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AMERICAN RIVER Messenger

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Serving Fair Oaks, Orangevale & Sacramento County

OCTOBER 11, 2024

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OF RIDING
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Honoring Her Leadership



Barbara Sestito recently retired from the Fair Oaks Theatre Festival board. Photo courtesy of the Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District

By Shaunna Boyd

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - Barbara Sestito was honored at the Sept. 18 Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District (FORPD) Board of Directors meeting upon her retirement from the Fair Oaks Theatre Festival board, where she has served since 1993.

State Senator Robert Niello, County Supervisor Rich Desmond and a representative for Assemblyman Josh Hoover attended the meeting to present Sestito with their own proclamations recognizing her contributions as a cultural cornerstone of the Fair Oaks community.

Sestito accepted the proclamation and said Fair Oaks has been "a wonderful place to live" and that serving at the theatre has "always felt like a homecoming."

Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District Chair Ralph Carhart announced that two chairs in the new

amphitheater will be dedicated to Sestito and her late husband, Tony, who was also a foundational member of the Theatre Festival.

The board then considered the possible reappointment of Measure J Bond Oversight Committee (BOC) members Garret McDermid and Diana Storo, who have served on the committee since 2021. Their terms are expiring.

District Administrator Mike Aho said that the board has previously approved some one-year term extensions "because we are getting closer to the finish line here and it's very beneficial to keep these folks in this as we continue to get closer and closer to finishing."

The Measure J-funded construction in the Village is expected to wrap up early in 2025 and the Bond Oversight Committee will disband after the bond funds are spent. Aho said that the scheduled Bond

Oversight Committee meetings have already been substantially reduced as there are far fewer expenditures to review at this point in the process, so bringing on new members wouldn't currently make sense.

The board voted unanimously to approve the Bond Oversight Committee reappointments.

Next, the board was prepared to receive a consultant report regarding possible updates to improve safety at the disc golf course at Miller Park. Parks and Facilities Manager Sean Ventura, however, said the report was not quite finished because the consultant wanted to visit the site again before submitting his findings. Ventura said the report will be submitted by the October board meeting.

The district also scheduled a public outreach meeting for 6 p.m. Oct. 3 at Miller Park to receive feedback from the community about the issues at the

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**'Destination
Aviation'
STEM Event
Inspiring
the Next
Generations**



U.S. Air Force ROTC was one of the many hands-on STEM exhibits at the event. Photo courtesy of David Blakeney Photography

By Omella Rossi

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - A day filled with fun, science, hot dogs and aviation excitement captivated more than 700 attendees at the California Capital Airshow's 'Destination Aviation' STEM event on Sept. 21 at Mather Airport, local youth explored career opportunities in aviation and other STEM fields. The event, held in partnership with Women in Aviation International, had a series of engaging activities and discussions.

"We have a lot of different programs that we weren't able to do this summer, so we decided to combine some of those topics and career opportunities into something called destination aviation," said California Capital Airshow Executive Director Darcy Brewer. "We thought, let's invite a couple hundred kids and show them what's possible. What we found in our programming, which we have been doing for about 14 years now, is that it's about the people you meet and you talk to that inspire you and show you how to find your way."

California Capital Airshow aims to provide education, exposure and access through engaging, year-round events focused on STEM, aviation and aerospace, all designed to empower the region's future workforce, as stated on its website at californiacapitalairshow.com.

The day featured a panel discussion with some of the nation's leading professionals in the aviation and aerospace sectors. Panelists included Lt. Col. Merryl Tengesdal, the first Black female U-2 Dragon Lady pilot in the U.S. Air Force; Elizabeth Lewis, PhD, a space engineer at X-bow Systems; Manu Mann, an artificial intelligence expert at Micron; and Ryan Bankerd, who specializes in

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Last Dance for Park Ranger

By Susan Maxwell Skinner

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Work has not been a 13-year walk in the park for Ranger John Mohamed.

"I love being in the fresh air among people who are enjoying our parks," said the retiring Fulton-El Camino Park Police Department (FECPD) Ranger. "But parks were my workplace, I was there on duty, helping to make people feel safe."

Last Friday's Carmichael Park concert, a packed performance by rocker Todd Morgan, was Mohamed's final public shift before handing in his radio and keys.

"Yes, I'm going to miss the job," Mohamed said.

The evening was punctuated by a farewell presentation, hundreds of handshakes and many dance requests.

"Most of all, I'm going to miss these



Park ranger John Mohamed greets concert crowds during his farewell Carmichael Park shift. Photo illustration by Susan Maxwell Skinner

people," Mohamed added. "Wherever I go someone recognizes me and calls me by name. That makes me feel like the community knows I've served them."

It has been a big community: Fulton-El Camino Park Police Department officers work under contract for many park

districts. Over career years, Mohamed was a familiar figure in Carmichael, Mission Oaks, Arden Manor, Fair Oaks, Orangevale, Sunrise, North Highlands, Arcade Creek and Rio Linda. He subdued the unruly, returned lost kids and helped the disabled.

Concert-goers recently saw him advise a woman not to boogie among concert dancers with a live python.

"You need a permit to bring any animal, other than a cat or a dog, to the park," Mohamed said. To the relief of many dancers,

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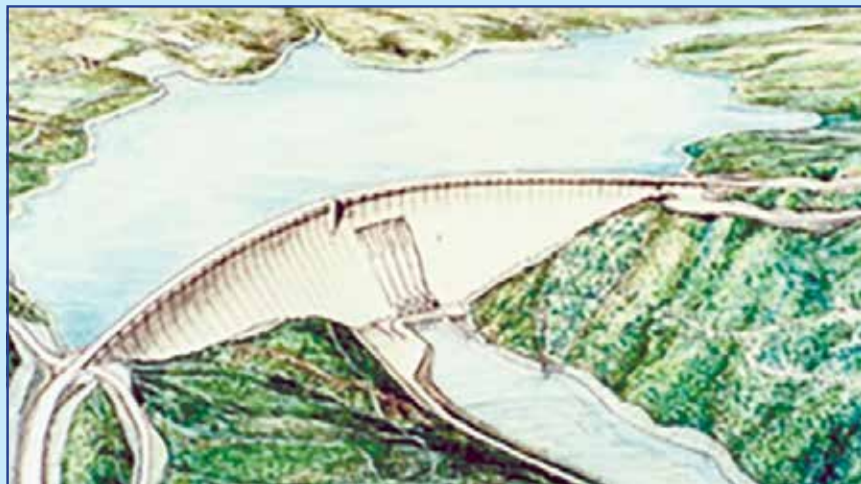


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Sacramento Blankets for Kids Readies for Holiday Giveaway



Kindergarteners are giddy with their blankets and Beanie Babies from Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids. Photo courtesy of Claire Gliddon

**By Claire Gliddon,
Sacramento Blankets
for Sacramento Kids**

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Got Beanie Babies?

Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids (SBSK) is asking for donations of new or “almost new” Beanie Babies all year long. Every September, Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids picks as many of the lowest-income elementary schools they can and finds out how many kindergarteners they have.

Volunteers make double fleece blankets (about 40” x 60”) and a little fleece

pouch with a Beanie Baby in it to go with each blanket for its Kindergarten Project. Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids gives blankets and fleece pouches to the children right before Christmas break. Some of the kindergarteners live in cars or in places without heat and this is all they get for Christmas.

The gifts are very popular with the teachers and the children.

This is Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids’ 11th year for the Kindergarten Project and the volunteers hope to continue doing it as long as they

can get Beanie Babies. In 2023, Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids gave out more than 2,394 blankets and Beanie Babies for its Kindergarten Project!

Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids is always looking for more volunteers to make blankets year round for children in need. Like to knit, crochet, sew, quilt, make no-sew blankets and have run out of people to make gifts for? We’re looking for you.

If you would like more information about Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids, go to www.sacblankets4kids.com and sign in. There is no pressure, no timelines, no meetings, just others who enjoy crocheting, knitting, quilting, sewing, making no-sew blankets and helping many children at the same time.

Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids is a non-profit organization that serves children in need from infants to 18-year-olds. While the volunteers help all year long, the Kindergarten Project is their “special” project of the year. ★

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Breaking Ground on New Braden Community



Sacramento County officials, state and federal representatives, and Somers West representatives gathered at the Braden Master Planned Community groundbreaking on Sept. 26. Photo courtesy of KJZ Productions

By Omella Rossi

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Braden Master Planned Community groundbreaking on Sept. 26 marks the start of a new development, bringing together Sacramento County officials, local developers and community leaders.

Formerly referred to as Cordova Hills, Braden officials promise to reshape an unincorporated section of the county located just outside Rancho Cordova along Grant Line Road.

The Braden Master Planned Community is designed as a “10-minute town,” where essential amenities are easily accessible within a short walk or via electric mobility. This layout allows residents to reach parks, shops and services quickly and conveniently, promoting a more connected community according to Braden officials.

