



**GM Pay Raise, Overdue Audits Are CSD Meeting Topics**

PAGE 4

**Game On! Event Draws Youngsters, Parents to CRES**



PAGE 2

# RIVER VALLEY TIMES

40TH YEAR • ISSUE 22

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DECEMBER 6, 2024

**SEE INSIDE**

**SUPERVISOR FROST BIDS FAREWELL**



PAGE 3

**THE SKY IS NOT FALLING**



PAGE 11

**BE TRULY THANKFUL**



*Spiritual Care*

PAGE 7

## Annual Tree Lighting Draws Crowd



Santa and Mrs. Claus welcome children during the annual Christmas tree lighting at Stonehouse Park on Nov. 29, sponsored by the RMA Recreation Committee. Photo by Gail Bullen

**By Gail Bullen**  
*River Valley Times Reporter*

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - The annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony at Stonehouse Park on Nov. 28 drew an enthusiastic crowd of children, parents and grandparents eager to visit with Santa.

This year, the Rancho Murieta Association Recreation Committee hosted the event for the first time, succeeding the Optimist Club of Rancho Murieta, which had

organized the cherished tradition for 20 years before disbanding earlier this year.

Highlights of the evening included appearances by Santa, Mrs. Claus, and the Christmas Elf, the lighting of the Christmas tree provided by the RMA, a lively performance by the Murieta Dance Company, seasonal treats, and cozy fire pits to ward off the chill.

Santa and Mrs. Claus made a grand entrance at 6 p.m., arriving in style aboard a Sacramento Metropolitan

Fire District engine with lights flashing and sirens blaring.

After arriving at the plaza, Santa led the excited crowd in a countdown that culminated in the glowing illumination of the Christmas tree and other festive holiday decorations.

Taking his place on his throne, Santa welcomed the first set of siblings in a long line of children and families eager to share their Christmas wishes.

This marked the third year RMA

*Continued on page 12*

## Pohll Lauded for CSD Service

**By Gail Bullen**  
*River Valley Times Reporter*

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - Director Marin Pohll was recognized for his four years of dedicated service to the community and district during the Rancho Murieta Community Services District meeting on Nov. 20. Pohll was attending his final meeting as a board member, having chosen not to seek re-election.



**Martin Pohll** joined the CSD board in 2020. Photo by Gail Bullen

After Board President Tim Maybee read a formal resolution commending Pohll's leadership and commitment, other board members reflected on his contributions.

Director Randy Jenco said the biggest issue at every meeting since he joined the board has been the district's "screwed-up" finances. Jenco acknowledged an earlier comment from an audience member blaming previous staff but noted, "That wasn't absolutely true."

Jenco said, "It was like the blind leading the blind" until Pohll brought his common sense and financial knowledge, joined the Finance Committee and started to ask questions. "We didn't even know we had a problem," Jenco said. "We are where we are today, 90% for what you did when you came onto the board."

Director Linda Butler, who has known Pohll for many years, expressed her gratitude. "I just want to thank you for your service," she said.

Director Steve Booth, appointed to the board recently, said he hadn't always agreed with Pohll on the issues. "But you have always been thoughtful in your approach to issues, and you have always been respectful," Booth said. "Probably more so than I have been sometimes. So, I want to thank you for that."

Maybee praised Pohll for his maturity. "The community doesn't know what they're losing," he said.

Pohll, Jenco and Maybee served on the Rancho Murieta Association Board before running for the CSD Board in 2018. Pohll lost to Butler in that election but was appointed to fill a vacancy in 2020. Former Director John Merchant will succeed Pohll, as Merchant and Booth were the only candidates to file for the two vacant seats. ★

## Frost Town Hall Covers Evacuation Gates



Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost comments at the Rancho Murieta Regional Fire Safe Council at a town hall meeting held at the RMA Building on Nov. 16. Joining her were past and current council members, from left, John Merchant, John Long, Greg Pryor, Dave Rhodes and Cheryl McElhany. Photo by Gail Bullen

**By Gail Bullen**  
*River Valley Times Reporter*

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - When Rancho Murieta residents were given the chance to weigh in on a proposal to automate two remote gates on the north and south for evacuation purposes, only 30 attended the discussion.

The proposal was the focus of the second half of a town hall hosted by retiring Sacramento County

Supervisor Sue Frost at the RMA Building on Nov. 16. Frost opened the meeting by highlighting recent county initiatives and introducing her successor, Rosario Rodriguez, who also addressed the audience.

Frost opened the second hour by reflecting on her years of collaboration with the Rancho Murieta Fire Safe Council to enhance community safety. She highlighted their achievements and praised the

all-volunteer group, calling them a valuable asset to the community.

Frost noted that using two remote gates during emergency evacuations was the only unresolved issue before she retires.

"There's a difference of opinion regarding the gates and whether they should have automatic gates," she said. "The fire safe council feels automated locks would be the safest, and RMA feels there could be a potential danger if

you have automated gates without someone managing the traffic."

The Fire Safe Council has long advocated the automation of the Escuela Gate on the north side and the Bent Grass Court gates on the south, allowing them to be opened alongside the two main gates during an emergency evacuation.

Under the council's proposal, the incident commander or their designee

*Continued on page 11*



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# Game On! Event Draws Youngsters, Parents To CRES



Five-year-old James Coon prepares for a miniature golf swing while his father, Jared Coon, watches. Both participated in the "Game On! Sons & Dates Fun Night" sponsored by the Cosumnes River Elementary PTA on Nov. 16. Photos by Gail Bullen

By Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times  
Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - It was all about the boys on Nov. 16, when the Cosumnes River Elementary PTA hosted "Game On! Sons & Dates Fun Night Out" at the school.

The biggest attraction of the evening was a virtual video game truck parked on the playground. Equally popular was a glow-in-the-dark golf course set up in the library. Other activities included sports stations for throwing footballs, shooting basketballs, and playing miniature golf inside the multi-purpose room. An outdoor pickleball station also drew players, who braved the unexpected cold weather without trouble.

Dinner was another highlight, featuring Italian food from Olive Garden, pizzas from Go Fore restaurant, and decadent desserts like chocolate mousse and tiramisu.

In recent years, the PTA began organizing mother-son events as a counterpart to the long-running father-daughter dances. PTA organizer Lizzeth Delgadillo explained that they changed the name this year



Davis Lindner loads his plate with Olive Garden pasta at the dinner, which also included pizza and dessert.

to make the events more inclusive for the adults accompanying the youngsters. Not only did this year's all-boy event bring in some fathers, but it also gave some mothers the night off, she said.

The annual father-daughter dance, scheduled for February, has also been renamed to "Daughters and Dates" to reflect the reality that brothers and grandfathers sometimes step in as father figures.

Delgadillo's initial idea for the boys' event was an arcade with sports stations. However, her husband, Johnny Delgadillo, suggested adding video games to make it even more appealing. After

researching options, she brought in a mobile truck with virtual video games, where a dozen boys rotated in and out every 20 minutes.

Looking ahead, she plans to have kids sign up for time slots to avoid long waits. "I also will look into more options for better games," she said.

Delgadillo introduced another exciting activity for this year's event—a miniature golf obstacle course inside the library. To create a virtual reality effect, she lit the course with a black light and painted small barricades and arches with reflective paint.

Her husband suggested

another good idea: borrowing putters from Rancho Murieta Country Club. Club Professional Brian Little not only agreed but also designed an improved course and added some neon touches of his own.

"The kids just loved it, and we are going to build it even better next year," Delgadillo said.

Equipment for the football and basketball stations came from PTA President Courtney Reid, who supplied items from her home. For the miniature golf game, Delgadillo purchased a Velcro target so kids could see exactly where their balls landed. She also created a balloon-decorated photo



Parent River Benavides Sr. steadies an inflatable football target for his son, River Benavides Jr.



Youngsters enjoy video games inside a virtual reality truck parked on the playground.



Katie Coon plays a game of basketball with her son, James.



Teacher Jen Harder snaps an image of Jack Neahr with his mother, Morgan Kilgour, at an outdoor photo booth.

booth for snapshots. Volunteers played a key role in making the event a success. PTA Board members served dinner, several fathers monitored the games, and sixth-grade girls staffed the sign-in table under the supervision of teachers Vandy Passmore and Jen Harder. Additionally, two Pleasant Grove High School students who had assisted at the Harvest Festival returned to earn more community service credit, along with Delgadillo's nephew, a student at Elk Grove High School. "I think we are going to keep this as an event. We will continue to grow and improve it to make it even more exciting for them," Delgadillo said. ★

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# Retiring Supervisor Frost Bids Farewell to RM

# CHP Receives Grant to Combat Distracted Driving

**California Highway Patrol News Release**

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - The California Highway Patrol (CHP) is proud to announce it received a \$350,000 grant to address the growing issue of distracted driving on California roads.

