

TOM BLAIR

This may be the unkindest cut of all

Since filing for bankruptcy two weeks ago, the Lyric Opera, owner of the Birch North Park Theatre, has made some tough financial decisions, including the layoff of most staffers. This week brought the latest cost-cutter: cancellation of this weekend's performance starring the theater's own artistic director J. Sherwood Montgomery. The show's title: "Good Bye, Good Luck ... And Get Out!!"

The wandering I: Bernie Rhinerson, chief of staff to city schools Superintendent Bill Kowba and a professor at SDSU, has decided he needs more school work. He's a candidate for community college trustee, with the recent endorsement of incumbent Bill Schwandt. Before his long PR career, Rhinerson dipped his toe into politics as an assistant to former S.D. Councilman Mike Gotch ... La Costa was a repository of the famous

and near-famous last weekend during a celebration of its \$50 million renovation. Among the dozen or so mostly TV stars: Chris Noth ("Law & Order," "Sex & the City"), celebrity chef Todd English ("Food Trip") and physician-spiritualist Deepak Chopra ... Tonya Torosian, former executive director of the County Commission on Children, takes over as CEO of **Promises2Kids** after former Mayor Susan Golding's surprising announcement this past summer she was resigning.

Life story: Tom and Nadia Davies, who have a home in La Mesa, apparently have flown under the radar of San Diego's philanthropic organizations. But they've got the attention of the UCLA Department of Neurosurgery, where they just committed \$2 million in memory of their late daughter Alfonsina (Nina) and in honor of Dr. Paul Crandall. He performed experimental surgery in 1977 to successfully control Nina's childhood epileptic seizures. Her parents were familiar names in the news here during the 1990s, when both were conservative

voices in county education. Nadia Davies resigned from the Grossmont High School District board in 1998 after the teachers union sued, claiming she didn't live in the district. Tom Davies, a former trustee for Grossmont and the County Board of Education, quit in 1996 in another dispute. Their daughter Nina had greater success in education. She went on to earn a doctoral degree and ultimately become assistant superintendent of the Santa Ana school district. She died this year, at 52, of sudden unexplained death in epilepsy.

The good news: The downtown San Diego Rotary Club, fifth largest in the world with 500-plus members, celebrates its centennial Thursday at the Crowne Plaza Hotel with an inspiring record of service. In just the past decade, the club has donated more than \$1 million to various charities while dedicating more than 110,000 hours of community service.

tom.blair@uniontrib.com