



Celebration of a Lifetime

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Remembering All of Them on Memorial Day



AMERICAN RIVER Messenger

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MAY 27, 2022

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CASA GRAD HEADING TO STANFORD



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FOLSOM NATIVE HONORS FALLEN MILITARY



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'Farm' Houses the Vulnerable



Sal Ramirez (right) and Matt Crooks' facility services the needs of vulnerable seniors. All food, laundry and toiletries are provided. Residents also have use of a communal kitchen.

Story and photo by Susan Maxwell Skinner

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Sal Ramirez and partner Matthew Crooks have combined commercial and humanitarian missions to provide a roof over the heads of potentially homeless men and women.

The community activists last year purchased a one-acre property on the Carmichael/Fair Oaks border. They increased the home's 3000 square feet by four extra, shared bedrooms. Their seven-bedroom property now houses 15 people, with capacity for seven more. Rent-\$925 per month-includes all meals, cable TV, utilities, cleaning, laundry and toiletries. Social security or disability

checks cover most boarder costs. "Our residents are some of the most at-risk elders," explains non-profit professional Sal Ramirez. "We want to supply a safe, supportive home and network for them. In most cases, this facility is all that stands between them and sleeping in the streets. It's one of very few room and board homes for an area with a big homeless population."

A year after opening, Fresh Start at Vassar Farm (Vassar is Matthew Crooks' middle name) seems a success. Mostly seniors, residents are quiet neighbors who adhere to a strict no-alcohol/drug rule. Boarders are referred by social and veteran agencies and, if income falls short of rent costs, the project solicits assistance

from charities such as Adopt an Elder Foundation.

If a "farm" moniker seems fanciful, the partners note mature olive, oak and citrus trees, a vegetable garden, clucking hens, two cats-Thelma and Louise-and a visiting bunny. "We call this a sanctuary for birds, bees, butterflies and people," explains career social worker Crooks. "Two of our guys look after the chickens and their eggs are eaten every day. Connecting with nature and animals is therapeutic. We want this to feel like a forever home for our boarders."

The facility offers a remote, much-used smoking patio. Though all food is provided, borders can use the

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Village Construction Delayed

Story by Shaunna Boyd

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - At the May meeting of the Measure J Bond Oversight Committee (BOC), it was announced that BOC Chair Gary Juels was stepping down from the position since he has other commitments that will sometimes conflict with BOC meetings—but Juels will still remain an active BOC member. Vice Chair Amy Larsen will now serve as Chair, and BOC member Justin Drake will serve as the new Vice Chair.

Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District (FORPD) Administrator Mike Aho updated the committee about the Village Construction project, which includes renovation of Village and Plaza parks, updates to the Community Clubhouse, and a new theatre building for Veteran's Memorial Amphitheatre.

In April, the construction bid was awarded to Bobo Construction of Elk Grove, which will serve as the general contractor. Bobo Construction had the lowest bid, at \$19.9 million. Aho explained the initial bid estimate for the project was \$18 million, so the bid is approximately 9% higher than the estimate. But Aho said that in the time since the estimate was completed late last year, materials and labor costs have increased dramatically. So, while the bid is higher than the estimate, he said it is still "a good bid." And he said it was likely that if they went back through the bid process, any new bids would come in even higher.

The contract total for the project is \$2.7 million, which includes the bid from Bobo Construction as well as a \$1.8 million bid allowance for unforeseen costs. Any costs billed under the allowance would have to be approved, so the Board authorized Aho to approve costs up \$150,000 to expedite the process and keep the project on schedule. Anything higher must be approved by the Board.

The project will mostly be funded through Measure J, with costs from the bond not to exceed \$20 million. The rest will be funded through Park Impact Fees and grant funding.

Construction was expected to start in late April after the bid was approved, but there have been delays due to last-minute issues brought up by the Fair Oaks Water District relating to hydrant locations and required maintenance easements within the project footprint. FORPD had

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Donor Gifts Rollingwood Center to the YMCA

YMCA of Superior CA News Release

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) -The YMCA of Superior California just grew by one more branch, thanks to the generous donation of Darla and Patrick Flanagan who graciously donated the Rollingwood Athletic Center to the YMCA of Superior California on May 1, 2022.

The Flanagan's care about their club community, as well as the greater Fair Oaks and Orangevale communities, and wanted a sustainable model for the club to thrive following the fitness industry's pandemic struggle. They felt it was time to bring in an expert in the field of health, wellness and community building which led them to the YMCA of Superior California in Sacramento.

The YMCA's mission to inspire all to a healthy life - in spirit, mind, and body is what drew the Flanagan's to the YMCA. "We wanted an organization that would continue the good work that was being done in



Darla and Patrick Flanagan graciously donated the Rollingwood Athletic Center to the YMCA of Superior California on May 1. Photo courtesy of the YMCA of Superior California

the community. Someone who cared about our staff and members the way we have for all these years. We needed an organization that was dynamic, financially stable, and could offer all the things a family needs and wants in community programming. We found that in the YMCA." said Darla Flanagan. "We believe the Y's values and mission align with our organization and think this is in the best interest of us all."

"The YMCA is thrilled to

be able to invest in the Fair Oaks and Orangevale communities by bringing the YMCA's expertise, nationally recognized brand, and time-tested best practices to the area," said Sharna Braucks, President and CEO of the YMCA of Superior California. "We are very thankful to Darla and Patrick for their generous donation and for the largest donation in our organization's history. They have the care and well-being of the people they have served at the core of this

decision. Their main concern was that great programming would continue and the sense of community will live on." Braucks said this donation is valued at over \$5 million dollars, and includes over 7.2 acres of fitness facilities, swimming pools and lighted tennis and pickleball courts. Once the YMCA takes over they will begin offering scholarships to those who otherwise could not afford memberships and annually raising funds to ensure no one is turned away. ★



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Outstanding Individuals Honored at the Spirit of San Juan Awards

SJUSD News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - San Juan Unified School District rolled out the red carpet on Thursday, May 5 as the district celebrated its first in-person Spirit of San Juan awards in three years.

The evening began with a reception hosted at Rio Americano High School's Center for the Arts building, which featured student involvement from three Career Technical Education (CTE) programs. San Juan High School's Culinary Arts students catered the dessert reception, while Casa Roble Fundamental High School's floral program designed the centerpieces to brighten the event. El Camino Fundamental High School media students staffed the photo station. Photos from the event can be found on the district's Facebook page.

Good Day Sacramento anchor and San Juan Unified alumna Tina Macuha emceed the event and highlighted the district's six honorees who were chosen for exhibiting exceptional character, removing barriers, and providing an inclusive environment for all.

Each honoree was celebrated with their own video highlighting the amazing work they have done in the last year, before being presented with an award by Superintendent Kent Kern and Board of Education Vice President Zima Creason.

Learn more about the 2022 Spirit of San Juan honorees by watching their highlight videos on the SJUSD YouTube page.



Spirit of San Juan Award recipients pictured from left to right pose for a photo on May 5 at Rio Americano High School in Sacramento: Sariah Horne-Kemp, Rene Mikluscak, Courtney Comstock, Maria Gibbons, Zubin Tagore and Nanik Tagore. Photos courtesy of the SJUSD



Spirit of San Juan Award recipients Zubin and Nanik Tagore pose for a photo on May 5 at Rio Americano High School in Sacramento.



Spirit of San Juan Award recipient Maria Gibbons (center) pose for a photo on May 5 at Rio Americano High School in Sacramento.



Spirit of San Juan Award recipient Sariah Horne-Kemp poses for a photo on May 5 at Rio Americano High School in Sacramento.



Spirit of San Juan Award recipient Courtney Comstock makes a speech after receiving her award on May 5 at Rio Americano High School in Sacramento.

Courtney Comstock
Parent, Mariemont Elementary School
Courtney serves as a board member of Mariemont

Elementary School's PTA. She has consistently worked toward not just benefitting her own school community but has broadened her reach

to help other schools in San Juan Unified.
Maria Gibbons
Teacher, Mary Deterding Elementary School

Maria is a fourth-grade teacher who has taught at Mary Deterding Elementary School for 24 years and continued Zoom

lessons for her students that couldn't attend class due to health concerns or COVID-19 related quarantines. She also dedicates her time to tutoring former students after school.

Sariah Horne-Kemp
Student, El Camino Fundamental High School
Sariah is a senior at El Camino Fundamental High School and has spent the last three years working with the San Juan Youth Voice Advocates to inform the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) with student voice. She is a leader at her school and started a Black Student Union club on campus to create opportunities for students to connect.

Rene Mikluscak
Teacher, Rio Americano High School

Rene is a special education teacher who works with several community partners to create work opportunities for students who receive special education services. She helps students gain valuable independent living skills through experience working in real-world settings, such as starting a dog biscuit business and learning how to do laundry.

Nanik and Zubin Tagore
Students, San Juan High School

Nanik and Zubin are students and brothers who have created videos and a podcast to highlight efforts at San Juan High School and the district as a whole. The two are go-to student leaders on campus and make an impact on those around them, while working to ensure others are equipped with the information they need. ★

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Celebration of a Lifetime

Story by Judy Andrews

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - It was the celebration of a lifetime in honor of one of Fair Oaks' most beloved local treasures – Penny Howard.

