



**Voices Choral
Group Disbands
After 30-Plus Years**

PAGE 4

**Sparkling Wines,
Chocolates Paired
at Women's Club
Luncheon**

PAGE 12



RIVER VALLEY TIMES

40TH YEAR • ISSUE 13

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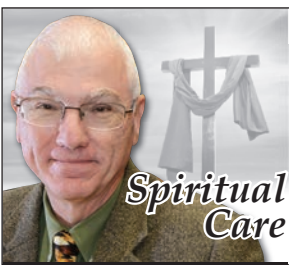
PAGE 6

**MISSILE SITE
CONTAMINATION
ADDRESSED**



PAGE 3

**BACK TO
THE GRIND**



PAGE 8



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Soaring Temperatures Threatened Fireworks Show



A vintage woodie bearing a surfboard is one of many classic cars in the parade. Photos by Gail Bullen

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Despite a record-breaking heat wave, the Fourth of July celebration in Rancho Murieta seemingly unfolded like it has for years.

The day began at 7 a.m. with beaming Kiwanians serving breakfast and ended just before 10 p.m. with a spectacular fireworks show.

However, behind the scenes, the soaring temperatures posed significant challenges that could have derailed the grand finale. Only through the herculean efforts of four Rancho Murieta Association (RMA) Maintenance employees could the fireworks show proceed as planned.

The phrase, "the show must go on," is an old saying in show business but it could easily be the motto



Barred from the gazebo because of the fireworks problem, Bonnie Kirschman, Elaine Toni Anania and Sharon McGowan line dance on the sidewalk in front of the caution tape and six private security officers.

for the Rancho Murieta Association employees after their remarkable efforts during this year's Fourth of July celebration.

Rancho Murieta Association General Manager Rod Hart said the problem originated with Pyro

Spectaculars, which is responsible for the fireworks show. This company has been under contract with Rancho Murieta Association for years.

After a company supervisor contacted a labor pool to hire six to eight technicians to help him prepare for the Rancho Murieta show, Hart said, "he couldn't get one person to work because of the heat. That's why we had our people out there wiring and testing it afterward."

Hart said the working conditions were even more miserable because the raft from which the fireworks are launched is covered with a black, heat-resistant material. That probably increased the temperature by another 15 degrees.

"So kudos to our maintenance guys," Hart said.

Continued on page 11

Panel Covers Broken Pipes, Tank Storage

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)

- Infrastructure issues that included two broken pipes and insufficient storage in the community's water tanks were topics when the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Improvements Committee met on July 2.

Acting operations manager Travis Bohannon updated the committee about an emergency repair to a sewer lift station and the discovery that a pipe that conveys raw water from the Cosumnes River to Calero Reservoir was probably broken. Bohannon said the break must be located and repaired before Nov. 1 so the district can pump water from the river into the reservoirs.

The committee also continued a discussion from its June meeting about the need for more water tank storage to serve development. The immediate concern is that the Rio Oso Tank might not have enough water storage to serve the Residences East and West subdivision under construction next to Stonehouse Park.

The Improvements Committee comprises two board directors, Martin Pohll and Randy Jenco, both engineers; Bohannon; General Manager Mimi Morris and other district staff. The committee looks at infrastructure issues in depth and makes recommendations to the entire board. The district's contract engineer, Joe Domenichelli, also participated in the June and July discussions about water storage. However, developer Bob Keil didn't attend the July meeting because he was ill.

Lift station

Bohannon said the problem with the 6A Lift Station at the end of De La Cruz Drive surfaced on June 12 when an employee discovered a minor sewer leak. Staff determined that the sewage was spilling from a manhole outside of the lift station. After the leak was stopped, a camera inspection showed that the pipe from the manhole to the wet well in the lift station had broken.

Although the district didn't have the right equipment or sufficient

Continued on page 5

RM Country Club Updates Members About Bankruptcy



The Rancho Murieta Country Club Board might be ready to initiate bankruptcy proceedings. File photo by Gail Bullen

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)

- Six months after Rancho Murieta Country Club members voted overwhelmingly to authorize the Board of Directors to initiate bankruptcy proceedings, they were

notified that the process might soon be initiated.

"It is my pleasure, on behalf of your Board of Directors (BOD) that an update on the Club's pending bankruptcy is finally here," President Eric Dutton wrote in a July 1 email.

"The BOD met with Carol Ward and Tony

Velez representing Rancho Murieta Properties (RMP) prior to its regularly scheduled board meeting on Thursday, June 27th. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the BOD on the status of a sale agreement so the club could move forward with our bankruptcy."

The club doesn't own the two golf courses or

the other facilities; instead, it operates under a 55-year lease with Rancho Murieta Properties, which expires in 2028. Ward, who owns the Murieta Equestrian Center, is a major investor in Rancho Murieta Properties, and Velez is the chief operating officer.

The same investment

Continued on page 6

Bill Limiting Smartphone Use in Schools Approved

Office of Assemblyman
Josh Hoover News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - On June 26, the Senate Education Committee unanimously passed landmark legislation authored by Assemblymembers Josh Hoover (R-Folsom), Al Muratsuchi (D-Torrance), and Josh Lowenthal (D-Long Beach) to limit the use of smartphones in schools. AB 3216 would require school districts in California to adopt a policy no later than July 1, 2026, that limits or prohibits the use of smartphones by students during the school day. It was approved on a unanimous 7-0 vote.

“This is a critical step toward protecting and improving the mental health and academic outcomes of students across California,” said Assemblyman Josh Hoover. “Research continues to demonstrate the potential harms of smartphone use among children. The growing use of these devices in a child’s everyday life can contribute to lower test scores, anxiety, depression, and even suicide. Our state must take action to limit the use of

smartphones during the school day and protect kids from these potential harms.”

The previous week, Gov. Gavin Newsom came out in support of reducing smartphone use in schools and LAUSD, California’s largest school district, passed a new policy prohibiting smartphones during the school day.

“I am pleased to join Assemblymember Hoover in this bipartisan effort to require California school districts to place limits on student smartphone use on campus during school hours, unless approved by teachers or administrators for academic, emergency, or other purposes,” said Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi, joint author of the bill and Chair of the Assembly Education Committee. “In 2019, I authored Assembly Bill 272, which was signed into law to encourage school districts to consider such limits. Since then, growing research shows excessive smartphone use not only interferes with learning but also contributes to teenage anxiety, depression, and cyberbullying. This bill will require all districts to develop their own appropriate policy to balance appropriate student use of smartphones at school

with curbing the impact of excessive smartphone use on a student’s educational, social, and emotional well-being.”

Under current law, school districts are authorized to limit or prohibit smartphone use by students during the school day and many have done so with resounding success. Administrators have reported increased social interaction among peers, decreased instances of bullying on campus, and improvements in academic outcomes.

A 2016 study found that when smartphones were removed from classrooms standardized test scores increased by an average of six percent, with even greater improvements among low achieving students. AB 3216 would continue to build on this success by expanding limitations on smartphones statewide.

A recent piece published in The Atlantic by NYU social psychologist Jonathan Haidt described a number of the potential harms that smartphone use is contributing to in children:

Grades suffer when learning is disrupted as a result of smartphone distractions in the classroom.

