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Nationwide

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Arrives in  
Sacramento

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# Pocket News

VOL 33 • ISSUE 24      Bringing You Community News For Over 30 Years      DECEMBER 20, 2024

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GIVING MACHINE



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NOT THE BEST  
CHRISTMAS EVER



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## Merry Christmas!



Christmas  
Berries Grace  
American  
River Parkway



Derek Minnema. Photo courtesy of Derek Minnema

By Derek Minnema

Christmas berries adorning the American River Parkway with their brilliant red clusters have symbolically been spreading Christmas cheer along California's waterways since long before the state was settled.

Spanish missionaries arriving in the late 18th century were struck by the resemblance of the plant to European holly, traditionally used as Christmas celebrations throughout Europe. The plant's association with Christian symbolism was immediate and profound. The bright red berries, appearing at their peak during the Christmas season, were seen as representing Christ's blood, while the sharp-toothed evergreen leaves reminded the faithful of the crown of thorns placed upon Jesus's head during the crucifixion.

This symbolism resonated deeply with early Christian settlers, who saw divine providence in finding such a powerful reminder of Christ's sacrifice in their new homeland.

The berries' annual December emergence aligned perfectly with Advent, the Christian season of preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth.

Just as the Star of Bethlehem guided the Wise Men, these red berries served as natural guides along the paths of early Christian travelers in California.

Today, along the American River Parkway in Fair Oaks, these biblical berries continue their winter display, creating a timeless connection between past and present. On a crisp December morning, with temperatures hovering around 55 degrees, mountain bikers and equestrians shared

## Land Park Meets Santa Claus!

By Kristina Rogers

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - An abundance of Christmas cheer arrived at Land Park on Dec. 5 when Santa Claus visited William Land Park Golf. Adults and children donned ugly Christmas sweaters and Grinch gear to celebrate the free family event.

When guests arrived, they were greeted by a firetruck with the Sacramento Fire Department available to help little ones sit in the driver's seat while parents took photos. Then, guests made their way to the green barn with Santa at the entrance in a bright red golf cart adorned with holiday décor, ready for more



Elf Jillian Rogers spreads holiday cheer with Santa at the event. Photo by Kristina Rogers

pictures.

Inside, volunteers from the Land Park Community Association (LPCA) and William Land Park Golf served cups of hot cocoa

with sprinkles and marshmallows. Then, visitors moved on to a table of festive holiday cookies. Kids also had the option to choose from an assortment of glittery Christmas headbands and glasses to level up their holiday look. And if that wasn't enough, a neighborhood elf was available to take family "elfies" at a photo booth.

There were indoor crafts and music, plus families were given cheerful Santa golf balls to practice their outdoor putting skills.

Jacey Cooper, vice-president of the Land Park Community Association, organized the event this year. As she distributed cookies and drinks, she

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# Family Hits Jackpot for Charities at Giving Machine

By Gary Zavoral

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - Seven is a special number for Kelvin and Leslie Moss of Granite Bay. They have seven children, and their last child was nicknamed “Seven.” And, on the night they went to the Sacramento area’s charitable vending machines, there were seven members of their family present.

And sevens are especially lucky for struggling individuals and families throughout the Sacramento region and the world. Because last week, the Moss family typed in “777” into a Light the World Giving Machine and donated 30 gifts to those in need. It is considered a “Giving Machine jackpot,” worth \$2,035 for five local charities and two global ones.

“We didn’t know we’d do this until we got there that night. We had seven children, and seven of us were at the Giving Machines that night. It just felt right to choose 777,” mother and grandmother Leslie Moss said. “We really felt we hit the jackpot for our community. It was a great night.”

Light the World Giving Machines, sponsored and financed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are at the Westfield Galleria at Roseville for a third year and are filled with cards detailing charitable gifts.

When one item is purchased, the card falls to the bottom, just like a candy bar drops when purchased at a vending machine. Joining Kelvin and Leslie at the Giving

Machine were son-in-law Eric Stratton and four grandchildren. “It was really fun to see every single card drop to the bottom one by one,” said Leslie. “The kids would shout as they dropped: ‘Someone is getting new underwear!’ ‘Someone is getting diapers for their baby!’” And so on, she says, until all 30 cards dropped.

Twenty-five of the 30 gifts are for individuals or families in the greater Sacramento region who are suffering financially or emotionally, and the gifts are designed to provide food, comfort, counseling and other services to help them on their path toward self-reliance. The Moss family knows a bit about suffering emotionally, as they lost three of their sons to accidental deaths in the past four years.

“Our grandchildren were really on board with this, in giving to others who are less-fortunate and suffering at this time,” Leslie said. “They wanted to make sure that heaven could be involved, that their uncles could be there, too.”

Before heading to the Giving Machines, Grandma and Grandpa talked to the children about what the Giving Machines are all about and to think about the specific gift they wanted to choose for a needy person or family.

“We talked about how usually with a vending machine you get something for yourself, but with the Giving Machine, this time you are getting something to help someone else,” Leslie said. “They were so thoughtful about why they chose that specific gift.”

Bennett, 14, chose suicide prevention therapy from Lighthouse Counseling & Family Resource Center because “it’s the gift that will keep giving,” Leslie said. Lighthouse, based throughout Placer County, provides counseling, educational classes and programs and assists clients in obtaining resources to help them through a challenging time. The other gifts in the Giving Machine for Lighthouse that the Moss family also purchased are child abuse and domestic violence prevention counseling sessions, one week worth of diapers for a single mother with a newborn, and a three-day supply of emergency food.

Winston, who goes by Win, is 8 years old, and he chose three days of safe shelter for a family or individual in need, provided by Catholic Charities throughout the Sacramento region. Win chose that, Leslie says, “because whenever he sees a homeless person, he feels so sad for them and wants to help take care of them.” Other gifts for Catholic Charities are an infant care kit for a new mother, a “dress for success” gift that provides a job seeker a new outfit, one week of food for a senior experiencing food insecurity, and job training for someone entering the workforce.