Penny turned 100-years old on May 7—a feat only achieved by an elite group of senior citizens. Her birthday celebration was held at the Carmichael Elks Lodge and hosted by Penny's three children Dean, Russell, and Mary. More than 150 of Penny's friends and family members – some travelling as far away as Hawaii and Texas – turned out to express their love and support for this special lady on her special day.

Party guests also included Penny's church friends, long-time neighbors, and members of the Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce. Penny is the Honorary Mayor of Fair Oaks and has been active in the community for five decades.

Michael Collins, Penny's oldest grandson, flew in from Portland (Oregon) and recalled how much his grandmother meant to him growing up. "She was a huge influence on my life. I loved coming down every summer and staying with her. She would take me camping and we'd visit special places. I wouldn't have missed being here today and I'll be back for her 105th!"

Jayne Daugherty (92-years old) and her daughter, Bev, both flew in from different cities. Jayne and Penny's friendship go back almost 70 years when the families lived across the street from each other in Altadena, California. "Penny is my oldest friend. We've been through sad times and joyful times over the years. She is a wonderful lady and a great artist. I'm so proud to be her friend!"

Laughter, Tears, Tributes

Penny's daughter, Mary Howard, officiated the program portion of the event, which included a blessing read by Laura Simkins from Penny's church, a slideshow highlighting Penny's eventful life, a song written by her father in the 1930s and sung by chamber friend Pete Schroeder, a video of Penny's first



Above: Penny is overwhelmed at the turnout and shares her gratitude. Below: Birthday cards from family and friends at Penny's party. Photos by Judy Andrews

indoor skydiving experience (which drew laughter) when she was a mere 94-years old, and special presentations from individuals Penny has touched over the years.

"How wonderful that we get to be here to celebrate this special day with this wonderful woman. When you live to be 100 you touch a lot of lives," remarked Mary.

Kimberley Pitillo, executive director of the Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce, presented Penny with a Certificate of Recognition along with a special letter from California Assemblyman

Kevin Kiley. The letter read in part, "Congratulations on your 100-year milestone birthday. You have made countless memories over the years and have lived the past 10 decades with compassion, love, adventure, and a commitment to making the world and those around you a better place."

Friends and family especially enjoyed hearing from Bud Gardner who was Penny's writing instructor at American River College about 30 years ago. Bud remembers Penny well.

"I told my students early on that if they want to sell articles, they need to focus on the local markets. It takes time to establish yourself in the big markets. You won't make it, etc. Well, after listening to my advice, Penny looked me straight in the eye and responded, 'oh yeah?' Next thing I knew she wrote a story and sold it to Better Homes and Gardens for \$700!"

"I Didn't Know I Knew 150 People"

Penny spoke about growing up in the Great Depression and shared a few stories including one about the day she walked across the Golden Gate Bridge when it opened. With overwhelming gratitude, she expressed her appreciation for everyone coming. "I can't believe you are all here –and just for my birthday!"

Penny has inspired many people throughout the years with her big heart, infectious smile, quick wit, numerous talents—and a knack for telling stories!

Here are some of her most memorable quips from the day:

Q: What's the secret to reaching 100 years old?

PH: *Don't die before you get there.*

Q: What do you think about having 150 people at your birthday party?

PH: *I didn't know I knew 150 people!*

Q: What advice do you have for your children?

PH: *Be good to your mother.*

Q: How long do you think you will live?

PH: *Forever!* ★



Left: Penny is surrounded by her children: Russel Howard, son; Mary Howard, daughter; and Dean Howard, son. Photo by Judy Andrews. Center: Attending members of Penny Howard's family were from left to right: Mary Howard, daughter; Doug Mansfield, nephew; Stephanie Mansfield, niece; Penny Howard; Dave Mansfield, nephew; and Julie Mansfield, niece. Photo by Paul Scholl. Above: Penny's helpers (great grandkids) Ripken, Kaia, and Rhett. Photo by Judy Andrews

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Trash and Debris Removed by Volunteers During Spring Clean-Up



More than 400 volunteers removed over 13,450 pounds of trash and debris from the American River Parkway on April 23. Photo courtesy of the American River Parkway Foundation

American River Parkway Foundation News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)

- More than 400 volunteers removed over 13,450 pounds of trash and debris from the American River Parkway (Parkway) during the American River Parkway Foundation's (Parkway Foundation) Spring Clean-Up on Saturday, April 23. That's more than 33 pounds per volunteer.

Spring Clean-Up is the Parkway Foundation's second largest clean-up of the year and took place at eight locations along the Parkway this year, including: Discovery Park, Northgate Parkway Access, Cal Expo Parkway Access, Northrop Parkway Access, Howe Avenue River Access, Watt Avenue River Access, River Bend Park and the Upper Sunrise Recreation Area. This is the first time the clean-up has been held since 2019.

"We love and appreciate our volunteers. These are families and involved community members that are giving up part of their Saturday to help us conserve the American River Parkway," said Dianna Poggetto, Parkway Foundation Executive Director. "We would not be able to make the impact we do without their dedication."

Some of the most interesting items found during the clean-up: The Sacramento Bee newspaper dispenser, a unicycle, a toy gun, a plastic barrel, shopping carts and electric scooters.

In addition to Spring Clean-Up, the Parkway Foundation hosts the Great American River Clean Up. This event takes place along all 23 miles of the Parkway



Part of the trash pile at the Howe Avenue River Access. Photo courtesy of the American River Parkway Foundation



Toy gun found at the Upper Sunrise Recreation Area. Photo courtesy of the American River Parkway Foundation



Dispenser for The Sacramento Bee found near Northrop Parkway Access. Photo courtesy of the American River Parkway Foundation

and will be on September 17 this year. These large clean-ups are complemented by smaller group clean-ups the Parkway Foundation hosts year-round to form the Parkway Foundation's Clean-Up Program. Last year, more

than 138,000 pounds of trash were removed by Parkway Foundation volunteers through this program.

More details about Parkway Foundation programs can be found at www.ARPF.org/Programs. ★

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Newsom's Rosy Budget Ignores Troubling Trends



By Dan Walters
CALMatters.org

The truly astonishing tax revenue numbers cited by Gov. Gavin Newsom last week as he unveiled a revised state budget bring to mind an old adage: "The bigger they are, the harder they fall."

So much money is pouring into state coffers from personal and corporate income taxes and sales taxes that Newsom said the state will have nearly \$100 billion more than it needs to finance ongoing spending, twice as much as his original budget, proposed in January, estimated.

"You've never seen a number like this," Newsom told reporters.

True enough, and it poses a potential problem that could be just as monumental. Big budget surpluses generate big demands for new spending from the advocates of educational, social welfare and medical services. But if spent on new entitlements, they become liabilities when, inevitably, the economy cools and revenues decline.

Boom and bust budgets plagued the state for decades as personal income taxes became the largest revenue source with much of them coming from a relative few high-income taxpayers. Their incomes, largely from capital gains

on investments, were and are more volatile than those of ordinary people and when they declined, it had a disproportionately heavy impact on the state's finances.

The revised California budget projects \$214.2 billion in direct general fund taxes, with personal income taxes supplying 64% of that. Roughly half of those income taxes come from the top 1% of taxpayers, fewer than 200,000 people in a state of nearly 40 million residents.

In introducing the revised budget, Newsom said he is "very mindful" of potential volatility and is responding by putting more money into reserves and making very few new permanent and long-term spending commitments.

About half of the projected surplus must, by law, go to public education and expanding the "rainy day fund" and other reserves to nearly \$40 billion. That leaves an estimated \$49 billion of so-called "discretionary income" that could be spent on anything he and legislators want.

Newsom says his budget would devote 94% of that pot of money to one-time allocations or paying down debt to avoid long-term commitments that could backfire should the economy cool and revenues decline. "This is important," he said of that strategy.

Yes it is, because the advocates of expanded entitlements and their legislative allies contend that the surplus is a golden opportunity to fill gaps. Within minutes of Newsom's budget press conference (which was 132 minutes long,

incidentally) advocacy groups were expressing disappointment.

The question posed by the astonishingly high revenue numbers is whether the good times — at least the good times for high-income taxpayers — will continue.

As the budget revision was being finalized, the world, the nation and California were experiencing some troubling trends that Newsom acknowledged.

"This May revision reflects a significantly upgraded revenue forecast due to recent cash trends and improvement in key economic indicators," Newsom told the Legislature. "However, the forecast has become more uncertain given Russia's war on Ukraine, high rates of inflation, and anticipated actions by the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates. In addition, capital gains as a percent of the state's personal income are at levels last seen in 1999 — just before the dot-com bust. Furthermore, the May revision forecast was finalized before the recent declines in the stock market."

California is not an economic island and those potentially negative factors are beyond the state's control. However, the budget's very rosy revenue projections ignore them and assume that the golden geese, California's high-income taxpayers, will continue to prosper and continue laying golden eggs.

Dan Walters has been a journalist for nearly 60 years, spending all but a few of those years working for California newspapers. ★

Casa Grad Heading to Stanford University

By MaryAnne Povey

ORANGEVALE, CA (MPG)

- Hard work really does pay off when you "have goals and stay determined!" That's what Casa Roble Senior Mia Cordova says about how she "beat the odds" and earned a full-ride scholarship to Stanford University in the Fall.

