



**Girl Scouts
Start Annual
Cookie Sales**
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Dixon Independent Voice

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Serving Dixon and Solano County since 1993

FEBRUARY 23, 2024

**SEE
INSIDE**

**PLAN FOR
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**WHERE SENIORS
ARE COOL**



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**REWARD TO HELP
LOCATE WANTED
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Failing Our Newborns

She opened a business to deliver babies, then California policies drove her out of the country



Midwife Madeleine Wisner evaluates Chloé Mick's belly during a maternal care consultation at Mick's home in Sacramento on Feb. 6, 2024. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

By **Kristen Hwang**
CALMatters.org

Madeleine Wisner dreamed of making community midwife services available to all expecting parents regardless of their income when she opened Welcome Home Community Birth Center in south Sacramento. But 451 births and five years later, Wisner is packing up her family and moving from California to New Zealand, where government policies are far more favorable to midwifery. She closed her birth center in October.

Wisner was the only licensed community midwife who took Medi-Cal patients in the greater Sacramento region, but she's leaving, she said, because it was impossible to sustain the birth center. Insurance refused to pay two out of every three claims she submitted for services including prenatal visits, labor and delivery, at-home postpartum check ups, and lactation consultations, Wisner said. "The entire system is not made for us," Wisner said. "I look at Medi-Cal as the standard of care, and midwives should be part of the standard of care."

Her experience and decision to leave reflects larger problems for California midwives highlighted in a new study released today from UC San Francisco's Osher Center for Integrative Health. It focuses on community midwives who work outside of hospitals but have licenses and training to perform much of the same reproductive care doctors provide to women with low-risk pregnancies. The report warns that access to maternity care will worsen in California if the state does not

Continued on page 10

Learn Money, Capital, and Credit

By **MPG Staff**

DIXON, CA (MPG) - Join the Solano-Napa Small Business Development Center, NorCal VBOC, the City of Vallejo and Solano Community College on March 20 for a deep dive into the world of financing for small and large businesses.

Whether you are an existing or new business owner, you'll find valuable resources at the Money, Credit & Capital Summit at Solano Community College's Vallejo campus, 545 Columbus Parkway, in Vallejo. The date of the event, March 20, also marks National Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Day, which recognizes the thousands of SBDC centers across the country supporting entrepreneurs in their pursuit of business ownership.

This no-cost event from 3 pm to 7:30 pm will begin with two free business trainings focused on social media marketing and finance. A lender panel at 5:30 pm will include representatives from both traditional and non-traditional financial institutions, all sharing information on the services they provide for new and existing business owners. There will also be a representative from Solano County who will introduce Solano Biz-Grow, a new local revolving loan fund.

Following the panel, business owners will have the opportunity to network, meet one-on-one with lenders, and learn more about local resources for their business. Refreshments will be provided.

Pre-registration is encouraged. Learn more and register at [solanonapasbdc.org/events](https://www.solanonapasbdc.org/events).

(Direct link: <https://www.solanonapasbdc.org/event/money-credit-capital-summit/>)

In addition, Solano County offers a Small Business Loan Program for entrepreneurs from \$25,000 to \$125,000 at an interest rate of 6% with loan term of five years and no prepayment penalty. A minimum credit score of 630 is required and businesses must be located in Solano County.

Participating lenders are First Northern Bank, Travis Credit Union, and Valley Strong Credit Union. The Program Partner is the Solano-Napa Small Business Development Center. For more information, contact Wendi Reed, Solano Economic Development Corporation Loan Program Manager at (707) 864-1855, ext. 21 or email Wendi@SolanoEDC.org. ★

Solano Home & Garden Show Returns

SHGS News Release

DIXON, CA (MPG) - The Solano County Home & Garden Show is back, with a weekend filled with inspiration, expert advice and entertainment for all ages. Scheduled for March 23 and 24 at the Dixon Fairgrounds from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday, this family-friendly event is a great way to explore home improvement, landscaping, and gardening ideas.

This year's highlight is the appearance of Ahmed Hassan, the original host of HGTV's hit show, Yard Crashers. Hassan will be sharing his expertise and insights, offering invaluable tips to attendees looking to transform their outdoor spaces into stunning retreats.

From home improvement specialists to arts and craft vendors, the Solano County Home & Garden Show will feature a diverse array of exhibitors showcasing the latest products and services. Visitors can



At last year's Solano Home & Garden Show, Greiner Heating and Air greeted visitors at the entrance of the Dixon fairground's Madden Hall joining dozens of companies that help demonstrate products and explain benefits of home improvement projects. Photo by Debra Dingman

explore various booths, receive free quotes, and discover innovative solutions to tackle unfinished projects.

But that's not all - the event will also offer live music performance by local artist Alan Brownlee,

food trucks and ample opportunities for networking and mingling with fellow enthusiasts.

"We're thrilled to welcome everyone back to the Dixon Fairgrounds for another exciting Home & Garden Show," said

event organizer, Shawna Arzadon. "Whether you're a seasoned DIYer or just starting out on your home improvement journey, there's something for everyone at this year's event. Come join us for

Continued on page 4



Life's too SHORT

Grants and Taxes

By Debra Dingman

Sometimes your tax dollars slip by unnoticed, and I think it is important for people to stay aware of some of the good that quietly happens. For example, in all that construction at Anderson Elementary School, I think many people forgot that we are re-investing in our schools and renovating them. During the entire time the construction was going on, almost all the children adapted well and there were no accidents or injuries.

The Dixon High School Barn and the expansive storage building that can protect small tractors and equipment, as well as the greenhouse are now being utilized by students. The money came from a grant. The grant came from the pocketbook of taxpayers although some grants come from big businesses and nonprofits.

It was also through a grant that significant upgrades to the two transitional houses near the Dixon Police Department have been paid. Now, each man will have his own bedroom and bathroom and hopefully help set them back on the better path to a working society.

After attending Dixon City Council meetings for many years now, I

hear the word "grants" over and over. Monies from the state and from the Federal government are often doled out as "grants" to help cities keep up infrastructure like bridges, roads, sewers, water; even parks and taking care of seniors.

But a staff person has to have the time and the know-how to find these grants. I can imagine this is a significant consumption of their time. But do not misunderstand, our taxes are the city's bread and butter. And, like our own home budgets, there is never enough and there is a need for constant improvements that take the funds.

I am reminded of that when I drive down Adams and notice the lane striping and crosswalks are faded to nothing, the potholes on Pedrick Road are dangerous, and the faux leather seats that City Council, School Board, and other ad-hoc committee groups sit on are plain embarrassing!

The priorities are police, fire and the city personnel to keep all the dots connected. Some of them work in mobile-home-like offices and others work in warehouses made into headquarters like our Dixon Read-Ride. Am I saying that I'm for another tax? Well, maybe.

It would be nice to have 'Welcome to Dixon' signs...

My husband and son might choke when they read this column but as I try to explain to them, the needs are not going away and won't even decrease in my lifetime so there is a certain amount of me that says we must accept this, or I will not see what I think most of us believe are typical standards for community living. I cannot emphasize this enough. Inside City limits are different from living in the County. For those of us who live in the city limits, we should be sharing the cost of safe, healthy, and yes, appealing standards.

Another sales tax increase initiative is being considered.

