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East Sacramento News

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SAFE Sponsors 'Big and Littles' at Ballet



Little Sister Rose Shatara poses with Sacramento Ballet Second Company dancer Abby Burnette. Photo by Robyn Eifertsen, SAFE Credit Union

SAFE Credit Union News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Matches from Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Sacramento Area experienced the magic of Sacramento Ballet's Nutcracker by invitation of SAFE Credit Union this holiday season.

Continuing in its efforts to support nonprofits and the vibrancy of the downtown area, the credit union

sponsored a group of Big Brothers Big Sisters to attend a matinee performance. For many it was the first time attending the ballet including Little A'Royal Keys, 10.

"I thought it was very great. I liked the candy part," says Keys, adding the best part was the dance of Mother Ginger and Her Polichinelles. "It's very awesome and you should really go. (And) there was a lot of dancing and there were surprising parts."

Big and Littles in attendance were treated to a special reception with lunch and treats as well as memorabilia before meeting Sacramento Ballet Second Company dancer Abby Burnette.

"I really appreciated how generous SAFE Credit Union was with the seats and the donor's box and all of the extras," says Big Brother and Orangevale resident Steven Herrera, who thought it was important for his Little, A'Royal Keys, to see a

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State Stiffens Penalties on Theft

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 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
Continued on Page 2

Gifts from the Heart Takes Donations All Year

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Santa's helpers are now working year-round in Sacramento County. Gifts from the Heart is expanding to accept donations and volunteer applications throughout the year.

The program has helped make a difference in the lives of thousands of local children, teens and adults for 36 years. Organized by the Department of Child, Family and Adult Services, this program relies on the generosity of volunteers and donors. Since 1988, volunteers and donors have provided gifts to thousands through the program.

"It is amazing. I think the joy of watching the kids open the gifts (before Christmas) is the best experience," said Erika Patterson, Gifts from the Heart volunteer and Department of Child, Family and Adult Services Permanency social worker. "The kids we work with sometimes have never had a



The Gifts from the Heart program relies on the generosity of volunteers and donors. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

Christmas and are overjoyed when they get a bag full of gifts or a bike." Patterson started volunteering with Gifts from the Heart five years ago and hasn't stopped.

"If you aren't the best gift wrapper, no worries," Patterson said, because there are plenty of ways to help.

"Donors are always so appreciated because kids all deserve to know what it is like to open gifts on Christmas morning and remember

that feeling of happiness playing with their new toys. Department of Child, Family and Adult Services children would not know this feeling without the generous donations of the donors," Patterson said.

If you're interested in volunteering or learning more, email GFTH@sac-county.gov.

You can also find information about donating at saccounty.gov/news/latest-news. ★



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Sac County Public Health Awarded National Accreditation

Sacramento County Public Health News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County Public Health has officially earned national accreditation from the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), recognizing its commitment to high-quality public health services that improve the health and well-being of County residents.

“This achievement affirms our commitment to meeting the highest standards in public health,” said Sacramento County Public Health Officer Dr. Olivia Kasirye. “It demonstrates our division has the systems, processes and capacity in place to deliver essential public health services that directly benefit our community. It strengthens our ability to address health disparities, respond to emerging public health threats and ensure better health outcomes for all Sacramento County residents.”

The accreditation process is a rigorous and voluntary review in which health departments must demonstrate that they meet or exceed national standards of public health service developed by the Public Health Accreditation Board, an organization supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. These standards are based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 10 Essential Public Health

Services that guide public health practices across the country.

Sacramento County Public Health’s accreditation required a comprehensive review of its systems, policies and procedures, including the submission of over 200 documents and a two-day site visit. The county’s accreditation efforts began in 2018, were put on hold during the pandemic and reinitiated in 2022.

“The value of becoming nationally accredited through PHAB extends far beyond the walls of the health department,” said the Public Health Accreditation Board President and CEO Paul Kuehnert, DNP, RN, FAAN. “People living and working in communities served by these health departments can be assured that their health department is strong and has the capacity to protect and promote their health. Going through the accreditation process itself helps health departments pinpoint the areas that are critical to improving the work they do for their communities.”

The Sacramento County Public Health accreditation team developed core accreditation components to meet the Public Health Accreditation Board’s requirements, including:

Community Health Assessment (CHA): Completed in October 2023, this assessment identified Sacramento County’s key health priorities.

Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP): Built on the

Community Health Assessment findings, this plan addresses the pressing health issues through community collaboration.

Strategic Plan: Sacramento County Public Health updated its mission, vision, values and identified strategic priorities to guide its public health efforts.

Workforce Development Plan: This plan ensures Sacramento County Public Health staff have the necessary skills and training to meet public health demands.

Quality Improvement Plan: Focuses on continuous improvement of Public Health’s services to achieve better health outcomes.

Emergency Operations Plan: This plan facilitates preparedness for, response to and recovery from public health emergencies.

Health and Racial Equity Action Plan: Published in June 2024, this plan shows Sacramento County Public Health’s intentional approach to address factors that contribute to specific populations’ higher health risks and poorer health outcomes, or health inequities.

Accreditation strengthens Public Health’s capacity to secure funding, improve service delivery and drive innovation. The department will maintain its accreditation for five years, submitting annual reports and preparing for reaccreditation throughout.

This achievement signifies an investment that will bolster the department’s ability to respond to evolving community needs. ★

State Stiffens Penalties on Theft



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

Continued from Page 1

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 non-profit 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. ★

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A Lucky Life Remembered

Sacramento Learns Lessons as Another Generation Goes Silent

Story by Kristina Rogers

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Each New Year's Eve, we take a moment to remember those we lost. We talk about the Baby Boomers and current generations, but little time is spent acknowledging those who came before, like the Silent Generation born from 1928 to 1945. Around 50 million were born, making them one of the smallest groups in the last 100 years.

These Americans lived during the Great Depression and World War II. Some may remember their mothers using ration books to buy sugar, clothing and gas. They are the final group on earth who experienced life before television. Normally one telephone was shared by everyone in the house. People communicated via local papers, radio, in-person gatherings and letter writing.

When looking at the traits of the Silent Generation, also known as the Traditionalist Generation, we find they came from tough times but were resilient. They believed reforming "the system" was better than tearing it down. They began with little, worked hard and remained appreciative of their blessings.

Sacramento citizen Barbara Harsch is one example. She wrote a family book called "My Lucky Life" filled with family stories and wisdom to pass down. Her life is reflected in decades of photos, from 1930s black-and-whites to sun-faded 1960s Polaroids to today's clear digital images.

Her family, the Rohwer's lived in Sacramento from 1935, when she was born. She grew up in a prominent home at 3344 H Street, across from McKinley Park's Rose Garden.

Like many of her peers, Harsch learned the importance of service to others. Her parents devoted plenty of volunteer time to churches and those in need. Neighbors could find Barbara and her mother frequently pruning the rose garden and hosting gardening meetings at their house. Her mother also organized the East Sacramento Home Tours. Barbara's attorney father was heavily involved in the Sutter Club, which continues to cultivate community leaders and successful professionals today.

In her book, Harsch shares how fortunate she was to have her parents. Their wisdom and



The old Rohwer home was sold in 2012. Photo by Kristina Rogers



Harsch was nominated "favorite teacher" at Dos Palos high school before moving back to Sacramento. Photo courtesy of Harsch family

support lifted her throughout her life. Her father recited a stanza from "If" by Rudyard Kipling: "Or walk with Kings, nor lose the common touch." This is a reminder to have high expectations for yourself while remaining a humble friend to everyone.

Harsch (then Rohwer) married George Harsch in 1956 while completing her degree in foreign relations at UC Berkeley. George was in the Air Force. They spent some time in Dos Palos, California where Barbara taught high school English. Eventually George became General Manager at Sacramento's Ricemill Products Company in West Sacramento. The outdoors and skiing were a passion, so they built a cabin in

Truckee, allowing them to enjoy years of waterskiing and snow skiing with family and friends.

After moving to Sacramento, Harsch volunteered with Loaves & Fishes and raised money for Sacramento Children's Home while raising their sons, Fritz and Hans.

Fritz Harsch spoke about his mothers' generous nature, "She had an affection for people that was always reflected back. She was the warm, calming presence in a room, ready to negotiate situations and get things done."

"She was a great negotiator. The kind of personality where you didn't feel challenged by her, but she brought out your best qualities."

Harsch's life had serious

challenges too. She contracted Guillain-Barre disease in 1982 and then legionnaires disease, which kept her in the hospital for almost two years at Mercy Hospital. Paralyzed and pronounced clinically dead more than once, she bounced back to the amazement of the hospital staff, with humor intact.