Up to 15% of teenagers engage in “problematic social media use,” which includes symptoms such as preoccupation, withdrawal symptoms, neglect of other areas of life, and lying to parents and friends about time spent on social media.

The latest Gallup data found that American teenagers spend around 5 hours per day on social media platforms alone.

As smartphones have become ubiquitous since 2010, we have seen a 70% increase in the number of high school seniors expressing that “life often feels meaningless (now more than 1 in 5 seniors express this).

Rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide are on the rise among young people.

Poor mental health outcomes and smartphone use are most strongly correlated in kids under the age of 14.

AB 3216 is critical legislation that prioritizes the needs of California students by limiting these potential harms during the school day, increasing social interaction among peers, reducing bullying, and improving academic outcomes. It will next move to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

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By Carol Feineman

Yet the Placer County Grand Jury addressed today's contamination spreading into a Lincoln active-adult community from the missile site because "it is important to educate the citizens of Placer County about this issue. Cleanup of former military sites contaminated with toxic chemicals

It is essential for proper authorities to prioritize and initiate cleanup efforts to address these potentially serious hazards. This remediation project underscores the importance of monitoring and managing environmental contamination at former military sites to ensure public safety and environmental preservation."

From left, Lincoln City Councilman Bill Lauritsen, Ray Birge and Anne Constantin Birge, members of the grassroots Titan 1-A Missile Site Environmental Contamination and Remediation Committee, were looking at the number of the monitoring well to see what the trichloroethylene (TCE) levels have been over the years. Photo by Carol Feineman

The two-stage missiles

Beale Air Force Base
851st Strategic Missile
Squadron oversaw

Co-founder Anne Constantin Birge of the grassroots Titan 1-A Missile Site Environmental Contamination and Remediation Committee trying to speed up the cleanup process appreciated the grand jury report. The report accurately

"Many thanks to the members of the Placer County Grand Jury for succinctly and clearly putting the issues on the table for all to see," Birge said. "And, for the Water Board and United States Army Corps of Engineers to know, there are others watching them." ★

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Voices Choral Group Disbands After 30-Plus Years



The Rancho Murieta Voices gather for a retirement party at Go 4 Pizza on May 2. The choral group performed at senior living facilities throughout the metropolitan area. Photos by Gail Bullen

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Rancho Murieta Voices have gone silent.

Initially formed as Murieta Village social group more than 30 years ago, the Rancho Murieta Voices has performed for frail, elderly residents in assisted living facilities since 2002.

Its mission ended earlier this year when they couldn't replace the group's retiring music director and pianist, even though both had given seven months' notice.

Joanne Lehman, who has been president since 2017, and her main helper, Geri Dekker, tried everything possible to fill the two positions. They posted pleas on social media and in the paper, talked to churches and music directors, and distributed fliers.

"We've had this before but this is the first time no one stepped up to the plate," Lehman said.

Dekker said the group's demise "is breaking" her heart.

"I will miss singing for these people because it gave me such joy to see their joy," she said

The Rancho Murieta Voices performed their last concert on April 11 for residents at Oakmont at Eldorado Hills. It was their best performance ever, according to Corinne Dryman, a member of the group for five years.

"Because we knew it was our last, we gave it our all," she said.

The Rancho Murieta Voices' last gathering was a May 2 retirement party at Go 4 Pizza, where current and past members flipped through photo albums, shared memories, and enjoyed pizza and complimentary sundaes.

Oakmont Folsom at Creekside activities director Marni Cadi was distressed by the news.

"They really made a reputation for themselves," she said. "Even though our residents get music twice a week, they absolutely loved them and everybody came down to hear them... This is so sad."

Atria Fair Oaks activities director Heather Williams agreed.

"We absolutely loved having them perform," Williams said. "Unfortunately, we could only get them once a year since they were so booked up."

Lehman said volunteering for the Rancho Murieta Voices was a significant commitment because they sang at practices or performances at 2 p.m. every Thursday for most of the year. "That didn't lend itself to somebody who was working so it almost had to be someone who was retired," Lehman said.

Lehman joined the group in 2016 when she was 65.

"I was the youngest member of the group," Lehman said

Danny Diaz, 87, who joined the Rancho Murieta

Voices in 2004, was both the oldest and longest-running member. He and his wife drove from their home in San Mateo to their home at The Villas every week.

"I love to sing and I love to play golf," Diaz said. "My wife has a group she has coffee with, so it has worked out pretty well for both of us."

Diaz said he couldn't help smiling when many audience members began singing along, although they didn't have the lyrics in front of them like he did.

Williams said that phenomenon was evident at her facility where many residents have some memory issues.

"But as soon as the group starts performing a song, they absolutely remember every single word. They love it," Williams said.

Lehman said they selected 25 songs for each performance, drawing from a playlist of more than 1,000 songs from the 1920s through the 1960s. Their all-time hit was "There Ain't Nothing Like a Dame" from the musical "South Pacific." The men in the group donned sailor hats to belt out that show tune, much to the delight of their audiences.

Lehman said the Rancho Murieta Voices experienced a hiatus when the pandemic hit. Nevertheless, nearly all members returned when rehearsals began in fall 2022. During this time, Lehman and Dekker also recruited a new music director. While visiting Strutz Ranch, they encountered Paula Ramirez showcasing her musical talent on the flute. Ramirez, a retired high school music teacher, accepted their offer to join the team. Additionally, Toni Anania, a pianist, also agreed to become part of the ensemble.

Lehman described Ramirez as an outstanding director who elevated the group to a higher level. "She was organized and just made things happen. Our practices became more like performances," Lehman said. "Paula felt we might as well go out and perform more and practice less."

Ramirez's contributions extended beyond organization; she also enriched the group's repertoire by incorporating military and patriotic songs, which resonated deeply with audiences. When the Rancho Murieta Voices performed a medley of songs representing all military branches, it prompted veterans in the audience to rise and salute.

Lehman said they were devastated when Ramirez and Anania tendered their resignations last November.

Lehman adjusted the 2024 performance schedule to accommodate the singers' and musicians' family obligations, allowing them more time for personal responsibilities. The revised schedule included a five-month



Mike Cummer is the master of ceremonies when the Voices perform for the Rancho Murieta Women's Club in 2019.



Donning sailor hats at a 2016 concert are, from left, Steve Chrismond, Mike Cummer and Phil Danz singing the group's most popular number, "There Ain't Nothing like a Dame" from the musical "South Pacific."



The singers show off their red noses when performing "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" for the Rancho Murieta Women's Club in December 2019.

break, with two concert performances scheduled per month for the remaining duration.

"We also thought we could attract some new people to help us out in our unfilled positions," Lehman said.

However, despite their efforts, Lehman ultimately had to make the difficult decision to cancel the remaining concert season for 2024.

Lehman said the Rancho Murieta Voices frequently performed at various venues beyond their regular schedule. In 2019, they delivered a heartfelt Christmas concert at the Rancho Murieta Women's Club, leaving many audience members moved to tears. Additionally, the group extended their support by singing at memorial services to honor departed members.

In addition, smaller groups from the Rancho Murieta Voices ensemble made visits to nursing homes, spreading cheer to former members who were unwell or celebrating birthdays. During the holiday season, they also delighted Murieta Village residents with festive carol singing.