The sales tax is the most beneficial way that my brain can think of that spreads the cost of community living. But no taxpayer wants to give the City a blank check. An oversight committee has no authority, just advisory, and it is most important to realize that the City Council rules. If you care about where the money goes, you need to elect prudent council representatives and certainly watch (if not attend) City Council meetings. ★

Dixon News Briefs



The Dixon Rotary Club donated 50 \$ 10 gift cards and 28 back packs to the students at Dixon Maine Prairie High School recently. Pictured are Rotarian Herb Cross, school principal Angelina Arias and Dixon Rotary Club President, Marianne MacDonald. Rotary courtesy photo

MPG Staff

City Meetings

The City's Parks and Recreation meeting is set for Tuesday, February 27, at 7 p.m. at 600 East A Street. One can also participate in these meetings via Zoom or watch the meetings online in real time or afterwards via cityofdixon.us. Click on government, then on agendas.

Castillo's New Office

Castillo's Legal Life Support business opened an office in Dixon inside Almond Tree Mortgage and alongside Crystal Rico State Farm Insurance at 1115 Stratford Avenue, Suite D, across from Safeway Shopping Center. Lisa Castillo specializes in estate planning and matters of family law that don't require an attorney. Her office also does uncontested divorces, marital separation, child support payment arrangements, support modification, guardianship, name changes and adult adoptions. Call (707) 564-3977.

Celebrate Dixon

The Dixon Chamber of Commerce is proud to present "Celebrate Dixon" where we will honor the 61st Annual Citizen of the Year, the 28th Annual Business of the Year, the Ambassador of the Year, and the Veteran of the Year. A new category for the awards this year is the category of Nonprofit of the Year, and the 1st Annual award will also be given out.

The event takes place on Saturday, March 7 from 5 to 11 pm at the Olde Vets Hall at 231 N. First Street. Social Hour begins at 5 pm, and dinner will be served at 6 pm.

Following the delicious dinner of tri-tip, chicken, potatoes and salads, the awards will be presented to deserving Dixon citizens who have made a significant impact on the quality of life in Dixon.

In addition, there will also be raffle prizes and a silent auction to help offset the costs of the event.

Tickets are \$75 per person and are available at the Chamber of Commerce office at 220 North Jefferson Street.

Tickets must be purchased in advance, and no later than February 26. No tickets will be sold at the door.

For more information, call 707-678-2650 or email info@dixonchamber.org.

Sound Bath

On Sunday, March 3 from 3 to 5 p.m. Lois Pengilly, Sound Bath Healing Practitioner, will offer a Lotus Sound Bath for a \$30 donation to the Dixon Women's Improvement Club. Sound baths can help relieve insomnia, decrease depression, and relieve anxiety and stress. It induces complete relaxation, can help release emotional traumas, helps blood pressure, and can relieve physical pain. For a ticket, call Teri Brown at (916) 601-3371. Space is limited. Funds raised go toward Scholarships and Community Grants. It will be held at Busy Bee Studios, 1115 Stratford Avenue.

FFA Car Show

The Dixon High School Future Farmers of America will host their first FFA Car Show on Saturday, February 24, from noon to 4 p.m. at the high school, 555 College Way. Follow the signs.

Veterans Dinner

Breaded chicken with scalloped potatoes and vegetables plus a roll will be the dinner for tonight at the Veterans Memorial Hall starting at 5:30 p.m. Cost will be \$12 per person. The hall is located at 1305 North First Street and dress is casual. No reservations are necessary, and one does not have to be a veteran.

Cemetery Tour April 13

Mark your calendars for the next Silveyville Cemetery Tour on Saturday, April 13, guided by local History expert, Denise McBride. The last one was well-attended by about 30 people who learned many interesting facts and accounts of Dixon's history including Dixon's past residents. Wear comfortable walking shoes (Sandals are not recommended.) It will happen rain or shine on. Meet at the cemetery office. For more information, call McBride at (707) 483-2211. ★

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ARREST LOGS UPDATED DAILY

FBI Offers \$25,000 Reward to Help Locate Wanted Fugitive

FBI Sacramento Office of Public Affairs News Release

SOLANO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Sacramento Field Office, announces a reward of up to \$25,000 for information leading to the identification, arrest, and conviction of Mario Guadalupe Vasquez. Vasquez is alleged to have fled prosecution for homicide in Solano County, California. Vasquez is described as a 31-year-old male with black hair and brown eyes who weighs 200 pounds and stands five-feet, seven inches tall.

Vasquez was charged with homicide on March 20, 2013, in the Superior Court of California, Solano County. Court documents allege that Vasquez shot and killed 20-year-old Jesus Adrian "Jessie" Gutierrez Amaya, during an attempted

robbery on Hayes Street in Fairfield, California, on Feb. 1, 2012. Local law enforcement, including the Fairfield Police Department, continue their efforts to locate and apprehend Guadalupe Vasquez.

The FBI obtained a federal arrest warrant for Vasquez in the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of California on Feb. 8, 2022, alleging Vasquez fled to avoid prosecution. Vasquez has ties to communities in Jalisco, Mexico, and California.

Anyone with information that may help locate Vasquez is urged to call their local FBI office or United States embassy or consulate. Tips may also be submitted online at tips.fbi.gov.

Posters featuring fugitives, kidnappings, and other cases in need of additional information from the public are available on the FBI Most Wanted page, <https://www.fbi.gov/wanted>. ★

Plan for Aging



Elaine Clark, Executive Director of Napa/Solano Area Agency on Aging, left, listens to a conference participant talk about lifting an older person out of a wheelchair.

Story and photos by Debra Dingman

DIXON, CA (MPG) - How old were you when you first looked at your parent and thought they looked old? That was the question asked recently of about 100 people gathered to learn the Master Plan for Aging in Solano County.

"When you walked in the living room and found them both napping on the couch?" asked Elaine Clark, Executive Director of Napa/Solano Area Agency on Aging. Some of the answers were when a parent needed bifocals, would not drive at night, or started going bald.

"The 60-year-old group is the largest in Solano County going from 100,000 to 148,000 through 2026," Clark reported. "Solano residents are living longer than ever before with an average life expectancy of 80 years. Solano's population is getting older and it's changing Solano."

The large meeting was organized by Solano County, Napa/Solano Area Agency on Aging, and Innovative Health Solutions to create an Advisory Committee and was held in Fairfield as a proactive response to the accelerated growth of the older adult population in California.

"We don't have enough convalescent homes. Home Health Aides need to get paid more. We need to build homes that have two bedrooms and can allow a wheelchair into the shower," said Solano County Supervisor Monica Brown. "The only way to deal with this is through political action. Who are



There was a large turnout of men and women to form a citizen advisory on Solano's aging adults. About 100 people attended the Master Plan for Aging seminar held recently in Fairfield.

we electing that will care about this?"

Turning to the audience for workshop-style brainstorming, the tables of people were to identify gaps in services or support that help older adults and differently abled adults to maintain their quality of life. One idea was to give tax breaks to owners who rent to seniors. Other ideas were to offer discounted or free legal services for trusts and wills. Another was to develop more senior low-income condominiums, and another was to encourage co- or shared housing.

"In helping our seniors, don't tell them to go on the computer," exclaimed one audience member. "Provide one-on-one information or instruction or give them a paper because there are predators online when one searches for senior affordable housing."

There were five 'bold' goals listed for 2030: 1. Housing for all ages and stages. Communities will be age, disability, and dementia-friendly and will be climate- and disaster-ready. 2. Health reimaged. Seniors will

have access to the services they need to live at home in communities. And will optimize health and quality of life.

3. Inclusion and equity, not isolation. There will be lifelong opportunities for work, volunteering, engagement, and leadership and will be protected from isolation, discrimination, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. 4. Caregiving that works: Seniors will be prepared for and supported through the rewards and challenges of caring for aging loved ones. 5. Affording aging. Elders will have economic security for as long as they live by increasing elder economic sufficiency.