Distracted driving remains a leading cause of traffic crashes across the state, with drivers often diverting their attention from the road to activities such as using mobile devices, eating or drinking, adjusting vehicle controls or engaging in conversations with passengers. Even a brief distraction can lead to severe crashes, injuries or fatalities.

To tackle this critical issue, the CHP will engage communities statewide through educational presentations, participation

in local events, enforcement operations and social media.

This comprehensive strategy emphasizes education and enforcement to reduce incidences of distracted driving. Education helps foster a safety culture on the road, while enforcement is a necessary deterrent to dangerous behavior.

“Every driver needs to recognize the serious dangers associated with distracted driving. Each time you look away from the road, even for a moment, you put yourself, your passengers and others at great risk,” said CHP Commissioner Sean Duryee.

Funding for this program is provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. ★



Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost concludes her final visit to Rancho Murieta on a bittersweet note during her town hall meeting at the RMA Building on Nov. 16. In photo above, Virgil Flores expresses gratitude to Frost for her responsiveness to the community. In photo right, Frost poses with residents who signed a banner acknowledging her dedication. “It’s been an honor and a privilege to serve your community and your district,” Frost said. She and husband Jack Frost are retiring to the Ozarks in Arkansas, where they have purchased 15 acres along a river. Frost served two terms as supervisor. Photos by Gail Bullen



# County Property Tax Due Dec. 10

**Sacramento County News Release**

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - The deadline for paying the first installment of your 2024-2025 Sacramento County property taxes is coming up shortly. Payments are due no later than Dec. 10. Late payments will incur a 10% penalty for each tax bill and partial payments are not accepted.

Payment must be received in the Tax Collector’s Office by 5 p.m. Dec. 10 or either be postmarked or paid through the county website at [eproptax.saccounty.gov](http://eproptax.saccounty.gov) by Dec. 10.

The Tax Collector also reminds property owners to include the appropriate installment payment stub from the tax bill or website, or write the parcel number of the property on the check being submitted

to make sure that you receive proper credit for the payment.

Payment can be mailed to P.O. Box 508, Sacramento, CA 95812-0508. Be sure to mail your payment early enough to ensure a timely postmark and avoid penalties.

Property taxes can be paid by online e-check or credit card through Sacramento County’s Property Tax Bill Information System or over the telephone at 1-844-430-2823, using the 14-digit parcel number. Credit card payments are processed by a contractor and a 2.29% convenience fee will be applied if you elect to pay the annual property tax bill using this method. This convenience fee is not revenue to the county. There is no fee to make a payment via e-check.

To avoid penalties, transactions made

either on the internet or over the telephone must be completed before midnight on the payment pay by date. Plan ahead and do not wait until the last minute to make your payment. If you are unable to get through on the internet or telephone, causing you to miss the payment deadline, penalties will not be waived.

Verify your data entry very carefully when making online payments. If your payment is rejected by your financial institution for any reason, you will be charged a return payment fee as well as penalties if your payment is rejected after the due date.

If you use your bank’s Online Bill Pay service, a paper check will be printed and mailed to the Tax Collector. Because the check is sent without a payment stub,

enter the parcel number, current year’s bill number and installment being paid in the online account number field for payment identification.

Be sure you are familiar with your bank’s online bill pay processing timelines. The Tax Collector uses the date appearing on the check from your bank’s Payment Processing Center as the payment date. Online bill pay checks dated after the due date will be returned for penalty without exception.

If you have not received a tax bill, you can obtain information and payment stubs at the Tax Collector’s website or by contacting the Tax Collector’s Office at 916-874-6622.

Failure to receive a tax bill does not relieve the property owner of their liability to pay taxes in a timely manner or give the Tax Collector reason to cancel penalties imposed for late payment. ★

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# GM Pay Raise, Overdue Audits Are CSD Meeting Topics



Board President Tim Maybee and Director Steve Booth express differing opinions on the proposed pay increase.

By Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times  
Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - A proposed pay raise for the general manager and overdue audits sparked significant debate during the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board meeting on Nov. 20.

Additional agenda items included approval of a new security budget, which will fund a new patrol position by raising barcode fees. The board also recognized Director Marty Pohl for his service, as he attended his final meeting after opting not to seek reelection.

Other actions included granting staff permission to apply for federal matching funds for projects such as new water meter technology capable of detecting hidden leaks and an initial discussion on increasing developer fees.

For more details, see the story on Page 5.

## GM Pay Raise

President Tim Maybee opened the discussion on a pay raise for General Manager Mimi Morris by noting the receipt of eight form letters from residents opposing the increase. He then asked if any board member wished to make a motion.

Director Randy Jenco provided context before presenting his motion. He explained that in January, the board had reached a general consensus to grant Morris a 10% raise, but due to a technical issue, only 5.5% was implemented. Jenco then moved to approve a 4.5% increase, retroactive to January.

Morris was initially hired at a salary of \$194,180. The first raise increased her pay to \$204,838, and the proposed adjustment would raise it to \$213,576.

Director Steve Booth stated that he “forcefully” opposed the motion for two main reasons. First, he argued that the board had not followed its established policy, which required a performance evaluation of the general manager starting in January. Second, he said the general manager was not performing satisfactorily in many areas.

“The prime objective when we hired this GM was to get these delinquent audits done, and they are not done,” he said.

While Morris and Director of Administration and Finance Mark Matulich have explained the audit process was

more challenging than anticipated, Booth said, “Unfortunately, a lot of those excuses sound like a lot of the excuses we have heard from prior staff. While I believe they are making progress, I also believe they are spending a lot of time on initiatives that are not necessarily of prime importance to the board.”

Booth further expressed concerns about the general manager’s adherence to state and federal laws, citing either her actions or inactions as problematic.

“I think there is a tendency to sometimes provide less than accurate and honest information,” he said.

Director Linda Butler concurred with Booth’s opposition to the pay increase, stating that Morris had not met the board’s expectations and was promoting projects that she believed would not benefit the community.

Director Martin Pohl, however, expressed a “completely different view” of the general manager’s performance.

“I think she is doing a good job,” he said. “We hired the best candidate we could get when we hired her, and she has lived up to those expectations from my standpoint.”

Pohl also suggested the board should recognize Morris and Matulich for their progress on the audits, saying they deserved commendation for getting as far as they have.

Maybee began his comments by stating, “I can only go off of what the GM is producing for us.”

He explained that before Morris joined the district, the board had approved contracting with the Punn Group to address the district’s financial issues and prepare for the audits.

“For everyone’s edification, it was the only audit firm that was willing to assist us,” Maybee said. “And we were paying them north of \$100,000 a year.”

When Morris assessed the situation, she described the task as “monumental” but assured the board she had the knowledge and skills to navigate the district through the audit process without relying on the Punn Group.

“It may have taken longer because we didn’t have the resources of that audit firm,” Maybee said. “But at 18-plus months into this, we are obviously a couple hundred thousand dollars ahead.”

District records show that the Punn Group invoices for 2022 and 2023 came to \$220,534.

While he shared Booth’s frustration over the delayed audits, Maybee concluded that the situation ultimately came down to a cost-benefit analysis.

## Audience Comments

During public comments, resident Brian Rosebrock expressed outrage that, since the first audit took a year and a half to complete, the remaining three audits might take as long as four and a half years.

“That is absolutely inaccurate,” Morris responded. “We have said we will be done with 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 by May of 2025.”

Maybee clarified that Booth had been referencing a Grand Jury report issued in March 2023, which stated the audits should be completed by September 2023.

“That was an impossible task,” Maybee said.

Booth acknowledged the challenges of the auditing process but expressed frustration over missed deadlines.

“We were told we would receive the 2021-22 audit last month, but no, we are being told we should have it next month,” he said. “We’ve canceled committee meetings. We’ve delayed reports, all in deference to getting these audits done. And we are continually being told there isn’t enough time to get it done.”

District Counsel Patrick Enright interjected, noting that Booth’s comments were veering into a board discussion while an audience member was waiting to speak. Booth responded that he was rebutting Maybee’s earlier remarks. Enright acknowledged, saying he had probably also let the board president go on too long.

Audience member Jim Farrell was the next to speak.

“I really question airing some of these comments in public like this,” he said, referencing Booth’s remarks about Morris. “I really question the appropriateness of it. That’s why you have closed sessions; that’s why you have performance appraisal sessions.”

