



**California
Continues to
Expand Rail Fleet**

PAGE 7

**Local Girl Scouts
Sharpen Their
Business Skills**



PAGE 2

East Sacramento News

VOL 33 • ISSUE 04

Bringing You Community News For Over 30 Years

FEBRUARY 23, 2024

**SEE
INSIDE**

**TRAILWAYS
FORGES STRATEGIC
ALLIANCE**



PAGE 3

**DIGNITY HEALTH
NAMED GREATEST
WORKPLACES**



PAGE 8

**NEW HOME SALES
START 2024 WITH
A BANG**



PAGE 4

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Community Call-Out for Photographers

Photography Month Coming to Sacramento in April



Local photography is always appreciated at area museums. Photo courtesy of Photography Month Sacramento

**Photography Month
Sacramento
News Release**

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Led by Viewpoint Photographic Art Center

— a non-profit organization located in Midtown Sacramento — and in collaboration with many involved partners including the City of Sacramento, Inside

Publications, Sacramento County Board of Supervisors Office of Phil Serna (District 1), and Sacramento365.com, Photography Month Sacramento is

scheduled for April 2024. First launched in 2018, the month-long event is highlighted by a variety of diverse and eclectic events that

Continued on Page 2



District Attorney Thien Ho. Photo courtesy of Thien Ho

DA Thien Ho Announces Settlement with Quest Diagnostics

**Sacramento County
District Attorney's
Office News Release**

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - On February 14th, Sacramento County District Attorney Thien Ho announced a settlement with Quest Diagnostics, Inc., resolving allegations that the diagnostic laboratory company unlawfully disposed of hazardous waste, medical waste, and protected health information at its facilities statewide. As part of the settlement, Quest Diagnostics will be required to pay nearly \$5 million for penalties, costs, and supplemental environmental projects and make significant changes to its operations and practices at its California facilities. Attorney General Rob Bonta, DA Thien Ho and the district attorneys of Alameda, Los Angeles, Monterey, Orange, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Ventura, and Yolo Counties are a part of today's settlement.

The settlement is the result of over 30 inspections conducted by the district attorneys' offices at Quest Diagnostics laboratories and Patient Service Centers (PSCs) statewide. During those inspections, the district attorneys' offices reviewed the contents of Quest Diagnostics' compactors and dumpsters and found hundreds of containers of chemicals, as well as bleach, reagents, batteries, and electronic waste; unredacted medical information; medical waste such as used specimen containers for blood and urine; and hazardous waste such as used batteries, solvents, and flammable liquids. The unlawful disposals are alleged to violate the Hazardous Waste Control Law, Medical Waste Management Act, Unfair

Continued on Page 4

California Wildlife Photo of the Year 2023 Winner Announced



'Juvenile Burrowing Owls' is by Paulette Donnellon.

**California Watchable
Wildlife News Release**

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - A winner has been announced for the 2023 California Wildlife Photo of the Year. This year's winner is Paulette Donnellon, who took "Juvenile Burrowing Owls" at

Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge. Burrowing Owl nests are not made public to protect this endangered species.

While discovering Burrowing Owls can be a challenge, Paulette's experience and time in the desert have taught her where to look. Her entrée into photography started as

a pandemic hobby in 2020, and she has never looked back.

"They are so amazing to photograph," said Donnellon, who loves burrowing owls so much she can often be found wearing an owl necklace, "Their eyes, they are just full of personality, and I really enjoy photographing them."

The winning image was selected by California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) Director Charlton H. Bonham. "The opportunity to choose the wildlife photo of the year is one of the perks of my job, even though it's never easy," said Director Bonham. "The eyes of the burrowing

Continued on Page 3

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Local Girl Scouts Sharpen Their Business Skills

As 2024 Cookie Season Kicks Off



Residents will soon have an opportunity to help Girl Scouts while also enjoying their favorite cookie favorites. Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of Northern California

Girl Scouts Heart of Central California News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Girl Scouts Heart of Central California (GSHCC) is excited to announce the official launch of the 2024 Girl Scout cookie season, bringing delightful treats and smiles to communities in the Greater Sacramento, Stockton, and Modesto regions. The Cookie Program not only spreads joy but also fosters the entrepreneurial spirit of numerous local Girl Scouts.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world. Proceeds from the Program support local Girl Scout troops and enable GSHCC to organize workshops, events, and initiatives that help create the next generation of empowered and innovative female leaders. GSHCC's Cookie Program supports two Girl Scout camps, two STEM Centers + MakerSpaces, a mobile STEM Center + MakerSpace, and provides resources to more than 4,000 volunteers.

"Entrepreneurship remains one of Girl

Scouts' most powerful program pillars," said GSHCC Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Linda E. Farley. "More than 8,000 local Girl Scouts will participate in the Cookie Program this year, gaining real-world opportunities to practice their entrepreneurship skills. Beyond the goal setting, money-management, and decision-making skills these girls learn, they also make connections with their community, develop friendships with their sister Girl Scouts, express creativity, and build their capacity to be leaders."

Local Girl Scouts have already begun taking orders from family and friends, and supporters will begin to see cookies available for local purchase in front of stores beginning February 23 through March 17. Additionally, GSHCC encourages the use of the Cookie Finder feature on the Girl Scouts' website, which provides a convenient and accessible way for cookie enthusiasts to locate nearby cookie booths. Cookie connoisseurs can input their zip code in the Cookie Finder tool to see where cookies are being sold in their community. ★

Community Call-Out for Participation Photography Month Sacramento in April 2024

Continued from Page 1
include special exhibits, receptions, photo shoot meetups, workshops, lectures, photo shoot gatherings, and more. With a new "Anything Goes" theme this year, the annual photographic celebration offers a diverse and collective experience of the visual arts. Photography Month Sacramento creates a shared platform for galleries, museums, educational institutions, libraries, retail establishments, photographers, and patrons to celebrate and elevate the art of photography. Interested participants are encouraged to create and/or highlight their own activations to help showcase the art of photography.

Thus far, a number of museums, businesses, and educational institutions from throughout the region have already signed up to participate in 2024, including: Casa de Español, Crocker Art Museum, Granucci Gallery at the Center for the Arts in Grass Valley, Nevada County Camera Club based in Nevada

City, Sacramento History Museum, Sacramento State University Department of Photography, Viewpoint Photographic Art Center, and YoloArts in Woodland.

How to Get Involved: Businesses, Museums and Organizations

Involvement in Photography Month Sacramento for businesses, museums and organizations is free and simple to do. The regional showcase offers a turnkey way to highlight visually enticing photographic programming already in place (possibly by incorporating a fresh visual element or hosting a special activation), introduce a concept in the planning stages, or create something unique to engage enthusiasts and connect with new audiences throughout the region.

How to Get Involved: Photographers

Photography Month Sacramento is open to everyone – professional and amateur photographers alike – and offers

wonderful opportunities to launch and/or exhibit photographic work, or to create a grassroots collaborative exhibit with friends interested in the visual arts. Those interested are encouraged to get creative and plan individual activations and/or contact favorite local coffee houses or restaurants to see if they might host an exhibit or reception in April 2024.

Once any photography-related concepts are confirmed by businesses, organizations, museums or individuals, Photography Month Sacramento participants are asked to post information details about any upcoming events here, a community curated calendar that is connected to and supported by Sacramento365.com.