Local developer Somers West has worked on the project for nearly two decades, with approval granted by the county in 2013. At full build-out, Braden will encompass 2,667 acres, providing up to 8,000 residences, 1.3 million square feet of commercial space, and an extensive network of 75 miles of trails and bike lanes. Additionally, the development will include four schools under the Elk Grove Unified School District and six mobility hubs.

“Braden at its core represents a visionary approach to sustainable and interconnected complete community design,” said Rachel Bardis, chief operating officer of Somers West. “It’s a legacy and one that we hope stands as the model for future communities that prioritize people, the planet and progress.”

The first phase of the project, which features a Town Center, is expected to be completed by 2026. The development is designed to integrate homes, workplaces, and recreational spaces, addressing pressing social and environmental challenges.

“Braden means ‘wide valley,’ a name that’s true to our California Central Valley location. And our belief in wide-open possibilities,” according to the project’s website.

California State Senator Roger Niello expressed his support for the project at the Sept. 26 groundbreaking.

“This has been a long time coming,” Niello said. “Thanks to the development



California State Senator Roger Niello speaks at the emcee at the Braden groundbreaking ceremony Sept. 26. Photo courtesy of KJZ Productions

team’s perseverance, they pushed forward knowing they were building something truly special.”

Improvements to Grant Line Road will enhance access to the community and essential services such as power, water and sewer will be extended from existing Sacramento County providers. The Sacramento County Sheriff’s Office will serve as the patrolling agency, with fire services contracted from Sacramento Metro Fire.

The Braden development emphasizes sustainability at its core, featuring energy-efficient homes that reduce operating costs and minimize environmental impact, along with green infrastructure.

“Braden will have a profound and lasting impact on the people that live here,” said Dave Defanti, deputy county executive for community services. “This project represents a growth in environmental stewardship and will significantly enhance the quality of life across Sacramento County.”

Community leaders praised the project’s innovative approach. Peter Calthrope, founder of Calthrope Associates, highlighted its potential to address America’s housing crisis.

“This site is half the solution,” he stated. “We need to create complete communities like this one where everyone has a place.”

Sacramento County Board of supervisors Rich Desmond, added, “This development is a shining example of Sacramento County’s commitment to ensuring that no project gets the green light unless it adds the creation of a cohesive thriving community.”

For more information on the project, visit bradenca.com/. ★

Honoring Her Leadership



Barbara Sestito, center, is honored with a proclamation by the Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District. Photo courtesy of the Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District

Continued from page 1

disc golf course. During Public Comment on this item, Fair Oaks resident Lindsay Kopperud said she first brought this issue to the board at the June meeting, describing various incidents of children being hit by discs and yelled at by players on the course. Kopperud said she is frustrated because negative interactions are still occurring, with families frequently dealing with aggressive confrontations by disc golfers.

“Nothing has been done. Why is this not moving forward?” said Kopperud. “I cannot walk my children safely to school without almost being hit by discs. I’m tired of it. And I think this board needs to do something about it.”

District Administrator Mike Aho said that this issue has proved to be more difficult to manage than first anticipated.

“When we look at a park like this, we have users on both sides that really are passionate about that park. And we want to be able to hear those concerns and have those concerns represented,” Aho said.

Director John O’Farrell said that the disc golf course has been there for about three years, while the park itself and the nearby school have been there for 50 years. So he’s sympathetic to the concerns of the families trying to use the park.

“If there’s some people out there that are rude, threatening, they should not be out there,” O’Farrell said.

Vice-Chair Delinda Tamagni said that the disc golf course is supposed to be closed during the hours when children walk through the park to and from school, so “we need to find a way to enforce those rules. ... If it’s closed, it is closed,” Tamagni said.

Aho said the district was “trying not to be too heavy handed” with enforcement and to encourage “voluntary compliance.”

The disc golf users are a very active group, Aho said, so “this is a tough balance. Any time you have multiple users in a park, it can cause conflicts. It’s really hard to look at one and the others and say what are the priorities.”

O’Farrell agreed that it can be difficult to make everyone happy but park users should not feel threatened.

“It’s not right,” O’Farrell said.

Chair Carhart suggested they could look at options for relocating the disc golf course to another park within the district where there would be fewer conflicts of use. He said Phoenix Park has plenty of large open spaces that could

work well for a course.

Director Raymond James Irwin suggested adding additional signage throughout the course to clearly state the hours of use and that pedestrians have the right of way. He also said the signs should have a phone number to call to report problems. Irwin said they don’t have to wait for the consultant’s report to make some immediate changes.

Kopperud said she and many others have sent emails to report issues but they have not received any responses. Aho apologized for that and said he will follow up on the lack of response.

Many written comments were submitted by residents sharing their concerns about the disc golf course, detailing various confrontations and times when they or their children have been hit by discs. Many asked that the course be moved out of that park because the site is too small to accommodate both a public park and disc golf.

Director Irwin said he would like staff to compile all the complaints about the disc golf course for the board to review. He said that Miller Park might not be the best place for this course.

“It does not sound good and I’m not comfortable with what I’m hearing,” Irwin said.

Irwin encouraged residents to keep submitting complaints and documenting the incidents, which will provide the board as much information as possible.

Carhart agreed that the board wants to know about every incident that occurs, especially when youth are affected. He said having that information will help when they address the issue with the disc golfers to remind them of their responsibility to follow the park rules.

Finally, Aho provided a brief update about construction in the Village, stating that the current estimate of full completion is the end of January 2025. While certain aspects of the work will be done sooner (the park areas and landscaping should be finished in December and the Clubhouse is expected to be completed in early January), the district must wait for an occupancy permit from the county, which won’t be issued until all the work is completed.

Carhart said he predicts as they get closer to finishing, “everything will accelerate. It’ll all come together and look really good really fast.”

The next Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Oct. 16. ★



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AVOID LINES



November 5, 2024 Presidential General Election

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All voters will be mailed a ballot

- You should have received your official ballot in the mail.

You can return your ballot starting October 7th

- By mail, no postage necessary
- At a Ballot Drop Box
- At a Vote Center (starting October 26th)

You can find a full list of Ballot Drop Boxes and Vote Center locations in your County Voter Information Guide, in your mail ballot packet, or at www.elections.saccounty.gov

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My Voter Portal is a convenient way to:

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- View your political party preference
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- Update your language preference if other than English
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- Locate Official Ballot Drop Boxes or Vote Centers near you
- View voting history

Scan the QR code or visit myvoterportal.saccounty.gov.



Rough Waters Ahead Commentary

Editor's note: Because of readers' comments to the American River Messenger's Sept. 27 front page article, "Rough Waters Ahead," we asked representatives from both sides to write a column about the issues addressed in the article. The Sept. 27 article was about the Fair Oaks Water District's current building plans and a recall effort to replace all district board members.

One column below was written by the Fair Oaks Water District President Chris Petersen. The other column was written by Leon Corcos, who was quoted in the article.

Fair Oak Water District Response

There is a heated election campaign in Fair Oaks to determine the future of the Fair Oaks Water District (FOWD).

On one side, a developer who developed a corner property in Fair Oaks Village directly across the FOWD Operations Center (or corporation yard). A year ago, the developer demanded that FOWD move the yard from the Village site, which FOWD has owned and occupied since 1979, so he could re-develop that 1.6-acre site into something with more parking for the Fair Oaks Village and his private gain.

After the public hearing, the FOWD Board voted unanimously to stay put and continue with the yard redevelopment project as planned. Since 2018 the FOWD has invested \$500K in design and permitting fees and obtained the county entitlements and approvals to redevelop the site (with the unanimous vote approval from the Fair Oaks Community Planning Advisory Commission and Sacramento County Planning Commission).

In 2024, the developer has changed his tactic. He wants to take control of the entire FOWD Board through the 2024 general election and recall efforts. The developer cannot run on a platform of "Move the yard -- build a parking lot" since this would not appeal to FOWD ratepayers and voters outside Fair Oaks Village. Instead, the developer has been trying to manufacture fake financial problems, stating falsely that FOWD needs new financial oversight and direction from Fair Oaks Village.

Here are important facts that our rate payers and the general public should know:

2024 Water Rates - (1-inch Bi-monthly)			
		40 CCF Units	% Diff
1	Fair Oaks Water District	\$ 111.05	
2	City of Folsom*	\$ 113.98	3%
3	Orange Vale WC	\$ 119.20	7%
4	California American WC	\$ 130.06	17%
5	Golden State WC	\$ 155.27	40%
6	Sac County WA	\$ 156.94	41%
7	City of Roseville	\$ 161.54	45%
8	Citrus Heights WD	\$ 175.78	58%
9	Placer County WA	\$ 200.36	80%
10	Sacramento Suburban WD	\$ 200.76	81%
11	Elk Grove Water District	\$ 208.98	88%
12	Carmichael Water District	\$ 210.64	90%
13	San Juan Water District	\$ 218.00	96%
14	El Dorado Irrigation District	\$ 220.26	98%
15	City of Lincoln	\$ 241.98	118%

*One CCF stands for 100 cubic feet or 748 gallons, so 40 CCF.

