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Downtown**

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its New Executive
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Land Park News

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Tail Wags and Treats at Local Pet Shop



Tyler Humphries and Scout prepare the store for 2024. Land Bark Pet Supplies is located at 3200 Riverside Blvd. Photo by Kristina Rogers

By Kristina Rogers

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento already has several pet stores, so why would someone open one in Land Park? It made

sense to Tyler Humphries, a Sacramentan who's had pets since he was born. He delivered pet food while earning a business degree at UC Davis and decided to open his own

shop after working at an East Sacramento pet store. "I saw how much it was a great neighborhood thing and the success they were having. I thought, I know a similar place that enjoys

shopping locally, and they don't have anything like this." The morning I visited, Joe Manes was buying treats for his dogs, Boomer
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Streaming Soon: 'CADETS' The Making of a CHP Officer



Gripping New Docuseries Gives Viewers Exclusive Access Inside the CHP Academy MPG Stock Photos

**California Highway
Patrol News Release**

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The California Highway Patrol (CHP) will give the public an inside look at its live-in training facility with

this month's release of the new reality series, Cadets. Premiering Jan. 17 on the CHP's YouTube page, the nine-part docuseries focuses on a cadet class navigating the six-month journey through the CHP Academy

on the way to becoming officers. The release of Cadets is part of the CHP's ongoing, multi-year recruitment campaign to recruit and hire 1,000 officers. A trailer for the series, produced entirely

by CHP staff, is available online. "Cadets is not just a series; it's a testament to the CHP's commitment to excellence, diversity, and the relentless pursuit of
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To those who know me, as well as those who don't, I am very proud to be your councilmember. As such, there are a lot of issues that we will work on together, and I look forward to working with you to make things better in the city that we love with all our heart. In the thirty-seven years I have lived in Sacramento, I have not seen homelessness at the level that I see it now. You have expressed to me that addressing homelessness in our city, community, and neighborhoods is the first, second, and third priority. The Mayor and the Council agree with you wholeheartedly. At the recent council priority-setting workshop, it also designated homelessness as the foremost concern for the city, followed by public safety as the second priority, and infrastructure/basic city services as the third.

Many of you are aware of the framework within which we must operate when addressing homelessness, including the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals decision in Martin v. Boise and multiple federal court injunctions that have, at times, halted or limited enforcement. It's important to note that the necessary shelter beds and services are provided by the county, as outlined in the City/County Partnership Agreement. I believe we all understand that developing long-term solutions for shelter and services will take time due to the complex nature of the issue.

The impact of the homeless crisis on our community's quality of life has been profound. This crisis has had stark consequences for residents, businesses, and visitors to our city. Despite the challenges posed by the Boise decision and enforcement injunctions, as a city government, we must proceed to ensure compliance with Sacramento City Code and relevant state statutes such as the California Vehicle Code. This compliance effort is aimed at addressing the quality of life and public safety issues resulting from homelessness on our streets.

For me, compliance with our city codes to address
Continued on Page 8



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Streaming Soon: ‘CADETS’ The Making of a CHP Officer



By sharing their experiences, in their own words, we hope to inspire more service-minded individuals to follow in their footsteps. MPG Stock Photos

Continued from Page 1
transforming individuals from all walks of life into dedicated officers ready to serve the community,” said CHP Commissioner Sean Duryee. “We are excited to offer a start-to-finish look inside our Academy as future law enforcement officers are brought to life.”
Viewers will “ride along” with nine cadets as they overcome physical and

mental adversity throughout the journey to earning their badge and becoming a CHP officer. The audience will also hear firsthand from the cadets as they speak candidly about their experience.
“By sharing their experiences, in their own words, we hope to inspire more service-minded individuals to follow in their footsteps and join us for a rewarding

career in law enforcement,” added Commissioner Duryee.
If you are interested in an exciting career that offers diversity, challenges, and opportunities, the CHP invites you to apply to become a part of our professional organization.
The mission of the CHP is to provide the highest level of Safety, Service, and Security. ★



Viewers will “ride along” with nine cadets as they overcome physical and mental adversity.

Tail Wags and Treats are Abundant at Local Pet Shop

and Rodeo. “Tyler’s knowledgeable and cares about the products he sells,” said Manes. “My dogs love visiting and are big fans of the bully sticks!”
Tyler is what makes it unique. He explained there’s no such thing as “the best” dog food, just food that works best for your dog. “I carry brands with a mission statement that marries what I’m doing. Profits do not drive them; good ingredients are what’s important.” And here’s a tip: the first three ingredients should be protein, protein, and carbohydrate.

He works with his customers to find the best answer for a dogs’ issues. For instance, one customer’s English Bulldog smelled terrible. It’s normal since the breed is prone to yeast build-up in their skin folds. Tyler knew that potatoes exacerbate yeast production. He suggested potato-free food, and the smell calmed down.
One customer owned a dog experiencing multiple monthly seizures. Through trial and error, they landed on cleaner, easier-to-digest freeze-dried, dehydrated food. Now, the pup has one seizure about every three months.

Tyler isn’t a vet; he just understands the importance of a good diet. “Results happen quickly with pets. After changing a diet, it can take thirty days for a human to see results. With animals, you can see improvements in six days.”

A relatively new addition to the shop is Scout, a seven-month-old Husky who greets everyone with an enthusiastic tail wag. Anyone considering a dog can bring their child by for a cuddle to see how they do. Scout adores kids and gives them as much attention as they allow. Scout was a shelter pup from Front Street Animal Shelter, another important cause to the owner. When someone buys a dog or cat food, Tyler will match it and add the donation to the Front Street pet pantry bin inside the store.

In July of 2020 when the store opened, pet supplies were considered an “essential service” and Land Bark Pet Supplies remained open. Neighbors felt safer visiting the neighborhood pet shop instead of larger, more populated stores and Tyler did well.

The real challenge to the shop began on



Frequent visitor Roxy sits wearing a leash, smiling for the camera. Photos by Tyler Humphries



Frequent visitor Reggie sits wearing a leash, ready to interact.

May 5th, 2023, when a contractor working on the strip mall allowed a spark into an interior wall. A fire resulted which closed several stores for months. Land Bark is on the far end and experienced minor fire damage, but Tyler immediately noticed fewer customers. “I learned many of my customers had a routine where they dropped their child off at Planet Gymnastics, got their nails done, or visited the other shops until making their way to me.” He explained, “I found out how important these other small businesses are to my store.”

Most shops were closed for seven months — enough to change routines. Tyler said, “If there’s a habit change for ninety days, that’s your new habit. The new habit was people stopped shopping here. I hope locals consider re-setting their routine and stopping by again.”

Scout is ready and waiting to provide a warm welcome and share his treats. ★

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SAFE Accepting Grant Applications for Financial Literacy Programs

SAFE Credit Unit Press Release

FOLSOM, CA. (MPG) - In its drive to improve financial literacy in the Greater Sacramento region, SAFE Credit Union will grant \$20,000 to a nonprofit organization providing financial literacy and financial stability programs in underserved communities.

