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# RIVER VALLEY TIMES

41ST YEAR • ISSUE 23

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DECEMBER 5, 2025

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## Tree Lighting Draws Crowd to Stonehouse

Story and photos by Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - The Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony at Stonehouse Park on Nov. 28 drew an enthusiastic crowd of children, parents and grandparents eager to visit with Santa. The Rancho Murieta Association Recreation Committee presented the event, a community tradition for 22 years.

Highlights of the evening included visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus, the lighting of the RMA Christmas tree, festive holiday music, cookies and hot cocoa, and two cozy fire pits to take the edge off the chill.

Santa and Mrs. Claus made their grand entrance at 6 p.m., arriving in style aboard a Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District engine, its lights flashing and sirens blaring.

After arriving at the plaza, Santa led the excited crowd in a reverse countdown that culminated in the Christmas tree being lit.

Once seated on their throne, Santa and Mrs. Claus welcomed the first youngster in what became

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The Christmas tree lights up as soon as Santa Claus finishes his countdown at Stonehouse Park on Nov. 28. The Rancho Murieta Association Recreation Committee sponsors the annual event.

## State Dismisses CSD Conflict Complaints



By Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - Three Rancho Murieta Community Services District board members have essentially been cleared of conflict-of-interest allegations by the California Fair Political Practices Commission.

The commission, which reviews potential financial conflicts of interest but does not rule on questions of bias, announced in separate Nov. 21 emails to the complainants that it will not pursue enforcement actions against Director Randy Jenco, Board President John Merchant or Director Linda Butler, citing insufficient evidence.

Former board member Stephen Booth filed the FPPC complaint against Jenco, while developer Bob Keil submitted a separate complaint against Merchant and Butler.

The two complaints raised different concerns: One alleged that Jenco could have a financial interest in development on his property, while the other claimed Merchant and Butler were biased because of their involvement in a petition supporting a moratorium.

### Development Moratorium

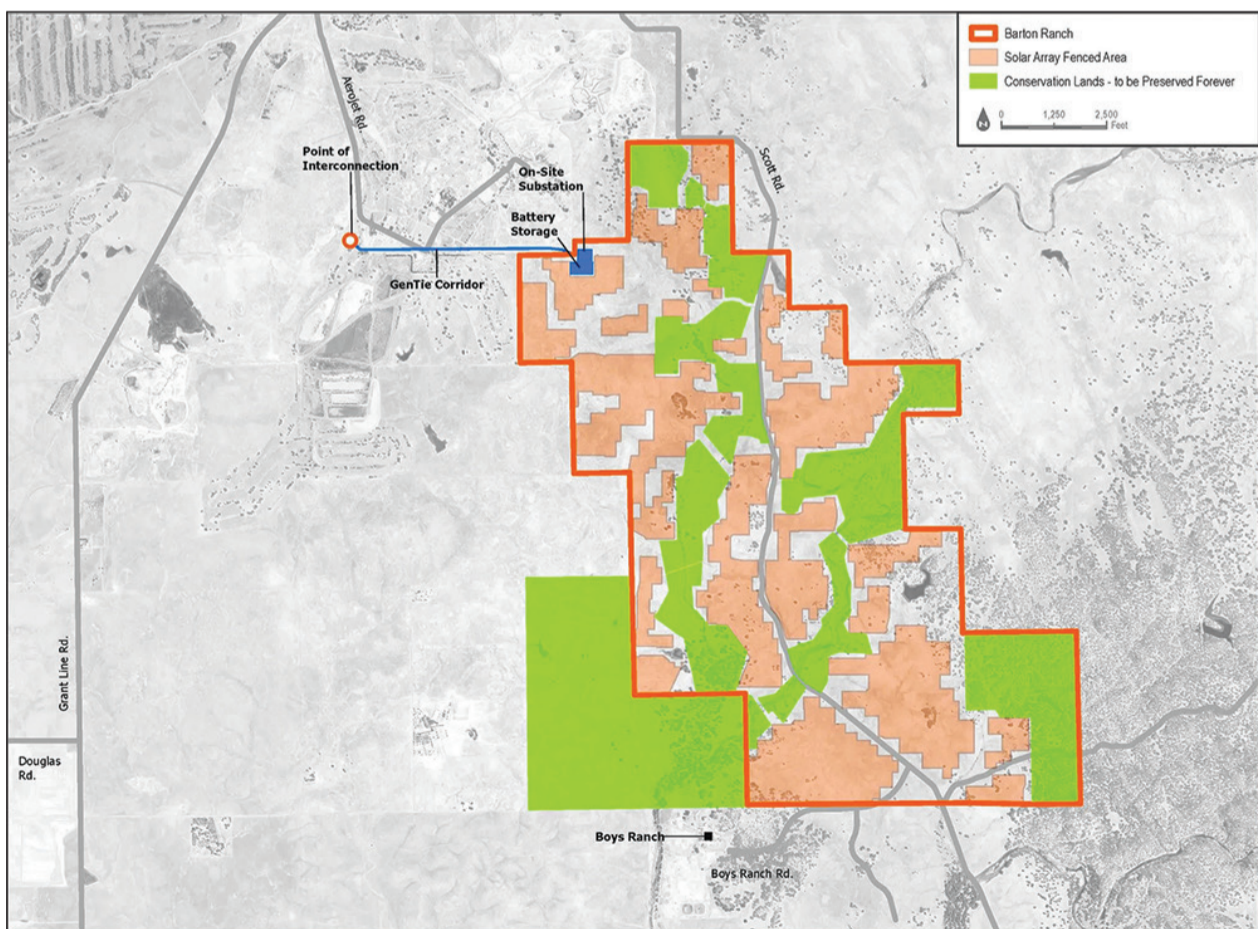
Both complaints stemmed from a tense Sept. 17 board meeting in which the board voted 3-2 to begin the process of enacting a moratorium on new development due to insufficient water supply. Merchant, Butler and Director Bill Gere supported the motion, while Jenco and Director Tim Maybee opposed it.

Before the board began discussing the moratorium, audience member Richard Gehrs told the directors that there was a perception in the community that Jenco had a financial conflict because he had purchased the Granlees property, which could be subdivided and developed in the future.

