



Progress on \$4.5 Mil. Fuel Project Outlined at Meeting

PAGE 9

North Gate Is Decked Out for Holiday Season

PAGE 11



RIVER VALLEY TIMES

39TH YEAR • ISSUE 41

Serving Rancho Murieta, Sloughouse, Wilton

NOVEMBER 24, 2023

SEE INSIDE

SECURITY, RULES AND DEV.; RMA BOARD TOPICS



PAGE 2

WILTON LOCAL SERVING ON AIRCRAFT CARRIER



PAGE 4

CSD BOARD: FINANCES, SECURITY AND WATER



PAGE 6

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Celebrating RM Veterans

Veterans Day Event Celebrates Rancho Murieta Heroes



Air Force veterans Mike Walker, left and Tom Thompson are greeted outside the RMA Building when they attend a Veterans Day celebration that recognized all past and current member of the Armed Services on Nov. 10. Photos by Gail Bullen

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Rancho Murieta held its own Veterans Day celebration to honor community veterans for their service to their country on Nov. 10, a day before the actual holiday.

Approximately 100 people participated in the ninth

annual "Been There, Done That" Café to enjoy coffee, donuts, and conversation at the RMA Building. The Rancho Murieta Caregiver Support Group sponsored the event.

The celebration began outside the building, where dozens of cheering children and adults lined the walkway and waved hand-drawn posters and small American flags as they

thanked the veterans for their service.

Army veteran Don Craig, who served in Vietnam, was touched by the outside reception. "It was absolutely overwhelming," he said. "It almost brings tears to your eyes - seeing all of these wonderful people thanking you for your service."

Once inside, the veterans filled out a raffle ticket

for a treasure trove of gift cards donated by local businesses and organizations before they found their way to a beautifully decorated table to share their military experiences with other veterans, family members, and friends.

The decorations included flags from each branch of the service hanging in front of the windows, a patriotic

Continued on page 2

Wilton Celebrates Veterans Day with Reverence and Respect

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

WILTON, CA (MPG) - A Veterans Day celebration in Wilton was all about remembering and honoring members of the Armed Services when it unfolded at the Wilton Community Center on Nov. 11.

The Wilton History Group (WHG) organized the event that drew around 60 attendees including 18 living veterans who were asked to pose for a photo.

The history group opened the doors to the community center an hour before the program so that attendees could enjoy a breakfast with an egg casserole, fruit salad and yogurt that was free for veterans and their families and by donation for everyone else.

The early opening also gave attendees time to look through an extensive collection of WHG historical artifacts, some dating back to World War I. They also perused displays with biographies and photos memorializing Wilton residents who have lost their lives. They also could leaf through notebooks with information about living Wilton veterans and young residents who are currently serving in the Armed Forces.

Peter Lovelace, a pastor at the Wilton Bible Church



Eighteen veterans are recognized for their military service at a Veterans Day Celebration held at the Wilton Community Center on Nov. 18. The Wilton History Group sponsored the event. Photos by Gail Bullen



Attendees look over displays memorializing Wilton veterans who have lost their lives

and a member of the history group, organized the event. He welcomed the attendees and emceed the program that featured six speakers, a flag salute by the Wilton Christian School Trap Team, the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, the singing of the national anthem, and two multimedia musical interludes - an Armed Forces medley and a filming of "Proud to be an American"

sung by Lee Greenwood and a group of veterans.

John Kent, a law enforcement chaplain was the keynote speaker. Lovelace described him as an honorary Wiltonite. Kent delivered the invocation, played "Taps" with his bugle, and described some of history behind the six branches of the service.

Kent also explained the meaning of "The Missing Man's Table" that was set

up near the front stage. "As we look at this table with a single setting for one, it represents and pays tribute to more than 83,114 Americans missing from each branch of the service because of their POW or MIA status," he said.

Kent also asked veteran Cosme Juarez to stand for special recognition. He served in the United States

Continued on page 3

Wild Lion Sighting, Abandoned Cats Cause Concern

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The misidentification of a mountain lion as a wild lion that was spotted on the golf course on the south and the discovery of a dozen house cats abandoned in a home on the north caused concern in Rancho Murieta last week authorities said.

The several-hour investigation into the lion sighting took place on Nov. 17 near Fairway 12. Four agencies responded: Rancho Murieta Association (RMA), Rancho Murieta Community Services District (CSD), Sacramento County Animal Control, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The incident blew up on social media after a resident posted a warning and a blurry photo that purported to be the animal seen on the golf course. It was later determined to be an image of an African Lion downloaded from the internet. The upshot was that the animal seen by three country club employees and several golfers was actually a mountain lion. It was never seen again after it ran into a field following the initial sighting. Mountain lion sightings aren't uncommon in Rancho Murieta.

The abandoned house cats were discovered after the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office, CSD and RMA responded to a report that two dead bodies might be inside an odiferous home on Ventana Drive on Nov. 14. They instead found 10 to 15 cats, some dead, inside the unoccupied house. Although the sheriff's office made an urgent referral to Animal Control, the county agency didn't respond until Nov. 17. In the interim, however, someone did go inside the house to remove the dead cats.

Mountain lion

CSD Security Supervisor Kelly Benitz said the initial report of the lion sighting came from the Rancho Murieta Country Club grounds supervisor. He contacted the North Gate to report that an employee had seen a lion near

Continued on page 6

Veterans Day Event Celebrates Rancho Murieta Heroes



Veterans share stories at the 'Been There – Done that Canteen' sponsored by the Rancho Murieta Caregivers Group. Photos by Gail Bullen

Continued from page 1
centerpiece on each table, and an embellished table loaded with donated coffee and donuts.

Hand-drawn cards created by youngsters at Cosumnes River Elementary School, the Hodge Learning Center, and The Ranch Preschool were also presented to each one.

This was the eighth year that the Rancho Murieta Caregiver Support Group has organized the Rancho Murieta celebration.

Nan Parquette, who chaired the organizing committee, emceed the short program. It began with Flag Bearer Troy Luna Jr., leading the members of Cub Scout Troop 633 to the front of the room where the youngsters led the crowd in a recitation of the "Pledge of Allegiance." Luna also waved the flag in front of the RMA Building before the event began.

Parquette then called out each branch of the service and asked past and current members to step forward to be recognized. The applause was resounding as they stood up.

Parquette also announced that the Rancho Murieta Post of Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) led by their commander Ted Ryon would take over the annual Veterans Day Celebration next year.

Parquette also told the crowd it had been a privilege for her group to "recognize our men and women of the Amed Forces for their service to the country" with the help of generous donations from throughout the community

"This is your respite time to be thanked by all of us, who have been and are now protected to enjoy the freedoms you earned for us," she said.

"This is a slogan that I have always liked, and I hope it will become yours," Parquette concluded. "Ours is the home of the free because of the brave."

Ryon later took over



Devin Davis and Alaine Davis help themselves to refreshments. He served in the Marine Corps and was stationed in Iraq, and she served in the Navy.



Scoutmaster Phil Leam lines up the youngsters in Cub Scout Pack 633 so they can lead a recitation of the 'Pledge of Allegiance'. Troy Luna Jr. is the flag bearer.



Admiring handmade cards created by local school children for the event are Hathaway, on left, and Bill DuVal. They are World War II and Vietnam War veterans respectively

the microphone to announce the names of all of the donors and to preside over the distribution of the raffle prizes. Ryon also introduced Jeni Case, who is forming an auxiliary for the local VFW Post. (See the community brief in this issue of the River Valley Times.)