In addition to their pianist, the ensemble welcomed various musicians into their performances over the years, each adding their unique flair to the group's sound. These accompanying musicians included guitarists, bassists, drummers and an accordionist.

At the final gathering, two pivotal group members of the group were

there. Bill Perry, who assumed leadership of the Village activity group in 2002 and served until his retirement in 2017, played a significant role in shaping the group's activities and fostering community engagement. Lee Holm, who served as the music director from 2004 until about 2018, made enduring contributions to the musical direction and cohesion of the Rancho Murieta Voices ensemble during her tenure.

Holm laughed when she remembers how she became involved. Perry was on the golf course with her husband, when he learned she had been a music teacher. Despite Holm's protestations, he recruited her to be the music director as the prior one had eloped. Holm and her husband had moved to the community only two weeks earlier.

"I have such good memories. It's hard to believe it is over," she said.

Perry characterized his involvement with the Rancho Murieta Voices as a "pleasurable chore," illustrating the blend of joy and responsibility it brought him. He traced the group's origins back over three decades to its inception as a social gathering within Murieta Village, spearheaded by Lillian Harris.

Initially led by Chuck Hagerman, the group's early meetings at the clubhouse featured a selection of songs curated by Hagerman. Perry's introduction to the ensemble came about serendipitously



Among the party attendees are Paula Ramirez and Toni Anania, who have retired as the group's music director and pianist, respectively. The group was unable to replace them.



The farewell party attendees include Lee Holm, left, the group's music director for 14 years, and Bill Perry, who managed the Voices for 15 years. He transformed the Voices into a performing choral group in 2002.



Chorus members, from left, Phil Danz, Cheryl Morgan, Mike Cummer and Geri Dekker throw in some dance moves at a 2016 concert.

on the golf course, where Hagerman, aware of Perry's musical background as a guitarist and arranger, extended an invitation for him to join their ranks.

Upon Hagerman's departure in 2002, the singers turned to Perry, recognizing his musical talents and leadership potential, and asked him to assume the role of leader, thus marking a new chapter in the evolution of the ensemble.

But Perry had some prerequisites.

"I didn't want to pull out a few pieces of sheet music and sing for a while," he said.

Instead, Perry advocated for the group to set goals and to begin performing publicly. The catalyst for that was his younger sister, a geriatric physician.

"She convinced me that people in senior residences and nursing homes don't have a chance to get out so why don't you bring the music to them," Perry recalled.

To enhance the organization, Perry implemented more structure within the Rancho Murieta Voices, establishing bylaws that delineated roles and responsibilities for each member, whether as a primary contributor or backup support.

Recognizing the group's financial needs, especially considering the acceptance of gratuities at performances, Perry took proactive steps such as opening a bank account and securing nonprofit status to ensure proper management of funds and

expenses.

The Rancho Murieta Voices encountered challenges as it grew. In late 2008, they faced a setback when they were asked to leave the Village because it was considered an outside group. However, the St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church deacon recognized the group's efforts as a ministry and provided space for rehearsals, meetings, and piano storage.

Subsequently, the group found a new home at the Rancho Murieta Community Church for years until renovations commenced.

Fortunately, the Catholic church welcomed Rancho Murieta Voices back, allowing the group to continue its musical endeavors in a supportive environment.

Maryanna Hashorva has played a vital role in maintaining the group's connection through her weekly newsletters since 2014.

Despite the significant commitment of practicing and performing every Thursday, she now feels a profound sadness as the Rancho Murieta Voices has disbanded.

Reflecting on the group's impact, Hashorva remembers the joy and camaraderie shared during performances.

"It was truly heartwarming to witness older individuals, who were actually our peers, tapping their hands on their legs and beaming with happiness," Hashorva said "It was the best thank you that you could ever ask for." ★

California Expands Access to Naloxone

Office of Governor Gavin Newsom News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA, (MPG) - On June 21, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced that CalRx-branded over-the-counter naloxone HCL nasal spray, 4 mg, will be available for free to eligible organizations through the Naloxone Distribution Project.

This follows the state’s contract with Amneal Pharmaceuticals to

purchase an over-the-counter naloxone nasal spray product through CalRx’s Naloxone Access Initiative at a significantly lower price.

“The CalRx brand is more than a logo; it’s a way to show that the state cares. CalRx is proof positive of California’s innovation, business acumen, and most importantly, our heart. California is spending smarter by making life-saving drugs more affordable so that we

stretch our dollars further – and make that same low price accessible to more people,” Newsom said.

Eligible entities can obtain CalRx over-the-counter naloxone HCL nasal spray, for free through the California Department of Health Care Services Naloxone Distribution Project. CalRx is also working on an option for individuals to buy CalRx over-the-counter naloxone nasal spray directly.

Additional details will be shared on the Naloxone Distribution Project website as they become available.

Qualifying California business entities and organizations seeking to purchase CalRx over-the-counter naloxone HCL nasal spray, for \$24 per twin-pack can do so by visiting CalRx’s Get Naloxone website at <https://calrx.ca.gov/get-naloxone>.

In May alone, the state

purchased approximately 24,000 units, leading to \$415,000 in savings. Since the Naloxone Distribution Project was created, more than 4,433,700 units have been distributed, and more than 277,000 lives have been saved.

“By making naloxone widely available and affordable, we are empowering communities and saving lives,” said California Health and Human Services Agency Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly.

“This is a crucial step in our ongoing efforts to tackle the opioid crisis head-on.”

The overdose epidemic claims thousands of lives each year throughout the nation – and California is combatting this through an all-hands-on-deck approach. A critical component of that is through harm reduction services and methods like naloxone, which can reverse opioid overdoses swiftly and effectively. ★

Panel Covers Broken Pipes, Tank Storage

Continued from page 1

manpower to fix the problem in-house, it had a master service agreement with TNT Industrial Contractors for emergency repairs.

“It took about two-and-a-half days to get it done because it was deeper than was originally expected,” Bohannon reported. “So the total came out to \$18,674.”

actual repair,” Bohannon said. “This is not an emergency but we have to get it done before November so we can pump...It could be extremely expensive, depending on what we find.”

Water Tanks

The community has two water tanks. The pressurized Rio Oso Tank, which holds 1.2 million gallons, serves 800 homes north of the second Guadalupe Drive. It has also been designated as the water tank for the Residences and for the 116-lot Village H in the proposed Rancho North subdivision. The 3,000,000-gallon Van Vleck Tank uses a gravity system to serve the remainder of the community.

Water tank capacity first emerged as a significant development issue at the committee’s June meeting. The most immediate concern was that the Rio Oso Tank, which has been draining quickly, might not have enough capacity to serve the first phase of the Residences subdivision with 68 lots, much less the 130 lots in the second phase.

Bohannon began the July discussion by reporting that Residences developer Bob Keil emailed the district on June 20 asking for district approval of his improvement plans for phase 1 so he could get a permit from Sacramento County to finish grading a wetlands area, with the understanding that water tank storage was yet to be resolved.

Bohannon said that Domenichelli was reluctant to sign off because of the pending water issue. Because Morris was on vacation, Board President Tim Maybee instructed Bohannon to instruct the engineer to sign off on the plans. Domenichelli did so three days later.

