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'Nellie,' the Fair Oaks Icon



Nellie is a neighborhood star! Children love the Little Library, too. Photo by Judy Andrews

By Judy Andrews

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - Shortly after moving into their Fair Oaks home in 2008, Wendy and Brian Branine went searching online for building supplies and discovered an ad for a “free elephant.”

“Who wouldn’t click on the ad?” quipped Wendy. The Branine’s decided they needed to have the 7-foot-tall elephant and brought it home using a neighbor’s truck. After dropping the elephant off in their front yard, the couple drove to the Bay Area to pick up more supplies. When they returned home, they were met with an astounding sight.

“When we drove up, there were cars in the street, kids in the yard, and people were lined up taking photos with our elephant,” shared Wendy. “The neighbors insisted we keep her in the front yard, so we did!”

In fact, the Branine’s designed

their new front yard around “Nellie,” who Brian named after a 1983 Toy Dolls punk rock song.

That’s how Nellie the Elephant became an accidental icon and a local landmark.

Today, the smiling elephant is winning awards and was voted “Best Hidden Treasure in Fair Oaks” two years in a row!

“Nellie dresses for all occasions and her outfits are never the same,” said Wendy. The Branine’s turned a third garage into closet space for all of Nellie’s wardrobe supplies, and they often take requests from neighborhood children on what she should wear next.

In 2013, Nellie had a complete makeover. Brian explained how the elephant began to look a little tired following years of children climbing and sitting on her. “A friend helped deconstruct her, and we added brackets for strength

and chicken wire to her body,” he shared. “Nellie’s burlap skin was dipped in dry mud covered with several coats of elephant gray paint. To create wrinkles, we used more than 650 binder clips.”

The Branine’s installed and maintain a Little Library next to the elephant with a bench for children to sit and read.

“Nellie is truly an ambassador for our neighborhood and beyond,” said Wendy, adding that people like to stop by and chat or often gather at the Little Library.

The iconic elephant has become so popular, she’s even considered an Historical Landmark in Fair Oaks by Google Maps and a Level 5 Pokemon Gym in Pokemon GO.

“Nellie brings people together and she makes everyone smile,” shared Wendy. “She has truly taken on a life of her own, quite by accident, but much to our delight!” ★

MathAlive! - Where Mathematics Meets Imagination

Story and photo
by Elise Speiss

SACRAMENTO REGION - (MPG) - “2THEXTREME! MathAlive!,” the newest exhibit at the Aerospace Museum of California at McClellan Park, has 40 unique interactive exhibits to inspire students and their families to discover the world of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). The exhibit runs through May 31. Museum hours are from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursdays through Sundays.

In a world where mathematics is often relegated to the realm of classroom tedium, the MathAlive! exhibition emerges as a vibrant testament to the beauty ever present and the sheer fun of math. This large-scale, interactive showcase is a journey through the mathematical bedrock of our everyday lives, designed to

captivate families and students alike. With an emphasis on engagement and hands-on learning, MathAlive! proves that math is not just about numbers and equations—it’s a key to unlocking a world of possibilities.

Math is everywhere. From the way we play to the technology we use, math serves as a foundational building block, shaping our experiences and innovations. The exhibit highlights this concept, ensuring visitors leave with a newfound appreciation for the math that surrounds us, often hidden in plain sight.

By discovering math in unexpected places, the exhibit ventures into the realms of sports, music, fashion and entertainment, revealing the surprising ways in which mathematical principles are essential to creativity and artistry. At the heart of MathAlive! are its interactive exhibits.

Extreme Sports: Visitors can design and test virtual snowboards, exploring the geometry that influences their performance, or experience the thrill of a snowboarding simulator, embodying the physics of snow sports.

Fashion and Design: Here, the fusion of geometry and creativity takes center stage. Participants can play with geometric patterns, delve into fabric design and see their ideas come to life in 3D garment models.

The Science Behind Video Games: Offering insights into the mathematical backbone of game design, this area allows attendees to peek behind the curtain of video game programming and coding, offering the chance to create a simple video game.

Robotics: By programming miniature Mars rovers, visitors engage directly with principles of navigation

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Measles Exposure at UC Davis

Sacramento County
News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County Public Health (SCPH) confirms one case of measles in a child who was seen at the UC Davis Medical Center Emergency Department on March 5, 2024, between 12 p.m. and 5 p.m.

Unvaccinated persons or those with unknown vaccination status who were in the UC Davis Medical Center Emergency Department during the aforementioned time are at risk of developing measles from 7 to 21 days after being exposed. These individuals should do the following:

Review their immunization and medical records to determine if they are protected against measles. People who have not had measles infection previously or who have not received three measles immunization may not be protected from the measles virus. These individuals should talk with a healthcare provider about receiving measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) immunization.

Contact by phone or email and notify their health care provider as soon as possible about a potential exposure if they are pregnant, an infant, have a weakened immune system and/or are not immunized, regardless of vaccination history. Do not go to your provider in-person or go to the emergency department for potential exposure.

Monitor themselves for illness with fever and/or an unexplained rash from 7 days to 21 days after their exposure (the time period when symptoms may develop); if symptoms develop, stay at home and call a healthcare provider immediately. If you become ill enough that you need to seek medical attention in person, please wear a mask and inform the registration staff that you have had a measles exposure so that appropriate isolation can occur in the healthcare setting.

UC Davis Medical Center, Sacramento County Public Health (SCPH) and Public Health and Health Departments in surrounding counties are contacting identified patients to assess their immunization status and provide guidance to individuals who were exposed. ★

**WE SUPPORT
OUR MILITARY**

Five Solutions to Some of California's Woes



Commentary by Ted Gaines

California's biggest problem is up for debate. Sadly, there are many contenders vying for that dubious distinction. But instead of focusing on the problems, we need to be focused on solutions. Without rank, here are five chronic California problems where state leadership has completely failed and one simple idea for each to help improve governance and boost our quality of life.

Budget: This budget year, California faces a nearly \$40 billion deficit. To avoid such massive shortfalls, California should adhere to the state's "Gann Limit," a law passed by the voters in 1979 that limits annual budget growth to a combination of population growth and inflation. The Gann Limit is ignored or avoided by legislative trickery, but it provides a simple structure that would avoid the massive budget growth that contributes to massive deficits whenever state revenues drop. Gann addresses California's spending problem.

Housing: One of many reasons housing is so expensive is excessive government fees, which can run as high as \$135,000 for

building a single-family residence. Right now, an El Dorado County man is battling these fees in his *Sheetz v. County of El Dorado*, California case currently before the US Supreme Court. I hope he wins, but the state doesn't need to be forced into fairness by a court decision. Developer fees serve a specific purpose but have morphed into a revenue source for governments. They should all be reviewed to ensure they are meeting their purpose only and not as a backdoor funding source for general government operations. This could help lower housing costs.

Crime: California's empowered criminals do not fear punishment and retailers are paying the price. Governor Newsom just recently witnessed this himself at a Target store. Thieves can afford to be cavalier, and casually stroll out of stores with arms full of merchandise because we've essentially eliminated punishment for shoplifting anything under \$950 in value. I'm encouraging Californians to sign the petition to repeal Prop. 47 that has wreaked havoc on our state and give prosecutors the ability to charge smaller retail thefts as felonies once again.

Insurance: The only thing leaving the state faster than its residents might be its insurers, who are pulling out of all or some of California's markets seemingly by the day. California must repeal Prop. 103 and make it easier for insurance companies to adjust rates and offerings. While this may lead to some price

increases in the short term, providing a framework for more insurers to write policies here will lead to more competition, more choice, and more options for consumers.

Homelessness: This problem may be most emblematic of the California Way, where taxpayers pay the most but get the least. Cities in some of the state's most beautiful and valuable areas have been overrun by a permanent cadre of homeless, many of whom are obviously mentally ill and who, by their own admission, are addicts. The state must dramatically expand the concept of forced care in Governor Newsom's "Care Court" proposal, to promote the health and safety of the homeless, but also to reclaim our streets, parks, and sidewalks for their intended purposes.

