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Warm Smiles and Great Conversations

Cops & Coffee Event Hosted by Sacramento PD



From left, Officer Amanda Pearlman, Jim Randlett (with Chocolate Turkey) and Sgt. Dani Longanecker/POP Team

Story and photo by Kristina Rogers

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - On a drizzly December morning, conversations were brewing at the Chocolate Fish Coffee

Roasters in Land Park. Sacramento PD hosted a Cops & Coffee, a friendly meet-and-greet event allowing officers and neighbors to casually chat (and snack on the best avocado toast

around). The Coffee with a Cop program was established in 2011 and designed to create positive relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Today,

the program is in all fifty states, and abroad in countries like Australia, Africa, Canada, and Europe. Sacramento's police and sheriff's departments came on board quickly and

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A Heartfelt Holiday Message from Your Councilmember

As the proud representative of this vibrant and diverse community, it is both an honor and a privilege to extend warm wishes to each and every one of you during this joyous season. On behalf of the entire team at the Sacramento City Council District 7 office, I want to express our heartfelt gratitude for allowing us the opportunity to serve and support you throughout the year.

As we approach the festive season, I am filled with pride to be part of a community that embodies the spirit of unity, compassion, and resilience. Our district is a tapestry of cultures, backgrounds, and stories that come together to create a unique and thriving community. Together, we have faced challenges, celebrated triumphs, and worked towards building a better future for all.

This Christmas, I extend my warmest wishes for a holiday season filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments with family and friends. May the spirit of joy and generosity be present in every home, and may the New Year bring opportunities for growth, prosperity, and community enrichment.

As we look ahead to the coming year, let us continue working together to build a community that thrives on collaboration, understanding, and inclusivity. Your insights and contributions are invaluable, and I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead for our district.

Once again, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you and your loved ones. May the holiday season bring you joy, peace, and a renewed sense of hope.

With warm regards,
Councilmember Rick Jennings
Sacramento City Council District 7

Fuji Comes Home: Hearty Japanese Food for All Generations



Kevin Oto, left, and Russell Okubo pose in front of the restaurant's Samurai mural.



An inviting banner outside Fuji Restaurant.

Story and photos by Kristina Rogers

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - When a new restaurant opens, it normally requires heavy marketing to get

the word out, but the buzz on social media was swift when it was announced Fuji is coming back to 1235 Broadway. Owners Russell Okubo and Kevin Oto have been deluged

with congratulations. In fact, within the hour of posting the announcement on Instagram, Oto received over 50 messages, and his DMs were still blowing up during the interview. On

the other hand, Okubo has no social media, but his robust following has people spreading the word, too. Between uncle and nephew, they've covered

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A Big Change at EDD

EDD changes unemployment contractor after scams

BY LYNN LA,
calmatters.org

SACRAMENTO COUNTY CA (MPG) - California has a new unemployment and disability payment contractor after the state's multi-billion-dollar pandemic fraud panic. The Employment Development Department hopes it will be the end of an era of brazen scams, which wreaked havoc for laid-off workers and fueled police busts involving stacks of ill-gotten debit cards issued at the department's direction by then-contractor Bank of America.

EDD tells CalMatters that on Monday it plans to begin notifying 850,000 benefit recipients of the new payment provider: Money Network, an electronic payment company owned by finance tech company Fiserv. Money Network may sound familiar; it was also tapped by the federal government and Gov. Gavin Newsom to pay out COVID-era stimulus funds, which attracted its own waves of debit card scams.

Money Network won the EDD contract after a competitive bidding process. It comes as the agency embarks on a five-year, \$1.2 billion tech overhaul known as EDDNext.

The contract will primarily be paid for through a debit card revenue-sharing agreement, similar to the EDD's previous deal with Bank of America. The agency will also pay \$32 million over five years for Money Network to offer a long-discussed direct deposit option to workers' bank accounts, which the



The offices of the Employment Development Department in Sacramento where it all went wrong. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

EDD says will launch in spring 2024.

In mid-January, people receiving unemployment, disability and paid leave benefits from the EDD will be mailed new Money Network debit cards. Payments will officially begin on these cards on Feb. 15. Anyone who still has a Bank of America EDD debit card will have until April 15, 2024, to spend the money.