Jenco said he and Maybee both discussed Keil’s request to continue grading.

“We didn’t see any downside allowing them to get into the wetlands with the caveat that it wasn’t an approval of their water tank issue or approving their water plans,” he said.

Jenco then asked Domenichelli about the status of the Rio Oso Tank. The engineer responded that his analysis wasn’t much further along than at the June meeting. That was the case, although he plugged three years of water usage records and water plant production data into a model developed by the Integrated Water Master Plan consultants but still encountered too many unknowns.

“All we have now are our water tank levels. We don’t know how much water is coming in and how much water is going out because there are no flow meters in the tank,” the engineer said.

At the June meeting, Bohannon said flow meters weren’t installed when the Rio Oso Tank was upgraded some years ago. They could be installed after the fact, Bohannon said, but 800 customers would have to go without water for a day.

Domenichelli said the model shows an unlimited amount of water going into the tank when it starts to empty and water levels drop quite a bit in the morning.

Bohannon confirmed that was the case.

“So like yesterday, we actually hit low-level alarms just on the irrigation without the development pulling any water,” Bohannon said. “I don’t know how much the heat wave is contributing because this morning Van Vleck is dropping like a rock...which is very unusual this time of year.”

Bohannon said he would increase water plant production to see if it would help with tank water levels, although his options are limited. The older Plant 2 was currently producing 1.7 million gallons per day, Bohannon said, but he would increase it to 2.7 million gallons. However, because of the manganese problem in the summer, he is limiting production at the newer Plant 1 to only



An outside worker repairs a broken pipe at the 6A lift station at the end of De La Cruz Drive after a minor sewage leak was discovered on June 12. The repair was one of several infrastructure problems discussed at the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Improvements Committee on July 2. Courtesy photo

1 million gallons, which is how much water can be pre-treated.

Although Plant I has a far greater capacity, increasing production would result in safe but brown drinking water as happened in 2019.

Domenichelli estimated that water demand from the first 68 Residences lots probably would drop the tank level less than a foot if lawns were barred in the subdivision.

“I would like to see that in writing or in an ordinance that says they are not going have lawn watering,” Domenichelli said.

Domenichelli also reported that a plan by the development engineer to use the Van Vleck tank as a backup for the 68 lots wasn’t going to work.

Further discussion

covered a myriad of other related water issues without any resolution.

Near the end of the meeting, Morris pointed out that the water distribution system was never mentioned in the two financial services agreements with the developers.

“So we are sort of on new territory in this,” Morris said.

Morris also proposed documenting the agreement allowing Keil to continue grading.

“I think it would be beneficial if I drafted a letter that would rein him in a little bit on what authority was given to him by Tim until this water tank capacity issue is resolved,” Morris said.

Pohll and Jenco liked her suggestion. ★

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

A story about the water tanks in the June 28 edition incorrectly said that Carol Anderson Ward was one of the

other investors besides Bob Keil in the Residences East and West subdivision. Tony Velez, who is one of

the other investors, confirmed Ward wasn’t involved. The River Valley Times apologizes for the error.



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State Fair Here for 17 Days

By Carol Feineman

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - The 170th California State Fair offers 17 days of old-fashioned fun for the whole family, from July 12 to July 28.

Lucky for us that we don't have to drive too far; the first state fair sponsored by the California State Agricultural Society, was held in San Francisco on Oct. 4, 1854, and rotated to different cities for the next six years. In 1861, however, Sacramento became the permanent location for the extravaganza.

While today's California State Fair still honors the state's agricultural industry, there is much more to see and enjoy at the annual event.

There are plenty of activities for all ages. That includes eating funnel cakes, waffles to sliders; listening to top musicians; riding Butler Amusements' thrilling Zipper to the classic and calmer Crown Merry Go Round; and checking out competitions and exhibits that feature our neighbors' talents and skills.

Besides the nightly concerts, entertainment is ongoing each

day. For starters, there are the Tanzanite African Acrobats, the Stilt Circus and the Salsa Steel Band.

The many competitions include the Open Livestock Show with beef cattle, sheep, Boer goats, dairy cattle, dairy goats, Nigerian dwarf goats, pygmy goats, angora and fiber goats, longhorn cattle, llamas and alpaca.

And the always popular Junior Livestock competition spotlights the dedicated youth FFA members with their beef cattle, sheep, swine, goats, dairy cattle and dairy goats.

Exhibits range from a Candy Maze Selfie Exhibit, a Student Showcase & CA Crafts Exhibit, Animation Academy to a fine art and photography exhibit.

The California State Fair is open different hours of the week.

Main Gate and Blue Gate hours are from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday through Sunday.

Green Gate opens at 2 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, and at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday.

Carnival and Skyride hours are from 2 to 11



What would a fair be like without going on rides at the carnival? There are rides for the thrill-seekers as well as for those who want a tamer but just as fun experience. Photo courtesy of California State Fair

p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, and from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday.

Kids Park hours are 1 to 11 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, and 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday.

Exhibit Building hours are 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday; and from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday through Sunday.

The Monorail opens at 11 a.m. Monday through

Thursday, and at 10 a.m. Friday through Sunday.

Tickets can be bought online at <https://calexpostatefair.com/tickets> or at the fair's box office. Several ticket prices and packages are offered. Daily tickets to the fair and food festival start at \$16 for adults (\$14 in advance), \$12 (\$10 in advance) for seniors 62 and older and \$10 (\$8 in advance) for children ages 5 to 12. Fair admission is free for children 4 and under.

In addition, a Family Fun Pack is \$49.99 and

includes four single-day general admissions, four ride tickets (each good for one ride in the Carnival or on the Monorail), and a parking pass.

The Toyota Concert Series is free with fair admission ticket in the area behind the General Admission seating area to the first 700 concert-goers. Seats can also be reserved, starting at \$25.

Parking is \$15 a day or three days for \$30.

There are also different prices for the carnival rides, starting at \$1 per

ticket and carnival fast passes from \$10 to \$15.

An Unlimited Ride Wristband bought at the Carnival is \$39 Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and \$44 Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Cal Expo is at 1600 Exposition Blvd. in Sacramento, northeast of the American River.

For more about the California State Fair, go online to calexpostatefair.com, call 916-263-3000 or email INFO@CALEXPO.COM. ★

RM Country Club Updates Members About Bankruptcy

Continued from page 1

group, previously represented by the late John Sullivan, developed the hotel and the Bel Air shopping center and is continuing to seek Sacramento County approval for the Rancho North development that includes 697 lots.

The July 1 update stated that the board would now finalize the necessary documents and submit the bankruptcy package.

"In the meantime, efforts in preparation for the transition to RMP will start taking place," Dutton wrote. "We were informed that Troon (a large golf management company) is contracted to complete a full assessment of the club's facilities, grounds, and operations."

Dutton said the assessment was expected to take 45 to 60 days and would begin soon, although he didn't have a start date.

"Other assessments will occur to assist with the transformation of the entire facility," he said.

As for the bankruptcy process timing, Dutton said their bankruptcy attorney

told them in January that once the club's package is submitted, "we will be at the mercy of the Federal Bankruptcy Courts and the workload of the judge it is assigned to."

The River Valley Times tried to reach Dutton for more details about the sales agreement and the transition to Rancho Murieta Properties, but he didn't respond by press time to a text or a phone message.

