



**Resurrected Wilton
Chili Cookoff
Draws a Crowd**

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FOR ELK GROVE SCHOOL BOARD AREA 7

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RIVER VALLEY TIMES

40TH YEAR • ISSUE 20

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OCTOBER 25, 2024

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Jog-a-Thon Earns Unexpected \$33,571



First grader Max Clelland gets ready to run laps in the jog-a-thon at Consumnes River Elementary School. Photo by Gail Bullen

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Roadrunner Rock 'N' Run jog-a-thon at Cosumnes River Elementary School on Oct. 11 was a double success. Not only did the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) raise \$33,571 in donations from school families,

but this year the PTA will retain all proceeds from its biggest fundraiser of the year.

Courtney Reid, PTA President, was elated afterwards. "It was extremely successful," she said. "We raised more than I thought possible with just the PTA organizing it ourselves, without using a professional company."

Last year, the PTA

hired a company to manage the jog-a-thon, as previous boards had done. "Although we raised a little over \$35,000 last year, we had to give 40% of it to the company," Reid said.

This year's financial outcome is much brighter. "We now have all the funds we need for the next year to support fun activities, purchase supplies and equipment for the school,

and launch a new broadcasting program," she added.

To simplify the process, Reid opted for a fixed donation amount instead of basing donations on the number of laps. She also set up a website using the free platform 99Pledges.com. "I sent out a ton of emails to parents, encouraging them to share it on

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Rancho Murieta Association Director Tom Reimers is proposing the deactivation of barcodes issued to nonresident members of the Rancho Murieta Country Club. He suggested it at the Oct. 15 board meeting. Photo by Gail Bullen

Access by Outsiders, Speeding are RMA Concerns

**Story and photo
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Preventing non-residents from trespassing behind the gates and increasing speed enforcement in next year's budget were key topics at the Rancho Murieta Association (RMA) Board meeting on Oct. 15.

The board also discussed extending Stonehouse Park's closing hours from dusk to 10 p.m. to accommodate pickleball players and considered proposals for adding shade covers at both dog parks and the spray park.

Additionally, the board approved a reserve study showing the association is 85% funded and approved a new fee schedule with only one increase.

Gate Security

Director Chris Childs informed the board that he and Director Tom Reimers, chair of the Compliance Committee, proposed forming an ad hoc committee to explore options for enhancing security at both gates, with a focus on the North Gate. Due to its design, non-residents have been able to enter the community on foot, by bicycle, or in golf carts for years. Recently, the issue has worsened with juveniles misbehaving on electric dirt bikes.

"We need to stop non-residents from coming in and trespassing on our property," said Reimers.

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CSD Covers Water Plan, Suit over Development Moratorium

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - A potential lawsuit if the board approves a water moratorium and the board's decision to seek an external review of the Integrated Water Master Plan were notable topics at the Rancho Murieta Community Services Board meeting on Oct. 16.

Additionally, district staff explained the delay in completing three overdue audits, and the board rejected a claim from a shooting victim at an equestrian center who sought to add the district to his lawsuit. The meeting also included updates from staff on finances, utilities, and IT, as well as the consideration of several significant infrastructure projects.

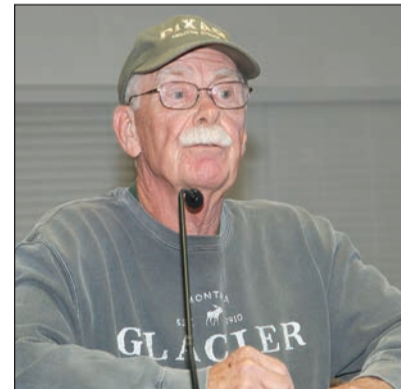
Water Moratorium

During public comments, Greg Dyer, a partner in the Jones & Dyer law firm and the new CEO of Rancho Murieta Properties, raised concerns



Attorney Greg Dyer warns the board the district will be sued if the board declares a water moratorium to preclude development. Dyer is the CEO for Rancho Murieta Properties, developer of the Rancho North subdivision with 697 lots. Photos by Gail Bullen

about a potential lawsuit over a proposed water moratorium. Dyer, who has represented Carol Anderson Ward and the late John Sullivan for over 20 years, warned the board about the implications of the moratorium, which is being advocated by SOLOS (Save Our Lakes & Open Spaces), a local organization advocating for



Audience member John Merchant advises the board that Save Our Lakes & Open Spaces will file a detailed response to the water plan. He is the SOLOS vice-president and a CSD board member-elect.

responsible development.

"I'm speaking because SOLOS is submitting a petition to stop any further water connections on our property," Dyer said. He emphasized that Rancho Murieta Properties has contributed significantly to the community's development, citing

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**"I'm supporting Heidi Moore
for Elk Grove School Board -
she'll stand up for Rancho Murieta!
- Sue Frost, Sacramento County Supervisor**



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TheRiverValleyTimes.com

Jog-a-Thon Earns Unexpected \$33,571



First, second, and third graders participate in the first heat. Photo by Gail Bullen

Continued from page 1

Facebook and other platforms," she said. "Then it really spread by word of mouth."

Students were key to the three-week fundraising campaign, which culminated in the jog-a-thon. Each classroom received a blank flag to decorate with their team name and motto, and incentives like ice cream and pizza parties were offered as they reached milestones.

One heartwarming exception came from five students who organized their own fundraiser. "I loved that these kids took the initiative to do something different and raised a lot of money," Reid said.

Mrs. Healey's fifth-grade class was trailing in donations when five students — Safia Ibragimova, Reece McNamara, Savannah Land, Drew Barentson Wilkins, and Jack Harper — set up a stand at Riverside Park, selling handmade bracelets, ice cream bars and lemonade. Their earnings



Parent Meghan McDonald cheers and waves pom-poms to encourage the runners. Photo by Gail Bullen

went to their classroom and "They ended up winning a lot of prizes," Reid said.

The PTA is excited to introduce a new broadcasting program, which will give fourth through sixth graders hands-on experience in digital video

and TV production. The program, suggested by computer teacher Bill Moe, will be modeled after one he created at Sunrise Elementary. With Principal Mike's approval, the PTA fully supported the idea.

"If everything goes well, the student-produced news

show will be broadcast to the whole school once a month and available for parents to watch at home," Reid explained.

About 350 students participated in the jog-a-thon, which took place under sunny skies on the school's grassy field. The



Participants enjoy fruit bars as a reward at the end of the jog-a-thon. Photo by Gail Bullen



DJ Reggie Vezia, left, emcee Dan Reid, and PTA President Courtney Reid oversee the event. Photo by Gail Bullen

excitement was high as first, second, and third graders took part in the first heat, waving their decorated classroom flags while emcee Dan Reid introduced each team, such as Mrs. Harder's Hares, Mrs. Myer's Monkeys, and Mrs. Shehorn's Sonics. Students raced under an inflatable arch marking the start of the course, while DJ Reggie Vezia kept the energy up with lively music and a freeze-and-slow-motion game.

Lap cards pinned to each runner's back added another layer of fun, allowing them to "brag about it

later," Reid said. Parent volunteers marked the cards after each lap, though some kids were too excited to stop.

At the end of the event, parent volunteers handed out frozen fruit bars to the students before they returned to class.

Later, the fourth through sixth graders took their turn, and the kindergartners and Pre-K students wrapped up the event by racing around a smaller track for 20 minutes. "I think we made the track too small because they zipped around it in no time," Reid joked. ★



Setting up a booth at Riverside Park to raise money for their fifth-grade classroom are Safia Ibragimova, Reece McNamara, Savannah Land, and Drew Barentson Wilkins. Jack Harper isn't pictured. Courtesy photo



Mothers stand by to mark lap cards as youngsters pass. Photo by Gail Bullen

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Resurrected Wilton Chili Cookoff Draws a Crowd

Story and photos by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - After a four-year hiatus, the Wilton Firefighters Association Chili Cookoff and Classic Car Show returned to the Wilton Community Center on Oct. 12, drawing an enthusiastic crowd.

The event, which was free to attend, welcomed 1,345 guests who sampled 11 varieties of chili, admired 47 classic cars, explored 45 vendor booths, enjoyed 500 types of beers, vied for 50 raffle prizes, lunched at food trucks and let their children play in the "Kids Zone." The event lasted six hours and featured music and entertainment from a disc jockey and emcee.

Patsy Nemetz, chair of the Sacramento County Service Area 4B Council, known informally as the Cosumnes Parks & Rec Council, oversaw the event at the community center. The co-sponsor was the Wilton Community Center Non-Profit, which is affiliated with the council. The event also utilized Dillard Elementary's playground, grassy area and a driveway.

"Overall, it was a huge success," Nemetz said. "It really felt like people were just waiting for an opportunity to get back out into the community again."

This marked the seventeenth iteration of the Wilton chili cookoff, which had paused after 2019 due to the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and a decline in volunteer support. The idea to bring it back was spearheaded by Randy Upham, president of the non-profit,



The chili alley teems with visitors. Photos by Gail Bullen

and long-time firefighter and association member Bill Kirkland.

"After much discussion, it was posited that the event may be manageable if both groups came together - thus our team was formed," Nemetz explained. "Randy, who went on to be event co-chair, and Bill did a lot of the heavy lifting to get us to the day of the event."

The cookoff saw 11 teams compete, with first place going to the Badger 7 Alarm Fire Chili team, made up of two women from the Badger Creek Road area. This neighborhood recently experienced a fast-moving grass fire.

"They decided to participate to show their appreciation for the firefighters that fought that fire and saved their neighborhood," Nemetz said. "This team donated their \$500 prize back to the event."

She said 47 participants competed for four prizes in the car show with Leon Eisenbrandt winning the People's Choice award for his 1947 Willys.

