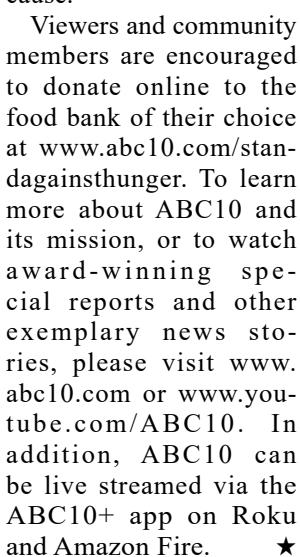


**LandParkSacNews.com**



# ABC10 Launches 4th Annual Stand Against Hunger

Lastly, if you didn't sign up for a Thanksgiving Day run but subsequently feel guilty about your overindulgence, there is the Sacramento Turkey Trot Run on Saturday November 25 with 5K, 10K, and half-marathon options. Registration is \$35-\$42, depending on race selected, and includes a swag bag that's mailed directly to you. There are three waves starting at 8:00, 8:30, and 9:00, filled on a first-come first-filled basis. All ages and paces are welcome, but this is a very limited capacity event. The run will start at Sutters Landing Park in Sacramento. ★





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# Parktoberfest Was A Smashing Hit!

*Continued from Page 1*  
For instance, the LPCA has decided to supply presents and goods to help a few local families in need enjoy Christmas this December. The board is also talking about supporting upgrades to the park and providing grants to neighborhood schools. Money is also put towards providing free family-friendly events for the community.

The Land Park Community Association is an all-volunteer board of neighbors. Today’s board is dedicated to the quality of life in our neighborhood and park. The Association offers informative community meetings, fun events, advocates for public/traffic safety, and supports efforts for the maintenance and care of the park. The LPCA also works with local representatives to advocate for projects that will bring positive changes.

To learn more about the LPCA, go to the website at [www.landpark.org](http://www.landpark.org). Links to a YouTube Channel, Instagram, and Facebook pages can all be found on the homepage.

The LPCA is excited to share that our next event will also be in partnership with William Land Park Golf. Firetruck Santa is scheduled for December 7th from 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Families can get free photos with Santa and enjoy hot cocoa and cookies. Around 6 p.m., the LPCA will provide an end-of-year wrap-up and discuss what is planned for 2024. A few special guests may show up as well! Guests are encouraged to wear their festive holiday gear.

Although the LPCA is currently working on next



Two attendees pose with their beer steins and full plates of German food. Photos Courtesy of LPCA



Attendees show off their dirndls as they drink their beverages.

year’s calendar, two events are already scheduled: the 2nd annual Bunny on the Green is March 16th, and Parktoberfest 2024 is September 28th. Details to follow. The entire calendar with dates for community meetings and other fun events will be posted soon.

The Land Park Community Association thanks all the contributors who made Parktoberfest a

reality. A special thanks to Curt Davids of Land Park Golf, Jamie Rich of House Reality, and the sponsors and vendors. Land Park has Heart!

*Kristina Rogers is the President of the Land Park Community Association. If you have questions or would like to partner with the organization, you can contact her at [communications@landpark.org](mailto:communications@landpark.org)* ★

# \$38 Million Catalytic Converter Theft Conspiracy

**United States Attorney’s Office,  
Eastern District of California  
News Release**

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - Three Sacramento family members pleaded guilty October 16, 2023, to charges related to their participation in a nationwide catalytic converter theft conspiracy, U.S. Attorney Phillip A. Talbert announced.

Brothers Tou Sue Vang, 32, and Andrew Vang, 28, and their mother Monica Moua, 58, all pleaded guilty to conspiring to transport stolen catalytic converters from California to New Jersey in return for over \$38 million in wired payments. Tou Sue Vang also pleaded guilty to an additional 39 charges related to money laundering.

In October and November 2022, federal, state, and local law enforcement partners from across the United States executed a nationwide, coordinated takedown of leaders and associates of a national network of thieves, dealers, and processors for their roles in conspiracies involving stolen catalytic converters sold to a metal refinery for over \$600 million dollars. Nine of 21 defendants were charged in the Eastern District of California.

