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Lost, Found and Returned

Local Kayaker behind 'American River Lost & Found'



Karl Bly, a Sacramento native and kayaker, runs the Facebook page American River Lost & Found. With more than 36,000 followers, he has recovered thousands of items and returned most of them. Photos courtesy of American River Lost & Found

By Idaly Valencia

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Going to the river to beat the heat is a summertime tradition for many Sacramento-area residents. Whether rafting, canoeing or swimming, local waterways attract crowds looking to have a fun way to cool off.

But losing a wallet, phone or any personal belonging to the river can

quickly end the fun.

For Sacramento native Karl Bly, recovering those lost items has become a mission that is part compassion, part hobby. He takes requests from individuals searching for belongings and posts daily online in hopes of reuniting items to the owners.

"It's such a fun addiction to find things out in the river, and then it just

adds so much more when you continue to search and find the owners," Bly said. "It's a whole new level of adventure."

Bly's connection to the American River goes back to 1972, when his family moved to Carmichael. He was 5 years old, Bly said, when he started kayaking and snorkeling.

"My dad would get our whole

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City Moves Ahead on Tiny Homes for Seniors



City of Sacramento News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - During the City of Sacramento's Sept. 16 homelessness workshop, Department of Community Response Director Brian Pedro presented the city council with updates on several strategies for bolstering the city's homelessness response, including progress reports on new Safe Camping and Safe Parking sites.

But it was the "Micro-Communities for Seniors" program – which was initially approved at an April 29 homelessness workshop – that garnered the most attention and feedback from councilmembers and others.

To be more cost-effective and client-centered, Pedro previously recommended the city pivot away from large, congregate homeless shelters and toward small communities of tiny homes supporting specialized populations, such as seniors ages 55 and older.

"The city has made major progress toward providing safe shelter and connections to supportive services, but there are still many people in our community who need a safe place to stay," said Pedro, who also leads the city's Incident Management Team responding to homelessness. "Offering seniors the option to move into a micro-community creates a dual benefit: It provides them with stable interim housing and frees up space in our emergency shelters."

Placed on vacant city-owned parcels, these communities would contain no more than 40 units. Each tiny home would be equipped with electricity, heating and air conditioning. Other amenities would include bathrooms, showers and a kitchen facility, 24/7 onsite security, internet, laundry, storage and connections to supportive

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Old Sacramento's Third Thursday Recap

Story and photos by Abbey Wicks

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - On Thursday, Sept. 21, this month's installment of Old Sacramento Waterfront's Third Thursday series took place along the bustling waterfront. Several businesses opened their doors from 4 to 8 p.m. for live demonstrations and free activities.

The Parliament, a wine bar and tasting lounge that opened in Old Sacramento this August, participated in Third Thursday for the second time, offering a crafty wine cork decorating session. Katie Grant, manager of The Parliament, said

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Valeria Cantor and Shruti Adusumilli pose with their decorated wine corks at The Parliament.



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Lost, Found and Returned

Continued from Page 1
family out on the river," Bly said. "He would go scuba diving in the river looking for things and I would follow his air bubbles around in a canoe."

At 10, Bly found a pair of cut-off shorts with a wallet and a California Highway Patrol badge inside.

"I still remember his name, Blaine Pectol," Bly recalled.

Without social media, Bly relied on the yellow pages to track down the officer. After a few calls, Bly reached the right family.

"It was exciting for me to go through that whole process as a young kid and ultimately returning a wallet to a CHP officer made me feel I was? an important part of the community," Bly said.

From then on, Bly said, he made it a point to return anything with a name attached that he found while diving. Social media starting in the what year or so initially gave Bly a way to share discoveries with friends but his reputation for finding lost items quickly grew.

One day, friends alerted him to a lost kayak posted in a community group. The next morning, Bly said, he went out and located it in just 10 minutes. That moment became the turning point for launching the American River Lost & Found Facebook page in 2018.

The page has since grown to more than 36,000 followers, with members actively helping reunite items by sharing posts and commenting.

The most common finds, Bly said, are sunglasses with hundreds, if not thousands, each year. Phones are the most valuable frequent recovery, with 178 phones returned so far in 2025.

Bly has also retrieved unusual items, such as three prosthetic legs.

"Social media is just invaluable to get something like that returned," Bly said.

Some of Bly's finds are more whimsical. A recent request led Bly to recover a lost mermaid tail, which he successfully returned to its owner.

But other items that seem ordinary often hold deep personal meaning, a part of Bly's work that stands out to him.

He recalled returning a sticker-covered water bottle lost a year earlier. Each sticker represented a vacation spot, marking trips taken by the owner and his girlfriend, beginning



An American River visitor holds his phone and an American River Lost & Found card after Sacramento native and kayaker Karl Bly returned the item in early September. Photos courtesy of American River Lost & Found



Karl Bly's efforts, he said, have had a "radiating effect," inspiring others on the river to hand him lost items or join the search, creating a sense of camaraderie along the American River.



The sticker-covered water bottle, found in July 2024, was returned to its owner, who told Karl Bly of American River Lost & Found that it chronicled his relationship, marking trips he and his girlfriend had taken together.

with the one where the boyfriend first told her he loved her.

"Every place they went all over the world, they put these stickers on it; it was kind of a history of their relationship," Bly said. "Little stories like that are so common. People thought their things were gone forever, things very meaningful to them and

not worth much to anyone else."

Bly holds onto items that might take longer to claim but clothing left unclaimed after about a week is washed and donated.

Summer is Bly's busiest season, when he receives daily requests. Most of his work is along the American River and Lake Natoma, where Bly has even had

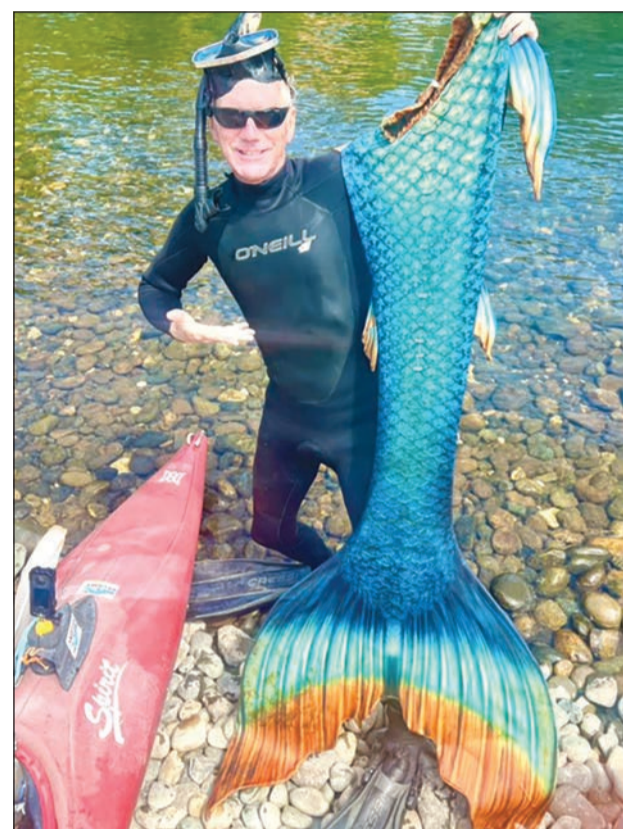
other local divers assist.

"It's just a fun hobby to go out and find things," Bly said. "And it's so much better when you can hand something back to somebody and have them in tears, 'Oh my God, I can't believe I got this back.'"

Outside of diving, Bly manages rental properties, which gives him more free time after a 20-year career



Along with wallets, common finds for Karl Bly include sunglasses, phones, keys, speakers, fishing lures, jewelry, vapes and scuba gear.



Karl Bly is pictured with a mermaid tail he found while diving in the river in August.

in various entrepreneurial ventures. In his later years, Bly joked, he has been "flexing his time," allowing him to dedicate more hours to the hobby.

For river-goers, Bly's top tip is simple: "Number one, if you're bringing something valuable in water, make sure it floats." He also recommends phone protectors, securing bags in kayaks or canoes and straps for prescription glasses.

Bly documents his days on the river with photos and videos, focusing on wholesome or funny interactions for his social media page.

But his work goes beyond returning lost items. He regularly picks up trash, helps stranded rafters and identifies safety hazards.

"Since I'm getting these messages daily during summer of where people are wiping out and losing their stuff, I also have kind of an overview of where the dangerous spots are," Bly said.

About two years ago, Bly noticed a pipe crossing the river that was causing wipeouts. He posted about it online, and after a local news outlet published a story, the pipe was removed.