In the meantime, fraud analysts tracking an uptick in attacks on government benefit debit cards — not just California's unemployment program, but also food assistance and others — will be watching to see what lessons have (or haven't) been learned from the pandemic. The new EDD cards will include both security chips and tap-to-pay options common in consumer credit cards.

Still, the EDD is advising cardholders to be vigilant: "Beware of scammers. We will never request your personal information by text message, e-mail or on social media."

Tens of thousands of Californians are still

awaiting aid from the COVID-19 rent relief program. But as CalMatters housing reporter Ben Christopher explains, the program may run out of money before it can help the remaining eligible applicants.

The \$5.2 billion program launched in 2021 to help Californians pay down rental debt they accumulated during the pandemic. Though it stopped taking new applications in 2022, more than 70,000 households still have applications pending. The program has enough funding to cover a little more than 14,000 people — meaning the remaining 80% of the total applicant pool is out of luck.

That's devastating news for tenants and landlords alike who may ultimately wait in vain for relief to come. As one graphic designer and single mother told Ben: "I'm trying to find a way to freelance or do whatever I can do to get the money to just pay it myself... I can't sit and depend on it and wait because it's been two years." ★

Fuji Comes Home: Hearty Japanese Food for All Generations

Continued from Page 1
several generations.

When you step in, it's apparent the décor will reflect the blending of generations, as well. A new mural of a fierce samurai greets patrons while family artifacts grace the walls. And although Russell Okubo is establishing the new Fuji, his nephew Kevin Oto will be in charge. Okubo's legendary background as a Sacramento restaurateur make him the perfect foundation for this new venture. He owns Sumo Sushi (Elk Grove), Tokyo Fros (Arden), and Aji Japanese Bistro in El Dorado Hills. Okubo was also corporate chef for the well-known Fats family. It's an impressive resume, even for a European-trained chef.

Although many restaurants lament about the struggle to find qualified employees, it won't be an issue here. Staff tend to follow Okubo wherever he goes. Steven Dacong has worked with him for over twenty-five years. Dacong is an energetic, affable man excited about his new role as Fuji's manager. He noted, "Even when staff leave, they always come back. Once you work for Russell, you don't want to work for anyone else."

And once the community tries the food, they'll keep coming back.

The new menu will incorporate a few old Fuji favorites like sesame chicken, udon, and tempura. Sushi will be in the nigiri style, like Okubo's mother and grandmother taught him: where flavor and substance come from quality ingredients. "We don't do rolls with sauces; that's more of a California thing," said Okubo. "And plenty of local



Kevin Dacong next to a vintage Little League trophy, wearing a shirt with the kanji characters for "Fuji."

restaurants do that already." He also said, "Our focus isn't to be a 'sushi restaurant,' but more about great Japanese food with sushi."

Along with locally-sourced produce and fish, Fuji will receive overnight deliveries from Japan's world-famous Tsukiji market. Whatever fish arrives that week will provide surprising, unique dishes. The site will offer happy hour with a robust bar stocked with local craft beers. Sake enthusiasts should appreciate the drinking flights and tasting events, too. And finally, the Sunday Asian brunch will be a weekend treat for guests.

Fuji is one of the only restaurants in the area with a professional events space attached. The December 18th opening was barely announced when eight parties booked the 100-seat banquet room. The upstairs space offers a

large projector screen and high-tech surround sound with a disco ball. Since Fuji is joining Selland's and The Kitchen in the new evolution of the Broadway corridor, the owners understand change is still coming. A security plan is in place to ensure guests can walk safely to and from their cars while visiting.

Kevin Oto, Steven Dacong, and the staff are eager to make Fuji a success. Russell Okubo is ready to let them take over as he looks towards retirement. Fuji is his final love letter to a city he has served for decades. Okubo's vision is clear: "Our food isn't going to be flashy or pretentious. It will be simple and clean with good flavors. A welcoming family place to get good food, drink and relax." The new Fuji is about to raise the bar on what that means. ★

Warm Smiles and Great Conversations at Cops & Coffee

Sac Diocese to Seek Bankruptcy Protection, Facing Over 250 Sexual-Abuse Cases

By Matthew Malone
Staff Writer



The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, the seat of the Diocese of Sacramento, is seen in 2011. Bishop Jaime Soto has announced his intention to seek Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on behalf of the diocese, in response to hundreds of lawsuits claiming clergy sexual abuse. 'Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament - Sacramento, California' by TravelingOtter used under CC BY-SA 2.0.

