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East Sacramento News

VOL 34 • ISSUE 19

Bringing You Community News For Over 30 Years

OCTOBER 10, 2025

**SEE
INSIDE**

**CLOCK TICKING ON
GOVERNOR'S RACE**



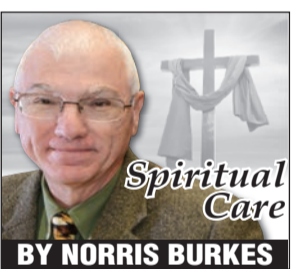
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**OFFSEASON
ENDS; IT'S A
BRAND-NEW START**



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**THANK YOU FOR
WALKING WITH ME**



*Spiritual
Care*

BY NORRIS BURKES

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Harvest Happenings

Events to Attend this Fall Season



The California Automobile Museum, 2200 Front St., invites families to Trunk or Treat from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 25. Enjoy trick-or-treating, classic cars, seasonal snacks, museum exploration and a haunted house. Photo courtesy of California Automobile Museum

By Idaly Valencia

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Autumn has arrived in the "City of Trees," wrapping the region in golden, fall colors. Throughout October, the Sacramento area comes alive with pumpkin patches, harvest festivals and Halloween celebrations.

Discover the events happening near you and celebrate the season by making memories with family and friends.

Día de los Muertos Fiesta

The California Museum will celebrate Día de los Muertos from 6 to 10 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 11, marking

the opening of its exhibit "Recuerdos Ilustrados: Día de los Muertos 2025." The event honors the Mexican tradition of remembering loved ones with sugar skulls, altars and offerings.

Festivities include a performance by Aztec dancers, live music by salsa band Conjunto Liberación, sugar skull

workshops (advance registration required), food and drinks, hands-on activities, face painting for kids and pop-up shops.

Admission for children 2 and under is free and general admission for adults is \$14.64, not including tax. Reserve spots at [Fiesta25.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com).

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Inspiring Girls in STEAM

By Seth Henderson

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Seventh- and eighth-graders from 25-plus middle schools visited the Aerospace Museum of California in North Highlands on Sept. 24 and Sept. 25 for the "We Can Do It" event that inspires young girls to learn about science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM).

About 1,200 girls from the Twin Rivers Unified and San Juan Unified school districts attended

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Middle school girls from San Juan Unified School District participate in an activity during the "We Can Do It" event, aimed at inspiring young girls to take up a career in science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM). Photo courtesy of the San Juan Unified School District

**Clean
California
Soars Past
Major
Milestone**



**California Department
of Transportation
(Caltrans)
News Release**

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - More than 136,000 garbage trucks worth of litter has been cleared from state highways and communities in the four years of Gov. Gavin Newsom's Clean California effort.

That Sept. 4 announcement comes after the governor convened a statewide task force to prioritize and remove encampments and bring services and shelter to individuals experiencing homelessness along state rights-of-way in California's 10 largest cities.

Emerging as one of the most successful environmental initiatives brought forward by Newsom, the \$1.2-billion Clean California effort has provided a visible and lasting impact on communities throughout the state, while also supporting long-term goals aimed at climate resiliency, economic equity and public safety.

Program highlights include maintenance crews dedicated to cleaning state highways and public rights of way; 650 free dump days hosted in urban and rural communities; 639 pieces of art installed on the highways; 72,000 community clean-up volunteers (according to a survey from Keep America Beautiful); 314 beautification projects, including the development of new parks, public art and improvements at several transit stations.

Of these, 191 projects have been completed and 18,000 job opportunities created.

So far, 110 communities have pledged to become a designated Clean California Community by agreeing to complete specific criteria that

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'Imagine This...' Writing Competition Underway

California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Aspiring young authors with great stories to share about agriculture are encouraged to enter the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom's annual "Imagine this..." Story Writing Contest. Entries are due Nov. 1.

Last year, more than 500 students submitted stories and six state-winning entries plus one honorable mention were published in the "Imagine this... Stories Inspired by Agriculture 2025" book. The fifth-grade winner last year who wrote "The Little Farm Dog" was Josephine Slattery from the Twin Rivers Charter School in nearby Yuba City. The "Imagine this..." Story Writing Contest

invites students in third through eighth grades from public, private, charter and home schools throughout California to submit original fiction or non-fiction stories highlighting agriculture's positive impact. "Agriculture is all around us," said Amanda Fletcher, the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom's executive director. "We encourage students to get out their pencils and

think creatively about an experience they've had that involves food, fiber or any topic related to agriculture." Regional and state winners will be announced Dec. 1. The six state winners, one from each grade level, will have their stories illustrated by high school art students and professionally published in book form. Along with their teacher and parents, each will also receive a

trip to Sacramento for an awards ceremony at the Capitol that includes medals, e-readers and classroom resources. Regional winners will receive plaques, books and teacher resources for their participation. "The 'Imagine this...' contest helps students and teachers see just how connected we all are to the farmers and ranchers who keep California growing," Fletcher said. "It's a fun way for students to explore the world around them while also meeting Common Core writing

and literacy standards for grades three through eight." Entry forms, contest rules and tips on incorporating "Imagine this..." into the classroom can be found at LearnAboutAg.org/programs/contest. Copies of the 2025 book are also available there for \$8.50. The nonprofit California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom is dedicated to educating youth throughout California about the importance of agriculture in their daily lives. ★



Election Information November 4, 2025, Statewide Special Election

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- Oct 20** Close of registration. Register today!
- Oct 25** 11-Day Vote Centers open through Election Day.
- Nov 1** All Vote Centers open through Election Day.
- Nov 4** Election Day! Last day to turn in your ballot.

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From the Dugout to the Vineyard

Baseball Legend Dusty Baker Helps to Produce a Great Pour in West Sacramento



Major League Baseball legend Dusty Baker is partner and grower in West Sacramento-based B and B Wine Company LLC in West Sacramento. Photos courtesy of B and B Wine

Chik and Polly Brenneman have been making wine in both amateur and commercial settings together for 25 years.

