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RIVER VALLEY TIMES

39TH YEAR • ISSUE 42 *Serving Rancho Murieta, Sloughouse, Wilton* DECEMBER 8, 2023

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Rancho Murieta Country Club Board Considers Bankruptcy



The Rancho Murieta Country Club is in dire financial straits. File photo by Gail Bullen

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Rancho Murieta Country Club (RMCC) is in a financial crisis, and the Board of Directors is considering options that include bankruptcy to resolve it, according to an email the board sent to the membership on Dec. 1.

Next year's preliminary budget shows a deficit of \$700,000 if the service levels remain the same. "If we do nothing, we are out of business by June 2024 or sooner," the email said. The board has identified three options. First is reducing club services and amenities to balance the budget. The second is increasing the dues by at least 20% to balance the budget. The third

is declaring bankruptcy and selling the lease to an entity that will make operational and capital improvements, which is the board's preferred option. However, the board won't pursue the bankruptcy option without the approval of a majority of its members in an electronic vote planned before the end of the year. The board also has slated a town hall meeting to answer

member questions on Dec. 12 at 6:30 p.m. at the Murieta Room at the clubhouse. The country club doesn't own its two golf courses and operates under a 55-year lease that expires in 2028. The club's landlord is Rancho Murieta Properties, an investment group that includes Carol Anderson Ward. The developers have built the hotel, the Bel Air
Continued on page 2

Rancho Murieta Soccer Club Coach Selected as a Coach of the Year



Sloughouse resident Matt Kartchner feels honored after being selected as a coach of the year in the Elk Grove Soccer League. He coached the Rancho Murieta Hawks girls team this fall and took a co-ed team to a tournament on Dec. 2. Photo by Gail Bullen

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The Elk Grove Soccer League has recognized Rancho Murieta Soccer Club Coach Matt Kartchner as one of seven coaches of the year thanks to efforts by the parents of the girls he coached last fall. The league has about 450 coaches and more than 70 were nominated for the honor.

See a separate story in this issue about the Ranch Murieta soccer season that ended Nov. 11.

Kim Doughty was one of the parents who put together the nomination statement for Kartchner. She said her daughter tried competitive soccer for one season but returned to the recreational Rancho Murieta Hawks girls' team because she loved Kartchner so much. "We all love him" Doughty added.

The parent statement put it this way: "Coach Matt is not just a coach, he is a person we trust to guide and shape our daughters as strong young women, humble humans, and dedicated athletes," it said. "He builds a rapport with all those he coaches and always shows up."

When asked about the recognition, Kartchner said he couldn't have done it by himself. "It has really been an honor to coach in this league, especially being able to coach my kids and all of their friends," he said. "I have been privileged to coach some really, really great teams of kids. It has just been an awesome experience," he added.

Kartchner began coaching soccer 15 years ago and joined the Rancho Murieta Club in 2014. As a past goalie, he began coaching to teach his two sons and then his daughter to play soccer. Kartchner confirmed this

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Christmas Tree Lighting Gathers Community to Stonehouse Park



The kids in the crowd are especially ecstatic as Santa Claus and friends approach. Photos by Gail Bullen

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The chance to visit with Santa drew an excited crowd to the annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony at Stonehouse Park on Nov. 24. It was the 20th year that the Rancho Murieta Optimist Club sponsored the event that drew an estimated 400 kids, parents, grandparents, and several well-behaved dogs.

In addition to celebrity appearances by Santa, Mrs. Claus, the Christmas Elf, and Blitzen the reindeer, the event featured the lighting of the Christmas tree supplied by the Rancho Murieta Association (RMA), a performance by the Murieta Dance Company, upbeat

Christmas music, seasonal refreshments, and two fire pits for toasting marshmallows and keeping warm. The crowd stayed well-fueled as they waited for Santa and watched the dance performance, according to

Optimist President Renee Bechthold. The club supplied many dozens of cookies from a specialty shop in Galt, went through eight urns of steaming water for hot chocolate and cider and gave out 130 S'mores kits. RMA

Director Chris Childs and other volunteers helped serve the goodies. Santa and friends made their grand entrance at 6 p.m. after three fire engines with lights flashing and sirens sounding dropped
Continued on page 4



Santa and Mrs. Claus greet youngsters as they make their way to the annual Christmas Tree Lighting at Stonehouse Park on Nov. 24. The Optimist Club sponsored the annual event.

