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# Gold River Messenger

VOLUME 13 • ISSUE 1

Serving Gold River and Sacramento County

JANUARY 2025

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## Stiffened Penalties for Theft



Prop 36, approved by California voters in November, includes heavier consequences for petty theft and shoplifting offenses. Photo courtesy of Pixabay

By Cayla Mihalovich, CalMatters.org

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - Californians accused of certain drug and retail theft crimes may already be facing stiffer penalties under an initiative voters passed this year, alongside related bills Gov. Gavin Newsom signed into law.

Voters this November overwhelmingly approved Proposition 36, which both modifies and adds key changes to California law.

That includes prosecutors being

able to charge people convicted of various third-time drug offenses with a so-called treatment-mandated felony, which would direct them to substance use disorder or mental health treatment in lieu of up to three years in jail or prison.

Under the new law, courts are also obligated to warn people convicted of selling or providing certain drugs, such as fentanyl, that they could face murder charges for later distributing illegal drugs that kill someone.

And heavier consequences may also extend to petty theft and

shoplifting offenses, including the possibility of up to three years in jail or prison if a person has already been twice convicted for certain theft offenses.

Several district attorneys and police departments announced arrests this month that they planned to charge under the new law, including in San Francisco, Solano and Shasta counties.

The measure partially reversed a different initiative voters approved a decade ago, which reduced penalties

*Continued on page 4*

## SacRT Launches Shared-Use Mobility Service

Sacramento Regional Transit District News Release

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - The Sacramento Regional Transit District (SacRT) has launched a shared-use mobility program. SacRT Flex is a limited subsidized neighborhood shuttle service for a limited group of qualified riders, including seniors (age 62 and older), low-income individuals and individuals with disabilities.

SacRT Flex, a new program operated by Via, officially started service on Jan. 2. SacRT Flex is a limited shared-use service designed to provide greater accessibility and mobility for riders with the greatest transportation needs. During the soft launch phase, eligible riders are invited to test the new service and familiarize themselves with its features.

"This new program, although not a replacement for SmARTRide, ensures that we continue to meet the mobility needs of our community while maintaining fiscal responsibility and optimizing resources," said SacRT General Manager/CEO Henry Li. "We are excited to introduce a program that prioritizes accessibility and convenience for those who need it most."

SacRT Flex is operated by Via, the same vendor responsible for scheduling the SmARTRide service. For the SacRT Flex program, Via manages the app, schedules the trips, maintains the vehicles, provides the drivers and collects the fare revenue, ensuring a seamless experience for riders. SacRT Flex is being funded by Measure A as a pilot for the next 18 months. Measure A is a Sacramento County program that funds transportation projects and services through a half-cent sales tax.

SacRT Flex operating hours are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays through Fridays (excluding most holidays). SacRT Flex will operate in the same nine zones as SmARTRide: Citrus Heights-Antelope-Orangevale, Arden-Carmichael, Downtown-Midtown, Elk Grove, Florin-Gerber, Folsom, Franklin-South Sacramento, Natomas-North Sacramento and Rancho Cordova.

Ride requests must be booked at least 24 hours in advance (up to two days in advance) using Via's SacRT Flex app or by phone. Same-day requests are currently not available. Cost is \$2.50 per trip for

*Continued on page 4*

## Holiday Home Tour Raises Funds

By Judy Andrews

**GOLD RIVER, CA (MPG)** - Hoping to deliver some fun holiday cheer and inspiration, Gold River's inaugural Holiday Home Tour kicked off last month, exceeding all expectations.

The tour, presented by local real estate professionals, ran from 4 to 8 p.m. Dec. 6 and featured eight elaborately-decorated homes scattered across several neighborhood villages within the Gold River community.

At least 200 ticket holders, eager to see what their neighbors had done, showed up with smiles and wide eyes at all the beautiful homes decked out for the holidays.

Proceeds from the tour's ticket sales raised \$8,000 for Gold River Discovery Center (GRDC) to support its Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) activities. The school, located in the heart of Gold River, serves grades K-8 in the San Juan Unified School District.

Inspired by other Sacramento-area fundraisers, tour founder Tamara Bish created the concept with three goals in mind: "inspire current residents,



The Freitas home featured a 100-plus-piece Snowy Village. Photo by Judy Andrews

welcome new and prospective homeowners, and raise essential funds for the school."

Bish is also a proud Gold River Discovery Center parent and area Realtor.

"The event offered a rare opportunity to explore the charm and diversity of the different Gold River communities," Bish said. "Our homeowners and hosts worked hard to make this a fun and festive evening for everyone."

Dave and Veronica

Freitas were among the eight families who opened their homes to the tour. They have been residents of Gold River for 25 years. With its elaborate interior display of Snow Villages, the Freitas' home was a big hit on the tour.

"We felt it was important to support the school because a good school helps keep the neighborhood thriving," shared Veronica Freitas, who started collecting village pieces in 1988. Her display now contains about 80 or

90 buildings plus many accessories.

"As a host, I felt a sense of community while meeting new neighbors and greeting old ones," Veronica Freitas said. "Seeing how much people enjoyed our home and the Snow Villages was truly gratifying."

The sponsors, homeowners and hosts of the 2024 Gold River Holiday Home Tour wish to thank the community for supporting this inaugural event. ★

# January is National Human Trafficking Awareness Month

**Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova & Gold River News Release**

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) -** Human Trafficking is more prevalent than you think. Every two minutes, a child is trafficked or sexually exploited in the United States. The average age of exploitation is 12 to 15 years old.

For every 10 trafficking victims identified globally, five are adult women and two are girls, meaning 70% are female.

The total number of trafficked individuals is unknown but estimates range from 28 million to 50 million globally.

This crime is often underreported and hard to track as it is the second largest worldwide criminal enterprise.

Sacramento is within the top 10 U.S. cities that are a trafficking hub, primarily due to I-5 that runs between Canada and Mexico, and I-80 which runs from the West Coast to the East Coast and California is a

coastal state.

**The Impact of Trafficking**

Human trafficking can happen to anyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation or social class but some people are more vulnerable than others. Vulnerable groups include recent migrants, those with substance use/mental health illnesses, people with limited education and individuals experiencing poverty or homelessness (especially youth).

Another vulnerability is lack of companionship, loneliness or boredom, and youth at home alone. Unsupervised or under-supervised youth because both parents/guardians must work, tend to retreat into social media or online video gaming where traffickers also hunt. Traffickers also prey on these vulnerabilities to create a dependent relationship and make it more difficult for victims to leave. Most frequently, people are trafficked by someone they know and taken by

manipulation rather than force. This manipulation and coercion often escalate to physical, emotional and financial abuse. (Source: <https://prevention.org/human-trafficking-101>.)