Daisy, 5, “couldn’t bear to think about someone going to bed without a blanket and a pillow,” so she wanted to give the “Pillow & Bedding” provided by Al-Misbaah Charitable Aid, Leslie said. The Sacramento-based charity has helped



Kelvin Moss finishes the Giving Machine's jackpot purchase with wife Leslie and grandchildren. Photos courtesy of Gary Zavoral



From left, Eric, Win, Daisy, Freddy and Bennett Stratton show off some of the gifts for others that they purchased.

numerous refugees and vulnerable families get established in Northern California. The other gifts for Al-Misbaah are socks and hat for someone who needs the extra warmth, a hygiene kit to help a community member stay clean, a backpack filled with school supplies for a student, and a bicycle for a child for exercise, adventure and to ride to and from school.

Daisy’s twin brother, Freddy, “loves to play soccer, and he couldn’t figure out how any child could go without a soccer ball,” Leslie said. So, he chose the gift of four soccer balls for a school to help teach students teamwork and promote fitness. That gift is offered by Right to Play, a global charity that helps children in impoverished nations thrive by promoting the “power of play.” The other gifts in the Giving Machine purchased are 20 storybooks for primary schoolchildren and menstrual hygiene kits to help female students stay

in school.

The Moss family purchased all those gifts, along with others from three other charities. They are:

First Step Communities in Sacramento and Roseville, which provides interim housing and emergency shelter in the Sacramento area and Roseville.

Their gifts in the Giving Machines are a kit of hygiene essentials, new underwear, a warm blanket and pillow, a winter coat and 100 laundry vouchers.

Rancho Cordova Food Locker’s Community Food Hub, whose gifts in the Giving Machines are two gallons of milk for children, an emergency weekend food pack for students, a one-month supply of fresh produce for a family, a kit of essentials to feed 10 senior citizens, and a group cooking class to teach 25 families cooking techniques and nutrition principles.

The global charity Academy for Creating

Enterprise, which provides business opportunities for individuals and families in impoverished countries. The two gifts in the Roseville Giving Machines are a basket as a way to carry goods for a new business owner and, probably the most unique gift in the machines, two piglets to help a family start a business.

“It was just an awesome experience for us to give to so many people at the same time,” Leslie said. “We hope to do again next year and make it a family tradition.”

The Light the World Giving Machines are located on the first floor of Westfield Galleria at Roseville, near the giant Christmas tree. The Giving Machines will keep giving through New Year’s Day.

To see all the gifts available, their prices and links to all the charities, go to the Sacramento and Modesto Giving Machines website at [www.givingmachinesgreatersacramento.org](http://www.givingmachinesgreatersacramento.org).

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ON GREENHAVEN / POCKET AREA

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# Sacramento Author Aides Shelter Animals Nationwide

## iPub Cloud International News Release

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - A new children’s book series is empowering young animal allies nationwide.

In 2024, approximately 6.3 million companion animals found themselves in shelters across the United States. iPub Cloud International is thrilled to introduce an extraordinary new children’s book that shines a light on this urgent issue. “A Shelter Is... A Dog’s Journey from Shelter to Home,” the debut picture book by Carolyn Wooddall and beautifully illustrated by Elaine S. Choi, captures the hopes, resilience, and love that define the shelter experience.

With its heartfelt storytelling and vibrant artwork, this inspiring book empowers young readers to connect with the cause and take action to support their local animal shelters.

Carolyn Wooddall aims to enlighten and motivate children through her Animal Ally book series. The first book, “A Shelter Is...,” tells the touching story of a hopeful dog in a shelter navigating its path to finding a forever home. Through simple storytelling and vivid illustrations, the book highlights shelters’ essential roles in nurturing and rehoming pets. “A Shelter Is...” not only aims to educate young minds about animal shelters but also encourages our youth to actively participate in creating happier endings for all animals in need.

“A beautifully illustrated piece showcasing the invaluable resource our local shelters play in our communities. A perfect introduction for children to learn about the lifesaving work of dedicated staff and bringing families and pets in need of homes together!” explained Meghan Ramczyk, animal services manager for the Lodi City animal shelter.

Wooddall’s deep passion for animal welfare shines through in her writing.

“My goal with this book is to educate readers about the powerful impact of animal shelters and their remarkable work,” she said. “I also want to empower kids to



Pictured is the book’s author, Carolyn Wooddall.

understand how they can get involved and make a difference in the lives of shelter animals in their communities. ”

### Community Impact

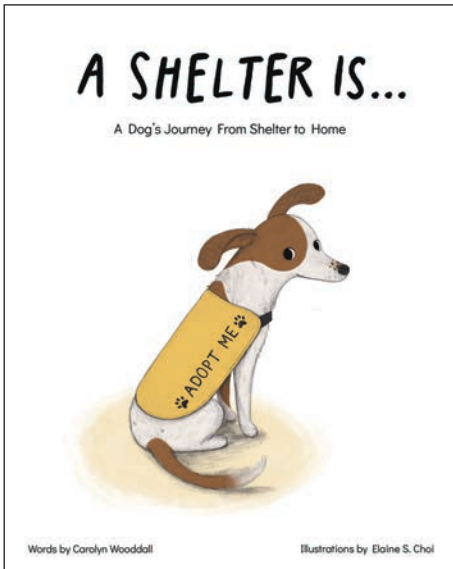
Key Statistics (Source: [www. ShelterAnimalsCount.com](http://www.ShelterAnimalsCount.com)): Approximately 3.2 million sheltered animals are cats, while 3.1 million are dogs. Around 50% of U.S. shelters maintain no-kill policies.

An estimated 4.1 million shelter animals find homes each year.

Proceeds from the Animal Ally series

will benefit Hard Luck Animal Welfare Advocates, a nonprofit that the author and her husband started in 2023 to help shelter animals who are down on their luck, as well as other animal shelters, supporting medical care and adoption efforts for animals in need.

This initiative reflects a significant opportunity for communities to rally together for a compassionate cause, ensuring more animals like the one in Wooddall’s book find their happily ever after.



Cover artwork is on display for “A Shelter Is...” Photos courtesy of Carolyn Wooddall



This is the book’s illustrator, Elaine S. Choi.

Carolyn Wooddall resides in Sacramento with her family and their four shelter pups. Her debut picture book is perfect for young animal lovers, and anyone interested in positively impacting animals’ lives. It is a compelling reminder that while shelters are essential, the ultimate goal is to turn them into temporary stops on the way to loving homes.

