



**Entertainment Zones
Allow Street Drinking**

PAGE 2

**Sprouts Brings July
Fourth Fun to Families**

PAGE 10



Land Park News

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Bringing You Community News For Over 30 Years

JULY 11, 2025

**SEE
INSIDE**

**LAWMAKERS ACHIEVE
'HOLY GRAIL' REFORM**



PAGE 5

**EVENTUALLY, A
TITLE WILL COME**



PAGE 5

**CHAPLAIN OFFERS ...
DATING ADVICE?**



PAGE 9

Great Times in the Golden Years Eskaton Celebrates 52 Years in Land Park



Robert Cole smiles up front with his daughter-in-law, Nancy, and son, Dan Cole.

**Story and photos
by Kristina Rogers**

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Eskaton Land Park celebrated its 52nd anniversary at a Community Barbecue on June 25. Thousands of mailers invited neighbors to attend and celebrate with them at 3225 Freepoint Blvd.

The event offered music, vendors, a car show and a barbecue lunch.

Adriana Inclan, director of resident

services, and Latoya Pulanco, residential living advisor, greeted guests and handed out fans to help keep attendants cool on the hot day.

Inclan welcomed Cathy Grab, a third-generation Eskaton resident. Grab grew up in Land Park and graduated from C.K. McClatchy High School.

Grab shared her experience about her life at Eskaton.

"It's the people. Everyone is wonderful. My parents lived here for 12

years. When I moved in, it was like coming home because I already knew everybody," Grab said.

Pulanco said, "This community is really incredible; you can feel it. And the longevity of our staff is great, too."

Pulanco has worked at Eskaton Land Park for six years and helps organize community events throughout the year. She hosted a table for Land Park's Doggy Dash in April

Continued on Page 3

Scams Target Customers of PG&E

**PG&E
Communications
News Release**

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Utility scams have continued at an alarming rate this year, with Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) customers reporting more than \$190,000 in losses to scammers. PG&E is helping customers recognize the signs of a scam and avoid falling victim.

A typical sign of a scam targeting a utility customer includes a caller claiming to be from PG&E and threatening disconnection if immediate payment is not made via a pre-paid debit card, digital payment mobile application or other methods of money transfer.

As a reminder, PG&E will never send a single notification to a customer within one hour of a service interruption and will never ask customers to make payments with a pre-paid debit card, gift card, any form of cryptocurrency or instant mobile payment applications, such as Zelle® or Venmo.

"Scammers seek to create a sense of panic, threatening disconnection of utility services if immediate payment is not made. If a phone call, visit to your home or email doesn't feel right, don't fall for it. Hang up, shut the door and do not respond to the email," said PG&E Cybersecurity Risk Manager Amy Lucido. "Remember, PG&E will never ask for your financial information over the phone or via email, nor will we request payment via pre-paid debit cards or other methods of money transfer, including mobile applications."

So far this year, PG&E has received more than 10,000 reports of scams targeting residential and business customers with customers reporting losses of more than \$190,000. The average scam victim lost more than \$900 and more than 200 customers have reported falling victim. This number is likely just the tip of the iceberg however, as many scams go unreported.

Scams reported to PG&E by county so far this year: Butte 62; El Dorado eight; Glenn three; Nevada 18;

Continued on Page 9

Ride the Local Waterways

*Get on the Water
This Summer*

By Idaly Valencia

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - While the summer heat in the Sacramento area is hard to beat, the region has several recreational areas to cool off by the water.

Kayaking, canoeing and rafting with friends and family are popular ways to enjoy the outdoors.

Here are nearby destinations where Land Park residents can rent or bring their own gear for a safe and memorable paddle adventure.

Nimbus Rentals

Nimbus Rentals offers fully equipped two-seat kayaks that don't require a

Continued on Page 4



The boathouse at Lodi Lake, 1101 West Turner Road, is a go-to paddling destination for Sacramento and Central Valley residents alike. Photo courtesy of Lodi Lake Boathouse



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Entertainment Zones Allow Street Drinking

City of Sacramento News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)

The Sacramento City Council in June approved an ordinance establishing designated entertainment zones, a move that will support local business, support economic development and create a festive event atmosphere.

The ordinance was developed by the City's Office of Nighttime Economy in partnership with the Entertainment Services Division. It authorizes the creation of three initial entertainment zones in Sacramento:

20th Street

Entertainment Zone: 20th and K streets

Entertainment Zone: Ali Youssefi Square and adjacent area including K Street between 7th and 8th streets

Entertainment Zone: Area surrounding the SAFE Credit Union Convention and Performing Arts Center

"This can help bring what we want to see," said Mayor Kevin McCarty. "More activity in the Central City and more economic development in a targeted zone."

Entertainment zones are areas where the

consumption of alcoholic beverages is allowed on public streets, sidewalks or other public rights-of-way during special events. Under Senate Bill 969, which took effect in 2024, local jurisdictions may create such zones by ordinance. When active, they allow patrons to purchase to-go alcoholic beverages from licensed bars, restaurants, breweries and wineries and consume them in common public areas.

"The goal is to enhance the experience for those attending special events in Sacramento and increase revenue for businesses," said Tina Lee-Vogt, the



The Ali Youssefi Square Entertainment Zone includes the square and adjacent area including K Street between 7th and 8th streets. Photo courtesy of City of Sacramento

city's nighttime economy manager.

Each zone will operate under a management plan to ensure public safety and neighborhood compatibility. An approved Special Event permit will be required for any activation. When a zone is active, its boundaries will be clearly marked – for example, with signage or sidewalk decals – to help guide

participants and maintain compliance.

The city has worked closely with business associations to identify initial zones and will continue stakeholder engagement as implementation progresses. Staff will provide updates and may seek council approval for additional zones throughout the city.

With the new ordinance, Sacramento joins cities

like San Francisco, Santa Monica and Long Beach that have approved entertainment zones.

Several others, including San Jose and Santa Clara, are exploring similar efforts.

For more information on Sacramento's entertainment zones, contact the Office of Nighttime Economy at nighttime@cityofsacramento.org. ★

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PENDING SALE

HOLLYWOOD PARK

Tree-lined street with new roof, new windows and 3 bedrooms. This classic Hollywood Park home features a formal living room, fireplace with pretty mantle, formal dining area, kitchen with tile counters and electric range. Updated bath with newer vanity and unique tiled tub area with shower. Wood floors, central heat and air, new roof, new dual-paned windows, single-car garage and storage sheds in the backyard. 4949 Helen Way \$525,000

PENDING SALE

COLLEGE MANOR

Nestled on a generous lot, this Custom College Manor home has the charm and elegance of a Carmel Cottage with its rustic wood-shingled exterior and mature landscape. The inviting covered entry porch leads to a spacious foyer, an oversized living room with a cozy fireplace, and a formal dining room. The updated kitchen boasts ample storage, granite countertops, and a sunny breakfast area. Laundry room off the kitchen that accesses the half bath. This home offers four bedrooms, one of which is a walk-thru and was used as an office. There is a step down to the sunroom that leads to the remote oversized fourth bedroom. Behind the detached two car garage is a separate guest room or entertainment room which offers tile floors, brick fireplace, remodeled bathroom, and bar. Backyard offers lovely lush gardens, artificial grass in some areas for low upkeep, a small outdoor putting green and patio with a large brick fireplace for those cool evenings. An Entertainer's Delight! 1800 8th Avenue \$1,298,000

Teresa Olson
916-494-1452
teresa.olson@cbnocal.com
CalBRE# 00784986

Great Times in the Golden Years

Continued from page 1

and is currently organizing Eskaton's involvement with the Walk to End Alzheimer's on Sept. 27.