Once immediate safety is established, the United Nations states that “acquiring skills and competencies for sustainable livelihoods” is an intermediate need and crucial part of a successful recovery for trafficked individuals. Soroptimists have decades of experience with providing this intervention through our education awards and other financial support. (Source: <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/prevention-prosecution-and-protection-human-trafficking>.)

Women and girls who have been trafficked often suffer financially, being forced to rely on their trafficker or forced to turn over their earnings to their trafficker. Even after they escape and are safe, they often face unfair societal stigma that can make finding meaningful

employment difficult.

**How Soroptimist Can Help**

Reducing poverty is a powerful way to lower the risk of trafficking and education is a key pathway to doing just that. Access to formal education can provide women with the tools to prevent trafficking and to command better wages after surviving trafficking. Leading organizations addressing trafficking agree that holistic methods are the best prevention. One of the most impactful preventative methods is to invest in building the agency of women and girls through access to education. Ensuring that women and girls have the opportunity and ability to complete school and earn a livelihood plays a significant role in reducing vulnerability.

Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova and Gold River will host a “Human Trafficking & Massage Therapy Industry” awareness workshop on May 31 to learn how to tell the difference between

legitimate and illicit massage businesses, what goes on in illicit massage businesses, what you can do and the impact that illicit massage businesses are having on legitimate ones. Visit <http://www.soroptimistranchocordova.org> for more information and registration announcement.

*Soroptimist is an international nonprofit organization that improves the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment. The name, Soroptimist, means “best for women” and that’s what the organization strives to achieve. Soroptimists are people at their best, working to help other women be their best. Email [sirgr2009@gmail.com](mailto:sirgr2009@gmail.com) to receive more information about Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova and Gold River, how to become a member or how to volunteer with club members. Or visit [soroptimistranchocordova.org](http://www.soroptimistranchocordova.org).* ★

# Soroptimists Give Holiday Joy to Veterans

**Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova & Gold River News Release**

**RANCHO CORDOVA, CA (MPG) -** Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova and Gold River recently completed its annual “mission” to fill and deliver holiday stockings to 120 female veterans receiving treatment at the VA Northern California Healthcare System (NCHCS).

Private businesses MednRx (in the new SF Market), Tara Dietel’s State Farm office, Crumbl Cookie, and Drink Eezy, as well as organizations including the City of Rancho Cordova, Visit Rancho Cordova, California American Water, Explore Rancho Cordova and our Soroptimist club contributed

items for the stockings.

The stockings included ChapStick, a mini squeeze ball, a granola bar, a pair of comfy socks, a mini bottle of hand sanitizer, a combination sunscreen and lip balm, an eyeglass cleaning cloth, a coaster, a pen, a mini tote bag, a voucher for a free cookie, a voucher for an adult beverage, a phone sanitizer/screen cleaner, a hot cocoa packet, a positive affirmation bookmark, stickers, a mini notebook, and a beautiful holiday card wishing happy holidays and a thank you for their service.

A former member also crocheted more than 20 one-of-a-kind beanies to be offered on a first come, first served basis to any female veteran who would like one. The stockings were

stuffed on Nov. 21 and delivered the next day for distribution, starting in December at the VA Northern California Healthcare System.

“Our Soroptimist club cares deeply for our brave veterans and the staff who serve them. We donated cases of snacks and vitamin water to the VA NCHCS during the pandemic, donated baby shower items to pregnant veterans receiving care there, donated warm socks numerous times to the VA NCHCS for veterans receiving chemotherapy and dialysis treatments, and now holiday stockings to bring veterans some cheer during the holidays. We love our veterans and those who provide care to them,” said club Vice-President Sheryl Longworth.

Both last year and this year’s

veteran stocking “missions” were led by club secretary and veteran, Stacy Delaney.

“Stacy did an amazing job coordinating all the donations and leading this committee. Committee members Ingrid Rosten, Christina Ma (club president), and Pamela Reed also worked very hard to ensure that our veterans receive nothing but the best.”

“Normally, our club members don’t have direct contact with those that we help. We generally drop off donations, materials, etc. to an intermediary who distributes what we contribute to the actual beneficiaries,” Longworth said.

After the 2023 holiday stocking mission, a woman stopped by to drop off some e-waste for the club’s e-waste recycling

fundraiser. The woman realized that the organization that provided her with a holiday stocking at the VA Northern California Healthcare System earlier that day was the same organization that she was giving her e-waste to now. The veteran was so grateful to receive her holiday stocking. She was having some health challenges that affected her employment and she was feeling down.

“The stocking she received brightened her day and outlook a lot,” Longworth said. “Knowing that a holiday gift from our hearts made a difference in the life of a veteran, was the best feeling in the world and that’s what the holidays are all about...spreading love to everyone. Our club now commits to a holiday stocking ‘mission’ every year.” ★

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- Jif Peanut Butter 25 oz **\$3.99/ea**

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# MEDnRX Launches Innovative Telemedicine and Telepharmacy Kiosk

Story and photos by Omella Rossi

**RANCHO CORDOVA, CA (MPG)** - MEDnRX, an El Dorado Hills-based healthcare technology company, officially launched its first telemedicine and telepharmacy kiosk on Dec. 12 at SF Market, 2738 Sunrise Blvd.

This innovative kiosk aims to transform access to healthcare by combining virtual medical consultations with convenient on-site prescription pickup.

The MEDnRX kiosk is designed to provide an efficient, patient-centered experience by eliminating long waits at traditional doctor's offices and pharmacies. Patients can use the MEDnRX app to connect with a healthcare provider for a virtual consultation, and if prescribed medication, can pick it up directly from a secure Dropbox at the kiosk.

Alternatively, patients can have an on-site consultation by stepping inside the kiosk for a video call with a provider. After each visit, the kiosk automatically sanitizes to ensure a clean and safe environment for the next user.

For those who don't need a consultation and simply need to pick up their prescriptions, the MEDnRX kiosk features a rapid refill pickup area for immediate access to medications.

MEDnRX also offers a convenient prescription pickup option for patients who prefer not to use the kiosk. Through a secure locker system, patients can access their medications at extended hours by entering their information and retrieving their prescriptions from a designated locker. This flexible system ensures patients can pick up their medications at a time that works best for them.