Rancho Murieta Country Club Board Considers Bankruptcy

Continued from page 1
shopping center, and is proposing the 697-lot Rancho North subdivision.

Represented by the late John Sullivan, the investment group purchased the country club land, but not the club, when they acquired all of the property owned by the Pension Trust Fund of Operating Engineers Local 3 (OE3) in 2013.

The dire financial news came in a “club status update” emailed to the membership on Friday, Dec. 1 at 5:17 p.m. It said those who attended the recent annual board meeting had already heard about the financial crisis from Board President Eric Dutton and Treasurer Chase Armer.

Although RMCC has faced financial difficulties for years, the reserves are now so low that the board can’t put off difficult decisions, the email said.

Since the RMCC lease runs through October 2028, the members must decide how the next five years will go. “Do we hold on and financially squeak by as we have done in the past, or do we speed up the process of transitioning the club to new ownership that may be able to give our members the quality experiences they deserve,” it asked.

The club has been treading water for at least the past decade with the golf course conditions and food and beverage services waxing and waning during that time. The board has looked for solutions over the past three years. They included obtaining outside funding, hiring management groups, exercising the option to buy the club under the lease agreement and selling the club to an outside party, and even offering an equity position to the

current membership to raise the necessary funds.

“Unfortunately, all these various options are doomed to fail for the same reason: the club has never been, nor will ever be, profitable with labor contracts,” the email said. “Every outside individual or entity that considers buying or managing the club declines to do so after reviewing the books and the dictates imposed by the club’s labor contracts.”

RMCC has been in a downward spiral for years as it lost full golf memberships and the associated revenue. At the same, the cost of all goods and services has gone up. The RMCC bylaws only permit a 5% increase in dues each year and “that has not been enough to offset the inflationary costs associated with golf and clubhouse equipment, labor, and the extraordinary expense caused by the storms this year,” the email said.

The financial outlook for next year is so bleak that RMCC would be out of business in June 2024, if the board doesn’t do anything.

However, the first option of cutting costs to meet the budget would likely reduce membership because of large cuts in amenities and services and the negative impact on the courses.

The second option of increasing dues a \$ 150-month increase for full members, \$25 for social members, also is expected to hurt membership.

Both options would only allow the club to tread water until the end of the lease term which ends Oct. 31, 2028.

The third option involving bankruptcy would be about starting over. “The entity known as the Rancho Murieta Country Club would cease to exist,” the

email said. “A new entity would take its place and be run by a professional with experience operating a successful country club with all the amenities, energy, and positivity that one should expect from the centerpiece of the community.”

Many potential buyers have been interested in doing exactly that. “None are interested in doing so unless the facilities are free of any successor liability, whether it be the unions, other creditors, or our membership bylaws,” the email said. “In the past, any contemplated sale has failed primarily because of withdrawal liability to the unions. (The estimated Pension Trust Fund Liability was more than \$3 million in 2017.)

Until recently, not even bankruptcy could alleviate this situation, according to the email. “However, there is a new provision in the bankruptcy code under Chapter 11 subparagraph 5 that will permit us to sell our interest in the remaining lease term, the club’s only true asset, bundle that sum with any other cash on hand, and present a compelling case to the bankruptcy court to dismiss all of our creditor’s claims,” the email said.

If that happens, several individuals competing to buy and improve the club could do so free of the conditions that prevented past sales.

“At the end of the day, it’s about improving our experience as members and maximizing our property values,” the email said. “Our best opportunity to do that is to allow the sale of the club to someone with the resources to invest in improving the facilities and the know-how to manage a private country club.” ★

Three Incumbents Re-elected to the RMA Board



From left, Danny Carrillo, Renee Bechtold, and Scott Adams are sworn in for a second term by Jim Elections Inspector Jim Moore at the Rancho Murieta Association Annual meeting on Nov. 30. The meeting drew 13 attendees. Photos by Gail Bullen

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Scott Adams, Renee Bechtold, and Danny Carrillo have been re-elected to the Rancho Murieta Association Board (RMA) of Directors.

After confirming that enough ballots had been returned to reach a quorum, Director of Elections Jim Moore announced the results at the RMA Annual Meeting on Nov. 30.

