellen McPherson (626-255-0278). All net proceeds go to Childhood Leukemia Society to benefit and support families whose children have cancer.

In light of the rough start the organization has had with its fundraising efforts, there is a sense of anticipation about finally getting together to pay it forward. "Not only is it going to be a really fun event, but the money will be dedicated to families with children in cancer treatment who are struggling to pay their bills," Nicola says.

In addition to the medical costs, families must incur additional expenses, such as parking fees at City of Hope or additional gas and food expenses, when taking their child for treatments. For some, taking their child for cancer treatment means they must take time off work and lose much-needed income. This could result in struggles to pay rent or utility bills. "When we were going to treatment on a daily basis at City of Hope, there were so many families that I could just tell didn't have the financial means to take on these additional costs," Nicola says. "We're looking to support families by providing funds for the basic items they need while going through the treatment process with their children."

*Continued on page 6*

*The James Speranta Organization dba*



## Mission Statement

The James Speranta Organization, dba Childhood Leukemia Society, has been created with the purpose of providing support structures and educational programs relating to Childhood Leukemia, particularly for the families in the San Gabriel Valley Community in Southern California.

Our Organization is actively engaged in helping individuals and families who are the victims of

Childhood Leukemia under a number of programs:

- Fund-Raising Events
- Blood Drives
- Meals for Victims of Leukemia
- Counseling assistance through local support groups
- Partnership with the Monrovia City Council for the promotion of educational events in support of Childhood Leukemia Awareness education as well as various fund-raising initiatives.





The organization also wants to raise awareness in the community about signs or symptoms of childhood cancer or complications of its treatment so that parents can get their children to a doctor sooner. “Because of what we went through with James, we realized that we didn’t recognize the signs. If we had known the signs early on, we would have gotten him to a doctor much more quickly,” she says.

The inaugural fundraiser for the Childhood Leukemia Society on November 1, 2024, offers our readers the opportunity to support these families in our community who are facing difficulties we can’t imagine. For more event information or to volunteer to help, you can email [childhoodleukemiasociety@gmail.com](mailto:childhoodleukemiasociety@gmail.com) or contact Nicola Speranta at 626-253-6746.



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# Basking in Someone Else's Shadow

By Nan Kuhlman

We've had a week of 90-degree heat where I live, but try to explain to two dogs that it's too hot to go for their typical 30-minute walk, and you'll realize it's futile. They're used to having that 30 minutes to smell the outdoors and see what's going on in the world, at least in the couple of blocks around our home. I had the best intentions to get them out earlier in the morning, but that didn't happen. So we ended up walking in the early afternoon, seeking the shade of the very generous trees that line the streets and reside in a nearby park.

On a particularly sunny stretch where we had to walk facing the sun, I noticed that our chihuahua Luna wasn't walking beside me as she typically does. I stopped and turned around to see her trotting right behind me, enjoying the small amount of shade my shadow provided her.

Her intuitive use of my shadow to help her cope with the heat made me laugh but also made me think. How have I basked in someone else's shadow, relying on them to help me cope with difficulties in the world? This isn't necessarily a bad practice. In fact, I think it shows how interconnected we are in the world.

For years in the winter, my dad would snow-blow the sidewalks around their Ohio home, including some of the neighbors' sidewalks and driveways. He was retired, and he liked doing it. Some of them had health problems or work, and having their snow removal taken care of was one less thing

they had to think about. These days, those neighbors and others who have moved into the neighborhood now help my nearly 90-year-old mother with her snow removal. Their kids take her trash to the curb for her on trash days, and I imagine, based on how I've seen this work, that someday, when they need it, someone else will help them with snow and trash removal.

It's not a sign of weakness to bask in someone else's shadow. It's OK to need others' help. Rather than thinking we have to be the helper all the time, it is time we understand the cyclical nature of need. I mean, if a ten-year-old chihuahua can figure it out, then maybe there's hope for us, too.

For more Nan's Noticings, check out [www.nankuhlman.com](http://www.nankuhlman.com)!



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# Moving Forward with MCAS

By Natalie Macchia, Counselor at MCAS



The Monrovia Community Adult School (MCAS) has a number of classes that can help you move forward in your work life and career. We'd like to highlight a few of them, and in future articles, we'll provide more details about each one:

governmental, educational, and workplace systems. MCAS provides a Citizenship program to help students pass the Citizenship test and become a U.S. citizen and a Conversation and Accent Reduction program to support students in their efforts to improve accents. The MCAS Vocational ESL program gives English Learners the chance to learn English while acquiring knowledge and skills that will prepare them for MCAS Career Technical classes.