The "Kids Zone" was a big hit with families. "We had a fully staffed climbing wall, a monitored bounce house, free face painting, and an obstacle course set up by the Wilton volunteer firefighters," Nemetz said. "Prizes were given



Firefighter Austin Huston times 11-year-old Robert Mullich as he begins running the Kids Zone obstacle course at the Wilton Chili Cookoff held at the Wilton Community Center on Oct. 12.

out by the local Cub Scout Pack 16 to all kids that participated."

Two Wilton residents provided the soundtrack for the event. "We had a local company Drew Gray Media playing a wide range of music, Nemetz said. "Our emcee was Cara Lane and she did an amazing job keeping everyone entertained."

When asked how they secured so many sponsors, Nemetz noted the committee's determined efforts. "The committee really hit the pavement to get sponsors this year, and it was well worth the effort," she said. "So many businesses

generously donated to our event, and we are truly so thankful."

Nemetz gave special thanks to The Knight Group of Elk Grove Auto Mall, the event's Chief level sponsor. "We plan to send all the sponsors and raffle donors a thank you letter to let them know how grateful we are," she added. "Their involvement will allow us to support so many worthy causes locally."

Initially, the committee had decided against holding a raffle, due to the time and energy it required to organize. However, community member Stephanie



Waiting to see if Christopher Long relishes their chili are Shasta Campbell, left, Alan Haynes and Susan Culmo.



Susan and Rene Mellegers of Rancho Murieta admire a 1947 Willys at the car show, which drew 47 entries. The Willys won the People's Choice Award.

Bruce stepped up to handle the entire process.

"Stephanie did the raffle start to finish and it was an enormous success," Nemetz said.

As of the story's deadline, Nemetz did not have the final figures for the amount raised. The profits will be shared among the firefighters association, the nonprofit, and the Firefighters Burn Institute.

The non-profit plans to use its portion of the funds to support local school programs and assist other community groups in need.

"We have also made a real effort in recent years to host new programs for the community at no or minimal cost," Nemetz said. "We've held several free gardening forums with local experts, a free elementary talent show and, of course, our annual Winter Festival and Parade."

The firefighters association is a long-standing supporter of the

community.

"Led by President and Chili Cookoff co-chair Jim Nessen, the WFA supports 4-H and FFA market animals at the County Fair, Dillard School programs such as PACE/PTO, and various scouting organizations for boys and girls in the Wilton area," Nemetz said.

The association also donates to Wilton families affected by tragedies, including house fires or the untimely death of a family member.

Nemetz had one final thought.

"I think one of the major reasons our event was so successful is our committee member, Codi Craig. She worked tirelessly to get the word out about our event," she said. "Codi really leveraged the social media platforms to drum up support and make sure the community was aware of our Chili Cookoff and how they could participate."

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The Chaplain's Day Off

Long before the 1986 movie "Ferris Bueller's Day Off," I, too, imagined a day off work of fun and frivolity.

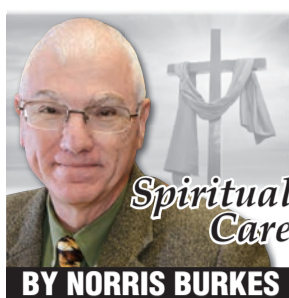
After all, who hasn't feigned illness to take a day off from work?

This was my self-justifying question as I called the Baylor University Bookstore one Friday morning in the fall of 1978. When my manager picked up the line, I winked knowingly at my new girlfriend sitting beside me.

"I'm not feeling well today." Cough, cough. "I can't come in until Monday."

"Then you're fired!" he said.

I wasn't expecting the finality in his answer. I could hear a pulse in my ears.



Spiritual Care
BY NORRIS BURKES

"Don't come back," he added before slamming down the phone receiver.

My face flushed and my eyes suddenly felt overhydrated. I was having a grief reaction, anticipating the loss of the prestige I'd enjoyed interacting with university professors and freshman co-eds.

How had I miscalculated this scenario? Was my boss aware of the love-struck hormonal illness with which I was afflicted?

How would I afford to take my girlfriend to the back-to-school dance?

I had to make this right for many reasons. The bookstore was the center of university life and I didn't want to be dodging my boss for the next year. I needed to apologize.

How does one apologize for such bald-faced lying?

First, it's always good to allow a cool-down period. I waited a few weeks for the back-to-school rush to end and called for an appointment.

Once inside the manager's office, I kept it simple. I admitted that I hadn't been sick. Plain and guileless. "I'm sorry for lying."

I didn't excuse my action or bring my girlfriend into the picture.

Second, I expressed

understanding for his situation. I admitted that I abandoned my colleagues, causing them to be short-handed at his busiest time of the year.

Third, I asked for forgiveness. He granted that.

Finally, I think I surprised him when I asked his help to clarify the lessons I needed to learn.

That question brought his deepest thought.

"Who is it you want to be?" he asked.

"Pardon me?"

"Well, I know you're a ministerial student, so I know WHAT you want to be. But beyond that, WHO do you want to be?"

I thought I got his drift, but I wasn't entirely sure.

"I think above all," he said, "you want to be a person who people trust. I

think you want to be a person who keeps his word."

"I see three lessons," he continued.

"First, don't lie. Lying demonstrates that you don't believe you're capable of being who you want to be. Don't sell yourself short. I know you are capable of being who you want to be."

"Second, if I'm not mistaken, Jesus said, 'Let your yes be yes, and your no, no. Whatever is more than these is from the evil one.'"

In other words, my ex-boss was telling me to be sure of what I want before I commit to something. And when I do commit, I should keep my word.

"Third." He cleared his throat, trying to remember

his third point.

He gave up on that. "Just remember those two for now. Don't lie and keep your word."

The bookstore manager was OK in my book ... even if he didn't give me my old job back.

Fortunately, he gave me a good reference to a better-paying job as a night watchman in a local bank. Good thing, too. I could afford to take the girl to the dance.

Unfortunately, since I can't dance, she broke up with me.

Happily, I met and married my wife Becky a few years after that. But that's a story for another day. ★

For an autographed copy of "Tell It to The Chaplain," send a check for \$20 (per book) to 10566 Combie Rd. Suite 6643 Auburn, CA 95602. Email comments to comment@thechaplain.net.

Access by Outsiders, Speeding are RMA Concerns

Continued from page 1

After discussion, the board unanimously approved the formation of an ad hoc committee to address the security issue. Childs and Reimers will return to the November board meeting with a charter, goals, and a name for the committee. Board President Scott Adams said RMA would invite community members to join the committee.

Barcode Deactivation

As part of efforts to curb trespassing, Reimers reported that the Compliance Committee recommended deactivating all non-resident Rancho Murieta Country Club barcodes after a 30-day notice. "One of the main reasons for doing this is that we don't have any way of finding them when they are causing violations on our streets," he explained.

Violations include excessive speeding, with Lidar cameras documenting speeds as high as 85 mph on Murieta Parkway and driving a car across the Yellow Bridge. Additionally, some non-residents are using their club barcodes to access restricted areas of the community.

The current rule only allows them to drive to the club via Alameda Drive during posted country club hours and when attending special events. Additionally,

residents in The Villas and Murieta Gardens who aren't RMA members, are using country club social memberships to obtain barcodes.

During the discussion, Adams urged caution, suggesting a meeting with the country club first. The board unanimously agreed to delay barcode deactivation until that meeting takes place, with a representative from the Rancho Murieta Community Services District, which issues barcodes based on RMA policy, also invited.

Budget Considerations

General Manager Rod Hart presented the proposed 2025 budget but postponed approval pending further discussion about a proposed addition. The Compliance Committee has requested funding for two more speed cameras at a cost of \$31,256, which would increase monthly dues by \$1.09, and a full-time staff position to handle the numerous citations generated by the existing Lidar cameras. The new position would cost \$84,000, resulting in a \$2.92 monthly dues increase.

Hart explained that the committee wants to relieve the two compliance officers from administrative tasks, allowing them to return to field duties. Considerable

discussion followed about the need for more data before making a decision.

As it stands, the proposed 2025 budget includes a \$108,507 increase over this year due to rising costs for employee wages, benefits, insurance, utilities, and street lighting. This would lead to a 2.3% budget increase and raise monthly dues from \$161 to \$164.77. The board plans to hold a special meeting in early November to finalize the budget.

The board also considered a \$55,000 proposal to add shade covers at the dog parks and spray park. Hart suggested that the funds should come from the Parks Committee, which has a budget of \$308,000. The board agreed, and Hart will prepare a bid packet.

Stonehouse Park Hours

Adams, chair of the Governing Documents Committee, proposed extending Stonehouse Park hours from dawn to dusk to dawn to 10 p.m. The change was prompted by a security officer enforcing the current closing time, which conflicted with pickleball players using the lighted court after dark. Signs at the court state the dusk closing time.

Childs expressed concern about opening the entire park after dark, but Adams

suggested that public comments could guide further adjustments after community feedback. The board voted 5:1 to send the rule change out for review, with Childs voting against it.

Additional Approvals

The board approved the 2025 Reserve Study, which showed reserves are 85% funded. The study recommended a 1.1% increase in reserve funding, from \$68,000 to \$69,000 per month.

A proposed fee schedule for 2025 was also approved, with the only change being an increase in the variance fee from \$100 to \$200. This fee is typically assessed for driveway variances, which require about four hours of staff work, including mailing 20 to 30 letters to neighbors.

Hart reminded the board to encourage voting in the upcoming election of directors before the Annual Membership meeting on Nov. 21. Ballots and materials will be mailed that week. He also announced a meet and greet with the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office on Nov. 13 at 6 p.m. at the RMA building.

The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Nov. 18, followed by the Annual Membership meeting on Nov. 21. A special meeting will be held in early November to adopt the 2025 budget, though the exact date was not confirmed at the time of this report. ★

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

RM Blood Drive Slated Oct. 28

The Rancho Murieta Women's Club has slated its next blood drive on Monday, Oct. 28 from noon to 6 p.m. at the Rancho Murieta Community Church, 14670 Cantova Way, Rancho Murieta.