In 1986, after a divorce, Harsch moved back to her parents' home. She obtained her real estate license and became the President of the Sacramento Association of Realtors, collecting awards along the way. Later, the association established a scholarship in Harsch's name, further helping to lift others ready to serve their community.

As her parents slowed



This is Barbara Rohwer's Sacramento High graduation photo from 1953. Photo courtesy of Harsch family



Pictured is Barbara Harsch's award from the 1971 Donner's Open water ski tournament. She won third place. Photo by Kristina Rogers



This is Barbara Harsch's photo on the cover of her book. Photo courtesy of Harsch family

down, Harsch became their caretaker. After they passed, she decided to sell the house and move to a smaller home in the Greenhaven area in 2012.

Although Harsch was very active, she mostly remained in the background. In her lifetime she performed many charitable acts only a few knew. She wasn't political. Like most of the Silent Generation, a purposeful life, giving back and time with those she loved were her greatest rewards. Harsch passed away on Nov.14, 2024, at age 89.

Sacramento changed as Harsch's generation aged. It got bigger and, to some, much more impersonal. Maybe a little more self-indulgent too. At the end of the last chapter of her book, there is a Peanuts cartoon where Linus sits next to Charlie Brown and says, "Worrying won't stop the bad stuff from happening; it just stops you from enjoying the good."

During the era of selfies, maybe the Silent Generation and Harsch's life can remind us of the bigger picture in the New Year. ★



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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

State Water Project Allocation Increases

SAFE Sponsors 'Bigs and Littles' at Ballet



Above average precipitation and snowpack allow for an increase in planned water deliveries for 2025. Photo courtesy California Department of Water Resources

California Department of Water Resources News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - On Dec. 23, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced an update to the State Water Project allocation forecast for 2025. The allocation has increased to 15 percent of requested supplies, up from the initial allocation forecast of 5 percent announced in December. The State Water Project provides water to 29 public water agencies that serve 27-million Californians.

Strong storms in late November and early December have helped boost statewide precipitation to just above average for this time of year. Reservoir levels have also increased because of the storms. The initial allocation forecast announced on Dec. 2 had not accounted for these storms because the data was not yet available to water managers. Prior to the second half of November, the start of the water year had been dry and warm.

"The past several weeks

has brought welcome rain and snow to Northern California and these improved conditions have allowed the State Water Project to increase the allocation forecast to the benefit of millions of Californians," said Department of Water Resources Director Karla Nemeth. "While we typically wait to provide an update until January, we felt it important to let our state water contractors know of the increase as soon as possible to allow them to better plan their water supply for the year ahead."

State water managers will continue to monitor precipitation and snowpack conditions, as well as account for dry soils that might soak up some of the spring runoff following record heat this past summer. Additionally, Southern California remains very dry and has not benefited from the atmospheric rivers experienced so far this season.

"California is still in the early months of our wet season and as recent history has shown, conditions can change quickly," said Dr. Michael Anderson, state climatologist. "While

Northern California has benefitted from early season storms, dry conditions in the new year can leave us with below average totals when warmer weather arrives."

Each year, the Department of Water Resources provides State Water Project allocation forecasts based on available water storage, projected water supply and water demands. Allocations are updated monthly as snowpack, rainfall and runoff information is assessed, with a final allocation typically determined in May or June. As the winter progresses, if California sees an increase in rain and snowfall, the allocation forecast might increase.

The next update will likely come this month and will use information from the season's first snow surveys.

The allocation forecast notice to state water contractors and historical data on State Water Project allocations are available online at water.ca.gov/programs/state-water-project/management/swp-water-contractors. ★



Big Sister Alyssa Sibley, of South Natomas, and Little Sister Nareiah Dillon prepare for the ballet's matinee Nutcracker performance. Photo by Robyn Eifertsen, SAFE Credit Union

Continued from Page 1

performance live and "in person" instead of just on a video screen. "That was such a great opportunity for RoRo to experience something like that."

A not-for-profit credit union, SAFE shares in the credit union cooperative principle of "people helping people" through community initiatives. Building upon its 25-year, \$23 million naming rights commitment and investment in the SAFE Credit Union Convention & Performing Arts District in Sacramento, the event highlights the credit union's investment in Sacramento's economy.

