



No Water for You!

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Dixon Independent Voice

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Serving Dixon and Solano County since 1993

JANUARY 19, 2024

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Club Category Added to Chamber Event



Chamber Ambassadors Realtor Vera Gleason and Jennifer Huff of the Silveyville Cemetery District packed in the gift baskets and gift cards raffled off as part of the evening's fun at the Celebrate Dixon event last year. Photo by Debra Dingman

By MPG Staff

DIXON, CA (MPG) - A new category has been added to the annual recognition of Dixon's finest. Nonprofit of the Year will be among the Citizen of the Year, Business of the Year, and Veteran of the Year at the Celebrate Dixon dinner Saturday, March 9, 5 -10 p.m. It will be catered by Bud's Pub & Grill at the Olde Vets Hall, 321 North First Street in downtown Dixon across from the public library.

Tickets are \$75 per person and are payable in advance and must be purchased by March 1 as no tickets will be sold at the door, according

to Chamber President/CEO Shauna Manina.

At the ceremonies, the Chamber Ambassador of the Year, chosen by fellow Chamber Ambassadors, will also be announced.

The no host bar opens at 5 p.m. and will be over by 10 p.m.

All nominations must be submitted in writing via either postal mail to Dixon Chamber of Commerce, PO Box 159, Dixon, CA 95620, or hand delivered to the Chamber office at 220 N. Jefferson St. in Dixon. They may also be submitted via email to info@dixonchamber.org.

All nominations must be received

at the Chamber no later than 3 pm on Thursday, February 8, 2024. The nominator's name and phone number must be included.

Business of the Year

Criteria for the Business of the Year are - Nominee business must be a Member of the Chamber of Commerce and business must be located in Dixon. Must give outstanding customer service. Have evidence of monetary giving or volunteerism in the community and/or involvement in community events. Nominee cannot be a previous winner of the award

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State of the City Address Hosted February 2

By MPG Staff

DIXON, CA (MPG) - The City of Dixon and the Dixon Chamber of Commerce are pleased to invite residents, business owners, community leaders, and all interested parties to attend the State of the City address on Friday, February 2, 2024 at 9 a.m.

This event provides an opportunity to hear from Mayor Steve Bird and City Department heads such as Fire Department Chief Todd McNeal, Police Chief Robert Thompson, and Raffi Boloyan, Community Development Director on the city's accomplishments over the past year, as well as future plans for growth, development, and initiatives.

Much like the President's State of the Union address, State of the City speeches celebrate the community, recognize areas for improvement, and set the policy agenda for the year ahead, according to the National League of Cities. Locally, these speeches are done annually with a goal of increasing transparency and helping local city leaders connect with constituents, network with local business, and tout their accomplishments to the region as well.

Chamber Board Chair Joe Bruch of Grocery Outlet will also speak. Attendees will have the opportunity to participate in a 'Question and Answer' session following the address and other department heads and city staff will be available to answer questions.

The State of the City address will take place at the Dixon Senior/Multi-Use Center, 201 S. Fifth Street, Dixon.

Light refreshments will be served, and the event is free to attend. Doors open at 8:30 a.m. and the program will begin at 9 a.m. No reservations are required. More information is available by contacting Dixon Chamber of Commerce President CEO Shauna Manina at (707) 678-2650. ★

Colusa Farm Show Coming!

Story and Photos by Debra Dingman

DIXON, CA (MPG) - For 59 years now, the Colusa Farm Show has meant one-stop shopping for all farm services and a great excursion for those entering the ag field. The event showcases and acquaints agriculturists with the latest in modern farming equipment and techniques including robots and drones. It is attended by farmers, ranchers, and ag workers from all over the world. It is February 6 - 8 this year.

There will be more than 300 exhibitors and vendors plus free admission and free parking. There are also food and coffee vendors for those who will explore it all.

One of those 300 companies participating is from Dixon: Pacific Southwest Irrigation that actually has five offices. With 20 years of business experience, they maintain a diverse inventory and services for drip irrigation systems which are widely used to irrigate trees and vines.



This is one of the many John Deere harvesters that will be on display at the farm show.

They serve farmers with custom-fit solutions that help keep farms efficient and thriving through their Fieldman Irrigation System Designers. They will go out to farmer's locations to help determine the proper application and selection of products saving valuable time from trips back

and forth, according to the company website.

"It's a good resource for us," said Hunter Kett from Pacific Southwest Irrigation's Dixon office. "We can reach out to a lot of people because it's such a large agricultural hub. We let them know we're here to help them out and

irrigate." He reported that people come from all over the Sacramento and Northern California area.

"I enjoy talking to people and explaining [our services] and talking about their needs, the products, and the industry in general," he said.

Continued on page 3





Life's too SHORT

Postage Stamps Go Up Again

By Debra Dingman

In 2019, just five years ago, it was only 55 cents to mail a letter. Starting January 21, the current stamp of 66 cents will become 68 cents. That is a 23.6% increase in five years. Selections for special greeting cards may now become even fewer. I usually go into a card section once a month. I am a card-giver. I have lots of women friends who give cards, too. As postage stamps went up, I was still able to justify the need for a sweet gesture to friends and family.

Do you remember when candy bars went from a nickel to 25 cents? I do. I was merely a child who earned extra money doing family chores or babysitting the neighbor's children for 50 cents an hour. I gave up candy bars. Well, mostly.

Some of us who watch our money closely have sent less Christmas cards these past few years—just as Walmart and other companies offered us the option of sending family photos with our holiday greetings so inexpensively. I would haul a stack of 40 cards into the Dixon Post Office proudly. Not so this year. I sent a lot of electronic messages from my phone and a minimal number of cards. Our family and all my friends now send cute electronic birthday wishes or greetings on the major holidays.

Over the last three years—and using myself as a medium of all Americans—we have paid more bills online, read more newspapers and magazines online, and shopped online. Only Amazon has been the chosen company for us to get anything delivered.

This will definitely affect the average American even though it will seem tiny

to the household, it climbs to bigger ramifications. Will Hallmark and DaySpring eventually close? You have to wonder what large businesses like that will grow next because they do respond to markets all the time.

But you don't have to be a large company to keep aware and expect the market to be ever changing. The mom-and-pop stores can actually change faster and respond quicker to changes by American consumers.

When the world experienced a pandemic and shut down, Amazon exploded. Shopping changed—even when things got better, the average American had experienced the comfort and ease of shopping online. Now, instead of stores and malls, there are huge Amazon warehouses dotting the landscape.

The effect of that was brick and mortar retail suffered. Downtowns everywhere were sporting empty windows. The chain reaction to that for our local downtown was those empty spaces morphed into service industries like hair salons, real estate offices, flooring outlets, and more restaurants. Also, people moved their shopping experiences online which created a huge demand for computer services and online marketing for small business owners and large companies.

But, as far as the stamp price increase, it's just two more cents, some will say. It will be interesting to watch the future effects on all of us being forced to do everything on a computer or on a phone. I worry about our senior citizens being uncomfortable with that.

It's true, there's always a line of effects to seemingly insignificant changes—especially when one considers there are 334,233,854 Americans now. ★

Dixon News Briefs



This cool tool chest moonlights as a collection container each year for donations at the annual Hobo Dinner Veterans Fundraiser held at the Veterans Memorial Hall this Saturday. It is more fun, however, to purchase raffle tickets and possibly win a prize from the many that are raffled off that evening. Photo by Debra Dingman

MPG Staff

Hobo Beef Stew

The annual dinner and raffle benefiting the American Legion Post 208 at the Veterans Memorial Hall, 1305 North First Street, Dixon will be on Saturday, January 20. The bar opens at 4:30 and dinner starts at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$12. Call Patti at (707) 592-0991 or inquire on Friday night at the Veterans Hall.

Free PG&E Charging

PG&E announced a Multi-family Housing and Small business EV Charger Program which offers a reliable EV Charger at no cost. The property must be located with a priority community and be one of the following: affordable or tribal multi-family housing; multi-housing with five units or more; a small business or nonprofit organization.

Customers will receive a technical assessment and site design; EV Charger installation and project management; EV charger networking and software fees paid for the first two years after installation; and a customized operations and maintenance plan. For more information, call 1-855-610-0074 or go to pge.com/msevprogram.