"Found out it was a decommissioned pipe. A few months later, I got a

message from the lawyers saying, 'We want to let you know that we will be removing that pipe because of your activism,'" Bly said.

At times, Bly's work can take a more serious turn.

"I spend so much time on the river, I wind up helping people in one way, shape or form or another almost every time I'm out there," Bly said. "I've been in those situations many, many times."

Bly noted that he and other divers have occasionally assisted in recovery efforts for drowning victims.

"We've actually attached buoys to drowning victims in the river so the Sac Metro Fire Department can come in, pull up the buoy to the rope and continue recovery," Bly said. "Since we know the river so well and know where all these little spots are, knowledge and skill come in handy sometimes when it's needed."

Despite the dangers, Bly keeps his page positive. Bly said his efforts have had a "radiating effect," inspiring others on the river to hand him lost items or join in the search, creating a sense of comradery along the American River.

To learn more, visit the American River Lost & Found page at @ARKayaker on Facebook. ★

Creating Community Connections: The Walk for Apraxia

ApraxiaKids News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The 2025 Greater Sacramento Area Walk for Apraxia will be held on Oct. 4 at McKinley Park to benefit children with apraxia of speech. The event begins at 10 a.m. with a ceremony starting at 11 a.m. Registration is free and open to all members of the community! Come out and join us to celebrate our Apraxia Stars, meet new friends and enjoy fun activities.



The 2025 Greater Sacramento Area Walk for Apraxia will be held on Oct. 4 at McKinley Park. Photo courtesy of ApraxiaKids.

who are diagnosed with apraxia. The day includes family-friendly activities, a ceremony and a short, inclusive group walk to raise awareness.

The funds raised through the 2025 Walk for Apraxia benefit Apraxia Kids, the leading nonprofit that works to strengthen the support systems in the lives of children with childhood apraxia.

For more information on how you can join the Walk for Apraxia, please visit apraxia-kids.org/walk-for-apraxia-splash-page. ★

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Old Sacramento's Third Thursday Recap

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Third Thursday has been a fantastic concept for Old Sacramento.

"I love that more things are happening during the day," said Grant, as The Parliament is only open until 7 p.m. on weekdays and 8 p.m. on weekends. Old Sacramento typically brings in more of a night-life scene, Grant explained.

Although fewer than half of people coming in are there for Third Thursday, they end up interested in what's going on and want to participate, Grant said.

"All of the events are free, so I love that to death," she said.

Another participating business, Cerealism, a vibrant dessert bar and café, offered a free class on creating unique mocktails. By 6 p.m., several tables were filled in the Captain Crunch Island Beach Club room, decorated with surfboards and palm trees, with individuals of a variety of ages learning how to make fun, alcohol-free drinks.



Participants in Cerealism's mocktail-making class pose with salt-rimmed cups.

Third Thursday also offers free opportunities to see art and support our local artists. This time around, a zine-making

class was held at Atrium 916 along with local artist Cat Xia's exhibit titled "Goodbye, Humans. Hello, Tulip."

Xia's work explores climate change and a post-human world through cute, calming and thought-provoking art and



Cat Xia's art exhibit, "Goodbye, Humans. Hello, Tulip" was featured as part of Atrium 916's Third Thursday activities.

will be displayed at Atrium 916 through Oct. 4.

Third Thursday's "Learn from Locals" slogan proves to be true, with businesses offering a variety of demonstrations from charm bracelet making to brewing the best cup of coffee at home.

The biggest roadblock to the public taking full advantage of the series? According to Grant, it's the weather. August's Third Thursday brought high heat, and skies were

gloomy for September's date.

Third Thursday is set to continue through Halloween and the holiday season, with businesses such as The Parliament leaning into holiday-themed activities. October's Third Thursday is set to take place Oct. 16 at the waterfront.

For the full list of businesses participating in Third Thursday in October, visit oldsacramento.com/post/third-thursdays. ★

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(Combo Pizza Extra \$4)

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(Combo Pizza Extra \$4)

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24 oz
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\$6.99/ea

WEEKLY MEAT SPECIALS

Rump/Bottom Round Roast Boneless
\$5.69/lb

Beef T-Bone Steak
\$4.99/lb

Chicken Drumstick
89¢/lb

Pork Loin Roast Boneless
\$2.49/lb

Pork Ribs Country Style
\$2.79/lb

Pork Loin Chops
\$2.69/lb

WEEKLY HALAL SPECIALS

Chicken Drumstick
99¢/lb

New Zealand Lamb Shoulder Chop Bone-In
\$4.99/lb

Rump/Bottom Round Roast Boneless
\$5.79/lb

Advertised items good at KP International Market - Rancho Cordova location ONLY. We reserve the right to LIMIT QUANTITIES. Not responsible for TYPOGRAPHICAL OR PICTORIAL ERRORS. All advertised items are SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY. Sorry NO RAINCHECKS. PRICES EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 24 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2025.

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89¢/lb

Russet Potato 10 lb Bag
\$1.99/bag

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99¢/ea

Organic Celery
99¢/ea

Pomegranate
\$1.49/lb

Peeled Garlic 5 lb Bag
\$19.99/bag

Wood Ear Mushroom 6 oz
\$2.29/ea

Shallot Onion
\$1.39/lb

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\$2.99/ea
+CRV
V8 Tropical & Berry Blend Juice 64 f.oz

REG. \$3.99
\$2.69/ea
Swanson Chicken Broths 32 oz

REG. \$8.99
\$2.39/ea
Dot's Pretzels 10 bags 10 x 1 oz

REG. \$6.99
\$5.99/ea
+CRV
Clamato Tomato Cocktails 64 f.oz

REG. \$8.99
\$3.99/ea
Kellogg's Fruit Loops Family Size 16.6 oz

ASIAN GROCERY

REG. \$2.49
\$1.19/ea
Twin Lion Taiwan Style Bean Thread 10.5 oz

REG. \$6.19
\$2.99/ea
Lee Kum Kee Premium Oyster Sauce 11.5 oz

REG. \$7.99
\$3.99/ea
Argentina Corned Beef 25% Less Sodium 12 oz

REG. \$3.99
\$2.49/ea
Piatto Cheese Flavor Potato Chips 7.48 oz

REG. \$5.49
\$4.29/ea
Kapal Api Cappuccino 2 in 1 Coffee 7.9, 9.5 oz

EUROPEAN GROCERY

REG. \$8.99
\$5.99/ea
Deep Dahi Whole Milk & Low Fat Yogurt 5 lb

REG. \$4.99
\$3.79/ea
Zergut Giant Beans in Tomato Sauce 550 gr

REG. \$6.99
\$3.99/ea
Uvelka Buckwheat 1.5 kg

REG. \$5.99
\$4.99/ea
Babkini Sunflower Seeds 500 gr

REG. \$3.99
\$2.99/ea
Halal Fruit Jelly 12 oz

EUROPEAN DELI

REG. \$10.19/LB
\$9.19/lb
Columbus Black Forest Ham

REG. \$13.19/LB
\$12.19/lb
Hickory Smoked turkey Breast

REG. \$6.19/LB
\$5.19/lb
Green Olives Stuffed with Jalapeno

REG. \$5.89/LB
\$4.89/lb
Green Olives Stuffed with Queen

FROZEN & FISH DEPT

REG. \$6.99/EA
\$4.99/ea
Masago Seasoned Capelin Roe 170 g

HOUSEWARE

REG. \$10.99
\$8.99/ea
ELECTRIC RICE COOKER (6-CUPS)
ELECTRIC RICE COOKER (10-CUPS)
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KAIZEN WOK PAN 30 CM
\$16.99/ea

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Restored Locomotive on Display in Historic Roundhouse

California State Railroad Museum News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - In partnership with Friends of No. 9, the California State Railroad Museum is excited to announce the beautifully restored No. 9 steam locomotive and companion exhibit are now on display inside the museum's historic Roundhouse. No. 9 is the only surviving locomotive of the Mount Tamalpais Scenic Railway, a tourist railroad in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that enabled tourists to leave the city and enjoy the scenic beauty of Mount Tamalpais and, later, Muir Woods.

In addition to seeing No. 9 up close, museum visitors can learn more about the history of the Mount Tamalpais Scenic Railway and the prized locomotive by watching a special 8-minute video that is part of the exhibit.

The Mount Tamalpais Scenic Railway, built in 1896, was known as the "Crookedest Railroad in the World" based on its 8.2-mile route with 281 curves that climbed from Mill Valley (70 feet) to the summit (2,353 feet). At the top, visitors enjoyed sweeping views of San Francisco and the Pacific as they danced and dined at the Tavern of Tamalpais. Despite its popularity, rising automobile travel, mounting debt and a 1929 wildfire ended operations by 1930.