"SAFE was delighted to bring this special matinee performance of the Nutcracker to Bigs and Littles from our communities," says SAFE Credit Union Community Impact Manager Lauren LeBov. "We hope experiencing the show together added to the magic and the memories of attending the Nutcracker and the ballet."

Before the performance and on stage, Sacramento Ballet Artistic/Executive Director Anthony Krutzkamp welcomed

and recognized the Bigs and Littles attending the performance.

"Sharing the magic of this holiday tradition with the youth of Sacramento is an incredible opportunity to inspire and ignite a love for the arts," Krutzkamp says. "I can't say thank you enough to SAFE, to buy those tickets. Those were amazing, authentic, wonderful, tickets. I can't say thank you enough."

Big Sister Stephanie Allen of Penryn thought it was wonderful for her Little Sister Saliyah to watch the story of the Nutcracker unfold with no dialogue and through music and movement from the dancers.

"This was Saliyah's first ballet, and I was so grateful for the chance to introduce her to a totally new art form and experience it together," says Allen. "I think meeting the dancer Abby and learning what it takes to be a professional ballerina was the highlight for her."

For more about Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Sacramento Area, contact the nonprofit's Advancement Director Madeline Lee madeline@bbbs-sac.org or 916-274-7391. ★

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Matsui Sworn In to 119th Congress

Office of Congresswoman Doris Matsui News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - On Friday, Jan. 3, Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA), issued the following statement after she was sworn in to serve California's 7th District in the 119th Congress.

"Serving my community in the seventh district continues to be the honor of my life," said Congresswoman Matsui. "This is a critical time for the future of our country. My mission is as clear as ever – to advance the interests of our region and make sure Sacramentans continue to thrive despite the challenges we face. My House Democratic colleagues and I will continue to push for progress to improve the economy, lower the cost of living, revitalize our

infrastructure, and keep our communities safe."

"As a leader on the Energy and Commerce Committee, I'm privileged to work on issues that have a transformational impact on our country," Matsui continued. "I'll continue to fight for expanded access to health care, a future with a livable planet, and broadband access for everyone. I'll continue to defend our democratic institutions and stand up for communities of color, the unhoused, and the most vulnerable among us. I'm ready to get back to work to tackle the pressing issues facing our neighbors and fellow Americans."

California's 7th Congressional District encompasses the heart of the Sacramento region, including the communities of Sacramento, Elk Grove, West Sacramento, Galt, Rancho Murieta, Wilton, and the Delta communities.

Congresswoman Doris Matsui has represented the Sacramento region in Congress since 2005. Congresswoman Matsui has been a champion of our regional community, securing billions of dollars of federal funding for infrastructure and flood protection projects across the region. As a leader on the powerful House Energy and Commerce Committee, she spearheads crucial policy to expand health care access, combat the climate crisis, and tackle the technological challenges of the 21st century economy.

Doris Matsui represents California's 7th Congressional District, centered in Sacramento, and includes the communities of Elk Grove, Galt, West Sacramento, Wilton, Rancho Murieta, Vineyard, Isleton, Walnut Grove, Herald, Clay, and the California Delta. ★

SMUD Board Elects Fishman, Tamayo

SMUD News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - SMUD's Board of Directors elected Director Gregg Fishman as president and Dave Tamayo as vice president of the board. Their terms will run from January through December 2025.

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, he 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, he 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



Gregg Fishman is president of the SMUD Board of Directors. Photos courtesy of SMUD



Dave Tamayo is vice president of the SMUD Board of Directors.

(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.

Tamayo was elected to the SMUD Board in 2014. He represents Ward 6, which includes the Meadowview, Oak Park, Parkway, Airport and Valley Hi neighborhoods.

Tamayo has led efforts to establish science programs and gardens in local schools, co-founded his neighborhood association and successfully advocated for public parks, affordable housing and urban infill.

Tamayo has served on several public boards

and commissions, including the South Sacramento Planning Advisory Committee, the Sacramento Parks and Recreation Commission, the Sacramento-Yolo Mosquito and Vector Control District and the California Structural Pest Control Board. He also has served on the boards of the nonprofit Sacramento Mutual Housing Association, California Stormwater Quality Association, Sacramento County Alliance of Neighborhoods and the Sacramento Urban Creeks Council.