Mia has been attending schools in Orangevale since kindergarten, but her dream to attend Stanford began in middle school where she learned about its educational opportunities in their medical and engineering programs. Knowing what it takes to get into such a top university, Mia got to work building her resume and joined many clubs at Casa, taking on leadership roles in the Spanish Honor Roll Society, the Engineering Club and the Wilderness Club too. She also enlisted in Questbridge, a college application process helping high achieving, low-income students get in front of top colleges around the country.

Mia also enrolled in SCORE, a three-year, hands-on, medical training academy at Casa for students interested in the medical field. Reflecting back, her time in SCORE was very special, not just because of what she learned, but because, "My friends in SCORE became like family and I really enjoyed Mr. Biggs, the instructor." Mia also was one of 18 students who earned the Medical Assistant certification from the program.



Casa Roble Senior Mia Cordova grew up going to Orangevale schools and will now be heading to Stanford University to study pre-med and engineering. Photo courtesy of Lupe Cordova



Mia found much support in her grandfather Richard Cordova during her rigorous educational journey. Photo courtesy of Lupe Cordova

Mia credits her grandparents as great inspirational role models for her—especially her grandfather who "even through tough times, never gave up and always put others before him."

Mia's own perseverance is inspirational, never letting difficult circumstances hold her back,

but motivating her to go further in life. She'll be studying pre-med and engineering and ultimately hopes to be Cardiothoracic Surgeon someday.

Her advice is simple and wise, "As long as there is a will, there's a way. Think big, trust yourself, and make it happen." Best of luck Mia! ★



By Marlys Johnsen Norris,
Christian Author

How Big Is Your God? What is your view of God?

Does your view of God Line up with all the recorded Holy Scriptures?

seeks His perfect will. He encourages and brings many blessing into a life that is totally surrendered to Him.

Some people forget He created this whole earth and every creature on it.

Throughout history there have been people who honored our Creator and lived by the laws and instructions God gave them. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, Isaiah, Joseph, David to name a few. Many Old Testament prophecies of what is to come are recorded in the Holy Bible.

It was a traditional custom for Old Testament Scholars - to kill a lamb once a year for God's forgiveness - and then, place the lamb's blood on the Altar to wash away all the sins of certain Jewish people. It even exists today but Almighty Father/God had a greater plan that involved a part of Him!

At just the right time in history, The Heavenly

Father miraculously planted a His seed in Mary and she bore a Son and named him Jesus. Jesus was miraculously created by His Heavenly Father to become -- the one and only perfect sacrificial "Lamb of God". Then, Jesus death was to provide complete forgiveness and to wash away sins forever to those who accept Him as their Lord and Savior of their lives forever.

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Clarification on the Safe Stay Site Presentation

By Janna Haynes,
Sacramento County

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - At the May 11 Board of Supervisors meeting, county staff presented to the Supervisors a list of County-owned parcels that have been reviewed for potential viability to site Safe Stay or Safe Parking programs for persons experiencing homelessness. The presentation was for information only and at the request of supervisors at the Feb. 16 Board meeting to review County-owned land based on object criteria and bring the resulting list of appropriate sites back.

After receiving numerous calls from concerned constituents under the impression that these sites were already selected and moving forward, it is necessary to provide context around the presentation and the discussed sites. These misconceptions were further exacerbated by a story posted in the Sacramento Bee on Monday, May 16 entitled "Sacramento County names potential sites for homeless shelters, from downtown to suburbs" – specifically the notion that the Carmichael location is somehow already in process – which it is not.

Background

During the Feb. 16, 2022, Board meeting, multiple Supervisors requested a report back on staff efforts to identify appropriate sites to expand sheltering opportunities for those experiencing unsheltered homelessness, including an assessment of County-owned land. Using objective criteria that looked at size of the parcel(s), access to utilities, and proximity to existing encampments and/or services, staff divided the 1,673 County owned parcels into three categories: not viable, potentially viable and viable. Only 16 were deemed "viable" based on initial review; during the workshop, staff and the

Board discussed the need to further refine potential sites based on surrounding uses and with extensive community input. The Board also asked for staff to continue to explore non-County owned land, including the purchase or lease of privately owned sites.

Any recommended site will include enough characteristics that staff believe they could support a viable Safe Stay or Safe Parking community.

To read more about the criteria that identified viable sites, or disqualified sites, please read the staff board letter.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to refine potential sites and bring any viable sites to the Board for review and direction prior to any commitments. Any site being considered will also include robust community engagement with the surrounding neighborhoods and business owners prior to a final Board decision. Outreach will include community forums to answer questions and hear concerns as well as present plans for any particular site.

The Board also directed staff to continue to engage landowners that have viable private properties that may also be used for Safe Stay Communities to increase the options the county can consider.

As a reminder, the goal of these Safe Stay Communities is to reduce crime, trash, blight and human suffering. As case studies have shown time and time again through the Pallet model the county has extensively reviewed, when done right, these communities drastically improve the surrounding areas while also providing positive outcomes for homeless persons who reside there.

For more information on Safe Stay Communities, read our Sanctioned Homeless Encampments Frequently Asked Questions. ★

ALA Report Doesn't Tell the Full Story, Includes Misleading Data

Sac Metro Air District
News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District, Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District, Placer County Air Pollution Control District, Feather River Air Quality Management District, and El Dorado County Air Quality Management District have issued a joint response to the American Lung Association's recent release of its annual State of The Air Report and the Sacramento Bee's coverage of the report on April 22, 2022.

The Air Districts address the report's ranking of counties based on air quality data that is skewed by extreme but short-term wildfire data and the increasing international transport of pollution that raises background concentrations, resulting in a misleading picture of air pollution emissions in the Sacramento region. The Bee's article omitted these factors as well. While air quality and public health are absolutely impacted by wildfires, to assign an "F" grade without naming the reason doesn't tell the full story. It also unnecessarily undermines public confidence and denies true progress.

Response From the Air Districts of the Sacramento Region:

"Thanks to innovative projects and programs by Sacramento region air districts and their partners, air quality has improved significantly over the past several decades and will continue to get cleaner in the future. Despite the challenges of wildfire and increasing transport of pollution, coupled with sharp increases in population and vehicle miles traveled, the Sacramento region has made great strides in moving toward and meeting strict state and federal health-based air quality standards.

Although the counties in our region received poor rankings, these rankings are flawed and do not reflect the real, tangible improvements in air quality that have been made possible by the efforts of our districts and residents. While we value our partnership with the American Lung Association, we are extremely disappointed that the ALA report fails to recognize that the region currently meets federal health-based air quality standards for short-term particle pollution and is on track to meet similar standards for summertime ground-level ozone pollution within the next several years. That is no small feat and certainly worth a passing grade. We are equally disappointed that the Sacramento Bee article about the report did not acknowledge these factors or recognize the region's air quality accomplishments.

Our Districts are committed to combating climate change and improving air quality and public health outcomes for all residents, especially in our environmental justice communities. It is important for the ALA report to honestly reflect the significant challenges the region faces, while we continue to work together to find innovative new solutions to improve public health."

Historical Air Quality Data Shows Dramatic Air Quality Improvement in the Region

Between 2000-2022, the Sacramento Federal Nonattainment Area (SFNA) population grew 30.57% resulting in an increased number of vehicle registrations, and motor vehicles in the region. The SFNA is comprised of all of Sacramento and Yolo Counties, the eastern portion of Solano County, the southern portion of Sutter County, the western slopes of El Dorado and Placer Counties up to the Sierra crest and includes five local air districts.

Because cars, trucks and trains are the largest source of emissions in the region, Sacramento region air districts have developed creative and innovative strategies to ensure the region can continue to grow due to an increased population but at the same time reduce air pollution, combat climate change, stimulate economic prosperity and improve the quality of life for residents.

According to the state's historical data, the number of smoggy summer days that exceed the current 2015 ozone standard has declined from 81 days in 2000 to 47 days in 2020. Even with the 2020 data, which had high measurements due to summer wildfire smoke impacts, this shows a strong downward trend that is expected to continue over the next several years.

Innovative Air Pollution Reduction Strategies Are Making a Difference

Sacramento region air districts have implemented numerous successful and innovative programs within the region

to reduce air pollution that impacts our health, environment, and local economy.

A few examples include: Infusing millions of dollars into the region each year to support and incentivize electric vehicle conversion and infrastructure builds for businesses, public agencies, school districts and residents. Requiring the use of the most stringent emission control equipment on major stationary sources, which means less pollution coming out of the stack. Working with both public land managers and private landowners on prescribed burn activities to reduce excess vegetation and restore fire resiliency to the land. On-going support for the utilization of forest woody biomass wastes to fuel electricity generation and reduce wildfire size, severity, and pollution.

Implementing mandatory or voluntary residential wood burning reduction programs. Creating clean, safe, and reliable transportation options by providing access to electric vehicles, carshare services, transit, and ride share for communities most in need in the region. Building out the region's zero and near zero emission infrastructure with the development of electric vehicle chargers, hydrogen fueling dispensers, and natural gas fueling stations.

About the Districts

Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District

The Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District is responsible for monitoring air quality, reducing air pollution, and enforcing air quality regulations, and helps to achieve state-wide carbon reduction goals. The district develops and administers programs to reduce air pollution levels below the health-based standards established by the state and federal governments, improve air quality in our region and combat global climate change. For more information, please visit www.AirQuality.org.

Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District

The Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District's mission is to protect human health and property from the harmful effects of air pollution. The district works to fulfil its mission through the development and enforcement of local rules, state, and federal air quality regulations; providing guidance to local agencies of air quality impacts of projects and planning documents, creating strategies to meet state and federal air quality standards, monitoring local air quality and raising awareness of reduction strategies through public outreach and education. For more information, please visit www.yoqamd.org.

Placer County Air Pollution Control District

The Placer County Air Pollution Control District's mission is to manage Placer County's air quality in a manner to protect and promote public health by controlling and seeking reductions of air pollutants while recognizing and considering the economic and environmental impacts. This is achieved through: enforcement of local, state, and federal air quality regulations, implementation of incentive programs to reduce emissions, air quality monitoring, efforts to reduce wildfire impacts, and land use/development reviews. The district works in concert with the five Sacramento-area air districts with a goal of moving the region into attainment of ambient air quality standards. For more information, please visit www.PlacerAir.org.

Feather River Air Quality Management District

The Feather River Air Quality Management District is a bi-county District that was formed in 1991 to administer local, state, and federal air quality management programs for Yuba and Sutter counties. The mission of the Feather River Air Quality Management District is to promote and improve the air quality of Sutter and Yuba counties. This is accomplished through monitoring, evaluation, education, by implementing control measures to reduce emissions from stationary sources, permitting and inspection of pollution sources, enforcement of air quality regulations, and by supporting and implementing measures to reduce emissions from motor vehicles. For more information, please visit www.fraqmd.org.

El Dorado County Air Quality Management District

The El Dorado County Air Quality Management District works to improve air quality and quality of life for El Dorado County residents by ensuring regulated sources control emissions and by implementing several emission reduction grant and incentive programs. For more information, please visit www.edcgov.us/airqualitymanagement. ★

ProjectAttain! Joins Effort to Improve Rural Higher Education and Workforce

ProjectAttain!
Press Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - CivicLab announced this week that ProjectAttain!, a social impact organization focused on increasing educational attainment among working-age adults across Northern California, has been chosen as one of five rural partnerships across the U.S. to participate in a two-year initiative to improve higher education and workforce systems. Supported by Ascendium Education Group, ProjectAttain! will receive training, technical assistance, and direct financial support valued at \$150,000 to develop and implement system-level strategies that create pathways to prosperity for rural, low-income learners.

Sacramento-based ProjectAttain! joins a cohort of four other partnerships from Florida, Indiana, New Mexico, and Texas that will meet virtually and in person to share ideas, resources, and receive technical assistance.

"We are thrilled to be selected to participate in this national program," said Dr. Jenni Murphy, founder of ProjectAttain! and dean of the College of Continuing Education at Sacramento State. "ProjectAttain! exists to help adults who opted out of their education for one reason or another get back on track with achieving their goals. Our efforts to support systems change in education and workforce development will be bolstered exponentially through our collaboration with CivicLab and by working in collaboration with the other partner programs across the country."

More than 810,000

adults across Northern California's 25 counties make up this initiative's territory, possess some college, vocational training, or high school credits, but have not completed their degree, certificate, or diploma. In the six-county Sacramento region alone, more than 400,000 individuals face the same circumstances. The Public Policy Institute of California predicts the state will have a shortfall of at least 1.5 million individuals with bachelor's degrees by 2030. Additional data indicate the shortfall increases to over 3.3 million when factoring in certificates. ProjectAttain! aims to learn CivicLab's state-of-the-art processes to develop processes that will ultimately dissolve this issue in California's north-state.

"This often overlooked and underinvested population deserves the opportunity to finish what they started," said Evan Schmidt, Valley Vision CEO and ProjectAttain!'s Executive Director.

"ProjectAttain! is here to help those who have paused their education find their way back because we know that employers, economies, and communities benefit when more adults complete their education."

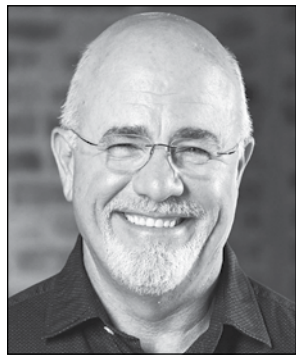
CivicLab's initiative launched in February 2022 with ProjectAttain!'s guiding team, comprised of leaders in workforce and education, attending a two-day Stakeholder Engagement Process Learning Lab at CivicLab's headquarters in Columbus, Indiana. The ProjectAttain! team will return in April 2022 for CivicLab's System Building Lab to improve plans for making lasting change.

"Though many partnerships are deserving of this recognition and support, ProjectAttain! demonstrated they had the relationships, capacity, and capability to make real change," said Dakota Pawlicki, director of Talent Hubs at CivicLab.

ProjectAttain! was selected through a national call for proposals. Each partnership in the cohort includes higher education institutions, nonprofit organizations, public agencies, private-sector partners, and other local stakeholders who work together to improve education and workforce outcomes. To be selected, partnerships were required to submit plans that both improve outcomes for their residents and make lasting changes on higher education and workforce systems during the two-year grant period.

"Rural communities have largely been left out of national initiatives designed to improve postsecondary education and workforce outcomes," said Kirstin Yeado, program officer at Ascendium. "Ascendium is pleased to help build the systems necessary to ensure more learners from low-income backgrounds earn degrees and credentials."

ProjectAttain! began in 2018 as a bold idea that mobilized area leaders to shed light on working-age adults with some college but no degree. ProjectAttain! has grown into a dynamic nonprofit bringing together organizations, talent, and seed funding to serve as a catalyst for equitable social mobility and economic growth for all working-age adults returning to complete a formal educational credential at the diploma, certificate, or degree level. ★



Sell the Cars, Keep Your Dignity

Dear Dave,

My wife and I are in our late twenties, and we have two kids. Our combined income is about \$110,000 a year, but we have \$70,000 in loans on two cars, plus about \$15,000 in credit card debt. My in-laws have offered to let us move in with them to save money and make things easier while we pay down debt. Do you think this is a good idea?

– Adam

Dear Adam,

In my mind there are only two scenarios where you should even consider taking the in-laws up on their offer. One, is where

Dave Ramsey Says

they're absolutely wonderful folks and you both have great, healthy relationships with them. By this, I mean there's a mutual sense of love, respect and everyone knows their boundaries. Even if this is the case, I'd still only consider it for an agreed-upon and very small amount of time.

The second scenario is if taking them up on their offer is the only way you two can accomplish your financial goals. That's not the case here.

You and your wife can get rid of most of your debt, and take a big step toward gaining control of your income, if you'll do one thing – get rid of those stupid cars! That's an insane amount of money wrapped up in cars for you two. If you had a couple of decent, paid-for used cars your lives would be so much different. You'd be in a situation where you could even start putting a little money aside while

you paid off the credit card debt. Then, once the credit card debt is gone, you'd have some cash freed up to find better cars.

If I were in your situation, I wouldn't move in with the in-laws. I'm sure they're great people, but I'd keep my dignity and sell the cars, start living on a budget and pay off debt as fast as possible!

– Dave

Dave Ramsey is a seven-time #1 national best-selling author, personal finance expert, and host of The Ramsey Show, heard by more than 18 million listeners each week. He has appeared on Good Morning America, CBS This Morning, Today Show, Fox News, CNN, Fox Business, and many more. Since 1992, Dave has helped people regain control of their money, build wealth and enhance their lives. He also serves as CEO for Ramsey Solutions. ★

Village Construction Delayed

Continued from page 1

to quickly survey to get the easements recorded and have Sacramento Metro Fire District provide expedited comments on the changes. The revised plans have been resubmitted to Sacramento County for final review, and Aho hopes the construction can commence soon.

Now that the amount of Measure J funding for the Village project has been authorized, the Board was able to review their priorities for other upcoming projects, choosing to focus on the proposed softball fields at La Vista and expanding parking at Phoenix Park.

Approximately \$2 million will be left from the Measure J for other District projects, but the softball fields will likely cost between \$3 million and \$5 million. So, the District is looking into other funding options, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which imposes lifetime restrictions on what can be developed. LWCF funds can only be used to increase outdoor recreation, so other than bathrooms, no other structures can be built on land developed with those funds. For example, Aho said if that funding was used for the fields, they couldn't later build a community center at that site. However, existing buildings on the site are exempt, so an existing concession stand at La Vista could be renovated under the LWCF restrictions. And the La Vista school buildings could potentially be used for a future community center if the San Juan Unified School District declared them to be surplus property and agreed to the sale.

Aho said the parking project at Phoenix would likely take up the rest of the Measure J funds since that project won't be eligible for many additional funding sources. The

current plan is to pave the existing dirt lot – which will increase the parking from 70 to 105 spaces but won't increase recreation opportunities. But Aho said it's a necessary improvement because the dirt lot makes storm water management very difficult and creates dust that impacts air quality, so the District will eventually be required to pave it.

The District's plans for a bike park expansion, pickleball court, and skate park are likely on indefinite hold until new funding sources are identified. There won't be any Measure J funds leftover for these projects. However, Aho said District staff are always looking for grants that could fund ongoing or future projects. And the language in the authorization for the Village construction funding says Measure J funds won't exceed \$20 million, so if additional funding is identified, those Measure J funds can be used as matching funds to secure the grants, freeing up Measure J money for other projects.

The total Measure J bond is for \$22.9 million, and the District has received two issuances so far – \$9.4 million and \$9 million. They have not scheduled the final issuance of \$8.5 million yet, as they do have deadlines for how quickly they have to spend the money once issued. But Aho said they have quite a bit of time, since the requirement is that they show progress, and authorizing the bid for the Village construction shows that the money is committed.