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Roman Catholic Diocese of Sacramento will seek Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection next year, Bishop Jaime Soto announced on Dec. 9, as it faces hundreds of lawsuits alleging child sexual abuse by clergy. The diocese oversees Catholic parishes in much of Northern California, including Sacramento County.

In a letter published online and distributed to parishioners at local churches, Soto said he expects to file for bankruptcy protection in March 2024.

"It is now clear to me that the only respectful, transparent, and fair way to address the substantial number of claims by those who have been abused by clergy and other members of the Church is to seek a court-supervised reorganization. This process will also allow me to sustain the sanctifying, teaching, and charitable work of the Catholic community in Northern California," the letter read.

Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection generally allows an organization to continue operating while negotiating with creditors to restructure its debts. The letter noted as much and said parishes and schools in the diocese "would continue their operations uninterrupted."

Soto said more than 250 lawsuits alleging abuse have been filed against the diocese. Without reorganization, "it is likely that not all the abuse victim-survivors would receive a fair

consideration of their claim," he said, with available funds being "depleted" in the first cases brought forward.

"Bankruptcy is a costly and lengthy process, but it also provides supervision and transparency for all the parties involved so that a fair resolution is offered to the victim-survivors of abuse," Soto continued. He expressed hope that the diocese would "emerge from this necessary, penitential exercise with greater resolve to be a humble sanctuary of holiness and healing for all the sons and daughters of God in Northern California."

Law Group Decries Plan

A law firm that represents people alleging clerical abuse, including cases in the Sacramento diocese, criticized the decision.

"On behalf of the many survivors who were gravely hurt, we react with deep disappointment in the choice made by the Bishop of Sacramento to seek bankruptcy protection from accountability," Jeff Anderson and Associates said in a press release. "We

know from all the work we have done with survivors across the country that bishops and dioceses have continuously utilized Chapter 11 to shamefully protect themselves."

The release said other dioceses have used bankruptcy filings to delay court cases and prevent "full disclosure."

"The Diocese might change, but their motivations for filing bankruptcy remain the same — the desire to protect their reputation and their assets, no matter the moral expense," attorney Jeff Anderson said in a statement.

The Sacramento diocese is the fourth in California to seek bankruptcy protection after a wave of sexual-abuse claims under state Assembly Bill 218. The legislation took effect in 2020 and extended the statute of limitations on childhood sexual abuse, allowing much more time for accusers to come forward after reaching adulthood.

The other dioceses filing for Chapter 11 protection are Santa Rosa, San Francisco and Oakland. ★

Continued from Page 1 hosted neighborhood coffee talks all around the area. Unfortunately, when the pandemic hit, people couldn't socialize in person, and the program was put on a shelf. The good news is that law enforcement revived Cops & Coffee this year, and plans to improve it in 2024.

"Previously, we'd host Land Park Cops & Coffee at different coffee shops. The inconsistency made it difficult for the community to rely on when they could meet us," explained Sergeant Dani Longanecker, "We want to change that in the coming year. We plan to have it at one spot (possibly Chocolate Fish) and host around every other month." They are still working out the details but hope this upgrade will encourage more neighbors to stop by.

"We want to reach the community in more ways than just when people call 911," said Officer Amanda Pearlman. "At a coffee shop, people aren't meeting us in a moment of crisis. They can relax and

get to know us." And officers get the opportunity to better understand the people they serve.

Officer Pearlman shared that discussions normally focus on homelessness, trespassing, home invasion, auto break-ins, and mail theft. These are not exclusive to any particular area, but Cops & Coffee creates connections to help share information and solve problems at a neighborhood level. The stories and photos residents share during these conversations can help law enforcement with current crime issues.

And Land Park residents also gain bits of helpful knowledge. For instance, Sergeant Longanecker pointed out that auto thefts increase in the winter months. "Criminals who normally steal bikes in warm weather turn to steal cars about now. Like the rest of us, they don't like to travel in the cold weather either." That's a good reminder it's just as important to keep our cars locked up and secure in the winter months. Also, police bring informational handouts such as Neighborhood

Watch sheets and crime prevention tips for residents to take home.