Catalytic converters are part of an exhaust system that reduces toxic gas and pollutants from a vehicle’s internal combustion engine. Catalytic converters use precious metals in their center, or “core,” and are regularly targeted for theft due to the high value of these metals, especially the precious metals palladium, platinum, and rhodium. Some of these precious metals are more valuable per ounce than gold, and their value has been increasing in recent years. The black-market price for catalytic converters can be above \$1,000 each, depending on the type of vehicle and what state it is from. They can be stolen in less than a minute. Last year, approximately 1,600 catalytic converters were reportedly stolen in California each month, and California accounts for 37% of all catalytic converter theft claims nationwide.

According to court documents, the defendants pleading guilty operated an unlicensed business from their residence in Sacramento where they bought stolen catalytic converters from local thieves and shipped them to DG Auto Parts LLC (DG Auto) in New Jersey for processing. They sold over \$38 million in stolen catalytic converters to DG Auto.

Also charged in the 2022 indictment were co-defendants Navin Khanna, aka Lovin Khanna, 40; Tinu Khanna, aka Gagan Khanna, 36; Daniel Dolan, 45; Chi Mo, aka David Mo, 37; Wright Louis Mosley, 50; and Ishu Lakra, 25, all of New Jersey who operated DG Auto in multiple locations in New Jersey. According to court documents, they knowingly purchased stolen catalytic converters and, through a “de-canning” process, extracted the precious metal powders from the catalytic core. DG Auto sold the precious metal powders it processed from California and elsewhere to a metal refinery for over \$600 million. The charges against them are only allegations; they are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

This case is the product of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation with assistance from the Sacramento County Sheriff’s Department, the Sacramento Police Department, the Davis Police Department, the Auburn Police Department, the Livermore Police Department, and the San Bernardino County Sherriff’s Department. Assistant U.S. Attorney Veronica M.A. Alegria is prosecuting the case.

Tou Sue Vang, Andrew Vang, and Monica Moua are not yet scheduled to be sentenced. Andrew Vang and Monica Moua each face a maximum penalty of five years in prison. The 40 counts to which Tou Sue Vang pleaded guilty carry various maximum penalties per count ranging from 20 years in prison to five years in prison, and fines that range from \$500,000 to \$250,000 per count or twice the gross gain or loss from the crimes. The actual sentences, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of any applicable statutory factors and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables.

This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at [www.justice.gov/OCDETF](http://www.justice.gov/OCDETF). ★



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# Home for the Holidays with Bliss

Story and photos by  
Mitch Barber

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - “Vintage bulbs. Like the old, German blown-glass bulbs,” said Stacy Tomlinson when asked what her favorite type of holiday merchandise was, referring to the fragile Christmas ornaments. And she knows a thing or two about holiday wares: she owns Midtown Bliss Home & Gifts with her daughter, Sydnei Kelly. Kelly’s favorite? Vintage Santa mugs.

Their Midtown store is home to about 110 vendors who rent space to display and sell anything vintage, clothing, furniture, home decor and gifts. November 2nd through the 5th was the “Big Holiday Reveal” at all three of the business’ locations, as they additionally have a similar store in Rancho Cordova and Roseville. Kelly said, “Basically it’s our big Christmas opening, so all of our vendors bring out all their Christmas (goods) for the first time.” Tomlinson added, thinking of her favorite tree decorations, “A lot of people (vendors) search for vintage ornaments year-round so they can bring them in for the holidays.”

The mother and daughter are part of the holiday fun, as well. Kelly said, “We decorate the stores, too. We put out lots of trees, lots of ornaments, garlands. Yeah, the garlands. My favorite.”

Their Midtown location is just a half block away from the Natural Foods Co-op, a greenish-blue warehouse next to the light rail tracks on R Street. A big, intentionally rusty “Midtown Bliss Home & Gifts” sign out front hints at the vintage nature of the articles for sale inside.

The mother and daughter had an aha moment before opening the location in February 2020. Tomlinson said, “We were doing a holiday breakfast at my youngest daughter’s house on Q Street and...I saw the empty warehouse for lease.” Kelly continued, “We looked at each other.” Then her mom

added, “And her (Kelly’s) husband said, ‘Hey. This could be Bliss’ second location,’ and we all started laughing because we were thinking it (too).” The first Bliss location opened in Rancho Cordova more than seven years ago. It is called “Bliss Marketplace,” and it is their largest store. Of the Midtown warehouse Kelly said, “It just looked so magical over there by itself. A beautiful white building.”