Tamayo worked as an environmental scientist for Sacramento County for 30 years. He is recognized as a public policy leader in protecting natural resources by effectively influencing state and federal environmental regulations. He wrote the county storm water pollution ordinance, co-founded the region's River Friendly Landscaping Program and helped create local, statewide and national integrated pest management programs. ★

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.

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/

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.

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!

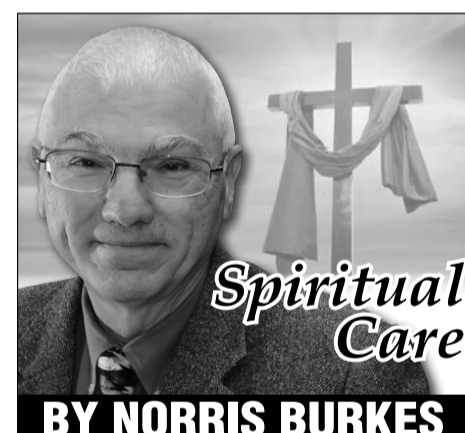
Yoga, Monday 12 pm, Wednesday 3:30 pm. Lodge members free.

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 for weekly menu. ★

Come Fly With Me or Buy With Me



"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.

Unsure 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. "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!" ★

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. ★

Home Heating Expenses Projected to Increase 8.7%

National Energy Assistance Directors Association News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Home heating costs this winter will remain unaffordable for millions of lower income families, according to the National Energy Assistance Directors Association.

The National Energy Assistance Directors Association, representing the state directors of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, released its end-of-the-year projections of home heating costs for the winter heating season. Prices for home heating this winter on average are estimated to increase by about 8.7% to \$941 from last year's winter heating season average of \$866, due to expected colder winter weather in the Northeast and Midwest states.

The largest change is for families using electricity to heat their homes increasing

by 14.2% from \$1,040 to \$1,189. Electric prices are increasing due to continued high cost of maintaining and upgrading the grid and colder weather leading to increased consumption. In fact, electricity as reported by the November 2024 Consumer Price Index is rising faster than the overall rate of inflation.

In addition, the National Energy Assistance Directors Association predicts higher prices for natural gas, one of the main fuels used in electricity production, primarily due to increased exports of liquefied natural gas with the average cost increasing from \$615 to \$634.

For those using heating oil, expenditures are estimated to decrease by 2.7% from \$1,560 to \$1,518. Households heating with propane can expect a 4.4 % increase in expenditures, from \$1,179 last winter to \$1,231 this year due to colder temperatures forecasted in the Midwest and Northeast. ★



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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.



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.

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. ★

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 or 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

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 substance use 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. ★

When Losing is Still Winning

By Daniel Canfield

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Rio Linda High School alumnus and former Sacramento State Hornet Cam Skattebo gave 110% in the Sun Devils' 39-31 College Football Playoff loss to the Texas Longhorns in the Peach Bowl on New Year's Eve. Skattebo transferred from Sacramento State University to Arizona State University following the 2022 season and just completed his senior year, culminating with the thrilling overtime loss to the Longhorns.

Skattebo's frenetic "never say quit" playing style, he was famous for from his time as a Hornet, carried over to his time as an Arizona State Wildcat and was exemplified by his Peach Bowl performance.

Over four quarters and overtime of the 2024-25 Peach Bowl, the 22-year-old racked up 284 total yards, 143 rushing, 99 receiving, and 42 passing. Skattebo's Peach Bowl

performance included two rushing touchdowns, a passing touchdown, and a two-point conversion. A herculean effort from the 5-foot, 11-inch, 215-pound senior running back.

Skattebo's performance was so great that despite being on the losing end of the game, he was named the Offensive Most Valuable Player of the Peach Bowl. It's the first time in 26 years that a member of the losing team has won the game's Offensive Most Valuable Player award.

Prior to the Peach Bowl, Skattebo had foreshadowed his game performance in his media day comments on Dec. 30.

"There's nobody out there that can stop me," Skattebo said. "If they're studying hard, there's a reason. I have full respect for them, because they understand what they're playing against, and that's why I love playing in games like this, because they constantly look at me as a



Rio Linda High School alumnus Cam Skattebo won Offensive Most Valuable Player Award for the 2024-25 Peach Bowl played in Atlanta on Jan. 1. Photo by Arizona State University Athletics

threat, and that's something I've always wanted to be. And if I'm a threat on the football field against an SEC team that was the runner-up to win their conference, then I think I'm in a pretty good position."