Hall Park Arenas Open for Play

Looking for a fun way to spend an afternoon or evening with friends? Come check out the City's synthetic play field and covered arena at Hall Park. We offer free drop-in play hours where you can come and enjoy a variety of activities, including soccer, flag football, and more. Whether you're a seasoned athlete or just looking to have some fun, our open play hours are the perfect way to get active and enjoy some friendly competition.

The Jim B. Stevens Arena is open for free drop-in play every Tuesday and Thursday from 12 noon to 5 p.m.

The Salaber All Weather Synthetic Play Field is open for free drop-in play on Fridays from 6 to 9 p.m.

Snowflake Cookies

Share recipes and learn how to decorate professional looking pretty snowflake sugar cookies at Every Baking Moment on Monday, January 22, starting at 6 p.m. All supplies will be provided. The 2-hour session is \$50. Please call or text to sign up (707) 693-0112. Every Baking Moment is located at 143 North First Street in downtown Dixon. ★

Mommy & Me Cake Class

The Creative Space is offering a Mommy & Me Cake Class on Monday, February 12, from 6 to 8 p.m. Great bonding opportunity for you and your kids. Come and decorate some adorable cakes. All supplies will be provided. Drinks and refreshments will be available. Tickets are \$40. Additional child tickets can be purchased for \$15. The classes are at 160 West A Street also in downtown Dixon. See more at thecreativespacedixon.com.

Valentine's Charcuterie Couples Workshop

On Tuesday, February 13 at 6 p.m. couples can enjoy a very different kind of fun! During this 2-hour class you will learn selection, pairing, cutting, and styling of artisanal cheeses and charcuterie! We will have fun charcuterie games (for prizes), raffle prizes, complimentary champagne, and a fun SURPRISE technique! Tickets are \$80-\$95 Learn more at thecreativespacedixon.com/classesworkshops.

Rotary Crab Feed

The 20th Annual Rotary Crab Feed will be Saturday, February 24, at the Dixon fairgrounds in Madden Hall. No host bar starts at 6 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m. There will be dancing to live music by the Time Bandits from 8:30 to 11:30 p.m. Tickets are \$75 each, sold online only, and include crab, pasta, salad, and bread. Go to <https://2024-dixon-rotary-crab-feed.eventbrite.com>. For information for groups of six or more, call Janice Beaman at (916) 240-0147.

Dixon Community Theater Season Announcement Meeting

Get ready for an evening filled with excitement and anticipation! You are invited to the Dixon Community Theater Season Announcement Meeting, where they'll unveil the upcoming Season and Class schedule. It will be held on Monday, January 22 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Chamber of Commerce, 220 North Jefferson Street. This event is OPEN TO ALL, and we encourage everyone to join us for a fun and upbeat experience. Whether you're a seasoned theater enthusiast or someone curious about what we have in store, you'll get to meet others and enjoy light refreshments including pastries from Solano Baking Company. For more info, email Abevents@live.com or call (831) 212-3491. ★

Update Regarding Officer Involved Shooting in Vallejo

Solano County District Attorney News Release

SOLANO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - As previously reported, at approximately 3:15 p.m. on Thursday, January 11, 2024, American Canyon Police Department Officers attempted to initiate a traffic stop in the area of SR-29 and American Canyon Road. The vehicle failed to yield and instead led the police on a pursuit which continued into the city of Vallejo. The vehicle became disabled in the area of Souza Way and Cronin Drive. The two occupants in the vehicle fled on foot while armed with loaded firearms. Shots were fired by one of the

responding officers. The officer immediately rendered aid to the that person, later determined to be an 18- year-old male who was the front passenger in the vehicle. He was taken to a nearby hospital where he was treated for non-life-threatening injuries. The driver of the vehicle was located and arrested without incident.

The Solano County Major Crimes Task Force responded to the scene to conduct an independent investigation into the officer involved shooting pursuant to the Countywide Officer Involved Fatal Incident Protocol. Due to the nature of the ongoing investigation, no other details will be released at this time. ★



Persons listed in this log from the Dixon Police Department are considered innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law. Only activities deemed significant by the Police Dept. are included.

DIXON POLICE LOG

Monday, January 8

- 0814 - Fraud Report 1400 block Reed Drive.
- 1126 - Confidential Report 300 block Pheasant Run Drive.
- 1436 - Battery report 300 block South Jefferson Street. Howard Swails (64) of Dixon was arrested for elder abuse and booked into the Solano County Jail.
- 1623 - Burglary report 1000 block Newgate Way.
- 1642 - Vandalism report 200 block West H Street.
- 1700 - Theft attempt 200 block Stratford Ave.
- 1800 - Hit and run accident reported in the 1300 block of West F Street.

Sunday, January 7

- 0825 - Vehicle Collision Stratford Ave at Pitt School Road.
- 1626 - Threats Report 1300 block West H Street. Aaron Larson (30) of Dixon was arrested for criminal threats and was booked into the Solano County Jail.
- 1800 - Information report taken at the PD. RP thinks her credit card was skimmed at a local convenience store and used in La Habra the following day.
- 2210 - Information report taken in the 600 block of North 1st Street.

Mattresses Now Accepted at Recycling Center

By MPG Staff

DIXON, CA (MPG) - Used mattresses are accepted free of charge for recycling at the Recology Vacaville Solano Recycling Facility on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 855 ½ Davis Street in Vacaville. Mattresses must be clean, dry, and free of insects.

Recology offers two convenient carpet drop off locations. Dixon residential customers may recycle their carpet at the Recology Vacaville Solano Recycling Facility on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3

p.m. Carpeting may also be recycled at our Recology Hay Road facility located at 6426 Hay Road in Vacaville. On Saturday's from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Recology Dixon Recycling and Buy-Back Center, located at the corner of First and C Streets, accepts large, corrugated cardboard boxes like those that bicycles and mattresses are packaged in. The Center is open Tuesday thru Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Boxes may be flattened and placed in blue recyclable carts. For Recology in Dixon, call (707) 678-4026 or go to Recology.com/Dixon. ★



Club Category Added to Chamber Event

Colusa Farm Show Coming!

Continued from page 1

In addition to several local farmers, the Dixon High School Future Farmers of America will also be among the show's participants.

Arriving by bus loads, FFA students will explore huge tractors that can navigate miles of crops, chop the tops of dozens of trees, and corral millions of walnuts, which will reduce harvest costs and time to keep California ranking first in the United States for agricultural cash receipts.

Dixon's FFA Advisor Marcus Tanaka, will be attending with several Dixon High School ag students.

"Most of them will be surprised at the magnitude and scope of the types of machinery they will see. I don't think they realize the many machines used for all the different applications," Tanaka said.

Agriculture Education is a hands-on learning approach within Career Technical Education elective credit-bearing courses. Students must be enrolled in Ag to be enrolled in the National FFA organization. It was established in 1928 in Kansas City, Missouri, by a group of young farmers with a mission to prepare future generations for the challenges of feeding a growing population.

Al Lindgren, formerly of Dixon, flies in from Tennessee for the week to demonstrate welding techniques and often captures the interest of many FFA students. Lindgren started welding when he was a 7-year-old with the help of his welder father in Napa. He will be in the large MJB Welding Supplies booth.



It may look like a carnival ride, but this is a hedger which takes off the tops of trees as simply as a front yard bush gets trimmed.

At Dixon High, there are other Ag courses offered besides Welding such as Woodshop, Agricultural Biology, Soil Chemistry, Floral Design, Vet Science,

Food Sciences, and Horticulture.

The Colusa fairgrounds is located at 1303 10th Street in Colusa. Hours are Tuesday, February 6

and Wednesday, February 7, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

and Thursday, February 8, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

For more information, call (530) 458-2641. ★

Continued from page 1
and they cannot nominate themselves. Please note that non-profit clubs and organizations are ineligible for this award.

Nominations for the Business of the Year will be evaluated by a panel composed of prior winners of the Business of the Year awards.

Citizen of the Year

Criteria for Citizen of the Year are: Nominee must live in Dixon; participated in all-around community activities and civic enterprise; has evidence of lasting contribution to community welfare; evidence of leadership ability including cooperation with individuals and civic organizations; has shown unselfish devotion and contribution without thought to personal gain. Contributions and community activities must have taken place in the City of Dixon. The Nominees cannot be prior Citizen of the Year winners.