Farrell, who said he was relatively new to the community, explained that he began following the CSD during the water study process. Drawing from his background in

administration, human resources and strategic planning — a background he noted Booth also shares — Farrell shared his perspective.

When he first observed the district, Farrell said it appeared to be a “classic example of an organization that was in mayhem because of inadequate management, procedures and systems in play.” However, he added, “I can tell you that in the limited time that I’ve watched — audits aside for a minute because that’s a legitimate issue — I think that there has been significant improvement in the administration of this organization.”

However, Farrell noted that he would like to see improvements in the organization’s governance.

“You want to criticize this person (Morris) for pursuing different alternatives and priorities than you have. I would ask you as a board, ‘Do you have a plan?’” he said. “I haven’t seen it, except for fighting the fires, closing out the audits and trying to deal with a lot of controversy around this water study.”

Regarding Morris’ \$200,000 salary, Farrell commented that it was not unreasonable given her role in the organization. He also highlighted her decision to bring in Matulich, whom he described as “far and above anything else in the organization.”

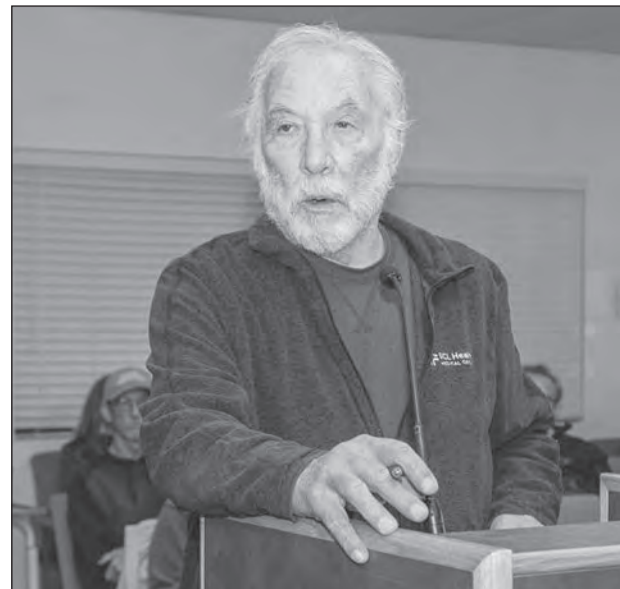
While Farrell acknowledged that the delay in completing the audits was a valid concern, he concluded, “I don’t know that should carry the day.”

The original form letter opposing the pay increase was submitted by Beth and Greg Buderus. The letter stated that Morris was hired to address the district’s financial issues and complete the overdue audits but had not achieved those objectives. It also urged the board to avoid reckless spending, citing the district’s low reserves and pressing facility maintenance needs. Seven other residents submitted letters with the same message.

The vote to approve the pay increase passed 3-2, with Jenco, Maybee and Pohl voting in favor, and Booth and Butler voting against.

## Accounting Update

In addition to delivering his usual financial update, Matulich addressed the district’s accounting challenges. He explained that before he joined the



Jim Farrell, an audience member, speaks about a proposed pay raise for the general manager, a contentious issue discussed at the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board meeting on Nov. 20. Photos by Gail Bullen



General Manager Mimi Morris provides an update on the timelines for completing overdue audits.

district in October 2023, the Punn Group had been attempting to finalize the 2020-21 audit, at one point involving as many as seven accountants. After Matulich’s arrival, his team (Matulich, Morris and accountant Chris Funakoshi) completed the audit within four months.

While progress began on the 2021-22 audit, the team encountered significant legacy issues stemming from past years.

“Do we just disregard that every single day that goes by, there is no accounting happening and the billing is all messed up for the residents?” Matulich asked. “Or do we pump the brakes to fix that, so when we catch up on those prior audits, we don’t have a bigger mess?”

Another significant challenge arose in July when the team ran the 2021-22 trial balance, the initial step in preparing for an audit.

“Not one single fund was in balance,” Matulich said.

Instead of attempting to untangle the issues that had taken 18 months to resolve in the previous audit, the team made the “monumental” decision to start a new general ledger. They used the opening balances from the recently completed audit and reposted every transaction for the entire 2020-21 fiscal year.

Matulich explained that they adjusted the audit timelines to establish a solid foundation of day-to-day accounting and accurate billing practices.

“I hope the community and the board sees the value in that,” he said.

Although Matulich didn’t mention it at the meeting, he has taken on much of the responsibility for security since Security Supervisor Kelly Benitez unexpectedly retired in February.

Audience member Mike Martel, a previous member of the CSD and country club boards, said he wanted to separate the

board’s action from the staff’s action in past years.

Martel emphasized that the board was not to blame, as they had been asking the right questions. The real issue, he said, lay with previous staff, including two former general managers and a director of administration.

“It was all the information that staff was providing at the time,” he said.

Martel told the board they had inherited a financial mess.

“This is the first time in probably four years where you guys are getting your act together,” Martel said.

## CSD Staffing

Morris came out of retirement to join the CSD in May 2023. She brought with her a 33-year state career largely dedicated to “doing a lot of cleanup” at various agencies. One notable example was her final role with the Judicial Council of California.

Six months into that position, the Council transitioned to a new accounting system, which led to a backlog of vendor invoices totaling approximately \$100 million in a \$2.8 billion budget.

To address the issue, Morris and her team swiftly shifted from paper to electronic invoicing and developed a database to track every step of an invoice’s journey, from receipt to payment within the financial system. By the time she retired three years later, the backlog of unpaid invoices had been reduced to less than \$1 million.

Matulich joined the CSD as director of Finance and Administration in October 2023, bringing with him 14 years of experience as an accountant and 11 years as an FBI agent specializing in white-collar crime.

Funakoshi, the CSD accountant, and three account staff positions also help with the day-to-day finance operations. ★

Thank

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# CSD Covers Security Budget, Grants, Pipelines

**By Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times  
Reporter**



**Mark Matulich, director of Finance and Administration for the Rancho Murieta Community Services District, proposes adding a patrol position to the security budget.** Photo by Gail Bullen

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - A change to the security budget, which will add a patrol position by increasing barcode fees, was a key topic when the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board of Directors met on Nov. 20.

In other business, the board approved pursuing WaterSmart federal grants for water and energy efficiency projects and commissioning a feasibility study for a pipeline connecting the CSD to the Sacramento County Water Agency.

Staff also provided updates on hiring an external expert to review the Integrated Water Master Plan and the permitting process to make Clementia Reservoir suitable for potable use.

Additionally, the board passed a resolution

to fund 24/7/365 patrol coverage by adding a new position. He explained that the funding would come from an increase in barcode fees, which have remained unchanged at a one-time cost of \$10 per vehicle since the 1990s.

Under the proposal, the initial cost for a new barcode sticker would rise to \$25, with an annual renewal fee of \$10. This change is projected to increase the security budget by nearly \$78,000, enough to cover the cost of a new community service officer position and additional expenses.

After extensive discussion, the board unanimously voted 5-0 to proceed with the security budget change. The next steps involve adopting an ordinance, potentially at the December and January meetings. If approved, the new renewal fee will appear on residents' March billing statements.

**Federal Grants** General Manager Mimi Morris and Operations Director Eric Houston requested board approval to apply for \$1.9 million in grant funding from the Federal Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSmart Program. The district would be required to provide an additional \$2.1 million in matching funds. Morris noted that this is likely the final year the program will be available.

Approximately half of the grant funding would be allocated to installing smart water meters equipped with built-in leak detection and remote reading capabilities. Another key project involves the installation of solar-powered parking canopies, which would significantly reduce the district's energy costs. Additional funding requests include plant equipment upgrades aimed at enhancing water reliability.

Director Booth initially opposed the grant application, particularly the inclusion of smart water meters, which he did not consider a priority. He also expressed concerns about the level of commitment implied by the resolution.

Director Randy Jenco shared reservations about the significant matching funds required but ultimately supported applying for the grant to explore its potential benefits. To address concerns, Jenco proposed an amendment to the resolution requiring staff to bring the grant back to the board for approval if awarded.

The amendment alleviated Booth's concerns, and he joined Jenco, Maybee, and Pohll in voting to apply for the grant. Director Butler, however, voted against the motion.

**In Other Business:** The board approved a staff request to commission

a formal analysis by the Sacramento County Water Agency (SCWA) to evaluate the feasibility of connecting Rancho Murieta to SCWA for additional water supply. The \$30,000 cost for the analysis will be covered by the developer fee reserve.

Staff reported that four external consultants are preparing quotes to conduct a technical review of the draft Integrated Water Master Plan. Houston confirmed that the review will also include an evaluation of public submissions.