President Reagan once said there are no easy answers, but there are simple answers. And it won't get better overnight. California holds all the promise it ever did and it can again be a national leader in all that is right and good. It has been in decline, but this can all be turned around by showing the political will to implement simple ideas that would reverse some of the state's chronic problems. With the right choices, our future is bright.

Sen. Ted Gaines (Ret.) is a member of the State Board of Equalization representing 34 counties in Northern, Eastern and Southern California. For more information, visit www.boe.ca.gov/Gaines. ★

United Way California Capital Region to Hold United in Purpose Gala Fundraiser



United Way California Capital Region held its inaugural gala last year to celebrate its 100th anniversary. Tickets are on sale for United Way's 2024 United in Purpose Gala on April 20. Photo courtesy of United Way

United Way California Capital Region News Release, Kristin Thebaud Communications

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Community members are invited to come together on April 20 for an evening of impact at United Way California Capital Region's United in Purpose Gala, presented by U.S. Bank. The event, which will take place at Memorial Auditorium in Sacramento, will raise funds toward United Way's Anniversary Goal to raise \$3 million to help 10,000 local children excel in school by 2025. The evening will include dinner, an inspirational program, fund a need, silent and live auctions, Golden Ticket Raffle, VIP reception with a chance to win a trip to New Orleans, and more. For tickets and sponsorship opportunities: <http://www.uwccr.org/gala>.

"The United in Purpose Gala is more than just a celebration; it's an opportunity for us to come together as a community and make a tangible impact on the lives of local children," said Dr. Dawnté Early, president and CEO, United Way California Capital Region. "With your support, we know our ambitious goal of raising \$3 million to help 10,000 children excel in school by 2025 is entirely achievable. Together, we can create a brighter future for our children and build a stronger, healthier, more

compassionate community."

More than 450 community members came together last spring for United Way's inaugural gala to celebrate the organization's 100th anniversary and to raise \$640,000 to help local children succeed in school.

Founded in 1923, United Way California Capital Region has been a transformative force in the Sacramento community for more than a century, serving Amador, El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, and Yolo counties. The local United Way's Square One approach to ending poverty is grounded in a public health model and uses a three-fold strategy to address community needs from birth and beyond: helping kids excel in school, investing in families and strengthening schools. At United Way's core is the philosophy that families possess the blueprint for their success. United Way supplies books to young children, provides literacy tutoring, addresses housing and food security, leads the region's largest tax preparation initiative, and launched Sacramento's first guaranteed income program. United Way works across diverse school districts, providing case management for foster youth and leading the Community Schools initiative in West Sacramento. For more information or to make a donation, visit www.YourLocalUnitedWay.org. ★

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Create Hope in the World



Five students spoke in the Fair Oaks Rotary Speech Contest on March 4. From right are first-place winner Adiya Clurman, Bella Vista High School 12th-grader; second-place winner Kiyomi Fielden, a Bella Vista 10th-grader; third-place winner Fia Nicolaescu, Bella Vista 10th-grader; and tied for fourth-place, Jocelyn Monroe-Holder, Meraki High School 12th-grader; and Jackson Cannon, Sacramento Waldorf School, 12th-grader.

Story and photos by Margaret Snider

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA (MPG) - The Fair Oaks Rotary Club has been holding its high school speech contest for more than 20 years. This year, the subject for the five- to eight-minute speeches was, "Create Hope in the World." Three Fair Oaks high schools contributed contestants: Bella Vista High School chose three students to participate, Meraki High School one, and Sacramento Waldorf School one student.

Master of Ceremonies Nick Broad, the Speech Competition chair for 2024, introduced the contest. "You're already the best and brightest in your high schools by showing the courage and the tenacity and the hard work to show up," Broad said. "Have some fun during the process." The students remained anonymous to the judges and the audience until after all had spoken and the judging was completed.

First-place winner was Bella Vista High School 12th-grader Adiya Clurman. She wrote an entirely different speech at first, she said after the contest, but after talking with her parents about hope and other things, "I thought that the meaning of life was, 'Leave the world better than you found it.'" She based the speech around that feeling. Adiya participated in Poetry Out Loud in seventh-grade, and later on in debate and drama. As the winner, Adiya received \$250 and will go on to the regional semi-finals. The winner of that contest will advance to the finals in Reno.

Second-place went to Kiyomi Fielden, a Bella Vista High School 10th-grader, who said this was the first time she had ever done anything like this contest. The speech's message included that the flame of hope is born and lives within us and can be found in the simple things of everyday

life. Kiyomi received a \$100 prize. Another Bella Vista 10th-grader, Fia Nicolaescu, won third-place. Her talk gave examples of people who had exercised hope in very difficult circumstances. She quoted Martin Luther King, who said, "Only light can drive out darkness."

Two 12th-graders tied for fourth-place: Jackson Cannon from Sacramento Waldorf School and Jocelyn Monroe-Holder from Meraki High School. Jackson noted the connection of hope to community to mental health and that the three form a "positive feedback loop." Amid a personal sense of hopelessness, Jocelyn said, "What did I have to create hope within my world?" She found it in looking outward in service and still continues volunteering and helping others. These final three contestants received \$50 each.

Judging was carried out by Fair Oaks Rotarians Mazzy Chirwa and Dave Williams, led by head judge Monica Eisel, not a Fair Oaks Rotarian but a former international speech competitor. Rotarian Doris Fulgham was the timekeeper.

"It's a shining moment for these students, they are really exceptional young people," Broad said. "You regularly go, 'Wow, we can't tell who should be the winner, they're all so good.'"

Rotarian Dave Holzknicht helped organize the event, especially in developing relationships with the high school faculties.

Fair Oaks Rotary President Dave Claugus has been a Rotary member for about 12 years and has been associated with the Fair Oaks speech contest some four times.

"I'm hoping each one of them comes away from the experience not only smiling but feeling better about themselves," Claugus said. "That's confidence. I think that's important as you go forward in life." ★

American Legion BBQ & Boots Dinner And Dance

American Legion Post 383 News Release

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - American Legion Post 383 is hosting a dinner and dance featuring country western music by the Brisco County band and catered by Texas Roadhouse (sirloin steak or BBQ chicken with all the fixins) on Saturday, April 13, 2024.

Location: Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Hall, 8990 Kruitof Way, Fair Oaks (off Hazel).

Time: No-host Saloon at 5 p.m., Dinner at 6 p.m., Music at 7 p.m.!

There will be drawings for sensational prizes throughout the evening!

Donations are \$40 per person, Children under 12 - \$25 each. (Limited # of tickets).

Donations are to support our local Veterans and Community programs.

Time to get your country on (no spurs on boots) and have a finger-licking good time!!!

For tickets, visit the VFW Hall, or call and leave a message at (916) 825-2977 for AL 383 Commander, Don Lemmon. ★

MathAlive! - Where Mathematics Meets Imagination

Continued from page 1

and engineering, confronting the complexities of robotic exploration.

The Mathematics of Architecture: This exhibit sheds light on the math behind iconic skyscrapers and gives visitors the opportunity to design their architectural marvels applying mathematical principles.

MathAlive!'s overarching mission is multifaceted: spark a lifelong interest in math, build confidence in math's accessibility, promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) careers, and revolutionize how visitors perceive mathematics. By transforming math from a dreaded school subject into a fascinating tool for exploration and innovation, MathAlive! aims to inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers, and mathematicians.

MathAlive! places a spotlight on a profound truth: mathematics permeates every facet of our lives. Whether in our leisure activities or the technology that powers our world, mathematics acts as an essential cornerstone, molding our experiences and driving innovation. The exhibition adeptly showcases this concept, ensuring visitors depart with an enhanced appreciation for the mathematics that envelops us, often concealed within the mundane.

So, whether you're a devout mathematician, an inquisitive learner or someone who always kept math at arm's length,



Math meets melody in this Math Alive! exhibit where robotics and instruments unite to compose a symphony of STEM harmony.

MathAlive! invites you on an adventure that promises to alter your perception of mathematics forever.

The Aerospace Museum of California is at 3200 Freedom Park Drive,

McClellan. For ticket prices, tours, education department and other information call 916-643-3192.