Tomlinson had some background on the building’s previous occupants. She said, “I think it was a plumbing store. Plumbing supply.” Kelly added, “In the beginning, we would have people coming in looking for a certain part, and they’d walk in and they’re like, ‘What is this?’”

Something entirely different. Tomlinson said, “Around every corner there’s something new.” Kelly then said, “You’re not going to find anything there that you’re gonna see anywhere else, really. And we’re gonna treat you like family.”

Mindy Tidwell, originally from Salinas, but now retired in the Sacramento area, is a vendor and manager at the Midtown store, and she used the term “Bliss family.” She said the store is a great place to meet people to befriend. She said of herself, “They call me the lamp lady.” She is into vintage lamps.

It seems the family is not limited to just humans. Tidwell said, “We love dogs. We’ve even had parrots (in the store).”

As for the other vendors? Kelly said, “For the most part they’re local. We have some folks that come from as far as Galt and Yuba City.” Tomlinson added, “We’ve had somebody as far as the Grapevine have space with us.” Every item in the store has a price and vendor number on it, making selling remotely possible for the merchants.

The customers are considered part of the family, as well. Kelly explained what brings



Candles and other Christmas wares for sale at Midtown Bliss Home & Gifts.

them to the warehouse. “Some like more of the true vintage, and others I think like the idea that they’re shopping second-hand instead of shopping big box...And supporting small business.”

The mother and daughter in the family have different roles in the business. Tomlinson lives in Fair Oaks and manages the day-to-day operation of the stores, whereas her daughter works on marketing and advertising: anything computer-related. She lives in Chattanooga, Tennessee, after moving away from Sacramento in August 2021, frustrated with COVID-19 restrictions.

She is making her own Christmas traditions in her household there. Kelly said, “The kids help me decorate the tree, and essentially I put all of my vintage, like really delicate bulbs, on the top of the tree, and I have a bunch of plastic, kind of cheapo ornaments that I let them (her kids) put on the bottom of the tree.” Her children are four, six, and eight years old.



Mother and daughter Stacy Tomlinson, left, and Sydnei Kelly, right, owners of the three Bliss stores.

As far as Kelly’s mother’s Christmas customs? Tomlinson said, “I’m so busy with the stores. It’s hard.”

The mother and daughter took the time to interview with this newspaper the day after Halloween. Kelly had flown back to Sacramento to help with the Big Holiday Reveal. The customers are attracted to the store during the holidays, as well. Kelly said, “I would say our customers turn out for the holidays.

So, for Halloween they go all out to buy all the Halloween merchandise our vendors put out. And the same for Christmas.”

If you would like to display and sell your own merchandise, Kelly said you simply go to their website, [vintagebliss-marketplace.com](http://vintagebliss-marketplace.com), and fill out a vendor information form. That will get you on a waitlist, and when space becomes available you get an email letting you know you can come in and set things up with a manager.

**Store Locations and Hours:**  
*Midtown Bliss Home & Gifts*  
2722 R St., Sacramento, 95816  
Tue. - Sun.  
10 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
*Bliss Marketplace*  
2529 Mercantile Dr. St. C, Rancho Cordova, 95742  
Thu. - Sun.  
10 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
*Bliss Market*  
390 Roseville Square, Roseville, 95678  
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# ABOUT TOWN

## Downtown Sacramento Ice Rink Open Nov. 8 - Jan. 15

Sharpen your skates and perfect your triple axel—the Downtown Sacramento Ice Rink returns to the heart of the city on November 8! Feel a chill blow down K street as you approach Ali Youssefi Square and be teleported into a winter wonderland at the ice rink.

**Regular Hours**  
Tuesday – Thursday 2 – 9 PM, Friday – Sunday 10 AM – 10 PM, Closed Mondays except for holidays.  
**Special Events**  
Nov. 18 - Princess & Superhero Day  
Nov. 19 – River City Food Bank Donation  
Nov. 25 – Silent Disco at the Ice Rink  
Nov. 26 – Crafting Kindness  
Dec. 2 – Calling All Dreamers Holiday Market  
Dec. 3 – Calling All Dreamers Holiday Market  
Dec. 9 – Xfinity Free Skate  
Dec. 10 – Crafting Kindness  
Dec. 16 – Silent Disco Ugly Sweater Party  
Dec. 17 – First Step Communities Donation  
Jan. 7 – Crafting Kindness  
Tickets are available at the entrance to the rink when you arrive to skate.  
For more info about holiday hours and scheduled events, visit [www.godowntownsac.com/events/signature-events/ice-rink/](http://www.godowntownsac.com/events/signature-events/ice-rink/)