The BOC discussed whether to continue virtual meetings, with the majority preferring to stay virtual through the summer since it's more convenient while people might be traveling. They agreed to review the matter again in the fall.

The next BOC meeting is scheduled for June 7. ★

Naval Medical Forces Pacific Names 2021 Nominee

By Rick Burke,
Navy Office of
Community Outreach

MILLINGTON, TN (MPG) - Petty Officer 1st Class Carly Vohs, a native of Sacramento, California, was selected as a Naval Medical Forces Pacific (NMFP) 2021 nominee.

NMFP announced the 2022 NMFP Senior Sailor of the Year during a ceremony at Naval Base San Diego, April 13. Vohs was one of 13 finalists nominated for the award. The finalists represented NMFP commands located from Maryland to Okinawa, Japan. Five hundred and forty-eighth first class petty officer billets across the 13 different NMFP commands competed for the coveted honor. Hospital Corpsman 1st Class David Lay, with Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command Pearl Harbor, was chosen as this year's winner.

Vohs joined the Navy nine years ago.

"My decision to join the Navy came after my freshman year at Azusa Pacific University," said Vohs. "While I would have loved to continue my education, it just wasn't feasible for me financially at that time. Aside from that, I wanted to get away and make something of myself. I had only planned to stay in for one contract, but here I am nine years later."

Today, Vohs, serves as a hospital corpsman with Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) San Diego.

"My favorite part about being a hospital corpsman is caring for patients and serving alongside my Marines as their 'doc,'" said Vohs. "For as long as I can remember, I wanted to have a career in the medical field."

Growing up in



Petty Officer 1st Class Carly Vohs, a native of Sacramento, California, was selected as a Naval Medical Forces Pacific (NMFP) 2021 nominee. Photo courtesy of Navy Office of Community Outreach

Sacramento, Vohs attended Valley Christian Academy in Roseville, California and graduated in 2011. Today, Vohs relies upon skills and values similar to those found in Sacramento to succeed in the military.

"In high school, I played every single sport that my school offered," said Vohs. "From basketball, softball, to volleyball, I was in sports year-round. I enjoyed every minute, but there were certainly some hard times that challenged me both physically and mentally."

"Learning how to effectively play as a team and identify my own areas for improvement and strive to work hard in order to overcome physically and mentally challenging situations, played a huge role in preparing me for life in the Navy," added Vohs. "I often revert back to them to this day."

Serving in the Navy means Vohs is part of a team that is taking on new importance in America's focus on rebuilding military readiness, strengthening alliances and reforming business practices in support of the

National Defense Strategy.

There are many opportunities for sailors, such as Vohs, to earn recognition in their command.

"My proudest accomplishment in the Navy is being selected as Senior Sailor of the Year for NMRTC San Diego," said Vohs. "As a mother of two young children, a dual military marriage and a full-time student, it's safe to say I worked hard for this. This title was earned not only by my own accomplishments, but the many accomplishments of my sailors. This title is a direct reflection of their hard work and dedication to the mission. I am just proud to be able to represent us as a whole."

As a member of the U.S. Navy, Vohs, as well as other sailors, know they are a part of a service tradition providing unforgettable experiences through leadership development, world affairs and humanitarian assistance. Their efforts will have a lasting effect around the globe and for generations of sailors who will follow.

"Serving in the Navy can be summed up in three words that many service members have heard before - "service before self,"" added Vohs. "Our duties as military members take precedence over whatever personal desires we may have. We are a part of something bigger than ourselves. If I can play even a small role in ensuring my children grow up having their freedom, all of the sleepless nights, challenges and time spent away from them is worth it in the end."

Vohs graduated from National University in 2022 with an Associates in Human Biology and will continue to pursue her goal in becoming a registered nurse. ★

'Farm' Houses the Vulnerable

Continued from page 1

communal kitchen to whip up cookies and cakes. A high-ceilinged breezeway (formerly an automotive workshop) supplies social and activity space. Some of the eclectic furnishings were donated; Crooks and Ramirez sourced other pieces in consignment stores. No one complains about sharing bedrooms. "Residents enjoy the companionship and some have formed strong friendships," explains Matthew Crooks. "Sharing a warm room is a palatial alternative to sharing a tarp in the streets."

A live-in manager oversees boarder welfare; special needs are met by health visitors. A third project partner, social worker Eliza Stonsby, provides resident case-management and helps with doctor appointments. "Applying for benefits, locating a driving license – even contacting family – some tasks can overwhelm our guests," says Ramirez. "We help them through this."

"We provide a clean slate for residents to have a fresh start in life. Birthday parties are celebrated, and we give everyone a nice Christmas. Some say they don't remember the last time they enjoyed a family setting for the Holiday. At Vassar

Farm, they've become their own family. And they rally to help each other."

Tucked behind high hedges on a busy street, the facility has raised no neighbor issues. "The place is well-managed; supervised 24 hours a day," explains Crooks. "We find plenty to keep residents busy. Lots of books and crafts. Growing vegetables is another option. Every room has a TV—these hardly get turned off."

Crooks is semi-retired; Ramirez works for non-profit California Council on Science and Technology and dovetails honorary mayoral duties for the Carmichael Chamber of Commerce. As a commercial enterprise, Vassar Farm has yet to turn a profit.

Says partner Crooks: "Our goal is to cover costs without comprising quality of life for our residents. We might never make money. Some things are more important. Sal and I want to be humanitarians first. We're supporting the most vulnerable members our community. It's a scary reality that these could be anyone in our family, including ourselves."

For information on Vassar Farm Fresh Start Room and Board, call (530) 632-1512 or e-mail eliza.stonsby@gmail.com ★

New Study Finds Nearly 60% of Office Workers Staying at Their Jobs

By Steve Burke,
Pinkston News Service

WASHINGTON, DC (MPG) - Some 47 million Americans voluntarily left their job last year, as the COVID-19 pandemic ushered in what has become known as the "Great Resignation." As the debate continues as to whether this is a lasting workforce trend or just a blip on the radar, a new survey released last month by the data management platform Kizen shows that most office workers appear content with their current job.

According to the survey, 57% of so-called "knowledge workers," or those who use a computer for at least 2 hours a day in their work, said they have not quit or even considered leaving their current job in the past year. An equal percentage also believe that they work the right amount of hours. Conversely, 37% of respondents considered quitting and 6% said they left their job. Of those who have considered quitting, the survey found most are young adults, people in urban areas and those going into a physical office.

"Leaders are navigating a totally new paradigm for attracting and retaining team members, and so understanding what employees value and appreciate is key," said Kizen co-founder and CEO John Winner in a news release.

Kizen (www.kizen.com) uses a no-code

data platform and an intelligent business assistant to help companies streamline business processes and boost productivity.

While 24% of these workers reported no job dissatisfaction, top complaints among those who expressed some level of discontent included: workplace culture and pay (19%), issues with management and lack of opportunities to advance and recognition (16%) and lack of flexibility (12%).

Earlier this year, the Pew Research Center found that a majority of workers who quit their job last year cited low pay, no advancement opportunities and feeling disrespected at work as major reasons for leaving.

When it comes to achieving a work-life balance, the Kizen survey also found that outside of financial security and compensation, the benefits workers valued most included more flexibility for activities outside of work (15%), a sense of purpose and opportunity to serve others (12%) and having the opportunity to be around likable colleagues (10%).

"There's no one-size-fits-all approach to satisfying employees, who value different aspects of work depending on their interests and circumstances. But flexibility and a sense of purpose seem to be powerful tools for recruiting talent and building a fulfilled, happy workplace," Winner added.

As for those who quit their jobs last year, one new survey found that approximately one in five workers regretted the decision. ★

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 - "58 Plymouth Fury in a Stephen King novel
 - Hole punchers
 - G in SAG
 - Lennon's wife
 - Napoleon's hat
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 - Brussels' org.
 - Genie, alt. sp.
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 - "The Green _____"
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 - Risqué
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 - Rainbow color
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 - Set right
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 - Boss, in Swahili
 - Rides the waves
 - Buck
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 - "Children of the Corn" cult leader Chroner
 - Subsection of a poem
 - "Rhinstone Cowboy" singer
 - Kind of change
 - Mistake
 - Oceanic trenches
 - "Rabid Saint Bernard in Stephen King book
 - Mogul rider
 - "Nicholson in "The Shining"
 - Foolish
 - Not bright
 - Subtlety
 - Plumber's concern, pl.
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 - Type of cap, pl.
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 - Yuletide
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 - Beginning of a story?

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U.S. Bank Helping Unhoused Sacramento Women

**Kristin Thébaud
Communications
New Release**

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Women's Empowerment recently received \$30,000 from U.S. Bank to provide Sacramento women experiencing homelessness with job-readiness programs and paid job training so they can secure employment and regain housing for their families.

"We are proud of and grateful for our ongoing relationship with U.S. Bank," said Lisa Culp, executive director, Women's Empowerment. "Thanks to their steadfast support, we can continue empowering Sacramento's unhoused women to find

jobs and homes during the pandemic and prolonged housing crisis."