Later in the meeting, Booth questioned whether Jenco should participate in discussions about a moratorium or even the Integrated Water Master Plan, given that he could

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## Supervisors Approve Solar Facility Despite Protests



A Sacramento County map shows the footprint of the Coyote Creek Agrivoltaic Ranch along Scott Road. The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the project on Nov. 18. Courtesy photo

By Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times Reporter

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - Over the objections of environmental advocates, off-roaders and tribal representatives, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a massive solar facility on

Nov. 18. The six-hour hearing drew an overflow crowd, with most of the 130 speakers opposed.

The Coyote Creek Agrivoltaic Ranch will be built on the Barton Ranch south of Rancho Murieta, spanning 2,700 acres of pastureland on both sides of Scott Road. About 1,412 acres will be developed for

the project, including a 200-megawatt solar array capable of powering up to 40,000 homes and a 100-megawatt battery storage system designed to deliver electricity for up to four hours.

The applicant plans to integrate seasonal sheep grazing around the

*Continued on page 5*

# The Kutzers: Preserving Wilton's Past, Protecting Its Future

By Wilton Winter Festival

WILTON, CA (MPG) -

Winter Festival time has arrived in Wilton again, and with it, another opportunity to honor local people who have shaped our community over the decades. This year, the Wilton Winter Festival Parade grand marshals are Bill and Alice Kutzer.

Communities are shaped over generations. People are attracted to a place and settle there for any number of reasons. But no matter what brought them there, those people become the fabric of that community. A patchwork of values and lifestyles that grows and attracts people with a desire for the same. Small American communities like Wilton are no exception to this phenomenon. And today, we honor Bill and Alice Kutzer for the impact they have had in shaping and protecting the community we value so much.

## Their Beginnings

Bill Kutzer was born in San Mateo. From a young age, he developed a love for the outdoors, spending time with his dad hunting and fishing. He spent several summers at a ranch on the Klamath River helping his aunt and uncle. The ranch was self-sufficient with many farm animals, a large garden, and lots of canning and cooking on a wood stove.

"There was always work to do," Bill says. He spent his days milking cows, collecting egg and gathering hay from the fields. This is where Bill says he developed a true "country connection."

In 1959, Bill graduated from high school and went on to the College of the Pacific (now University of the Pacific) to play football and pursue a career in teaching and coaching. After graduation, Bill stayed at UOP as a freshman football coach and completed a Master's Degree in education in 1965, along with credentials qualifying him to teach up to the junior college level. Soon after, Bill was hired as an instructor in the physical education department and head freshman football coach at Sacramento State College, a job that launched a long and rewarding career. Bill says, "All my life, God was opening doors."

Bill served in the United States Marine Corps Reserves from 1963 to 1969. He graduated at the top of his training company and was honored to carry the flag at the ceremony. He also received the Marine Corps Dress Blues for being first in the class.

Alice Schmierer was born in San Diego. At a young age, she moved with her family to one of her grandfather's ranches, a grape vineyard in Acampo. Alice has many fond memories of growing up on the ranch in Acampo with her brother and sister. They were very involved in the Evangelical United Brethren Church in Lodi. Because many German-Russian immigrants lived in Lodi, much of the congregation spoke German, and the church service pamphlets were printed in English and German. Alice recalls many traditions, including the annual Christmas play and stuffing stockings for the children in the congregation as a member of the youth group. A highlight recalled by both Bill and Alice is a German opera singer named Inga singing "Silent Night" a cappella from the balcony of the church on Christmas Eve. After all these years, the memory still has an effect on them. Alice continues to stay in contact with church families from these days. She says she and her siblings always felt supported by the close-knit community they had.

Also during these years, Alice developed her love for preserving history. A self-described archivist, she followed in



Bill and Alice Kutzer are grand marshals of the Wilton Winter Festival Parade on Saturday, Dec. 6. Photo courtesy of Wilton Winter Festival

her mother's footsteps by clipping newspaper articles and obituaries of family and friends. She says her church directories and high school yearbooks are stuffed with articles about events and people in the community.

## Life Together

Bill and Alice met at Campus Crusade for Christ in Stockton in 1962, and they were married in 1965. Not long after, they began to consider where they wanted to settle down and raise a family. They wanted to be near Alice's family, and they were both drawn to rural life. They looked around Citrus Heights, Lincoln and Newcastle but didn't find exactly what they wanted. They discovered 80 acres for sale on Colony Road (considered Galt at the time) and wished they could have purchased it all, but it was out of reach. They purchased 20 acres in 1967 with the plan to build a home.

By 1970, the Kutzers were a family of four (their two daughters, Wendy and Roxanne, were 4 and 2), and construction started on the home Bill and Alice live in today. Alice describes it as a Capp home: The lumber for the home was pre-cut and delivered to the site, which Bill unloaded on a northern California summer day... it was 113 degrees!

The project was a group effort, with friends and family helping along the way. Bill dug the foundation by hand while working full-time. The family lived in an 18-foot travel trailer on the premises for six months. As one can imagine, there is no shortage of stories from this time, like when the pipes on the trailer froze and ruptured; or when the roof was sheeted with plywood and the family awoke to pouring rain in the night forcing Bill to climb up and nail the roofing paper to

stop the water from damaging the furniture they had already moved in; or when Bill and Alice were on the roof nailing the shingles down and they turned to see the sweet face of their 2-year-old daughter, who had climbed up to the roof to see what they were doing. Undoubtedly, this was a time of hard work, sweat, exhaustion and stress. But Bill and Alice recount the stories with smiles. They are the salt of the earth: unafraid of hard work in pursuit of their dreams.

After settling into the new house, their last daughter, Cindy, was born. As lovers of agriculture, involvement in 4-H was a natural next step. The family was given two sheep: one with a bad eye and one with a bad leg. Those gifts led to the construction of pens and a small barn; the flock reached 30 sheep at its peak. As shearing is required for sheep, Bill became quite proficient. This led to the impromptu formation of a sheep-shearing operation with a few of Bill's local friends that lasted 15 years. The men would shear sheep for people from miles around; their biggest day was 100 sheep! Bill was even willing to stop by ranches after his workday at Sac State to shear a few sheep when requested.