Appointments to donate can be made online at donors.vitalant.org by using blood drive code SMFM053 or by calling Vitalant at 877-258-4825. Walk-ins will be accommodated if space permits.

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

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

RM, Wilton Voting Centers Open on Nov. 2

Sacramento County Vote

Centers in Rancho Murieta and Wilton will open on Nov. 2 and operate through election day on Nov. 5.

The Rancho Murieta location is the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Building at 15160 Jackson Road, and the Wilton location is the Wilton Community Center at 9717 Colony Road. The hours are the same for both voting centers: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Nov. 2, 3, and 4 and on Nov. 5 election day from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Ballot drop boxes are also available in both communities.

Ballots may be dropped off at the CSD Building Monday through Thursday and on election day from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The hours on Friday are from 8 a.m. until noon. The drop box location in Wilton is at the Wilton Garage at 11050 Wilton Road. The hours are 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and on election day.

Village Craft Fair and Bake Sale Nov. 2

Rancho Murieta residents can get a head start on Christmas shopping for unique gifts and

homemade treats at the Murieta Village Craft Faire and Bake Sale on Nov. 2 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the clubhouse.

Offerings will include fine art, walnuts, wreaths, crafts, photography, plants, candy, jewelry, soap and much more.

The kitchen will also be open, serving hot dogs and coffee.

Wilton Bingo Games Held Monthly

November bingo will be on Saturday Nov. 9. Doors open at 5 p.m. with food available for sale and bingo starts at 6 p.m. in the Wilton Community Center (9717 Colony Road, at Dillard Road).

All proceeds go to two non-profits: the local Park Council and the Wilton History Group.

The next bingo will be on Jan. 4. Questions, call Lorraine Robinson at 916-212-8896

RM Veterans Day Celebration Nov. 11

You are invited to the "Been There-Done That Canteen" to honor all past and present members of the USA Armed Forces.

Mark your calendars for Nov. 11 from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. at the RMA Building. Coffee, donuts and conversation will be enjoyed by all the community as they celebrate our dedicated veterans and current members of the armed forces.

The Rancho Murieta Caregivers Support Group, which has sponsored the celebration since its inception, is passing the baton to the Rancho Murieta Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary this year.

The event will be very similar to prior years with a brief program planned for 10 a.m., according to Auxiliary President Melissa Mineni.

Sheriff's Meeting in RM on Nov. 13

The Sacramento County Sheriff's Office will present a community meeting on Rancho Murieta on Nov. 13 at the RMA Building.

The meeting will run from 6 to 7:30 p.m. All residents are invited to attend.

Supervisor Frost Town Hall Nov. 16

Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost will hold her last town hall in

Rancho Murieta on Nov. 16 at 10 a.m. at the RMA Building. Frost also will introduce her successor, Supervisor-elect Rosario Rodriguez.

Greg Pryor, president of the Rancho Murieta Regional Fire Safe Council, also is slated to speak. His topic will be evacuating from behind the gates in the event of an emergency.

Community Invited to Christmas Dinner at Catholic Church

Please join us for a Christmas Dinner Dance on Friday Dec. 6 from 5:30 to 10 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, 14673 Cantova Way.

Enjoy a dinner of Santa Maria tri tip with jus on the side, sauteed shrimp scampi in a wine butter sauce, creamy pesto pasta with sundried tomatoes, green beans almandine, garden salad with balsamic vinaigrette dressing, rolls and butter, and cheesecake with caramel rum sauce for dessert.

The No Host bar opens at 5:30 p.m. with dinner at 6:30 p.m. Dance to the

music of DJ Back 2 Back from 8 to 10 p.m. Tickets are \$55 per person and are on sale before and after the Saturday and Sunday Masses at SVDP starting the weekend of Nov. 9 and 10, or by calling Sherry at 916 844-5171.

Gather your family and friends for a fun-filled adult evening.

Kiwanis Seeks Sweats for Vets

Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta is once again asking for monetary donations to its Sweat for Vets program that will run through the end of December. This is the 15th year of helping veterans who are hospitalized at the Sacramento Veterans Administration Medical Center in Mather.

Please make your check out to Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta Sweat for Vets. Cash donations and Walmart gift cards are also welcome.

Mail donations to Kiwanis at P. O. Box 855, Rancho Murieta, or put them in a drop box at the RMA building.

If you have any questions, call Diann Swan at 916-354-0656. ★

BERC Awards Honor Eco-Friendly Businesses

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - On Sept. 26, Business Environmental Resource Center (BERC), a division of the Sacramento County Office of Economic Development, presented the 18th Annual Sustainable Business Awards in partnership with the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD).

Eight businesses were recognized as part of the Sacramento County Sustainable Business Program.

The ceremony recognized the top contenders in eight unique categories whose work practices demonstrate an outstanding commitment to enhancing sustainability in Sacramento County.

Sacramento County Sustainable Business Award Recipients

- Energy Conservation: Teichert Materials
- Water Conservation: Meristem
- Solid Waste Reduction: GreenWaste Florin Perkins
- Green Design: ReIMAGINE Mack Road Community Venter
- Pollution Prevention: Badfish Coffee and Tea
- Transportation & Air Quality: Community Resource Project
- SMUD Clean Power City: Sustainable Building: Stanford Settlement Neighborhood Center
- SMUD Clean Power City: Carbon Free Transportation: Folsom Cordova Unified School District

Congratulations to

the Sacramento County Sustainable Business Award Winners for 2024!

Throughout the year, Business Environmental Resource Center conducts community outreach to identify business participation in the Sustainable Business Program.

This no-cost membership platform provides the business community with marketing toolkits, educational opportunities, community engagement events and connections to grant or incentive opportunities in the space of environmental sustainability.

Business Environmental Resource Center's Sustainable Business Program is the region's benchmark for businesses considering or already



Eight businesses in Sacramento County were recognized Sept. 26 for their commitments to sustainability. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

engaged in eco-friendly practices.

Since the Program's

inception, Business Environmental Resource Center has issued more

than 800 certifications and has awarded more than 200 unique businesses. ★



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Interactive Database Reports if Agencies Fiscally Healthy

California Policy Center News Release

Local Fiscal Health Dashboard Scoring Table

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - California Policy Center released a Local Fiscal Health Dashboard on Oct. 4 that tracks the financial health of California cities, counties and school districts. The interactive database allows users to track how elected officials are managing local budgets, support ongoing budget decision-making and identify financial red flags.

The new dashboard is especially timely for California voters who have local tax and bond measures on their November ballots. Each city, county and school district has been awarded a fiscal health score and letter grade from A to F, depending on how well they have managed their finances. Government entities are also identified and color-coded as low, moderate or high-risk for fiscal distress.

"We're excited to be able to offer local officials and voters this important tool for tracking their city's fiscal performance," said Lance Christensen, vice-president of government affairs at the California Policy Center. "Today, many local governments are asking taxpayers for more money to fund lower-quality services. Californians have the right to know where their hard-earned dollars are being effectively used and where they are not."

Sacramento-area cities had mixed results, from an "A" for Elk Grove while Folsom flunked the test. The grades for several cities in the region, listed alphabetically, include Citrus Heights, B; Colusa, C; Dixon, B; Elk Grove, A; Galt, B; Gridley,

Letter Grade	Fiscal Health Score out of 100	Description - Overall Fiscal Risk
A	85 to 100	Low Risk of financial distress
B	70 to 84	Low Risk of financial distress
C	60 to 70	Moderate Risk of financial distress
D	50 to 60	Moderate Risk of financial distress
F	49 and under	High Risk of financial distress
N/A	No Data	Jurisdiction is delinquent in publishing timely financial audits
Exempt	Exempt From Reporting Requirement	Local entity's federal awards expenditures were less than \$750K

Local Fiscal Health Dashboard Scoring Table

B; Lincoln, B; Live Oak, C; Marysville, C; Rancho Cordova, B; Sacramento, D; West Sacramento, B; and Yuba City, D.

The Local Fiscal Health Dashboard fills a void in government transparency data left after the California State Auditor's Office unexpectedly discontinued its popular Local Government High-Risk Dashboard in October 2023. California Policy Center's new dashboard was created to replace and expand on that data to ensure local governments maintain transparency and accountability when it comes to their budgets.

California Policy Center's dashboard uses public data from Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports (ACFR) that local governments are required to submit every year to get access to federal funds. The dashboard provides key financial metrics to allow local elected officials, analysts, reporters and citizens to understand how cities are performing overall and

in comparison to other cities, and spotlight concerning financial trends.

"The public should have access to the tools necessary to ensure government budgets are transparent and government officials are held accountable," Christensen said. "Californians can't allow government officials to sweep bad fiscal news under the rug."

Tracking local financial metrics, such as liabilities and revenue trends, is crucial. California has more than \$1.6 trillion in unfunded liabilities (debt) at both state and local levels. Many cities have potentially catastrophic unfunded pension liabilities. Other municipalities are making budget decisions based on incomplete, missing or delayed financial reports.

Cities are required to file their Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports, often referred to as annual audits, every year. Most municipalities submit the financial reports within nine months of fiscal year end (as required

by the federal and state governments) but many others are routinely and egregiously late in filing their required annual financial reports, according to the California Policy Center. That means local officials are left to make budgeting decisions without current fiscal information.

Out of 482 cities, 86 (or 17.8%) received an "A" grade; 21 (4.4%) received an "F" grade, indicating they are at high-risk of fiscal catastrophe and 70 cities (14.52%) are delinquent in submitting their 2023 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. (Sixteen cities are exempt from reporting.)

But 189 cities, counties and school districts have still not submitted Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports for 2023. Twenty-six of those cities, counties and school districts that are missing their 2023 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report are asking voters to OK a local tax increase on the November ballot and/or approve new bonds

totaling \$534.6 million in new borrowing.

"When cities don't turn in their fiscal reports on time, city officials have to make important budget decisions without the data they need," Christensen said. "Even worse, many of the cities that aren't on top of their financial reports are proposing tax increases and putting local bond measures on the ballot."