Women's Empowerment provides a two-month employment-readiness and empowerment program, paid job training, childcare and support services so all women and their children can break the cycle of homelessness. Women's Empowerment offers the most comprehensive job-readiness program in the Sacramento area designed specifically for women experiencing homelessness, and their children. On average, 70% of women in the program find housing during the ongoing housing crisis. Last year, 142 job placements were achieved by



Pamela Maxwell of U.S. Bank presents a check for \$30,000 to Lisa Culp from Women's Empowerment to help Sacramento women experiencing homelessness find employment. Photo courtesy of Kristin Thébaud Communications

Women's Empowerment graduates.

"U.S. Bank is committed to powering the potential of our customers, our employees

and our communities. Through our ongoing funding of critical programs like Women's Empowerment, we can help make progress in

closing the gaps between people and possibility in the areas of housing and workforce development," said Pamela Maxwell, community affairs manager for Sacramento at U.S. Bank.

Since its founding in 2001, the award-winning organization has graduated 1,740 women and their 3,864 children. Women's Empowerment is funded through private donations from the community and grants. To make a donation, visit WomensEmpowerment.org.

U.S. Bancorp, with nearly 70,000 employees and \$573 billion in assets as of December 31, 2021, is the parent company of U.S. Bank

National Association. The Minneapolis-based company serves millions of customers locally, nationally and globally through a diversified mix of businesses: Consumer and Business Banking; Payment Services; Corporate & Commercial Banking; and Wealth Management and Investment Services. The company has been recognized for its approach to digital innovation, social responsibility, and customer service, including being named one of the 2022 World's Most Ethical Companies and Fortune's most admired superregional bank. Learn more at usbank.com/about. ★

Folsom Native Spends Memorial Day Honoring Fallen Military Members

**By Alvin Plexico,
Navy Office of Community Outreach**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (MPG) - As the nation pauses this Memorial Day to remember fallen service members, a native of Folsom, California, has special responsibilities honoring fallen comrades in the nation's capital with the U.S. Navy Ceremonial Guard.

"I am a color guardsman," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Ian Callendar, who joined the Navy a little more than a year ago. "The color guard represents the Navy

at official events."

Established in 1931, the United States Navy Ceremonial Guard is the official Ceremonial Unit of the U.S. Navy and is based at Naval District Washington Anacostia Annex in Washington, D.C.

According to Navy officials, the Ceremonial Guard's primary mission is to represent the Navy in Presidential, Joint Armed Forces, Navy and public ceremonies under the scrutiny of the highest-ranking officials of the United States and foreign nations, including royalty.

Growing up in Folsom, Callendar

attended Bella Vista High School and graduated in 2013. Today, Callendar uses skills and values similar to those learned in Folsom.

"I learned to always try my hardest and do my best," said Callendar. "I also learned that doing well will always take me far."

These lessons continue to help Callendar while serving in the military.

Serving in the Navy means Callendar is part of a team that is taking on new importance in America's focus on rebuilding military readiness, strengthening alliances and reforming business practices in

support of the National Defense Strategy.

"The Navy has a global presence," said Callendar. "We are able to respond to any challenge and are ready to defend our Nation and way of life."

Callendar and the sailors they serve with have many opportunities to achieve accomplishments during their military service.

"I'm very proud of having become a fully-qualified color guardsman," said Callendar. "For me, serving in the Navy is a very important responsibility. I am serving my country the best I can." ★

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By County Supervisor Sue Frost

Through the generosity of the *American River Messenger*, this column serves to provide an update about matters affecting the unincorporated community of Orangevale.

With the legalization of recreational cannabis in 2016, we have seen a status quo in terms of where you can legally purchase it in Sacramento County, with only Sacramento City and tiny Isleton currently allowing it. Due to a recent action by the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors, unincorporated Sacramento County could be added to that list - which would impact communities like Orangevale, Antelope, North Highlands, and Rio Linda/Elverta. I would like to take this opportunity to explain to you what happened, what my stance is, and where we are going from here.

On May 10th, the Board of Supervisors had a workshop to hear a report on the positive economic impacts of allowing recreational cannabis sales. During this discussion, multiple Supervisors said they would like this to be

Orangevale Community Update

Recreational Cannabis Sales in Orangevale

approved, and asked staff to bring a formal item back to the Board of Supervisors as soon as possible so that this issue could be placed on the November ballot for a public vote. Even though it's legal in California, jurisdictions have to get residents to have a public vote in order to get it approved locally.

The push to get this allowed in Sacramento County is entirely due to money. Based on the report that we received, cannabis retail would generate anywhere between \$5 million to \$14.5 million each year for the County general fund. And with projected budget shortfalls in the near future, that money could be incredibly important.

I was reluctant to support bringing this back for a formal vote however, as I personally felt that this topic was being too quickly rushed and wasn't giving the public enough of an opportunity to have their voices heard. While the economic aspect of this issue is important, I feel of equal importance are the public safety and public health aspects - both of which the Board of Supervisors has not had any discussion over. As such, I made a request that before this is formally voted on, that we have full presentations from both public safety and public health to get their take on this issue. This request

was broadly acceptable to the rest of the Supervisors, and will happen in the near future.

When it came time for a vote on whether or not to bring this back for a formal vote to put this on the November ballot, the issue passed by a vote of 3-2 with me voting "no." While I have not made my mind up on whether or not to ultimately support this, I continued to feel that this issue was being rushed too quickly and that we shouldn't decide to organize a vote on this until after we have heard from public safety and public health.

Based on that vote, the Board of Supervisors is now slated to vote on whether or not to put this on the November ballot on July 26th. In order to get placed on the ballot it will need a minimum of four Supervisors to approve it, meaning at least one of the two Supervisors who voted "no" on May 10th will have to switch their vote to a "yes". In the meantime, I hope you will tell me your thoughts by e-mailing me at SupervisorFrost@sac-county.net so I can start to get a feel for how my constituents want me to vote.

Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost represents the 4th District, which includes the communities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, Orangevale, Antelope, North Highlands, Rio Linda, Elverta, and Rancho Murietta. ★



Poppoff!

With Mary Jane Popp

Remember

We love the parades and picnics, the day off from work and barbeques too. It's Memorial Day and we celebrate. But do we know why we celebrate on this day? It's to honor some very special men and women who are no longer with us. Their sacrifice looms large for what we have today. America is known as the "Land of the Free" and it's all because of those brave men and women. We need to remember all those who died in every war to preserve our freedom. Would you believe even Ancient Greece had a similar day to remember their lost loved ones? In Greece and Rome, they decorated the graves of those who passed on including soldiers.

There have been many stories on how Memorial Day came to pass. Originally, it was a day to honor the soldiers who lost their lives in the Civil War. They originally called it Decoration Day started on May 5th 1868 by General John A. Logan, Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic. Why Decoration Day? Because family members of soldiers who died in the war decorated their graves with flowers. Did you know 620,000 Americans died in the Civil War? Incredible and sad when



We need to remember all those who died in every war to preserve our freedom. Photo courtesy of Mary Jane Popp

brothers were against fighting sons. In 1967 Congress changed the name to Memorial Day. And after WWII it was changed to honor all soldiers who lost their lives in all wars. In 1971, it was declared a National Holiday.

When I think of all those precious lives lost in so many wars, it humbles me and my heart goes out to all those families who had to grieve for their loss. I know how difficult it can be to say goodbye to a loved one. My husband Rick and I were married a short three months when he boarded the plane on his way to Vietnam. It tore my heart out. So many did not return. I knew some of them. I am grateful that the good Lord blessed me with his return, but that is a time I will never forget!

And neither should we... no matter the war. The sacrifice is still real.

So I ask you to REMEMBER and pass that remembrance on to your children and grandchildren. Fly the flag with pride and honor and stay dedicated to what we stand for in our country...freedom! Let go of the discord we are facing on so many levels, and marvel at what the founding fathers created and the lives lost to keep that dream. At 3 PM on Memorial Day, we are all encouraged to take a moment of silence from our activities to reflect about what this day means. Please think of all those men and women who gave their lives so we could celebrate in the land of the free! God Bless them and God Bless America!!! ★

Social Security Matters
Will My Husband's Benefits Continue After He Dies?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: My husband is 65 and I am 55. He has recently been diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. My question is, will I continue receiving his full social security check every month after his passing? Will the amount decrease? **Signed: Tearful Wife**

Dear Tearful Wife: So sorry to hear of your husband's condition. If he is now receiving Social Security benefits, when he passes your husband's Social Security payments will stop. You will be able to keep the payment received in the month your husband dies (which is for the previous month), but any payments made thereafter must be returned to the Social Security Administration (SSA). FYI, normally the funeral director who handles arrangements sends a death certificate to Social Security, which will stop your husband's SS benefits effective with the payment for his month of death. However, you should notify the bank which receives your husband's SS payment of his death, and they will automatically return any later incorrect

payments to the SSA.

At age 55, you are too young to collect survivor benefits from your husband (unless you are disabled, in which case you can). You will first become eligible for a survivor benefit from your husband when you are 60 years old, but if you claim it at that time, it will be cut by 28.5% from the full amount. Your maximum benefit as your husband's survivor is 100% of the benefit he is now receiving, but you can only get the full amount by waiting until your own full retirement age (FRA) of 67 to claim it. Any SS benefit claimed before full retirement age is reduced.