Because their home address was Galt, the girls went to Arcohe School. Alice began volunteering at the school, which slowly developed into part-time work and eventually a full-time job. Over the years and through the kids' activities, the Kutzers developed relationships with many people in the surrounding area.

## The Community

When asked what the area was like when they purchased their property, the Kutzers describe a few houses, and mostly open pasture, cows, sheep, goats and row

crops. Alice recalls that after corn harvest, there would be hundreds of Sandhill cranes in the fields. There were abundant pheasants, turkeys and Canadian honkers that would visit their land regularly. The Kutzers remember the old Dillard Store as a community hub, with two gas pumps and a meat locker in the back. They also reminisce about the post office located in the back of the Wilton Store until the current post office was built.

In the early 1980s, the boundary lines were redrawn, and the Kutzers' address became a Wilton address. They joke that they moved from Galt to Wilton without having to pack a single item!

It was after this that Bill became involved in the movement to keep Wilton the rural, country community it has been for so long. When Elk Grove began to look southward in the expansion of its sphere of influence, Bill was a vehement opponent. His involvement in keeping Elk Grove from encroaching on agricultural land and wildlife habitat was crucial to defeating the plan.

The Kutzers (mostly Bill, according to Alice) also became involved in the formation of the Wilton History Group, which continues to benefit our community today. For many years, Alice has been part of the military committee within the group, organizing the annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day celebrations in Wilton. Alice and members of the group have collected significant amounts of military memorabilia, which they display at the events. Alice has also been able to put her archival skills to work and maintains binders chronicling information on local veterans, surviving and deceased. The criteria for representing Wilton as a veteran is to have stayed here for at least 24 hours, Alice says with a smile. She is obviously passionate about the importance of recognizing our veterans in this way.

Regarding the Wilton Winter Festival Parade, Bill recalls Mary Morgan being the driving force behind the first one, and Bill and Alice were there. They have attended many over the years and are honored to be named grand marshals for 2025. Their favorite part of the event is seeing community members recognized for their contributions to Wilton.

This year, they plan to have family in attendance at the parade, including their daughter, Cindy, and her family, also residents of Wilton.

In addition to the Wilton Winter Festival, the Kutzers plan to spend the holidays with family as they always do. When their three daughters married, Bill and Alice felt they had been given three sons. Now, with seven grandchildren, and two of them married, the gatherings are growing. They are grateful that all three children and their extended families still live in California. Alice counts the opportunity to gather and share memories with family as the second-best gift she has ever received; the first being God sending his son, Jesus, to earth for us.

In talking with Bill and Alice, their love for the rural lifestyle shines. As Bill said of Alice, he knew "she had country in her bones." Of course, things have changed over the years: more traffic, more houses, less wildlife, water worries. But the sense is that the good has been so good it has unquestionably outweighed any changes in the other direction. They love where they live and the life they created here. They love this community, which was forged over the years by people drawn to its rural charm and authenticity, forged by people like Bill and Alice Kutzer.

The 17th annual Wilton Winter Festival is from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6 at the Wilton Community Center (9717 Colony Road). The parade is at noon. ★



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# E-Bikes, Barcodes are Association Topics

By Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times  
Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - Discussion of a proposed e-bike rule and non-member barcode use highlighted the Rancho Murieta Association Board's Nov. 18 meeting.

In other business, the board presented a plaque to Randy Jenco in recognition of his work improving the Stonehouse Park sports fields. The general manager also honored Gyan Singh, a 50-year employee who died the previous week. (See separate stories in this issue.)

## E-Bikes

Director Scott Adams, who chairs the Governing Documents Committee, has been working for months on a proposed e-bike rule. The draft discussed at the meeting had been circulated for member feedback earlier this year and drew about 50 comments from residents.

Adams asked the board to weigh in on three sections: where e-bikes may be ridden, a requirement that riders be at least 16 years old, and higher fines for egregious violations.

After several directors raised concerns about limiting e-bikes to paved surfaces, Adams agreed to revise the rule to allow their use on gravel paths as well.

The other directors did not object to the age requirement or the proposed fine schedule. They also briefly discussed requiring identification stickers for e-bikes and the challenges of enforcing the rule.



Director Scott Adams requests board comments on a proposed e-bike rule at the Nov. 18 Rancho Murieta Association meeting. File photo

At the end of the discussion, the board voted unanimously to circulate the proposed rule for a 30-day member review.

## Non-Member Barcodes

During his general manager's report, Rod Hart said he is working with Rancho Murieta Community Services District Security to address problems with issuing and managing non-member barcode stickers. He noted that the current system lacks clear tracking and adequate controls for

monitoring non-resident access to the community. For example, as many as five barcodes have been issued per household to Rancho Murieta Country Club social members.

Hart is proposing transferring the entire non-member barcode process to RMA control, with several key improvements. The new system would introduce color-coded barcodes specifically for non-members, making them easily identifiable throughout the community. Each barcode would require a signed contract

and a deposit, allowing RMA to assess fines for violations such as speeding or unauthorized access to restricted areas. Moreover, the association would have the power to deactivate barcodes if deposits are not replenished. Nonmembers also would apply for barcodes at the RMA building during business hours.

## Annual Meeting

Although the board was scheduled to hold its annual meeting on Nov. 20, not enough members returned ballots to reach the required 40% quorum,

Hart said. The board rescheduled the meeting for Dec. 11 under a new state law that lowers the quorum requirement to 20%. Hart said the association received enough ballots to meet that requirement. The meeting will begin at 6 p.m.

## Other Business

Hart said he has contacted Caltrans about installing deer-crossing signs along Jackson Highway after receiving multiple community reports of deer being struck by vehicles. He will

also ask the Maintenance Committee to consider whether similar signs could be installed inside the gates, particularly on Murieta Parkway and Camino Del Lago.

Hart also addressed a motorcycle escort issue raised by audience member Brian Rosebrock. He said the escort policy does not appear in the CC&Rs or in the non-architectural rules. The requirement that a patrol officer escort a motorcycle to and from an owner's home – only in the North – appears to stem from a past board decision that was never clearly documented. Hart said that developing a better, consistent process will require going through the committee structure, beginning with the Compliance Committee.

