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*Happy
Mother's Day!*



RIVER VALLEY TIMES

41ST YEAR • ISSUE 9 *Serving Rancho Murieta, Sloughouse, Wilton* MAY 9, 2025

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COMING UP ROSES
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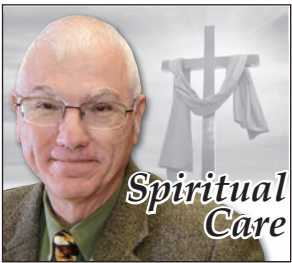
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CSD Finance Director Resigns Before Audits Are Completed



Mark Matulich, the finance and administration director for the Rancho Murieta Community Services District, is resigning after 15 months.

**Story and photo
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Mark Matulich, who spent the past 15 months as director of finance and administration fixing the Rancho Murieta Community Services District's financial system,

has resigned. Although much of the preparatory work for two long-overdue audits is complete, they remained unfinished when he left. Board Vice-President John Merchant, who is acting as the board president, confirmed that Matulich resigned on May 1. He said that before leaving, Matulich met with "an

interim finance person we have hired to complete the audit process and to manage the day-to-day district accounting." The Rancho Murieta Community Services District has also posted the vacancy on its website. The River Valley Times contacted Matulich to request an exit interview and he said, "I will

respectfully decline to make any comments." However, Matulich added, "The district is on the right track and set up for success. There are hard-working and truly great people working there, and I wish them, the district and the community all the best." The River Valley Times
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**SOLOS Event
Draws Crowd
Despite
Cloudy Skies**



Saving Our Lakes & Open Spaces celebrates its accomplishments at an April 27 gathering at Lake Clementia. Courtesy photo

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Despite rain earlier in the day, the Sunday on the Green event hosted by Saving Our Lakes & Open Spaces (SOLOS) on April 27 at Lake Clementia drew a strong turnout. More than 50 tickets were sold in advance, with an additional 50 purchased at the door, according to SOLOS President Cheryl McElhany. "The food was great," McElhany said, noting that Chef John Van Doren grilled 100 bratwursts for the event. Guests also enjoyed live music performed by the New Age Quintet, and the lucky ones scooped up donated raffle prizes. The gathering brought in many new faces. Vice-President John Merchant reported speaking with several SOLOS members he had never met. "They were eager to learn more about proposed development ... or the lack thereof, we hope," McElhany added. SOLOS is marking what McElhany described as "a very successful year" in opposing future development. "This is due to a final acknowledgment by CSD and local developers that there is not sufficient water to support the proposed development," she said. A recent highlight for the organization was Rancho Murieta Properties' filing of a revised application for the proposed Rancho North development. The updated map eliminates 136 housing units previously planned for Villages D, E, F and G, reducing the total number of units to 561. "Although that's a reduction, the community
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Renamed Kids Fishing Day Returns to Clementia

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - When Kids Fishing Day unfolded at Clementia Lake on May 3, it was the same family-friendly event as always ... with one exception.

The Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta, which hosts the event, renamed it the Joe Mazzoni, Sr. Memorial Kids Fishing Day. Board President Bill Kinney said the new name honors Mazzoni, who died last summer. "He started the Kiwanis fishing day program and drove the boat for 20 years," Kinney explained. After the fishing event, the Kiwanis Club also dedicated a bench at the Clementia boat dock in Mazzoni's memory. See the separate story in the May 23 issue of the River Valley Times. Despite predictions of rain earlier in the week, the event unfolded without



Kiaan Pandya is excited after reeling in a 2.8-pound rainbow trout during the Joe Mazzoni, Sr. Memorial Kids Fishing Day at Lake Clementia on May 3. The Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta presented the event. Photo by Gail Bullen

needing raincoats, although the skies remained cloudy. Approximately 100 children aged 12 and under, along with numerous siblings, parents, grandparents and family dogs, turned out to fish.

After youngsters began checking in at the registration table at 8 a.m., Kiwanians loaned out fishing rods and bait to those without and a couple of hours later served several nearly 200 hot dogs

for lunch. A half-dozen past fishing club members were also on hand to help the children catch, weigh and clean their trout. Kinney estimated that the youngsters caught
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John Van Doren hands a bratwurst fresh off the grill to Roger Formsnek. Photo by Gail Bullen

Strong Turnout at Blood Drive; Chair Urges Donors to Make Appointments

Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The April 28 blood drive at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church saw a strong community turnout, with 47 whole blood donations and nine Power Red donations collected. The Power Red donations accounted for 16 pints, bringing the total number of pints collected to 63.

“We’re thrilled with the turnout,” said Bonnie Kirschman, who co-chairs the blood drive for the Rancho Murieta Women’s Club.

“It was great to be back at St. Vincent de Paul, and we’re incredibly grateful to St. Joseph’s, the Knights



The Rancho Murieta Community Blood Drive operates in its new location at the St. Vincent De Paul Church on April 28.

of Columbus and everyone who made this possible,” Kirshman said.

She also recognized Allie Arnerich for her hard work in making it possible and Maggie Scruggs from St. Vincent de Paul for her support and accommodations.

While praising the generosity of walk-in donors, Kirshman emphasized the importance of making

appointments in advance.

“Walk-ins are sometimes lifesavers, especially when we have no-shows,” she said. “But appointments help Vitalant determine how many staff members, donor beds and Power Red machines to send, which impacts the overall efficiency of the drive.”

When more people walk in than expected, the registration and donation

process can get backed up.

On average, donors who complete the Fast Track process online and bring their QR code can finish in as little as 30 to 45 minutes,” she said. However, a high number of walk-ins can lead to longer wait times and donor frustration.

In an effort to improve organization, Vitalant



Donor Barbara Armstrong chats with phlebotomist Christopher Wilson.

introduced a new system during the April drive, assigning front-row seating to donors with appointments and second-row seating to walk-ins.