Some events are just for residents and their families.

Third Thursday Brunch is a big hit with family members, according to Pulanco, who said, "We've had the same chef for 33 years and she's constantly reinventing herself."

Servers were busy moving residents and guests through the long line for the June 25 complimentary lunch. The meal consisted of barbecue brisket, hot dogs, pasta, potato salad, corn and baked beans. And if there was "still room," guests could indulge in ice cream and homemade cookies.

Paul Wallace, a Fat Fenders Car Club member, was enjoying his first time at the event, showing off his 1969 Volkswagen Fastback. When asked if he would return next year, it was an enthusiastic yes.

"They fed us well and they have great music," Wallace said. "What else do you need?"

Wallace liked speaking with the residents, who he said knew more about the classic automobiles than he did.

"They point out a car and say, 'Oh, I had one of those in high school' or their dad had a 1933 Plymouth like that one in their backyard," Wallace said.

Inclan has been director of resident services for eight years. She enjoys chatting with the residents and supporting events such as the barbecue bash.

Eskaton Land Park opened in 1973 as an independent living residence,



Staff serve guests brisket with homemade barbecue sauce and all the fixings.

according to Inclan.

There is a difference between independent living versus assisted living, according to the staff. Eskaton Land Park offers meals, transportation and a variety of activities for its residents. Each resident also receives an emergency pendant in case of an accident. However, the residents do not receive around-the-clock supportive services, in independent living facilities. If a resident begins to require full-time care, they can bring in a third party to help them.

This has become their home and Eskaton "does what they can to keep a resident there if it's possible," Inclan said.

Most residents range from 60 to 100-plus years old.

No one should assume that being on the older end of the spectrum is an indicator of being any less spry.

Robert Cole will celebrate his 103rd birthday on July 11. He is considered a "newbie" who moved to Eskaton last July. Inclan lights up when she talks about the charming Cole.



Paul Wallace of the Fat Fenders Car Club shows off his 1969 Volkswagen Fastback.

"His first week here, he said, 'Look at all these babies.' His humor is just the best medicine," said Inclan, adding that he "is also a bit of a celebrity, frequently being pulled into group book discussions and other clubs."

Cole grew up in Fresno, where his family enjoyed riding horses.

Cole's neighbor, Beth Ainsworth, did too. She invited 12-year-old Cole to Monterey to ride with her. That's where he met 20-year-old John Steinbeck and they formed a lifelong friendship. Cole said that he would spend the summers fishing with Steinbeck and Edward "Doc" Ricketts.



Joey Soto, receptionist; and Latoya Pulanco, residential living advisor, greet guests with goodies and fans.



Adriana Inclan, director of resident services, hangs out with Cathy Grab, a third-generation Eskaton resident.

After Cole grew up, he joined the Marines and was stationed in Guam during World War II. When the war ended, Cole settled in Sacramento and started a business. Today, the same company, Goodwin-Cole Tents & Awnings, is run by his grandson.

Dan Cole "loves" his father's new residence.

"This place is the best, and it begins with the people and leadership. It's a gourmet set-up," Dan Cole said. "He's had more ice cream in the last year here

than in his entire life."

Robert Cole sums it up, "I can't imagine a more delightful place. The people here treat me so well."

June 25 heated up to 95-plus degrees but the music kept playing while guests remained cool under the shade, fanning themselves and conversing.

For neighbors who missed out on the event, they can mark their calendars for 2026's event to delight in first-rate barbecue and inspiring life stories. ★



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Ride the Local Waterways

Continued from Page 1

roof rack. Located at 3651 Redding Ave., Sacramento, the business serves couples, families and travelers seeking a convenient outing at their preferred waterway.

Rentals include two life jackets (adult, youth or child), two paddles, a 20-pound dry bag, foam mount blocks, roof straps with quick loops and a transport wheel. Loading assistance is available at pickup.

Kayaks can be picked up between 7 and 9 a.m. and returned by 6 p.m. The daily rental fee is \$80, with a discounted \$60 rate for first-time renters. Pickup is near Tahoe Park; the exact address is provided upon booking. To book a rental, visit nimbusrentals.com, text 916-477-7311 or email rental@nimbusrentals.com.

Lake Natoma

Known for its calm waters, Lake Natoma in Sacramento County is ideal for flatwater kayaking. Limited motorized boat use makes for a chill and easygoing day on the water.

Lake Natoma Paddle Rentals at 9600 Greenback Lane offers four watercraft options: paddleboards and single kayaks

for \$20 per hour, tandem kayaks (two-person) for \$30 and canoes for \$30. Rentals are available daily from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. through Oct. 13. Two-hour beginner kayak lessons and lake tours are available for \$79, included with gear.

For bookings or more information, visit lakenatomapaddlerentals.com.

The Sacramento State Aquatic Center, also at Lake Natoma, 1901 Hazel Ave., offers rentals and classes in activities such as sailing, rowing, paddling, windsurfing, wakeboarding and jet skiing.

California State University, Sacramento alumni and affiliates receive discounts. For currently-enrolled students, cost for rentals is almost half price upon showing photo identification. For more, visit sacstateaquaticcenter.com or call 916-278-2842.

American River Raft Rentals

Rafting on the American River is a summer tradition. American River Raft Rentals has offered self-guided floats since the 1970s. There are two launch sites: Sunrise at 11257 S. Bridge St. and Sailor Bar at 4253 Illinois Ave., both with shuttles back to the starting point.

The Sunrise launch site is open daily through Oct. 31. Sailor Bar, a newer two-mile float option, is open Saturdays and Sundays through Labor Day. Rafts range from four-person (\$99) to 12-person (\$280). Rentals are from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., depending on river conditions. Visit raft-rentals.com or call 888-338-RAFT.

Cosumnes River Preserve

For paddlers with their own gear, the Cosumnes River Preserve offers free-flowing, flat water ideal from spring through fall. It's a scenic spot for nature lovers to explore local wildlife and wetlands.

Tide information and navigation tips are available at cosumnes.org/paddle-the-river. Guided paddle tours are available and led by experienced instructors. Paddlers must bring their own equipment. The preserve is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 13501 Franklin Blvd., Galt. For more, call 916-684-2816.

Sacramento Barge Canal Access

The Barge Canal Access in West Sacramento is a local favorite for kayaking, canoeing, fishing and boating. Located at 2100 Jefferson Blvd., near South River Road, the site includes parking, a hand-carry boat ramp, picnic areas, a walking trail and interpretive panels.