Audience member Tom Shewchuck offered the board three focus areas for the coming years. First, he urged tighter controls on non-member access at the gates, noting that Hart is already addressing part of the issue with barcode sticker changes. His second suggestion was to improve guest compliance and explore new gate-access technologies, such as license plate or facial recognition systems. Third, he proposed uniting all of the community's homeowner associations under the RMA umbrella.

The board's next meeting will be at 6 p.m. on Nov. 11 for the Annual Meeting and at 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 16 for the regular monthly meeting.

This story is online at [therivervalleytimes.com](http://therivervalleytimes.com) and on Facebook. ★

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# CSD Crews Work Nonstop to Prevent Sewage Spill



Located near the wooden bridge, Lift Station 6B is operating normally after an emergency in mid-November when the pump couldn't keep up with heavy rain. Photo by Gail Bullen

By Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times  
Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - Rancho Murieta Community Services District crews worked around the clock from Nov. 15 to Nov. 17 to prevent a sewage spill at Lift Station 6B, after a series of equipment failures and heavy rain overwhelmed one of the community's most sensitive wastewater stations.

Because the lift station sits near the wooden bridge, any spill into the Cosumnes River could trigger costly state penalties, similar to the fines the district incurred in 2006 when treated wastewater accidentally entered the river.

District directors unanimously approved the Lift Station 6B repair and cleanup at their Nov. 19 board meeting. Board President John Merchant estimated the total cost could reach \$250,000.

The trouble began Friday night, Nov. 14 when a low-level alarm was reported around 10 p.m. and cleared by staff. But the more serious problems surfaced the next afternoon. At about 3 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 15, another low-level alarm was triggered at the station, prompting an operator to respond.

Interim Operations Director Travis Bohannon said the station's programmable logic controller (PLC) unexpectedly stopped controlling pump levels, and the backup float system – designed to take over when levels rise or fall beyond setpoints – also failed to engage. As a result, the pump continued running until the wet well dropped to roughly half a foot, triggering the alarm. The lower float was later found to have failed and has since been replaced.

When the operator arrived, he manually refilled the wet well to 4 feet and returned the pumps to automatic mode. But the system could only draw the level down to about 2.5 feet and no lower, indicating the pumps were no longer operating at full efficiency. Bohannon responded to the site and suspected that air and grease had entered the 4-inch main when the wet well was pumped nearly to the bottom. The pumps were not damaged, he said, but they were unable to keep up with incoming flow.

"Once the rain started, I knew we were going to need Vector trucks due to the amount of rain that was forecasted in a relatively short period of time," Bohannon said. The Vector truck began hauling effluent from the lift station to



Work is underway to expose a 10-inch pipe that will provide another connection between Lift Station 6B and the 12-inch force main at the Yellow Bridge. Courtesy photo

the wastewater plant.

Once the rain became a deluge, Bohannon summoned two more Vector trucks. During the height of the storm, all three trucks rotated continuously.

"We had to have continuous pumping," Bohannon said in his email response. "Once the rain kept coming down, one truck couldn't keep up."

After the heaviest downpour ended, Bohannon released one truck, but two remained on site for two full days, operating 24 hours a day until early Monday morning. In total, five CSD employees worked rotating shifts throughout the weekend to keep wastewater moving and prevent an overflow, Bohannon said.

Compounding the problem was significant inflow and infiltration (I&I) discovered during the storm. After Bohannon alerted him to earlier issues, Utility Supervisor Corey Carskaddon inspected manholes during the peak rainfall and found an illegal tap on De La Pena and multiple uncapped cleanouts at The Retreats, all allowing stormwater to pour into the sewer system. Staff cut off the tap and capped the cleanouts, though additional storms will be needed to gauge how much these fixes reduce inflow.

District staff are continuing to investigate the cause of the weekend emergency. When asked at the board meeting whether outdated equipment had played a role, Bohannon said the float switches were not old and had been installed only a couple of years ago.

One long-term effort already underway is to locate and prepare to use a separate 10-inch force main that was believed to exist but had never been mapped. The staff located the downstream end of the line near the yellow bridge, confirming its position. Work is now underway to connect the larger pipe to the lift station in addition to the small pipe. The intent is "make sure this never happens again," Bohannon told the board.

The emergency formally ended Monday morning when wet-well levels stabilized, and the pumps met normal demand without

assistance. The final Vector truck was released shortly afterward.

Merchant told the board he authorized the initial work and said it may evolve into a \$250,000 project.

### 2006 River Spill

Merchant was also the board president in 2006 when about 20 million gallons of chlorinated water spilled from Bass Lake into the Cosumnes River, and he ended up appearing before the state Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Merchant recalled the incident at the Jan. 20, 2023, board meeting. The board was deciding whether to loan \$115,816 to the Rancho Murieta Country Club for emergency repairs and upgrades to the Bass Lake pump that was damaged in the New Year's storm. The pump irrigates the north course using reclaimed water from the district.

According to the discussion, a failing pump house would have been bad for the country club because it couldn't irrigate, and for the district because it couldn't remove reclaimed water.

The worst-case scenario happened to the district in 2006 when the state fined CSD after reclaimed water spilled into the Cosumnes River from Bass Lake.

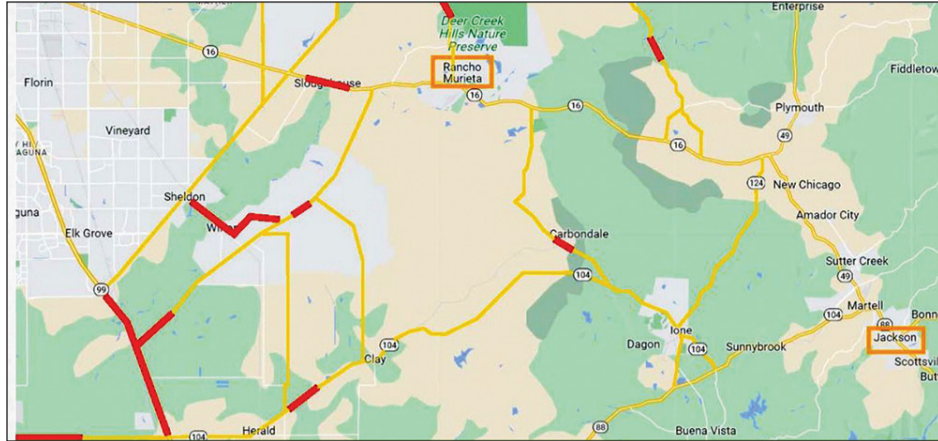
Merchant said the district was fortunate to receive a \$200,000 fine, noting it could easily have reached a million dollars. In addition to the fine, the district incurred substantial permit-related work and significant legal expenses.

