



The Informer

RETIRED EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION OF ORANGE COUNTY, INC.



Welcome, New Members

Assessor: John McKee

District Attorney: Tori Bird

HCA: Isabel Benavidez, Deborah Browning, Carlos Andrade, Asuncion Vergara

JWA: Barbara Bossenmeyer

Probation: Darlene Pitchford, Alice Takahashi, Arthur Oropeza

Public Defender: Donald Landis, Jr.

SSA: John Hendrickson

Superior Court: Frances Marino, Alicia McKee, Jan Mueller, Carol Anderson

Not Stated: Sara Gallardo, Jeffrey Chalmers, Rosemarie Higley

Surviving Spouse: Nancy Shurts

REAO Luncheons

As we earlier notified you by email on October 2, 2021 (for those who have email addresses on file with REAO), we must inform our members that there will not be a REAO holiday luncheon in December 2021. We hope the New Year of 2022 will find the Covid situation improving and that we will once again be able to hold our luncheons. We will keep you apprised of the luncheon situation as we know more of the ongoing impact of the pandemic. We sincerely miss you and trust you and your families will remain healthy and safe!

Presidents' Message

From the Desks of Linda Robinson and Doug Storm

Holiday Greetings, Retirees!!

It's Holiday Season 2021 and your REAO and AREOC Board Members wish each of you healthy and magical times spent with one another, family and friends. However you celebrate the season—in-person, by zoom, landline, cell or written communications—may you find happiness, contentment and hearts (just like yours) filled with love and appreciation in all your encounters. The world remains filled with wonder and amazing beauty. Take time to be wonder-filled and delight in the beauty of it all. Enjoy the 2021 holiday festivities, customs and heart-warming memories you will be creating for yourself and others. **CHEERS, PEACE AND LOVE TO ALL.**

New Year 2022 is just around the corner. New opportunities, challenges and experiences will arrive and demand our attention. This next year is bound to be exciting AND unpredictable—in so many ways. Keep in mind we retirees navigated through the 2020 pandemic, a combative election cycle and our own personal challenges. Despite all the on-going issues, as retirees, we have been able to carry-on commendably in 2021. It is with high hopes: (1) the

pandemic will be in the rear view mirror sometime during 2022; (2) any personal challenges will be successfully overcome; and (3) acceptable solutions will be found to the complex issues facing our county, state, nation and the world. We may all have different perspectives or personal views but we all have one thing in common—we are ALL retirees and need to support and care about one another as we go through these times, together.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

As you read this issue of *The Informer*, daylight savings will have ended but not so for the activities of your REAO organization, Board members, Executive Director and dedicated/invaluable volunteers serving retirees. On-going activities include monthly Board of Director meetings, legislative and litigation monitoring, Board Watch Committee member review of Board of Supervisor meetings, newsletter publications, networking with other retiree associations, updates on the REAO website at www.reaoc.org including, "Weekly Public Policy News (and Funnies)" and member-

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Attention Social Security Recipients: Cost-of-Living Adjustment for 2022

In 1972 legislation was changed to provide, beginning in 1975, automatic annual cost-of-living allowances (COLAs) based on the annual increase in consumer prices.

The Social Security Administration announced on October 13, 2021, that Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for approximately 70 million Americans will increase 5.9 percent in 2022. This COLA increase is based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI-W) from the third quarter of 2020 through the third quarter of 2021.

The 5.9 percent cost-of-living adjustment will begin with benefits payable to more than 64 million

Social Security beneficiaries in January 2022. The increased payments to approximately 8 million SSI beneficiaries will begin on December 30, 2021. (Note: some people receive both Social Security and SSI benefits.)

Social Security and SSI beneficiaries are normally notified by mail starting in early December about their new benefit amount. Most people who receive Social Security payments will be able to view their COLA notice online through their personal “my Social Security account.” Social Security recipients may create or access their “my Social Security account” online at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount.