Dr. Norma Lisenko, Executive Director for Innovative Health Solutions strongly encouraged people to get involved and listed future community meetings and work groups.

If you would like to host a listening session at an existing meeting or event, attend one, or help with one, email her at normalisenko@innovativehealthsolutions.com. Information can be found at www.mpsolano.com. ★

Girl Scouts Start Cookie Sales



Dixon Girl Scout cookie sales are happening in front of grocery stores like this stand set up in front of Grocery Outlet last year. This year the little ladies will be selling in front of Safeway and Walmart. More locations may be added soon. Check out the official "Cookie Finder" by searching online. Courtesy photo

By Girls Scouts of Central California

DIXON, CA (MPG) - Girl Scouts Heart of Central California (GSHCC) is excited to announce its upcoming Mega Drop events, taking place in both Sacramento and Turlock. This annual event is a highly anticipated occasion where hundreds of thousands of Girl Scout Cookies are delivered to troops and eager customers alike.

Girl Scouts from all over the greater Sacramento area will descend on Sutter Health Park in Sacramento and the Stanislaus County Fairgrounds in Turlock to pick up Girl Scout Cookies to provide to their cookie customers. The two events, scheduled for Feb. 17 and Feb. 19, respectively, mark a significant annual milestone for the organization, showcasing its commitment to empowering young girls through the Girl Scout Cookie Program.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world. Through selling cookies, Girl Scouts learn essential business skills such as goal setting, money management and customer service. These experiences not only prepare girls for future success but also instill confidence and leadership qualities that will serve them throughout their lives.

In addition to promoting entrepreneurship, proceeds from the Girl Scout Cookie Program play a vital role in funding various programs and initiatives within Girl Scouts Heart of Central California, including those focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and

Mathematics) education. These programs provide girls with opportunities to explore their interests in STEM fields, encouraging them to pursue careers in areas traditionally underrepresented by women.

"At Girl Scouts Heart of Central California, we are dedicated to empowering girls to become leaders in their communities," said Girl Scouts Heart of Central California Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Linda E. Farley. "The Girl Scout Cookie Program not only teaches valuable life skills but also helps us fund two STEM Centers + MakerSpaces, a mobile STEM Center + MakerSpace, and provides resources to more than 4,000 volunteers, ensuring that all girls have access to opportunities for growth and development."

Don't miss out on your chance to support the next generation of female leaders and indulge in delicious cookies!

How to purchase cookies:

- If you know a registered Girl Scout, reach out to her today to find out how she's selling cookies.

- Supporters will begin to see cookies available for local purchase in front of stores beginning Feb. 23 through March 17.

-Use the Cookie Finder feature on the Girl Scouts' website, which provides a convenient and accessible way for cookie enthusiasts to locate nearby cookie booths.

-Text COOKIES to 59618.

For more information about Girl Scouts Heart of Central California, visit www.girlscoutshcc.org. ★

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Solano Home & Garden Show Returns

Continued from page 1

a weekend of inspiration, education, and fun!"

Admission to the Solano County Home & Garden Show is \$8, with children under 12 years admitted free of charge. Tickets sold at the gate. Cash only. Don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity to kickstart your home and garden projects for the year ahead.

The Solano County Home & Garden Show is an annual event dedicated to showcasing the latest trends and innovations in home improvement, landscaping, and gardening. With expert speakers, exhibitors, and interactive activities, the show aims to inspire and educate homeowners looking to enhance their living spaces.

For more information visit www.SolanoHomeShow.com. ★

Solano EDC Launches Small Business Loan Program Countywide

Solano Economic Development Corporation News Release

SOLANO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The Solano County Economic Development Corporation (Solano EDC), with funding from the Solano County, announces the launch of the Solano Biz Grow small business loan program. The loan program is designed to assist small businesses and non-profits impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The \$4 million loan program offers below market, fixed rate, loans with a 5-year term.

"The Solano Biz Grow loan program will provide small businesses and non-profits with an important tool to help address the financial impacts of the pandemic. I want to thank the Board of Supervisors for allocating the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funding. They truly understand the importance of small businesses and non-profits in our local economy." said Chris Rico, Solano EDC President and CEO.

Solano Biz Grow offers to small businesses an ability to borrow with a lower credit score than traditional lending. This funding will help improve small business survivability, stability, and expansion, which in turn facilitates job creation in the

local community. Loan principal repayments will revolve back into the fund, creating a lasting and ongoing resource for the community.

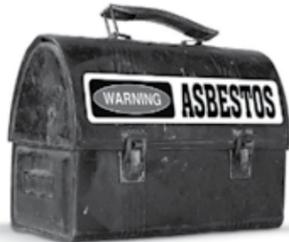
Solano EDC is partnering with the Solano Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to provide business assistance and on-going capacity building support. Small businesses and non-profits must meet certain eligibility criteria. Eligibility includes a demonstrated impact from the pandemic, along with certain areas of Solano County and certain types of businesses that are automatically eligible. Small businesses or non-profits must be operating on or before December 31, 2021.

Loans will range in size from \$25,000 to \$125,000.

The Solano EDC is working with the following local financial institutions on Solano Biz Grow:

- First Northern Bank
- Travis Credit Union
- Valley Strong Credit Union

For more information about the program, including eligibility and how to apply, please contact Wendi Reed, Solano EDC Loan Program Manager, at 707-864-1855, ext. 21 or Wendi@SolanoEDC.org; or visit <https://solanoedc.org/solano-biz-grow-1/revolving-loan-fund/>. ★



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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

Tuesday, February 13

- 0808 - Theft report taken in the 500 block of Wisteria Lane.
- 0946 - School Resource Call in the 400 block of East A Street.
- 1251 - School Resource Call in the 200 block of North Lincoln Street.
- 1325 - Information report taken at the PD.

Monday, February 12

- 2056 - Possession of a controlled substance arrest report was taken in the 1000 block of North 1st St. Officers conducted an enforcement stop and contacted (S) Jose Zarate Jr. (37) of Dixon. Zarate was arrested and transported to the Dixon Police Department. Zarate was cited and released.
- 0230 - Assist Outside Agency report was taken in the 400 block of West D St.
- 0733 - School resource call in the 300 block of Pheasant Run Drive.
- 0924 - Theft report taken in the PD lobby. 0954 Theft report taken in the 200 block of East Dorset Drive.
- 1100 - Restraining order violation reported in the 200 block of South 8th Street.
- 1118 - Stolen trailer reported in the 2200 block of North 1st Street.
- 1128 - Stolen vehicle recovery in the 100 block of Dorset Drive. A Dixon Officer located an occupied stolen vehicle and conducted a high risk stop on the car. Isaac Johnston (21) of Vallejo was arrested for possession of a stolen vehicle. Isaac was taken to county jail.
- 1242 - Found bike report taken in the PD lobby.
- 1621 - Burglary report taken in the 1200 block of Stratford Avenue.

Sunday, February 11

- 0809 - Stolen vehicle reported in the 400 block of South Almond Street also resulted in the recovery of the stolen vehicle, a short distance from the RP's house.
- 0930 - Theft report taken in the 1100 block of Jacobs Drive.
- 1029 - Missing person report taken in the 400 block of North Jefferson Street.
- 1039 - Agency assist for Solano Sheriff in the 700 block of North Almond Street.
- 1425 - Theft report taken in the 700 block of West B Street.

