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RIVER VALLEY TIMES

40TH YEAR • ISSUE 21

Serving Rancho Murieta, Sloughouse, Wilton

NOVEMBER 22, 2024

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Veterans Day Event Honors RM Heroes



Scouts welcome World War II veteran Jerry Hathaway to the RMA Building on Nov. 11 during a Veterans Day celebration that recognized all past and current members of the Armed Services. Photo by Gail Bullen

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - On Nov. 11, Rancho Murieta held its own Veterans Day celebration to honor past and current Armed Services members for their service to their country.

Approximately 125 people attended the ninth annual "Been There, Done That Café" at the RMA Building, gathering for coffee,

donuts, and conversation. This year marked the first time the Rancho Murieta Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary 12215 hosted the event, taking over the reins from the Rancho Murieta Caregiver Support Group.

The celebration began outside, where dozens of children, adults, and Scouts lined the walkway waving small American flags and cheering as they thanked the veterans for their service.

Inside, veterans received raffle tickets for an array of gift cards donated by local businesses, then gathered at beautifully decorated tables to share military experiences with fellow veterans, family, and friends.

The decorations included flags from each branch of the service hanging in front of the windows, a patriotic centerpiece on each table, and an embellished table loaded with

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CSD Discusses Pipeline to Boost Water Supply



Photo shows Sacramento County Water Agency employees replacing a waterline. Courtesy photo

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - An intriguing option to supplement Rancho Murieta's water supply by connecting to the

Sacramento County Water Agency (SCWA) dominated the discussion when the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Improvements Committee met on Nov. 5.

That option wasn't included in the draft

Integrated Water Master Plan (IWMP). According to comments at the meeting, the ballpark estimate of the cost to construct a pipeline conveying treated water to Rancho Murieta would be comparable to the IWMP's

estimated cost to dig three emergency wells for \$15 million. The draft IWMP also indicated that the low-producing wells would cost even more once treatment options were added.

Should a pipeline prove

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Sheriff's Office Reports Improved Response Times to RM



Captain Matthew Tamayo reports that response times to Rancho Murieta have significantly improved since Sacramento County Sheriff's Office deputies began responding from Rancho Cordova earlier this year. He made the announcement at a Nov. 13 community meeting. Photo by Gail Bullen

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The transition of Rancho Murieta from the Central Division to the East Division of the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office has become official following a little-noticed trial.

The most notable improvement has been a 50% to 60% decrease in response times since deputies dispatched to the community come from Rancho Cordova instead of the South County.

East Division Commander Matthew Tamayo delivered the good news at a sheriff's community meeting held at the RMA Building on Nov. 13, which drew only eight attendees. Other sheriff's office speakers included two Problem-Oriented Police Officers, a service office manager, and a crime prevention specialist.

California Highway Patrol Officer Alan Stevens, a member of the Valley Division's Community Response Team, also helped answer audience questions. One came from Rod Hart, the general manager of the Rancho Murieta Association, who described a serious speeding problem inside the gates. Other audience questions concerned the local sheriff's center, homelessness, and identifying sexual offenders who live in Rancho Murieta.

East Division

Tamayo explained that the sheriff's East Division operates a joint command with the Rancho Cordova Police Department out of the same building. The East Division serves the unincorporated areas in the eastern county, and Rancho

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Veterans Day Event Honors RM Heroes



Veterans stand in salute as they listen to a live rendition of the National Anthem. Photos by Gail Bullen



Veteran Terry Lightfoot is greeted by an indoor welcome committee, including Margaret Platt, Paula Ramirez and Cindy McCarver, after making his way through a crowd of well-wishers outside.



Navy veteran Gene Cameron shows a commemorative T-shirt of his former ship to attendee Karen Hoberg.



Veteran Charles Nellist plans to add this hand-painted card to his collection, gathered since the first Rancho Murieta Veterans Day celebration about a decade ago.



After winning a gift card, WWII veteran Ed Moran draws the next raffle ticket from Diane Tibbits and Marianna Harshorva.



Navy veterans raise their hands during a branch recognition segment.

Continued from page 1

to honor them with a performance of the "National Anthem." In another part of the program, JT Turner, owner of Bar Code Barbers, invited veterans to come across the street for a free haircut and street tacos, while Bob Rice, owner of a security firm, announced a \$1,000 donation to the VFW Post. Jose Garcia, a dedicated member of the Rancho Murieta VFW and an employee of the California Department of the Veterans of Foreign Wars based in Elk Grove, was eager to share his expertise at the event. Garcia offers free assistance to all veterans, helping them secure or appeal Veterans Administration medical and financial benefits. He can be contacted at 916-509-8712. Auxiliary President Melissa Mineni led the raffle prize distribution, which included a beautiful hand-made quilt donated by the out-of-state sister of event organizer Norma Dawdy. She and about 10 other auxiliary members had decorated the RMA

meeting room the previous day, setting tables, hanging decorations, and arranging raffle prizes.

"One person can't do it alone," Dawdy said. Mineni expressed the auxiliary's enthusiasm for the event. "We were happy to carry on this tradition from the caregiver group," she said. "It was our honor to do this as an auxiliary. "That is what we are here for, to support the veterans and the community," she added.

The Rancho Murieta Caregivers Support Group held the first local Veterans Day celebration nine years ago. JoAnn Young, whose late father-in-law John Prenz was a World War II veteran, initially proposed the idea. The original organizing committee also included Nan Parquette, Judy Prenz, Erin Reed, and Berniece Jones. ★

Bill McCarver, the senior vice-commander of the local VFW post, emceed a brief program. He began by recognizing each branch of the service, asking past and current members to raise their hands, which was met with resounding applause. "Thank you all for your service," McCarver said. "We're glad you came out. ... The camaraderie that we have is second to none."

At his request, members of Scout Troop 633 and Cub Scout Troop 633 presented the colors and led the recitation of the "Pledge of Allegiance."

McCarver then requested "a moment of silence for those who did not come back and who have passed along the way." He continued the solemnity by inviting Jenni Roland, a member of the local post,



Emcee Bill McCarver attends as Scouts present the colors and lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Rancho Murieta, a 3,500-acre country-club community, is an oasis of emerald fairways and manicured greens, built along the scenic banks of the Cosumnes River. It encompasses five lakes, greenbelts, rolling hills and stately oaks.

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RMA Board OKs Minimal Dues Increase

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - When Rancho Murieta Association members open their monthly dues notice in 2025, they're likely to breathe a sigh of relief, especially if they've just returned from shopping. That's because dues will only increase by \$4.50 a month.

The current dues of \$161 will rise to \$165.50 next year, a 2.8% increase in funding \$4.8 million budget. The RMA Board approved the dues increase at a special budget meeting on Nov. 12.

