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Pocket News

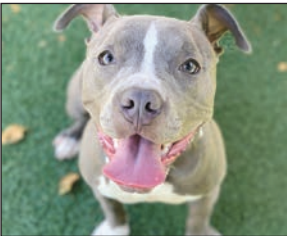
VOL 33 • ISSUE 07

Bringing You Community News For Over 30 Years

APRIL 12, 2024

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Rocker Loans Heart and Harley



Tesla rock band vocalist Jeff Keith (front, center) joins friends at Woodhaven Avenue, Carmichael, to plan a "Ride For Reason" fundraiser.

Story and photos by Susan
Maxwell Skinner

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Tesla rock band vocalist Jeff Keith will reunite "Ride for Reason" bike ride supporters on May 4.

Self-confessed "two-wheel maniac" Keith (65) first revved up for the charity ride in 2012. The event aids the Higher Purpose Foundation, a nonprofit that supports

foster youth. This year, veteran causes will also benefit.

"It's a great feeling to do this ride again," says Keith. "Helping others is an important part of success in the music industry. You're on a platform where you can reach people. You can do a lot of good."

The Granite Bay resident fronts the heavy-metal Tesla group, a Sacramento staple and anchor for many U.S. and international tours.

Despite a brief 1990s split, the rockers have sold more than 14 million albums and are now completing a Mandalay Bay (Las Vegas) residency. Gravel-voiced Keith has been their lead singer for four decades.

When not gigging, he is tooling around Northern California on his Harley Davidson. "There's nothing like being on my bike," he says. "I love the freedom. The engine sound

Continued on Page 2

New Theatre Company Has First Show

Pioneer Players News
Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Pioneer Players, a newly formed nonprofit theatre company in mid-town Sacramento, have announced their inaugural production, Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest."

Serving as the new resident theatre company of Pioneer Congregational United Church of Christ, Pioneer Players is the creative vision of artistic director and church member David-Matthew Barnes. The objective of the new company is to produce inspiring and uplifting shows including plays for young audiences and original works written by their planned workshop-based Pioneer Playwrights.

Barnes, whose catalog of more than 70 stage plays has been produced around the world, says he recognized the need for more support for local playwrights. "Many of my stage plays were first performed in Sacramento



The cast of "The Importance of Being Earnest" performs on stage. Photo courtesy of Pioneer Players

before moving on to other theaters," he says. "Giving the opportunity to workshop scripts is something I'm very committed to offering to fellow playwrights. We would love

for Pioneer Players to be the first theatrical home for many playwrights in Sacramento."

Similarly, Barnes recognized the need for more productions specifically

aimed at young audiences. This fall, Pioneer Players will launch their first children's theater production (featuring adult actors), an interactive musical version

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County Updating Economic Strategic Plan

Sacramento County
News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County's Office of Economic Development (OED) has launched efforts to create an updated Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) to guide priorities, programs and resources for the next five years.

"The Sacramento County organization, community, and economic landscape has undergone significant change since our last strategic plan," said Crystal Bethke, director of Economic Development for Sacramento County. "With this transition comes the opportunity to renew our vision and set strategic areas of focus to meet the needs of our community and stimulate sustainable economic growth."

The last Economic Development Strategic Plan was in 2014.

On Jan. 9, 2024, the Board of Supervisors approved a consulting contract with HR&A Advisors, Inc. (HR&A) to lead the Economic Development Strategic Plan development.

Selected through a highly competitive Request for Proposals process, HR&A has four decades of experience in delivering strategic economic development solutions to cities, counties and special districts within the region.

Throughout 2024, HR&A will engage with the community and key stakeholders, conduct an in-depth economic analysis, and create an actionable strategy and implementation roadmap for Sacramento County's Office of Economic Development.

The updated Economic Development Strategic Plan will build on existing regional economic development work, enhance inclusive economic

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PocketSacNews.com

Doggy Dash to Take Place April 20 At Land Park

By Annie Kerr

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The largest 5K/2K dog walk and festival event in the Sacramento area is right around the corner. On April 20, the Sacramento SPCA will hold the 31st annual Doggy Dash at William Land Park from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Doggy Dash is a widely beloved event in the Sacramento area and is a great way to not only have a fun day with your furry friend, but also contribute to the efforts of the SPCA to save and care for

animals in need. Participation in the Doggy Dash helps the Sacramento SPCA provide direct care for more than 40,000 animals each year in the community. Funds raised at this event provide medical care to sick or injured animals, low-cost vaccinations and spay/neuter services, behavior training, humane education programs and more. Registration is now open for the Doggy Dash, with options to register as an individual or as a team. Individual walkers pay \$35, while teams pay \$45.