To explore available sponsorship opportunities or find out more detailed (and continually updated) information about Photography Month Sacramento 2024, please visit www.photomonthsacramento.org. ★



International MARKET
FOOD COURT NOW OPEN
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Rancho Cordova, CA 95670
916.853.8000

Market: 7 Days: 8am - 9pm
Food Court: 1 Day: 11am - 7:30pm
Korean/Mex: Wed: 7:30pm last call
Chinese/Japanese: 7:00pm last call

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FROZEN & FISH DEPT

 Frozen Raw Shrimp 41/50 2 lbs REG. \$12.99/ea \$7.99 /ea	 Shredded Coconut 340 g REG. \$2.99/ea \$1.99 /ea
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WEEKLY MEAT SPECIALS

 Chuck Roast - Brnls Chuck Asado Brnls REG. \$4.99/lb \$4.99 /lb	 Beef Ribeye Roast - Boneless Chuleton de Ternera Asado Deshuesado REG. \$6.99/lb \$6.99 /lb	 Beef Ribeye Steak - Boneless Filete Chuleton de Ternera Deshuesado REG. \$7.99/lb \$7.99 /lb
 Ground Beef Lean Carne Molida Magra REG. \$4.99/lb \$2.99 /lb	 Pork St. Louis Ribs - Single Pack Costillas de San Luis REG. \$3.99/lb \$3.99 /lb	 Pork Loin Chops Bone In Chuleton de Cerdo con Hueso REG. \$2.69/lb \$2.69 /lb
 Chicken Drumsticks Piernas de Pollo REG. 79¢/lb 79¢ /lb	 Pork Sirloin Meat Boneless Carne de Serrano de Cerdo Deshuesado REG. \$2.99/lb \$2.99 /lb	

Advertised items good at KP International Market - Rancho Cordova location ONLY. We reserve the right to LIMIT QUANTITIES. Not responsible for TYPOGRAPHICAL OR PICTORIAL ERRORS. All advertised items are SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY. Sorry NO RAINFOUNDS. PRICES EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 21 - FEBRUARY 27, 2024.

FRESH PRODUCE

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 Fuji Apple 3 lbs 2/\$5.00	 Avocado 2 lbs \$2.59 /bag	 Chayote Squash \$1.19 /lb	 Ginger Root \$1.39 /lb

AMERICAN/HISPANIC GROCERY

 Lavary's Seasoned Salt 16 oz REG. \$5.99/ea \$5.99 /ea	 V8 Splash Berry Blend Tropical Blend 64 Oz REG. \$2.99/ea \$2.99 /ea	 Morton Salt Regular & Iodized 26 oz REG. \$1.99/ea \$1.49 /ea	 No Brand Paper Cups 50 ct REG. \$3.99/ea \$3.99 /ea	 Sunny D Sunny Orange Juice 64 Oz REG. \$1.49/ea \$1.49 /ea
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ASIAN GROCERY

 Bolin Knife Shave Noodles 42.3 oz REG. \$8.99/ea \$8.99 /ea	 Fu Lo Ku Mushroom Seasoning 17.11 oz REG. \$7.99/ea \$7.99 /ea	 777 Mackerel 15 oz REG. \$4.99/ea \$4.99 /ea	 Savvy Coconut Cream 13.5 Oz REG. \$1.99/ea \$1.99 /ea	 Kopul Api White Coffee 3 in 1 157 oz REG. \$3.99/ea \$3.99 /ea
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EUROPEAN GROCERY

 Sofid Mediterranean Olive Oil Blend 2 liters REG. \$11.99/ea \$11.99 /ea	 Sofid Ghazali Pure Ceylon Tea 454 gr REG. \$8.99/ea \$8.99 /ea	 Natalie's Alud Region Linden Honey 905 gr REG. \$11.99/ea \$11.99 /ea	 ARMY BRAND Chopped Pork 425 gr REG. \$4.99/ea \$4.99 /ea	 Hathi Raw Peanuts 56 oz REG. \$5.99/ea \$5.99 /ea
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KOREAN/JAPANESE GROCERY

HOUSEWARES

 Japanese Miso 4 lbs REG. \$6.99/ea \$6.99 /ea	 Troy Arch Soybean Oil 5000 ml REG. \$74.99/ea \$74.99 /ea	 Chestnut Oil 370 g REG. \$3.99/ea \$3.99 /ea	 Korean Fried Rice 1 kg REG. \$2.49/ea \$2.49 /ea	 Cheese Fryer 216 g REG. \$1.99/ea \$1.99 /ea	 All-Purpose Wafers 2.3 kg REG. \$3.99/ea \$3.99 /ea
 Organic Chestnut 300 g REG. \$4.99/ea \$4.99 /ea	 Joy & Bejak 3 kinds 300 g REG. \$2.99/ea \$2.99 /ea	 Palmolive Dried Beans 100 g REG. \$3.99/ea \$3.99 /ea	 Pilo Kakanen 5 x 120 g REG. \$5.99/ea \$5.99 /ea	 Rendal Soup Stock 4 kinds 2.2 lbs REG. \$19.99/ea \$19.99 /ea	 Fruita in Jelly 4 kinds 2 x 7.05 oz REG. \$1.99/ea 99¢ /ea

FROZEN & FISH DEPT

EUROPEAN DELI

 Assi Crispy Seaweed Rolls 1.1 lbs REG. \$5.99/ea \$3.99 /ea	 Columbus Pan Basted Turkey Breast REG. \$11.99/ea \$11.99 /ea
 Columbus Appleswood Smoked Ham REG. \$7.99/ea \$7.99 /ea	 Olive Medley REG. \$4.99/ea \$4.99 /ea
 Sicilian Style Olives REG. \$5.99/ea \$5.99 /ea	 Sicilian Style Olives REG. \$5.99/ea \$5.99 /ea

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California Wildlife Photo of the Year Winner Announced

Continued from Page 1
owl family in Paulette Donnellon's photo are captivating, it was difficult to peel my own eyes away. The concrete in the shot is also a reminder that nature is all around us and we need to learn to live with wildlife to preserve California's unmatched biodiversity."

On February 12, 2023, Paulette joined Senator Brian Jones (D-California Senate 38th District) and Central Subregion Representative Chris Dallas, Sierra Nevada Conservancy in a presentation where she received a Proclamation honoring her photograph. She also received a pair of Zeiss Conquest HD 8x42 binoculars donated by Out of This World Optics, a two-night stay at Abbey House Inn, and a gift certificate from Chirp Nature Center. Leading up to the announcement, the top winning images from the 2023 contest were part of a week-long social media presentation.

The year's top finishers included two winning entries selected by representatives from Sierra Nevada Conservancy and Out of This World Optics.

2023 Sierra Nevada Conservancy Winner

Black Bear with Salmon, Taylor Creek Visitor Center, Photographer: Steve Harms

2023 California Watchable Wildlife Winner

Great Blue Heron & Iris, Effie Yeaw Nature Center, Photographer: Michele Dodge

The Photo of the Year was selected from the top 17 winning images for 2023. The other contenders are below. All images are viewable online.



'Black Bear with Salmon' is by Steve Harms.



'Great Blue Heron & Iris' is by Michele Dodge.

- Alyn Brereton - Common Ravens Mating
- Collin McKahin - Humpback whales lunge feeding
- Randy Robbins - A barking gray fox
- Larry Venus - Bald Eagle and coot
- Jean Zuo - Sandhill Cranes Dancing
- Larry Whiting - Yellow-bellied marmots
- Cindy Croissant - Metaphid Jumping Spider
- Randy Robbins - Bald eagle catching rainbow trout
- Larry Whiting - Merlin
- Ryan Wickiser - Foothill Yellow-Legged Frog
- Kevin Lohman - Double-crested Cormorant & American White Pelicans
- Michele Dodge - Great Blue Heron & Wild Irises
- Parham Pourahmad

- Red-shouldered Hawk
 - Steve Harms - Black Bear with Kokanee Salmon
 - Ryan Wickiser - Great Gray Owl * Cindy Croissant
 - La Jolla Cove Crab
- Now, the California Wildlife Photo of the Year 2024 is officially underway. The contest celebrates California's native wildlife in their natural habitat. The contest is co-hosted by California Watchable Wildlife and California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and is sponsored by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Out of This World Optics, Chirp Nature Center, and Abbey House Inn. Photos are submitted bi-monthly five times a year. Photographers are encouraged to submit their photos for consideration. ★

Trailways Forges Alliance with Greyhound and Flixbus

To Provide Customers More Travel Options



Trailways buses will soon be available in your area. Photo courtesy of Trailways

Trailways News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Trailways, the largest and oldest network of independent motor coach operators in North America, has announced a new strategic partnership with Greyhound and Flixbus.