MEDnRX co-founder and CEO, Dr. Steven Gest, expressed the company's commitment to addressing gaps in healthcare



Above left: Curt Haven, left, presented a proclamation from the City of Rancho Cordova to Vaibhav Shah, co-founder and CTO, and Dr. Steven Gest, co-founder and CEO, during their grand opening on Dec. 12. Above right: MEDnRX launched its first telemedicine and telepharmacy kiosk on Dec. 12 at SF Market.



access.

"We surveyed the community's needs and found that pharmacies were closing, creating pharmacy deserts," Gest said. "A lot of people don't have transportation or access, so our main goal is to make healthcare more affordable and accessible. About a third of people don't pick up their medication or don't do so in a timely manner, which can aggravate the issue. We're working to make healthcare more efficient, more effective and more accessible."

In addition to its telemedicine services, MEDnRX plans to build a medical office on-site.

"For every 15 kiosks, we need a pharmacy, and for every pharmacy, we need a medical office," Gest said.

The company's expansion plans include targeting underserved communities, particularly

areas facing pharmacy deserts.

"Rancho Cordova is a great center of innovation," Gest said. "It's a growing community that's flexible and open-minded, and we already had an office here. It's the perfect place to launch this initiative."

Said Vaibhav Shah, co-founder and CTO of MEDnRX, "Our goal is to make healthcare more accessible and affordable for everyone. As pharmacies close and people are forced to travel long distances to fill prescriptions, we're working to solve that problem. By providing an efficient, cost-effective alternative, we can serve underserved communities."

Several city official representatives were on hand to celebrate the grand opening with proclamations and certificates of recognition.

"We're so happy you're

here in Rancho Cordova serving our community," said Josh Gumacal, a representative from Congressman Ami Bera's office.

Mark Cullum from Assemblyman Josh Hoover's office, also spoke, noting the evolution of healthcare.

"Healthcare is so important, and it's great to see how healthcare has diversified. This is the way of the future," Cullum said. "We're excited that you chose Rancho Cordova and hope to see many more locations across the Sacramento region."

Kosim Latipov from state Sen. Roger Niello's office extended congratulations, stating, "On behalf of Senator Niello, I want to thank you for bringing such an innovative way to deliver healthcare to our community. We're so pleased you chose Rancho Cordova."

Curt Haven, a chamber board

member, presented a proclamation from the City of Rancho Cordova, signed by Mayor David M. Sander, Ph.D.

"On the occasion of your ribbon cutting, we present this proclamation to MEDnRX in recognition of your innovative contributions to our community," Haven said.

Other officials included Bee Lopez with Explore Rancho Cordova and Josh Gumacal, a representative from Congressman Ami Bera's office.


The kiosks will be strategically placed in public spaces such as SF Market to ensure convenience for those who might not have easy access to medical offices or pharmacies. MEDnRX accepts all major insurances, including Medicare and Medi-Cal, and allows patients to select their preferred location for prescription pickup. ★

MEMORIAL

**DAVID LANE • 10/23/1950 - 12/9/2024**

David Lane passed away on December 9, 2024 at the age of 74. Known for his unconventional ways and unyielding opinions, David often walked a path uniquely his own, leaving behind a legacy of complexity and individuality. His passions were his dog and the mountains.

David was unapologetically himself—a trait that, in its own way, commanded a certain respect. David left an indelible mark on those who knew him and the communities he served. His life serves as a reminder of the diverse and colorful personalities that shape our world.



David was widowed in 2009 (Gaille Lane) and is survived by his children, Colleen Lane and Bryan Lane. At this time, there are no planned services. He will be deeply missed but fondly remembered by all who had the privilege of knowing him. May he rest in peace.

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# Gregg Fishman Elected SMUD Board President



SMUD's Board of Directors elected Director Gregg Fishman as board president. Photo courtesy of SMUD

**SMUD News Release**

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - SMUD's Board of Directors elected Director Gregg Fishman as president of the board. His term as president runs from January through December.

Fishman first began serving the SMUD Board of Directors in January 2015 and represents Ward 3, which includes East Sacramento, much of the Arden-Arcade area, and the Campus Commons, College Glen, and Rosemont neighborhoods, as well as parts of Carmichael, Florin, Fruitridge and Vintage Park.

Fishman has been a clean-energy advocate for much of his career. As a former SMUD employee, Fishman promoted wind and solar energy when they

were in their infancy. At the California Independent System Operator, he led public engagement efforts supporting new wind energy farms in California. As president of the SMUD Board in 2018, Fishman led the utility in passing its Integrated Resource Plan, hailed by the California Energy Commission as "... an ambitious road map for lowering greenhouse gas emissions in the Sacramento region."

In his varied career, Fishman was a news reporter and anchor at KFBK and KGO Radio, a public information officer at SMUD and the California Independent System Operator (California ISO), and communications coordinator for the California State Association of Counties. He currently works at Sacramento Regional Transit as the senior community relations officer.

Fishman is an active volunteer with the Sacramento Tree Foundation and has led a neighborhood effort that has planted more than 2,000 new trees since 2001. He received an award from the MLK 365 organization for helping to make it easier to remove racially-restrictive clauses from local property records. Fishman is a 25-gallon blood donor

and a frequent volunteer master-of-ceremonies for Project Ride in Elk Grove.

Fishman is a graduate of California State University, Sacramento with a bachelor's degree in journalism. He and his wife live in Arden Park and are the parents of two daughters.

**About SMUD**

As the nation's sixth-largest, community-owned, not-for-profit electric service provider, SMUD has been providing low-cost, reliable electricity to Sacramento County for more than 75 years. SMUD is a recognized industry leader and award winner for its innovative energy-efficiency programs, renewable power technologies and for its sustainable solutions for a healthier environment.

In 2023, SMUD's power supply was, on average, 78-percent carbon free and SMUD has a goal to reach zero carbon in its electricity production by 2030. SMUD's rates and customer bills are consistently among the lowest in California and are today, on average, more than 50 percent lower than its neighboring investor-owned utility. For more information on SMUD's Zero Carbon Plan and its customer programs, visit [smud.org](http://smud.org). ★

# Stiffened Penalties for Theft

*Continued from page 1*

for certain lower-level drug and petty theft offenses from felonies to misdemeanors. The initiative, Proposition 47, was intended to develop new public safety strategies and reduce incarceration after the state's prison population exploded due to tough-on-crime policies dating back to the 1980s.