“This helps ensure those with appointments are seen as close to their scheduled time as possible,” Kirshman explained.

“We’re thankful for every donor who came out,” she added, “but making an appointment really does make a difference for everyone.”

The July 14 drive is already being planned, and organizers hope to see even more appointments booked in advance. ★



Rancho Murieta, a 3,500-acre country-club community, is an oasis of emerald fairways and manicured greens, built along the scenic banks of the Cosumnes River.

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Cosumnes River Little League Honors 2025 Scholarship Winners

Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Cosumnes River Little League President Dan Reid paused practice briefly on April 29 to present this year’s scholarship winners during a special ceremony at Stonehouse Park.

The awards are typically announced on opening day, but scheduling changes led to the stand-alone presentation.

“Our timing was a little off this year,” Reid said, “But we have two outstanding former CRLI players who are the recipients of the 2025 scholarship, and I want to bring them out here so we can honor them.”

The first honoree, Madeline Lawson, grew up in Rancho Murieta and began her journey with the league in T-ball. She played through every level, participated in



Cosumnes River Little League Board members, from left: Kaycee Vaba, vice president; Chris Betzler, field/equipment operator; and Dan Reid, president, present Madeline Lawson with a scholarship at Stonehouse Park on April 29.

All-Stars and now pitches for Pleasant Grove High School’s varsity softball team.

“She’s an academic giant,” Reid said. “Her GPA is at 4.6—maybe 4.545—so she’s getting it

done on the field and in the classroom.”

Lawson will attend Columbia University in



The board members present a check to Owen Carmichael.

the fall, where she plans to major in biology and play softball.

“She wants to be a geneticist,” Reid added. “So watch out for Madeline—on the field, in the lab or at a pharmaceutical company near you.”

The second scholarship was awarded to Owen Carmichael, also a Rancho Murieta native, who spent nine seasons in the league before returning as an umpire for five years.

“For those of us with younger kids, we only know him as an umpire,” Reid said. “We don’t know about his prowess out here on the baseball field.”

Carmichael, a senior at Jesuit High School, holds

a 3.9 GPA and has juggled academics with baseball, water polo and participation in the finance club. He plans to attend Baylor University, where he’s considering a future in finance or sports management.

“He had a whole stack of acceptance letters,” Reid noted. “He’s a giant in the classroom, and he is continuing to give back to CRLI.”

The short ceremony closed with the national anthem played over the loudspeakers, capping a proud moment for the league and its extended community.

This story is online at therivervalleytimes.com. ★

SOLOS Event Draws Crowd Despite Cloudy Skies

Continued from page 1

still doesn’t have enough water to support them,” McElhany said. “So we will continue to work toward making this realization acknowledged by all involved.”

She also cited another milestone: the successful petition for a moratorium on future development presented to the district in December.

“Our membership continues to grow each month,” McElhany noted. “We now have over 1,500 members.”

This story with more photos is online at therivervalleytimes.com. ★



Playing bocce away from the main activity at the pergola are Mike Olson, left, and Brian Young. Photo by Gail Bullen




The New Age Quintet performs against a picturesque backdrop. Photo by Gail Bullen



Theresa Ilaga wins an exceptional raffle prize: a photograph by the late Steve DeMello. Photo by Gail Bullen



SOLOS Vice-President John Merchant focuses intently as he draws raffle tickets for President Cheryl McElhany. Photo by Gail Bullen



MEMORIAL


GUY LUTHER BROWN • 09/24/1929 - 04/15/2025

In Loving Memory of Guy Luther Brown

Guy Luther Brown, beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, peacefully entered into the presence of the Lord on April 15, 2025, at the age of 95. A longtime resident of Elk Grove and Rancho Murieta, California, Guy lived a full and joyful life rooted in faith, family, and laughter.

He was preceded in death by his mother Ruth Slimkoski (Stevens), father Luther Brown, sister Shirley Hodson, and nephew Russ Pistole.

Guy is survived by his devoted wife of 67 years, Beverly Brown (Pistole), who stood faithfully by his side through every season of life. Together, they raised two daughters, Cheryl Barron (Bill) and Debra Focht (Dan), and



built a legacy of love that now spans generations.

He was a proud grandfather to Laura Barron (Andy), Chad Focht (Alayna), John Focht (Veronika), Adam Barron, and Becky Focht (Jenny), and a joyful great-grandfather to Audrey, Emma, Haley, Annabel, Hannah, Tekoah, Melayia & Adalynn. He is also lovingly remembered by his nieces Julie, April, and Deanne, and nephews Rick, Mike, and Tom.

Guy had a beautiful tenor voice that could lift spirits and fill a room with warmth. He loved to entertain, share a laugh, and make everyone feel at home. A true outdoorsman at heart, he found delight in cruising the fairways searching for his golf ball or casting a line into quiet waters—always taking time to soak in the beauty of God’s creation.

To know Guy was to know kindness, a broad smile, and a heart full of gold. He had a gift for making every person feel seen, valued, and deeply loved.

He will be missed more than words can express, but we rejoice in knowing he is now at peace—singing with the angels. The memorial will be May 13th, 11:00 am at Thrive Church Elk Grove, 3109 Dwight Rd, Elk Grove, Ca. 95758

Gillian Smith

Gillian Smith, a long time resident of Rancho Murieta, passed away last month at home following a short but brutal illness.

I will be forever grateful for the support and bravery of Gillian’s cadre of golden girls throughout this ordeal.

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Garden Club Presents Horticultural Scholarship



Vice President Margaret Watson-Hopkins presents Michael Wood with a scholarship check at the River Valley Garden Club's meeting on April 22. Photos by Gail Bullen



Wood shows off a farm-to-form poster he created for a festival at his home.