Based on the dashboard data, California Policy Center has identified 10 of the best and worst performing cities statewide when it comes to financial health. The dashboard designates the level of financial risk as low, moderate or high.

This financial risk determination is achieved by evaluating each entity on 10 key fiscal metrics: General Fund Reserves, Debt Burden, Liquidity, Revenue Trends, Pension Costs, Pension Funding, Pension Obligations, Other Post Employment Benefit Obligations, Other Post Employment Benefit

Funding, and Net Worth.

The 10 cities earning the highest fiscal health scores and an "A" grade are Eastvale (Riverside County), Indian Wells (Riverside County), Danville (Contra Costa County), Rancho Mirage (Riverside County), Lake Forest (Orange County), La Quinta (Riverside County), Laguna Woods (Orange County), Dublin (Alameda County), La Mirada (Los Angeles County) and Jurupa Valley (Riverside County).

Ten of the worst performing cities are considered high-risk for fiscal stress, including the ability of the city to pay its bills in the short and long term.

Cities earning the lowest fiscal health scores and an "F" grade are Ukiah (Mendocino County), West Covina (Los Angeles County), Richmond (Contra Costa County), Calexico (Imperial County), San Gabriel (Los Angeles County), Oakland (Alameda County), Orange (Orange County), Pinole (Contra Costa County), Atwater (Merced County) and Escondido (San Diego County).

Other cities that received an "F" include San Buenaventura/Ventura, Grover Beach, Banning, Lake Elsinore, Folsom, Costa Mesa, Montebello, Downey, Monrovia, Hayward and Lindsay. With many cities having yet to file Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports for Fiscal Year 2023 and in some cases, Fiscal Year 2022, this list of worst cities is subject to change. Some cities with poor financial metrics are often late filers.

Information about California cities, counties and school districts can be found at californiapolicycenter.org/fiscal-health-dashboard. ★

CSD Covers Water Plan, Suit over Development Moratorium

Continued from page 1

examples like the Bel Air Market and Starbucks. He also noted that Rancho Murieta Properties paid over \$5.7 million to upgrade the community's water treatment plants through a Facility Services Agreement (FSA) with the district.

"In exchange for that, we are entitled to 697 district water connections," Dyer said. He claimed that John Merchant, a proponent of the moratorium, had voted to approve the FSA contract.

(Merchant later disputed this claim, stating, "I didn't rejoin the board until 2017, and in no way was connected with executing, the signature, or the voting on the financial services agreement.")

Dyer warned that any future attempt to declare a water shortage emergency to prevent development would violate state law and could lead to a lawsuit for breach of contract. He referenced a case from Mammoth Lakes, where a developer won a \$30 million judgment in a similar situation.

The board did not respond to Dyer's comments, as the Brown Act does not require responses to public comments on non-agenda items during meetings.

Following the board meeting in July, Merchant and SOLOS began circulating a petition demanding a development moratorium due to concerns about the community's water supply. The petition has garnered more than 1,900 signatures.

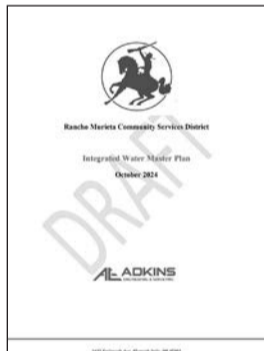
Merchant, who will assume an uncontested board seat in December, previously served on the district board before resigning in October 2022 to focus on SOLOS. His resignation followed a board meeting where John Sullivan accused him of "malfeasance" for allegedly attempting to derail the Rancho North project during discussions with Sacramento County planners.

Water Plan

General Manager Mimi Morris informed the board that after the consultants completed the draft of the Integrated Water Master Plan, she requested staff to post the 317-page document on the website for public review and add it to the board's agenda for discussion on the next steps.

President Tim Maybee began the discussion by opening the floor for public comments.

Tom Shewchuk, a resident of 33 years, expressed his belief that the health of the



A draft of the Integrated Master Water Plan is posted on the Rancho Murieta Community Services District website. Public comments will be accepted through the end of November. Courtesy photo

country club is the most pressing issue for the community, but he urged the board to approve the plan as soon as possible and to consider all aspects of increasing the water supply. He also suggested more water conservation efforts.

Additionally, Shewchuk praised

Rancho Murieta Properties for launching a new website, Buildinga BetterRanchoMurieta.com, stating, "It's great to see both sides of the issue."

Merchant expressed concern about allowing sufficient time for public comment on the plan and noted that SOLOS would be submitting a formal reply.

Merchant also raised several questions about the plan, particularly Chapter 4, authored by consultant Lisa Maddaus. "What I think is predominantly evident there are four recommended sources of mitigation in the report, and three of these are really not qualitative and are very assumptive in their posture," he said.

Merchant outlined the three mitigation strategies: using Clementia Reservoir, irrigating the golf course with river water (which would free up 500-acre feet of recycled water for new development), and drilling augmentation wells.

Merchant expressed skepticism about relying on the wells and Clementia for water supply. With the report indicating a production of only 50 to 150 gallons per minute, the wells could serve only as an emergency resource. Even with the addition of 907 acre-feet from Clementia, the impact would be minimal.

"You are not going to be able to support 697 houses with what is in that report," Merchant said.

When Maybee opened the floor to the board for discussion, Director Stephen Booth reminded everyone that the board had committed months ago to provide the community with 45 days to review the plan. There was general agreement to begin the review period immediately,

which would extend until the end of November.

Booth also brought up the idea of a technical review of the study, and Morris mentioned that she had already lined up an expert from Wagner & Bonignore, an engineering firm. However, both Merchant and Booth opposed this suggestion because of dissatisfaction with a water rights consultant from the same firm who contributed to the plan.

Directors Randy Jenco and Pohl, both engineers, also rejected Booth's idea to use the district's contract engineer, Joe Domenichelli, for the technical review.

Director Pohl emphasized the need for an expert well-versed in preparing master water plans and suggested staff revisit the long list of engineering firms that had initially been invited to bid on the plan. (Only a joint proposal from Maddaus and Adkins engineering firms was submitted.)

Maybee pointed out that the district would likely receive more responses this time, as the task would be to review the plan, not prepare it. "Let's see who is available and start whittling it down," he said.

The conversation shifted to how the community would provide feedback on the plan. Morris explained that the district's website includes an online receptacle for resident comments, which could later be compiled into a report for the board and the technical consultant. The link is at <https://www.ranchohurieta.csd.com/complaint-compliment-or-question>.

Booth expressed support for the online inbox but cautioned that it should not be the only method for submitting comments. "I wouldn't want to prevent other methods of sharing comments with us and thereby disenfranchise any individual or groups of individuals," he said.

Maybee added that he wanted to involve all the homeowners associations (HOAs) in the community in the process.

Overdue audits

After General Manager Mimi Morris mentioned in her report that staff were still on track to complete the three outstanding audits by spring 2025, Director Stephen Booth asked why there was a delay, noting that the 2021/22 audit had been slated for completion this month.

Morris explained that a cleanup of faulty accounting records had to be completed before the audit could proceed and asked Finance Director Mark Matulich to

provide more detail. Matulich explained that when he ran a trial balance for 2021/22, "Not one of the funds was in balance individually, and the district's books as a whole were out of balance, which is impossible."

Rather than spending months trying to untangle the transactions, Matulich opted to set up a new General Ledger and a system for "big data analytics so we can review the data, clean up, and reload it into all the years," he said. "It was a huge undertaking with 22,500 lines of data, but it goes for 21/22, 22/23, 23/24, and through September of 24/25."

In addition to the audit cleanup, Matulich discovered that "a lot of real accounting wasn't happening at the district" when he arrived in January. As a result, he and accountant Chris Funakoshi had to establish full accounting processes and train the staff.

Matulich also had to address numerous urgent issues, such as faulty utility billing. For example, a landlord at the meeting complained that he had never been notified about a tenant's unpaid water bill of approximately \$6,500, which prevented his new tenant from receiving water service.

"The schedule (to complete the audits) that we put out before wasn't disingenuous," Matulich told Booth. "We just didn't know how bad it was, so we had to make the decision to pivot."

Booth expressed appreciation for the clarity provided by Matulich and Morris, saying, "Unlike the previous staff, you are able to answer our questions. They were simply out of their element and made up stuff."

In his finance report, Matulich noted that the district's revenues for the first quarter had exceeded the budget by \$350,000 due to increased water usage during the hot weather. He also reported that the district had earned nearly \$200,000 in interest in the first quarter, thanks to the board's approval to move the district's investments to different entities.

Additionally, Matulich proposed increasing the barcode fees. The current one-time fee of \$10, which has been in place for the past 20 years, would be raised to \$25 with an annual renewal. He estimated this change could generate about \$200,000 to enhance security. Booth supported the idea but suggested a lower renewal fee to make it more acceptable to residents. ★

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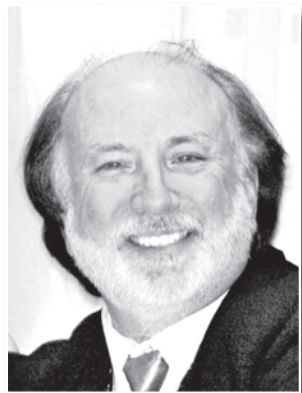
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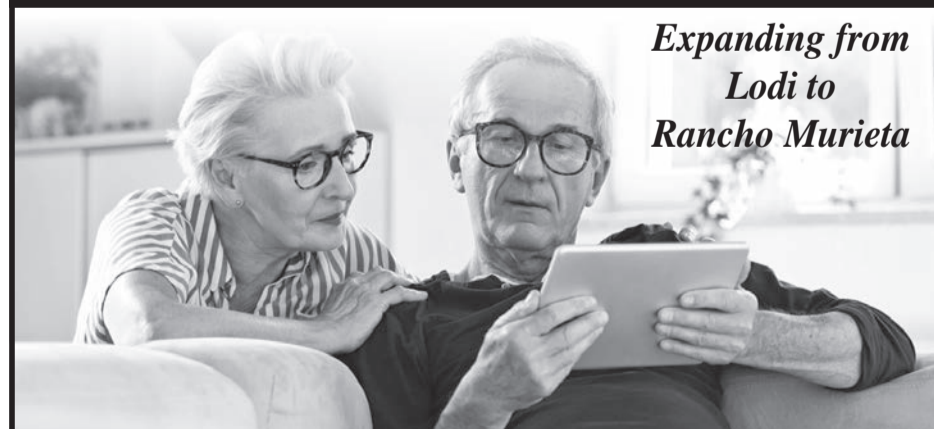
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Halloween Safety Tips

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Halloween is upon us and Sacramento County has important tips for parents to help make sure children have safe trick-or-treating adventures. Follow the tips below and have a fun and safe Halloween every year!