The ramp provides access to the Sacramento River and the Sacramento Deep Water Channel for hand-carried watercraft. Visitors must bring their own gear. Seasonal hours through Nov. 1 are 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day.

Lodi Lake

The boathouse at Lodi Lake is a go-to paddling destination for Sacramento and Central Valley residents alike.

Rentals include basic and premium single kayaks (\$22 to \$35), tandem kayaks (\$44), paddleboards (\$22) and pedal boats. Rentals are available hourly, with lower rates for additional hours.

Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends. Rentals end one hour before closing.

Lessons in kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding are \$92 per person. A free Community Paddle is at noon Thursdays for those with their own kayaks; rentals for the event are \$45 (plus tax) or \$20 (plus tax) for children 10 and under.

Lodi Lake Boathouse is at 1101 W. Turner Road, Lodi. Visit lodiboathouse.com or call 209-471-5988.

Wherever you paddle, stay hydrated, wear a life vest and have fun exploring the region's scenic waterways! ★



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Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



The Milwaukee Bucks won their first NBA title in 1971, and it took 50 years for the Bucks to win a title again. A fellow by the name of Giannis Antetokounmpo helped them accomplish this task, but players of his caliber are in short supply.

The Sacramento Kings have been in Sacramento for 40 years without reaching the finals or winning a championship. But make no mistake, fans in Kingstown still believe an NBA title will eventually come to Sacramento.

Sadly, during the offseason, fans are hearing far too much about mid-level exceptions, aprons first and second, collective bargaining and salary caps. Frankly, the NBA has one of the most complicated systems regarding player compensation, and it takes someone with an advanced degree in economics to comprehend it.

What we know, is that in the aftermath of seeing mega popular DeAaron Fox trot his talents to the San Antonio Spurs midway through the 2025/2026 season, the Kings have navigated the point guard position much like a rudderless ship.

Freshman GM Scott Perry, tasked with replacing De'Aaron Fox, last week signed journeyman Dennis Schröder, a former #1 draft choice by the Atlanta Hawks in 2013. Schröder was chosen #17 overall and for the past 12 seasons has seen playing time with Oklahoma City Thunder, Los Angeles Lakers, Boston Celtics, Houston Rockets, Toronto Raptors, Brooklyn Nets, Golden State Warriors and finally the Detroit Pistons.

Originally from Germany, where he played professionally and for the German national team in the Olympics, one could say Schröder has seen America from coast to coast.

Dennis Schröder's career stats are not gaudy, but 13.9 points per game being as traveled as he's been, shows he can contribute when needed. Five assists per game and 3 rebounds aren't eye popping, but it's important to remember why the Kings went out to get him.

Sacramento has a plethora of scoring power in the starting lineup and coming off the bench. What has been lacking since the departure of Fox, is a capable distributor of the basketball.

At 2.2 turnovers per game Schröder has a better control average than DeAaron Fox, so at least in one regard the Kings have made

an upgrade.

Not many players would clammer to be the replacement for a point guard as popular as Fox, but Sacramento fans are a generous crowd, and I expect to see fans give Dennis Schröder an ample opportunity to display his talents.

Do I think Schröder can be a capable replacement? Absolutely! He won't score 24 points per game or go coast to coast with the type of speed that DeAaron does, but neither does anyone else.

Scott Perry was given a thankless job, and if Schröder can come in and give the Kings 14 points per game, and take care of the basketball, there's a good chance that the playoffs of two seasons ago won't be the exception to the rule.

Coming off the bench is last year's first round draft choice Devin Carter, and Sacramento has a rookie guard in Nique Clifford that is going to need playing time, so don't expect to see Schröder get much more than 20-25 minutes per game.

Perry is likely to have more moves coming, so keep your eyes on summer league Kings fans, and don't forget that Sacramento also drafted a 7-footer in Maxime Raynaud. It will be interesting to see how coach Christie uses his new big man.

Sadly, popular Jonas Valanciunas won't be suiting up for the Kings this season, as he was traded last week to the Denver Nuggets for Dario Saric. Saric will be a role player, and spell Sabonis off the bench. At 6' 10" and 225 lbs. this 31-year-old will undoubtedly see playing time.

Players like Isaac Jones and Devin Carter are still trying to open eyes, so this year's summer league will be an opportunity to showcase their talents and allow Doug Christie to see their growth over the season.

NBA pundits have praised the Kings' draft this year, and I concur with their accolades. There's real optimism as this team is deep in talent. It remains to be seen how that talent will come together, and whether the Kings can take the young talent they have to the next level.

Stay tuned Kings fans, because this roster isn't cast in stone just yet!

All the best!

Your thoughts are always welcome at vgarrisriskingsfan@gmail.com. ★

Social Security Matters

Can I Switch to a Taxi Driver Job Without Hurting my Social Security?



By Russell Gloor,
AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: I opted to draw my Social Security retirement benefit early and work part time. The company I work for has decided to pull me from field work due to my age and health. Although they are great keeping me at 20 hours per week running for parts and doing office work, I'm not sure how much longer it will last. I'm thinking of taking a taxi driving job to keep my income enough to live on. The way it would work, I would lease the cab for some amount of dollars per day, set my own hours to work and collect anywhere from \$1.40 to \$4.00 per mile, depending on what type of fare. My question is: how does Social Security look at that type of employment? Would I be held to the 15 - 45 hours a month standard? I could never come close to making the \$1,200 to \$1,300 a month I need by working so little. Any advice is greatly appreciated. **Signed: Seeking Advice**

Dear Seeking: If you go ahead with your plan to lease a taxicab instead of continuing your current employment, you would, in effect, be considered "self-employed" and would submit your income tax return to the IRS accordingly. Social Security would get your earnings information as reported to

the IRS, and it would be your net earnings from self-employment (after deducting all your business expenses) that is reported to SSA by IRS. There is, however, a special rule which would apply to you in your first calendar year of self-employment while collecting early Social Security benefits.

Since, in your first year, some of your earnings would be as a part-time employee paying SS FICA payroll taxes, Social Security would first look at your earnings as an employee to see if you exceeded the annual earnings limit (\$23,400 for 2025). Then, upon starting your self-employment, Social Security would look at the hours you spent performing "substantial gainful activity" (e.g., driving your taxi) each month and, if you spent more than 45 hours per month in that capacity, you would not be considered "retired," and thus, not eligible for Social Security in any month you exceeded that amount of hours. If you earned less than the annual limit in total (both as an employee and while self-employed), you would get benefits for all months of the year. But if you earn more than the annual limit, you will get no benefits for any month you exceeded 45 hours as a self-employed person. Again, this only applies during the first calendar year of self-employment - in the following year only your net earnings from self-employment would count toward the annual earnings limit.

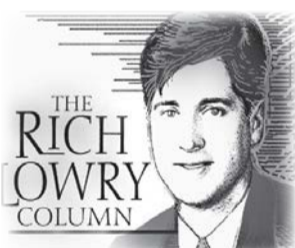
In effect, SSA would use the hours-worked standard to see if you are truly retired or actually working. If the latter, they would withhold

SS monthly benefits for any month you exceed 45 hours working while self-employed (up to and including December of your first calendar year of self-employment), and only if your total income (as an employee and while self-employed) exceeds the annual limit.