The Heisler locomotive No. 9 dates to 1921 when it was purchased by the Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway of Mill Valley to operate on the rails of the scenic tourist railway. In 1924, the locomotive was sold and spent the next two and a half decades working for lumber companies in Siskiyou and Humboldt counties.

In 1953, the Pacific Lumber Company bought the locomotive for display

next to its new museum in Scotia, California. The locomotive was later put up for auction in 2018 when a group of dedicated rail fans joined together to raise funds to secure No. 9 and begin restoration. The dedicated group was steadfast in their focus to return No. 9 to its Mt. Tamalpais roots and viewed it as the "last piece of a lost era."

Carefully researched, the meticulous restoration work began in 2019 and was completed this year. The historic locomotive remains an important piece of logging, tourist and rail history.

"The restoration of the No. 9 represents the very best impulses of the preservation community," said Dr. Ty Smith, Director of the California State Railroad Museum. "Although the locomotive won't steam passengers up Mt. Tamalpais, it serves as a window into a remarkable episode in California History. We're grateful to



Restored No. 9 Steam Locomotive is on display through next January at the California State Railroad Museum. Restorations on the historic locomotive with California roots began in 2019 and were completed this year. Photo courtesy of California State Railroad Museum/Kim Whitfield

be able to share in telling this important story."

The prized No. 9 steam locomotive and companion exhibit will remain on display in the museum's

Roundhouse until next January. Daily viewing hours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Admission to the California State Railroad

Museum is \$12 for adults, \$6 for youth (ages 6 to 17) and free for children 5 and under.

For more, visit www.californiarailroad.museum. ★

Zoological Society Submits Expansion Request to City

City of Sacramento News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento Zoological Society has submitted a request to the City of Sacramento to expand the footprint of the Sacramento Zoo's iconic Land Park home. The expanded footprint incorporates two parcels: a 1.4-acre parcel on the northern boundary of the existing zoo, and a 4.4-acre parcel across Land Park Drive from the zoo, which

was previously used for the pony ride operation and has since been vacant.

The proposal expands the zoo's current 14.3-acre footprint to 20.1 acres, and represents a 40 percent increase in the size of the zoo: the largest expansion of the zoo since the 1960s.

"We have always known that the zoo needs more space to meet the needs of our animals, support our mission and provide the experiences our guests expect and deserve," said Elizabeth

Stallard, president of the Sacramento Zoological Society's Board of Trustees.

"We are thrilled to be working with the city on this effort, and can't wait to plan for the zoo's future right here."

Mayor Kevin McCarty and Councilmember Rick Jennings echoed the benefits of the expansion.

"The Sacramento Zoo has served this community for nearly 100 years and is a beloved Sacramento institution," noted

McCarty. "This expansion and partnership with the city will make sure the zoo is here for the next 100 years."

Jennings added: "The Sacramento Zoo is one of the treasures of District 7, our city and our region. I am so excited to see the expansion plans for the Sacramento Zoo. Turning the former pony ride area into new space for the zoo will create even more experiences for families and visitors to enjoy. I'm proud to stand alongside

the zoo as a partner, and grateful for the way it continues to strengthen and connect our community."

Land Park residents are also excited about this proposal, and about making it possible for the zoo to commit to staying in Land Park. Kris Rogers, president of the Land Park Community Association, confirmed:

"The zoo is a wonderful neighbor; we are excited to see it stay and we are looking forward to working with the zoo and the



city to make that possible." Anthony Jackson, president of the South Land Park Neighborhood Association, stated: "As a South Land Park resident and community leader, I wholly support the proposed expansion of this treasured community asset." ★

City Moves Ahead on Tiny Homes for Seniors

Continued from page 1

services. Residents will be asked to contribute up to 30 percent of their monthly earnings toward program costs after a 90-day grace period.

Utilizing prefabricated units and an on-demand service model, these micro-communities are far less expensive to build, operate and sustain when compared to congregate shelters, Pedro said, saving the city millions of dollars and enabling it to help more people.

The city currently funds 18 shelter sites with a total capacity of 1,375 beds at an annual operating cost of \$28 million. With reduced state funding anticipated this year through Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) grants, Sacramento faces the challenge of expanding shelter and housing options while working with fewer resources.

The city council in 2023 granted the city manager the authority to site new facilities serving people experiencing homelessness, and the locations for the first four micro-communities were announced at the workshop. They are:

3511 Arena Blvd. in Council District 1
6360 25th St. in Council District 5
2461 Gardendale Road in Council District 8

A site under review in Council District 7
The city has developed the following FAQ to better help the public understand what micro-communities are and how they will operate.

Q: What are micro-communities and who will they serve?

A micro-community is a city-operated interim housing program where stable people 55 years and older who are currently staying in our emergency shelters, on a fixed income – and cannot find housing they can afford – can live for an extended period of time.

Q: How will micro-communities work?

Placed on vacant city parcels, these communities will contain no more than 40 micro-home units. Each micro-home will be equipped with electricity, heating and air conditioning. Other amenities will include bathrooms, showers and a



Micro-community residents will be asked to contribute up to 30 percent of their monthly earnings toward program costs after a 90-day grace period. Photo courtesy of City of Sacramento

kitchen facility, 24/7 onsite security, internet, laundry and connections to supportive services.

Q: Why is the city of Sacramento focusing on serving seniors in its micro-communities?

Seniors are one of the fastest growing homeless populations. In Sacramento, 22% of our homeless population is 55 and older. Many seniors are on a fixed income and cannot afford market-rate housing. They often end up in city homeless shelters when they could live independently if there were an affordable option for them.

Q: How many micro-communities is the city currently planning?

The city of Sacramento is currently planning four micro-community sites, in Council Districts 1, 5, 7 and 8.

Q: How will people be selected to participate in the micro-community program?

People will be referred into the program by the Department of Community Response. Participants will need to have an income to participate in the program and have met criteria demonstrating they would be successful living independently in a micro-community. There

will be no "walk-up" intakes to the micro-communities.

Q: Are people being asked to use part of their income to stay in a micro-community?

Yes, participants would pay 30% of their income per month after an initial 90-day grace period. The city believes that paying a program fee encourages self-sufficiency, promotes dignity and increases program sustainability.

Q: Will there be 24-hour security and supportive services at micro-communities?

Yes, there will be 24-hour security at the micro-communities. Daytime visiting hours will be established, and no overnight guests will be allowed. Bag checks will be required.

In addition, there will be a Good Neighbor Policy, and caseworkers will be in the micro-communities daily, offering connection to all supportive services currently available.

Q: Will pets be allowed at micro-communities?

Yes, a maximum of 40 animals will be allowed per micro-community site. Pets must be registered, vaccinated and spayed/

neutered (provided free). Pets will be limited to two small or one medium dog or cat. Dogs must be leashed at all times.

Q: Have other cities established their own micro-communities?

Elements such as the program fee make Sacramento's micro-community program distinctive; however, cities across California have launched transitional or interim housing programs using pre-manufactured units, including San Jose, San Francisco and Santa Barbara.

Q: What units will be used to create the micro-communities?

The city is planning to use pre-manufactured 120-square-foot micro-homes in its micro-communities. Bathrooms, showers and laundry will be located in various areas of the community so that no one is further than a few steps away. Communities will also include gathering space, gardens and dog-run areas.

In collaboration with its partners, the city continues to provide services, support and solutions in our community. Visit cityofsacramento.gov/city-manager/Homeless-Coordination to learn more about the city's comprehensive response to the homelessness crisis. ★

From This Tragedy, More Voices Must Rise

Silencing one voice cannot end the conversation. It must awaken a chorus of many

By Hector Barajas,
California Globe

Charlie Kirk's death on September 10 was more than a personal tragedy; it struck at the very heart of free speech in America. For years, he had become a modern symbol of debate culture, a figure willing to put himself in front of hostile audiences and say, "Let's talk."

In a time when disagreement often leads to shouting, shaming, or silencing, Kirk chose dialogue — once so common it wasn't even considered special in America, but now it seems like a lost art.

Kirk built his career not by hiding from critics but by meeting them head-on. In person, not from the safety of an online echo chamber. On college campuses across the country, he welcomed tough questions from students who often opposed everything he represented. He listened, he argued, and he stood his ground with facts, critical thinking, and a depth of knowledge rare for any citizen, especially someone his age.