JT Turner, who owns Bar Code Barbers, also announced he would provide its services free of charge to veterans the following day. He later reported giving away 50 services.

The "Been There,

Done That" Café first opened eight years ago at the suggestion of JoAnn Young, whose late father-in-law John Prenez was a World War II veteran. Besides Young, the other original members of the organizing committee were Parquette, Judy Prenez, Erin Reed, and Berniece Jones.

Residents are welcome to attend the monthly Rancho Murieta Caregiver Support Group. The meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the RMA Building. ★

Security, Rules and Development are RMA Board Topics

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Security and development were topics of interest when the Rancho Murieta Association (RMA) Board held its monthly meeting on Nov. 14 that only lasted 25 minutes.

The board also adopted two non-architectural rule revisions and took in updates from General Manager Rod Hart and several committee chairs.

Security Committee

Director Chris Childs chairs the Ad Hoc Security Committee, which is looking for options behind the gates when the Rancho Murieta Community Services District (CSD) stops funding patrol services at some point next year. Childs said he requested that RMA seek a legal opinion on using Measure J tax money to help the association fund security inside the gates.

"Our attorneys believe that Measure J funding will not be available to RMA for security reasons," Childs said. "So that is a key piece of information for our security ad hoc committee as we continue to research options to present to the RMA Board for consideration."

Childs didn't elaborate. Nor did the other board members comment.

Childs said his committee is still waiting to get data from CSD about salaries and benefits for security personnel. After the meeting, he said that CSD has given him the big number, but he is looking for specifics especially details about benefits.

Rancho North

Audience member John Merchant, who is vice-president of Save Our Lakes & Open Spaces (SOLOS) and a past CSD board member, provided an update about the Rancho North subdivision that is proposing to build 697 lots.

Merchant said the transportation study for the project is now on the Sacramento County planning website. He described it as an immense document that he and resident John Long, a retired engineer have reviewed. "At some point, we should get together and go through it," he told the board.

Merchant said on the surface the document appears very favorable for Rancho Murieta "because of what is being required of the developer to satisfy the transportation demands going forward."



Director Chris Childs provides an update from the Ad Hoc Security Committee at the Rancho Murieta Association Board meeting on Nov. 14. Photo by Gail Bullen

Merchant added that water for the new subdivision isn't the only issue. "There are a lot of technical studies that we need to get involved in," he said.

Rule revisions

President Scott Adams chairs the Governing Documents Committee. He said the 30-day public comment period for the revision of two rules about identification and fireworks had ended.

Adams outlined some of the changes to the rule that specifies when RMA members and nonmembers must provide identification. He said the committee added RMA compliance officers in addition to CSD officers who can ask for identification and "explained the description of illegal activity that gives rise to the request for identification."

Saying that only one resident comment, which was favorable, had come in about the rule, Adams made the motion to adopt the revision. It passed 7:0.

Adams said that five favorable comments came in about the revised fireworks rule. In fact, three of the residents said that all fireworks should be illegal all together. Adams said he modified the rule slightly based on one comment about a section of the rule that says fireworks can't be used near unimproved grasslands or inside any park.

The suggestion was that the rule should specify a number of feet from the perimeter. Adams said he looked at other rules and laws around California and determined that 100 feet would be fair.

Adams asked for a motion to adopt the revised fireworks rule, with the one change. The board voted 7:0 in favor.

The most significant change in the fireworks rule was increasing the fines for the use of illegal

fireworks to \$1,000, 1,500 and \$2,000.

Other business

• General Manager Rod Hart said he wanted to remind the public about the annual membership meeting and election of directors on Nov. 20 at 6 p.m. He said they had to make sure that enough members voted in the election so the would be a quorum. Hart also said the new board would elect officers at the Dec. 19 meeting. The directors will vote on committee members at the January meeting.

• Adams, who chairs the Communications Committee, said his group received 108 entries for the annual photo contest. He said the winners will be announced at the Nov. 30 meeting.

• Director Patrick O'Hern, who chairs the Architectural Review Committee, said that 34 projects and plans were reviewed in October for a total of 376 so far this year.

• Director Renee Bechthold who chairs the Recreation Committee said her group had finalized plans for this year's Holidays Lights Contest. She said that entrants should be sure to turn on their lights on Dec. 17 when the final judging takes place.

• Director Danny Carrillo, who chairs the Maintenance Committee said Maintenance Manager Troy Schaffner had updated them about current activities including fire fuel reduction, street sweeping, facility painting a townhouse told them that new legislation that doesn't allow the use of potable water to irrigate "nonfunctional turf" will affect RMA.

The board's next meeting is the annual membership meeting at 6 p.m. Nov. 30. The following meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 19. ★

Rancho Murieta, a 3,500-acre country-club community, is an oasis of emerald fairways and manicured greens, built along the scenic banks of the Cosumnes River. It encompasses five lakes, greenbelts, rolling hills and stately oaks.

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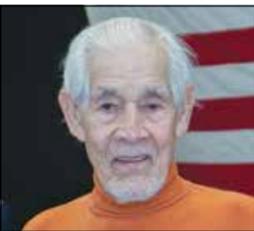
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Wilton Celebrates Veterans Day with Reverence and Respect



Wilton resident Cosme Juarez, who turned 100 on Sept. 27, is asked to stand for special recognition. He served as a radio operator in the United States Army Air Corps in World War II, flew 24 missions, and was shot down twice.



The keynote speaker, John Kent, plays 'Taps'. Photos by Gail Bullen



Attendees are intent as they sing the 'National Anthem.' Attendees on the other side of the room aren't pictured.



Riley Charlow help Kent explain the meaning of 'The Missing Man's Table', which commemorates 83,114 Americans missing in action.

Continued from page 1
Army Air Corps as a radio operator on a B-17 bomber. He flew 24 missions and was shot down twice. He turned 100 on Sept. 27.

Two speakers addressed the veterans in the crowd. Edgard Monroy served on an aircraft carrier when he was young, and one of his sons is doing the same. "Each of you has built the structure of our society, the structure of our great county and you model a way for those who follow us," he said.

Longtime Wilton resident Dale Wrigglesworth served in the Army National Guard for 10 years before taking a break. He returned to the service just before 9-11 and was deployed four times including one year in Iraq and two in Afghanistan.

"It's been really an honor. But there are a lot of scars that veterans don't see coming home," he said. "I just want to let you know there are resources out there for you."

Wrigglesworth urged veterans to pick up a California Veterans Association book, which he explains the federal and state benefits.

At the conclusion of the program, WHG member Jim Ring asked the crowd to peruse all of the displays put

together by Alice Kutzer and Bonnie Rose with help from other volunteers. He also announced that a moment of silence would be observed at 11:11 a.m. "to remember who passed and say a prayer for them." The silence is held at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month to mark when the First World War ended in 1918.

Kutzer also thanked the crowd for coming and the other WHG members for their help in the set up and take down. She said many residents also had loaned and donated uniforms and artifacts for display.