The Aerospace Museum of California is a Smithsonian Affiliate. ★

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Spring Into Fair Oaks

FORPD Mid-Year Budget on Track



Women in Business Expo vendor, Susan Aimes, talks to Sam Holly about Stars & Stripes Dog Rescue. Photo by Judy Andrews

By Judy Andrews, Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - The Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District is hosting a series of monthly pop-up events at Fair Oaks Park. These family-friendly events will occur the first Thursday of each month in conjunction with Food Truck Mania. The Fair Oaks chamber's popular Classic Car Show will return in June.

On March 7, the Fair Oaks Recreation and Parks District partnered with local business leader and Fair Oaks Honorary Mayor, Katie Yount, on a Women in Business Expo that featured more than two dozen local businesses and organizations owned or run by women.

Next month's pop-up event will be a Spring Craft Fair on April 4 from 5-8 p.m. at Fair Oaks Park.

It's going to be a busy spring in Fair Oaks! Check out the following activities.

KEY DATES & EVENTS

March 30 - Easter Eggstravaganza, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., Fair Oaks Park (11549 Fair Oaks Blvd.) Free event for the whole family.

March 31 - Event sponsor deadline for Taste of Fair Oaks. For questions, contact Kimberley Pitillo



Judy Andrews. Courtesy photo at (916) 967-2903.

April 4 - Spring Craft Fair & Food Truck Mania, 5-8 p.m., Fair Oaks Park (11549 Fair Oaks Blvd.) Free event for the whole family.

April 10 - Chamber After Hours Mixer & Ribbon Cutting, 5-7 p.m., Homewatch CareGivers (4777 Sunrise Blvd, Suite E). Pre-register at fairoakschamber.com.

April 13 - St. Mel School Annual Benefit Auction, 5-9 p.m., St. Mel Parish Hall (4745 Pennsylvania Ave.) For more information, contact Natasia Hawkins at (916) 505-4798 or stmelauction@gmail.com.

April 18 - Chamber Monthly Luncheon, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., The Boardwalk (9426 Greenback Lane). Pre-register at fairoakschamber.com.

April 18 - Woman's Thursday Club Scholarship Luncheon & Fashion Show, North Ridge

Country Club (7600 Madison Ave). This annual fundraiser provides local high school seniors with scholarships. The event is sold out for 2024.

April 18 - Meraki High School's Exhibition Night, 5-7 p.m., Meraki High School (10700 Fair Oaks Blvd.) The public is invited to view student creations.

May 2 - Fair Oaks Summer Preview & Food Truck Mania, 5-7 p.m., Fair Oaks Park (11549 Fair Oaks Blvd.). Hear what the Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District has planned this summer.

May 4 - Big Day of Service. Pick a community-based project and sign up to lead or volunteer at bigdayofservice.com.

May 17 - Taste of Fair Oaks, 6-9:30 p.m., North Ridge Country Club (7600 Madison Ave.) Tickets go on sale April 1 at fairoakschamber.com.

Tuesdays - Fair Oaks Farmer's Market, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Fair Oaks Park (11549 Fair Oaks Blvd.) Open rain or shine.

CONNECT WITH US

For more information about the Fair Oaks Chamber, please go to fairoakschamber.com. For member or sponsorship questions, contact Kimberley Pitillo at (916) 967-2903 or info@fairoakschamber.com. ★ See you in Fair Oaks!

By Shaunna Boyd

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - The Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District (FORPD) Board of Directors considered updated bylaws at its February meeting for the Fair Oaks Recreation Foundation, a nonprofit fundraising entity that supports recreation, arts and entertainment within the district. The directors also serve as the board members for the foundation but they were advised that it should instead be controlled by a separate entity.

The updated bylaws, if approved, would allow for the dissolution of the foundation and simultaneous transfer of assets to the Fair Oaks Foundation for Leisure and the Arts (FOFLA), an existing nonprofit with a mission similar to that of the Foundation.

Vice-Chair Delinda Tamagni said she wants the Board to review the Fair Oaks Foundation for Leisure and the Arts' annual financial reports prior to the transfer of assets to see "how their funds are managed."

Director Darren Mounts agreed and suggested that they should look at a few years of reports "to see those ups and downs, what goes in and out; that way we have at least a benchmark going forward."

The main charitable actions that would move to the Fair Oaks Foundation for Leisure and the Arts are the administration of various scholarships, and Board Chair Ralph Carhart wondered whether the Fair Oaks Foundation for Leisure and the Arts would legally be able to abandon those scholarships in the future.

Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District Administrator Mike Aho explained that administering those scholarships aligns with the Fair Oaks Foundation for Leisure and the Arts' mission, and they will also be required to abide by their updated bylaws, which will include directives to administer the scholarships from restricted accounts. And the Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District directors will have up to two seats on the new Fair Oaks Foundation for Leisure and the Arts Board, so they will maintain a voice in future actions.

Aho said he will get the Fair Oaks Foundation for Leisure and the Arts' financial documents for the board to review and he requested that the board authorize up to \$2,000 for the district's attorneys to review the foundation's updated bylaws ahead of the directors' final vote on this matter at a future meeting.

The directors voted to approve the funding for the legal review of the foundation's bylaws.

Next, the Measure J Bond Oversight Committee's (BOC) annual report was presented to the board by Bond Oversight Committee member Kim Sarkovich. She said that the Bond

Oversight Committee reviewed Measure J expenditures from last year and found that all were "in compliance with the bond covenants."

The board also heard a mid-year budget review for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, looking at both expenditures and revenues.

On the expenditures side, \$2.27 million was budgeted for salaries and benefits and 56% has been expended so far (\$1.29 million). For services and supplies, \$1.49 million was budgeted and 53% has been expended (\$790,243). All district expenses are on track for this time of year, with no savings expected.

For revenue, the budget includes \$743,229 expected from special assessments from Gum Ranch Park, Fair Oaks Park, Phoenix Fields, and lighting and landscape districts, and 58% has been collected (\$429,702). Property taxes are budgeted at \$2.25 million and 56% has been collected (\$1.26 million). Revenue from use of money and property (which includes interest income, facility rentals, and cell tower leases) was budgeted at \$180,000 and 55% has been collected (\$100,356). Program revenue was budgeted at \$467,870 and 35% has been collected (\$161,679), which is in line with the budget projections since most of the district's major programs and events are offered in the spring and summer.

Board Chair Carhart said the mid-year budget review had "no big surprises," which is exactly what is wanted in a budget, and the report was officially received and filed.

The board next considered a change order for services from the district's architects, WMB, for work related to the Veteran's Memorial Amphitheatre and the Community Clubhouse.

"Our project obviously has been delayed," Aho said, and "we continuously need architectural services throughout this process." Aho said WMB provides valuable services to the district for what has turned out to be a very complex construction project: "They attend the construction meetings. They deal with any issues that come up through inspections that require changes in the design, or the implementation of that design. They've been doing an incredible job."

The change order requested amounts not to exceed \$36,000 for the clubhouse and \$59,800 for the amphitheatre, for a total request of \$95,800 for an 11-month extension for their services. The actual amount will be determined based on billable hours but the total cost will not exceed \$95,800.

Aho said that the contingency costs built into the initial contract have already been expended on unanticipated costs that cropped up during project, such as water intrusion issues in the Clubhouse.

The board voted to approve the change order to extend WMB's services. ★

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What Are They to Do?

Sacramento gave a homeless camp a lease as an experiment

By Marisa Kendall
CALMatters.org

When Sacramento changed its plan to demolish a homeless encampment on a vacant lot on Colfax Street, instead offering the homeless occupants a lease, activists and camp residents celebrated it as a win.

The first-of-its-kind deal, which allows the camp to remain in place and govern itself without city interference, was held up as a model Sacramento could replicate at future sites. Other cities, including San Jose, have said they're considering similar models, putting the success or failure of this encampment under the microscope.

A year later, Sacramento has not managed to reproduce the concept and has no plans to. Residents of the camp, who lack electricity or running water, complain they feel forgotten. And the county district attorney, claiming the site threatens public safety, has demanded the city clear the camp or risk prosecution.

Those troubles highlight the logistical and ethical dilemmas that come with setting aside outdoor spaces for homeless residents to go when there aren't enough beds indoors. And it comes at a time when officials across the state increasingly are turning to this last-ditch solution as they face mounting pressure to clear encampments away from sidewalks, parks, schools and other high-traffic public areas.