It was not about demanding agreement but about proving that open dialogue matters more than uniformity of thought. He even sat with California Governor Gavin Newsom; while the two disagreed on most issues, they still managed to show millions of viewers what respectful debate



Charlie Kirk and his wife, Erika, speak together at an event in Texas in 2025. Photo courtesy of CA Globe

could look like.

That choice to engage with opponents was no small act. In today's culture, it is easier to cancel, shame, or attack than to have a real conversation. Too many people treat disagreement as something to shut down and silence. Kirk refused to play that game. He believed the only way to sharpen your own argument was to test it against the strongest case from the other side. In that way, he upheld the older American tradition of free speech, where ideas meet head-on and the best argument stands.

His assassination is therefore not only the silencing of one

man, but also an assault on the heart and soul of America. When violence is used to end debate, free speech itself becomes the casualty. We cannot accept a future where the price of speaking out is fear for your life.

There is also a broader warning in this tragedy. Political violence doesn't stop with one person. Once it becomes acceptable to kill or threaten a voice because you disagree with it, the door opens to silence anyone.

Today it was Charlie Kirk. Tomorrow it could be an elected official, a professor, a journalist, a union organizer, or a student. Free speech is not a partisan value. It is the foundation of

democracy, and without it, every other right grows weaker.

Charlie Kirk forced people to think, respond, and defend their beliefs. He showed that disagreement doesn't have to lead to dehumanization. He showed that you can argue passionately and still see the humanity in the person you're debating.

Perhaps even more troubling than the cancer consuming the art of civil discourse is that Charlie Kirk's underlying message was essentially one of love and respect for our country, our fellow citizens, our values, our history, and our future generations.

There is a poignant video clip

circulating online of George Carlin, the sardonic comedian and social critic, who framed assassination this way:

"It's interesting to notice who it is we assassinate. You know who it is — it's always people who told us to live together in harmony and try to love one another. Jesus. Gandhi. Lincoln. John Kennedy. Bobby Kennedy. Martin Luther King. Medgar Evers. Malcolm X. John Lennon. They all said try to live together peacefully . . ."

Sadly, we've experienced too many of these tragic moments in American life. Kirk's assassination is yet another.

But like other moments in history, this tragedy can be a turning point. The best way to honor Kirk's legacy is to refuse silence. We must keep speaking, listening, and debating, even when it is uncomfortable. Fear cannot be allowed to dictate our voices. The future of free speech, and the restoration of respect and love for this nation and for our fellow countrymen, depends on it.

Hector Barajas is a communications strategist who advises companies, associations, and campaigns on public affairs and policy issues. He is the founder of Amplify360 Inc., a strategic communications firm, and a frequent commentator on politics, legislation, and Latino issues in English and Spanish-language media. ★

Please, Conversation Not Assassination

By Dr. Glenn Mollette

Charlie Kirk was a man who had opinions and vocalized them. He believed in free speech. He also believed in the right of free speech for those who disagreed with him. In his Turning Point rallies, he gave untold numbers of people the opportunity to express their opinions and to debate him. He respectfully gave each person the time to state their case on whatever the subject. Charlie was adamant, profound and articulated strong convictions.

Sadly, a deranged 22-year-old man from Utah took Charlie's life. It has been reported that the gunman had previously stated at a family dinner that he thought Kirk was filled with hate. When Kirk spoke at a university rally in Utah, the gunman plotted and positioned himself to shoot a single long-range rifle shot that took Kirk's life. The man ran back to his home where he later had no choice but to confess to his father that he was indeed the man who had been videotaped at the rally who took Charlie Kirk's life. The lone assassin is an evil coward who silenced one of America's star voices. At least he thought he did. Charlie Kirk has become more known, and his sound clips have been heard more in the last few days than in his entire ministry/career. Kirk has been propelled by the assassin to a status in American culture that will never be forgotten. Instead of silencing Kirk he magnified Kirk's voice and message a hundred or more times. Kirk is now being remembered around the world.

Charlie Kirk used his voice. Every American is entitled to this freedom. His voice cost him his life.

Abraham Lincoln gave his life

reuniting our country and abolishing slavery. A cowardly assassin took Lincoln's life as he leisurely watched a play at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. John F. Kennedy used his voice to excite the American people and to bring about a positive attitude in the country but was gunned down by an assassin from a hidden window in downtown Dallas, Texas. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a man with a great voice who stirred the hearts of millions of Americans and brought about liberating change for black Americans. An assassin who disagreed with King cowardly hid and took King's life with a bullet. Malcom X and Bobby Kennedy were orators for positive change in America but someone who disagreed with their views killed them.

The greatest voice of hope, love, change and forgiveness, who ever lived, was Jesus Christ. A cowardly crowd yelled for him to be executed.

These mentioned voices were not silenced by hideous crowds or hidden gunmen. Each of their voices have rung loudly and clearly. Their legacies have only grown bolder and stronger.

It is sad that Charlie Kirk's assassin did not go down to the rally, stand up like a man and challenge Kirk in a debate. He could have told Kirk what he thought about him and given Kirk a chance to respond. But no, he was a weak, spineless man filled with more hate than probably anyone in America at that given moment. It's one thing to have a hateful, negative thought, but it's another to allow hate to act itself out in such a way.

Violence is never the answer. Let's keep America free. Free to speak, free to debate, free to practice and express our religion. Let's have peaceful and strong conversation, not assassination. ★

never backed down from his beliefs, his faith, or his love of this country.

Charlie brought light into dark places. On campuses where free speech is under attack, he stood strong and gave others the courage to speak up. As the founder of Turning Point USA, he organized a movement that will shape generations.

He was bold in his faith, clear in his convictions, and fully embraced his conservative values.

Charlie is now with the Lord — but the work he started isn't finished." ★

America's Sports Teams Pay Tribute to Charlie Kirk

The White House News Release

WASHINGTON, CHRISTIAN NEWSWIRE (MPG) - The White House releases the following:

From coast to coast, sports teams and organizations paused this week to commemorate the legacy of Charlie Kirk. The White House recognizes these profound tributes that celebrate Kirk's enduring legacy as a champion for faith and patriotism and honor the remarkable impact he had on millions of Americans.

NFL franchises, including the Green Bay Packers, New York Jets, Dallas Cowboys, Miami Dolphins, New Orleans Saints, Kansas City Chiefs, Pittsburgh Steelers, Tennessee Titans, and Arizona Cardinals

all held moments of silence or special recognitions.

In baseball, the Chicago Cubs and New York Yankees paid tribute. College football teams, such as the South Carolina Gamecocks, LSU Tigers, and the Wyoming Cowboys, joined in — as did the UFC and NASCAR, showcasing the broad reach of Kirk's influence.

These tributes reflect the widespread admiration for Kirk's dedication to inspiring the next generation of American Patriots. We commend these organizations for honoring a figure who championed the values that unite us all, and we join the nation in celebrating his legacy. ★

Liberty Counsel: Message From Mat Staver Regarding Charlie Kirk

Liberty Counsel News Release

We are heartbroken to learn that Charlie Kirk has been shot while speaking at Utah Valley University.

Our prayers go out to Charlie, his wife and two young children, and all those affected by this tragic and senseless

act of violence.

We ask everyone to join us in praying for Charlie and his family, for peace, and for strength during this incredibly difficult time.

And we pray against this senseless hatred and disdain for human life that elevate violence over dialogue. ★

Bera Condemns the Killing of Charlie Kirk

Office of U.S. Representative Ami Bera, M.D. News Release

WASHINGTON, D.C. (MPG) - Representative Ami Bera, M.D. (CA-06) released a statement after conservative activist Charlie Kirk was shot and killed at an event at Utah Valley University on Sept. 10:

"This is a dark day for America. The killing of Charlie Kirk is a horrific and deeply disturbing act of political violence. I condemn it in the strongest possible terms.

"Political violence is a cancer on our nation. We

don't have to agree with one another's beliefs — in fact, we may find some views deeply offensive or wrong — but we must reject violence as a means of resolving disputes. It corrodes the very foundation of our democracy and threatens the freedoms we all cherish. Democracy demands that we resolve our differences peacefully through debate, civic engagement, and at the ballot box.

"I urge law enforcement to use every available resource to bring the perpetrator of this act to justice. There must be

accountability. We cannot allow violence to take root as a tool of political expression in America.

"In moments like these, we must rise above partisanship and reaffirm a simple truth: violence against anyone — Republican or Democrat, liberal or conservative — has no place in our society. No person or political party is immune to this disturbing and growing trend. Above all else, we are Americans.