"We appreciate you, and we are so happy to be able to honor our Wilton veterans in this very special way," Kutzer said. ★

Turkey Pickup in Rancho Murieta Scores Food for the Needy



Photo courtesy of Rancho Murieta Resident

From left, Chris Childs, Danny Carrillo and Tom Reimers all smiles after another successful Rancho Murieta turkey pickup on Nov. 15. They went from porch to porch to collect frozen turkeys, Thanksgiving fixings and other needed items such as peanut butter and diapers. This was the fourth time that Rancho Murieta residents have collected donations for the Amador Interfaith Food Bank the week before Thanksgiving. Chris Childs filled in for Renee Bechthold this year. All four are Rancho Murieta Association directors, but their food drive was a personal effort that wasn't connected to the association. ★

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Wilton Resident Serving on Aircraft Carrier in the Mediterranean



Above Photo by Gail Bullen, below photo courtesy of Monroy Family

Wilton resident Edgar 'Alan' Monroy is currently serving on the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier which is currently stationed in the Mediterranean because of the Israel Hamas conflict. In photo right, an 8-year-old Monroy admires the Easter Bunny at the Wilton Spring Fling in March 2012. In photo above, Monroy enlists in the Navy in August 2022 at age 19. When growing up, Monroy belonged to 4-H, Boy Scouts and became the youngest member of the Wilton History Group. ★



MEMORIAL

WALLACE THEODORE "TED" STRAND • 7/20/1936 – 11/10/2023

Our dad, Wallace Theodore 'Ted' Strand, Jr, a 59-year resident of Wilton, passed away on November 10, 2023 due to complications from pneumonia. The eldest son of Neva Marie and W. T. 'Wally' Strand, Sr, Ted was born on July 20, 1936, in Los Angeles. He was raised in Long Beach, CA, Marion, IA, and Gold Hill, OR before settling in Sacramento in 1953.

After graduating from C.K. McClatchy High School in 1954, Dad worked at Panama Pottery, Capital Nursery and DMV in Sacramento before starting his 38-year career with Procter & Gamble out on Fruitridge Road. He worked alongside our grandpa Wally in both the Duncan Hines cake mix part of the plant and also the lab, before becoming a machinist/mechanic in the plant's tower.

Along the way, he met our mom and they had to get married because, as he put it, their horses were living together.

The four of us came along between 1963 and 1969, adding more noise to the farm he was busy building from the dirt up on Apple Road. Speaking of which: he could build or fix almost anything. Television's 'Tim the Toolman' had nothing on our dad, who was quite handy with just about any power tool or situation that required intelligence, resourcefulness, or grit.

Our dad had a great (albeit sometimes very dry) sense of humor, and was known far and wide as the driver of a very slow-moving VW Bug. He enjoyed Blues music, antiques, science, history, genealogy, and sneaking extra chocolate chip cookies baked by our mom. He was extremely skilled at clock and watch repair. In the late 50's through the 60's, before the Sacramento portion of the I-5 freeway was completed, he spent many hours digging for bottles in the Old Sac/K Street area with friends, and eluding the law to sneak into Sacramento's underground catacombs to look for treasure. In later years, after becoming more of a law-abiding man, he rarely passed a garage sale without stopping.

Our dad was a great son, brother,



husband, father, grandpa, uncle, friend, and neighbor. He was a member of the Sloughhouse Volunteer Fire Department for a couple years, and believed in honesty, integrity, and helping others. His handshake was his word.

He leaves behind our mom, Marlene, his wife of 62 years; children Christina Strand Wagner, Ted Strand III (Jennifer), and Michelle (Jeff) Radford. He also leaves his brother Bob (Kristen) Strand, brother-in-law Stan Scharosch (Mary); grandchildren Shelby, Casey, Alex, Kiersten and Jacob; and numerous nephews and nieces. He was preceded in death by our Grandpa Wally, our Grandma Marie, and our brother Carl.

We are grateful to the wonderful doctors and nurses at Sutter Hospital in Sacramento who tried so valiantly to save our dad's life.

The funeral will be held Friday, December 1 at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, located at 8701 Elk Grove-Florin Road in Elk Grove. Visitation will be from 9:00am to 10:00am, followed by the funeral service at 10:00am. Interment will be at East Lawn Cemetery, located at 4300 Folsom Blvd in Sacramento, with a luncheon reception immediately following. In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to the Sacramento Shriners Hospital for Children, or St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, two of our dad's favorite charities.

DAVID ROBERT HOUESHELL • 4/19/1963 – 10/28/2023

David Robert Houdeshell was laid to rest on October 28th, 2023 after a short diagnosis of End Stage Liver Disease, he was 60 years of age.

David was born in Redding, CA on April 19th, 1963. He resided in Rancho Murieta for 22 years. Relocating here from the Central Coast and Bay Area in 2001.

Otherwise, known as "Big D", "Big Dave", "Cowboy", but his favorite nickname was "Coach". It made the big guy teary-eyed when he ran into his coached student-athletes and they addressed him as such. He'd talk about it for days.

Surviving members of his family are his spouse, Deborah, twin children, Austen and Audrey, his father Robert Houdeshell, his sister, Debra Houdeshell Ryan, and brother, Dan Houdeshell.

David was a Bartender for a number of years and made a "mean cocktail". He worked 3 jobs when his twins were born, in order for his wife to stay home, while starting up two new businesses with his parents. Top Gun Enzyme & Microbial and Producers Specialties, Inc. are manufacturing companies that produced products for animal nutrition. These companies were extremely lucrative.

David never graduated from high school. He had the equivalent to a 9th grade education. The lure of making money was the catalyst to dropping out of high school. He would tell you he was the richest kid in his Leduc, province of Alberta Canada. Hard working, working nights doing janitorial work at that time. He moved to Sacramento to be near family and worked for Campbell Soup Company, and Sunset Lawn Funeral Home selling pre-need funeral arrangements. Where he met his wife, Deborah, in 1989. She was moving to Aptos and he soon joined her there. They were married in 1993. They recently celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary October 10th. When living in Aptos, he worked for Santa Cruz Memorial Park and Funeral Home, Aptos Club, Krazy's Restaurant & Bar, Moe's Alley, Britannia Arms and Woodworks



Furniture & Leather. He worked the 1995 Poppy Hills AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am and met Joe Pesci. Who insisted on wearing his golf shoes in a "no shoe zone" and making his own cocktail. They hit it off immediately. Twins, Austen and Audrey, were prematurely born in 1997. In

2001, relocating to Sacramento, purchasing a home in Rancho Murieta, to be closer to Aunt Deb and Uncle Mat Ryan, with raising twins, he worked for Ashley Furniture, Beck's Furniture and continued his animal nutrition business. Working for himself provided him with the flexibility and opportunity to Coach the PG Eagles pilot program for youths. He found his niche and loved it!

A HUGE Chicago Bear fan, it was either going to be "a good week or a bad week" if the Bears won or

lost. If you follow "Da Bears" most weeks were not good weeks. But he was a true fan.

David care-gave his mother who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer for 17 months until her demise in 2019 which devastated him and this he never bounced back from. She waited to pass until he arrived at her bedside. Just prior to David's death, he was caregiving his father and Brother in Laws father.

David will be remembered as a "Larger than Life" personality, the "Life of the Party", always a good story or joke to tell and knew just about everything about your favorite sports team and his. He also loved his military movies and could name any plane in the sky and give you the details. He loved the Rancho Murieta Airport and the Rancho Murieta Equestrian Center, he could be seen frequenting them often. Or by the Consumes River, hoping to see the salmon in the fish ladder jump.

He was loved by so many and is missed greatly by his family and friends.

In lieu of flowers please consider a small donation to: CCFAA -Alcoholics Anonymous or Loaves and Fishes/ The Mustard Seed School.

Thank A Veteran Today

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Kiwanis seeks donations for Toys for Tots

The Kiwanis Club is in its 14th year in partnership with the Marines Toys for Tots program. Kiwanis has placed Toys for Tots boxes at several locations in Rancho Murieta. Toy boxes can be found at: Consumnes River Elementary School, Ace Hardware, The Backyard, Go Fore Pizza, Rancho Murieta Homes and Ranches, Kiwanis See's Candy Store, Rancho Murieta Garden Club, Rancho Murieta Country Club and the Local Bean Coffee Shop. Toys will be collected until Dec. 14. The toys collected are for needy children in over 2000 families in Sacramento County. For more information contact Pete Edwards 408-209-1461.