By Kathleen Wheeler

SACRAMENTO REGION (MPG)

- In 2012, baseball manager Dusty Baker teamed up with winemaker Chik Brenneman to create an urban winery brand specializing in handcrafted and limited-production wines.

Starting out as a gentleman's vineyard in Baker's backyard, the wine initially was given away to friends and family. After a consistent level of praise and acclaim for Baker's 2012 Vintage Syrah, the duo decided to expand their production and to "go pro."

In 2013, Baker and Brenneman established B and B Wine Company, LLC, which now produces and bottles their wines in West Sacramento.

All of B and B's handcrafted wines are produced from grapes sourced and harvested through local Northern California vineyards. Its varietals embody

unique characteristics representative of the various microclimates within the regions.

Visit B and B's tasting room in West Sacramento where you can say hello and enjoy these unique wines.

Dusty Baker, Partner and Grower

Dusty Baker played major league baseball for 16 seasons with the Atlanta Braves, Los Angeles Dodgers, San Francisco Giants and Oakland A's.

He went on to be the manager for the San Francisco Giants, Chicago Cubs, Cincinnati Reds, Washington Nationals and has recently retired from the Houston Astros. His record-setting career as a Major League Baseball manager is legendary and has earned him "Manager of the Year," and he now has surpassed 2,000 regular season managerial

wins. In 2022, Baker added a managerial World Series win to his list of baseball accomplishments.

He has carried his passion and desire for excellence from the baseball field to the winery.

Baker's combined efforts with Chik Brenneman in establishing Baker Family Wines has given him great pride and he's looking

forward to the future of producing more great wine for clients to enjoy.

Chik and Polly Brenneman, Winemakers and Partners

In 1998, Chik Brenneman graduated with a Master's degree from the University of California, Davis school of Viticulture and Enology, a school

internationally respected for innovation in grape growing and winemaking. He has worked for Amador Foothill Winery, Terre Rouge-Eason Winery in Amador County and then at Woodbridge by Robert Mondavi in Lodi. In 2006 he became winemaker and winery manager for the Department of Viticulture and Enology at UC Davis.

Polly Brenneman joined the B and B team after she retired from a local hospital as a clinical laboratory scientist. She is an excellent chef and complements the duo with her strong palate and analytical skills.

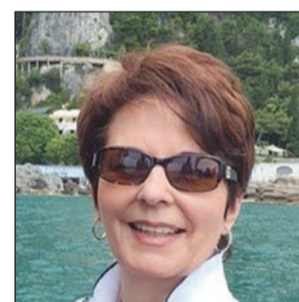
Chik and Polly Brenneman have been making wine in both amateur and commercial settings together for 25 years. At Baker Family Wines, the Brennemans ensure that every handcrafted wine is of the highest quality and will absolutely delight B and B's customers. Their motto is, "If we're not going to make good wine, why bother?"

B and B Wine Company's tasting room is at 2568 Industrial Blvd. Suites 110/120, West Sacramento. It's six minutes or 2.6 miles from Sutter Health Park, home of the River Cats and Athletics. Learn more at bakerfamilywines.com. ★

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Writer and travel professional Kathleen Wheeler, left, is partner, with Patti Palamidessi, right, in Wine Chic River Cruises, a travel agency focusing on local wineries through river cruises in Europe. Their love and passion for travel allows clients to experience unique adventures.

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Harvest Happenings

Continued from page 1

The museum is located at Archives Plaza, 1020 O St.

Happy Harvest Festival HeartLand Child & Family Services will host its free fall resource festival from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 18, at 6833 Stockton Blvd., Suite 485. Sponsored by the Sacramento County Division of Behavioral Health Services, the festival offers games and activities for all ages, treats and family resources from local organizations. Those interested can register at bit.ly/4pIRDZI.



The California Museum, located at 1020 O St., will celebrate Día de los Muertos from 6 to 10 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 11, marking the opening of its exhibit "Recuerdos Ilustrados: Día de los Muertos 2025." Photo courtesy of California Museum



Autumn has arrived in the "City of Trees," wrapping the region in golden, fall colors. Throughout October, the region comes alive with pumpkin patches, harvest festivals and Halloween celebrations. Photo courtesy of Old Sacramento Waterfront

Trunk or Treat

The California Automobile Museum, 2200 Front St., invites families to Trunk or Treat from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 25. Enjoy trick-or-treating, classic cars, seasonal snacks, museum exploration and a haunted house.

Admission is \$5 for ages 6 and up; and free for children 5 and under. Museum entry and all you-can-eat candy is included; it is advised for attendees to bring their own trick-or-treat bags. More information is available at calautomuseum.org/trunkortreat2025.



Movies Under the Stars returns to the Old Sacramento Waterfront with family-friendly films on Thursdays and classic favorites for adults on Fridays at Old Sacramento State Historic Park, 111 I St. Photo courtesy of Old Sacramento Waterfront

Pumpkin Patches

The Farm-to-Fork capital is home to many farms that open their gates for pumpkin picking and autumn activities during this time of year.

An area favorite is Nick and Ray's Pumpkin Patch just 10 minutes from downtown at 3845 El Centro Road on the historic Bastiao Farm. It is open now through Nov. 2 and

features a mining town, pick-your-own pumpkins, hayrides, haunted attractions, a corn maze and its famous Pumpkin and Corn Cannon.

Weekday general admission costs \$12 and weekend admission is \$14. VIP tickets are \$24 which covers unlimited train rides, Cow Cruiser rides and access to the giant slide. More information is at

nickandrayspumpkinpatch.com.

Another local favorite, Fog Willow Farms, is open through Nov. 2 about 20 minutes from downtown at 11011 Cecatra Drive, Wilton. The farm offers educational, country-style fun with more than 50 animals, a pumpkin patch, adventure course, unlimited hayrides and a Barnyard Speedway called the "Pigtona 500."