The outcome wasn’t a surprise although a fourth candidate, David Roy Harmon, threw his hat into the ring before the filing deadline. The results were 784 votes for Adams, 765 for Bechtold, and 777 for Carrillo.

Harmon, who previously served on the board between 2009 and 2011, received 185 votes. He didn’t attend the meeting.

The three incumbents were asked to comment after the meeting.

Adams said he was happy and proud. “I’m happy that the board is staying intact because we have such a great board...I think this board serves the RMA and the membership very well.”

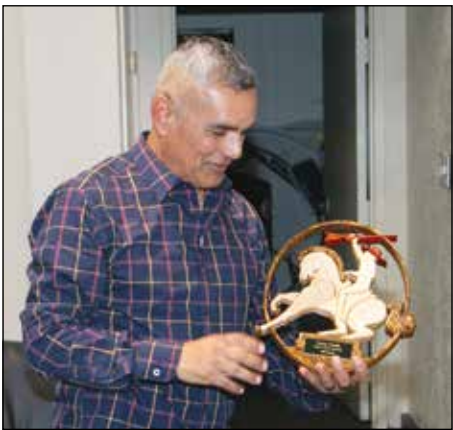
Bechtold was appointed to the board last year to fill a vacancy created by the resignation of Joanne Brandt. “I am so honored and feel so privileged to be able to have this opportunity to continue with the people of Rancho Murieta,” she said. “I thank everyone who put their faith and trust in me.”

Carrillo said he felt very honored and very blessed that he had received so many votes. “I just love this community. I love the people,” he said.

In a tradition at the annual meeting, directors who had just completed terms on the board were awarded a wooden plaque hand-crafted by RMA General Manager Rod Hart. Adams, Bechtold and Carrillo all received plaques.

Adams described Hart as being a magician with wood. “One of the great things about being on the board is that you know you will be getting one of these at the end of three years,” he said.

Adams began the meeting by thanking the RMA staff for their work, and Hart then introduced each department head by name. The board also introduced



Carrillo admires a hand-craft plaque commemorating three years of service on the board. General Manager Rod Hart also made plaques for Adams and Bechtold, who accepted them at the meeting.

themselves. They also drew names for a raffle rewarding residents who voted early. Six RMA members received \$50 gift carts, and one received an iPad.

As seems to happen every year, the RMA staff had to send out blast emails and phone residents urging them to return their ballots so the annual meeting could take place as scheduled. They needed 931 eligible ballots to meet the required quorum.

Moore said that 950 eligible ballots came in before the noon deadline. The volunteer counters tossed out four ballots because they were duplicates. Moore also said that five ballots had write-in candidates. One was for a dog – Leo Carrillo.

Asked how his dog ended up with a vote, Carrillo said a friend thought it would be humorous to write in Leo’s name. “Even though I told him that Leo wasn’t a property owner since he was a dog, my friend said that Leo identifies as a property owner,” he said.

Moore also announced that RMA members had voted 693 yes and 25 no to approve applying any excess income from the 2023 financial year to the next year’s budget.

Adams also announced the results of the annual photo contest. See the separate story in this issue. The written results weren’t available at deadline. None of the winners came to the annual meeting to accept their prizes. The meeting drew only 13 attendees. ★

Annual Turkey Trot Sees Runners and Walkers Gobble to Gazebo



Approximately 90 runners, walkers, young cyclists and a couple dozen dogs participate in the annual Turkey Trot that was held at the Gazebo on Thanksgiving Day. In photo left, the second wave of participants take off. In photo right, organizer Carole Thames awards a youth prize to Luke Camara after he came in first on his bicycle. Thames took over sponsorship of the event at the last minute. Participants donated \$242 in cash to the Tunnel 2 Towers Foundation and filled a box with canned goods for the Elk Grove Food Bank. Photo by Gail Bullen



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Murieta Bulldogs Fundraiser Draws Crowd to Equestrian Center



The Murieta Bulldogs Concert BBQ Fundraiser unfolds at the Murieta Equestrian Center on Nov. 18 with emcee Billy Haze thanking the traveling baseball club's many supporters. Photos by Gail Bullen

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The party atmosphere wouldn't quit when the fifth annual Murieta Bulldogs Concert BBQ fundraiser opened for business at the Murieta Equestrian Center on Nov. 18.