All of our Board meetings are open to the public and we invite public comment at every Board meeting.

The FOWD has the lowest water rates in the Sacramento region, and perhaps in the entire state.

The FOWD has no debt.

The FOWD has built five new groundwater wells to improve long-term water supply reliability.

The FOWD has saved \$10 million in cash reserves.

The FOWD built a new modern administration building

in the Village and is in the final stages of redeveloping the new Operations Center at the site.

All FOWD financial transactions, including checks written by the FOWD, credit card purchases, warrants, and FOWD Board expenses are posted online in the monthly Board packets.

All financial transactions are approved in public and where public comment is invited.

All annual budgets and audited financial statements are posted on the FOWD.com website.

These facts demonstrate that Fair Oaks Water District's financial management is sound and our actions transparent.

After two public hearings, the FOWD Board voted in 2022 to increase water rates by 25% over three years. The three major reasons for the 25% rate hike were: 1) Capital investment needs of approximately \$37 million over the next ten years to replace system water mains, 2) Inflation, and 3) Wholesale surface water rate increases charged by the San Juan Water District (SJWD).

Between 2006 and 2022, the FOWD increased water rates by 13% while the Consumer Price Index increased by 49% and the cost of surface water purchased from SJWD by 323%. Even with the 25% rate hike over three years, the FOWD has the lowest water rates in the region (see the table at middle).

For more facts, visit the FOWD.com website. Don't be fooled. Seek the truth.

- Chris Petersen, FOWD Board President

Leon Corcos' Response

In February 2023, hundreds of Fair Oaks residents packed the Water District Board Meeting and demanded answers about a 25% rate hike and a \$7 million maintenance yard renovation. Instead of transparency, we got blame — the board claimed it was our fault for not being involved earlier, despite making no effort to engage us.

Here's the reality: the Fair Oaks Water District has just 31 employees, imports 90% of

its water and outsources major infrastructure projects. So why are they planning to spend \$7 million on a yard for tools, trucks, and materials? Why are they building an employee gym? The board gave no justification and refused to explore cheaper alternatives.

Instead, the board keeps trying to reframe the issue, as if it's about anything but the reckless spending we're all concerned about. We aren't asking for a

new parking lot as the board would like to distract you into thinking. That's simply not true. We're asking them to honor their promise to let the community use the existing admin building parking after hours, as they said they would. It took almost two years. Finally, signs went up a few weeks ago. Meanwhile, the board likes to boast about having the lowest water rates in the region but refuses to acknowledge that this won't be true after

the upcoming 25% rate increase.

This election isn't just about water. It's about transparency, accountability, and, frankly, the basic respect that we, as ratepayers, deserve. Most of the board members have sat in their positions for over a decade. Every current board member ran unopposed in their election. Is it any surprise they feel invincible, insulated from the very people they serve?

It's time for change. The board

should answer to the community, not the other way around. By voting for Levi Newlin, Darryl Cragun, and Leah Parrish-Pane, we will finally be able to hold the Fair Oaks Water Board accountable and make sure our voices are heard. Let's take back our water district. Vote for leadership that puts community first.

Respectfully,
Leon Corcos,
29-year resident of Fair Oaks

Newsom Vetoes Bipartisan Legislation Improving Accountability Over Homelessness Spending

**Office of Assemblyman
Josh Hoover News Release**

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - On Sept. 26, Assemblyman Josh Hoover (R-Folsom) expressed deep disappointment following Governor Gavin Newsom's veto of Assembly Bill 2903.

The bill, which had garnered unanimous bipartisan support in the Legislature, would have required state-run homelessness programs to annually report cost and outcome data to the California Interagency Council on Homelessness

(ICH). It would have also required the Interagency Council on Homelessness to develop procedures for collecting the data and reporting it to the public.

"Governor Newsom had an opportunity to do what is right and hold his own agencies accountable for our state's failed response to homelessness," Assemblyman Hoover said. "Instead, he rejected the recommendations of the State Auditor and vetoed legislation that received unanimous support in the Legislature. Our

state has spent billions of taxpayer dollars in recent years only to see homelessness get worse. We will not solve this crisis and get people the help they need until we get serious about accountability."

AB 2903 sought to implement the recommendation of the California State Auditor following the results of a recent audit requested by Assemblyman Hoover. The audit revealed that the state has failed to systematically track homelessness spending and is not adequately positioned

to collect data and assess outcomes.

According to the Auditor's report, California has spent nearly \$24 billion taxpayer dollars since 2018 to solve our homelessness crisis. During that same period, the state's overall homeless population increased by 32 percent and half of the nation's unsheltered homeless now live in California.

"Californians deserve better," Assemblyman Hoover added. "They deserve transparency and accountability in

how their tax dollars are spent, especially on such a critical issue. I will continue to fight for meaningful reforms to address our state's homelessness crisis."

Josh Hoover represents Assembly District 7, which includes the cities of Citrus Heights, Folsom and Rancho Cordova and the unincorporated communities of Carmichael, Fair Oaks, Foothill Farms, Gold River, Mather, McClellan Park, North Highlands, Orangevale and Rosemont. ★

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Saturday, October 12

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Orangevale Community Update

Why I'm Supporting Prop 36

overdoses, and rampant retail thefts.

Proposition 57, promoted as a safety measure, redefined numerous violent crimes as non-violent, enabling earlier releases for offenders. This categorization includes heinous acts like the rape of an unconscious person. Such legislative changes have not only facilitated the growth of organized retail theft but also diminished the morale of our law enforcement and threatened the viability of small businesses.

The political landscape, influenced by a focus on decarceration and police funding cuts, has prioritized criminal interests over public safety, affecting citizens and businesses alike. Despite resistance and legislative attempts to remove it, Proposition 36 remains on the ballot, reflecting a critical public mandate to address these legislative failures.

Proposition 36 proposes several amendments to enhance penalties and accountability, particularly concerning drug-related offenses:

Stricter penalties for smash-and-grab incidents and repeat retail theft.

Allowing stolen property values from multiple thefts to be combined, countering tactics by career thieves who steal repeatedly to avoid harsher penalties

Enhanced charges for drug dealers, especially those linked to fatalities, with potential for murder charges.

Similar penalties for

possessing firearms with fentanyl as with other drugs.

Increased penalties for distributing significant amounts of fentanyl and renewed incentives for treatment programs over incarceration.

We need tougher rules to stop repeat offenders who aren't facing the consequences they should. Supporting Proposition 36 means strengthening our laws to better protect our neighborhoods and support honest businesses and residents.

This proposition will enforce stricter penalties for ongoing crimes, helping to ensure the safety of everyone in Sacramento. With Proposition 36, we take a crucial step toward a safer community by addressing the gaps in our current system and showing our commitment to law and order.

Thank you for Reading – and as always if you want to contact me, call me at 916-874-5491, or e-mail me at SupervisorFrost@sac-county.gov. Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost represents the 4th District, which includes the communities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, Orangevale, Antelope, North Highlands, Rio Linda, Elverta, and Rancho Murietta.

Sue Frost was elected to the Citrus Heights City Council in 2012 and served as Vice-Mayor in 2014 and Mayor in 2015. She is now the Sacramento County District 4 Supervisor. ★



By County Supervisor Sue Frost
Through the generosity of the *American River Messenger*, this column serves to provide an update about matters affecting the unincorporated community of Orangevale.

As the November 5 elections near, I want to highlight Proposition 36, a pivotal measure for Sacramento. Our community has been increasingly troubled by crimes ranging from theft to assault, driven by legislative changes and systemic shifts in crime definitions over the past decade.

The origins trace back to 2011 with AB 109, or "Public Safety Realignment," initiated under Governor Jerry Brown. This legislation shifted many felons from state prisons to local jails, leading to premature releases due to inadequate facilities. This transfer has contributed to a visible rise in crime, particularly affecting the trafficking of dangerous drugs like fentanyl.

Further complicating matters, the 2014 Proposition 47, labeled "The Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act," reclassified numerous drug felonies and all property crimes under \$950 as misdemeanors. This policy shift has fueled the increase in California's drug-addicted homeless population, surges in fatal

California's Expensive Explosion of Real Estate Fraud Hits Home



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

Rana Robillard came very close this year to losing her life's savings and with it her dream home, when she wired nearly \$400,000 to an internet scammer.

Robillard, ironically, is an experienced veteran of the Bay Area technology industry, but when she received what she thought was a request for her down payment on a home in Orinda, she sent the money, only to learn that she had been tricked.