See and Be Seen

Pick out costumes that don't interfere with vision, add reflective tape on the front, back and sides and use accessories that are soft or flexible.

Before Going Out to Trick-Or-Treat

If your child has food allergies, it's important to remind teachers and supervising adults about what they cannot eat. Just before going trick-or-treating, give your kids a healthy snack or light meal. On your way out the door, bring a flashlight, take safe routes, use sidewalks and crosswalks and have children look both ways before crossing the street. If you are driving in residential areas on Halloween, slow down and be extra alert for children crossing the street.

When You Get Home

Inspect treats for tampering, unusual appearance or discoloration, tiny pinholes, or tears in wrappers – throw away anything suspicious and do not eat any

homemade treats unless you know the person who made them.

For young children, consider choking hazards such as the size and texture and remove gum, nuts, hard candies or small toys.

Handing Out Treats

Be sure to turn on your outside walkway lights, and use battery flicker lights for carved pumpkins instead of lighted candles. Give out only factory-wrapped treats and consider handing out healthier treats like mini-boxes of raisins or crackers.

You could also give out non-food items, like stickers, bookmarks, coloring books and crayons.

Don't Forget Your Pets

While Halloween is fun for children, it can be spooky for your fur children. Keep these tips in mind to ensure your pet feels comfortable and safe. Dressing up pets might be fun for you, but some pets get truly distressed and may even bolt to try to get the costume off. Keep pets safely indoors and put on their I.D. collars with up-to-date license tags – do not take them trick-or-treating.

Consider setting up shop on your driveway so that your doorbell does not continuously ring and further distress animals. Lock candy safely away, a dog's keen sense of smell will lead them right to the treats that can be life-threatening. ★

County ROAR Program Receives Funding

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento County Department of Health Services (DHS) has received an \$8 million grant from the California Board of State and Community Corrections, funded through Proposition 47, to launch a new program focused on helping formerly incarcerated individuals reintegrate into society. The Reentry Opportunities and Access to Resources (ROAR) program will address core challenges like recidivism, homelessness and unemployment for individuals reentering the community after incarceration. The grant, which was awarded in October 2024 will fund efforts through June 1, 2028.

ROAR aims to reduce recidivism rates by 35% by connecting individuals with community-based resources and support

before they are released. The program plans to expand eligibility for reentry services and establish partnerships with correctional facilities to provide "warm handoffs" for those reentering the community. By connecting individuals with community providers who can help them find housing, job training or mental health services, DHS hopes to offer a fresh start for those reintegrating into society.

Homelessness is a significant barrier for individuals leaving incarceration, and ROAR is set to address this challenge with re-housing funds and access to shelter beds. The program's objective is to reduce homelessness among its participants by 60% and lower unemployment by 50%, with job training and workforce development as core components of the strategy. Data from the Homeless Management Information System and reports from

community-based organizations will be used to track these efforts.

Substance use and mental health issues are common among justice-involved individuals, with nearly 25% of Sacramento's incarcerated population affected by substance use disorders alone. ROAR will work to increase participation in mental health and substance use treatment programs by 50%, helping participants build a foundation for stability. By recruiting more service providers and strengthening referral networks, ROAR seeks to offer targeted, timely support to those in need.

With funding secured, Sacramento County will begin developing an implementation plan and budget for ROAR and

is aiming to create lasting change and reduce the barriers faced by formerly incarcerated individuals in Sacramento. ★

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Nine Commission-Supported Bills Signed into Law

Little Hoover Commission News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Nine bills supported by the Little Hoover Commission were signed into law this year, including four measures that will strengthen efforts against intimate partner violence and other legislation to address labor trafficking, organic waste disposal, and customer-centric government.

“Seeing our recommendations embraced by the legislature and Governor Newsom and then turned into concrete policy improvements speaks to the Little Hoover Commission’s bi-partisan approach to solving California’s complex challenges,” said Commission Chair Pedro Nava. “We are honored that our work is helping to protect many of California’s most vulnerable.”

The Commission is a nonpartisan 13-member body appointed by the Governor and legislative leadership, and charged with making recommendations for policy changes that will foster efficiency, economy, and improved service in state government. The Commission supports legislation and other actions that implement its recommendations.

The four bills addressing intimate partner violence implement recommendations stemming from Commission reports. Among other reforms, those reports urged a focus on prevention and early intervention, accompanied by adequate funding.

Three of the bills address prevention and early intervention:

AB 2308 (Davies) extends from 10 to 15 years the maximum duration of a protective order issued against people convicted of certain domestic violence offenses.

SB 1394 (Min) creates new ways for survivors to stop a

domestic abuser from tracking their car.

SB 989 (Ashby) enhances investigation procedures in cases involving domestic violence-related deaths.

AB 2432 (Gabriel, Cervantes, Reyes), establishes a California Crime Victims Fund, which will disburse fines paid by corporations convicted of illegal activity, to assist victims, including survivors of intimate partner violence.

“These new laws will make a real impact in the lives of people who experience intimate partner violence,” said Commissioner Janna Sidley, the Commission’s on IPV subcommittee chair “We want to congratulate Assemblymembers Davies, Gabriel, Cervantes and Reyes and Senator Min, for their important work in getting these bills passed, and the Governor for signing them.”

Two approved bills further the goals of recommendations from three Commission reports on labor trafficking. Detecting labor trafficking is difficult as few understand the nature of the crime, and implementation of state human trafficking laws has focused on sex trafficking.

Even when these crimes are successfully identified, cases that bring traffickers to justice remain rare. The Commission recommended that the state empower state agencies to investigate labor trafficking crimes and conduct public education and outreach campaigns to increase awareness of all forms of human trafficking.

AB 1888 (Arambula and Ramos) establishes a dedicated labor trafficking unit within the California Department of Justice to receive labor trafficking reports from law enforcement agencies and other entities and refer those reports to appropriate agencies for action. AB 1966 (Davies) requires

ticket sellers to include information and resources for human trafficking victims with all ticket purchases for events at an entertainment venue.

“These reforms will help California serve those victimized by labor trafficking, an often-hidden crime,” said Commission Vice Chair Anthony Cannella. “Assemblymembers Arambula, Ramos and Davies should be very proud of this important milestone.”

In a 2023 report, Reducing California’s Landfill Emissions: SB 1383 Implementation, the Commission determined that California is falling short in the fight against harmful landfill emissions, a major contributor to climate change. The report featured recommendations that would help further the state’s efforts to curb methane emission, including:

Build as much flexibility as possible for local governments to recycle their organic waste.

Expand the list of compliance pathways and products eligible to count toward a jurisdiction’s procurement requirements.

Plan for the necessary infrastructure to achieve the state’s environmental goals, facilitate community composting, speed up the permitting process, and make any necessary changes to the relationship between state and local governments to better reflect shared responsibility for waste management.

Two approved bills will further the goals of these recommendations. AB 2346 (Lee) provides flexibility to local governments in how they comply with procurement requirements for recovered organic material. SB 1046 (Laird) requires a Program Environmental Impact Report for small and medium composts facilities to streamline permitting and help the

state meet its climate goals.

AB 2455 (Gabriel) modernizes whistleblower laws and add protections to prevent the misuse of state funds and is in line with numerous Commission recommendations through the years regarding fiscal accountability.

Here are details of the nine bills that were supported by the Commission and that were signed into law this year.

Intimate Partner Violence

SB 989 (Ashby) expands law enforcement and coroners’ duties when a deceased person has a history as victim of domestic violence. Allows additional access to coroner records for family members when litigating a victim’s death.

AB 2432 (Gabriel, Cervantes, Reyes) establishes the California Crime Victims Fund in the State Treasury and would require that moneys deposited in the fund be continuously appropriated to the Office of Emergency Services to support crime victims’ services.

AB 2308 (Davies) authorizes a court to issue a protective order for up to 15 years. Authorizes the issuing court, upon a written petition by the prosecuting attorney, defendant, or victim, to modify or terminate the protective order for good cause if the parties receive notice at least 15 days before the hearing on the petition. Expands the scope of a crime to create a state-mandated local program.

SB 1394 (Min) establishes a process for the rapid termination of a domestic abuser’s access to app-connected, remote, and GPS-based vehicle technology. Requires car manufacturers to disable an abuser’s access to remote vehicle technology within two business days of a survivor’s request provided sufficient documentation, such as proof of legal possession of the vehicle or

a domestic violence restraining order that awards possession of the vehicle in question.

Labor Trafficking

AB 1966 (Davies) requires a primary ticket seller to include information regarding nonprofit organizations that provide services or support in the elimination of slavery and human trafficking.

AB 1888 (Arambula and Ramos) establishes the Labor Trafficking Unit within the Department of Industrial Relations to receive, investigate, and prosecute complaints alleging labor trafficking and take steps to prevent it. The Unit will also coordinate with the Labor Enforcement Task Force, the Criminal Investigation Unit, the Department of Justice, and the Civil Rights Department to combat labor trafficking.

