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East Sacramento News

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AUGUST 23, 2024

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New Space, New Ideas Residents Imagine Future for Sacramento Zoo Site



The front of the Sacramento Zoo is a designated historic landmark displaying the Googie mid-century modern style of architecture. Photo by Kristina Rogers

By Kristina Rogers

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Recently, the Elk Grove City Council approved the move of the Sacramento Zoo to its city. It may be a surprise to some, but to those who have been around for some time, it isn't.

Expanding the zoo to support the needs of the animals has been a discussion for decades. The zoo opened in William Land Park in 1927. The only expansion was in the 1960s, making it the 14.2 acres it is today.

Around the late '80s, the zoo was looking to expand again. That's when neighbors formed a group to protect the park, which later became the

Land Park Community Association, or LPCA. Expansion would have impacted the baseball fields and picnic areas nearby. Even then, neighbors understood there were only two choices for the zoo: to remain at its current size or relocate to a larger space.

After years of searching, the zoo has found a new home. Elk Grove is planning to open its zoo in 2029, leaving the space in Sacramento empty by 2028. A new generation of LPCA board members is once again participating in the conversation.

With the support of board member Jeff Coleman, the LPCA launched a community survey to collect people's

thoughts on what they want to see in the empty zoo space.

Firstly, it is essential to know the city has parameters for what can go into that space. For example, it cannot be used for housing or private business. It should be family friendly and affordable. It must be privately managed like Fairytale Town and Funderland (neither of those sites receives money from the city). There may be other restrictions that are currently unknown.

Over 600 people participated in the survey. Respondents had many ideas and lots of feedback. 76% approved of natural/outdoor

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Newsom: Restrict Use of Cell Phones in Class

Office of Gov. Gavin
Newsom News
Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)

- In a letter to California schools on Aug. 13, Gov. Gavin Newsom called on every school district to restrict smartphone use in classrooms as the new academic year begins. In his letter, the governor applauds districts that have already implemented cell phone restrictions, like Los Angeles Unified, and reminded education leaders of the mental health, scholastic and social risks of cell phone use in classrooms.

In 2019, Newsom signed AB 272 (Muratsuchi) into law, which grants school districts the authority to regulate the use of smartphones during school hours. Building on that legislation, he is currently working with the California Legislature to further limit student smartphone use on campuses. In June, the governor announced efforts to restrict the use of smartphones during the school day.

A copy of the letter can be found below:

Dear School Leaders,

As we strive to create the best learning environment for all students this new academic year, I write today to raise an urgent issue that affects their well-being: the pervasive use of smartphones in schools.

Excessive smartphone use among youth is linked to increased anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. A recent Pew Research Center survey found that 72% of high school and 33% of middle school teachers report cell phone distractions as a major problem. Common Sense Media found that 97% of students use their phones during the school day for a median of 43

Continued on Page 6

Staying Safe from Rattlesnakes

By Judy Andrews

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Although wildlife sightings are typically more common near rivers, creeks and open spaces, this year's extreme heat has forced the local wildlife, including many unwelcome visitors such as venomous snakes, to seek food, water and shelter in populated areas, sometimes right into our backyards.

The California Poison Control System receives hundreds of rattlesnake exposure calls every year, especially from April to October. Although rattlesnake bites are rarely fatal, they can cause severe injury or death, according to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and prevention is the key to human safety.

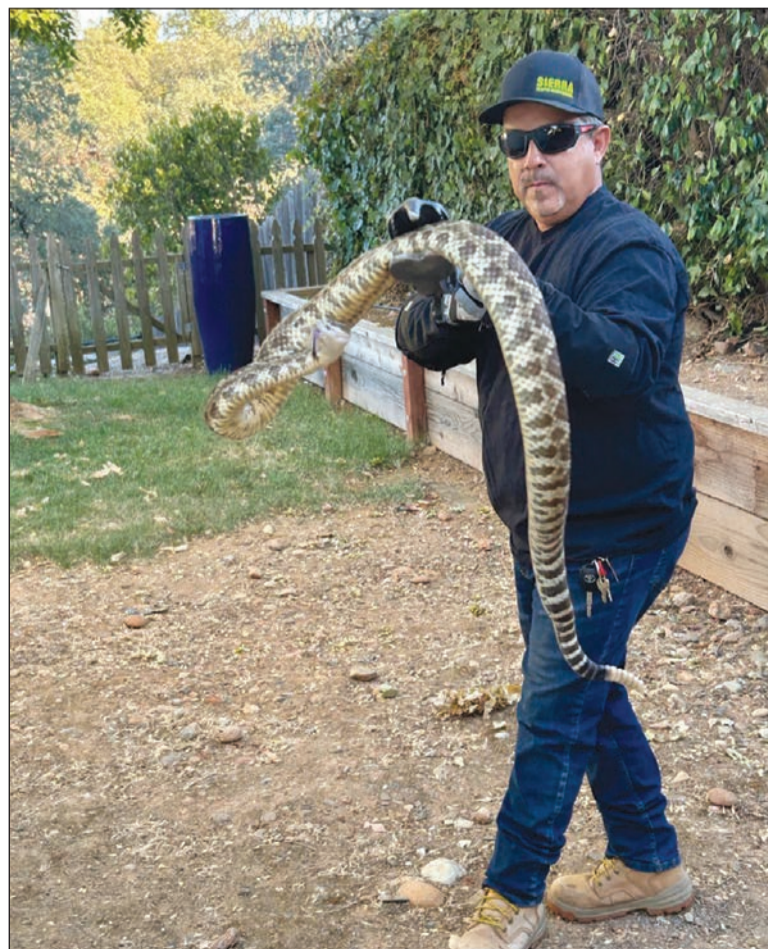
"Snakes start roaming around when they get desperate for water," said Jake Molieri, owner of SNAKEOUT, Inc.

"They can die if they become overheated, so it's not unusual to find them on hot days near water sources like sprinklers, fountains, pools, pet water dishes and inside flowerpots," Molieri said.

Molieri's business provides humane snake removal services, educational resources and canine rattlesnake aversion clinics.

He's one of a handful of local snake removal companies specializing in removing rattlesnakes from businesses and homes. Molieri sees a growing need

Continued on Page 9



Wildlife Capture Specialist Ben Nuckolls safely handles a Northern California Rattlesnake removed from a backyard. Nuckolls accepts donations through California Wildlife Encounters to keep his work going. Photo by Jane Miki Gagnier

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New Space, New Ideas



People ask what will happen to the artistic animal bike racks, created by local metal artist Gina Rossie and donated by the Land Park Community Association. Photo by Kristina Rogers

Continued from Page 1

education offerings, while 75% wanted an animal sanctuary or wildlife rehab center. This could include a bat sanctuary, butterfly pavilion or bird sanctuary. Several respondents liked the idea of a Japanese garden with a tea house. It would also honor the historical Japanese culture in the community. 69 to 71% asked for a multi-use community center. It could also be a space for weddings, open-air markets and concerts. 68% asked for sports facilities, mainly aquatic. Neighbors have commented that William Land Park has no public pool or community center. The new amenities would include neighbors and visitors to Land Park alike.

And although the arts were not listed in the survey, it's assumed an artistic component would benefit the space as well.