Murieta Dance Company sales annual recital Dec. 9 and 10

The Murieta Dance Company will head "Back to the Future" when the young members will dance, sing and act their hearts out at the annual recital on Dec. 9 and 10. The performances inside the former Murieta Market space in The Plaza will be held at 5 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 9 and at 2 p.m. on Sunday Dec. 10. Tickets are \$15 per person for general admission and \$25 for VIP seating. Tickets can be purchased at the studio which is located in the plaza and at Bar Code Barbers in the Bel Air shopping center. Food and drink will be available for purchase during the performances. For more information call 916-296-6503.

Rancho Murieta Cub Scout pack is recruiting members

Cub Scout Pack 233 in Rancho Murieta is seeking new members. The pack is open to boys and girls in grades kindergarten through fifth. Contact Scoutmaster Phil Kleam at pckleam@gmail.com.

Kiwanis seeks Sweats for Vets donations

Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta is once again asking for monetary donations to its Sweat for Vets program. This is 14th year of helping veterans who are hospitalized at the Sacramento VA Medical Center in Mather. Please make your check out to Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta Sweat for Vets. Cash donations and Walmart gift cards are also welcome. Mail donations to Kiwanis at P. O. Box 855, Rancho Murieta, or put them in a drop box at the RMA building. If you have any questions call Diann Swan at 916-354-0656. Thank you for your support of this program. Roadway improvements to close Grant Line Road

Sacramento County will close Grant Line Road between Keifer and Douglas Roads between Nov. 27 and Dec. 23 to make roadway improvements.

Kiwanis slates See's Candies fundraiser

Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta is once again selling See's Candies for the holidays. You will have two ways of purchasing your favorite items - in-person or online. You will find us at the same in-person location as last year, next door to Town & Country Real Estate in the Bel Air Shopping Center. Look for our blue Kiwanis flag. We will be

open every day from Nov. 25 and 26 and Friday to Sunday, Dec. 1 to 3, Dec. 8 to 10, Dec. 15 to 17, and Dec. 22 to 23, if not sold out. Our hours will be noon to 4 p.m. We will accept cash or credit cards. Online purchases can be made through our website. We offer free delivery to residents in the North, South, Gardens, and the Village. Orders placed by 5 p.m. will be available for delivery the next day. For more information or to purchase online, please visit our website at www.rmkiwanis.org. You can also contact the co-chairs Jeannette Edwards at (408) 515-2636 or Patti Maffei at (415) 519-1043. Thank you for supporting our fundraiser.

Roadway improvements to close Grant Line Road

Sacramento County will close Grant Line Road between Keifer and Douglas Roads between Nov. 27 and Dec. 23 to make roadway improvements.

Kiwanis slates annual crab fee on Feb. 3.

The Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta is thrilled to announce our 10th Annual Crab Feed will be Feb. 3, 2024, at the St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church on Cantova Way. In partnership with the Knights of Columbus the Crab Feed is an amazing evening of delicious crab dinner, a silent auction, dessert auction, and, of course, our huge and extravagant raffle. The Crab Feed is the largest fundraiser for our Kiwanis Club. Cash sponsorship opportunities ranging from \$300 to \$5,000 are available until Dec. 3, 2023. Crab Feed dine-in tickets will go on sale January 6 and 13 at The Local Bean from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Dine-in tickets will be sold on a first come first served basis. Cash or credit cards are accepted. The price is the same as last year at \$70. Drive-through tickets can be purchased at The Local Bean in-person sales days or online at our website www.rmkiwanis.org from Jan. 6 to Jan. 28. Dinner includes crab, shrimp, salad, pasta, rolls and dessert. Chef KC will be catering the meal this year. Our Key Club high school students will again be our servers. For more information regarding sponsorships, raffle or silent or dessert auction items, please contact Bonnie at 916-502-3260. For more information regarding ticket sales, please contact Jeannette at 408-515-2636. Like our Facebook page for most up-to-date information, "Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta". Thank you for your continued support of our Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta.

RMA members urged to vote by Nov. 30

Don't forget to vote in the Rancho Murieta Association (RMA) 2023 election for directors. Cast your vote by noon on Nov. 30 for a chance to win an Apple iPad or one of six gift cards. The drawing will be held at the RMA Annual Meeting that begins at 6 p.m. on Nov. 30. The association needs 932 votes to establish a quorum. A packet about the election was mailed to all members earlier this year. Mail or deliver your ballot to the RMA Building or bring it to the meeting.

VFW slates auxiliary meeting Dec. 16.

The Rancho Murieta Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars is forming an auxiliary and will be seeking members at a meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 6 at

the RMA building. To be eligible, an auxiliary member must have a relative who qualifies to be a member of the VFW. For example, an auxiliary member could be a mother, spouse or grandson. To be eligible for VFW membership, a person must meet two requirements. First is having served in the Armed Forces of the US and receiving an honorable discharge. Second, the person must have served on foreign soil or hostile waters. For more information about the auxiliary, contact Jeni Case at 845-541-7232 or Post Commander Ted Ryon 916-801-9383

RM holiday home tour slated Dec. 8

What could be better than Christmas in Rancho Murieta? The Rancho Murieta Woman's Club Holiday Home tour, of course. Join us Friday Dec. 8 between 10 a.m. and noon at the Rancho Murieta Country Club to pick up your program, wrist band (entry ticket) and to enjoy a light breakfast of mini quiches, fruit, bite size pastries, coffee, tea and your choice of one free Bloody Mary or Mimosa. The Holiday Home tour will be held from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and features three beautiful homes in the South and three in the North. The cost is \$30 per person. The reservation forms are available at the RMA building or contact Cindy Shamrock at 916-354-1918 or Barbara Armstrong 916-541-1884. Reservations and payment are due by 5 p.m. on Monday, 11/27. The event is open to all Rancho Murieta residents & their guests. Gentlemen are included.

Wilton Winter Festival slated Saturday Dec. 2

The annual Wilton Winter Festival will be held at the Wilton Community Center on Saturday, Dec. 2. Girl Scout Troop 2060 will serve breakfast from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. The P.A.C.E. program at Dillard School will serve lunch from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The parade will begin at noon with nearby roads closing at 11:30 p.m. After the parade, Santa will listen to Christmas wishes at the community center. Vendors also will sell crafts and holiday goods. For more information email ParksEvents@SacCounty.gov, phone 916-875-6205, or check the Wilton Community Center Facebook page. The event is sponsored by the Sacramento County Parks & Rec Council Area 4B.

River Valley Garden Club Sponsors Smokey the Bear Contest

All students in grades one through five at any school are invited to participate in a poster contest sponsored by the River Valley Garden Club. The contest is about Smokey the Bear and needs to state somewhere on the poster - "Only you can prevent forest fires". Please contact Bernice Jones at 916-354-2873 to get poster paper and more information about the contest. We will deliver poster paper and contest rules to anyone who wants to enter. The contest ends Nov. 1. Prizes will be awarded for each grade level. The first place prize is \$20 and second place is \$10. All first prize winners will be entered into the state level competition. River Valley Garden Club is affiliated with National Garden Club, Pacific Region, and California State Garden Clubs. ★

SECURITY LOGS

Following is a summary of activity for the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Security Department for the following dates. Note: these log entries are condensed. For full security log details, go to the CSD website at www.rmcsd.com. A quick link to the security logs is on the home page.