## Run to Feed the Hungry Nov. 23

*Presented by Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services at CSU Sacramento (Sacramento State), Sacramento CA.*

The pandemic and the economic disruption it caused have triggered a nationwide hunger crisis. Many families—some for the first time—are having to make impossible choices between rent, transportation, utilities, medicine, and putting food on the table. In Sacramento County, about 280,000 individuals are now turning to Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services (SFBFS) for food assistance every month, an increase of 87% over 2019.

The need for SFBFS’ services is as great as ever, and after three straight years of rising demand, our resources are becoming increasingly stretched. But with your support, we’ll be able to keep pace with demand and distribute more food to more people than ever before. Whether you choose to run or walk the 5K or 10K, donate to an individual or team, or fundraise yourself, every dollar from Run to Feed the Hungry will be used to feed the nearly 1 in 5 Sacramentans who are at risk of hunger.

To register as a runner, view the track map, or find more info, visit [www.runtofeedthehungry.com](http://www.runtofeedthehungry.com).

## California Waterfowl Fundraising Dinner Dec. 7

This fundraiser for the California Waterfowl

Association will be held at Portuguese Hall, 6676 Pocket Road, on Dec. 7. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. for games and social hour. Dinner will begin at 7 p.m., followed by a live auction. The event will also include a silent auction and youth program. For tickets, visit the website, [www.CalWaterFowl.org/Tickets](http://www.CalWaterFowl.org/Tickets)

## Breakfast With Santa at the Elks Lodge Dec. 17

Two of the best kept secrets in Sacramento are at Elks Lodge 6. The first secret is they have a wonderful breakfast every Sunday from 8:30 to 11 a.m. Keep it a secret from the kids, but Santa will be there on Saturday, December 17th.

The breakfast will be closed on December 24th and 31st for the holidays. The breakfast starts with a wonderful omelet bar. The rest of the menu includes: pancakes, french toast, waffles, and biscuits and gravy. There is also potatoes, sausage, bacon, and of course either orange or tomato juice. Don’t forget the coffee! All of that for \$15, and children under 10 are half price. That price includes tax and tip [donations to the Purple Pig are encouraged]. That second best secret is the Elks have an indoor swimming pool and athletic facilities with handball courts. While you are there you can have a tour of the facilities. The Elks Lodge 6 is at 6446 Riverside Blvd.

## Elk’s Lodge Calendar of Events Elks 6’s Annual Arts & Craft Festival and Greenhaven Pocket Farmers Market. The Greenhaven Pocket Farmers Market will open at 8 A.M.

Free Raffle at GreenHaven Pocket Farmers Market every Saturday until November 11th  
Come by Membership Booth and fill out a raffle ticket for a chance to win a free farmers market tote bag filled with fresh farmer products and other goodies. The winning ticket will be drawn at 1 P.M. at the close of each market day until Saturday, November 11th. The winner need not be present to win.

**Can you stay too long at the GreenHaven Pocket Farmers Market?**  
Vic Cima, manager of the GreenHaven Pocket Farmers Market, said, “Juan Flores thought he had to shop from 8 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. at the GHP Farmers Market. His dog got so tired that he had to take a dog nap! Juan will be back every Saturday. We hope his dog also comes.”

**Elk’s Lodge Sunday Breakfast**  
Every Sunday 8:30am - 11am  
Bring your friends and family  
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Best deal in town  
Made to order Omelets or eggs any way you want. Bacon, sausage, potatoes, biscuits and gravy, pancakes, waffles, coffee large parties should call for reservations  
Guest are VERY welcome!

## Canal Holiday Lights Community Pocket News Event

Hi friends and neighbors!  
Costco has had Christmas decor for a month, so winter must be coming soon! With it comes the return of our Pocket Canal Holiday Lights!  
I hope you’ve enjoyed this great tradition as much as I have. I love the beautiful show as the lights reflect off the water, but most of all, I enjoy how much it gets our community out, enjoying it together, being with friends, being with family.  
We need your help to keep it going and continue to grow this great community tradition.