In 2024, Skattebo had a

breakthrough senior season, rushing for 1,568 yards and 19 touchdowns while catching 37 passes for 506 yards and three touchdowns. Making him the first Big 12 player ever to have at least 1500 rushing yards and 500 receiving

yards in the same season and the first FBS player to do it since Christian McCaffrey in 2015. The star running back finished fifth in Heisman Trophy voting.

While Skattebo and the Arizona State University Wildcats would have

preferred to beat the Longhorns in the Peach Bowl and advance in the College Football Playoff, the Offensive MVP award is an admirable accomplishment for one of the nation's top running backs. ★

Hornet Sophomore Picked in MLS Draft



Sacramento State Hornet sophomore Donovan Sessoms (No. 21) was selected by San Diego FC in the 2025 Major League Soccer SuperDraft on Dec. 20. Courtesy photo

Sacramento State Athletics News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - A spectacular sophomore season has translated into a ticket to the next level for Sacramento State sophomore forward Donovan Sessoms, who was selected with the first pick of the third round (No. 61 overall) by expansion side San Diego FC in the 2025 Major League Soccer (MLS) SuperDraft on Dec. 20.

Sessoms is the first Hornet to be taken in the MLS SuperDraft since Chimdum Mez was taken in the fourth round (66th overall) by the San Jose Earthquakes, and the fifth Sacramento State student-athlete to be drafted by an MLS club in school history along with Brandon Cavitt (1996 College Draft, Dallas Burn), Ernesto Carranza (2011 Supplemental Draft, Chivas USA), and Fernando Cabadas (2011 Supplemental Draft, New England Revolution).

San Diego FC had five selections in the draft, building a roster as the newest of Major League Soccer's 30 clubs that will compete in 2025. The city was awarded a franchise in May of 2023 and will play its first match on Feb. 23 against defending MLS Cup champion LA Galaxy.

An All-Big West first-team selection in 2024, Sessoms put together one of the finest offensive seasons in school history, finishing with a team-high 10 goals and 20 points for the year, both ranking among the top 10 in single-season history. Half of those 10 scored went for game-winning goals, ranking tied for fifth in the nation.

Among his Big West Conference brethren, Sessoms ranked third in the Big West in shot attempts (48) and led the league with 2.67 shots per match. He also finished fifth in the league in points, fourth in points per match (1.11), fourth in goals, and third in goals per match (0.56). ★

Athletics Add Infielder Gio Urshela

Major League Baseball News Release

WEST SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Athletics agreed to terms with infielder Gio Urshela on a one-year contract for the 2025 season, the club announced on Dec. 22.

Urshela began the 2024 season at Detroit and was hitting .243 with five home runs and 37 RBI in 92 games when he was released in mid-August. He signed with Atlanta and batted .265 with four home runs and 15 RBI in 36 games with the Braves. The 33-year-old right-handed hitter combined for a .250 batting average in 128 games overall, making 102 starts at third base and 15 at first base. Urshela also went 0-for-6 in two postseason games for Atlanta, his fifth season with postseason experience.

Urshela is a .273 career hitter with 73 home runs, 332 RBI and a .729 OPS in 792 games over nine seasons in the majors with Cleveland (2015, 17), Toronto (2018), New York-AL (2019-21), Minnesota (2022), Los Angeles-AL (2023), Detroit (2024) and Atlanta (2024). He batted .299 in 62 games with the Angels in 2023 before a fractured pelvis ended his season in mid-June. The native of Colombia had



On Dec. 22, the Athletics announced infielder Gio Urshela will join the team for the 2025 campaign. Courtesy photo

his best season with the Yankees in 2019 when he hit .314 with 21 home runs and 74 RBI in 132 games. Urshela led Major League third basemen with a .992 fielding percentage in 2020 and has made 614 of his 700 career starts at third base. ★

River Cats Announce 2025 Promotions

River Cats News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Fans will be sure to find plenty of fun and new surprises at Sutter Health Park next season as the Sacramento River Cats, proud affiliate of the San Francisco Giants, are excited to share the first half of their 2025 promotions schedule while also announcing single game tickets on sale for games through July 3.

