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# Gold River Messenger

VOLUME 13 • ISSUE 5

*Serving Gold River and Sacramento County*

MAY 2025

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INSIDE**

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CITIZEN AWARDS  
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## Rowing for the Rest of Us



Here are participants from the Crew Master's Program February 2024 Learn to Row event. Photo courtesy of Capital Crew Masters Program

*By Idaly Valencia*

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - Did you row on a crew “way back when” in high school or college? Do you still enjoy rowing but do not know how to get back into it? A local rowing team is seeking new members to join them on the waterways and to build community.

Lake Natoma Rowing Association’s Capital Crew Masters Program is an inclusive, multi-level competitive and recreational adult rowing team offering coached sessions.

Joining the program gives members affiliate access to rowing equipment appropriate for a variety of fitness levels. A skill assessment and swim



Capital Crew Master's Program member Marco Palilla takes a selfie with fellow rowers. Photo courtesy of Capital Crew Masters Program

test will be required on water rowing.

The program is calling out to those who used to row competitively in high school or college and would like to get back into the sport, according to Susan Hooten, a Capital

Crew Masters Program rower and board member.

Rowers of all experience levels are welcome to join as well.

“Our members range from ages 27 to 80 years old and chose their level of commitment, from casual

to international level. The practice schedule is nothing like your college days,” said Hooten.

Those interested in participating can select sessions to attend based on experience and comfort level. The team has separate groups that range in difficulty, offering different options for people to pick their preferred pace.

Experienced rowers can train and compete for local and international events. The upcoming competition that the team is currently training for is the Masters Regional Championship in June.

On Sundays, the program hosts a leisure rowing session for members who “just want to

*Continued on page 3*

## Mental Health Rehabilitation Center Lease Approved

**Sacramento County  
News Release**

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - On April 22, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors approved a significant step forward in the creation of a new Mental Health Rehabilitation Center for adults.

The board authorized the execution of a 30-year lease agreement and sub-lease with WellSpace Health for a new facility at 6790 Stockton Blvd., Sacramento. The lease will run from Jan. 1, 2027, through Dec. 31, 2056.

This proposed facility, approximately 24,700 square feet in size, is expected to be completed by Dec. 31, 2026. It will feature a 32-bed, 24-hour residential program designed for individuals 18 years or older living with mental disorders.

The program will provide intensive support and rehabilitative services to help residents develop skills to become self-sufficient, with the hope of increasing levels of independence and developing skills to reintegrate back into society.

WellSpace Health, the nonprofit organization partnering with the county, will manage the facility, ensuring that it provides the highest level of care for those in need. The lease agreement also ensures the county’s first right of refusal on available beds, allowing for the county to place individuals in need of care directly into the facility.

The \$23.57 million needed for the construction of the Mental Health Rehabilitation Center will come from Round three of the State of California’s Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program grant. In addition, the county will provide a required grant match of \$1.98 million, which will come from Sacramento County’s Patient Care Revenue, along with up to \$1.5 million in possible cost overrun funding.

The new facility is an essential part of the county’s commitment to improving mental health services and addressing the growing need for mental health care across the region. By providing a stable and supportive living environment for individuals in recovery, Sacramento County is helping to break down barriers to mental health treatment and support.

For more information, visit [dhs.sacounty.gov/BHS/Pages/BHS-Home.aspx](https://dhs.sacounty.gov/BHS/Pages/BHS-Home.aspx).

## Temporarily Out of Town? Your Vote Stays Home

**Sacramento County  
News Release**

**SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG)** - Did you know that while all voters must be registered where they live, some voters might also have out-of-state mailing addresses?

We know this might sound a little confusing but it’s actually quite simple, so let’s break it down.

What this means is that a voter who permanently resides in Sacramento County might choose to receive their election ballot, voter information guide and other materials at an address that is not their registered residence.

There are many reasons that a voter might need to use an out-of-state mailing address to receive their election material. This includes students attending college, workers on an extended work assignment, retirees enjoying a seasonal trip and/or voters temporarily caring for an out-of-county family member.

Voters who find



There are many reasons that a voter might need to use an out-of-state mailing address to receive their election material. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

themselves out of state unexpectedly or on short notice during an election could also request a one-time mailing address to receive their ballot at their temporary location.

To maintain an accurate voter file, Voter Registration and Elections (VRE) reviews the voter file for out-of-state mailing addresses after each general election. This month, Voter Registration and Elections will send a letter to every voter with an out-of-state mailing address. This letter gives them the

opportunity to let us know whether their out-of-state mailing address is correct, and they would like to maintain their Sacramento County voter registration; if they would like to update their voter registration (residential) address; or if they have registered or plan to register to vote in a different state and wish to cancel their Sacramento County voter registration.

We use the information from the responses to these letters to ensure that our voter file is as accurate and up to date as possible.

For more information on Voter File Maintenance, visit [elections.sacounty.gov/ElectionInformation/Pages/Voter-File-Maintenance.aspx](https://elections.sacounty.gov/ElectionInformation/Pages/Voter-File-Maintenance.aspx)

A voter can add or remove a mailing address by calling Voter Registration and Elections at any time at 800-762-8019; re-registration is not necessary.

If you have moved and need to update your voter registration, visit [registerto-vote.ca.gov](https://registerto-vote.ca.gov), call our office to request a registration form or visit any Post Office or library.



# Soroptimists Honor ‘Live Your Dream’ Award Recipients

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

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova and Gold River presented \$3,650 in Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women to help six local woman improve their economic situation.

Soroptimist is a global volunteer nonprofit organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment.

The local Soroptimist club’s awards ceremony was held at Cattlemen’s Restaurant at 11:30 a.m. March 29.

First-place (\$1,200) went to Samone H. She is a widowed mom of two young children living in the Rosemont Sacramento-area. She’s working on an associate’s degree in nursing at Sac City College and will graduate this May. Samone’s goal is to become a labor and delivery nurse to help women have a wonderful birthing experience and she hopes to one day become a clinical instructor of nursing. Samone proved her tenacity as this was her third and final application attempt since she’s graduating this year. Samone’s application advanced to the Soroptimist Sierra Nevada Region level, where recipients could receive up to an additional \$5,000. The program culminates with three finalist \$10,000 awards.