The board began preliminary discussions on raising the Water Augmentation Implementation Fees paid by developers. Legal counsel advised that an engineering study would be required to justify any fee increase.

The board discussed some issues concerning permitting Clementia Reservoir for drinking water use but didn't act. ★

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# Gate Security, Meeting Delay are RMA Topics

By Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times  
Reporter

## RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)

The Rancho Murieta Association Board's monthly meeting on Nov. 19 focused on two primary topics: the formation of a committee to explore ways to enhance gate security and an announcement by Board President Scott Adams that he is stepping down as president.

Additional agenda items included approving the removal of an association-owned redwood tree despite objections from nearby residents and plans for constructing a new path at Riverview Park.

The board reconvened briefly two days later for the Annual Meeting and Election of Directors. General Manager Rod Hart informed the board that not enough ballots had been returned by property owners to meet the required 40% quorum. As a result, the board rescheduled the Annual Meeting for Dec. 12.

Under a new state law, the quorum requirement will decrease to 20% for the rescheduled meeting. The low ballot return for the Nov. 21 meeting was likely influenced by the uncontested election for two board seat openings, which will be filled by incumbents John Van Doren and Tom Reimers.

## Trespassing

Directors Chris Childs and Reimers gained approval to form an ad hoc committee to explore options for enhancing security at both gates, particularly the North Gate, during the October board meeting. The gate's layout has long allowed nonresidents to enter the community on foot or by bicycle, and the situation has recently been exacerbated by juveniles riding electric motorcycles.

"I, for one, have witnessed an electric motorcyclist go through the North Gate then literally pop wheelies all the way to the 11th Fairway," Childs said.

Reimers noted that cyclists, often in groups of eight to 10, gather at the CSD parking lot "to go through the gates to go mountain biking on our trails."

Childs said the Perimeter Security Ad Hoc Committee will also assess the fencing around the community. On the north side, non-residents have been bypassing the fence to go fishing, while on the south side, they are gaining access to the Frisbee park. He requested the board approve the appointment of three residents — Jim Moore, Ernie Cowles, and Greg Mason — to the committee.

The board unanimously approved the charter for the new committee and the three appointments with a 7-0 vote.

Adams further reported that the Rancho Murieta Country Club had deactivated 50 barcodes belonging to non-residents who are no longer members of the club.

## Adams Stepping Down

During his president's report, Adams reflected on



Director Chris Childs discusses the formation of a new committee aimed at exploring strategies to prevent trespassing behind the gates during the Rancho Murieta Association Board meeting on Nov. 19. Photos by Gail Bullen



Scott Adams shares his reasons for stepping down from his role as board president.

his tenure, reminding the board that when he was elected president two years ago, he committed to serving for one or two years. Now, after two years, he informed the board of his decision to step down.

"The community has elected some very talented and successful board members, and RMA will be in good hands with the next director who serves as president," he said.

Adams appeared visibly moved as he expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve as president.

"It's been rewarding and challenging at the same time," he said. "It has been very special for me to work with the board members and closely work with the person who has been so devoted to our community for decades."

"Rod Hart, in my opinion, is the best GM we've ever had in Rancho Murieta."

Adams said he would continue to chair the Governing Documents Committee and remain actively involved in serving the community he loves for the remainder of his two-year term.

In response, Hart expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to work with the seven board members and reflected on the community's impact on his life over the past 47 years. "Thank you, Scott," he said. "I'm in awe of your energy and compassion for the community."

## In Other Business:

Hart and Director Patrick O'Hern outlined their opposition to automating two remote gates for use in an emergency evacuation. See the separate story in this issue on the same topic.

The board approved a recommendation from the Maintenance Committee to fell a redwood tree in a common area despite the objections of nearby residents. Maintenance Manager Troy Schaffner explained that the arborist had identified the tree

as a hazard due to its roots are breaking concrete walkways and lifting up a garage floor.

The board also approved a Maintenance Committee recommendation to construct a new multi-use path at Riverview Park to provide better access to community and for maintenance. Schaffner estimated the material cost at \$500 and noted that maintenance employees would handle the construction.

Audience member Tom Shewchuk asked the board to approve the annexation of three lots from the Residences subdivision on Puerto Drive into RMA. Hart and Adams told him that his request was premature because RMA has not yet received plans from the developer.

Shewchuk also urged RMA to collaborate with CSD and the country club work together to optimize the community's water management.

Reimers, who chairs the Compliance Committee, said that RMA compliance officers had issued 102 citations in the past month while CSD officers issued two.

O'Hern, chair of the Architectural Review Committee, noted the committee had reviewed 20 staff-approved projects in October and eight so far in November, bringing the total to 217 projects reviewed this year.

Director Renee Bechthold, chair of Recreation Committee, announced plans for the annual holiday decorative lighting contests. She said 50 prizes, consisting of a lawn sign and a \$50 gift certificate will be awarded.

Due to the upcoming holidays, the board decided to move its next monthly meeting from Dec. 17 to Dec. 10.

Additionally, they scheduled another meeting on Dec. 12 for a second attempt at holding the annual meeting. They also will meet again on Dec. 12, for a second attempt at an annual meeting. ★

## COMMUNITY BRIEFS

### 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 Dance Company in the plaza or by calling 916-296-6503.

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

### Garden Club Offers Smokey Bear Contest

The River Valley Garden Club is in search of budding artists interested in participating in the club's Smokey Bear and Woody Owl contest.

This annual contest is organized for children in grades one through five living in Rancho Murieta, Wilton, Sloughhouse and surrounding areas. The club will supply paper for the poster.

The due date for the local contest is Jan. 6, 2025. Winning posters from the club competition will be submitted to compete at the state level California State Garden Clubs, Inc. (CGCI) on Jan. 24, 2025.

First place winners from the state level

will be awarded \$25 cash prize by CGCI for each grade.

Posters should be submitted no later than Jan. 6, 2025, to the River Valley Garden Club.

Please contact Jayne La Grande at 916-708-6764 or [jmlagran@gmail.com](mailto:jmlagran@gmail.com) for contest rules, poster paper, submission or more information.

### Kiwanis Seeks Sweats for Vets Donations

Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta is once again asking for monetary donations to its Sweats 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 Sweats 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.


### Wilton Bingo Games Held Monthly

The next bingo will be on Saturday Jan. 4. 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.

Questions, call Lorraine Robinson at 916-212-8896 ★

MEMORIAL



**PATRICIA LYTLE • 4/6/1934 – 10/18/2024**

Patricia (Pat) Lytle, 90, passed away peacefully in her home on Oct. 18, 2024, surrounded by her loving family. She was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Bill Lytle (2017), and outlived her first two husbands, Edward Smith and Ted Loeber.


Born April 6, 1934, in Walpole, Massachusetts, Pat moved to San Jose, California, with her parents, Bill and Helen Percy, and her siblings Bill, Connie, Katha, and Dennis. The Percy family flourished in San Jose, especially after purchasing a unique property in the Willow Glen area, where Pat's father constructed a house atop a hill with stunning views of the bay area and on some days San Francisco.

In 1954, Pat married Edward Smith, and together they raised a large family. She is survived by her seven children: Mary (Rick) Blakemore, Colleen (James) Fournier, Edward Smith (John O'Neil), Robert (Jean) Smith, Phillip Smith, Carole (Don) Thames, and Tricia Smith. Pat took great joy in her 11 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

Pat was an active member of her community, particularly at St. Martin of Tours Elementary School. The family home on Homewood Drive became a gathering place for her children's friends. Her capacity to welcome others into her home was legendary, often finding herself cooking breakfast for a small army of children on Saturday mornings.

Pat had many part-time jobs as her children were growing and when the time was right, she started her full-time career at Marriott's Great America. She began as a merchandise department secretary prior to the park opening. Realizing she needed more of a challenge she moved into the sales and marketing department, and this is where Pat flourished. She traveled up and down the western United States as well as Hawaii with Bugs Bunny in tow promoting the park to corporations for their company outings. Her attitude and organizational skills landed her the title of Director of Marketing.

In 1985, Pat married Ted Loeber,



leading to her retirement from Marriott's Great America. Together, they traveled the world and enjoyed summer vacations in Incline Village and boating on the San Francisco Bay. After Ted's passing, Pat moved to Rancho Murieta in 1996 to be closer to her daughter Carole and her granddaughters, Makayla and Katie.

She settled into Rancho Murieta making many new friendships through her involvement in various community clubs. She had a beautiful condominium on Laguna Joaquin and enjoyed hosting many social gatherings. Pat was a passionate reader, often finishing multiple novels each week.