"That's when I went into a full panic," Robillard, 55, told CNBC, the cable channel devoted to financial matters, which chronicled her terrifying experience.

Robillard was not alone in being victimized.

The real estate industry has fully embraced online transactions, thus eliminating the hassle of having buyers, sellers, real estate agents, mortgage lenders and title company employees shuffle through dozens of paper documents that must be signed or initialed to complete transactions.

It's made the process of buying and selling houses much more convenient, but it's also given scammers an opening for fraud that has cost home buyers many millions of dollars.

payment that Robillard received was virtually identical to the many email messages she had exchanged and, in fact, was the only bogus one, which is why scammers have been so successful.

Cyber crooks have mastered the dark art of mimicking legitimate messages, complete with the real names of title company employees and authentic-looking logos, and artificial intelligence could make their scams even more successful in the future.

FBI data, CNBC reported, reveal that real estate fraud involving bogus emails has risen from less than \$9 million in 2015 to \$446.1 million in 2022.

A study of real estate fraud commissioned by Anidjar and Levine, a Florida law firm, found that California's 1,583 cases in 2023 far surpassed those of any other state, as did its \$24.8 million in losses.

Robillard is one of the lucky victims. She quickly reported her loss and her \$398,359.5 was tracked through several banks as the thieves shifted it around to avoid detection. Five months later, after CNBC began making inquiries, she received \$150,000 from one bank and then the remaining nearly \$250,000 from another.

Robillard contacted CNBC about her case both to help her recover the money and bring more attention to the real estate fraud explosion.

"This is not what I thought my public representation would look like, which is that I've lost all this money," Robillard told

CNBC. "If it helps other people, I'm happy to do it, even though it's obviously not my proudest moment."

I take a particular interest in Robillard's case not only because it's important but because I came within a whisker last week of also becoming a victim.

I, too, received a very authentic-looking instruction from the title company handling my purchase of a smaller home for downsizing, seeking down payment and closing costs to complete the purchase. It seemingly came from the title company employee who had been handling my transaction and had all of the appearances of a legitimate communication.

I intended to comply with the request a few hours later, but then received a phone call from my lender about closing the transaction. I told him of the request and he immediately smelled a rat.

That phone call was a lifesaver. A few days later, I presented a valid cashier's check to the title company employee whose identity had been borrowed by the scammer and signed the legitimate paperwork to finalize the purchase.

One of the documents I signed was a warning about phony payment instructions. Perhaps it should have been one of the first documents I was given, rather than one of the last.

Dan Walters is one of 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. ★

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Fidelis K9 Dog Training Celebrates Ribbon Cutting

Out & About with MaryAnne Povey



By MaryAnne Povey

ORANGEVALE, CA (MPG) - Fall is here, and you know what that means—it's time for some fantastic events in our community! Here are a few highlights you won't want to miss.

First up, on Friday, Oct. 11, wear your costumes (big and little kids alike) and come to the OV Parks Family Fright Night at the Orangevale Community Center, 6826 Hazel Avenue for some Halloween fun! Trunk-or-treating begins at 5:30 p.m. in the lower parking lot, followed by a family-friendly movie at 7 p.m. in the community center. Bring blankets, lawn chairs, or pillows and get comfy! Gonna be a spook-tacular time! Note: Arrive early for this popular community event.

Next, on Saturday, Oct. 12, the Big Community Food Drive returns from 8:30 to 11 a.m. at Divine Savior Catholic Church, 9079 Greenback Lane. "Drive thru and drop off" your non-perishable food donation! Times are tough, and the demand for food is on the rise. We're asking everyone to come together and help us reach the goal of collecting 50,000 pounds of non-perishable food to stock

the shelves for winter to help our neighbors in need. Thank you for your support!

The Great Pumpkin Palooza returns on Oct. 13 at the Orangevale Grange from 12 to 4 p.m. (5708 Walnut Ave). The giant pumpkin grown by our award-winning youth pumpkin growers will be on display, and there will be plenty of fun activities, including pumpkin chuckin', a pumpkin patch, pumpkin carving, free games, and new this year chicken pumpkin carving and a scarecrow contest! Admission is FREE, so bring the whole family out for a day of fun, food, and festivities!

Finally, October ends with a bang at the last Orangevale Farmers Market of the season with a Halloween Bash on Thursday, Oct. 31, from 3 to 8 p.m. Enjoy lots of vendors, live music, a petting zoo, pumpkin painting, and free candy for the kids. All happening at the Orangevale Community Center 6826 Hazel Ave.

Last but not least, the election is Tuesday, Nov. 5. Orangevale residents will have Measure L on the ballot to help improve our local parks. Don't forget to vote!

That's it for now! Hope you'll take the time to enjoy these local events! Stay tuned for more coming your way! ★



Proud onlookers watch as Patrick and Shannon Smith cut the ribbon to their new business. Photo by Jayden Valesquez

By MaryAnne Povey

ORANGEVALE, CA (MPG) - The Orangevale Chamber of Commerce, along with an enthusiastic crowd of family, friends, clients and community leaders, celebrated the grand opening of Fidelis K9 Dog Training with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Sept. 21.

Owners Patrick and Shannon Smith were showered with recognition from the offices of County Supervisor Sue Frost, Assemblyman Josh Hoover and Congressman Kevin Kiley, highlighting their exceptional dog training services and their official welcome into the Orangevale business community.

Patrick kicked things off by sharing the story of how their business was started during the pandemic and has grown into a successful venture. Both Patrick and Shannon were genuinely touched by the outpouring of support from the Orangevale community.

Adding some patriotic flair to the event, Darren Lang of Easystumps—both a Fidelis K9 client and a fellow Chamber member—drove in with his boom truck, proudly displaying a giant American flag. It was a special nod to Patrick's



Patrick Smith wraps the ribbon around his wife, Shannon, after it has been cut. Photo by Jayden Valesquez



A representative of Rep. Kevin Kiley presents Patrick and Shannon Smith with a certificate of recognition for Fidelis K9 Dog Training. Photo by Jayden Valesquez

service as a Marine and his ongoing commitment to helping veterans train their dogs.

La Placita's Eileen Hernandez, a neighboring business owner, catered the event with a delicious spread of appetizers, making sure no one left hungry. Patrick also took the opportunity to showcase the variety of training classes Fidelis K9 offers,

stressing the importance of having a well-behaved family dog.

It was a fantastic afternoon, and we wish Fidelis K9 nothing but continued success!

If you're looking to train your dog into the perfect family companion, reach out to them at 916.337.0104 or visit Fidelisk9training.com for more details. ★

Presidential General Election Update

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Voter Registration and Elections (VRE) has begun delivering Vote by Mail (VBM) ballots to the U.S. Postal Service for distribution to all currently registered voters in the County for the Nov. 5 Presidential General Election.

Secure early ballot retrieval begins this week. Voters may use any Ballot Drop Box throughout the County to return their ballot. Voter Registration and Elections has a drive-through Ballot Drop Box in the Election's Office parking lot at 7000 65th St., Sacramento. This Ballot Drop Box is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week until 8 p.m. on Election Night.

Voters are encouraged to return their ballots early and sign their pink VBM envelope in order for their ballot to be counted. Information on the days and hours of operation for Ballot Drop Boxes or upcoming Vote Centers is available on the Voter Registration and Elections website at <https://www.elections.saccounty.gov> or use the direct links in the Key Election Dates below. No postage is necessary for voters returning their ballots by U.S. Mail using

the pink Vote by Mail envelope.

For more information, contact Voter Registration and Elections at (916) 875-6451, email voterinfo@saccounty.gov, or use the toll-free voter assistance hotline at (800) 762-8019. The hotline has the ability to connect voters with disabilities with TTY (Text Telephone).

Key Election Dates

Monday, Oct. 21: Close of voter registration for this election. Voter registration forms must be postmarked by this date or delivered to the VRE Office at 7000 65th Street, Suite A, Sacramento 95823 by 5:00 p.m. Online voter registration must be completed before midnight on this date at www.registertovote.ca.gov

Tuesday, Oct. 22: Conditional Voter Registration (CVR) begins

Saturday, Oct. 26: 11 Day Vote Centers open

Tuesday, Oct. 29: Last day a Vote by Mail (VBM) ballot can be mailed to you. After this date, VBM ballots are only available at the VRE Office or Vote Centers

Saturday, Nov. 2: All Vote Centers open throughout the County

Tuesday, Nov. 5: Election Day ★

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Garage Sale

Gated Community Garage Sale Sat. Oct 12 8am - 2pm. 8900 Block of Cliffside Lane, Fair Oaks. Lots of well taken care of secondhand items (10/11/24)

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Open House

Sacramento MHRC will be hosting an open house to update the community on new service offerings on October 21, 2024, at 2pm. For details, please contact Michelle at 609-240-8615. (10/11/24)

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Admit One

You land up in a hospital and you feel like you are in a maze. Do you have the correct information when you go in? Did you know that communication breakdowns in hospitals in the U.S. leads to hundreds of deaths? Never happen to you? Let's face it, in the trauma of being admitted, patients and family can easily become confused by the tons of information and instructions from these strangers. That's why **Kati Kleber, BSN, RC, and CCRN** and nationally certified critical care nurse in the neurosciences pulled together information you need to know before it all comes crashing down and you become one of those victims. It's called **"Admit One"** with what you must know when going to the hospital, but no one actually tells you. From CNN to Dr. Oz **Kati** shared the insider information with me on **POPOFF**.