The new alliance will add hundreds of Greyhound and Flixbus destinations to Trailways.com, including stops in Sacramento, and Trailways.ca, giving customers even more access to convenient, comfortable, and affordable bus travel at a time when other travel options have become cost prohibitive and difficult to navigate. Starting Tuesday January 23rd, customers visiting Trailways.com and Trailways.ca will be able to purchase tickets for Flixbus and Greyhound trips, with

travel dates commencing January 30th and beyond.

"This is a historic moment for Trailways. Connectivity is the backbone of North America and a critical piece of this partnership. By working in concert with one another and interlining our inventory, we're aligning with Trailways' commitment to make affordable and eco-friendly transportation more accessible to travelers across North America," said Alex Berardi, President of Trailways.com.

Members of Trailways' Loyalty Program, Driven Rewards, will also reap the benefits of the new relationship. Driven Rewards Points members will be able to earn and redeem across all Trailways partners, including Flixbus and Greyhound, when making purchases online, giving members a compelling reason to explore new roads together. "The Trailways

alliance reaffirms Flixbus North America, Inc.'s commitment to partnering across the industry and delivering even more affordable travel options for customers," said Kai Boysan, CEO of Flixbus North America, Inc. "We will continue to work with our partners throughout the country to elevate travel and nurture further growth. Trailways shares this vision, recognizing the power of collaboration and the benefit that the Flixbus platform unlocks in building a brighter future for travelers and the industry."

New connecting services will be powered by technical integrations from Transcor Data Services of Jacksonville Florida. Customers looking for information about service, schedules, arrival and departure times, and fares, are encouraged to visit Trailways.com or Trailways.ca. ★

Leadership Farm Bureau Class Announced for 2024

California Farm Bureau News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Nine agricultural professionals have been chosen for the California Farm Bureau's 2024 Leadership Farm Bureau program.

Leadership Farm Bureau class members will participate in a 10-month educational and development initiative that prepares them

for leadership roles in Farm Bureau and agriculture. The program includes 250 hours of instruction, with seminars on key issues affecting California farmers, ranchers, and agricultural businesses.

Program participants will learn about government and legislation, media and communications, public speaking, and team building. They will also attend lobbying sessions in Sacramento

and Washington, D.C., and meet with lawmakers and administrative and regulatory officials.

Members of the Leadership Farm Bureau class include:

- Ben Abatti III of Imperial County, a third-generation farmer who grows alfalfa, sugar beets, wheat, and other forage crops in Holtville.
- Alex Arroyo of Monterey County, general manager of

King City Transplanting in the Salinas Valley.

-Tanya Brouse of Butte County, a program coordinator for the Butte County Farm Bureau who also works with the Butte Agriculture Foundation.

-Sy Honig of Sutter County, a third-generation farmer, owner of Honig Farms and a pest control advisor.

-Jackie Kennedy of Glenn

County, founder of Knaughty Farms Olive Oil and office manager for a family farm growing olives, rice, and walnuts.

-James Moller of Shasta County, a seventh-generation cattle rancher and a manager for Driscoll's Inc. focusing on strawberry nursery production.

-Rachel Nettleton of Kern County, executive director of the Kern County

Farm Bureau and a marketing and communications professional.

-Harsimerdip "Harry" Sidhu of Sutter County, a vice president of First Northern Bank in Yuba City who grew up on his family's fruit and nut farm.

-Danielle Vietti of Tulare County, a vice president at AgWest Farm Credit in Tulare who specializes in dairy financing. ★



Election Information

March 5, 2024 – Presidential Primary Election

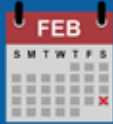
Vote Early and Vote by Mail.



Feb 5 Ballots begin to arrive by mail. Ballot Drop Boxes are now open.



Feb 20 Close of registration. Register today!



Feb 24 11-Day Vote Centers open through Election Day.



Mar 2 All Vote Centers open through Election Day.



Mar 5 Election Day! Last day to turn in your ballot.

Vote Early! Don't wait for Election Day

Take advantage of early voting and avoid the lines! You can return your ballot in the mail, at any Ballot Drop Box, or at any Vote Center. No postage is necessary.

Track your Ballot

Sign up for "Where's My Ballot?" with Ballottrax, a free ballot tracking and alert system. It is available to all voters who wish to track the status of their Vote by Mail ballot - from printed to accepted. This provides additional transparency to voters on the status of their ballot.



Vote Early! Vote by Mail.

California Comment on the Latest National Small Business Poll

NFIB California Press Release

Two big compliance headaches adding to the pessimism leading into 2024, says NFIB.

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)

-Tiny bits of good news could be found in the recent release of the monthly Small Business Optimism Index from the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), but they offered no serious counterweight to the pessimism small business owners have heading into 2024—a pessimism made heavier and darker by two new laws certain to give Main Street entrepreneurs compliance migraines.

“Today’s Optimism Index is the 24th consecutive monthly one below its 50-year average,” said John Kabateck, California state director for NFIB. “But it does not factor in the compliance misery facing small business owners who must calculate the substantial cost and time of abiding by the new federal beneficial ownership information reporting requirements under the Corporate Transparency Act and the new state requirement on every enterprise to have workplace violence prevention plans in place and constantly update them.

“Add to all of that the return of a Legislature never shy about sticking small businesses with another rule, regulation, or tax, and it’s not a good time to start a business let alone keep one going.”

More about the workplace violence prevention plan can be found in this article, The Top Five Compliance Headaches in 2024. The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) issued a final rule that sets forth beneficial ownership information reporting requirements as mandated by the Corporate Transparency Act. The rule, effective January 1, 2024, affects a broad spectrum of businesses (virtually all LLCs, corporations, and entities formed under state or tribal laws with 20 or fewer employees and \$5 million or less in gross annual receipts), and requires them to begin filing periodic reports on their beneficial owners to FinCEN.

Today’s Optimism Index found 23% of small business owners reported that inflation was their single most important problem in operating their business, up one point from last month, and replacing labor quality as the top concern. Other key findings include:

-Small business owners expecting better business conditions over the next six months increased six points from November to a net negative 36% (seasonally adjusted), and 25 percentage points better than last June’s reading of a net negative 61%.

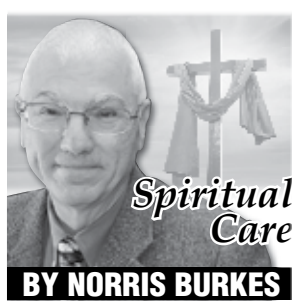
-Seasonally adjusted, a net 29% of owners plan to raise compensation in the next three months, down one point from November.

-The net percentage of owners raising average selling prices was unchanged from November at a net 25% (seasonally adjusted).

-The net percentage of owners who expect real sales to be higher increased four points from November to a net negative 4% (seasonally adjusted), the highest reading since January 2022.

“Small business owners remain very pessimistic about economic prospects this year,” said NFIB Chief Economist Bill Dunkelberg. “Inflation and labor quality have consistently been a tough complication for small business owners, and they are not convinced that it will get better in 2024.”

Keep up with the latest California small-business news at www.nfib.com/CA and on Twitter @NFIB_CA ★



BY NORRIS BURKES

It seems that whenever pastors preach to a sparse crowd, they often begin by quoting Matthew 18:20. However, they remove the verse from its context to passively express their disappointment for the low numbers.

“This reminds me of what Jesus said,” they’ll jest. “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

During my years as a hospital chaplain, I often paraphrased this verse to convey my frustration for yet another staff meeting.

“Wherever there are two or more chaplains gathered in his name, there will be a chaplain staff meeting.”

Nevertheless, our hospital staff meetings at Sutter Medical Center could occasionally be interesting.

They were led by our Spiritual Care supervisor, Lisa Nordlander. Lisa was a petite, fiftyish woman who supervised a staff consisting of a secretary, three full-time chaplains and six chaplain interns.

One day, she sent out a message: “All hands on deck for a joint meeting of staff and interns.”

A few hours later, we assembled in a conference room where I’d like to tell you we looked like Jedi Knights perched on chairs waiting for divine wisdom from Obi-Wan Kenobi.