SAFE is accepting applications for the grant until Friday, Feb. 9, through its online application, or at <https://www.safecu.org/community/community-impact/funding/community-sustainability-grant-application-1>.

“Equipping people with the skills they need to take charge of their finances is one of our main motivations here at SAFE,” says Vice President of Community Relations and Financial Education Rebecca Delmundo, adding only 27 percent of California’s students attend schools that offer personal finance courses.

“It’s essential for people to understand how to put aside savings, how interest rates and loans work, and how to handle debt for them to succeed in life. With so few students receiving formal financial literacy training, financial cooperatives like SAFE Credit Union and our nonprofit partners are stepping in to provide this much-needed education,” she continues.

Only 1 percent of California students are required to complete personal financial education courses to graduate from high



SAFE Credit Union Vice President Community Relations and Financial Education Rebecca Delmundo. Photo courtesy of SAFE Credit Union.

school, according to state Department of Education statistics. There have been some political efforts to change that, with the Legislature recently considering proposals, and a 2024 ballot initiative in the works. However, the grant, says Delmundo, represents how SAFE and others in the region dedicated to providing financial education services are stepping in to fill the need now.

Delmundo says that young people especially can benefit from financial education programs since mistakes they may make early in life can affect them long into adulthood.

“It just takes one missed payment to harm a credit score,” she says. “I’ve seen a lot of young people get buried in credit card debt while also tackling paying off student loans. I’m a strong proponent of helping people learn how to handle the finances they have now

so they can achieve their future financial goals.”

SAFE offers its own financial education services through free webinars available to the public as well as workshops to employers and organizations. It also offers its no-cost Budget Cents interactive simulations to high schools in the region, where students get a first-hand look at the real-life expenses they’ll face as adults. SAFE’s high school branch program works closely with three area high schools to house a branch at each and provide supportive financial education for the students who staff the branches and their fellow students.

“There are a lot of us working to fill the financial education gap,” says Delmundo. “And we are all keenly aware of how many people truly want this information. This grant helps us help others providing this service.”

SAFE conducts four grant cycles each year as part of its overall philanthropic program that also includes direct giving, scholarships, sponsorships, and volunteerism.

For more information on SAFE’s grant program and to contact VP Community Relations and Financial Education Rebecca Delmundo, please contact Assistant Vice President Communications and Public Relations Carole Ferguson at carole.ferguson@safecu.org or by phone at (916) 836-6312. ★

Start the New Year by Adopting a Pet

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - There’s no better way to start the new year than by adopting your new best friend from Bradshaw Animal Shelter. To ring in a new year of adoptions, the shelter celebrated the first adoption of 2024: an 11-year-old dog named Mini. Mini, a Miniature Pinscher mix and senior dog, was exactly what Christena Austin was looking for.

“Old dogs need a good home too,” Austin said. She knows a thing or two about adopting older dogs: she met her last pup, Violet, when Violet was 12 1/2 years old. At first, Austin recalls walking away from Violet, thinking she was too old to adopt, but “something made me go back for her,” Austin said. The pair spent five memorable years together, but Violet recently passed away at the age of 17 1/2. Austin felt called to give another old dog a new lease on life and is ecstatic to welcome Mini into her home. “She will be treated like a queen,” Austin says.

There are still so many wonderful pets who are looking for forever homes. If one of your resolutions going into 2024 is to live a healthier lifestyle, a pet can help you get there. Studies have shown that pets can have positive effects on our health: pets can increase opportunities to exercise, get outside, and socialize. Regular walking or playing with

pets can decrease blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and triglyceride levels, and the companionship that pets provide can help manage feelings of loneliness and anxiety.

Ready to add a new pet to your home? Before visiting Bradshaw Animal Shelter, you can view all of the dogs, cats, and other animals available for adoption, or you can take a walk around in person to see whom you fall in love with. To help match you with your new best friend, the shelter offers adoption counseling, and if you’re looking to adopt a dog and have an existing dog at home, you can bring them to the shelter for a meet and greet to make sure it’s a good fit for your four-legged family members as well.

Your new pet’s adoption includes their spay/neuter surgery, up-to-date vaccinations and monthly preventatives, a microchip, and a one-year license for Sacramento County residents. Adoption fees are, for example, \$50 for adult dogs one year and older, \$75 for puppies, and \$50 for cats and kittens.

Bradshaw Animal Shelter is located at 3839 Bradshaw Rd. in Sacramento and is open Tuesday through Sunday from 12 p.m. - 5 p.m. with extended hours on Wednesdays from 12 p.m. - 6 p.m. You can also meet adoptable pets at Petco adoption center located at 8840 Madison Ave. in Fair Oaks from 12 p.m. - 5 p.m. on Wednesdays and 1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. ★



Christena Austin is happy with her 11-year-old Miniature Pinscher mix. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County



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LAND PARK

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LAND PARK

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Land Park News

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Sacramento River Cats Join GOAL Sustainability Movement

Sacramento River Cats News Release

WEST SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento River Cats and Sutter Health Park have joined a collective of major venues in sports and live entertainment across the globe as a member of the industry-wide GOAL sustainability platform to champion social impact, climate action, and responsible change.

GOAL, which was founded in October 2022 by Oak View Group (OVG), the Atlanta Hawks & State Farm Arena, Fenway Sports Group, and green building expert Jason F. McLennan, is a community of sustainability-minded sports and entertainment operators which provides venues at different points in their sustainability journeys with tactical roadmaps, easy-to-use tracking tools, a library of resources and case studies, and access to like-minded, leading operators, vendors, and solution-providers, all committed to operating more sustainably, more urgently.

Sutter Health Park joins a growing list of venues, representing legendary teams and iconic places of mass assembly committed to leading, learning, collaborating and, in all cases, making a positive impact on their communities and for the planet. GOAL supports each venue’s sustainability journey through data collection and analysis in addition to providing sustainability strategy, communications support and corporate partner engagement.

The Sacramento River Cats and Sutter Health Park have been an active participant in implementing sustainable best practices which included the installation of stadium solar panels, the use of internal LED lights, and intentional recycling efforts across the organization which include a food waste diversion system. Additionally, in partnership with area businesses, the River Cats created the Sustainability Circle in 2015 to work collaboratively to cultivate sustainable practices and reduce their carbon footprint.

“We look forward to continuing our renewable journey by joining the GOAL sustainability platform,” said Chip Maxson, President/COO of the Sacramento River Cats. “This partnership will allow us to enhance our industry-leading efforts and further our commitment to keeping our region beautiful and healthy for generations to come.”

The venues within GOAL represent different sports, different geographies, and different building types of varying sizes and ages, ensuring that the input and feedback is

worthy of the diversity of the live entertainment and hospitality industry. Some venues are already leading the way when it comes to climate action, and others are just beginning their respective journeys. But in all cases, these venues are action-oriented, climate-minded, and understand the urgency required to address a changing planet.

