



March 25, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**East County Transitional Living Center, San Diego County Supervisor Joel Anderson, San Diego Air & Space Museum joins community partners to present relighting for restored iconic Fabulous 7 Motel sign**

*Media is invited to attend April 22 ceremony*

**EL CAJON, Calif.** — East County Transitional Living Center (ECTLC), a nonprofit organization providing shelter, skills and work therapy to help people transition out of homelessness, will join San Diego County Supervisor Joel Anderson, the San Diego Air & Space Museum and other community partners April 22 to hold a relighting ceremony for the Fabulous 7 Motel sign.

The ceremony will run from 6 to 8 p.m. at 1527 E. Main St, the site of ECTLC and the onetime motel site.

Esteban Villanueva, a local business owner and advocate of preserving San Diego County history, led a push to restore the sign, with financial support from San Diego County Supervisor Joel Anderson, Feeding San Diego, San Diego Gas & Electric, Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation and the San Diego Air & Space Museum.

In an online history, Villanueva writes that what's now Main Street in El Cajon was once part of Highway 80, which went from San Diego to Yuma, Arizona, and took the place of a plank road that covered the Algodones Dunes in Imperial County, California.

By the earliest records, the Fabulous Five-Seven Corp. incorporated the motel April 14, 1966, with California's secretary of state, Villanueva wrote. The 62-room hotel, geared toward road-tripping families, was originally called the Fabulous 5-7 Motel because single-guest rooms cost \$5 and rooms for two, three or four guests cost \$7. Later, the \$5 rate went away and the hotel was renamed the Fabulous 7 Motel, Villanueva wrote.

When Interstate 8 was built in the latter 1960s, it passed on one side of the hotel, sparing the building from demolition. The new roadway inspired the need for the sign.

In time, Villanueva wrote, the hotel fell into disrepair and was abandoned. Harold Brown established the transitional living center on the site in 2004 and in 2023, Villanueva approached the center with his idea to restore the sign. A plan to do so, which would also build community partnerships, was hatched in 2024 and Villanueva would lead the fundraising. The San Diego Air & Space Museum, whose staff and volunteers have experience in the restoration of aircraft, restored the structure, surface and paint; David Vich of Neon Jungle replaced and rewired the electrical and neon tubing.

The restoration of the Fabulous 7 Motel sign coincides with the 100 year anniversary of Route 66.

“This project was three years in the making. As a lover of history and roadside Americana, I couldn’t see this (Fabulous 7 sign) getting rusty or getting bulldozed,” said Villanueva after driving by the sign on the way to work every day.

The project will mark the formation of a long-term partnership between East County Transitional Living Center and the San Diego Air & Space Museum to explore and develop job training and employment opportunities for ECTLC residents in the fields of aviation, flight school and airport maintenance.

The ceremony will start with a mix-and-mingle session and optional tours of East County Transitional Living Center. Remarks from San Diego County Supervisor Joel Anderson, San Diego Air & Space Museum Executive Director Jim Kidrick, East County Transitional Living Center Chief Executive Officer Dr. Julie Hayden and Villanueva, a longtime East County resident, will follow.

San Diego Air & Space Museum Lead Restorer Mark Weixeldorfer, sign expert and consultant Peter DeSilva and Vich will be recognized for helping restore the sign.

The lighting will come at 7:30 p.m., seven minutes after sunset.

Notes about the partners:

**Esteban Villanueva:** Villanueva, a longtime supporter of San Diego nonprofits, grew up in La Jolla, earned his bachelor’s at Dartmouth College and earned his juris doctor degree, focused on entertainment law, at Pepperdine School of Law. He worked in the Latin music industry with artists including Carlos Santana and Ricky Martin, who appeared in Bad Bunny’s Super Bowl halftime show in February. Villanueva started Giving Back magazine, part of DAESVI Publishing, with his wife, Danitza, in 2007. He sits on the San Diego Air & Space Museum’s board of directors. He’s helped raise money for several San Diego nonprofits.

**The San Diego Air & Space Museum** is California’s official air and space museum and education center. The Museum is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution and was the first aero-themed Museum to be accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The Museum was voted the top Aviation Museum in California and one of the “10 Best Aviation Museum’s Around the U.S.” The Museum also is home to the prestigious *International Air & Space Hall of Fame*. The Museum is located at 2001 Pan American Plaza, Balboa Park, San Diego, CA 92101. The Museum and gift store are open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with admissions until 4:30 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

#### **East County Transitional Living Center**

East County Transitional Living Center is a nonprofit organization focused on ending homelessness in San Diego County. Our core programs include emergency housing, a one-year ministry-based recovery program, family restoration and workforce training.

What sets East County Transitional Living Center apart is our loving and holistic process. For more information, visit [www.ectlc.org](http://www.ectlc.org).

For media inquiries or to RSVP, please contact Susan Somers, managing member, FM Marketing LLC, at [susan@fmmpr.com](mailto:susan@fmmpr.com) or 619-990-4414.