Second-place (\$800) went to Yelzaveta V. She is the primary breadwinner with three young children living in the Lincoln Village neighborhood. She’s working on an associate’s degree in accounting at Folsom Lake College and will graduate in 2026. Her goal is to become a CPA.

Third-place (\$750) went to Jay-Lynn L. She is a single mom of three young children living in



The awards ceremony for the Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards was held at Cattlemen’s Restaurant on March 29. Photo courtesy of Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova & Gold River

Rancho Cordova. She’s working on an associate’s degree in human services at American River College and will graduate in 2026. Her goal is to open a community support center, library, a school and a safe haven for at-risk youth.

Fourth-place (\$500) went to Svitlana O. She is the sole caretaker of her infirmed husband and lives in the Lincoln Village neighborhood. She’s working on an associate’s degree in early childhood education from Folsom Lake College and will graduate in 2026. Svitlana looks forward to creating an inclusive environment in her classroom and promoting respect for bi-lingual literacy.

Honorary Award (\$200) went to Jessica D. She is a single mom of two young children and lives in the Natomas area. She’s working on professional certification from the Southwest Institute of Healing Arts and will graduate in 2026. Jessica’s goal is to become a healing arts practitioner and

develop programs that address the physical, mental, spiritual, financial and emotional well-being of individuals who promote a comprehensive approach to healing and empowerment.

Honorary Award (\$200) went to Valentyna O. She is the guardian of her 18-year-old niece and lives in Rancho Cordova.

Our awardees also received a Certificate of Recognition from Congressman Ami Bera’s office and Assemblyman Joshua Hoover’s office and an illustrated dictionary presented by Rancho Cordova Rotary Club member Ross Johnson.

Marlena Uhrik, Ed.D. presented our first-place winner, Samone, with an Empowering Elegance wardrobe consultation valued at \$299.

Our guest speakers were our Soroptimist region Governor-elect Kathy Dunbar and Region Live Your Dram program coordinator Billie Araiza. Lisa Miller from our sponsor Golden State

Water spoke about how proud Golden State Water is to support the Live your Dream program. Our 2020 Live Your Dream winner, Stacey Beeler, shared her story about where she was when she applied for the award in 2019 and how far her life has improved since winning the award.

We appreciate the support of all our attendees and those who support and assist with administrating this annual program.

The “Live Your Dream Award” provides more than \$2.8 million in cash grants to head-of-household women in need each year.

Since the program’s inception in 1972, more than \$40 million has helped tens of thousands of women achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families.

A study conducted by The Fels Institute of Government, a research and consulting organization at the University of Pennsylvania confirmed the efficacy and impact of this program.

It improves the recipients’ quality of life; builds their confidence; strengthens their self-determination and makes them want to, in turn, help others. Helping women in this way has the demonstrated effect of leading to stronger communities, nations and the world.

Founded in 2009, the Soroptimist International Rancho Cordova/Gold River club is part of Soroptimist International of the Americas, a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment. Since its 1921 founding, Soroptimist, a nonprofit organization that relies on charitable donations to support its programs, also powers LiveYourDream.org, an online community offering offline volunteer opportunities in support of women and girls.

For more information about how Soroptimist improves the lives of women and girls, visit [www.soroptimist.org](http://www.soroptimist.org). ★

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# Pony Express Rides from Sacramento to St. Joseph



The first rider will depart Old Sacramento at 2 p.m. (Pacific Time Zone) on June 11, and the last rider is scheduled to arrive at the Patee House in St. Joseph, Missouri, at 7:30 p.m. (Central Daylight Time) on June 21.

## National Pony Express Association News Release

### SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) -

The Annual Re-Ride of the historic Pony Express mail service will be conducted from June 11 through June 21 by the National Pony Express Association (NPEA).

The event, celebrating the 165th year anniversary of “the Pony”, will start in Sacramento and end in the city of St. Joseph in Missouri, traveling west to east this year.

Personal and commemorative letters will be carried in a mochila (a leather square that is placed over the saddle with four locked cantinas to hold the mail) by horse and rider relays from the Sacramento River to the Missouri River.

The first rider will depart Old Sacramento at 2 p.m. (Pacific Time Zone) on June 11, and the last rider is scheduled to arrive at the Patee House in St. Joseph, Missouri, at 7:30 p.m. (Central Daylight Time) on June 21.

The route will follow the Pony Express National Historic Trail, a component of the National Trails System. The mail will travel 1966 miles across California, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming,

Colorado, Nebraska, and Kansas to Missouri.

Approximately 600 member riders from the National Pony Express Association’s eight state divisions will ride relay-style, 24 hours a day, until the mochila is delivered in St. Joseph, Missouri. Each rider will take the Pony Express Oath prior to riding with the mochila, just as the riders did in 1860.

The annual Re-Ride is a 10-day, 24 hours-a-day event honoring the Central Overland California and Pikes Peak Express Company. The company carried letters and telegrams from April 1860 to November 1861, between St. Joseph and Sacramento, proving the central route through Salt Lake City was passable year-round. Their intent was to win a federal mail contract, which unfortunately never materialized.

Are you interested in participating in the annual Re-Ride? Get your mount legged up to ride a leg in the annual Re-Ride. Reach out to a state president near you and find out about riding in this year's Re-Ride. Several states have ride sections available; come experience the thrill of being a Pony Express rider! For

more information, visit the state officer directory online at [nationalponyexpress.org/about/national-directory/](http://nationalponyexpress.org/about/national-directory/).

Send a letter through the Pony Express! The commemorative letters carried this year will be a vignette of Pony Express history in Nevada. Letters can be purchased by the public for the 1860 price of \$5 each. Personal letters are also available for \$10 each. All letters will be carried on horseback from Sacramento to St. Joseph, Missouri. They will be stamped as having been officially carried by Pony Express and then delivered via the United States Postal Service. The letter application form can be obtained by downloading it from the National Pony Express Association website at [nationalponyexpress.org/re-ride/send-a-letter/](http://nationalponyexpress.org/re-ride/send-a-letter/).