Some Land Park neighbors like showing appreciation for SacPD and don't come empty-handed. Long-time neighbor Jim Randlett walked in with a giant chocolate turkey. He presented it to Sergeant Longanecker as thanks for their service. It certainly put a smile on everyone's face, and inspired a few jokes, too. And that's what Cops & Coffee is all about; humanizing officers in a relaxed atmosphere and allowing neighbors to be themselves and make a connection.

Officer Pearlman said, "We want the community to keep coming, we want to hear from everyone and to put a friendly face to SacPD. We are not only here to fight crime, but also to say hello."

The community is encouraged to stay in touch for updates on the 2024 Cops & Coffee events. Events will be posted on Instagram, Facebook, Next Door, and the Land Park Community Association website. ★



LAND PARK
Large corner lot in Land Park. Enjoy this remodeled "move-in" condition 2 bd. / 2 bath home on a lovely tree lined street. Beautifully refinished hardwood floors in the spacious living room with bay window, plantation shutters, fireplace with insert and recessed lighting with dimmer. Enjoy cooking in the delightfully remodeled kitchen with quartz counters, under counter recessed lighting, stainless steel dishwasher & sink, gas range / oven and three door pantry. Both bedrooms have ceiling fans and wood floors. Hall bathroom has restored cast iron tub with shower and vanity with marble counter. Second bath is in the back bedroom and features a large tiled shower. Plantation shutters throughout, many dual paned windows, inside laundry room with cabinets, folding area and access to back porch. Two driveways, single car garage. 3041 17th Street

LAND PARK
Nestled in the heart of Land Park on a tree lined street, this spacious three-bedroom 2.5 bath home features formal tiled entry, living room with fireplace & bookshelves, oversized formal dining room with window overlooking backyard, galley type kitchen with island eating area, stainless steel appliances, tiled backsplash and access to patio. Downstairs desk area with adjoining bath, and TV / gathering room with sliding door to yard. Three upstairs bedrooms, updated hall bath with new vanity, floor and shower. Primary bedroom with large walk-in closet, updated bath with shower over tub. Lots of wood floors, central heat and air, basement and two-car garage. Backyard covered patio with privacy drapes, brick fence and small storage shed. Don't miss this one! 1154 Swanston Dr. \$1,075,000

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ABOUT TOWN

Your Elks 6 Lodge needs your help!

Help is needed in the office from 9 - 3 Monday through Friday to answer phones, sell event tickets etc.

We also need help in the Rental office to answer the phone.

If you can lend a hand even if it is half a day or one day per week, please contact me and I will get your information to the appropriate person.

For questions or to volunteer call or send text message to Sue Hill 215-327-7712.

Elks 6 Annual Bicycle/Toy Drive

Toy donations are coming in and we thank you. 13 gifts were delivered on 12/2 and 2 more deliveries will be made, one next week and the last on 12/17.

Any items donated after 12/17 will also be given to children as in previous years.

The Dave Hamm bicycle fund has given us enough money to purchase 3 bicycles, 3 helmets and 2 bike locks. Two donations have been made to the bicycle fund by our members. Thanks to the Dave Hamm fund and to our generous members who support the fund.

All new, unwrapped toys and bikes can be brought into the lounge or office and placed near the Christmas tree.

Thank you for your support. We will make a lot of children happy this year.

Any questions, call Joanne Martin 707-486-6027.

Theatre of Lights at the Old Sacramento Waterfront

Theatre of Lights is a free, family-friendly performance retelling "Twas the Night Before Christmas" in a uniquely Sacramento way on the rooftops of the Old Sacramento Waterfront. Produced by Downtown Sacramento Partnership, the shows are Thursday through Sunday from

Thanksgiving Eve to December 30th (no show on Thanksgiving).

Conceived and created by Stage Nine Exhibitions' Troy Carlson, Theatre of Lights brings together some of California's finest talents in the field of light and sound: 4Wall Productions, Musson Theatrical, Associated Sound, and Emmy-nominated voice actor Bill Farmer, the voice of Disney's Goofy.

The performance features an immersive retelling of Moore's 1823 poem — "A Visit from St. Nicholas," more popularly known as "Twas the Night Before Christmas" alongside stories of how Sacramento pioneers experienced the calamities — and revelry — that befell the new city in the 1850s. The sounds of the fires, floods, and parties will surround the audience as the 150-year-old building facades light up with color. The highlight of the 20-minute production is a live dramatization on the balconies above K Street, complete with a special appearance by Jack Frost, and the lighting of the 60-foot Christmas tree by St. Nick himself.