The Bulldogs are a Rancho Murieta traveling baseball team that was founded by local parents in 2016 and has been going strong ever since.

Attendees weren't lacking for food and drink as they sampled delicious barbecue at five booths that came with the price of admission or grabbed adult beverages at the bar. Two food trucks also offered oven-fired pizza or desserts.

Attendees also perused tables full of beautifully packaged raffle prizes and silent auction opportunities as a disc jockey filled the air with driving music. Cornhole games also lured some from the mezzanine down to the arena.



Barbecue chef Corri Gran serves Riley Russo, left, and Justine Russo.

Billy Haze, one of the coaches, emceed the program that proceeded the night's entertainment. He waxed at length over the support that the club has received from the parents and many supporters over the years. Haze brought his wife Denise onto the stage, explaining that she had spent eight months putting the fundraiser together.

Haze gave special thanks to Carol Anderson Ward, who owns the equestrian center. He said Ward's generosity was the reason that the Bulldogs can now hold their fundraisers rain or shine.

Haze also told the young baseball players standing in front of the stage that it had been "an absolute honor and blessing" to mentor them.

Before introducing the band, Haze brought high schooler Gracie Tucker to the stage. Her ability to hit every single note as she sang the National Anthem drew considerable applause.

Haze ended his program by asking the crowd to give it up for the country-rock band North Forty, which played until the event wrapped up. ★

Christmas Tree Lighting Gathers Community to Stonehouse Park

Continued from page 1
them off at the park. Santa led the countdown that ended with the illumination of the Christmas tree and other holiday figures. As Santa moved to his throne, Christmas tunes began reverberating from the speaker and the first child in a long line of youngsters and families drew near to tell him what she wanted for Christmas.

Bechtold said RMA Director Tom Reimers was a very convincing Santa. Director Danny Carrillo was the elf, his dog Leo was the reindeer and Optimist Melinda Martel was Mrs. Claus.

Reimers said they "posed for a ton of family pics with their kids and pets."

As for Christmas wishes, the older children asked for electric bikes and scooters while the younger ones were more interested in Pokémon cards, Legos, and Barbie dolls. A couple of children asked for a puppy or kitten while a few said they would be happy with anything and wanted to be surprised.

"One girl asked for an army tank, sweaters, and a machine gun for her guinea pigs," Reimers said.

Murieta Dance Company Director Doreen Zimmerman said eight members of the Junior Competition Team learned a new dance especially for the event. Emma Hunter, Alyssa Gritzmacher, Quinn McWayne, Arianna Chavez, Kennedy Brenner, Aislinn Brenner, Addison Burgundy, and Jema Nauman danced to "Santa, Can You Hear Me," by Ariana Grande and Kelly Clarkson.

Bechtold thanked members of the RMA Maintenance Department for their help with the event. They blew away the leaves, set up the tables, put up the decorations and lighting, and built the fire pits. Then, they stayed afterwards to clean up. "We could not hold this event without them," she said.

The Optimists have sponsored the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony for 20 years, according to Bechtold.

"It is such a beloved and well-attended event that we will continue to work in cooperation with the RMA Recreation Committee to keep this tradition going," she said. "See you next year." ★



The Christmas tree lights up as soon as Santa finishes the countdown.



Explaining their Christmas wishes to Santa are, from left, Abigail, Jack, and Emily Leslie.



Murieta Dance Company members strike a pose before dancing to 'Santa, Can You Hear Me.' Photo courtesy of Murieta Dance Company

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By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

“You guys are doing pretty darn good,” he said. “I would say you guys are definitely on the right track and doing a good job. ★

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Murieta Sidewalk Shoppe Opens for Business



Early Christmas bargains, Santa photos, holiday music, and tasty barbecue lure many visitors to the Murieta Sidewalk Shoppe for a one-day event that unfolded at Murieta Plaza on Nov. 25. In photo right, plaza business owners like Jessica Sanders display their wares on the sidewalk. In photo above, crafters like Lorraine Spradlin are excited about showing off their work. Sanders, who owns Ilume Luxe Studio, organized the event. She said more than 34 vendors signed up. Photos by Gail Bullen



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Wilton Fire plans light parade of fire engines.