Survey respondents also shared concerns such as parking overflow onto neighborhood streets. Noise levels are a worry, too. Land Park residents are used to many visitors on holiday weekends in

the park and some after-hours events at the zoo. This is possible for the new space, but to be kept to a minimum. During regular hours, the space should be available to children and adults.

Many were apprehensive about the site's future architectural character, but that may already be determined. In 2023, the front of the zoo was designated a historic landmark by the city council and cannot be torn down.

The entrance could be a blueprint for the rest of the area — an open, airy, mid-century-modern look with plenty of green spaces to calm the soul.

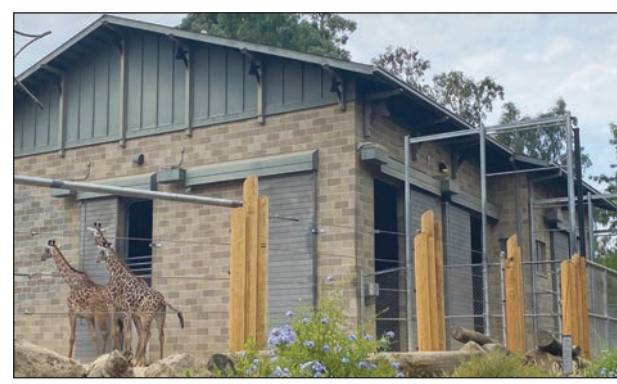
There were also questions about repurposing structures inside the zoo. For instance, the carousel is a favorite among local families.

Solid, brick buildings like the giraffe stable, reptile house and veterinarian clinic could be reused. In addition, there are plenty of mature trees, plants and flowers along pathways. It would be nice to keep some of that as well.

Finally, there are large



Land Park neighbors would like to keep the carousel that generations of neighborhood children have enjoyed, a community survey found. Photo by Kristina Rogers



Many existing buildings like the giraffe stable could be repurposed into amenities such as a bat or bird sanctuary. Photo by Kristina Rogers



This is a rendering of what is possible for the space after the Sacramento Zoo leaves. This image is only a mock-up and has not been viewed or approved by the city. Image courtesy of Brandon Testa

pieces of artwork throughout the zoo that were donated in past years. What is their future?

This may seem like a tall order for a developer. It's inevitable that only some of the things on the wish list are possible. But building a space with the

neighborhood in mind will help harmonize it with the rest of the area.

And creating something new with a nod to Land Park's history and natural beauty will certainly win the hearts of the community.

It's possible that the

space is large enough to handle several different amenities, fulfilling many wishes.

In the end, 71% hoped the new attraction would bring in about the same number of visitors as the current zoo.

Now that the survey is

closed, the LPCA is discussing next steps. One is to share the full survey results with its city councilmember Rick Jennings and his staff.

The next is to request to participate in the process of determining the next amenity in the space. ★

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Free Fishing Day: Get Hooked on New Adventure

California Department of Fish and Wildlife News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - During the second of California's two free fishing days in 2024, which will be on Aug. 31, the public can fish throughout the Golden State without a fishing license.

For those new to fishing, this is an opportunity to explore a rewarding and exciting new hobby. For licensed anglers, this is an opportunity to introduce or reintroduce someone else to the joys of becoming an angler. Free fishing days are also a perfect time for former anglers to return and reconnect to the activity.

Those interested in

fishing California's lakes, streams and rivers can find information about inland fishing locations and species on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife website at wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Inland. Information is also available about year-round free fishing opportunities found on specific piers, jetties and breakwaters along the coast. Other helpful tools for anglers include the fish planting schedule, fishing guide and Recruit, Retain, Reactivate (R3) Program resources at wildlife.ca.gov/r3#54518718-fishing.

A variety of offerings is also available from California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Fishing in the City program,



Fishing in California is free on Aug. 31. Photo courtesy of California Department of Fish and Wildlife

which focuses on teaching Californians how and where to fish in metropolitan areas.

General information about the Fishing in the City program can be found on the California Department of

Fish and Wildlife website at wildlife.ca.gov/fishing-in-the-city.

Children 15 and younger can fish for free every day of the year in California, but Free Fishing Days offer a time when families and friends can experience the

hobby together for free.

All fishing regulations, such as bag and size limits, gear restrictions, report card requirements, fishing hours and stream closures remain in effect.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

encourages potential anglers to check rules and regulations for each water they plan to fish at wildlife.ca.gov/regulations.

More on licenses, validations and fees can be found online at wildlife.ca.gov/Licensing/Fishing. ★



Shane Q fans can find him performing all around the Sacramento area throughout the year. Photo courtesy of Shane Q

'The Voice' Singer Shane Q Shares Powerhouse Vocals Across City

By Annie Kerr

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento continues to produce stars.

That's precisely what Sacramento native and acclaimed musician Shane Q is to the area. Shane Q, whose birth name is Shane Quidachay, rose to fame on Season 17 of the hit NBC competition singing show "The Voice" in 2019. There, he wowed celebrity judges and viewers with his powerhouse vocals and down-to-earth personality, capturing the hearts of many.

Messenger Publishing Group recently interviewed Quidachay about his music career in light of all the shows he is doing in and around the area.

Born and raised just outside of Rio Linda, Quidachay still lives in Sacramento and frequently performs all around the broader area, with recent shows in West Sacramento, Elk Grove, Auburn, and more. "I do about 200 to 250 shows a year," he said.

With his busy schedule, Quidachay can most often be found strumming his guitar at local venues, captivating audiences with his voice.

Quidachay discovered his gift of singing around 5, but said shyness got the best of him for some years. "I became extremely shy and didn't sing again until I was about 16," he admitted.

Later, he began posting videos on YouTube of him covering songs, which garnered attention from industry professionals.

According to Quidachay, producers from both "The American Idol" and "The Voice" reached out to him

multiple times inviting him to audition until he finally decided to go for it at the age of 28.

On "The Voice," celebrity judges sit facing away from the person auditioning, only paying attention to their voice, hence the title of the show. If they like what they hear, they will turn their chair to face the performer, offering a spot on their team. Quidachay's voice impressed all four judges, and he was able to turn all their chairs, which is a rare feat. Quidachay then had to decide which superstar's team he wanted to be on.

"I was torn between Blake Shelton and Kelly Clarkson," he admitted. "But I went with Team Kelly."

Quidachay made it to the Top 10 of "The Voice" before elimination and calls the experience the "time of my life."

What was his favorite part about being on the show?

"It was so fun meeting a bunch of people and just singing together, dressing up and meeting celebrities," he said. "The contestants all lived together in the hotel, so you build friendships and relationships with these people for months. They become your new family, your new best friends from all over the country."

Since then, Quidachay has not stopped performing and sharing his voice. Additionally, he has released two co-written songs, titled "Bad Girl" and "Off My Mind" with the hopes of more to come.

"I am slowly working on new stuff," he said.

As for where he gets his musical inspiration from,

Quidachay cited Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder, Celine Dion, John Mayer and his father as musical influences.

"My dad is a musician and a singer," he said. "I get it from him."

Quidachay and his full band, which includes Grammy-winning drummer/producer Jesse Kasset Hanes, and a bass guitarist and an electric guitarist,

Why should the community come to his shows?

"I engage a lot with my audience," he said. "We rock out and have a good time."

Quidachay's performances involve mostly covers from a wide range of genres, including country, classic rock, reggae and R&B.

