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Pocket News

VOL 33 • ISSUE 04 *Bringing You Community News For Over 30 Years* FEBRUARY 23, 2024

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An Ode to “Crazy Wheels”



DeAnn Baker stands with her dad, Wally “Crazy Wheels” Baker, in his room at The Waterleaf at Land Park. Photo by Mitch Barber

By Mitch Barber

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Larry Shelton was six or seven years old when he started going to West Capital Raceway in West Sacramento. Why did he go? Shelton said, “They had all these guys who were really good.” Shelton is now 64.

He remembers often reading, “Baker Wins!” in The Sacramento Bee, and clipping it out of the paper to keep; the namesake West Capital Raceway legend is Wally “Crazy Wheels” Baker. As a young child Shelton was able to get his picture taken with Mr. Baker, who now lives at The Waterleaf at Land Park, an assisted living facility — the same place where Shelton’s mother passed away. In a recent interview for this article, Shelton said, “A couple

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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

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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 2



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California Wildlife Photo of the Year Winner Announced

Local Girl Scouts Sharpen Entrepreneurship Skills

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. ★

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. ★

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An Ode to Wally “Crazy Wheels” Baker



A family photo with Wally Baker seated in the front row with sunglasses, and his wife, Connie Baker, to his right. Photos courtesy of DeAnn Baker

Continued from Page 1
weeks ago I stopped by and saw him.”

“Crazy Wheels” doesn’t race like he used to, but his room is like a shrine, reminding him of his younger years with a bevy of old racing photographs and plaques on the wall. His days now consist of activities he enjoys like bingo, listening to music performances, and dancing.

He is 96 years old, born in Sacramento, and his daughter DeAnn Baker assisted with the interview in the Waterleaf’s lounge. She would occasionally write something down to communicate with Mr. Baker; his hearing abilities have declined with age.

Despite his advanced age, Mr. Baker answered questions enthusiastically, occasionally channeling his younger self, describing his work on engines. It was like a time machine: “You started out with a stock engine... Bigger pistons; special racing pistons... You polish the engines... You cut the bottom off... You cut the flywheel all off... I did my own work.”

Mr. Baker would visit junkyards for parts and work on his cars in the evenings.

As far as racing goes, Mr. Baker spent much of his time at West Capital Raceway — where Gary Gerould was the P.A. announcer and there were destruction derbies at half-time — but he made his name at other tracks, as well, like those in San Francisco, Calistoga, and L.A.

In a telephone interview, Gerould said, “Wally was always a championship contender — A tremendous competitor.”

He gave an anecdote expressing Mr. Baker’s intensity: “I remember one time, there was some kind of official’s call Wally did not like.” Mr. Baker came up to the broadcasting booth. Gerould explained what happened next: “I was receiving the full wrath of his fury.” But Mr. Baker realized he was barking up the wrong tree. Gerould said that in the end, “Everything was fine. I was the wrong target.”

Some races were 100 laps, though most were 25. In 1972, Tognotti’s sponsored three 100-lap races at West Capital. Tognotti had a 1972 Oldsmobile Cutlass for the overall winner of the Tri-Holiday Sweepstakes. Mr. Baker won the first two, on Memorial Day and the 4th of July, and only needed to place 20th in the final race on Labor Day, but he won the third race outright, winning the car.

In the 70s Mr. Baker spent much time racing in Australia where he drove his trademark #100 car.

He won often, but there were times he didn’t win. When he was asked about crashes, he said he was in “tons of ‘em,” also saying, “Oh, yeah. I’ve had bad crashes.”

His worst crash had him unconscious for two days and incoherent for two weeks. Despite the danger involved with car racing, Baker said, “I raced bikes. Motorcycle racing was more dangerous.”

His daughter DeAnn added, “He flipped a lot



Wally Baker’s #100 racecar on display in Australia, patriotically decorated.

of times. He had a lot of injuries, a number of concussions. In fact, we kind of think his state of mind right now is partially due to the number of concussions he had, kind of like the football players. He says all the time, ‘It’s a miracle. Can you believe I’m still alive?’” This writer found Mr. Baker easy to talk to and still relatively sharp at 96.

In West Sacramento, DeAnn said the race crowd would hang out at Yolo Club, Vince’s, and Club Pheasant. Today Mr. Baker has dinner with family and friends on Wednesdays. His favorite dish is Mexican: steak chicana.

When asked about his wife, who wasn’t into car racing according to DeAnn, he said, “I like everything about my wife.” She is to be 95 years old in May, and still takes care of herself in the Hollywood Park home that they bought in 1953. That’s more than 70 years ago. In the game of longevity, “Baker wins!” indeed.

★



Wally Baker standing by one of his earlier hardtops, before they evolved into super-modified racing cars.