Organic Waste Disposal

AB 2346 (Lee) authorizes local jurisdictions to be credited for the procurement of recovered organic waste products through an agreement with a direct service provider. Recovered organic waste that local jurisdictions procure from specified compost operations also count towards the local jurisdiction’s procurement target.

SB 1046 (Laird) requires CalRecycle to prepare and certify completion of an environmental impact report that would streamline the process for jurisdictions to develop small and medium organic waste composting facilities.

Customer-Centric Government

AB 2455 (Gabriel) modernizes local and state whistleblower hotline laws and add protections to prevent the misuse of state funds. These changes are meant to improve accountability, increase public trust, and ensure government actions and transactions are transparent. ★

Taxpayer-Funded Political Advocacy is Illegal

By Jon Coupal

As the November election gets closer, there are increasing complaints from voters over local governments openly supporting tax hikes. While local government officials are free to support or oppose ballot measures, they may not authorize the use of public funds on any election matter – be it for or against a candidate or initiative.

Despite the illegality of taxpayer funded advocacy, officials have an incentive to try it anyway because the potential ROI (the return on investment) of millions – if not billions – in new tax revenue would dwarf any fine or other punishment they might face.

That must change. The same First Amendment rights that allow individuals to speak on ballot issues also prohibits the use of taxpayer funds for political advocacy. In 1976, the California Supreme Court ruled, “The use of the public treasury to mount an election campaign which attempts to influence the resolution of issues which our Constitution leaves to the ‘free election’ of the people (see Const., art. II, § 2) ... presents a serious threat to the integrity of the electoral process.” *Stanson v. Mott* (1976) 17 Cal.3d 206, 218.

Such a “serious threat” deserves a response of imposing real penalties on bad actors including large fines, personal liability on the part of those authorizing those expenditures and, yes, even jail time.

The agency charged with policing campaign finance violations is the Fair Political Practices Commission, which can be an aggressive enforcer against these expenditures. For example, the FPPC imposed a \$1.3 million fine against Los Angeles County for using taxpayer funds for political ads touting Measure H, a sales tax increase on the ballot in 2017. It was the largest fine ever imposed by the FPPC.

The fine against L.A. County was precipitated by a complaint filed by the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association. It was hoped that the fine levied by FPPC would serve as a warning to government entities in California that they must obey all state laws and regulations relating to both reporting campaign expenditures as well as providing disclosures on campaign advertising. And, to some extent, it has.

However, as noted earlier, the ROI for violations can overcome the deterrent effect of a large fine. Sure, a \$1.3 million dollar fine imposed on the County of Los Angeles seems big. But because the Measure H tax

has generated more than \$2.4 billion since its passage, L.A. politicians could easily conclude, “it was worth it.”

That’s why stiffer penalties are needed to ensure that no amount of ROI would lead a politician to conclude “it was worth it.”

So, what can voters do if they see a taxpayer-funded political ad that crosses the line from “informational” material to outright “advocacy?”

At a minimum, voters may forward a copy or screen shot of the questionable ad and send it directly to the FPPC’s “ad-watch” program, where citizens can report government-financed communications that they suspect cross the line into political advocacy. According to the FPPC’s website, its rules on reporting and disclosures “also apply to communications from public entities when their activity meets the thresholds to qualify as a ‘committee.’ This happens when a state or local governmental agency pays public moneys for a communication to the public and the communication expressly advocates the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate or the qualification, passage, or defeat of a clearly identified measure, or, taken as a whole and in context, unambiguously urges a particular result in an election.”

In addition to FPPC engagement, voters have alternative remedies. While the FPPC’s jurisdiction is limited to enforcing the disclosure of campaign spending and the timely reporting of those expenditures, the courts – both federal and state – are not so limited. Taxpayers have the right to proceed directly to Superior Court for claims asserted under the First Amendment of both the U.S. and California Constitutions.

Finally, voters can always contact the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association which has created a Public Integrity Project under the auspices of HJTA’s affiliated Foundation. HJTJF’s Public Integrity Project has already proven to be an additional enforcement tool against illegal expenditures of public funds and other violations of law that hurt taxpayers and voters.

It’s bad enough when local politicians work to raise taxes when Californians are already paying one of the highest tax burdens in America. But it’s adding insult to injury to have those efforts supported with the same public funds that could be spent on legitimate government services.

Jon Coupal is president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association. ★

Record Uncertainty Hanging Over Nation’s Main Streets

National Federation of Independent Business News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - A double dose of bad news sprung from the latest Optimism Index released by the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB). The Index showed a 33rd consecutive month below its 50-year average but its uncertainty component raised more than a few eyebrows, rising 11 points to 103.

“Small business owners are desperate to cling to any good news they can and finding nothing to grasp,” said John Kabateck, state director for the National Federation of Independent Business in California. “I give equal blame to Congress for dragging its feet on making the Small Business Deduction permanent, and to California for – where to start? – passing new laws curbing the free-speech rights of employers, imposing new requirements on independent contractors, adding new unlawful employment practices, knitting a crazy quilt of minimum-wage laws, and requiring workplace violence prevention plans from every employer no matter the need, time required or paperwork involved. Have the time? I have more. Hopefully, things have gotten so rock bottom with small business and

working families that it will motivate voters to make positive changes at the ballot box this November.”

“Small business owners are feeling more uncertain than ever. Uncertainty makes owners hesitant to invest in capital spending and inventory, especially as inflation and financing costs continue to put pressure on their bottom lines,” said the National Federation of Independent Business Chief Economist Bill Dunkelberg.

The average rate paid on short maturity loans was 10.1%, up 0.6 of a point from August. The last time it was this high was February 2001.

Thirty-four percent (seasonally adjusted) of owners reported job openings they could not fill in the current period, down six points from August.

Seasonally adjusted, a net 32% reported raising compensation, down one point from August and remaining the lowest reading since April 2021.

Twenty-three percent of owners reported that inflation was their single most important problem in operating their business (higher input and labor costs), down one point from August but remaining the top issue. ★

Democrats Double Down on End of Session Chaos

Office of Assemblyman James Gallagher News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Democrats are doubling down on their mismanagement and undemocratic tactics during a chaotic end of session. In response to an investigation request from Assembly Republican Leader James Gallagher (R-Yuba City), Democrats insisted no rules were violated and everything ran smoothly, despite barring Republican members from participating in discussion and limiting debate to just 30 seconds per member.

“Democrats’ refusal to address the chaos on the last day of session is disappointing, but not a surprise,” said Gallagher. “By cutting off debate, Democrats silenced the voices

of our constituents and did a disservice to Californians who deserve a transparent law-making process. We’re not done fighting for what’s right, because Democrats’ business as usual is no longer acceptable.”

Democrats’ response, where they claim “no rules were violated in the final hours of session,” ignores underlying concerns around limiting debate on important legislative issues. Instead, Democrats have justified their actions by citing precedent and twisting parliamentary rules to retroactively defend their actions.

Assemblyman James Gallagher represents the 3rd Assembly District, which encompasses all of Glenn, Sutter, Tehama and Yuba counties as well as portions of Butte and Colusa counties. ★

CSD Considers Relocation of Water and Sewer Lines



The Rancho Murieta Community Services District is planning to relocate the Murieta Village water and sewer service lines from underneath the homes into the streets.

Story and photo by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)

- During the construction of Murieta Village in the 1970s, the Pension Trust Fund laid the water and sewer lines beneath the mobile home sites, an unusual configuration that has made repairing leaks both difficult and sometimes hazardous. Adding to the issue is the aging PVC pipes, which have failed five times in the past six months.

Fortunately for the mobile home park residents, the Rancho Murieta Community Services District is launching a new Capital Improvement Project to relocate the water and sewer mains to the streets and common areas. This project, likely to take several years and cost millions, will probably be implemented in phases to reduce the financial burden on the district's reserves and allow time to seek outside funding.

A project to fix the Village pipes may have been delayed for years if not for recent actions taken by Michael Fritschi, the district's former operations manager, Dale Schell, a persistent Village landlord, and Mimi Morris, the district's general manager

Fritschi sent a letter to the Village manager on Nov. 23, 2023, explaining why the district would no longer repair water and sewer lines that didn't adhere to district code. None of the residents received the letter.

When Schell experienced a water leak in April, he had to pay a plumber

to make the repair. Schell emailed the board in May, questioning why the district had reclassified water lines serving multiple homes as privately owned. These were the same tangled water lines the district had been repairing for years.

Frustrated by the response from staff, Schell raised concerns to the July Board meeting. President Tim Maybee assured him that he would discuss the matter with Morris and have staff arrange a meeting.

While investigating the repair situation, Morris discovered that an \$877,000 Capital Improvements Project to relocate the Village water lines had been included in the 2021 budget but was missing from the following year's budget.

After meeting twice with the Improvements Committee, Morris proposed an interim policy that would allow Village property owners to seek reimbursement for plumbing repairs to "a CSD-owned water line." She also recommended a new plan to relocate both the water and sewer pipes in the Village. On Oct. 16, the board unanimously approved both recommendations, including the allocation of \$100,000 into the plan for the preliminary design.

Sept. 18 Meeting

Morris first brought the Murieta Village pipe situation to the district's Improvements Committee on Sept. 18. The committee consists of two board members, Randy Jenco and Martin Pohl, Morris, the director of operations, and

other staff. The committee looks at infrastructure issues in depth and reports its findings to the board.

One attendee was Rob McCloud, a former district utility manager who retired about 11 years ago and also owns property in the Village. McCloud pointed out that the code Fritschi referenced in his letter to the Village manager applied to a single home, not multiple homes on a shared line. "I don't care if that pipe is a quarter or three-quarters of an inch. With multiple homes on it, it is a water main," he said.

Morris also informed the committee that she had discovered a plan proposed several years earlier to relocate the water pipes, which would have solved the current problem. She planned to investigate it further.