For more information on how to support or to order a copy of “A Shelter Is...,” please visit [www.ipubglobalconnection.com](http://www.ipubglobalconnection.com). For more information about how kids can get involved with their local animal shelters and become Animal Allies, visit [www.animalallybooks.com](http://www.animalallybooks.com). ★

## California Respects the Power of Your Vote

By Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D., California Secretary of State

Californians can confidently claim this: California has made more significant reforms to our election laws and expanded voting rights than any other state.

The relevance of this accomplishment deepens as we prepare to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act next year. This landmark legislation began to undo our country’s long history of voter suppression, intimidation, and disenfranchisement that far too many Americans experienced at the polls for decades.

My own parents, who were sharecroppers, were denied their right to vote in the Jim Crow era South. Before moving to Los Angeles from Hope, Arkansas, my parents, David and Mildred Nash, could not vote. My father was an adult with six children before he registered to vote and was only able to exercise that constitutional right for the first time here in California.

As California Secretary of State, I do not take the progress we have made over the years lightly. My staff and I hold sacred the obligation to ensure that our elections are safe, free, fair, and accessible to all. Therefore, before certifying the results for this year’s election on Dec. 13, we have taken a number of steps to ensure that every vote is counted. We have also made sure that our ballot counting process is credible and free from interference.

To meet that deadline without a hitch, California requires elections officials in all 58 counties to turn in their official results by a certain date. This year, that date was Dec. 6.

By law, every eligible voter in our state receives a vote-by-mail ballot. This ensures all registered voters can exercise their right to vote.

Whether you placed your ballot in a designated drop-off box, voted by mail, or cast your ballot at a polling center, votes are safe and secure. And we allow voters to sign up to receive text message, email, or voice call notifications about the status of their own ballots by using the Where’s My Ballot? tool. To learn more or to sign up, paste this URL in your web browser: <https://california.ballottrax.net/voter/>

The ballots of Californians who voted by mail are also protected. The United States Postal Service partners with the State to make sure ballots are delivered on time. All mailed-in ballots are sent by First Class mail with a postage paid envelope provided to every eligible registered voter.

Election Security is our number one priority. That’s why my office designed and implemented a program to back up that commitment. For more information, visit this URL: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/election-cybersecurity>

Additionally, California takes preventive actions to make sure our voting technology keeps our elections safe and protects everyone’s votes.

For example, county voting systems are not connected to the internet, which protects them from cyber-threats. The State also performs regular and rigorous testing to make sure the voting systems are working optimally, and only authorized personnel are granted access.

Staff members are also given phishing and cybersecurity training.

VoteCal, the state’s centralized voter registration system, is also key. The system is regularly updated, and it is used as a resource for counties to verify voter signatures.

California also provides security at all counting locations and makes sure ballot drop-off boxes are secured and monitored.

And all election processes are open to observation during specified hours.

In my role as Secretary of State of California, there is nothing more important to me than defending our democracy. I am committed to safeguarding voting rights, and to leading our state in upholding the highest democratic standards by implementing policies and practices that Californians and all Americans can trust and look to for instruction and hope.

You can contact the California Office of the Secretary of State at 1-800-345-Vote or [elections@sos.ca.gov](mailto:elections@sos.ca.gov) with inquiries or to report suspected incidents or irregularities. Additional information can be found at [www.sos.ca.gov](http://www.sos.ca.gov) and the office’s social media platforms:

Instagram: [@californiasos\\_](https://www.instagram.com/californiasos_)

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# Christmas Berries Grace American River Parkway

*Continued from Page 1*

the damp trails, their paths lined with the festive shrubs. Recent rains had left the soil perfectly tacky for bike riding, and the air carried that distinctive winter freshness that makes every breath feel like a blessing.

The integration of natural space and residential areas in Fair Oaks creates a unique community character that reflects the peaceful coexistence of nature and civilization. Unlike many Sacramento suburbs that surrendered to high-density development, Fair Oaks has maintained

its semi-rural atmosphere, with the American River Parkway serving as a green ribbon that ties the community together.

The Christmas berries mark the changing seasons along the parkway's winding trails, their transformation from white spring blossoms to red winter fruits mirroring the Christian liturgical calendar.

The berries begin to turn red as Advent approaches, reaching their peak brilliance during the Christmas season, when Christians worldwide celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. The

berries' persistent presence through winter mirrors the endurance of faith, while their sharp leaves remind believers of Christ's later sacrifice.

As another December unfolds, I find myself increasingly grateful for these simple gifts, open spaces that give us room to breathe, trails that bring neighbors together and these beautiful berries remind us of Christmas past and present.

Whether watching a friend's horse carefully traverse the path or pausing to let a mountain biker pass with a wave and a smile,



Overlooking San Juan Rapids, winter berries brighten a December sunset. Photo by Susan Maxwell Skinner

I'm reminded that the best Christmas presents don't come wrapped in paper. They grow wild along our trails, they float down our river and they live in the hearts of the community we've built together.

*Derek Minnema is a Fair Oaks resident, who can be reached at [DerekMinnema.com](mailto:DerekMinnema.com).* ★

## Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



Things can change quickly in Kings Town, and the happenings of the past week certainly demonstrate exactly that.

The hardcourt gladiators from Sacramento are currently on a torrid 3-game winning streak, looking ahead to Monday night's game against the Denver Nuggets.

If you hadn't paid attention and just tuned into the Kings, you'd discover a team that is just finding themselves 26 games into the regular season, after losing every game in the preseason.

Fans and pundits alike have riddled the airwaves with remedies for multiple losing streaks, along with advice to coach Brown as to who should be his starting five.

I am more than happy to announce that coach Brown's decision to finally insert Malik Brown into the King's starting lineup has produced four wins in the last five games, and everyone is now wondering why it took three seasons to figure this one out.

But rather than casting aspersions, I will take the high road, and just give him an attaboy for making a decision that was long overdue. Malik is thrilled to be where he always thought he should be, and now coach Brown can simply focus on his bench that is currently ranked in the bottom of the league.

Kevin Huerter is showing signs of returning to form and seems to be comfortable taking the 6th man position that was formerly Monk's, so it's really the next three or four rotations that are going to tell the tale.

What has created chaos with the team is the night-in and night out inconsistency as to who will sit the night out completely, or who will garnish the majority of the minutes.

Big man Alex Len cannot catch a break, as he all too often finds himself at the end of the bench being a spectator for the entire game. This 7-foot giant has NBA game, and from my perspective, it's up to coach Brown and his staff to build this big man's confidence. One way you do that is by giving him a consistent rotation that he can count on every night.