Can you make a donation to support the effort this year? Any amount helps!  
Donations are tax deductible, please donate here:  
<https://giftstoshareinc.ejoinme.org/donate> (select “District 7 Canal Holiday Lights”)

If your business is interested in sponsoring, please let me know!  
And save the dates, December 2nd, hanging holiday lights & December 3rd, lighting ceremony with Santa.  
Thanks so much for your support!  
Your partner in building stronger communities,  
Devin Lavelle  
[devinlavelle@gmail.com](mailto:devinlavelle@gmail.com)

## Sacramento Symphonic Winds Holiday Concert Dec. 10

The Sacramento Symphonic Winds holiday concert entitled “Holiday Fiesta” will be Sunday, December 10, 2:30pm, at Capistrano Hall, California State University, Sacramento (CSUS). Admission and parking at Capistrano Hall (garage levels 1-3) for this concert are free of charge. Donations are welcome! The Sacramento Symphonic Winds is a 60-piece adult symphonic wind ensemble conducted by Music/Artistic Director Dr. Matthew Morse. This concert features Symphonic Dance #3 “Fiesta” by Clifton Williams, A Christmas Carol by Alan Silvestri, Rhapsody on Christmas Carols by Claude T. Smith, and more! Visit our website at: <http://www.sacwinds.org> OR find us on Facebook!

## Elk Grove Marine Corps League Launches Toys for Tots Toy Collection Effort

Marine Corps League, Elk Grove Detachment #1238 comprised of

nearly 70 Marine veterans involved in all conflicts from WWII to Afghanistan hosts their 76th Anniversary National Marine Corps Reserve’s Toys for Tots program. The mission for the Toys for Tots program is to collect new, unwrapped toys during October, November and December each year and to deliver the toys as Christmas gifts for needy children in the community in which the gifts were collected.

The collection will be on Friday, November 24, 2023 - 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. in the Smart and Final parking lot at - 8775 Elk Grove Blvd. Baskins Robbins Ice Cream is on the west side and F&M Bank is on the East end in Elk Grove, CA

Today the Marine Corps Toys for Tots program in the United States collects on average 17 million toys and distributes them to 7.5 million children each year.

Marines in Dress Blues who are currently serving our country; Marine veterans who have served in Wars from WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Bosnia, the Gulf War, Desert Storm, Kuwait, Afghanistan and Iraq. Elk Grove Girl Scout Troop# 276 will also attend.

This event is fully sanctioned by the USMC Reserve’s Toys for Tots Program. For more information about the program and its history, please go to [www.toysfortots.org](http://www.toysfortots.org)

## Sacramento Area Museums Showcase Region’s Farm-to-Fork Roots All Year Long

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (August 28, 2023) – The Greater Sacramento region is rich with popular museums and destinations that offer diverse and enriching experiences for individuals, families, residents, and visitors alike. Given the critically important role agriculture continues to play in the region, many local museums offer special exhibits, experiences and activations that highlight ever-enduring Farm-to-Fork connections. A sampling of some of the Farm-to-Fork offerings at local museums includes the following:

**California Agriculture Museum** – Woodland is home to an entire museum focused on agriculture, filled with a unique collection of harvesters, wheel and crawler-type tractors, combines, trucks, art, artifacts, rotating interactive exhibits and much more. In all, the museum tells the history of Farm-to-Fork, dating back to the Gold Rush era and how the industry evolved from horse drawn to steam driven to fuel powered machines to harvest and transport California’s bounty.

**California State Railroad Museum & Foundation** – A Fruit

Growers Express refrigerated rail car is on permanent display inside the Museum’s Roundhouse. Museum visitors can explore this historic rail car and exhibit, “Farm to Fork: A Public History,” and learn about how refrigerated rail cars enabled California farmers, growers, and producers send farm-to-fork freshness all over the country. Visitors can step inside the historic Fruit Growers Express rail car to see how the ice-cooled rail cars transported produce and built an agricultural system that exports more wealth than the California Gold Rush. Plus, the popular weekend excursion train, Sacramento Southern Railroad – currently on pause due to an important rail repair project – runs on the historic Walnut Grove Branch Line. This rail line transported pears, asparagus, celery, seeds, and other products from the Delta communities to markets nationwide.