But on this particular day, things took a surprise turn when Lisa tossed white plastic bags on the table and asked her chaplains to each claim one. Taking the bags, we spilled their

Something Stinks? Is it I?

contents onto the table — a toothbrush, toothpaste, mouthwash, tongue brush and dental floss.

Ooohh kaaay. The supervisor’s husband was a dentist, but given her professional demeanor, product endorsement seemed a little beneath her.

“This is a friendly reminder,” she managed to say among the giggles, “that good dental hygiene is a part of good spiritual hygiene.”

Yes, apparently when it comes to spiritual care, oral cleanliness is next to godliness.

Lisa continued her teaching moment. “We work in close quarters,” she said, struggling to smother her erupting smile.

“Chaplains often whisper to nursing staff and lean close in their patient visits. These patients may be sensitive to certain odors, so please make sure you are well acquainted with these products.”

I can tell you we all searched the faces around the table, wondering which chaplain inspired Lisa to bring the toothbrushes.

Was it our Catholic priest who drank too much coffee?

Was it I, the one who loved the cafeteria onion rings?

Was it the new intern snacking on tuna crackers?

We all had a side-splitting laugh over Lisa’s artful presentation of such a personal matter, but I couldn’t help but remember a gathering of 12 — the Last Supper when Jesus predicted one of his disciples (Judas) would betray him.

Like the disciples who muttered, “Is it I, Lord?” we chaplains blew into our cupped hands, taking a quick whiff and wondering,

“Is it me, Lisa? Am I the reason you are saying this?”

There are times in our exchanges with people that we become pretty sure something stinks. On those occasions, what is our first reaction? Do we lean close to our friends and examine their smell first? Or do we check our own breath?

We’re not perfect and we certainly won’t always smell perfect, but our imperfection gives us two choices.

We can deny it and make others suffer or we can celebrate that we are all in the same boat. We’re all human and we all have the potential to, well, there’s no other way to say it... stink.

The truth is, we are pretty human and the spirit we breathe on people may not always be the freshest one.

It’s something we should keep in mind as we enter the Lenten season. Take a hard look at yourself, check your spirit. Examine your intentions. And question your motives.

Ask yourself, “Am I the one who has caused the problem?” or “Am I the one who holds the solution?” These must be among the first questions we ask when we smell something not quite right.

Which leads me to my final paraphrase of Matthew 18:20 — “Wherever two or more are gathered in his name, there will always be imperfections.”

This column is an excerpt from my newest book, “Tell it to the Chaplain.”

Order all my books at www.thechaplain.net or send \$20 to 10556 Combie Rd. Suite 6643 Auburn, CA 95602. Comments received at same address or by email: comment@thechaplain.net or at (843) 608-9715. ★

Sacramento New Home Sales Start 2024 With a Bang

North Side Building Industry Association News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)

- New home sales in the greater Sacramento area started off with a bang in January, fueled by continued strong demand, a scarcity of existing homes for sale and declining mortgage interest rates, the North State Building Industry Association reported today.

BIA members sold 580 new homes during the month, which is 40% higher than December, 32% above January 2023, and 28% higher than the average January in the region.

Chris Norem, the BIA’s political director and senior policy advisor, said the robust sales totals should bode well for the homebuying public in the region.

“New homes continue to hold a larger-than-normal share of total sales because they offer high-quality options and because builders can provide incentives such as mortgage buy-downs that aren’t available when you’re buying an existing home,” he said.

“We’d also like to thank Sacramento County officials for working with us to lower their water connection fees for apartments and other multifamily housing options. One of the



The only way to restore affordability is to reduce fees and incentivize builders to build more homes to meet the ongoing need. MPG Courtesy Photo

best ways we can continue to tackle the housing crisis is to reduce unnecessary building fees, and more jurisdictions need to be open to taking a fresh look at whether their fee programs are truly necessary as the regional average is already approximately \$100,000 per home. The only way to restore affordability is to reduce fees and incentivize builders to build more homes to meet the ongoing need.”

As always, communities

in Sacramento and Placer counties accounted for the vast majority of sales, with 259 sales reported in Sacramento County and 218 in Placer. Roseville saw the highest number of sales of any submarket with 147, followed by Elk Grove, Sacramento, Rancho Cordova, and Lincoln.

The BIA’s sales figures cover nearly 190 active new home communities in Sacramento, Placer, Yolo, El Dorado, and Yuba counties. ★

DA Thien Ho Announces Settlement with Quest Diagnostics

Continued from Page 1

Competition Law, and civil laws prohibiting the unauthorized disclosure of personal health information.

After being notified of the investigations, Quest Diagnostics implemented numerous changes to bring its facilities into compliance with California law, including hiring an independent environmental auditor to review the disposal of waste at its facilities and modifying its operating and training procedures to improve its handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste, medical waste, and personal health information at all four laboratories and over 600 PSCs in California.

The settlement resolves the allegations above and requires Quest Diagnostics to pay \$3,999,500 in civil penalties, \$700,000 in costs, and \$300,000 for a Supplemental Environmental Project to support environmental training and enforcement in California. The settlement also imposes injunctive terms,

including requirements that Quest Diagnostics maintain an environmental compliance program, including hiring a third-party waste auditor, and report annually on its progress.

“This settlement is the result of a successful collaboration between District Attorney’s Offices and the state Attorney General’s Office to protect California’s environment and its health consumers,” said Sacramento County District Attorney Thien Ho. “Thanks to the joint efforts of our Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit and prosecutors across the state, the financial penalty and permanent injunction will deter Quest Diagnostics from violating hazardous waste, medical waste and protected health information laws. Sacramento County will receive a total of \$259,440 from the settlement, which will reimburse the cost of prosecuting this case and increase the enforcement of consumer and environmental protection laws.” ★

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ABOUT TOWN

Rosie the Riveter Dinner Dance Fundraiser at Elks Lodge #6 March 1

Elks 6 celebrates Rosie the Riveter with a Dinner Dance Fundraiser to be held on March 1st, from 5:30pm - 10:30pm, with dinner starting at 6:30pm. Entertainment will be from The Groove Thang Band. Tickets are presale only, at \$45 per person. Tickets can be purchased at the Lodge Office (M-F 9:00-3:00) 6446 Riverside Blvd. or call 916-422-6666

Elks 6 Crab Feed March 8

THE DETAILS ARE OUT! Tickets are on sale for the Elks 6 Crab Feed on March 8th. This will be a fun-filled evening starting with a no-host bar at 6:00. At 7:00, dinner is served. Crab. Seafood boil of clams, mussels, shrimp, corn, and potatoes. And more.

All for \$75 (tax included). Presales only at the Lodge office (M-W 9:00-3:00), 6446 Riverside Blvd. or call (916) 422-6666.

Curtis Park Book Club with Crawford's Books Mar. 12, Apr. 9

Curtis Park Book Club is back for 2024!

Join Track 7 Brewing Company and Crawford's Books every second Tuesday of the month in the Curtis Park taproom for Book Club! Crawford's Books will be leading the discussion.

Track 7 Brewing Company is located at Track 7 Brewing Co. - Curtis Park, 3747 W. Pacific Ave, Ste F, Sacramento, CA 95820

The event dates and times are: Feb 13, 2024 at 07:00 pm (Tue), Mar 12, 2024 at 07:00 pm (Tue), Apr 9, 2024 at 07:00 pm (Tue).

Questions? Contact Crawford's Books at sue@crawfordbooks.net

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.

Elk's Lodge Calendar of Events Elk's Lodge Sunday Breakfast

Every Sunday 8:30am - 11am

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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 playtimes-scheduler.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

registration to register and learn more.

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

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.suttersfort.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 24th, 2024

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Location: William Land Golf Course 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 childrens' Easter Bonnet contest and putting activities. Guests can purchase food and mimosa's for the adults. More details to come soon.

Elks 6 Volunteer Opportunities Available

This is just a partial list of ways you can be of service to the Lodge and by extension the community.

- PM Crew - We welcome anyone willing to work but especially if you have experience in mechanical, electrical, general contracting, painting, or plumbing the lodge really needs you.

- Bar Back - Help out the paid bartenders for large events.