With registration comes a short-sleeved T-shirt and admission into the festival afterwards. On the day of the Doggy Dash, registration opens at 8:30 a.m. and the 2K/5K walk leaves at 10:00 a.m. Note: registration is \$50 on the day of. It is required that all dogs be up to date on their vaccinations to participate. Immediately following the walk, stay and play at the Bark in the Park festival and enjoy K-9 demonstrations, contests, and more than 100 sponsor and vendor booths to visit, sample and purchase



The 31st Doggy Dash will be on April 20 in Sacramento. Photo courtesy of Sacramento SPCA

pet-friendly products and more. Bark at the Park Festival admission is free for registered Doggy Dash walkers. There is a \$5 suggested donation for anyone not registered to walk upon entering the festival area. As of press time, \$81,000 has already been raised for the 2024 Doggy Dash, with a goal of \$222,500. The park is on the corner



Support all the furry friends of Sacramento by participating in the Doggy Dash. Photo courtesy of Sacramento SPCA

of Sutterville Road and Freeport Boulevard. For tickets, registration, donations, and more information, refer to the SPCA Doggy Dash website. ★

Rocker Loans Heart and Harley

Continued from Page 1 is cool; having hundreds of other engines beside you is even cooler.” Fundraising is further music to his ears. Keith’s friend, Sacramento businessman Ryan Fleenor, formed the Higher Purpose Foundation in 1995, and it has since raised more than \$250,000 to aid foster youth. Keith’s namesake ride assisted until it spluttered to a 2018 hiatus. The pandemic and aftermath stalled resumption until this year. “Ryan asked me to consider doing it again,” says Keith. “It just worked out that Tesla’s schedule had an opening in May. I’m excited to get behind

another ride.” The event will begin at Harley Davidson’s Folsom dealership. Riders will sedately thunder along 50 miles of back roads to reach the Roseville Opera House Saloon more than an hour later. Here, Sacramento country singer Jennifer Bell will sing the National Anthem, and during a lunch and concert Jeff Keith promises to jam for several numbers. Event manager is Whitney Webb, a former teacher who manages Higher Purpose Foundation operations and hopes to see more than 400 riders follow Jeff Keith’s exhaust on May 4. “With the money raised,

we’ll give backpacks, school clothes, Christmas gifts and necessities to underprivileged children and families registered within the Sacramento system,” explains the Carmichael mom. “We’ll also support Bridges Inc., that provides specialized youth services. “We love having Jeff involved. He stands for humanity and for making the world a better place.” Foundation funds will also donate a trained PTSD service dog for a combat veteran. Support for a veterans’ golf program and for veteran excursions will also result. Helping the cause, contends Jeff Keith, shows



Jeff Keith (center) hangs with friends Pete DePalma (left) and High Purpose Foundation founder Ryan Fleenor.

appreciation for safe communities. “Without our vets, we wouldn’t have freedom to make choices in our lives,” he says. “We owe them everything.” Jeff Keith’s Ride for Reason Reunion will assemble at Folsom Harley Davidson on the morning of Saturday, May 4 and hit the road at 11 a.m. The ride ends at Roseville Opera House Saloon. Anyone with any type of motorbike can participate. Registration fee of \$30 includes lunch and a concert by Bob Seger tribute band CCsegeR. Meal and concert tickets are also available for \$25. For information, visit higherpurposefoundation.org. ★

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Youths wait patiently to retrieve eggs at the River's Edge Church's Egg Drop. Photo courtesy of River's Edge Church

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - On March 23, 2024, the Saturday eight days before Easter, about 10,000 eggs were dropped in the grassy lot behind

River's Edge Church. The church works with Capitol Helicopters based at Sacramento Executive Airport to make the event happen.

River's Edge Egg Drop



Onlookers marvel as a helicopter drops Easter eggs at River's Edge Church. Photo courtesy of River's Edge Church



Revelers gather Easter eggs next to River's Edge Church. Photo courtesy of River's Edge Church



A helicopter drops Easter eggs at River's Edge Church in the Pocket area. The eggs are visible in the grassy lot behind the church. Photo courtesy of River's Edge Church

Midtown Farmers Market Kicks Off a Fresh Season

Midtown Farmers Market News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Celebrating its 11th consecutive season in the heart of the dynamic district, Midtown Association has a series of fresh, free and family-friendly activations planned in April highlighted by fitness workouts, citrus tasting, entertaining music, interactive games, a spring fashion show, and more. Proudly presented by Sutter Health and always bursting with fresh fruit and produce, gourmet or locally made products and artisan goods, the open-air market is

available year-round with spring/summer hours now in effect from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

A sampling of some of the special activations happening in April at the Midtown Farmers Market includes the following (Market Square is located at 20th & K Streets):

Saturday, April 13
9 - 10 a.m. - Sacramento-based fitness studio Instaphysique (that is opening a new location in the 19J building) will host three 10 to 15-minute mini trampoline workouts in Market Square

10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. - Live music by

singer/songwriter John Alan Connerley in Market Square

Saturday, April 9
8 a.m. to noon - Sac Republic FC will host spirited yard games in Producer's Plaza

10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. - JAS Music will take over Market Square with live saxophone and entertaining beats

Saturday, April 7
9 to 10:30 a.m. - G6 Performance Training will host three 10 to 15-minute fitness classes in Market Square

10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. - Live music by singer/songwriter John

Alan Connerley returns to Market Square to delight audience with his musical mastery.