"The best part about live music is the energy I get from the crowd," Quidachay said. "I've played at places where there's maybe five people in the audience, and even then, if you can get a reaction out of them, that's pretty wild."

To name a few upcoming shows, Shane Q will perform Aug. 30 at JJ Pfister near Rancho Cordova, Aug. 23 at Bike Dog Brewery in West Sacramento, Aug. 24 at Willamette Winery in Folsom, and many more.

Shane Q performs across the Sacramento area very frequently and a list of more shows can be found on his Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Theshaneqq> or his Instagram page @ [shaneqofficial](https://www.instagram.com/shaneqofficial).

Another option is to visit <https://www.shaneqofficial.com> for more information. ★

Fitness System Gets a New Face

Fitness System Land Park News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Fitness System Land Park is under new ownership. New owner Joe Pantoja would like to thank the Land Park community for over 12 years of support.

In addition to saying thank you, he will be offering a number of free events for the community — for both members and non-members. This will include classes and events. In addition to this, Fitness System is now offering kids karate classes.

Finally, Pantoja would like to announce a free open gym day. Starting in August, Fitness System Land Park will be offering a free open gym day every Saturday (no membership necessary). It's just a way of saying thank you for 12 years.



Joe Pantoja, left, the new owner of Fitness System Land Park, stands with Becca Wong and trainer Robert Mylove. Photo by Linda Pohl

If you're a member, bring a friend; if not, come try us out. Joe and the team would love to meet more members of the community so please feel free to stop in and say hi!

Fitness System Land Park is located at 1250 Sutterville Road, Sacramento. It is open Sunday through Friday, 5 a.m. to 11 p.m., and Saturday, 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. ★

Labor Unions, Cities Unite Against Cardroom SB 539

Elevate Public Affairs News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - The California Gaming Association, California Cardroom Alliance and Communities for California Cardrooms announce growing opposition with many labor unions joining in opposition to Senate Bill 549 by Senator Josh Newman as it could have a "devastating impact on public sector jobs."

Joining in opposition to SB 549 includes the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), California Professional Firefighters, and SEIU California and Teamsters Local 630 as well as a growing number of locals such as AFSCME District Council 36, AFSCME District Council 57, AFSCME Local 101, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades DC 36, Los Angeles County Firefighters Local 1014 and the Los Angeles County Professional Peace Officers Association.

They join a growing number of cities that have filed letters in opposition including California Contract Cities Association, California Cities for Self-Reliance Joint Powers Authority, California Cities Gaming Authority, City of Bell

Gardens, Town of Colma, City of Chula Vista, City of Citrus Heights, City of Commerce, City of Compton, City of Emeryville, City of Gardena, City of Hawaiian Gardens, City of Inglewood, City of Oceanside, City of San Jose and City of Tracy.

SB 549 will create a PAGA-like law for gaming tribes to be able to sue their competitors — the cardrooms. This would usurp state regulators and the Attorney General which oversee the legality and permissibility of cardroom games. It would also permit for the first time ever a one-sided injustice as cardrooms would not be allowed to sue tribal casinos. The joint letter opposing SB 549 by these labor unions state: "SB 549 Could Have a Devastating Impact on Public Sector Jobs: SB 549 is an attack on local cardrooms, which are a significant source of revenue for general funds in many cities across California... Many have revenue sharing agreements with municipalities providing a significant amount of funding for essential public services like police, fire, parks and recreation, etc. The measure could easily force cardrooms out of business and result in a loss of \$500 million in tax revenue statewide — meaning less

revenue for public safety, public health, homelessness services and infrastructure.

The loss of local tax revenue could spell devastation for many cities across California. For example, approximately 78% of the City of Hawaiian Gardens' general fund comes from cardroom revenues. Similarly, 50% of the City of Commerce's general fund comes from cardroom revenues. Larger cities like San Jose and Fresno would also be seriously impacted. This bill will destabilize essential services.

If signed into law, cities who depend on this revenue stream could be forced into municipal bankruptcy or even disincorporation. This could have potentially devastating impacts that puts jobs, pensions and the financial wellbeing of working families at risk. We have seen this happen before: the Orange County Bankruptcy."

"SB 549 Puts Workers in the Middle: The mere cost of litigation alone could lead to lower wages, loss of jobs or cardroom closures. And cardroom closures could devastate some cities who may have to file for municipal bankruptcy or disincorporate."

For more information about why SB 549 is bad for California, go to BadBetforCA.com. ★



Airport Breaks Ground on Pedestrian Walkway

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Sacramento International Airport (SMF) has broken ground for its new Pedestrian Walkway, a key project in the SMForward program.

The Pedestrian Walkway will connect Terminal B to Concourse B via a skybridge with moving sidewalks, escalators and elevators along a panoramic corridor. The walkway project is vital to supporting passenger growth well into the future.

The \$140-million walkway will enhance passenger convenience and connectivity, offering travelers the ability to walk or ride the existing Automated People Mover. The project will feature three major pieces of art that represent a \$2.5-million investment in public art.

“This is the first project of our \$1.3 billion SMForward program and the culmination of years of planning and creativity,” said Cindy Nichol, director of Sacramento County Department of Airports. “By transforming how people experience travel, we’re enhancing our community’s connection to the region and the world, boosting our economy and



The new walkway will connect Terminal B to Concourse B. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

improving our quality of life.”

The project is funded by \$33 million in grant funds through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), as well as a low-interest federal loan through the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) and airport revenue bonds. Zero local tax dollars will be used to fund this important project.

The airport has been breaking passenger records month after month, ending fiscal year 2024 with 13.2

million passengers served.

“With passenger numbers on track to break records again this year, this project is essential to meeting the demands of today and tomorrow,” said District 2 Supervisor and Board Chair Patrick Kennedy. “By expanding our airport’s capacity and enhancing the passenger journey, Sacramento County’s Department of Airports is ensuring our region remains a top choice for travelers and businesses alike.”

Said District 1

Supervisor Phil Serna, “This walkway, with two sky bridges and a hub, is built with the future in mind. They will provide SMF’s passengers a flexible portal that can connect to a future concourse to meet our growing region’s need for air travel for decades to come.”

Following a competitive selection process, Balfour Beatty was chosen to serve as the project’s Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR), a first for a major project in Sacramento County.

The Construction Manager at Risk delivery method is beneficial because it allows for early collaboration between the department, the project designer and the construction manager, leading to better project design and cost control. The project will be delivered through multiple progressive guaranteed maximum price (PGMP), which reduces financial risk for the department.

The Construction Manager at Risk delivery method enhances

project quality and efficiency through integrated project design and delivery and proactive risk management.

The Pedestrian Walkway is just the first step in a \$1.3 billion plan to leverage transformative partnerships, lead the way in creative financing solutions and deliver the future of Sacramento International Airport.

Throughout the program’s projected duration, 800 jobs will be created in the first four years alone. ★

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WE SUPPORT FIRST RESPONDERS

As Scammers Target PG&E Customers, Here's What to Know to Not Fall Victim

PG&E News Release

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, CA (MPG) - Utility scams have continued at an alarming rate during 2024, with Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) customers reporting over \$334,000 in losses to scammers. To stop this trend, PG&E is committed to helping customers recognize the signs of a scam and avoid falling victim.