Len has played several good games and shows real promise, only to find himself relegated to the bench the very next game with no explanation except for the dreaded, coaches' decision.

The Kings can keep scouring the league for another trade/acquisition, or just look at their own bench, and perhaps realize that there is more talent already on this team than they are giving them credit for.

I for one believe that Alex Len has a big upside, but it takes a coach and staff that are willing to build a player's confidence if you want to see the desired result.

So far, I'm giving this staff a failing grade as it relates to evaluating talent, and you need to look no further than the inexplicable trade of Davion Mitchell to qualify my comments.

The Kings are still feeling the void left in Mitchell's absence, and all he is doing in Toronto is making Canadian fans fall in love with him. From the Kings bench to the Raptor's starting point guard, Davion is making the Toronto GM look like a basketball wizard.

The Kings cannot afford to continue undervaluing talent, or simply not see the forest for the trees. Let's get everything out of the team currently constituted, and that means starting with consistency as it relates to players coming off the bench. If Huerter is the 6th man, who is #7, 8, and 9? At this point no one but coach Brown knows, and he doesn't know until just before gametime.

Here's the good news! At 13-13 it's time to hit the reset button. Yes, the Kings are at 500, and now is the time to start making a run that can propel this team to the playoffs.

The starting five of, Fox, Monk, DeRozan, Murray, and Sabonis are a formidable group to guard, and I look forward to watching this team come out of the blocks on all 8 cylinders every night.

So, take heart Kings fans, because the best is yet to come, and that's without a trade or an acquisition.

Merry Christmas to one and all and go Kings!

*Your thoughts are always welcome at [vgharriskingsfan@gmail.com](mailto:vgharriskingsfan@gmail.com).* ★

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# ABOUT TOWN

## Area Museums Offer Plenty of Experiences

The Greater Sacramento region is rich with museums and popular destinations that offer plenty of must-see and must-do experiences to explore.

The community is encouraged to show support for local museums by making plans to visit favorite locations (or discovering new ones).

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

**California Automobile Museum** – Take a ride in a museum car during Sunday Drives, the third Sunday of every month,. With paid museum admission, take a ride from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Details at [calautomuseum.org/](http://calautomuseum.org/)

**California Museum** – ¡Pleibol! In

the Barrios and the Big Leagues, Oct. 26-Jan. 25, 2025: This Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition takes audiences on a journey into the heart of American baseball to understand how generations of Latinas/os have helped make the game what it is today. Details at [californiamuseum.org](http://californiamuseum.org).

**California State Railroad Museum & Foundation** – The California State Railroad Museum & Foundation are proud to offer the Polar Express Train Ride – Enjoy this magical family event! The evening begins in our passenger station where you will be entertained by Polar Express characters, and then board your train to the North Pole where you will enjoy hot chocolate and a sweet treat courtesy of our hot chocolate chefs. Once you reach the North Pole, the jolly old elf — Santa himself — will

come on board to give each passenger the first gift of Christmas, a silver sleigh bell. For more details and/or to book a train ride, please visit [www.californiarailroad.museum](http://www.californiarailroad.museum).

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

For more activities offered by Sacramento area museums, visit [SacMuseums.org](http://SacMuseums.org).

## Elks Lodge Calendar of Events

Elk’s Lodge Sunday Breakfast, 8:30 am-11 am every Sunday.

Bring your friends and family; \$15 tax included. Best deal in town. Made to order Omelets or eggs any way you want. Bacon, sausage, potatoes, biscuits and gravy, pancakes, waffles, coffee. Large parties should call for reservations. Guests are VERY welcome!

Yoga, Monday 12 pm, Wednesday 3:30 pm. Lodge members free.

Martial Arts, Monday 5 pm

Pickleball, Monday, Wednesday 9a-12p, Thursday 4:30-7:30p,Sunday 4-7p.

Improv Night, 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 6-8 pm

Wednesday Night Dinner, 5:30 to 7 pm. See [elks6.net](http://elks6.net) for weekly menu. ★

# Keep Your Pets Safe During the Holidays

### Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The holiday season is a time for joy, celebration and spending time with loved ones – including our furry, feathered and scaly family members. However, this festive time can also bring unique challenges and hazards for pets. By taking a few precautions, you can ensure your pet stays safe, comfortable and stress-free while enjoying the holiday spirit.

#### Decorate with Care

Holiday decorations add charm, but they can pose risks to pets.

**Christmas Trees:** Secure your tree to prevent it from tipping over if your pet gets curious. Avoid using tinsel, which can cause intestinal blockages if ingested.

**Ornaments:** Keep fragile or small ornaments out of reach. Opt for shatterproof decorations on the lower branches.

**Lights and Wires:** Tape down wires and unplug lights when you’re not home to prevent chewing accidents.

**Candles:** Use flameless candles to avoid burns or fires if a tail or paw knocks them over.

#### Watch What They Eat

Holiday meals often include foods that can be harmful to pets.

**Toxic Foods:** Avoid giving your pet chocolate, grapes, raisins, onions, garlic and anything sweetened with xylitol.

**Bones:** Cooked bones can splinter and cause serious injuries. Offer pet-safe treats instead.

**Alcohol:** Keep alcoholic drinks out of reach – even small amounts can be toxic to pets.

If you want to include your pet in the festivities, prepare them a special treat, like a dog-friendly “pupcake” or some plain, cooked turkey (without seasoning or bones).

#### Provide a Stress-Free Environment

With guests coming and going, homes can become chaotic during the holidays. Create a calm, safe space for your pet.

**Safe Spaces:** Set up a quiet room or corner with their bed, toys and water where they can retreat if they feel overwhelmed.

**Guests:** Remind visitors to keep doors and gates closed and to ask before offering food or treats to your pet.

**Fireworks and Noise:** If your holiday



Make sure that holiday decorations don’t pose a hazard to curious pets. Photo by Oli R/Pixabay

celebrations include loud noises like fireworks, consider using calming aids such as white noise machines, anxiety vests or pet-safe CBD oil (with vet approval).

**Traveling with Pets**

If you're traveling for the holidays and bringing your pet along, make sure they’re travel-ready.

**Car Safety:** Use a pet seatbelt, carrier or barrier to keep them secure.

**Pet Identification:** Ensure your pet has an updated ID tag and microchip.

**Packing:** Bring their food, water, medications and a few comfort items, such as a favorite blanket or toy.

If leaving your pet at home with a sitter, provide detailed care instructions and emergency contact information.