Saturday, February 10

- 2130 Hours - Brandon Hourmouzus (49) of Dixon was contacted in the 100 block of East A Street and arrested for public intoxication.
- 0710 - Suspicious Vehicle 1400 block Ary Lane. Eva Alvarez (37) of Woodland was arrested for outstanding warrants. She was cited and released from the PD.

Friday, February 9

- 0855 - Extortion Report 300 block Horsetail Court.
- 0913 - Hit and Run Collision 800 block Elm Drive.
- 1125 - Domestic Battery 1500 block Valley Glen Drive. Edward Walker (35) of Sacramento was arrested for domestic battery and booked into the Solano County Jail.
- 1130 - Grand Theft Report 200 block East Dorset Drive.
- 1308 - Extortion Report at Dixon PD.

Thursday, February 8

- 2300 Hours - Missing person report in the 400 block of East Mayes.
- 0624 - Suspicious Circumstances 100 block North Adams Street.
- 0821 - Suspicious Circumstances 100 block Dorset Drive.
- 1100 - Vehicle Burglary 1300 block North Lincoln Street.
- 1335 - Domestic Violence report 400 block Ellesmere Drive.
- 1526 - Fraud report 1500 block Valley Glen Drive.



FOR THE LOVE OF BOOKS
By Amy Shane
BOOK REVIEW & SPECIAL EVENTS EDITOR • ✉ amy-shane@att.net • 📷 amy_fortheloveofbooks

The Series that will Spark the Fairytale in all of Us

The Selection Series Box Set
by Kiera Cass

Thirty-five girls compete but only one will win the Prince's heart. America is just an average lower-caste girl who works hard to make ends meet for her family. Living in the newly united country of Illea, people live and die in the caste their families have been assigned to. But America doesn't care about castes. Her family survives with just enough food on their table every night, and she gets to do what she loves, sing and perform, as she secretly hopes to marry the forbidden love of her life, Aspen. However, America's life drastically changes for the worse when the country announces the lottery- a competition for all eligible girls to compete for the Prince's heart and be crowned Princess of Illea. Even though every girl in the country eagerly anticipates the lottery, America only sees entering as a way to ruin her life.



and friendship are tested to the greatest lengths as the remaining girls' lives are shattered, and the real meaning behind holding the crown is presented before them. While the competition has forced America to grow stronger than she ever thought possible, it has also highlighted the downfalls of being royalty. Teaching America not only the type of leader she could fight to become but also if she wants to fight for that type of life, and turn her back on love.

remains in the competition by being who she truly is: an outspoken and intriguing girl who throws caution into the wind. America is not afraid of telling anyone what she thinks, including the Prince. Even with her brutal honesty, the Prince can't help but be enamored with her, keeping her in the competition purely for her firm conviction.

Charged with emotional angst and heartbreaking struggle, Kiera Cass thrills readers with her enchanting and enthralling *The Selection Series*. Beautiful, as it is endearing, this series will break readers' hearts as well as mend them, repeatedly. Leaving the conclusion to etch itself permanently in the remnants of their hearts, forever.

As the competition narrows down to the Elite, only six girls remain, and America becomes torn between her first love and Prince Maxon, yet she is the only one in the competition who finds her heart divided. The remaining girls know exactly what they want and will go to any lengths to safeguard their chance to win the Prince's heart and the crown. Love

America and Prince Maxon's journey is realistic and honest, causing readers' minds to reel into endless conclusions. Readers will be shocked by the moments that forever changed the competition and opened America's heart, forcing readers to question the path America will ultimately choose. ★



Riley Reviews

“MADAME WEB” MUDDLES ALONG;
“LAND OF BAD” TENSE ACTION SCENES

A Film and TV Review by Tim Riley

“MADAME WEB” Rated PG-13

A reasonable judgment about a film's possible appeal may be discerned from watching a trailer. After all, the studio releasing the movie has invested heavily in the production and hopes for a box office win.

In the case of “Madame Web,” the trailer offers little incentive to rush to a theater. A singer wails “What do you want from me?” The thought comes to mind that the recurring tone of the lyrics couldn't be more irritating.

The idea of Dakota Johnson in the role of Cassie Webb to become a superhero is not off-putting on its own. If anything, Johnson's Cassie is failed by a script that too often makes little sense.

The story begins with a flashback to the Amazon jungle in 1973 when Cassie's pregnant mother Constance (Kerry Bishe) is a scientist doing research into rare spiders. Her guide, Ezekial Sims (Tahar Rahim), has his own agenda.

Tragedy strikes when Cassandra's death occurs just about when she gives birth to Cassie. With her mother bitten by a mystical spider, Cassie develops paranormal powers as an adult.

Thirty years later, Cassie is a New York paramedic, working alongside her best friend Ben Parker (Adam Scott). If Ben's last name sounds familiar, it's because he's the future uncle to Peter Parker, aka Spider-Man.

A work-related accident causes Cassie to realize her hidden superpower of being able to see into the near future. Falling into the East River is a near-death experience that triggers clairvoyant powers.

Meanwhile, Ezekiel is on a hunt for three teenage girls in New York. It has something to do with Cassie having visions that Julia (Sydney Sweeney), Mattie (Celeste O'Connor), and Anya (Isebella Merced) are marked for death.

A feasible bet to make is that “Madame Web,” for all its spider-related wish fulfillment, does not seem destined for another superhero franchise. Lacking any psychic powers, I am unwilling to place a wager because anything can happen in show business.

You may get the idea that Dakota Johnson didn't want to be in this movie, and if so, a sequel would be nothing more than another payday. Sadly, studios have no aversion to turning out an inferior product to cash in with a sequel.

If there is going to be another arachnid-themed installment, the genre would be best served by another Tom Holland turn as the web-slinging Spider-Man, and the next chapter is reportedly in the works.

Depending on how far the appetite for more Spider-Man films exists,

it wouldn't take much effort to make a connection between Madame Web and Peter Parker/Spider-Man. A strong bond exists between Cassie and Ben Parker, but then Ben gets killed during a robbery, as we already know.

One can only speculate on the future of Sony Pictures so-called “Spider-Verse,” and this reviewer has neither the bandwidth nor desire to figure out anything more than “Madame Web” lacks merit for a sequel.

“LAND OF BAD” Rated R

“Land of Bad” is a high-octane action picture of a daring military operation that is almost certain to have far more public appeal than it does with many critics tired of the genre.

The awkward title reflects the title card introduction of a Southeast Asia island in the Sulu Sea that is home to “violent extremist groups” that are at war with us but we just don't know it.

A rescue mission by a quartet of Special Forces to extract a CIA asset being held hostage by terrorists will undoubtedly discover that the war will come at them hard and fast.

Liam Hemsworth's Sergeant J.J. “Playboy” Kinney is not battle-tested when he joins the team at the last-minute to handle communications with Sergeant Eddie “Reaper” Grimm (Russell Crowe), who is the drone pilot tracking the squad's moves and launching missiles when needed.

Playboy's teammates consist of tough, hardened veteran comrades, including Milo Ventimiglia's Captain John “Sugar” Sweet, Luke Hemsworth's Sergeant Abel, and Ricky Whittle's Bishop.

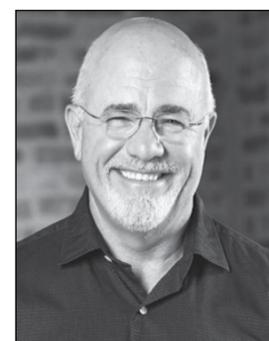
The bad guys are personified by Islamic terrorist Hashimi (Robert Rabiah), the sadistic leader of Abu Sayyaf radical group who decapitates a woman in front of her husband, in a move designed to terrorize other innocent victims.