"This little miscalculation we had – in the amount of rain we were going to get and the amount of water we could hold in our recycled-water pools – cost us in excess of half a million dollars," he said. "So what we're doing here, whether it's secured or unsecured, we're betting \$100,000 that we are not going to be fined another half a million."

The board approved the 2023 loan from sewer reserves, which the country club is still paying off.

This story is online at [therivervalleytimes.com](http://therivervalleytimes.com) and on Facebook. ★

## Community Updated on Jackson Highway Study



This image shows the roads that closed during the 2023 New Year's storm. It was part of the presentation on the Rancho Murieta Resilience Plan held at two meetings in November. Courtesy photo

By Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - Two meetings were held in Rancho Murieta on Nov. 17 and 18 to update residents on a study examining the vulnerabilities of Jackson Highway if an evacuation were required during a fire or flood. The presentation, held at Rancho Murieta Community Church, included models showing how a

wind-driven fire could spread through the community, a map of local road closures during the 2023 New Year's storm, and results from a recent community survey.

The Rancho Murieta Resilience Plan is a project led by the Sacramento County Department of Transportation under a Caltrans planning grant. A full story will be published in the Dec. 19 issue and is already available online at [therivervalleytimes.com](http://therivervalleytimes.com). ★



Rancho Murieta Country Club

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## Turkey Drive Helps Elk Grove Food Bank



The first Rancho Murieta Association Frozen Turkey Pickup Donation, held Nov. 21, was a success, according to Director Tom Reimers, who worked with RMA staff to launch the event. "RMA members are so generous," he said. "It will be an annual event." In the photo on the near left, Reimers and Directors Ernie Cowles, Wylie Haviland and Chris Childs display the results of their porch pickups: 45 turkeys weighing 670 pounds, along with 270 pounds of dry goods and \$250 in cash. In the photo far left, Reimers and Haviland deliver the donated turkeys to the Elk Grove Food Bank. Courtesy photos

## Supervisors Approve Solar Facility Despite Protests

*Continued from page 1*

solar arrays, use strategic landscaping to help screen the panels from view, and establish a permanent conservation corridor. All electricity generated will be supplied to the Sacramento Municipal Utility District.

The project applicant is Sacramento Valley Energy Center, a subsidiary of D.E. Shaw Renewable Investments based in New York City. D.E. Shaw has developed several solar projects in Sacramento County, including a smaller facility on Dillard Road near Wilton and the Rancho Seco solar facility.

Barton Ranch LLC will retain ownership of the Scott Road property.

### Opposition

Audience opposition focused largely on environmental and cultural impacts.

Many speakers raised alarms about the planned removal of 3,493 mature blue oaks, saying the loss of old-growth woodlands would destroy critical wildlife habitat and permanently alter the landscape. They argued that the proposed mitigation measures – including one-for-one tree planting – are inadequate because young saplings cannot replace the carbon-sequestration capacity or habitat value of 100- to 600-year-old trees.

Tribal representatives described the project as an ongoing desecration of sacred and ancestral lands, emphasizing the cultural significance of oaks. The project also perpetuates historical harm to tribal communities, they said.

Many speakers argued that more suitable locations exist, including disturbed land, industrial areas, parking lots and rooftops. One speaker contended that the ranch owners could likely secure a conservation easement that would generate enough revenue – potentially millions – to sustain ranch operations without converting the land to solar use.

Others argued that the loss of the carbon sink provided by the trees, habitat and healthy soil undermined the climate benefits of a new solar facility. Some described the project as greenwashing: presenting itself as sustainable while causing significant environmental damage.

Users of the Prairie City State Vehicular Recreation Area said placing a massive industrial facility next door would degrade the open space, scenic character and ecological integrity.

### Support

Audience proponents – including two Rancho Murieta residents and the Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce – emphasized the urgent need for renewable energy to meet SMUD



Supervisor Rosario Rodriguez makes the motion to approve the project, describing it as a business decision.



Herb Garms, one of the Barton Ranch owners, explains that the project will allow the family to keep the property in agriculture.

and Sacramento County clean-energy and climate targets. They argued that utility-scale solar projects are essential, noting that regional energy demand far outpaces what rooftop or parking-lot solar alone can supply.

The most heartfelt comments in support of the project came from members of the Mosher-Barton family, including Herb Garms. He spoke passionately about his family's deep commitment to agricultural heritage and conservation over generations. He emphasized the importance of adapting to changing realities in farming while preserving open space and supporting sustainable agriculture, stating, "It's a way for agriculture and clean energy to work together, not against each other."

Several local ranchers also spoke in support, including Stan Van Vleck, who described the financial and operational challenges of keeping his own properties in agriculture.

Union members and business advocates pointed to the benefits of union-wage construction jobs, economic development and increased property-tax revenue.

### County Planners

Senior Planner Kimber Gutierrez explained that the Coyote Creek Agrivoltaic Ranch is largely consistent with the Sacramento County General Plan. She noted that the project supports key county goals for renewable energy development and aligns with the General Plan, the county's Climate Action Plan and SMUD's 2030 Zero

Carbon Plan.

She added that the project is compatible with agricultural policies because it avoids prime farmland, maintains concurrent grazing under the Williamson Act and includes an agricultural management plan to ensure the land remains in productive use.

However, Gutierrez acknowledged that the project is only partially consistent – or inconsistent – with several other policies, particularly those related to scenic-corridor protection, oak woodland preservation and tribal cultural resource avoidance. She said not all impacts in these areas could be fully mitigated.