11 to 11:30 a.m. - Spring Fashion Show in the WEAVE parking lot that highlights items/styling from market vendors and four-legged friends with participation from Fig Mobile Fashion, Owlhaired Designs, Wildflower Daydreams, Bunker's Attic, Art Scarf, and more

Every Saturday, the Midtown Farmers Market is filled with local vendors and artisans that offer a diverse array of gifts such as fragrant fresh flowers by returning vendor

KC Flowers or hand-soldered framed florals by Owlhaired Designs. Plus, food enthusiasts will love culinary options such as pierogies from UkrFood or Cuban burritos from Gondo Fusion.

Owned and managed by the Midtown Association, the Midtown Farmers Market continues to grow and evolve to reflect the thriving and eclectic tastes of the surrounding neighborhood. Spanning five city blocks, the Midtown Farmers Market lies in the heart of Midtown at 20th & K Streets. More detailed information about the Midtown Farmers Market

plus a regularly updated market map are available at midtownfarmersmarket-sac.com.

In addition to offering numerous public transportation options, Midtown Sacramento is walkable and bike/scooter/car-share friendly with plenty of parking available in nearby garages plus various lots throughout Midtown.

For more about Midtown Sacramento, visit explorethemidtown.org or follow on social media - Facebook [atfacebook.com/exploremidtown](https://www.facebook.com/exploremidtown) and @ExploreMidtown on Instagram and X.



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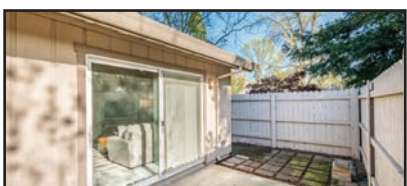

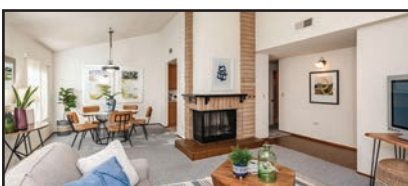
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Sacramento Superior Court Celebrates Historic Women Leaders

Superior Court of California News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento Superior Court proudly celebrates the contributions of historic women leaders who have blazed trails within the court.

Presiding Judge Bunmi O. Awoniyi is the first Black woman to preside over the unified Superior Court of Sacramento. Judge Awoniyi was appointed to the bench by Gov. Jerry Brown in 2012. During her tenure, she has served rotations in Family Law, Criminal Domestic Violence, Criminal Trials, and Master Calendar for all Criminal assignments. She also served as the Supervising Judge for Family Law and Probate

for four years and served two years as the court's Assistant Presiding Judge. Juvenile Court Supervising Judge Dena M. Coggins is the first Black woman from the Sacramento County bench to be nominated by a sitting president to serve on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California. Judge Coggins was appointed to the bench by Gov. Gavin Newsom in March 2021. She presides over dependency matters. Veteran court employee Ginger Durham is the first Black woman to serve as Jury Commissioner for Sacramento Superior Court. Durham is a Nationally Certified Court Manager through the National Center of State Courts and has worked at the court for 18 years.

In addition to Jury and Interpreter Services, she has also managed the court reporters and court attendants throughout her career, is an active participant in several statewide pilot programs, is the Language Access Representative for the Sacramento Superior Court and is on the bargaining team for the Region 3 Courts in the court's labor relationship with the California Communications Workers Union.

Laetesia Ible is the first Black woman to serve as the court's Chief Financial Officer. Prior to joining the court in 2023, Ible had more than 15 years of experience with Sacramento County in various fiscal roles. She previously managed



Sacramento Superior Court Presiding Judge Bunmi O. Awoniyi speaks with Judge Dena M. Coggins, Jury Commissioner Ginger Durham and CFO Laetesia Ible in her chambers. Photo courtesy of Sacramento Superior Court

the Sacramento County Probation Department's Fiscal Unit as a Senior Administrative Analyst, overseeing all budgetary, purchasing, accounting, contracting, and grant reporting for the department.

In honor of Women's History Month, the Sacramento Superior Court recognizes all women leaders who have

made indelible marks on the judicial system. Their courage, determination, and commitment to justice are inspiration for an equitable and inclusive future. ★

SMUD's Shine Program Invests \$580,000 in Local Projects

SMUD News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Twenty-nine local non-profit organizations will benefit from more than \$580,000 in funding from SMUD's annual Shine program. The Shine program, now in its 7th year, is supporting nonprofit programs that engage communities across SMUD's service area in an equitable transition to a clean energy future.

This year's projects will increase access to clean energy/STEM education and support environmental justice and equity, zero carbon workforce development, habitat restoration and increased tree canopy, energy efficiency and electrification for nonprofits, inclusive economic development, youth entrepreneur development and job readiness programs and trainings for under-resourced community members.

"SMUD's vision for a clean energy future is about much more than transforming our power plants, it's about equitably transforming the communities we serve," said SMUD CEO and General Manager Paul Lau. "The Clean PowerCity movement empowers our region's households, businesses and diverse communities to help us reach and deliver our ambitious 2030 Zero Carbon Plan. From clean energy outreach and STEM lessons in classrooms, to



Local nonprofit leaders gather to celebrate SMUD's 7th Annual Shine Awards. Photo courtesy of SMUD

neighborhood revitalization projects, workforce training in under-resourced communities and new apprentices, SMUD's Shine program harnesses the determination and vision of local nonprofits, regional partners and the communities we serve and supports them in making meaningful change that will benefit the entire region for generations to come."