Getting caught up in the effort to save the village people, the team ends up in a merciless firefight where it appears that Playboy is the only survivor who then flees into the jungle while being chased by heavily armed thugs.

On the run, Playboy relies on Reaper to guide him to a spot for a helicopter rescue, but things are hardly that simple. At the Air Force base in Nevada, Reaper is so committed to the mission that he risks insubordination by arguing with an arrogant superior officer.

“Land of Bad” belongs to Hemsworth for his battlefield heroics and to Crowe for his cocky, amusing self-confidence and unwavering commitment to his job, spending his time mainly confined to a chair staring at a screen.

Easily dismissed as formulaic, “Land of Bad” is nevertheless replete with thrilling, tense action sequences for action fans to enjoy. ★



Dave Ramsey Says

to be so blunt, but you've got a really big mess on your hands.

Long story short, the money you make at another full-time job is likely to decide whether you can stay in your home. If you've got a mortgage, home equity loan and business debts hanging over your head, the chances of this are slim. You probably need to consider the idea moving into a small, affordable apartment for a while, too. If you do this, get your debts paid off and your finances back in order—which includes living on a budget and saving—you might be able to buy a house again in a few years.

I know the idea of giving up your home and business is hurtful, but sometimes when you have a serious illness, extensive surgery is needed to fix the problem. And right now, you've got a very serious financial illness.

I want you to understand how I'm looking at this,

Tammy. The house alone is not the problem. You borrowed money to open a business, and that was your first mistake. You also have no savings, which is another mistake, and now your business isn't making a profit. See how all of it combined adds up into one big mess?

I love your spirit, and the fact that you want to be an entrepreneur. But you've got to get control of your money first. If you don't, this thing will eat you alive.

– Dave

Dave Ramsey is an eight-time national bestselling 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,

I'm a single mom, and I opened my own small business last year. The business isn't growing at all, and my mom and dad are helping me with the bills. On top of all this, I don't receive any child support payments from my ex-husband. But my biggest concern is our home. I bought it four years ago, and when I opened my business, I did it with a home equity loan. Do you have any advice?

– Tammy

Dear Tammy,

You need to close up your business, at least temporarily, and go find some money-making work. I'm sorry

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 - "He's nominated for playing Leonard Bernstein
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 - Snap up
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 - Howard of radio fame
 - Death-related
 - One of the Earnhardts
 - Spermatozoa counterparts
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 - Review service, with .com
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 - At any time
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 - Trojan War story
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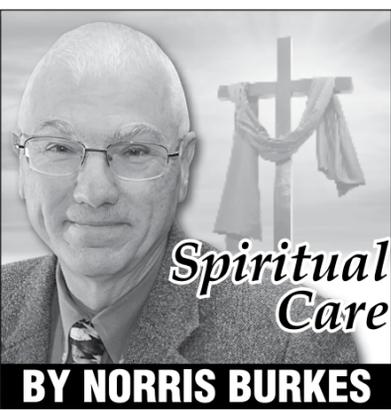
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Something Stinks? Is it I?



It seems that whenever pastors preach to a sparse crowd, they often begin by quoting Matthew 18:20. However, they remove the verse from its context to passively express their disappointment for the low numbers.

“This reminds me of what Jesus said,” they’ll jest. “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

During my years as a hospital chaplain, I often paraphrased this verse to convey my frustration for yet another staff meeting.

“Wherever there are two or more chaplains gathered in his name, there will be a chaplain staff meeting.”

Nevertheless, our hospital staff meetings at Sutter Medical Center could occasionally be interesting.

They were led by our Spiritual Care supervisor, Lisa Nordlander. Lisa was a petite, fiftyish woman who supervised a staff consisting of a secretary, three full-time chaplains and six chaplain interns.

One day, she sent out a message: “All hands on deck for a joint meeting of staff and interns.”

A few hours later, we assembled in a conference room where I’d like to tell you we looked like Jedi Knights perched on chairs waiting for divine wisdom from Obi-Wan Kenobi.

But on this particular day, things took a surprise turn when Lisa tossed white plastic bags on the table and asked her chaplains to each claim one. Taking the bags, we spilled their contents onto the table — a toothbrush, toothpaste, mouthwash, tongue brush and dental floss.

Ooohh kaaay. The supervisor’s husband was a dentist, but given her professional demeanor, product endorsement seemed a little beneath her.

“This is a friendly reminder,” she managed to say among the giggles, “that good dental hygiene is a part of good spiritual hygiene.”

Yes, apparently when it comes to spiritual care, oral cleanliness is next to godliness.

Lisa continued her teaching moment. “We work in close quarters,” she said, struggling to smother her erupting smile.

“Chaplains often whisper to nursing staff and lean close in their patient visits. These patients may be sensitive to certain odors, so please make sure you are well acquainted with these products.”

I can tell you we all searched the faces around the table, wondering which chaplain inspired Lisa to bring the toothbrushes.

Was it our Catholic priest who drank too much coffee?

Was it I, the one who loved the cafeteria onion rings?

Was it the new intern snacking on tuna crackers?

We all had a side-splitting laugh over Lisa’s artful presentation of such a personal matter, but I couldn’t help but remember a gathering of 12 — the Last Supper when Jesus predicted one of his disciples (Judas) would betray him.

Like the disciples who muttered, “Is it I, Lord?” we chaplains blew into our cupped hands, taking a quick whiff and wondering, “Is it me, Lisa? Am I the reason you are saying this?”

There are times in our exchanges with people that we become pretty sure something stinks. On those occasions, what is our first reaction? Do we lean close to our friends and examine their smell first? Or do we check our own breath?

We’re not perfect and we certainly won’t always smell perfect, but our imperfection gives us two choices.

We can deny it and make others suffer or we can celebrate that we are all in the same boat. We’re all human and we all have the potential to, well, there’s no other way to say it... stink.

The truth is, we are pretty human and the spirit we breathe on people may not always be the freshest one.

It’s something we should keep in mind as we enter the Lenten season. Take a hard look at yourself, check your spirit. Examine your intentions. And question your motives.

Ask yourself, “Am I the one who has caused the problem?” or “Am I the one who holds the solution?” These must be among the first questions we ask when we smell something not quite right.

Which leads me to my final paraphrase of Matthew 18:20 – “Wherever two or more are gathered in his name, there will always be imperfections.” ★



Dare to Live Without Limits

by Bryan Golden

The IF in Life



Life is filled with ifs. The ever constant dilemma is, “If I do this, what will happen?” People also lament about the past with thoughts of “If I had only done things differently.” Then there is worry about the future with “What will I do if that happens?”

You can’t go forward in life when you are caught up in the past. Although you can learn from the past, you can’t change it. Getting caught up in thoughts of “if only I had done such and such then things would have been different,” is a total waste of time.

Learn the lessons your past has to teach, then focus on the ifs of the present. Rather than becoming stressed when faced with many ifs, be thankful you live in a country that provides the freedom to have so many choices.

Ifs serve a valuable role by enabling you to evaluate various options. One pitfall is inaction as a result of becoming overwhelmed by all of the choices. Doing nothing is at times a valid option, but only when it is intentional, not as a result of indecision.

Make the best decision you can and move forward. Don’t become immobilized due to paralysis by analysis. Often, a person is afraid to make a decision because they can’t guarantee the outcome. Some people even project negative scenarios for every if they are considering.