During the Re-Ride, updates and information about the progress across the Pony Express trail can be found at [facebook.com/expressrider/](http://facebook.com/expressrider/). A Global Positioning System (GPS) device will be carried in the mochila that will transmit real-time location of the mail.

The National Pony Express Re-Ride 2025 schedule, with links to detailed state schedules, is available on the National Pony Express Association’s website at [nationalponyexpress.org/re-ride/current-reride/](http://nationalponyexpress.org/re-ride/current-reride/).

The National Parks Service (NPS) will have an interactive map to follow the transmissions at [nationalponyexpress.org/re-ride/follow-the-ride/](http://nationalponyexpress.org/re-ride/follow-the-ride/). Status updates will also be posted on the website, photos and videos on the National Pony Express Association Facebook page. ★

# Rowing for the Rest of Us



Capital Crew Masters adult rowing team, for ages 27 and above, is a multi-level competitive and recreational adult rowing team offering coached sessions. Photo courtesy of Capital Crew Masters Program

*Continued from page 1* socialize and have fun.”

Hooten emphasized that those who rowed before are encouraged to come back to row.

The adult rowing team consists of men and women members (ages 27 and up) who row together from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, and from 7:15 to 9:15 a.m. Saturdays. Members meet at the Sacramento State Aquatic Center, 1901 Hazel Ave, Gold River, located by Lake Natoma. View the full 2025 master’s schedule at [sacstateaquaticcenter.com/capital-masters](http://sacstateaquaticcenter.com/capital-masters).

Capital Crew Masters Program members come from across the Sacramento

region to row on Lake Natoma. The adult rowing team includes residents from nearby communities such as Gold River, Carmichael, Rancho Cordova, Citrus Heights, Fair Oaks, and Orangevale. Others travel from East and South Sacramento, Folsom, Woodland, El Dorado Hills and Placerville.

Curious about joining the team? Contact coach Jackie Synder, the Capital Crew Masters Program president, at 719-330-1783. For more information, visit [lakenatomarowing.org](http://lakenatomarowing.org).

Community members who have never rowed but want to learn can contact the Sacramento State Aquatic Center about rowing classes at 916-278-2842. ★



The rowing Capital Crew Master’s Program members are treated to seeing a rainbow during this session. Photo courtesy of Capital Crew Masters Program



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# Roger's Review

By State Senator Roger Niello

Hi everyone, I'm Senator Roger Niello, your guide to the twists and turns of California's legislative landscape. I am honored to represent Senate District 6, which includes portions of Sacramento and Placer Counties.

Welcome to my new monthly column, Roger's Review. Here, I will shine a spotlight on policies that impact our lives and highlight the amazing news that's happening in our community.

Now, let's talk about the state budget. This year, the state budget is going to be difficult to balance, and legislators will have to make tough choices to avoid fiscal challenges like deficits in the future.

As the vice-chair of the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, I sent a letter to the budget committee chair to address some of the priorities, and here are some of the issues I included in the letter to get California back on track. The full letter can be found on my website at [sen.ca.gov/niello](http://sen.ca.gov/niello).

The rising homelessness issue in our communities is a big concern. Well-funded mental health and substance abuse services will result in meaningful and positive outcome that leads some of the homeless population to self-sufficiency. With nearly 70% of voters in support, Proposition 36 is not just popular but also good policy. My fellow legislators and the governor must fully fund the needs of Proposition 36 and give law enforcement and local governments the resources to improve public safety in our communities.

Many of us know someone who was impacted or lost their home and much more in the tragic wildfires in Southern California earlier this year. California needs to invest more in fire prevention through vegetation and forest management. After decades of neglect, the state of California began to improve on fire

prevention in recent years, but even in the surplus years of 2021 to 2022 and 2022 to 2023, most of the fire prevention funds were short-term in nature. My request seeks funding toward fire prevention efforts, including forest and vegetation management.

High school seniors who are preparing to attend college after graduation may be impacted by the governor's plan to cut from the University of California and California State University systems and nearly \$400 million from Middle Class Scholarships. The legislature must reject this plan and make sure our schools focus on supporting California students.

Our local business owners are being crushed by unemployment insurance debt left over from the pandemic shut-downs. Despite a \$98 billion surplus in 2022 to 2023, the state failed to retire its unemployment debt unlike 48 other states. Creating a payment plan to eliminate the debt over time would save interest costs and help Californians by enabling job creators to boost employment.

The governor's May revision announcement will happen in May, and I will be paying close attention to see if the administration's priorities reflect those of all Californians.

*State Sen. Roger Niello represents District 6, which includes Antelope, Arden-Arcade, Carmichael, Citrus Heights, Clay, Fair Oaks, Folsom, Foothill Farms, Franklin, Galt, Gold River, Herald, Mather, Orangevale, Rancho Cordova, Rancho Murieta and Wilton in Sacramento County. The district also includes Auburn, Granite Bay, Lincoln, Loomis, Newcastle, Penryn, Rocklin, Roseville and Sheridan in Placer County. To reach the senator, call 916-772-0571 or email [senator.niello@senate.ca.gov](mailto:senator.niello@senate.ca.gov).* ★

# Hoover Wants Folsom Lake Reopened to Decontaminated Boats



Josh Hoover

## Josh Hoover News Release

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - Assemblyman Josh Hoover (R-Folsom) announced that he has joined Congressman Kevin Kiley, Senator Roger Niello, and Assemblyman Joe Patterson in sending a letter to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and the California Department of State Parks regarding the ongoing closure of Folsom Lake to motorized boats and the handling of the invasive golden mussel.

Despite having

knowledge of the golden mussel threat for over six months, the relevant agencies did not inform the public of the new boating restrictions until April 7. While Assemblyman Hoover and his colleagues share the commitment to protecting the local environment and water delivery systems, they expressed serious concerns about the lack of preparation and the resulting economic harm to the region.

The letter specifically calls on the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and State Parks to:

Authorize decontamination procedures similar to those already implemented at Lake Tahoe.

Immediately reopen Folsom Lake to all boats that have been properly decontaminated.