Properties within GOAL include: Acrisure Arena (Greater Palm Springs, CA), Budweiser Gardens (London, ON), CFG Bank Arena (Baltimore, MD), Chip Ganassi Racing (Pittsburgh, PA), Citi Field (New York, NY), Climate Pledge Arena (Seattle, WA), Co-op Live (Manchester, UK), Fenway Sports Group (Boston, MA), Footprint Center (Phoenix, AZ), Frost Bank Center (San Antonio, TX), Gainbridge Fieldhouse (Indianapolis, IN), Los Angeles Dodgers (Los Angeles, CA), Levi’s® Stadium (Santa Clara, CA), MGM Music Hall (Boston, MA), Miami Heat (Miami, FL), Moda Center (Portland, OR), Moody Center at University of Texas Austin (Austin, TX), Mullett Arena at Arizona State University (Tempe, AZ), PPG Paints Arena (Pittsburgh, PA), Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse (Cleveland, OH), Sacramento River Cats (Sacramento, CA), Spectrum Center (Charlotte, NC), State Farm Arena (Atlanta, GA), Subaru Park (Chester, PA), Target Center (Minneapolis, MN), UBS Arena (Belmont Park, NY), Wrigley Field (Chicago, IL), Xcel Energy Center (St. Paul, MN)

“Our collection of GOAL venues represents forward-thinking venues across the sports, live entertainment and convention industry,” said Chris Granger, OVG360 President. “I applaud Sutter Health Park for their leadership, for their spirit of collaboration, and for their understanding of the urgency demanded by climate change. I look forward to working with Chip Maxson and his team, learning from them, and sharing the very best ideas and best practices with our industry as we race against the clock, together.”

OVG’s Sustainability Director Kristen Fulmer added, “We designed GOAL to make sure that the data points and thresholds for leadership meet venues anywhere along their sustainability journey, engaging – and without shaming – venues that are just getting started, while also enhancing efforts in venues that already make an impact in a variety of different topics, from waste diversion, to water conservation, to improved indoor air quality.” ★

DWR Announces Initial State Water Project Allocation of 10 Percent for 2024

DWR News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - On December 1, 2023, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced an initial State Water Project (SWP) allocation forecast of 10 percent of requested supplies for 2024. The SWP provides water to 29 public water agencies that serve 27 million Californians.

The December 1 initial water supply forecast is the first allocation of the new water year and is based on current reservoir storage and an assumption of very dry conditions. So far in October and November, storms have not brought as much rain and snow.

“California’s water year is off to a relatively dry start. While we are hopeful that this El Niño pattern will generate wet weather, this early in the season we have to plan with drier conditions in mind,” said DWR Director Karla Nemeth. “California’s water supply continues to benefit from our aggressive efforts last season to capture record rain and snow melt in our reservoirs and groundwater basins.”

The initial SWP allocation forecast is looking ahead to 2024 and only applies to water deliveries in the year ahead. The allocation is calculated based on October and November precipitation, dry soils, runoff, and storage in Lake Oroville. It has no bearing on current water supplies or water captured in 2023. Most reservoirs in the state remain above average for this time of year.



A drone view of water levels at the Oroville Dam located at Lake Oroville in Butte County, California. On this date, the water storage was 2,581,728 acre-feet (AF), 73 percent of the total capacity. Photo taken October 2, 2023. Photo by Fred Greaves/California Department of Water Resources

Highlights of California’s Water Supply Storage

Last winter, a total of 3.5 million acre-feet of water was captured in SWP reservoirs. The SWP delivered 2.7 million acre-feet in allocated water plus an additional 400,000 acre-feet of supplemental water to SWP contractors in 2023;

To date, Lake Oroville, the SWP’s largest reservoir, is at 133 percent of average.

San Luis Reservoir, jointly operated by the SWP and Central Valley Project, remains at 109 percent of average. Water stored in San Luis also includes water from 2023 being stored by water contractors for use in future dry years;

In coordination with the Metropolitan Water District (MWD), DWR provided water to fill up Diamond Valley Reservoir for the first time in three years. The facility is a critical part of the Southern California water delivery system;

California was also able to redirect excess storm water for groundwater recharge. DWR has estimated more than 3.8 million acre-feet of recharge capacity in 2023, including more than 1.2 million acre-feet of groundwater

recharge permitted by State agencies, 390,817 acre-feet of flood water recharged using the Governor’s Executive Orders, and millions more acre-feet of managed and naturally occurring recharge.

It is not uncommon for the initial allocation forecast to be low following very wet years. For Water Year 2018, the initial allocation was 15 percent following an 85 percent final allocation in 2017. Water Year 2020 started with a 10 percent initial allocation following a 75 percent final allocation in 2019. Both 2017 and 2019 were very wet winters. More historical data on SWP allocations is available at water.ca.gov/programs/state-water-project/management/swp-water-contractors.

As the winter progresses, if California sees an increase in rain and snowfall, the allocation forecast may increase.

Each year, DWR provides the initial SWP allocation by December 1 based on available water storage, projected water supply, and water demands. Allocations are updated monthly as snowpack, rainfall, and runoff information is assessed, with a final allocation typically determined in May or June. ★

The Veteran Homeless Crisis

BY SHREYA AGRAWAL, calmatters.org

California has poured billions of dollars into finding homes for unhoused veterans, but the number of former military service members living on the street has held steady for almost a decade. Today, a third of the nation’s unhoused veterans are in California.

Gavin Newsom proposes a significant change in the state’s strategy for ending veteran homelessness. His plan, included in a \$6.4 billion mental health bond he’s sending to voters in the March primary election, would set aside funding specifically for veterans with serious behavioral health conditions.

That’s a shift from California’s last two major efforts to fund housing for veterans, both of which created units for a general population of former military service members.

The first effort began in the late 1990s, when the state built seven new veterans’ homes over a period of 17 years. Today those veterans’ homes are underused. They were built to house about 2,400 people, but only 1,575 veterans live in them. The 300-unit veterans home in Barstow was so underutilized in 2020 that Newsom moved to close it as he braced for a pandemic recession, although lawmakers blocked him from shutting the site.

The second push centered on a pair of ballot measures voters approved in 2014 and in 2018 that allocated \$4.6 billion to build housing specifically for former military service members. The money created the Veterans Housing and Homelessness Prevention Program, which has supported the construction of about 3,250 housing units for veterans to date.

Veterans advocates and state officials view the programs — along with federal efforts led by the Department of Veterans Affairs — as successful in reducing homelessness among former military service members. In the last 12 years, veteran homelessness in California has decreased by more than 30%.

But the trend in California mostly accounts for gains made during the Obama administration, when veteran homelessness peaked nationwide and the Department of Veterans Affairs moved aggressively to place former troops in housing. Since 2014, the number of homeless veterans in California has mostly plateaued around 10,000 to 12,000 people, according to annual counts released by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Alex Visotzky, senior California policy fellow at the National Alliance to End Homelessness, said the high numbers of veteran homelessness result from the challenges veterans face on returning home in California’s competitive housing market.

“When housing markets are unaffordable and incredibly competitive, those with the greatest needs are going to be more likely to fall out,” he said.