Please list, as completely as possible, the nominee's past activities, as the award is based on an individual's cumulative service to the community. Include the nominee's involvement with business, professional, civic, and/or religious committees and any offices held.

All nominations must include the following information, or they will not be considered –Nominee's name, address, phone number, spouse's name, years of residency and occupation, and nominator's name, address, and phone number.

Nominations for Citizen of the Year will be evaluated by a panel of representatives from the nonprofit groups that are members of the Dixon Chamber. This award is traditionally a surprise to the recipient. Therefore, nominees should not be aware that their name has been submitted.

Nonprofit of the Year

Criteria for new category, the Nonprofit of the Year are – Nominee must be a Member of the Chamber of Commerce and must be located in Dixon or provide key services in Dixon. Must have a positive impact in the Dixon community and/or to those that they serve; must demonstrate outstanding dedication to their nonprofit mission; and must be involved in Community Events and Programs. Nominees cannot be a prior Nonprofit of the Year winner and cannot nominate themselves.

Nonprofit organizations include service clubs, civic groups, churches, veterans' organizations, social service organizations, educational organizations, animal rescue organizations and cultural organizations. For more information as to which groups qualify, contact the Chamber at 707-678-2650 or info@dixonchamber.org. All nominations should include the organization, address, phone number and President or a contact person, as well as the nominators' name, address, and phone number.

This award should be a surprise to the recipient. Therefore, nominees should not be aware that their nonprofit has been nominated.

For further information on either, contact Manina at the Chamber office at (707) 678-2650 or info@dixonchamber.org. ★

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No Water for You!



California's proposed water conservation rules too stringent and costly, analysts say. Photo courtesy of Freestocksorg - Pexels

By Rachel Becker,
CALMatters.org

California's legislative advisors lambasted the state's ambitious proposal to regulate urban water conservation, calling the measures costly and difficult to achieve, "in many cases without compelling justifications."

The proposed rules, unveiled in August, call for more than 400 cities and other water suppliers serving about 95% of Californians to meet conservation targets beginning in 2025.

The state Legislative Analyst's Office suggested significant changes to the State Water Resources Control Board's proposal, warning that the regulations would set "such stringent standards for outdoor use that suppliers will not have much 'wiggle room' in complying." They also warn that the added costs will ultimately be borne by customers.

"Whether the benefits of the new rules ultimately will outweigh the costs is unclear," the report says. "These doubts are particularly worrisome given we find that suppliers will face notable challenges complying with these requirements."

The report recommended that lawmakers direct state regulators to "make several of the proposed requirements less stringent (such as the residential outdoor standard), consider how to target state funding to assist lower income customers, and extend some of the deadlines for suppliers to

ensure they can actually achieve the framework's goals."

Water board officials didn't comment on the criticism or recommendations, but spokesperson Edward Ortiz said the report, along with other feedback received from industry and the public, will be considered. He said a new draft of the rules will be released this spring.

"With changing weather conditions threatening to reduce the state's water supply 10% by 2040, California is advancing an all-of-the-above strategy to bolster water supplies throughout the state, including conservation," Ortiz said.

Heather Cooley, director of research at the Pacific Institute, a global water think tank, said conservation and efficiency are the cheapest, fastest ways to meet California's water needs as climate change renders supplies more variable and uncertain.

"We have to take real action to ensure we can provide safe, clean, reliable water for California communities," she said. "Retrofitting and taking out old devices, transforming our landscapes, all of those things have a cost. But it's far less than developing new sources of supply."

Mandated by a package of 2018 laws, the intent of the rules is to make conservation "a way of life" in California. The rules, which are two years behind schedule, are expected to be adopted by the water board this summer before taking effect in October.

The rules don't target

individuals or businesses, instead setting individualized conservation targets for urban water agencies across the state based on goals for indoor and outdoor water use, leaks and other factors.

By 2035, water providers will collectively need to reduce water use by 14%. The savings would be enough to supply about 1.2 million homes every year, or about 1% of the state's total water use.

The report called this amount "modest," noting that "the agricultural sector uses about four times as much water as the urban sector."

Water agencies and city officials warned state regulators last fall that complying would be costly, roughly \$13.5 billion from 2025 to 2040 for rebates and other efforts to cut residential use. The benefits are anticipated to reach about \$15.6 billion, in large part because suppliers and customers will buy less water.

The Legislative Analyst's report noted that an assessment by a consulting firm commissioned by a water supplier raised questions about those calculations. They noted that customers, particularly low-income households, would likely bear the brunt of rates increased to cover the costs.

"Even if benefits outweigh costs in the long run, whether they merit the amount of work and costs to implement the requirements as currently proposed is uncertain," the report said.

Jay Lund, vice-director of the Center for Watershed Sciences

at the University of California, Davis, called the report "an unusually frank assessment."

"Although there is good room for further conservation, this additional State effort seems like it is probably not needed, or at least, need not be as stringent and complicated as it seems. It has been asked, 'Is this juice worth the squeeze?'" he told CalMatters in an email.

During the last three-year severe drought, which ended last year, the Newsom administration set voluntary conservation goals that were largely ineffective. Californians used only about 6% less water from July 2021 through the end of last year compared to 2020, far less than Gov. Gavin Newsom's 15% goal.

Some areas, especially in hot, inland areas of the state, will require more stringent conservation than others under the proposed rules. Inland and eastern California will be required to cut back the most, with the biggest cuts, up to 34%, needed in desert areas, followed by the Tulare Lake region.

Even in the North Coast area, which as a whole is not expected to need to cut back at all to meet the 2035 targets, two large suppliers serving more than 1.6 million customers will nevertheless need to reduce their water use by a quarter.

But increasing conservation in the places that need it most will seem a bargain when inevitable longer and drier droughts occur, said Felicia Marcus, former

chair of the water board and now a visiting fellow at Stanford University's Water in the West Program.

"The goal is both to make each locality more resilient to the nightmare curveballs climate change is throwing at us, and to do it in a way that integrates efficiency first and foremost as the most cost and carbon effective measure in the long run," Marcus said.

Sonja Petek, the principal fiscal and policy analyst who authored the report, said the office isn't saying to abandon the conservation regulations, it's just recommending changes to make them more feasible.

"Water conservation is one of the important components of the state's overall water management strategy," she said, citing more severe and prolonged droughts and the need to reduce reliance on overdrafted groundwater basins. "Our concern is that if these regulations were adopted as written, it could lead to a scenario where compliance is not feasible for some water suppliers, so the state might not achieve its ultimate goals."

Assemblymember Laura Friedman, a Democrat from Burbank and an author of the original legislation, said the report "raises some valid concerns with the rulemaking process thus far, however, I have faith in the water board to do its due diligence in implementing the standards that were passed." ★

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- Foreclosures
- Unclaimed property
- School Board issues
- Elections/Polling places, initiative petitions
- Tax assessments/proposals

Girl Scouts of Northern California Kick off 2024 Cookie Season



Girl Scouts of Northern California with their cookie display. Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of Northern California

Girl Scouts of Northern California News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Girl Scouts of Northern California will kick off their 2024 Cookie Season on January 29. Consumers in all 19 counties from Gilroy to the Oregon Border can support their local girl entrepreneurs by ordering from the iconic cookie lineup online at ilovecookies.org. Local shoppers can also locate cookie booths starting February 11 for in-person cookie sales. The 2024 Northern California cookie season will run through March 17, and all cookie flavors are \$6 a box (shipping fees additional).

This season, cookie lovers can enjoy the full assortment of Girl Scout Cookies, including Thin Mints, Trefoils, Samoas, Tagalongs, Do-Si-Dos, Lemon Ups, Toffee-tastic, Girl Scout S'mores, and Adventurefuls. Visit www.ilovecookies.org for more information.

Girls Scouts of Northern California is one of the largest councils in the country, offering unique outdoor experiences, civic engagement, entrepreneurship opportunities, skill-building, leadership, and fun. One hundred percent of the proceeds from the cookie program are used locally and provide critical funds for girls' access to affordable programming, the outdoors, camp and program centers, STEM, financial aid, and volunteer support services. Girl Scouts and their troops depend on these funds to support their community service efforts.

This year, over 16,000 Girl Scouts in Northern California will participate in the cookie entrepreneurship program with the goal of selling \$4.3M packages of cookies.