Develop a coordinated system allowing watercraft seals issued after decontamination or quarantine

to be recognized at multiple lakes.

"The residents of our region deserve better than an abrupt closure when other options exist to safely open the lake," said Hoover. "We must protect our waterways from invasive species, but we can and must do so in a way that maintains recreational opportunities and supports our local economy."

Hoover remains committed to working with local, state, and federal partners to ensure Folsom Lake is reopened safely and responsibly.

*Josh Hoover represents Assembly District 7, which includes the cities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, and Rancho Cordova and the unincorporated communities of Carmichael, Fair Oaks, Foothill Farms, Gold River, Mather, McClellan Park, North Highlands, Orangevale, and Rosemont.* ★

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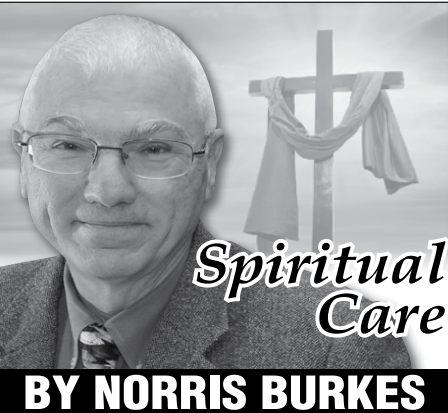
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# Flying on a Wing and a Prayer



Amidst the Cinco de Mayo celebrations last Monday, I couldn’t avoid thinking of May 6, 2009, the day I returned from deployment in Iraq on a chartered World Airways DC-10.

After spending four months serving the wounded at the Air Force Field Hospital in Balad Iraq, my only thoughts on final approach into Baltimore/Washington International Airport, were of home.

Our landing attempt was anything but welcoming as our plane bounced like a porpoise on the waves. Security cameras recorded a large puff of smoke from our wheels. Eyewitnesses would later tell FAA investigators that they thought the plane was going to flip.

A second bounce delivered at an estimated 3.2 Gs and plastic ceiling molding fell on us as oxygen generators swung like piñatas. Several seat backs snapped backward while passengers along the left windows watched the yellow centerline, and I watched our wing drift over the grass.

We sailed back into the air as the cockpit voice recorder captured pilot Craig Gatch asserting: “8535 heavy declaring an emergency go-around.”

When we regained some altitude, my fellow passengers spoke in muffled voices. No one wanted to be the first to cry, but clearly no one wanted to die without protest. Some were praying or holding hands or just staring at their feet.

I rested my forehead on my seatback to pray, even as I wondered if I heard a judgmental voice in it all. My shortcomings felt as though they were being weighed on the scale of a spiritual assayer. Was there a deity somewhere with a one-piece eyeglass assessing my life with a doubtful squint?

Had I been a good husband and dad? Or had I been too absent, physically and spiritually? Was it OK to feel scared? Or should I gather my wits and start a rousing chorus of

“Amazing Grace?”

I kept praying, spending the next few minutes asking God, “What about all these passengers?” A soldier was about to meet his new son for the first time. An airman was trying to make a marriage work again. They all wanted another chance. Would they get that chance?

In a center aisle seat, catty-corner from me, a young officer was wiping her tears. I stretched across the aisle to offer my hand as a reminder she wasn’t alone. I wanted to hold it until we landed, but the awkwardly angled reach caused me to break loose and rejoin her hand with the chaplain assistant sitting beside her.

As we reapproached the airport, the flight attendants told us to grab our ankles and lower our heads. Then the pilot added his instruction to “brace for impact!” But instead of impact, we landed as calmly as if we were sailing across a mountain lake.

Slowly we looked up from our crash/prayer position and started clapping like we had never expected another tomorrow.

Before we deplaned down portable stairways, five people were removed for medical care, including the first officer with a broken back. Behind us, debris littered an unusable runway.

Few of us could make much sense of the incident. Many would say to me things like, “Chaplain, we expected to die in Iraq, but never in Baltimore.”

FAA investigators declared the plane a total loss because the main spar was broken, (the structural member that supports the wings.)

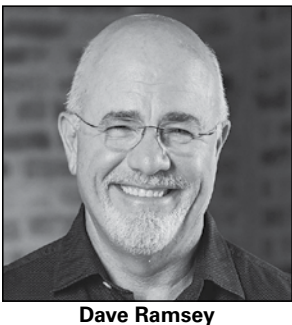
This meant our pilot literally risked losing our wings during his 10-minute go-around. But I suppose that’s what airmen mean when they describe a harrowing flight as “flying on a wing and a prayer.”

Even today, my airplane remains at the airport where its continentally stippled for parts. For those curious, I posted links to the security footage and the accident report on my website

This column is excerpted from my book “Hero’s Highway.”

Sign up to receive this weekly column in your email box at <https://thechaplain.net/newsletter/> or send me your email address to [comment@thechaplain.net](mailto:comment@thechaplain.net).

All of Norris’s books can be ordered on Amazon. Autographed copies can be obtained on his website [www.thechaplain.net](http://www.thechaplain.net) or by sending a check for \$20 for each book to 10566 Combie Rd. Suite 6643 Auburn, CA 95602. ★



Dear Dave,

I recently experienced a medical emergency and unexpected hospital stay. I’m about halfway through Baby Step 2, and I’m paying off my debts using the debt snowball system. I have good insurance, but should I put Baby Step 2 on hold for now due to all the hospital bills?

– Gerard

Dear Gerard,

That’s *exactly* what you should do. I’m sorry to hear about your health issues, but at the same time, I hope you’ll make sure you’re only pressing the pause button on Baby Step 2. I’m talking about temporarily stopping the debt snowball and making only minimum payments on all non-mortgage debt for now. Can you manage that?

Things like this can be expensive, but they’re part of life. At the same time, taking care of these kinds of issues doesn’t have to mean giving up on gaining control of your finances. Emergency issues, especially medical emergencies, come first. Then, go back and

# Dave Ramsey Says Medical Emergencies Come First

pick up where you left off when things are better, and finish knocking out your other debt by restarting your debt snowball. After that, I’ve got a feeling you’ll have the motivation to fully fund your emergency fund in Baby Step 3 all the way up to three to six months of expenses.