Story and photos by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The award of a \$1,000 scholarship to a horticultural student pursuing a second career and a presentation about the wonder of roses were the highlights when the River Valley Garden Club met on April 22 at the RMA Building.

(See the separate story about raising roses in this issue.)

The scholarship winner was Michael Wood, a full-time student studying horticulture at American River College and Farm to Fork at Cosumnes River College.

Club Vice-President Margaret Watson-Hopkins presented the check to Wood. She said the club's ability to award scholarships to horticulture students like Wood is why it holds fundraisers like the upcoming Garden Stroll and Plant Sale on May 10.

"It's so we can give back," she explained.

Wood began by thanking the garden club for the scholarship and passing out a notebook with photos of what he would talk about.

Wood explained that he has worked in technology for most of his career.

"I've worked as a computer partner

software engineer, and I've designed and built medical equipment and microscopy systems," he said.

But at the same time, another passion took root: gardening.

"During the last few decades, I've been building something different. I've been building my garden," Wood said.

"It started with a few tomato plants," he said, "and extended out to herbs and berries and trees and everything you can imagine. It's been one of the most fulfilling things in my life to do."

What started with "a few tomato plants" expanded into an abundant backyard filled with herbs, berries, fruit trees and vegetables.

A couple of years ago, Wood made the life-changing decision to "step away from engineering for a little bit" and pursue horticulture full-time.

Today, Wood is a full-time student at both Cosumnes River College and American River College, tackling a rigorous schedule.

"If you know anything about hours, usually 12 hours is full-time — I'm taking 23 hours," he said, drawing murmurs of admiration from the crowd.

In addition to his studies, Wood serves as the farm manager at Cosumnes River

College, helping to maintain greenhouses, orchards, and aquaponic systems.

"It's really great work," he said. "We're more than just growing plants at CRC; we're growing people," he added, describing the satisfaction of mentoring new students

At home, Wood's passion continues to flourish. Over the last 20 years, he and his wife, Carrie, have transformed their ornamental backyard into a food-producing landscape. Apples, oranges, lemons, peaches, strawberries, blackberries, blueberries — the list goes on.

One of the highlights of their year is the Apple Harvest event.

"This year, we had almost 50 people come to our home: friends, neighbors, family, and children in the neighborhood," Wood shared.

Guests helped harvest apples, pressed cider, attended soil and seed workshops, and even learned about pollination from the couple's mason bees.

"It's just a wonderful experience," he said.

Wood emphasized that the River Valley Garden Club's gift to him was more than financial.

"It's something that I see as an investment, basically, in my education and the

work that I'm doing to help promote other people to grow their own food," he said.

Looking ahead, Wood has ambitious plans. He founded a company called Rational Gardening.

"Our mission is simple: It's helping people feed themselves," he said. The business will offer plants and horticultural services locally, but Wood's bigger dream is a mobile app powered by artificial intelligence, designed to guide gardeners through every step — from mapping out a garden to identifying plant diseases.

"We're trying to make everything easier, smarter and more accessible to people," he explained.

In concluding his remarks, Wood expressed heartfelt gratitude: "Once again, I just want to thank you very much. Your investment in me and the journey I'm currently on is helping me grow, not only as a horticulturist but also as an educator. I hope I can make you proud."

The audience responded with warm applause, and Watson Hopkins had the final word.

"This is why we do fundraisers: to help people like you," she said.

This story is online at therivervalley-times.com. ★

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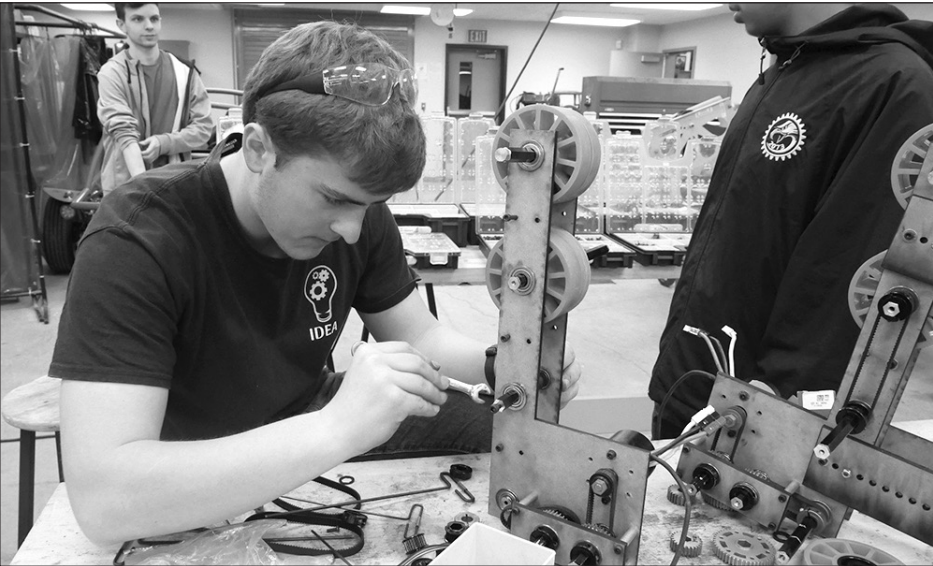
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Students, Club Help Drive Robotics Team to Championship



Rancho Murieta student Jason Keys works in the Pleasant Grove High School robotics lab on a prototype launcher for the EagleForce 2073 Team's 2024 robot. Photos courtesy of Kanchan Arya

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - When the Pleasant Grove High School robotics team secured second place at an international competition in Houston on April 19, the excitement also rippled through Rancho Murieta. Two high school seniors, Jason Keyes and Trevor Armer, live in the community. As integral members of the EagleForce 2073 Team, they helped design and build the robots. The Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta also is a proud sponsor of the team.

This was the seventh time the team had competed in the FIRST Robotics Competition Championship, which this year drew 161 teams from around the world. (See the separate story in this issue for more details.)