**Be Mindful of Plants**

Many holiday plants are toxic to pets,

including Poinsettias, which are mildly toxic and can cause irritation if ingested; mistletoe and holly, which can cause severe gastrointestinal upset or worse if consumed; and lilies, which are extremely toxic to cats, even in small amounts.

Opt for pet-safe alternatives or artificial plants to avoid any accidental nibbles.

**Monitor Outdoor Time**

If you live in a cold climate, limit your pet’s exposure to chilly weather.

**Protective Gear:** Use pet sweaters, coats and booties for dogs who need extra warmth.

**De-Icers:** Avoid letting pets walk on areas treated with salt or chemical deicers, which can irritate paws or be toxic if licked. Rinse their paws after walks.

**Keep an Eye on Pet Health**

The holiday season can be

unpredictable, so monitor your pet for any unusual behavior or symptoms of distress.

If your pet eats something potentially harmful or shows signs of illness, contact your veterinarian or an emergency pet clinic immediately.

**Don’t Forget to Include Them in the Fun!**

The holidays are all about family, so don’t forget to involve your pet in the festivities.

Take a cute holiday photo together, give them a special gift or spend extra time snuggling to show how much they mean to you.

By taking these simple steps, you can ensure your holidays are not only merry and bright but also safe for your beloved pets.

Wishing you and your furry family a joyful and safe holiday season! ★

# Front Street Shelter Offers Free Adoptions

### City of Sacramento News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Front Street Animal Shelter launched a “Home for the Holidays” adoption campaign with waived-fee adoptions through Dec. 31 in an effort to find loving homes for animals in need.

The shelter continues to face

challenges maintaining kennel space, regularly operating close to 200% of its appropriate capacity.

“When it rains, it pours,” said Phillip Zimmerman, manager at Front Street Animal Shelter. “We were already extremely full, but just took in 12 additional large dogs from an investigation case.”

The shelter has dealt with

several large hoarding cases this year, including one where they secured over 30 dogs when the shelter was already at capacity. Cases like these quickly push the shelter into crisis mode.

“When someone adopts an animal, they truly are saving a life,” said Zimmerman. “We are in dire need of animal lovers to come to the rescue to change an animal’s life and to experience

the joy these animals will bring to their adopters’ lives as well.”

For no charge, all adopted animals will be spayed or neutered, vaccinated and microchipped, which the shelter says would cost about \$1,000 to have done at a private clinic.

More information about the shelter, the adoption process and available animals can be found at [frontstreetshelter.org](http://frontstreetshelter.org). ★



Front Street Animal Shelter offers free pet adoptions through Dec. 31. Photo courtesy of Front Street Animal Shelter

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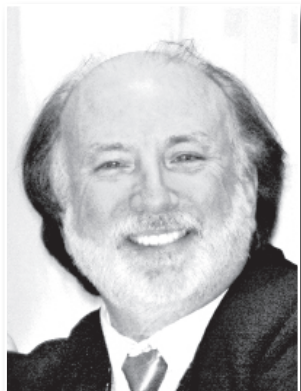
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# Sacramento Nursing Home Among Top in Nation

## ACC Care Center News Release

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - ACC Care Center has been recognized as a Best Nursing Home for 2025 by U.S. News & World Report. ACC Care Center has received recognition for both short-term and long-term care and is one of only three Sacramento skilled nursing communities to receive dual recognition.

Since 2009, U.S. News' annual Best Nursing Homes ratings have assisted American families in need of either short-term rehabilitation or long-term care for themselves or a loved one.

ACC Care Center earned its U.S. News Best Nursing Home status by achieving a rating of "High



Performing," the highest possible rating, for short-term rehabilitation and long-term care. U.S. News gives the designation of Best Nursing Home only to those that satisfy U.S. News' proprietary assessment of consistent performance in quality measures.

Heidi Wheeler LNHA, RCFE, LVN, ACC Care Center administrator, said: "I'm honored and immensely proud of the caring team at ACC Care



Center for earning top honors in this thorough national review of nursing home quality. ACC Care Center has a robust training program that focuses on our mission to provide compassionate, person-centered care that celebrates our cultural diversity and promotes the highest quality of care to our residents in a homelike environment. With higher nurse to resident ratios our nursing team can spend more time with residents

providing them with attentive, genuine care. Having more staff on hand and our medical director onsite regularly allows the team to be proactive vs reactive which results in better outcomes and fewer visits to the emergency room."

Dr. Scott Stringer MD, Sutter physician and medical director of ACC Care Center, said: "As the medical director, I am incredibly proud of our commitment to providing the highest quality of care, reflected in the prestigious recognition from U.S. News & World Report. A cornerstone of our success is the thoughtful and strategic reduction in the use of antipsychotic medications. By prioritizing individualized care plans, promoting non-pharmacologic interventions, and fostering

a deep understanding of behavioral health needs, we have significantly enhanced the well-being and safety of our residents. This achievement underscores our dedication to innovation, compassion, and setting a benchmark for excellence in skilled nursing care."

Connie L. Rusnyk, president and CEO of ACC Senior Services, said: "I have worked in hundreds of Nursing Homes throughout my career, and the Care Center is one that is remarkable. What makes the Care Center so different? The community, the staff and the families involved make the Care Center such a special place for our elderly to call home! The community involvement is unlike anything that I have ever

seen. The families are so actively involved with the Care Center, whether they have family or friends living in the Care Center or not."

For the 2025 edition, U.S. News evaluated nearly 15,000 nursing homes on patient and resident outcomes, such as infection rates; staffing levels; potentially inappropriate reliance on antipsychotic drugs; health inspection results and other indicators of quality.

Short- and long-term ratings include data on nurse staffing, use of antipsychotic drugs and success in preventing ER and hospital visits. The long-term care rating also includes measures of whether a home changed ownership and how well it was staffed on weekends. ★

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# Hornet Football Coach Resigns

By Daniel Canfield

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - On Friday, Dec. 6, Sacramento State University announced that Hornet Football head coach Andy Thompson had resigned to pursue other career opportunities. Thompson's departure after two years at the helm of the Hornet Football program comes at the conclusion of a 2024 campaign that saw the Hornets finish with a 3-9 overall record and 1-7 in Big Sky Conference play. Sac State dropped the final five games of the 2024 season including the annual causeway classic matchup with UC Davis which was played on Nov. 23 at Hornet stadium.