In Rancho Murieta, Pat met and married Bill Lytle. Their home on Cortina Court became a hub for family gatherings, filled with laughter and celebration. At the age of 70, Pat embraced golf, finding joy and friendship through the game, and traveled to golf destinations with Bill and friends. Bill and Pat also enjoyed many fishing trips to Alaska where Pat landed a 145-pound halibut!

She continued her commitment to volunteerism, serving with organizations such as the Susan G. Komen Foundation, the Rancho Murieta Community Blood Drive as well as serving as President of the Rancho Murieta Niners Golf Club and the Rancho Murieta Women's Club.

Pat's selflessness defined her life. She consistently put others before herself, earning the love and admiration of all who knew her. Her friends and family will remember her for her kindness, generosity, and unwavering spirit.

A celebration of Pat's life will be held on December 14th, at St Vincent de Paul Church in Rancho Murieta. There will be a mass at 11:00 am, followed by a reception in the main hall.

Pat will be deeply missed but lovingly remembered by all whose lives she touched.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Tunnels 2 Towers Foundation. T2T.org

## Brighten a Senior's Day

### Volunteer with Meals on Wheels Sacramento County

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

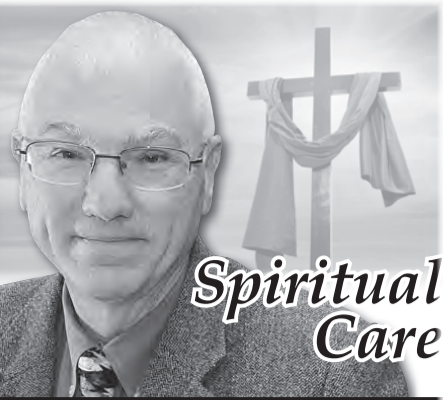
For more information and to sign up, visit [mowsac.org](http://mowsac.org) or call (916) 444-9533.

Be the reason someone smiles today.

Volunteer with us and make a heartfelt difference.



# Let Us Be Truly Thankful



## Spiritual Care

**BY NORRIS BURKES**

As I built a post-election gratitude list, I remembered a question routinely asked by the minister of music in a church I pastored.

He'd stand behind the big Baptist pulpit and ask this question of his sleepy and aging congregation:

"Would you rather be in the best prison in America or here in church today?"

He used the question to roust our aging congregation and inspire them to sing louder. He often used it at the Thanksgiving service because he felt like it gave congregants a bit of gratitude perspective.

I find the reasoning a bit haggard as

it's the same kind of sermon reasoning ministers use every year that urge us to remember those less fortunate.

I ask you, can't we just hold the guilt this year and sit back and relax with our holiday pie?

Newspaper columnists like myself, and most especially ministers, of whom I am both, try to make you see that your life is not as bad as it could be.

This approach comes off sounding a lot like a parent trying to get their kid to eat turnips.

"At least we have turnips and broccoli on our table," goes the paternal reasoning, "I'll bet the kids in Godawfulstan wish they had turnips."

That line of reasoning never did much for me.

The problem with that perspective is that gratitude and thankfulness has never been about comparing your good fortune to the misfortunes of others. Thanksgiving will never be about trying to equalize the imbalance of those fortunes.

Thanksgiving isn't just about being

grateful you don't have a loved one deployed to a war-torn country. It's also about being thankful we have brave service members who are willing to serve when their country calls.

Thanksgiving isn't just about being grateful you aren't poor. It is also about being grateful you have resources to give to the poor.

It is not only about being grateful you aren't hungry. It is also about sharing your gratitude with the hungry.

Being truly thankful is not about comparing what you have with what others do not have. It is not about being glad your home is not a shanty cardboard shack under the freeway. It's about the help we give the homeless as we humbly realize that most of us are one paycheck away from building our own shack.

Gratitude is not about giving thanks for what you have, where you work, where you live or even who you are. Thanksgiving is not about you at all.

Thanksgiving is about keeping perspective between recognizing the blessings

we've received and utilizing our capacity to return those blessings to others.

At the end of the calorie-laden day, perspective will be a constant reminder that we are not alone on this planet. It is the perspective of gratitude that teaches us we've all journeyed from the same place and, as Scripture suggests, "to dust we will return."

That is the perspective from which humility comes, and humility will always be about gratitude.

\*\*\*

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For an autographed copy of "Tell It To The Chaplain," or any of my books, order from my website [www.thechaplain.net](http://www.thechaplain.net) or send a check for \$20 (per book) to the address above. ★

## 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](http://www.rmcsd.com).

### Nov. 11

Trespassing, North back area: Patrol found vehicle at Lake Calero, North back area after hours, Calero Hill, occupied by two juveniles. Patrol made contact and advised of back area hours, requested to leave area; vehicle complied without incident.

### Nov. 12

Citation, Medella Circle: RMA rule violation, resident parked overnight in front of home. Citation issued.

Citation, Cayo Court: RMA rule violation, resident parked overnight on street in front of home. Citation issued.

Citation, Pera Drive: RMA rule violation, resident parked overnight in street in front of home. Citation issued.

Animal complaint, Venado Drive: Barking dog complaint, patrol responded, no one home. Patrol placed phone call and reached resident advising of complaint. Owner on way home to bring dog inside.

### Nov. 13

Citation, Guadalupe Drive: RMA rule

violation, resident parked overnight in guest parking. Citation issued.

415/Disturbance, Anillo Way: Report of disturbance on Anillo way; RP advised to contact Sacramento Sheriff's Department. Patrol arrived nearby and called reporting party who requested to observe and standby close to home regarding daughter being violent. RP had called SSD waiting for arrival.

### Nov. 15

Vandalism, Camino Del Lago: Report of attempted burglary in morning hours due to front window damage. Patrol made contact with the homeowner who had already contacted Sacramento Sheriff's Department, who investigated and found no forced entry, and that a rock had damaged the window.

### Nov. 20

Miscellaneous, Alameda Drive: Upon routine patrol, noise heard coming from the loading dock at RMCC main building. Patrol thought the noise could be alarm. Perimeter was checked, no activity found; building locked and secured.

Citation, Colbert Drive: RMA rule violation, resident parked on street with trailer and no 24-hour pass. Citation issued.

Citation, Via Sereno: RMA rule violation, resident parked vehicle and trailer overnight on street without 24-hour pass.

Citation issued.

Citation, Camino De Luna: RMA rule violation, resident parked overnight on street in front of home. Citation issued.

### Nov. 21

Miscellaneous, Medella Circle: Report of an unknown male driving a dark-colored pickup truck with camper shell searching through pile of garbage in front of home. Patrol responded and checked Murieta South, unable to locate vehicle. Area cleared.

Disturbance, Murieta Parkway: Report of disturbance at North gate. Gate officer had an encounter with resident who made verbal comments during entry process. Patrol called the residence and informed father of the interaction at North gate.

### Nov. 23

Disturbance, Murieta Drive: Murieta Inn manager requested patrol due to a male and female arguing at the bar in the hotel. Manager called Sacramento Sheriff's Department, and upon patrol's arrival both suspects were calm and compliant.

Welfare check, Verona Drive: Report of a female crying in a vehicle on Verona Drive near Murieta South Parkway. Patrol responded and spoke to a resident nearby who stated they saw some commotion in front of a home on Verona Drive, but no crying or fighting heard; vehicle had

already left area. Vehicle with female was unable to locate.

### Nov. 24

Welfare check, Abierto Drive: Request for welfare check on intoxicated person, Murieta Drive and Abierto Drive. Patrol responded and made contact with resident who lived on North. Subject unfamiliar with Murieta South and unable to call for ride due to discharged mobile phone. Due to circumstance resident transported home.

### Nov. 25

Resident complaint, Puerto Drive: Resident requested patrol due to being home alone and thought she heard the garage door open. Patrol responded and found garage door closed and all doors locked and secured; area clear.

Citation, Fuente de Paz: RMA rule violation, resident vehicle and trailer parked overnight in front of home without 24-hour pass. Citation issued.

### Nov. 27

Gunshots, Bass Lake: Report of two gunshots heard by Bass Lake and North golf course. Patrol and RMA compliance responded and found no suspicious activity or gunfire around the area.