But prosecutors, law enforcement and large retailers who rallied in favor of Prop. 36 said those sentencing reforms went too far and created a revolving door for people to repeatedly commit crimes without being held accountable.

"It's a clear mandate from the public that we need to take a new approach on public safety issues, specifically hard drugs, retail theft and fentanyl," said Jeff Reisig, Yolo County District Attorney.

Those who opposed the measure warned that it will worsen homelessness, drug use and crime by cutting funding for treatment programs and increasing court and prison costs in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Behavioral health experts across the state have voiced concern over the efficacy of a treatment-mandated felony, given that most California counties lack the resources needed to provide 'mass treatment' that has been promised by the measure's proponents.

"I believe that (proponents) have also received a mandate to embrace problem solving and supportive services for people who are struggling," said Cristine

Soto DeBerry, executive director of the Prosecutors Alliance of California, a nonprofit organization that opposed Prop. 36.

"I don't believe the mandate was (to) put more people in prison. It was not what people believed they were voting for. I hope that people with the discretion to enforce this law will think very carefully about the communities they serve and what they were asking for in this moment," she said.

Gov. Gavin Newsom tried to keep Prop. 36 off of the fall ballot and for a time considered putting a competing crime measure before voters. Instead, he signed a package of 10 bills in August that will make it easier to prosecute retail and vehicle theft. Those laws go into effect on Jan. 1.

Although Gov. Newsom didn't put any money into fighting Prop. 36, he referred to the initiative as an "unfunded mandate" that will take California back to the war on drugs. Indeed, the measure included no new funding streams. But supporters like Reisig voiced optimism that funding opportunities already exist in the law, pointing to a \$6.4 billion from the mental health bond voters approved in March.

"I hope that lawmakers and the governor embrace the mandate and work collaboratively to make sure that we're successful in delivering the promise of Prop. 36," Reisig said. ★

# SacRT Launches Shared-Use Mobility Service

*Continued from page 1*

eligible riders and adult companions, and free for children riding with parents.

To ride Via's SacRT Flex service, individuals must first complete an eligibility process. Applications can be submitted online at [sacrt.com/applyflex](http://sacrt.com/applyflex). Via's SacRT

Flex app is also available to download on Google Play and the App Store.

For more information about SacRT Flex, including application details, service zones, and a full list of features, visit [sacrt.com/flex](http://sacrt.com/flex), email [CustomerAdvocacy@sacrt.com](mailto:CustomerAdvocacy@sacrt.com) or call 916-321-BUSS (2877). ★

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# PoppTalk

With Mary Jane Popp

## High "5" In '25

Can you believe it's 2025? It seems like time is spinning so fast. So what's in store for this New Year? I thought it might be fun to check in with an Astrologer to give us some guidance or, at least, warning of what to expect. Astrologer **Mercury** is a regular on my POPPTALK Radio Show every Saturday 5-7 AM and Sunday 9-11 PM on FM-104.5 & AM-950 KAH1 or you can listen to my show 24/7 at [www.kahi.com](http://www.kahi.com). Just click on Listen, then audio on demand and there's POPPTALK Hour one and POPPTALK Hour two. That's my shameless plug for the day. Mercury has spent his life studying the ways of astrology and metaphysics and focuses on the "to be" and "not to be" in the present moment. He has authored "Astrological Predictions for the Age of Light." So let's get some insight into that age of light for 2025, and I have to admit, I am a little worried that we may be on the dark side. Hold on to your hats!

**PLUTO RETURNS (2025-2043) TRANSFORMATION AND REGENERATION.** The U.S. is undergoing its Pluto return, a major astrological event that occurs roughly every 248 years. This period suggests a profound transformation, potentially involving themes of power, governance, and the nation's fundamental structures. It will bring challenges that necessitate profound change, such as political, economic, or social system reforms. **NEPTUNE TRANSITS. IDEALISM AND ILLUSIONS.** Neptune's position and aspects can highlight the themes of idealism, spirituality, and collective consciousness over these years. There will be a heightened focus on healthcare, medical, and environmental issues, with potential deception and misinformation in the public arena. Meditation is an ex-

cellent way to listen to your inner voice to speak to you. **URANUS IN TAURUS. INNOVATION AND DISRUPTION.** Uranus in Taurus signals shifts in economic systems, agriculture, and environmental policies. It can bring sudden changes and break throughs in technology or resource management, urging a move towards sustainability and innovation. Personal drone aircraft will be the future. **SATURN TRANSITS. STRUCTURAL RE-EVALUATION.** Saturn's ongoing transits emphasize the need for responsibility, discipline, and reassessment of existing systems, particularly in justice, infrastructure, and international diplomacy. Saturn's movement will challenge all governments. **JUPITER TRANSITS. EXPANSION AND OPPORTUNITY.** Jupiter's movement in Gemini often aligns with periods of growth, optimism, and opportunity, impacting economic conditions and foreign relations. Stay grounded in practical reality. This may also exaggerate existing issues.

**The U.S. will face significant challenges and transformations during these transits, particularly with Pluto's return. This period offers an opportunity to realign with core values of democracy, justice, and innovation while addressing deep-rooted issues like racism, equal rights for women, and financial inequality.**

So that's what **Mercury** had to share. I guess it's all in the stars or planets, as the case may be, and how they all align. Check out **Mercury** at his website for all he does from predictions to readings, a podcast and more for life. Check out [www.Mercury-Minute.com](http://www.Mercury-Minute.com). My wish for you is heavenly white light and a **HAPPY AND BLESSED NEW YEAR!** ★



Dave Ramsey

## Dave Ramsey Says

### The Game's Not for Everyone and The Safest Place?

on an easy \$400 in your pocket every month.

Now, I love real estate. I understand the excitement and allure. But what you're really saying is you want to cash out part of your retirement, get hit with a penalty and take on debt, all to buy an investment property. This is not a good plan.

My advice is to save up, and pay cash for one small, decent rental property to see if the landlord game is really for you.

- Dave

### The Safest Place?

Dear Dave,

Where is the best place to keep my savings?

- Angie

Dear Angie,

In my mind, when it comes to savings, the idea is to park the money in a safe place—like a money market account or basic savings account—and keep it separate from the rest of your cash, so you don't accidentally spend it on the wrong thing. I'm not really concerned

with making money in a savings scenario, so things like setting money aside for an emergency fund or vacations fall into this category.

Investing, on the other hand, is when you're going to leave the money alone for a bare minimum of five to 10 years in order to grow it. Things like college planning and retirement fall into this category. In these instances, I recommend good, growth-stock mutual funds that have stable track records of at least 10 years.