RP = Reporting Person
GOA = Gone on Arrival
UTL = Unable to Locate
BOLO = Be on Look Out
NFI = No Further Information
QOA = Quiet on Arrival
HBD = Had Been Drinking

Rancho Murieta

- Nov. 1**
 - Log not supplied.
- Nov. 2**
 - Four extra patrols.
- Nov. 3**
 - Four extra patrols.
- Nov. 4**
 - One extra patrol.
 - Animal complaint, 4:17 p.m. Nueva Drive, dog barking. No one was home, but dispatch reached the owner, and they said they would take care of the problem.
- Nov. 5**
 - Two extra patrols.
 - Trespassing, 2:07 p.m. Lone Pine Hill, GOA.
 - Accident, 2:59 p.m. Gazebo parking lot, involved golf car and a van. The damage was minor. The drivers exchanged information. The under-age golf cart driver was cited.
- Nov. 6**
 - Six extra patrols.
 - Parking enforcement, 4:38 a.m. Lago Circle, two citations.
- Nov. 7**
 - Five extra patrols.
 - Parking enforcement, 2:06 a.m. Murieta South, three citations.
 - Stop sign enforcement, 8:16 a.m. Murieta South Parkway and Reynosa Drive, two citations.
 - Welfare check, 10:21 .m. Lago Drive, the elderly resident told patrol that he didn't need any medical attention.
 - Vandalism, 12:04 p.m. location not listed, an unknown person placed tree bark inside the ignition of her Kawasaki motorcycle so she couldn't start it. It was last driven on Nov. 4. Follow-up with video surveillance to identify a possible suspect.
- Nov. 8**
 - Five extra patrols.
- Nov. 9**
 - Three extra patrols.
 - Suspicious activity, 7:32 p.m. Rio Oso, Resident reported someone knocked on their door and left a sack with a deceased animal inside, possibly a bird. Patrol conducted a perimeter check and didn't find anything.
- Nov. 10**
 - Four extra patrols.
 - Stop sign enforcement, 7:26 p.m. three locations on the south, three citations.

- Miscellaneous, 1:45 pm. Location not listed, contacted neighbor about feeding stay cats in the neighborhood. Resident apologized. She stated.
- Resident complaint, 7:52 p.m. Colbert Drive, report of doorbell ditching. When patrol arrived he saw some juveniles who ran away when they saw his vehicle.

Nov. 11

- Three extra patrols.
- Stop sign enforcement, 6:07 p.m. Cayo Court. License plate recorded.

Nov. 12

- Nine extra patrols.
- Parking enforcement, 4:24 a.m. Murieta South, three citations.
- Animal complaint, 3:30 p.m. Barking dog. Reached homeowner by phone. They will be home soon to take care of the problem.
- Miscellaneous, 6:37 p.m. Jackson Highway and Murieta Inn. RP said he followed a person driving recklessly to the Murieta Inn, where he blocked the vehicle from leaving. Patrol contacted the driver of the vehicle who was distracted but not intoxicated. Patrol advised the RP to contact the appropriate authorities the next time and not to follow or detain anyone.
- Gun shots, 8:07 pm. Murieta Village, patrol checked the village and surrounding business areas. All seemed normal.
- Stop sign enforcement, 9:47 a.m. Murieta South Parkway at Abierto and Celebrar, license plates listed on log.

Nov. 13

- One extra patrol.
- Parking enforcement, 2:25 a.m. Murieta South, three citations.

Nov. 14

- Stop sign enforcement, 7:13 a.m. Murieta South Parkway and Reynosa Drive cited.
- Welfare check, 12:33 p.m. Ventana Drive. RAM compliance officer contacted patrol for a welfare check. Upon arrival, nobody answered the door. Patrol saw numerous cats inside the home, but no residents appeared present. The sheriff's department arrived to assess the situation and determined that no one was presently living at the address. Patrol cleared call. Animal Control was advised about the cats.

Nov. 15

- Accident, 7:33 a.m. Murieta Parkway and the first Lago Drive, vehicle versus golf cart. Video surveillance showed a juvenile making an illegal left turn at the intersection, bypassing the designated turn lane with the drop arm, causing a collision with the vehicle. The video also indicated the juvenile driver had a passenger. The juvenile driver was cited for not having a license and carrying passengers without a license. Supervisor Kelly Benitez showed the video at the CSD Board meeting that night. The footage shows

the driver of the vehicle running the stop sign just before the accident.

- Animal complaint 9:16 a.m. Stableford Way, RP reported that a neighbor's dog had defecated in his front yard, but the dog owner didn't pick up the excrement. Patrol responded to the dog owner's home, but nobody was home. The incident was referred to RMA Compliance.
- Vandalism, 10:59 a.m. Riverview Park, report of vandalism in men's bathroom. An unknown juvenile used a green marker to draw male genitalia inside the bathroom divider. Referred to RMA Compliance, which will be checking the video.

Nov. 16

- Two extra patrols.
- Stop sign enforcement, 8:16 p.m. Murieta Parkway and Guadalupe Drive. License plated noted on log.

Nov. 16

- Twenty-one medical aids between Nov. 1 and 16

Nov. 1

- Grass fire, 5:15 pm. 12817 Woods Road.

Nov. 3

- Fire alarm, 12:58 p.m., 9961 Dillard Road.
- Grass fire, 1:38 p.m. Alta Mesa and Twin Cities Road.

Nov. 4

- Illegal burn, 5:07 am. 9760 Colon Road.
- Smoke investigation, 12:06 p.m. 9621 Sherman Lane.
- Grass fire, 2:32 p.m. 9516 Clay Station Road.
- Grass fire, 8:39 p.m. 1318 Midway, Ave., Galt.

Nov. 5

- Accident, 12:09 a.m. Walmort and Badger Creek Roads.
- Fire alarm, 12:08 p.m. 13390 Orange Road.
- Accident, 9:18 p.m. Highway 99.

Nov. 6

- Unknown type fire, 6:04 p.m. 8960 Voula Lane.

Nov. 8

- Grass fire, 1:15 p.m. 11492 Alta Mesa Road.

Nov. 10

- Accident, 6:52 p.m. Highway 99 and Dillard Road.

Nov. 11

- Accident, 3:07 a.m. Highway 99 and Arno Road.
- Accident, 10:32 a.m. Dillard and Riley Roads.

Nov. 13

- Smoke investigation, 4:55 p.m. Darr Lane and Woods Road

Nov. 14

- Accident, 3:31 p.m. 10240 Colony Road.

Sacramento County Sheriff's Office

Oct. 24

- Theft, 8 a.m. 10300 block Tavernor Road.
- Aggravated assault, 8:56 a.m. 11900 block of Hobday Road. ★



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CSD Board Discusses Finances, Security and Water

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Nov. 15 meeting of the Rancho Murieta Community Services District (CSD) Board was mostly talk with little action because the agenda was so light. Nevertheless, the directors and some audience members sometimes waxed at length on related topics when department heads delivered their monthly staff reports for finance, security and utilities.

Agenda items

The directors voted unanimously to order new membranes for Water Treatment Plant I and approved two housekeeping requests. General Manager Mimi Morris also introduced Mark Matulich, the new director of finance and administration.

The board voted to spend \$199,000 for the membranes with the understanding only 30% of the amount was needed to initiate the purchase. A lengthy discussion ensued about whether the cost should come from operating expenses or the reserves. Already close to life expectancy, the membranes are even in worse shape because they have been damaged by manganese in the water.