Presidents’ Message

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ship services to name a few. Numerous other significant duties are completed by Ilene Barcenas, Executive Director of REAOC and Board members.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

In the past two months two insurance enrollment processes have taken place. First—Open Enrollment for retirees eligible to participate in 2022 County Health Plans began October 20th and closed November 9th. On October 5th REAOC co-sponsored a workshop via ZOOM with County Employee Benefits staff and representatives of the available health insurance plans. Participation increased noticeably compared to last year’s virtual zoom meeting. It appears “zooming” is becoming more acceptable and a number of retirees took advantage of the work-

shop agenda and information provided. We want to thank everyone who attended.

Second—Pacific Group Agencies, Inc. (PGA) offers Open Enrollment for non-County insurance benefits including dental, vision, pet care, travel protection, legal services and more. In October PGA mailed a Benefits Guide to you that provided detailed information regarding available coverage and cost of those plans. Open Enrollment for PGA coverage ended November 12, 2021.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

Our nation celebrated Veterans Day on November 11th. We respect, admire and honor all our veterans (and their families and loved ones) who served our country so well. Thank you for your noble service.

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REAOC

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OFFICERS

Linda Robinson	Co President
Doug Storm	Co President
Rebecca Guider	Secretary
Bill Castro	Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Tom Cooney
Frank Eley
Gaylan Harris
John Iagjian
Larry Leaman
Sara Ruckle-Harms
Michael Schumacher

APPOINTED STAFF

Ilene Bårceñas	Executive Director
John Iagjian	Membership Committee
Ilene Bårceñas	<i>The Informer</i> Editor
Vacant	Luncheon Committee
Norma Roberts	Board Watch
Linda Robinson	CRCEA Delegate
Michael Schumacher	Legislation
Rebecca Guider	Scholarship Committee

The Informer is published 5 times a year. Readers are encouraged to write *The Informer* expressing their views and comments on the subjects of interest to them.

The mission of REAOC is to promote and maintain fellowship and camaraderie of OCERS retirees and their spouses by sponsoring social and recreational activities and by maintaining contacts via the newsletter, the REAOC website, e-mail, or other means of communication. A secondary purpose is tracking and dissemination of information relating to pension and legislative actions, financial matters, physical and mental health care, volunteer and employment opportunities and other concerns that may be of interest to our members.

OCERS retirees and their spouses are eligible for regular association membership. Dues are \$3.00 per month, payable through payroll deduction. Active employees, who will receive their retirement through OCERS, are eligible for Associate Membership. Dues for associate members are \$1.00 per month payable for the year each January.

Luncheons are held at Mile Square Golf Course in Fountain Valley on the fourth Wednesday of January, March, May and September, and on the first Wednesday of December. A local chapter of REAOC is active in Hemet.

Fears About Alzheimer's Are Real, But Here's What You Can Do

by Steve O'Leary

In conversations with other seniors, I often hear them saying they are worried about their memory. They think they might have early signs of Alzheimer's, a disease few of us even heard about 20 years ago.

It's true: Alzheimer's has become "the new cancer" in terms of our health fears. A recent Harris Poll found that one in three (32%) retirees listed Alzheimer's as the chronic disease they feared most. It was 11 points higher than cancer, and even 13 points higher than contagious diseases—such as Covid-19.

There is good reason to be concerned. Deaths from Alzheimer's have increased 145% since 2000. During the same time, deaths from heart disease (the nation's historic #1 killer) have increased just 7.3%. As we age, the incidence of Alzheimer's increases: 5.3% in people 65 to 74; 13.8% from 75 to 84; and 34.6% in ages 85 and older. Currently, 1 in 3 seniors dies from dementia.

It's important to understand that Alzheimer's is just one form of dementia. It is the most common one. Parkinson's disease, Lewy Body Disease, and Frontotemporal Degeneration are others. The challenge with Alzheimer's is that it so often takes many years for the symptoms to show themselves and, therefore, finding ways to stop or reverse the disease has been difficult. It's another reason we fear it so much.

So, what can you do?