Keyes said team members were thrilled with their second-place finish. “It was awesome. We never expected to get that far,” Keyes said.

Armer added that their initial hope was simply to be selected for an alliance at the competition. But the team went on to win its division.

“Then, we were finalists ... like, for the entire world,” he said. “It was incredible.”

Kiwanian Carol Prinzo spoke on behalf of the club.

“We, in the Rancho Murieta Kiwanis Club, are so pleased to have helped support the Pleasant Grove High School Robotics Team in achieving this incredible feat,” she said. “It’s been an honor to have been a part of their amazing journey.”

The team sent 25 students, five mentors and their robot, Kingfisher, to Houston.

The four-day competition began April 16 at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston. Armer said the space was massive.

“I think the room we were in is nearly two miles long with eight competition fields,” he said.

The atmosphere was electric.

“It was like any big sporting event, but here, everyone in the stands was an athlete, with the stakes being as high as possible,” Armer said.

Keyes explained that teams were ranked by points after two days of qualification matches, with EagleForce finishing around the middle of its division. Next came alliance selection, where the top seven ranked teams formed playoff alliances consisting of four teams: three active robot teams

per match and one as a backup.

One of the top-ranked teams, Team 1690 Orbit from Binyamin, Israel, selected EagleForce as its second choice for its alliance.

“We were very consistent and could do a lot of things that our alliance partners couldn’t,” Keyes said. “That’s probably why they chose us.”

The EagleForce robot team played so well in the first match that “They just decided to keep us throughout the entire thing,” Keyes said.

During the playoffs, each alliance sent three robot teams onto the field to compete against another alliance in a series of matches—12 in total—that involved completing specific tasks, somewhat resembling a game of basketball. Alliances first battled at the division level. The winning alliance from each division then advanced to a round-robin tournament, with the top two alliances ultimately facing off in a best-of-three final to determine the world champion.

Keyes said seven EagleForce team members participated in the playoff matches. He served as part of the three-member pit crew that maintained the robot, while two communicated with judges and two



Trevor Armer presents a technical binder detailing the club's 2025 robot to judges at a recent competition.

“It was like any big sporting event, but here, everyone in the stands was an athlete, with the stakes being as high as possible.”

— Trevor Armer, Pleasant Grove High School

more drove the robot.

“Every time the Drive Team came back from their matches, they were jumping and screaming,” Keys said. “It was awesome.”

Armer contributed by scouting opposing teams; he collected and analyzed data to help the EagleForce alliance.

Keyes also took part in scouting and talked to many teams.

“It was really awesome to see how differently everybody’s results came out after putting in the same amount of work that we did,” he said.

Keyes said his interest in robotics began in elementary school when he attended a summer camp hosted by the EagleForce team.

“I thought what they did

was really cool, so when I got to high school, I immediately went to look for them during the club rush,” he said.

He eventually became a lead for the mechanical team.

“I oversee the design, production and assembly of the robot,” he said. Keyes also enjoyed mentoring younger students and helping them get involved in the program.

Participation in the robotics club required a significant time commitment. During the first semester—the off-season—the robotics lab was open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. and on Saturdays from noon to as late as 6 to 8 p.m. Once competition season began, the team added sessions on Mondays and Fridays.

As a leadership member, Keyes typically stayed for the entire scheduled time, even though it wasn’t mandatory.

“It was like a full-time job,” he said.

Armer said he has always been passionate about engineering, but it wasn’t until his sophomore year—when Keyes encouraged him to check out a few meetings—that he joined the robotics club.

“He told me I could leave if I didn’t like it,” he said. “I came and fell in

love.”

Armer highlighted three key areas of learning from his time in the robotics club: mechanical design, prototyping and manufacturing, which included the use of a computer numerical control machine to cut and shape metal bars.

“I’ve learned a lot about the prototyping process and how to go from an idea to a finalized design,” Armer said. “I’ve also learned a lot about the manufacturing process: how you take a design and build it in the real world.”

Armer and Keyes said their experience in the robotics club solidified their decision to major in mechanical engineering in college.

Armer will enroll at Sacramento State. Keyes plans to attend Cosumnes River College for two years before transferring to either the University of California, Los Angeles, or California Polytechnic State University.

As Armer and Keyes look ahead to college and future careers in engineering, their story stands as a testament to the lasting impact of their participation in the robotics club at Pleasant Grove High School.

This story is also online at therivervalleytimes.com. ★

CSD Finance Director Resigns Before Audits Are Completed

Continued from page 1

emailed all five board members seeking comments on Matulich’s resignation timing and contributions to the district. The board members were also asked to share their understanding of the reasons behind his decision to resign.

Randy Jenco was the only director who provided a comment. Director John Merchant responded only to confirm Matulich’s resignation and the hiring of an interim finance director. Director Linda Butler said she could not comment. Directors Tim Maybee and Board President Steve Booth, who has not been attending board meetings due to a conflict with General Manager Mimi Morris, did not respond as of press time.

Jenco said he had this understanding of why Matulich resigned: “Mark was disappointed with the current board’s lack of support for the efforts he and Mimi were making in updating and improving CSD’s operations and procedures. He questioned the board’s involvement in day-to-day operations and inserting themselves inappropriately into the organizational chain of command.”

Jenco said that Matulich would be sorely missed. “He was a steady influence in finance that the

district has been missing for years. We were finally making progress to get our accounts in order,” Jenco said.

Jenco said he especially admired Matulich’s ability to attack problems with innovative solutions.

“His approach may have been too much for some on the board. An example is the flip-flop on the bar code fees, Jenco said. “Mark’s idea of adding fees was a simple and thoughtful solution to a (security funding) problem that had plagued us for years. It should have been a no-brainer. But social media’s influence on some directors confused the issue. I believe he was extremely frustrated by how this was handled.”