This year, 112 community members participated in program education sessions, 148 community members participated in technical assistance sessions and 84 organizations moved forward and submitted applications in the competitive award process. Per Shine requirements, SMUD's investments are matched by the recipient for maximum impact.

The 29 selected

nonprofits include American River Parkway Foundation; Asian Resources, Inc.; Associated General Contractors Construction Education Foundation (AGC CEF); Carmichael Improvement District; Center for Land-Based Learning; City of Trees Foundation; CLEANSTART, Inc.; Folsom Historic Society; Franklin Blvd Business Association; Freedom Through Education; Fulton El Camino Recreation and Park District; Futures Explored; Health Education Council; HumanBulb; Interns2Pros; Iranian American Culture & Education; Kiwanis Club of Rancho Cordova Foundation; Lion's Roar Dharma Center; National Academic Youth Council DBA Sojourner Truth African Heritage Museum; NeighborWorks

Sacramento; ReImagine Mack Road Partnership; Sacramento Children's Museum; Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services; ShopClass; Soil Born Farms; Square Root Academy; Sunshine Food Pantry and Resource Center; The Salvation Army; Voices of Youth.

SMUD will take an active role in monitoring performance and progress of each project.

Shine awards range from \$5,000 to \$100,000. Any nonprofit organization within SMUD's service area is eligible to apply. Shine awards are available at three funding levels: Spark (up to \$10,000), Amplifier (up to \$50,000) and Transformer (up to \$100,000).

For more information about the SMUD Shine program, visit smud.org/Shine. ★

Reggae Heaven: Holo Holo Music Festival Returning to Sacramento

Good Vibez Presents News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - For the third year running, Good Vibez Presents—the promoters behind Monterey's legendary California Roots Music and Arts Festival—are bringing their traveling Holo Holo Music Festival back to Sacramento. Over the weekend of Sept. 21 and 22, Heart Health Park at Cal Expo will be transformed into a musical oasis of island vibes with performances from Kolohe Kai, Maoli, J Boog, and many many more.

"When we first had the idea of Holo Holo, we wanted to bring the music of Hawaii to the mainland as a gift to those who are homesick for the sounds and feelings of home," says O'ahu-born Good Vibez co-owner Dan Sheehan. "Two years into the concept, it has grown to be so much more. We have artists from all corners of the Polynesian Triangle and beyond performing. What started as a straight-ahead music festival paying homage to music of the islands has grown into a full-blown celebration of island culture with spiritual welcome ceremonies and traditional dances from local halaus, in addition to island eats and drinks by local vendors."

Since its inception in Northern California in 2022, the festival has taken on new markets, bringing its second gathering to Las Vegas, Nevada, in

the early summer of 2023, to Sacramento the following fall, San Diego this summer, and back to Sacramento in September. "The support we have received from the artist, fans, and sponsors has been nothing short of the true spirit of Aloha. We look forward to bringing Holo Holo back to the great city of Sacramento," says Sheehan.

For a festival that's constantly moving, Sacramento has become a yearly stop for Holo Holo. "We're thrilled to have Holo Holo as a part of Sacramento's growing music festival portfolio," said Visit Sacramento President & CEO Mike Testa. "The energy of the lineup really aligns with the spirit of our city, and we can't wait for music fans to come and celebrate with us later on this year."

The full lineup for Holo Holo Music Festival Sacramento can be found below. Tickets went on sale March 29. For more information, visit holoholofestival.com.

HoloHolo Sacramento Lineup

On Saturday, Sept. 21, the artists performing will be Kolohe Kai, J Boog, Iam Tongi, Ho'onu'a, Josh Tatofi, FIA, and Kuulei Music.

On Sunday, Sept. 22, Maoli, The Green, Kapena, Ekolu, John Cruz, Irie Love, and SiaoSi will be performing. It is hosted, both days, by Western Conference. ★

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

Elk’s Lodge Calendar of Events Farmer’s Market, 9 am-1 pm every Saturday starting April 6.
Country Music BBQ Dance, 5:30 p.m. Saturday, April 13, with the All Hat No Cattle band; \$35. tax included. No-host bar and dance lessons, 5;30; Dinner 6:30; Music at 7.
Elk’s Lodge Sunday Breakfast, 8:30 am-11 am every Sunday. Bring your friends and family; \$15 tax included. Best deal in town. Made to order Omelets or eggs any way you want.. Bacon, sausage, potatoes, biscuits and gravy, pancakes, waffles, coffee large parties should call for reservations. Guests are VERY welcome!
Water Aerobics, Monday 10 am, Wednesday 2 pm, Friday 10 am
Yoga, Monday 12 pm, Wednesday 3:30 pm.