- Bartender - Riverside bar for Elks events

There will be a meeting for volunteer bartenders some time this week. email or text Sue Hill if you want to be on the meeting list

- Sunday Breakfast - Cook, Serve, bus tables

- Wednesday Night Dinners - Help or adopt a night one time or once a month

- Join the membership committee.

Attend events and be available to give tours: Help at membership booth at Farmers Market, Man a membership booth at the Craft Fair or Parking Lot Sale, Make phone calls to members

If any of the above sound like something you would enjoy doing, please contact me for more information and I will make sure you are directed to the proper person. Call or text Sue Hill 215-327-7712

★

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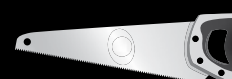
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As California Closes Prisons, The Cost Of Locking Someone Up Hits New Record At \$132,860

BY KRISTEN HWANG AND NIGEL DUARA, *calmatters.org*

Per inmate spending in California prisons surged during the COVID-19 pandemic and has remained high despite Gov. Gavin Newsom's cost-cutting efforts. Here, guard towers stand outside of Kern Valley State Prison on Nov. 15, 2022. Photo by Larry Valenzuela, CalMatters/CatchLight Local

The cost of imprisoning one person in California has increased by more than 90% in the past decade, reaching a record-breaking \$132,860 annually, according to state finance documents.

That's nearly twice as expensive as the annual undergraduate tuition — \$66,640 — at the University of Southern California, the most costly private university in the state.

California's spending per inmate jumped steeply during the COVID-19 pandemic and it continued to increase despite recent cost-cutting moves, including Gov. Gavin Newsom's recent move to close three state prisons.

It's propelled by lucrative employee compensation deals and costly mandates to improve health care behind bars, according to fiscal analyses by the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office. Newsom's most recent budget proposal includes \$18.1 billion for the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, up from \$15.7 billion when he took office in 2019.

Some lawmakers and advocates have argued California should focus on rehabilitation and shut down additional prisons to save money in the face of what the governor's office projects to be a \$38 billion deficit.

Last year, the Legislative Analyst's Office suggested the state could close as many as five more state prisons because of California's declining inmate population.

That would stand to save upwards of \$1 billion in operating costs, and even more money on unfunded capital improvement projects, the report said.

Newsom's three closures and the cancellation of a contract for a fourth privately run prison save the state an estimated \$667 million over the next year, according to the Department of Finance, but the savings are not enough to offset increased operational and employee costs.

The California Correctional Peace Officers Association, which represents 26,000 prison guards, last summer negotiated a contract with successive 3% raises and other perks that will cost the state roughly \$1 billion over the next three years. The prison doctors' union, which represents 1,700 employees, also negotiated a two-year contract with a combined 5.5% general salary increase and a range of other incentives. The Newsom administration estimates it will cost \$234 million over three years.

But Newsom, at least for now, is not recommending any additional prison closures. Instead, his state budget proposal recommends keeping prisons open with fewer inmates in them to provide more space for rehabilitative programs.

"The administration is not currently proposing any additional prison closures," H.D. Palmer, spokesperson for the Department of Finance, said in a statement. "We remain committed to meeting the needs of staff and the incarcerated population while right-sizing California's prison system as the prison population declines over time, and to addressing space needs as the state transforms the carceral system to one more focused on rehabilitation."

An inmate at San Quentin State Prison on March 17, 2023. Photo by Martin do Nascimento, CalMatters

Opponents of mass incarceration say the administration's argument for keeping empty prison beds open doesn't align with how the money is spent.

"This is a cash grab (the corrections department)," said Brian Kaneda, deputy director of the prison abolitionist group Californians United for a Responsible Budget. Newsom has touted transforming San Quentin State Prison into a rehabilitation center, but advocates like Kaneda and state advisory groups say the plan is vague.

Rehabilitation costs, which currently include prisoner education and activities, only make up a fraction of total correctional spending — roughly 3% — over the past decade, according to state budget documents.

In a written statement, the corrections department said its spending plan "judiciously uses taxpayer dollars in a manner that balances the need for cost-efficiency while maximizing public safety, the wellbeing of incarcerated people and successful rehabilitation."

The actual cost to house a prisoner is much closer to \$15,000, said Caitlin O'Neil, a criminal justice analyst for the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office. Direct costs include things such as food and clothing while the remaining 91% of spending per prisoner comes from fixed costs like salaries and facility upkeep.

She found that compensation for employees at the corrections department increased by 43% between 2010 and 2019 — from \$110,000 to \$158,000 — nearly triple the rate of inflation.

Last summer, the state prison guard contract included \$10,000 bonuses for officers at certain prisons and a new guaranteed 40k contribution in addition to regular pension benefits.

The state's current savings from prison closures, about \$200 million per facility, is not nearly enough to offset those pay and benefits boosts.

"We would have to close one or more prisons per year just to offset employee compensation increases that happen regularly," O'Neil said.

The peace officers' union did not respond to requests for comment. Prison labor advocates often argue that jobs are dangerous and difficult to staff, warranting high compensation benefits.

The union can be a force in the Capitol. It has contributed \$2.2 million to the campaigns of current state legislators and it gave \$1.75 million to help Newsom defeat a 2021 recall campaign. It also recently contributed \$1 million to support Proposition 1, the measure Newsom placed on the March ballot to build housing and treatment facilities for people with serious mental health conditions.

Despite a precipitous decline in prison populations, corrections spending has remained relatively stable. In 2018, the average daily prison population topped 120,000 compared to a projected 90,240 people in 2024. That's a 25% decrease. In contrast, correctional spending as a share of the total state budget has barely dropped in the same time period from 7% to 6%.

What should be good news to opponents of mass incarceration — decreasing populations — has not resulted in a leaner criminal justice system.

"If you have \$700 million in annual savings from prison closure, but you're spending hundreds of millions of dollars on new prison infrastructure and giving prison guards a billion dollar raise (over three years), that starts to show why the math isn't mathing," Kaneda said.

But wholesale cuts to correctional spending don't necessarily always equate to better prison conditions, said John Pfaff, a law professor at Fordham University.

"If you don't cut (budgets) carefully, that makes prisons worse places to be. It makes them more dangerous, more traumatic," Pfaff said. "I say that as someone who is not a fan at all of prisons as a general institution."

Medical care is one area of increased spending where the state, under court order, is trying to improve prison conditions.

The average cost per person for medical care has more than doubled in the past 10 years, and total health care spending by the corrections department has increased by about 67%. Although the recent prison closures have cut about 2,700 correctional positions, medical spending has eaten up those savings.

Former Assembly Budget Chair Phil Ting, a Democrat from San Francisco, said corrections is the only state program where having fewer people translates into more spending. In 2022 Ting proposed closing three more prisons to bring down fixed costs and account for the shrinking number of prisoners.

"If we were educating 50% less kids, you'd see the funding go down. If we had 50% less people in health care or 50% fewer families using CalFresh, the programs would go down," Ting said. "So how is it at a time when the prison population has not just gone down a little bit, has gone down significantly, that spending increased?"

There were roughly 15,000 empty beds last year in prisons across the state, according to the Legislative Analyst's Office. That number, driven largely by decades of sentencing changes and court-ordered mandates to decrease prison crowding, is expected to reach 20,000 over the next three years.

"We're not talking about some very small number where they want to keep a little bit of a buffer," Ting said. "They want to keep three to five empty prisons up and running."

Ting, who is no longer the budget chair, said he may still push this year to shut down more prisons. ★

California Continues to Expand Hydrogen-Powered Passenger Rail Fleet

Latest Order Pushes Number of Zero-Emission Intercity Trainsets to 10



One of the new rail fleets travels through the countryside. Photos courtesy of Caltrans

Caltrans News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Caltrans today announced a \$127 million agreement with Stadler Rail, Inc. for six more zero-emission, hydrogen-powered passenger trainsets, building upon an earlier order to deliver the first four hydrogen-powered intercity trainsets in North America, furthering California's standing as a world leader in clean transportation.

The trains will help California adapt to climate change by strengthening the state's zero-emission passenger rail capabilities. The first trains are expected to enter revenue service in 2027. The trainset design will make them more efficient, lighter weight and more affordable than traditional locomotive-hauled coaches.