Jenco also addressed the search for a replacement.

“I am hopeful that we will get someone on board who can complete the tasks that Mark has spearheaded and organized for completion,” Jenco said. “I am doubtful that we will be lucky enough to find a replacement of his caliber.”

April Financial Update

The last time Matulich provided an accounting update was at the April 10 Finance Committee meeting. Matulich did not attend the April 16 Board meeting.

Matulich began his April 10 report by stating that his efforts over the prior 15

months to fix the district’s accounting so the overdue audits could proceed had resulted in the recovery of \$623,000.

The recovered funds included developer deposit fees, security impact fees, long-overdue utility bills and reimbursements for infrastructure costs. In one case, staff discovered 40 homes that had never been set up with district utility accounts, one of them unbilled for more than a year.

“These problems had been building for five years,” Matulich said, noting that past turnover left the district without regular financial reporting or basic accounting procedures in place.

Because the accounting records were so unreliable, according to Matulich, he, General Manager Mimi Morris and accountant Chris Funakoshi decided to rebuild the district’s accounting system from scratch, starting with records from July 1, 2021. They carried over the last verified balances from the 2020-21 audit and began reposting more than 30,000 transactions. At the same time, they implemented new procedures, trained staff and addressed operational issues such as broken meter readings and uncollected charges.

The 2020-21 audit was finally completed in December 2023. The

2021-22 fiscal year records are currently under audit. Two temporary accountants are nearing completion of the 2022-23 and 2023-24 records needed for audit preparation, and the district’s auditing firm has agreed to conduct the next two audits simultaneously to help speed up the process.

Although more work remained, Matulich told the Finance Committee, the foundation was in place for accurate accounting and reliable audits going forward.

Director Merchant was so elated with Matulich’s April 10 report that he asked that the district share it with the public, calling it an important sign of progress. The audio is available at the district’s website.

Second Setback

Matulich’s resignation marked the district’s second major setback this year. The first was a rift between General Manager Mimi Morris and Board President Steve Booth.

The conflict erupted into public view on Jan. 6, when the board held a special meeting to evaluate Morris’ performance. Before the board moved into closed session, without Booth, Morris publicly accused him of retaliation, discrimination and harassment.

Morris also said that she had filed an internal

complaint against him following the Nov. 20 board meeting.

Morris’ primary complaints center on Booth’s alleged insistence that she return to the office some months after being allowed to work from home due to a medical condition. Morris has also claimed that Booth harmed her reputation by discussing her performance during the open session of the November board meeting.

Booth responded to the River Valley Times on Jan. 7, stating, “I categorically deny that there has been any discrimination against her for any reason.”

During the Jan. 6 closed session, the board voted 4-0 to place Morris on administrative leave pending an investigation into her grievance. Two days later, Morris’ attorney filed a government claim against the district, expanding on her allegations against Booth.

Under California law, public employees must file a government claim before suing a governmental entity, providing an opportunity to resolve the issue before litigation.

In an executive session during the Feb. 19 board meeting, the board voted 4-0 to deny Morris’ government claim. That action cleared the way for her to proceed with a lawsuit, although no legal filing has been made to date.

The board also held a special meeting on March 14 to confer with legal counsel about Morris’ situation. After the closed session, Director Merchant announced that Morris would be returning from administrative leave.

Morris resumed her duties on March 24. On the same day, Board President Booth notified the district that he would be unable to attend any committee or board meetings for the time being.

Matulich’s Credentials

Matulich grew up in Sacramento and graduated from California State University, Sacramento in 1999 with a bachelor’s degree in business administration, specializing in accountancy. He worked as an accountant for 11 years, including positions at The Sacramento Bee and with a California State University, Sacramento auxiliary that managed business operations.

In 2010, he joined the FBI as a special agent, primarily serving in the San Francisco office, where he investigated financial fraud. Matulich returned to the private sector in 2022 as chief financial officer for a healthcare facility in the Bay Area.

He joined the district on Oct. 30, 2023.

This story is online at therivervalleytimes.com ★

Pleasant Grove Robotics Team Takes Second

By Sean P. Thomas
MPG Staff

ELK GROVE, CA (MPG) - EagleForce 2073, the robotics team from Pleasant Grove High School, finished second overall at the 2025 FIRST Robotics Championship on April 19, an international robotics competition featuring some of the brightest young minds in engineering.

EagleForce 2073 powered through the Johnson Division, emerging as division champions before advancing to the final round where they competed against the seven other division-winning alliances. In the final bracket, they earned second place overall.

The competition

included 601 other teams from around the world and was held April 16-19 at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston. It was the team’s highest finish since it began competing seven years ago.

“It was thrilling,” Aarna Prasad, member of the team’s business sub-team, said. “People were like, ‘My God, we actually did it.’ We were all really excited about it and we were proud of our team of reaching that point and proud of drive team for being able to perform.”

The EagleForce team has competed in robotics competitions since 2007, and recently received the Engineering Inspiration Award, which honored the team for spreading STEM

among the community.

The team, which has grown from just eight members in its inception to 45 students, competed as part of an alliance with Team 1690 Orbit from Binyamina, Israel; Team 4414 High Tide from Ventura; and Team 5166 Fabricators from Freeland, Mich. The alliance defeated 71 teams in its division before moving into the championship bracket.

In total, EagleForce 2073 team, and their robot Kingfisher, competed against top-ranked teams from over 28 countries.

The team, which consists of five sub-teams ranging from mechanical to programming and electrical, receives a video that outlines what the robot



Pleasant Grove High School’s EagleForce 2073 team finished second-place overall in the 2025 FIRST Robotics Competition in Houston, Texas. Photos courtesy of EagleForce 2073

needs to do to succeed in the event. The team gets six weeks to build their robot and spends every day, except Wednesday and Sunday, after school in preparation for the competition.