A typical sign of a scam targeting a utility customer includes a caller claiming to be from PG&E and threatening disconnection if immediate payment is not made via a pre-paid debit card, digital payment mobile application, or other methods of money transfer. As a reminder, PG&E will never send a single notification to a customer within one hour of a service interruption and will never ask customers to make payments with a pre-paid debit card, gift card, any form of cryptocurrency, or instant mobile payment applications, like Zelle® or Venmo.

"Scammers seek to create a sense of panic, threatening disconnection of utility services if immediate payment is not made," said Matt Foley, lead customer scam investigator for PG&E. "If a phone call, visit to your home or email doesn't feel right, don't fall for it. Hang up, shut the door or delete it. Remember, PG&E will never ask for your financial information over the phone or via email, nor will we request payment via pre-paid debit cards or other methods of money transfer,

including mobile applications."

During 2024, PG&E has received nearly 15,000 reports of scams targeting residential and business customers with customers reporting losses of over \$334,000. The average scam victim lost over \$600, and over 500 customers have reported falling victim. This number is likely just the tip of the iceberg however, as many scams go unreported.

Business customers also are not immune from scam attempts. In fact, PG&E has received 528 reports of scams targeting small and medium-sized businesses this year, and these attempts frequently occur during busy business hours when scammers hope to catch unsuspecting victims while they are distracted or stressed.

Another recent scam trend involves scammers creating fake websites which provide a fraudulent phone number when you search services related to PGE such as "bill pay" or "start/stop" service. These sites and phone numbers often appear when a handheld device is used to search for and contact PGE. As a reminder, customers looking to contact PG&E should either call our customer service number, 800-743-5000 or by logging into your account at www.pge.com.

Scammers can be convincing and often target those who are most vulnerable, including senior citizens and low-income communities. They also aim their scams at small business owners during busy

customer service hours. However, with the right information, customers can learn to detect and report these predatory scams by visiting www.pge.com/scams or by calling 1-833-500-SCAM.

Signs of a potential scam

Threat to disconnect: Scammers may aggressively demand immediate payment for an alleged past due bill.

Request for immediate payment: Scammers may instruct the customer to purchase a prepaid card, then call them back supposedly to make a bill payment.

Request for prepaid card: When the customer calls back, the caller asks the customer for the prepaid card's number, which grants the scammer instant access to the card's funds.

Refund or rebate offers: Scammers may say that your utility company over-billed you and owes you a refund, or that you are entitled to a rebate, and ask you for your personal financial information.

Scammers Impersonating Trusted Phone Numbers: Scammers are now able to create authentic looking 800 numbers which appear on your phone display. The numbers don't lead back to PG&E if called back, however, so if you have doubts, hang up and either log into your account at pge.com to confirm your bill details or call PG&E at 1-833-500-SCAM. If customers ever feel that they are in physical danger, they should call 9-1-1.

How customers can protect themselves

Customers should never purchase a pre-paid card to avoid service disconnection or shutoff. PG&E does not specify how customers should make a bill payment and offers a variety of ways to pay a bill, including accepting payments online, by phone, automatic bank draft, mail or in person.

If a scammer threatens immediate disconnection or shutoff of service without prior notification, customers should hang up the phone, delete the email, or shut the door.

Customers with delinquent accounts receive an advance disconnection notification, typically by mail and included with their regular monthly bill.

Signing up for an online account at pge.com is another safeguard. Not only can customers log in to check their balance and payment history, but they can also sign up for recurring payments, paperless billing and helpful alerts.

Customers who suspect that they have been victims of fraud, or who feel threatened during contact with one of these scammers, should contact local law enforcement. The Federal Trade Commission's website is also a good source of information about how to protect personal information.

For more information about scams, visit pge.com/scams or <https://consumer.ftc.gov/scams>. ★

California Seizes More Than \$120 Million in Illegal Cannabis Since January

Office of Gov. Gavin Newsom News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)

- In strong support of California's legal cannabis market, Governor Gavin Newsom announced that since January, California's Unified Cannabis Enforcement Task Force (UCETF) has seized more than \$120 million worth of illegal cannabis, destroyed nearly 37 tons of unlicensed cannabis, including 122,914 illegal plants. As part of these operations, state law enforcement officials have also seized 22 firearms.

"The legal cannabis market brings billions of dollars to our state's economy, helping to sustain California's position as the fifth largest economy in the world. We will not tolerate illegal operations that threaten our economy and the health and well-being of California

communities," Gov. Gavin Newsom said.

In recent months, the task force conducted operations in 11 California counties, including Mendocino, Tuolumne, Shasta, Orange, Kern, Alameda, Yuba, Trinity, Los Angeles, Butte and Humboldt.

"UCETF's efforts are continuing to break new ground in unlicensed cannabis enforcement by leveraging the expertise and knowledge of its diverse group of partners to disrupt the unlicensed market," said Bill Jones, Chief of the Law Enforcement Division with the Department of Cannabis Control.

Taking Down Illicit Cannabis

Governor Newsom has directed state agencies to aggressively target the organized criminal enterprises involved in the illicit cannabis market. These

illegal schemes not only threaten California's legal cannabis market but the use of illegal pesticides and unregulated practices harm California's environment and water quality. California is also focused on ending the exploitation of vulnerable workers at these sites, who are often victims of labor violations and human trafficking.

"The continued success of UCETF is a testament to the collaboration between its partner agencies. Due to the high level of engagement from each of the agencies involved, we are able to move swiftly against those who choose to continue to grow cannabis illegally," said Nathaniel Arnold, Chief of the Law Enforcement Division with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and co-lead of the Unified Cannabis Enforcement Task Force.

"We will continue to



Unified Cannabis Enforcement Task Force officers find illegally grown cannabis. Photo courtesy of the Office of Gov. Gavin Newsom

rely on the individual and combined strengths of these agencies to support those who are cultivating legally in a manner that is safe for the consumer, the general public and the environment."

A Unified Strategy Across California

In 2022, Governor Newsom created the Unified Cannabis Enforcement Task Force to further align state efforts

and increase cannabis enforcement coordination between state, local and federal partners. The enforcement actions protect consumer and public safety, safeguard the environment and deprive illegal cannabis operators and transnational criminal organizations of illicit revenue that harms consumers and undercuts the regulated cannabis market in California.

Since its inception,

the Unified Cannabis Enforcement Task Force has seized over \$465 million in unlicensed cannabis by serving 309 search warrants.

The taskforce has also eradicated 470,435 illegal cannabis plants, seized 150 illegal firearms and arrested 38 individuals.

To learn more about the legal California cannabis market, state licenses and laws, visit cannabis.ca.gov. ★

County Boosts Fentanyl, Opioid Awareness

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG)

- Fentanyl poisoning has now become the leading cause of death among adults ages 18 to 45, surpassing suicide, gun violence and car accidents, according to Sacramento County officials.

In response to this critical public health and public safety crisis, the Sacramento County Department of Health Services, in collaboration

with the Sacramento County Opioid Coalition, Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society, California State University, Sac Metro Fire and local law enforcement, joined forces to present the 2024 Fentanyl Awareness and Action Summit.

The event, held Aug. 15, aimed to bring community members together to analyze data trends, discuss prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement efforts, hear from those with lived experiences,

provide resources and aid in the solutions for a safer community.