Jenco vaguely recalled the project, believing the trenching was meant to coincide with the Village repaving of the streets. Travis Bohannon, the interim operations director, remembered discussing the project with the former operations director, Paul Siebensohn, who had estimated it would cost several million dollars.

Later at the October board meeting, Maybee mentioned that the 2021 Village project hadn't been included in the following year's plan because of fiscal constraints.

McCloud emphasized that the pipes should never have been laid under the mobile home sites. "It's not the fault of the residents that it was put in that way by the Operating Engineers Local 3," he said. He added that, if he were still

working for the district, he would have advocated relocating the water lines, but only one section at a time.

The two board members were open to the suggestions. Jenco acknowledged that the district should work on the issue, stating, "We need to do the right thing."

Pohl asked if the sewer lines could be relocated simultaneously, to which Bohannon agreed, noting, "Why dig twice if you don't have to?" However, he also cautioned that much would depend on the location, adding, "The water and sewer lines need at least six feet of spacing between them."

McCloud raised another issue, noting that cleanouts weren't installed during the original construction. The only cleanout he knew of was the one he had installed at his property. He also suggested that homeowners should be responsible for paying for their own cleanouts.

A cleanout is a pipe with a cap that allows a plumber access to the private pipe at the point where the private sewer line connects to a utility line. According to utility code, the district is responsible for maintaining the sewer pipe up to the cleanout, while the homeowner is responsible for any clogs or repairs beyond the cleanout.

Oct. 8 Meeting

Schell's complaint

and the relocation of the Village pipes were again discussed at the Oct. 8 Improvements Committee meeting. There was considerable debate about where the district's responsibility for the water lines begins and ends, with the consensus settling on the water meter as the boundary. Morris suggested referring to the unusual lines in the Village as sub-mains, while Eric Houston, the district's new operations manager, explained that in larger city systems, these lines would be classified as water mains and distribution mains.

Schell pointed out that the issue began with Fritschi's letter last November. Jenco asked Morris if the letter should be rescinded, given the angst it had caused. Morris responded that she didn't think it was necessary.

Morris explained that staff had prepared an interim policy that allowed property owners, including Schell, to seek reimbursement for plumbing repairs to a district-owned mainline.

During the discussion, Jenco noted that while the water line issue seemed resolved, the sewer pipe cleanouts presented a separate challenge. "Number one, we have to figure out if they have cleanouts," he said. "Then number two is, if there aren't any, we need to come up with a proposal."

Bohannon added that

Utilities Supervisor Ron Greenfield should be part of the conversation. Village resident Richard Gehrs mentioned that most mobile homes in the area don't have cleanouts, which had caused costly problems in the past. However, some newer residents installed cleanouts.

Jenco suggested continuing the discussion about sewer lines at the committee level until more information could be gathered. "I don't think there is a lot of urgency here," he said. Both he and Pohl agreed that the interim water policy should be immediately referred to the board.

After the Oct. 8 committee meeting, Village Board Member Richardson contacted the River Valley Times to express his support. He praised Schell for pursuing the issue and McCloud for his advocacy, and he was pleased the district was taking responsibility for the lines.

"So this is really great news although it is still going to cost the homeowners some money," Richardson said.

Speaking at the Oct. 16 board meeting, part-time Village resident Alexander Warrington also expressed his gratitude. "From my perspective, this is a win-win situation," he said. "We will work with you on these water lines and water meters... I think I speak for the entire community on this." ★

Hospital Guild Back Open to Volunteers

By Carol Barr, Mercy General Hospital Guild

Editor's note: Mercy General Hospital offers many services, including heart and vascular care, a family birth center and cancer care. The Sacramento hospital, part of the Dignity Health network, is dedicated to delivering high quality, compassionate care and access to Sacramento and nearby communities.

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)

- The Mercy General Hospital Guild is back open to all volunteers since the pandemic years.

We are hoping that some will want to give back to your community by volunteering. The address for Mercy General Hospital is 4001 J St., Sacramento.

Volunteers only work in four-hour shifts, which are



The Mercy Hospital Guild volunteers served 608 hospital staff members tea sandwiches and baked goods at the annual personal tea in May.

9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., 12:30 to 4 p.m. or in some cases, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The basic requirement is only two shifts a month. The yearly fee for membership is \$20.

There are many departments where volunteers can work.

The AlexGSpanos

information desk is located in the main lobby. Patients are directed to registrars so they can have their procedures completed from that desk. We also direct patients and their families to see loved ones or find the locations of their procedures.

The Mercy Medical Plaza Information Desk is located in the doctors' offices building next door, and patients are directed to their doctors' offices or outpatient surgery there.

The Surgery/Cardiac Waiting Area is located on the second floor of the



The Mercy Hospital Guild volunteers host the annual personal tea. Photos courtesy of Deborah McStocker/Mercy Guild

main hospital. We keep families informed of their loved ones' surgery and its completion.

The gift shop is located on the first floor of the main hospital. There are always beautiful clothes, jewelry and gifts, and seasonal art pieces to purchase as well as books, candy and snacks.

If a volunteer would rather work from home, there are pillowcases that are made for all our cardiac patients, plus there are creations made for our seasonal sales throughout the year.

The fun activities are

planned for the staff at the hospital. These include bake sales, ice cream socials, vendor sales and the annual personal tea held each May.

There is office work available in the new Guild office located in the main hospital basement. The staff organizes hours and keeps information like addresses and requirements current for all volunteers.

If you are interested in getting an application, please call 916-453-4699. The requirements will be explained to you and an application will be available. ★



Stop Criminals, Drugs, Theft

By John McGinness

California voters will have several very important decisions to make as they complete their November 2024 ballots. One that has the potential to reverse a decade of deterioration of the state's criminal justice system is Proposition 36.

To adequately analyze the merits of Proposition 36, a quick review of history is in order. Ten years ago, voters approved Proposition 47 based upon assurance that it would improve public safety. The voters were deceived – Proposition 47 eliminated compounding consequences for several theft and possession and use of dangerous drugs. Many crimes were reduced from felonies to misdemeanors, eliminating the deterrent value of discipline.

The results have been devastating for the state of California. Urban, suburban, and even rural areas once used for recreation have been taken over by critically addicted people living like walking zombies. Retail businesses have become so frequently victimized by “smash and grab” thieves that merchants have been forced to lock up much of their merchandise out of reach, inconveniencing legitimate customers and staff. Fentanyl poisoning has become the leading cause of death for Americans 18-45-years-of-age. On average, over 200 deaths by fentanyl poisoning occur in the United States every day. Consider the tolerance

society would have in an environment in which 200 people were killed in a commercial airline crash every day – public outcry would be extreme and warranted; change would be mandated by an outraged public. Yet persons in positions of leadership seem oblivious or apathetic to the plight of our youth.

Proposition 36 will restore the ability of the criminal justice system to impose compounding consequences on chronic habitual offenders for the sake of discouraging unacceptable behavior.

Specifically, offenders convicted not once, but twice of possession of hard and dangerous drugs will be eligible for felony prosecution or completion of a court-supervised treatment for addiction. This course of action was common before the passage of Proposition 47, when drug court was a viable option for those first charged with felony drug possession. The impetus for treatment is now gone by virtue of chronic drug offenders suffering through addiction and only being cited for misdemeanor violations of law. That means no time in custody in California, and no incentive to participate

in court supervised treatment. Those cited typically ignore their citations, fail to appear in court and continue to live their destructive lifestyle, wreaking havoc on the streets, parks and public facilities throughout the state. Proposition

consequences be brought against those who habitually violate the law for the sake of discouraging habitual lawlessness.

Critics have asserted that Proposition 36 represents a reversion to days of mass incarceration. It does not!

Proposition 36 is a bipartisan concept created by elected attorneys of diverse political and philosophical affiliation, supported by big city mayors from California's diverse communities, to provide incentive for treatment for those chronically addicted to dangerous

drugs, as well as common sense solutions to those who habitually break the law and diminish the quality of life for law abiding Californians.

If concern for law abiding citizens and those seeking to safely pursue their dreams in this state is insufficient to motivate voters to support this thoughtful proposition,

consider the wellbeing of the people directly adversely impacted by the results of the horrific current state of law. Since 2014, when Proposition 47 passed, the number of chronically addicted people living on the streets of California has exploded. Failing to recognize the wellbeing of those

lost to drugs on the streets represents an apathetic disregard for our fellow human beings. Swift, lawful action taken to put these lost souls on the path to a vastly better existence is the compassionate and appropriate action to be taken by the electorate of this state.

Ten years ago, the political leadership of the state of California misled the voters, assuring them that Proposition 47 would enhance public safety, that eliminating thoughtful punitive consequences for lawlessness would somehow make the schools and neighborhoods safer. Many of those same people are again describing Proposition as something vastly different than what it is. Proposition 36 is a plan to reduce homelessness, drug addiction, and theft in California. Law-abiding taxpayers deserve better, future generations of Californians deserve better and those in the grip of addiction need our help. Please do not be fooled by the same people who misled the voters to pass Proposition 47.

Please help save California. Vote “Yes” on Prop.36.

John McGinness, MS, is the retired sheriff of Sacramento County, an adjunct professor of criminal justice and host of the John McGinness Show on KFBK. He can be reached at 916-924-3901

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**YES
ON
36**

36 will give incentive to those who badly need treatment. Those who complete the treatment and graduate from the program will have the opportunity to have their record expunged and avoid incarceration, liberating them to live rich full lives.

Proposition 36 will also reclassify fentanyl as a hard drug, and provide enhanced penalties on those who possess fentanyl while armed with a firearm.

As or thieves, Proposition 36 will impose the potential for felony consequences for persons twice convicted of petty theft and charged with a subsequent theft case. It simply demands that



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Electric Dreams or Economic Nightmares?