"The fact that people have a place where they can legally exist and not be threatened with arrest, not be run off and have to lose their belongings, where they can go to the bathroom with dignity, where there's trash pickup so they don't have to live in a place where there's trash all over, where service providers can find them regularly and they aren't going to lose contact with people as they work their way to housing — those are all good things," said Eric Tars, senior policy director of the National Homelessness Law Center. "But it would be even better if they were doing them indoors."

They Got A Lease, And They Make Their Own Rules

Camp Resolution, as the Sacramento camp is known, was started in 2022 by Sharon and Joyce Jones — a married couple in their 50s who found themselves homeless for the first time late in life. More than four-dozen people now live there, some in new-looking Bullet trailers provided by the city, and others in cars, tents and more dilapidated trailers and RVs.

Some residents have taken pains to make it more homey: Two potted plants hang from the hitch of one trailer, chickens roam the lot, and Sharon and Joyce are putting in a garden, using pallets to make raised planter beds.

"We try to make it as comfortable as possible," Joyce said, "but sometimes it's impossible."

Shortly after Joyce and her community occupied the city-owned, formerly vacant lot in 2022, city workers determined the camp was unsafe and needed to be demolished — as often happens in Sacramento and throughout California. But that's where the story takes an unusual turn. Residents of the camp, and their supporters, showed up in force to a city council meeting and persuaded council members to delay the sweep. About six months later, the city signed a lease allowing the camp to remain in place.

The lease, which advocacy group Safe Ground Sacramento signed on behalf of the Camp Resolution residents, was an experiment. Generally, similar programs are run by nonprofits contracted by a city. They often impose curfews, no-guest policies, sobriety requirements and other rules on residents. In exchange, they offer social services such as counseling or help finding permanent housing, and amenities such as showers and bathrooms.

"They don't think people experiencing homelessness are capable of governing themselves," Tars said. "Camp Resolution is different.



Joyce and Sharon Jones poke holes in a water bottle to water their garden next to their trailer at Camp Resolution on Feb. 28, 2024. The camp has no running water, so residents must rely on bottled water for all their needs. Photo by Fred Greaves for CalMatters



Jeanne Gillis cooks ground turkey over a wood fire beside her trailer at Camp Resolution on Feb. 28, 2024. Residents must rely on bottled water, generators, and wood fires because no utilities are provided at the camp. Photo by Fred Greaves for CalMatters

Safe Ground Sacramento, which leases the property from the city for free, takes a hands-off approach that lets residents run the camp and write their own rules. The city gave the residents a handful of residential trailers, set up portable toilets and a hand-washing station, and provided dumpsters and ongoing trash pickup. But that's it.

Many activist groups laud that model as a best practice, saying it's important to let the residents run, or at least help run, their own camp.

"When individuals in these encampments have a sense of ownership, then it can really lead to the camp being a place that they take pride in and that they are trying to keep in as good condition as possible," Tars said. "It gives a sense of responsibility to others in that community."

It also means minimal overhead for the city: The trailers provided to Camp Resolution residents came from the Federal Emergency Management Agency at no cost to the city of Sacramento, and adding the camp to the city's existing contract for trash pickup didn't add any additional expense.

But in the case of Camp Resolution, it also means residents are left to fend for themselves. The city doesn't provide electricity or running water. Community members donate food, some residents have generators, and a nonprofit used to bring a trailer with showers every other Sunday — but they recently stopped.

"It's not going very well," Joyce said. "I think that (the city) should do a little bit more."

The Camp Resolution lease says the city would provide up to 33 trailers. Residents ended up receiving just 16. But 51 people live at the camp, meaning some people sleep in tents, in their cars or in dilapidated trailers and RVs that leak in the rain and have sprouted mold.

The city wouldn't comment on the trailers — or anything else — citing a pending threat of prosecution from the county District Attorney's Office. City officials recently sent 40 trailers to a new safe sleeping site they opened on Roseville Road, which also has

and held underground storage tanks for diesel and gasoline, he said. It's not safe to camp on the contaminated soil, according to his letter. But only half of the site is paved, while the other half is bare dirt — and people live on both sides.

Ho's office did not set a specific deadline for the city to clear the encampment, leaving it unclear exactly what, if anything, will come of his threat.

When asked about Ho's next steps, Sonia Martinez Satchell, a spokesperson for the District Attorney's Office, indicated prosecution is still on the table.

"To date, the City has failed to move the unhoused off this toxic

has agreed to take up the case and will hear arguments next month. But for now, cities' hands remain largely tied if they lack enough shelter beds.

Safe sleeping sites take many different forms — and have a range of price tags. In August, after the city stalled in its attempts to open safe sleeping sites, Sacramento City Manager Howard Chan single-handedly tried to identify locations for the projects. He initially said Camp Resolution could be a model for future sites — because it cost the city so little to run, it would allow the city to open more sites than if they used more expensive models.

Instead, the city in January launched its next safe sleeping site, on Roseville Road, with more services, more oversight and a greater cost — \$3.2 million per year. The site has 60 rudimentary tiny homes and 40 trailers and is governed by a nonprofit contracted through the city.

But, due to an anticipated budget shortfall for the coming fiscal year, the city has no plans to launch additional safe sleeping sites, Swanson said. At a committee meeting last month, city staff predicted that by next year, the city's budget for homeless services would be short \$11 million. By the 2025-26 fiscal year, they expected to be short nearly \$39 million.

Life At Camp Resolution

There are about 800 people on the waitlist to get into Camp Resolution, according to Sharon and Joyce. Only six people from the camp have moved out and into permanent housing, they said. Just on the other side of the gate that separates Camp Resolution from the rest of the world, a group of people live in a cluster of cars parked haphazardly on the side of the road. Across the street, someone has erected a makeshift shack. RVs that serve as stand-in homes line the road.

Inside the gate, Sharon and Joyce tend to have the ultimate say in what goes, though there's also a council that meets on Thursday evenings to discuss camp issues. Things don't always go smoothly.

Last year a neighbor's dogs attacked Sharon and sent her to the hospital with multiple bite injuries. That led to new rules at the camp about pets. But Sharon and Joyce say it's hard to actually enforce the rules they impose.

"We need more structure," Sharon said.

As they showed off the different parts of their community, Sharon and Joyce expressed disapproval of a trash pile in the middle of the camp. "That can go in the trash can," Joyce said. It didn't take long. A few minutes later, residents could be seen picking up the garbage and carrying it to a nearby dumpster.

CalMatters Capitol reporter Jeanne Kuang contributed to this story. ★



Jeanne Gillis uses tubs to wash dishes next to her trailer at Camp Resolution on Feb 28, 2024. Photo by Fred Greaves for CalMatters

plumbed toilets and showers.

Several of the Camp Resolution residents are elderly, and some have serious medical issues that make living without reliable power and water difficult. One woman, who recently turned 60, is on dialysis and gets around on an electric mobility scooter that she leaves parked outside her trailer.

Most of the residents are women, some of whom wouldn't feel safe on the streets by themselves. Jeanne Gillis, 53, was cooking ground turkey over an open flame outside her trailer on a recent Wednesday. Gillis, who used to work as a medical patients' advocate, lost her housing two years ago when she got sick with lupus and could no longer work. She'd never been homeless before and didn't know what to do — so Sharon and Joyce took her under their wing. Now she's part of their tight-knit community.

"Thank God for everybody. Because it's hard," she said, tearing up. "I don't think I'd be here if it wasn't for everybody."

Camp Resolution Faces Legal Threat

Camp Resolution also faces an outside threat — Sacramento County District Attorney Thien Ho has demanded that the city close the camp. His office sent a letter to the city and Safe Ground Sacramento in November labeling the site a public health hazard. The site is contaminated by toxic chemicals left over from when it was used as a vehicle maintenance yard

waste site," she said in an emailed statement. "We will not waver from our commitment to protect public safety for all. As outlined in our letter, all available actions and recourse remain available."

But camp residents and the advocates working with them say they've heard nothing but silence from the District Attorney's Office since the November letter. That means the fate of those living at Camp Resolution is still up in the air.

Tim Swanson, spokesman for the City Manager's Office, said the city can't comment on any aspect of Camp Resolution because of the pending threat of prosecution.