So, if your goal is to net \$1,200 - \$1,300 per month as a self-employed taxi driver, that would be well within the limits of the annual earnings test (\$23,400 for 2025 but changes yearly). But there may, or may not, be a reduction in your Social Security benefits during your first year of self-employment, depending on when you start as self-employed. Note that SSA will ask about your work plans when you apply, and if you expect to stay under the annual limit (working part time in both capacities), you should get full SS benefits. Just be careful to stay under the annual earnings limit for those collecting early Social Security benefits. FYI, earnings from before your SS benefits started don't count toward the earning limit.

Note, too, that your monthly Social Security benefit will be actuarially reduced according to how far in advance of your full retirement age you claim SS. Whenever SS benefits are claimed prior to one's full retirement age, those benefits are permanently reduced.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). ★



Blow up Washington, D.C.'s Brutalist Buildings, and the Sooner, the Better

There's a reason God created dynamite. The brutalist federal buildings that have blighted Washington, D.C., for decades deserve the same fate as Carthage after the Third Punic War, and the nation's capital is finally beginning to move on from these concrete monstrosities.

The Department of Housing and Urban and Development just announced that it is leaving its god-awful headquarters in Washington for a less hideous space in Northern Virginia. HUD Secretary Scott Turner has described the structure as "the ugliest building in D.C.," which is a dubious claim only because there are so many other buildings in Washington that compete for that distinction. He's not the first HUD secretary to hate the building. Jack Kemp called it "10 floors of basement."

Meanwhile, the FBI is also departing its HQ, designated by the U.K. building materials retailer Buildworld as the ugliest building in the United States and the second ugliest in the world.

The moves are in keeping with the spirit of President Trump's executive order stipulating that federal buildings should "respect regional, traditional and classical architectural heritage in order to uplift and beautify public spaces and ennoble the United States and our system of self-government."

That EO should be considered common sense, but has several trigger words for defenders of the architectural status quo, including "traditional," "classical" and, perhaps foremost of all, "beautify." In response, the American Institute of Architects expressed its "strong concerns that mandating architecture styles stifles innovation and harms local communities."

According to The Nation magazine, Trump's initiative is part of an agenda to "make historical architecture on the whole inextricable from Eurocentric white supremacy." In short, it's an unforgivable offense to want a government building to look nice.

Brutalism, with its blocky, minimalist structures made of poured concrete, was a creation of a post-war Europe that wanted to embrace the fresh and new and to economize on rebuilding. Although the name "brutalism" perfectly captures the aesthetic effect, it actually comes from the French for "raw concrete," "beton brut."

To be sure, concrete is extremely important to modern life, but no one has ever said, "Oh, it's so elegant and uplifting." The brutalist buildings in Washington were largely built between the late 1960s and mid-1970s, an era of grievous architectural mistakes, including cookie-cutter multiple-purpose baseball stadiums and modernist Catholic churches. The buildings never had a heyday, but were hated when they were erected and are still hated now.

The seedbed of the trend was a Kennedy administration commission that advocated contemporary

designs and said -- laughably, in retrospect -- that federal architecture should "reflect the dignity, enterprise, vigor and stability of the American national government."

Instead, the brutalist buildings speak of a lumbering bureaucracy with no regard for the sensibilities or priorities of ordinary people. They are about what you'd expect if a DMV were headquartered in a maximum-security prison or in a massive pillbox.

The buildings could easily be used as stage sets for docudramas about East Germany. They are a tribute to soulless monumentality and a gut punch to the human spirit. If they don't eventually get a well-deserved appointment with a wrecking ball, they should be donated to North Korea.

The original justifications of brutalism no longer apply. The buildings aren't new anymore, and aren't cheap. They haven't aged well in any sense, not aesthetically or functionally. The FBI building is literally falling apart, and the expense of maintaining the HUD building has become ruinous.

Defenders of the brutalist buildings say that they are now part of our heritage and should be preserved as such. That's not fair, though, to the people who have to work in them, or who walk or drive by them every day. They are a net subtraction to the D.C. landscape and to human happiness. If one of them has to be kept for historical reasons, it should be made into a Smithsonian museum devoted to idiotic fads that were indulged for much too long.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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California Lawmakers Finally Achieve 'Holy Grail' Reform



By Dan Walters,
CALMatters.org

Jerry Brown once described reform of the California Environmental Quality Act as "the lord's work" but he, like other recent governors, was not willing to invest enough political capital to change it.

Simply put, significantly altering CEQA, which then-Gov. Ronald Reagan signed more than a half-century ago, would require confronting two powerful interest groups: environmental organizations and labor unions, which have weaponized the law to achieve their goals.

Brown made one stab at compelling the Legislature to alter CEQA in 2016, but otherwise left it to his successor, Gavin Newsom.

For six years, Newsom echoed the attitudes of his predecessors, critical of CEQA's misuse to block housing and other much-needed projects, or compel developers to hire unionized labor or jump through other hoops, but unwilling to confront it head-on.

Instead, he and the Legislature nibbled at the edges of the law and gave specific projects, such as sports arenas, exemptions.

Finally, however, the social and economic costs of leaving CEQA intact became too high. The state's critical shortage of housing continued despite innumerable policy

declarations aimed at spurring investment. It became downright embarrassing that a politically dominant Democratic Party pledged to socioeconomic equity was unable to deliver on promises to make housing more abundant and affordable.

California started in a New York Times video that chastised blue states for failing to live up to their stated principles and in a recent book, "Abundance," about the nation's chronic inability to deliver much-needed projects due to regulatory overkill, such as CEQA.

This year, with Newsom nearing the end of his governorship and appearing to cast his eyes toward a presidential campaign, the governor decided to confront the CEQA issue squarely. He endorsed two bills that would impose limits on the law's reach and, in the end, threatening to block the entire state budget if they weren't placed on his desk.

On Monday (June 30), the last day of the fiscal year, the Legislature passed Assembly Bill 130 and Senate Bill 131 with last-minute changes to dampen opposition from construction unions. Newsom quickly signed them.

"We needed to go bold and big on this holy grail reform," Newsom said at a hastily staged signing ceremony.

Essentially, the legislation exempts virtually all infill housing projects from CEQA's provisions, making it more difficult for opponents of high-density housing projects, known as NIMBYs, to block approval.

Such projects, particularly those aimed at low- and moderate-income families, have been the most difficult to gain approval, due largely to opposition in upscale communities

dominated by single-family homeowners.

"When you are building housing in an existing community, that is environmentally beneficial, it is climate friendly, that is not something that should be subjected to potentially endless CEQA challenges and lawsuits," Sen. Scott Wiener, a San Francisco Democrat who authored SB 131, told senators before they passed the measure.

Wiener and Assemblywoman Buffy Wicks, an Oakland Democrat who carried AB 130, have been the Capitol's two most aggressive advocates of pro-housing legislation.