God bless you, friend. Keep your head up, and take good care of yourself while you’re recovering. You can do this!

– Dave

## Pay it Off, Young Lady

Dear Dave,

I’m 28, and I make around \$75,000 a year. My only debt right now is a car payment. I still owe \$15,000 on the vehicle, and currently I have \$30,000 in savings and a 401(k) through my employer. I love my job, but my income can fluctuate from month to month. Do you think I should pay off the car, or hang on to all my savings?

– Erin

Dear Erin,

Debt is a bad thing to

have in your life, even with a good income. It’s an especially bad thing when your income can vary from paycheck to paycheck. It’s sounds like you’re in pretty good shape financially, except for that car note. It’s like an anchor weighing your finances down.

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– Dave

*Dave Ramsey is an eight-time national best-selling author, personal finance expert and host of The Ramsey Show. He has appeared on Good Morning America, CBS This Morning, Today, Fox News, CNN, Fox Business and many more. Since 1992, Dave has helped people take control of their money, build wealth and enhance their lives. He also serves as CEO for Ramsey Solutions.* ★



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# Outstanding Citizen Awards Ceremony Honors 13 Citizens

## Sacramento County District Attorney's Office Release

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - Sacramento County District Attorney Thien Ho presented the Outstanding Citizen Award to 13 victims and witnesses who have shown uncommon courage by participating in the criminal justice process under extraordinarily challenging circumstances.

The awards were given out April 25 at the Board of Supervisors' Chambers on H Street in Sacramento.

A Beacon of Hope Award was also presented to an individual or organization showing compassion and dedication, thus enhancing victim advocacy and public safety.

**Citizens Harrell Fischer, John Stubbe and Damaria** were recognized and awarded for their assistance in the People versus Mandiko Kwadzo case (case number 20FE011791).

On July 27, 2020, West Sacramento Police officers responded to a report of shots fired inside a residence. Moments later, a witness reported seeing the victim, Carliena Clayton, and the defendant having an argument on the driveway of that residence. The victim was then seen getting into a car with her four small children and the defendant getting into the passenger seat as she pulled out of the driveway. When officers arrived on scene, they found evidence of a shooting inside the residence.

That night, Harrell Fischer was at Cliff's Marina in Sacramento County when he heard a gunshot followed by a car crashing into the Sacramento River. He called a friend, John Stubbe, and the two went to the crash scene to help. They found the victim's car partially submerged in the river, with the defendant standing nearby, not doing anything to help. When they looked into the car, they found the victim unresponsive in the driver's seat and her four children in the backseat. The oldest child, Damaria, 6, had already unbuckled all their seatbelts but the youngest child, 2, was still in her car seat. Fischer and Stubbe got the children out of the car to safety. Responding California Highway Patrol officers found the victim did not have a pulse, with severe bleeding from her head. At that time, officers believed it was a car accident until Damaria told officers that the defendant shot his mother. It was later determined that the victim suffered two gunshot wounds to her head. Damaria, Harrell Fischer and John Stubbe all testified at trial and were instrumental in obtaining guilty verdicts in this case.

The defendant was convicted of first-degree murder with a firearm allegation and felon in possession of a firearm. He was sentenced to 53 years to life in prison.

**Citizen Gigi Barrios** was recognized for her help in the People versus Dominick Roberson case (case number 22FE019182). On Nov. 18, 2022, Gigi Barrios was working at the Medical Safe Haven. A pregnant patient named Precious came into the clinic for an appointment. Gigi knew Precious well and immediately recognized something was wrong.

Precious avoided eye contact; she was vague and hesitant when Barrios asked her questions and seemed distressed when she received text messages. Precious said that her baby's father was the cause for her agitation. Barrios finally got Precious to reveal that her unborn child's father was in the clinic parking lot and was threatening to kill her. He had a gun and he had been trafficking Precious since she met him months earlier.

Barrios jumped into action, making sure that clinic staff called 911 and personally reached out to Sacramento Police Department human trafficking detectives that Barrios knew from her collaborative work throughout the county. Sacramento officers and detectives quickly arrived to the clinic, detained the defendant and found a gun in his car. Precious was terrified of her trafficker, but with



From left, Harrell Fischer, Damaria (middle) and John Stubbe received Outstanding Citizen Awards by Sacramento County District Attorney Thien Ho for their courage demonstrated in the People versus Mandiko Kwadzo case from 2020. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County District Attorney's Office



Sacramento County District Attorney Thien Ho presented to the River City Waterway Alliance a Beacon of Hope Award for their continuous efforts keeping the river waterways clean. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County District Attorney's Office



Joseph Bayless, Brandon Gross, Devonte Rainey, Michael Armendariz, Brian Saldivar and Jose Garcia all received Outstanding Citizen Awards for their help in the People versus Kryn Spear case from 2022. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

Barrios by her side, was able to explain that the defendant groomed her, portraying himself as a boyfriend before taking her to the "blade" to engage in prostitution. He made Precious give him all the money she made.

He regularly beat and threatened Precious, he threatened her family and controlled her life. Precious gave detectives access to her phone, where they found messages that corroborated what Precious told them. The defendant was arrested that day and Sacramento police detectives ensured that Precious got to a safe house, where she stayed through the birth of her child and through the trial.

The defendant was convicted of a variety of human trafficking charges and sentenced to 71 years to life in prison.

**Residents North Peredina and Scott Kingston** were recognized for their support in the People versus Tycho Roney case (case number 24FE003928). North Peredina is the general manager of Paco's Bike Shop in Midtown Sacramento. The bike shop was burglarized with a loss of more than \$28,000 in high-end bikes and \$13,000 in property damage. Peredina reviewed their interior surveillance cameras and saw the defendant drop into the business from a breached roof skylight. The profile of the defendant's face was momentarily caught on the surveillance video.