## English as a Second Language (ESL)

MCAS offers all levels of ESL classes during the day and at night to help students become proficient in English. MCAS includes English Learner (EL) Civics units in all ESL classes to assist students so they can better navigate a variety of

## Nurse Assistant Pre-Certification CAN

The MCAS Nurse Assistant Pre-certification CNA program trains students for positions in the nursing field and prepares students for the State Nurse Assistant Certification Exam. Successful students can climb the first rung up the professional



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nursing ladder on the way to becoming a Registered Nurse at significant savings from programs offered by private colleges. This program includes classroom and lab instruction as well as hands-on training in a long-term care facility.

### *Pharmacy Technician*

The MCAS Pharmacy Technician program prepares students to earn a state Pharmacy Technician license, pass the national Pharmacy Certification Exam and get successful employment at a pharmacy. This is all provided at a fraction of the cost charged by private colleges. Our faculty has years of pharmaceutical experience and contacts to help MCAS students to get employed. The MCAS Pharmacy Technician training has always been a program delivered in a hybrid manner including both online and in-person instruction. Students complete 12-20 hours of online assignments in preparation for classroom direct instruction one day per week. The program requires 140 hours of an internship at a pharmacy. MCAS helps students with internship placement.

### *Certified Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist*

The MCAS Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Training program is a five-week, 88-hour program that prepares individuals to pass the California Mental Health Services



Authority (CalMHSA) Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist certification exam and to work as a Certified Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist with an approved provider who treats clients with mental health and substance use disorder issues. Individuals who complete the training and pass the CalMHSA certification exam support treatment professionals to help individuals overcome life problems caused by mental health and substance use disorder. A Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist could work at a sober-living facility, in an outpatient treatment center, in the field, or in other settings supporting the coaching, linkage, and skill-building of individuals with treatment needs.

### *Construction Training Program*

Monrovia Community Adult School and Habitat for Humanity are providing a pathway to work in Construction through the Building Futures Program. Earn money while you learn the trade skills to successfully work in the Construction Industry! The Construction Training Program curriculum includes plan reading, understanding safe operation of hand tools, wall framing, window installation, roof truss and roof installation, siding installation, interior trim, and finishing carpentry skills. Assignments include reading assignments, tests, and hands-on projects. Students become certified in OSHA Click Safety.



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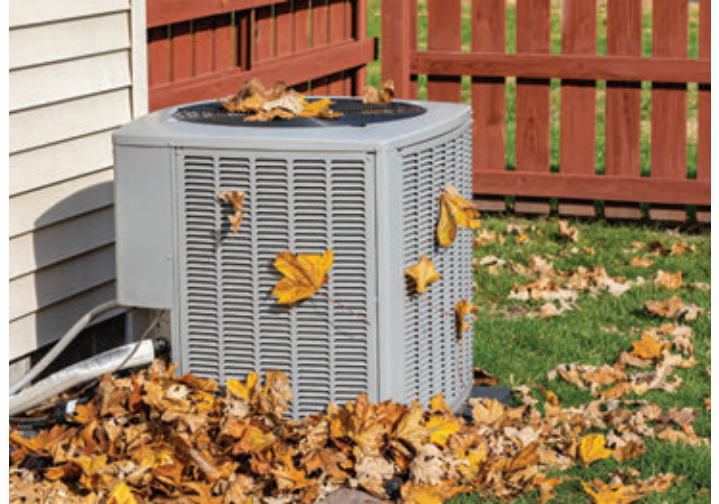
# Autumn HVAC Inspection

By Bob Helbing, President, Air-Tro, Inc.



Summer is in the rearview mirror, but there are a few things you should do while the high heat and high electric bills are still fresh in your mind. Your equipment has spent the past few months working hard to keep you and the family comfortable in spite of searing outdoor temperatures. Now it's your turn to take care of your equipment.

Long run times during heat waves mean lots of air flowing through your filter. If you can't remember the last time it was changed, it's probably time to change it again. The more you used your air conditioning, the more dust and dirt was pulled into that filter. Go ahead and replace it. Filters don't cost much, and a clean filter means less work for the blower and cleaner surfaces on the coils. It's a good idea to have your entire system checked by a professional technician. High temperatures and constant running put a stress on the electromechanical components such as relays, capacitors, and fan motors. Have them looked at to see if they're still in good shape. Don't hesitate to call in an HVAC professional for a thorough inspection. It's better to replace a worn component now than it is to suffer a breakdown when you need the system most.