The remaining question, of course, is whether the two new laws, which go into effect immediately, will have a discernible impact on the state's housing shortage. CEQA is just one factor of many determining whether proposed projects proceed or die. Those who oppose high-density housing in their neighborhoods will not just roll over.

Ironically, as the Legislature was passing the two new laws on Monday, The Atlantic was publishing a lengthy article entitled "The Whole Country Is Starting to Look Like California," that describes how red tape and local opposition are adversely affecting housing development in red states such as Texas and Florida, which had been viewed as developer paradises.

Dan Walters is one of the most decorated and widely syndicated columnists in California history, authoring a column four times a week that offers his view and analysis of the state's political, economic, social and demographic trends. ★

Disposable E-Cigarettes More Toxic Than Traditional Cigarettes

By Kat Kerlin from the University of California, Davis News and Media Relations

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - They might look like travel shampoo bottles and smell like bubblegum, but after a few hundred puffs, some disposable, electronic cigarettes and vape pods release higher amounts of toxic metals than older e-cigarettes and traditional cigarettes, according to a study from the University of California, Davis.

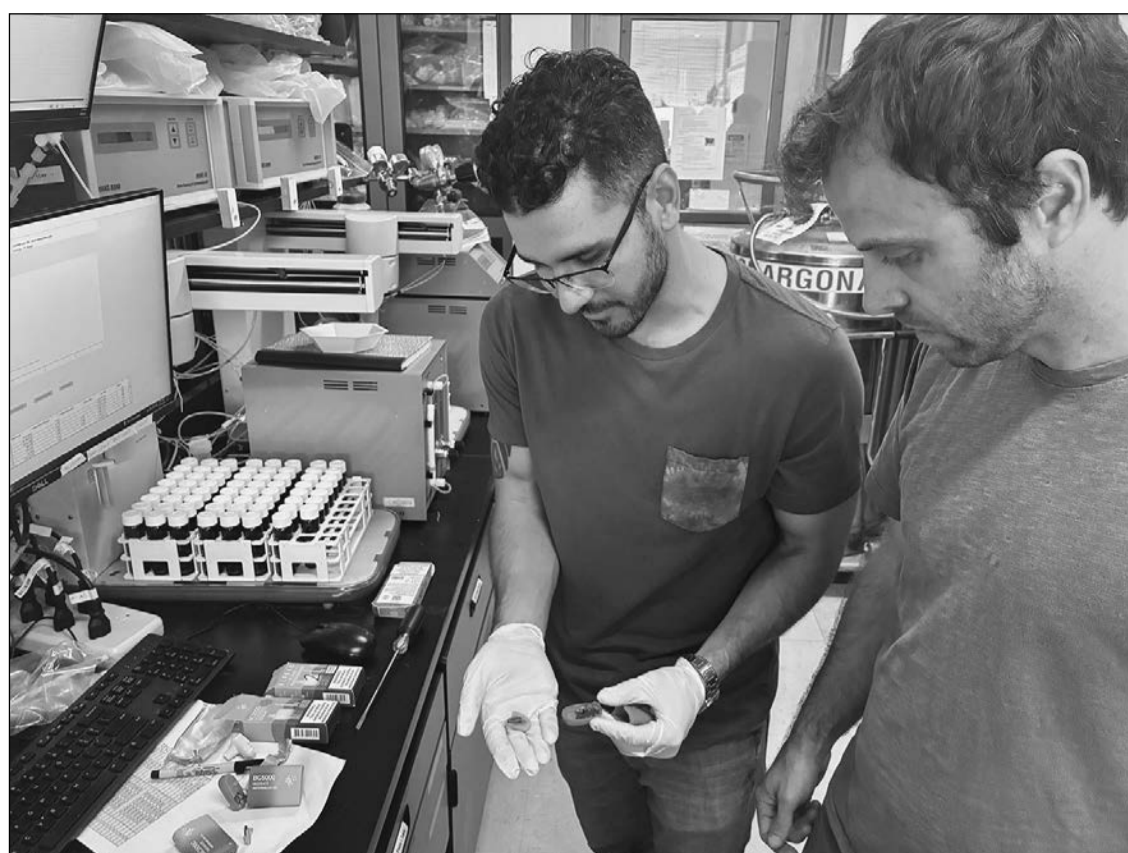
For example, one of the disposable e-cigarettes studied released more lead during a day's use than nearly 20 packs of traditional cigarettes.

The study, published on June 25 in the ACS Central Science journal noted that although most disposable e-cigarettes are illegal in the United States, they remain widely available.

Most consumers of disposable e-cigarettes are teens or young adults, who are also highly susceptible to lead exposure. Inhaling certain metals can increase a person's risk of cancer, respiratory disease and nerve damage.

"Our study highlights the hidden risk of these new and popular disposable electronic cigarettes with hazardous levels of neurotoxic lead and carcinogenic nickel and antimony, which stresses the need for urgency in enforcement," said senior author Brett Poulin, an assistant professor in the University of California, Davis Department of Environmental Toxicology. "These risks are not just worse than other e-cigarettes but worse in some cases than traditional cigarettes."

First author Mark Salazar, a Ph.D. candidate in Poulin's lab, first saw a disposable vape pod when



Mark Salazar, left, and Brett Poulin are in the lab with disposable vape pods. Photo courtesy of Kat Kerlin, University of California, Davis

he was visiting a friend. The pods are self-contained cartridges that hold a battery, e-liquid and heating coil. Salazar was curious: what exactly was his friend smoking? Salazar brought the pod back to the lab at University of California, Davis and tested its vapor for metal concentrations.

"When I first saw the lead concentrations, they were so high I thought our instrument was broken," Salazar said. "That sparked us into looking further into these disposables."

The scientists analyzed the metal and metalloids inside seven types of disposable devices from three of the most popular brands. Using an instrument to activate disposable



Shown is the inside of a vape pod, a type of e-cigarette, at University of California, Davis. Photo courtesy of Kat Kerlin, University of California, Davis

e-cigarettes and heat the internal liquid, they created between 500 and 1,500 puffs for each device.

They said that some devices emitted surprisingly high

concentrations of elements in the vapor, including antimony and lead. Levels of chromium, nickel and antimony increased as the number of puffs increased. Most of the disposable e-cigarettes tested released markedly higher amounts of metals and metalloids into vapors than earlier, refillable vapes.

The scientists then took apart the devices to trace the metals' sources.

"We found that these disposable devices have toxins already present in the e-liquid or they're leaching quite extensively from their components into e-liquids and ultimately transferred to the smoke," Salazar said.

Leaded bronze alloy components

in some devices leached nickel and lead to the e-liquid. Nickel was also released from heating coils and antimony was present in unused e-liquids at high levels, both of which increase the risk of cancer.

The researchers also assessed the health risk for daily users. Vapors from three of the devices had nickel levels and two devices had antimony levels that exceeded cancer risk limits. Vapors from four of the devices had nickel and lead emissions that surpassed health-risk thresholds for illnesses besides cancer, such as neurological damage and respiratory diseases.

While the researchers tested only three of the nearly 100 disposable e-cigarette brands on the market, they say that this initial work prompts concern, given the popularity of disposable e-cigarettes, especially among adolescents.