**Sacramento Children’s Museum** – Young visitors hungry to learn about fresh food have a variety of options at the Children’s Museum, including at the miniature Leo’s Market and Leo’s Food Court (a miniature market of food carts), about bees and honey with the in-house beehive, and an interactive train table highlighting Sacramento’s agricultural landscape in miniature, complete with mini livestock. Plus, the Children’s Museum will be at the Farm-to-Fork Festival (September 22-23) sharing vegetable stamp printing with visitors.

**SMUD Museum of Science & Curiosity** – MOSAC’s interactive exhibits bring the story of water to life, demonstrating how our region is working together to conserve this natural resource for now and future generations. The “Water Challenge” exhibit lets museum visitors actively shape a watershed’s flow, create a tune for saving water at home, and choose between local or non-local foods to buy based on how everyday decisions impact conservation efforts — all while learning about the environmental footprint along the way.

**Utility Exploration Center** – The City of Roseville’s Utility Exploration Center (UEC) is a testament to the region’s commitment to sustainable living and resource conservation. Nestled in the heart of a region renowned for its Farm-to-Fork movement, the UEC acts as an educational hub, encouraging residents and visitors alike to delve into the intricacies of energy and water conservation, waste reduction, and sustainable practices. By fostering an understanding

of how we use and preserve resources, the UEC underscores the importance of our agricultural roots.  
For more information about upcoming activities offered by Sacramento area museums, “like” them on Facebook at [www.Facebook.com/SacMuseums](http://www.Facebook.com/SacMuseums), follow them on Instagram and Twitter @SacMuseums or visit the user-friendly website at [www.SacMuseums.org](http://www.SacMuseums.org).

## Friends of Sutter’s Fort Announces Exciting Line-Up of Special Events and Activations Happening this Fall

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Friends of Sutter’s Fort, in partnership with Sutter’s Fort State Historic Park, is proud to present a series of family-friendly events and activations this fall highlighted by holiday themed movies, an all-ages concert, and adventurous self-guided evening tours by flashlight or lantern light.

A schedule of fall activities presented by Friends of Sutter’s Fort includes the following:

## Flashlights & Friends After Hour Tours – Friday, December 1 from 6 to 8:30 p.m.

For those seeking fun and adventure in a unique space, Flashlight & Friends may be just the ticket. The holiday themed evening provides an opportunity to explore Sutter’s Fort Historic Park like never before – by flashlight or lantern light (guests can bring their own or purchase them on-site). The self-guided tour experience is family friendly and includes live music, games, and treats for event attendees. For tickets and/or more information about Flashlights & Friends visit <https://suttersfort.org/event/flashlights-friends/>

The special events and activations support the nonprofit Friends of Sutter’s Fort to help provide upcoming programming such as field trips and future events at Sutter’s Fort State Historic Park.

For those interested in visiting inside Sutter’s Fort State Historic Park (that is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily), all Fort admission fees will be waived for the duration of a major roof replacement and seismic stabilization project that is currently underway. Visitors can observe the rehabilitation project firsthand and tour the Central Building, which remains open.

*Friends of Sutter’s Fort is a 501c3 charitable foundation. As a state park cooperating association, we collaborate with California State Parks at Sutter’s Fort State Historic Park to preserve and protect historic structures, and artifacts, and to engage visitors of all ages. For more information, please visit [www.suttersfort.org](http://www.suttersfort.org)* ★





# Shifting How California Funds its Mental Health System

## System is Critical to Getting More People Off the Streets

**Commentary By Darrell Steinberg**  
**Mayor of Sacramento**  
**From CALMATTERS.ORG**

What if we could reach each person suffering from mental illness or addiction on California’s streets and assertively surround them with the resources they need to get well and to get housed? What if we could get them a mental health therapist, a bed in an addiction treatment facility? Someone to help them find an apartment and to pay their rent?

This is not an impossible dream. To reach tens of thousands of people living in tent encampments, we must prioritize and focus the billions generated through our existing Mental Health Services Act, the millionaire’s tax I authored in the Assembly and was approved by voters 20 years ago as Proposition 63.

California needs more money for housing and more money for mental health and substance abuse treatment – all targeted for those with the most severe needs.