The purchase is funded through Governor Gavin Newsom's historic \$10 billion, multiyear zero-emission vehicle package, which included \$407 million for the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) to purchase or lease state-of-the-art clean bus and rail equipment and infrastructure.

The first trains will operate between Merced and Sacramento on the future

Valley Rail service — an expansion of the existing Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) and Amtrak San Joaquins services that will eventually connect with the first section of California's high-speed rail service. The trains will also be demonstrated on corridors throughout the state in coordination with intercity and regional rail partners. With this option order, there are 19 option trainsets remaining on the base contract that Caltrans signed with Stadler in October 2023.

"California continues to lead the way to a cleaner, more connected transportation system," said California Transportation Secretary Toms Omishakin. "By expanding our fleet of hydrogen-powered passenger trainsets, we are showing we are serious about deploying innovative and sustainable transportation options for the people of this state."

"These clean-energy trains are the future," said Caltrans Director Tony Tavares. "California is building a climate-resilient transportation system that will help every community move around the state in a safe and sustainable way."

The vehicles will be based on Stadler's successful Fast Light Intercity

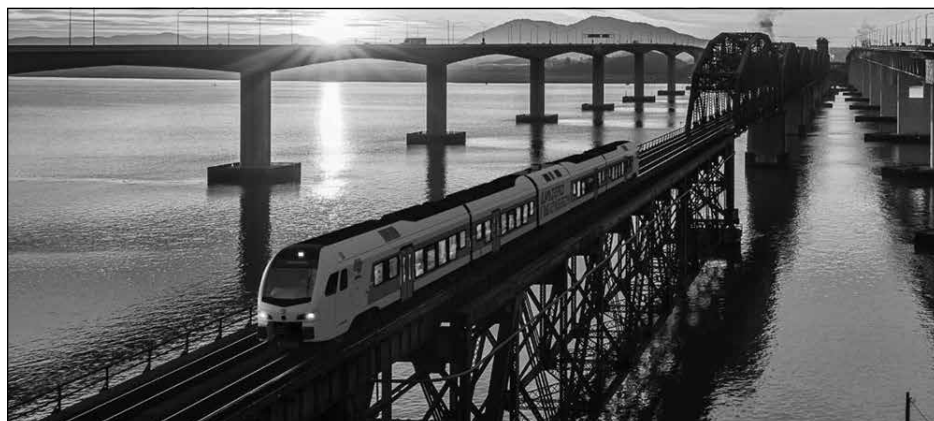
and Regional Train (FLIRT) concept, extending work done with the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority to develop self-powered multiple-unit trains using zero-emission hydrogen fuel cells without the need of a separate locomotive.

"We are very proud to be providing additional hydrogen trains to the California State Transportation Agency and Caltrans. With our multiple units, we are jointly driving the decarbonization of rail transportation in the U.S.," said Stadler CEO Martin Ritter. "We thank CalSTA and Caltrans for their trust and look forward to deepening our partnership."

California continues to build momentum in its nation-leading effort to harness clean renewable hydrogen power, critical to cutting planet-warming pollution and expanding the clean energy economy statewide. Caltrans' purchase of the first four trainsets in October came one day before the U.S. Department of Energy announced California will receive up to \$1.2 billion as one of the country's hydrogen hubs to accelerate the development and deployment of clean renewable hydrogen. ★



Here is a side of a rail fleet.



A sunset view of a rail fleet going over the water.



A rail fleet takes a coastal route.

It Costs \$18,441 for a Hospital Stay in California, the Most Expensive State

Charlotte Green, Digitaloft News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - A new study reveals the most expensive states for a hospital stay and the most common reasons for those stays.

The research, conducted by Universal Drugstore, looked at the average cost of a hospital stay in each state to determine the most expensive states for a stay. The study also uncovered the most common reasons for a hospital stay.

California is the most expensive state for a hospital stay. On average, by staying for 4.6 days, patients can expect to pay an astronomical \$18,441, equating to just over \$4,000 daily. Despite the high prices, the sunny state has various hospitals for residents to consider, including Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and UCLA Medical Centre. Each hospital is ranked nationally in multiple specialties with high-performing procedures and conditions.

Oregon is the second most expensive state for a hospital stay. It's a top visitor location known for its diverse landscape, scenic forests, and beautiful lakes. However, when it comes to its healthcare, Oregon is one of the most expensive states in the US, averaging around \$18,336 to afford a typical 4.6-day hospital stay. There are plenty of hospitals in and around the state, including OHSU Hospital, which has been described as



On average, by staying for 4.6 days, patients can expect to pay an astronomical \$18,441, equating to just over \$4,000 daily. MPG Courtesy Photo

Oregon's leading academic medical center, offering advanced treatments and expert care.

Washington state is also one of the most expensive places for a hospital stay. An average stay of just under five days in Washington can cost as much as \$17,753, equating to more than \$3,800 per day in hospital fees. If you are looking for specialized hospital care, Inova Fairfax Hospital and MedStar Washington Hospital Center have numerous medical specialties. From complex care to common procedures and conditions such as knee replacement and heart failure.

The most common reasons for hospital stays:

- 1-Septicemia
- 2-Heart failure
- 3-Osteoarthritis
- 4-Pneumonia (except that caused by tuberculosis)
- 5-Diabetes mellitus with complication
- 6-Acute myocardial infarction
- 7-Cardiac dysrhythmias
- 8 - C O P D and bronchiectasis

9-Acute and unspecified renal failure

10-Cerebral infarction.

Septicemia, also known as sepsis, is the clinical name for blood poisoning by bacteria; surprisingly, it is the most common reason for hospital stays in the United States, with a shocking rate of over 2.2 million. Sepsis is a life-threatening infection that requires urgent medical treatment.

Another primary reason for hospital stays across the US is heart failure. This typically happens when the heart cannot adequately pump blood around the body, especially when it has become weak. In the United States, a staggering 1,135,900 hospital stays resulted from heart failure in 2018.

With more than 1.1 million hospital stays, osteoarthritis is one of the most common reasons for visiting the hospital in the US. The condition causes joints to become painful and stiff. It is also one of the most common types of arthritis. ★

Momentum Continues for the Homelessness, Drug Addiction, Retail Theft Reduction Act

Becky Warren, Elevate Public Affairs News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Californians to Reduce Homelessness, Drug Addiction, and Theft announced February 2nd that they have collected another nearly 100,000 signatures from California voters totaling over 300,000 to place the Homelessness, Drug Addiction, Retail Theft Reduction Act on the November 2024 ballot.

"We continue to see an outcry of overwhelming support from Californians of every political affiliation and geographic region across the state demanding for change that will improve community safety and hold repeat offenders of theft and serious drug crimes including those involving fentanyl accountable," said campaign chair Greg Totten who is also chief executive officer for the California District Attorneys Association.

"Californians want to feel safe in their neighborhoods and when they shop, and this initiative amends Prop 47 to effectively hold individuals accountable for repeat crimes of theft

and serious drugs like fentanyl while making sure individuals receive and complete drug and mental health treatment they need," added Totten.

A survey of likely California voters found that 70% of voters support the title and summary of the Homelessness, Drug Addiction, Retail Theft Reduction Act. The overwhelming support was consistent across every demographic and geography including the Bay Area and Los Angeles. Furthermore, 89% of likely voters support amending Proposition 47 for stronger penalties for those engaged in repeated retail theft and trafficking hard drugs like fentanyl. The measure also includes incentives to complete drug and mental health treatment for people who are addicted to hard drugs. The survey was conducted online from November 8-November 13, 2023, with a margin of error of +/- 2.28%.

To qualify the measure for the November 2024 ballot, the law requires 546,651 valid signatures.

For more information, go to www.CASafeCommunities.com. ★



The overwhelming support was consistent across every demographic and geography including the Bay Area and Los Angeles. MPG Courtesy Photo

A Small Fix to the IRA Will Give Hope to Patients with Rare Diseases

By Ted W. Love

For the roughly 30 million Americans living with a rare disease, the chances of finding an effective treatment are tragically slim.