"My thoughts and prayers are with Mr. Kirk's family, loved ones, and all those impacted by this heinous act of violence." ★

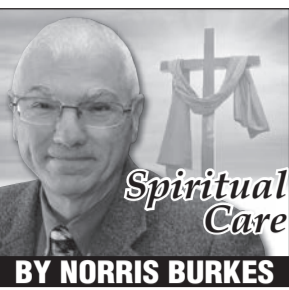
Republican Leaders Issue Joint Statement on Assassination of Charlie Kirk

Assembly Republicans News Release

SACRAMENTO (MPG) - Assembly Republican Leader James Gallagher (R-East Nicolaus) and Leader-Elect Heath Flora (R-Ripon) issued the following statement on the assassination of conservative leader and Turning Point USA founder, Charlie Kirk:

"In the 21st century, no one did more to lead the conservative youth movement than Charlie Kirk. He spoke the truth, welcomed respectful debate, and

Does God Hear Me Now?



BY NORRIS BURKES

Readers: I began writing this syndicated column October 2001. Now, after 24 years, I'm retiring the column on October 12th. You can stay in touch by joining my weekly email newsletter at www.thechaplain.net/newsletter or send email request to comment@thechaplain.net. As I approach my 68th year around our sun, I'm doing a lot of reflecting.

My active days are full of grandkids, home repairs, charity work with Chispa Project, all while pastoring a small church in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

With this summertime busyness, I was feeling that my God-connection was breaking up.

No, not a complete disconnect, but my reception of the divine felt crackly and fuzzy. You know, the kind you get from a fading phone signal. You walk in circles, waving your phone above your head asking, "Can you hear me now?"

I found myself needing to find a place, a moment, an event, to reconnect with God.

As I minister, I hear people claim they don't need a church to find God. They tell me that God can be found anywhere – even on a beach.

So earlier this summer, I drove my wife and twelve-year-old grandson to Half Moon Bay for a few days off. I went to see if God indeed had beachfront property in California.

It had been one of those weeks where the inconsistencies of my faith had been apparent to more than just myself. It was one of those weeks where I was longing to simply be the same person I had been the previous week.

So, as my grandson dug tunnels in the sand and my wife kicked at the cold waves, I walked alone up the rocky beach, explaining to God my ground rules of our upcoming conversation.

"I just need a moment to double check stuff with you – a moment to make sure you're still covering my back.

"So, I thought I'd say 'howdy' here at the beach. I know that you make every day special, but I'm needing this day to be extra."

There, on the water's edge, I found an isolated rock and quickly breached its top. Sitting atop the rock with my soul exposed, I began scanning the waves for some kind of epiphany.

As I searched, the cold wind pounded my heart like a burglar's hammer working to unlock a treasure, so I hid my face beneath my sweatshirt's hood.

From this rock, I hoped to find a still place, a space where I could both hide and be exposed, see and be seen – an abode high enough to make my prayer heard but low enough to nurture humility.

My prayer began: Lord, find what I've hidden.

Touch what I've hurt

Open what I've closed.

Teach what I wouldn't learn.

Fill the places I've emptied.

And, empty what

consumes me.

Release what I've captured.

Hold what escapes me

Invade what I defend.

And defend what I've surrounded.

Amen

Opening my eyes, I saw my grandson writing messages in the sand, but the finicky waves quickly rinsed them away, like an Etch-a-Sketch turned upside down.

On the horizon, I watched the pacific swallow the setting sun. "Wow! God really does own beachfront property!"

As I made my way back to my family, I inched around a deep rocky tide-pool and fell – hard. Blood oozed from my shins and elbows, but I still managed to get up to check if anyone was looking.

Becky came running over with my grandson.

The next day, bandaged, but ambulatory, I heard God's voice again.

"See what I did there, son.

"I met you on the top of the rocks where I heard your praises.

"But I also fall with you to the bottom of those rocks.

"I always hear you perfectly, even when you've lost reception on your end.

"I'm with you always and I will never leave you."

My reception was clear again.

Email me with questions or comment at comment@thechaplain.net. Sign up to receive this column by email at thechaplain.net/columns/

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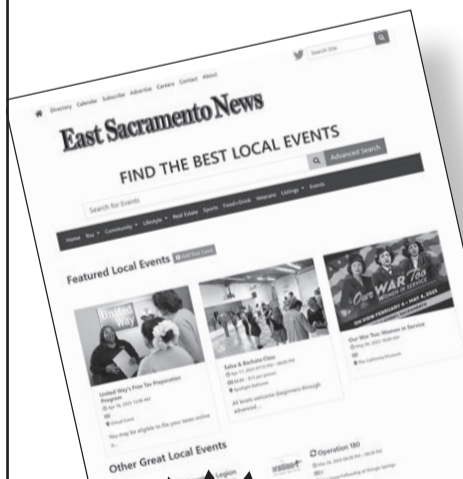
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Sacramento-Area New Home Sales Continued Rise

North State Building Industry Association News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - New home sales in the Sacramento region continued moving upward in August, with 496 sales reported by members of the North State Building Industry Association, the highest total since February.

Tim Murphy, the Building Industry Association's president and

CEO, attributed the strong showing to a combination of slightly lower interest rates and the valuable incentives being offered by many builders.

"Mortgage interest rates continue to slowly move downward and are now at their lowest point since last October," Murphy said. "As Robert Dietz, the chief economist of the National Association of Home Builders, told our members last week, as prospective buyers see rates get close

to 6%, we're likely to see a significant increase in sales. As rates have inched below 6.5%, we may be seeing that trend already getting underway."

"In addition, many builders are continuing to offer a range of incentives designed to make buying a home more affordable, and those deals are clearly making a difference as well," Murphy said.

August's sales totals were well above the historical monthly average of

409 sales during the month and up 3% from July. However, due to July being a five-week month, basic sales were up nearly 30% from the prior month on a weekly basis. Sales were down 18% from August 2024, but because that also was a five-week month, weekly sales year-over-year were almost even.

Rancho Cordova led all area submarkets with 91 sales, followed by Roseville with 87, Elk Grove with 74, Sacramento

with 64, and Natomas with 40. Rounding out the Top 10 were Plumas Lake (31), Lincoln (30), El Dorado Hills (29), Granite Bay (9) and Galt (8).

Building Industry Association statistics covered 198 new home communities reported by members in Amador, El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba counties.

The North State Building Industry Association is the leading advocate for the

home building industry in the greater Sacramento region. Representing more than 500 members who provide 55,000 industry jobs, the North State Building Industry Association is committed to preserving and furthering the economic interests of its members, while also working to enhance the industry's standing as a significant contributor to the regional economy. For more information, visit www.northstatebia.org. ★

ABOUT TOWN

Area Museum Experiences

A sampling of must-see and must-do experiences and special activations offered by local museums include the following:

California Museum - "Revolutionary Grain: Celebrating the Spirit of the Black Panthers in Portraits and Stories, through Nov. 2. This temporary exhibition features striking contemporary portraits and deeply personal stories of former members of the Black Panther Party.

The exhibit portrays former Panthers as lawyers, social workers, teachers, and political activists who continue to

make a difference in their communities.

"Recuerdos Ilustrados: Día de los Muertos 2025" ("Illustrated Memories: Day of the Dead 2025") features contemporary altars and artwork by artists from Southern California and the Central Valley.

Opening Oct. 11, the annual exhibit explores the Mexican cultural tradition of honoring deceased loved ones each year Nov. 1-2 by creating sugar skulls, altars of the dead) and offerings, which has evolved from the Aztecs to modern day Mexico and California.

This year's exhibit features the work of

printmaking artists Stephanie Mercado, Daniel Villa, and Álvaro D. Márquez, whose altars will be centered around the topic of immigration. Details at californiamuseum.org.

California Automobile Museum - Freewheelers Car Club hosts a car show full of vintage luxury from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 11.

The show will benefit the museum, helping to raise money for new placards that will expand the history and knowledge shared for 130+ classic cars.

Car registrations are \$40 each, \$50 on the day of. Spectators are free!

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 californiarailroadmuseum.org.

Sacramento History Museum - Come play our brand new SacTown History Quest! Set in the four corners of the city, come find out about the best hidden gems of Sacramento!

The city is your game board, take your time to find out about these spots and discover areas you never think about! Gears provided & prizes at the end!

Drive the quest with your team up to 6 people and unscramble the final puzzle! Saturdays, Oct. 4, Nov. 8, Nov. 22. Details at sachistorymuseum.org.

Sacramento Fine Arts Center - "Bold Expressions," Sept. 30-Oct. 25. Hosted by Northern California Arts Inc., this international exhibit features a wide range media and artists. This art makes a statement every year. Our galleries are free

and open to the public. Details at atsacfinearts.org.