Fire trucks with lights blazing will parade along Wilton Roads on Dec. 16 and 17 beginning at 6 p.m. The first parade on Dec. 16 will leave Station 83 on Dillard and Orange Roads, turn left at Clay Station Road, turn on the first Stable Gate Road, and stop at Rim Road, where the firefighters will park and meet with neighbors. The second parade on Dec. 17 will leave Station 1 at Dillard and Wilton Roads, turn left on Dillard Road, right on Colony Road, right on Walmart Road, right on Davis Road, and right on Dillard Road. The firefighters will park at the Dillard Elementary School to meet with neighbors.

Kiwanis slates See’s Candies fundraiser

Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta is once again be 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.

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 peckleam@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 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. ★

Jackson Rancheria Band of Miwuk Indians Supports Holiday Toy Drive with \$20,000 Donation



Jackson Rancheria News Release

JACKSON, CA (MPG) - The Jackson Rancheria Band of Miwuk Indians is proud to support this year's Matt Scott Racing/Amador County Sheriff's Foundation Holiday Toy Drive with a \$20,000 donation to help families in need in Amador County.

For sixteen years, the elves at Matt Scott Racing have been collecting and purchasing toys for the youth of Amador County.

In cooperation with the Amador Sheriff's Annual Toy Drive, they have successfully fulfilled the many wishes of local children. This year, once again, the need will be great.

"On behalf of the Jackson Rancheria Band of Miwuk Indians, we are proud to sponsor this year's holiday toy drive," said Crystal Jack, CEO of Jackson Rancheria. "The Tribe is committed to our community during times of need, and we hope that the contribution will help more families have a more

joyful holiday season." The Holiday Toy Drive will take place on Saturday, December 2 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in front of Foothill Appliance in the Amador Shopping Plaza. Bring a new unwrapped toy and Santa's helpers will collect your donation.

If you would like to make a monetary donation or learn more about the Holiday Toy Drive, please contact Kevin Barnett at (209) 223-0508 or kevin@themountainmerchant.com. ★



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. 17

- Three extra patrols.
- Parking enforcement, 5:51 a.m. Murieta South, seven citations.

Nov. 18

- Two extra patrols.
- Motorcycle escort, 1:33 p.m. Guadalupe Drive.

Nov. 19

- Three extra patrols.
- Stop sign enforcement, 7:17 p.m. De La Cruz Drive and Murieta Parkway.

Nov. 20

- Follow up, 7:14 a.m. animal hospital construction site. Report of juveniles hanging around when patrol was unavailable. No signs of vandalism or theft, but the wind blew over a large section of temporary fencing.
- Parking enforcement, 7:25 a.m. Murieta South, six citations.

Nov. 21

- Alarm, 5:10 a.m. Catholic Church, nothing suspicious to report.
- Water leak, 5:44 a.m. Murieta Parkway in 7000 block, water coming from the ground, CSD utility department responding.

Nov. 22

- One extra patrol.
- Open door, 3:29 p.m. Domino Drive, garage door closed when patrol arrived.
- Speeding complaint, 9:48 p.m. Lago Drive, flat-bed truck with juvenile passengers, UTL.

Nov. 23

- One extra patrol
- Miscellaneous, 5:59 p.m. Stonehouse Park, incident from previous night reported. RP said one of his friends got stuck in a swing in the playground and he had to cut the safety handlebars to get him out. Forwarded report and photos to RMA.

Nov. 24

- Suspicious person, 9:23 p.m. North Gate, CSD employee saw a bike being stolen from the back of the guard shack. Unable to locate the suspect.

Nov. 25

- One extra patrol.
- Noise complaint, 9:59 p.m. Riverview Park, report of a large group in the park after hours. Patrol used his PA system to ask the group to leave, which happened.
- Noise complaint, 10:10 p.m. Reynosa Drive, report of large, loud gathering inside a garage. Patrol contacted the group and advised them of the complaint. The resident stated the party would be taken inside the house.
- Noise complaint, 10:30 pm. Magno Court, report of a party. Patrol didn't hear anything upon arrival.
- Noise complaint, 11:45 pm. Shaq Street inside Riverview development, report of juveniles in the street, a disturbance, and doorbell ditching. Upon arrival, observed only one juvenile who ran into Riverview Park upon seeing the patrol vehicle.