The River Valley Times reached out to Velez for clarification about the sales agreement and to ask whether Rancho Murieta Properties would take over the club or sell it to another party.

Velez confirmed there was no sales agreement in place yet. Regarding potential directions, Velez said, they had received offers both ways but haven't formalized anything.

"These are just thoughts at this point and discussion on both sides: selling it to a company, doing a joint venture (JV) or us taking over," he said.

Asked about the country club's transformation,

Velez referred to the Troon assessment.

"If we do decide to either take over a transfer or a JV, they would be running the golf course for us," Velez said. "Again, that would not be set in stone."

The River Valley Times also contacted board member Tom Barentson. He said the board's meeting with Ward and Velez on June 27 had been very positive and many options were discussed.

Barentson said that a sales agreement was "coming together" and that he understood a sales agreement would be needed so the club could move forward on the bankruptcy.

"I don't know how it is going to work out," Barentson said. "But it seems like people are working together to make the best possible situation for the community."

Dutton first notified the membership that the board was considering bankruptcy as an option to resolve the club's dire financial circumstances in a Dec. 1 email. He said that the board was

also proposing two other options: one involves cost-cutting measures to meet the 2024 budget and the other would increase member dues by \$150 a month. Dutton explained that these two options would only allow the club to tread water until the lease ends.

On the other hand, the third option involving bankruptcy would be about starting over.

"The entity known as the Rancho Murieta Country Club would cease to exist," Dutton said in December. "A new entity would take its place and be run by a professional with experience operating a successful country club with all the amenities, energy and positivity that one should expect from the centerpiece of the community."

Many potential buyers have been interested in doing exactly that.

"None are interested in doing so unless the facilities are free of any successor liability, whether it be the unions, other creditors, or our membership bylaws," he wrote. "In the

past, any contemplated sale has failed primarily because of withdrawal liability to the unions. Until recently, not even bankruptcy could alleviate this situation."

"However, there is a new provision in the bankruptcy code under Chapter 11 subparagraph 5 that will permit us to sell our interest in the remaining lease term, the club's only true asset, bundle that sum with any other cash on hand, and present a compelling case to the bankruptcy court to dismiss all of our creditors' claims," Dutton explained in his December email.

If that happens, several individuals competing to buy and improve the club could do so free of the conditions that prevented past sales.

"At the end of the day, it's about improving our experience as members and maximizing our property values," Dutton wrote.

"Our best opportunity to do that is to allow the sale of the club to someone with the resources to invest

in improving the facilities and the know-how to manage a private country club."

Following Dutton's Dec. 1 update, the board convened a town hall meeting on Dec. 12 to present the three options to keep the club operating and to explain why filing for bankruptcy would have the best chance for success. The meeting drew about 300 attendees.

After the board conducted a subsequent electronic vote on the options between Dec. 18 and Dec. 22, the membership voted overwhelmingly to authorize the board to initiate bankruptcy.

When contacted by phone after the vote, Dutton told the River Valley Times that the timing for the board to initiate the bankruptcy process would be dependent on their bankruptcy attorney. "When he says quite clearly that you are not going to stay afloat for whatever amount of time, that will help us decide where that financial point is," Dutton said. ★

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



Celebration time, come on! Yes, it really is celebration time in Sac Town, and for the naysayers in the group that were waiting that the free agents were flying by and Monte McNair wasn't pulling the switch, it's time for some credit and accolades.

The most recent acquisition, albeit not yet complete, of free agent DeMar DeRozan, has a 50-plus win season written all over it for our hometown team.

DeRozan, without question one of the most coveted free agents in this year's mix, has apparently chosen the Sacramento Kings over other contenders such as the L.A.

Clippers and L.A. Lakers. What makes this exceptional is that DeRozan is from Southern California, and he chose Sacramento over his hometown.

Sacramento has received criticism over the years that the Kings can't attract big free agent names, and the signing of DeRozan may spell an end to that rhetoric.

One of the shortcomings of last year's team was their inability to close out close games, and that they were somewhat too one-dimensional with their late-game methodology.

No question De'Aaron Fox can't be called upon to provide all of the late game heroics, and that was

primarily the end-game strategy the past couple of seasons.

The signing of DeRozan will enhance opportunities for not only Fox, but Keegan Murray, Domantas Sabonis and Malik Monk, as well.

Opposing teams cannot plan their defense around stopping De'Aaron Fox with a weapon like DeRozan on the floor, and his scoring ability will undoubtedly enhance the scoring capabilities of everyone around him.

DeRozan doesn't come cheap, and part of the process in procuring a six-time NBA all-star is making room under the salary cap. To make that happen, the

Kings had to shed the \$18 million per year they were paying to veteran Harrison Barnes, and Harrison was dealt to the San Antonio Spurs, who are apparently looking for veteran leadership amid their current youth movement.

For many Kings fans that have enjoyed watching Harrison bring his slashing style of offense and the mid-range shooting he has become known for, it's bittersweet. Harrison was a fixture in the Kings starting lineup since February of 2019, and his durability was one of the unquestionable qualities the Kings will miss.

For a team that led the NBA in scoring just two seasons ago, Sacramento dropped 13 spots last year, and even a stronger defensive presence wasn't enough to make up the difference. Missing the playoffs after making the playoffs just one year ago was a gut punch, and it put a bull's eye on

the backs of players that were too inconsistent with their scoring. Harrison, as a starter, was at the top of the list.

So, we wish Harrison well, and usher in a different looking starting lineup that will hopefully include fan favorite Malik Monk, as well.

Without question, DeRozan brings a veteran strength that will show itself in additional wins this season, but the Kings still need help for their all-world center and NBA leader in rebounds, Domantas Sabonis.

While Monte McNair could run for mayor of Sacramento and probably win right now, other potential moves are still in the offing. Drew Timme, 6' 10" center from Gonzaga, was just signed to the Kings' summer league team, and although not drafted, there is something about this 23-year-old that will make you look twice. Could he be a diamond in

the rough? It's possible, but for much needed up front help, let's not forget that already secured on the Kings roster are little-heralded Alex Len and veteran Trey Lyles.

At times, coaches have a tendency to overlook what they already have, and I for one do not believe that we've seen the best basketball that these two Kings have to offer.

For the Chris Duarte fans out there, sadly Chris was sent to Chicago along with two second-round draft picks and money to conclude the DeRozan acquisition. We will miss Chris and his spark off the bench, but like Harrison, the fans wish Chris all the best in Chi Town.

Stay tuned, Kings fans, for more magic from your intrepid GM, and thank you Monte McNair for having the patience to wait for the right player to surface for the Kings.

Welcome, DeMar DeRozan! ★

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

RM Blood Drive Slated July 15
The Rancho Murieta Women's Club has slated its next blood drive on Monday, July 15 from noon to 6 p.m. at the Rancho Murieta Community Church, 14670 Cantova Way, Rancho Murieta. Appointments to donate can be made online at donors.vitalant.org by using blood drive code SMFM053 or by calling Vitalant at 877-258-4825. Walk-ins will be accommodated if space permits.