Wally Baker, left, sits with Larry Shelton who is holding a photograph of them standing together more than 50 years ago in front of one of Baker's racecars. Photo courtesy of Larry Shelton



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Go 4 Pizza Makes National News



The outside view of Go 4 Pizza’s Rancho Cordova location. Photos by David Nguyen, G Tour Photos

Go 4 Pizza News Release

RANCHO CORDOVA, RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Go 4 Pizza, a popular local restaurant with locations in both Rancho Cordova and Rancho Murieta, CA has been honored as one of the top 35 pizzerias to watch for in 2024. Owners Mark and Donna Kendro say: “We’re thrilled to announce that Go 4 Pizza in Rancho Cordova, CA & Rancho Murieta, CA has been recognized by Pizza Today as one of the top 35 pizzerias to watch in the US in 2024! Pizza Today is the leading pizza publication in the United States. Out of 44,000 pizzerias in the United States, Go 4 Pizza

has stood out and earned this prestigious honor in the Pizza Industry. Pizza Today felt our total operation, from sales and employee programs to community outreach, marketing, and our family- friendly interior design is justified to be highlighted in the pizza industry. This is a tremendous achievement in our industry and reflects the dedication and passion of our team in delivering delicious and exceptional pizzas to our community. We couldn’t have achieved this without the continued support of our amazing customers! We couldn’t be more honored to make their list.” Go 4 Pizza opened in 2009, and since then, has

seen much success. But what sets them apart from other pizzerias is that it is a center for communities and has heavy community involvement. They support local schools and sports teams by having fundraisers throughout the year, including offering their party room and party patio at no costs to sports teams’ parties. Go 4 Pizza also includes live music, weekly trivia, paint night, corn hole tournaments, comedy nights, and much more. To see their menu, locations, and more, find Go 4 Pizza’s website here. To keep up with Go 4 Pizza, follow on Instagram @go4pizza2.0. ★



Inside of the Rancho Murieta location.



The party room at the Go 4 Pizza Rancho Cordova location, available to rent out.



Some of the tasty selections at Go 4 Pizza.

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

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

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.

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
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**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
Sutcliffe 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 band leaders 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

★

Community Worship

River's Edge Church

6449 Riverside Blvd. • 391-9845

Sunday Worship: 10:00am

www.recsac.org

Saint Anthony Parish

660 Florin Road • 428-5678

Sunday Masses: 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. and Saturday Vigil 5:00 pm

Daily Mass: 8:00 a.m Monday through Friday • www.stasac.org

Greenhaven Lutheran Church

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Worship 10:15 a.m.

www.greenhavenlutheran.org

A graphic banner with a dark background. On the left, the text "WE SUPPORT FIRST RESPONDERS" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. To the right of the text is the MPG logo, which consists of the letters "MPG" in a stylized font, with a small star above the "P", all enclosed within a white oval. On the far right, there is a close-up, black and white photograph of a police vehicle's emergency light bar.

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 best ways we can continue to tackle the housing crisis is to reduce



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

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

Management Act, Unfair 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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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 under-represented 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.

★

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



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

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.

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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 'Momnibus' 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 Momnibus Act" three years ago. It required Medi-Cal to cover postpartum care for a full year after birth — the period when most maternal deaths happen — and added doula benefits. In January, rate increases for California doulas made them the highest-paid in the nation.

But state regulations simply aren't designed to accommodate the services community midwives provide, UCSF researchers found.

For example, the Medi-Cal application until recently asked midwives to list a supervising physician even though licensed midwives are authorized to practice independently. Providers also said most community midwives conduct home visits during pregnancy and especially after birth, but Medi-Cal billing policies make it difficult to get reimbursed for services that happen outside of a clinical facility.

"The overarching policy issue for licensed midwives in California is that we continue to be regulated under a very dysfunctional arrangement," said Rosanna Davis, president of the California Association of Licensed Midwives.

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

Wisner, who served mostly Medi-Cal patients, said on average insurance reimbursed just 17% of her costs — roughly \$1,451 out of \$8,500 for a full course of prenatal, birth and postpartum care — and frequently took months to pay her.

"We've had people have two or three babies with us before we get paid for

the first one," Wisner said.

The state is trying to make improvements, said Holly Smith, co-lead of the California Midwifery Learning Collaborative, but the system is still "failing a lot of people." The midwifery learning collaborative is a five-state initiative aimed at improving access to midwife care. The state agency that oversees Medi-Cal recently joined, Smith said.

In an emailed statement, the Department of Health Care Services said it is working closely with the midwifery learning collaborative to help midwives "successfully navigate and work within Medi-Cal." The department is using a document drafted by the collaborative to "continue making program and policy improvements" on issues related to billing and applications, the statement said.

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."

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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



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’s 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.



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+ NO
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WITH MONTHLY PAYMENTS IF
PAID IN FULL WITHIN 1 YEAR**

If the purchase balance is not paid in full within the promotional period interest will be charged to your account from the purchase date.**



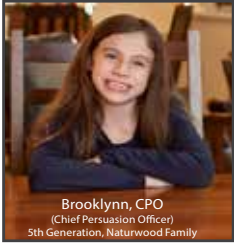
HOME FURNISHINGS

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**The Wells Fargo Furnishings credit card is issued by Wells Fargo Financial National Bank. ONE YEAR Special Financing applies to qualifying purchases of \$1,500 or more charged with approved credit and 35% down payment. Minimum monthly payments are required during the promotional ONE YEAR period. Interest will be charged to your account from the purchase date at the APR for Purchases if the purchase balance is not paid in full within the promotional ONE YEAR period. Paying only the minimum monthly payment will not pay off the purchase balance before the end of the promotional period. For new accounts, the APR for purchases is 28.99%. If you are charged interest in any billing cycle, the minimum interest charge will be \$1.00. This information is accurate as of 1/01/2024 and is subject to change. For current information, call us at 1-800-431-5921. *Since the State of California requires that tax be paid on all retail sales, we reduce the purchase price by an amount equal to the tax on the reduced purchase price except “Special Buys”, all “Mega Clearance”, Serta Arctic and iComfort products. Offers not available in conjunction with any other promotion, discount, or financing. Offers not available on previous purchases. Sale ends 2/25/24.