The 2025 game REEFSCAPE required robots to complete tasks on a coral reef-themed field, including both autonomous and driver-controlled phases.

Teams were evaluated on

performance, strategy and consistency across multiple rounds.

“This is as close to real-world engineering experience as students can get,” Prasad wrote in an email. ★

GOLF SCORES

Niners 'Swing into Summer' with 23 Clubs from Region

By Nancy Clevenger

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Beautiful spring weather graced the Rancho Murieta Country Club (RMCC) as the Niners’ Golf Club held its Silver Anniversary Invitational, “Swing into Summer.” With course conditions pristine and well-groomed, 140 women returned from their round of nine holes with impeccable scores.

After 25 years of hosting this action-filled event, the Invitational committees of the RMCC Niners aced it with activities, raffle, door prize and tee-prizes.

Twenty-three golf clubs from the surrounding area and as far away as Brentwood and Modesto took part in the fun. Groups within RMCC supported the Niners’ Invitational, as the Women’s Golf Club greeted golfers with freshly baked and wrapped cookies and the Senior Men’s Golf Club shuttled the women to their destinations and served mimosas to them while they were on the course.

Club Pro Brian Little provided exquisite directions for the four-person,

Modified Chapman’s Scotch Format. The Pro Shop, managed by Sandy Boal, offered the ladies 25% off, which, when combined with the gift certificate tee prize, contributed to shopping fun for all.

After a hearty breakfast prepared by Chef KC Brown and organized by Sharon Haeger, all 35 teams of four hit the links in a shotgun start on the North Course of RMCC. Eighteen teams played the front nine (holes 1-9) while 17 teams played the back nine (holes 10-18). These were considered the two flights for the day.

Niners’ Captain Cathy Niley enlisted the help of the Senior Men’s Golf Club for a free putting contest, hosted by Golf Galaxy. The two putters stroking the ball closest to the putting green hole received a generous gift certificate from Golf Galaxy/Dick’s Sporting Goods. Member Elaine Fowler landed the white orb closest of all participants while guest Vicki Holman (Castle Oaks) holed it to claim the win.

Holes 2 and 12 were played for

closest-to-the-pin for members and Guests alike. Member Elaine Fowler was 5’9” away on hole 2 and member Ginny Hoskins was 40’1” on the tough-pin-placement of hole 12. Guests Vicki Holman, representing Castle Oaks Golf Club, placed the ball closest to the pin at 2’3” on number 2, while Lori Bradford from Northridge Country Club landed her tee shot 45’7” away on the back-nine hole 12. All four ladies walked away with cash awards.

After two-and-a-half hours of team golf, the lady linksters returned to the clubhouse for a delicious lunch, also arranged by Haeger and prepared by Brown. During the mealtime gathering, Captain Cathy Niley and Co-Captain and Invitational Chair Vicki Kalman announced team winners. Cash prizes paid down to the top four teams for those playing the front nine and the back nine. The scores were impressive.

The ladies scrambled to place raffle tickets in hopes of taking home one of the 35 incredibly decorated and filled baskets of food,



Taking first place on the front nine with 23 under par were, from left, Katie Gilchrest, Cameron Park; Mary Sanchez, Stockton; Robin Karnitz, Castle Oaks, and Heidi Taylor, Rancho Murieta. Photo courtesy of Nancy Clevenger

wine, goods, cash and golf outings. Chair Andrea Johnson put together beautifully decorated and sought- after items. The generous Door Prize—a Ping Golf Bag—was donated by the Pro Shop. Door Prize and Raffle winners left pleased with their take-homes.

The team of Heidi Taylor, Katie Gilchrest, Mary Sanchez and Robin Karnitz walked away with first place honors on the front nine of the course with a scalding 23 under par, while Sharon Crawford, Judy Scelea, Christina Lehman and Conni Warren captured the best score on the back nine. They smoked the

back of the course with 25 hits under par.

Recognition to those with the second-best scores went to Catherine Silvera, Helen Botsford, Colleen Earley and Kathleen Weatherby on the front and on the back Vicki Kalman, Cheryle James, Sandra Weissenbacher and Trudy DeFelice, with 21 and 23 under. Third place honors went to the team of Pamela O’Hern, Kathi Adams, Vicki Holman and Teresa d’Artenay (19 under), and with 21 under on the aft part of the course were the team of Elizabeth Meyer, Terry Gau, Terry Wilder Unruh and Susan Levy. Alison Gomez, Debra Massaro,

Nancy McDonough and Gina Moll were recognized for their fourth-place finish of 17 strokes under par on the front nine as Nancy Clevenger, Cindy Woodbury, Lori Bradford and Deena Post scored 21 under on the back. Great scores for a delightful day of chasing the golf ball with wonderful women on a magnificent course.

Rancho Murieta Country Club offers golf, tennis and pickleball. Memberships are available by contacting the Club Office at 916-354-3416. RMCC members who would like to join in the Niners’ Golf Club or their events may contact Captain Cathy Niley at cjniley@gmail.com. ★

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

CSD Hires Security Sergeant

The Rancho Murieta Community Services District has hired a full-time administrative security sergeant, Branden Arino.

He is returning to the Security Department after five years working at a correctional facility in Louisiana.

Before he left the district, Arino was a patrol officer, so many residents will probably remember him. He can be reached at barino@rmcsd.com.

CSD Establishes Security Hotline Email

Rancho Murieta residents with security issues have a new option for contacting the Rancho Murieta Community Services District to receive a timely response: securityhotline@RMCSd.com.

Residents also can reach security 24 hours a day by calling 916-354-CARE (2263). However, residents experiencing a life-threatening emergency requiring immediate police, fire or ambulance assistance should call 911.

Wilton Farmers Market to Open May 17

A new Wilton Farmers Market is slated to open on May 17 at the Dillard Elementary School parking lot.