After reporting the crime, Peredina set out to find the stolen bikes. When he saw a man with one of the bikes, Peredina immediately reported it to the Sacramento Police Department. Detectives responded to the area and spotted a similar-looking bike outside a tent. After confirming it was one of the stolen bikes, they found the defendant inside the tent along with the clothes from the burglary, a loaded 9-millimeter semi-automatic handgun and methamphetamine. Peredina positively identified the defendant as the person in the surveillance video and with the stolen bike.

Scott Kingston is in commercial real estate. Kingston rallied attention to this case, including writing passionate pleas to city leadership for the need to



Sacramento County District Attorney Thien Ho presented Gigi Barrios with an Outstanding Citizen Award on April 15 for her assistance in the People versus Dominick Roberson case from 2022. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County District Attorney's Office



North Peredina and Scott Kingston were both recognized with an Outstanding Citizen Award for their help in the People versus Tycho Roney case. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County District Attorney's Office



From left, victim advocates Lisa Corral and Colette Brown are with Sacramento County District Attorney Thien Ho who recognized them both with a Beacon of Hope Award for their contributions in the Domestic Violence Unit. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

address retail crime and public safety in the city. As a business leader, Kingston encouraged city leaders to address these issues or businesses would leave. Peredina's proactive response to the burglary and Kingston's challenging of the conditions that were leading to

rampant crime helped lead to the arrest and conviction of the defendant. In a broader sense, their actions helped restore faith in public safety and the criminal justice system for a business community plagued with repeat thefts.

The defendant was convicted

and sentenced to six years in prison.

**Citizens Joseph Bayless, Brandon Gross, Devonte Rainey, Michael Armendariz, Brian Saldivar and Jose Garcia** were awarded for their help in the People versus Kryn Spear case (case number 22FE008691).

On May 26, 2022, Veronica Vargas was driving through the intersection of Power Inn Road and Elsie Avenue with her 4-year-old daughter, Samantha, in the back seat. At that same time and intersection, the defendant ran a red light at 89 miles per hour and broadsided them with his dually truck. The collision's force flipped the victim's car onto its roof.

Brian Casado was the first person who stopped at the scene after the crash occurred. He rushed over to the victim's vehicle and saw and heard the little girl in the back seat. He tried to help other bystanders get the victims out of their car. Joseph Bayless and Brandon Gross also stopped at the scene and tried to help Veronica and Samantha. The three men stayed with Samantha, reassuring her she would be OK until the first responders arrived.

After the crash, the defendant got out of his truck and began walking away from the crash scene. Devonte Rainey stopped at the scene to help the victims and followed the defendant as he recorded and took pictures of him. Michael Armendariz saw the crash scene and came across Rainey, who told him that the driver who caused the crash was trying to get away. Armendariz stopped his car and went hands-on with the defendant to detain him.

Brian Saldivar and Jose Garcia also saw the crash scene and helped Armendariz detain the defendant until California Highway Patrol arrived. The defendant had a blood alcohol content of 0.251% and was on probation for a prior Driving Under the Influence conviction at the time of this crash.

The defendant was convicted of gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated and a number of additional felonies driving under the influence-related charges, hit-and-run causing death and or permanent injury and a great bodily injury allegation. He was sentenced to 13 years and eight months in prison.

## Beacon of Hope Award Recipients

**Victim advocate Lisa Corral** works tirelessly in the Domestic Violence Unit, where she has helped thousands of domestic violence victims and supports the unit attorneys. The Domestic Violence Unit is unlike any other unit in that the victim advocate is involved immediately at the beginning of the case, at filing and sometimes when a case is not filed. The Domestic Violence Unit is also a unique assignment because not all victims want our help and can be resistant to us. Corral is patient and works through these challenges, with the mission to keep the victims of domestic violence safe.

**The River City Waterway Alliance** is made up of a volunteer team of 30 to 40 experienced waterway stewards who work tirelessly to keep the river waterways clean and safe for people and endangered salmon species. The allied volunteer teams pulled 2.8 million pounds of trash or 1,400 tons of trash, to date.

It's not just litter and trash. They recover large hazardous waste items, including propane tanks, household appliances, electronics, clothes and other personal items. Unhoused encampments all along the river levees are the primary source of the items found in the waterways. The amount and type of waste being tossed into our waters are a significant environmental and wildlife hazard. Alliance volunteers are continually cleaning these waters even as more garbage, junk and hazardous items are thrown right back into those same waters. It is a never-ending struggle for them; however, they remain devoted to keeping the waters and the environment clean and safe for people and wildlife. ★



# License to Kill

By Robert Lewis,  
CalMatters.org

**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA (MPG)**  
- Ivan Dimov was convicted of reckless driving in 2013, after fleeing police in Washington state while his passenger allegedly dumped heroin out the window. Before that, he got six driving under the influence (DUI) convictions in California over a six-year period. None of that would keep him off the road.

The California Department of Motor Vehicles reissued him a driver's license in 2017. The next year, on Christmas Eve, he drove drunk again, running stop signs and a traffic light in midtown Sacramento, going more than 80 miles per hour, court records show. He T-boned another car, killing a 28-year-old man who was going home to feed the cat before heading to his mom's for the holiday.

Kostas Linardos had 17 tickets, including for speeding, reckless driving and street racing, and had been in four collisions. Then, in November 2022, he gunned his Ram 2500 truck as he entered a Placer County highway and slammed into the back of a disabled sedan, killing a toddler, court records show. He's now facing felony manslaughter charges.

In December of last year, while that case was open, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) renewed his driver's license.

The California Department of Motor Vehicles routinely allows drivers like these, with horrifying histories of dangerous driving, including driving under the influence, crashes and numerous tickets, to continue to operate on our roadways, a CalMatters investigation has found. Too often they go on to kill. Many keep driving even after they kill. Some go on to kill again.

With state lawmakers grappling with how to address the death toll on our roads, CalMatters wanted to understand how California handles dangerous drivers. We first asked the district attorneys for all 58 counties to provide us with a list of their vehicular manslaughter cases from 2019 through early last year. Every county but Santa Cruz provided the information.

Because California has no centralized court system and records aren't online, we then traveled to courthouses up and down the state to read through tens of thousands of pages of files. Once we had defendants' names and other information, we were able to get Department of Motor Vehicles driver reports for more than 2,600 of the defendants, providing details on their recent collisions, citations and license status.