General Manager Rod Hart had initially proposed a budget at the October board meeting with a 2.2% dues increase, which would have raised dues by \$3.51 per month. This \$108,506 budget increase was intended to cover rising costs for employee wages and benefits, insurance, utilities, and street lighting.

However, the board postponed approval to hold a special meeting to consider proposed budget additions.

The Compliance Committee, chaired by Director Tom Reimer, requested funding for two additional speed cameras for \$31,256, which would have raised monthly dues by \$1.09. Reimer also requested funding for an additional full-time staff position to manage the citations generated by existing Lidar cameras. This position would cost \$84,000, resulting in a \$2.92 monthly dues increase.

The Recreation Committee also requested



New shade covers for the spray park and both dog parks are planned for next year, following budget discussions by the Rancho Murieta Association Board at a special meeting on Nov. 12. Courtesy photo

\$55,000 to add new shade covers at both dog parks and the spray park.

Hart explained at both meetings that the Compliance Committee sought the new position to free up the association's two compliance officers from administrative tasks, allowing them to return to field duties.

Most of the discussion about this new staff position centered on whether it should be full-time or part-time, with a part-time role costing substantially less at \$33,000 annually and adding only \$1.15 to monthly dues.

Although Hart and Compliance Supervisor Chris Smith both stated

that there was enough work to keep a full-time employee busy, they declined to make a specific recommendation. Ultimately, the board unanimously approved Reimer's motion to establish a part-time position. Reimer noted that the role could become full-time if RMA found the right candidate.

The decision on whether to spend \$31,255 for two additional Lidar cameras, which would increase dues by \$1.09, became easier after Hart suggested an alternative funding source. He proposed using funds from members' equity, describing it as "our emergency fund. If something

happens in the upcoming year and we need to offset dues, these funds are there for a good reason."

Hart noted that the fund currently holds just under \$300,000. The board favored this approach and unanimously approved the camera purchase within the same motion that established the new part-time position.

During the discussion about the Compliance Committee's requests, Smith expressed frustration that parking is out of control due to what he described as 'zero' enforcement by Rancho Murieta Community Service District patrol officers.

Audience member John Merchant also raised a question about increasing traffic citation collections to help offset administrative costs.

Hart responded that fines generate minimal revenue. 'As I always tell the members, I'm hoping those violations go down and our income (from fines) goes down. That's what we are after,' he said.

Coincidentally, another fund intended for shade covers also has a balance of around \$300,000. The board agreed with Hart's suggestion to seek approval to use the Parks Committee fund to cover the \$55,000 cost for the shade covers, rather than

adding \$1.91 to member dues.

However, Hart asked the board to hold off on a formal motion until he could obtain project bids.

The Parks Committee includes two representatives from RMA, two from the development community, and one from CSD.

In other business, Hart reviewed projects completed by the association in 2024, including the construction of a new ramp and boat dock at Calero Reservoir, repairs to the fence along Jackson Highway above Greens Park, asphalt repairs, and the replacement of approximately 150 street and stop signs. ★

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Vitalant Collects 61 Pints in Community Blood Drive



A community blood drive sponsored by the Rancho Murieta Women's Club drew 66 participants to the Rancho Murieta Community Church on Oct. 28. Vitalant, the local blood bank, collected 43 whole-blood donations and nine Power Red donations, each equivalent to two donations, for a total of 61 pints. In the photo left, Carole Thames jokes with phlebotomist Christian P. Thames donates a \$50 gift certificate for a raffle at every blood drive. In the photo at right, the church's worship area is transformed into a donation center. Photos by Gail Bullen

Opening Nears for Shell Station, Circle K and Subway

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)

A new multi-service station featuring a Shell fuel station, a Circle K convenience store, Subway restaurant, car wash and dog wash at Oakville Lane and Jackson Road is slated to open in the coming days.

Manager JJ Sandu said the business is awaiting final approval from Sacramento County Health Department.

"As soon as we pass the final round of inspections, we will do a soft opening first and hold a grand opening a week later," Sandu said.

In addition to its current offerings, a Jamba Juice bar is slated to open early next year.

The gas station, Circle K

and the carwash will operate from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Subway will be open from 9 a.m. until 8 p.m.

Sandu said his parents, Bhupinder and Manpreet Sandhu, who previously owned the Subway restaurant in the Murieta Plaza that closed several years ago, and his wife will help him operate the family-owned business. Dorothy Devai, the manager at the prior Subway, will manage the new shop.

The Shell station has 12 fuel stations and will sell gasoline, diesel and propane.

Sandu emphasized competitive pricing at Circle K, adding, "The most famous thing about Circle K is their 89-cent soda drinks for any size cup: small, medium, and large." The convenience store will also offer Thrifty Ice Cream,

a fan-favorite typically found at Rite Aid stores.

While the new Subway shop will provide standard franchise offerings, it will include a drive-up window—a unique feature that won't be available immediately upon opening.

Regarding the Jamba juice bar, Sandu explained that the same private equity firm that purchased Subway earlier this year also owns Jamba, which made it easy to partner with that business.

The car wash will offer touchless, brush, and combination options, while the self-service dog wash will be conveniently located near the car wash exit.

Although the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors approved the application by Bhupinder and Manpreet Sandhu to build



The long-awaited multi-service Shell Station is set to open within days. Photo by Gail Bullen

the multi-service station on Sept. 24, 2019, initial construction didn't begin until 2021. After intermittent progress, construction activity ramped up earlier this year.

Sandu said getting permits took a long time, especially those required for the installation of the underground fuel tanks. He said the County Environmental

Management Department had been very strict "because they don't want any leakages or anything hazardous. That's why a gas station takes a long time."

Sandu said they hoped to get power from SMUD in April, because they needed electricity to schedule other inspections. However, because of repeated difficulties with

SMUD inspectors who weren't on the same page, they didn't have power until August.

The multi-service Shell station will compete directly with The Country Store, which houses a Burger King, a Chevron station, and a carwash. Sandu clarified that there is no familial connection between the two business owners. ★

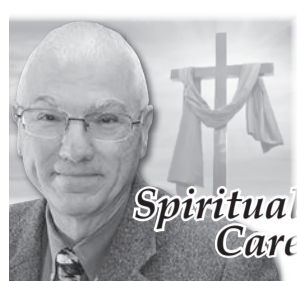
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Retirement, Really?

"Do you think you'll ever fully retire?" my wife, Becky, asks a few times a month.



BY NORRIS BURKES

hospitals, churches and civic organizations.

You've traveled with me to Honduras for Chispa Project, the charity my daughter Sara began for establishing libraries in Honduran elementary schools. Many of you are generous, regular donors.

When I think of full retirement, I'm struck with a sudden case of FOMO. "Fear of Missing Out." I don't want to miss out on more wonderful exchanges, meetings and friendships this writing

ministry has brought to me.