Nov. 26

- One extra patrol.

- Noise complaint, 12:18 am. Camino Del Sol Cricle, the resident could hear a band playing. Upon arrival, patrol could also hear the music but couldn't locate the source.
- Parking enforcement 4:20 a.m. Murieta South, two citations.

Nov. 27

- One extra patrol.
- Parking enforcement, 2:45 a.m. north and south, three citations.

Nov. 28

- One extra patrol.
- Parking enforcement, 4:51 a.m. Trinidad Drive, one citation.
- Trespassing, 2 p.m. Murieta Village RV Storage Yard, west side fence was cut, but no obvious signs of theft.
- Alarm, 11:50 p.m. Burger King, no signs of forced entry.

Wilton Fire

- Thirteen medical aids between Nov. 15 and 26.

Nov. 15

- Smoke Alarm, 3:28 p.m. 11180 Green Road.

Nov. 16

- Grass fire, 12:33 p.m. 10974 Mann Road.

Nov. 17

- Unknown type fir, 7:26 p.m. 11280 Alta Mesa East.

Nov. 22

- Public assistance, 12 a.m. 12206 Arno Road.
- Public assistance, 1:36 a.m. 12206 Arno Road.
- Smoke investigation, 7:15 p.m. 10139 Alta Mesa Road.

Nov. 26

- Public assistance, 2:40 a.m. 12530 Lee School Road.

Sacramento County Sheriff's Office

- No incidents reported. ★



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Rancho Murieta Soccer Season Ends on a High Note

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (M PG) - Good memories ran rampant after the Rancho Murieta Soccer Club ended its 21st season on Nov. 11.

A case in point was Chris Betzler, who signed up last fall as a new head coach for the Rancho Murieta Tigers to make soccer fun for his daughter. Most of his players were 4-year-olds with a couple of 5-year-olds. Quite a few hadn't played soccer before. He probably had the youngest team in the Elk Grove Soccer League.

"We went from the first practice with them not really knowing how to dribble to ending the season when they were scoring goals against 6 and 7-year-olds," he said. "Seeing the progression was incredible."

Betzler said he would coach the same team into the foreseeable future. "They were engaged. They were energetic, They had a big smile on their faces at every practice and every game," he said. "We had a blast."

A total of 250 youngsters signed up for the Rancho Murieta Soccer experience last fall with 54 in the Rancho Murieta Mini Kickers 3 and 4-year-olds. Tony Silva and Chad Myers ran the program, which consisted of six Friday night sessions. Three past players Sophia Krist, Kate Myers, and Macey Casagrande earned community service hours helping with the youngsters.

The other kids, 101 boys and 95 girls, were divided into 14 teams with 14 coaches. Three teams, the most ever, played in tournaments.

Doug Mattos has been the club's program director for 11 years. He said the 2023 season was one of the best because of the coaches. "At the end of the day, they create the experience for the kids and the parents who come to the games," he said. "They are our lifeline. We couldn't have a season without them."

Prospective coaches, mostly parents with a child on the team, must make the choice to volunteer, he said. After working all day, they must commit to two practices on weekday evenings and be available for games on Saturday.

Parents also have busy schedules. They too must make a choice about whether to sign their kids up for the program. The biggest compliment parents can give a coach is signing up their kids to play on their roster another season, Mattos said.

The Rancho Murieta Association (RMA) also wraps its arms around the program particularly General Manager Rod Hart and Maintenance Manager Troy Schaffner. "They keep the fields in such great shape," Mattos said. The



Melissa Kassel, the Rancho Murieta Mustangs coach, encourages her players to focus as they practice for a tournament. Photos by Gail Bullen

fields are the envy of visiting soccer teams, according to parent Dave Keslar. They go "into shock" the first time they see them, he said.

The club is part of Elk Grove Soccer League, which provides "great" support with funding, equipment "and everything we need to put soccer on the field," Mattos said. Debra Carlton is the president and Andrew Donnary, is the CEO for the league. It has 5,000 registered players and 450 coaches, according to its website.

Mattos said the Rancho Murieta club needs local leadership to ensure the program runs smoothly. The committee members take care of the fields, scheduling, registration, and referees. Their goal is to make everything as easy as possible for the coaches, Mattos said.