Despite those policy inconsistencies, the Planning Commission recommended approval, Gutierrez said, concluding that the project's economic, social and environmental benefits – including its contribution to General Plan and climate goals – outweighed the remaining significant impacts.

Gutierrez also noted that during the project's nearly five-year review, it underwent several iterations to reduce environmental impacts. The current version, known as the "reduced footprint project," shrinks the solar development area by 55 acres compared to earlier designs and preserves an additional 1,150 acres on or adjacent to the site.

Following public testimony, Supervisor Rich Desmond asked about the county's coordination with the four tribes involved in the review: Wilton Rancheria, the Ione Band of Miwok Indians,



The hearing at the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors chamber lasts six hours. Courtesy photos



Supervisor Patrick Hume says supervisors "sometimes are asked to make decisions that suck."

the United Auburn Indian Community and the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians.

Planner Julie Newton said the county worked with the tribes to conduct site visits and archaeological surveys to identify areas of concern. She emphasized that the resulting mitigation strategy is robust, designed to avoid known cultural resources and to establish protective procedures in the event of inadvertent discoveries during construction.

However, when Desmond pressed her on whether the tribes had approved the project, Newton acknowledged that none of the four tribes had ever approved or endorsed the Coyote Creek solar proposal.

### Applicant Comments

Jim Gillum, a local consultant representing the applicant, described the use of advanced solar-tracking technology that reduces grading and helps maintain the site's natural terrain. He said the project incorporates agrivoltaics by integrating solar panels with grazing and pollinator-friendly vegetation.

Gillum also outlined why the site was selected, noting that its large size, lower-quality grazing land and proximity to key electrical infrastructure made it well-suited for a utility-scale solar facility.

Gillum emphasized the project's oak woodland preservation and mitigation measures, noting they exceed county policy requirements, and he outlined planned partnerships to support long-term oak restoration. He also described commitments to improve the nearby Prairie City State Vehicular Recreation Area and to help facilitate a future public trail system.

Gillum also answered some questions from the supervisors after the public

testimony. Responding to widespread concern about vernal pool impacts, Gillum explained that the project would result in less than one one-hundredth of an acre of permanent vernal pool disturbance.

Gillum also addressed questions about SMUD's role, noting that while the utility was not present at the hearing, the project had been reviewed at a public SMUD board meeting. He said SMUD was fully aware of the site's characteristics, contradicting audience claims that the utility had acted without due diligence.

### Supervisor Comments

Supervisor Rosario Rodriguez made the motion to approve the project.

"My decision to support this project is a business decision because of the financial conditions of Sacramento County," she said.

Rodriguez said the county has few opportunities to generate new revenue.

"To me, it is an economic driver, and it will have a ripple effect throughout our county," she said. "In property taxes alone, the first year it will generate \$4.7 million. This project, over the next 20 years, will generate \$76 million just in property taxes alone."

Desmond described the decision as particularly difficult.

"This is a Sophie's Choice, if I have ever seen one," he said.

Supervisor Patrick Kennedy, who worked for SMUD in the 1990s, reflected on the need for decisive climate action and the difficult tradeoffs inherent in the Coyote Creek project. Drawing on his earlier experience at the utility, he emphasized that "the county Climate Action Plan and the ambitious goals therein that I

supported are dependent on SMUD's success in implementing their own ambitious plan. If one fails, we all fail as a region."

Supervisor Patrick Hume acknowledged that some speakers defending the oaks had made misstatements, but he said he would not correct them.

"Because I don't want to argue against what you're arguing for, which is the preservation of our natural world," he said. "I love the outdoors. I love to hike; I love to fish. I love to sit under trees."

Hume said he has long been a proponent of agriculture and understands the pressures facing family farms.

"Family farms are dying and being taken over by corporate ag interests because of the costs, the regulation, the work ethic," he said. "To have a generation that wants to try and keep the land in the family and keep it going is commendable... If they could, they would keep their property as is and just be allowed to continue doing the work that they've been doing, that their parents did, their grandparents did."

Noting that "sometimes we're asked to make decisions that suck," Hume seconded the motion.

Board Chair Phil Serna closed the discussion by noting the difficulty and divisiveness of major land-use decisions, especially when ecological preservation and climate goals conflict. Drawing on his experience in county government and on the California Air Resources Board, he said supervisors must balance input from staff, state law and public testimony to make decisions consistent with the General Plan and climate objectives.

"This is what we do: as supervisors, we hear from our constituents, we hear the different perspectives, we synthesize what we hear, what we understand from our own staff, what we understand from state law as it relates to a CEQA process, and then distill all of that down into a moment like this, where we have a motion and a second on the table, and we're going to make a decision."

After Serna called for the vote, the screen showed all five supervisors voting yes. Applause from the audience was loud.

This story is online at [therivervalleytimes.com](http://therivervalleytimes.com) and on Facebook. ★

# Wilton Donates \$12,000 to Burn Institute



Thanks to the overwhelming success of the Wilton Firefighters Association Chili Cookoff on Oct. 11, three community organizations donated \$12,000 to the Firefighters Burn Institute. A brief ceremony was held at the main fire station on Nov. 22 to present the check to Joe Pick, executive director of the Firefighters Burn Institute. Pick was impressed. "This speaks to the

way that a small town like Wilton can come together," he said. The Chili Cookoff was organized by the Wilton Firefighters Association, the Sacramento County 4B Council and the Wilton Community Center Nonprofit. Proceeds came from sponsors, raffle and beer sales, car show entries and chili-tasting kit sales. Courtesy Photo

## COMMUNITY BRIEFS

### Deadline Near for Holiday Tour of Homes

The Rancho Murieta Women's Club is hosting the Holiday Home Tour on Dec. 13. The reservation deadline is Dec. 5. Join us as six homeowners from the north and south open their doors to some of the most beautifully decorated homes in our community.

The event runs between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., and the tickets cost \$35. The event is open to all: residents, guests and gentlemen. Reservation forms are available at the RMA building. For questions, contact Barbara Armstrong at 916-541-1884.

### Murieta Dance to Perform Dec. 13-14

The Murieta Dance Company will present "Indiana Jones and the Lost Skull" in two shows: 5 p.m. Dec. 13 and 2 p.m. Dec. 14. Tickets are \$15 per person or \$25 for VIP seating.