Highlighting the beginning of the 2025 baseball season is the return of 2024 MLB All-Star Heliot Ramos, in miniature form that is, as Opening Night on Friday, March 28 will see the first 2,500 fans receive their own Heliot Ramos bobblehead presented by Jackson Rancheria Casino Resort.

The first half of the season includes three additional giveaway games on Saturday, May 3, Friday, May 30, and Friday, June 27. Fans can stay tuned to River Cats social media for the future reveal of these items or sign up for the River Cats email list by visiting rivercats.com/newsletter for first access to this information and other release.

Theme nights will be aplenty as Sacramento hosts nine during the first half of the season including returning favorites Green Awareness Night presented by SMUD (April 17), First Responder's Night (April 18), Dinger's

Birthday/Take Meow't to the Ballgame (May 4), Salute to Armed Forces Night (May 17), and Dino Night (May 31). Joining those for the first time in 2025 are AAPI Night (May 3), Bark in the Park (May 18), and Videogame Night (June 28).

SMUD Orange Fridays and Sutter Health Fireworks Saturdays return for the entirety of the 2025 season. Fans can watch the River Cats light up the sky with their bats and fireworks shows a total of 15 nights during the first half of the season concluding with a special Independence Eve Fireworks Spectacular following the game against the Reno Aces on July 3.

The River Cats will play four games as the Dorados de Sacramento this season as part of Minor league Baseball's 2025 Copa de la Diversión, celebrating baseball's Hispanic/Latino fan base. During the first half of the year, Sacramento will take the field as the Dorados on Thursday, May 1 and Thursday, May 29.

The Sacramento River Cats kick off their season at home with Opening Night on Friday, March 28 against the Albuquerque Isotopes at 6:45 p.m. (PT). The full schedule is currently available online at rivercats.com. Game dates, times, and promotional dates may be subject to change. Memberships, select ticket packs, hospitality rentals, and now single-game tickets are currently available by visiting rivercats.com or by calling the River Cats ticket hotline at (916) 371-HITS (4487). ★



Athletics' President Resigns

Major League Baseball News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Dave Kaval, President of the Athletics for the past eight years, announced today that he is resigning to pursue new business opportunities in California. His last day with the team, which is in the process of building a new ballpark in Las Vegas, was Dec. 31, 2024.

"We are grateful for Dave's contributions and leadership over the past eight years. He guided our organization through a period of significant transition, and we sincerely thank him for his unwavering commitment to the team," said A's Owner John Fisher. "As we look ahead to the next chapter of our franchise, the team will continue to grow under new leadership, driving the organization toward success during our interim years in West Sacramento and at our new home in Las Vegas."

Sandy Dean, a longtime business partner with the Fisher family, will serve as Interim President. Dean has worked with the A's since John and his family became

owners in 2005. The club will begin a search for a new leader in the new year.

Kaval said that, given the substantial progress toward the team's move to a new, state-of-the-art ballpark in Las Vegas, "I will be staying in California to explore new opportunities at the crossroads of business and government. I am grateful to A's ownership for the opportunities they have given me."

Kaval, 49, served as the seventh president of the Athletics in the franchise's 123-year history. The franchise was founded in Philadelphia in 1901.

Prior to his role with the A's, Kaval served as president of the San Jose Earthquakes, where he played a pivotal role in the development of PayPal Park, home of the Earthquakes and Bay FC.

Kaval has also served as vice chairman of the San Jose Sports Commission, board member of the San Jose Chamber of Commerce, member of the San Mateo County Workforce Investment Board, and Executive Committee member of the Bay Area Council. He has also taught Sports Management at the Stanford Graduate School of Business for the past decade. ★

Elks Organists Keep a Vanishing Skill Alive



Hammond Concord organ circa late 1970s.



Organists Chuck Shumate of Carmichael Elks Lodge #2103, left, and Dan Baldassari of Sacramento Elks Lodge #6 continue the tradition of organ accompaniment for Elks Lodge meetings and ritual ceremonies. Photos courtesy of Dan Baldassari

By **Pattie McDaniel**

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Much like the ancient organs from third-century Greeks that were powered by displacing water into airtight containers to push wind needed to play notes, today's church organs are quickly becoming obsolete.

Still, two Elks Lodges in the seven lodge Central District of California have the honor and rare privilege of enjoying organ music at their meetings and ritual ceremonies.