Sharon and Joyce aren't concerned — they claim the camp isn't on the portion of the site that's contaminated. Ho's letter is just an excuse to try to kick them off the property, they said.

Sanctioned Homeless

Encampments In California

Faced with a massive shortage of affordable homes, desperate city officials across California are considering opening places where unhoused people can legally set up tents. The move could give them more power to clear encampments from around parks, schools, downtown zones and other high-profile areas. That's because unless cities have somewhere for displaced unhoused residents to go, the 2018 appellate case *Martin v. Boise* limits the extent to which they can clear encampments. That could change soon, as the Supreme Court

Jemuel Johnson Shares Society's Wonders with Readers



Jemuel Johnson. Courtesy photo

By Tamara Warta

Sacramento author Jemuel Johnson's new book, "21 Wonders (That You Don't Know)," tells the tale of influential figures that time has forgotten, including Nikola Tesla, Benjamin Banneker and John Brown.

Johnson also wrote the romance novel, "And The Tears Revived" in 2013,

and a collection of suspense tales, "Needles" in 2021.

Now, he has added historical accounts, recognizing heroes of the past to his repertoire.

"21 Wonders (That You Don't Know)" revolves around 21 unsung revolutionaries of yesteryear.

"I'm essentially giving them their flowers. Isn't that a wonderful thing?" Johnson said.

He is proud to provide recognition to those who did not necessarily receive it in their lifetime or ever for that matter.

"Unfortunately, many figures of massive influence are relegated to the shadows of history or are eventually acknowledged 200 years later," Johnson said. "Better late than never, I suppose."

A busy entertainment entrepreneur, the



Jemuel Johnson's latest book cover is shown here.

within a week during someone's lunch breaks," Johnson said. "This book is for people who have a lust for life, who engage with nonfiction, love harrowing, inspirational and aspirational storytelling, and are honest with themselves that they don't read 500-page books anyway."

Readers will find stories that tell the true struggles and dreams of each of the 21 individuals featured.

"I'm obsessed with people who have been through the fire for a desired result," Johnson said. "I want people so badly to own and develop their gifts. These gifts are their upper hand in life. This is not taught in our schools in a dynamic way."

Outside of his creative

endeavors, Johnson works in ride-sharing for both Uber and Lyft from 3 to 8 every morning for the past five years. The job includes airport drop offs, chatting with truck drivers and assisting those going to and from dialysis appointments.

The wide range of individuals that he interacts with daily serve as inspiration. Through these conversations, which include challenging circumstances such as dialysis treatments, Johnson receives inspiration by hearing and observing how everyone's life counts and the desire that others have to share their perspectives.

"It's an excellent way to meet new faces constantly in a private setting and receive massive amounts of information from people from all over the world," Johnson said.

If you're a history buff, love inspirational stories or just want to support a local author, consider adding "21 Wonders (That You Don't Know)" to your reading list.

Johnson focuses on speciality sales and corporate bulk orders, and has a collaboration with Forever 21.

And if you run into Johnson himself around town, you'll be able to land a signed copy of his latest venture.

"Catch me in traffic! I keep copies and a Sharpie on me at all times," said Johnson with great enthusiasm.

"21 Wonders (That You Don't Know)" can also be bought at thebookpatch.com, a marketplace for self-published books. ★

Arden-Arcade-based Johnson is a novelist and also a former TV host and producer of "Half Circle," which broadcast on Comcast On Demand (Channel 17) from 2009 to 2014.

Johnson values his readers and tries to write with the knowledge that many don't have much spare time.

"Wonders" is a book that can be finished

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Many Californians Rely on this Farmers Market Program. Newsom Wants to Cut It

By Sarah Portnoy, CALMatters.org

When we think of a farmers market in California, we usually picture vibrant displays of beautiful, albeit expensive, fruits and vegetables, and perhaps a tempting array of pricier prepared foods. However, the roots of farmers markets in California trace back to the late 1970s, when they first emerged in low-income areas.

They were designed to facilitate a direct connection between farmers and consumers, an arrangement that proved to be a win-win for both small-scale farmers and those seeking affordable, fresh produce.

Today, farmers markets may be more prevalent in affluent neighborhoods, but a key program has been working diligently to uphold their original spirit, making fresh fruits and vegetables accessible to all Californians. The Market Match program has successfully placed fresh produce into the shopping bags and kitchens of low-income Californians at more than 293 farmers markets across the state. Since 2010, this program has empowered shoppers who receive CalFresh benefits, allowing them to double their funds for exclusively California-grown fruits and vegetables.

Frank Tamborello, the executive director of Hunger Action Los Angeles, aptly describes the Market Match program as a “win-win-win.” It helps fight hunger while promoting healthy eating habits and supports California farmers, boosting the small-farm economy and contributing to environmentally sustainable agriculture.

Despite its evident benefits, the program faces a looming

threat from budget cuts as state leaders work to close a multibillion-dollar deficit. Gov. Gavin Newsom proposed a \$33.2 million cut from the three-year, \$35 million California Nutrition Incentive Program, a move that would effectively end Market Match once the remaining funds dry up. Since 2015, the state has supported the program by matching federal funds through a grant from CNIP, enabling substantial expansion over the past nine years.

Market Match has routinely reported increases in low-income shoppers using their benefits at farmers markets. Last year, 9% of the roughly 574,000 visits were first-timers, underscoring the program’s positive impact on both consumers and local farmers.

The potential loss of this program threatens low-income Californians’ nutrition, especially those who live in food deserts where corner stores and vacant lots are more prevalent than full-service grocery stores. In such neighborhoods, an orange can cost more than a soda, highlighting the disparities in accessing affordable, nutritious food.

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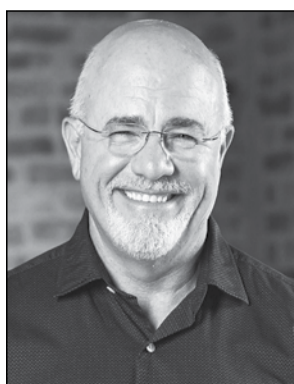
low-income shoppers using their benefits at farmers markets. Last year, 9% of the roughly 574,000 visits were first-timers, underscoring the program’s positive impact on both consumers and local farmers.

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The proposed cuts would also significantly impact rural farmers who rely on the revenue generated from weekly market sales. It’s a steady source of income in an era defined by its unpredictability.

In the wake of the pandemic, the number of food-insecure households in California surged as costs for fresh produce increased. A USC study last year revealed that 1 in 3 households in Los Angeles County experience food insecurity, indicating a dire need for programs like Market Match. Cutting this essential program would exacerbate the challenges faced by low-income shoppers in bringing home nutritious food for their families, compounding the intense pressure to simply put food on the table.

Access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food is a fundamental human right. As Californians confront the potential loss of the match program, we must recognize its profound impact. In a state known for its agricultural abundance, we cannot allow budgetary decisions to compromise the well-being of others in our community. ★



Well-Meaning, But Misguided

Dear Dave,

Our son will be graduating from high school in May, and then heading off to college in August. He will also be working during the summer to save up money for school. When classes begin, do you think he should continue working a part-time job, or would it be better for him to focus solely on his studies?

– Brenda

Dear Brenda,

There’s really nothing wrong with either approach, especially during a kid’s first semester in college. As a parent, though, I’d urge you not to fall into the trap of thinking his

Dave Ramsey Says

grades will go down if he holds a job while in school. Research actually shows that, on average, kids who work while in college carry higher grade point averages than those who don’t.

The reasons for this differ, depending on who you ask, but I think a lot of it has to do with them having to learn to manage their time—and their lives—more effectively. Lots of kids could pay their way through school, and not have to worry about student loans, if they just used some of the time they spend watching television and on social activities at a job.

We never required our kids to work during the school year, but they were self-starters. And when they came home for the summer, there was no such thing as just lying around the house all day. They had jobs, and they made money. Of course, some of it went toward having a little fun during their time

off. But we made sure they set some aside for the next school year, too.

Long story short, the philosophy of not wanting kids at college to work so they can spend all their time studying is well-meaning, but misguided. For the most part, kids who work while they’re in school will make better grades and develop into more mature and well-rounded individuals.