The show schedule is as follows:

November 22nd through December 30th

Thursday through Sunday, shows at 6 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

Special Shows:

Sun. Dec. 24th

One show at 6 p.m.

For more information about this event and to check out other events help at the Old Sacramento Waterfront, visit oldsacramento.com/event

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

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/

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 Elk's Lodge Sunday Breakfast

Every Sunday 8:30am - 11am

Bring your friends and family

\$15 tax included 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!

Water Aerobics

Monday 10 am, Wednesday 2 pm

Yoga

Monday 12 pm, Wednesday 3:30 pm

Lodge members free.

Martial Arts

Monday 5 pm

Pickleball

Mon & Wed 9 am-12 pm, Thu 4:30-7:30 pm, Sun 4-7 pm

To sign-up or confirm schedule, join playtimescheduler.com

Improv Night

2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 6-8 pm

Wednesday Night Dinner

5:30 to 7 pm

See above and elks6.net for weekly menu.

Karaoke

Thursday 7 pm

Saturday 7:30pm

Friday Happy Hour

Friday 4-7 pm

Land Park Softball

Softball is back in Land Park and will now be a part of the Land Park Pacific Little League organization. LPPLL has been a pillar in our community since 1954 and is welcoming softball under their umbrella this SPRING!

Early Bird Registration is NOW OPEN!

Visit lppll.com/ registration to register and learn more.

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, follow them on Instagram and Twitter @SacMuseums or visit the user-friendly website at www.SacMuseums.org.

Friends of Sutter's Fort Announces Discounted Admission Rates

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.

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 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.sutters-fort.org

Elks 6 Lodge Winter Blast February 24, 2024

Last year was a sellout - You don't want to miss this great event.

Tickets will go on sale in the office by 12/10.

Online ticket sales will be available soon, watch for the announcement.

Note the 5\$ savings for tickets purchased by February 3.

Bunny on the Green Saturday, March 16th, 2024

Late morning/early afternoon, exact time to be determined.

Location: William Land Park Golf 1701 Sutterville Road.

Families are encouraged to come and meet The Easter Bunny for the 2nd Annual Bunny on the Green. It is free to visit the Bunny and take photos. There will also be a children's Easter Bonnet contest and putting activities. Guests can purchase food and mimosa's for the adults. More details to come soon.

★



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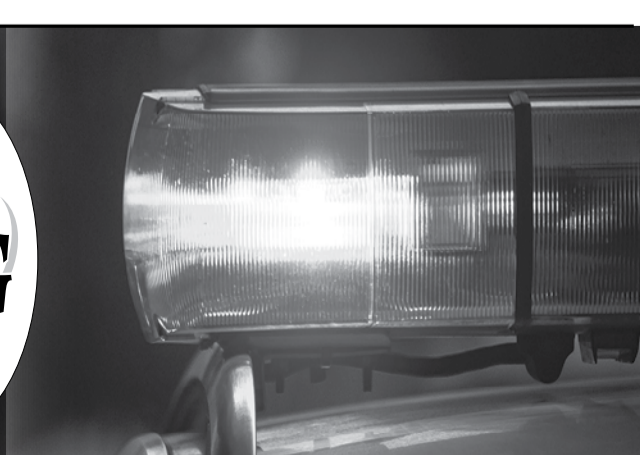
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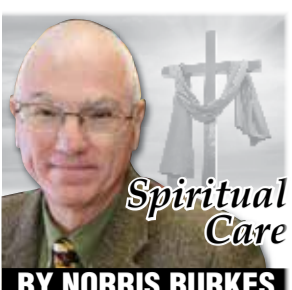
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BY NORRIS BURKES

Signs Point to God's Love for Us All

Honestly, it seems a bit odd that Advent sermons often begin with a lesson from John the Baptist. I mean, I'm uncomfortable that I share the Baptist name with my predecessor.

While J-the-B was Jesus' second cousin, they shared no resemblance in their preaching style. The "Babble-ist" was one wild-eyed, deranged preacher dude. If he were alive today, his caustic style might recommend him for presidential candidacy.

The man didn't make any friends when he referred to the local clergy as "a group of vipers" and dead wood fit to be burned. Of course, he really lost his head when he called King Herod an adulterer - literally head on a platter.