"To battle this crisis, we need to get the message out about both prevention and treatment. Sacramento County is dedicated to promoting widespread access to Naloxone and our amazing providers stand ready to assist individuals on their road to recovery from the devastating impacts of opioid use disorders," said Dr. Ryan Quist, Sacramento County Director of Behavioral

Health."

Below, county leaders share ways that we can help raise awareness of this crucial issue.

Educate and Advocate: Learn and spread the word about campaigns such as Safer Sacramento and 1 Pill can Kill.

Wear Purple on International Overdose Awareness Day (Aug. 31): This globally observed day aims to reduce the stigma associated with drug-related deaths, remember those lost and acknowledge

the grief endured by their loved ones.

Attend a county event (Aug. 21 through Aug. 30): The Department of Health Services, Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Unit will host a resource table with informational handouts for the community in the lobby of 7001-A East Parkway in Sacramento from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Free Narcan will also be available.

Join the Opioid Coalition. Meetings are quarterly from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Visit the Sacramento County Opioid Coalition website at

sacopioidcoalition.org for the meeting schedule.

Share Your Loved One's Story through an Opioid Awareness Project featuring Gone Too Soon Memorial Posters, commemorating the precious lives lost in Sacramento and surrounding counties. Contact Sacramento County Behavioral Health Division Manager, Lori Miller, at Millerlori@sacounty.gov.

Have Naloxone/Narcan available. For ways to obtain Narcan and/or training, call 916-875-2050 or visit SaferSacramento.com. ★

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Edible Food Recovery Microgrants Available from Access Alliance

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The Capital Food Access Alliance – a regional collaboration between Sacramento County and the cities of Citrus Heights, Elk Grove, Galt, Folsom, Rancho Cordova, Sacramento – has released Edible Food Recovery Microgrants to help local organizations expand their capacity to accept food donations for distribution throughout the community.

Award amount: applicants can request a minimum of \$5,000 and a maximum of \$25,000.

Grant application period: applications are accepted now through November 2024. Applications will be reviewed once per month. Notifications of award will be provided on a rolling basis.

The grant term will last six months.

Grant funds must solely benefit food recovery efforts in the Sacramento County region, and this grant does not require

matching funds or cost-sharing.

Capital Food Access Alliance may extend or reopen the application cycle and launch a larger grants program with higher funding limits.

To learn more about and register for this grant, visit the Capital Food Access Alliance grant overview webpage at <https://capfoodaccess.org/overview>.

Applicants will need to register with Capital Food Access Alliance to access grant information and apply. ★

Newsom: Restrict Use of Cell Phones in Class

Continued from Page 1

minutes. Combined with the U.S. Surgeon General's warning about the risks of social media, it is urgent to provide reasonable guardrails for smartphone use in schools.

As I work with the Legislature to further limit student smartphone use on campus, there is no reason for schools to wait. In 2019, I signed AB 272 (Muratsuchi) into law, which grants school districts the authority to regulate the use of smartphones during school hours.

This legislation was a crucial step in our efforts to minimize distractions and foster a

more conducive environment for our students to learn. It is imperative that school districts take full advantage of this law to address the growing concerns surrounding student well-being and academic performance.

Leveraging the tools of this law, I urge every school district to act now to restrict smartphone use on campus as we begin the new academic year. The evidence is clear: reducing phone use in class leads to improved concentration, better academic outcomes, and enhanced social interactions. Schools and districts, including Santa Barbara Unified and Bullard High in Fresno, have seen positive

impacts of limiting smartphones on campus, with some reporting higher test scores, grades, and student engagement, and less bullying and damage to school facilities.

I applaud these districts, and others like L.A. Unified, for their leadership.

Every classroom should be a place of focus, learning, and growth. Working together, educators, administrators, and parents can create an environment where students are fully engaged in their education, free from the distractions on the phones and pressures of social media.

Thank you for your continued dedication to our students and support in making our schools the best they can be.

Sincerely,
Gov. Gavin Newsom ★

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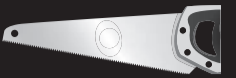
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Grieving Isn't a Secret

I was 28 years old when the U.S. Air Force sent me to Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Ala., to complete Chaplain Basic Training.

For three weeks, I sat elbow-to-elbow with other young chaplain wannabes.

On my left side sat the first of many chaplain priests I'd befriend.

Yet, almost from the beginning, Father Frank found me deeply disturbing on two levels.

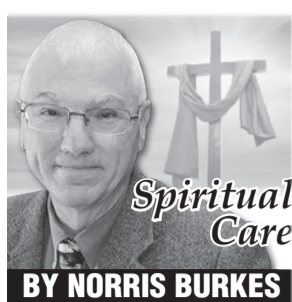
First, he couldn't believe I didn't drink.

For the second problem, he suggested that "A good drink could fix your akathisia."

"What's that?" I asked. "Akathisia describes a complete inability to sit still."

Fortunately, within a few days, I was able to win Frank over without alcohol.

We shared a lot of laughs, giggling during



BY NORRIS BURKES

lectures, passing notes and kicking each other under the table to keep quiet. I began to feel that Catholic priests would likely go to heaven, and he learned that even Baptist teetotalers could be fun.

However, my classmate to my right wasn't as sociable. Bobby kept to himself, looking straight ahead, volunteering little more than his name and religious denomination.

Finally, a few days from the course completion during a lecture on grief, Bobby dropped a bomb.

"I know you probably think I've seemed detached these past several days."

An a cappella chorus of "No-duh" rippled through our student body.

"My mother died the day after we arrived."

Suddenly, it became quite enough to hear a chaplain cuss, but I just said, "Ah, shoot."

Our class stopped to say a prayer for Bobby. The course director offered him emergency leave, but Bobby refused, holding tight his military bearing.

After class, a few of us invited Bobby to a nearby bar. He declined, so we went without him.

Inside the bar, we commiserated on Bobby's behalf, noting how tragic it was to lose a family member while so far away from home.

After a few drinks, Frank slammed his hand on the table.

"Bobby didn't trust us," he said. "We sat shoulder-to-shoulder with him all month and he was locked up too tight to share

with his clergy brothers."

"Perhaps we could have helped him," said one chaplain.

"How could we?" asked Frank. "He didn't trust us to help him."

"We could have carried his class assignments," suggested one lieutenant.

"I would have given him my phone card to call his family," I said.

To each idea, Frank pushed back, "If only he had trusted us."

The bar debate eventually found some resolve to reach out to Bobby again the next day.

"Try again," Frank said.

A few years later, I saw Frank at a chaplain's conference, just outside a Denver hotel.

"How you doing, Baptist?" he asked.

The word "fine" came to mind, but thinking of Bobby, I didn't lie. I trusted Frank more than that.

"Not good." I said as my tears splatted the

conference-room carpet.

Many readers know the story I told Frank next.

A few months prior, I'd rushed to give solace at a mass shooting scene at Cleveland Elementary school in Stockton, Calif. I was the chaplain who told six parents that their child had been killed.

I fell into the arms Frank extended. He held me and wouldn't let go.

That night, he invited me to join him and two other priests at a local bar – the same opportunity he'd offered Bobby.

As we talked in that dark, private space, I sipped at my Pepsi, feeling a restoration budding in my soul.

During the next few hours, my priestly friends also told their stories of grief. They taught me that grief can't stay in the dark. It must come out or it will never heal.