If you are still working when you become eligible for your survivor benefit, you should be aware that Social Security will impose an earnings limit until you reach your FRA. The earnings limit changes annually (for 2022 it is \$19,560) but, if it is exceeded, SS will take away benefits equal to \$1 for every \$2 you are over the limit (half of what you exceed the limit by). If you work full time and your earnings are high enough, you may be disqualified from receiving survivor benefits (because your benefit amount may not offset the penalty for exceeding the earnings limit). The earnings limit applies until you reach your full retirement age, at which time your survivor benefit also reaches maximum (100% of the amount your husband was receiving at his death).

If you will also be eligible for your own SS retirement benefit (from

your own lifetime work record), and your own benefit at maximum will be more than your survivor benefit, you can choose to take your survivor benefit first and delay claiming your own SS retirement benefit until it is more than your survivor benefit. Your own benefit will reach maximum at age 70 so you could, if desired, take your survivor benefit first and your own larger benefit later. Or, once you are 62 you can claim only your own reduced benefit first and allow your survivor benefit to reach maximum at your full retirement age. In other words, you have a choice of which benefit to claim, and you should try to maximize the one which will give you the highest benefit for the rest of your life. But remember, the earnings test will apply to any benefit you claim before reaching your full retirement age.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. ★

Ask Toni

Married VS Domestic Partner with Employer Benefits and Delaying Medicare Part B



Toni King

Toni

My problem is different than most couples that I read about in your weekly Medicare column. I am finding out that my company's group health plan is not paying for any Medicare Part B medical expense since my husband is really a domestic partner. We have been together for over 25 years, but never officially married. Richard is 72 and I am a 58-year-old female who now needs to learn the maze of Medicare

Richard has serious health issues with 2 stents in his heart and a recent back surgery, which is now costing us thousands of dollars because my company's group health plan is not paying for his doctor's care. Richard has never enrolled in Medicare Part B because I have always been the "working spouse." Now I am discovering that the group health plan (the company's self-administered group health plan) does not recognize "domestic partners" as a married couple because we do not have a marriage license

Now, he needs to enroll in Medicare Part B, and with him being 72 if he does not do this correctly the penalty will be over 7 years. From what I have read in your articles, that this could be 70 or 80% penalty forever. The bottom line is, we need HELP!!

~ Thank You, Gabby, Phoenix, AZ

Gabby:

Enrolling in Medicare Part B needs to be a rush job! You are in the middle of the maze of Medicare and Richard needs Medicare Part B immediately!

This is a new Medicare question for the Toni Says® Medicare office. America needs to know the rules of Medicare regarding delaying Medicare Part B, when there is an unmarried domestic partner situation (same sex or opposite sex), and they receive health insurance through their partner's employer. Always discuss delaying your

domestic partner's Medicare Part B with your company's health insurance benefits administrator or HR department about what is in the insurance company's handbook regarding unmarried domestic spouse Medicare rules.

The size of the group may not make a difference. Whether there are less than or over 100 employees on your unmarried spouse's group health insurance plan, one should verify with HR or the insurance plan if you generally should not delay the non-working domestic partner's Medicare Part B. As I said earlier in this article, always consult with your benefits or HR department about the consequences that may arise when your domestic partner delays their Medicare Part B and if there could be a possibility of receiving a late Part B penalty, when they need to enroll in Medicare Part B at a later date.

I have written about the "Special Enrollment Period" and having the Social Security form titled CMS L-564 "Request for Employment Information" filled out by your HR or office manager. Richard could have his Medicare Part B with an effective date of the first of the next month.

Richard will need to take 2 Social Security forms, the CMS L-564 "Request for Employment Information" signed by the employer's HR department along with the CMS 40-B "Application for Medicare Part B" to his local Social Security office.

During a Toni Says Medicare Consultation, we advise clients to meet with a Social Security rep in person (if possible due to COVID-19 social distancing) or fax it directly to the specific office or leave in the Social Security office's mail drop box. Remember, always make copies of every document given to the Social Security office or received from the Social Security office.

Sign up for the Toni Says® Medicare newsletter about Medicare rules and changes at www.tonisays.com. Toni King, author of the 2022 Medicare Survival Guide® Advanced edition is giving a \$5 discount on the Medicare Survival Guide® Advanced book at www.tonisays.com. ★



WEEKLY COMICS

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps

GERALD! ANSWER ME, BOY, WHERE ARE YOU?
HEY, SON, WHERE DID YOU GET OFF TO?
GERALD!! GIVE YOUR OL' DAD A HOLLER!
INDOORS HE JUST BREAKS STUFF. GET HIM OUTSIDE, WE JUST WORRY HE BREAKS BONES.

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering

I'M GOD'S GIFT TO WOMEN.
THAT'S WHY I'M AN ATHEIST.

Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas

MACARONI. NO, IT'S LAMB CHOPS.
MACARONI. NO, IT'S STUFFED CABBAGE.
MACARONI. NO, IT'S BEEF STEW.
FRANCINE ALWAYS HATED COOKING FOR YANKEE DODDLE

THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

BY AL SCADUTO

BARGAIN TALK-TV COMMERCIAL TALK, THAT IS...
ORDER THE NO-STICK EGG POACHER NOW AND WE WILL INCLUDE THE COMPLETE NO-STICK CUTLERY SET AND THE NO-STICK CHINAWARE FOR 12...A \$60 VALUE FOR ONLY \$19.95 IF YOU ORDER NOW... ONLY \$19.95... DO IT NOW...
AND OF COURSE IT'S A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OFFER...
THANK TO LEAH WEISS, YONKERS, N.Y.
EVERY REAL HOT DAY OF THE YEAR, THIS SEEMS TO HAPPEN ON SCHEDULE...
I'LL TRY TO HAVE IT WORK BY NEXT WEEK--GOTTA SEND FOR THE PARTS FOR THIS OLD MODEL...
THANK TO G. MAXWELL, WASHINGTON, D.C.

R.F.D.

by Mike Marland

DO YOU TAKE CRYPTO COIN?
NO, BUT WE TAKE LOTS OF OTHER KINDS OF COIN.
PANTS-POCKET...BOTTOM-OF-YOUR-PURSE... COUCH CUSHION...CAR SEAT...JUG...JAR... CIGAR BOX...COOKIE TIN...PIGGY BANK...
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ENOUGH TO MAKE A GROWN MAN CRY...
OH, DRAGBUTT--I THINK I'D BE HAPPIER NEARER THE WATER...
THANK TO CHAS. H. REED, UNIV. MINE

GRIN and BEAR IT

by Wagnon

"On this spot, gas once sold for \$1.25 a gallon!"

LAFF-A-DAY

"Marriage is really a grind. You wash the dishes, make the bed — then a week later you have to do it all over again."

Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps

THIS IS SO NICE! I CAN'T GET MY HUSBAND TO EAT ANYWHERE THAT DOESN'T HAVE PICTURES OF THE FOOD ON THE MENU.

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTNOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