The market is also outpacing science. Few studies of the relatively new devices are available, leaving consumers and regulators largely uninformed. The work underscores the need to enforce regulations around illegal e-cigarettes while continuing research to reveal the extent of the problem and its public health implications.

The study's co-authors include Lalima Saini, Tran Nguyen, Kent Pinkerton, Amy Madi and Austin Cole from the University of California, Davis.

The research was supported with funding from the University of California Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences T32 training program, and the University of California Agricultural Experiment Station. ★

Sutter, Sacramento Recertified with Top Cardiovascular Honor

It's one of two Comprehensive Cardiac Centers in Northern California

Sutter Health News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento this month received the top cardiovascular honor from The Joint Commission and the American Heart Association. The medical center received its recertification as a Comprehensive Cardiac Center, which represents its commitment to upholding the highest standards of cardiac care quality and safety.

Sutter Medical Center is one of two hospitals in Northern California and 24 in the nation to have received the certification.

"This certification by The Joint Commission and American Heart Association recognizes the dedication and excellence of the cardiovascular staff at Sutter Medical Center," said Dr. David Roberts, section chief of interventional cardiology for Sutter Health's heart and vascular service line. "It is a team sport that requires the doctors, nurses and the entire ancillary staff to function at the very top of their game. I cannot be more proud of this team."

In 2023, Sutter Medical Center became one of only 16 heart programs in the nation and the second in the western United States to earn the certification, the other being Stanford Hospital, Sutter Medical Center's partner for its pediatric heart surgery program.

The recertification earned this month demonstrates Sutter's excellence in heart and vascular care, where cardiologists and care teams "deliver superior quality of care across the cardiac continuum" and provide "world-class, patient-centric service," as outlined by The Joint Commission.

"We pursued becoming a Comprehensive Cardiac Center because we saw an



Sutter heart surgeon Dr. Michael Ingram, left, and Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento medical director of cardiovascular services Dr. David Roberts work in the hospital's specialized hybrid surgical suite. Courtesy photo

opportunity, not just to close the gaps that existed but to push ourselves toward true excellence," said Thomas Rhodes, Sutter's Greater Sacramento Division heart and vascular service line executive who championed the certification. "This is one of the most rigorous surveys in healthcare and our cardiovascular team at Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento went well above and beyond, and our patients are the real beneficiaries of that dedication. It's the intent of our leadership team to carry this standard of excellence to sister hospitals across the Sutter Health system." Sutter Medical Center has the most comprehensive cardiac care program in the greater Sacramento region and the only heart transplant program in Northern California outside the Bay Area.

Among its lifesaving services are an adult congenital heart disease program and clinic, which is one of two Northern California

programs accredited by the national Adult Congenital Heart Association, and pediatric heart and vascular services, including heart surgery.

Another lifesaving service is a structural heart disease program with the next generation of devices, including transcatheter aortic valve replacement, also known as TAVR, mitral and tricuspid valve repair, and transcatheter mitral, tricuspid and pulmonary valve replacement. In addition, the program offers innovations for percutaneous atrial septal closure, as well as the Watchman™ device.

Also offered are lifesaving electrophysiology and atrial fibrillation services, including the first regional case with the Affera device for simultaneous mapping and innovative pulse-field ablation for treatment of atrial fibrillation.

Other Sutter lifesaving services are

transplants and cardiac assist devices, including a left ventricular assist device (LVAD), and the Impella heart pump; renal denervation treatment of resistant hypertension; and access to heart and vascular research and clinical trials, testing the latest treatments, devices and surgical approaches.

With a rich history as a pioneer of heart and vascular services that began in 1957, Sutter Medical Center's milestones include successful open-heart surgery, pediatric open-heart surgery, heart transplant, interventional vascular program and pediatric heart catheterization.

"The list of pioneering 'firsts' at Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento and Sutter Health as a system is a true testament to the hard work and commitment to clinical excellence that each of our heart and vascular specialists leads with," said Dr. Steven Hao, Sutter cardiologist and chief medical officer of Sutter's service lines. "Sutter Medical Center is a crucial 'hub' of quality and innovation within our heart and vascular service line, and this recertification represents our commitment to provide patients with the highest-quality care and experience throughout Northern California. We want the best for our patients, and our medical staff works tirelessly to ensure the heart and vascular care they receive means they can live their fullest, longest lives." Mick Doughty, a Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento patient who received a heart transplant in the 1990s, was told he would gain another 10 years of life with the new heart. Now, more than 30 years after the transplant, Doughty aims to beat the current 40-year record and be admitted into Guinness World Records.

For a complete list of the premier heart and vascular services that Sutter offers, visit <https://www.sutterhealth.org/services/heart-and-vascular>. ★

Staying Healthy and Safe Driving in a Heatwave

DiscoverCars.com News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Drivers need to ensure they take precautions this summer, because extreme temperatures have been predicted by the National Weather Service across the U.S. from June to August.

Driving in hot weather means taking some extra steps to make sure your trip is safe and comfortable. DiscoverCars.com, a car rental comparison company, has put together the following tips on

driving during a heatwave to keep you and your car cool during the hottest time of the year.

One of the most important steps to take while driving in a heatwave is to drink plenty of water, as dehydration might impact your ability to drive safely. Before you head out, make sure that your car is stocked up with plenty of water bottles for yourself and all passengers.

Driving in very hot temperatures for an extended amount of time could lead to feeling drowsy. It's also important to take breaks

during longer journeys to rest and allow your car to cool down. Consider planning your rest stops in advance so you know exactly where you'll be stopping off at.

Additionally, in very hot temperatures, your tires could overinflate due to the air expanding inside them. This can wear your tires down, so it's important to monitor the pressure during a heatwave to keep your car safe. Make sure that your tires are inflated properly before and after long trips.

If you know you'll be driving

during a heatwave, you should check your car's cooling systems to make sure everything is working properly. If your coolant level is low, consider filling it up to prevent your engine from overheating.

Placing sunshades in your car windows is an extra step you can take to help keep your car cool during high temperatures. Sunshades block out harsh sunlight, which can heat up your car during the day. This is especially important if you are traveling with anyone who is more vulnerable to

extreme heat, such as children or individuals over age 65.

Sunshades can be placed in the backseat windows for passengers sitting in the back and they can be used in all windows after you park. You can also try parking in shaded areas where you can help keep your car as cool as possible.

"You should also make sure your car is prepared for the hot weather," Buraks said. "Ensure your air conditioning and cooling systems are in good working order, as you'll be reliant on these once the hot weather takes over." ★

ABOUT TOWN

Genealogy Learning Event July 16

The Genealogical Association of Sacramento will hold a special summer event on Wednesday, July 16 at Belle Cooledge library, 5600 S. Land Park Drive, Sacramento. We will hold a learning event with several stations to learn about various genealogy sites to explore for your genealogy expansion.

The doors open at 11:30 a.m. Bring a friend; bring two friends. It is free; there will be prizes and light refreshments. Questions? Call Melanie, 916-383-1221.