I hope this helps, Angie!

- Dave

*Dave Ramsey is a national best-selling author, personal finance expert and host of The Ramsey Show, heard by more than 20 million listeners each week. He has appeared on Good Morning America, CBS Mornings, Today Show, Fox News, CNN, Fox Business, and many more. Since 1992, Dave has helped people regain control of their money, build wealth and enhance their lives. He also serves as CEO for the company, Ramsey Solutions.* ★

Dear Dave,

I'm 38, and after looking and waiting for years, I think I've found a rental property scenario I like. My plan is to take \$30,000 out of my retirement account, and use it as a down payment on a property. My loan payment would be \$1,400 a month, but I could easily rent the place for \$1,800 a month. What are your thoughts?

- Colin

Dear Colin,

No offense, but I can tell you've never been a landlord before. Bringing in nearly \$1,800 a month, while paying out \$1,400 may seem like a nice place to be. But you've left one very important factor out of your equation—risk. Rental properties just sit there empty sometimes. And this happens to all rental properties. You'll also have repairs to contend with, renters who don't pay and other expenses. See what I'm saying? You won't be able to count

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## Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



What a difference a week makes! Yes, a lot can happen in a week, and the Sacramento Kings are living proof.

Gone is former coach of the year, Mike Brown, and interim head coach Doug Christie not only is riding a season high 4-game winning streak, he's riding a basketball juggernaut as well.

Wins over injury depleted Dallas Mavericks and Philadelphia 76ers were welcome wins, but to handily defeat the Memphis Grizzlies and archrival Golden State Warriors back-to-back was a sign that the Kings were truly on the road to recovery.

A horrid 6-game losing streak was the undoing of Mike Brown, and every pundit, newscaster and fan had a different opinion. The general consensus was that coach Brown had lost the locker room, and after a meltdown loss to the Detroit Pistons in which collectively the Kings and in particular DeAaron Fox guarded no one, the Pistons came away with an improbable 1-point win. 4-point plays to win a game are a rarity, and it's no fun to be on the losing end, but that's precisely where the Kings found themselves.

Whether coach Brown had truly lost his voice with the team is still open to conjecture, but from this writer's perspective, his lack of any consistency as it relates to playing time for players off the bench, led to overall sub-par productivity. Players from Keon Ellis, Alex Len, to Trey Lyles never knew from one game to the next if they would see significant minutes or no minutes at all.

Doug Christie was tapped on the shoulder and asked to take over the head coaching reigns, and so far, he's been a welcome addition to the head seat.

Some players have commented that Christie brings the mindset of a former player to the table, and thus far his voice is being heard. In particular the defensive end of the court has seen significant improvement, and the past four games have featured some of the best defensive basketball that fans have seen in memory.

A wire-to-wire victory over the Golden State Warriors in which Sacramento never allowed the Warriors any breathing room, was a glimpse of what the

Sactown boys are capable of, and Malik Monk had perhaps his finest game of the season. Malik matched Steph Curry with 26 points and added a season high 12 assists, but his defense was equally impressive. Domantas Sabonis had his usual stellar performance, adding 22 points and 13 rebounds while playing only three quarters.

Does coaching make a difference? You bet it does. Does that mean that winning four of five games since Mike Brown's departure, the Kings are headed to the playoffs.

Too early to tell Kings fans but take solace in seeing what your hometown boys are capable of doing. Not just playing tough teams and winning, but actually accomplishing blow-out wins.

Keon Ellis has returned to form and did a yeoman's job in filling in for an injured DeAaron Fox in the win over the Warriors. Keon has a big upside, as does Trey Lyles who is also showing signs of looking like his former self, playing solid basketball on both ends of the court.

Say hello to Devin Carter Kings fans, and this young rookie has game! Playing in just his 2nd NBA game, Devin broke into the scoring column with 13 points while adding an impressive seven rebounds. This youngster has been on the sidelines all season recovering from off-season shoulder surgery, and he looks eager to impress his fans and teammates alike. I like what I see in Devin, and his defense in particular on Stephon Curry was impressive to see. His debut has been a long time coming, and it could not have come at a more auspicious time. I look for coach Christie to give him all the playing time he can handle, and with the unfortunate departure of Davion Mitchell, another guard that can play ferocious defense is a welcome sight.

Stay tuned Kings fans and stay away from ugly trade rumors. Trades will invariably come, but let's just hope it doesn't involve the core members we've come to love!

All be best!

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

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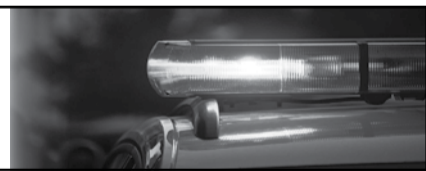
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# Social Security Matters

## I Use only VA Healthcare; Can I get back Medicare Taxes Paid?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

**Dear Rusty:** I'm 72 years old with 20 years of military service. I am retired collecting Social Security, my military pension, and State retirement benefits. According to my SSA statement, over my working lifetime I paid \$14,302 into Medicare, but I never used that medical plan. I only bring in \$33,000 in annual income. Can I get those Medicare taxes back somehow? I've run into dead ends at SSA, Medicare and IRS websites. **Signed: Veteran Seeking Answers**

**Dear Veteran Seeking Answers:** First, I want to thank you for your military service to our country. You may find the "For Veterans" section of our [www.amacfoundation.org](http://www.amacfoundation.org) website of interest.

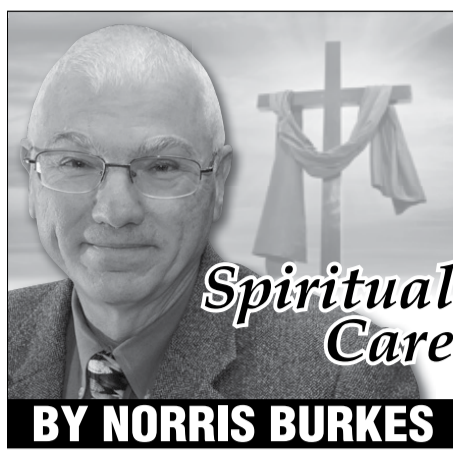
Regarding the contributions you have made over the years to federal Medicare, I'm afraid you cannot get any of those taxes back even though you have never used Medicare healthcare services. That's because Medicare, like Social Security, is a "pay as you go" program where all contributions received from workers are used to pay for benefits for current beneficiaries (contributions aren't put into a separate account to pay for your coverage). It's also important to know that your Medicare taxes were used only to fund Medicare Part A, which is coverage for inpatient hospitalization services. Those contributions (via payroll taxes) did not entitle you to outpatient healthcare services, as provided by Medicare Part B (for which there is a monthly premium).