But alas, I've come up with a compromised writing retirement, giving us at least two ways to stay in touch no matter when I fully retire.

First, I'd like you to sign up to get my weekly column by email. You can do this by sending me a quick email to comment@thechaplain.net.

Or even easier, sign up for my weekly email at www.thechaplain.net/newsletter. The website also contains everything I've ever written or will write.

Check out the audio versions of past columns too. Remember to spell chaplain correctly, not chaplin. We've talked about this.

Second, while you're on my website, consider ordering one or more of

the four books I've written. These books are a compilation of my columns from the past 20 years. And of course, I'll autograph them.

Keep the book on your nightstand or reading rack so you can read one 700-word story each time you crack open the book.

You can read the books in any order and jump around between stories.

"No Small Miracles" contains stories I wrote as a pediatric hospital chaplain.

"Hero's Highway" recounts my deployment to a combat hospital in Iraq.

"Thriving Beyond Surviving" is a compilation book of the columns I wrote about faith, family, fun and forgiveness. And my most recent book, "Tell it to the Chaplain" recalls my chaplain experiences in the hospital, hospice and the military.

The last section of "Tell it to the Chaplain" tells the

story of Chispa Project, so I especially hope you'll read that one. Thanks to readers like you, we've helped over 22,000 kids in Honduras get their first books by creating school libraries with my daughter's charity.

To say thank you, and "spark" you into action one more time, my family and I will be matching all reader donations up to \$5,000 postmarked between now and Giving Tuesday on Dec. 3. I hope you'll take up my challenge for this ambitious goal.

You can donate online at www.chispaproject.org/chaplain or send a check made to "Chispa Project" to 10566 Combie Rd. Suite 6643 Auburn, CA 95602.

Every \$100 gives four kids a school library, training their teachers and parents, and providing books, shelves and colorful, painted murals. There are no words that can

completely describe the joy that fills a child's face when they hold their first picture book. It's why I go back year after year to volunteer. (Details for 2025 volunteer trips at www.chispaproject.org/volunteer)

Finally, know that I'm not completely retired. I remain the pastor of Community Church, Nevada City, CA. It's a little country church of two dozen in California's Sierra Gold Country. They've been patient with me, but they miss me when I travel at least eight Sundays a year as grandkids and foreign adventures keep calling.

Keep me in your prayers and thoughts, as I will for you. Thank you for your faithful reading and support.

Email comments to comment@thechaplain.net or by text or voicemail to (843) 608-9715. ★

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Ladder Fuel Reduction Project to Close Trails

The Cosumnes Ladder Fuel Reduction Project was slated to begin Nov. 19 and expected to last 3 to 5 weeks. Some Rancho Murieta trails may be closed while equipment is operating in the area. Not all trails will be closed simultaneously.

Please do not use trails where you see yellow "Caution Do Not Enter" flagging. The project is designed to provide wildland fire protection for the community of Rancho Murieta, as well as local ranches and Deer Creek Hills Preserve.

The project is being funded by a \$4.4 million Cal Fire grant that was submitted by the Rancho Murieta Regional Fire Safe Council and awarded to the Sacramento County Regional Parks.

Christmas Tree Lighting Slated Nov. 29

The Rancho Murieta Association Recreation will present the annual Christmas Tree Lighting at Stonehouse Park on Nov. 29 at 5:30 p.m. After Santa Claus leads the countdown, he and Mrs. Claus will sit on their throne so children can share their Christmas lists and parents can take pictures.

Hot cocoa, hot apple cider, and cookies will be served.

Women's Club Holiday Luncheon Dec. 4

The Rancho Murieta Women's Club has a special treat planned for its holiday luncheon on Dec. 4. The Sutter Street Theatre from Old Folsom has agreed to create a version of its holiday production from last year, "Holiday in the Hills."

Several of our members were able to

see the original last year at the theatre and speak very highly of it.

The reservation deadline is 5 p.m. Nov. 22. For more information, contact Cindy Shamrock at 916-354-1981 or Barbara Armstrong at 916-541-1884.

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 sun-dried 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.

Wilton Winter Festival Slated Dec. 7

The annual Wilton Winter Festival will be held at the Wilton Community Center on Saturday, Dec. 7.

Vendors also will sell crafts and holiday goods from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Breakfast will be served 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and lunch from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The parade will begin at noon with nearby roads closing at 11:30 a.m. After the parade, Santa will listen to Christmas wishes at the community center.

For more information check the Wilton Community Center Facebook page. The event is sponsored by the Sacramento County Parks & Rec Council Area 4B.

Santa Run Set for Dec. 14

Burn some calories and support hospitalized veterans by taking part in the Santa Run on Dec. 14 at 9 a.m.

Meet at the Gazebo to walk or run around the front lake. The Murieta Heath Club will provide Santa hats and beverages. Voluntary donations will be collected to support the Kiwanis Sweats for Vets program.

Murieta Dance Company Stages Shows Dec. 14, 15

Embrace the spookiness and joy when the Murieta Dance Company presents the Haunted Mansion on Dec. 14 and 15 at the Murieta Plaza.

The Saturday show is at 5 p.m. and the Sunday show at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$15 per person or \$25 for VIP Seating. They can be purchased at Murieta Dancy Company in the plaza or by calling 916-296-6503.

Food and drinks will be available for purchase at the event.

Kiwanis Club Seeks Sponsors for Crab Feed

The Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta, in partnership with the Knights of Columbus, will host their 11th Annual Kiwanis Crab Feed on Feb. 1 at St. Vincent de Paul Church on Cantova Way. The Crab Feed is the largest fundraiser for

our Kiwanis Club.

We are actively seeking new sponsors for our event in addition to the many generous returning sponsors. Sponsorship levels range from \$300 to \$5,000 with great benefits at each level. The sponsorship deadline is Dec. 3.

In addition, we have limited opportunities for businesses to advertise their business card on our placemat. Placemat ads are \$75 each.

Raffle prizes and silent auction items are also needed. Please consider donating new items, gift cards, wine, travel, etc. We also need baskets or containers for our extravagant raffle.

Our Crab Feed is our largest fundraiser, which allows our Kiwanis Club to continue doing the good work in our community. Please contact Bonnie at 916-502-3260. Crab Feed ticket sales will begin after the holidays.

Kiwanis Seeks Sweats for Vets Donations

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. ★



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Sac Metro's CERT Volunteers Recognized

Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Our Community Emergency Response Team's (CERT) exemplary service has earned them the esteemed 2024 Heroes of Human Services award, presented by Supervisor Sue Frost at the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors meeting on Nov. 5.