Lodge members free.
Martial Arts, Monday 5 pm
Pickleball, Mon & Wed 9 am-12 pm, Thu 4:30-7:30 pm, Sun 4-7 pm
To sign up or confirm schedule, join playtimescheduler.com
Improv Night, 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 6-8 pm
Wednesday Night Dinner, 5:30 to 7 pm
See above and elks6.net for weekly menu.
Karaoke Thursday 7 pm
Saturday 7:30 pm
Friday Happy Hour, Friday 4-7 pm
Line Dancing, 2nd and 4th Fridays

Sacramento Area Museums Showcase Region’s Farm-to-Fork Roots All Year Long
The Greater Sacramento region is rich with popular museums and destinations that offer diverse and enriching experiences for individuals, families, residents, and visitors alike. Given the critically important role agriculture continues to play in the region, many local museums offer special exhibits, experiences and activations that highlight ever-enduring Farm-to-Fork connections. A sampling of some of the Farm-to-Fork offerings at local museums includes the following:
California Agriculture Museum – Woodland is home to an entire museum focused on agriculture, filled with a unique collection of harvesters, wheel and crawler-type

tractors, combines, trucks, art, artifacts, rotating interactive exhibits and much more.
In all, the museum tells the history of Farm-to-Fork, dating back to the Gold Rush era and how the industry evolved from horse drawn to steam driven to fuel powered machines to harvest and transport California’s bounty.
California State Railroad Museum & Foundation – A Fruit Growers Express refrigerated rail car is on permanent display inside the Museum’s Roundhouse. Museum visitors can explore this historic rail car and exhibit, “Farm to Fork: A Public History,” and learn about how refrigerated rail cars enabled California farmers, growers, and producers send farm-to-fork freshness all over the country.
Visitors can step inside the historic Fruit Growers Express rail car to see how the ice-cooled rail cars transported produce and built an agricultural system that exports more wealth than the California Gold Rush.
Plus, the popular weekend excursion train, Sacramento Southern Railroad – currently on pause due to an important rail repair project – runs on the historic Walnut Grove Branch Line. This rail line transported pears, asparagus, celery, seeds, and other products from the Delta communities to markets nationwide.
Sacramento Children’s Museum – Young visitors hungry to learn about fresh food have a variety

of options at the Children’s Museum, including at the miniature Leo’s Market and Leo’s Food Court (a miniature market of food carts), about bees and honey with the in-house beehive, and an interactive train table highlighting Sacramento’s agricultural landscape in miniature, complete with mini livestock. Plus, the Children’s Museum will be at the Farm-to-Fork Festival (September 22-23) sharing vegetable stamp printing with visitors.
SMUD Museum of Science & Curiosity – MOSAC’s interactive exhibits bring the story of water to life, demonstrating how our region is working together to conserve this natural resource for now and future generations. The “Water Challenge” exhibit lets museum visitors actively shape a watershed’s flow, create a tune for saving water at home, and choose between local or non-local foods to buy based on how everyday decisions impact conservation efforts — all while learning about the environmental footprint along the way.
Utility Exploration Center – The City of Roseville’s Utility Exploration Center (UEC) is a testament to the region’s commitment to sustainable living and resource conservation.
Nestled in the heart of a region renowned for its Farm-to-Fork movement, the UEC acts as an educational hub, encouraging residents and visitors alike to delve into the intricacies of energy and water conservation, waste reduction, and sustainable practices. By fostering an understanding of how we use and preserve resources, the UEC underscores the importance of our agricultural roots.
For more information about upcoming activities offered by Sacramento area museums, “like” them on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/SacMuseums, follow them on Instagram and Twitter @SacMuseums or visit the user-friendly website at www.SacMuseums.org.

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 bar tenders 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
For more information, call or text Sue Hill 215-327-7712.

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.
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For more information, please visit www.sutters-fort.org

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County Updating Economic Strategic Plan

Continued from Page 1
development efforts and introduce new and timely strategies for the future focus of economic development efforts.
The Economic Development Strategic Plan development process will be transparent, with regular updates provided on project milestones, timelines and opportunities for community involvement.
Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to participate in community engagement activities to contribute to the shaping of Sacramento County’s economic future.
For more information on the Economic

Development Strategic Plan development process, including updates on objectives, timelines and opportunities for community involvement, visit the Economic Development Strategic Plan webpage at economic.saccounty.gov/StrategicPlan/Pages/default.aspx ★



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California Insurance Market ‘In Chaos’



Here are the remains of a burned home in Berryessa Highlands on Sept. 21, 2020. Photo by Anne Wernikoff for CalMatters

By Levi Sumagaysay
CALMatters.org

With more California homeowners just discovering their insurance policies are getting canceled — and hundreds of thousands of others stuck with a pricey option of last resort — state Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara’s efforts to fix the home insurance market can’t come quickly enough.

Lara has introduced two main regulations, with more to come. The first, unveiled last month, aims to streamline rate reviews. State law gives the Insurance Department the power to approve or deny insurers’ requests to raise premiums. Insurance companies complain the process has been holding up the increases they seek as a result of what they say are increased costs due to rising climate-change risks and inflation.

The second regulation will let insurers use catastrophe modeling — which combines historical data with projected risk and losses — along with other factors when setting their premiums. California is the last state to allow for catastrophe modeling.