The court records and driving histories reveal a state so concerned with people having access to motor vehicles for work and life that it allows deadly drivers to share our roads, despite the cost. Officials may call driving a privilege, but they treat it as a right, often failing to take drivers' licenses even after they kill someone on the road.

We found nearly 40% of the drivers charged with vehicular manslaughter since 2019 have a valid license.

That includes a driver with two separate convictions for vehicular manslaughter, for crashes that killed a 16-year-old girl in 2009 and a 25-year-old woman in 2020. In July of last year, the Department of Motor Vehicles issued him a driver's license.

The agency gave licenses to nearly 150 people less than a year after they allegedly killed someone on the road, CalMatters found. And many drivers accused of causing roadway deaths don't appear to have stopped driving recklessly. Records show that nearly 400 got a ticket or were in another crash, or both, after their deadly collisions.

"It is somewhat shocking to see how much you can get away with and still be a licensed driver in the state of California," Placer County District Attorney Morgan Gire said. "I don't think anyone fully understands what you need to do behind the wheel to lose your driving privilege."

Almost as interesting as the information in the drivers' Department of Motor Vehicles records is what not there.

Hundreds of drivers' Department of Motor Vehicles records



**Jerrod Tejeda holds a framed photo of his daughter Cassi Tejeda, at his home in Visalia on March 6.** Photo by Larry Valenzuela, CalMatters

simply don't list convictions for manslaughter or another crime related to a fatal crash, we found. The apparent error means some drivers who should have their driving privileges suspended instead show up in Department of Motor Vehicles records as having a valid license.

The cases we reviewed cut across demographics and geography. Defendants include farmworkers and a farm owner. They include off-duty police officers and people with lengthy rap sheets, drivers who killed in a fit of rage and others whose recklessness took the lives of those they loved most, high school sweethearts, siblings and children.

The tragedies span this vast state. From twisty two-lane mountain roads near the Oregon border to the dusty scrubland touching Mexico. From the crowded streets of San Francisco to the highways of the Inland Empire. From Gold Country to Timber Country, to Silicon Valley, to the almond capital of the world. So much death. More people than are killed by guns.

Dangerous drivers are able to stay on the roads for many reasons. The state system that targets motorists who rack up tickets is designed to catch clusters of reckless behavior, not long-term patterns. And while there are laws requiring the Department of Motor Vehicles to suspend a driver's license for certain crimes, like driving under the influence, there is no such requirement for many vehicular manslaughter convictions.

It's often up to the Department of Motor Vehicles whether to act. Routinely, it doesn't.

The Department of Motor Vehicles declined to make its director, Steve Gordon, who has been in charge since Governor Gavin Newsom appointed him in 2019, available for an interview to discuss our findings.

Chris Orrock, a Department of Motor Vehicles spokesperson, said the agency follows the law when issuing licenses. "We use our authority as mandated and as necessary," he said.

Even when the Department of Motor Vehicles does take away motorists' driving privileges, state officials, law enforcement and the courts are often unable or unwilling to keep them off the road. We found cases where drivers racked up numerous tickets while driving on a suspended license and faced little more than fines before eventually causing a fatal crash, even though authorities could have sent them to jail.

Taking away someone's driving privilege is no small decision. It can consign a family to poverty, affecting job prospects, childcare and medical decisions.

Still, the stakes couldn't be higher. More than 20,000 people died on the roads of California from 2019 to early 2024.

Kowana Strong thinks part of the problem is that lawmakers and regulators are too quick to treat fatal crashes as an unfortunate fact of life, as opposed to something they can address.

Her son Melvin Strong the Third, who went by his middle name, Kwaun, was finishing college and planning to start a master's program in kinesiology. He was killed by Dimov, the driver with six prior driving under the influence convictions.

Kwaun was a bright and innocent young man, she said, just starting



**Cassi Tejeda and Courtney Kendall.** Photo courtesy of Butte County District Attorney

his life.

"It's just another accident as far as they're concerned," Kowana Strong said.

Young people think they're invincible. It's the old who know how unfair life is, Jerrod Tejeda said.

His daughter Cassi Tejeda was just 22. She was months from graduating from Chico State with a bachelor's degree in history and a plan to be a teacher. Outgoing and athletic, she wanted to travel, see the world and make her own life.

She had a girlfriend who was visiting. Courtney Kendall was 24 and a student at Louisiana State University.

On a Sunday afternoon in January 2022, a Volvo sports utility vehicle (SUV) topping speeds of 75 miles per hour ran a red light and smashed into their Jeep, court records show. The collision killed them both.

"The most difficult part, besides the incident, is every day that goes by you're always wondering what if. What would they be doing today?" Jerrod Tejeda said. "Would they be married? Would they have developed into the career that they chose? Where would she be living?"

Tanya Kendall lamented not being there to protect her daughter, hold her hand or say goodbye.

"Instead, I was left with the unbearable task of choosing what outfit she would be buried in. Buried, Your Honor. Not the gown she would wear to her graduation from Louisiana State University, the one she will never attend," the mother wrote in a letter to a Butte County judge. She added that she and her husband stood in their daughter's place, accepting her diploma.

Such pain was preventable.

The driver of the Volvo, Matthew Moen, had a blood alcohol level more than three times the legal limit, according to court filings. And it wasn't his first time drinking and driving. Moen was caught driving drunk in Oregon in 2016. He never completed the requirements of a diversion program and had an outstanding warrant at the time of the fatal crash, the Butte County district attorney's office said. In January 2020, he was convicted of driving under the influence in Nevada County for driving with a blood alcohol level more than twice the legal limit, given a couple of weeks in jail and put on probation for three years.

His license was valid at the time of the fatal 2022 crash, records show.

Across the country, states grapple with how to effectively spot and punish drivers who could be a danger on the road. Often they rely on a basic point system, with drivers

accruing points for various types of traffic violations and thresholds for when the state will take away a motorist's driving privileges. But like many, California has such high limits that drivers with a pattern of reckless behavior can avoid punishment.