A great deal of research on Alzheimer's has moved toward prevention. There are now clinical trials on effects of exercise, diet, and sleep to determine the value they might

have in delaying or preventing Alzheimer's. The trials are being conducted across the country, and also right here in OC at UCI MIND, an institute devoted to research on all forms of dementia-related diseases.

There are many medical problems associated with dementia including diabetes, midlife obesity, midlife hypertension, and high cholesterol. But you don't have to wait to start helping yourself reduce your chances of getting Alzheimer's.

Some actions to consider:

First: Smart choices for your brain health start with heart and blood vessel health. For example, make sure your brain is receiving the oxygen and energy supplies it needs. That means stop smoking, and ensure your blood sugar, blood pressure, weight and cholesterol levels are well managed. Talk to your doctor about these things.

Second: Research has shown that foods we eat have a significant impact on brain health. Mediterranean diet, the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet, and MIND diet (a combination of the two) are great ways to eat enough of the proper foods. These diets all emphasize eating brain healthy fatty acids like those found in fish, olive oil, and nuts. In fact, a research study found that people who consumed fish at least once a week had a 60% reduced risk for Alzheimer's compared to those who rarely or never ate fish.

Third: Regular aerobic exercise is critical for brain health. Of course, it also helps heart health. One research study found walking three or more times a week was associated

with a 32% reduced risk for Alzheimer's.

Fourth: Restful sleep can also help. It gives the brain a chance to recharge and remove the buildup of toxic proteins. (If you have challenges getting restful sleep, you may want to see a sleep specialist.)

Fifth: Cognitive and social activity is also important. The key is to continue challenging yourself by learning new skills, languages, games and information of any kind. If you aren't a self-learner, you can always sign up for a class.

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Presidents' Message

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In closing, we look forward to offering luncheons in Fountain Valley and Hemet during 2022 once it is safe to do so. We miss sharing in-person time together with members of REAOC; however, health and safety are a priority. Once the harmful virus is under control, REAOC luncheons will be back on track. Save some time and lots of enthusiasm for participation in our future luncheons!

Once again, we sincerely thank you for your membership, support and participation. YOU are the most important part of the REAOC organization. Let's remain united, active and informed as we journey through retirement, together. Until next time be well, healthy, safe AND experience the best possible holiday season, ever!

– Linda Robinson and Doug Storm

Covid-19 Updates from the County of Orange Health Care Agency

Find a Vaccine

Vaccination is one of the most important tools to end the Covid-19 pandemic. As the HCA focuses on delivering vaccines to our most vulnerable population and hard-to-reach communities, individuals who have not yet received their initial vaccine series are encouraged to visit any local pharmacy or healthcare provider, or go online to Vaccines.gov, MyTurn.ca.gov or Othena.com, to schedule a vaccination appointment. See where vaccines are available near you by

viewing this website:

<https://occcovid19.ochealthinfo.com/covid-19-vaccine-distribution-channels>.

OC Covid-19 Hotline

The OC Covid-19 Hotline is available to answer questions about vaccine-related issues, including booking appointments, or assistance with transportation. Live operators are available Mon-Fri from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at (714) 834-2000.

Covid-19 Testing

With more social gatherings occurring, Covid-19 testing can help

prevent the risk of spread. Plan to get a viral Covid-19 test at least 1-3 days before and 3-5 days after trips or following exposure or showing symptoms. Visit www.ochealthinfo.com/covidtest to order an at-home, self-collection testing kit.

PREVENTING COVID-19 – A GUIDE FOR VACCINATED INDIVIDUALS Individuals Who Are Fully Vaccinated Is Defined As:

2 weeks after the second dose in a 2-dose series (examples: Pfizer or Moderna) OR 2 weeks after a single-

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Fears About Alzheimer's

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Think you have a problem?

If you or your loved ones feel you have memory or other thinking problems, it is important to get an early diagnosis! If you are hiding your memory issue from your loved ones, you are doing yourself and your family a disservice. And there's a good chance you aren't hiding it as well as you think.

An early diagnosis of your memory issues may rule out the other potential non-dementia-related issues like hormone imbalances, depression, or vitamin deficiencies. Your personal physician may perform some of the tests, but it may be a good idea to see a geriatrician or neurologist. Ask them about cognitive testing.