Newsom’s new strategy in the mental health bond, advocates say, should help those most in need. The California Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that half of the state’s unhoused veterans suffer from some kind of behavioral health issue.

The money in the bond would go to the state’s Department of Housing and Community Development,

which would work with CalVet “to focus specifically on housing veterans experiencing behavioral health challenges,” said Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin, the Thousand Oaks Democrat who wrote the bill that ultimately put the bond on the ballot.

Studies have shown veterans are overrepresented in the nation’s homeless population. They may experience personal challenges, such as post-traumatic stress disorders or other mental health issues as well as disabilities related to their military service.

“Transitioning from that very specific culture and society to civilian life is a lifelong process,” said Amy Fairweather, director of policy at the veterans advocacy group Swords to Plowshares. “If you do have any physical or mental disabilities, dealing with those and trying to re-enter civilian life can be very difficult.”

California’s long history of providing housing to former military service members dates to 1884, when it opened an estate in Napa County as the state’s first veterans home. That site is still in operation, housing around 600 veterans on a picturesque property in wine country.

Altogether, the state now has eight veterans homes. The two largest homes are in fairly remote communities — one is in Napa County’s Yountville and the second is in Barstow in the Mojave Deserts. Moving to them can mean living at a long distance from a veteran’s family. That geography somewhat limits interest in the homes.

The homes account for the lion’s share of CalVet’s \$650 million annual budget. Some advocates have called on the state to put money into programs that would benefit people who don’t necessarily want to live in a veterans home.

“The state should keep its promises to the current home residents, but as things change, the program needs to be less structured on just providing room and board for a very limited number of people and more structured on providing skilled nursing facility care for those who need it,” said Ethan Rarick, executive director at Little Hoover Commission, which published a report on the veterans homes in 2017.

Outside of the veterans homes, California approved a series of bonds meant to help military service members find housing beginning in 2008. The Veterans Bond Act, passed that year, provided \$900 million to veterans through the CalVet Home Loans Program.

In 2014, California passed an initiative creating the Veterans Housing and Homelessness Program, which put \$600 million toward building multi-family homes for veterans. A second ballot initiative in 2018 gave another \$4 billion to the program.

The federal Department of Veterans Affairs, meanwhile, has kept up steady funding for housing vouchers that can provide a place to live for former troops. The Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program, commonly known as HUD-VASH, was a centerpiece of the Bush and Obama administration’s efforts to curb veterans’ homelessness. It provides rental assistance to over 100,000 veterans nationally.

The number of homeless veterans in the U.S. peaked in the Great Recession, when the VA in 2007 reported some 154,000 former troops were homeless.

At that time, Fairweather

of Swords to Plowshares said many of those deployed in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars were starting to come back home “to a society that wasn’t prepared for it.”

On top of that, they and older veterans struggled in the economic downturn, which led to more unemployment and homelessness.

“It all came together in a way that was really disadvantageous to the veterans,” she said.

Last year, the VA estimated about 33,000 veterans were homeless nationwide. According to the 2021 annual homelessness assessment report by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, more than half of them are over age 55. The data also shows that Black veterans are more likely to be homeless than veterans belonging to other races.

Advocates say veterans can be reluctant to ask for help.

“When veterans ultimately fall down that hole into homelessness, what is happening along with that is that they’re losing connection with friends and family, because they’re ashamed that their life is falling apart and it’s hard for them to ask for help,” said Stephen Peck, president of the veterans support organization U.S. Vets.

Putting the money into the mental health bond comes with a tradeoff.

In advancing Newsom’s mental health plan, lawmakers amended an early version of Assemblymember Irwin’s veterans’ housing bill that would have issued more bonds for the existing veterans’ housing program. Without new funding, the program that supports construction of multi-unit veterans’ housing is expected to run out of money in 2024.

Still, representatives for Newsom’s ballot measure in a written statement said the bond would create more capacity to help former troops.

“Proposition 1 adds new money for California’s most vulnerable veterans without any redirection or reprioritization from the current program. Without Proposition 1, there would be zero funding for homeless veteran housing moving forward, which is why the measure is so critically needed,” the statement read.

Altogether, the ballot measure going to voters includes \$6.4 billion to fund projects for behavioral health issues and those at the risk of homelessness. It also includes a proposal to adjust how the state spends money it collects for mental health services from a tax on personal income over \$1 million, aiming to direct more of the money to housing.

The \$1 billion for veterans housing will be distributed in the form of loans and grants by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Representatives from veterans’ groups say the program’s success could hinge on getting the word out, and providing services that provide a path out of homelessness.

At U.S. Vets, Peck said the nonprofit strives to create a community where veterans help veterans.

“Building that community is really important,” he said. “A federal veteran who’s been through the process already is probably more effective than we are as social workers.”

Visit www.chcf.org to learn more. ★

Office of Traffic Safety, Caltrans, and the CIF Partner to Promote Safe Driving Behaviors

Office of Traffic Safety and Caltrans News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) —The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) announced today a partnership with the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) aimed at raising awareness and educating drivers on safe travel behaviors, especially in and around highway work zones.

The OTS and Caltrans will display digital messages, signs and audio public service announcements at the CIF State Wrestling Championships in February, Basketball Championships in March, and the Swim & Dive and Track & Field Championships in May encouraging student-athletes, parents and families to always “Be Work Zone Alert” and “move over” for highway workers, or slow down if unable to do so.

“Traffic Safety is a team sport and we’re thrilled to team up with the CIF to encourage safe driving behaviors,” said Caltrans



Director Tony Tavares. “Engaging youth is a great play to help reach our Vision Zero Initiative’s goal to eliminate traffic-related severe injuries and deaths.”

“Traveling safely is a game plan that’s always a win,” OTS Director Barbara Rooney said. “We are excited to partner with the CIF to relay important traffic safety messages to student-athletes, parents and fans that everyone can get behind.”

“We are happy to have California OTS and Caltrans as partners,” said Bryan Powell, General Sales Manager for CIF Sports Properties. “Traveling safely to and from CIF events is incredibly important, and we are pleased to share this messaging with the attendees of our upcoming championship events.”

Additional messaging and content will focus on safe

and responsible driving, including awareness about California’s hands-free cell phone law and the risks of distracted driving, as well as reminding drivers to slow down and “Share the Road” by looking out for bicyclists and pedestrians.

In addition, traffic safety messages will appear on social media, the CIF state website, and the CIF Sports 365 mobile app.

Car crashes are a leading cause of death for teens in the United States. In 2021, there were more than 17,000 fatal and injury crashes involving teen drivers across California, according to data from the California Highway Patrol’s Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System.

Student-athletes, parents and fans are encouraged to join the Go Safely Movement and sign up as “traffic safety champions” for their families and communities.

To learn more about efforts to save lives on California roads, visit gosafelyca.org and follow on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram @GoSafelyCA.