Through extensive volunteer work, they have demonstrated unwavering dedication to community safety and well-being. Their empathetic approach is highlighted by notable initiatives, such as installing hundreds of smoke alarms in economically disadvantaged areas, thereby enhancing fire safety awareness and planning.

Throughout the years, the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District's CERT team has played a crucial role in the response effort to various disasters in our region and beyond. They provide essential support during severe weather events and power outages and support our crews with rehab and relief when resources are thin.

Characterized by their selflessness, the team delivers vital emergency training and first aid services, including hands-only CPR and Stop the Bleed. Their contributions have undoubtedly saved lives and property, making them an invaluable asset to our community. Congratulations, CERT! ★



Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost presents an award to the Community Emergency Response Team at the board chambers on Nov. 5. Harry Belt, who is the lead mechanical trainer for the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District, accepts the award for the team. Courtesy photo

SECURITY LOGS

Following is a summary of activity for the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Security Department for the following dates. Note: these log entries are condensed. For full security log details, go to the CSD website at www.rmcsd.com.

Nov. 4

RMA rule violation, Reynosa Drive: Resident parked overnight in front of home. Citation issued.

Nov. 5

Resident complaint, Terreno Drive: Vehicle parked in guest parking, unoccupied for 4 hours with headlights on with motor running. Patrol responded making contact with owner who stated he was having battery issues and fell asleep.

Patrol and owner confirmed nothing was missing. Owner locked vehicle and returned home.

Nov. 7

RMA rule violation, Colbert Drive: Resident parked overnight on street in front of home. Citation issued.

RMA rule violation, Murieta South Parkway: Resident parked overnight on street in front of home. Citation issued.

Nov. 8

Abandoned golf cart, Greens Park: Upon arrival golf cart was unable to locate.

Nov. 9

Miscellaneous, Murieta Drive: Transients loitering around business area.

Patrol responded and was unable to locate. Area cleared.

Nov. 10

Welfare check, Rio Circle: Welfare check requested due to unable to reach resident for several days. Patrol followed up and made contact with resident who had lost their phone and was doing fine. Dispatch updated reporting party.

Trespassing, Murieta Drive/ Bel Air: Report of two juveniles causing a disturbance and trespassing at the Bel Air market. Patrol made contact with manager and was informed the two juveniles are not allowed in store due to stealing. Juveniles were gone on arrival and unable to locate in area.

Suspicious person, Puerto Drive: Report

of three juveniles wearing masks and hoodies on Puerto Drive. Upon patrols arrivals juveniles were gone on arrival, unable to locate.

Animal complaint, Plano Court: Barking dog complaint for extended period of time. Patrol responded and was unable to make contact with resident. Dispatch called homeowner leaving a voicemail, informing of complaint.

Abandoned disabled vehicle, Murieta Gardens: Report of possible abandoned disabled vehicle pulled over on Jackson Rd. nearby Oakville Lane. Vehicle occupied by driver who pulled over to use phone. Patrol advised driver to find another area for safety reasons. Driver complied and left area. ★

CSD Discusses Pipeline to Boost Water Supply

Continued from page 1

feasible, CSD water supply augmentation fees would be one of the myriad funding sources. The fees, which go into reserves, are charged on new developments to fund the expansion of the community's water supply system.

Bob Keil, the developer of the Residences subdivision, asked that the \$30,000 pipeline feasibility study be placed on the agenda, saying: "Wouldn't everybody want to know whether we could get water from the water agency down the street to protect Rancho Murieta forever?"

Other meeting topics included groundwater recharge possibilities, researching statutory authority to use Clementia as an additional water supply, seeking an outside technical review of the draft IWMP, issues with Lost Lake, preliminary plans to relocate the Murieta Village pipelines, federal grant opportunities, and updates on major infrastructure projects including the Granlees Dam Safety Improvement and repair of the water transmission line between the Cosumnes River and Calero Reservoir.

A recording of the Improvement Committee meeting has been posted on the district's website. The meeting minutes also will be posted and included in the packet before the Nov. 20 board meeting (after press time).

The Improvements Committee is comprised of CSD Directors Randy Jenco and Martin Pohll, Operations Director Eric Houston, General Manager Mimi Morris and other staff. The committee looks at infrastructure issues in depth and makes recommendations to the entire board.

Pipeline Discussion

Houston kicked off the discussion by explaining that CSD had received a request to direct \$30,000 from its Water Supply Augmentation Reserve Funds to pay for a formal analysis of the viability of connecting with the Sacramento County Water Agency (SCWA) to provide an additional source of water for the community.

Houston said that the community currently relies on a single source of water although the district is approaching 3,000 water connections. For districts with fewer than 3,000 connections, California SB552 mandates having two sources of water by 2027, which could mean both a primary and a secondary source or an emergency option.

"The proposal from staff," Houston added, "is that we move forward with a water modeling study by the SCWA as a possible alternative source of treated drinking water."

The proposal spurred discussion. Jenco confirmed with Morris that she wanted the proposal to go before the board. Houston also clarified, "The study would be modeling, not a preliminary design."

Pohll raised a point about alternative options, suggesting that the \$30,000 could potentially fund other projects that might yield more water. "You need to say which is most feasible and then do a study to see if feasible," Pohll argued.

Jenco disagreed.

"I don't know how you decide what's the best option to go after unless you have all the facts in front of you," he responded. "And how do you have all the facts in front of you unless you start pursuing some of this stuff and get into the nuts and bolts of how this is going to happen and what it's going to cost? That \$30,000 is to find out if it is feasible, how much it would cost."

Pohll countered, "You can't pursue all of them at one time, because you're going to run out of money. For instance, with a well, you have to commission someone to go deeper and see if that's feasible."

Houston reiterated the necessity of the study for long-term resilience. "The district currently only has one primary source of water and some storage, but that poses a significant risk if there's an event on the river or with that treatment facility," he explained.

The study would be low-cost, "giving us a little further step forward in risk and resiliency, where we feel that we have

safety and security with our water supply, Houston said. "This is a finished treated water source, and it's very common for entities to have a multiple emergency connection types."

Pohll asked Houston if it would cost more than \$10 million to construct a pipeline. Houston said it would but described the \$30,000 study as a worthwhile investment to clarify potential options.

Jenco underscored the need to investigate every possibility, saying, "It has to be the board's number one priority to find more water." He expressed hope that the staff was exploring other options, including the costs of drilling new wells and statutory requirements to use Clementia Reservoir.

Houston mentioned other possible options, such as groundwater banking and water wheeling, emphasizing that "pushing those decisions further and further down the road only makes them more and more expensive, especially with rising construction and infrastructure costs," he said. "I think the first time we have a large water outage; people will be unpleasantly surprised by what that looks like."