"I am thrilled to kick off another exciting cookie season and to support our cookie entrepreneurs in having a fun and successful year," said Bri Seoane, CEO of Girl Scouts of Northern California. "Each year, these budding entrepreneurs impress

us with their dedication to achieving their goals and supporting local initiatives. Through this program, they contribute to their communities and gain invaluable life and business skills that will serve them for a lifetime. I am immensely proud of each and every participant!"

During this highly anticipated time of the year, girls acquire essential life skills, including money management, team building, public speaking, and decision-making. Girl Scouts can earn a variety of badges and awards to develop valuable business skills, including Cookie Business badges, Financial Literacy badges, Cookie Entrepreneur Family pins, and Entrepreneur badges. Ultimately, this entrepreneurship program serves as a vital steppingstone, equipping girls and gender-expansive youth with lifelong skills, and instilling a deep sense of confidence that they will carry into the future.

How to Purchase Girl Scout Cookies This Year

Starting January 29, consumers can source Girl Scout online via digital cookie stores at ilovecookies.org and have their favorite cookies delivered straight to their home or anywhere in the country or find the closest Girl Scout booth for in-person cookie sales starting February 11 at select businesses and neighborhoods in Northern California communities until March 17.

About Girl Scouts of Northern California
The mission of Girl Scouts of Northern California is to build girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place. As one of the largest councils in the country, Girl Scouts of Northern California serves a diverse membership of over 24,000 youth and over 21,000 adult volunteers in a 19-county area that stretches from Gilroy to the Oregon border. To learn more about Girl Scouts of Northern California, visit www.gsnorcal.org. ★

Comedy Show Will Fundraise to Fight Violence

The Empowerment Project News Release

DIXON, CA (MPG) - Domestic Violence happens everywhere and The Empowerment Project volunteers want to help Dixonites know there is help for someone being abused and what the signs of trouble are even if one thinks they are in a love relationship. They are raising funds for educating the public about this serious topic with a comedy show.

Tickets are now available for a local production of "The Vagina Monologues," with net proceeds to benefit organizations dedicated to curtailing domestic violence.

Presented by On Stage Vacaville and directed by Barbara Norris, the acclaimed play will have a three-show run at the Journey Downtown theater Feb. 9-11. Ticket sales will support non-profit groups, SafeQuest Solano and The Empowerment Project.

Created by playwright and activist Eve Ensler, "The Vagina Monologues" debuted in 1996 to critical raves and since has been staged around the world. Based on more than 200 interviews Ensler conducted with women of diverse backgrounds, her sharply witty and impactful work explores — among other topics — consensual and nonconsensual sexual experiences, body image, and the social stigma surrounding rape and abuse.

"The Vagina Monologues" also serves as the centerpiece of V-Day, a global activist movement to end violence against women and girls. February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM).

"The Empowerment Project is honored to be chosen as a partner for the upcoming presentation of 'The Vagina Monologues,'" said Sonia McClellin, the organization's founder and president. "The mission of The Empowerment Project,

which is to bring awareness about intimate partner abuse in order to stop the cycle of domestic violence, is right in line with Eve Ensler's mission."

"I'm so pleased and happy that On Stage Vacaville has chosen SafeQuest Solano to support through their production of 'The Vagina Monologues,'" said executive director Mary Anne Branch. "I've attended the play several times. It's a great comedy and well worth seeing."

Start times for "The Vagina Monologues" are 7:30 p.m. for the Friday and Saturday (Feb. 9 and 10) performances, along with a 2 p.m. matinee on Sunday.

Ticket prices range from \$20 to \$50 for adults and are \$10 for students. Sponsorship tables are also available for \$500. Senior citizens receive a 10 percent discount on tickets.

To purchase tickets online, go to www.onstagevacaville.org/events

• **The Empowerment Project** is dedicated to the prevention and education of intimate partner violence. It focuses on ensuring that people are empowered through education to develop healthy and safe relationships in order to stop the cycle of domestic violence.

• **SafeQuest Solano** provides prevention education, advocacy, and intervention services to those affected by domestic violence and sexual assault. Emphasizing client-centered and trauma-informed care, SafeQuest works with partners to promote individual, family and community transformation.

• On Stage Vacaville is a volunteer-run organization dedicated to the promotion, support, development and growth of arts appreciation and programming for the Vacaville community.

For more information, email info@onstagevacaville.org. ★



Merced, Sonoma Poultry Farms Hard Hit As Avian Flu Outbreak Spreads

Outbreaks of a highly contagious strain of avian influenza have spiked markedly this winter, leading to the recent destruction of 3.78 million birds at poultry farms in Merced and Sonoma counties. Until last fall, the disease appeared to have left California poultry farms relatively unscathed compared to farms in states such as Iowa, the nation's largest egg producer. While California bird losses totaled 751,680 the first year of the outbreak, losses topped 4.7 million in 2023, with most of the cases occurring since October, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Desert Farmers Are Pleased With Winter Vegetable Harvest

Winter vegetable harvest is in full swing in the Imperial Valley and growers say the conditions this season have been close to perfect. Growers say a fall planting season without heat waves and a mild winter have created ideal conditions for leafy greens and vegetables. Alex Jack of Jack Brothers grows lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower and other crops in the Imperial Valley. "Our crops are looking fantastic," Jack said. "We're pretty much right on schedule." The Imperial Valley and neighboring Coachella Valley produce the lion's share of America's winter vegetables.

Snowfall, Rain Diminish In Early 2024 After California's Wet 2023

Unlike early 2023, when nonstop atmospheric river storms built a deep Sierra Nevada snowpack, replenished depleted reservoirs and flooded parts of California, snowfall and rain has sharply diminished so far this year. In the days since the first Sierra Nevada snow survey of 2024 last week, storms added more snow, increasing the early January statewide snowpack figure of 25% of average to 36% of average as of Monday. At this time last year, the state's snowpack measured 117% of average, which is more than half of the average yearly total. But key precipitation months are still to come.

Organic Market Is Robust For Berries, Prepackaged Salads

The prospects for organic produce remain strong in these inflationary times, according to leaders of some of the largest grower-shipper operations. Statistics gathered by the Category Partners farm market data firm show that organic berry sales increased nearly 7% in the third quarter of 2023 compared to the previous year, while organic prepackaged salads were up 5.4%. Sales of organic lettuce, onions and tomatoes were all up less than 4% year over year, while sales of organic celery, squash and peaches were down. ★

National Search for Dixon Superintendent



DUSD will conclude its search for a new superintendent at the end of the month.

Story and photo by Debra Dingman

DIXON, CA (MPG) - At the end of this month, the application for the Dixon Unified School District superintendent position will close, and the final stages of replacing retiring Superintendent Brian Dolan will start with hopes of selecting a new executive by the end of March. Dolan announced in September that he would retire after 26 years in the district at the end of the 2023-2024 school year.

"The district already works with Education Support Services Group, and we contracted out an extension of our legal services, and it was a nice clean shift. They outlined the whole process," explained David Bowen, DUSD Board Trustee Board president. The cost was not to exceed \$18,500. "I think it will be closer to \$15,000, but we won't know until the process closes," he added.

In late October, there was a special public meeting for the board to give their input, then ESS collected it all together and will be presenting in January the candidate profile list of preferred or required [assets.]

The search went national at the request of the school board in October, then ESS started interviewing "stakeholders" in late November and December.

"They did meetings with more than 20 people," reported Bowen. "There were so many different subsets including union and non-union people, teachers, site administrators, and different parent groups."

Results of the online survey are tallied and disaggregated and displayed in the leadership profile found online at dixonusd.org/superintendent-search/.

The candidate profile that they created from the input will be presented to the public in January.

"What I appreciated and respected most was that we made this decision earlier than average," Bowen said. "Both VV and FF made decisions to move on from their superintendents late in the year, so we got a two-month head start. We're lucky we got to [qualified candidates] first."

One wondered why the national search when Nick Girimonte, assistant superintendent of education services for the district who was raised in Dixon, graduated from Dixon High School, graduated

from the University of Notre Dame, and earned a master's in education from UC Davis. He taught English five years at Dixon High before becoming the assistant principal for a couple years and ultimately a popular and respected principal there for five more. He has family with DNA in education. His mother, Susan, retired from the job Nick has now in a couple years before Nick stepped into it 2017.