Gregg Fishman Elected SMUD Board Vice President

SMUD Press Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - SMUD’s Board of Directors elected Gregg Fishman as Vice President of the Board, effective January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024. Gregg was first elected to the SMUD Board of Directors in January 2015 and represents Ward 3, which includes East Sacramento, much of the Arden-Arcade area, and the Campus Commons, College Glen, and Rosemont neighborhoods, as well as parts of Carmichael, Florin, Fruitridge and Vintage Park.

Vice President Fishman has been a clean energy advocate for much of his career. As a former SMUD employee, he promoted wind and solar energy when they were in their infancy. At the California Independent System Operator, he led public engagement efforts supporting new wind energy farms in California. As President of the SMUD Board in 2018, he led the utility in passing its Integrated Resource Plan, hailed by the California Energy Commission as “... an ambitious road map for lowering greenhouse gas emissions in the Sacramento region.”

In his varied career, Gregg was a news reporter and anchor at KFBK and KGO Radio, a public information officer at SMUD and the California Independent System Operator (California ISO), and communications coordinator for the California State Association of Counties. He currently works at Sacramento Regional Transit as the Sr. Community



New SMUD Board Vice President, Gregg Fishman. Photo courtesy of SMUD

Relations Officer.

Gregg is an active volunteer with the Sacramento Tree Foundation and has led a neighborhood effort that has planted more than 2,000 new trees since 2001. He received an award from the MLK 365 organization for helping to make it easier to remove racially restrictive clauses from local property records. He is a 25-gallon blood donor and a frequent volunteer master-of-ceremonies for Project Ride in Elk Grove.

Gregg is a graduate of California State University, Sacramento with a bachelor’s degree in journalism. He and his wife live in Arden Park and are the parents of two daughters.

CAPIAA Welcomes its New Executive Director, Khydeeja Alam

CAPIAA News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs (CAPIAA) is thrilled to announce the appointment of Khydeeja Alam as its new executive director. Khydeeja Alam was sworn in by the Honorable Robert Rivas, speaker of the California State Assembly, at the State Capitol surrounded by family and friends. “California’s diverse AAPI communities enrich and strengthen our state in countless ways and have a pivotal role in driving our state and nation forward,” said Governor Gavin Newsom. “Director Alam brings more than a decade of experience working on a variety of priority issues for the state, and deep ties to nonprofit and philanthropic partners that will help further the Commission’s important work. I thank her for her dedicated service to our state, and commitment to elevating the needs and concerns of our dynamic AAPI communities.”

Khydeeja brings a wealth of experience and leadership in advocacy, non-profit, and state government to this role, and the commission is confident in her ability to lead CAPIAA in its mission to elevate the political, economic, and social issues of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

“I extend a heartfelt congratulations to Ms. Khydeeja Alam for this exciting appointment. I have had the pleasure of witnessing her career unfold through the years as a former colleague,” said Speaker of the California State Assembly Robert Rivas. “She is passionate, determined and a fierce advocate for her community. There is no one better suited to

represent the best interests of over 6 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who call California home. As speaker, I look forward to working alongside her in this new capacity.”

One of the key focus areas for CAPIAA under Alam’s leadership will be to educate, raise awareness, and advocate for the rights and safety of AAPI communities. The Commission will work towards an inclusive and supportive environment for all residents of the state.

“The Commission is excited about the fresh perspective and dynamic leadership that Khydeeja Alam brings to the table. Khydeeja will undoubtedly play a crucial role in advancing CAPIAA’s mission to ensure the voices and needs of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are at the forefront of discussions and investments by California decision makers,” said CAPIAA Chair Serena Kirk.

As executive director, Alam will spearhead efforts to maximize outreach efforts with Asian and Pacific Islander American communities, including informational campaigns about public and private programs that benefit community interests, and addressing issues of access and cultural language sensitivity within state agencies, departments, and other commissions. Most importantly, Alam will bring visibility around the incredible work the commission continues to do on behalf of California’s AAPI communities.

“The California Asian American and Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus (AAPILC) welcomes Khydeeja Alam as the new executive director for the Commission on Asian Pacific Islander American Affairs (CAPIAA). The Caucus looks forward



Khydeeja Alam was appointed new executive director of the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs. Photos courtesy of Speaker’s Office, California State Assembly

to continued partnership with the Commission under the leadership of Khydeeja to ensure that we continue to uplift and mobilize our AAPI community here in California,” said Assemblyman Evan Low, chair of the AAPILC.

Alam will also play a pivotal role in providing assistance to policymakers and state agencies by identifying the needs and issues of AAPI communities, developing appropriate responses, and implementing programs to address these concerns effectively.

“I welcome Khydeeja Alam as the new executive director of CAPIAA. Her lived experiences as an immigrant and her hard work that led her to be where she is today is an incredible benefit to the AAPI community and a celebration of the rich tapestry of perspectives that will guide CAPIAA towards meaningful progress,” said State Treasurer Fiona Ma.

The only ethnic commission established by California state law, CAPIAA’s mission is to address the diverse and complex needs, issues, and concerns of Asian American and Pacific Islander American communities. The commission plays a crucial



The Honorable Robert Rivas, right, speaker of the California State Assembly, administers the oath of office to Khydeeja Alam. Photos courtesy of Speaker’s Office, California State Assembly

role in advising the governor and legislature on the views, needs, and concerns of the state’s population of over six million Asian and Pacific Islander Americans.

“Khydeeja Alam’s dedication to public service will serve her well as executive director. She’s a respected leader in her community and trusted advisor to many lawmakers. I look forward to seeing what she

will accomplish in this new role,” said Senate President pro Tempore Toni G. Atkin.

Khydeeja Alam: “I am honored and grateful for the opportunity to represent the AAPI community. As CAPIAA’s new executive director, I look forward to continuing the commission’s incredible work, and taking it to the next level, while ensuring that over six million

AAPI community members have a strong representation. I believe the stronger the footprint of the commission, the stronger and more resilient the AAPI communities will be. As a first Pakistani American in this role, I wear my identity with pride. This position allows me to pay it forward, uplift, and empower the community and the next generation of AAPI leaders.”



Some of my most rewarding years in chaplain work were those I spent as the Chaplain for Women and Children at Sutter Medical Center in Sacramento (2002-2008).

It was there my rounds often took me onto the high-risk maternity unit. Rooms in this unit were filled with scared pregnant women whose doctors had confined them to bed rest in hopes of avoiding a miscarriage.

One afternoon, our unit secretary, Jeannette, told me about a patient who was expecting twins, but her 23-week pregnancy was being threatened by severe complications.

“Her husband is a youth minister, so she has a lot of church friends in her room now,” Jeannette said.

Jeannette’s unusually quiet demeanor told me she was worried. “Maybe you could go introduce yourself. Might help if things go south.”

Inside the room, the minister greeted me with the typical chorus of religious platitudes.

“These twins are in God’s hands. I’m not worried,” he said in a dismissive manner. “We know God will heal these babies.”

The atmosphere of the room had me nearly convinced. It was adorned with religious books, greeting cards and Bibles. The family played sacred music and wore pious jewelry on their necks and earlobes.

So I took the minister’s hint and excused myself, figuring my time would be better spent elsewhere.