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.

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

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.

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

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SacSewer Receives National Gold Peak Performance Award



The EchoWater Resource Recovery Facility is honored for the 10th year by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies. Photo courtesy of Sacramento Area Sewer District

Sacramento Area Sewer District News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento Area Sewer District (SacSewer) is going gold once again.

Its EchoWater Resource Recovery Facility (EchoWater Facility) was named a 2024 Gold Peak Performance Award Winner from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, marking the 10th consecutive year that the EchoWater Facility received a Peak Performance Award.

The 2024 Peak Performance Awards recognize public utility members for excellence in permit compliance over the 2024 calendar year. In the last 30 years, this was the fifth Gold Award that the EchoWater Facility received from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, also winning 16 Silver Awards in that span.

“We are excited to be selected once again for a Gold Peak Performance

Award,” said SacSewer General Manager Christoph Dobson. “Our vision is to set the bar for excellence in utility management and environmental sustainability, and these awards demonstrate our ongoing responsibility to serve our community by protecting public health and the environment. We are proud of what we accomplish at the EchoWater Facility, and this is a testament to the dedication and hard work our staff put forth every single day.”

For more than 50 years, the National Association of Clean Water Agencies has been the nation’s recognized leader in legislative, regulatory and legal advocacy on the full spectrum of clean water issues. It also serves as a top technical resource for water management, sustainability and ecosystem protection interests.

The 2024 Peak Performance Awards recognize public agency members that demonstrate

exceptional compliance and operational excellence under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit program. To earn a Gold Award, a facility must maintain a perfect record with zero permit violations within a calendar year. Facilities with no more than five violations can earn a Silver Award.

These award-winning utilities exemplify the highest standards in the country, going above and beyond to protect water resources for the communities they serve. It is just another example of SacSewer’s ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship.

For the full list of honorees and to learn more about the National Association of Clean Water Agencies and the Peak Performance Awards, visit online nacwa.org.

To learn more about the ongoing efforts of SacSewer and its EchoWater Facility, visit sacsewer.com. ★

Tutors Can Boost Reading Skills for Kindergartners



Izabelle Lewis from United Way’s literacy program works with a student. United Way is seeking volunteers for its partnership with Fortune School’s Kindergarten Reading program. Photo courtesy of United Way California Capital Region

United Way California Capital Region News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)

United Way California Capital Region is seeking volunteers to help Sacramento kindergartners learn to read through its partnership with Fortune School’s Kindergarten Reading program. Volunteer tutors will work in small groups with kindergartners once a week, guiding them through reading sessions as they master sight words. No teaching experience is required, and training is provided. For more information and to sign up: yourlocalunitedway.org/our-work/kindergarten-reading-volunteer.

“United Way has a long history of helping kids read at grade level so they can be successful in school, but this program is extra special because it helps kids build reading

confidence and mastery at a very young age,” said Dr. Dawnté Early, president and CEO, United Way California Capital Region. “Our literacy tutoring volunteers tell us each year how grateful they are for this opportunity to work with kiddos and watch them grow in their love of reading. Together, we can help every child learn to read by the end of kindergarten and close the achievement gap one student at a time.”

Fortune School of Education, established in 1989 by Dr. Rex Fortune, aims to close the African American achievement gap by preparing scholars for college through a preschool-12th grade public charter school system in Sacramento and San Bernardino. Learn more: fortuneshool.us.

United Way California Capital Region has been a driving force across the region for more than 100

years, listening, responding and taking comprehensive action to meet local needs. From advancing youth opportunities and helping kids excel in school, to strengthening local communities and investing in families’ financial security and health, United Way mobilizes communities to build a future where everyone can reach their full potential and thrive.

Working across Amador, El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento and Yolo counties, the local United Way provides books and literacy tutoring, addresses housing and food security, leads the region’s largest tax preparation initiative, works with foster youth across school districts, launched the region’s first guaranteed income program and leads the Community Schools initiative in West Sacramento. To make a donation: YourLocalUnitedWay.org. ★

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Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



Can it be that the NBA preseason is upon us, and less than two weeks away? Yes, Kings fans, it's nearly time to don those jerseys and break out the rally towels once again.

Much has been said about the lack of moves the Kings have made during the offseason, and the numbers don't lie.

Aside from shoring up the point guard position with the acquisition of veteran Dennis Schroder, Sacramento has only the draft to look back on as it relates to adding talent to this year's squad.

Much discussion about adding Russell Westbrook to the team, and a constant dialogue about acquiring Jonathan Kuminga from the Golden State Warriors, but as of today, neither of those transactions has been consummated.

Do the Sacramento Kings really need those two players to be successful this year? You bet they do, and Scott Perry is on the hot seat before he literally has a chance to sit down. This is the life of an NBA general manager, and it's what he signed up for.

Obviously, there are other players besides Westbrook and Kuminga that could add talent to the current squad, but for now if we can believe what we hear and read, the focus remains on these two veterans to boost our winning chances.

Fans and Pundits are looking askance at the Kings in general, so what are the glaring needs that can silence the critics and get the Sacramento Kings out of the gate on a winning note?

Front court help remains the most pressing need, and athletic big men are a tough commodity to come by, particularly this late in the off season.

Watching 6'9" Trey Lyles quietly walk out the back door after four plus years with the Kings made no sense, and losing a proven veteran was a gut punch to those of us that appreciated what Lyles brought to the court every night. Mistake, yes, I believe it was a definite mistake, but the Kings will have to move on and try to find someone to replace those missing minutes going forward.

Isaac Jones has been waiting for an opportunity to log more minutes, and this may be the chance he has been

looking for. But even if Isaac steps up and plays well, the Sacramento Kings are still in need of front-court help.

Apparently, the pressing issue that has stalled trade talks with Jonathan Kuminga, has been the Kings reluctance to giving the Warriors a 1st round unrestricted free agent in the package.

The Kings have been willing to offer up a first round draft pick, but it comes with restrictions.

I believe the time has come to acquiesce and give the Warriors the unrestricted 1st round pick they're looking for. Kuminga is worth it, and his upside is huge.

On paper this just doesn't seem to be a difficult decision, so I'm baffled that the Kings don't see the obvious upside to pulling the switch.

The energy that the Kuminga trade would bring to Sacramento is incalculable, but rest assured it wouldn't hurt ticket sales!

As fans we can only go by what's reported and what we read, but for this writers money, do what is necessary to put the name of Jonathan Kuminga on the roster, and let's start the 2025/2026 season of a high note.

I also support adding aging veteran Russell Westbrook, largely because he has a reputation for being an excellent team player and would add a presence in the locker room that is hard to measure. In addition, Westbrook looks and plays like he did ten years ago, and whether occasionally starting or coming off the bench, there is no doubt in my mind that Westbrook will be a welcome addition that will bring with it wins.

Is there a surprise in store that no ones heard or read about? Probably, and let's hope that Scott Perry has done his homework and has just such a surprise in store for the Kings faithful.

Don't lose heart, Kings fans because it's always darkest before the dawn.

Stay tuned and get ready, because NBA basketball is right around the corner!

All the best!

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

Social Security Matters

Should I Claim Social Security Early Because it is Going Bankrupt?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: My best friend is going to be 62 and wants to begin taking her Social Security immediately. Her reasoning not to wait is the thought that it is going to run out in 10 years, so she wants as much of her money before that happens. I have paid into Social Security my entire working life (44 years and counting). What are your thoughts on taking it as soon as you are eligible? **Signed: Uncertain what to do.**

Dear Uncertain: Deciding when to claim Social Security is a sometimes-confusing task, but no one should ever claim SS early because they believe Social Security will go bankrupt in the near future. Social Security cannot and will not go bankrupt. What your friend may be referring to is the fact that Social Security will be facing some financial issues in 2033 unless Congress acts soon to reform the program. And they will act, but likely not until they must.

The fact is, Social Security still has about \$2.7 trillion in reserved funds which are now being

used to pay full benefits. If that Reserves balance were to be fully depleted, then Social Security would need to go to a "cash basis" (essentially, paying out in benefits only what is received in SS taxes), which would result in about a 21% cut in everyone's benefit. In other words, even if Congress neglected to reform the program, beneficiaries would still get about 79% of their monthly benefit starting in about 2033/2034. Hardly anyone believes that Congress will fail to eventually reform Social Security, and, in fact, they already know how to do that reform (they just currently lack the bipartisanship to accomplish it). But neglecting reform would amount to political suicide for all members of Congress, which is extremely unlikely to happen.