Our healthcare system defines a rare condition as one affecting fewer than 200,000 patients around the country. Such small patient populations create enormous financial and practical barriers to developing cures and therapeutics.

Unfortunately, one element of 2022's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is contributing to the challenge. As written, the law's provisions strongly discourage research into treatments for rare conditions -- and also discourage making the most out of the few treatments that do emerge from our labs.

The good news is that Congress can undo this unintended consequence by passing the ORPHAN Cures Act, bipartisan legislation introduced in the House and the Senate. The legislation would remove an unnecessary barrier to medical progress.

This is an issue I take very personally as a physician and a leader of companies with years of first-hand experience bringing breakthrough medicines to patients -- including one of the most successful treatments for

sickle cell disease yet discovered.

Developing medicines that treat rare diseases like sickle cell -- or "orphan drugs," as they're sometimes known -- is an extraordinarily difficult task.

No less daunting than the scientific challenges are the financial challenges. Investors are generally unwilling to spend billions of dollars developing a product that benefits so few patients.

Right now, just 5% of rare diseases have an FDA-approved treatment. What's needed are government policies that incentivize work on the other 95%.

Unfortunately, the IRA as crafted does the opposite.

In order to reduce Medicare's costs, the IRA allows the government to demand price controls on a range of prescription drugs paid for through the program. So as not to stand in the way of orphan drug development, lawmakers attempted to exclude these medicines from the price-setting program -- but with one important exception. The rare-disease carve-out doesn't extend to treatments approved for more than one rare disease.

In other words, an orphan drug approved to treat one disease is exempt from Medicare price cuts, but if a

scientist discovers a second rare disease application for the same drug, they face a steep financial penalty through loss of the exemption.

Of the more than 280 orphan drugs approved since 2003, nearly a quarter were later approved to treat additional diseases. Some medicines earned approval for four or more follow-on indications.

These are potentially life-saving discoveries that may not have occurred under the pricing system created by the IRA.

Lawmakers can fix this problem right now simply by passing the ORPHAN Cures Act. Introduced by Reps. John Joyce (R-PA) and Wiley Nickel (D-NC) in the House and Sens. John Barrasso (R-WY) and Tom Carper (D-DE) in the Senate, the two-page bill amends the IRA's drug-pricing section by changing the words "only one rare disease" to "one or more rare diseases." With that revision, the legislation vastly increases the odds of treating and curing many of the thousands of rare diseases that currently lack effective medications.

Dr. Ted W. Love is Chair of the Biotechnology Innovation Organization's Board of Directors, and former President and CEO of Global Blood Therapeutics. This piece originally ran in RealClearHealth. ★

ABC License Administrators Can Now Submit Catering Authorization Applications Online

Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control California News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control's (ABC) catering authorization applications are now available online for the first time, permitting users to complete the form within minutes.

"We are excited to bring an online method for licensees to apply and pay for the most common application submitted to the department," said Licensing Division Chief Jaime Taylor. "Catering authorizations are used for selling and serving alcohol at many types of events, from weddings to large scale music festivals. Our new online applications will make the process much simpler and faster, providing an enhanced service to Californians who are applying for a catering authorization."

Catering authorizations allow licensees with an active caterer's permit to sell alcoholic beverages for consumption during events approved by ABC. Applicants must have an ABC Online Services account with the License Administrator role. Applicants can submit their application, pay with a credit card or eCheck, and upload required documents or approvals.

To qualify for the online authorization, the event must be more than five days but not more



Applicants must have an ABC Online Services account with the License Administrator role. MPG Courtesy Photo

than 60 days from the application date. Users can submit and pay for events online for up to three consecutive days if each day has the same number of attendees and hours during which alcohol is served. If the dates are not consecutive, or if the number of attendees and hours are not the same, each day must be submitted and paid for as a separate event.

There is a limit of 36 catered events per year at any given location. This limit applies to all Caterer's Permits (Type

58), including those held by club licenses (Type 50, 51, and 52). An exception may be made to exceed 36 catered events if the licensee can clearly establish that additional events are in the best interest of the State and necessary to satisfy substantial public demand. Exceptions can be requested at a local ABC District Office.

For more information about online catering authorization applications, please visit <https://www.abc.ca.gov/licensing/license-forms/caterers-permits/>. ★

Failing Our Newborns

She Opened A Business to Deliver Babies, California Policies Drove Her Out of The Country

BY KRISTEN HWANG, calmatters.org

Midwife Madeleine Wisner evaluates Chloé Mick's belly during a maternal care consultation at Mick's home in Sacramento on Feb. 6, 2024. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

Madeleine Wisner dreamed of making community midwife services available to all expecting parents regardless of their income when she opened Welcome Home Community Birth Center in south Sacramento.

But 451 births and five years later, Wisner is packing up her family and moving from California to New Zealand, where government policies are far more favorable to midwifery. She closed her birth center in October.

Wisner was the only licensed community midwife who took Medi-Cal patients in the greater Sacramento region, but she's leaving, she said, because it was impossible to sustain the birth center. Insurance refused to pay two out of every three claims she submitted for services including prenatal visits, labor and delivery, at-home postpartum checkups, and lactation consultations, Wisner said.

"The entire system is not made for us," Wisner said. "I look at Medi-Cal as the standard of care, and midwives should be part of the standard of care."

Her experience and

decision to leave reflects larger problems for California midwives highlighted in a new study released today from UC San Francisco's Osher Center for Integrative Health. It focuses on community midwives who work outside of hospitals but have licenses and training to perform much of the same reproductive care doctors provide to women with low-risk pregnancies.

The report warns that access to maternity care will worsen in California if the state does not increase the number of community midwives who are Medi-Cal providers at a time when hospitals are shutting down labor and delivery wards and maternal mortality is trending upwards.

Seventy-five community midwives are registered with Medi-Cal, according to data provided by the state. More than 1,000 nurse midwives are registered with Medi-Cal, but the majority of those providers work in hospitals and not in community settings, researchers said.

Outdated licensing requirements, tortuous state regulations and cumbersome insurance policies make it nearly impossible for community midwives to accept Medi-Cal patients, the UCSF report found.

Medi-Cal is the state's health insurance program for extremely low-income residents. It pays for 40% of all births statewide, and midwife care is

a guaranteed benefit for expecting mothers.

On paper, the benefit includes community midwifery, which focuses on providing care close to where people live either at a birth center or in the home. But the reality is different, researchers and providers say.

"So many people who have taken Medi-Cal in the past have had to stop or close their practices, and so many people who want to have not been able to make it happen," said Ariana Thompson-Lastad, lead author of the study.

California's 'Mominibus' Act

The UCSF findings come at a time when the state is trying to make inroads against persistent maternal and infant health disparities, particularly among Black families. Statewide surveys show Black mothers are the most interested in alternative birth support through doulas and midwives, which have been shown to improve a variety of birth outcomes.

Doulas are birth workers who provide non-medical social and emotional support during and after pregnancy while licensed midwives are clinically trained professionals who can provide a range of independent reproductive care for low-risk moms and babies.

In an effort to chip away at inequities, state lawmakers passed the "California Mominibus Act" three years ago.



Midwife Madeleine Wisner evaluates Chloé Mick's belly during a maternal care consultation at Mick's home in Sacramento on Feb. 6, 2024. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

Midwives could help fill maternity gaps

Large studies of birth center and at-home birth outcomes show that when trained midwives care for low-risk patients, cesarean section and preterm birth rates decrease while breastfeeding rates and reports of satisfactory birth experiences increase. Severe outcomes and deaths of mother and baby are exceedingly rare and similar to the rates found in planned hospital births. UCSF researchers also found that community midwives see patients more frequently before and after birth and are able to catch complications early.

The majority of Medi-Cal births — more than 80% — are babies of color. They and their mothers suffer some of the worst infant and maternal health outcomes. Even though the state has made improvements overall, it has struggled to curb severe pregnancy complications and death among Black women and babies. Black women of all income levels are more than four times as likely as white women to die from pregnancy-related complications and their babies are nearly three times as likely to die within a year, according to state data.