By Sue Frost

I want to share my concerns about a significant policy change that has the potential to impact not only Californians but also people across the entire country. California's Advanced Clean Fleets (ACF) rule, established last October by the California Air Resources Board, mandates that all medium and large trucks transition to electric vehicles by 2035. This rule applies to any fleet of at least 50 trucks operating within our state, regardless of where a company's headquarters might be.

California is a big player on the global stage — our decisions impact people from all walks of life, not just in our state but around the world. The ACF rule is no exception, especially since we're waiting to see if the Environmental Protection Agency will let California set its own emissions standards. If they say yes, other states might follow our lead.

It sounds good in theory, but the reality is complex. The people who run our supply chains, from businesses to truck drivers, face a huge challenge. There's even legal pushback, including from the California Trucking Association, arguing that this rule goes too far and disrupts the national goods movement industry.

Let's break down what this means for us. California's ports like Los Angeles and Long Beach

The bottom line is that the extra costs—from the trucks to the infrastructure and electricity—will ultimately fall on us, the consumers and taxpayers.

handle almost \$500 billion in cargo yearly. With over 1.8 million trucks on our roads and less than 300 of them electric, you can see the gap we need to bridge.

The shift from diesel to electric trucks is steep. Diesel trucks can travel up to 2,000 miles on a single tank and take about 15 minutes to refuel. Electric trucks? They cost much more, might only get you 150 to 500 miles per charge, and take up to three hours to recharge. And with only a few public charging stations available, meeting the state's goals will be a massive, costly project.

Also, our push for more renewable energy sources like wind and solar has its own set of challenges.

Just days after mandating all new cars be electric by 2035, Californians were asked to cut back on electricity to avoid blackouts. Plus, the costs to produce these electric batteries are high, both financially and



Sue Frost. Photo courtesy of Sue Frost.

environmentally.

The trucks themselves need two huge batteries that add a lot of weight, which means trucks will need to carry lighter loads or more trucks will be needed, potentially leading to more traffic.

The bottom line is that the extra costs—from the trucks to the infrastructure and electricity—will ultimately fall on us, the consumers and taxpayers. This includes higher prices and taxes to cover these expenses and likely shortages of goods.

I support cleaner air, but we need to be practical. Instead of just using catchy slogans or unrealistic plans, we should use proven methods. Let's improve our roads and highways to help reduce traffic jams and update our ports and freight stations to keep trucks from idling while they wait for loads. These steps can truly help reduce emissions.

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@saccounty.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 Murieta.

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



Preseason games don't matter. No one cares about preseason games. Preseason games are just about getting the players in shape. Coaches and fans don't care about wins and losses in preseason games.

Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! The truth is losing matters, and unfortunately it creates a tone and can be contagious.

Preseason games show teams what they have, and winning creates positive habits that more often and not carry over into the regular season.

So, if I'm right, what do Kings fans make of a zero-win preseason record?

You should be concerned, but not worried. There's a difference, so don't wring your hands just yet.

The good news is the Kings starters overall looked pretty good. In the first two preseason games against the Golden State Warriors, the Kings starters played the Warriors to a standstill for the first half of both games.

The starters did not participate in the second half of either game, and the Kings were forced to take a long look at their bench strength.

I'm not certain how deep coach Brown intends to go as it relates to bench players, but my guess with the recent signing of Doug McDermott, he will probably play 10 or even 11 players.

What we know is that due to injuries to Trey Lyles and Kevin Huerter, the Kings have yet to see a true picture of what their regular season bench will look like.

Both Lyles and Huerter are experienced NBA players, and both can have an immediate impact when they enter a game. Both are good passers, can drive effectively to the hoop and have a better than average three-point game.

What we also know is that Malik Monk is likely to be the first player off the bench, so when Lyles and Huerter return, we can see with some certainty who the first three off the bench will undoubtedly be.

Although in a pinch Lyles can play the five, it is more likely that veteran Alex Len will be called on to give Domantas Sabonis a blow every game, and at times

in the preseason Len has been a bright spot. I have long believed that Len may have another level to his game, and I'm hopeful that if he sees consistent playing time, his game will demonstrate the kind of NBA confidence the Kings have longed for. Seven footers with skills are in short supply, so giving Len every opportunity to shine just makes lots of sense. At age 31 Len is still in his prime, and with every season he brings much needed veteran experience to the lineup and represents a rim protector when Sabonis is off the floor.

So, with Huerter, Lyles, Monk, and Len coach Brown is nine deep, so who do the Kings have that could also make a contribution?

I would hope that the signing of Doug McDermott is not just ceremonial, so this veteran sharpshooter should be seeing 10 to 15 minutes nightly.

If last season proved anything to me it was that coach Brown is anything but predictable as it relates to his bench rotation, and I believe his frenetic experiments last year were a contributor to the Kings missing the first round of the playoffs.

Settling into a bench rotation builds confidence in players and gives the team an opportunity to gel. I'm crossing my fingers that any experiments have concluded in the preseason, and the regular season will bring a level on continuity that was missing last year.

Do I think the preseason matters? Of course I do. But I also know the Sacramento Kings have yet to lose a game in the regular season, and I believe in the players we have.

I hope you will all join me in applauding our gladiators as they step on the hardwood for the first time on Thursday night (Oct. 24) and open the regular season against the Minnesota Timberwolves.

The NBA schedulers did the Kings no favors as they will face the number one ranked defensive team in the NBA, but I say bring them on.

Put a smile on your faces Kings fans, and let's celebrate on Thursday night!

Your thoughts are always welcome at vgharriskingsfan@gmail.com. ★



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Beloved Pianist Plays for RM Women's Club

Story and photos by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Award-winning pianist and master storyteller Richard Glazier returned to perform for a Rancho Murieta Women's Club luncheon for the fourth time on Sept. 25.

Club president Bonnie Kirshman warmly introduced Glazier and shared some of his musical history.

Glazier began playing piano when he was six years old. And when he was nine, he saw the film "Girl Crazy" on television, with a score by George and Ira Gershwin, and his career seemed to start from there. He has performed in concert halls across the country, including Carnegie Hall, and has had three nationally broadcast television specials on PBS.

"His passion for the great American popular song has led him to this wonderful program we're going to have today—from Broadway to Hollywood," Kirshman said.

Glazier, beloved by the club, was greeted with warm applause as he seated himself at the piano. "It's great to be back here," he said. "This is only the second time I have performed in four and a half years because I've had some health problems.

"It really means a lot

because this women's organization here in Rancho Murieta has shown great kindness and has been loyal to me. I want to celebrate this music with you," he added.

Glazier began with a heartfelt performance of "Pure Imagination" from "Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory," a piece with special meaning for him. "I was 10 when I saw the film in 1971, and I've always wanted to play it," Glazier shared.

That same year, he was introduced to "Rhapsody in Blue." "That piece really defined the direction I would take," he said.

Glazier's passion for music and theater was deeply influenced by his mother, who studied acting in New York and participated in community theater after marriage. "When we went to New York when I was 3, we saw 'Fiddler on the Roof.' Mom said she would never forget that performance as long as she lives."

Glazier followed with a "Fiddler on the Roof" medley, captivating the audience.

Continuing the morning's journey through iconic musicals, Glazier played a medley from "My Fair Lady," another film released in 1971. As the audience hummed along, he transitioned seamlessly to "People," a song made famous by Barbra Streisand in "Funny Girl."

Glazier also reminisced



Pianist Richard Glazier entertains The Rancho Murieta Women's Club at its Sept. 25 luncheon. Photos by Gail Bullen



Glazier combines fascinating stories and hilarious anecdotes with his piano performance.

about discovering an old record at age 10 featuring Oscar Levant performing "Rhapsody in Blue." "He was the premier interpreter of Gershwin's concert music in the '40s and '50s," Glazier said, noting his fascination with Levant's brilliance despite his struggles with mental illness.

Glazier shared Levant's witty one-liners, including, "There is a thin line between genius and insanity, and I have crossed that line," and "The first thing I do in the morning is brush my teeth and sharpen my tongue."

In tribute to Levant's virtuosity, Glazier dazzled the audience with a performance of "Sabre Dance", famously featured in the 1949 film "The Barkleys of Broadway" with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

Glazier then honored the legacy of Stephen Sondheim, calling him "one of the greatest lyricists and

composers on Broadway," before he played "Send in the Clowns."

He also shared memories of Hugh Martin, a close friend and mentor. "You may not have heard of him," Glazier said, "But he wrote 'The Trolley Song' for the 1944 film 'Meet Me in St. Louis' with Judy Garland." He followed with a lively rendition of the song, to the delight of the audience.

Glazier took the opportunity to reflect on the impact his mother had on his childhood. "She believed in me," he said. "My parents bought me a 16mm Bell and Howell projector, and I would check out movies from the library to watch in the basement."

His voice softened as he spoke about his mother's passing in 2010, explaining that he had put together a medley of her favorite Hollywood songs in her memory. The audience sat in silence as he played the tribute.



The reflection behind the keyboard makes it appear that two artists are playing.



Audience members give Glazier a standing ovation at the end of his performance.

Glazier shared one final, extraordinary story. At the age of 10, he had written to Ira Gershwin, who responded. Their correspondence is now stored in the Library of Congress.

A couple of years later, Glazier and his mother visited Gershwin's home in Hollywood. "When I played 'Embraceable You' for him, the most amazing thing happened: He started singing along," Glazier said. "That's something you can't even make up. You can't put a price tag on inspiration like that."

As Glazier played

and sang the lyrics to "Embraceable You," the room filled with emotion. The audience burst into applause, only to be silenced again as Glazier transitioned seamlessly into "Rhapsody in Blue."

The crowd erupted into thunderous applause, many joining a standing ovation. As the applause died down, Women's Club members gathered around the piano to chat with the pianist. Several club members have become personal friends after his past performances at their luncheons. ★

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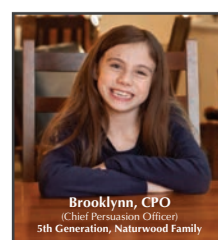


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