“What if I change jobs and then I’m unhappy?” “What if I go out on a date and then the other person rejects me?” “What if I paint my living room and then don’t like the color?” “What if I get my car fixed and then it breaks down again?”

A person who always assumes a negative outcome for each option most likely doesn’t make any decisions at all. Or when they do, they subconsciously program their mind to produce, or attract, the very outcome they feared.

Why not anticipate a positive outcome? It takes no more effort, yet conditions your mind to produce or attract good things. You don’t have to be afraid. Make your best pick based on all the information you have at the time. The negative ifs listed above could be altered to provide a better chance of success.

“What if I change jobs and then I’m really pleased with my new position.” “What if I go on a date and then we get along great?” “What if I paint my living room and then love the new look?” “What if I get my car fixed and then it serves me reliably for many more miles?”

So, what if things don’t turn out the way you had hoped? Then you come up with some more choices and change what you don’t like. Don’t be hard on yourself. No one gets it right every time. All you can do is consider all of the options and then make an intelligent, informed decision.

Just as it’s pointless to bemoan the past, it is also a waste of energy to fret about the future. When you become engrossed with the ifs of tomorrow, you take your attention away from the ifs of today.

The best way to plan for your future is to pay attention to the ifs of the present. The person who worries about what happens if they are not happy tomorrow, isn’t going to be happy today. A better approach is to concentrate on completing the following: “If I’m going to be happy now, then I have to do _____ today.”

Life doesn’t stand still and neither should you. Welcome the ifs as an opportunity to live the way you want to.

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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Tavallaei D.M.D. Corporation, 400 Plaza Drive Suite 120-311, Folsom, CA 95630.
 Date filed in Solano County: January 16, 2024. The Registrant commenced to transact business under the above business name on: December 1, 2017.

This Business is conducted by: A Corporation. NOTICE: In Accordance with subdivision (a) of section 17920 A Fictitious Name Statement generally expires at the end of five years from the date on which it was filed in the office of the county clerk, except as provided in subdivision (b) of section 17920, where it expires 40 days after any change in the facts set forth in the statement pursuant to section 17913 other than a change in the residence address of registered owner. A new fictitious Business name statement must be filed before the expiration January 15, 2029. The filing of this statement does not itself authorize the use in this state of a Fictitious Business Name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see section 14411 ET SEQ., business, and professions code.)
 Publish: Feb 9, 16, 23, March 1, 2024
 MAKE 3-1-24

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO. 2024-000075
 The following persons are doing business as: Smile Time Dental, 1955 W. Texas Street #2B, Fairfield, CA 94533.
 S. Jang DDS Incorporation, 400 Plaza Drive Suite 120-361, Folsom, CA 95630.
 Date filed in Solano County: January 16, 2024. The Registrant

commenced to transact business under the above business name on: December 1, 2017.
 This Business is conducted by: A Corporation. NOTICE: In Accordance with subdivision (a) of section 17920 A Fictitious Name Statement generally expires at the end of five years from the date on which it was filed in the office of the county clerk, except as provided in subdivision (b) of section 17920, where it expires 40 days after any change in the facts set forth in the statement pursuant to section 17913 other than a change in the residence address of registered owner. A new fictitious Business name statement must be filed before the expiration January 15, 2029. The filing of this statement does not itself authorize the use in this state of a Fictitious Business Name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see section 14411 ET SEQ., business, and professions code.)
 Publish: Feb 9, 16, 23, March 1, 2024
 MAKE 3-1-24

commenced to transact business under the above business name on: December 1, 2017.

This Business is conducted by: A Corporation. NOTICE: In Accordance with subdivision (a) of section 17920 A Fictitious Name Statement generally expires at the end of five years from the date on which it was filed in the office of the county clerk, except as provided in subdivision (b) of section 17920, where it expires 40 days after any change in the facts set forth in the statement pursuant to section 17913 other than a change in the residence address of registered owner. A new fictitious Business name statement must be filed before the expiration January 15, 2029. The filing of this statement does not itself authorize the use in this state of a Fictitious Business Name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see section 14411 ET SEQ., business, and professions code.)
 Publish: Feb 9, 16, 23, March 1, 2024
 SMILE 3-1-24

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO. 2024-0000207
 The following persons are doing business as: Navigatere, Morgan Lane Group, Navigate Real Estate, Rivetti Real Estate, Navigate Property Management, Navigate RE, 4167 Suisun Valley Road, Fairfield, CA 94534.
 Navigate RE Co, 4167 Suisun Valley Road, Fairfield, CA 94534.
 Date filed in Solano County: February 5, 2024. The Registrant commenced to transact business under the above business name on: N/A This Business is conducted by: A Corporation. NOTICE: In Accordance with subdivision (a) of section 17920 A Fictitious Name Statement generally expires at the end of five years from the date on which it was filed in the office of the county clerk, except as provided in subdivision (b) of section 17920, where it expires 40 days after any change in the facts set forth in the statement pursuant

to section 17913 other than a change in the residence address of registered owner. A new fictitious Business name statement must be filed before the expiration February 4, 2029. The filing of this statement does not itself authorize the use in this state of a Fictitious Business Name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see section 14411 ET SEQ., business, and professions code.)
 Publish: Feb 16, 23, March 1, 8, 2024
 NAVIGAT 3-8-24

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE CHANGE OF NAME

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SOLANO ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE CHANGE OF NAME CASE #CU24-00616

Lan Quach and Karl Tran filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows: Clifford Ngoi Tran to Clifford Dang Khoi Tran

THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter shall appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing. March 20, 2024, 9:00 a.m. Department 3, Room 3, Superior Court of California, County of Solano, Old Solano Court House, 580 Texas Street Fairfield, CA 94533
 Judge of the Superior Court: Christine A. Carringer
 Dated: February 1, 2024
 Publish: Feb 23, March 1, 8, 15, 2024
 TRAN 3-15-24



Farmers Assess Damages After Recent California Storm Surge

With a respite from stormy weather, farmers say they are surveying for damage and waiting for the ground to dry so they can access fields and orchards to make repairs or do other practices. Historic and deadly storms that brought two weeks of rain and powerful winds to California led to mudslides, flooding and widespread power outages and related evacuations. A state of emergency was declared for eight Southern California counties. Even with farming challenges caused by the storms, farmers say they are grateful for the winter weather, which adds water to the state.

Valentine’s Day Inspires, Tests Flower Retailers and Wholesalers

With Valentine’s Day falling on a Wednesday and clear skies forecast for most regions in the U.S., flower retailers were preparing for a busy Feb. 14. Two separate consumer data analyses projected record Valentine’s Day flower sales this year. The holiday typically trails only Mother’s Day in flower sales. For California cut flower farmers, the winter holiday brought a welcome boost in demand alongside renewed frustration. For two years running, dark skies and stormy weather have impacted flower crops grown in the state for Valentine’s Day.

Researchers Strive to Ramp Up Studies to Meet Needs of Organic Farmers

California leads the nation in organic agricultural production, accounting for more than \$14 billion in organic sales and 36% of the U.S. organic market in 2021. Yet research has lagged behind the exponential growth of organic farming in the state. Now that trend may be changing, thanks to an increasing focus on supporting organic studies and information sharing. With organic studies drawing increasing funding interest, researchers and growers are looking to identify potential study areas that are best connected to day-to-day challenges of organic farming.