You should also look at your electric bills from this summer as well as any repair bills. If they're high, it might be time to budget for equipment replacement. New systems are more reliable and more energy efficient. If your operating costs pushed you outside your comfort zone, you should plan on replacing older units in the off-season when equipment and skilled labor are easier to find. If you have any questions about maintaining your existing systems or installing new ones, call the Air-Tro professionals at (626) 357-3535.

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# Nan's Book Reviews and Recommendations: October 2024

By Nan Kuhlman

## *Bluebird, Bluebird* by Attica Locke

This is the first in a series about an African-American Texas Ranger named Darren Matthews digging into a couple of murder cases. The two murders end up being linked but not like readers might think at first glance. The book examines justice, racism, and how people often sacrifice the truth to have closure. I listened to the audiobook and found it well done.

## *Mrs. Quinn's Rise to Fame* by Olivia Ford

Calling all fan of the streaming series The Great British Bakeoff! Mrs. Jenniver Quinn has always loved baking and associated specific baked goods with significant milestones in her life. On a whim at age 70-ish, she decides to enter a televised baking show in Britain, but she keeps it a secret from her husband of 59 years, Bernard. As the story progresses, readers come to learn other secrets Mrs. Quinn has kept to herself. Excellent audiobook, but the print version might include recipes of her special baked goods.

## *Book Lovers* by Emily Henry

This romantic-comedy pairs New York literary agent Nora Stephens with book editor Charlie Lassiter. Their first meeting doesn't go so well, but after they both end up in a small North Carolina town for a month, they start letting down their guard, and things get sizzly. Audiobook is good, too.

## *Sipsworth* by Simon VanBooy

This is a short, sweet fictional story about an elderly woman who is alone and ready to die – until she finds a reason to live. It's not what you expect exactly, but it involves connection and a way to contribute and care for others. The audiobook is only five hours, and you'll be uplifted!



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## Emergency Veterinary Care: Dr. Sylvia Domotor and Rose City Veterinary Hospital

By Jan Muetting



On a late Saturday afternoon, we came home from the movies and found one of our dogs in dire need of a veterinarian. We knew our regular veterinarian was not open, and in a panic, we scooped her up, jumped in the car, and were frantically trying to find an emergency clinic. We had a faint memory that there might be a vet hospital open on Saturdays on Foothill, and sure enough, we found Dr. Sylvia Domotor.

That first visit was reassuring, and our sweet Bella was patched up. It was on our follow up visit, though, that I became a convert. Dr Domotor spent time explaining what had happened, even taking the time to pull out medical books to show me diagrams and assure me Bella would heal. Bella lived long into old age and always loved kayaking with us.

I had never had a doctor, veterinary or human, go into so much detail to make sure I understood and felt at ease. I had so much confidence and relief when I left that I vowed to start taking all three of our dogs to Dr. Domotor. I was not unhappy with my veterinarian, but the difference in how I felt was immeasurable. That was twelve years ago, and since then, I always refer friends and family to Dr. D. Now that she is at Rose City Veterinary Hospital, the drive might be a tiny bit farther, but I wouldn't go anywhere else. I like the staff there, too! If you need emergency veterinary care, check out Rose City Veterinary Hospital in Pasadena by calling 626-796-8387.



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# Why Regular Dental Cleanings and Exams Are Important

By Dr. Sam Valiani, DDS, Foothill Dental Center



Dr. Sam Valiani

While most people don't like going to the dentist, there are some pretty good reasons to have your teeth cleaned and checked twice a year. While most people can get by with semi-annual dental cleanings, more frequent dental cleanings might be needed if you have a weakened immune system or issues with gum disease. Regular cleanings remove stains and tartar buildup, improving the beauty of your smile, but they also have wide-ranging health benefits:

- ◆ Reduce the likelihood of common issues like gingivitis and cavities
- ◆ Reduce the potential for dementia, stroke, heart disease, and even some respiratory infections.
- ◆ Reduce bad breath
- ◆ Reduce costs by dealing with small dental problems before they become big, expensive problems.