Further cost considerations came into play. Pohll asked about the estimated costs of wells, to which Houston responded that each well could cost about \$5 million—excluding water treatment and integration into the system. The cost for three would be \$15 million. Per the draft IWMP, they wouldn't produce large volumes of water and would only provide an emergency supply.

Morris clarified that the pipeline was not considered in the draft IWMP nor was groundwater recharge.

She mentioned a recent Sloughhouse Resource Conservation meeting, saying, "They were saying, 'Give us your excess, and then we'll give it back to you when you need it,'" Morris reported. "I do think looking at all the alternatives is responsible."

Houston noted that the SCWA study would model the feasibility of delivering the necessary volume, but Pohll pointed

out the spending \$30,000 won't tell the district how much it would cost.

Morris told him when she first called SCWA, she was given a ballpark pipeline cost of \$12 to \$15 million.

"They just threw it out there," she said. "But that is in (cost) range of the wells.."

Jenco referenced an article from the Business Journal about Reynan and Bartis's plans to develop 5,000 homes at Grant Line Road and Sunrise Boulevard.

"This is not like pie-in-the-sky stuff. They're moving this way," he pointed out.

Houston confirmed that SCWA had a substantial water right of 100 million gallons per day. He also said that contractual negotiations for supply options could potentially follow the study.

The committee discussion concluded with Jenco recommending "Let's move it to the board," with Pohll agreeing, "I think this is weighty enough that the whole board needs to weigh in."

Public comments

In public comments, Keil, the developer of the Residences subdivision, said he was the one who initially reached out to CSD about the potential pipeline connection. He noted that SCWA planned to extend services to Grant Line, with possible reimbursement if a developer were to bring the line further.

"Since developers are paying augmentation fees," Keil argued, "it would be inconceivable that the district wouldn't direct money they've collected to try to find out exactly what it would take to get water out here, no matter how much it costs."

Keil concluded by asking, "Wouldn't everybody want to know whether we could get water from the water agency down the street to protect Rancho Murieta forever?"

Not everyone was in favor. Board member-elect John Merchant voiced his opposition. "It's not consistent with our master plan, which really shows us as a self-contained community," he said.

Nor should the district spend \$30,000 "for somebody to tell us, well, maybe we don't have an appropriate right to give you the water," Merchant said. ★

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Grant Funding Aims to Restore and Protect Thriving Forest Ecosystems



Prescribed fire is used as a tool to manage healthy forests. Photo courtesy of CAL FIRE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is announcing the availability of up to \$70 million in funding for projects aimed at improving forest health across the state. CAL FIRE is soliciting applications for projects that work to proactively prevent catastrophic wildfires and restore forests to healthy, functioning ecosystems while also sequestering carbon and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Applications will be accepted from Nov. 13 and are due by no later than 3 p.m. Jan. 15, 2025. "We know this work

makes a difference both in forest health and wildfire resilience and that is why CAL FIRE is proud to have awarded over \$700 million in Forest Health grant funding since 2017," said Chief Matthew Reischman, Deputy Director of Resource Management. "This Forest Health grant funding supports sustainable land management practices, reforestation efforts, promotes a healthier ecosystem, and ensures that future generations can enjoy and benefit from California's natural resources."

The Forest Health Program funds active restoration and reforestation activities aimed at providing for more resilient and sustained forests. This ensures the future existence of forests in

California while also mitigating climate change, protecting communities from fire risk, strengthening rural economies, and improving California's water and air.

A virtual pre-recorded workshop will be made available to explain the grant process and requirements.

Please check the Forest Health webpage at www.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/grants/forest-health to view the workshop.

Any questions can be directed to ForestHealth@fire.ca.gov.

Projects that receive funding from the Forest Health grant program are designed to complement the California Forest Carbon Plan, California's Natural and Working Lands Implementation

Plan, California's Wildfire & Forest Resilience Action Plan, California's Strategic Plan for Expanding the Use of Beneficial Fire, and AB 32 Climate Change Scoping Plan.

The Forest Health grant program is part

of California Climate Investments, a statewide program that puts billions of cap-and-trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment,

particularly in disadvantaged communities.

Projects will reduce the risks to California's forests from extreme disturbance events including catastrophic wildfires, drought, disease, and pest mortality. ★

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RM Voting Center Stays Busy on Election Day



Choosing to cast their ballots in person or to drop off their mail-in ballots, voters streamed into the Rancho Murieta Vote Center at the CSD Building on Election Day, Nov. 5. In this photo, Julia Jonas carefully fills out her ballot in a voting booth. Photo by Gail Bullen

Sheriff's Office Reports Improved Response Times to RM

Continued from page 1

Cordova contracts with the Sheriff's Office for police services inside the city limits. Tamayo, a captain with the sheriff's office, is the East Division commander and chief of police for the Rancho Cordova Police Department. "So I have two titles, one job," he said.

Tamayo said the proposal to transition Rancho Murieta and Sloughhouse into the Eastern Division came from Capt. Vanessa Vaden, the South Division commander, about eight months ago. "The question was: 'Why are deputies coming from so far away when your division is so much closer,'" he recalled.

After considering the positives, including the community's low volume of calls, and the negatives, including an increased workload for the East Division, they quietly implemented a trial period in May.

Since the East Division began answering calls, "It has increased our workload by about 5%, which is something we could easily manage," Tamayo said.

The main advantage for residents has been the decrease in response times. Asked to elaborate, Tamayo said that deputies are typically patrolling the East Division and aren't coming from the police station when dispatched to a call in Rancho Murieta. "It depends on the time of day and the type of call because sometimes we come with lights and sirens," he said. "I can't give you the exact figure. But it is probably 50 to 60% better, and we are working on that."

The trial period statistics also revealed a decrease in calls for service. "This community has got to have the lowest calls for service in the entire county," Tamayo remarked.

Although Rancho Murieta has some property crime, which is always unacceptable, the numbers remain relatively low. "Overall this is a very safe community," he said.

Asked about East Division patrol staffing, Tamayo said the top managers and supervisors - three lieutenants and six sergeants have double duties at both agencies. However, 24 patrol positions are solely dedicated to the East Division. Other staff includes two Problem-Oriented Police officers



Few attend the community meeting held at the RMA Building. Photos by Gail Bullen

and a community service officer who deals with parking.

Speaking after the meeting, Tamayo said the transition into the East Division had only received official approval a week earlier. The first component was securing approval from the Chief of Patrol Services. The second was "looking over the data over the course of an extended period of time to make sure it made sense," he said.

POP officers

Deputy Joe Gordon and Sgt. Mike McCoy, both Problem-Oriented Police officers, shared some of their experiences inside the community. Gordon said residents have probably seen him "creeping around the community in his unmarked black car" in the four weeks he has been on the job. He has handled only one complaint in the Village. But when he "poked his head in at sheriff's service center" inside the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Building, he learned about some graffiti at Calero Reservoir. He photographed it and sent it to the gang division.