Why did I choose this week to tell you this story? Because my 90-year-old mother died a few weeks ago and I won't keep that a secret.

She was the most

wonderful mother who taught me faith, laughter and love. I want you to know that I feel grief and so should you.

By the way, I finally did take Frank's advice by accepting his offer of a Colorado Bulldog. (It's a White Russian cocktail, with added Pepsi.)

It was so delicious that I ordered two more that evening.

About midnight, when we stood to leave, the ceiling seemed a bit active.

"Don't worry. We got you, Baptist." Frank promised. And they did. They all walked me back to my room, arm in arm, like the brothers they'd become.

Join Norris' mailing list at www.thechaplain.net/newsletter. Contact Norris by voicemail at (843) 608-9715 or email comment@thechaplain.net.

Snail mail received at 10566 Combie Rd. Suite 6643 Auburn, CA 95602. All his books are also available at Combie Mail or on his website or by sending a \$20 check to the above address. ★

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



Congratulations to Kings standout De'Aaron Fox and his wife Recee! Their young family has recently added a baby girl, and on behalf of all Kings fans I want to say a hearty congratulations to you both.

Many Kings fans have enjoyed watching Recee and baby Reign the past season, as they sit courtside and root on De'Aaron and the Kings nightly.

As an NBA veteran and former all-star, I fully expect De'Aaron to have another all-star season this year, and with the added presence of DeMar DeRozan, Fox could potentially have his best year yet.

Many believe with De'Aaron's improved three-point shooting, and his dynamic drives to the hoop, DeRozan's stellar midrange game may give Fox even better looks at the basket.

The same can be said for Keegan Murray, whose three-point shooting fell off a bit after having an eye-popping rookie season.

Teams tightened up the D on Keegan in his sophomore campaign, and the open looks he enjoyed in his rookie season were harder to find last year.

Look for DeRozan to help Keegan get back on track, and I believe every Kings fan is firmly convinced that Keegan's best basketball is still in front of him.

I have listened to NBA pundits that have downgraded the Kings to a 44-win prospect in the coming season, and this writer wonders what these supposed experts are looking at.

I see a 50-plus win team hitting the hardwood for Sacramento this year, and that is without Monte McNair making any further improvements to the roster. McNair has done a yeoman's job as a young GM, and is already developing a reputation as a GM not to be taken lightly.

Not since the Geoff Petrie days have we seen someone in the front office with the acumen that our own Monte McNair has demonstrated.

So, take heart Kings fans, because I believe McNair is here for the long haul, and his 13-year stint with the Houston Rockets has proven invaluable to the Kings, as he continues to make prudent

moves that are consistently improving this team.

Many fans criticized choosing another guard in acquiring Devin Carter, but I firmly believe that utilizing the philosophy of choosing the best possible talent, regardless of position, was the correct prescription for the Kings, and just like choosing Keegan Murray two years ago, I believe that young Carter will prove his value in the 2nd half of the 2024/2025 season.

Many believe that the only reason he wasn't taken in the top 10 was due to impending shoulder surgery that has already taken place. Carter's availability looks to be sometime in late January, so his rookie campaign will consist of only half a season. I'm convinced that McNair chose wisely, so working him into the lineup in the all-important drive to the finish could make Devin Carter another fan favorite.

The continued talk is that the Kings still need a power forward to match up with stalwart big man Donatas Sabonis, and there still remains quality players that are on the open market.

One name I haven't heard mentioned is Indiana Pacers small forward Doug McDermott, who may yet be a sleeper that just needs more time on the hardwood.

A playoff team last year and a good one, the Pacers gave McDermott only 14 minutes per game while adding 5.5 points per game each night. McDermott was the 11th pick overall in the 2014 draft, and at 32 years of age could bring a veteran presence to a young Kings roster.

Tobias Harris is more of a household name, and while scoring 17.2 points per game for the 76ers last season, has scored 20 or more for the season twice in his 9-year career, and would also fit nicely into the Sacramento lineup.

Stay tuned Kings fans, because the roster for the upcoming season is not yet cast in stone, and just one more move could propel this playoff bound team to a place deep in the playoffs! ★

All the best, and please send your comments to vgharriskingsfan@gmail.com.

ABOUT TOWN

Kennedy High 1969 Reunion Oct. 19

The John F. Kennedy Senior High School Class of 1969's 50-year reunion is set for Saturday, Oct. 19 from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. at Dante Event Center, 2330 Fair Oaks Blvd.

Registration is \$75.69; after Sept. 19, \$85.69. Includes dinner, no-host cocktails.

Questions? Text or call Ruth Trubschenk Lundsten, 916-718-8826.

Free Vision Screening for Kids Sept. 7

The California-Hawaii Elks Major Project is conducting a FREE vision screening. Certified vision screening personnel will provide the service. Parents of children, preschool through third grade, are urged to bring their children to the screening. Children who fail the screening are then referred to an eye specialist of the parents' choice. Emphasis is placed on discovering amblyopia, a decrease or loss of vision in one eye. To prevent irreversible damage to the child's visual system, amblyopia needs to be detected and treated before the age of 8.

The local screening will take place at Elks 6 on Saturday, Sept. 7, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. during the GreenHaven Pocket Farmers Market. The FREE vision testing for children 3 to 8 years old will be indoors.

Elks Lodge Calendar of Events

Farmer's Market, 9 am-1 pm every Saturday.

Elks 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 Offer Plenty of Experiences

The Greater Sacramento region is rich with museums and popular destinations that offer plenty of must-see and must-do experiences to explore during the long and lazy days of summertime. The community is encouraged to show support for local museums by making plans to visit favorite locations (or discovering new ones).

A sampling of must-see and must-do experiences and special activations offered by local museums this summer include the following:

Aerospace Museum of California – Due to popular demand, the museum's Math Alive! exhibit has been extended to Labor Day (Sept. 2) with games, music, fashion, robotics, movie making, and more. Museum visitors have the opportunity to ride in a live-action snowboard race, control a Mars rover, record a weather telecast, design a video game, or try out systems engineering for a city. For details, visit www.aerospacemuseum.org.

California State Railroad Museum & Foundation – Always a summertime favorite experience, the California State Railroad Museum & Foundation are proud to offer the only train ride experience behind an authentic, historic locomotive in the Sacramento region. Weekend excursion train ride guests delight in the sights, smells, and sounds of an authentic, historic locomotive as it rolls along the levees of the Sacramento River for a six-mile, 45-minute round-trip excursion. Appealing to all ages, the experience offers guests the chance to enjoy train travel from an earlier era. For more details and/or to book a train ride,

please visit www.californiarailroad.museum.

Sacramento History Museum – Through Jan. 7, 2025, the museum is proud to present a limited-time exhibition titled "America's Monsters, Superheroes and Villains: Our Culture at Play" from SuperMonsterCity. The engaging exhibition will be filled with 400+ vintage and original toys, comic books, games, posters, packaging, TV commercials, movie trailers and more. For details, visit www.SacHistoryMuseum.org.

SMUD Museum of Science & Curiosity (MOSAC) – The museum is excited to present a new exhibition, Health Connections presented by UC Davis Health. Health Connections showcases a variety of hands-on interactive activities that engage guests of all ages in many aspects of health, from the wonders of the latest medical discoveries happening in our community to topics ranging from muscles to mindfulness. Health Connections is the first exhibition at the museum to be featured in English and Spanish. For more details, visit www.visitmosac.org.