Chuck Shumate of Carmichael Elks Lodge #2103 and Dan Baldassari of

Sacramento Elks Lodge #6 are unique among musicians who have mastered the complex art of playing the organ.

Shumate is 101 years old. He has been an Elk for 39 years and is a U.S. Army veteran.

Baldassari is half Shumate's age at 50 years old. He has only been an Elk for two years. Baldassari started his musical training by playing the trumpet in high school. Baldassari's music teacher, fellow trumpet player Tom Thompson, was a former international concert artist for the Hammond Organ Co.

Among Thompson's many students is

Stu Boyer, the retired organist of Pizza and Pipes that was located on Arden Way in Sacramento.

Shumate and Baldassari met recently after Shumate's Elks Lodge performance. Shumate is probably the oldest organist in Northern California. Baldassari is an anomaly among young artists. Mastering the complex skills required to play an organ takes years. It requires concentration and coordination of both hands and feet, eyes and ears.

The decline of organists can be attributed to many factors. There is a lack of interest due to the incredible patience

required to play proficiently. There are less-costly options such as keyboards and small home organs.

Music teachers with the expertise to teach organs are rare. Finding organ repair people is even rarer.

Additionally, there are very limited career or financial opportunities for professional organists.

As a result, churches and fraternal organizations struggle to keep the traditions of organ accompaniment for their choirs and ritual ceremonies.

Sadly, the king of instruments may be nearing the end of its reign. ★

Sutter Health Expanding Multispecialty Care Center

Sutter Health News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Renovation is underway at the Sutter Health Arden Care Center located at 1651 Exposition Blvd. in Sacramento as part of the health system's robust, strategic plan to increase access to more care services.

The location will support greater access to services for those in Sacramento, Arden-Arcade, Del Paso and Carmichael.

The existing three-story, 70,000-square-foot office building will be transformed into a multispecialty care center. It will feature primary care and outpatient support services, including diagnostic imaging, urgent care and a clinical laboratory. The location will also feature specialty care, including dermatology, endocrinology and rheumatology. About 40 Sutter-affiliated physicians and other providers will have offices and clinics in the Sutter Health Arden Care Center.

"Patients want the convenience of having multiple services available in one location," said Dr. Karun Grossman, chief medical officer of Sutter Medical Group. "The Sutter Health Arden Care Center features a host of options and is centrally located to better serve those living and working in nearby communities."



The existing three-story, 70,000-square-foot office building will be transformed into a multispecialty care center. Photo courtesy of Sutter Health

Internal demolition is now underway. Renovation construction is scheduled to begin in January and the first patients are expected to be seen next December. The estimated cost of the project is about \$76 million.

The Sutter Health Arden Care Center is the latest example of Sutter Health's broader expansion plans in action. With new facilities and services strategically located, the aim is to increase access to primary and specialty care doctors, reduce travel times

for patients, and provide timely access to essential healthcare services.

Other expansion plans in the greater Sacramento area include the Sutter Health Folsom Care Complex, a 106,500-square-foot, \$145-million project featuring primary and specialty care, as well as an ambulatory surgery center. Sutter Health is also expanding its Elk Grove Care Complex with the planned construction of a new 56,000-square-foot, \$67.8-million specialty care center. In addition,

Sutter Health acquired seven acres of land in south Placer County on Highland Pointe Drive for a proposed care center that could feature primary, urgent and specialty care.

"Adding more care locations for patients and families is just one part of how Sutter plans to expand patient access now and in the future," said Rachael McKinney, Sutter Health's Greater Sacramento president. "We have recruited more than 250 physicians to the area alone, expanded pathways for the next

generation of caregivers, and added digital health support that will help meet the growing demand for our services and enhance the overall patient experience."

Sutter Health is a not-for-profit healthcare system dedicated to providing comprehensive care throughout California. Committed to health equity, community partnerships, and innovative, high-quality patient care, Sutter Health is pursuing a bold new plan to reach more residents and make

excellent healthcare more connected and accessible. It currently serves nearly 3.5-million patients, thanks to a team of more than 57,000 employees and clinicians, and 12,000-plus affiliated physicians, with a unified focus on expanding care to serve more patients.

Sutter Health delivers affordable care through its hospitals, medical groups, ambulatory surgery centers, urgent care clinics, telehealth, home health and hospice services.

Learn more at sutter-health.org. ★

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