The state suspends a driver's license for accumulating four points in a year, six points in two years or eight points in three years. What does it take to get that many points? Using a cellphone while driving is zero points. A speeding ticket is a point. Vehicular manslaughter is two points.

Between March 2017 and March 2022, Trevor Cook received two citations for running red lights, got two speeding tickets and was deemed responsible for two collisions, including one in which someone was injured, court records show. (A third red light ticket was dismissed.) At-fault collisions add a point to a driver's license, according to the Department of Motor Vehicles. But the incidents were spaced out enough that none resulted in a suspension.

So Cook had a valid license on April 14, 2022, just a month after his last speeding ticket, when he blew through a Yolo County stop sign at more than 100 miles per hour.

At that exact moment, Prajal Bista passed through the intersection on his way to work after dinner and a movie with his wife, according to details of the crash that prosecutors included in court filings. Bista was driving the speed limit and on track to make it to work 30 minutes early.

The force of the collision nearly split Bista's Honda Civic in half. Investigators determined Bista had been wearing his seat belt, but the crash tore it apart. They found his body 75 feet from the intersection.

On March 28, 2024, Cook pleaded no contest to felony vehicular manslaughter.

Just a month later, on April 30, the Department of Motor Vehicles issued Cook his current driver's license, agency records show. Less than two weeks after that, he got a ticket for disobeying a traffic signal. Melinda Aiello, chief deputy district attorney in Yolo County, said her office didn't know anything about the new license or the red light ticket until contacted by CalMatters. What's more, the manslaughter conviction, like hundreds of others we found, isn't listed on Cook's driving record.

Cook's license was still listed as valid in California Department of Motor Vehicles records as of early 2025. But for now, he's off

the roadways. Last summer, Cook started serving time in state prison.

"It's stunning to me that eight months later, his license is still showing as valid and the conviction for killing someone while driving is not reflected in his driving record," Aiello said. "You killed somebody. I'd think there might be some license implications."

Orrock, the Department of Motor Vehicles spokesperson, said he couldn't speak directly to why so many convictions are missing. But, he said, "we acknowledge that the process and coordination between the judicial system and the Department of Motor Vehicles must continually evolve to address any gaps that have been identified. And we're looking into that."

Roughly 400 drivers accused of causing a fatal crash since 2019 received a ticket, got in another collision or did both after the date they allegedly killed someone on the road. (The reports don't show whether the drivers were found at fault, only that they were involved in an accident.) That's about 15% of the drivers for whom we could get Department of Motor Vehicles reports.

Drivers like William Beasley. From 2011 to 2016, Beasley collected five speeding tickets and a citation for running a red light in Sacramento County, court records show. Then around 9 a.m. on a sunny Tuesday in October 2019, he killed a man.

William and Deborah Hester were crossing the street to go to a dentist appointment at a veterans facility when Beasley's silver pickup sped toward them. They thought they would make it across. But the truck didn't stop. At the last minute, William Hester shoved his wife out of the way. She heard the truck smash into her husband's body and screamed, according to court records.

Beasley still didn't stop. He fled the area and tried to hide his truck. Investigators used nearby cameras and license plate readers to track him down days later. Beasley admitted to being in a collision.

He later pleaded no contest in Sacramento to hit-and-run and misdemeanor vehicular manslaughter. A probation report in the case revealed Beasley was nearly blind in his left eye.

"Mr. Hester is with me every moment of my life," Beasley said in an interview. "I took away a father, a grandfather, a husband, and they consider me a murderer. That's not who I am."

"My accident with Mr. Hester was just that, an accident. Nothing more," he said, adding that he worked as a courier for years and sometimes got speeding tickets because he was rushing.

In May 2020, the Department of Motor Vehicles took away his driving privileges.

In November 2022, Beasley got his license back, "because I could and I needed to," he said, adding that people deserve second chances, particularly for accidents.

Almost immediately, less than three weeks after getting his license, he was in another collision, his Department of Motor Vehicles report shows. In early 2024, he got in yet another. His license was suspended when his car insurance was canceled, records show.

"It makes no sense to me that they would give him a license and give him the opportunity to hurt someone else," said Loriann Hester Page, William Hester's daughter.

Her father's death broke the family, she said. He drove a tank in the Army, played guitar in a band, and liked to ride horses.

"My dad was such a wonderful, kind man," she said. "He would always walk in a room and wanted to make everyone smile."

Beasley said he doesn't plan to drive again.

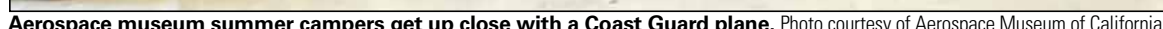
"I am 75 years old," he said. "I am blind in one eye. I have had a situation where a man was killed, he lost his life. I am not going to repeat that situation at all."

*This is the first piece in a series about how California lets dangerous drivers stay on the road. Sign up for our License to Kill newsletter to be notified when the next story comes out and to get more behind-the-scenes information from our reporting.* ★

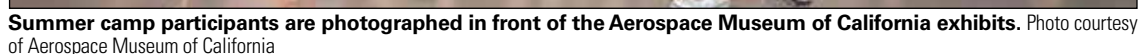


***Compiled from the  
Aerospace Museum of  
California Website***

The “Dream It...Build It” camp is a summer camp for youth eager to bring their ideas to life. Campers will explore the exciting world of engineering through hands-on projects, problem-solving challenges and teamwork. From designing structures to building machines, the “Dream It...Build It” camp will spark creativity and inspire the next generation of innovators. Campers will also take a special journey



Discovery Days at the aerospace museum are another way for youth to experience the museum and science. Join the museum staff for a day of learning and exploration during Discovery Days. Dive into the forces of flight, uncover the stories behind historic aircraft and engage in hands-on activities designed to spark curiosity and imagination. Whether you are exploring aircraft up close or



### One-day discovery programs

The Aerospace Museum of California is at 3200 Freedom Park Drive, McClellan.

For more information on the Aerospace Museum of California Summer programs, visit online at [aerospaceca.org/summer-programming](http://aerospaceca.org/summer-programming) or call 916-643-3192. ★

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## EUROPEAN GROCERY

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