Morris told the board Matulich would be a very qualified member of the team given his 20-year career in accounting and auditing (which included working as the controller at the Sacramento Bee.)

Finance

Matulich told the board only one item remained to wrap up the 2020/21 audit, which is unwinding a \$123,000 unresolved audit adjustment balance. In looking at the first four months of the current fiscal year, it appears that district expenses are coming in a little under budget. If projected out for the year it could come to a \$1.2 million surplus.

Matulich also reiterated a report from General Manager Mimi Morris that the Great Plains accounting system was a viable general ledger accounting package for the district's needs. He also said using it would be more cost effective than switching to the Tyler Technologies software. This was surprising because the prior finance administrator, Paula O'Keefe, described Great Plains at many past board meetings as being outdated software, and she indicated that switching to Tyler would help solve some of the district's accounting woes.

Security

Audience member Crystal Matter asked how much of the budget surplus wasn't being used to support security services (which currently only has three officers on patrol.)

Director Steven Booth said he understood that



Mark Matulich, the new director of finance and administration, is introduced at the Nov. 15 meeting of the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board of Directors. Photo by Gail Bullen

the security budget the board approved requiring Security Supervisor Kelly Benitez "to operate with a skeleton crew" didn't have a surplus, which would be verified in a report next month.

Morris responded that the 23/24 Security budget included all the money from Measure J plus \$250,000 from the property taxes. "That was a reduction of \$250,000 from the prior year as part of ramping down the security budget to live within the means of the Measure J resources. So that was the plan," she said.

Benitez also showed surveillance camera footage at the North Gate of an accident on Murieta Parkway and Lago Drive on Nov. 15. It shows a southbound SUV driver blowing the stop sign on parkway and hitting a golf cart that had made an illegal left turn in front of him. Although the golf cart was tipped over, no injuries were reported to the underage driver and his passenger.

During his report about incidents of note, Benitez described graffiti left on a wall at Murieta Village and a patrol officer's response to a shooting at the equestrian center when he rendered first aid to one of two victims on Oct. 5. Benitez said he wants to begin stocking trauma kits in the patrol cars. He has heard a report of the victims was left a paraplegic.

Another discussion ensued about CSD locking and unlocking non-district facilities throughout the community when patrol no longer operates 24/7. Booth said that brought up his long standing concern that CSD is providing many services to RMA without being compensated for enforcing the associations rules and regulations.

Utilities

Director Linda Butler touched off a lengthy discussion about cleaning out storm drains when she described a protection ditch at Chesbro Reservoir that is located between the homes and the water as "a pathetic example of a ditch."

Operations Director Michael Fritschi also

reported that district will get some free engineering work from a class of students at the California Polytechnical State University in San Luis Obispo working on the final design project. As the client, CSD will present the students with an RFP for consulting services to solidify the existing water production capacity, to determine the best way forward to increase capacity and to provide suggestions for increased sufficiency.

Fritschi also briefly reported on a district town hall meeting held on Nov. to discuss progress on the Integrated Water Master Plan. Commenting about work on the plan, audience member John Merchant brought up what he said was another discrepancy in the water production statistics being used by the consultants. Another lengthy discussion ensued on topics such as seepage and separating estimates for increased water demand for already approved subdivision versus the Rancho North subdivision that has yet to be approved.

Public records

Audience member Matter, who is an attorney, asked why she has waited 14 months to get an answer to a request under the Public Records Act. Booth said he thought all the PRA requests had been resolved and asked Morris to provide a list of any still pending.

District secretary Amelia Wilder said Matter was referring to a request for many emails. "Since we don't have the staff to go through them, our IT department grabbed them out of where the emails land, and I have to send them over to our attorney's office," she said. "There are a lot of redactions and things that have to be looked at."

After Booth said he wanted to see all outstanding PRAs wrapped up, Morris said she would add a PRA status report to her future general manager reports.

The next CSD Board meeting will be held at 5 p.m. on Dec. 20. ★

Wild Lion Sighting, Abandoned Cats Cause Concern in Rancho Murieta

Continued from page 1

the 12th fairway on the south.

When a compliance officer alerted RMA General Manager Rod Hart about the lion sighting, he told him to immediately notify animal control and fish and wildlife. "We got there right away because it was next to a bus stop," Hart said.

The young woman who had seen the lion was "pretty shaken up" when she showed Hart her blurry picture. But he couldn't ask her about it because of language difficulties. But two other Hispanic employees, one of whom spoke English, confirmed they also had seen the animal depicted in her photo. She also shared her photo with other people on the scene.

Hart said they used binoculars to check for the lion but didn't see anything. When the animal control officer pulled up, the three witnesses had already left. However, the animal control officer conducted a web search of the photo and determined it was a copy of an African Lion taken off the internet.

Hart said they remained on scene for a couple of hours waiting to view some video the young woman also had taken. However, the video didn't show the lion. "It was obviously of a field where she said it ran," he said.

In the interim, they were approached by several golfers who

said they too had seen a large animal on the golf course. "They were pretty certain it was a mountain lion," Hart said.

Abandoned cats

The CSD Security log shows the house cat incident began on Nov. 14. Sgt. Mel Outram wrote that RMA Compliance Officer Chris Smith asked for a welfare check on Ventana Drive. Outram wrote that no one appeared to be living at the house. But he could see numerous cats inside.

The sheriff's office personnel also responded and assessed the situation, determining that no one was living at the residence. Outram cleared the call without incident, according to his log entry.

Sheriff's Lt. Greg Coquette also referenced the call the following day when he was speaking at a community meeting at the RMA Building. He described the call as suspicious with two people possibly dead inside the house because of the smell.

After reading the log, the River Valley Times contacted Outram to see whether Animal Control had been notified about the cats. Outram said the sheriff's office made the notification.

Outram said sheriff's personnel also contacted one of the homeowners who lives in Los Angeles. She told them the elderly people living there had become ill and had been taken to a care facility.

"Nobody has been living at that address for some time. But I don't know the time frame," Outram said.

When Benitez was asked for more details about the incident on Nov. 18, he said that Outram saw 10 to 15 cats inside the house, some of them dead. Hart also reported the about same number of cats on the initial call.

Benitez said someone came in later and removed the dead cats. Hart said when he and Smith checked the locked house the following day, the dead cats appeared to be gone.

Hart said Animal Control didn't respond to the initial call even though Coquette personally made the referral, saying it was urgent.

However, Animal Control did respond on Nov. 17.

Hart said it came about after an animal control officer responded to the lion sighting earlier in the day. After Hart told him that his department hadn't responded to the abandoned cats three days earlier, the officer said he would head to the address after the lion call concluded. Hart said the animal control officer was taken aback when he went to the house and told him that his department had dropped the ball.

"I was very pleased with our interaction with them last night," Hart said on Nov. 18. "I have all the confidence in the world that it will get taken care of." ★

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UTURE HOMES AND REAL ESTATE



BY NORRIS BURKES

The Holiday is Pronounced THANKSgiving

Note to readers: If you met my friend Susan Sparks, you'd immediately note our similarities. We have both written a syndicated spirituality column and we are both Baptist pastors. However, as a trial lawyer-turned-stand-up-comedian-and-Baptist-minister, she speaks in a unique voice. And that's why I've asked her to pen this guest column for us as we prepare our homes for Thanksgiving. Enjoy.

you may think. Unlike New Yorkers who say, "ThanksGIVING," Southerners call this holiday "THANKS-giving." Why? Because that's what the holiday is about. THANKS. Not giving. The thanks must come first because you can't truly give FROM the heart, unless you have gratitude IN your heart. It's as 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, "God loves a cheerful giver."