Admission is \$12 for ages 3 and up; and free for children 2 and under. Barbecue is available on weekends, a snack bar on weekdays and shaded picnic areas let families bring their own food. More information is at fogwillowfarms.com or 916-687-4547.

The Yolo Explorer Pumpkin Train runs Oct. 5, 12 and 26, offering an on-board pumpkin patch,

festive snacks and drinks, and family-friendly activities while cruising through the countryside. The train departs from 18095 County Road 117, West Sacramento.

Tickets are \$73 for adults, \$62 for youth ages 3 to 12 and \$12 for children 2 and under. Book at riverfoxtrain.com/experiences/yolo-explorer.

Old Sacramento Waterfront

Enjoy Halloween all month long at the Old Sacramento Waterfront, where pumpkins, costumes and fall fun await visitors of all ages.

Movies Under the Stars returns with family-friendly films on Thursdays and classic favorites for adults on Fridays at Old Sacramento State Historic Park. Highlights include a "Coco" screening featuring Día de los Muertos items for sale from Sol Collective and the Sacramento Hispanic Chamber, and an opportunity to meet the 916 Ghostbusters before the "Ghostbusters" showing.

Other seasonal activities at the waterfront include

\$3 hayrides from Top Hand Ranch from 1 to 6 p.m. Oct. 12, Oct. 19 and Oct. 25 at Waterfront Park; a scarecrow contest featuring 18 creative displays from local businesses; and harvest specials from restaurants and shops with a self-guided food and dessert tour.

Ghost Tours in Old Town

Visitors can also enjoy the popular Underground Tours hosted by the Sacramento History Museum all month, a Paranormal Investigation of the Medical Museum on Thursdays at 7 p.m. Oct. 16 and Oct. 23, and a special Halloween After Hours Underground Tour at 6 p.m. Oct. 30. Ghost Tours take place Fridays, Oct. 10 and Oct. 24, and Saturdays, Oct. 11 and Oct. 25. More details are at sachistorymuseum.org.

The Sacramento Spooky River Cruise runs from Oct. 17 to Oct. 31 aboard a festively decorated Capitol Hornblower, featuring spooky legends and haunting history along the river. More information on all events is available at OldSacramento.com. ★

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Summer Camp 2025 enrollment is open

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



The offseason is over, and your Sacramento Kings are undefeated. It's that time of the year for effervescent optimism, and it has a contagious effect.

Time to be a little kid again and dream that your home team can win the first championship in Sacramento Kings history.

Is that a strong likelihood? The basketball pundits will tell you no, and emphatically no. Local media seems to have a Debbie downer attitude as it relates to the Kings playoff chances, let alone an actual championship.

I choose to focus on what I know is doable and ever likely, with the assembled group of ballers we have that will grace the confines of Golden One Arena on Oct. 8. The Kings face Utah Jazz in their first preseason game of the 2025/2026 campaign.

I will be sitting behind the Kings bench like a kid in a candy store, ready to greet newcomer Dennis Schroder with open arms, and hopes that Dennis will get a warm Sacramento welcome. Schroder has received few accolades as he joins this year's squad, but I believe he could make Sacramento his home for years to come.

As a mentor, Schroder offers a great opportunity for both Nique Clifford and Devin Carter to see how an NBA point guard plays both ends of the court, and Dennis skills as a teacher and veteran NBA ball distributor portends to be an invaluable asset.

Little used Doug McDermott managed to acquire a fan club last season, as he electrified the crowd with his deft 3-point shooting, and it remains to be seen if Doug Christie can translate McDermott's ability to shoot from long range into wins.

Domantas Sabonis returns as the shining star, and his dominance is undeniable. The perennial rebounding champion of the NBA holds down the block like no other center in Sacramento Kings history, and the 2025/2026 season should be more of the same.

Sabonis brings a nightly double-double to the table and an attitude of optimism that translates into team chemistry. If there was a statistic for helping fallen players to their feet, Domantas would win the award going away, and that comes with an effervescent smile that lights up the court.

If ever there is a player that deserves 100% fan support, it is Sacramento's own

Domantas Sabonis, and my advice to fans is to enjoy this magnetic big man while you can.

As Wednesday approaches with no recent acquisitions, the starting five appears to be Domantas Sabonis, Dennis Schroder, DeMar DeRozan, Zach Lavine and Keegan Murray.

That represents a lot of scoring power, what remains to be seen is how Doug Christie can accomplish a flow that will return the Kings to the high-powered scoring machine that led the NBA in scoring just 3 short seasons ago. That cannot be done by the starters alone, so Christie's use of his bench will be a needed ingredient.

Malik Monk appears to be more comfortable in the 6th man role, and he could become a catalyst of prosperity on both ends.

Likewise, Devin Carter showed flashes of brilliance last season, with his defensive skills, and playing alongside Keon Ellis, this tandem could wreak havoc on opposing offensives.

A looming question is whether Doug Christie will abandon his staccato substitution style, in favor of one that allows players to understand better their roles. Knowing that you can expect to play every game and understand how many minutes it's likely you'll play can help in fomenting a more formidable NBA bench.

Will 2025/2026 be a coming out party for Isaac Jones? It should be, as he adds length while helping support Sabonis on the boards, and provides a scoring punch with a nice touch around the rim that can translate into easy baskets.

It is no secret that many teams approached the Kings regarding Keon Ellis and Keegan Murray. I give credit to G.M. Scott Perry for realizing what he has in these talented youngsters and keeping them in this year's squad.

If you're not excited Kings fans, it's time to let your hair down and howl! Get a little crazy and dream the dream!

The first 10 games of the regular season are brutal, and if our hometown boys can acquit themselves admirably, fans may be in for a season to remember!

All the best and enjoy!