Physicians deliver the vast majority of babies in California, and while the percentage of babies delivered by certified nurse midwives has increased slightly in the past decade most certified nurse midwives work in hospital maternity wards under doctors. Often when maternity services end, providers leave the area.

At least 46 hospitals have closed maternity wards since 2012, leaving a dozen counties without a single hospital delivering babies, a CalMatters investigation found.

Smith, with the midwifery learning collaborative, said historically state laws and policies have supported physician-only maternity care.

"It's not safe anymore to do that," Smith said. "We have a maternity desert situation. Literally hospitals are closing, and birth centers will be a necessary strategy for that."

One of her last California patients

Midwife Madeleine Wisner speaks with Chloé Mick during a maternal care consultation at Mick's home in Sacramento on Feb. 6, 2024. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

In a cozy house in Sacramento's Oak Park neighborhood, Wisner has Chloé Mick lie back on her couch while her kids and husband play outside.

Wisner measures the length of Mick's uterus, feels for the baby's position and they both listen to the baby's heartbeat. Mick is 25 weeks pregnant and tired.

"I feel the most depleted probably just from having two other children that I hope I have the inner strength to not get a bad attitude during the process and make it through," Mick tells Wisner.

Wisner responded, "Has it occurred to you that having a bad attitude is OK?"

Mick is planning a home birth, and Wisner assures her that going to the hospital would not be "giving up." It would be listening to her body's needs and responding appropriately. They make plans for what to do if the baby is breech or if Wisner's New Zealand visa comes before Mick gives birth. When Mick's second child was born, she was on Medi-Cal and Wisner was the only midwife who would take her.

"(The hospital) really feels like a business. You're in and out, and you don't have a rapport or relationship with them... It feels like your bodily autonomy is taken away," Mick said. "And then you look back, and you wish you had done things different."

Midwife Madeleine Wisner uses a fetal doppler on Chloé Mick's belly during a maternal care consultation at Mick's home in Sacramento on Feb. 6, 2024. Wisner is listening to the fetal heartbeat. Photo by Miguel Gutierrez Jr., CalMatters

Wisner wishes her birth center's story had ended differently. Her practice finally had enough patient volume to maybe be sustainable, she said, but the other community midwives who worked with her didn't want to argue with Medi-Cal insurers day in and day out. Over the past five years, Wisner estimates she poured \$250,000 into the birth center to keep it open. It's a big reason why she's leaving California for another country where she'll make \$60,000 a year working four days a week with a team of other midwives.

"There was always this promise that the system would be reformed, you know, Medi-Cal is gonna get reformed," Wisner said. "I was really let down."

Supported by the California Health Care Foundation (CHCF), which works to ensure that people have access to the care they need, when they need it, at a price they can afford. Visit www.chcf.org to learn more. ★



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Governor Newsom Announces New Appointment To Sacramento Superior Court

Sacramento Superior Court News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Gov. Gavin Newsom recently appointed Richard C. Miadich, of Sacramento County, to the Sacramento Superior Court bench.

“The court welcomes the addition of Mr. Miadich and the experience he will bring to the Sacramento County bench,” Presiding Court Judge Bunmi O. Awoniyi said.

Miadich has served as chair of the California Fair Political Practices Commission since 2019. The commission is responsible for regulating statewide campaign finance, governmental ethics, and lobbying activity.

Prior to his appointment to the FPPC, Miadich worked at Olson Hagel & Fishburn LLP from 2005 to 2018, where he held several positions including managing partner, partner, and associate. The practice focused on litigation matters involving election and campaign finance law, education law, government and administrative law, and constitutional law. He also assisted in the firm’s political advising, primarily in areas of elections and initiatives.

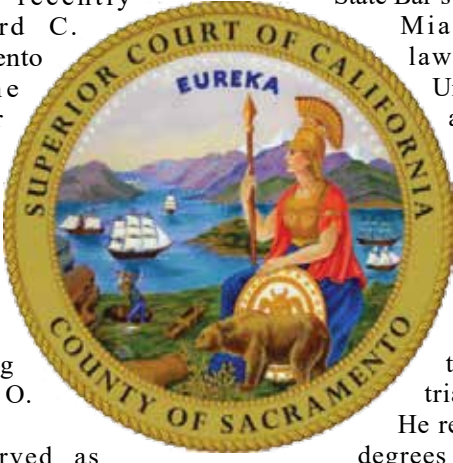
Miadich has litigated matters at the trial and appellate levels in California, including the California Supreme Court, and has represented clients before state administrative agencies. He has also participated in matters before the United States Supreme Court, the United States Courts of Appeals for the Seventh and Ninth Circuits, and the United States District Courts for the Northern and Eastern Districts of California.

Miadich was an at-large director of the Sacramento County Bar Association Board of Directors. He also served on the Board of Directors of the Sacramento County Bar Foundation, the charitable arm of the Sacramento County Bar

Association. Previously, Miadich also served on the Executive Committee of the Public Law Section of the California State Bar and was the assistant editor of the State Bar’s Public Law Journal.

Miadich earned his law degree from the University of California at Davis in 2002. While there, he served as a member of the U.C. Davis Law Review, externed with the California State Assembly Judiciary Committee, and participated in the school’s trial practice program. He received his bachelor’s degrees in political science and history from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1998.

Miadich fills the vacancy created by the appointment of Judge Daniel J. Calabretta to the federal bench.



Richard C. Miadich, of Sacramento County.
Photo Courtesy of Sacramento County

Dignity Health Named to Newsweek’s America’s Greatest Workplaces 2024 for Diversity



Diversity is a widely discussed topic – and it remains a crucial factor as people look for an employer or a business partner. Photo Courtesy of Dignity Health

Dignity Health News Release

REDDING, CA (MPG) - Dignity Health announced today that it has been recognized for the second consecutive year as one of America’s Greatest Workplaces for Diversity 2024 by Newsweek and Plant-A Insights Group. This survey of over 220,000+ individuals included representation at over 1.5 million companies in America.

The esteemed list features the top large and mid-size companies recognized by their employees, via an anonymous online survey, for genuinely respecting and valuing individuals from different walks of life.

“Dignity Health has long been dedicated to creating a workplace that values equity and inclusion,” shares Julie J. Sprengel, California Region President, CommonSpirit Health. “By fostering diversity within our workforce, we are better equipped to meet the needs of the unique communities we serve.”

Many different genders,

racess, nationalities, sexual orientations, and identities are represented at Dignity Health hospitals and clinics, but the focus and commitment around diversity is more than that. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) ensures everyone has the opportunity to be involved, developed, empowered, and trusted by Dignity Health.

Being recognized on Newsweek’s list underscores Dignity Health’s belief that a diverse workforce brings a variety of perspectives, leading to innovative solutions and better outcomes for both employees and patients. Some of our proudest achievements include:

-Dignity Health hospitals have been recognized by the Healthcare Equity Index (HEI), a program of the Human Rights Campaign. The HEI is the nation’s foremost benchmarking survey of healthcare facilities on policies and practices dedicated to the equitable treatment and inclusion of their LGBTQ+ patients, visitors, and employees.

-CommonSpirit Health

has entered into a historic 10-year, \$100 million dollar partnership with Morehouse School of Medicine that will increase development of Black and minority physicians by ensuring that a minimum of 300 additional underrepresented providers complete their residency training. Three new residency programs are under development in Dignity Health’s California Region.

-Dignity Health prioritizes cultural competency training for all employees to provide care that is highly sensitive to the concerns of those who are marginalized.

“Diversity is a widely discussed topic – and it remains a crucial factor as people look for an employer or a business partner. Newsweek and market-data research firm Plant-A Insights are proud to introduce “America’s Greatest Workplaces for Diversity 2024,” highlighting companies that are committed to offering diverse and inclusive work environment,” shared Nancy Cooper, Global Editor in Chief for Newsweek.



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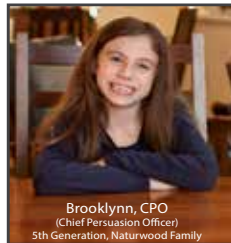
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