1. BRING A LIST OF HOME MEDICATIONS. Know what medications you take on a regular basis. When you are admitted someone will ask you to provide a list of your med and will put them in your chart. Your attending doctor will decide which to keep you on in the hospital. On this one, I asked Kati if it's a good idea to have a list of vitamins and herbs you take, and she said absolutely because of interactions.

2. MAKE A LIST OF HEALTH CARE TEAM MEMBERS. An extensive team of health professionals will come and go from your room. It's hard to tell which is which ... doc, nurse, consultant etc. You and your support person will want to write down who is who, along with their instructions.

3. KNOW YOUR CODE. Your code status informs staff what to do if you stop breathing or your heart stops. Patients without chronic health issues who aren't nearing the end of their life may want health professionals to do everything to revive them. Others with terminal diagnosis or advanced age may choose not to be revived. This is called DNR or Do Not Resuscitate.

4. ASSIGN A SPOKESPERSON. Identify someone the hospital staff can call when changes occur. It is important this person can be easily reached and that you trust.

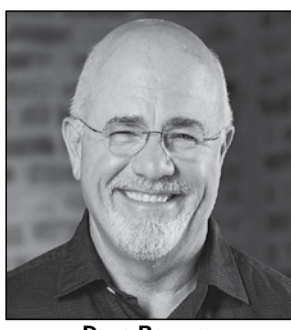
5. WRITE DOWN QUESTIONS AS YOU THINK OF THEM. Except for nurses, most team members stop by your room once a day, review your care plan, and make adjustments. It's not easy to remember all your questions.

6. ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF. Let the nurse know of any changes in your condition so the information can be relayed to your health care team. Also, if for any reason, you are not happy with a member of your health care team, let your nurse know that you'd like to speak with a nurse manager.

7. LEAVE THE EQUIPMENT TO THE EXPERTS. Hospitals are full of elaborate, high-tech equipment. If any equipment becomes dislodged, always alert a nurse. Unfortunately, incidents have occurred where patients or family inflict irreparable harm when trying to fix things themselves.

That's just the tip of the iceberg, lots more in **"Admit One."**

HOPEFULLY NOT YOU! ★



Dave Ramsey

Dear Dave,

I follow your advice and live on a budget, but it's really hard to save up for a down payment on a house because property is so expensive on the West Coast. My family thinks I should buy a cheaper property back home, fix it up and flip it to get the extra money I need. How do you feel about this?

- Alan

Dear Alan,

When you take on this kind of work, you need to oversee what's happening every step of the way. You're working out details, keeping an eye on the crew and it's all on you to make sure everything's being done right.

It's not unusual for pros who flip houses to look at 100 or more properties to buy just one. It's not an easy way to make money, and it's definitely not something to consider doing from a distance. All that being said, can you guess what my answer's going to be? Fixing and flipping properties in the area where you live is hard

Dave Ramsey Says Wait and Save Up

enough work. Trying to do it from hundreds of miles away would be a nightmare. There's no way I'd sign on for something like this.

Keep working on your budget, and start saving as much money as you can. You might even consider getting a part-time job for a little while to bring in some extra cash for your house fund. But waiting and saving up is a lot smarter than trying to fix and flip a house in another state.

- Dave

Eliminate the Confusion

Dear Dave,

I work for a construction company. The closer we get to winter, the more I think about work slowing and my income dropping. I've had couple of winters in the past where things were pretty lean. Do you think I should begin building an emergency fund for the slow times?

- Carl

Dear Carl,

I love that you're thinking about the future. I also think it's great that you've learned from past mistakes and are determined not to repeat those mistakes.

You've got a smart idea,

but you're going to have to get on your horse to make something happen for this winter. Also, you might want to think about calling it something other than an emergency fund. How about your "Offseason Fund"? You might think I'm being silly playing with the name, but hear me out. This sort of saving isn't really for emergencies, is it? It's a budget issue, because you're planning and setting aside cash leading up to something you know is coming.

Remember, we're not talking about some random amount of money. It's an exact amount that you can budget for accordingly. This winter you may have to think about picking up a side job, depending on the weather and other circumstances. But after that, it'll be a simple matter of planning ahead for the down time and setting aside something each month to see you through!

- Dave

Dave Ramsey is a national best-selling author, personal finance expert and host of The Ramsey Show, heard by more than 20 million listeners each week. Since 1992, Dave has helped people regain control of their money, build wealth and enhance their lives. ★

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Last Dance for Park Ranger

Continued from page 1

the snake charmer exited. Although armed and uniformed, the son of Sacramento building legend Joseph Mohamed, Sr. was no killjoy. He usually acquiesced to dance requests.

“Just don’t call me the dancing deputy,” Mohamed warned fans. “You’ll get me in trouble with the Sheriff. I’m a park ranger.”

Mohamed believes his dancing, among other activities, put a regular person’s face on a police officer.

“Walking around and shaking hands shows people we’re the same as them,” Mohamed reflected. “We’re not the mean guys. We’re safe to be around.”

One of four kids, Mohamed graduated from Mira Loma High School and then studied business at American River College. Mohamed was an Army drill sergeant at Fort Ord before stepping into another family tradition: construction work. Mohamed is still a general contractor, a certified property appraiser and he operates his own real estate brokerage.

Volunteering for years in the Drowning and Accident Rescue Team (DART), brought Mohamed in contact with many first responders.

“My friend, Bob Erickson, then chief of police for Fulton El Camino Park District, encouraged me to train as a park ranger,” Mohamed said. “When I passed all my tests, he hired me.”

Mohamed estimates he has served 8,000 hours of duty over 13 years.

“It’s been a rewarding career with daily returns,” Mohamed said. “Few people know that I carried a box of socks in my patrol vehicle, along with McDonald’s gift cards, bottled water, first aid and hygiene items that I bought from my own funds. They were for people in need.”

“As a ranger, you see people’s needs. Open wounds, wet shoes, dirty clothes, sunburn,” Mohamed said. “The back of my vehicle was like a drug store. I also carried an unlock kit (for when keys got locked in cars) and a jumper box for dead batteries. It’s been my duty to be as helpful as possible.”

Sometimes, help went beyond duty: Mohamed was last year awarded a State of California medal of valor. He rescued a man from a burning Madison Avenue building and then



Guinevere Mitchell, 6, cuts a rug with the retiring ranger. Photo by Susan Maxwell Skinner



Officer John Mohamed displays a Carmichael Park District service award. Fans include his fiancée, Denise Ulm (in pink), and rocker Todd Morgan (right, with guitar). Photo by Susan Maxwell Skinner

re-entered the inferno in search of more occupants.

Playing at the Sacramento Softball Complex, Mohamed revived a rival player from cardiac arrest. Mohamed applied the Heimlich maneuver to save a choking concert attendee. His Silver Star medal for distinguished service resulted from securing an active crime scene where a fellow officer was mortally wounded. Fulton El Camino Park Police have twice named him Officer of the Year.

“Officers don’t do what we do for glory,” Mohamed said. “Our rewards are in seeing safer neighborhoods and public

confidence in us. We want people to believe we’re there for them; that we have their best interests at heart. I thank the fantastic training I’ve had for whatever I’ve achieved.”

Retirement plans include teaching continuing education for law officers. He also hopes to sell a house or two. Travel, with his fiancée, Denise Ulm, is anticipated.

“I’ll miss my fellow officers,” Mohamed said. “I’ll miss my interaction with the public and the feeling at the end of a day that I’d accomplished something meaningful. I’ll still go to concerts. It’ll be much easier to dance without body armor.” ★

Sheriff's North Division Community Meetings Announced

Office of District 3 Supervisor Rich Desmond News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento Sheriff’s Department, North Division, is hosting a series of community meetings. This is a great opportunity to have your concerns addressed in person. There will also be representatives from the District Attorney’s Office, CHP and Code Enforcement.

The dates and times are as follows:

Carmichael, Fair Oaks, Old Foothill Farms

The meeting for the Carmichael, Fair Oaks and Foothill Farms area will be held at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 16 at the Sheriff’s Office Community Room, 4510

Orange Grove, Sacramento. Arden-Arcade

The meeting for the Arden-Arcade area will take place at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 15 at Country Club Lanes, 2600 Watt Ave, Sacramento. **Orangevale**

The Orangevale area meeting will be held at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 23 at Divine Catholic Church, 9079 Greenback Lane, Orangevale.