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

Social Security Matters

When Will My Disability Become My Regular Social Security?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: I hope you can answer this question. I'm currently receiving Social Security Disability benefits, and I will be turning 65 in February 2026. I'm confused as to how Social Security Disability transitions to regular Social Security, and when. I assume it's age 65 but maybe it's my retirement date? Also, does the amount remain the same or will it change? I'm not working. I've been on SSDI for about 15 years. Thank you.

Signed: Disabled Senior

Dear Disabled Senior: If you are collecting Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits, those SSDI benefits

will automatically convert to become your regular Social Security retirement benefit when you reach your SS full retirement age (FRA) which, in your case, is age 67. For information, FRA today is somewhere between age 66 and 67, depending on your year of birth, and the full retirement age for everyone born in 1960 or later is age 67.

The change from SSDI to your regular Social Security benefit will be transparent to you because your monthly benefit amount will remain the same. SSDI benefits were originally awarded to you based upon your full retirement age entitlement when you applied for SSDI (even though you hadn't yet reached your FRA when you went on SSDI). Thus, the monthly benefit amount will not change because it is based on your lifetime earnings record, from before you became disabled.

FYI, although age 65 was once Social Security's "retirement

age," full retirement age for Social Security today is based on the year you were born. So, your SSDI benefit will automatically switch to become your regular Social Security retirement benefit as soon as you reach age 67. Essentially, the only thing that will change is the Social Security Trust Fund from which your benefits will be paid.

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For Those Hoping to Be California's Next Governor, The Clock is Ticking



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

Over the last half-century or so, California has had six elections for governor when the office was being vacated.

Understandably, such incumbent-free elections to run the nation's most populous and economically powerful state have drawn serious candidates, mostly holders of other high-profile offices who declared themselves as soon as decorum would allow.

When, for example, Republican Ronald Reagan's two terms as governor were ending in 1974, the Democratic secretary of state, Jerry Brown, narrowly defeated the Republican state controller, Houston Flournoy.

This bit of political history is offered because the end of Gavin Newsom's governorship is approaching rapidly. In scarcely a year, California voters will choose a new governor. The June 2 primary, which will determine the two finalists, is just eight months away.

Yet the field of would-be governors remains very unsettled.

For months voters, political media and potential campaign financiers waited for former Vice President Kamala Harris to decide whether, after losing the presidency to Donald Trump, she would seek the governorship.

Harris finally said no, with a rather odd remark: "I don't want to go back in the system. I think it's broken." She may have been referring to national politics, but since the issue was California's governorship, she could also have been implying the state was broken after many years of dominance by her Democratic Party.

Harris' decision, whatever her motives, did not settle the question about who will be running for governor next year. There are declared candidates, of course, but none scores very high in preliminary polling.

Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis had been one of the first to declare her candidacy but shortly after Harris announced her decision, Kounalakis dropped out, opting instead to run for state treasurer.

With those two out of the picture, former Congresswoman Katie Porter became the frontrunner, more or less by default, but with underwhelming support — 17% in a poll by UC Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies, released in late August. Her standing may have reflected nothing more than name recognition from her losing campaign for U.S. senator last year.

This week Toni Atkins, former president pro tem of the state Senate, also ended her campaign, saying she could see no pathway to victory. A few other Democrats remain, most notably former Biden administration official and state Attorney General Xavier Becerra and former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

Mostly, however, we are seeing just preliminary

skirmishing among those still in the race, because we're still waiting to see who else might run.

After the departure of Harris and Kounalakis, another name popped up in media speculation: U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla.

It's difficult to understand why Padilla, who holds one of the nation's most coveted political offices and could remain in the Senate for the rest of his life, would want to seek no more than eight years as governor.

Does he really want to deal with California's plethora of infinitely difficult, unresolved issues, such as homelessness, housing shortages, water supply uncertainty, economic stagnation and, perhaps trickiest of all, a chronic multibillion-dollar budget deficit?

Were Padilla to give up his Senate seat for the governorship, as Republican Pete Wilson did in 1990, the only logical motive would be civic duty — he thinks California needs him to weather its crises.

Meanwhile, we're waiting for another potential candidate, Rick Caruso, to also declare intentions. The very wealthy Los Angeles businessman ran a credible but unsuccessful race for mayor of his city after switching his party identification from Republican to Democrat and could draw support from moderate voters and interest groups of both parties. He says he's weighing a race.

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. ★



Mississippi, Not California, is the Education Future

A miracle defies the laws of nature. This is why "the Mississippi Miracle," the sobriquet for the extraordinary gains that students in the Gulf state have made in reading in recent years, is a misnomer.

There's nothing miraculous about a state that adopts phonics and that sets high standards for its kids to get better results in reading instruction. This, to the contrary, is a predictable outcome, and a replicable one, as other Southern states that have taken up similar policies have shown.

Mississippi went from 49th in fourth-grade reading results on the National Assessment about a decade ago to 9th in 2024. Its low-income children are ranked first in the nation. It's Black kids are number three in the nation and it's Hispanic kids number one. Overall, when adjusted for socioeconomic and demographics, Mississippi has the best fourth-grade results in the nation.

The derisive cliché was always, "Thank God for Mississippi," since it could be trusted to save other states from coming in 50th in various metrics. Now, the phrase can be used with sincerity and admiration, since the state recognized and did something about its literacy crisis.

In 2011, about four out

of five fourth graders in Mississippi weren't proficient in reading. In 2013, the state passed a reform to require teachers to understand the science of reading (basically, phonics), to deploy literacy coaches to schools, to identify students struggling to read early, and to hold back students in third grade who weren't ready to advance.

Alabama, Tennessee and Louisiana have now done much the same, and have also made gains. The original source of all this was a 2002 reading law in Florida that boosted student achievement in the Sunshine State.

In a piece headlined "Illiteracy is a policy choice" at the website The Argument, Kelsey Piper makes the case that it would be irresponsible and wrong to ignore the lesson of Mississippi and the Southern states.