The official news release from the university includes a gracious statement from Athletic Director Mark Orr regarding Thompson's tenure with the Hornets. "We want to thank Coach Thompson and his family for all they have done for Sacramento State football over the last five seasons," Orr said. "Under his watch, the program has achieved its highest level of success. We wish him the best of luck in the future."

In his two years as head coach Thompson posted



Sac State's Football program is in search of a new head coach to replace Andy Thompson who resigned on Dec. 6 to join the Stanford University football coaching staff. Photo by Sacramento State Athletics

an overall record of 11 wins and 14 losses. In his first year as head coach in 2023, the Hornets enjoyed an 8-5 record and made it to the second round the 2023 FCS Playoffs. Unfortunately, that success was not seen again in the disappointing 2024 season.

Thompson had been on the Hornet coaching staff since the 2019 season.

As defensive coordinator, Thompson was instrumental in the Hornet football program earning Big Sky Conference titles in 2019, 2021 and 2022. Following the conclusion of the 2022 season, Thompson was promoted to the Hornet head coach position which had been vacated by Troy Taylor who left Sacramento State to take

the head football coaching position at Stanford University.

On the heels of the official announcement from Sacramento State Athletics regarding Thompson's departure on Dec. 6, Stanford University officially announced that coach Thompson would be joining the Stanford Football coaching staff

as Stanford Football's assistant head coach and co-defensive coordinator. Reuniting Thompson with his former boss and former Hornet head coach Troy Taylor.

The Hornet Football program owes a debt of gratitude to Coach Thompson as his involvement with the program led to success and accolades

not previously enjoyed by the Hornets. Best wishes to Coach Thomspon in his new position, as long as Stanford football's interests do not conflict with Hornet football's interests.

Sacramento State officials announced that a national search will begin immediately to find the next head coach for the Hornets. ★

# Jesuit High's Cross Country Coach Honored



Jesuit High School's Cross County Head Coach Walt Lange, photographed here with his 2024 State Championship team, was named the Joe Newton Coach of the Year at the Nike Cross Nationals on Saturday, Dec. 7. Courtesy Photo

## Jesuit High School News Release

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - Jesuit High School Cross Country Head Coach Walt Lange received a prestigious honor on Saturday, Dec. 7, as he was named the Joe Newton Coach of the Year at the Nike Cross Nationals (NXN).

This award, named after legendary coach Joe Newton of York High School, celebrates lifetime achievement in high school cross country. Newton's teams captured at least 24 Illinois State Championships, and his legacy extends far beyond victories, having profoundly shaped the lives of countless young athletes.

Coach Lange, with an extraordinary 55 years of coaching at Jesuit High

School, including 54 years as head coach, now joins the ranks of elite coaches recognized on a national stage. Known for his humility, Lange's contributions to high school cross country and the countless lives he has impacted over the decades make this recognition richly deserved.

"I'm overjoyed that the boys were there to witness this moment," shared Assistant Coach David Zielke, reflecting on the significance of the occasion.

Lange's dedication, passion, and lifelong commitment to developing athletes both on and off the course embody the Jesuit tradition of excellence and service. Congratulations to Coach Lange on this remarkable and well-deserved honor! ★

# UC Davis To Join Mountain West Conference

## UC Davis News Release

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - The University of California, Davis has accepted a formal invitation to join the Mountain West Conference beginning July 1, 2026.

"We are thrilled to join the Mountain West Conference, and we look forward to an incredible experience for our student-athletes and for our fans," said UC Davis Chancellor Gary S. May. "Our transition to the highly regarded conference will introduce our Aggie community to a broader audience, in major metropolitan areas and through increased media coverage. It also provides us with an opportunity to align with universities that share similar academic strengths while also expanding our competitive presence in the Western United States."

The Aggies will compete in all Mountain West Conference-sponsored sports, except for football, which will continue to participate in the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) in the Big Sky Conference. Men's and women's water polo as well as beach volleyball will seek to remain in the Big West through affiliate membership but are prepared to explore other options, if necessary. No changes will occur with membership

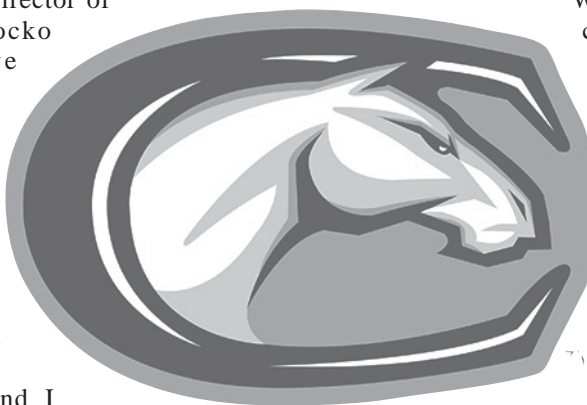
agreements for equestrian, field hockey and lacrosse.

"Adding UC Davis further strengthens the trajectory of the Mountain West as it continues to build its brand that has proven to elevate institutions and student-athletes," said MW Commissioner Gloria Nevarez. "Chancellor Gary S. May and Director of Athletics Rocko DeLuca have shared their strategic plan and financial vision for enhancing student-athlete development, welfare, and competitive excellence, and I believe UC Davis brings a wealth of positives in the continuing growth of the Mountain West."

The announcement comes on the heels of a historic fall sport season for the Aggies in which all eight varsity fall sports teams qualified for postseason competition.

Men's soccer secured a Big West championship and a trip to the NCAA

tournament. UC Davis football finished the regular season seeded fifth in the nation with a bye in the first round of the NCAA Division I Football Championship followed by a win against Illinois State on Dec. 7. They will play South Dakota on Saturday, Dec. 14 at noon in the quarterfinals.



hockey finishing sixth in the America East.

"We are grateful to the Mountain West Conference membership for this incredible opportunity and for sharing our vision of academic and athletics excellence," said UC Davis Director of Athletics Rocko DeLuca. "Our campus leadership, students, Aggie alumni, fans, the Davis

community and the broader Sacramento region all recognize the unique spirit of UC Davis and carry Aggie Pride with them each and every day. They have invested their time, talent and resources in supporting our growth, and the success of our fall sports is a clear reflection of those efforts. Now is the time to showcase Aggie Pride on a national stage, and the Mountain West's brand and strategy align perfectly with our aspirations."