### Nov. 28

Citation, Via del Cerrito: RMA rule violation. Resident parked overnight in street. Citation issued. ★

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# ARC Coach Named NorCal Coach of the Year

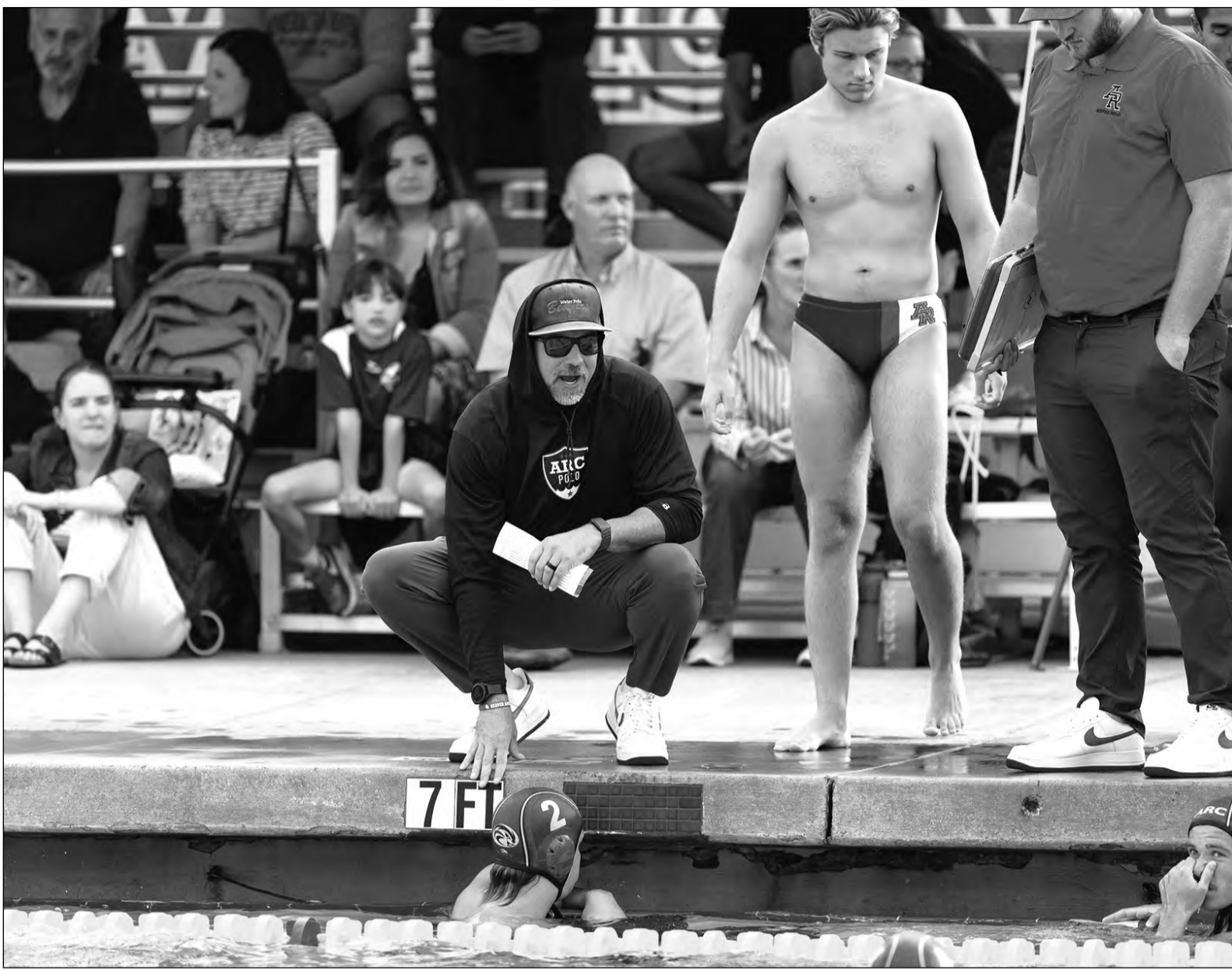


**American River College Athletics News Release**

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - The American River College Men's Water Polo program has achieved a lot of great things throughout the 2024 season. As the program prepares to open up the 3C2A State Championships, the Beavers can add another achievement: NorCal Coach of the Year.

The Beavers men's water polo head coach, Zac Koerner, was named the 3C2A NorCal Coach of the Year after leading the Beavers to back-to-back Big 8 Conference Championships, a 2nd place finishing in the NorCal Championships, and an opportunity to compete for the 3C2A State Championship.

This is Coach Koerner's first NorCal Coach of the Year award. Congratulations Coach! ★



Beaver Head Coach, Zac Koerner, was named the 3C2A NorCal Coach of the Year. Photo by ARC Athletics

## Sac Republic FC to Host Open Tryouts

**Sacramento Republic Football Club News Release**

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - Ahead of the 2025 USL Championship season, Republic FC is hosting its annual Open Tryout, giving the region's top players a chance to impress the technical staff and earn an invitation to training camp.

The 2025 Open Tryout will take place on Saturday, Jan. 18 and Sunday, Jan. 19 at Bartholomew Sports Park in Elk Grove, and is open to players aged 18 and older. Players are encouraged to sign up early to secure their spot and take advantage of Early Bird Pricing – a \$50 discount – through December 31. At least one participant will be invited to join the club for its 2025 training camp ahead of the season.

Tryouts have been an important part of Republic FC's roster development since 2014. In total, six attendees have gone on to sign professional contracts with the club, as well as others who have earned a spot in the youth academy. In 2023,

Aldair Sanchez attended the Open Tryout and earned an invitation to training camp, where he would compete in preseason friendlies against USL Championship and MLS clubs and go on to sign his first professional contract with the Indomitable Club. He appeared in 30 appearances in his rookie season and in 2024 was one of five players to appear in every game.

Tryouts are open to eligible males, 18 years or older. Registration fees apply and are non-refundable. In addition to registration fees, each trialist is solely responsible for all accommodation bookings and costs. Players must come prepared for the tryouts with their own boots, socks, shorts, gloves, shin guards or any other equipment related to their position. Republic FC's athletic training and medical services personnel will be onsite throughout tryouts.

For more information on tryout registration and requirements, visit [SacRepublicFC.com/Tryouts](http://SacRepublicFC.com/Tryouts) or e-mail [Tryouts@SacRepublicFC.com](mailto:Tryouts@SacRepublicFC.com). ★



## Hornet Volleyball Standouts Named All-Big Sky



**Hornet senior Bridgette Smith is the first four-time first team all-Big Sky selection in Hornet program history (2021-24).** Photos courtesy of Sacramento State Athletics



**Sacramento State senior Caitlin Volkmann has tallied double figures in kills on 24 occasions in the 2024 season, and 71 times during her career as a Hornet.**



**Hornet senior rightside hitter Ellie Tisko named second team all-Big Sky for the second straight season.**

**Sacramento State Athletics News Release**

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - Three Hornet seniors were named all-Big Sky Conference on Nov. 26, including outside hitters Bridgette Smith and Caitlin Volkmann being named to the first team, and rightside hitter Ellie Tisko named second team.

The Hornets received three all-league honors after finishing the regular season with an 18-11 overall record and 11-5 conference mark. Sacramento State finished in a tie for second place in the conference

standings and will be the No. 3 seed at the Big Sky Tournament at the Nest.

Smith was named to the first team for the fourth straight year, becoming the first player in program history to be named first team on four occasions. Counting her pandemic season of 2020 when she was named to the second team, Smith is also the first player in school history to receive all-conference accolades on five occasions.

Volkmann was named to the first team for the first time in her career, and Tisko received second team honors for the second consecutive season. ★

# Sacramento State Women's Basketball Finishes Third

**Sacramento State University Athletics News Release**

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - Senior Katie Peneueta finished with a career-high tying 20 points to go with nine rebounds while three other Hornets finished in double figures on Sunday Dec. 1, helping push the Sacramento State women's basketball team past Wagner, 73-34, to finish third at the FIU Thanksgiving Classic in Miami.

The Hornets snapped their three-game skid, improving to 5-3 overall on the year, while the Seahawks fell to 1-6 overall with the result. The 39-point victory was the largest of the year and the largest against a Division I opponent since a 48-point triumph over Portland State on Jan. 23, 2016.

Sunday's 34 points allowed are the fewest in the program's Division I history and the fewest since

defeating Concordia College, 78-29, on Nov. 22, 1990. Sacramento State limited Wagner to just 15 first-half points — the lowest scoring first half by a Hornet opponent since Northern Colorado trailed, 24-15, at the break on Jan. 6, 2007.

Overall, from the field, the Hornets stifled the Seahawks to the tune of a .245 (12-for-49) field goal percentage for the game, which is the lowest by an opponent since Pacific Union shot the same percentage on Dec. 19, 2019.

In only her second game back after missing the first six games of the season due to injury, Peneueta came off the bench to finish 7-of-10 from the field and 5-of-7 from long distance in 29 minutes, matching her career high set at Northern Arizona on Feb. 3, 2022, and tied against Montana State just over a year later on Feb. 23, 2023.