The performances will be held at Murieta Plaza, in the former Murieta Market space.

For more information, text or call 916-296-6503 or visit [murietadancecompany.com](http://murietadancecompany.com).

### Kiwanis Seeks Sweats for Vets Donations

The Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta seeks monetary donations to its Sweats for Vets program, which runs through the end of December.

Make checks payable to Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta-Sweats for Vets. and mail to Kiwanis at P.O. Box 855, Rancho Murieta, or place in the drop box at the Rancho Murieta Association Building.

### Wilton Bingo Set for Dec. 6

Wilton Bingo is held the first Saturday of every month. The next bingo will be on Saturday, Dec. 6 in the Wilton Community Center, 9717 Colony Road at Dillard Road. Doors open at 5 p.m. with food available for sale and bingo starts at 6 p.m.

All proceeds go to two nonprofits: the local Park Council and the Wilton History Group. ★

# Roger's Review

By State Senator Roger Niello



## Holiday Edition

As the end of the year approaches, I am deeply grateful for the trust you have placed in me to represent our communities. I have five bills that passed the legislature and were signed by the governor this year, and here is the list.

With the support of the County of Placer, I authored Senate Bill 359. This measure establishes clear guidelines for the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration and confirms that the existing tax exemptions for fuels, such as diesel and compressed natural gas, used by public transit operators also apply to counties that operate their own transit services directly.

When engaging in a home improvement contract, consumers should be informed about who will be providing the service. I proposed Senate Bill 517 to allow consumers to make an informed decision regarding their home improvement project by requiring a home improvement contract to provide a disclosure if subcontractors are being used on a project.

I introduced Senate Bill 568 to make sure that the requirement to have epinephrine available in public schools is applied in school programs including preschool. Epinephrine is currently required in public schools, and our school health professionals have the medication on hand to provide lifesaving treatment. My bill provides the necessary clarification to this requirement so that our public schools and their programs are prepared to assist any student who might need epinephrine. ★

Senate Bill 765 establishes the giant garter snake as the official state snake. The giant garter snake can only be found in California. Declaring the giant garter snake as the official state snake of California acknowledges the important place of the species in the ecology, agriculture and water resources and reinforce the state's commitment to protecting endangered species. It has been my honor to work on this legislative proposal with the California Rice Commission and Save the Snakes, a local nonprofit organization whose mission is to conserve snakes around the world through education, research and community support.

Having spent my early career as a Certified Public Accountant, I have great respect for the accounting industry and am pleased that Senate Bill 788, which eliminates unnecessary regulatory overlap and confusion, was also signed by the governor. This bill reduces compliance burdens and costs for Certified Public Accountants and Certified Public Accounting firms, and California consumers can continue to access the trusted tax professionals they need to meet their compliance needs.

You can review a more extensive list of the bills I introduced this year on my website at [sen.ca.gov/niello](http://sen.ca.gov/niello), and happy holidays to you and your family!

State Sen. Roger Niello represents District 6, which includes Antelope, Arden-Arcade, Carmichael, Citrus Heights, Clay, Fair Oaks, Folsom, Foothill Farms, Franklin, Galt, Gold River, Herald, Mather, Orangevale, Rancho Cordova, Rancho Murieta and Wilton in Sacramento County. ★

# Twin Brothers Win at Mixed Martial Arts Tournament

By MPG Staff

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - When 15-year-old twin brothers Riley and Jaxson Clanton walked into the U.S. Open BJJ Tour Championship the night of Nov. 16, they not only had to face bigger and older opponents but they also had to face each other.

Despite weighing 137 and 141 pounds respectively, they competed in the 147-weight bracket against 17-year-olds and both won matches.

Jaxson Clanton advanced to the championship final and won the silver medal.

The pair also competed in the 141-weight class against one another with Jaxson Clanton taking the gold medal and Riley Clanton taking the silver. At only 15 years old, the two brothers' future appears bright as they both plan to go pro in MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) upon turning 18 years old.

"These young men have come a long way since signing up with me a little over a year ago. There's sibling rivalry but there's also a healthy respect and they push each other," said Apex Predator MMA owner and head coach Rudy Vidaurri. "Riley beat



From left are Riley Clanton, owner/head coach Rudy Vidaurri and Jaxson Clanton. Photo courtesy of Apex Predator MMA

Jaxson in the last tournament but today was Jaxson's day and that's how it goes in this sport. For them, the sky is the limit. They feed off one another and I couldn't be more proud of them."

The twin brothers continue a longstanding tradition of Apex Predator MMA competitors who have found the podium and

had success in BJJ Tour competition.

The win comes not long after the fight club won the award for the Best Martial Arts Club in Rancho Cordova for the fourth consecutive year since opening in 2021.

For more information on upcoming events or classes, visit [apexpredatormma.com](http://apexpredatormma.com). ★

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# Association Dedicates Sports Field to Jenco

By Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times  
Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - Before there were dugouts, before the lighting towers rose over the majors' field, before Little League District 57 coaches called Rancho Murieta the best place to play, there was Randy Jenco with an idea of what local kids deserved.

At the Rancho Murieta Association Board meeting on Nov. 18, that long vision came full circle as the directors voted unanimously to rename Stonehouse Little League Field No. 1 in his honor.

Board President Patrick O'Hern read the proclamation recognizing Jenco's "tireless efforts and selfless dedication" and his "ongoing and strong sense of community," noting that visiting teams hold the fields "in the highest regard" because of the commitment he brought to building and improving them. The proclamation resolved that the field be renamed and identified by a plaque affixed to it, formally marking his decades of work.

General Manager Rod Hart, who served for many years as RMA's maintenance manager, told the board that Jenco transformed the park from the moment he arrived.

"Well, first off, where do I start? Randy was instrumental in pretty much every aspect of that park," he said. "We thought we started off with a really nice park, and then Randy came along and talked about the benefits of



Board President Patrick O'Hern presents a plaque to Randy Jenco at the Rancho Murieta Association Board meeting on Nov. 18. Courtesy photos

having real dugouts and lights, and scoreboards."