Early diagnosis can also help you and your family access the helpful resources provided by the Alzheimer's Association and other social service providers, such as support groups, counseling, and education classes. A

diagnosis gives the patient a chance to begin appropriate treatments and participate in clinical trials of promising new treatments.

Personally, I can attest to the value early diagnosis meant to my wife Patty and me as we went through our journey together. It helped Patty understand and accept what was happening. And it made it much easier for me and our family members to help explain things to her. We hope to contribute future articles on memory issues like the signs and symptoms of Alzheimer's vs. those of just simple aging. Or we'll review some of the myths about Alzheimer's treatments that are regularly hyped. In the meantime, there is a great resource you can access at UCI MINDcast: <https://mind.uci.edu/mindcast/>. It features helpful information like "Ask The Doc," a series of video sessions with doctors answering questions on dementia and Alzheimer's; and "Spotlight on Care,"

podcasts on tips from care givers on how to handle the challenges of Alzheimer's.

So, the "fears" are understandable. The numbers and severity are imposing. But you can—and should—create a plan of action. That plan may provide you with the tools and other support to help you manage it.



Steve O'Leary is a dedicated volunteer at UCI MIND, the only federally funded Alzheimer's disease research center in OC. Steve

has also coordinated a men's caregiver group for the past six years. He has had his own journey having lost his first wife, Patty, to Alzheimer's in 2017.

Operation Santa Claus and Senior Santa & Friends



For nearly 60 years, County of Orange employees and the community have been donating and providing gifts to children in foster care and from disadvantaged families, as well as low-income seniors, both served by the County. Last year, Operation Santa Claus (OSC) distributed more than 17,000 toys and gifts to children, and over 1,000 gifts and household essentials to seniors through its



Senior Santa and Friends (SSF) program. OSC and SSF is led by the County of Orange Social Services Agency working with the OC Health Care Agency, OC Probation, Orange County Child Support Services and OC Community Resources.

Here's how you, your family, friends, or faith-based group can give back:

• Volunteer

Volunteers are needed to assist shoppers and sort and restock gifts at the holiday store. Online sign ups begin November at signupgenius.com/findasignup. Enter operationsantaclaus@ssa.ocgov.com in the "search for sign up" field, then click the Operation Santa Claus link. Volunteers must be 18 or older.

• Donate

Operation Santa Claus and Senior Santa and Friends accepts new, unwrapped toys and gifts for children, teens and seniors. To make an online financial or toy donation to Operation Santa Claus, visit www.ssa.ocgov.com/ssa_volunteer/

[donations/osc_donation](http://www.ssa.ocgov.com/ssa_volunteer/donations/osc_donation). To make an online financial or gift donation for seniors, visit Senior Santa and Friends at www.ssa.ocgov.com/ssa_volunteer/donations/sr_santa_donation. Checks and gift cards can also be mailed to Operation Santa Claus, Social Services Agency, P.O. Box 22006, Santa Ana, CA 92702-2006. Make checks payable to either Operation Santa Claus or Senior Santa and Friends.

• Coordinate

Coordinate an Angel Tag toy or gift drive at your company, school, club or faith-based organization.

This year's annual gift drives run November 1 - December 17. Gift ideas for infants and toddlers include toys that make noise and learning/developmental toys. Shoes in all sizes and popular video games, Disney or Marvel toys are a constant

request for boys and girls ages 5-12. Teens appreciate electronics such as drones or tablets, gift cards to Target, Wal-Mart, Starbucks and Amazon, as well as cologne and make-up kits. Seniors also appreciate gift cards to grocery stores, appliances such as Keurig machines, bedding, and nutritional supplements like Ensure or Boost.

To learn more about OSC and SSF, visit www.ssa.ocgov.com/ssa_volunteer/donations/osc_donation or contact OSC at (714) 679-2438 or email OperationSantaClaus@ssa.ocgov.com. For more information about SSF, call (714) 825-3111 or email Senior.Santa@ssa.ocgov.com.