An even larger committee is already in place for next year - Mattos, Melissa Kassel, Josh Twist, Tony Driver, Luke Iverson, and Kim Doughty. His wife Jennifer Mattos also helps with registration.

Mattos said they begin reaching out to find coaches in July and August after forming the teams according to age groups. This year six new coaches volunteered - Kaitlin Bauer, Chris Betzler, Grace Long, Kurt Bunnell, Tony Driver, and Josh Twist. Another eight returned - Jason Strongman, Dennis Brown, Meghan McDonald, Josh Long, Melissa Kassel, Tara Iverson, Rick Spickard, and Matt Kartchner.

Nor could the program operate without referees. Four young people who aged out of the program came back as paid referees last season - Rocco Krist, Kate Myers, Christian Stigler, and Gavin Yabut. "It's a great avenue for these kids to stay in the community," Mattos said. "Refereeing also grows them up quickly."

Coaches with older players sometimes choose to take their teams to tournaments, which is a further commitment by them, the kids, and their parents. "It extends the season with three weeks of practice under the lights when the weather is getting colder," Mattos said. "It is a testament to what the coaches are doing to make an

experience for the kids."

This year three coaches were bringing teams to a tournament in Davis on Dec. 2 and 3. They were Melissa Kassel with the Rancho Murieta Mustangs, Tara Iverson with the Rancho Murieta Feisty Cats and Matt Kartchner with a co-ed team with players from the Rancho Murieta Hawks and the Murieta Mayhem teams.

Mattos said the Rancho Murieta Club was founded 21 years ago by Paul Frank, Martha Glunt, and Sam Sommers Jr. "They got it started by putting the best experience on the field that the community would embrace, and we are just continuing it," he said. "That's why it has lasted 21 years."

Two parents also contributed their thoughts about Rancho Murieta Soccer.

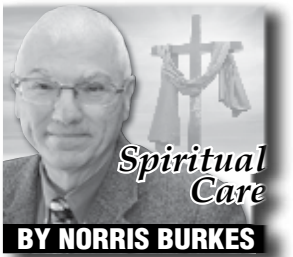
Tony Driver, who also is a Little League coach, was a first-time soccer coach this season. He managed two teams with his younger and older sons. Fortunately, their practices were back-to-back. Driver said his soccer knowledge stems from 10 years of exposure to his wife's side of the family. His sister-in-law had a full-ride scholarship at Cal Berkeley and entered the Olympic development program, all the while coached by her father and his father-in-law.

Driver is convinced that soccer is the best sport for young kids. "It develops so much of that foundational athleticism," he said. "We focus very much on movement - balance, running, jumping, lateral movement, and fun. That is how all our practices are."

Keslar, who was interviewed when watching his son practice for a tournament, appreciates the continuity and consistency that is built into the Rancho Murieta club. His son Avery has played for Coach Melissa Kassel for the past five years and developed lifelong friendships. "That camaraderie just gets better through the years," he said.

Keslar also knows what makes the best teams. "Good leadership is very hard to find," he said. "There is definitely great leadership in this coaching staff."

Parents also play a role. "We are like the support cast," he said. ★



This is the time of year that many of us consider our charitable-donation budget. But as we decide how much to give, perhaps we also ought to calculate why we give.

In his list called "Eight Degrees of Charity," the 13th century Rabbi Moses Maimonides offers wise counsel for weighing our motives.

I've mentioned his list a few times in this column, but like Dicken's "Christmas Carol," the list inspires me each time I revisit it. The unabridged catalogue can be found on my website, but since it has many nuances, allow me this paraphrased summary.

Maimonides describes his list as a ladder, so let's begin at the bottom rung, the lowest form of charity.

8. Sometimes we give only because we are uncomfortable with our wealth. This sentiment is aptly described by Tibetan Buddhist Trungpa Rinpoche as "Idiot compassion." You can see it in the actions of retirees like me who did this during the pandemic.

As our savings bulged with stimulus checks and investment returns, we started giving to the local food-bank. No judgment here. I think Maimonides would say that most charity is good charity. Still, it's hard to sort our good motives from our lesser ones. That's why the rabbi encouraged us to work our way up the ladder.

7. Let us give cheerfully but not too much. We do this by dropping a few bucks in the Salvation Army kettle or the church offering. We smile generously, but we know it's woefully inadequate.