She notes that Mississippi outperforms her native California, even though the Golden State is richer and spends substantially more on education per pupil. More than half of Black fourth graders in Mississippi are at or above basic level, while only 28% of Black fourth graders in California are.

It may be galling for Blue States that have prided themselves on their commitment to education and looked down on the South to have to acknowledge that Mississippi, of all places, has figured out a model for the nation, but it is imperative all the same.

"We have been spending lots of money on schools," Piper writes of Blue States, "but we have not been willing to muster the polit-

ical will and effort necessary to hold those schools accountable for results and adopt teaching practices that actually work."

The so-called reading wars between the whole-language approach and phonics was won, on the merits, by phonics long ago. Yet, ineffectual methods hung around even though they'd been discredited. This is why it's so important to get teachers to embrace research-based reading instruction.

There must also be high expectations, rigorously enforced. This is what the Mississippi third-grade retention policy is about. If a teacher and a parent know that a child is going to be held back, they will do all they can to get that child to basic proficiency. Research in Florida shows that getting held back not only helps the academic performance of the students who are retained, but their younger siblings as well.

With reading scores nationally sliding the wrong way, especially for the bottom 10% of students, Mississippi and the other Southern states offer a beacon of hope. Their example shows that, no, it's not impossible to teach children, and no, it's not very costly. It's a good sign that even California just passed a phonics bill.

It's fully within our power, so long as we insist on the basics, to give kids a skill absolutely essential to their development and their futures. No miracles necessary.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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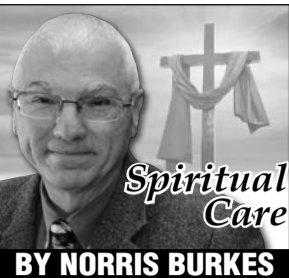
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MEALS ON WHEELS SACRAMENTO COUNTY

Thank You for Walking With Me



BY NORRIS BURKES

“Happy Birthday,” my wife sweetly whispered as we woke.

“How does it feel?” Becky asked.

“What? Being 68?”

“No. How does it feel to be footloose and deadline free. Your newspapers just published your last column today.”

“Feels like I just lost a lot of friends.”

“Maybe not. Aren’t you going to stay in touch with readers through weekly email?”

“I hope so,” I said.

“Plus, some readers will be joining you on the Chispa volunteer trips next year.”

She’s right.

I’ve always felt that you, my readers, walked along side me. Even though anyone in earshot would think I was talking to myself, I was often talking to you.

We began our conversations in 2002 as I left active-duty Air Force and restarted my hospital chaplain career.

From that beginning, I feel we have been walking the hospital halls together. Those years were not easy ones for me, but I felt encouraged just knowing that you were listening. You responded with kindness and understanding as I recounted my ministry with pediatric cancer patients, premature babies, parents who lost children,

and children who lost parents.

On other days, we found a moment to laugh together, chuckling over the military hat I lost in the toilet, over my unintentional theft of toilet paper, and my OCD that had me noting expired license plate stickers.

And even though I employed the help of a freelance editor, you still corrected my spelling, my grammar, and my punctuation. You fact-checked my references to movies, songs, books, and ouch, even Bible verses.

You prayed for me as I made death notifications for Iraq war KIAs. I felt like you followed me to Iraq as you sent hundreds of care packages to the service members serving with me at Joint Base Balad.

You were there for my biggest losses — my mother-in-law to a stroke in 2011, my brother, Milton, to COVID in 2020, my best friend, Roger, in 2020 to cancer and my mother last year from natural causes.

Still, through all that trauma, we managed to share a lot of fun the last 23 years as you read my column in over 50 papers — Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and even Ontario Canada.

Readers in those states invited me to speak in their churches, schools, clubs and veteran events. They read my books, bought them, donated them to troops, and one

Florida church even commissioned me to write one.

Along the way, I snagged a few awards from the Amy Foundation, the National Society of Newspaper Columnists and the Religion Newswriters Association, BUT, I’m forever most proud of the award you gave me.

I say, “You” because it was solely your response to Chispa Project that sent me to New York in 2019 to receive the Will Rogers Humanitarian Award “... for positively affecting readers’ lives and producing tangible humanitarian benefits.”

Now this last column is your recognition for positively influencing my life!

But alas, I won’t stop writing entirely. I’ll still appear weekly in the two newspapers closest to my home, The Union in Grass Valley, Calif., and the Auburn Journal of Auburn, Calif. Of course, I’ll share these columns with everyone who signs up for my email list.

So, don’t lose touch.

Get my weekly muse by sending an email to comment@thechaplain.net. Or sign yourself up at www.thechaplain.net/newsletter. Remember to spell chaplain correctly, not chaplin. We’ve talked about this.

Finally, please continue to support Chispa Project either by donating or volunteering for a trip in 2026 as they get ready for the next Honduran school year. Find info at chispa-project.org.

All of my books can still be ordered on Amazon. Autographed copies can be obtained on my website www.thechaplain.net ★



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Clean California Soars Past Major Milestone

Continued from Page 1
demonstrate long-term commitments to zero litter, community beautification and environmental enhancement.

Thirty communities have achieved full designation status.

“Clean California has become an overwhelming success and a model our state can continue to build on. Yes, we’ve removed hundreds of thousands of garbage trucks worth of

trash from our roads and highways,” Newsom said, “but it’s more than that; we’ve invested in communities all across our state with public art projects and parks, creating thousands of jobs and lifting up countless neighborhoods in need.”

Caltrans District 3 completed the \$5.7-million State Route 99 Beautification and Safety Improvement Project in Sacramento. This project

improves and upgrades a nine-mile stretch of State Route 99 between the Broadway Undercrossing and the Stockton Boulevard Overcrossing.

Key project features include rehabilitation, illumination and beautification of four pedestrian overcrossings; community-designed steel art panels installed on newly painted sound walls at five locations; new fencing, landscaping, slope paving,

and curbs to improve drainage and safety; beautiful mosaic tile art panels at on- and off-ramps visible to pedestrians, cyclists and motorists; and two large murals sponsored by Caltrans at 2nd Avenue and 21st Avenue, bringing vibrant color and community identity to the corridor.