FYI, you must be enrolled in Medicare Part A to collect Social Security benefits after age 65. Medicare Part B isn't mandatory to collect Social Security, but assuming that, as a retired military veteran, you now receive healthcare benefits under the military's TriCare-for-Life program for retired veterans, you must be enrolled in Medicare Part A and Part B to maintain your TriCare-for-Life coverage. Your military TriCare coverage coordinates with Medicare to pay for your healthcare costs. Thus, even though it may not be transparent to you, you may be benefiting from your current

enrollment in Medicare. Note that some non-career veterans can use VA healthcare services based on their service years, instead of TriCare-for-Life for retired military veterans. Non-career recipients of standard VA healthcare services are not required to be enrolled in Medicare but, in any case, cannot receive their past Medicare Part A contributions back if they choose to decline Medicare. You may have interest in this article I previously published on the topic of VA benefits versus Medicare: [www.socialsecurityreport.org/ask-rusty-i-have-va-coverage-should-i-get-medicare-part-b/](http://www.socialsecurityreport.org/ask-rusty-i-have-va-coverage-should-i-get-medicare-part-b/)

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# Come Fly With Me or Buy With Me



BY NORRIS BURKES

Not long ago, I spoke to a Spanish club, a group of women hoping to hone their Spanish skills and asked the attendees to "Come fly with me."

Not wanting my invite to be misinterpreted, my wife Becky, chimed in, "And me too."

A few older woman heard a reference to United Airline's 1968 campaign, "Come Fly with me." But the younger ones began humming the Jonas Brothers 2009 hit "Fly with Me."

"To clarify," I said, "I'd like you join us on one of the two volunteer trips to Honduras to help Chispa Project."

Of course, I was pushing the Spanish immersion trip on April 6-13. "But no worries, you needn't speak Spanish or have any particular skill; you just need to be willing to help out as needed!"

One woman seemed interested, but questioned the sparse accommodations, hoping to book her own hotel.

Well, you know me. I had an answer for her.

"Both trips have nice accommodations, but if you want the 5-star trip, then join us in March 5-16. It'll be an "immersive experience of volunteer-tourism that will allow you to explore one of the hidden gems of Honduras."

"Arguably the most beautiful colonial town in the country, Copan boasts traditional Mayan chocolate, the best Honduran coffee, and some of the most incredible and well-preserved Mayan Ruins."

Yup, I was reading from the travel brochure.

If you've only recently joined my readership, you'll need to know that my daughter, Sara, started Chispa Project, pronounced cheez-pah, meaning

"spark" in Spanish. Hondurans use the word to describe people with spark or drive.

Chispa has a simple mission: Sponsor children's libraries and equip them with quality books in Spanish by working side by side with Honduran community leaders and educators.

In the 80 schools where Chispa works, they build alliances with communities to design, fund and manage their own libraries. Community members also volunteer in the library project and raise a symbolic portion of the funding that ensures sustainability and ownership.

"What will we do during the volunteer week?" asked another.

"We begin the day after arrival by decorating library spaces that will make children proud of their school. We paint the walls with colorful murals, assemble bookshelves, and stock and catalog an entire library."

"Imagine us working together, rolling two coats of white paint on crumbling walls. The paint provides a bright pallet for those murals intended to inspire future readers."

The children will surround us, chattering the few English words they know. Their smiles go for miles as they read the picture books we bring."

Some in my group gave an empathetic sigh.

Finally, one woman asked the most common question about our trips "Is it dangerous?"

"That's a risk you will have to assess on your own. We safely welcomed volunteers from ages 3 to 83. I can also tell you that that my daughter, Sara, her husband and her two children spent several years in Honduras."

Unsured how many takers I'd persuaded, I added, "While the days are sometimes hot and long, I reward my volunteers with ice-cream cones."

I suggested additional questions might be answered on our website at [ChispaProject.org/volunteertrip](http://ChispaProject.org/volunteertrip). "Read the details and fill out the forms," I said. "Watch the five-minute video and e-mail Sara or me with your questions."

And, finally, you know I made one more pitch –

"If you can't fly with me, then "Buy with Me!" ★

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**WE SUPPORT FIRST RESPONDERS**

**STATEPOINT CROSSWORD • SNOW DAY**

**CLUES**

**ACROSS**

- Larger-than-life
- Capone's family
- Wild swine
- "You're not allowed," to a baby
- Deal with it
- Cunningly
- Shower with affection
- Allege
- City in Belgium
- \*Snow Day exercise?
- Poet Pound
- Ovine sign of the zodiac
- Tasseled hat
- All together (2 words)
- Military College of South Carolina, with The
- For every
- a.k.a. association football
- \*All-day Snow Day garb?
- Delete
- Crude fuel
- Read-only disc
- Good's counterpart
- Popular flowering shrub
- Female ancestor
- Two heads are better than one, e.g.
- Bering Strait state
- Rudolph's Clarice, e.g.
- Like thick smoke
- Fountain option
- \*No two are alike, sing.
- Surround (2 words)
- Tangerine plus grapefruit
- \*Like a river, with over
- #51 Down, pl.
- Heidi's "Magic Wooden Shoe"
- Olufsen's partner
- Sound of a bell
- Not him
- Surfer's stop

**DOWN**

- Odds' partners
- Tubby little cubby
- "He's Just Not That You"
- Of the same period
- \*Popular Snow Day pastime
- Some tournaments
- Zugspitze, e.g.
- \*Severe weather
- Deed hearing
- Algae, sing.
- Marble bread
- \_\_\_\_ Jack, English pirate
- \*As opposed to rain
- Irregular
- Type of conifer
- Musketeers' swords
- High-strung
- Cerebellum location
- Unit of life
- Students' dwellings
- \*Snow Day reading choice
- Helping theorem
- \*Like soft pj's
- Intelligence org.
- \*Slope fun
- Shorter than California
- Number of years

**CROSSWORD**

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# Habitat Health Opens PACE Center

## Habitat Health with Kaiser Permanente News Release

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - Habitat Health has opened its first Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) center in partnership with Kaiser Permanente, expanding access to vital health care services for older adults. At the new center located at 855 Howe Ave. in Sacramento, Habitat Health with Kaiser Permanente offers participants a fully integrated health care model that includes primary and specialty care, prescriptions, social activities, transportation, home care and more, all coordinated under one roof.