Nick's wife, Phoebe, worked in the Dixon Unified School District for 14 years in roles including teacher, site administrator, and district personnel coordinator before joining the Winters JUSD where she is now assistant superintendent of educational services.

"Nick was personally invited to apply, and he satisfied a lot of the criteria," said Bowen. "He's a fluent Spanish speaker and is the coordinator for the district's vision statement for future years."

As of press time, Nick has not applied and offered no comment. But he also stated that if he does, he will, of course, "honor the Board process."

"The students are always the priority to me," he said.

The board is interested in conducting a national search, and according to Board Trustee Jewel Fink, they had to do that because they could not "promote" as has been done in the past.

"The board wanted an equitable process that was open to any and all candidates," said Bowen. "He may have been able to be promoted, but we never considered it because we didn't want any sense of nepotism or favoritism — because that's what the public elected us to do."

"We want what is best for Dixon's students, parents, and staff," Bowen said. "In context, California wages are pretty high. We are right on the edge of the Bay Area, but we have a lot of rural traditions. The board is wanting to make sure we've exhausted the search to finding someone who has (all of the profile.) We could get a very highly-skilled person from another county."

"We will definitely have the replacement chosen by the end of the year (roughly speaking the end of March). The replacement will definitely not begin before Dolan's contract ends on July 1," Bowen added. ★

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CLUES

ACROSS
1. Moonshine maker
6. *Artist with most 2024 Grammy nominations
9. Not his
13. "Roots" author
14. That guy
15. Full of emotion (2 words)
16. Relating to #3 Down
17. Tarzan's mom, e.g.
18. Caribbean island destination
19. *The Recording ____, voting organization
21. **"What Was I Made For?" movie
23. **"A Boy Named ____," 1970 Grammy winner
24. Prickle on a wire
25. Drench
28. Waiter's handout
30. *Grammy-nominated Lauper song, "True ____"
35. Amusement destination
37. Rachel Renee Russell's "____ Diaries"
39. Extend subscription
40. South Korean boy band
41. Type of wrap
43. Italian wine region
44. Forearm length unit
46. Honey-producing facility
47. Saw incision
48. Nauseant
50. Fancy marbles used as shooters
52. U.S. Marine Corps gift recipient
53. EU currency
55. Aglet on a shoelace, e.g.
57. ____com Arena
60. *Miley Cyrus' Song of the Year nominee and popular romantic gift
64. Texas cook-off dish
65. **In the ____ Tonight," by Grammy-winner Phil Collins
67. Send, as payment
68. Safe place
69. Bird word
70. Leave out
71. Bookkeeping entry
72. Refrigerator sound
73. Scatter

DOWN
1. Not Sunni
2. Baby powder ingredient
3. Pelvic parts
4. Shows the way
5. Aristotle's school
6. One-horse carriage
7. Mailing "code"
8. Single-cell protozoan
9. *Grammy-winner, ____ Alpert
10. *Purse for the red carpet
11. Bumpkin
12. Pampering place
15. Bar ____, ME
20. Rewards, in the olden days
22. Pendulum's path
24. Cantina staple
25. *Ice ____, Best New Artist nominee
26. Wooden ship caulking
27. Space exploration mission
29. *Grammy host for the fourth time
31. Plumbing problem
32. Early stages of illness
33. Reminiscent of the past
34. **"Anti-Hero" performer
36. Not purl
38. Pacific Islanders' herbal drink
42. Handrail post
45. Neckwear decoration
49. Use scissors
51. Soft palate vibrations
54. House pest
56. Resided
57. Social media conversation
58. Bank of Paris
59. Big Bang's original matter
60. Word on a gift tag
61. Arabian bigwig
62. Fair attraction
63. Hot pot
64. Denoted by symbol X
66. Debtor's letters

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Riley Reviews

JASON STATHAM TURNS “THE BEEKEEPER” INTO HIS ACTION PERSONA

A Film and TV Review by Tim Riley

“THE BEEKEEPER” RATED R
Known for his muscular physique and believable portrayal of a gritty action hero, Jason Statham, with his martial arts background, has made such a career of being the tough guy that in about dozen years or so he could turn into a durable aging version of Liam Neeson or Steven Seagal.

As long as he remains a bankable action star, Statham should not be lacking for work. His resume includes fine films in the thriller genre, from crime dramas like “The Bank,” “Snatch,” and “Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels” to the action thriller “Transporter” trilogy.

The appeal of this British actor is that he is convincing in his action roles, which likely comes from his practice of kickboxing and karate. Having been a member of Britain’s national diving team and competing for his country in the 1990 Commonwealth Games rounds out his athletic abilities.

Statham’s Adam Clay is a loner living on Massachusetts farm land where he tends to his bee hives and operates out of a barn rented from his neighbor, the elderly Eloise Parker (Phylicia Rashad), who acts like his surrogate mother.

Aside from his love of beekeeping, Clay is a retired Beekeeper, a member of a clandestine government agency that apparently operates outside legal boundaries to restore order when corruption and nefarious crimes must be addressed.

Unfortunately, retired teacher Eloise responds to a tech support group’s notification of a virus on her computer and gets connected to sleazebag Mickey Garnett (David Witts), who then proceeds to drain her bank accounts of her entire life savings as well as the \$2 million in her charitable foundation.

The scammers work for the despicable Derek Danforth (Josh Hutcherson), a man-child cokehead who skates around his corporate office under the protection of some powerful people.

Feeling hopeless after losing everything, Eloise commits suicide, and this prompts Clay to take immediate action to hunt down the perpetrators of the telemarketing fraud.

Eloise’s suicide is a blow not just to Clay but especially to her FBI Special Agent daughter Verona Parker (Emmy Raver-Lampman), who wants to find those responsible for her mother’s death, but must function within the law.

There are no such constraints for Clay who wastes no time finding the call center of the United Data Group where he arrives with two cans of gasoline and announces to the security guards that he is going to burn the place down.

Making good on this threat to turn the entire operation into an ashtray, Clay

sets his sights on going after the main source, only to find that his Beekeeper replacement, Anisette (Megan Le), a punked-out lunatic armed with a machine gun tries to take him out.

As odious as he is, Derek is protected by people in high places, as his mother Jessica Danforth (Jemma Redgrave), with the ultimate political connections, is the founder of the multibillion-dollar conglomerate Danforth Enterprises.

Derek’s minder and protector of the family business is Wallace Westwyld (Jeremy Irons), a former Director of the CIA now in a cushy corporate job, who informs the spoiled rich kid that when a Beekeeper says he’s going to kill someone, nothing can stop him.

Westwyld calls in a favor from his old friend, the current CIA director Janet Harward (Minnie Driver in brief cameo), and before long everyone from Verona’s FBI S.W.A.T. team to Secret Service agents and mercenary thugs working for Danforth Enterprises are after Clay.

In addition to traditional law enforcement, Westwyld assembles his own team of Special Forces types, but they have no clue that the Beekeeper will do everything to “protect the hive” while spouting mythology about the importance of bees.

Derek seems to think his ace-in-the-hole is gnarled South African mercenary Lazurus (Taylor James), who once killed a Beekeeper but lost his leg in the process. You may guess how that’s going to turn out.

The climactic end comes down to a big party at Mama Danforth’s seaside estate, where Westwyld’s thugs and Secret Service agents are out in force, and Clay slips under their noses to end his mission.

Fifteen minutes shy of two hours, “The Beekeeper” has the welcome pace of an action thriller with just enough exposition and plenty of hard-hitting violent retribution on the bad guys that should satisfy any fan of Jason Statham.

Jason Statham always seems to be at his best when he lets his fists do the talking. Some of the best action stars have mastered the art of being laconic. As it is, enough of the dialogue is nonsensical.

What’s enjoyable about “The Beekeeper” is that Statham shines in his action scenes, and let us not forget the atrocious waste of his talent in recent the recent outings of “Meg 2: The Trench” and “Expendab4les.”

Even “Operation Fortune: Ruse de Guerre” proved disappointing. But that’s not the case with a thrilling B-movie bulging with stunts, explosions, gunplay and overall volatile mayhem. Enjoy the scorched-earth ride for what it is. A “Beekeeper 2” could even be a possibility. ★

The Invocations

by Krystal Sutherland

Emer Byrne wasn’t aware that her little cornerstone of magic was making her clients a target for a serial killer. Her spells were written to help women gain power, change their lives, or give them the strength to change a situation but not harm them. Now, it’s doing precisely the opposite.