The Sacramento County Service Area 4B Committee (CSA4B) and the Wilton Community Center Nonprofit are sponsoring the new event.

The market will run every Saturday

from 8 a.m. to noon through the end of September. Local farmers, bakers and artisans will offer a wide variety of goods, from seasonal fruits and vegetables to farm-fresh eggs, flowers, sourdough bread and hot fresh coffee.

“We’re excited to provide a space where people can connect with their local growers and support small local businesses,” said Market Manager Kelly Hines. “It’s about building a stronger, healthier community.”

For more information and vendor applications, email DillardFarmersMarket@gmail.com.

Pickleball Tournament Slated May 17

Join the Rancho Murieta Pickleball Club and local firefighters for a charity tournament benefiting the Firefighters Burn Institute on May 17 at Stonehouse Park. The Witch Doctors will perform tunes from the 1960s until today. Registration closes May 14. Sign up at the courts or by emailing pbanducc33@gmail.com.

The entry fee is \$50 per person, or \$75 with a commemorative t-shirt. The tournament will feature eight to 10 teams, each made up of four players, including one firefighter serving as team captain. All proceeds will go to the Firefighters Burn Institute.

Not playing? You can still support the cause by donating through the club’s Venmo.

Free Food, Drink at ETC Kickoff

Entertainment, Theater & Culture for Rancho Murieta (ETC) will host its Kick-Off Event from 3 to 5 p.m. Sunday May 18 at the Rancho Murieta Country Club.

Join us for the Kick-off to learn about ETC, to meet your neighbors and to enjoy free wine, appetizers, raffle prizes and music by Drew Gray Media.

Village Trash & Treasures Sale Slated May 24

The Rancho Murieta Village Trash & Treasures sale will be held from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, May 24. The sale will take place at the clubhouse patio and in the driveways of Village residents.

The cost to rent a table at the clubhouse is \$20 for residents and \$25 for non-residents. Contact Nancy at 541-539-7078.

VFW Slates Memorial Day Events on May 24 and May 26

The Rancho Murieta Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars has scheduled two events to honor U.S. military service members who died in service to their country.

The first event will be a Buddy Poppy distribution from 12 to 3 p.m. Saturday, May 24, either inside Bel Air Market or outside Tractor Supply. VFW members will collect donations for veterans in need and offer assistance in navigating Veterans Administration services.

The formal Memorial Day ceremony

will take place at 1 p.m. Monday, May 26, at the North Gazebo.

ETC Scholarship Essay Contest

Entertainment, Theatre & Culture for Rancho Murieta (ETC) is sponsoring its annual essay contest for graduating high school seniors who live in Rancho Murieta North or South. The winner will be awarded a \$2,000 scholarship, which will go directly to the college, university or trade school she or he will attend in the Fall of 2025 or Spring of 2026 for application toward tuition and fees.

Essays must address one of three questions: 1. How have Technology, Artificial Intelligence and Social Media influenced the Arts for the better or for the worse? 2. Discuss why you feel it is important to support Arts Education in the schools and the Arts in our Communities? 3. Explain how Experiencing the Arts, dance, music, visual art, theater has made you a better person.

Essays must be 550 to 600 words in length and entries must be postmarked by May 30. The contest winner will be announced on July 26 at Lake Clementia Amphitheater prior to the concert. The application form with contest rules is available at the Rancho Murieta Association Building or by request at philan.etcrm@gmail.com. For more information about the scholarship program, contact Stephanie Stanislaus, Philanthropy chair at 916-354-0901. ★

SECURITY LOGS

Following is a summary of activity for the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Security Department for the following dates. Note: these log entries are condensed. For full security log details, go to the CSD website at www.rmcsd.com.

April 21

5:38 p.m., Follow-up to arm incident, North Gate: Gate arm was knocked off, driver did not stop and proceeded into Murieta North.

Traffic camera footage review revealed a white golf cart without a barcode, two female occupants, arrived to the far resident lane at approximately 5:58 p.m., Saturday, April 19.

Golf cart attempted to drive to the left side of the lane; as golf cart passed through the gate, a frame of the golf cart pushed the gate arm out of the bracket.

Golf cart driver did not stop or advise North Gate officer of the incident.

Approximately a minute later a black Ford pickup arrived to the same resident lane and activated the gate arm with his vehicle's barcode, resulting in gate arm coming out of the bracket.

Gate arm did not sustain any damages and in good working condition.

At this time unable to identify driver of golf cart.

April 23

4:27 a.m., RMA Violation, Callaway Drive (Murieta South): Vehicle parked overnight on street in front of house. Citation issued.

4:44 a.m., RMA Violation, Playa Del Rey: Guest vehicle parked overnight in guest parking. Citation issued.

April 24

3:03 a.m., RMA Violation, Trinidad Court: Trailer attached to Ford pickup parked overnight on street without 24-hour pass. Citation issued.

3:11 a.m., RMA Violation, Trinidad Court: Trailer attached to GMC pickup parked on street without 24-hour pass. Citation issued.

April 25

RMA Violation, Via Sereno: Trailer attached to Audi SUV parked overnight on street without 24-hour pass. Citation issued.

April 26

9:32 p.m., Resident Complaint, Puerto Drive: Upon arrival, patrol noticed six

vehicles on back side of Lake Calero. Golf cart, four trucks and a sedan were fishing after dark. Patrol canvased area; no fire or trash left so let the group of friends leave. Patrol escorted them out of lake area.

April 29

1:44 p.m., Rio Oso3: Administrative Sgt. Branden Arino responded to Rio Oso 3 Park Water Tank for a break-in that occurred between Saturday and Tuesday. Arino spoke with Chief Plant Operator Travis Bohannon about the incident.