Additional costs to support the transition, including travel, staffing and support services, will be primarily offset by increased revenues from ticket sales, donations, multimedia rights and, for the first time, revenue distributions from the conference. A ramp-up period of three to four years is anticipated before revenues fully reach projected levels. The university does not plan to use existing institutional funds to support the transition.

Starting no later than the 2026-27 academic year, the Mountain West will feature the United States Air Force Academy; University of California, Davis; Grand Canyon University; University of Hawaii at Mānoa; University of Nevada, Reno; University of New Mexico; San José State University; University of Nevada, Las Vegas; University of Texas, El Paso and the University of Wyoming. ★



# Land Park Meets Santa Claus!



BFFs have a great time at the holiday event.

*Continued from page 1*

shared her reason for joining the Land Park Community Association.

“When I found myself with more time as my kids moved on to college, joining the Land Park Community Association board was the perfect fit.

Being able to help coordinate events like Meet Santa and bring joy to the families in our community is exactly where I want to spend some of my free time,” Cooper said.

Another team of Land Park supporters, The Majestics and Family First low-rider car clubs, also had a table with free Matchbox or Hot Wheels cars. The car clubs are passionate advocates for William Land Park and plan to engage in more outreach and park improvements with the Land Park Community Association in the coming year.

The event went through 400 cookies, 280 hot cocoa cups, 200 ornament crafts and over 400 giveaways. Meet Santa was sponsored by the Land Park Community Association and WLP Golf and included a generous donation by Schaff Law Group. Although guests came to partake in the food and cheer, they left tables of donations such as food, baby items and toys. The Land Park Community Association will deliver the food items to the Leataata Floyd Elementary School Food Bank and the toys to the Sacramento Children’s



Majestics and Family First lowrider car clubs let children choose their favorite diecast car to take home.

Home. Contributions also included two children’s scooters from the lowrider car clubs.

As the event came to a close, the line for photos continued until the last child had a chance to speak to the Jolly Old Elf.

“This is why community matters,” said Kris Rogers, president of the Land Park Community Association. “It doesn’t take much to volunteer time or contribute to



The line for photos with Santa lasted the entire event. Photos by Kristina Rogers



A little guest chooses her favorite Christmas headband. Photo by Kristina Rogers

something like this. You never know who will be inspired by the effort and do something for others in the future. That includes the all the children who benefitted and were made to feel special.”

*To learn more about the Land Park Community Association and how to get involved, visit [www.landpark.org](http://www.landpark.org).* ★

## Grateful for My Amazing Friends

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442 Florin Rd.	7615 W Vista Way	6821 Arabella Way
6389 Aspen Ranch Ct.	1120 Rosa Del Rio Way	6861 Westmoreland
436 Hopkins Rd.	6665 Lake Park Dr.	7410 Barcella Dr.
7030 Havenhurst Dr.	9826 Rombiolo Ct.	7024 Wilshire Cir.
18 Kittiwake Ct.	1117 Woodshire Way	5604 Cazadero Way
541 Leeward Way	5604 Cazadero Way	8265 Seahorse Way
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# 93rd Annual Capitol Tree Lighting



Gov. Gavin Newsom and family gather at the 93rd annual Capitol Christmas Tree lighting ceremony on Dec. 11. Photo courtesy of Governor's Office

## Governor's Office Press Release

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - A cherished holiday tradition, this year marked the 41st consecutive year that California's Governor and First Partner have hosted a child receiving support from one of California's 21 non-profit regional centers to light the California State Capitol Christmas Tree. Nine-year-old Carter Morris from Merced was selected by Central Valley Regional Center to represent the more than 450,000 Californians with

intellectual and developmental disabilities who receive services. "Happy holidays, California! It was an honor to stand with Carter in solidarity with all of California's kids with intellectual and developmental disabilities, to light the Capitol Tree this year. The holiday season is about gratitude, being together with loved ones, and giving to those less fortunate than ourselves, and I am so pleased to usher in this time of joy with Carter and his family," Gov. Gavin Newsom said at the tree lighting ceremony.

First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom commented on the occasion, "The holidays are a powerful reminder to lead with empathy and compassion, spreading joy and kindness to those around us. This year's California State Capitol Tree Lighting was especially meaningful as we joined Carter and his family for this beautiful tradition. Standing with them, we were reminded of the strength and resilience of our communities and the importance of coming together to celebrate hope and connection during this season." ★

# City Swears in New Mayor, Two Councilmembers



Kevin McCarty was sworn in as mayor of Sacramento on Dec. 10 in Council Chambers. Photo courtesy of City of Sacramento

## City of Sacramento News Release

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - The new Sacramento mayor and two new members of City Council were officially sworn into office on Tuesday, Dec. 10, in Council Chambers. Kevin McCarty, Sacramento's most recent District 6 State Assemblymember and former city councilmember, was sworn in as the mayor. McCarty replaces Darrell Steinberg, who was mayor from 2016 to 2024. "I know that there is a long list of issues that we need to address," McCarty said. "But I know that there is a list much longer of greatness in our city — great people, great neighborhoods, great assets. We have a lot of pluses in our community, so I come with wide-open eyes, wide-open optimism about the present and the future." Roger Dickinson, housing advocate and former county supervisor and state assemblymember, is the newest member representing District 2, which includes the neighborhoods of Del Paso Heights, Hagginwood, Woodlake and Robla in northern Sacramento. Dickinson replaces Shoun Thao, who was interim councilmember from December 2023 to 2024. "We are bound together in our part of the city by a common commitment to create a better tomorrow for everyone who lives, works and plays, not just in District 2, but throughout the city, throughout the

county and the region," Dickinson said. "A new day has come to District 2. The sun started coming up with Councilmember Shoun Thao. It's going to continue to rise until we are in full, full sunlight." Phil Pluckebaum, project manager for UC Davis Health, is the newest member representing District 4, which includes downtown, midtown and East Sacramento. Pluckebaum replaces Katie Valenzuela, who was councilmember from 2020 to 2024. "I believe teamwork is the key to success; we can't achieve our goals alone," said Pluckebaum. "It's through the collective efforts of our community members, local businesses, government and staff members that we can create meaningful change. Together, we can build a city that is resilient, vibrant and full of opportunity for everyone." Mai Vang was sworn in for a second term as councilmember for District 8, representing the Meadowview, Parkway, North Laguna Creek and Jacinto Creek neighborhoods in southern Sacramento. Eric Guerra was sworn in for a fourth term as councilmember for District 6, representing Campus Commons, Sierra Oaks and areas of Tahoe Park and Little Saigon. The City of Sacramento is made up of eight districts represented by one member and one mayor at large. Each serves a four-year term. The City Council generally meets three times each month on Tuesdays at 2 or 5 p.m. ★

# Urban Plates Arrives in Sacramento



The Urban Plates kitchen is busy preparing craveable, wholesome and clean food.