Zara Jones would do anything to bring her sister back, even if that means the unthinkable. While Zara can’t change the fact that her sister was murdered, or the fact that it was by an elusive serial killer targeting women, the one thing she thinks she can control is magic. Zara’s only focus is bringing her sister back from the dead; if only she could find someone with the knowledge strong enough to help.

Jude Wolf, daughter of a billionaire, has learned that there is one thing money can’t buy: a soul. Jude, desperate to change her life and be loved by her father, makes a deal that goes horribly wrong. Now, her cursed body is slowly dying, making everything around her rot, spoil, or even mold in her presence. While Jude might have everything at her disposal, finding someone who can



◆ Nancy Paulsen Books
◆ Intended Audience: Young Adult
◆ Rating: ★★★★★
◆ Release Date: Jan. 30, 2023

reverse a curse is nearly impossible.

Three individual paths are about to become one when a clue leads Zara and Jude straight to the magic-wielding invocations of Emer. One girl has the power to write powerful spells, and two girls are willing to do whatever it takes to change their lives. However, none of them expected to be opening the door to a supernatural Jack the Ripper serial killer.

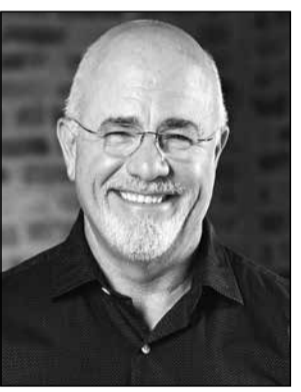
Krystal Sutherland does it again by taking her readers to the edge of darkness and plummeting them straight through. While some books might dance

on the edge of danger and darkness, *The Invocations* pulls its readers deep within its dark and inviting tale.

This fast-paced story is intense, dark, and even gruesome at times, exploring a side of misogyny passed down from the witch trials that is not often discussed but very skillfully adds to the storyline. Told in a three-person POV takes this story to even more powerful storytelling and vulnerability that creates magnificent and magnetic characters that are so instantly captivating that readers will not be able to look away, even if one of the characters has a stench of death.

While this story has a dark supernatural current, it also touches on deep and powerful emotions, subjects, and issues. However, readers will not be dismayed; this story does come to an ending and even an epilogue that will leave readers satisfied.

Sutherland once again delivers a powerful story of sisterhood and friendship, and has truly found her calling of writing within the dark shadows of the macabre, where once you enter, you will never be the same. ★



Dave Ramsey Says

pretty good teacher when it comes to learning how the world really works.

One of the jobs of a parent is to look for teachable moments with their kids. Of course, when it comes to teaching there’s always a chance the student won’t learn the lesson well enough the first time around. I’m not sure how you’re doing things, but if I were in your shoes, I’d follow these steps. First, give him a chance to earn some money. In my book, that means work. No allowances! There’s a lot of self-esteem and value to be found in accomplishing a given task successfully. Then, once you pay him for the work he does, you have another perfect chance for teachable moments, because you can help him learn about saving, spending and giving, and how to do all three wisely.

It’s always hard on parents when they see their kids unhappy. I know we went through it with ours. As a parent and protector, you want to jump in and

make everything okay. But the hard truth is that fixing or doing everything for them is the easy way out. And in the process of doing that, a child will begin to develop a sort of learned helplessness.

Sometimes, Lane, you need to love kids enough to not do things for them. Let them make some mistakes, experience the consequences and fix things themselves. And it’s better for them to do all this while they’re still under your guidance and protection.

– Dave

Dave Ramsey is an eight-time national best-selling author, personal finance expert and host of The Ramsey Show. He has appeared on Good Morning America, CBS This Morning, Today, Fox News, CNN, Fox Business and many more. Since 1992, Dave has helped people take control of their money, build wealth and enhance their lives. He also serves as CEO for Ramsey Solutions ★

Dear Dave,

My wife and I have started teaching our five-year-old son about money. Do you feel we should step in and fix things when he makes mistakes, or let him experience the consequences of his actions? It’s so hard on my wife, especially, to see him disappointed when he makes a mistake, and his plans don’t work out.

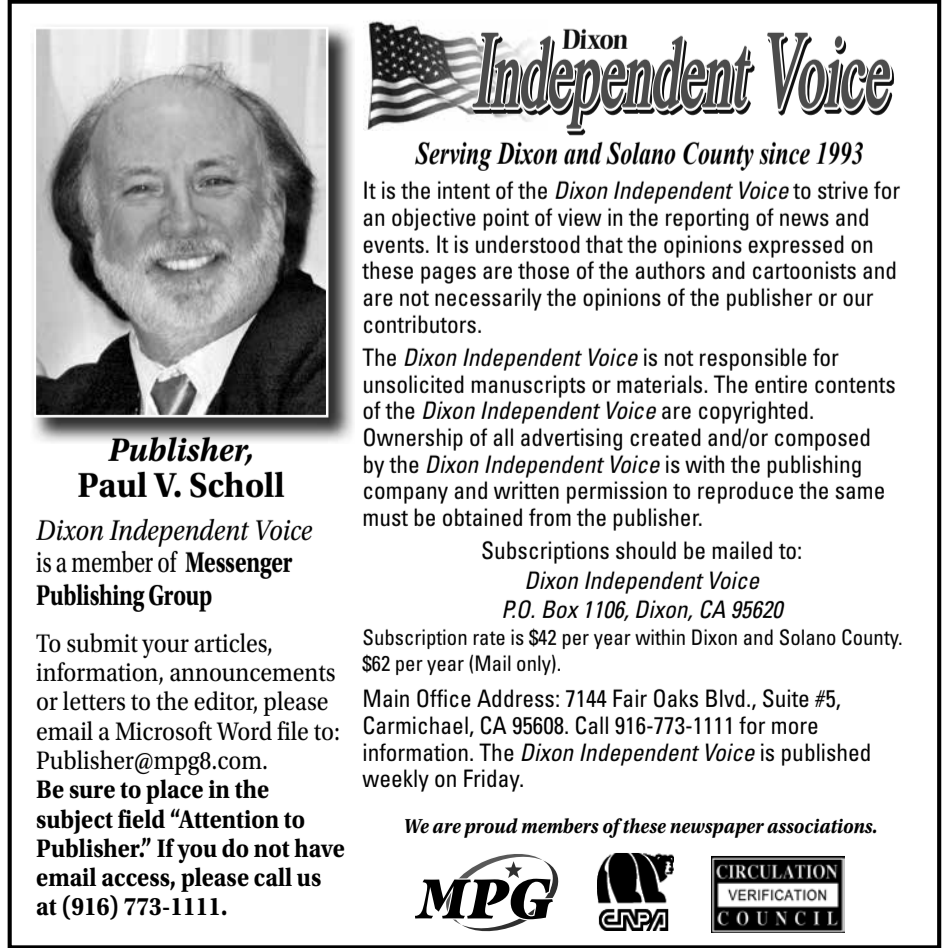
– Lane

Dear Lane,

I know this might sound mean to some folks, but sometimes a good financial disappointment when you’re young is the best thing that can happen to you. They’re hard to watch happen, or to experience, but often they’ll teach life-long lessons. No decent parent wants to see their child sad or hurt, but reality is a



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Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



The roller coaster team of the NBA, namely the Sacramento Kings, put together a comprehensive and highly entertaining performance Sunday night in Milwaukee. For all of us that are die-hard Kings fans, you witnessed a team effort on both ends of the court, and, finally, coach Brown tightened up his rotations, limiting substitutions to four players off the bench.

In previous outings, coach Brown has kept us guessing as to who would come off the bench, and at times it was difficult to make sense of the substitutions.

One notable rotation included for perhaps the first time, Sabonis and Alex Len on the court at the same time, and the team responded, playing with enthusiasm at both ends.

Many times during the early season, we have needed more rim protection, and simply more size to match up with bigger teams, but Brown has been resistant to putting Sabonis and Len together. Sunday gave way to optimism as Len became that needed rim protector, and although his 4 points and 5 rebounds may not sound like much, in only 11 minutes of play his presence was felt.