“We’re undertaking the state’s largest insurance reform,” Lara said during a press conference earlier this month. “We can no longer look solely to the past to guide us to the future.”

He said catastrophe modeling will lead to “more reliable rates,” “greater insurance availability” and “safer communities,” because he said it would further encourage and reward wildfire mitigation by homeowners and communities. Insurance Department spokesperson Michael Soller said success will mean fewer homeowners needing to turn to the FAIR Plan, the state-mandated insurer of last resort.

Insurance trade groups, which stand to benefit most from the new regulations, agree with Lara’s support for catastrophe modeling and support his so-called sustainable insurance strategy. So do fire chiefs, to an extent. But almost everyone else — homeowners, consumer groups and former insurance commissioners — has lingering concerns.

U.S. Rep. John Garamendi, a Democrat representing parts of Solano and Contra Costa counties, had two stints as state insurance commissioner in the mid-1990s and early 2000s. He says the insurance market is “in chaos” — and that Lara should be holding public hearings and demanding insurance company executives testify to explain to Californians why

their premiums are rising.

“One of the critical things a commissioner does is to analyze the market and provide the public with information,” Garamendi said in an interview with CalMatters. “(Lara) didn’t use his power to control the industry and second, to inform Californians.”

The criticism drew a retort from Soller: “Commissioner Lara is fixing decades-long neglected issues that have led to this crisis. He is focused on safeguarding the integrity of the state’s insurance market, not second-guessing from predecessors who had their chance and failed to act.”

Dave Winnacker, chief of the East Bay’s Moraga-Orinda Fire District, said the upsides of catastrophe modeling include being able to credit what homeowners, communities and governments do to lessen wildfire risk. That includes being able to account for the numbers and proximity of firefighters in certain areas, Winnacker said.

“Depending on where you are in a state, and that’s tied to population density, the number of firefighters available could affect the outcome (of a wildfire),” he said, adding that catastrophe models should reflect that.

He also said he and other fire chiefs are working to make sure the interests of consumers, fire professionals, insurers and the state are aligned. Insurers may not know what homeowners, communities and local fire departments are doing to reduce wildfire risk. One idea: a database to share that information.

“There is no future in which we can price our way out of this crisis with just premiums,” Winnacker said, adding that everyone needs to work together.

Dave Jones, the state insurance commissioner for eight years before Lara took over in 2019, said he is “trying to avoid looking over the shoulder of my successor.”

Jones is now director of the Climate Risk Initiative Center for Law, Energy & the Environment at UC Berkeley School of Law. He said it is good for consumers that the catastrophe-modeling regulation could take forest management into consideration. But he said he’s not sure Lara’s actions will be sufficient.

Before the end of the year, Lara is also expected to issue a regulation that will allow insurers to factor reinsurance costs into their rates. Reinsurance is insurance for insurance companies in the event of large payouts. That plus the other new regulations may “help in the short to mid term,” giving insurance companies the ability to raise



State Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara speaks during a press conference with Los Angeles labor leaders and advocates in Commerce on Sept. 26, 2022. Photo by Alisha Jucevic for CalMatters

premiums, Jones told CalMatters.

But he said those actions may “ultimately be overwhelmed by our failure to stop the fossil-fuel industry, which is contributing to rising temperatures” and therefore insurance losses.

Jones also pointed out that Florida has long allowed insurers to use catastrophe modeling and has let them factor in reinsurance costs in their rates — yet its insurance market is in worse shape than California’s.

“Florida has done what insurers are asking for,” Jones said. Yet “Florida’s rates are three or four times the national average.”

Mark Friedlander, spokesperson for the Insurance Information Institute, an industry group, confirmed that the group estimates that Florida’s average home insurance premium was \$6,000, or three-and-a-half times the national average, in 2023.

In addition, Jones said Florida’s version of California’s last-resort FAIR Plan — called the Citizens Property Insurance Corp. because it’s funded with a surcharge on policyholders — has more than 1 million policies. California’s growing FAIR Plan, run by a pool of insurers, has 373,000 policies, its president told state lawmakers recently.

“That raises the question,” Jones said. “Giving insurers (higher rates) and shifting the burden to all Californians... whether that’s going to be enough in the face of growing background risk associated with climate change.”

Meanwhile, last week State Farm said that it is not renewing policies for 30,000 California homeowners, as well as refusing to cover all commercial

apartments by not renewing 42,000 of those policies.

This is happening despite California approving State Farm’s requests to levy double-digit premium increases last year.

“One of our roles as the insurance regulator is to hold insurance companies accountable for their words and deeds,” said Soller, the Insurance Department spokesperson. “State Farm General’s decision... raises serious questions about its financial situation — questions the company must answer to regulators.”

State Farm spokesperson Sevag Sarkissian would not comment beyond the statement the company put on its website last week, which read in part: “This decision was not made lightly and only after careful analysis of State Farm General’s financial health, which continues to be impacted by inflation, catastrophe exposure, reinsurance costs, and the limitations of working within decades-old insurance regulations.”