North Highlands, New Foothill Farms, Antelope

The meeting for the North Highlands, Foothill Farms and Antelope areas will take place at 6 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 24 at Family Community Church, 6331 Watt Ave, North Highlands. ★

Sac County Celebrates Food Safety Excellence

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - To honor the remarkable food safety efforts of local restaurants and food facilities that protect the public from foodborne illnesses, and to celebrate National Food Safety Month, the Sacramento County Environmental Management Department recognized Sacramento County operators during the Board of Supervisors meeting on Sept. 10.

The recipients of the 19th Annual Environmental Management Food Safety Award of Excellence all achieved three consecutive health inspections without major violations.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimate that 48 million people get sick, 128,000 people are hospitalized, and 3,000 people die from foodborne diseases in the U.S. each year.

With the help of Environmental Management Department’s (EMD) food protection program and free food safety classes, Sacramento County food facility operators are trained that most foodborne illnesses are preventable, by teaching the principles of

food safety and focusing on preventing food contamination and learning facility sanitation, time/temperature control, and personal hygiene.

Of those 673 food facilities recognized, one establishment from each of the five Sacramento County supervisorial districts was chosen to receive their award from their respective County Supervisor.

Awards Of Excellence District Representative Honorees

District 1 – Supervisor Phil Serna: Yume Gelato, located at 5921 Folsom Blvd in Sacramento

District 2 – Supervisor Patrick Kennedy: Samosa Garden, located at 6608 Florin Road in Sacramento

District 3 – Supervisor Rich Desmond: Del’s Pizza, located at 11711 Fair Oaks Blvd in Fair Oaks

District 4 – Supervisor Sue Frost: Mas Taco Bar, located at 450 Palladio Parkway in Folsom

District 5 – Supervisor Pat Hume: Full Moon Palace, located at 1000 C Street #50 in Galt ★

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Amber Waves

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Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Dishcloth is larger. 2. Picture on wall is larger. 3. Stack of dishes is shorter. 4. Cabinet handle is missing. 5. Report card is smaller. 6. Upper cabinet is missing.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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CLUES

ACROSS

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- No longer is
- Cake with rum
- * _____ Asinoff, author of "Eight Men Out"
- Invoice qty.
- Fox crime drama, 2005-2017
- *Baseball player's representative
- Pastrami's partner
- With irregular edge
- "Last year's World Series winners"
- "Brave contender"
- Certain tray content
- Fail to mention
- Nocturnal flyer
- Team homophone
- "Last year's MVP Corey _____"
- Iranian monarch
- Proactiv target
- "Superman" star
- Head of family
- Button-up or button-down
- Singles
- Graduates
- Symphony member
- "Number in a baseball lineup"
- Say again
- Brezhnev's country
- PST plus three
- Mouth off
- Brewed beverage
- "Fall _____"
- *Two-time World Series MVP winner in 1970s
- Two under on one hole in golf
- Brewed alcoholic beverage
- Grind down
- #72 Across, in the olden days
- *2003 World Series winner or Marvel leader, Stan
- Plural of #62 Down
- Eject
- _____ excellence
- Noise of contempt

DOWN

- 1984, e.g.
- Pond plant
- Right to a property
- Polynesian kingdom
- Affirm to be true
- TV's "Storage _____"
- Comedian Schumer
- Iron setting
- Bora _____
- Any day now, formerly
- Superlative of better
- Not in port
- Loud singer
- Actress _____ Perlman, pl.
- _____ the season!
- Double-decker
- Wife of "The Picture of Dorian Gray" fame
- Blue or gray swimmer
- Drink like a cat (2 words)
- Reply from a tunnel
- Eon, alt. sp.
- Robin Williams in "Aladdin"
- 0 and 2, e.g.
- Set to zero
- *Touch to score

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WE SUPPORT FIRST RESPONDERS

MPG

'Destination Aviation' STEM Event Inspiring the Next Generations

Continued from page 1 sustainable fuels at UPS.

"We have a truly incredible panel here today," said Bankerd. "One thing we all have in common is the efforts we put into doing what we love."

The event included more than a dozen hands-on STEM exhibits from organizations such as the Aerospace Museum of California, Sacramento City College, and the U.S. Air Force ROTC where youth explored various career opportunities, engaged with professionals in those fields and discovered the latest technological innovations.

"It's about getting kids involved in something fun and exciting that encourages aviation," said Anthony Elder, the co-Founder of Red Tail Drone Academy and Sports, one of the exhibits present at the event where youth had the opportunity to explore "drone soccer".

Attendees also enjoyed a Mad Science show and a display of various aircraft and vehicles. Winners of an essay contest also had the chance to experience an introductory flight before the main event.

"Today was so cool," said attendee Ava Chang. "I want to be an astronaut when I grow up and I learned so much today."

Tengesdal highlighted the significance of representation, saying, "I think events like this are great for people that are likeminded to meet people that have been there and done that. To show kids the diverse backgrounds we bring to the table helps them see that they can do it too."

Lewis stressed the importance of hands-on learning, stating, "Any kind of STEM event is really good, especially ones like this with hands-on activities. It gives



An interactive "Mad Science" show took place at the event. Photo courtesy of David Blakeney Photography

kids a chance to discover something new and fosters a one-on-one connection."

Offering advice to aspiring young professionals, Lewis said, "Be determined, don't give up. It's hard work getting into these fields, but if you are willing to be determined and not give up, that spark of innovation and curiosity will lead you to success."

The California Capital Airshow continues to make strides in inspiring the next generation, showing that with education and exposure, the sky is truly the limit.

For more information on programs and future events go to californiacapitalairshow.com. ★



Speakers at the event included, from left Lt. Col. Merryl Tengesdal, Ryan Bankerd, Manu Mann and Elizabeth Lewis. Photo courtesy of David Blakeney Photography

Over 1,000 Acres of Open Space Protected in Sacramento County

Sacramento Valley Conservancy News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Sacramento Valley Conservancy (SVC) announces the permanent protection of 1,055 acres of vernal pool and open space between the Mather and Sloughhouse areas.

This is Sacramento Valley Conservancy's largest acquisition since Deer Creek Hills was protected in 2004, and Sacramento Valley Conservancy has plans to connect these preserves to Deer Creek Hills and other open spaces for wildlife corridors and regional trail networks.

The protected area includes vernal pools, wetlands, and swales that supports threatened, protected and species of concern,

including vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*) and tadpole shrimp (*Lepidurus packardii*), western spadefoot (*Spea hammondi*), burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) and Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*). The preserves encompass 5 properties located off of Grant Line Road, including sections of Carson Creek, tributaries to Deer Creek and Laguna Creek Watershed and portions connecting to the Kiefer Landfill Preserve.

"Vernal pools are home to unique species found nowhere else on Earth! They provide biodiversity, support local ag and become living classrooms where we inspire the next generation of stewards," said Kelly Hopkins,

executive director for the Sacramento Valley Conservancy.

This project succeeded in finally dedicating the preserves after years of collaboration between the South Sacramento Conservation Agency (SSCA), the developer, Sacramento Valley Conservancy, and many more, fulfilling the required mitigation for the Cordova Hills development project which was approved by the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors in 2013.

Symbolizing a decade-long due diligence effort, Hopkins noted, "SVC is pleased that these parcels have finally been protected, and we are excited to gain the Conservation Agency as a partner in the land protection process."

Sacramento Valley Conservancy manages and monitors 7,326 acres of vernal pool and upland habitat, known as the Sacramento Prairie Vernal Pool Preserve, which includes 23 properties in the Mather, Rancho Cordova area, and southeast Sacramento County area. Over the past twenty years, Sacramento Valley Conservancy has worked with mining companies, developers, resource agencies, and organizations such as the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the US Bureau of Reclamation, Sacramento County, the Sacramento Municipal Utility District, and the California State Water Resources Control Board to protect and restore these rare

habitats. Grasslands containing vernal pools are some of the most threatened lands in the region and 237,000 acres of working agricultural lands have been lost to development from 1988-2018.

The Sacramento Valley Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and an accredited land trust dedicated to preserving agricultural lands, natural habitats, and open spaces in the Sacramento Valley for future generations. Since 1990, Sacramento Valley Conservancy has protected over 17,500 acres, actively contributing to the region's environmental sustainability and resilience through land and conservation easement acquisition. ★



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Heartstoppers Haunted House Returns for Annual Scare

By Heather Atherton, AthertonPR News Release

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA (MPG) - Ready for a really good scare?

Not only are there excellent haunts at the Heartstoppers Haunted House in Rancho Cordova but it is also the ideal venue for such an attraction, given that the Mineshaft property itself is rumored to be haunted.