For more information about upcoming activities offered by Sacramento area museums, visit the user-friendly website at www.SacMuseums.org.

Elks 6 Volunteer Opportunities

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

- 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

If any of the above sound like something you would enjoy doing, please text Kathy Smith, 916-606-9313. ★

Brighten a Senior's Day

Volunteer with Meals on Wheels Sacramento County

We need compassionate volunteers to deliver meals, support our community cafes, or help with clerical tasks. Your kindness helps our elderly neighbors maintain independence and dignity through improved nutrition.

For more information and to sign up, visit mowsac.org or call (916) 444-9533.

Be the reason someone smiles today.

Volunteer with us and make a heartfelt difference.



WE SUPPORT FIRST RESPONDERS



Messenger Publishing Group

Pitbull Attack a Lesson for Dog-Walkers

By Mitch Barber

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Cynthia Gonzales lives in a Midtown apartment with her 16-month-old baby, Elias.

On July 13, they took a walk with Gonzales' small dog, Jackie, finding themselves in front of Orbit Wash, a self-service car wash, at Ninth and T streets in Sacramento.

Gonzales told Messenger Publishing Group, "From what I remember, I was walking across the street. When I got to the other side, a homeless person's dog (a pitbull) poked its head up from a pile of stuff. I thought the dog was restrained. I didn't pay any mind to him."

As Gonzales tried to move faster her dog and the pitbull saw each other.

"It was a very big dog going for my dog," Gonzales said.

The larger dog lunged, trying to grab Jackie by the neck. Gonzales said

she picked Jackie up and did her best to protect her dog and baby from the pitbull, which was on a leash but not being restrained adequately.

The pitbull bit Gonzales' elbow, according to Gonzales.

The World Health Organization's website indicates that approximately 4.5 million people are bitten by dogs every year in the United States.

Ryan Hinderman, communications and customer service manager with Sacramento's Front Street Animal Shelter, said that the city's animal control team received 808 reports of dog bites in 2023.

At Sacramento County's website, animalcare.sac-county.gov, it recommends, "If you sense a dog attack is imminent, NEVER pick up your dog as a means to protect it. An aggressive dog will not be able to differentiate your body from that of the dog."



The unhousehold person's dog was a pitbull. Photo by Urs Tudor-Alexandru from Pixabay

Gonzales said that the pitbull was trying to kill her chihuahua-terrier mix.

"I was just in shock; I noticed there was blood on my baby," she said.

The homeless man's large dog had jumped up on Elias' stroller, clawing him in the head and producing a small wound that broke the skin.

Gonzales called 911, and dispatch asked if there was an emergency. Gonzales said yes, but after more discussion, was referred to animal control.

She dropped the call but soon decided to call 911 again and ask for an ambulance.

Three firefighters arrived a few minutes later, and one of them attended to Elias' wound.

Mother, first responders and small dog were at ease as Elias calmed down, ceasing to cry. Gonzales gave her residence's key to a firefighter so that he could deposit Jackie at her apartment while she accompanied Elias to the Sutter Medical Center Emergency Department.

In a moment of comic relief, as Gonzales handed her dog's pink leash and Jackie to the firefighter, he asked, "Do you have another leash?"

Elias ended up being

fine, having only a wound that was largely invisible two weeks later.

How has the incident changed Gonzales?

"I'm actually scared right now of dogs, and I've been rescuing dogs and cats for years," she said. "This incident changed things."

Gonzales has rescued dogs since 2013.

Her takeaways from the experience with the pitbull are to be hyper-vigilant when outside in the city. She recommended investing in pepper spray.

"There's a Taser stick for dogs if they are attacking you," she said.

This reporter, who saw the pitbull shortly after the dog had drawn blood from the baby, spoke to the homeless man that day as he walked away from Gonzales, her baby and her dog; he was unresponsive to calls for acknowledgment in regard to what his animal had done.

Hinderman from the

Front Street Animal Shelter had some advice for staying safe around loose dogs in the community.

"People should stay vigilant when walking in neighborhoods, especially when walking dogs of their own," Hinderman said. "Many dog bites we hear about occur when an unfamiliar dog attacks or fights with a dog someone is walking and get bitten in the process of trying to break up the fight. Similarly, not everyone walks their dog on a leash. If you see an unleashed dog being walked, the owner may be confident that the dog isn't reactive to other people or pets. However, it is still safest for you to create distance, especially if you're walking your own dog who may not react well to an unfamiliar dog approaching."

Hinderman added that extra care should be taken when walking near encampments, especially if walking your own dog. ★

Lara Faces Criticism Over Insurance Crisis



By Dan Waters
CALMatters.org

"Father Knows Best" was a popular radio show in the post-World War era that morphed into an even more popular television series starring actor Robert Young.

Young's character, Jim Anderson, was an insurance company executive — probably the only time American mass media have positively portrayed such a figure. Young later played a much more sympathetic role, a doctor who made house calls, in "Marcus Welby, MD."

Insurance to indemnify

us for liabilities and damages to our homes, cars and businesses is a modern necessity, but consciously or subconsciously we often resent paying for coverage that is seldom invoked.

Politicians tend to play on that resentment by promising, if elected, to protect voters from rapacious insurers.

In California, that attitude took the form of a 1998 ballot measure sponsored by a self-designated consumer protection group, that made the state insurance commissioner an elected official with new authority to regulate insurers.

The sponsoring group, Consumer Watchdog, has since been paid millions of dollars in "intervenor fees" for inserting itself into insurance rate cases pending in the Department of Insurance, but it claims to have saved Californians \$6 billion.

Ever since he launched his 2018 campaign for insurance commissioner, former state Sen. Ricardo Lara has faced sharp criticism from Consumer Watchdog, which denounced him as a tool of the insurance industry.

However, Lara has had to contend with an unprecedented crisis in California's insurance market. The disastrous wildfires that have swept through California in the last half-decade prompted many insurers to curtail their exposure, some to the point of abandoning the state altogether.

California's insurance regulatory system, they said, made it impossible to accurately project potential losses and adjust their premiums accordingly.

As tens of thousands of policies were canceled or not renewed, property owners scrambled to find new coverage, and many

turned to the state's insurer of last resort, the FAIR program, that offers only limited reimbursement for losses at high cost.

Furthermore, because mortgage lenders require borrowers to maintain insurance coverage on their property, the insurance crisis has contributed to California's housing crisis.

Lara, backed by Gov. Gavin Newsom, has proposed systemic changes in how insurance is priced. He agreed with insurers that their rate proposals should be processed more rapidly, that they should be allowed to include potential losses from wildfires and other catastrophes in their rates, and that the costs of reinsurance — to spread the financial burden of losses — should be folded into premiums.

"We do not have the luxury of time," Lara said in a press release last week as he announced the adoption

of new rules to speed up rate cases.

Consumer Watchdog is still nipping at Lara's heels, saying "we remain concerned that the new procedures announced by the commissioner will short-circuit public participation and rates will be rubber-stamped."

"Consumer Watchdog will analyze this action to determine if it is an illegal underground regulation or otherwise violates Proposition 103 by shutting consumers out of the process," it added.