Here at the AMAC Foundation, we are confident that Congress will soon address Social Security's future financial dilemma, and we have been working on potential solutions. We have, for several years, been providing these suggestions to various members of Congress, and those members are now considering our proposals. Thus, we do not suggest making a Social Security claiming decision based on fear of the program going bankrupt. That fear is unfounded. Instead, we suggest that everyone decide when to claim based upon their individual personal situation,

considering their need for the SS money, their life expectancy, and their marital status. And remember, claiming early (before one's SS full retirement age (FRA)) also means Social Security's Annual Earnings Test (AET) will apply (the AET limits how much can be earned from working before FRA is attained).

So, our thought on the wisdom of taking Social Security as soon as you are eligible is that it is often not a wise decision, and certainly not if that decision is made based on fear of Social Security "not being there" soon. Instead, we suggest making your Social Security claiming decision based upon your unique personal circumstances, including, especially, your life expectancy, financial need, and marital status.

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). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. ★



events about public affairs, and never managed it. No worries. Kirk figured it out for them. That he was shot while he engaged in an act of peaceful persuasion makes his murder all the more devastating.

Kirk wasn't a literary figure, but his assassination was a little like, say, William F. Buckley or James Baldwin getting gunned down in the midst of their famous 1965 debate at the Cambridge Union.

What Kirk was doing drew on some of the finest traditions of civilized life. Gathering on a hill to hear people speak and argue, like what we saw at Utah Valley University prior to the shot ringing out, is as old as the Pnyx in ancient Athens.

The university as a battleground of ideas, with clashing worldviews vying for influence, goes back to the Middle Ages. Founded in 1231, the University of Paris quickly became "a forum where great questions of theology, society, and government were analyzed and answered," writes historian Dan Jones.

More fundamentally, language and abstract reasoning make us distinctly human; violence, the tool of brutes, does not. What are young people on the right to conclude from the horror at Utah Valley? Progressives viewed Kirk as a "MAGA troll" (as a New Republic headline put it in the immediate aftermath of his shooting), but for his fans, he was a figure of hope and inspiration.

It's also important to realize that Kirk worked diligently and effectively to bring disaffected kids into mainstream politics.

He pushed back against anti-semitism and other poisonous influences. The far-right envied and hated him.

It would be natural for Utah Valley to become the Right's equivalent of Kent State in the 1970s, a shattering experience, and a radicalizing one.

Charlie Kirk did it the right way, and now he's gone. He espoused the Christian faith, and what did it get him? He believed in open debate, and it left him defenseless unto his enemies. He did his enemies the favor of taking their arguments seriously, whereas (presumably) one of them used a bullet to silence him forever.

To quit on persuasion, though, is the counsel of despair. Political violence in a free society is always wrong. There's no substitute for convincing our fellow citizens, and we should also assume -- as Kirk did, even with the odds stacked heavily against him -- that they can be convinced by good arguments made sincerely and passionately.

Kirk's murder will long be remembered as a symbol of the irrationality and hatred of this era, with, one fears, worse to come. His life's work, on the other hand, is a testament to how one person can, with enough pluck and talent, move the needle of our politics.

Kirk fought back against illiberalism, and his supporters -- when the shock and grief subsides -- should be equally committed to his mission.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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Sky-High Living Costs Afford It the Nation's Highest Poverty Label - Again



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

Last year's presidential election underscored, particularly to Democrats, that the costs of living were a major factor in the outcome.

Inflation had increased sharply during Joe Biden's presidency, and voters' angst about rising prices worked against Vice President Kamala Harris' campaign to succeed him in the White House.

Not surprisingly, therefore, when the California Legislature opened its 2025 session, its dominant Democrats declared that they would focus on taming the state's notoriously high costs for housing, fuel, utilities and other necessities of modern life.

The session ended last week and as it did, by happenstance, the Census Bureau reported that California once again has the nation's highest "supplemental" rate of poverty when its living costs are included in calculations over a three-year period.

California's rate, 17.7%, means that nearly 7 million of its residents are impoverished, 5 percentage points higher than the national rate and tied with Louisiana. The lowest rate is 6.7% in Maine.

California's rate is also 2.3 percentage points higher than it was in the Census Bureau's previous three-year calculation, implying that its living costs vis-à-vis incomes had

increased markedly.

The situation is even gloomier in a report last month from the Public Policy Institute of California and the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality.

Using methodology similar to that of the Census Bureau, they calculate that 16.9% of Californians were poverty-stricken in 2023 and another 17.9% were near-poor. That translates into 13.2 million Californians struggling to put roofs over their heads, food on the tables, fuel in their cars and electric power in their appliances and light fixtures.

Los Angeles County, which has about 25% of the state's population, has the highest poverty rate of any county, 19.9%. Poverty in the Central Coast region is nearly as high at 19.3%, while Sacramento has the state's lowest rate, 13%.

Another data point about poverty in California is found in the newly enacted state budget. It declares that 14.9 million Californians are enrolled in Medi-Cal, the state's health care program for the poor.

So, one might wonder, did the Legislature's 2025 session deliver on promises to reduce the costs of living?

Legislative leaders claim some success.

"We went big," Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas, said in a summary of the session's work. "We produced results. We delivered historic progress — on housing, on energy, on climate, on health care, and on human rights. And that progress is something every one of us can be proud of."

"And while our work is not finished fixing California's housing system,

this year marked a turning point in California's housing story," Rivas continued. "And today, we also advanced the most significant energy package in years. We passed measures that will deliver real relief for families on their electricity bills. We took action to stabilize gas supplies, to prevent price shocks — while keeping health and environmental protections in place."

By easing what had been a crackdown on gasoline refiners and sanctioning more oil production, legislators and Gov. Gavin Newsom say they are avoiding a gasoline supply crisis that could send costs soaring as the state shifts to a zero-emission economy. Two refineries have already announced closure plans, and Chevron has dropped hints that it could abandon its Richmond refinery.

By integrating California's electric power grid with those of other Western states, the elected officials say, shortages of electric power will be mitigated.

By reducing impediments to housing development, they say, higher levels of construction will moderate increases in rents and home prices.

Whether any of these legislative efforts actually lower or at least stabilize Californians' living costs won't be known for months, or even years. Meanwhile, California's high poverty rate will continue to be a civic embarrassment.

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. ★

WE SUPPORT FIRST RESPONDERS

Applause for Literary Award Winners

By Kimberly A. Edwards

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Seven awardees will be recognized at the "100 Years of Writing Excellence in Sacramento" Gala on Oct. 18, when the California Writers Club Sacramento hits its century mark and celebrates at North Ridge Country Club in Fair Oaks.

The award recipients are 916 Ink, Capital Storytelling, Jan Haag, Ginger Rutland, Sacramento Poetry Center, Sacramento Press Club and Under the Gum Tree.

While recognizing that literary service abounds in our area, a Blue Ribbon Panel identified the above for nurturing the development of talent and appreciation for the written word and contributing to a larger purpose influencing Sacramento's literary reach in children and adults.

The Oct. 18 Centennial will bring writers, reporters and historians together to learn about early writing and publishing in Sacramento. Partners and friends include the Crocker Art Museum, the California State Library, the Center for Sacramento History and the Sacramento Public Library.

Keynote speaker and Pulitzer Prize winner Jack Ohman will talk about "At Wit's End."

A star-studded line-up featuring Rich Ehsen of Capitol Weekly, literary agent Sandra Proudman, Sacramento journalist at local CBS affiliate Alison Linton, Pushcart Prize nominee Carol Lynn Stevenson Grellas, cultural historian Maryellen Burns and documentary filmmaker Al González will entertain.

Kiyo Sato, 102 and the William Saroyan International Writing Award winner for "Dandelion



Keynote Speaker Jack Ohman will challenge attendees with his interpretation of "At Wit's End." California Writers Club of Sacramento

through the Crack" (renamed "Kiyo's Story") will attend. Her book is on display at the Smithsonian Institute. Attendees can bring along a copy of her book if they want an autograph.

Rare books from early California Writers Club members will be displayed at the gala. Many books were made into movies or popular TV series. One movie was nominated for an Academy Award. Also displayed will be a 1913 woodcut of the club logo designed by University of California, Berkeley professor Perham Nahl, nephew of Charles Christian Nahl, whose work hangs in the Crocker Art Museum.

The celebration includes a buffet, the Jazz Band "Syncopating Sea-Monkeys" of River City High School, and a no-host bar, including a Jack London "Glass in Hand."