## Story and photos by Daniel Canfield

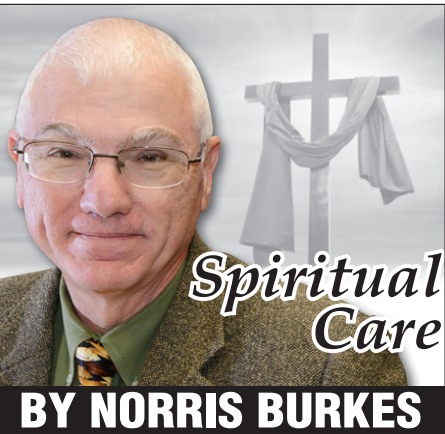
**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - A new restaurant is bringing fresh, organic scratch-made cuisine to Sacramento. On Dec. 12, Urban Plates opened its first Sacramento region location in a newly-constructed building at 2080 Fair Oaks Blvd., Sacramento. Visitors to the new Urban Plates location will have the opportunity to experience the restaurant's motto, "Everyone deserves to eat this good." The Sacramento location represents the 20th Urban Plates restaurant, all of which are in California and all company-owned and -operated. Urban Plates originated in San Diego County and has migrated northward through fine dining destinations in Orange and Los Angeles counties as well as the San Francisco Bay Area. Urban Plates provides an ideal atmosphere for casual and relaxed dining with a comfortable vibe and friendly hospitality. This unique restaurant approach was explained by Urban Plates Hospitality Trainer Monique Patriota, who took a break from training new staff to speak to this reporter. In addition to fresh organic scratch-made cuisine, the Sacramento Urban Plates location also brings with it job growth for the Sacramento region. Patriota explained the restaurant has locally hired 50 staff members to get the restaurant ready for the Dec. 12 grand opening and that additional staff would be brought on as they move forward. Urban Plates issued an official



Urban Plates opens its newest location and first in the Sacramento region on Dec. 12.

statement to celebrate the opening of its first Sacramento area location. "Opening in California's 'Farm-to-Fork' capital is especially meaningful to us," said Joe O'Donnell, Urban Plates president. "We look forward to serving this community with fresh, affordable and scratch-made meals that honor Sacramento's deep commitment to thoughtfully-sourced ingredients and menus that change with the seasons." The Urban Plates menu is replete with delicious scratch-made offerings, including salads, bowls, sandwiches and full entrees with a choice of sides. Several scrumptious vegan menu items are also available and scratch-made. The dessert selection is plentiful with cookies, pies and gluten-free options, and the staff favorite, a mango tart. All desserts are made on site like all the food offerings on the Urban Plates menu. An array of non-alcoholic beverages is available to accompany your meal, along with fine spirits in the form of craft beers and California wines. ★

# Definitely NOT the Best Christmas Ever



**BY NORRIS BURKES** This is the time of year when writers like to recount their "Best Christmas ever." Their stories often include a video of a slobbering puppy leaping from a ribbon-covered box or a marriage proposal, or my favorite, a deployed soldier surprising her family with an early homecoming. But if you've read my column long enough, you'll know that this columnist seeks to fill the holes of the unexpected. So, today, I recollect my very worst Christmas ever! I was only 4 years old, but savvy enough to ask my parents why our Charlie Brown Christmas tree was so bare. I didn't understand why my father, a poor ministerial student, had nothing to place under the tree. However, I became cautiously optimistic on Christmas Eve when my dad called us one-by-one into his study cubby. My sister came away with a new doll. My brother followed holding a kinetic car, the kind you roll backwards to wind up the energy. Score! Seeing that kind of haul, my kinetic energy was pushing full throttle. I approached my dad's desk and climbed into his loving lap. "I have something very important to tell you," he said. My little eyes reflected with the anticipatory joy of Tiny Tim. "There is no such thing as Santa Claus," he said. "We celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas, not Santa." My eyes blinked with tears. Could it get any worse for a preschooler than that? Yes, actually, it could. When I asked about my present, my dad told me that I'd be sharing the kinetic car with my brother. "Does it get it any sadder?" you ask.

In fact, it did.. I joined my brother on the kitchen floor where we took turns sending the car careening back and forth like a game of catch. Twenty minutes into the game, my 5-year-old brother began speculating on how the car mechanism worked. "Let me take it apart," my brother begged with screwdriver in hand. I was curious, too, but I would only agree if he promised to restore it to working condition. He promised. Ten minutes later, with wheels, chassis and motor spread on the kitchen table, the car was humpty-dumptyed. Saddest, worst, most disappointing Christmas ever, right? So, why would I write about a Christmas memory worthy of Debbie-downer? As foul as it was, it still points toward some spiritual takeaways of Christmas. First, Christmas needn't be all about materialism, about what we buy or what we consume. It might also be about sacrifice. My sacrifice fed my brother's mechanical mind. He explored the workings of the tiny engine, gaining early insights into motion, potential energy and kinetic energy. He may have failed the car restoration business, but he became an electronics repairman and later started his own electronics business. Second, my worst Christmas inspired me to share what we are given. Christian scripture reminds us, "To whom much is given, much shall be required." I didn't get much, but in sharing it, I perhaps inspired greater generosity. For years to come, my brother modified other gifts into things much more interesting. One year he rigged a toy tank to burst from a record player box and shoot rubber bands. Another year, he removed the capacitor from an old radio to make an electric shock device capable of repelling the school bullies. I've shared this sad story with my wife many times over the years. So, last week I told her I'd have my best Christmas ever if she'd give me a miniature Schnauzer puppy for Christmas. At first she said no, but after reading this column, she assured me that our neighbor would likely "share" his new puppy. So much for the worst Christmas ever. ★