Anticipating the criticism, Lara's announcement last week said, "Any intervenor groups engaged on certain rate filings must provide a 'substantial contribution' to the rate review process and not duplicate the work of the department's rate review experts to be eligible for compensation."

Would Lara's proposed

regulatory changes likely make insurance coverage more expensive in fire-prone regions? Yes, but there are no free lunches and it's better to have costlier coverage than none.

If nothing else, Lara deserves credit for actually doing something about a severe crisis, rather than passing the buck — a contrast with how California officials are dealing with another crisis, homelessness.

Dan Waters is one of the most decorated and widely syndicated columnists in California history, authoring a column four times a week that offers his view and analysis of the state's political, economic, social and demographic trends. He began covering California politics in 1975, just as Jerry Brown began his first stint as governor, and began writing his column in 1981. ★

Staying Safe from Rattlesnakes

Continued from Page 1 for public education and awareness of wildlife behavior, especially as more people from other areas move into Sacramento County and the foothills.

"Rattlesnakes are important to our ecosystem. We don't need to live in fear of them. But we need to be vigilant and respect them for their role

in the environment like we do for other wildlife," Molieri explained.

Depending on the county, this region is home to between 10 and 13 different species, including the venomous Northern Pacific Rattlesnake, which is often the target of fear and misconception.

Sacramentan Michael Starkey supports snake conservation worldwide

through his nonprofit Save The Snakes organization.

"We haven't solved the problem by killing and removing them," Starkey said. "Rattlesnakes are simple creatures with survival needs similar to ours. They are much more afraid of you than you are of them and won't strike unless provoked."

Starkey's organization provides training courses

that teach students about venomous snake behavior and how to safely handle them.

"Empowering individuals to learn about snakes helps conserve their population in the ecosystem," he said.

Keeping Your Home Snake-Free

Rattlesnake sightings and encounters can occur at any time of year in this area but are more frequent as the snakes become active when temperatures rise above 70 degrees. Should you find one in your yard, don't panic. Follow the experts' advice to keep your property snake-free.

"Understanding their behavior and habits is the first step in safety and prevention," said Ben Nuckolls, Wildlife Capture Specialist and owner/operator of California Wildlife Encounters. With 30 years of experience, Nuckolls

is trained to safely work with all types of wildlife, often including venomous snakes.

"The important thing to remember is that rodents attract snakes," Nuckolls said. "Removing a snake's food source is crucial to keeping your home snake-free."

Nuckolls frequently responds to calls from livestock owners and residents in rural communities who find rattlesnakes in the loose straw where rodents burrow or near chicken coops where rodents eat the feed.

Homeowners can reduce snake encounters by keeping their yards, sheds and garages clutter-free. This involves cleaning up all birdseed from the ground, trimming weeds, grass and overgrown foliage—and conducting regular home perimeter inspections, including checking woodpiles and areas near water sources.

Snake experts also advise homeowners near open spaces and greenbelts to invest in rattlesnake fencing installed by a professional to minimize snake entry points.

Should you encounter a rattlesnake in your yard, it's recommended that you call a professional to safely and humanely remove it. Don't try to remove it yourself or kill it unless you've been trained in handling venomous snakes. A scared, provoked snake will try to defend itself.

Experts recommend having a plan in place and keeping the phone numbers of local snake removal companies or your local county Animal Control handy in case you need them at any time. Check with your nearest hospital or emergency facility to ensure they carry the antivenom. A rattlesnake bite is a medical emergency. ★

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UC Davis Children's Hospital Opens Panda Cares Center of Hope



Children can participate in art therapy at the Panda Cares Center of Hope.

UC Davis Health News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - UC Davis Children's Hospital is proud to announce the opening of its Panda Cares Center of Hope, made possible by Panda Express associates and guests.

The Panda Cares Center of Hope will promote healing by providing specially curated programs that address each child's entire well-being, including their mental, emotional, physical and spiritual needs. This will include therapeutic play, art therapy, music therapy and academic enrichment, all designed to give children courage and strength through their hospitalization.

"Our staff have historically believed that we are

more than just our space," said Diana Sundberg, manager of the UC Davis Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy Department.

"However, we have never had a room such as this, and we can't help but dream about what opportunities the Panda Cares Center of Hope will open for our children, families and staff."

The Panda Cares Center of Hope will provide a dedicated space for:

School: Children can engage in group science or math activities, complete assigned schoolwork or take virtual field trips to local museums. These opportunities will help to educate pediatric patients and normalize their time in the hospital.

Music therapy: Group sessions will give children

the chance to explore their feelings through music. They'll use various techniques such as playing musical instruments, drumming, writing songs or improvisation.

Art therapy: Group sessions will give patients the chance to explore art mediums, including technology, while creating and building self-esteem.

Special events: The center will provide a large space for children and families to gather for performances.

Support groups: A private meeting space for patients and their families will be available.

Individual sessions: Patients who, because of their immune system, cannot be around other children will still have the opportunity to take part in



The Panda Cares Foundation presents UC Davis Health representatives with a check for \$5 million. Photos courtesy of UC Davis Health



With a panda in attendance, the ribbon is cut for the Panda Cares Center of Hope on Aug. 16.

activities. They will have space outside their hospital room for individual time with staff, focused on music therapy, art therapy or school.

"We are proud to partner with Children's Miracle Network Hospitals to bring the vision of the Panda Cares Center of Hope to life. We are humbled to be part of the healing journey for the families and kids

at these hospitals," said Peggy Cherng, co-founder and co-CEO of Panda Restaurant Group.

"Children are our future, and through this partnership and curriculum designed to give children the strength to thrive, we will bring smiles and hope to communities nationwide."

Since 2007, Panda Express and Children's Miracle Network Hospitals

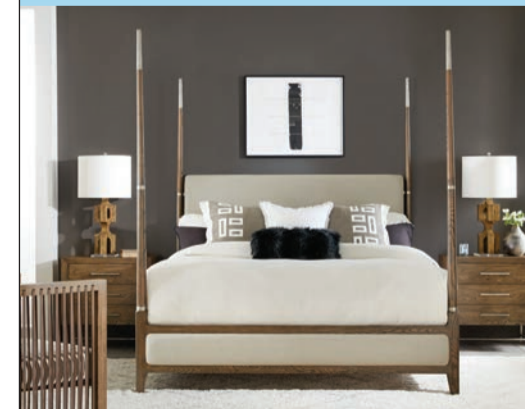
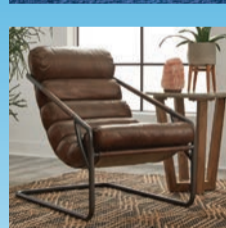
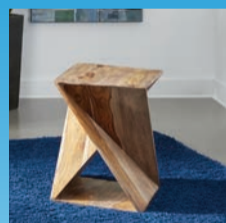
have partnered together to "change kids' health, change the future." To date, Panda has raised more than \$150 million for hospitals affiliated with CMN Hospitals, including UC Davis Children's Hospital. Panda Express guests and their associates in the Sacramento region have raised more than \$4.6 million for UC Davis Children's Hospital since 2007. ★

LABOR DAY

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is ON SALE!*



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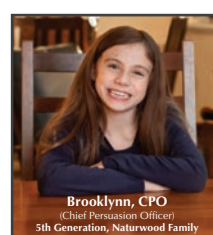
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