But today in the US, we're a little more tolerant of these crazy preacher types. I often see them during visits to San Francisco where scathing prophets wave signs announcing the end of the world.

But during one particular Christmas-shopping visit to Union Square in San Francisco, I saw a man holding a sign with a much kinder, gentler Baptist message. "Jesus Christ Loves You."

He must have noticed me curiously inching toward him, and he motioned for me to approach. Jose Rodriguez kept a neat beard and held his sign above his short stature on most weekends and holidays:

Jose's sign was to the point. Simple. Not preachy. I expected Jose to hand me an advert promoting the time

and location of his services. "No," he said, "I'm not a preacher. I don't really know much about the Bible."

Nevertheless, Jose found the Bible's most important message, so I asked him what kind of reaction the sign was generating.

"Most people show their agreement in some way," he said. "They smile or nod and say, 'That's right.'" But no matter what their response, Jose held his sign in the same unflinching way he had begun in 2000.

I admire Jose's courage, but I also appreciated what his sign did not say.

In a time when fundamentalist fanatics picket the funerals of war veterans and thrust placards of dead babies in the faces of confused mothers, I could fill several columns with what Jose's sign DID NOT say.

It didn't name conditions such as, "Jesus loves you if ..."

It didn't say "Jesus only loves you when ..." It didn't say, "My god hates your god."

The cynic might have scolded Jose saying that it's easier to hold a placard about Jesus' love than to actually put love into practice. It's the warning James, (Jesus' half-brother) gave against simply telling the hungry, "Be warm and filled," without offering them a cup of soup.

While I doubt Jose would argue that point, I do think he was on track to offer love.

After all, I don't think it's possible to remind each other too often about God's love for us. For instance, can you tell a child you love him too much? Can you tell your spouse too many times that you cherish her above all?

Maybe Jose's message, however many times you see it at football games or on the streets of a major city, is that God's love will always be too big to define or imagine. This was the love that John the Baptist saw in Jesus when he said in Mark 1:7 that he wasn't "worthy to stoop down and untie his (Jesus') sandals."

Maybe it comes down to a variation of what our mothers taught us: If you can't say something nice about God, don't say anything at all.

After I got my fill of sourdough and cable cars that day, I entered the subway to take the last train home when I spied a woman holding a hymnal and singing "Silent Night, Holy Night."

I paused, recalling my experience with Jose. His example inspired me to put down my train schedule and join in song. And for a moment our voices managed to flood the station with an echoing chorus that told a busy world of God's never-ending love.

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Board Approves Parks Fee Schedule Update

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors, at its December 12 meeting, approved the 2024 Department of Regional Parks Fee Schedule. The updated Fee Schedule will go into effect on Thursday, January 11, 2024.

The Fee Schedule was last updated in 2022 with an understanding that updates would happen every two to three years. Regional Parks updates its Fee Schedule intermittently to:

Adjust fees for inflation; Ensure fees cover costs of services provided; Standardize fees with similar facilities and services; And, raise needed revenues to offset department maintenance and operations costs

"Going into this update, staff compiled the daily vehicle, daily boat launch and annual pass fees charged by other comparable park agencies with similar facilities," said Liz Bellas, Director of Regional Parks. "We wanted to ensure that the revisions to our fee



An updated fee schedule will go into effect on Thursday, January 11, 2024, in Sacramento County parks including the American River Parkway. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County Regional Parks

schedule are within the range of fees charged by these agencies."

The proposed revisions include increases to the following fees:

Daily Parking; Annual Pass; Amplified Sound Permit; Bounce House Permit; Special Event Permit; Open Trail Event; RV Camping (Sherman Island only); Youth Group Camping (Scouts, Church Groups, etc.); Gibson Ranch House (off season event package only); Habitat Restoration Program.

View the 2024 Fee Schedule to learn more. ★



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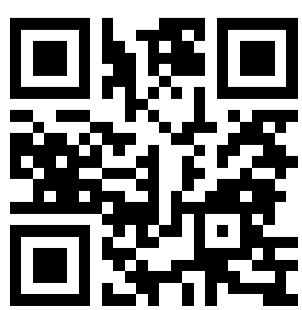
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Physical Altercation Leads to Homicide on Sunnyslope Drive

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Just after 12:30 AM on Friday, December 8, 2023, deputies responded to a shooting at an apartment on the 6600 block of Sunnyslope Drive. Upon their arrival, they discovered a 35-year-old

male, later identified as Christopher Saunders, suffering from a gunshot wound to the chest. He was lying just outside of an apartment. Deputies administered first-aid until Sacramento Metro Fire personnel arrived, but Saunders was ultimately pronounced deceased at the scene.