USDA Offers Grants Up to \$250,000 to Inspire ‘Value-Added’ Farm Products

Federal funding is available under the Value-Added Producer Grants program to help farmers and ranchers generate new products and create marketing opportunities. The U.S. Department of Agriculture may award up to \$75,000 for planning activities or up to \$250,000 for capital expenses related to producing and marketing value-added agricultural products. USDA said it is interested in proposals for initiatives aimed at reducing pollution and increasing resilience to impacts of climate change. Some \$31 million in funding is available through the program. ★

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Where Seniors Are Cool

Story and photos
by Debra Dingman

DIXON, CA (MPG) - The Four Seasons 55+ Community would make almost any person in their 60s swoon when they see the resort-like amenities like the huge luxury swimming pool that isn't over 5-feet deep and the large spa where each has ADA lifts. It's like a 5-star hotel with wide, circular-shaped lounging chairs, four pickleball courts, and an expansive barbecue area complete with bar stools and two different types of grills and cooking stations.

The Club [house] in Dixon also has a classroom-sized yoga deck, a manicured grass area for summer concerts, and two dog parks—one for little dogs and one for big ones. And these are only the amenities on the outside of the clubhouse.

Indoors, there is a banquet-sized kitchen for when one wants to have a family get-together or party, a well-equipped workout center equal to three spacious rooms that have treadmills, bicycles, ellipticals, and other assorted work out machines plus a wall full of weights.

There is a living room area with a big screen television for having friends watch a Super Bowl with you and another room filled with a full-size pool table and a gaming table for checkers.

These are all free to use for residents because they are part of the HOA fee, currently at \$191 and only \$260 at complete build out. The development has 78 of its 302 homes sold but will host the grand opening of 'The Club' in a few weeks. Neighbors are excited.

"We have several homes filled and they are over here all the time," said Jason Davenport, Project Superintendent, who was working with Project Engineer Davis Rodigo.

"They walk their dogs. They ride their bikes, and they're intrigued by what's happening. I



At Four Seasons 55+ Community in Dixon, 'The Club' is a block-long piece of property that features resort-style amenities including luxurious indoor gathering rooms, huge pool and spa, large outdoor activity areas, and even two dog parks.



Left to right, Jennifer Castiglioni, sales associate for KHovnanian Home Builders, Jason Davenport, project superintendent, and Davis Rodigo, project engineer. Davis Rodigo offered tours to new residents at the new retirement community that has opened in Dixon.



The huge pool is gated and part of "The Club," which is one of the many benefits to the Homeowners Association in the Four Seasons development.

think they're happy they got to watch it all get built," added Davenport. He said he enjoys talking with people and invites them to go for a walk around the grounds so he can show them everything.

The men met up with Jennifer Castiglioni to show off the outdoor amphitheater where there will be planned shows like

concerts, a comedy show, and poetry readings, according to Castiglioni, Sales Associate for KHovnanian Home Builders.

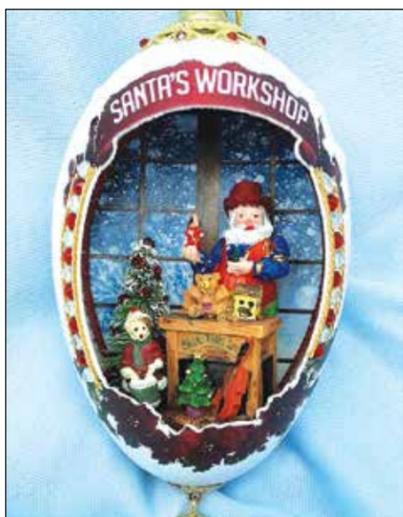
"We are creating a true community. People need people," she said glowing with enthusiasm. "The homes are priced from mid-500 to 600 and they are 1460 square feet to 2194." She emphasized the opportunities for people

to get to know their neighbors and even revealed the company will be hiring a "Coordinator of Fun."

The community is gated and offers plenty of ways to stay active outdoors with walking trails and two bocce courts and because of Dixon's location, there are plenty of simple road trips for those who want to discover more.

For more information on home prices, closing costs, options, and upgrades, drop by the model homes at the edge of Dixon just off West A Street at 400 Farmhouse Way or call (707) 348-0505 to visit in person or schedule a virtual meeting. Open hours are Tuesday and Thursday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Wednesdays 1 - 5 p.m. ★

Egg Artists Raise Funds for Shriners Children's Hospital



These eggs and more will be featured in 11 classes on making egg art. Preregister for the classes at www.norcaleggshow.com or Northern California Eggstravaganza on Facebook. Photos courtesy of Diana Macias

By Carol Feineman

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Local fine artists are invited to be in the 32nd annual Northern California Eggstravaganza Egg 'N' Art Show and Sale that benefits the Shriners Children's Northern California hospital for children in Sacramento.

The show and sale runs from April 12 to April 14 in Elk Grove. All proceeds from the event go to the Shriners Children's prosthetic department.

The Northern California Egg Artists ran the show as a club activity for years and Diana Macias, a club member and a Wilton egg artist, now

organizes the show.

Macias expects that a few hundred eggs will be on exhibit from regional and national artists at the event.

"Some people have never seen egg art and they will be surprised and astonished to see what can be done with an egg and the types of art possible with eggs," Macias said. "It's not what you think when you think of dying eggs for Easter eggs; it's real fine arts. Everything that artists have done in art, all of those arts can be done on an egg. There's no limit to what you can do."

According to the Library of Congress, egg art is one of the oldest

decorative arts. In 2010, a University of Bordeaux (France) team led by Pierre-Jean Texier found etched ostrich eggs in South Africa dating back 65,000 years ago.

Each year, egg artists at the Northern California Eggstravaganza Egg 'N' Art Show and Sale donate artwork that will be raffled with all proceeds befitting the children's hospital. Show genres include porcelain, carving, beading, jewels, miniaturists and sculpting.

Last year's show in West Sacramento included artists from Berkeley and New York, Texas, Washington and Idaho. This year's show will be in Elk Grove's SES

Hall, with artists from throughout the United States, according to Macias.

Public viewing hours will be from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 13 and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. April 14. Admission is free. The SES Hall is at 10428 E. Stockton Blvd., Elk Grove.

While finding out more about egg art, viewers can also learn more about the Shriners Children's Hospital. Shriners volunteers will provide pamphlets and signage about the nonprofit hospital and answer questions.

Event attendees can also make egg art at a "learning table" for \$5 with all proceeds going to the Shriners Hospital. The learning table will be

open from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on April 12 and April 13. Children at least 6 years old up to adults can work on the projects designed for beginners. All materials are supplied.

Eleven classes on making different types of egg art will also be offered April 12 to April 14. Class preregistration is required at www.norcaleggshow.com or Northern California Eggstravaganza on Facebook.

Artists and the public can contact Macias for more information about the upcoming Northern California Eggstravaganza Egg 'N' Art Show and Sale at leggantdesigns@frontier-net.net or at 916-230-9811. ★

COMICS & PUZZLES

The Spats



by Jeff Pickering



Amber Waves



by Dave T. Phipps

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Flower picture is reversed. 2. Clock is larger. 3. Nose is different. 4. Pillow is different. 5. Curtain is wider. 6. Drawer is missing.

Out on a Limb



by Gary Kopervas

TIGER



by BUD BLAKE

CRIM and BEAR IT



Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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Failing Our Newborns

Continued from page 1

increase the number of community midwives who are Medi-Cal providers at a time when hospitals are shutting down labor and delivery wards and maternal mortality is trending upwards.