Donors will be entered into a drawing for a \$50 gift card for Yogurt Pop that was donated by Carole Thames of Town & Country Real Estate. All donors will receive a 10% off coupon at Yogurt Pop. Eat well and drink plenty of water prior to donating, and please bring a photo ID.

If you have eligibility questions call Vitalant at 877-258-4825 or Vitalant.org.

Sheriff's Office Service Center Open House is July 31
The Sacramento Community Sheriff's Office has announced it is reopening

a service center in Rancho Murieta in partnership with the Rancho Murieta Community Services District.

A grand opening has been slated on Wednesday, July 31 at 10 a.m. at the district's administrative building. The participants will include the new Volunteers in Partnership with the Sheriff (VIPs) and several top officers with the sheriff's office Central Division.

The service center will be located inside the CSD administration building, and the VIPs will operate it on Mondays between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

The sheriff's office shuttered the Rancho Murieta service center during the pandemic.

Gold Rush Classic Tournament Set for Aug. 22-23
We are thrilled to announce and would be excited to have you participate in the 2024 Gold Rush Classic on Thursday and Friday, Aug. 22 and 23, 2024, at the Rancho Murieta Country Club. The Gold

Rush Classic is a celebrity Pro-Am Golf Tournament, a Celebrity Challenge, a Million Dollar Hole-in-One contest, a Celebrity Draft Party, a Farm-to-Fork Dinner, and a Stars and Guitars concert featuring great live music.

The Gold Rush Classic raises philanthropic proceeds for Make-A-Wish, Jordan's Guardian Angels, 1st Tee of Sacramento, Rancho Murieta Youth Programs, and other key children's charities in Sacramento and beyond. More information is available at <https://birdease.com/Goldrushclassic/>.

Summerfest Tickets Are on Sale
Summerfest is slated to return on Friday, Oct. 4 and Saturday, Oct. 5 to Stonehouse Park, and tickets are now on sale on the website: www.summerfest-rachnomurieta.org/tickets.

Tickets will only be sold online or at the event. For the first time, a \$20 discount will be available with the online purchase of four tickets.

A cornhole tournament will be a new event that will take place on Saturday for attendees 18 years and older. A participant link will be posted soon.

Save the Date for Wilton Fire Chili Cookoff
The Wilton Firefighters Association has slated its Chili Cook off on Oct. 12 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Wilton Community Center and at CW Dillard Elementary School. In addition to chili tasting the event will feature a car show, vendors, music, food trucks, a beer garden and a kid zone complete with games, bounce houses and a rock-climbing wall.

For a chili cook-off booth, contact Patsy Nemetz at 209-648-5030. For a vendor booth, contact Codi Craig at 630-441-2082 or sales@eternaliron.com.

To enter the car show, contact Randy Upham at 916-708-5589 or rupham60@gmail.com. The event will benefit the Sacramento Firefighters Burn Institute and other local charities. ★

Amid Wildfire Smoke, Take Steps to Protect Health

California Department of Public Health News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - With wildfire smoke and reduced air quality affecting many California communities, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is urging Californians to take steps to protect themselves from air pollutants. Wildfire smoke can affect anyone's health, but some people are at higher risk, including pregnant people, children, older adults, first responders, and people with chronic conditions like asthma, COPD, diabetes, kidney disease or heart disease.

"All Californians should be aware of the risks of wildfire smoke and ash inhalation and take steps to avoid breathing in pollutants, including reducing outdoor

activity and staying indoors when possible," said Dr. Tomás J. Aragón, California Department of Public Health Director and State Public Health Officer. "Wildfire smoke can make anyone sick, but it's particularly unhealthy for vulnerable individuals, including children, people who are pregnant, and those with chronic health conditions."

To avoid possible health problems due to wildfire smoke and poor air quality, California Department of Public Health recommends taking the following steps:

Stay informed. Check the air quality and sign up for updates. Californians can check their local air quality index (AQI) at AirNow.

Stay indoors. If the air quality is bad, stay inside as much as possible and close all windows, doors and vents.

Adjust your A/C. Change the settings on your A/C unit to re-circulate or close outdoor air intakes to avoid drawing in smoky outdoor air. Running an air purifier can also help.

Wear a mask. If you must go outside, wear a well-fitting N95 mask. This is especially important for those who must work outdoors for long periods, in areas with heavy smoke.

Wildfire smoke contains fine particles which are respiratory irritants, and when inhaled deeply, can affect the lungs and the heart. Exposure to high concentrations of fine particles can cause persistent cough, runny nose, phlegm, wheezing, and difficulty breathing.

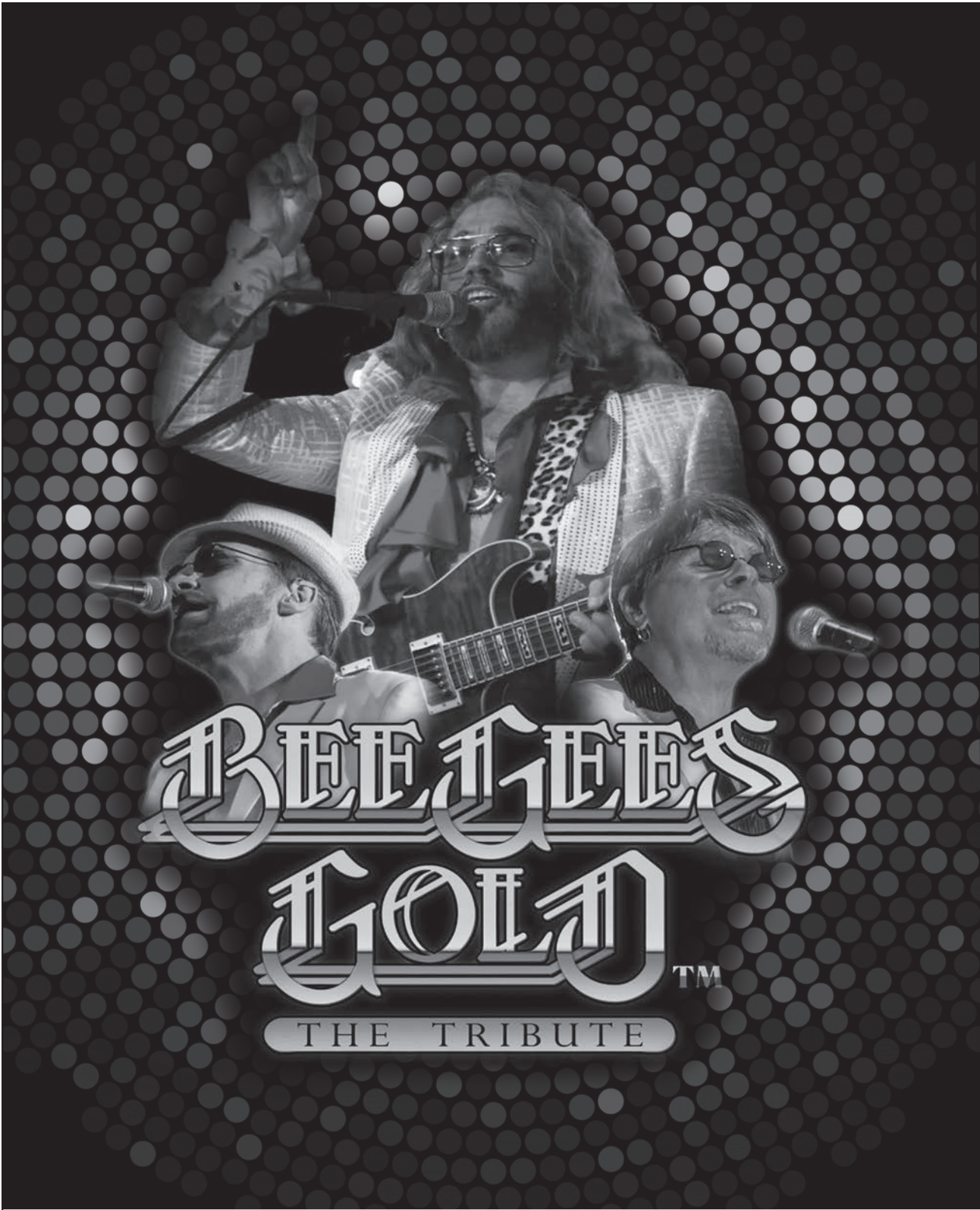
Smoke from wildfires can also cause eye irritation, reduced lung function, and bronchitis. Those with asthma or another