Gordon told the audience that the easiest way to reach the POP program for a long-term public safety issue that affects residents in their day-to-day life would be to email EastPOP@Sacsheriff.com.

Tamayo encouraged residents who see more urgent issues such as a suspicious person or a car to immediately notify the sheriff's office. "You would be surprised how many cases we can solve or can intervene before something becomes a crime, based on citizen calls," he said.

McCoy said a case in point was a recent call about a suspicious person



CHP Officer Alan Stevens explains how other gated communities have handled traffic enforcement.

hanging out by Tractor Supply. When a deputy contacted the man, he discovered he was wanted on seven warrants with \$3.5 million bail.

"It was pretty petty stuff, all misdemeanors like drug possession and trespassing," McCoy said. "I'm guessing that he missed court and really pissed off the judge."

McCoy added that he would investigate a tip regarding a homeless encampment near the airport.

Sheriff's volunteers

Tamayo and Lisa Gerber, who manages the Kilgore Service Center in Rancho Cordova, addressed the re-opening of the sheriff's service center in Rancho Murieta. It is currently being operated by two Volunteers in Partnership with the Sheriff (VIPS) with a third in training.

Tamayo credited Vaden and Lt. Reid Harris with

the South Division for bringing the program back to the community.

Two VIPS are presently working four hours every Monday, either taking reports or providing information inside the CSD office or patrolling the community. Gerber said they are recruiting more VIPS at 916-874-7339 or volunteer@sacsheriff.com.

In the meantime, Rancho Murieta residents can phone the Kilgore Service Center to get help from volunteers to file online reports or answer questions. It is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. She also noted that the Rancho Murieta Service Center phone number, 916-875-2962, rolls over to the Kilgore Center when not answered.

Kitman Likes, the crime prevention specialist for both entities, also introduced herself. She said she could help the community set up a Neighborhood



Sergeant Michael McCoy, a Problem-Oriented Policing officer, shares an engaging story about a warrant arrest in Rancho Murieta. The bail on the warrants was \$3.5 million.

Watch program. She also can process letters of agency for businesses. Once signed, the letter gives the sheriff's office the authority to cite trespassers without the owner and manager being present.

Stevens said the general answer was "no" because Rancho Murieta is a private community although CHP respond to misdemeanors such as driving under the influence. However, when Stevens worked at the Placerville CHP office, he sometimes conducted

traffic enforcement inside gated communities that had contracted with the CHP to provide that service with off-duty officers. Stevens offered to put Hart in contact with the right person.

Hart explained that after the association's professional lidar cameras document violations, RMA can only issue citations to residents and their guests. The daunting problem is the other two-thirds of the speeding drivers over which the association has no jurisdiction. Those speeders are primarily contractors and vendors, particularly Amazon drivers.

Speeding

RMA compliance has been able to get speeding school buses to slow down, but Hart hasn't had any success with Amazon. "From mid-January until now, there have been about 9,000 violations in our small little community with really excessive speeds," Hart said.

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Other questions

Audience member Mike Martel asked about homelessness, saying he believes it is moving into the community from Amador County and Sacramento. Tamayo said being in a private community has a silver lining. "If they come in here, we can remove them immediately," he said. Tamayo also went into detail about Rancho Cordova's collaborative approach to homelessness which seems to be more successful than those in other cities.

Martel also asked Tamayo about identifying sex offenders in the community. After checking an app on his phone, Tamayo said it showed three in the community. However, he said the best source would be the California Megan's Law Website. ★

Rancho Murieta Women's Golf Club Hosts Past Captains

GOLF SCORES

By Nancy Clevenger

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - On Oct. 22, the Rancho Murieta Women's Golf Club (RMWGC) hosted its annual Captain/Past Captains tournament and luncheon.

This event honors all past RMWGC captains and is hosted by the current RMWGC captain.

RMWGC has had a captain every year since 1975, with several captains serving multiple years.

There were 16 past captains in attendance at lunch:

Beverly Brown (1995), Connie Heimbecker (1998), E. Jane White (2000, 2002), Margaret Niederberger (2001), Sally Davis (2004), Doris Hanson (2005), Liz Stenstrom (2007), Marilyn Laver (2008), Diane Raggio (2009), Melinda Frost (2010), Mardi Bryant (2012), Judy Candlish (2013), El Louise Waldron (2016), Patty Favero (2019), Joanna Graf (2022) and Georgella Burnette-Ellis (2023).

Prior to lunch there was a tournament. The format was one best ball on odd holes and two best balls on even holes. In addition to Captain Melody Hayes, 10 past captains also competed.

The winners were announced at lunch:

Flight 1:

First Place — Lucia Choi, Alison Gomez, Patty Jenco, Therese Yannuzzi

Flight 2:

First Place — Georgella Burnette-Ellis,



Seated, from left, are Diane Raggio, Judy Candlish, Melinda Frost, Mardi Bryant, Marilyn Laver and Beverly Brown. Standing, from left, are Doris Hanson, Georgella Burnette-Ellis, Melody Hayes, El Louise Waldron, Connie Heimbecker, Margaret Niederberger, E. Jane White, Sally Davis and Patty Favero. Photo courtesy of RMWGC

Second Place — Melody Hayes, Bonnie Shewchuk, Jan Valine, Carla Zuehlke
Third Place — Sue Clark, Marlene Duncan, Patty Favero, Ashlye Shields

Nancy Clevenger, Vicki Fargo, Denice Murk-Kilgour

Second Place — Joanna Graf, Catherine Silvera, Charlene Steving, Pat Valdez

Third Place — Margaret Niederberger, Alicia Newman, Liz Stenstrom, Melissa Stepanick

There was a great turnout for the event with over 60 ladies attending.

In addition to a wonderful lunch, there was much laughter and reminiscing.

By all accounts a good time was had by all, and roses were in order to honor all of our past captains. ★

MLB's Athletics Announce 2025 Regular Season Home Game Times

Athletics News Release

WEST SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - First pitch of the A's inaugural game at Sutter Health Park in West Sacramento will take place at 7:05 p.m. on Monday, March 31, as the Athletics take on the Chicago Cubs.

Across the 81-game home slate, the A's will play 60 night games, including 25 of their 28 games in June and July. Eleven of the A's 21 total day games will be played in April and May, with only six Sunday

day games scheduled from June through August. Night games begin at 7:05 p.m.

The home schedule features matchups against eight National League clubs, including the San Diego Padres (April 7-9), New York Mets (April 11-13), Philadelphia Phillies (May 23-25), San Francisco Giants (July 4-6), Atlanta Braves (July 8-10), Arizona Diamondbacks (Aug. 1-3), and Cincinnati Reds (Sept. 12-14).