The project was made possible thanks to partnerships with the City of Sacramento, Vietnamese American Community

of Sacramento, Oak Park Neighborhood Association, Sierra Curtis Park Neighborhood Association, Valley Hi Neighborhood Association/Mesa Grande Neighborhood Association and the Franklin Neighborhood Development Corporation.

Together, these partners turned a vision into reality in just over 19 months, delivering lasting safety improvements and a strong sense of community pride for Sacramento residents.

“This project shows the power of collaboration between Caltrans,

the City of Sacramento and neighborhood groups. By working together, we turned a gray corridor into a welcoming gateway filled with art, color and community identity,” Caltrans District 3 Director Sergio Aceves said.

“These improvements not only enhance safety and drainage but also create spaces Sacramento residents can feel proud of every day.”

To learn more about how California is creating a brighter future by building more, faster, for all, visit build.ca.gov. ★

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 Dec. 14. 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, 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 of media and artists. This art makes a statement every year.

Our galleries are free

and open to the public. Details at sacfinearts.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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Inspiring Girls in STEAM



Coming out of a Coast Guard plane on display in the plane yard at the Aerospace Museum of California, middle school girls from Twin Rivers and San Juan Unified school districts observe and experience different aircraft while completing an activity to create solar system bracelets. Photos by Seth Henderson



Girls experience an interactive exhibit at the "We Can Do It" event on Sept. 24 and 25, hosted by the Aerospace Museum of California. More than 1,000 middle school girls attended the event between the two days.

Continued from Page 1

the event, listening to panel discussions, interacting with planes in the yard and experiencing museum exhibits.

Jayda Isaac, 13 and a F.C. Joyce School eighth-grader, said that she felt inspired by the speakers from the panel discussion. One speaker was a high school student from Saint Francis High School and Jayda said she learned to believe in herself. Jayda "learned a lot," including that she is capable of whatever she puts her mind to, no matter who tries to put her down.

Aerospace Museum President and CEO Tom Jones said that he has met dozens of children who have had their lives changed by attending museum events and that the organization raises money specifically for such inspirational events, which are free to students and the school districts.

"People don't really understand," Jones said. "These types of things change lives but you can't change a life until you get them here so they can meet women like this, see a place like this, be around the aircraft we

have in the park. You can't just talk about it in a classroom."

Alianna Threatt, another F.C. Joyce School eighth-grader and 13-year-old, said that she had fun at the museum and she liked how multiple schools got together for the event.

Jeremy Combs, a career and technical education counselor at the Twin Rivers Unified School District, said that the district has had a strong relationship with the museum, partnering together for a number of years.

"The women here, whether it be in aviation or medical or anything related to STEAM, it's a really cool opportunity for all ages and all demographics," Combs said. "The hope is that these girls see something within themselves that inspires them to be in these career fields."

According to a scientific article from Yale University, more than 50% of bachelor's degrees were obtained by women and about 38% of all women in the U.S. held STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) degrees.

Historically, STEAM fields are dominated by men but events such as "We Can Do It" are

aimed at encouraging girls who might not even know about such careers, according to Combs.

"Hearing the feedback, just seeing the interactions with the students and seeing their excitement, hearing them ask questions to these women in different fields," Combs said, "I was just really surprised at the thoughtfulness of their questions and you can tell it sparks something within them."

The Twin Rivers Unified School District had about 700 students at the event, Combs said.

According to the San Juan Unified School District, nearly 500 girls from multiple schools in the district attended the event and it successfully sparked the student's curiosity and passion for STEAM careers in the future.

"It was heartening to see the girls so engaged, asking thoughtful questions and interacting with the numerous hands-on booths," San Juan Unified District said in a statement about the event.

Aerospace Museum Vice President Karen Jones said transportation is one of the biggest barriers when it comes to

getting students to attend inspirational events such as "We Can Do It" and that in the five years the museum has held the event, it has served almost 5,000 girls. Jones said the museum can provide the experience, thanks to volunteers and donations from individuals and organizations in the community.

"We've probably had, across the five years, almost 1,000 women volunteering their time and being mentors to these girls," Karen Jones said.

Describing one of her favorite moments from last year's event, Karen Jones said that Carmichael's honorary mayor, Kawanaa Carter, M.D., told her story of becoming a neurosurgeon, causing the audience of young girls to gasp and audibly sigh. One girl in the crowd could be heard saying "I didn't know we could do those kind of careers," shocked to learn the career possibilities for women in STEAM.

"I love seeing all these young girls show up and just the excitement," Karen Jones said. "They energize us to do what we do."

Linda Martin, board chair of the museum, said that the museum wants its visitors and the youth to be inspired by someone who looks like them. A mural displayed inside the upper wall above the doors to the exhibit portrays historical figures who had to overcome

incredible barriers to fulfill their achievements.

"We don't just touch lives here, we change lives," Martin said, "and I really believe that."

Martin said that the guest speakers have become mentors for many of the girls, describing the progression of a girl who was mentored by a woman in dentistry and is now graduating from dental school.

Tom Jones said that the museum provides about 51,000 scholarships for students each year and that the museum needs donors to continue those life-changing efforts. He said that the museum appreciates people in the community who opened their wallets and made donations on behalf of the students.

"We have unbelievable outcomes but we can't do that without the support of the community," Tom Jones said.

Karen Jones said the museum will have hands-on activities for young people, children and grandparents for families to engage with, learning by doing.

"So whether you're 2 or 102, there's something here for you," Karen Jones said. "There's hands-on activities all the time."

The museum, at 3200 Freedom Park Drive in McClellan, is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays with final admission at 4 p.m. To donate to the nonprofit museum, visit aerospacemuseum.org/make-a-donation. ★

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County Public Health Officer to Retire

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG)

- Longstanding Sacramento County Public Health (SCPH) Officer Dr. Olivia Kasirye will retire next March after more than two decades of service.