lung disease should keep at least a seven-day supply of medication on hand and call a health care provider if nearby wildfires worsen breathing issues.


Knowing the "Ps of Preparedness" can help you react quickly if a wildfire threatens your area:

- People (help children, older adults and people with disabilities)
- Pets
- Papers (important documents)
- Phones
- Prescriptions (and glasses)
- Pictures
- PCs (computers) (for the information stored)
- Plastic (credit cards and cash)


More information can be found at the California Department of Public Health's Extreme Heat site. ★



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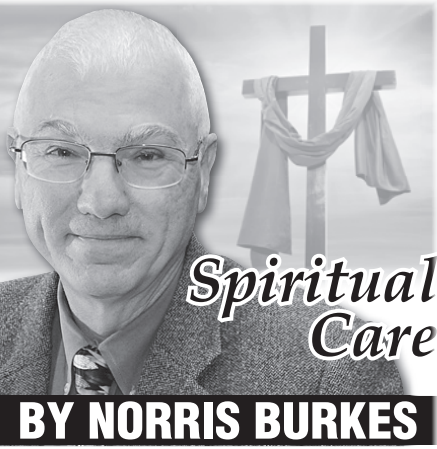
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If I say “1492,” chances are it’ll bring to mind that old school rhyme, “In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.”

But now I suspect I’ll remember 1492 in a different light. That’s because last month I flew to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, to sharpen 1,492 pencils.

You say, “That’s an expensive trip for such a menial chore.”

Yes, I get your point, but if you’re a regular reader of this column, you know that Chispa Project needed those pencils for the inauguration of their 88th Honduran library at Pedro Nufio Elementary School.

I know I’m not the sharpest stick in the pencil box, but still I expected the project director to match me to something more in line with my talents.

After all, the director is my daughter, Sara Brakhane. She knows that I’ve spoken to dozens of U.S. audiences. I thought she might arrange a speaking gig in a Honduran soccer stadium.

At the very least, she should have

Back to the Grind

arranged for me to mentor the school’s principal and share the B.F. Skinner Psychology of Education I learned in seminary.

I mean, what’s the harm in a little nepotism?

A lot, apparently.

She assigned me to count pencils, sharpen them, and drop said writing instruments into 421 of the new school backpacks.

Of course, I wasn’t the only volunteer that arrived on the Dallas connection. The less jet-lagged and talented ones were slotted for important jobs.

Under the direction of Lester Reconco, an artistic Chispa employee, volunteers helped paint a large mural onto the library wall. It was no Banksy or Wyland Whale, but in quick time, our fledgling artists brought the room to life with bright primary colors.

Designed to inspire, the drawing features a Honduran boy in an oceanside scene. He’s reclined on a wave of books while reading. On a field of blue, volunteers added a sailboat, a swan, and multiple fish.

Other artists meticulously painted a line of books that encompassed the room.

Meanwhile my pencil sharpener overheated and forced Sara to assign me to the painting team. However, it was still not the fame I sought.

My job was to pour various paints into red Solo cups, lug them to the talent, and wash their brushes. My nickname was Pour-Pour-Norris.

Suddenly, I became a truly irreplaceable member of the team.

I know this because I begged others to replace me.

They would not.

But finally, after two days of painting, the moment came to shelve the books in the new library.

From the school parking lot, our volunteers worked an assembly line offloading 850 new books from our bus. We carried the books through a playground of kids playing soccer and girl-chase-boy games.

Still, several stopped to hug us, sharing broad and cheeky smiles that stretched for miles and miles. Suddenly we were surrounded by a gaggle of schoolgirls and boys, all grinning with unrehearsed wonder. They weren’t subtle. They wanted to see the new books we were shelving.

If you know the excitement U.S. children express over a new video game, you can conceive the enthusiasm building in these students as they saw their first children’s picture book.

On the final two days, Chispa volunteers hosted the library inauguration, a sort of all-day birthday party. Students rotated among classrooms for hands-on-fun that included puppets, science experiments and

storytelling.

I never did get to deliver my Skinner lecture. But I can share with you that, like Skinner, Chispa believes that changing the environment can make education enjoyable and effective for all students.

Books are used to affect that change.

And the school where we were is definitely an environment that needed changing.

This rural school sits near the city’s landfill where many parents work to collect trash, operate the landfill’s incinerator, or commute by bus to a day laborer job.

When we left Honduras, the new library we had painted and filled with rows of new books had changed their environment for the better.

Chispa’s challenging slogan suggests we all “Help change the story.” I like to think that sometimes their stories can be changed, and a sharpened pencil can write that new story.

So, with more libraries coming soon, shall I “pencil you in” for the next volunteer trip? In the meantime, I guess you can say, it’s back to the grind for me.

You can be a part of the change by sending a check made to “Chispa Project.” Or give online at ChispaProject.org/chaplain Send 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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A black and white headshot of John Taylor, a middle-aged man with a mustache, wearing a dark suit jacket, white shirt, and patterned tie. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera.

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Soaring Temperatures Threaten Fireworks Show

The fireworks snafu also put an end to the dance party that was slated from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Gazebo. Families driving up in their golf carts and a growing cluster of teenagers were surprised to find their access blocked by caution tape around the parking lot and a half dozen security officers per the orders of a fire inspector.

Despite this, a disc jockey continued blasting tunes from inside the gazebo, prompting several visitors to dance on the sidewalk. The caution tape was removed just before the fireworks show began. However, after the show ended, the crowd of teenagers inside the gazebo began dancing. Although exuberant, with many sipping from cans of beer, the teenagers didn't cause any issues and began drifting away as the night progressed.

Likely due to the early timing, the heat didn't hamper the three morning activities – the parade, the pancake breakfast or the fun run.

Parade.

Rancho Murieta Association sponsored the 10 a.m. parade along Murieta Parkway. Three horn-bling Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District trucks led the way, followed by three patrol cars from the California Highway and the Sacramento County Sheriff's and a contingent from Scout Troop 633 with an honor guard and a golf cart bearing candy for the spectators.

The community's Hometown Heroes led a



Zooming along in their motorized sofa, Bevis (Eric Dubey) and Butt-Head (Aaron Vogt) delight the crowd. They were the last entry in the parade.