The A's will play at home for three

popular summer holidays, taking on the New York Yankees on Mother's Day (May 11), the Phillies over Memorial Day Weekend (May 23-25), and the Giants on Independence Day (July 4).

The A's will share Sutter Health Park with the Sacramento River Cats. MLB and MiLB have coordinated home schedules to accommodate both teams, ensuring that there are no instances in which both teams play at home on the same day.

The 60 home night games would tie the

1968 A's for the most in a season in franchise history.

A's season tickets for 2025 are on sale now and will be released in phases.

Current A's season ticket holders will be notified when seats comparable to their 2024 plan are available to purchase.

Fans who have placed a season ticket deposit will be notified based on priority when tickets are available for purchase. Single-game tickets will go on sale in early 2025. ★

Rancho Murieta Country Club

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Contact: Chantil Russo (916) 354-3421
crusso@ranchomurieta.com

Kings Korner
By V.G. Harris

The Sacramento Kings were 2-2 in the past week, but that doesn't begin to tell the tale.

Beginning with a disappointing 116-96 loss to the San Antonio Spurs and concluding with a thrilling 121-117 win over the Utah Jazz, the Sac Town ballers had an up and down week that ended on a high note.

Sadly, injuries played a role, sidelining big man Domantas Sabonis and newcomer all-star DeMar DeRozan, both with lower back issues.

In between the Spurs and the Jazz, saw the Kings take a tough overtime loss to a talented Minnesota Timberwolves team, and win decisively over the Phoenix Suns by the score of 127-104.

The real story of the week was none other than the offensive show put on by point guard DeAaron Fox, who scored a total of 109 points in back-to-back games against the Timberwolves and the Utah Jazz.

Setting a Sacramento Kings scoring record, DeAaron put the team on his back against the Timberwolves, scoring 60 points and shattering his previous personal record. Just one game later, with Malik Monk, DeMar DeRozan, and Domantas Sabonis sidelined with injuries, Fox backed up his 60-point performance with 49 more, this time in a win over the Jazz.

Thanks to the offensive explosion of DeAaron Fox, the Kings now have a player in the top ten in scoring. DeAaron is currently #6 in the NBA in scoring, and remarkably the Kings are the only team in the NBA to feature three players with a scoring average of 20 points or higher per game.

In addition to raising his scoring average, DeAaron is fifth in the league in steals, averaging 1.8 per game. I look for Fox to challenge the top spot in steals as the season wears on.

Overall, the Kings are off to an 8-6 start, and most pundits and fans alike are well aware that their record could be decidedly better.

It took a few games for DeRozan to become completely comfortable with his teammates, and that should be taken for granted.

Since the first few games, DeMar has been the perfect fit, and teams are having a difficult time trying to figure out who the go-to player is going to be. The Kings are spreading the boy to everyone on the court including Keegan Murray, who has had an up and down start to the season as it relates to scoring.

Keegan has made a noticeable move forward as he has focused on rebounding and improving his defensive efficiency.

Domantas continues to rebound with ferocity, and the rebounding champion of the past two seasons, is currently #2 in the NBA behind big man Nikola Jokic.

Nursing a sore back, Sabonis is on the sidelines, and with nothing definite coming from the Kings organization, Domantas is day to day.

So, what kind of a report card should the Kings receive as they play in their 15th game against the Atlanta Hawks on Monday night.

I give the team a solid B, considering the addition of DeMar DeRozan and understanding it takes time for a starting five to jell.

Let's not forget the energy and scoring punch that Malik Monk brings to this team, and the sooner we see Malik back in action, the better off the Kings will be. Reportedly, Malik has a week to go before he'll be ready for any hardwood action.

Sadly, after witnessing what I consider to be one of the worst officiating seasons in the past 50 years last season, the zebras were back to their old ways Saturday night and were it not for Kings ability to challenge two horrific calls by the referees, the Kings would have likely lost to the Utah Jazz.

I have no answer for what the NBA needs to do, but clearly the officiating is sadly lacking in quality, and this has not always been the case.

I credit the NBA with putting challenges into the mix, but there is still more that needs to be done.

Meanwhile, keep the faith Kings fans. This team is showing a lot of bright spots, so let's get everyone healthy and see if the Sac Town boys can get on a winning streak!

All the best Kings fans!
Your thoughts are always welcome at vgharriskingsfan@gmail.com. ★

Village Craft Fair Becomes Christmas Shopping Mecca



Early Christmas shoppers looking for unique presents found themselves in paradise at the annual Murieta Village Craft Fair and Bake Sale on Nov. 2. In photo left, Addie Shepherd admires artwork created by Village resident Tamsen Fox. In photo right, Village Crafters Sandy Weber, left, and Julie Wilder watch as customer Melanie Kramer checks out a colorful muffer. This event serves as the primary fundraiser for the Murieta Village Social Committee. Proceeds are dedicated to organizing memorial services in the clubhouse for residents who have passed away and to purchase clubhouse amenities and equipment. Photos by Gail Bullen

Donnelly To Be Honored as Wilton Parade Marshal

By Patsy Nemetz

Patsy Nemetz is the chair of the Sacramento County Service Area 4B Council, known informally as the Cosumnes Parks & Rec Council. The council is presenting the Wilton Winter Festival on Dec. 7.

WILTON, CA (MPG) - Some people leave their mark on a community. In Wilton, we have an annual event, the Wilton Winter Festival and Parade, which presents us with the opportunity to recognize those among us who have shaped this area we know and love. This year, the Grand Marshal of the Wilton Parade will be our very own Corky Donnelly, who is best known for managing Sheldon Feed & Supply for around 40 years. His steadfast commitment to helping others has made a real difference in our community for generations.

The beginning:

Corky Donnelly was born in 1950 and spent his early years in Oakdale, Calif. — the “Cowboy Capital of the World.” He was one of six children and, at the age of 15, began working at Oakdale Feed and Seed, started by his father the year Corky was born. Over the years, the business consisted of multiple Northern California feed stores and in 1962 Sheldon Feed was added to the list. Corky worked afternoons and weekends at Oakdale Feed and Seed through high school, then attended Modesto Junior College. Upon graduation from MJC, Corky went to work full time for his father; the only one of the six children to take on the family business. When asked what made him want to be involved in the feed business, he answered frankly, “I love it. It’s as simple as that.”

On Family:

Corky married his wife, Teena, in 1980 and in 1981 welcomed the first of their four children. In 1982, with a tiny daughter in tow, Corky and Teena came to Sheldon Feed to relieve the manager during a medical leave. When the manager did not return, Corky and Teena took over the operation with Teena and the baby in the office doing the books and Corky manning the store. Forty-something years later, Corky is still at the helm with Teena by his side. He says, “Teena has been my partner the whole time.” They are “partners for life.”