Forty-eight hours later, I returned to the nurses’ station where Jeanette

When Faith Doesn’t Meet Our Expectations

whispered, “They’re really going to need you now, chaplain. The twins didn’t make it.”

“They’ll need me, but will they want me?” I muttered.

Jeanette dared me to “give it a shot.”

I tapped my watch. “I’m betting they don’t give me five minutes.”

Prayerfully, I entered the room. It’s a risk going where you aren’t wanted, even when you wear the chaplain’s badge.

Nevertheless, I entered the room and found it in stark contrast to its previous state of smiling church visitors and religious music.

The couple remembered me and invited me to sit.

“We’ve been in church work for years,” the pastor said. “Why couldn’t God help us?”

For a moment, I assumed they didn’t want a chaplain so I leaned forward to signal my willingness to leave. Yet, amazingly, they continued to unload.

“No, chaplain, stay,” insisted the grieving mother.

They seemed to want someone to hear the case they’d built against God, so I stayed and listened.

They sincerely believed God had shortchanged them. They swore they’d never return to church. God wasn’t fair. We deserve better. Is God really love? If God loves us, why does he hurt his children?

I was plenty uncomfortable, but I stayed through the barrage, listening to it all with the tenacity of a soldier in a firefight.

I lost my bet with Jeanette. My visit lasted 45 minutes and during the next few days, I was invited for more visits.

On the day our patient was discharged, her youth-pastor

husband said to me, “You probably wonder why we let you stay after we’d dismissed our congregants.”

I did. “You were the only one willing to listen to our gripes about God,” he said.

“I was taken by your honesty,” I said. “You voiced your complaints directly to God. Often people aren’t that authentic. Instead of telling God exactly what they are feeling, they talk smack about God behind his back.

“I think God understands your talk. After all, God saw his son die, too.”

They nodded, thanking me for not trying to change their minds or judge them.

“Just make sure you keep up the conversation with him,” I said with a cracked smile.

I phoned their home a few times in the weeks that followed and found that they were still having daily conversations with God. And while those conversations didn’t sound much like their usual church prayers, I know God heard every word.

I’d bet Jeanette that I wouldn’t be allowed into the couple’s room, much less their lives. But because I listened to them without trying to defend or explain God, the couple allowed me a place in their sacred grief.

In the end, that’s a gamble I’ll take every time.

Send Chispa Project denotations, grammar corrections or comments to 10556 Combie Rd. Suite 6643 Auburn, CA 95602 or by email comment@thechaplain.net or at (843) 608-9715. For more on how to comfort the grieving, check out my books on my website at www.thechaplain.net. ★

Robert Craig Films Announces Study Guide to Reduce Homelessness

AthertonPR News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - In a continuation of the mission to bring awareness and solutions to homelessness in America, Robert Craig Films is announcing the release of an Interactive Study Guide, which will be widely available on March 5th, 2024, titled, “No Address.” This is an important part of “The Big 5” solutions for homelessness born from the Robert Craig Films produced — award-winning “Americans with No Address” documentary and “No Address movie.”

The Interactive Study Guide

“No Address” provides education and structure for groups nationwide who would like to contribute in a meaningful way to reduce homelessness. Written by a partnership of many industry leaders, it outlines how to best approach and engage in supporting people experiencing homelessness. It consists of resources for how to serve them best. The guide will help individuals, small groups, congregations, pastors and leaders as they help the homeless.

The Interactive

Resource Guide is the first of its kind, jointly presented by national executive leadership to serve those experiencing homelessness. These experts include Dr. Robert G Marbut Jr., former White House “Federal Homelessness Czar” and Discovery Institute senior fellow. Dr. Marbut shares, “This has never been done before. In an effort to support individuals and groups nationwide who would like to contribute in a meaningful way to reduce homelessness, this study guide will provide industry leaders who are offering resources for how to best serve those experiencing homelessness.”

The Interactive Study Guide provides education and structure for how to best approach and engage serving people who are experiencing homelessness and will be available to all organizations and individuals. Other expert contributors to this project are National Commissioner Jolene Hodder, The Salvation Army, John Ashmen Citygate Network President Emeritus, as well as Myrka Dellanos with videos by Max Lucado and Amy Grant.

Topics include:
-Types of homelessness;
big picture and root causes

-Why it is up to the people to make the change and not rely on policy and government programs

-Engage rather than enable

-How to best collaborate with existing agencies as an individual or group

-Why duplicating services beyond the established professional agencies can harm more than help

-Building leadership alliances between faith organizations and agencies serving the local homeless community

The Interactive Study Guide will serve individuals, small groups, congregations, pastors and leaders published by David C. Cook.

“Having the opportunity to partner with Robert Craig Films on this impactful project was an immediate yes for us,” said Chadd Miller, executive vice president of David C Cook’s Learning Resources Group. “We are passionate about creating an innovative, interactive study guide, intentionally designed to equip the church to help our brothers and sisters who are experiencing homelessness. I’m excited to bring this study to churches and community groups — including my own.” ★

Defendant Sentenced for Shooting Murder, Robbery at Capitol Casino

Sacramento County DA Press Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The Honorable Michael Bowman sentenced Dawan Pecot to life in prison without the possibility of parole. On November 27, 2023, a jury convicted Pecot of first-degree murder with the allegation of personal use of a firearm causing death and the special circumstance of murder during the commission of robbery found true. Pecot was also convicted of second-degree robbery with the allegation of personal use of a firearm, intentional discharge of a firearm and aggravating factors found true.

On August 22, 2022, Dawan Pecot attempted to rob the Capitol Casino. The security guard, Sean Bernal, caught Pecot and walked him out of the casino at taser point. When they got outside, Pecot

pulled out a firearm and went back inside the casino. Once inside the casino’s cash cage, Pecot pointed the firearm at a casino employee. While that was occurring, Mr. Bernal made his way back to the cash cage and attempted to tase Pecot.

Simultaneously, Pecot shot Mr. Bernal one time in the neck, killing him. Pecot then stole over \$38,000 dollars and fled the casino. The casino employee chased him outside and watched as Pecot tried to hide in his vehicle. When police arrived, Pecot jumped out of his vehicle and shot one time in the employee’s direction. Pecot then tried to flee on foot before being apprehended by the police.

DATE: January 12, 2024
CASE: Dawan Pecot (Case #22FE014097)
PROSECUTOR: Principal Criminal Attorney Kristen Andersen, Homicide Unit ★

Matsui Press Conference Announcing Funding for Sacramento Native American Health Center

Office of Congresswoman Doris Matsui News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - On Wednesday, January 24th at 10:00 a.m., Congresswoman Doris Matsui (CA-07) will hold a press conference announcing \$1,000,000 in federal funding for Sacramento Native American Health Center (SNAHC). The funding will support their expansion site on Florin Road. Congresswoman Matsui secured the funding as part of the FY 23 omnibus appropriations package.

The Sacramento Native American Health Center is a Federally Qualified Health Center. In 2023,

SNAHC opened an expansion site located at 3800 Florin Road in South Sacramento. This approximately 35,000 square foot facility offers medical, behavioral health, dental, and supportive services. This location also has a Youth and Family Space.