Domantas Sabonis claimed his 10th triple double of the season, 2nd in the NBA, and has begun to develop a mid-range game that gives him another weapon for the opposition to deal with. In addition to 21 points, 13 rebounds, and an astonishing 15 assists, Sabonis added a 3-pointer for good measure.

This was a highly entertaining game that turned into a loss in overtime for only one reason, our inability to hit free throws. Our best free throw shooter, Malik Monk, missed two in a row in overtime, and De'Aaron Fox missed one of two, setting up the last-second, 30-foot arching rainbow by Damian Lillard to win the game by one point for the Bucks.

The Kings were coming off of a disappointing loss to the Philadelphia 76ers, but were still 2-1 on the road trip coming into Milwaukee.

Coach Brown was tossed from the game for the first time this season, and

the team responded with energy, making the 4th quarter a real contest, ending with a Fox layup that tied the game and forced overtime.

As much as I hate to bring officiating into the equation, once again the referees did an abysmal job. At times we would be better off with a coin flip in deciding out-of-bounds calls, or whether to call a charge versus a block.

I truly believe if we switched out the division 1 NCAA referees for the NBA group, we would see an immediate improvement in the quality of the officiating.

Of course, it shouldn't be this way, and with the advent of having the ability to challenge calls, the NBA has mitigated some of the more obvious mistakes, but more needs to be done.

I believe it starts with better off-season training, but without a doubt, the NBA needs to hold each referee accountable, and a vetting process should be in place so that some referees can rotate out, and news ones in.

When it comes to challenges, the Kings simply don't take advantage of the process in place, going many games without even taking a challenge. When the Kings challenge, they are simply not good at it, with an abysmal 28% winning percentage. It's hard to understand how you can be wrong three out of every four times, but the stats don't lie, and just like shooting free throws, the Kings need to get better.

What a surprise the Philadelphia 76ers have a league best 84% free throw percentage, and the Kings are dead last in 30th place with a percentage of 73%.

So, while a part of me applauds the vociferous energy that coach Brown brought to the floor Sunday night, I think he should direct some of that energy towards his team with regards to shooting free throws.

Thank you to the many that have reached out to me with your thoughts and comments. Let me know what you think at vgharrskingsfan@gmail.com.

Until next time, keep the faith! ★

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Dare to Live Without Limits
 by Bryan Golden
How Much is Enough?

Money, food, friends, happiness, time, and food; how much do you need in order to have enough? Those who appreciate all they have, always have more than they need. However, those who want more never feel they have enough.

Real life is full of actual examples illustrating this principle at work. Of the people who win big lottery jackpots, about 70% go broke within 5 years. There are many stories of people who inherit wealth yet are miserable. There are endless news stories of successful actors, celebrities, and sports stars self-destructing on drugs, alcohol, crime, or other aberrant behavior.

The key factor is not how much you have, but whether or not you appreciate that which you do have. Happiness and contentment are based on internal sentiment, not external possessions. Remember, if you always want more, you'll never feel you have enough.

So, appreciating what you have is a mindset. It's not based on how much you have. It is based on how grateful you are for what you have. When you are thankful for what you have, you'll feel as if you have an abundance.

So, instead of looking to just accumulating for the sake of having as much as possible, strive to appreciate all of the blessings in your life. Having more, without a sense of gratefulness, diminishes the enhancement on your quality of life.

Quality of life is more important than quantity of your accumulations. There are numerous examples of high-income earners who spend so much time making money that they have little time to really enjoy it. Yet, there are people who make a more modest income but are able to have a more enjoyable lifestyle.

This is not to say that more money is bad and less is good. Rather there must be a quality of life balance where you are able to benefit from all of your efforts, instead of feeling as if you are on a treadmill going a little faster than you can keep up.

Ideally, your money should contribute to your quality of life. When your pursuit of financial rewards leads to

more stress and insecurity than enjoyment, you might want to reassess your strategy.

You can look at your friends in a similar fashion. Do you have dependable friends or simply a lot of friends? A handful of people you can count on is more valuable than dozens of likes on social media. A true friend is there for you in good times and bad, as you are for them. These are people who sincerely care about how you are doing. They keep in touch just to say hello, not just when they want something from you.

You need only so much food to be healthy. Eating more than is required may lead to health problems and weight issues. Spending more than you can afford eating out creates stress in other aspects of your life.

Time is one commodity that most people will agree is in too short a supply. Since everyone has the same amount of time each day, it's how you utilize your time that matters. If you find yourself with "time to kill," you are not putting your time to good use.

There is a certain amount of time you spend working and then there is the rest of the day which is your discretionary time. What you do with your discretionary time impacts how much you will achieve. Time spent working toward an important goal is productive. Time wasted aimlessly keeps you busy with nothing to show for your efforts.

Regardless of what you are measuring, how much is enough for your needs is all that's relevant. Don't compare yourself to what others have or want. Their lives have no impact on you. Appreciate and be thankful for all of your blessings. Make the most of what you do have, instead of lamenting what you feel might be lacking.

NOW AVAILABLE: "Dare to Live Without Limits," the book. Visit www.BryanGolden.com or your bookstore. Bryan is a management consultant, motivational speaker, author, and adjunct professor. E-mail Bryan at bryan@columnist.com or write him c/o this paper. ©2024 Bryan Golden ★

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COMICS & PUZZLES

The Spats by Jeff Pickering

I USED TO HAVE A MAGIC DOG.

WHAT BREED WAS IT?

IT WAS A LABRACADABRADOR.

POPEYE by EMMETT HENNING

HEV, BABY BROTHER! ARE YOU AND BLUTO COMIN' TO BRUTINA'S BIRTHDAY PARTY?

I AM, BUT I DON'T THINK BLUTO WILL BE THERE, BRUTO.

WHAT'S HE GOT PLANNED?

HE'S ABOUT TO PICK A FIGHT WITH POPEYE, SO AN I.E.R. VISIT.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT SHEET, BRUTO?

I HEARD A RUMOR POPEYE'S SCARED OF GHOSTS!

I'M GONNA SCARE HIM PUBLICLY SO EVERYONE SEES HE'S NOT SO TOUGH AFTER ALL!

HOW'S THAT SOUND FOR A PLAN?

IT COULD DEFINITELY BE MISTAKEN FOR ONE.

BRUTO, SMASH POPEYE'S COMING!

BOO!

A GHOST!

I GET IT! HE'S SCARED OF GHOSTS, SO YOU'RE TRYING TO TRICK HIM INTO MAKING YOU INTO A GHOST, RIGHT?

THIS WOULD HURT LESS IF THERE WAS EVEN A HINT OF SARCASTIC IN YOUR VOICE.

Amber Waves by Dave T. Phipps

TODAY I'M FINALLY GOING TO SLEEP IN... JUST ME AND MY PILLOW, NOT A CARE IN THE WORLD.

JIM, GET DOWN HERE AND SEE WHAT YOUR SON DID!

THIS IS NOT REAL, IT'S JUST A DREAM... A VERY BAD DREAM.

HOCUS-FOCUS BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Light is moved. 2. Nose is smaller. 3. Buttons are added. 4. Bricks are lower. 5. Headlight is missing. 6. Shirt is different.

Out on a Limb by Gary Kopervas

YOU'RE TOTALLY CRUSHING IT, SARA.

NO, YOU'RE CRUSHING ITS SOEL.

YOU'RE CRUSHING IT, ARLO...

THANKS, BUT YOU'RE REALLY CRUSHING IT, JACK.

ANOTHER WORK DAY IN NAPA VALLEY

GRIN AND BEAR IT by Dave T. Phipps

THIS NEW IPAD IS GREAT. IT TAKES CARE OF LIGHTS, TEMP, LOCKS... I WISH I COULD DO SOMETHING TO HELP YOU WITH LAUNDRY.

TIGER by BUD BLAKE

HECK, TIGER.

IT'S STARTING TO RAIN.

HOW 'BOUT WE SKATE IN YOUR GARAGE?

WE CAN'T CAUSE OUR CAR IS IN IT.

WE'LL TRY OURS.

I DON'T BLAME HIM.

BIG-O BURGERS

BIG-O BURGERS

HOW'S THAT COLOSSAL?

How could those athletes put steroids into their bodies?