As the family grew, the hard work continued. The Donnellys worked a lot, raised the kids, and were involved a variety of activities. There were years of soccer games and countless 4-H and FFA projects that kept them busy. At one point, their sheep project included 30 ewes. Corky recounted that every year, without fail, there would be lambs that needed bottle feeding. The kids would put diapers on the lambs and raised them in the house. Corky and Teena chuckled as they reminisced about the lambs jumping into their laps and sleeping in bed with the kids.

Because they worked a lot, they didn’t take lavish vacations. The Donnellys enjoyed taking the family on camping trips into the mountains to hike and fish. They loved it when the kids got older and would bring their friends out to Wilton to enjoy the country life, having barbecues, fishing and enjoying campfires out back. The couple has always loved the outdoors and Mother Nature and still try to spend time outdoors hiking, camping, fishing and hunting whenever possible. As they reflected on the times raising their



Corky Donnelly, the longtime operator of Sheldon Feed & Seed, is to be the grand marshal in the Wilton Winter Festival parade on Dec. 7. File photo by Gail Bullen

children, Corky remarked with Teena’s agreement, “We cherish those times.”

And the Donnellys love their family traditions. Every year since Corky got his hunting license in 1961, they have gathered for the opening day of dove season on Sept. 1. For decades, they have hosted the event at their home, welcoming the family including all the kids, their spouses, and their six grandchildren.

On Wilton:

Arriving in Wilton in the early ’80s was strange for the Donnellys. They said their hometown of Oakdale felt much farther away than it seems now. They were struck by the lack of trees in the area (In the 80s, Wilton was mostly pastureland and poultry farming). “It really didn’t feel like an established community back then.” Their current neighborhood was a 100-acre field that produced corn in the summer and wheat in the winter.

But as time passed, neighborhoods began to develop, with many trees being planted which changed the landscape. Now, Corky and Teena enjoy their neighbors, who are also great friends. In addition to driving to the other houses in their golf carts to enjoy a meal together or to visit, they have many traditions. One of their favorites takes place during Christmastime, when they decorate their golf carts and take a fire pit to the end of the street. There, they light a fire and wait for the Wilton Firefighters to pass by with their fire truck adorned with holiday decorations, indulging them with a flash of lights and sirens at the fire in the fire pit.

On Business:

Since the Donnellys’ arrival at Sheldon Feed in 1982, they have made lasting friendships across generations of Wilton residents. From the old timers that told of a Grant Line Road with almost no cars, to the children of children coming in for 4-H project advice, there have been many great friendships. And the clientele has evolved over the years, which required Corky to be flexible and change with the times. Several decades ago, the customers were primarily large, commercial dairies, feedlots, and cattlemen; today it is mostly smaller ranchers. Corky has always been committed to changing with the community. Although he has passed the management of Sheldon Feed on to his son, Corky - at 74 years old - is still going to work every day and helping people (although

now it is usually one of their other stores, Robinson’s Feed in Lodi).

Corky is quite a storyteller and has no shortage of tales from his years at Sheldon Feed. As he recounted stories from the past, he was on his feet demonstrating how to coax a newborn calf to accept a bottle. He and Teena recalled the phone ringing in the middle of the night with customers needing advice; and how Corky slept all night with a 4-H person’s sick pig because the County Fair was the next day; and how Corky would keep the store open well past the stated hours on Christmas Eve so customers could finish their last minute shopping - as Teena and the kids waited in the car to go to their own family Christmas dinner. Corky says, “Honestly, I love helping people. It’s hard work, but people come into our stores with questions on how to raise animals, what to feed them, and how to care for them. I just very much enjoy helping people live this lifestyle. Always have.”

When asked about the changes Corky has seen over the years, he described the economic down cycles they have experienced. He feels we are in one now and has been through the process three or four times since he started in business. He says, “It’s always tough for about a year or two, then it slowly gets better. They come and go. It’ll get better.”

In Corky’s opinion, the most rewarding aspect of his business has been the customers. He says, “So many of the friends we have made were customers first.” Corky and Teena both describe their patrons from the community as friendly, quality, wholesome people. When reflecting on his career, Corky states, “It’s been a great lifestyle. We’ve worked hard, we’ve made a good living doing what we love to do - living the rural lifestyle.”

Favorite Memories:

When Corky was 16 or 17 years old, he became the community Santa Claus, dressing up in a costume purchased for him by the City of Oakdale. His dad would allow him a day or two off work to make his rounds. He visited the hospital first, starting around 5 p.m. to talk with the elderly people in their rooms and deliver a small gift.

Then he visited individual homes; the owners invited some of their neighbors in advance and left a bag of presents outside in the bushes, arranging for Corky to have a list of their kids’ names and gifts they



Corky and Teena Donnelly reflect on community changes over 40 years. Courtesy photo

had requested from Santa.

Corky’s routine was to throw pebbles on the roof to mimic reindeer hooves as he approached the house with a hearty, “Ho ho ho!” and calling out to his reindeer. The children would come to the door, amazed that Santa was there in person, and Corky would go in to deliver the gifts to the children and sing a few Christmas carols. He attempted to limit each visit to 20 minutes and still didn’t finish until around 1 a.m. His services became so popular that there were waiting lists for Santa and people from neighboring towns were requesting visits. Corky was the anonymous Oakdale Santa for 15 plus years until his daughter was born. When he finally decided to retire, there was an article on the front page of the Oakdale Leader dedicated to the loss of the City of Oakdale’s beloved Santa Claus.

On the Future:

The Donnellys have seen a lot of changes within our community over the years. Corky isn’t crazy about the idea of developers building thousands of homes, but he is happy to have witnessed the growth and development of the Wilton community. He has seen positive changes to the landscape with neighborhoods popping up all around. “We have a post office now, the Dillard Store has been remodeled and improved, and Dillard School has been remodeled and enlarged. We have a lot of stuff today we didn’t have 30 or 40 years ago,” he said.

And for anyone looking to make a positive impact, he advises, “Get involved.” He is excited about the community events we currently have; the Wilton Winter Festival included and would like to see more opportunities for the people of Wilton to get together.

Corky offered his perspective in the rear view: We have done a “lot of hard work, made a good living, we support the community and the community supports us. It’s been a wonderful ride.”

With any luck, Corky’s ride as Grand Marshal of the Wilton Winter Festival Parade will convey the gratitude of our community for the many years of diligent service he has provided.

Please join us at the Wilton Winter Festival and Parade on Dec. 7 at the Wilton Community Center. The event will include vendors, free crafts for kids between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m., a youth choir performance, the parade at noon, and free cookies and hot cocoa for the kids following the parade.

Parade applications and a schedule of events can be found on the Wilton Community Center Facebook page. We hope to see you there. ★