Habitat Health provides comprehensive medical and social care to eligible older adults to help them maintain their independence and stay in their homes and communities. Through the partnership, Habitat Health with Kaiser Permanente PACE participants have access to Kaiser Permanente's industry-leading clinical expertise and sophisticated network of health care services. These services are typically provided at no cost to program participants who are eligible for Medicare and Medi-Cal coverage.

"We are excited to offer a



Habitat Health with Kaiser Permanente Sacramento PACE Center is located at 855 Howe Ave. Photo courtesy of Habitat Health with Kaiser Permanente

truly differentiated care experience to support the diverse needs of older adults who live here in Sacramento," said Brad Oglevee, vice president and general manager of Habitat Health with Kaiser Permanente Sacramento. "We know that bringing together Kaiser Permanente's demonstrated expertise delivering complex care with Habitat Health's dedicated interdisciplinary teams and joyful activities here in our center will provide

older adults and their caregivers peace of mind and a sense of community."

With roots in California since the 1970s, PACE is a community- and home-based care model that has been shown to reduce hospital admissions, improve symptoms of depression, enhance overall well-being for older adults and their caregivers, and reduce health disparities. Habitat Health with Kaiser Permanente Sacramento's PACE center is eager to enroll

participants and support them through a differentiated and effective model.

"Our partnership with Habitat Health aligns seamlessly with Kaiser Permanente's commitment to improving the health and well-being of our members and communities by providing access to high-quality, affordable care," said Dr. Jason Gritti, Habitat Health with Kaiser Permanente Sacramento's medical director and Kaiser Permanente primary care

physician leader. "The beauty of the PACE model of care is that it allows us to expand our scope of care to address older adults' medical, emotional, and social needs as a team."

The PACE center in Sacramento is the first of several centers that Habitat Health and Kaiser Permanente plan to open together in California, subject to applicable regulatory approvals.

For those interested in enrolling yourself or your loved one into Habitat Health with Kaiser Permanente, call 1-844-664-2248 (TTY: 711) or visit online [www.habitathealth.com/refer](http://www.habitathealth.com/refer).

### About Habitat Health

Habitat Health empowers older adults to manage their health and maintain their independence in their homes and communities. Health insurance coverage, and medical and social care, is provided at the centers and in participants' homes. Through partnerships with health leaders such as Kaiser Permanente, scalable, affordable solutions are offered to meet the care needs of aging populations. Habitat Health redefines aging in place to bring more good days and a sense of belonging to participants and their caregivers. To learn more, visit [www.habitathealth.com](http://www.habitathealth.com). ★

## Beyond the Call: Supporting Foster Care Services



Quality Management worker Rose Vu has dedicated her career to making a difference in the lives of children and families served by the Department of Child, Family and Adult Services. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

### Sacramento County News Release

#### SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG)

Sacramento County's Department of Child, Family and Adult Services (DCFAS) is celebrating its dedicated staff members. Quality Management worker Rose Vu has dedicated her career to making a difference in the lives of children and families served by the Department of Child, Family and Adult Services. Vu's career is a great example of hard work, innovation and a passion for improving lives.

"I started as a temporary employee and then I became a permanent employee as an assistant," Vu said. "I worked my way

up to getting promoted to a clerical supervisor level one and then level two. I was recently promoted to my current position as Human Services Program Specialist."

In her role, Vu acts as a data entry liaison, ensuring critical data is collected and analyzed. This data reflects the care foster children receive and identifies patterns and trends that can drive improvements in outcomes.

"It's important to collect this data because we want to ensure that our foster children are taken care of," Vu explained. "In addition to that, we are always striving to do better."

For Vu, improving

processes and supporting transitional-age foster youth are priorities. By overseeing data entry for programs such as supervised independent living, Vu ensures young adults in extended foster care can access the financial resources they need to thrive.

"Extended foster care is a great opportunity for foster children to be out on their own, learn skills and take them out into the real world so they can take care of themselves," Vu said.

Beyond data and processes, Vu takes pride in developing staff and training new social workers to understand the importance of placement information.

Vu is also an advocate for Sacramento County's PRIDE values: Principal, Respect, Innovation, Diversity and Inclusion, and Excellence. She appreciates how these values shape the work environment and provide opportunities for employees to recognize and celebrate each other's contributions.

"Sometimes, we are just so tunnel-visioned in the work that we do that we don't recognize the great work that we do," Vu said. "Sacramento County gives us that opportunity to recognize each other and to have great values."

Through her dedication, Vu makes a meaningful impact that helps families and children in Sacramento County. Vu is an example of one of Sacramento County's many employees who goes beyond the call. ★

## Stand Against Hunger Raises Nearly \$630K for Food Banks

*Annual Programs supported by generous community members along with Wells Fargo, Ashley Law, Bayside Church and Northwest Exteriors*



Yolo Food Bank: Shown are from left, Darla Weaver, a community volunteer, Rebecca Elliott, Don Henry, Corey Rose, Aaron Heinrich, Mark S. Allen, Katie Kim and Gerardo Cabral. Photo courtesy of ABC10.

### ABC10 News Release

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - A signature initiative proudly led by ABC10, a Tegna-owned media station, the fifth annual Stand Against Hunger holiday fundraising campaign raised \$628,169. The impact of the annual fundraising drive is significant, especially with today's increased grocery prices. Every dollar donated to a food bank helps to address the issue of rising food insecurity taking place throughout the region. In fact, a donation of just \$5 equates to 15 meals for those in need.

Through the 2024 Stand Against Hunger initiative, donated funds from the community went to seven participating food bank partners: Emergency Food Bank of Stockton/San Joaquin; Feeding the Foothills (formally known as Placer Food Bank); Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano; Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services; Second Harvest of the Greater Valley; Yolo County Food Bank; and Yuba-Sutter Food Bank.

The 2024 Stand Against Hunger

campaign ran for six weeks from Nov. 6 through Dec. 22, and was supported by Wells Fargo, Ashley Law, Bayside Church and Northwest Exteriors. The TEGNA Foundation also donated \$25,000 to kick off the program. In addition, Telemundo 33 and KAT Country 103.3 in Stockton joined ABC10 by providing on-air support for the cause.