The SNAHC Florin Road location will double SNAHC’s patient population in Sacramento County and serve as an additional location for the provision of quality healthcare for all. There are no tribal or ethnic requirements to receive services at SNAHC Florin Road. **WHO:** -Congresswoman

Doris Matsui (CA-07) -Britta Guerrero, CEO, Sacramento Native American Health Center -Dr. Hakeem Adeniyi, Chief Clinical Officer, Sacramento Native American Health Center -Samantha Cypret, Board Member, Sacramento Native American Health Center **WHAT:** Press conference to announce federal funding for SNAHC’s Florin Road location. **WHERE:** Sacramento Native American Health Center – 3800 Florin Road, Sacramento, CA, 95823 **WHEN:** Wednesday, January 24, 2024, at 10:00am. ★



Continued from Page 1
crime, public health issues, trash problems, public safety concerns, and their impact on businesses is the missing piece of the puzzle. While our enforcement efforts are limited by the Boise decision, there are still actions we can take. In fact, the courts have indicated that “camp management” to ensure compliance with local codes and address issues related to trash and public health is permitted. The challenge lies in striking the necessary balance between achieving code compliance and providing the shelter and services homeless individuals need.

My decision and action have been informed by my experience with my church’s Winter Sanctuary Program. My wife and I were actively involved in this ministry, partnering with other faith communities during the winter to provide shelter to the homeless. The most impactful aspect of this experience was observing the same individuals returning year after year. Despite services offered day after day, month after month, and year after year, the same individuals continued to return.

I cannot condone allowing homeless individuals to remain trapped in a cycle of disordered thinking and related activities. While this approach may not be popular or supported by everyone, I firmly believe that we need to implement disruptive actions to break the cycle of disordered thinking and behavior among the homeless, with the hope that they will become more receptive to receiving services. The current problem is that the overwhelming majority of homeless individuals are resistant to accepting services. As the Mayor often

points out, during one encampment cleanup, 33 homeless individuals were offered shelter and services, but only one person accepted. Unfortunately, this low level of service acceptance is the norm rather than the exception.

For me, the issue lies in finding the balance between addressing the impacts on our community’s quality of life and providing shelter and services. While I am not a member of the working group between the city and county, the participation of council and board of supervisors members is limited by the state law known as the Brown Act. Consequently, when the first report on the City County Partnership was delivered at the end of May this year, I requested a council workshop on enforcement. I was pleased that the council agreed to this, and in late June, we had a discussion that provided direction to staff to return with an aggressive program for code compliance and relevant state statutes. Working closely with staff, my office and the council passed a resolution at the beginning of August by a 7-2 vote to enhance enforcement and secure the necessary budget authority to ensure code compliance. Subsequently, the Sacramento Homeless Union sued us, and a federal judge imposed an injunction on the city, preventing us from enforcing our codes.

The 7-2 vote was pivotal because it also included the Homeless Response Protocols, establishing the Rapid Response Model with a focus on code compliance as the goal. This demonstrates our commitment to balancing the need for quality of life and public safety while working towards shelter and services, which is a significant step forward.

Enforcing compliance with critical infrastructure

regulations, restrictions on nighttime park activities, sidewalk ordinances, the California Vehicle Code, and rules regarding the storage of private property on public land can all be enforced under the Boise decision. This aims to strike a balance between addressing quality of life issues and providing shelter and services. Through discussions with staff, it has become evident that they require additional tools to better mitigate the impacts on quality of life and public safety.

Councilmember Guerra and I introduced a daytime camping ordinance for city council consideration. We collaborated with staff to devise a plan to mitigate the impacts on quality of life while our partnership with the county focuses on shelter and services. We are drawing insights from cities like San Diego that have already implemented similar measures and seen significant reductions in their homeless populations.

By prohibiting daytime camping, homeless individuals will be required to store their belongings through a city-provided program or private means. They will be limited in what they can pack up and move each day. The hope is that they will avail themselves of services offered during compliance actions or later at a CORE center or other facilities. The proliferation of illegal encampments in our city cannot continue. For far too long, we have not adequately addressed the impact of homelessness on our community’s quality of life and public safety. As your councilmember, my council colleagues and I are actively working to bring about this change while remaining committed to providing shelter and services through our partnership with the county. ★

AARP Community Challenge Grant Applications Open

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County’s Department of Child, Family, and Adult Services is encouraging community groups to apply for AARP’s Livable Communities Grant Program, known as the AARP Community Challenge. Since launching in 2017, the program has helped invest millions of dollars into communities across the United States.

Grant applications are open until March 6, 2024. Nonprofits and other community organizations are encouraged to apply.

Key Dates for the 2024 application process include:

- March 6: Application window closes
- June 26: Selected grantees announced
- December 15: completion of all

projects

There are three grant opportunities:
-Flagship Grants are for projects that especially benefit community members who are 50 or older.

-Capacity-Building Microgrants are worth \$2,500 and benefit residents through bike audits, walk audits, and HomeFit Modifications.

-Demonstration Grants support community-based projects in different categories.

Organizations that want to help continue making Sacramento County a great place for people of all ages are encouraged to apply. Visit www.AARP.org/CommunityChallenge to fill out the application and for more details on the different types of grants. You can also view a list of past grant winners here: AARP Community Challenge Grantees. ★

Bank of America Invests More than \$1.4 Million in Sacramento Nonprofits in 2023

Bank of America News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)

—As part of its long-standing commitment to supporting economic opportunity in local communities, Bank of America has invested more than \$1.4 million across nearly 65 organizations in Sacramento this year through philanthropic grants and sponsorships to the region’s nonprofits. The support helps nonprofits remove barriers to economic mobility, with most bank funding directed for workforce development and job skill training, entrepreneurship and small business development, housing, and hunger

relief.

For instance, Bank of America continued its grants to food-related small businesses, local farmers and food entrepreneurs through its support of programs like Visit Sacramento’s Farm to Fork Festival. Additionally, the Bank has provided grants to Alchemist CDC to scale community-based small business programs, and Second Harvest Food Bank to combat food insecurity.

In addition to philanthropic capital, the company’s local employees provided more than 18,000 volunteer hours throughout the year to local causes, ranging from assisting with food distribution, to

providing free financial education workshops to more than 20 nonprofit organizations as part of the bank’s Better Money Habits program.

“Sacramento’s nonprofits know firsthand the needs and obstacles our communities face. Bank of America proudly helps nonprofits develop the solutions and services needed to promote economic opportunity,” said CP Parmar, Bank of America market president for the Greater Sacramento region. “Bank of America will continue to deploy capital and resources to help create real impact for all members of the greater Sacramento community.” ★

Alcohol-Free Venue Opens in Downtown Sacramento

Socialize During Dry January and Beyond



A bartender prepares a mocktail.



The sign that greets customers at the Teetotalist entrance.