Not only are there two major haunts within the main building, upstairs and in the creepy caves and basement, but there are two immense outdoor haunts in the former mini golf course and property adjacent to Folsom Boulevard to complete the experience with spooks in every corner. Tickets are online only and start at \$35 at www.heartstoppershaunt.com.

Heartstoppers' production team has been running professional quality haunted houses for 17 years. In 2016 and 2017, they joined forces with Callson Manor to create DireWorld in Roseville. Given the redevelopment @ TheGrounds, the haunt needed to find a new home. Heartstoppers, now affiliated with a 501c3 nonprofit called Theatre Education 4 Theater Nerds, Inc., was welcomed back to Rancho Cordova with open arms in 2018 and was offered a home at the Mineshaft. They have deepened their relationship with the Cordova Community Council and will receive community and marketing support from the Council. Shared profits will then go to support various community programs in Rancho Cordova run by the two organizations.

"We can't wait to open again this year and scare all of our local friends again this year," said Joel Watson, producer of Heartstoppers Haunt. "Our long-term plan is to not only run the Heartstoppers Haunted House in October but expand to open seasonally for workshops and eventually some other holidays



"We can't wait to open again this year and scare all of our local friends again this year," said Joel Watson, producer of Heartstoppers Haunt. Image by Harry from Pixabay

for specialty themed events at The Mineshaft."

Tickets include all attractions, plus two Scarezones to hang out in and soak up the Halloween vibes. A waiting area indoors (so inclement weather won't be a problem) where themed refreshments and souvenirs will be available to help guests prepare for the winddown from their Heartstoppers experience. Its four attractions all centered around a single storyline, really helping to bring you into their world, including:

Deadlands

Old West meets The Walking Dead outdoors under the moonlight.

The Ward

Project Crossbreed; the abandoned hospital on the hill. In the building, upstairs.

BlightWoods

A possessed forest on the outskirts of Deadlands, controlled



by three witches. In the golf course.

Misery Mine

The now collapsed silver mine underneath the town of Deadlands. In the basement.

Redemption! Stage Show

An included stage show runs every hour that explains the story and history of Deadlands and the surrounding area.

Tickets are \$35. For those who don't have the guts to wait in line

and enjoy the anticipation, Fancy Pants tickets for \$55 enters them into the Fast-Q. Six-packs of tickets for group rate or return visits are \$32 each when six are purchased. Larger group rates are available.

The Parkour and Performing Arts Center is bringing a one-of-a-kind experience, CIRQUE VAU DE VILLAIN to the Ghost Town at Heartstoppers! The PPAC will be selling tickets

to a thrilling 45-minute Circus Variety & Freak Show, that will amaze and entertain the young and old. Included with the ticket is the Spin-to-Win experience. Three spins of the wheel to win prizes, including the grand prize of a Mystery Trip or an overnight stay at a Haunted Motel in Nevada.

There will be vendors with unique horror-themed jewelry to one-of-a-kind artwork, gifts and tchotchkes throughout the property each night. Food trucks will also be on site for tasty treats and meals and specialty mocktails area available inside the haunt, featuring non-alcoholic libations like Cyrus Cider or the Witches Brew.

"Our volunteers are the heart of our organization," explained Joel Watson, producer of Heartstoppers Haunted House. "We are grateful for their hard work and dedication to learn an artistic craft while help us bring our vision to life for a premier haunted house experience that benefits the community."

The Cordova Community Council Foundation is very involved in supporting Heartstoppers Haunted House in many ways. From helping recruit community volunteers to running the parking, helping secure the venue and marketing support, they are a valuable partner. A portion of the proceeds will benefit Rancho Cordova community activities presented by the Cordova Community Council.

Heartstoppers Haunted House will open for the public on Sept. 27, then Fridays and Saturdays each weekend in October. Additional dates around Halloween through Saturday, Nov. 2. Halloween week will include Sunday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. Due to the reservation system, all tickets are sold online only. Parking gates will open at 7 p.m. View the full schedule at <https://heartstoppershaunt.com/information/dates-hours-calendar>. ★

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Connector Provides 'Simple Pleasure of Riding a Bike'

By **Derek Minnema**,
Executive Director
Capital Southeast
Connector JPA



The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) has plans for a regional bike and pedestrian trail that links people to parks, schools, business employment centers, retail outlets, mass transit hubs, entertainment venues and residential developments throughout the region.

"The Sacramento Regional Trail Network will spark a new wave of walking, biking, and rolling to daily destinations throughout the region." SACOG says on its website. "Imagine a network of trails that makes it easy for families to ride to their favorite park, provides a safe route for children to get to school, and offers a simple way for residents to explore new corners of their neighborhoods and cities...(providing) reliable routes to the best

places around the region for all ages and abilities."

The plan envisions over 1,000 miles of connected trails serving portions of six counties. The goal is to provide trail connections that make walking or biking to destinations a top choice for people of all ages and abilities.

Sacramento is already home to some of the nation's most scenic trails, like the Jedediah Smith Memorial Trail--a 32-mile route along the American River that attracts around 5 million visitors annually.

The Capital SouthEast Connector bike trail will build on this legacy by adding 34 paved miles

to the regional trail network. The Connector trail will traverse southern Sacramento County's diverse landscapes, connecting users to small communities and scenic views along the way. Many new developments near the bike trail route have incorporated the trail into their design plans, giving residents the ability to go shopping or visit friends in nearby communities without using their cars.

Safety is the forefront of the Capital SouthEast Connector's bike trail. Pedestrians and bicyclists are completely separated from vehicular traffic, eliminating the need to share narrow roads with speeding cars—a crucial feature for safety and enjoyment.

Portions of the trail in Folsom and Elk Grove have already been completed. Cyclists and pedestrians can enjoy views of ranching and agriculture as the trail

parallels the road and crosses over creek beds.

The completed section near Folsom features a bike bridge over Alder Creek and offers a view

Sacramento's congested roads, encouraging more people to opt for walking and biking in their daily lives.

As Sacramento con-

and collaboration, the Capital SouthEast Connector bike trail will transform how people move through southeast Sacramento County. It will offer a safe, scenic alternative to driving while improving the quality of life for all.

As former President John F. Kennedy once said, "Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of riding a bike."

Visit our website at www.connectorjpa.com to learn more about the Capital SouthEast Connector bike trail and to stay updated on project developments.

To watch a video of the bike bridge construction in Folsom, visit our YouTube page at www.youtube.com/southeast-connectorexpressway

Derek Minnema is a civil engineer, and the chief executive leading the Capital SouthEast Connector Joint Powers Authority. ★

Alder Creek Bike Bridge



of the wildlife corridor. Our next project will extend the trail and connect access to White Rock Road's historic namesake, a prominent rock formation that once guided Gold Rush travelers.

Whether for commuting or recreation, the Capital SouthEast Connector bike trail is a sustainable solution to

continues to grow, projects like this trail are essential for fostering sustainable, connected development. The trail is more than just a path--it represents a commitment to creating a healthier, more connected community where walking and biking are both viable, and attractive options.

With ongoing support

What Everybody Ought to Know...

About Transportation and Traffic in Sacramento County

Why Are We Publishing This Information

The Capital SouthEast Connector is the largest and most significant road project in Sacramento and El Dorado Counties, but its value to the region is often unknown to residents. We hope to change that through a series of ads. The ads explore the Connector's history and future, its financing, its challenges, and its successes.

Please send your comments about these ads, or any questions you might have, to ConnectorSupport@SacCounty.gov

For more information or to sign up for our newsletter, visit our website at ConnectorJPA.com or go to our YouTube channel @[southeastconnectorexpressway](https://www.youtube.com/southeastconnectorexpressway)

Q What is the Capital SouthEast Connector Expressway?

A The Connector is a planned expressway that links I-5 and Hwy 99 near Elk Grove to Hwy 50 in El Dorado County. The new expressway will relieve congestion by directing commuter and commercial traffic around central Sacramento. Travelers to and from areas south of Sacramento will no longer need to go through the city to get to their destinations. The Capital SouthEast Connector Expressway also features a separated, parallel paved bike and pedestrian trail.

Q How much of the transportation sales tax funds are spent on maintaining our current roads? They are extremely worn out. Potholes and cracks are constantly banging our vehicles... Why spend more money on another road when we need to have our current roadways repaired for safer travel.

A At least \$545.5 million of the \$2 billion thus far generated by the transportation sale tax has been used for street and road maintenance, along with another \$54.5 million spent on traffic control and safety, according to the Sacramento Transportation Authority that administers the funds. We need to both maintain our current roads and build more roads to accommodate the

increase in area traffic due to the region's rapid population growth. Simply put, more travelers require more roads and alternate modes of transportation.

Q What is the status of the Connector section from SR16/Jackson Highway to White Rock Road?