Covid-19 Updates

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dose vaccine (example: Johnson & Johnson). Fully vaccinated people should still help prevent Covid-19. Here are some ways you can continue to protect your community:

Wear a face cover when required by federal, state, local laws, rules, and regulations. Follow local business and workplace requirements. Learn and follow travel requirements. For international travel, it is recommended that you get a Covid-19 test 3-5 days **after returning** but you do not need to self-quarantine. For more information on travel, visit: CDC Destination Travel Alerts.

Get tested if you have symptoms If you have been exposed to Covid-19

and you live or work in a correctional or detention facility or a homeless shelter, you should get tested even if you do not have symptoms.

Individuals who have certain medical conditions or who are taking medications that weakened the immune system may **NOT** be fully protected even if fully vaccinated. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have concerns. If you test positive for Covid-19, **stay home and let close contacts know**. A close contact is someone you were within six feet of for at least 15 minutes during the infectious period.

Help Fight Medicare Fraud

We all know that scam artists continue to thrive and do their best to obtain personal information about our Medicare accounts. As a reminder, we are publishing the following information from the Medicare website.

Medicare covers the Covid-19 vaccine at no cost to you, so if anyone asks you to share your Medicare Number or pay for access to the vaccine, you can bet it's a scam. Here's what to know:

- You can't pay to put your name on a list to get the vaccine.
- You can't pay to get early access to a vaccine.
- Don't share your personal or financial information if someone calls, texts, or emails you promising access to the vaccine for a fee. Con artists may try to get your Medicare Number or personal information so they can steal your identity and commit Medicare fraud. Medicare fraud results in higher health care costs and taxes for everyone.

Protect yourself from Medicare fraud – Guard your Medicare card like it's a credit card. Remember:

- Medicare will never contact you for your Medicare Number or other personal information unless you've given them permission in advance.
- Medicare will never call you to sell you anything.
- You may get calls from people promising you things if you give them a Medicare Number. Don't do it.
- Medicare will never visit you at your home.
- Medicare can't enroll you over the phone unless you called first.

Learn more tips to help prevent

Medicare fraud by visiting <https://www.medicare.gov/forms-help-resources/help-fight-medicare-fraud/tips-prevent-fraud>.

Check regularly for Medicare billing fraud. Review your Medicare claims and Medicare Summary Notices for any services billed to

your Medicare Number you don't recognize.

Learn more about how to report fraud by visiting <https://www.medicare.gov/forms-help-resources/help-fight-medicare-fraud/how-report-medicare-fraud>.

Recipe Corner

Butternut Squash Soup

Great for the upcoming cool nights! Delicious and very easy to make. You can use 3 to 4 cups of chicken broth instead of the water and bouillon cubes. Also works well with half as much cream cheese if you don't want it too rich.

Prep: 25 min • Cook: 35 min
Total: 1 hour • Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients

6 tablespoons chopped onion
4 tablespoons margarine
6 cups peeled and cubed butternut squash
3 cups water (see note above)
4 cubes chicken bouillon (see note above)
1/2 teaspoon dried marjoram
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/8 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
2 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese

Directions

1. In a large saucepan, sauté onions in margarine until tender. Add squash, water, bouillon, marjoram, black pepper and cayenne pepper. Bring to boil; cook 20 minutes, or until squash is tender.
2. Puree squash and cream cheese in a blender or food processor in batches until smooth. Return to saucepan, and heat through. Do not allow to boil.

Nutrition Facts

Per Serving: 398 calories; protein 7.7g; carbohydrates 20.2g; fat 33.4g; cholesterol 82.5mg; sodium 1081.4mg.



Opportunity to Serve as a Grand Juror!

Every year the Superior Court of Orange County is required by law to empanel a 19-member Grand Jury to serve a one-year term. The Court is seeking qualified and capable individuals, like you, to serve the Orange County community in this unique role for the term that begins July 1, 2022.