Sarkissian also referred CalMatters to the Personal Insurance Federation of California, which counts State Farm as a member. The industry group’s president, Rex Frazier, said in an email last week that allowing insurers to use catastrophe modeling would help with insurance availability. Yet in its statement, State Farm acknowledged the actions Lara is taking to try to fix the insurance availability and affordability crisis in California, even as it announced its decision not to renew tens of thousands of homeowners.

Joyce Kaufman, a retiree in June Lake in Mono County,

recently got a notice of non-renewal for her homeowners insurance with Farmers, which she said she and her husband were dreading but expecting.

“I’m not really sure what the state’s trying to do, both at the commissioner and legislative level,” Kaufman said. And losing the ability to renew her policy is affecting her other insurance needs, she said. As her broker helps look for an alternative, her auto premium is now going up about \$300 a year because it will no longer be bundled with home insurance.

As the new regulations give insurance companies what they had asked for, one part of Lara’s strategy — which he first laid out last year after an executive order by the governor — is conspicuously missing. Lara had said insurance companies would be required “to commit to writing at least 85 percent of their statewide market share in wildfire-distressed underserved areas.”

That provision is nowhere in the text of Lara’s unveiled regulations so far — an omission not lost on consumer groups or former commissioner Jones.

“Where is that 85 percent?” asked Carmen Balber, executive director of Consumer Watchdog. Soller, the Insurance Department’s spokesperson, said that part of the commissioner’s strategy is coming.

Balber also said she is concerned that the catastrophe-modeling regulation “appears to not comply with the transparency requirements of Prop. 103,” the voter-approved law that regulates the insurance industry.

According to the text of the regulation on catastrophe modeling, the public will be able to take part in reviewing catastrophe models before they’re deemed acceptable. But anyone who helps review the models will be required to sign a nondisclosure agreement.

“If a big chunk of your insurance rate is behind a ‘black box,’ then that’s not what the voters passed,” when they passed Proposition 103 in 1988, Balber said. “At the end of the day, if the commissioner passes something that hides something behind closed doors, we’ll have to consider challenging it.”

Levi Sumagaysay covers the economy for CalMatters. Previously, she was a senior reporter who covered worker issues, the gig economy, inequality and corporate accountability for MarketWatch. She also was a longtime reporter and tech and business editor at the Mercury News. ★

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Don't Gamble with Faith

I'm not sure you played the Powerball this month, but the jackpot skyrocketed past \$1 billion when no one won.

I know the odds are terribly impossible, but maybe Chaplain Norris' winning numbers can help you win that jackpot.

That's right. Today I will reveal my divinely inspired numbers.

Well, the "divine" claim is probably an overreach, but I do know that if you pick numbers above 31, you're likely to be the sole winner. That's because most people choose their birth dates.

So with that in mind, can I get a drum roll?

Chaplain Norris' winning numbers are 35-40-45-50-55-60. Bonus number 65.

Yup, I know choosing numbers in multiples of five may seem whacky, but statistics suggest that the odds never change no matter how many times you play or what numbers you choose. Your winning odds are similar to getting struck by lightning on your birthday two years in a row.

Truthfully, you really shouldn't take gambling advice from a chaplain. Unless it's "Don't gamble!"

But the whole lotto game provides some analogy for the way folks choose the right kind of faith.

Why is it that we sometimes think faith is all about luck?

We seek out the nearest weeping statue and drive hundreds of miles to light a candle. We say a prayer



and hope a god in a good mood hears it.

Sometimes we search for faith like we are playing scratch cards. We scratch at the deep questions of faith, hoping to come up with a win.

Still others rely on some lucky combination that their grandfather passed along to them. "My granddaddy prayed for my grandmother inside that church, and she was healed, so I guess it's a winner."

Yet, still others rely on the big-spin approach and take the one they land on. Others see faith like picking the right card out of a newly shuffled deck.

And some play faith the way they play a bluffing poker hand, refusing to let anyone see the cards of doubt they hold.

The problem with these approaches is they produce a routine of losing, much like those who return each night to the same casino only to lose again.

The faith choice made with these methods usually ends up discarded, much like a Lotto ticket on a gas-station driveway.

Faith has little to do with winning or losing. Faith is too important to treat with the same glibness we use

to choose our winning numbers. Perhaps it's more about investing in who we are, not about gambling on what we never had.

Maybe faith comes about when we invest in the search. We find it inspired by the conversations, the discussions, the questions, and the debates that we have with others. In fact, I believe God prefers honest "searchers" or "questioners," even when they challenge him directly, even when they are unflattering.

Jesus suggested faith might well be something compared to a mustard seed. A mustard seed is the tiniest of seeds, yet in ratio, it grows into one of the biggest plants. Faith starts from the smallest beginnings in the hearts of people and produces not a personal profit, but a powerful and personal transformation.

Well, all this talk about winning the lottery made me wonder what might happen if I actually bought a ticket. I mean, if I ever bought just one, what might happen?

I may never know.

But if you do happen to win with my divine numbers, please remember my favorite charity – Chispa Project. I think it's fair to say that any gift can be an investment in faith.