Story and photos by Andrew Rose

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)

- As Dry January plows forward, people are looking for a place to socialize and enjoy tasty beverages without the booze. Enter The Teetotalist (the name derived from teetotaler, one who abstains from alcohol), which presents itself as Sacramento’s first nonalcoholic bar. Such is the brainchild of Amanda Altman Brincat and Kathryn Altman Brincat, who have been molding and forming this concept since September 2022, when they started out at K Street in downtown Sacramento. Their current location is at Propagate Plants and Gatherings at 1700 I Street, where they are serving up the drinks and fun from Thursday through Saturday evenings, 5-10 PM. In this inclusive venue there is no cover charge. The proprietors are pleased to offer a space that focuses on the social aspects of a traditional bar without the pressure of drinking alcohol. They maintain that “people deserve to have fun in an adult setting even if they don’t want to drink, or

even be around alcohol, and that is what The Teetotalist is aiming to provide.”

Its centerpiece is mocktails, innovative, exotic, and refreshing concoctions mixed deftly by head bartender Jocelyn Freeman. Patrons may select an Espresso Martini (alcohol-free doesn’t necessarily mean caffeine free) or an over-the-top Properly Dressed Under the Radar (Cut Above Mezcal, Aperitif, Honey Syrup, Lime), or non-alcoholic wine and beer. Specialty drinks range from \$12-\$14 while beer and wine run \$5-\$7.

Tasty snacks round out the jovial atmosphere while patrons enthusiastically chat or possibly participate in board games between sips. They may even help themselves to create a friendship bracelet with complimentary materials. Mood music heightens the jovial, relaxed vibe (It was Taylor Swift Night on Saturday, January 13, while a silver-fringed dress, halter-top, or rhinestone encrusted tiara could be seen there and there), but volume was kept down so people could enjoy

conversation in the well-lit space.

Good things come to those willing to wait, while patrons (several of them on a drink-run for the group at their table) patiently wait to wet their whistles. But it’s clearly no bother as strangers avidly mix and mingle in line, only adding to the festive atmosphere. The owners plan additional thematic evenings, including live music, art shows, trivia nights, and networking events.

Moving forward, the proprietors proclaim their next step is to establish a permanent brick-and-mortar location of their own and expand their hours. Their vision for the future includes coffee service, an expanded food menu, and more non-alcoholic beverage choices, including beer on tap. In addition to their events at Propagate, the Teetotalist is pleased to provide local delivery service to customers for \$5 who prefer to enjoy bottled nonalcoholic beverages at home. Teetotalist merchandise, including shirts and hats, may also be purchased through the website: theteetotalist.com. ★

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Sky River Casino Announces Top Three Nonprofit Winners



A special awards ceremony and check presentation was held January 11th when the winners were announced. Photo courtesy of Sky River Casino

Sky River Casino News Release

ELK GROVE, CA (MPG) - Sky River Casino is excited to announce the top three winners of the 2nd Annual Wreaths of Hope, an annual holiday program that resulted in \$15,000 being donated to support local charities. Creatively decorated 48” wreaths were on display throughout Sky River during the month of December 2023 when casino Rewards members were encouraged to vote for their favorites. In total, an impressive 45,048 votes were cast as part of the 2nd annual holiday program. 2023 Wreaths of Hope winners are as follows:

- First Place – Native Breast Cancer Awareness Walk/Run
- Second Place – Elk Grove Food Bank
- Third Place – Paws For A Purpose

Each of the 10 participating organizations received \$1,000 just for participating. Then, the first place wreath winner received an additional \$2,500, second place an additional \$1,500, and third place an additional \$1,000.

“We were amazed with the number of votes that were cast for our festive Wreaths of Hope program that supports 10 local charities,” said Michael J. Facenda, President of Sky River Casino. “This 2nd annual holiday program clearly struck a chord with our guests while also providing much-needed donations that support local nonprofits so they can continue their meaningful work in the community.”

A special awards ceremony and check presentation was held January 11th when the winners were announced. For more information, please visit www.SkyRiver.com.

About Sky River Casino

Sky River Casino was built by the Wilton Rancheria in partnership with Boyd Gaming Corporation, which is building and managing the property for the tribe. The casino opened in August 2022 and includes 100,000 sq ft of gaming, 2,100 slot machines, 80 table games, and 17 bars and restaurants. To learn more, visit www.SkyRiver.com.

★

Sacramento Kings Empower Youth through Continued Mentorship Initiatives

Sacramento Kings News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - On January 10, as part of National Mentorship Month, the Sacramento Kings announced they will continue their ongoing commitment to highlighting the significance of mentorship and the importance of becoming a mentor. The team will continue to work with MENTOR California and partner with UC Davis Graduate School of Management to engage with youth and promote more involvement in the mentorship process.

“The Kings mentorship initiatives create pathways for local youth to engage with the team in unique ways, highlighting the impact on both mentees and mentors,” said Sacramento Kings Chief Operating Officer Matina Kolokotronis. “To inspire and empower the next generation, we must shine a light on the diverse avenues and opportunities available for our youth.”

“The Sacramento Kings continue to be champions for mentoring and MENTOR California, and it is because of their collaborative spirit and partnership that we are excited for this next adventure in our mentoring movement with the UC Davis School of Business Management,” said MENTOR California Executive Director Marcus L. Strother. “Having amazing partners, like the Sacramento Kings, who believe in the power of



agency, belonging and connection is what allows us to continue lifting up the necessity of mentorship and amplifying mentoring during National Mentoring Month and beyond!”

Through a partnership with UC Davis Graduate School of Management, the Kings will continue their Fastbreak Mentoring program with UC Davis MBA students in the Collaborative Leadership Program mentoring students from Improve Your Tomorrow on educational pathways and career readiness while offering an opportunity to connect with Kings team members to learn about jobs in sports and entertainment. This will be an exclusive, behind-the-scenes glimpse into the inner workings of a professional sports team.

During January, the mentors and mentees will meet at four Kings home games to discuss their goals and aspirations, participate in panel discussions, tour the arena and interact with Kings team members and personnel. Also, on January 27, mentees will attend the Brotherhood Conference, presented by Improve Your Tomorrow and My Brother’s Keeper, to learn

how they can continue to support their mentees.

Throughout the month, the team will be elevating the importance of mentoring through their social channels and billboards in the region with resources and videos sharing messages from Kings players. The team will also recognize a special mentor selected by MENTOR California on-court on January 22 as the Kings take on the Atlanta Hawks. Fans can nominate worthy mentors starting January 4, by tagging them on the Kings Community Instagram: @kings_community.

The Kings are committed to investing in positive pathways that support youth beyond January mentorship month. For the past six years, the Kings, in partnership with the Black Child Legacy Campaign, have led the Kings and Queens Rise Youth Sports and Mentoring League, which seeks to prevent and interrupt violence by providing a caring, productive environment through community building, sportsmanship, and health and safety resources. The organization has participated in several Fastbreak Mentoring Sessions to connect youth with Kings team members and has hosted Studio Sessions to make top entertainment talent accessible as mentors, both to share insight about careers in the sports and entertainment industries.

For more information, visit Kings.com.

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