This is an important lesson as we begin this holiday season. While loving, joyful giving should be the focus of the coming weeks, giving usually turns into an exhausting act of duty. Like the conviction that you have to make two potato dishes—sweet potatoes and mashed potatoes—for the holiday dinner. Or the belief that you must fight the Black Friday crowds to get a generic scarf and mitten set for a great aunt twice-removed because she sent you a Whitman's Sampler.

This is not joyful giving. This is giving cause you gotta. And this type of giving rarely produces anything heartfelt. What it does produce is heartburn. It also generates stress, resentment and, the worse of all things, the martyr syndrome.

To break from this pattern, we must put the emphasis on the "THANKS"—in the word for the holiday and in our lives. And the best way to do that is to ask yourself the following question: What is good in my life?

When you focus on what you have, even if it's the tiniest of things, you begin

to feel gratitude. Then slowly, you start to see past the angst and realize that you are surrounded by blessings.

Maybe you woke up feeling physically stronger than usual. If so, find someone who needs physical help crossing the street or carrying groceries.

Perhaps you have a plant blooming in your house. Take a photo and send it to someone whose heart is not blooming.

Or maybe you are one of the lucky people with the biggest of blessings: a job. (And please understand, I didn't say a job you love. I mean a J-O-B with a C-H-E-C-K.) If that's your blessing, then remember those who don't have a job this holiday. Volunteer to serve a meal or maybe pay for someone's.

In the coming week, as you make your multiple potato dishes and shop in the Black Friday chaos, raise thanks for what is good in your life, then share that blessing with joy. Give with a grateful, not grudging, heart.

Put the emphasis where it belongs. And remember, as we do in the South, that the holiday is pronounced THANKSgiving!

Rev. Susan Sparks is the senior pastor of Madison Avenue Baptist Church in New York City. The author of Laugh Your Way to Grace and Preaching Punchlines, Susan is a nationally known speaker on the healing power of humor. Contact her through her email at revssparks@gmail.com, or her website, www.SusanSparks.com. ★

Sheriff's Office Holds Community Meeting in Rancho Murieta

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Report

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - It was like "Coffee with a Cop" but minus the coffee when 15 representatives of the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office held a community meeting at the RMA Building on Nov. 15.

The event, which wasn't well advertised, drew about 20 residents. A major

topic of concern was the sheriff's office response time to calls in Rancho Murieta. One of the speakers, who is a resident, said juvenile misbehavior has always been an issue since he moved to community in 1995. He also said that visitor screening at the two gates is lacking.

See the Dec. 1 issue of the River Valley Times for a full report about the meeting. ★

How Military Spouses Can Find Connection and Support

From StatePoint

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Military spouses sacrifice stable careers and time with loved ones due to constant moves to new duty stations, and hold down the fort at home during their spouses' deployments. That's why the USO prioritizes providing community and support to military spouses. Here are some of the ways their programs are making an impact:

Friendship: USO Coffee Connections are monthly gatherings where military spouses can relax, craft, do yoga, swap advice and go on outings. The goal is building friendships among military spouses. When Jenna King's husband Tech Sgt. Howard King was forward deployed to Poland with less than 24 hours' notice, she says she found a home away from home at USO Lakenheath in the U.K., which has been hosting Coffee Connections since the war in Ukraine began. Because of the warm welcome and sense of community she found there, she and her children visit the center often. "There's something for each of us here," she said. "Being overseas, friends who are like family are the biggest blessing. And you can't turn down free coffee and snacks!"

Support for new parents: Military parents are often away from family and friends during their pregnancies and first months as new parents. USO Special Delivery presented by Johnson's are baby showers that provide a touch of home. They allow expectant parents and military spouses to connect and bond, and 72% of participants this year have stated in feedback surveys that



USO Coffee Connections provide monthly gatherings for military spouses. Photo courtesy of USO Photos

this is the only baby shower they will receive. More than 20,000 parents have been served through this program since its 2013 launch, including 1st Lt. Erika Pearson, an active-duty service member in the Air Force. She knew her spouse, 1st Lt. Drew Pearson, could potentially be deployed around her due date. "The USO helped me make friends that I could rely on if my husband were to miss the birth, and offered me resources I could reach out to, if needed," says 1st Lt. Pearson.

Professional development: Because of frequent relocations, military spouses often have trouble finding their professional footing. That's where the USO can step in. Connecting service members and military spouses to resources that focus on employment, education, financial readiness, mentorship and veterans benefits, the USO Transition Program helps military families build a roadmap to achieve their goals and positions them for success throughout the duration of their service, as well as in their post-military life.

Support while solo-parenting: The burden of solo-parenting can become especially apparent during deployments, when military

family members must struggle to find a new normal. For Tessa Michaelson Schmidt, connection with her husband Brett, a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve, became complicated when he was deployed to Kuwait where there is an eight-hour time difference, unreliable Wi-Fi on base, and the added pressure of being deployed near the frontlines. Because they and their two children have an incredible passion for reading, the USO Reading Program has been a blessing. Deployed service members can record themselves reading a book to their child. Then, the recording and a copy of the book are sent to that service member's family.

"They have a real response when they hear his voice, and then we get the books in the mail, and they know they're books from daddy," says Schmidt, who explained that her children will often watch the videos of their father just before bed, so that in a way, he is present for story time.

The life of a military spouse is undeniably challenging. By the USO fostering community and providing sources of connection, military spouses can feel supported and empowered. ★

Sacramento County Honors and Serves Our Veterans

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County extends its deepest gratitude and respect to the veterans of this region for their unwavering commitment, courage, and sacrifice in defending our nation. These brave men and women have selflessly dedicated their lives to preserving our freedoms and protecting the values we hold dear.

Sacramento County is proud to be home to more than 84,000 veterans. As this vital segment of our population continues to increase, Sacramento County Veterans Services, part of the Department of Human Assistance, encourages veterans to take advantage of the available benefits and resources that are in place to not only assist veterans but family members and dependents.

Benefits range from disability compensation (due to injuries/illness resulting from service-related activities) to VA Pension, which is

monthly financial assistance to low-income, wartime Veterans over the age of 65 and/or those who are "totally disabled." Surviving spouses may also receive benefits.

We assist local veterans in applying for benefits offered through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the State of California and local government entities.

Veterans Services is also responsible for administering the College Fee Waiver Program for Veterans' Dependents. This program is afforded to spouses, unmarried surviving spouses, and children of service-connected disabled or service related deceased veterans. Eligible dependents are not required to pay "mandatory system wide" tuition and fees while attending either a California community college, a campus of the California State University (Cal State) system, or a campus of the University of California (UC) system. This program not only provides eligible dependents with the incentive but also the

opportunity to pursue their goals.

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Progress on \$4.5 Million Fuel Reduction Project Outlined at Meeting

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The first public meeting to explain the Cosumnes Ladder Fuel Reduction Project, which is intended to protect Rancho Murieta from a north-wind-driven wildfire attracted a small audience to the RMA Building on Nov. 3.

Sacramento County Regional Parks put together the meeting with a slide show and four presenters who explained the planning for the project and the timeline for on-the-ground work. The bulk of the contracting work isn't expected to begin until September. The panelists also answered audience questions.

A \$4.5 million grant from Cal Fire is paying for the project that will mitigate fire fuels on 947 acres of woodlands - 40% inside Rancho Murieta, 33% on ranch lands west of Scott Road, and 27% inside the Deer Creek Hills Preserve.