Her nine rebounds were also two shy of her career high of 11 set

against Idaho on Jan. 5, 2023.

She was followed closely by sophomore Lina Falk, who finished with 15 points on 6-of-13 from the field and added six rebounds, three assists, and three steals. Senior Jaydia Martin chipped in 12 points on 5-of-11 from the field, adding four rebounds and six assists, while freshman Sofia Alonso finished with 11 points, five rebounds, and six assists.

Freshman Brooklyn Taylor also blocked four shots on the day, the most since Summah Hanson had four against Eastern Washington on Dec. 30, 2023.

The Hornets surrendered the first basket of the game, but it was all Sacramento State from that point on, outscoring Wagner by a 21-2 count the rest of the quarter — including a 14-0 run to close the period. The run grew to 17-0 with the first three points of the second quarter as the Hornets led by as many as 27 points

in the first half en route to the 41-15 halftime advantage.

Sacramento State limited the Seahawks to four points in both the first and third quarters — tied for the fewest in a single quarter this season along with the four-point fourth quarter at Cal State Fullerton back on Nov. 14 — and tallied the fourth and fifth single-digit quarters defensively this year.

Meanwhile, the offense was clicking, finishing the day shooting 49 percent from the field overall (26-of-53) — its second-highest single-game shooting performance of the year behind only the 55 percent against Lincoln University on Nov. 10. The Hornets were also 11-of-25 (.440) from behind the arc as a team, setting season highs for both makes and percentages and the best in both categories since hitting 13-of-24 from three-point range against Idaho State at last year's Big Sky Conference Tournament.

Sacramento State opened the second half on a 9-0 run, holding Wagner to without a point for the first six minutes of the period and to without a field goal until the final 30 seconds of the period. The Hornets led by as many as 46 points with two minutes to play in the fourth quarter and led nearly the entire game save for the 15 seconds that the Seahawks went in front to start the day and the 3:55 during which the contest was tied.

Following three straight games away from home, Sacramento State returns to The Nest this coming week, hosting Kansas City to open the second-annual Big Sky-Summit Challenge on Wednesday, Dec. 4, at 6:30 p.m. The Hornets then travel to Nebraska to take on Omaha on Saturday, Dec. 7, at Noon PT prior to the start of final exams. Both games are scheduled after press time. ★

# Frost Town Hall Covers Evacuation Gates

Continued from page 1

would use a cell phone to unlock the gates with a code stored at the inter-agency fire dispatch center. The remote gates are currently secured with Knox Locks, which can be opened by police and fire personnel using a key.

Frost explained that she recently organized a meeting to discuss gate automation with representatives from the Fire Safe Council, RMA, and several key stakeholder agencies. These included the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District, the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office, and various county departments such as the Office of Emergency Services (OES), transportation, planning, and county counsel.

"Every one of them basically said: 'It's not our deal. It's not our decision. It's the community's,'" Frost said. "The community is your RMA, and you...It's going to be on you to convince your RMA of what you want."

Residents who wish to learn more about the Sept. 16 stakeholder meeting may request the minutes at [SupervisorFrost@Saccounty.gov](mailto:SupervisorFrost@Saccounty.gov).

Although invited, RMA representatives General Manager Rod Hart and Director Patrick O'Hern, who attended the Sept. 16 stakeholder meeting, did not participate in Frost's town hall. However, they later explained their opposition to gate automation during the Nov. 19 RMA Board meeting that drew three attendees.

Both emphasized that the health and safety of the community were their



**Council President Greg Pryor strongly advocates automating two remote gates to ensure they can be unlocked during an emergency evacuation. The Rancho Murieta Association Board prefers keeping the gates locked until a fire responder is present to direct traffic.** Photos by Gail Bullen

top priorities. They warned that opening the emergency gates before a first responder's arrival to manage traffic could lead to chaos, mainly if a resident crashes while exiting onto the roadway. Hart also informed the board that RMA complies with county code by maintaining two gates on both sides of the community, including the remote gates.

During the town hall, Fire Safe Council President Greg Pryor, who spent 38 years in fire service and 11 years on a fire board, explained how a wildland fire could sweep through the community within a half hour to an hour. Retired traffic engineer John Long said his calculations showed it would take an hour and a half to evacuate the community under the best-case scenario, which is not likely in an emergency.

Pryor also recounted a series of "roadblocks" posed by RMA over the years as the Fire Safe Council worked to address the gate issue. He expressed disappointment that the two RMA

representatives had opted not to attend to explain their stance on keeping the gates locked until a first responder arrived.

"I'd say it is a bigger problem to lock in people and for them to panic than the problem of having the gate open and causing an accident," Pryor said.

Audience members asked a few questions and shared several comments, with the strongest opinion coming from Lynn Erpelding. "Are they saying we should just sit here and cook in the fire because someone might make a left turn in front of somebody getting out of here," she said. "Is that what we have running this community?"

During the town hall, Pryor asked Cheryl McElhany, a past RMA Board president, how residents should communicate with the board. She recommended writing letters and requesting to be added to a meeting agenda.

Pryor concluded by saying he and Frost had taken gate automation as far as they could. "It's going to take more than the people



**County Supervisor Sue Frost expresses disappointment that the gate automation issue has remained unresolved as her retirement approaches.**

in this room," he said. "You have to talk to your neighbors to let them know where we are."

"That's why we are coming to you, and this is what this is," Frost added.

Earlier in the meeting, Pryor had expressed his gratitude for Frost's assistance to the fire safe council. "It's been wonderful working with her. She's done so much," he said. "Getting that kind of attention at the county level to shine a light on a satellite community like ours has just been amazing."

## Background

The evolution of the fire safe council began in 2018 when McElhany was an RMA Board member. She volunteered to lead an ad hoc committee to examine emergency preparedness in the community. The committee, which included experts such as Long, Pryor and IT specialist Rob Schultz, researched the issues for months. Their efforts culminated in an emergency preparedness plan that the RMA eventually printed and distributed to residents. Members



**Retired traffic engineer John Long estimates that, under ideal conditions, evacuating the community would take at least an hour and a half.**

can find it on the RMA website.

However, an evacuation map attached to the plan became problematic since Sac Metro said a proposed third gate near the Yellow Bridge would be unsafe. The evacuation map hasn't been revised since then as the dispute over automating the Escuela and Bent Grass gates continued.

After the RMA board formed the fire safe council in 2019, Pryor was elected president. In late 2021, the board agreed to fund the automation of the two remote gates in the 2022 budget. But after the board composition changed, that didn't happen, despite repeated efforts by Pryor and the fire safe council.

In 2023, the board and the fire state council agreed to separate. Since then, the fire safe council board has discussed seeking its nonprofit status. It has remained a satellite fire safe council that functions collaboratively with the Sacramento County Fire Safe Council. The board was slated to hold its quarterly meeting on Dec. 2.

Frost cited the fire safe council's accomplishments during her town hall. The first was the designation of Rancho Murieta as a Firewise Community,

which enables discounts from some insurance companies. The council also used a \$25,000 county grant secured by Frost to pay for the construction of a shaded fuel break on Scott Road.

In 2022, after two years of efforts by Schultz, McElhany, and Pryor, Schultz authored a successful application for a \$4.4 million Cal Fire grant to reduce fire fuels within and around the community. Thanks to Frost's advocacy, Sacramento County Regional Parks initially sponsored the grant and now oversees its administration. The on-the-ground work is underway.

Following the New Year's Day storm in 2023, which left Rancho Murieta isolated due to flooding, traffic engineer Long and council member John Merchant collaborated with Frost and Supervisor Pat Hume to address the issue. As a result, the county Department of Transportation secured a \$400,000 Caltrans grant to study the problem and develop recommendations.

The study aims to identify solutions for fixing evacuation bottlenecks and implementing measures to protect the highway from future flooding. ★



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## Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



Chicken Little said, "the sky is falling, the sky is falling," but was it? We know of course the answer was no but does this sound vaguely familiar.

Kings fans and supposed experts would have you believe that the current team is in need of an overhaul, as well as a group of new coaches.

I'm the first to say that I'm not pleased with coach Brown's performance thus far, but I'm not clamoring for his job. Coach Brown's rotations have been hard to understand all season, but that is no different than the prior season where continuity was in short supply.

It wasn't long ago the Kings were two games over 500, and suddenly went into a losing tailspin. Losers of five out of the last six games will get people talking, and everyone has an opinion.

On the plus side, no one was casting aspersions when last week the Kings announced the signing of small forward Jae Crowder. Crowder, a free agent, has a history of being on winning basketball teams, and his moniker is his hard-nosed style of play, something the Kings could use more of.