A Improvements to Grant Line Road in Rancho Cordova are in the final engineering design stage. Construction of the alignment between Douglas Road and White Rock Road is anticipated to begin in late 2026 or early 2027.

Q What is the timing of completing the Connector to US 50? When will White Rock Rd be widened at the El Dorado County line? I was under the impression that White Rock would be realigned as it came over the hill into El Dorado Hills.

A Environmental review for that section has been completed. Initial construction between Prairie City Rd and East Bidwell Street was completed in 2023. Improvements to White Rock Road in Folsom/El Dorado County are in the final engineering design stage with right-of-way acquisitions anticipated in 2025. The road will be realigned and completely reconstructed as it comes over the hill into El Dorado Hills.

Q Can you please provide an update on the Connector's

section from I-5 to Bruceville Road?

A Environmental review for that section has been completed. Initial construction between Bruceville Road and SR 99 was completed in 2023. Improvements to Kammerer Road in Elk Grove are in the final engineering design stage with right-of-way acquisitions anticipated in 2025.

Q I recall hearing that part of the Connector will be a toll road with funds used to support what will be the Elk Grove Zoo. True?

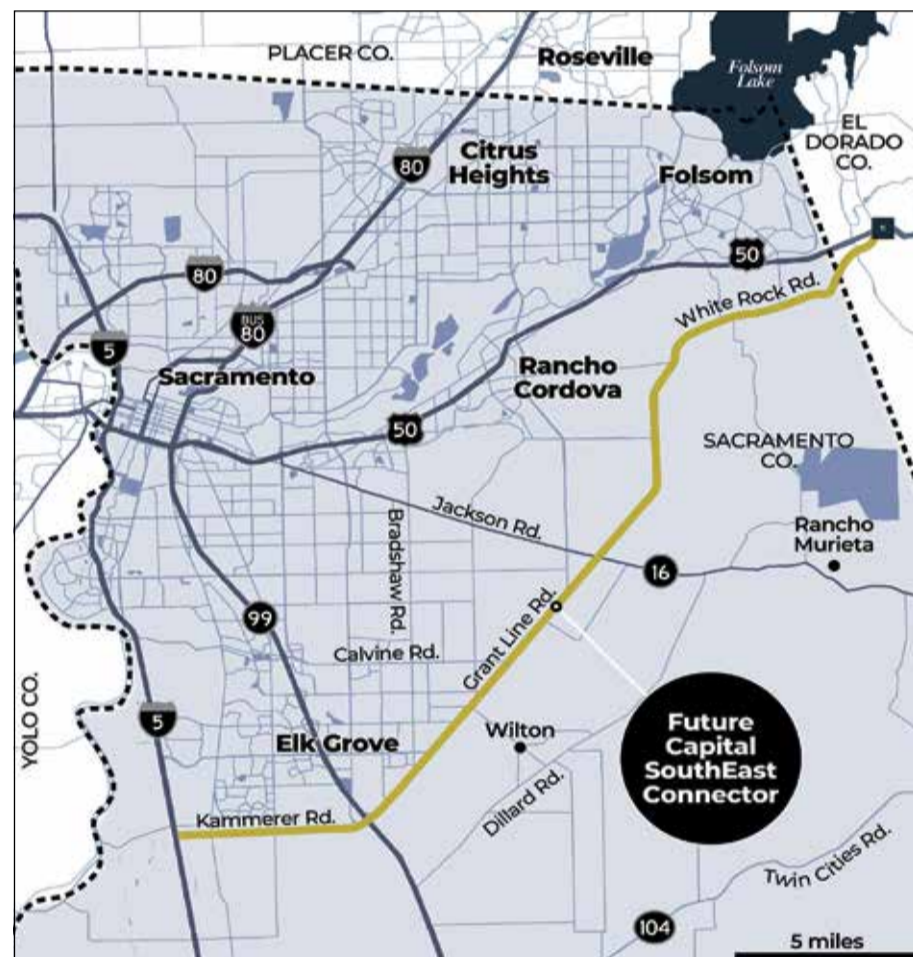
A NO!

Q How is the Capital SouthEast Connector Expressway funded?

A Revenue from a county half-cent transportation sales tax passed in 2004, combined with state and federal funds, finances the project.

Q What effect will the Capital SouthEast Connector Expressway have on regional travel and the local economy?

A The Connector will greatly relieve traffic congestion on Hwy 50, I-5, and Hwy 99. Economically, a 2022 study found that the completed Capital SouthEast Connector Expressway would save commuters between



Map showing the location of the future Capital SouthEast Connector

\$500 million and \$1.5 billion in travel time from 2026 to 2046, compared to current roadways. The study also found that the completed Connector would generate \$1.8 billion in increased economic output; \$770 million in new labor income; \$1.1 billion in added value to the region; and \$80 million in new state and local taxes on production and imports.

Q Who will benefit from the SouthEast Connector Expressway when completed?

A The entire region will benefit from reduced congestion on area highways, particularly Hwy 50, and from fewer toxic fumes spewing from thousands of vehicles stuck in traffic. Southeastern Sacramento County residents will have a safe new route to avoid Hwy 50, I-5, and Hwy 99 congestion, and to bypass downtown traffic. Businesses, farmers, and ranchers will be able to more efficiently receive supplies and send products to market. Most importantly, the modernized roadway will be safe to travel, unlike current conditions that endanger lives.

Q How will the Capital SouthEast Connector affect bike and pedestrian traffic in the area?

A Bicyclists and pedestrians who currently face grave danger will be able to avoid traffic entirely by using a paved, Class 1 bike trail that will be separated from the expressway along its entire length. The bike trail is designed to enable resi-

dents to walk or ride their bikes to visit friends in neighboring communities; or peddle to work, local restaurants, stores, parks, and entertainment venues; or simply to exercise and enjoy the outdoors.

Q Why is the expressway being constructed in portions?

A The Capital SouthEast Connector's 34-mile span is too long to construct in a single phase, and transportation sales tax revenue allocated for the project does not begin to cover overall construction costs. Building in segments allows the project to tap into various state and federal road programs over time to help finance the effort. While more than \$2 billion has been generated by the county's transportation sales tax since 2004, less than \$60 million has been allocated to the

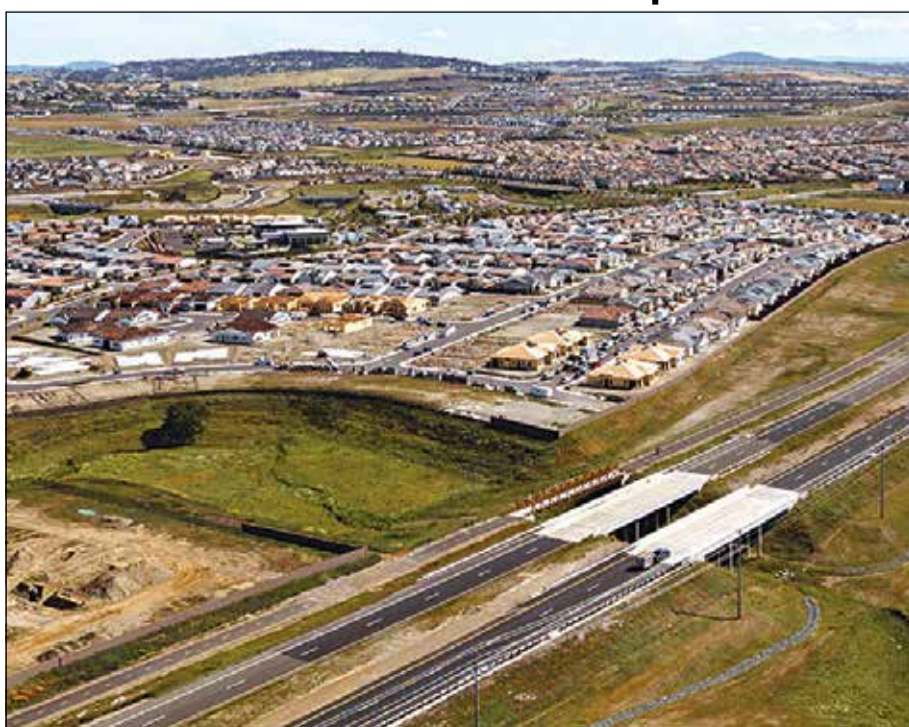
Connector project.

Q How can residents support construction of the Capital SouthEast Connector?

A Your support is vital to our successfully applying for funds to complete the project. Telling your local, state, and federal elected representatives that you support the project is very helpful. Learn more about the project or sign up for our newsletter on our website at www.connectorjpa.com. Alternatively, use the QR code on this page, visit our Instagram page at www.instagram.com/connectorjpa or our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/southeastconnectorexpressway Please send questions or comments to ConnectorSupport@sacounty.gov.

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