The Rancho Murieta Fire Safe Council put together the grant application but couldn't submit it because it wasn't a nonprofit. Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost helped the council secure an agreement from Sacramento County Regional Parks to sponsor and administer the grant. Cal Fire awarded the grant to county parks in July 2022.

The meeting presenters were Virginia Thorley, the grant administrator, KC Sorgen, the project manager, both with county parks, Eric Kellegrew, the Sacramento Valley Conservancy stewardship director, and Phyllis Banducci, the contracted registered forester who is supervising the work on the ground.

Thorley kicked off the meeting by asking Frost to say a few words. The supervisor began by thanking the fire safe council "which has several individuals who have worked tirelessly over the years to identify the problems and solutions to keep Rancho Murieta safe in an extreme fire or flood."

Frost also thanked Parks Director Liz Bellas, who was sitting in the audience, for her help with the grants. "Thank you very much for all that you have done to make this possible," Frost told her.

After Banducci was



Rob Schultz, who researched and wrote the Rancho Murieta Fire Safe Council application for the \$4.4 Cal Fire grant, asks a question at the meeting.

introduced, she added her own thanks to the fire safe council and asked the three members who had been trying to get grants for four years to stand up - Greg Pryor, Cheryl McElhany, and Rob Schultz. The forester also thanked the participating land owners, which include rancher owners along Scott Road, Rancho Murieta Association (RMA), and Rancho Murieta Properties (which owns undeveloped land around the back lakes and along the river.)

Thorley said the goal is to reduce ladder fuels on local lands so that regular maintenance will protect the community and promote healthy oak woodlands. They estimate that the project will protect over 5,000 people and structures valued at \$1.2 billion.

Thorley said planning activities began in January 2023. To comply with the California Environmental Impact Act (CEQA), the project was analyzed under the California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP). (It's an extensive environmental impact report (EIR) developed by Cal Fire to streamline environmental compliance to address California's wildfire crisis.)

County parks also contracted with Ascent Environmental to provide a specific analysis and addendum for the local project. Thorley said the consulting firm worked closely with Sacramento County, the contracted registered foresters, and Sacramento Valley Conservancy to ensure the environmental impacts were minimized or avoided.

The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors approved the project on Sept. 26.

Thorley said that

county parks has initiated the bidding process for on-the-ground services and noted that bidders and their subcontractors must have a "tree service classification" and arborist certifications.

Thorley said the groundwork will take place over the next two years, beginning in January and ending no later than February of 2026. The bulk of the fuel treatment work will take place outside of the nesting bird season, which is generally from February through August. The trails will be posted and closed when contractors are working nearby with help from volunteers (from the Murieta Trail Stewardship.

Thorley asked Banducci, who lives in Rancho Murieta, to provide details on the fuel treatment prescriptions she had put together for the project. Banducci began by showing a slide of two treatment areas with spindly trees growing haphazardly.

"When we say ladder fuel removal, the intent is to raise the canopies of the trees and to separate them from the ground fuels - grasses and brush," she said. "The intent is when the fire starts and gets going you want to keep in on the ground."

Banducci said the fuel treatments make the fires easier to extinguish and reduce the possibility of embers (which in a wind-driven fire can start new fires miles away.) "The biggest risk to the community is the fires that start outside and move inside," she said.

While the grant doesn't have any money for understory burning, the CEQA document was written so "we would be good to go" if Cal Fire should want to conduct some training burns with



Sacramento County Regional Parks holds a public meeting to explain the Cosumnes Ladder Fuel Reduction Project at the RMA Building on Nov. 3. The intent is to protect more than 5,000 people and \$1.2 billion in structures by reducing fuels on 947 acres inside and outside of Rancho Murieta. Photos courtesy of RMA



A slide shows two examples of areas with tangled oak trees that will be remediated.



Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost praises the efforts behind the project. The presenters, from left, are Virginia Thorley, the grant administrator, KC Sorgen, the project manager, both with the parks department, Eric Kellegrew, the Sacramento Valley Conservancy stewardship director, and Phyllis Banducci, the contracted registered forester who is supervising the groundwork.

firefighters soon to be stationed at the Boys Ranch.

Referring to photos with some tangled, skinny trees, Banducci said that contractors will remove trees that are less than six inches in diameter and prune the bigger trees six feet up. "The most important treatment will be taking care of a lot of trees that went down in the storm last year," she said.

Referring to a map of the project area with numbered units, Banducci said she has written a prescription page for each one. It specifies the number of acres, the treatment required for the fuel level,

and the type of equipment required, which could range from a chain saw to a masticator tractor. The trails and boundaries are also delineated.

Banducci said she has specified special treatment zones with 100% fuel treatment along all property lines and public roads including Scott and Latrobe Roads and a short section of the parkway. The zone will how the conservancy plans to use the grant money at Deer Creek Hills Preserve. In addition to fuel reduction, the grant will pay for herbicide treatment for five kinds of invasive weeds that

are impervious to cows and can actually damage their health. The conservancy also will plant 500 trees to regenerate Blue Oaks.

During questions and answers, Frost asked how long the environmental report would last. Banducci said it wouldn't expire. "But every time you want to do a new treatment you have to ensure there aren't any new or threatened or endangered species, either plant or animal and then do what they call an update to make sure you are good to proceed," she said. "That's the beauty of using the CalVTP.) ★



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Rancho Murieta Country Club

SPECIAL TRIAL OFFER
AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 2023-FEBRUARY 2024 ONLY

Monthly Fees:
Family, Couple or Single
Golf Membership \$300
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Sign up for the trial offer in November 2023-February 2024 and your initiation fee is waived. Like what you see, and after the trial in March join the club with a 1 year contract and no initiation fee is needed!

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Join the Club!

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GOLF SCORES

The Rancho Murieta Country Club (RMCC) Women Niners Golf Club recently held their annual Turkey Shoot golf tournament. The event was attended by over 40 women golfers who shot down the fairway for their best score. No foul weather interrupted play for the golfers as they strolled the nine holes on RMCC's front nine on the North Course. After the round of golf, the ladies enjoyed a scrumptious meal of turkey, stuffing, gravy and sides while announcements of best scores were made.

In Flight One, top scores were achieved by Mary Beth Alameida, Alison Gomez, Therese Yannuzzi and Teri Medina. Denice Murck-Kilgour, Elaine Fowler, Ann Petterle and Patty Harris walked away with the honors of first through fourth place in Flight Two. Flight Three best scores were had by Ginny Hoskins, Mary Carroll, Vicki Kalman and Barbara Armstrong. Finishing strong in Flight Four were Martin Gailin, Sally Montaigne, Frances Aguilar and Toni Vaughn. Low net finisher was Catherine Silvera with a scalding 37.

The Turkey Shoot also afforded the Niners the opportunity to announce the Most Improved Golfer for October. Denice Murck-Kilgour walked away with that distinction after improving her



October's Most Improved Golfer Denice Murck-Kilgour Photos courtesy of Nancy Clevenger

handicap 2.4 points, which equates to a 1.06 improvement factor.

All women golfers who belong to RMCC are welcome to join this fun and modestly competitive group for an organized nine holes of golf each week. Contact Chris Pasek at Cypasek@aol.com or contact the club pro shop.

-Nancy Clevenger



Enjoying the recent Turkey Shoot golf event and luncheon at Rancho Murieta Country Club are Sally Montagne, Teri Medina, Mary Kenobbie, and Barbara Armstrong.

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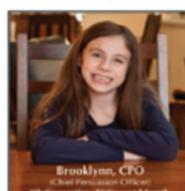
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