This prize-winning golf cart is one of many decorated in red, white and blue.

motorized division of the parade with some waving from a 1926 Chevrolet Utility Express Truck. Following them were even more military veterans affiliated with Veterans of Foreign Wars riding in a trailer. A long line of gleaming vintage cars completed the segment.

Decorated golf carts made up the bulk of the parade entries. Most of them were celebrating the nation's birthdays with American flags. Streamers, ribbons, garlands, canners, shiny signs and pompoms – all in red and white and blue – added to the festive

atmosphere. One resident mounted a flag pole to his cart, showcasing his patriotic spirit.

Compared to previous years, fewer golf carts were completely transformed for the parade. However, this year's entries were still imaginative and festive. They included a golf cart transformed into a lantern fish, a tribute to bumblebees, and a depiction of the flowery Pixie Nation. But the most elaborate was the pirate ship complete with Captain Hook, Peter Pan, Tinker Bell, Wendy and even the crocodile.

Although not a golf cart,



Nearly 300 runners take part in the fun run sponsored by the Murieta Health Club. Photos by Gail Bullen



Kiwanis breakfast coordinators Bonnie Shewchuk and Angie Friedrich present Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost and her husband Jack Frost with proclamation recognizing their years of volunteering at the breakfast.

the Summerfest parade entry centered around a wooden Ferris wheel, adding a whimsical touch to the event.

The list of parade winners wasn't available at press time but will be published in the next edition.

Pancake breakfast

Kiwanians Bonnie Shewchuk and Angie Friedrich supervised the pancake breakfast that opened at 7 a.m. and served about 800 customers. The menu included scrambled eggs, pancakes and sausage, along with orange juice, coffee and condiments. The Kiwanians used grills to cook the pancakes and sausages on the site and transported the fresh scrambled eggs from the country club kitchen.

For the first time, the Kiwanians offered blueberry pancakes, thanks to Kasey Cronquist, who moved to Rancho Murieta last year and is president of the North American

Blueberry Council. "The blueberry pancakes seemed to be a big hit," Friedrich said.

The two breakfast coordinators also bid farewell to long-time volunteers Sue and Jack Frost, who are moving to Arkansas after her second term as a Sacramento County supervisor ends. Shewchuk and Friedrich surprised the Frosts with a proclamation drawn up by Kiwanian Jack Seigal, lauding them for their dedicated efforts over the years.

Asked why she and her husband had shown up for every pancake breakfast since she had been elected, Frost said: "It is a tradition. We wouldn't miss it. It's what we do on the Fourth of July."

Attendee Candace Hern had nothing but praise for the breakfast.

"There were no lines. People had a good breakfast and the blueberry pancakes were outstanding this year," she said. "It

was a great way to start the Fourth of July."

Fun run

Erin (Howard) Bailey of Murieta Health Club sponsored the 44th annual Fun Run near the North Gazebo and handed out necklaces and bottled water.

The fun run drew 300 runners and walkers, the largest crowd ever, with some pushing strollers, kids riding bikes and dogs on leashes. The event was comprised of a 5-kilometer run and a shorter route, with both beginning at 7:30 a.m. This year's participants ranged in age between 9 months and 84 years.

About 20 youngsters also turned out for the children's races across the street that began at 8:15 a.m. Everyone received a prize.

As was the case last year, about 25 members of the Pleasant Grove High School cross-country team were the top finishers. Ryan Almog came in first for the boys with a time of 15:19 minutes, which was a second slower than last year.

The first female was Alona Dota, although her time wasn't recorded.

Ava Lingo, 12, participated in the race with her two brothers, her parents and their dog.

"I like to start my day with an accomplishment," she said. ★



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Sparkling Wines, Chocolates Paired at Women’s Club Luncheon

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA CA (MPG)

- As another example of how she has created a job out of drinking wine, Tracey Beckner presented a “Bubbles and Chocolate Pairing” for the Rancho Murieta Women’s Club at their May 22 luncheon at the Rancho Murieta Country Club.

Although the wines Beckner poured at the luncheon could be on the menu at the Taste Restaurant and Wine Bar in Plymouth, most of her on-the-job tasting happens as a wine studies instructor at Delta College. On the other hand, Beckner doesn’t see any reason to confine the sparkling wine to work.

“So ladies, how many of you think that the reason champagne was invented so we can have a little with breakfast is because it goes so well with eggs,” she asked the crowd.

During her program, Beckner poured a Cava from Spain, a Crémant from France and a Spumoni from Italy. Then she paired each wine with a different gourmet chocolate, along with some nuts, for the first tasting and a bit of pound cake for the last one. Beckner also educated her audience about sparkling wines in the process.

Beckner explained how two secondary fermentation methods are used to add the bubbles, how the different grapes and levels of sugar affect the taste, and the geography of where the grapes are



Wine expert Tracey Beckner leads a “Bubbles and Chocolate Pairing” program at the recent meeting of the Rancho Murieta Women’s Club. Beckner and her husband own a restaurant and teach wine study classes at San Joaquin Delta College. Photos by Gail Bullen



Rancho Murieta Women’s Club President Bonnie Kirshman pours a Spanish sparkling wine for Cheryl Cannon, left, and Patti Keating.



Beckner uses a saber to open a bottle of sparkling wine.

grown. She also added some “fun facts.”

“Did you know that Marlyn Monroe was known to have taken a bath in champagne,” Beckner said. “It took 35 bottles to fill the bathtub.”

Beckner also wove historical anecdotes into her talk and recommended “Wine and War,” a book that explained how World War II devastated the European wine industry.

“These estates worked and clawed to come back from complete devastation to be where they are

today,” Beckner said. “All of those big houses that are known internationally and have been producing champagne for hundreds of years are all led by women.”

Beckner seamlessly transitioned from discussing all the world’s sparkling wines to focus on three examples. She began by pouring a bone-dry Cava from Spain, the Juve & Camps Brut Grand Reserva. She paired it with several pieces of rock salt-encrusted white chocolate and a little pile of sweet and spicy nuts.



Beckner shows club members how to locate the seam where it comes together at the neck in case they want to try sabrage at home.

“So what we do is a little sip and taste while we still have a little bit of wine in our mouth. Then we sip again to see how it changes the wine and to see how the textures and flavors match,” Beckner said. “Or, you can just eat and drink it.”

The other two wines in the taste test were for Paul Buisse Crémant de Lorie and Contessa Collection Platinum Asti Spumante.

Tracey Beckner and her husband, Mark Beckner, have made significant

contributions to the culinary and wine education scene in Amador County. After moving to the area 27 years ago, they initially purchased and operated the Union Hotel in Volcano. They later expanded their ventures by opening Taste Restaurant and Wine Bar in Plymouth.

Their commitment to education began about 15 years ago when they started teaching at Delta Community College. Mark Beckner chaired the culinary arts program, where

he taught hundreds of future chefs the art of cooking. Tracey focused on wine studies, restaurant operations and hospitality management, sharing her extensive knowledge and experience with students.

Five years ago, Mark Beckner took a sabbatical to explore community college wine study programs across the state. This led to the creation of a wine study program at Delta College, which Beckner describes as a “wonderful resource.” ★

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