This is a wonderful opportunity for O.C. retirees and REAOC members to get a behind-the-scenes look at the workings of local government agencies and recommend areas for improvement. The Grand Jury also decides on indictments for some

criminal cases. Detailed information and the application form are online at <http://www.ocgrandjury.org/>.

The Grand Jury meets at the Central Justice Center in Santa Ana.

The Orange County Grand Jury Purpose is to:

- ◆ Ensure that the performance of county, city, and other local agencies is proper and ethical!
- ◆ Improve government with your recommendations!
- ◆ Respond to citizen complaints about local government agencies!
- ◆ Issue indictments for serious crimes!
- ◆ Make sure our local tax dollars are wisely spent!
- ◆ Evaluate

conditions at our county's jails!

Grand Jury Hotline:

657-622-6747

Apply NOW!

Qualifications:

- Resident • Citizen • 18 or Older
- Knowledge of English • Sound Judgement • \$50 per day stipend, plus mileage.

Nineteen grand jurors will take the oath of office on July 1, 2022, for a one-year term.

Grand Jury Flyer and Timeline can be seen at:

www.ocgrandjury.org/pdfs/22-23_GJ_Recruitment_Flyer.pdf

In Memoriam

We extend our deepest sympathy to the families and loved ones of those who meant so much to so many.

July 2021 – October 2021

Luis Aqueche, OCSD
Tony Ash, OCTA
Yvonne Avery, HCA
Wyvonne Bachman, DA
Kari Balazs,
UCI Katherine Bish, HCA
Maggie Blount, Probation
Irene Brauer, Superior Court
Jean Bull, Treasurer-Tax Collector
John Canas, OC Public Works
Mark Carlson, OC Public Works
Harold Craig, OCTA
John Devereux, Probation
Joseph Devlin, OC Public Works
Gloria Duhamel, SSA
Bernard Esposito, OCSD
Marshall Fairres, OC Sanitation District
Betty Farrell, Superior Court
Fred Forbeck, Assessor
Jerry Frazier, Probation
Barbara French, SSA
Earl Gaston, OCTA
Harvey Glen, JWA
Mary Harris, SSA
John Hefler, OCSD
Jimmy Hill, OCSD

Steven Hoyle, OCFA
Kazuyoshi Ide, HCA
John Jacobus, OCTA
Valerie Jensen, Probation
Kathleen Johnson, SSA
Judith McMillin, HCA
Julio Mendez, OCSD
Lynne Merrifield, DA
Charles Middleton, DA
Robert Morales, OC Public Works
Helen Mujagic, County Clerk/Recorder
Carl Neue, Assessor
Jimmy Newman, Probation
Maria Olsen, Probation
Glenn Owens, JWA
Kay Pelham, SSA
Hien Pham, Assessor
Virginia Ramsey, SSA
Enrique Reyes, OCTA
Robert Rodgers, OCCR
Francisco Romero, SSA
Judith Sanders, SSA
Rustico Santos, OC Sanitation District
Martha Sasano, OCSD
Elaine Scarbrough, OC Public Works
Thomas Schimke, OCSD
Donald Schneider, OCPW
Nancy Shirley, HCA
Helen Shoemate, UCI
Robert Sianez, HCA
Ronald Smith, OCSD

Martha Soldan, OCFA
Douglas Soloman, OCTA
Barbara Squires, OCTA
Murray Storm, OC Public Works
Robert Talley, OCSD
Lina Tapia, SSA
Sharon Tapia, Superior Court
Brigham Tiafau, OCTA
Carl Webb, OCTA
Philip Wilmot, OCFA
William Wilson, OCTA
Theresa Wisniewski, OCTA

Surviving Spouses

Joan Boyer
Barbara Current
Virginia Eichler
Julia Fitschen
Angelina Gomes
Gladys Graham
Nancy Ingalls
Barbara Jenkins
Mary Love
Carmen Loya
Betty Odell
Bennette Overby
Mary Quigg
Pamela Senior
Fannie Turner
Pearl Williams



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RETIRED EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION OF ORANGE COUNTY, INC.

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Presorted
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