"Leading Sacramento County Public Health has been an extraordinary privilege," said Kasirye. "I am most grateful for all of you. This community has shown strength and commitment to protecting each other during all the good times and in the face of many challenging times as well. That and the remarkable team at Sacramento County Public Health are what inspires me every day."

Kasirye began her Sacramento County career in 2004 as a senior physician manager, then served as El Dorado County's health officer from 2009 to 2012 before returning to Sacramento in 2012 to lead Sacramento County Public Health.

Kasirye set five priorities when she entered the role, all of which continue to define Sacramento County Public



Dr. Olivia Kasirye, Sacramento County's Public Health Officer since 2012, will retire next March. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

Health's work today. Those priorities are to strengthen disease response, reduce health disparities, confront the opioid epidemic, build a resilient workforce and achieve public health accreditation.

The five priorities were advanced with lasting impact. Sacramento County achieved national public health accreditation last November. Sacramento

County Public Health built new equity and nursing units, expanded partnerships to improve birth outcomes and launched campaigns to prevent opioid overdoses among youth under her direction.

"Dr. Kasirye has been a compassionate and dedicated leader for Sacramento County," said Sacramento County Supervisor and Board Chair Phil Serna.

"She guided us through unprecedented exigencies with rigor, significantly advanced health equity and safeguarded our most vulnerable residents. She leaves an enduring legacy."

Colleagues describe Kasirye as a graceful leader who people love working with. Kasirye inspires loyalty not only through her expertise but through an irreplaceable

warmth and kindness she shows every day at work.

Many staff say her ability to connect with people on a personal level sets her apart as a uniquely beloved leader in county government.

"Dr. Kasirye's leadership has meant stability and trust for Sacramento County," said Sacramento County Supervisor Patrick Kennedy. "We owe her a great deal for getting us through the pandemic. She led with transparency and put the health of the community first. We are grateful for her service."

Kasirye leaves behind a legacy of strong partnerships, forward-thinking strategies and a public health system better prepared for the future. She will work with Department of Health Services Director Tim Lutz over the next several months to guide the transition and help identify the next health officer.

"Dr. Kasirye has been an exceptional leader," said County Executive David Villanueva. "She built strong teams and responded decisively to complex public health challenges. We deeply appreciate her decades of service." ★

Code Enforcement Increases Penalties, Strengthens Community Safety

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG)

- Sacramento County Code Enforcement saw major success in its 2025 efforts to crack down on illegal fireworks, issuing more than twice as many penalties as the previous year despite receiving fewer complaints.

From mid-June through July, Code Enforcement received 774 complaints about illegal fireworks, a 26% decrease from 2024. Even with fewer reports, the division issued 72

penalties, up 112% from the year before.

Officers also sent 189 warning letters and completed more than 840 follow-ups with residents, nearly doubling community engagement from 2024.

A key factor in this success was a new emphasis on gathering stronger evidence from residents. By working directly with complainants, Code Enforcement was able to turn previously unactionable complaints into enforceable cases.

Technology also played a major role. In



A key factor in this success was a new emphasis on gathering stronger evidence from residents. By working directly with complainants, Code Enforcement was able to turn previously unactionable complaints into enforceable cases. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

partnership with the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office and Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District, Code Enforcement used drones to identify violators in real time. Drone operations

alone led to nearly one-third of all penalties issued.

"These results show that collaboration, technology, and community involvement make a real difference in reducing

illegal fireworks," said Taylor Parker, Senior Code Enforcement officer. "Every penalty issued sends a clear message: fireworks are dangerous, and those who use them illegally will be held accountable."

Code Enforcement will continue working with county partners to expand drone coverage, improve evidence collection and strengthen public education ahead of the 2026 fireworks season. ★

Public Authority Office Moves



A new exterior drop box is available so that members of the public can turn in their forms after hours. There are currently signs at both the former (3700 Branch Center Road) and new (9300 Tech Center Drive, Suite 100) location to assist the public with the transition. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County's Public Authority office recently moved to a new location. The new office is located at 9300 Tech Center Drive, Suite 100, Sacramento.

The Public Counter hours continue to be 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and forms can be picked up or dropped off from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

A new exterior drop box is available so that the public can turn in their forms after hours. There are currently signs at both the former (3700 Branch Center Road) and new location to assist the public with the transition.

The Public Authority assists recipients and providers with the In-Home Supportive Services Program. You can learn more about the services provided by visiting the In-Home Supportive Services Public Authority website at pubauth.saccounty.net.

For any questions regarding the new location or general inquiries about the Public Authority office, call 916-874-2888 or email HHS-PA@Saccounty.gov. ★

Feedback Wanted Amidst Behavioral Health Services Act Transition

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - As the cooler temperatures set in and we transition from summer to fall, new transitions are happening within the Sacramento County Department of Health Services. The county is preparing for the rollout of the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), a major shift in how behavioral health programs are structured, overseen and funded, which will take effect next July.

In 2024, California voters passed Proposition 1, replacing the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) with the Behavioral Health Services Act. This shift brings significant changes to how behavioral health services are planned, delivered and funded.

While the Behavioral Health Services Act introduces structural

changes, it does not increase funding; instead, it reorganizes how funds are allocated and prioritized. Changes include streamlining services to reduce duplication and build a more connected and effective system of care, directing resources to those with the most significant mental health and substance use challenges, as well as defining specific outcomes and reporting on progress.

Over the past few months, the county has launched a two-phase Community Planning Process where residents can share their thoughts on what's working in the current system and where improvements are needed. These conversations will inform the Integrated Plan and ensure it reflects the voices and experiences of the people it's meant to serve. Phase one is wrapping up with a community survey, which closes on Oct. 6. Residents are

encouraged to share their input.