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<p>9 LIVES CANNED CAT FOOD 5.5 Oz All Varieties</p> <p>Limit 2 Cases Per Family</p> <p>47¢ Effective 5/25/22 - 5/31/22</p>	<p>FUSSIE CAT PREMIUM CANNED CAT FOOD Black Label Gold Label 2.8 Oz.</p> <p>Limit 2 Cases Per Family</p> <p>EVERYDAY LOW PRICE Effective 5/25/22 - 5/31/22</p>	<p>PURINA CAT CHOW DRY CAT FOOD •Regular •Indoor 15 Lb Bag</p> <p>Limit 2 Bags Per Family</p> <p>ON SALE Everyday Effective 5/25/22 - 5/31/22</p>	<p>SCOOPAWAY Unscented 25 Lb Box \$8.99 SCOOPAWAY Multi-Cat 20 Lb Box \$6.99 FRESH STEP SCOOP Regular 20 Lb Box \$9.99 FRESH STEP Outstretch 19 Lb Box \$10.99 CLUMPING CAT LITTER Limit 2 Boxes Effective 5/25/22 - 5/31/22</p>															
<p>WORLD'S BEST CAT LITTER •Original •Extra Strength New Size 15 Lb Bag Limit 2 Bags</p> <p>\$14.99</p>	<p>ORIJEN DOG & CAT FOOD SALE All Products •Dry Dog Food •Dry Cat Food •Canned Dog Food •Dog & Cat Treats</p> <p>15% OFF OUR REGULAR LOW PRICES</p>	<p>PRECIOUS CAT CLUMPING CAT LITTER 18 Lb Bag •Regular •Ultra Limit 2 Bags Per Family</p> <p>\$6.49</p>	<p>JONNY CAT PREMIUM CAT LITTER 10 lb Ba Limit 2 Bags Per Family</p> <p>\$2.79</p>	<p>EUKANUBA DRY DOG FOOD 30-33 Lb Bag •Large Breed \$47.99 •Medium Breed \$49.99 •Adult \$56.99</p>	<p>PREMIUM CHOICE ALL NATURAL CLUMPING CAT LITTER 40 Lb Bag (Extra Strength 25Lbs \$8.99) Limit 2 Bags</p> <p>\$9.99</p>													
<p>CANIDAE PURE ADULT DRY DOG FOOD Grain Free 24 Lb Bag •Selected Varieties Limit 2 Bags</p> <p>\$15 OFF As Marked OUR REGULAR LOW PRICES</p>	<p>AVODERM CANNED DOG FOOD •Regular •Grain Free (Avoderm Canned Cat Food 3 Oz. 13 Oz. Limit 1 Case) Grain Free \$9.99 5.5 oz Reg \$1.25</p> <p>\$1.79</p>	<p>MERRICK'S CLASSIC NATURAL DRY DOG FOOD •Chicken/Green Pea/Ancient Grains 25 Lbs Limit 2 Bags •Beef/Green Pea/Carrots •Lamb/Green Pea/Ancient Grains</p> <p>\$10 OFF OUR REGULAR LOW PRICES</p>	<p>MEOW MIX DRY CAT FOOD •Original Choice 16 Lb Bag Limit 2 Bags Per Family</p> <p>\$13.99</p>															
<p>CAT'S PRIDE FRESH & LIGHT PREMIUM CLUMPING CAT LITTER 15 Lb Bag Limit 2 Jugs</p> <p>\$8.99</p>	<p>MERRICK'S CLASSIC NATURAL DRY DOG FOOD •Chicken/Green Pea/Ancient Grains 25 Lbs Limit 2 Bags •Beef/Green Pea/Carrots •Lamb/Green Pea/Ancient Grains</p> <p>\$10 OFF OUR REGULAR LOW PRICES</p>	<p>FRESH STEP CRYSTALS CAT LITTER 8Lb Bag Limit 2 Bags</p> <p>\$13.99</p>																
<p>CAT FURNITURE •Prevue Pet Products •Ware Asst. Styles</p> <p>20% OFF OUR SUPER LOW PRICES</p>		<p>PENN-PLAX CASCADE POWER FILTER SALE</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th>MODEL</th> <th>TANK SIZE</th> <th>PET CLUB SALE</th> </tr> <tr> <td>CASCADE 100</td> <td>20 Gal.</td> <td>\$29.99</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CASCADE 150</td> <td>35 Gal.</td> <td>\$42.99</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CASCADE 200</td> <td>50 Gal.</td> <td>\$54.99</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CASCADE 300</td> <td>100 Gal.</td> <td>\$72.99</td> </tr> </table>		MODEL	TANK SIZE	PET CLUB SALE	CASCADE 100	20 Gal.	\$29.99	CASCADE 150	35 Gal.	\$42.99	CASCADE 200	50 Gal.	\$54.99	CASCADE 300	100 Gal.	\$72.99
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<p>Bramton SIMPLE SOLUTION TRAINING PADS 23" x 24" 50 Pads (Extra Large 50 Ct. \$23.99)</p> <p>\$14.99</p>	<p>PET CORRECTOR 1.58 oz. \$6.99 STOPS BARKING 6.35 oz. \$13.99</p>	<p>KORDON WATER CONDITIONERS</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td>Amquel 16 Oz</td> <td>\$8.49</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Amquel Plus 16 Oz</td> <td>\$9.49</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Novaqua Plus 16 Oz</td> <td>\$8.99</td> </tr> </table>		Amquel 16 Oz	\$8.49	Amquel Plus 16 Oz	\$9.49	Novaqua Plus 16 Oz	\$8.99									
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<p>BONUS COUPON</p> <p>FRISKIES BUFFET CANNED CAT FOOD 5.5 Oz All Varieties Limit 1 Case With Coupon Limit One Coupon Per Family Price Valid Only With Coupon Effective 5/25/22 - 5/31/22</p> <p>ON SALE Everyday CHM PLU 367</p>		<p>BONUS COUPON</p> <p>FRISKIES PARTY MIX CAT TREATS 2.1 Oz •Selected Varieties Limit 2 Pkgs Per Family Limit One Coupon Per Family Price Valid Only With Coupon Effective 5/25/22 - 5/31/22</p> <p>\$1.35 CHM PLU 573</p>																
<p>BONUS COUPON</p> <p>ARM & HAMMER CAT LITTER DEODORIZER 20 Oz Box Limit 2 Boxes with Coupon Limit One Coupon Per Family Price Valid Only With Coupon Effective 5/25/22 - 5/31/22</p> <p>\$1.49 CHM PLU 422</p>																		

Caltrans Honors Fallen Highway Workers at Memorial

Caltrans Press Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Caltrans dignitaries, employees, families and friends gathered solemnly on the west steps of the State Capitol for the department's 32nd Annual Workers Memorial to remember and honor the 189 public servants who have died since 1921 while building and maintaining California's transportation system.

The yearly memorial – in addition to honoring families and giving staff the opportunity to pay respects to their fallen colleagues – reminds us to “Be Work Zone Alert” and “Move Over” a lane when you see flashing amber lights ahead, or slow down if not safe to do so.

“Safety is always Caltrans’ top priority and the tragedies that brought us here today have resulted in intensified safety efforts within the department,” said Caltrans Acting Director Steven Keck. “Zero deaths on our state highway system is the only acceptable number, and – as we recognize those who tragically died while at work on our transportation system – we remind all motorists to please Slow for the Cone Zone, Be Work Zone Alert and Move Over when you see flashing amber lights.”

During the ceremony, Caltrans placed 189 orange traffic cones in a diamond “caution sign” configuration, each bearing the



Caltrans employees honor the 189 fallen highway workers that have died since 1921. Photo courtesy of Caltrans

name of an employee lost since 1921. A black cone in the center represented all people killed while working on the state highway system, including private contractors, tow truck drivers, California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers and other emergency responders. The commemoration also included the Caltrans Honor Guard, who led the symbolic tribute. Additionally, flags are flying at half-staff today at the State Capitol and at all Caltrans facilities in honor of these fallen workers.

The ceremony marked the third year in a row that no new names were added to the memorial – the longest stretch in nearly 75 years – though speakers at the memorial stressed the need for everyone to



A Caltrans employee holds an orange cone while honoring the 189 fallen highway workers that have died since 1921. Photo courtesy of Caltrans

remain vigilant.

With the help of Senate Bill 1, the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017, as well as the recently enacted federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Caltrans and local agencies now have

significant additional funds to repair and maintain California's transportation system. The additional funding also increases the number of Caltrans employees and contractors working on our roadways, increasing their exposure.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, highway construction and maintenance work is one of the most hazardous occupations in the United States. In 2020, more than 6,500 work zone collisions occurred on California

roadways, resulting in an estimated 1,964 injuries and 60 fatalities. Nationally, drivers and passengers account for 85 percent of the people who are killed in work zones.

In February, Caltrans announced a new Director's Policy on Road Safety, which commits the department to the Safe System approach and reaffirms the vision of reaching zero fatalities and serious injuries on state highways by 2050. This policy takes steps to further a shift that began in 2020, as state transportation leaders recognized a bolder and more focused approach was necessary to combat the troubling rise in fatalities and serious injuries on California roads. The state's 2020-24 Strategic Highway Safety Plan – managed by Caltrans and involving more than 400 stakeholders – was updated to include the Safe System approach.

Caltrans has partnered with the California Transportation Foundation to develop two funds to benefit the families of Caltrans workers killed on the job. The Fallen Workers Assistance and Memorial Fund helps with the initial needs a surviving family faces and the Caltrans Fallen Workers Memorial Scholarship is available to the children of these workers. For more information or to make donations, visit the California Transportation Foundation. ★

Man Pleads Guilty to COVID Relief Fraud, Embezzlement and Unemployment Fraud

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of California

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Aaron Ashcraft, 42, of Sacramento, pleaded guilty to one count of wire fraud and one count of bank fraud in a scheme to defraud the Paycheck Protection Program of over \$1.2 million in COVID-19 relief loans guaranteed by the Small Business Administration (SBA) under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, U.S. Attorney Phillip A. Talbert announced.

According to court documents, Ashcraft carried out

the fraud scheme between May 2020 and April 2021. As part of his scheme, Ashcraft submitted to SBA-approved lenders at least seven fraudulent Paycheck Protection Program loan applications in the names of purported businesses. In the applications, Ashcraft falsely represented that each of the purported businesses had employees and monthly payroll expenses. To support the Paycheck Protection Program loan applications, Ashcraft submitted fabricated records including Internal Revenue Service forms, checking account statements, and payroll

summaries. In total, Ashcraft requested over \$1.2 million in Paycheck Protection Program loans and obtained approximately \$920,000.

In addition to Paycheck Protection Program fraud, Ashcraft admitted that, from September 2017 through June 2020, he embezzled at least approximately \$780,000 from his former employer—a street-sweeping company in Sacramento. Ashcraft held multiple positions at the company, including chief financial officer. As chief financial officer, Ashcraft had access to the company's business credit card

accounts. Without authorization, Ashcraft used those accounts to pay for personal expenses.

Finally, Ashcraft admitted to defrauding the Maine Department of Labor. According to his plea agreement, in July 2020, Ashcraft applied for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, falsely claiming that he lived in Maine and was unable to work due to COVID-19. To support his application, Ashcraft submitted falsified IRS forms in which he represented that, in 2019, he operated a business in Maine that received over \$160,000 in income and made a net profit of over \$66,000.

In total, Ashcraft fraudulently obtained unemployment compensation of over \$58,000.

As part of his plea agreement, Ashcraft agreed to pay restitution as follows:

A total of \$919,598 to three SBA-approved lenders; \$45,979 to the SBA; \$779,832 to his former employer; and \$58,050 to the Maine Department of Labor.

U.S. District Judge Kimberly J. Mueller is scheduled to sentence Ashcraft on Aug. 22, 2022. He faces up to 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine for wire fraud and up to 30 years in prison and a \$1 million fine for bank fraud. ★



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