The effort is well underway with Gov. Gavin Newsom’s mental health system overhaul,

which requires that more of the \$4 billion raised annually by the MHSA is spent in a much more focused way. Thirty percent for housing, 35% for wraparound services, and the remainder for other services and ensuring children get the help they need before they suffer the worse consequences of untreated mental illness.

In March, voters will have a chance to weigh in on these crucial changes in addition to a second key piece of the governor and legislature’s agenda for behavioral health reform. Proposition 1 would modernize the MSHA – renamed the Behavioral Health Services Act – and raise an additional \$6.2 billion in one-time bond funding to build more housing and treatment beds for those with the most severe needs.

Currently, the funds produced by Proposition 63 flow to counties to care for adults and children with serious mental illness. MHSA’s 20-year history and \$31 billion of community-based services has saved many lives.

But the work is so incomplete. Counties currently spend this money to help

many people in need. But there has not been enough focus on identifying and enrolling the unhoused people suffering in plain view on our streets.

The updated Behavioral Health Services Act shifts the dynamic by requiring more funding – an estimated \$1 billion – to be spent on housing those with severe mental illness and substance use disorders. It expands the successful full-service partnerships, the wrap-around services that is the proven formula to end homelessness for thousands when combined with housing.

The law would also require the prevention and early intervention resources required by the original MHSA to be spent on proven strategies like investing in early psychosis identification, so teenagers do not suffer that life-altering first break.

In Sacramento, our city and county governments in December took an important legal step toward a more robust encampment outreach and enrollment strategy. Sacramento County pledged in this agreement to do “whatever it takes” to get people off the streets,

including adding as many full-service partnerships as needed. New city-county outreach teams are working the encampments and identifying the people who qualify for this level of care.

Our agreement is a model that could be replicated by cities and counties statewide to reach more people.

Passing the accompanying bond next year to build community treatment and housing facilities will move us much closer to fulfilling the promise made by Gov. Ronald Reagan and the Legislature when they closed old hospitals and promised a decent system of community based mental health care. Closing the hospitals was the right decision. For decades the community promise was forgotten.

The MHSA in 2004 was a major step towards upholding that promise. The BHSA and the bond has the chance to move us even closer.

Every dollar, every program, every roof, every bed, every newly trained care provider means one more person off our streets, out of the hospital, out of jail, out of a lonely back bedroom with the chance for a better life. ★



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# Tips: Stay Healthy and Informed this Flu Season

## Sacramento County News Release

**SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG)** - As the seasons change and cooler weather sets in, so does the onset of flu season. In addition to the annual influenza virus, the ongoing concern of COVID-19 continues to be a critical health issue. Staying healthy this flu season requires a combination of preventative measures and timely medical intervention.

Getting a flu shot is one of the most effective ways to protect yourself and your community from influenza. The vaccine helps your immune system recognize and fight the virus,

preventing or reducing the severity of symptoms and preventing complications. It's recommended for everyone, especially for vulnerable populations like the elderly, young children, pregnant women, and those with underlying health conditions.

In addition to the flu shot, receiving a COVID-19 vaccine and subsequent booster shots is crucial. COVID-19, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, has proven to be a highly contagious and sometimes severe illness. Vaccination not only reduces the risk of infection but also lowers the chances of severe illness, hospitalization, and death.

Visit a Public Health community flu clinic to get this year's flu vaccine and COVID booster. Clinic dates and locations can be found on the Public Health website.

Staying healthy during flu season starts with practicing good hygiene: Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after being in public places. Use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol when soap and water are not available.

Wearing masks, especially in crowded or indoor settings, can significantly reduce the transmission of both the

flu and COVID-19.

Avoid touching your face: your eyes, nose, and mouth are entry points for viruses. Try to refrain from touching them unless you've just washed your hands.

Get regular exercise, eat a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, and ensure you're getting enough sleep.

Stay updated with information from reliable sources like the World Health Organization (WHO) or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). They provide essential guidance on how to protect yourself and others.

Flu season, coupled with the ongoing cases



Getting a flu shot is one of the most effective ways to protect yourself and your community from influenza. MPG Courtesy Photo

of COVID-19, demands a proactive approach to safeguarding our health. By following recommended preventive measures, getting vaccinated against the flu and COVID-19, we can collectively reduce the impact of these illnesses on individuals and communities. Remember, your health is in your hands, and by taking these steps, you're not only protecting yourself but also those around you. Stay safe, stay informed, and stay healthy! ★

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