The appointment typically begins with a cleaning performed by a licensed dental hygienist who uses tools called scalers to remove plaque and tartar from your teeth. Some dental offices use a water-pik type tool to remove or loosen the plaque from your teeth. After that, your teeth are flossed and polished, and your gums are checked for signs of periodontal disease. At that point, I will examine your teeth, looking for cavities, signs of any problems with existing dental work, and even oral cancer. We'll then pre-schedule your next checkup appointment and you can go about your day.

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# October 2024

*Mon., October 7*

## **Writers Workshop with Marisa Kanter**

@Community Room, Monrovia Public Library,  
321 S. Myrtle Ave.

At this event for grades 6-12, students will learn what being an author is like. Marisa Kanter, an author of young adult literature, will answer questions at this workshop. Participants will also enjoy creative writing exercises, snacks, and giveaways. Registration encouraged.

**Time:** 5:30-6:30PM

**Cost:** Free

Email [acarey@monroviaca.gov](mailto:acarey@monroviaca.gov) or call 626-256-8274.

*Sat., October 12*

## **Old Town Fall Festival**

@Library Park, 321 S. Myrtle Ave., Monrovia

Come to Old Town Monrovia to enjoy fall harvest activities. Free live music and a pet costume contest at 12:30PM.

**Time:** 10:00AM-2:00PM

**Cost:** Free (note: hay wagon rides and train rides @\$5/person)

<https://www.monroviaca.gov/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/8635/>

*Sat., October 26, and Sun., October 27*

## **Halloween-ish Tour of Live Oak Cemetery**

@200 E. Duarte Rd., Monrovia

The Monrovia Historical Society and the Monrovia Historic Preservation Group (MOHPG) are pleased to offer a Halloween-ish Tour of Live Oak Cemetery on Saturday, October 26, and Sunday, October 27, from 3:30-5:30pm. This tour will be similar to the tour offered by the late local historian Steve Baker but will feature Jim Wigton telling haunted tales this year. Jim's stories will include a who's who of those buried at Live Oak, how they died, and their claim to fame in Monrovia. Each tour group is limited to 25, and all proceeds benefit the Monrovia Historical Society.

**Time:** 3:30-5:30pm

**Cost:** \$25 per person

Tickets can be purchased for \$25 at the Community Center or online at [monroviahistoricalsociety.org](http://monroviahistoricalsociety.org).

*Thurs., October 31*

## **Halloween Spooktacular & Trick-or-Treat Bash**

@Library Park, 321 S. Myrtle Ave., Monrovia

Join us for free Halloween events in Old Town, including trick-or-treating; costume judging contest for youth, adult, group, family, and dogs; activity booths; photo booths; and library activities. This event is sponsored by the Monrovia Old Town Advisory Board.

**Time:** 3:00-6:00PM

**Cost:** Free

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# Streamline Detailing: Meet Sami Elliott

By Luke Elliot, Streamline Detailing



Luke Elliot

Sami Elliott is the third part of the trilogy that makes up Streamline Monrovia. Sami and I have been together since just after our high school days in Monrovia, and we have two children who love what their mom and dad do. These kids have even made short videos about how we make cars look pretty and clean.

Though Sami has worked as a cosmetologist, running 2 salons, she now concentrates on our business, Streamline Detailing, handling the administrative side. But she does know the front end of the store and all the products that we sell. Sami has worked with chemicals in the salon business, and she can relate that to what is used in the car detail business. Even as there are certain types of hair products that can do more damage than good, the same goes for cars. If you use the wrong product or the wrong techniques, it can negatively impact your vehicle. Streamline Detailing carries the best in the industry's product lines, such as Ultra Clean, Max Shine, Autofiber, and Gyeon. These products can be purchased for your own use and are the same products we use when detailing your car at the shop. Sami takes great pride in knowing what is best for customers and their cars.

Sami Elliott





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If you ask Sami what makes Streamline Detailing different from other detailers, she'll tell you that everyone at Streamline strives to make the customer happy. We believe in integrity, and as the owners, it all starts with us. For example, we believe that a customer's time is valuable, so we include free vehicle drop-off and pickup services. Sami and I hold the business philosophy that we want to take care of our customers, so we treat your cars as if they belonged to us. Stop in to see us at 424 West Chestnut, or for more information, check out [ems-streamline.com](http://ems-streamline.com).

# MONROVIA

Living

2458



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**Gary Schaeffler**

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**mtjoycons@aol.com**

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**ELEMENTS**

restaurant & bar

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rwatkins@doubletreemonrovia.com

Contact:

Ryan Watkins – Restaurant Manager

**“Where the little things  
mean everything!”**