Area Museum Experiences

A sampling of must-see and must-do experiences and special activations

offered by local museums include the following:

California Museum – Experience four decades of powerful activist printmaking in “Mission Gráfica: Reflecting a Community in Print,” a striking exhibition that showcases the rich legacy of Mission Gráfica, a renowned community print center in San Francisco. Featuring 42 vibrant screenprints from influential artists such as Carmen Lomas Garza, Rupert Garcia, and Favianna Rodriguez, the exhibit explores themes of cultural celebration, political resistance, and social justice—from gentrification and gender equality to international solidarity. Through Sept. 14.

Details at californiamuseum.org.

California Automobile Museum – Sixty Years of Mustang. A comprehensive history of the Mustang, from when it first hit the roads in 1965 to the current era of Mustangs.

Highlighting stories from prolific names in Mustang history like Saleen, Shelby and Iacocca. Interactive experiences and digital displays showcase the iconic Mustang image over the decades. Details at calautomuseum.org.

California State Railroad Museum—The Chinese Railroad Workers’ Experience offers visitors a view of the Chinese workers who built the western portion of the nation’s first Transcontinental Railroad. Marginalized

by history, the Chinese workers were more than a nameless group of laborers.

Details at californiarailroad.museum.

Elks Lodge 6 Calendar of Events

Elks Lodge 6 Sunday Breakfast, 8:30 am-11 am; \$15 tax included.

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

Martial Arts, Monday 5 p.m.

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

Karaoke Nights, Thursdays and Saturdays, 7 p.m.

Wednesday Night Dinner, 5:30 to 7 p.m. See elks6.net for weekly menu. ★

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WE SUPPORT FIRST RESPONDERS

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Two Graduate Nursing Programs Earn Accreditation

University of California, Davis Health News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - The first week of June marked the start of a new educational journey for students in two recently-accredited graduate programs at the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at University of California, Davis (UC Davis).

They are members of the Class of 2025 for the University of California Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) Certificate Program and the Class of 2028 Doctor of Nursing Practice - Family Nurse Practitioner (DNP-FNP) Degree Program.

Both programs earned full accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) Board of Commissioners following a site visit and formal review in fall 2024. In addition, the California Board of Registered Nursing approved the School of Nursing's programs, affirming they meet state-specific licensing and practice requirements.

Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education accreditation is a trusted mark of quality for graduate nursing programs. It confirms the program meets national standards, qualifies students for financial-aid and licensure, and enhances its reputation with employers and peers. It also reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in nursing education.

"This accreditation reflects what we value most, an environment where faculty and staff are deeply



Primary care is delivered by family nurse practitioners for all areas of California. Photo courtesy of University of California, Davis Health

invested in student success, where academic excellence is the standard and where every graduate is empowered to be a change agent in health care," said School of Nursing Dean Stephen Cavanagh. "It's not just about meeting benchmarks. It's about transforming lives and advancing the future of how and where care is delivered to meet the needs of California and beyond."

Primary care is delivered by Family Nurse Practitioners for all areas of California.

Launched in 2022, The Doctor of Nursing Practice - Family Nurse Practitioner program marked the first Doctor of Nursing Practice program at University of California, Davis. Faculty developed the curriculum from the ground up, weaving into every facet the elements of leadership, innovative clinical practice and health equity. The

result: a new curriculum that actively develops meaningful solutions to provider shortages in rural and urban areas.

The hybrid program combines distance-based education with four on-campus immersions across three years. The inaugural cohort graduated June 12, prepared to implement evidence-based innovations and develop expertise in their clinical practice.

Doctor of Nursing Practice program director Charleen Singh suggested that faculty have learned as much from the first students as those soon-to-be graduates have learned through their coursework.

"As a result, we've created not only a program that we are extremely proud of but one that is a rewarding journey that starts with exploring the Central Valley and ends with the DNP symposium to celebrate their

projects with colleagues, family and friends," said Singh. "I often asked myself if I am leading the team in the right direction to fulfill the mission of the school and meet the vision of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. As the inaugural cohort graduates, I believe we did."

Inaugural graduate Samiksha Dhakal credits the program with transforming her perspective as a nurse and expanding how she sees her future impact.

"This program has been a truly transformative experience, really life-changing," said Dhakal. "This program helped to equip me with the advanced leadership skills, critical thinking abilities and expertise to apply these evidence-based solutions in clinical practice."

Mental care access has expanded through the Nursing Practitioner certification.

While residents in many areas of the state lack access to primary care services, more than half of Californians living with mental illness do not receive the psychiatric care they need. To answer the call, nursing schools at University of California, Davis; University of California, Los Angeles; University of California, Irvine; and University of California, San Francisco launched the multicampus, hybrid mental-health certificate program to prepare nurse practitioners across California as psychiatric mental-health specialists.

The one-year program, which welcomed its first class in 2021, grew out of a course of study developed by University of California, San Francisco. University of California, Davis became the administrative home of the program in 2023 with a focus on expanding the

impact on people in desperate need of mental health services and identifying ways to expand the curriculum and placement opportunities.

"This accreditation marks more than a milestone," said Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner program director Lynda Creighton-Wong. "It reflects our intentional decision to lead an established program and reimagine its potential. We saw an urgent need in our communities and made it our mission to reach those too often left behind. Accreditation affirms that we're on the right path in building a program rooted in equity, innovation and real-world impact."

More than 120 students from across the state have graduated from the program, including 30 from the first cohort program since University of California, Davis assumed its operations.

Among those graduates is Roxanne Abella. She credits the faculty, preceptors and curriculum with not only preparing her to become a psychiatric mental health provider but a leader in health care.

"Coming from an underserved background and having worked as a nurse practitioner in resource-limited communities, many aspects of this framework initially felt intuitive," said Abella. "However, the program expanded my approach, not just as a clinician but as someone committed to equity, collaboration and lasting impact."

Accreditation for both programs lasts for five years. The next on-site evaluation will take place in fall 2029. ★

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SUN Bucks Returns for Summer 2025

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Summer break is a season of sunshine and fun but for many Sacramento County families, it also brings a food access challenge.

That's why California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is bringing back SUN Bucks, also called Summer-EBT, this summer. Eligible families receive \$120 per eligible child to help fill the meal gap when schools are closed.

Children who qualify for free or reduced-price school meals through a school meal application or an Alternative Income Form, CalFresh, CalWORKs or Medi-Cal, are automatically enrolled. You don't need to do anything to sign up.

SUN Bucks provides \$40 per month for food in June, July and August (\$120 total).

Children will automatically get SUN Bucks if they are 6 to 18 years old and get CalFresh, CalWORKs or Medi-Cal (below 185% Federal



Children who qualify for free or reduced-price school meals through a school meal application or an Alternative Income Form, CalFresh, CalWORKs or Medi-Cal, are automatically enrolled in the California Department of Social Services' SUN Bucks program this summer. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

Poverty Level).

Anyone from babies to 22 years old, attending schools that are part of National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast Programs and are approved for free or reduced-price meals, will also automatically receive SUN Bucks.

Check with your child's

school to make sure your free or reduced-price meal application or Alternative Income Form is on file.