Without question, the current squad plays hard every night, but we are lacking in players that have the dog mentality that can set the bone crushing screens that the Kings seem to see nightly from other teams.

Crowder brings that element, so it remains to be seen in what capacity coach Brown will use his new addition.

Brown chose to put Crowder in the starting lineup without even a single practice, while talented Mr. everything, Malik Monk watched as always from the bench.

Imagine my surprise when not one but two former members of the Kentucky Wildcats were introduced into the starting lineup against the San Antonio Spurs on Sunday, Dec. 1 at Golden One Arena. The arena erupted when Malik Monk was introduced right in back of DeAaron Fox, and I couldn't have been happier for Malik.

Coach Brown and Sacramento Kings fans were treated to the best scoring first quarter of the young season, as the Kings put up a staggering 42 points.

Malik was the spark plug he always seems to be, but despite the auspicious start, the Kings played poorly in the fourth quarter, and although they made it close, came away with a 2-point loss.

As is oft the case, the zebras did not help their cause, and the game was replete with calls that one would expect at a high school game, not in the highest court of basketball.

The last week began on a high note, as the Sactown boys went into Minnesota, and after losing the prior two games to the Wolves this season, the Kings put on a fourth quarter show that was a pure pleasure to watch. Surprisingly, while only connecting on 32% of their 3-point efforts, and scoring only 12 3-point field goals all night, the Kings sent the Timberwolves home with a 115-104 spanking.

For Kings fans, this type of overall efficiency, which included solid team defense all night, is what gives everyone hope that this team can turn things around.

Sadly, after breaking a 4-game losing streak by besting the Wolves, Sacramento could not back it up, losing to both Portland and San Antonio back-to-back.

The bright spot for me this past week was the emergence of small forward Isaac Jones. Nearly forgotten at the end of the bench, the rookie out of Washington State brought energy, spirited defense, and added 12 points that were sorely needed against the young and talented Timberwolves.

Why it's taken this long to give Isaac a look is a hard question to answer but look for coach Brown to move this young forward closer to the top of the bench.

Another bright note is hearing Malik Monk in the post-game interview say it's taken him three years in Sacramento to get a single start, and he likes being a starter where he's spent the majority of his career.

Hang on Kings fans. It's not time to pull your hair just yet. Christmas is right around the corner, and something tells me the Sac Town ballers may have some presents in store for basketball hungry Sacramento fans in the month of December.

All the best Kings fans!  
Your thoughts are always welcome at [vgharriskingsfan@gmail.com](mailto:vgharriskingsfan@gmail.com). ★

# Country Club Christmas Bazaar Lures Shoppers



On Nov. 23, the Rancho Murieta Country Club hosted its annual Christmas Bazaar, transforming the Murieta Room into a bustling shopping destination filled with unique, handcrafted items that drew a steady stream of visitors. In the left photo, artists Becky Reilly, left, and Pamela

Szemesi chat while awaiting customers interested in their paintings. At right, Lynnette Flores, left, and Jane Miller admire custom creations by vendor Tami Massi. The country club also organized a raffle during the event, with proceeds benefiting Toys for Tots. Photos by Gail Bullen

# Annual Tree Lighting Draws Crowd

Continued from page 1

Director Tom Reimers portrayed Santa at the event. Longtime Optimist member Melinda Martell reprised her role as Mrs. Claus, while RMA Director Patrick O’Hern took on the role of the Christmas Elf, distributing candy canes to children and assisting families with photo opportunities.

“We posed for a ton of family pics with their kids and pets,” Reimers said. When it came to Christmas wishes, several children asked for bicycles and Pokémon cards, while boys in particular requested video games.

“The big thing this year was that all the girls wanted unicorns,” Reimers shared. One girl envisioned a rainbow unicorn, another wanted a white one, and a third wished for a black unicorn with red eyes.

Reimers recounted a particularly heartwarming moment from the evening. The wish that “really melted me,” he said, came from a 3- or 4-year-old who asked for “a goat with horns who really likes me.” Another touching request came from a young boy who wanted a blanket. When Reimers asked if he’d like something extra warm, the boy simply replied that he wanted something soft.

As they approached, a few children were afraid, but most embraced the experience.

“The parents were great, too,” Reimers said. “They just were happy, smiling,



The Christmas tree lights up as Santa completes the countdown. Photo by Gail Bullen



Members of the Murieta Dance Company perform a festive Christmas number despite the chilly weather. Courtesy photo

glad their kids were having a good time.”

Fourteen youngsters from the Murieta Dance Company braved the chilly weather to perform

a spirited dance to “Santa, Can You Hear Me” by Ariana Grande and Kelly Clarkson.

RMA Director Renee Bechthold, chair of the

Recreation Committee and a former president of the Optimists, expressed gratitude to the RMA Maintenance Department for their invaluable



Hunter and Lena Archer eagerly reach for cookies while their father, Jeff Archer, holds their drinks. Photo by Gail Bullen



Sacramento Metropolitan Fire Captain Kiegon and Engineer Michael Lawery escort Santa and Mrs. Claus to the park.



Josh, Jayce, Kinsley and Joyce Nunez smile for a photo with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

support. The team cleared leaves, set up tables, hung decorations and lights, tended fire pits, and stayed afterward to clean up.

“We could not hold

this event without them,” Bechthold said.

Photos from the Tree Lighting are available at TheRiverValleyTimes.com. ★

# Old Sacramento Waterfront Transforms into Holiday Destination

Downtown Sacramento Partnership News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Old Sacramento Waterfront is the place to be this holiday season, sporting delightful decorations, a 60-foot holiday tree, electrifying light shows, pedestrian-friendly streets and a unique shopping experience. Located three blocks away from Golden 1 Center and the Downtown Sacramento Ice Rink, Old Sacramento Waterfront is a key holiday-themed destination for shopping and entertainment.

2024 marks the 16th anniversary of Theatre of Lights, the immersive, live-action lightshow on the balconies of Old Sacramento buildings as the entire district embraces the holiday spirit. Theatre of Lights is a free, family-friendly performance every Friday and Saturday (plus some special dates) created by Stage Nine Exhibitions’ Troy Carlson and voiced by Emmy-nominated voice actor Bill Farmer; the voice of Disney’s Goofy. The performance features an immersive retelling of “The Night Before Christmas” by Clement Clarke Moore alongside stories of how Sacramento pioneers experienced the calamities — and revelry — that befell the new city in the 1850s.

The crowd-favorite Holiday Tree Lighting kicked off Theatre of Lights on Wednesday evening, Nov. 27. The tree-lighting ceremony was powered by SMUD and featured community favorites such as the Sacramento Gay Men’s Chorus and Sac Dance Lab and was hosted by FOX40’s Bianca Ventura starting at 5 p.m. with the official first lighting happening at



Theatre of Lights, the immersive, live-action holiday lightshow, occurs on the balconies of Old Sacramento buildings. Photos courtesy of Downtown Sacramento Partnership

6 p.m., led by Stomper, the A’s mascot. This holiday season, shoppers are encouraged to “skip the ship” and support small by visiting any of the small businesses at the Old Sacramento Waterfront to find unique, fun and thoughtful gifts. K Street will be open only to pedestrians on Friday nights and through Saturday evenings through Dec. 24, so visitors can freely explore all the holiday activations.

## Special Events and Activations Lineup:

Theatre of Lights is produced by the Downtown Sacramento Partnership and lit by SMUD, a free, immersive performance retelling “The Night Before Christmas”

in a uniquely Sacramento way on the balconies of Old Sacramento Waterfront. Always free, the exciting shows happen at 6 and 7:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays from until Dec. 24. And to increase accessibility, an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter will be on-site for Saturday evening Theatre of Lights performances throughout the season.

Live Big, Support Small: Shop Local — In total, there are 125+ small businesses (50+ of which are retail shops) in the district, with plenty of unique offerings and items that make perfect gifts.

Holidays on K: The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear with live music Saturdays from 11



The Old Sacramento Holiday Tree is adorned with 24,000 lights to light up the Sacramento waterfront.

a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Every week will feature specific Old Sacramento Waterfront merchants, comfortable seating, a photo booth with proceeds helping to underwrite the cost of Theatre of Lights, and a “Letters to Santa” station.

All Out Decor: In addition to the Holiday Tree that has nearly 24,000 lights, every building in the historic district will be adorned with garland and LED lights, every street pole will sport red bows, and storefronts will have their own decorations. To show off Sacramento pride, the Holiday Tree will be lit Kings’ purple on game nights.

For more information, visit [www.old-sacramento.com](http://www.old-sacramento.com). ★