Homicide detectives

and Crime Scene Investigators responded, interviewed witnesses, and gathered evidence. Detectives contacted the residents inside the apartment and learned Saunders drove there in an attempt to locate his estranged wife. When Saunders arrived, he left his car running in the parking lot and

banged on the front door multiple times. The apartment was occupied by Saunders' estranged wife and her friends who lived there: an adult male, an adult female, and minor children. When they answered the door, Saunders rushed into the apartment, grabbed his estranged wife, and commanded her to leave

with him. When she refused, the adults inside the apartment directed Saunders to leave. Saunders then became involved in a physical altercation with several of the family members, including a 15-year-old. The adult male resident then produced a firearm, which was legally possessed, and shot Saunders.

The Sacramento County District Attorney's Office was advised and made the preliminary decision to release the adult male under the presumption of a justifiable homicide. The District Attorney's Office will make a final determination at a later date. There is no further information available at this time. ★

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Sacramento Public Library Puts Out Call for Artists

By Tamara Warta

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento Public Library (SPL), which has 29 locations spanning from Orangevale to Isleton, recently announced its new Parks and Tranquility project. With the intention of bringing visual and performing arts to a selection of the region's many outdoor spaces, artists are invited to apply for grant awards that range from \$5,000 - \$10,000.

"We will engage and collaborate with community members, community-based organizations, and arts and justice collectives," states the official website, "to create site-specific art and educational experiences at multiple California

State Park sites around Sacramento County."

A schedule of the public events developed through the Parks and Tranquility program are expected to be announced in early 2024.

The idea to bring the arts into parks and other outdoor spaces was inspired by the California State Library's statewide Parks Pass program. This program allows any California resident with a library card to borrow free passes to approximately 200 state parks. SPL specifically was granted funds to identify and create art installations to complement these passes. While any artist may apply, selected projects should carry one of the specific themes being prioritized by the library.

According to Ricardo M. Ramirez, the system

supervisor of SPL, these themes include a project goal to "generate positive measurable impacts in the areas of health, natural resource stewardship, and historical and cultural connections with an equity lens."

"SPL will engage and collaborate alongside our Sacramento community members, community-based organizations, and arts and culture collectives on arts and recreational equity experiences that include community events and field trips," Ramirez also stated.

Selected artists will work with a special project team that consists of both library staff and community members. The original visual artwork will be featured at pre-selected California state

parks, while other artists will prepare and execute community workshops featuring their art discipline.

"All types of art mediums are eligible," said Ramirez. "We encourage a wide range of artists and all levels of experiences to apply for these grants. We are fortunate to be in a dynamic and lively arts community, and are continually inspired by what we see, hear, and experience. We plan to curate a number of public programs that will incorporate the work of the selected artists that reflect our communities and the joy of being in natural spaces."

While any type of artist is welcome to apply, it is with the understanding that their art form may be converted to accommodate a

realistic outdoor art installation. A watercolor or acrylic painter, for example, may complete their piece and see it converted into a more durable digital print. Dancers should expect to accommodate an outdoor learning or performance space in lieu of a traditional indoor studio.

In order to be eligible for the Parks and Tranquility grant, applicants must be a resident of the Sacramento region and aged 16 or older. Applicants cannot be currently employed by SPL, and should be eligible to receive taxable income. The selected artist(s) must also be available for public events and installations related to the finalized artwork at the select location(s).

The grant application

and selection process is a quick turnaround — applications are due by December 30th, and artists will be notified by the end of January. Time is of the essence for those artists wishing to be considered. With all levels of experience welcome to apply, SPL understands there will be questions. Applicants may call (916) 264-2920 or email parksandtranquility@saclibrary.org with any inquiries.

Potential artists may visit saclibrary.org/Parks-and-Tranquility for more information and to apply, as well as for the opportunity to view artists' inspirations behind the project for a better view of what SPL is seeking out for this unique new opportunity. ★

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Folsom Lake State Recreation Area, one of the potential sites for a Parks and Tranquility Project art installation. Photo courtesy of California Department of Parks and Recreation

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