"Throughout the 2024 Stand Against Hunger initiative, it was heartbreaking to see the increased number of individuals and families in line at local food banks as they struggle with food insecurity," said Risa Omega, president and general manager of ABC10. "I am very pleased that ABC10 and our parent company TEGNA teamed up with nonprofits, along with other community-minded businesses and organizations, to take a Stand Against Hunger. Along with an incredible number of viewers who donated, we are proud to do our part to help put food on the table for so many community members in need."

For more information, visit [www.abc10.com](http://www.abc10.com) or [www.youtube.com/ABC10](http://www.youtube.com/ABC10). ★

## Expanding Two Behavioral Health Service Programs

### Sacramento County News Release

#### SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG)

Sacramento County is kicking off the new year by expanding two Behavioral Health Service programs, combining Access and Substance Use Prevention Treatment (SUPT) services to streamline care, address critical needs and enhance the health and safety of our community.

Behavioral Health Services-Screening and Coordination (BHS-SAC) Call Center

The new Behavioral Health

Services-Screening and Coordination Call Center simplifies access to mental health and substance use treatment services by combining multiple phone numbers into one centralized line at 916-875-1055. This new service integrates the Mental Health Access Team and the Substance Use Prevention and Treatment System of Care under one number. By doing so, Sacramento County ensures that individuals in need can receive timely coordination among providers and improve health outcomes for those struggling with mental health and

substance use challenges.

"The BHS-SAC Call Center is a game-changer for our community," said Dr. Ryan Quist, the Behavioral Health director. "By centralizing these essential services, we're breaking down barriers to care and simplifying how our community can receive mental health and substance use resources."

### Implementation of Senate Bill 43 (SB 43)

Sacramento County will implement the state's modernized law for involuntary psychiatric holds, which expands the definition of

"gravely disabled." This new definition includes individuals unable to care for their basic needs for health and safety due to a severe enduring mental disorder or a co-occurring mental health disorder and severe substance use disorder.

Senate Bill 43 also broadens the definition of "basic needs" to include a person's ability to obtain necessary medical care, personal safety, food, weather-appropriate clothing and/or shelter.

The updated law will expand access to acute and long-term care for our most vulnerable community members who meet the definition

of gravely disabled and are suffering from a severe substance use disorder.

These efforts are part of a broader initiative in California to address homelessness, mental health crises and substance abuse treatment. The efforts implemented reflect the county's dedication to providing comprehensive care and fostering collaboration between health services and community partners. For more information about these programs, visit Sacramento County's Department of Health Services' Behavioral Health website at [dhs.saccounty.gov/BHS](http://dhs.saccounty.gov/BHS). ★



# First Snow Survey Shows Snowpack Near Average

*After a Warm, Dry Fall, Recent Storms Provide Boost to Snowpack but Return of Dry Conditions Looms*

**Department of Water Resources News Release**

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - The Department of Water Resources (DWR) Jan 2 conducted the first snow survey of the season at Phillips Station. The manual survey recorded 24 inches of snow depth and a snow water equivalent of 9 inches, which is 91 percent of average for this location. The snow water equivalent measures the amount of water contained in the snowpack and is a key component of the Department of Water Resources' water supply forecast. Statewide, the snowpack is 108 percent of average for this date.

Recent years in California have been marked by extremely hot and dry conditions broken up by periods of intense rain and snow. So far, this water year has been no different. A record-breaking hot and dry summer continued well into the fall, but a powerful atmospheric river in November broke several rainfall records in Northern California. A series of storms in late December provided another boost.

"While our snowpack looks good now, we have a long way until April when our water supply picture will be more complete," said Department of Water Resources Director Karla Nemeth. "Extreme shifts between dry and wet conditions are continuing this winter and if the past several years are any indication, anything could happen between now and April and we need to be prepared."

The Department of Water Resources' electronic readings from 130 stations placed throughout the Sierra Nevada indicate that the statewide snowpack's snow water equivalent is 10.7 inches, or 108 percent of average for this date, compared



California Department of Water Resources staff members (from right) Andy Reising, Snow Surveys and Water Supply Forecasting Unit Manager, Manon von Kaenel, Water Resources Engineer, Angelique Fabbiani-Leon, State Hydrometeorologist, and Jordan Thoennes, Water Resources Engineer, conduct the first media snow survey of the 2025 season at Phillips Station in the Sierra Nevada. The survey is held approximately 90 miles east of Sacramento off Highway 50 in El Dorado County. Photo courtesy of California Department of Water Resources



California Department of Water Resources staff Angelique Fabbiani-Leon, State Hydrometeorologist, conduct the first media snow survey of the 2025 season at Phillips Station in the Sierra Nevada. Photo courtesy of California Department of Water Resources



California Department of Water Resources staff (from left) Angelique Fabbiani-Leon, State Hydrometeorologist, Manon von Kaenel, Water Resources Engineer, Andy Reising, Snow Surveys and Water Supply Forecasting Unit Manager, and Jordan Thoennes, Water Resources Engineer, conduct the first media snow survey of the 2025 season at Phillips Station in the Sierra Nevada. Photo courtesy of California Department of Water Resources

to 28 percent on this date last year. California has seen this pattern

before. In both 2013 and 2022, the January snowpack was well above average thanks to December storm activity, only for dry conditions to take over the rest of the winter, quickly

erasing early season snow totals and continuing existing drought conditions across the state.

"We are fortunate to have had several solid snow-producing atmospheric river systems so far

this season," said Department of Water Resources Snow Surveys and Water Supply Forecasting Unit Manager Andy Reising. "The fall was extremely dry, so our healthy snow totals are thanks to a handful of big storm systems in November and late December. But to finish the year where we need to be, we will still need additional snow building at a regular pace throughout the winter."

Major reservoirs statewide are currently 121 percent of average thanks to two consecutive years of above average snowpack conditions, which occurred after the driest three-year period on record in California. DWR is preparing for these swings between extreme conditions by investing in climate resilience, including the use of Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations, floodplain and flood infrastructure improvements and groundwater recharge efforts that will ensure California is able to capture and use as much water during flood conditions as possible.

On average, the Sierra snowpack supplies about 30 percent of California's water needs. Its natural ability to store water is why the Sierra snowpack is often referred to as California's "frozen reservoir." Data from these snow surveys and forecasts produced by the Department of Water Resources Snow Surveys and Water Supply Forecasting Unit are important factors in determining how Department of Water Resources manages the state's water resources.

Department of Water Resources conducts four media-oriented snow surveys at Phillips Station each winter near the first of each month, January through April and, if necessary, May. The next survey is tentatively scheduled for Feb. 3. ★

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