I hope this helps, Brenda!

– Dave

Dave Ramsey is an eight-time national bestselling author, personal finance expert and host of *The Ramsey Show*. He has appeared on *Good Morning America*, *CBS This Morning*, *Today*, *Fox News*, *CNN*, *Fox Business* and many more. Since 1992, Dave has helped people take control of their money, build wealth and enhance their lives. He also serves as CEO for Ramsey Solutions ★



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With Mary Jane Popp

Rebirth

Easter! What does it mean to you? I know. It's Easter hunts and chocolate bunnies, family get-togethers and flowers. I can go on and on and I get it. We love all those symbols, but I hope we don't forget what Easter really means down deep. It's a rebirth of faith and hope and sharing too.

Did you ever wonder how the bunny got to be the BIG symbol for Easter? It's cute, but it's also universal and secular in its appeal. But would you believe I was told that the hare, not the rabbit, should be treated as the true symbol of Easter. Historically, the hare is the symbol for the moon. And legend has it, the hare never closes its eyes, not even for a single blink. The reason for having such a belief may be rooted in the fact that hares, not rabbits, are born with their eyes open. Rabbits are born blind. There is also a fertility thing in there some place. Maybe that's why the rabbit is more familiar in America. Rabbits beat hares, hands down, in being way more prolific.

Then comes the Easter eggs. Confusing since bunnies don't lay eggs. Despite claims that Easter eggs were originally pagan symbols, there is no solid evidence of this. It was not until the 28th century that Jakob Grimm theorized a connection with the goddess of his own whom he names Ostara, a suggested version of Eostere. At the Passover Seder, a hard-boiled egg dipped in salt water symbolizes both new life and the Passover

sacrifice offered at the temple in Jerusalem. The ancient Persians painted eggs for Nowrooz, their New Year celebration falling on the Spring Equinox. In Christian times, the egg was a symbol of new life just as a chick might hatch from the egg. Also, the egg may have celebrated the end of the privations of Lent. In Medieval Europe, eggs were forbidden during Lent. It was during Easter that the consumption of eggs resumes after the strict Lenten fast.

Traditions change, but not the true meaning of Easter...rebirth. It can give us new hope, especially after all we have endured with the pandemic, war, hate and negativity in the world. So how can we take all the symbols we have come to love and make a difference in our life? Perhaps we can take it one baby step at a time. Easy doesn't make a difference. Take a chance. Example, there's so much negativity on the internet. Why not check out facts before you jump to conclusions. Remember, not everything you read and see may be true. Besides, with AI, it might not even be the real thing. How about this? Rebirth means little changes like sharing a smile or a positive thought each day with someone who has been difficult. You might be surprised the difference it can make. I will leave you with this quote from Kate McGahan. "True, it's not over till it's over, and even when it's over, it just begins again." ★

TRUE REBIRTH!

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



Overall, it was an auspicious week for our Sacramento Kings, in spite of a frustrating loss to the New York Knicks.

The difference was defense, and it was a noticeable change in the way the team collectively played defense. Davion Mitchell brought his usual tenacity to the hardwood, but Keon Ellis joined him in bringing a ferocity that was contagious, and resulted in a three-game stretch that was undoubtedly the best defense by the team this year.

Back-to-back wins over the Milwaukee Bucks and Los Angeles Lakers had pundits gaping, and wondering who are these guys?

I have to repeat what has been expressed over and over again, and that is this team can beat any team in the NBA on any given night.

The playoffs are still a new phenomena for this team, and whether they can bring that same intensity to the court over a seven-game stretch remains to be seen, but for the naysayers out there I say, do not count this team out!

Our 2022 acquisition Domantas Sabonis not only is leading the league in double-doubles and triple-doubles, he is currently 5th overall in assists.

If you're a fan that watches from home and you haven't been to Golden 1 to see Domantas in action, you're missing a real treat. Grab a ticket while you can and get out to see this gladiator of the hardwood work his magic.

Currently the Kings are in a tenuous 6th place position in the Western Conference, with the Memphis Grizzlies coming in Monday night, followed by a road trip with stops in Toronto, Washington, and Orlando. As always, this road trip will loom large, but if the Kings can somehow manage a winning record in the three-game trip, 6th or even 5th place is not out of the question.

I have been critical, and rightfully so, of coach Brown's inability to win challenges this season, but whether skill or luck, recently the Kings have

been coming out on top. Keep up the good work Coach Brown. And, what is going on with the free-throw shooting? All of a sudden, the Kings are outperforming opponents, and actually looking like professionals from the charity stripe. With less than 20 games remaining in the regular season, finding a rhythm going into the playoffs couldn't come at a better time, and will be critical if the Kings want to advance to the second round.

So, the question many are asking: Can the Kings match or surpass last year's 48-win total? Surprisingly, I have talked to a lot of fans that don't believe they can do it, but I am firmly in the other camp. I think this team has a higher level to their game, just as they've shown in the recent improvement on defense.

Although I have not been a big Keon Ellis fan, I am all about giving out credit where credit is due, and this young man has been bringing a real NBA game to the court. His defense at times is smothering, and it was never so evident than last week, when he threw a blanket over perennial all-star Damian Lillard in last week's blowout win against the Bucks.

If 2nd-year forward Keegan Murray and veteran Harrison Barnes can harness some of the scoring they're capable of, the next 16 games could be a rocket launch into the playoffs.

Both Keegan and Harrison have shown signs of the players we know them to be, so keep your fingers crossed.

Coach Brown remains committed to Kevin Huerter for reasons that remain a mystery to me. He has obvious other options, and I remain puzzled as to why he's not employing the principle of playing the best player, or even who is hot at the moment.

Fans are all over the board as it relates to Huerter, and I would love to see him find some of the magic he displayed last season. ★

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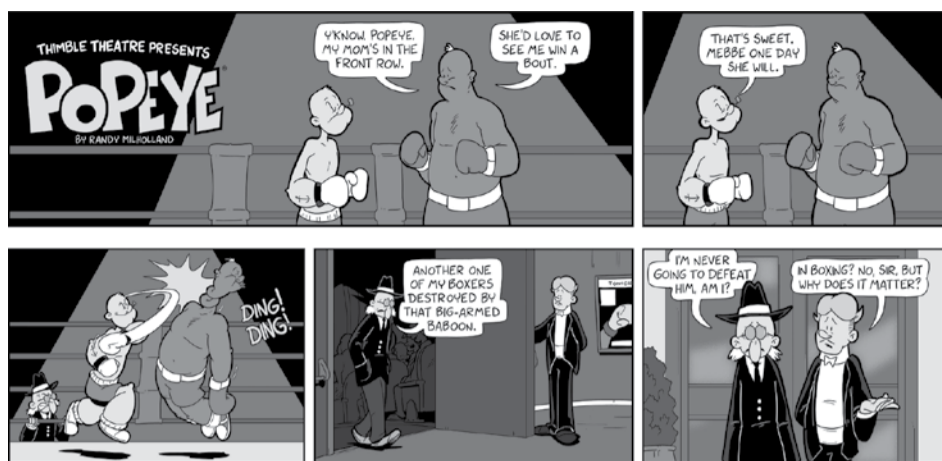
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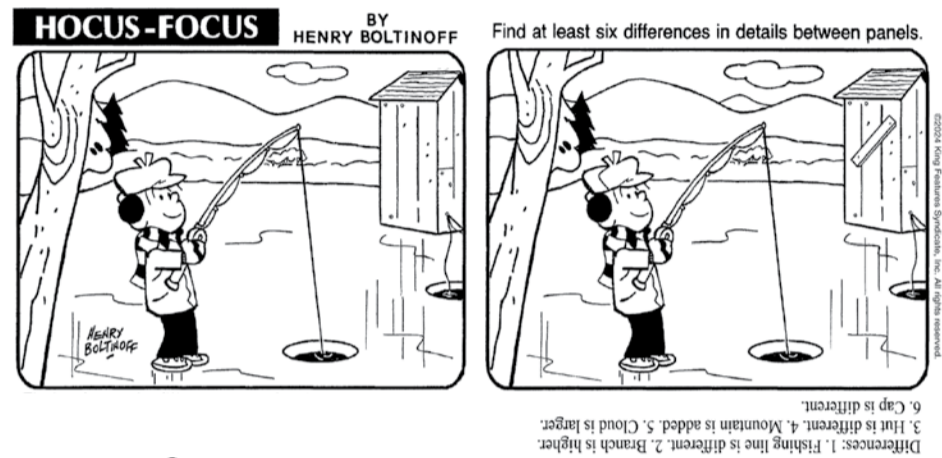
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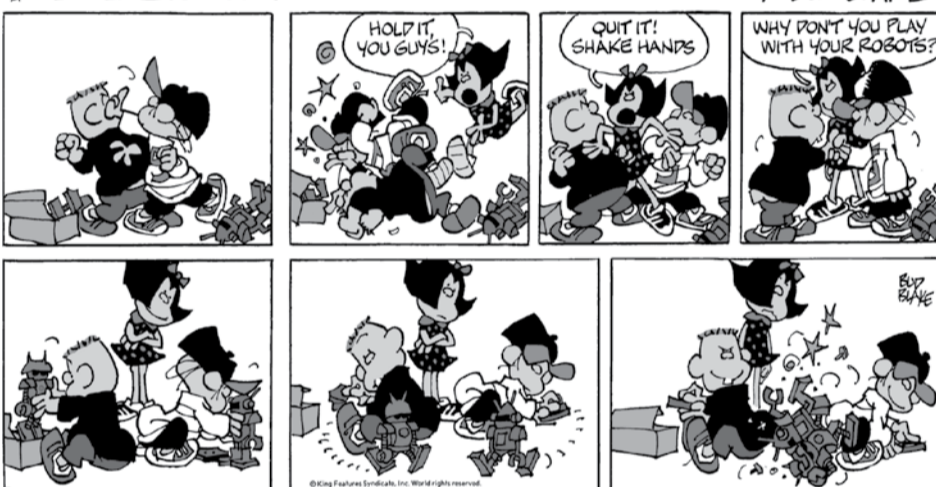
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CLUES