Send column comments to 10556 Combie Rd. Suite 6643 Auburn, CA 95602. Email comment@thechaplain.net or message at (843) 608-9715. www.thechaplain.net. ★

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An aerial photograph of the new baseball stadium in San Jose, California. The stadium is a large, circular structure with a green field and a brown infield. It is surrounded by a multi-level parking lot and a modern, multi-story building with a glass facade. In the background, there are other buildings, including a tall, modern skyscraper and a large, pyramid-shaped structure. The area is lush with green trees and vegetation.





The cast of “The Importance of Being Earnest” performs. Photo courtesy of Pioneer Players.

New Theatre Company Has First Show

Continued from Page 1
of Little Red Riding Hood. “I love the idea of families having a shared experience through theatre,” Barnes says. “As an arts educator, I realize how significant having access to theatre can be, especially for young people.”
Also joining this artistic endeavor is Cyndi Lopez-Spencer, who is serving as the resident technical director of Pioneer Players. An alum of Sac State’s theatre program, Lopez-Spencer has been working as a stage manager or a technical crew member for over 30 years. “I’m really excited to join Pioneer Players and their effort to provide theater that is accessible to the community,” says Lopez-Spencer. “This is a really amazing team to be working with. It’s exciting to be a part of this company who are doing and planning such innovative things.”
First, Pioneer Players will present Oscar Wilde’s “The Importance of Being Earnest,” with Barnes

directing. Performances are April 6-April 21: Fridays and Saturdays at 7 p.m.; Sundays at 3 p.m. The Pioneer Theater is inside the Fellowship Hall at Pioneer Congregational United Church of Christ: 2700 L St. in Midtown. To reach the Pioneer Theater, enter the church through the courtyard. The theater is accessible. Street parking is available. Concessions are cash only. Late patrons will not be seated until intermission. Tickets are \$15.
Advance tickets can be purchased from Eventbrite. Tickets can also be purchased at the door.
First performed on Feb. 14, 1895, at the St James’ Theatre in London, “The Importance of Being Earnest” is a farcical British comedy classic.
The play tells the story of two men, Jack Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff, who both assume the identity of a fictional man named Ernest, leading them both to fall in love and find an assortment

of problems along the way. Working within the social conventions of late Victorian London, the play’s major themes are the triviality with which it treats institutions as serious as marriage and the satire of Victorian conformity.
“We believe that the Pioneer Players align closely with the mission of our church through their creative storytelling and performances, fostering connections among individuals, providing a welcoming and inclusive environment for all, and contributing to the betterment of the community,” says the Rev. Dr. David C. Bocock, pastor of Pioneer Congregational Church. “This initiative resonates with our core values and exemplifies our commitment to spreading love, building community, and extending our service to all. We are thrilled to support Pioneer Players and look forward to their positive impact on the Sacramento community.” ★



Crocker Art Museum goers enjoy artwork on display. Photo courtesy of T-Rock Communications

Many Local Museums Participate in Photography Month Sacramento

T-Rock Communications News Release
SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento area museums are proud to participate in the 6th Annual Photography Month Sacramento happening in April 2024. Photography Month Sacramento is a collaborative, grassroots event led by Viewpoint Photographic Art Center with support by many involved partners that include the City of Sacramento, Inside Publications, Sacramento County Board of Supervisors Office of Phil Serna (District 1), and Sacramento365.com.
A sampling of the local museums that are presenting special exhibits and activations as part of Photography Month Sacramento include the following:
Leland Stanford Mansion State Historic Park is offering three guided tours (April 7, 14 & 28) focused on Eadweard Muybridge, a photographer

who worked with Leland Stanford on his photographic studies of motion, specifically of horses, and is known for early motion picture. Attendees will immerse themselves in the intersection of art, history and technology. To reserve a tour space, visit photomonthsacramento.org/events.
Sacramento History Museum is presenting an exhibit titled “Tattooed & Tenacious: Inked Women in California’s History” that is highlighted by three dozen locally produced photographs by Kevin Vierra and Michelle Smith plus a visually captivating 30" X 60" photograph that welcomes visitors as they enter the R. Burnett Miller Gallery. For more, visit SacHistoryMuseum.org.
SMUD Museum of Science & Curiosity (MOSAC) is displaying a special “Celebration of Student Photography” in the museum lobby park that is presented in partnership with the photography department at the California State University,

Sacramento. For more, visit MOSAC.org.
Viewpoint Photographic Art Center and Crocker Art Museum is presenting “Life in Motion: Annual Student Juried Show,” a display of photographic work by college and high school students in a special exhibition aligned with Photography Month Sacramento. The exhibition is on view in the Crocker’s Student & Community Gallery from March 28 through May 5.
For more information about Photography Month Sacramento happening in April, please visit photomonthsacramento.org. And for more information about upcoming activities offered by Sacramento area museums, “like” them on Facebook at [Facebook.com/SacMuseums](https://www.facebook.com/SacMuseums), follow them on Instagram and X @SacMuseums or visit the user-friendly website at SacMuseums.org. Those interested can also sign up for emails to learn more about Sacramento Area Museums via sacmuseums.org. ★

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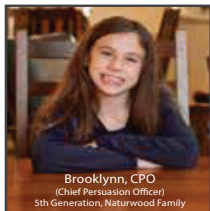
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