6. Just ask me and I'll donate. Generous, yes. But why must we be asked first? In Honduras, as in many Latin countries, people of all income levels will carry charity money to give to those who ask. The San Francisco

What Is Your Reason for Giving?

company GoFundMe began with the premise of giving to those who ask. The tragic drama in many requests inspires us to give. In 2021 they generated \$22.6M in revenue.

5. Let's give without being asked. This sounds like a clean motive but it's low on the ladder because the giver may be doing it to gain attention. On one hand, it's the kind of giving we might do when we say we pick up the dinner check. On the positive side, it's the kind of giving we do when a neighbor needs our assistance.

4. We should give to those we don't know, but they should know who we are. A lot of us achieve this when we give to the homeless woman at the intersection. It's a kind act, but there's no way to avoid making the recipient feel less-than.

3. I like to give anonymously but I need to know who's getting it. This may seem like a high form of giving, but not quite. Maimonides cautions that since "subconsciously, the giver might gain a pleasure and a sense of power over the recipient, this detracts from his act."

2. I like to give anonymously and don't want anyone to know This one is tricky, but the best modern-day example is the Salvation Army Kettle. Your donation helps the poor, but you will never know who they are, and they will never know who you are. You have no say in where the money goes and cannot take it back. And the highest degree of charity motive on Maimonides list is...

1. Let's form a business partnership with the poor. "What?" you ask. "Business is not charity!" The rabbi considered this the highest charitable form because it "strengthens the hand of the poor through either a gift or an interest-free loan." Surprisingly, Maimonides considered the loan better than an outright gift "since the poor are not shamed."

This charity is best illustrated in the saying, "Give a person a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him to fish and he eats for

a lifetime."

It's this charitable approach that has inspired me to proudly promote Chispa Project in this column for the past eight years.

Chispa establishes libraries in Honduran elementary schools with the help of Honduran teachers, parents and students who will organize, plan and monitor the libraries.

Each Honduran community is asked to raise a symbolic portion of the costs (less than 4% of the total project). In this way Maimonides highest principle is applied and the schools establish ownership, pride, and better sustainability of the library.

"Pure" charity is about improving the lives of others, not our own. Yet still I think even Maimonides would have to admit that sometimes we need to do something to feel better. Regardless of our motive, someone is helped.

In any case none of us have a pure heart, so thankfully most charities are able to help those in need regardless of our motive to give.

Maimonides' full writing is available at <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/maimonides-ladder-of-tzedakah/>

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Coach Matt Kartchner directs his co-ed team during a Nov. 20 practice under the lights at Stonehouse Park as they prepare for an upcoming soccer tournament where they will compete in the boys' division.

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A black and white portrait of Debra Medrano-Wertz, a woman with shoulder-length hair and bangs, wearing glasses and a dark top. She is smiling at the camera. A small star-shaped pin is visible on her left lapel.



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River Valley Garden Club and Boy Scout Troop #633 Join Hands to Refurbish CRES School Garden



Garden club members and boy scout members working at the CRES garden.

**Story and photo by
Nancy Compton**

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - On a sunny Saturday morning in November, members of the River Valley Garden Club and Boy Scouts from Troop #633 joined staff member Melissa Fite at the CRES school garden located behind the school with shovels, rakes, hoes, trowels, and a can-do spirit.

Due to vandalism and neglect, the garden, which had been up and running in the past, needed to be completely refurbished, including replacing the building blocks which provided structure for the raised garden beds.

With the exception of one enormous rosemary bush and a large lavender, weeds had taken over most of the growing space, and had to be weeded out by hand. With so many community members pulling together, what appeared to be an enormous task was accomplished in under three hours.



Jerome Keys working with stone planters.

Next, the raised beds will be filled with soil so it will be ready for spring planting. Right now, the school

garden is in need of soil and fertilizer, and will welcome donations from local businesses or nonprofits. ★

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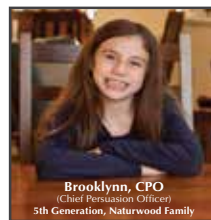
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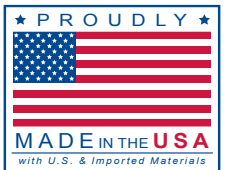
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