ACROSS

- Swell up
- Pendulum's path
- Type of salmon
- *Steve Miller Band: "I want to fly like an _____"
- Simon & Garfunkel, e.g.
- Popular winter boot brand
- Ohio city
- Lodge
- Squirrel away
- *Glenn Frey: "The pressure's high just to stay alive 'cause _____ is on"
- *John Travolta in "Grease": "I got _____ they're multipliyin'"
- Automated teller
- Clarified butter
- Bad-mouth, slangily
- Stag
- Tartans
- "I'm _____ you!"
- Combies
- Monocot's alternative
- Road's edge
- Living room centerpiece?
- Prefix meaning "left"
- Deadly snake
- Sasquatch's cousin
- Court petitioner
- Blood infection
- Indian flatbread
- Opposite of post-
- Sound of impact
- *Duran Duran: "Her name is _____, and she dances on the sand"
- *The Beatles: "Take a sad song and make it _____"
- *Elvis: "We're caught in a trap, I can't _____"
- Relating to a mode
- Scrooge's exclamation
- Memory failure
- Bouquet thrower
- Number of candles on a cake
- Musketeers' weapons
- Picnic invaders
- "Just kidding!"
- Did, archaic

DOWN

- *The Go-Go's: "They got the _____"
- 100,000, in India
- Cameron Diaz' Fiona, e.g.
- Hula dancer's hello
- These are held to be true
- Miners' passage
- *Tainted Love: "Once I ran to you, now I _____"
- *Lord of the Flies' shell
- Like the other side of the pillow?
- Certain kind of exam
- Not his
- Antiquated
- Protection from a sword
- To death, in French (2 words)
- _____ B vaccine
- Manna from heaven
- *Bon Jovi: "Tommy used to work on the _____"
- Habituate
- Spaghetti _____
- *Don McLean: "Drove my chevy to the _____"
- Pains
- Frost over (2 words)
- Capital of Delaware
- *Tennessee Ernie Ford: "I owe my soul to the company _____"
- Geishas' sashes
- "_____ good example"
- Royal topper
- _____tattle
- Pronoun
- Refused to act, archaic
- City-related
- Giraffe's striped-legged cousin
- *Bruce Springsteen: "Tramps like us, baby we were _____ to run"
- Change a manuscript
- Small amounts
- Make sharper
- Newspaper piece
- Applications
- Midterm, e.g.
- Wharton degree, acr.
- Back then

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Study Finds Significant Disparities in Diagnosis and Treatment of Dementia

University of California - Davis Health News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - A new study from UC Davis Health and Oregon Health & Science University reveals significant disparities in dementia care. The researchers found that people living with dementia from minoritized racial and ethnic populations are less likely to receive an accurate and timely dementia diagnosis compared to non-Hispanic whites. They were also less likely to be prescribed anti-dementia medication or use hospice care. Minoritized populations are those marginalized due to systemic oppression.

In addition, the study found the same populations have a higher risk of hospitalization and receive more aggressive life-sustaining treatment in end-of-life care. The study was published in *Alzheimer's & Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association*.

"Reducing disparities in Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and receiving timely, high-quality health care services is essential to advance health equity," said Ladson Hinton, first author of the study and a professor in the UC Davis Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. Hinton is also associate director for research in the Family Caregiving Institute at the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis.

The researchers conducted a scoping review, identifying and analyzing the results of 71 research studies conducted between 2000 and 2022. The studies examined health care access and quality for people with dementia and their caregivers. The studies reported findings related to race and ethnicity.

"Our review provides timely and compelling evidence of disparities in health care quality and access for people living with dementia from minoritized populations," Hinton said. "It also highlights significant gaps in data, particularly for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and American Indians and Alaska Natives populations."

Statistically significant differences

Of the 71 studies identified, all but one reported one or more statistically significant differences between racial and ethnic groups. For example:

-85.9% of the studies reported findings for Black Americans.

-57.7% for Hispanic Americans.

-25.4% for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

-2.8% for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

-32.4% reported aggregate categories for non-white populations.

The most frequently addressed topics in the papers were medication treatment (38%), end-of-life care (22.5%), health service use (18.3%), diagnosis (15.5%), family caregiving (7%) and long-term care (5.6%).

Some of the key findings related to diagnosis and treatment found that compared with non-Hispanic white Americans:

-Minoritized populations received less optimal care and experienced delays in how long it took to receive a diagnosis. In one large, recently published study, it took 11% longer for Black Americans and 40% longer for Hispanic Americans.

-Asian American older adults were less likely to receive a diagnostic work-up for cognitive impairment.

Black and Hispanic American patients were less likely to be referred for neuropsychological testing.

-Minoritized populations had lower rates of prescriptions for anti-dementia medications like cholinesterase inhibitors and memantine.

-Hispanic and Black American older adults had higher discontinuation rates of anti-dementia medications.

Disparities in end-of-life care

There were also disparities in living conditions and end-of-life care. Compared with non-Hispanic white Americans:

-Black Americans with dementia were more likely to have increased hospital admission rates, longer lengths of stay and higher costs.

-Minoritized populations living with dementia were less likely to be in long-term care facilities with special memory care units.

-Caregivers of Black Americans with dementia were less likely to fill out advanced care directives.

Black Americans with dementia were less likely to receive hospice care and more likely to receive feeding tubes and mechanical

ventilation during end-of-life care.

"The results of our study highlight the importance of granular data collection on race and ethnicity," said Oanh Meyer, co-author and associate professor in the UC Davis Department of Neurology. "Understanding where the disparities exist will help us address why they occur and how to remedy them at the individual, clinical and health-system level."

Achieving equity and closing gaps in health outcomes

The researchers recommend monitoring for disparities at the local level, educating and training clinicians to reduce bias and improve communication, and enhancing the cultural and linguistic competence of clinical care. They also support developing targeted initiatives to empower people with dementia and family caregivers as they navigate the health care system.

The authors also point out that recognizing existing disparities can prompt policy change at the health system level to address systemic racism and promote health equity.

The researchers noted several limitations of their study, including that some studies may have been missed for inclusion and that the underlying factors responsible for the identified differences are unclear and need further research. They note the study also did not include other potential disparities for people with dementia, such as those identifying as LGBTQ, or geographical inequities faced by those living in rural, urban, and suburban areas.