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A Big Change at EDD

EDD changes unemployment contractor after scams

By Lynn La,
CALMatters.org

California has a new unemployment and disability payment contractor after the state's multi-billion-dollar pandemic fraud panic. The Employment Development Department hopes it will be the end of an era of brazen scams, which wreaked havoc for laid-off workers and fueled police busts involving stacks of ill-gotten debit cards issued at the department's direction by then-contractor Bank of America.

EDD tells CalMatters that on Monday it plans to begin notifying 850,000 benefit recipients of the new payment provider: Money Network, an electronic payment company owned by finance tech company Fiserv. Money Network may sound familiar; it was also tapped by the federal government and Gov. Gavin Newsom to pay out COVID-era stimulus funds, which attracted its own waves of debit card scams.

Money Network won the EDD contract after a competitive bidding process. It comes as the agency embarks on a five-year, \$1.2 billion tech overhaul known as EDDNext.

The contract will primarily be paid for through a debit card revenue-sharing agreement, similar to the EDD's previous deal with Bank of America. The agency will also pay \$32 million over five years for Money Network to offer a long-discussed direct deposit option to



The offices of the Employment Development Department in Sacramento where it all went wrong. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

workers' bank accounts, which the EDD says will launch in spring 2024.

In mid-January, people receiving unemployment, disability and paid leave benefits from the EDD will be mailed new Money Network debit cards. Payments will officially begin on these cards on Feb. 15. Anyone who still has a Bank of America EDD debit card will have until April 15, 2024, to spend the money.

In the meantime, fraud analysts tracking an uptick in attacks on government benefit debit cards — not just California's unemployment program, but also food assistance and others will be watching to see what lessons have (or haven't) been learned from the pandemic. The new EDD cards will include both security chips and tap-to-pay options common in consumer credit cards.

Still, the EDD is advising cardholders to be vigilant: "Beware of scammers. We will never request your personal information by text message, e-mail or on social media."

Tens of thousands of

Californians are still awaiting aid from the COVID-19 rent relief program. But as CalMatters housing reporter Ben Christopher explains, the program may run out of money before it can help the remaining eligible applicants.

The \$5.2 billion program launched in 2021 to help Californians pay down rental debt they accumulated during the pandemic. Though it stopped taking new applications in 2022, more than 70,000 households still have applications pending. The program has enough funding to cover a little more than 14,000 people — meaning the remaining 80% of the total applicant pool is out of luck.

That's devastating news for tenants and landlords alike who may ultimately wait in vain for relief to come. As one graphic designer and single mother told Ben: "I'm trying to find a way to freelance or do whatever I can do to get the money to just pay it myself... I can't sit and depend on it and wait because it's been two years." ★

Investigation of University Department Exposes Problematic "Critical" Ethnic Studies

AMCHA Initiative Press Release

SANTA CRUZ, CA (MPG) - A new study released today by campus antisemitism watchdog group AMCHA Initiative provides extensive evidence that faculty in the academic department considered ground zero for the highly politicized, "critical" version of the ethnic studies discipline at the University of California and for efforts to push the discipline into K-12 classrooms are using their department's name and University resources to promote propaganda and activism to undermine and ultimately dismantle the Jewish state — in violation of University policy and California law.

According to the new research, the University of California Santa Cruz's Critical Race and Ethnic Studies (CRES) department has engaged in anti-Zionist advocacy and activism since at least May 2021, when CRES pledged departmental allegiance to "the struggle for Palestinian liberation" and committed its faculty to bringing the academic boycott of Israel (the academic arm of the antisemitic BDS movement) onto campus and into their classrooms. However, according to the study, incidents involving CRES's anti-Zionist political advocacy and activism have drastically increased in frequency and intensity since Hamas' massacre of Israeli civilians on October 7, 2023.

Some of the newer incidents include: blaming Israel for the Hamas massacre and calling Israel's defensive measures a "genocide"; incorporating anti-Zionist propaganda, including clear falsehoods, into their teaching and teacher training programs; shutting down their department as part of a "Global General Strike" against Israel and calling for students to boycott their classes; and promoting and participating in the "Shut It Down for Palestine" protest rally of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) that illegally blocked access to the campus. Even after a clear warning from the UCSC Provost highlighting UC policies proscribing political advocacy and activism "in the classroom and other instructional spaces," CRES faculty doubled-down on their political activities, recently announcing on their university website the launch of Faculty for Justice in Palestine (FJP), a group designed to serve as the faculty-arm of SJP.

"CRES's commitment to anti-Zionist political advocacy and activism, as a department and as a core element of its discipline, can't help but corrupt the academic mission of the

university and violate students' fundamental right to be educated and not indoctrinated," said Tammi Rossman-Benjamin, co-founder and director of AMCHA Initiative and a former UC Santa Cruz faculty member herself. But for Rossman-Benjamin, the most alarming consequence of CRES's substitution of anti-Zionist activism for education is its harmful impact on Jewish students: "Our research has consistently shown that on campuses where individual faculty and departments use educational spaces for anti-Zionist political advocacy and activism, rates of antisemitic activity — including assaults, threats of harm, vandalism, and bullying — are significantly elevated. Against the backdrop of a more than 700% increase in campus antisemitism since Hamas' horrific massacre of Israeli civilians on October 7th, CRES's unbridled expression of animus towards the Jewish state and its supporters absolutely contributes to a hostile, antisemitic environment for Jewish students, faculty, and staff at UCSC."

The report also notes that CRES plays an important role in bringing the department's highly politicized version of ethnic studies to K-12 classrooms in the state. Last year CRES became the first UCSC department outside the STEM fields to include an expedited pathway for students to earn a post-BA teaching credential. In addition, CRES leadership is behind a proposal for establishing a UC ethnic studies admissions requirement, which, if approved, would force almost every high school student in the state to take an ethnic studies course whose content standards were developed, in large part, by CRES faculty.

"Shockingly, these same professors who are using their university positions and resources to unabashedly promote anti-Zionism and antisemitism," says Rossman-Benjamin, "are the ones who our state has entrusted with developing what will be taught to every California student about Jews and Israel."

According to the report, CRES's anti-Zionist advocacy and activism are likely in violation of several UC policies and state laws that prohibit the use of the name, facilities, and resources of the University for political advocacy or indoctrination, and others that sanction the failure of individual faculty members and academic departments to fulfill their contractual and fiduciary responsibilities. The report concludes that there is more than enough evidence of departmental misconduct to warrant a thorough investigation of CRES by UC and state officials. ★

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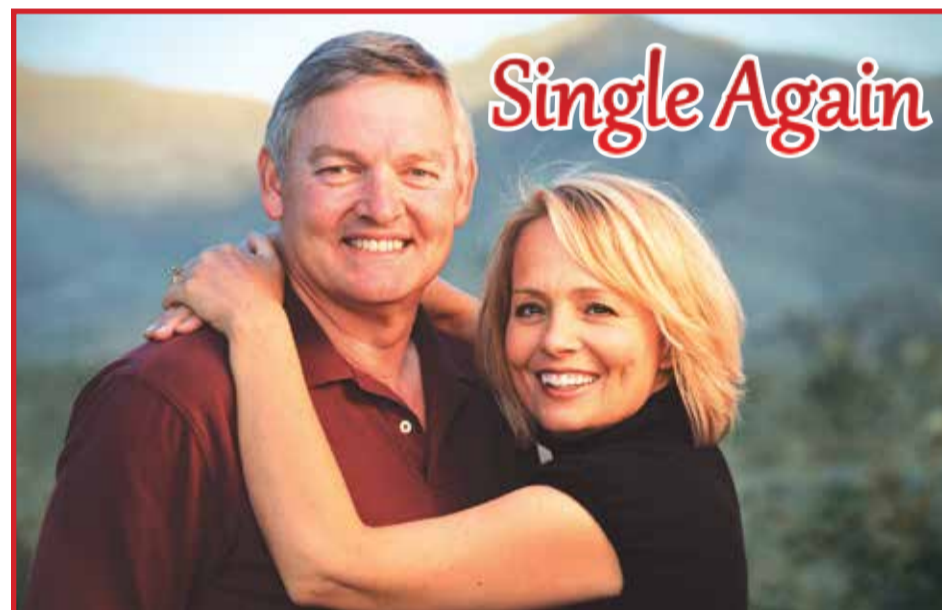
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