Children who are attending Head Start, experiencing homelessness, living in foster care or part of a migrant family are also automatically eligible.

If your family is eligible,

a SUN Bucks S-EBT card will be mailed to your home. You do not need to fill out an application. You will get one new SUN Bucks card for each eligible child.

You can use SUN Bucks just like a debit card to buy food such as fruits, vegetables, meat, whole grains

and dairy at grocery stores, farmers' markets and other places that accept CalFresh EBT benefits.

The state is issuing SUN Bucks cards by mail in stages by last name. If your child has not received a SUN Bucks card in the mail or you have questions about how

to obtain a card, visit the California Department of Social Services SUN Bucks website at cdss.ca.gov/sun-bucks or call 1-800-560-0976 for more information.

To learn more about SUN Bucks, and if your child is eligible, visit ha.saccounty.gov. ★

Scams Target Customers of PG&E

Continued from page 1
Placer 75; Sacramento 270; San Joaquin 130; Shasta 32; Sutter 40; Tehama six; and Yuba 43.

Business customers are also not immune from scam attempts. In fact, PG&E has received 250 reports of scams targeting small and medium-sized businesses this year and these attempts frequently

occur during busy business hours when scammers hope to catch unsuspecting victims while they are distracted or stressed.

Scammers can be convincing and often target those who are most vulnerable, including senior citizens and low-income communities. They also aim their scams at small business owners during

busy customer service hours. However, with the right information, customers can learn to detect and report these predatory scams by visiting www.pge.com/scams or by calling 1-833-500-SCAM.

Scammers are able to create authentic-looking 800 numbers which appear on your phone display. The numbers don't lead back to

PG&E if called back, however, so if you have doubts, hang up and either log into your account at pge.com to confirm your bill details or call PG&E at 1-833-500-SCAM. If customers feel that they are in physical danger, they should call 911.

Signing up for an online account at pge.com is another safeguard. Not only can customers log in to check their balance and payment history, they

can sign up for recurring payments, paperless billing and helpful alerts. Customers can also call PG&E Customer Service at 800-743-5000 to confirm their bill details and current amount due.

Customers who suspect that they have been victims of fraud or who feel threatened during contact with these scammers should contact local law enforcement. The Federal Trade Commission's website

is also a good source of information about how to protect personal information. For more information about scams, visit pge.com/scams and/or <https://consumer.ftc.gov/scams>.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company is a combined natural gas and electric utility serving more than 16-million people across 70,000 square miles in Northern and Central California. For more information, visit pge.com. ★

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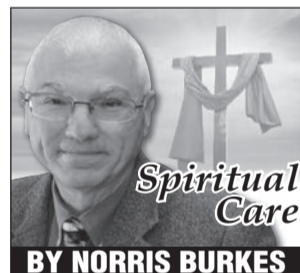
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Chaplain Offers ... Dating Advice?



BY NORRIS BURKES

Are you familiar with a business named Chispa?

No, I'm not talking about Chispa Project, the nonprofit my daughter Sara founded in 2015 to establish children's libraries in Honduras. Just now, they are working on library #100. No small feat for their small but powerful Honduran team.

But the Chispa I'm referring to is the #1 Latino dating app. According to their website, they are "Fluent in Amor." This Chispa claims to have made "the perfect dating app for single Latina women and single Latino men."

"Chispa" is Spanish for "spark," which is why both the dating app and a literacy organization chose the name. Both organizations are appropriately named. After all, your love life and the books you read can radically light up your life and change your future.

I only mention Chispa, the dating app, because Chispa Project, the non-profit, takes many misdirected phone calls from lovelorn folks asking:

"Why is my account blocked?"

"Why isn't SHE calling me?"

"I haven't found anyone, can I get a refund?"

The incredulous part isn't how they find Sara's number in the first place, but how crazy-certain they are that they've reached the right number -- no matter how many times Sara tells them otherwise.

She's tried clarifying her

opening line to avoid confusion: "Hello, this is Sara at Chispa Project, the non-profit in Honduras!"

"Hi, I'm trying to access my account and..."

"Ooh, so sorry!" Sara says in perfect Spanish, "You've reached Chispa Project, the non-profit in Honduras."

"I really need to get on your site ASAP..." insists the caller.

"Sorry, we're not related to the Chispa dating app. Wrong number."

They beg her, "Can't you connect me to the right person?"

Listening to Sara patiently explain -- again and again -- that she's not tech support for a dating app reminds me of how often Jesus had to clarify his mission for those who misunderstood him. People sought a political savior or miracle worker, but Jesus kept emphasizing a different purpose.

Despite all the parables, analogies, metaphors, and symbols Jesus used, he was clear and repetitive about one thing in particular—love—the chispa that lights everything else.

When he said to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind," and to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39), he pointed to the fire that kindles true connection, purpose, and transformation.

Like a single chispa that can ignite a flame, love sets everything in motion—whether it's changing a life through a children's book, finding a life partner, or growing closer to God by following Jesus' example.

To be clear, this columnist does not endorse the dating app in question. I'm already locked into a lifetime subscription with my wife, Becky.

It's not the fleeting spark

of romance I'm looking for, but a different kind of spark: one that ignites compassion, healing, and humility. These days, I find myself affirming the love that kindles true connection, purpose, and transformation -- like Jesus taught.

How can we all become more fluent in the amor that demonstrates empathy? An amor that humbles us across differences?

In Greek, this type of amor is described as agape—a love that is unconditional, selfless, sacrificial. It's the choice to love regardless of circumstances or feelings.

In English, it might seem that Chispa, the app, and Chispa Project, the non-profit, offer the same thing—a spark of love. Make no mistake, both are important and necessary, but they are different.

Chispa, the app, offers a chance at romantic love. Chispa Project, the non-profit, encourages the agape love for our neighbors.

I keep telling Sara that she should charge a minimum donation for each of the crisscrossed Chispa calls she gets, but she always mutters something about honesty and goofy dad ideas.

But now the choice is yours—what will you do to spark agape in whatever Chispa you end up calling? What chispa will you ignite in your community?

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.

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. ★

Sprouts Brings July Fourth Fun to Families



Members of the Land Park community took part in the art activity.



Children had fun painting fireworks.



Children created Fourth of July art at the event hosted at Sprouts Farmers Market.

By MPG Staff

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sprouts Farmers Market Store No. 267 hosted a Fourth of July event, bringing a bang to the Land Park community by giving back to the families that shop at the store.

According to Becca Wong, Sprouts Store spokesperson, there were several families in



The Sprouts Farmers Market located in the Land Park neighborhood put on a free event for the community on July 4. Courtesy photos

attendance and more than 50 children at the event.

"They had so much fun with Julie, our event coordinator," said Wong. "She had put together an art event for them to do; the kids loved it."

Children at the event received goodies such as Fourth of July light bracelets to celebrate Independence Day.

This event was hosted outside of the Sprouts Farmers Market Store at

4408 Del Rio Road in Land Park.

Wong said that they cannot wait for their next event, and that their store/team are "truly committed" to the Land Park community. ★



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