Another change that comes with Behavioral Health Services Act is the creation of the Sacramento County Behavioral Health Commission. The commission advises the County Board of Supervisors and Department of Health Services on behavioral health policy, programs and services. It also provides a forum for community members to share input and stay engaged in local behavioral health planning.

The Behavioral Health Commission holds a hybrid virtual/in-person meeting on the fourth Wednesday of each month from 6 to 8 p.m. The in-person location is 7001-A East Pkwy., Conference Room 1 in Sacramento. To learn more about the Behavioral Health Services Act, the commission or take the survey, visit the website at dhs.saccounty.gov/BHS. ★

New EBT Cards Being Mailed

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The California Department of Social Services has announced that magnetic stripe EBT cards are set to expire by Oct. 25. To keep your benefits safe and secure, California Department of Social Services mailed new EBT cards with chip and tap technology to all cardholders.

The cardholder's benefits and PIN will automatically transfer to the new card. Once the new card is activated, the old one will be turned off.

Sacramento County recommends activating the new chip-enabled card when it is received. EBT cardholders can request a new card using

the ebtEDGE mobile app.

Call the EBT Customer Service Center at 1-877-328-9677 to request a new card.

Visit your county office if your new card hasn't arrived. Wait times might be long, so plan accordingly.

If no action is taken, magnetic stripe-only EBT cards can still be used until a chip and tap card has been activated or up to 180 days after the new chip and tap EBT card is issued, whichever comes first.

For further assistance, call EBT's customer service center at 1-877-328-9677 or visit the EBT Client Website for updates.

For more information, visit the Department of Human Assistance website at ha.saccounty.gov. ★

From Closure to Community

Little Redwoods School Opens Downtown

By **Ena Lupine**
Little Redwoods School

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Last spring, the daycare located in the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) building abruptly closed, leaving dozens of families scrambling for childcare: a nightmare situation for any working parent. Finding local childcare is no easy feat in a region already facing high unmet childcare needs, with many local daycare centers maintaining months-long waitlists.

Many in this situation would have scattered to find care wherever they could, but a tenacious group of parents was determined to rebuild the daycare community from the ground up. They banded together to launch a nonprofit, parent-led collaborative daycare called Little Redwoods School by James Marshall Parent Nursery School (JMPNS) in the newly vacant downtown space, which opened its doors in early September.

Parent board chair Megan Nevin said, "We felt it was important to continue offering quality childcare in Sacramento especially given how difficult it can be to find care here, and we wanted to build a daycare center that prioritizes community, fair teacher compensation and meaningful caregiver

involvement in children's education."

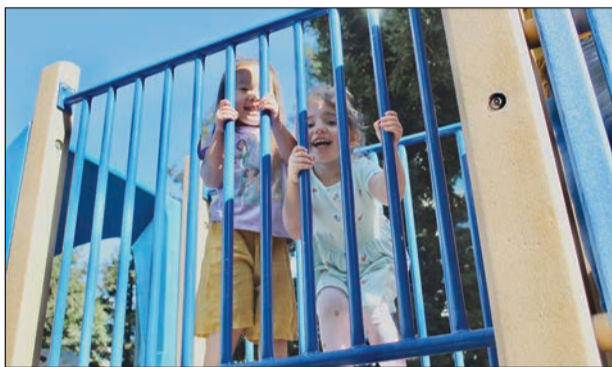
After long volunteer hours spent developing every aspect of the new school, Little Redwoods School officially opened its doors on Sept. 2. The parent board partnered with the well-established cooperative preschool James Marshall Parent Nursery School (JMPNS) to help develop a new concept for the school that would emphasize financial transparency and parent engagement. The on-site director and the teachers from the previous daycare were also excited to join the staff of the new care center.

"It really meant a lot to us to bring back so many of the amazing teachers and our On-Site Director Jen Ortiz from the previous school, and we couldn't have done this without the support of those teachers and of James Marshall Parent Nursery School. It's been a huge collective effort to create this school over the past few months, but after so many late nights and weekends, it's very satisfying to see the community that's come together and to see how excited our kids are to go to daycare every morning," said Ira Tarshis, the parent board vice chair.

Little Redwoods School by James Marshall Parent Nursery School is committed to a child-centered approach grounded in the principles of diversity,



Little Redwoods School facilitates learning through hands-on play. Photos courtesy of Jen Ortiz



Children play in Little Redwoods School's large outdoor area.

equity, family engagement and community building. For the children in our care, this means fostering resilience, nurturing meaningful connections, encouraging a sense of responsibility and promoting overall well-being. For families, we strive to build a culture of transparency, safety and integrity through open and collaborative communication.

Executive Director Erin

Hinton said, "I have 17 years of experience with collaborative childcare at James Marshall Parent, which was established in 1954 and has been a pillar of the community in West Sacramento ever since. I've seen firsthand, both as a teacher and a participating parent, how this cooperative model of care and education is a reflection of what research has proven time and again:

that when families are involved, children thrive."

Jen Ortiz, the school's on-site director, said, "Raising resilient, deeply connected children begins with modeling it as a community. What we've built here reflects what I hope every child learns: that even in challenges, we can choose joy and meaning when we lean on those who care for us. I'm honored to be part of a community that values each person's unique strengths and creates a true sense of belonging."

"I wake up every day excited to laugh, play and connect with the children, families and teachers I love," continued Ortiz.

Little Redwoods School by James Marshall Parent Nursery School is located in the California

Environmental Protection Agency building in downtown Sacramento and offers full and part-time care to children from three months to five years old. The school is currently enrolling preschoolers and accepting waitlist submissions for infants and toddlers. Located at 1001 I St. in Sacramento, the school also offers discounted rates for state employees.

The Little Redwoods School is hosting a fall festival on Saturday, Oct. 18, from 10 a.m. to noon at Southside Park. The fall festival will feature fun activities for kids, including pumpkin painting, games, costume dress up, arts and crafts and more.

For more information, visit littleredwoodsschool.org. ★

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