"Ultimately, it's critical that the best available dementia care is attainable and offered to all Americans, particularly those who are left out of novel research innovations because of their race, social standing or place of residence," said Ana R. Quiñones, senior author of the study and an associate professor at Oregon Health & Science University. "To make real progress in achieving equity and closing the gaps in outcomes for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, we must do more to ensure the most promising interventions are aimed at those who need them the most."

Additional authors of the study include Duyen Tran at UC Davis Health and Kate Peak at Oregon Health & Science University. ★

Sacramento Native Serves at Naval Information Warfare Center Pacific

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Andrew Hanchar, Navy Office of Community Outreach

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Lt. Jessica Valeske, a Sacramento native, serves the U.S. Navy assigned to Naval Information Warfare Center (NIWC) Pacific.

Valeske graduated from Sheldon High School in 2008.

The skills and values needed to succeed in the Navy are similar to those found in Sacramento.

"My family back at home has taught me the power of respect and integrity," said Valeske. "Having these values instilled in me from such a young age has helped me in my Navy career."

Valeske joined the Navy 11 years ago. Today, Valeske serves as an engineering duty officer.

"I joined the Navy because college was expensive and the Navy provided an alternative that would give me life-long skills," said Valeske. "I also wanted to get out of my hometown and see the world."

NIWC Pacific is comprised of more than 5,200 scientists, researchers, engineers, technicians, and personnel who develop and deploy technologies to support warfighters from seabed to space.

With 90% of global commerce traveling by sea and access to the internet relying on the security of undersea fiber optic cables, Navy officials continue to emphasize that the prosperity of the United States is directly linked to recruiting and retaining talented people from across the rich fabric of America.

"We will earn and reinforce the trust and confidence of the American people every day," said Adm. Lisa Franchetti, Chief of Naval Operations. "Together we will deliver the Navy the nation needs."

Valeske has many opportunities to achieve accomplishments during military service.

"I am most proud to have been accepted to the Naval Academy where I



Lt. Jessica Valeske. Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jordan Jennings, Navy Office of Community Outreach

earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and a master's degree in electrical engineering," said Valeske. "I am also proud of having gone on three deployments and having climbed the ranks from enlisted to commissioning to becoming a lieutenant."

Valeske serves a Navy that operates far forward, around the world and around the clock, promoting the nation's prosperity and security.

"Serving in the Navy means giving up certain rights and holidays to serve and protect the American people," said Valeske. "We as sailors become something bigger than ourselves."

Valeske is grateful to others for helping make a Navy career possible.

"I would like to thank my mom, Susan, and the rest of my family for always supporting me and being there for me whenever I needed them," said Valeske.

Valeske is also grateful for the opportunity to serve in the Navy.

"I am looking forward to building and contributing to innovating the fleet in terms of technology and keeping this Navy the biggest and strongest navy in the world," added Valeske. ★

To Stop Predators from Using AI to Exploit Children, Congress Must Act

Commentary by Teresa Huizar

Sexual predators are using a new tool to exploit children -- AI image generators. Users on a dark-web forum shared 3,000 AI-generated images of child sexual abuse in one month, according to the Internet Watch Foundation.

Current child sexual abuse laws are outdated. They don't account for the dangers AI and emerging technologies pose. Lawmakers must act fast to put legal protections in place.

The national CyberTipline -- a reporting system for suspected online child exploitation -- received a staggering 32 million reports in 2022, up from 21 million two years prior. That figure is sure to grow with the rise of AI.

AI platforms are "trained" on existing visual material. Sources used to create images may include real children's faces taken from social media, or photographs of real-life exploitation.

Advanced AI-generated images are virtually indistinguishable from unaltered photographs. Investigators have found new images of old victims, images of "de-aged" celebrities depicted as children in abuse scenarios, and "nudified" images taken from otherwise benign photos of clothed children. Much of this technology is downloadable, so offenders can generate images off-line without fear of discovery.

Using AI to create pictures of child sex abuse is not a victimless crime. Behind every AI image, there are real children. And studies show that a majority of those who possess child sex abuse material also commit hands-on abuse.

Adults can also use platforms like ChatGPT to better lure children. Criminals have long used fake online identities to meet young people in games or on social media, gain their trust and manipulate them into sending explicit images, then "sexort" them

for money, more pictures, or physical acts. ChatGPT makes it shockingly easy to masquerade as a child or teen with youthful language.

President Biden recently signed an executive order geared at managing the risks of AI. But we need help from lawmakers.

We need to update the federal definition of child sexual abuse material to include AI-generated depictions. As the law stands, prosecutors must show harm to an actual child. A defense team could claim that AI material is not depicting a real child, even though AI images often pull from material that victimizes real children.

We must adopt policies requiring tech companies to monitor and report exploitative material. Only three companies were responsible for 98% of all CyberTips in 2020 and 2021: Facebook, Google, and Snapchat.

Many state laws identify "mandatory reporters," or professionals who are legally required to report suspected abuse. Employees of social media and tech companies ought to have mandated reporting responsibilities.

We need to rethink how we use end-to-end encryption, in which only the sender and receiver can access a message or file. While it has valid applications, end-to-end encryption can help people store and share child abuse images. To illustrate how many abusers go undetected, consider that out of the 29 million tips CyberTipline received in 2021, just 160 came from Apple, which maintains end-to-end encryption for iMessages and iCloud.

Even if law enforcement has a warrant to access a perpetrator's files, a tech company with end-to-end encryption can claim that it can't help. Surely an industry built on innovation is capable of developing solutions to protect our children.

AI and social media are evolving every day. If lawmakers act now, we can prevent wide-scale harm to kids. ★

Reparations Would Cost Taxpayers \$2.8 Trillion

Pacific Research Institute News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - A new analysis released February 20th by the Pacific Research Institute -- a California-based, nonpartisan, free-market think tank -- finds that if California were to implement the controversial recommendations of the state Reparations Task Force, it would cost taxpayers \$2.8 trillion, push 1.84 million additional people to leave California over 5 years, and increase the tax burden for the average household by 54 percent.

"As lawmakers consider the first bills to implement the state Reparation Task Force's recommendations, it is imperative that they

understand the fiscal and economic implications," said Dr. Wayne Winegarden, PRI senior fellow in business and economics. "Our new analysis makes clear -- the state reparations plan is a financially unrealistic proposal that will bankrupt California if enacted."

Spending Watch is a new initiative from the Pacific Research Institute evaluating the revenue, spending, and economic impacts of major budget and policy proposals.

Reviewing U.S. Census estimates, nonpartisan media analyses, and the California Reparations Report from the state Reparations Task Force, it is estimated that roughly 2 million black Californians would be eligible for the Commission's recommended \$1.4 million

per person payout. Given this, Spending Watch pegs the total state reparations bill at \$2.8 trillion.

Assuming that reparations are paid out over 30 years, and that the present-day value of \$1.4 million is not accounted for over that period, the annual state cost would be \$93.3 billion.

Given these calculations and assumptions, Spending Watch estimates that Californians would experience the following if lawmakers enact the state Reparations Task Force's proposals:

54 Percent Increase in State Tax Burden: Since lawmakers are unlikely to significantly reduce spending, Spending Watch calculates that a 3.25 percent point increase in

income, sales, and corporate income tax rates would be needed to generate sufficient revenue to fund reparations payouts. This equates to a more than 54 percent increase in the marginal state income tax and sales tax burden for the average household.

Jobs, Economy, Household Income Would Decline: Spending Watch estimates that, compared to California's baseline growth, reparations payouts would

cause the economy in 2029 to be 11 percent smaller and the average family's income to be 5.7 percent lower. There would also be 4.9 percent fewer job opportunities.

Would Accelerate State's Outmigration Problem: Given the negative economic and tax effects, Spending Watch estimates that an additional 1.8 million residents would leave the state over a five-year period due to reparations, seeking a more affordable lifestyle in

other states.

"Unlike reparations, there are many policies that lawmakers can enact to create prosperity and improve affordability for all -- such as repealing AB 5 to increase employment opportunities, implementing school choice, and reforming CEQA to lower housing costs -- without imposing huge burdens on the poorest residents who are least able to bear the costs," Winegarden concluded. ★