The California Writers Club is a nonprofit organization. For information on the event, buying tickets or sponsoring this literary event, visit online

sacramentowriters.org.

2025 Greater Sacramento Literary Awardees

916 Ink is a creative writing and literacy nonprofit organization since 2010 that provides workshops and tutoring to transform youth into strong readers, confident communicators and published authors. Programs increase literacy skills, improve vocabulary, teach empathy, positively impact social and emotional learning, and expand communication skills. Partnerships are with school sites and community groups serving marginalized students, including economically-disadvantaged, system-impacted youth and English Language Learners. 916 Ink has transformed more than 6,000 youth into authors in 300-plus professionally published anthologies.

Capital Storytelling is an arts education organization in Sacramento that empowers individuals to share their personal stories and, in doing so, to foster connection, empathy and compassion across race,



Kiyo Sato, 102 and the William Saroyan International Writing Award winner for "Dandelion through the Crack" (renamed "Kiyo's Story") will be at the gala. Sato's book is on display at the Smithsonian Institute. California Writers Club of Sacramento

gender, religion, abilities, orientation and political affiliations. This is accomplished through classes and workshops and special programs, including an Immigrant Storytelling Program, which empowers first- and second-generation immigrants to share their stories, and a Story Ambassador Program, which trains leaders to lead storytelling workshops.

Jan Haag was a writing professor at Sacramento City College and journalism department chair, advising the student newspaper, literary journal and nonfiction magazine. Before that, she was a copy editor and feature writer for the Sacramento Bee, covered the capitol for United Press International and was editor of Sacramento Magazine. Haag has had many poems, essays and fiction published in journals and anthologies. Her poetry collection, "Companion Spirit," is comprised of poems about her late husband. She is co-publisher of a Sacramento publishing company, River Rock Books. She

publishes daily poems on her website (janishaag.com) and is working on a poetry collection and a novel set in Sacramento in the 1950s and 1970s. She hosts writing groups, including a monthly Writing as Healing group in Elk Grove.

Ginger Rutland spent 17 years as a reporter with KCRA TV in Sacramento and then with KRON TV in San Francisco as that station's capitol bureau reporter. She earned a local Emmy at KRON for her documentary, "Showdown at Diablo," about the controversy surrounding the nuclear power plant's building and commissioning at Diablo Canyon in San Luis Obispo County. Rutland wrote and produced a play, "When We Were Colored, A Mother's Story," adapted from her mother, Eva Rutland's, memoir. The play is about a middle-class Black family's journey from the segregated south before World War II to post-war California, through the Civil Rights era and Black Power Movement to the

racially-blended families of today.

The Sacramento Poetry Center, founded in 1979, offers readings, workshops, writers' conferences, publications and a lending library. "Landing Signals, released on Oct. 26, 1986, was the first major anthology (print and audio) of Sacramento poets. The center's annual writers' conferences and Poetry Month celebrations have featured some of today's leading poets, including Pulitzer Prize winners Gary Snyder and Philip Levine, former U.S. Poets Laureate Juan Filipe Herrera and Robert Hass.

The Sacramento Press Club, established in 1961, is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to supporting the next generation of journalists through scholarships for college students. The scholarship program is paid for through member donations and ticket sales to regular events with California and national newsmakers. The Sacramento Press Club annually awards nearly \$60,000 in scholarships to a proudly diverse array of students.

Under the Gum Tree is a reader-supported, quarterly literary arts magazine publishing creative nonfiction and visual art. It champions the mantra of telling stories without shame since 2011. The mission is sharing stories that remind readers of shared humanity. Each issue includes seven to 10 original nonfiction stories and personal essays, one photo essay and one cover artist whose work is featured throughout the interior pages. The magazine nominates for the Pushcart Prize every year and essays published have been listed as notable in the Best American Essays. ★

Fourth-Grade Families Can Visit 54 State Parks for Free

California State Parks News Release

STATE OF CALIFORNIA (MPG) - Families of fourth-graders in California public schools are invited to download the free California State Park Adventure Pass at parks.ca.gov/AdventurePass

The pass opens the door to California's stunning natural landscapes and rich cultural heritage, granting students and their families a year of free entry to 54 state parks full of sandy beaches and desert canyons, majestic redwood forests and eye-opening historic sites.

Championed by First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom, whose California for All Kids initiatives support children's physical, mental and social-emotional well-being, and the Newsom Administration's Outdoors for All initiative, the California State Park Adventure Pass expands the opportunity for fourth-graders and their families to enjoy the benefits of connecting with nature, each other and their communities.

The pass for this school year's fourth graders is valid until Aug. 31, 2026. To date, more than 89,000 passes have opened new doors and fostered a love of state parks for California fourth-graders.

"As a mom, I know how much time in nature shapes a child's health, happiness and love for the outdoors," Siebel Newsom said. "The California State Park Adventure Pass has opened the door for more kids and families to experience the joy and benefits of our beautiful state parks. I encourage all public school fourth-graders and their families to take advantage of this opportunity and to explore all the incredible natural treasures California has to offer."

Said State Parks Director Armando Quintero,



Let the adventures begin. California State Parks and First Partner invite fourth-graders and their families to experience the state's unmatched beauty and history for free. It's easy for Sonoma State Historical Park visitors to picture life here in the 1800s. The historic old town of Sonoma comes alive at the state park. Sonoma State Historical Park is an easy drive from this area. Photo courtesy of California State Parks, 2025

"California's state parks are true wonders of nature and human history. The Adventure Pass is an invitation to fourth-graders and their families to discover the world of California. It's your home."

And California Natural Resources Agency Secretary Wade Crowfoot said, "California's natural treasures belong to all of us. By opening our parks to public school fourth-graders at no cost, we're investing in healthier kids, stronger communities and the next generation of stewards who will care for the Golden State's wealth of natural and cultural resources."

Obtaining a free California State Park Adventure Pass online is easy. Parents and/or guardians can go online to reservecalifornia.com or call 800-444-7275 (Spanish-speaking customer service available). If they don't already have a ReserveCalifornia

account, they can set up a profile by providing their name, address, phone number and email address. After completing the form, the free pass will be immediately sent to their email to be used at the 54 participating parks.

Individuals without access to a smartphone, computer, printer and/or email address can request a pass by visiting a State Parks Pass Sales Office or by calling 800-444-7275.

What are some of the picturesque state parks that fourth-graders and their families can visit? Two parks within a few hours' drive from home include the Empire Mine State Historical Park and the Sonoma State Historical Park.

Empire Mine State Historical Park is the site of one of the oldest, deepest and richest gold mines in California. The park is at 10791 East Empire St., Grass Valley. In operation for more than 100 years, the mine

extracted 5.8-million ounces of gold before it closed in 1956. The park contains many of the mine's buildings, the owner's home and restored gardens, and the entrance to 367 miles of abandoned and flooded mine shafts. The park encompasses 856 acres of forested backcountry and 14 miles of trails, including easy hikes for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding.

Sonoma State Historical Park is a scattering of historical sites consisting of six midtown locations near Sonoma's Plaza. Off the Sonoma Plaza are Mission San Francisco Solano, the Blue Wing Inn, Sonoma Barracks, the Toscano Hotel & Kitchen, and the Servants Quarters (the remains of La Casa Grande). General Vallejo's Home, less than a mile west of the Plaza, was the estate of General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, Military Commander and Director of Colonization of the Northern Frontier and founder

of Pueblo de Sonoma. The park's main office address is at 363 3rd St. West, Sonoma,

Closer to home are the California State Railroad Museum, Leland Stanford Mansion State Historic Park, State Indian Museum State Historic Park and Sutter's Fort State Historic Park in Sacramento.

Find all 54 participating parks at parks.ca.gov.

Made possible by Assembly Bill 148, the California State Park Adventure Pass program was signed by Governor Gavin Newsom in July 2021. The pass is valid for the one-year period during which the child is a fourth-grader or fourth-grade equivalent and attends a public school, from Sept. 1 to Aug. 31 of that year. The pass is also a good educational tool for California fourth-grade teachers, who can encourage students to extend their classroom learning into state parks and explore these living classrooms.

In addition to the California State Park Adventure Pass, all Californians can check out a California State Parks Library Pass by using their library cards to access more than 200 participating state park units.

Families receiving California Work Opportunity and Responsibility for Kids (CalWORKs), individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and income-eligible Californians 62 and over can apply for the Golden Bear Pass with their smartphone or other web-based device and have access to more than 200 California state park units. The Golden Bear Pass is also available to participants of California's Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

For more information on all three State Park Pass programs, visit parks.ca.gov/OutdoorsForAll. ★