Seventy-five community midwives are registered with Medi-Cal, according to data provided by the state. More than 1,000 nurse midwives are registered with Medi-Cal, but the majority of those providers work in hospitals and not in community settings, researchers said.

Outdated licensing requirements, tortuous state regulations and cumbersome insurance policies make it nearly impossible for community midwives to accept Medi-Cal patients, the UCSF report found.

Medi-Cal is the state's health insurance program for extremely low-income residents. It pays for 40% of all births statewide, and midwife care is a guaranteed benefit for expecting mothers.

On paper, the benefit includes community midwifery, which focuses on providing care close to where people live either at a birth center or in the home. But the reality is different, researchers and providers say.

"So many people who have taken Medi-Cal in the past have had to stop or close their practices, and so many people who want to have not been able to make it happen," said Ariana Thompson-Lastad, lead author of the study.

California's Momnibus' Act

The UCSF findings come at a time when the state is trying to make inroads against persistent maternal and infant health disparities, particularly among Black families. Statewide surveys show Black mothers are the most interested in alternative birth support through doulas

and midwives, which have been shown to improve a variety of birth outcomes.

Doulas are birth workers who provide non-medical social and emotional support during and after pregnancy while licensed midwives are clinically trained professionals who can provide a range of independent reproductive care for low-risk moms and babies.

In an effort to chip away at inequities, state lawmakers passed the "California Momnibus Act" three years ago. It required Medi-Cal to cover postpartum care for a full year after birth — the period when most maternal deaths happen — and added doula benefits. In January, rate increases for California doulas made them the highest-paid in the nation.

But state regulations simply aren't designed to accommodate the services community midwives provide, UCSF researchers found.

For example, the Medi-Cal application until recently asked midwives to list a supervising physician even though licensed midwives are authorized to practice independently. Providers also said most community midwives conduct home visits during pregnancy and especially after birth, but Medi-Cal billing policies make it difficult to get reimbursed for services that happen outside of a clinical facility.

"The overarching policy issue for licensed midwives in California is that we continue to be regulated under a very dysfunctional arrangement," said Rosanna Davis, president of the California Association of Licensed Midwives.

Wisner, who served mostly Medi-Cal patients, said on average insurance reimbursed just 17% of her costs — roughly \$1,451 out of \$8,500 for a full course of prenatal, birth and postpartum care — and frequently

took months to pay her.

"We've had people have two or three babies with us before we get paid for the first one," Wisner said.

The state is trying to make improvements, said Holly Smith, co-lead of the California Midwifery Learning Collaborative, but the system is still "failing a lot of people." The midwifery learning collaborative is a five-state initiative aimed at improving access to midwife care. The state agency that oversees Medi-Cal recently joined, Smith said.

In an emailed statement, the Department of Health Care Services said it is working closely with the midwifery learning collaborative to help midwives "successfully navigate and work within Medi-Cal." The department is using a document drafted by the collaborative to "continue making program and policy improvements" on issues related to billing and applications, the statement said.

Midwives Could Help Fill Maternity Gaps

Large studies of birth center and at-home birth outcomes show that when trained midwives care for low-risk patients, cesarean section and preterm birth rates decrease while breastfeeding rates and reports of satisfactory birth experiences increase. Severe outcomes and deaths of mother and baby are exceedingly rare and similar to the rates found in planned hospital births. UCSF researchers also found that community midwives see patients more frequently before and after birth and are able to catch complications early.

The majority of Medi-Cal births — more than 80% — are babies of color. They and their mothers suffer some of the worst infant and maternal health outcomes. Even though the state

has made improvements overall, it has struggled to curb severe pregnancy complications and death among Black women and babies. Black women of all income levels are more than four times as likely as white women to die from pregnancy-related complications and their babies are nearly three times as likely to die within a year, according to state data.

Physicians deliver the vast majority of babies in California, and while the percentage of babies delivered by certified nurse midwives has increased slightly in the past decade most certified nurse midwives work in hospital maternity wards under doctors. Often when maternity services end, providers leave the area.

At least 46 hospitals have closed maternity wards since 2012, leaving a dozen counties without a single hospital delivering babies, a CalMatters investigation found.

Smith, with the midwifery learning collaborative, said historically state laws and policies have supported physician-only maternity care.

"It's not safe anymore to do that," Smith said. "We have a maternity desert situation. Literally hospitals are closing, and birth centers will be a necessary strategy for that."

One Of Her Last California Patients

In a cozy house in Sacramento's Oak Park neighborhood, Wisner has Chloé Mick lie back on her couch while her kids and husband play outside. Wisner measures the length of Mick's uterus, feels for the baby's position and they both listen to the baby's heartbeat. Mick is 25 weeks pregnant and tired.

"I feel the most depleted probably just from having two other children that I hope I have the inner strength to not get a bad

attitude during the process and make it through," Mick tells Wisner.

Wisner responded, "Has it occurred to you that having a bad attitude is OK?"

Mick is planning a home birth, and Wisner assures her that going to the hospital would not be "giving up." It would be listening to her body's needs and responding appropriately. They make plans for what to do if the baby is breech or if Wisner's New Zealand visa comes before Mick gives birth. When Mick's second child was born, she was on Medi-Cal and Wisner was the only midwife who would take her.

"(The hospital) really feels like a business. You're in and out, and you don't have a rapport or relationship with them...It feels like your bodily autonomy is taken away," Mick said. "And then you look back, and you wish you had done things differently."

Wisner wishes her birth center's story had ended differently. Her practice finally had enough patient volume to maybe be sustainable, she said, but the other community midwives who worked with her didn't want to argue with Medi-Cal insurers day in and day out. Over the past five years, Wisner estimates she poured \$250,000 into the birth center to keep it open. It's a big reason why she's leaving California for another country where she'll make \$60,000 a year working four days a week with a team of other midwives.

"There was always this promise that the system would be reformed, you know, Medi-Cal is gonna get reformed," Wisner said. "I was really let down."

Supported by the California Health Care Foundation (CHCF), which works to ensure that people have access to the care they need, when they need it, at a price they can afford. Visit www.chcf.org to learn more. ★

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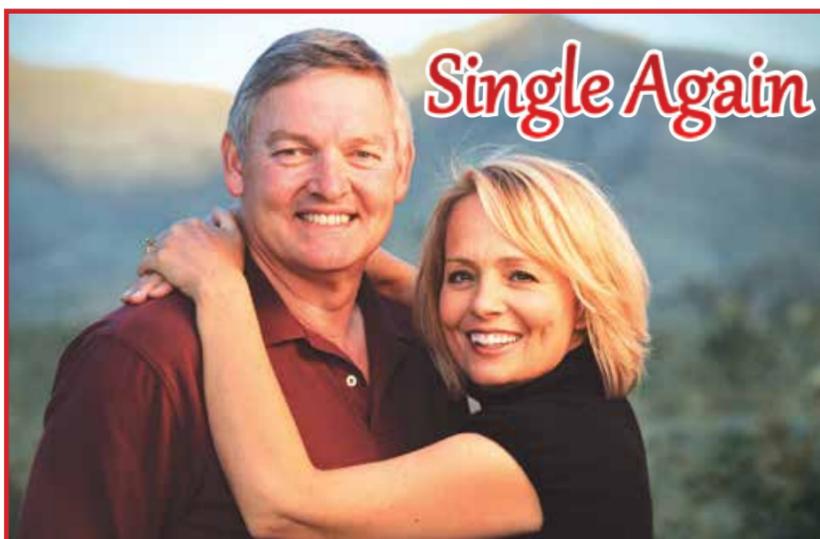
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