Two holes were cut inside the fence and the ladder access to the top of the tank was pried open. Pictures of the damage were taken. The first hole in the fence was located just north of the entrance and second hole was east of the entrance behind the power boxes. Arino and Bohanon spoke with a male resident neighboring the water tank who reported he observed what looked to be possibly two juveniles who backed in the pathway to entrance of the water tank in an undisclosed-colored golf cart. He stated the juveniles loitered there longer than normal before leaving. The resident did not call security. Resident was then provided information to call Bohanon as well as RMCSO in the future

if any suspicious activity is observed. RMCSO officers have been instructed to perform extra patrols in the area.

April 30

7:09 p.m., Gate Officer Casey Lebanon reported residents of Puerto Drive came through his gate harassing him with foul language. This is the second offense.

Video shows and supports statement given to patrol officer. A full incident report will be made to initiate an RMA Rule violation and fine to the resident.

May 1

4:31 a.m., RMA Violation, Robles Grandes Drive: Vehicle parked overnight on street in front of house. Citation issued.

4:34 a.m., RMA Violation, Fuente de Paz 2 Park: Vehicle overnight in guest parking. Citation issued.

May 2

4:25 a.m., RMA Violation, Guadalupe Drive: Vehicle parked overnight on street in front of house. Citation issued.

11:47 p.m., RMA Violation, Lake Calero: Burgundy truck, golf cart and four subjects at Lake Calero after hours. Patrol made contact with subject and all departed area.

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Bookmobile Librarian Honored at Farewell Reception



In the left photo, about 35 people gather at the Murieta Village Clubhouse on April 23 to honor longtime Wanderer Bookmobile Librarian Neal Denton. Many attendees brought baked goods, cards and gifts to show their appreciation. Denton has served Rancho Murieta for 17 years and retired after 35 years with the Sacramento

Public Library. In the center photo, Denton is pictured with Joan Barnes, who volunteered with the bookmobile for eight years, and Cindy Jones, the current volunteer who has assisted him for the past seven years. In the right photo, Denton stands beside the new electric bookmobile. A new library team will continue the weekly visits

to Rancho Murieta every Wednesday from 9 a.m. to noon at the Murieta Village Clubhouse parking lot. The bookmobile offers adult and children's books, movies and audiobooks. Patrons can obtain or renew a library card and reserve books online at saclibrary.org for pickup at the bookmobile. Courtesy photos





Entertainment, Theatre & Culture for Rancho Murieta Announces a

\$2000 College Scholarship

to be Awarded to a Rancho Murieta Graduating High School Senior

This year's essay questions are listed below. Please select one of the following:

1. How have Technology, Artificial Intelligence and Social Media influenced the Arts for the better or for the worse?
2. Discuss why you feel it is important to support Arts Education in the schools and the Arts in our communities?
3. Explain how experiencing the Arts (dance, music, visual art, theater) has made you a better person?

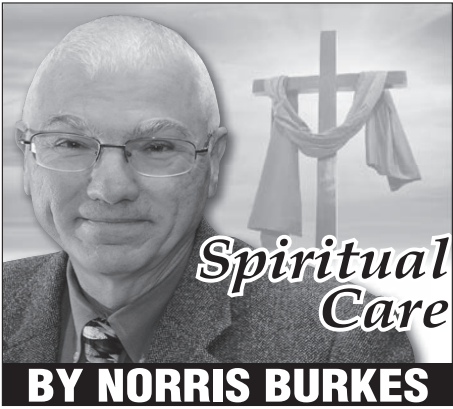
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916-354-0901

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May 30, 2025

Keeping the Arts Alive in Our Community!

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."

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



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Subscriptions should be mailed to *River Valley Times*, 7144 Fair Oaks Blvd. Suite 5, Carmichael, CA 95608.




The *River Valley Times* is published twice monthly. Call (916) 773-1111 for more information.

Publisher, Paul V. Scholl

River Valley Times is a member of **Messenger Publishing Group**

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MEALS ON WHEELS
SACRAMENTO COUNTY

Renamed Kids Fishing Day Returns to Clementia

Continued from page 1
more than 200 pounds of fish, although not everyone brought their trout to the cleaning station. The volunteers weighed 167 pounds of fish.

The Kiwanians also awarded prizes consisting of fishing poles and gift certificates to the kids who caught the largest fish.

The winner of the Boys' Division was Pharooh Mosley-Allen, who landed a trout weighing 2.92 pounds.

Brinley Pierce won the Girls' division with a trout weighing 2.14 pounds.

Two days before the event, the club stocked 500 pounds of high-quality rainbow trout in Lake Clementia after the Rancho Murieta Association Maintenance Department installed a net to keep the fish confined to the swimming area.

The Maintenance Department also supplied the barbecue, tables and chairs for lunch.

"They were great," Kinney said. "I tell you: The community would not be the same without the Maintenance Department."

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife supplied the loaner fishing poles, and Bass Pro Shop donated the gift certificates.

Kinney expressed great satisfaction when asked to reflect afterward.

"It's a wonderful event that brings kids out and introduces them to fishing," he said. "We hope that a few of them get the fishing bug. It's something we want to pass on."

See more photos online at therivervalleytimes.com.



The event attracted about 100 young anglers and their families. Photo by Gail Bullen



Trout make a splash as they are stocked two days before the event. Photo by Jay Solomon



Adrian Tabares helps his kids get organized: from left, Arthur, Lillian and Matthew. Photo by Gail Bullen



Astin Pierce and his daughter Brinley proudly show off her fish. After landing the biggest trout in the Girls' Division, she also won a fishing pole. Photo by Gail Bullen



Noah Forget, 13, gets a lesson in cleaning a fish from Don Craig.



Volunteer Jay Solomon weighs a trout at the cleaning station while Don Craig looks on.



Stephen Jaeger helps his daughter Emma with her fishing pole while 16-month-old Colton takes in the scene from his hiking pack. Photo by Gail Bullen

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