Hart recalled that the majors' field had severe drainage problems, and Jenco's crew tackled those issues while also constructing dugouts and undertaking "several other projects on all three fields."

Hart noted that Jenco's family was also part of the effort.

"Even his wife Patty was, I think, at the snack bar back in those days, probably more than she was at home." He added that other leagues would visit and stand in awe of what Rancho Murieta built, saying, "That wouldn't have happened without Randy's efforts."

Director Scott Adams added his perspective as a Cosumnes River Little League parent.

"My son began playing Little League around 2006 and ended up playing for years and years," he said. "Everybody knew... the significant amount of thought and time and money you spent getting

those fields to the way they are." Adams said that when teams came from outside the area, "everybody knew" about the Rancho Murieta fields, and that Jenco's work helped create "some of the best times I've spent with my son."

Audience member Tim Maybee said he has known Jenco from the days both served on the Rancho Murieta Association Maintenance Committee. Maybee and Jenco both went on to serve on the Rancho Murieta Association board and are currently board members with the Rancho Murieta Community Services District.

"It was said the man had a vision," Maybee said. "He had an idea what those fields could be, not just baseball, not just softball, but softball and then lacrosse."

He credited past boards, a long list of volunteers and a culture of pitching in.

"Those dugouts are true dugouts, and the first set of dugouts were where the

girls' softball field [is]," he said, noting that adding lights later "doubled our capacity" and helped both Little League and soccer.

Maybee said Jenco even kept working through hip surgery: "That's the commitment this man, this family, has to the community." Maybee said District 57 frequently asks to use Rancho Murieta for the Tournament of Champions because "it is by far the nicest in District 57." What people often don't realize, he continued, is how much of the work relied on personal contributions.

"We owe Randy a ton because not only was it his personal time, but it was his personal money." Maybee ended by saying, "Board, thank you for recognizing him. It's about time."

After the comments, O'Hern presented the plaque and read its inscription: "This field is dedicated to Randy Jenco due to his many contributions and passion for the youth, the park and the



The plaque is to be mounted at Stonehouse Park Little League Field No. 1.

community. We have a facility that we can all be proud of."

Jenco, accompanied by his wife Patty, described the work as a labor of joy.

"I love this place, and I have spent a lot of time trying to improve the experience that the kids have."

Because they were raising three boys in Rancho Murieta, Jenco said it was natural to invest in the park. "It was fun, because I like to build things. So, as you look around you, see some of the things that I built." (Jenco designed and built the wooden bridge.)

Jenco said he was proud of what he and Hart "accomplished out there at the park," and also proud of the generations of kids who have played on the fields.

Jenco named several people who contributed over the years, saying he hesitated to start because he knew he would leave someone out.

"It all started with Dan Hayes, who contributed

some netting for a baseball cage, and that turned into concrete and chain link fence," he said.

Jenco listed others such as Mike Martel, Scott Bailey — who he said "was out there in 100-degree heat laying blocks for some of the dugouts" — Sam Summers and Dave Burkhart, whose construction company helped build the softball field. He also emphasized the role of the Rancho Murieta Optimists, saying, "The Optimists were there," and noted that "some of us also contributed a lot of money to what we were able to accomplish out there."

"Just so proud of everybody that had a part of it," he said, "and just really proud that I was able to be a part of it thanks to our team."

Hart responded, "That's right." Jenco closed by thanking all who contributed to the years-long effort.

This story is online at [therivervalleytimes.com](http://therivervalleytimes.com) and on Facebook. ★

## Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



Will the real Sacramento Kings please stand up. Yes, Kings fans, it's been a conundrum to say the least, and in spite of a 5 and 16 record to start the season, bright spots have actually surfaced.

Stuck with 3 paltry wins just one week ago, the Sactown boys went into the city of Denver, and handed the first place Nuggets a surprising 128-123 defeat. Perhaps equally surprising was the 117-112 win over the Timberwolves just 2 nights later before a roaring crowd at Golden One Center. Both victories came with big man Domantas Sabonis sidelined with a knee injury, leaving fans and pundits wondering what can these guys do if they play like this at full strength?

Well, that's certainly a good question, but we can all remember what the team looked like 3 seasons ago when Domantas arrived in Sacramento and led the Kings to 48 wins and a playoff berth. That team led the NBA in scoring but also had a vaunted point guard by the name of DeArron Fox.

I think it's important to take a closer look at these back-to-back wins that the Kings recently put together and try to find a common thread. It's actually very obvious. In both wins the Kings shot remarkably well from the free throw line, something that has been seemingly impossible for this team to do. Against the Nuggets the Kings went 22-23 missing amazingly only one shot the entire night. Two nights later against the Timberwolves the Kings went 26-28 from the line missing only 2 shots.

Now compare that with Sunday night's game against the Grizzlies. 59% from the free throw line in a tight game converting on only 13 of 22 attempts in a 115-107 loss.

Unfortunately, the game against the Grizzlies has been the pattern we've seen all too often when the Kings put together that alarming 8-games losing streak.

So, even with Domantas Sabonis sidelined, the Kings are capable of taking down some of the best teams in the NBA, but making their free throws is absolutely critical!

Unfortunately, the Kings are among the worst shooting NBA teams when it comes to free throws, and as we've seen, if wins are to come that pattern has to change.

Doug Christie can talk all he wants to

about defense and playing for 48 minutes, but if his team can't convert from the line the stats don't lie.

But the Sacramento Kings can only play the players on the court, and this year's pattern of substitutions has been a head scratcher. Last year's first round draft choice Devin Carter has been all but forgotten as he sits game after game on the pines. A solid defender, good rebounder, and efficient scorer around the rim, Devin appears not to be in the Kings future and fans want to know why.

The coaching staff talks about a youth movement while second year player Isaac Jones was recently cut from the team. 6'9" with a huge wingspan, Isaac was scooped up by the first place Detroit Pistons almost immediately, and it won't surprise me to see them utilize Jones moving forward.

The number 1 problem has been identified and it's the inability to shoot free throws with any consistency, but what is #2?

The coaching staff and entire franchise can't evaluate talent! Drafting talent over the years, and talent that resides already on the team.

Allowing Jonas Valanciunas to get away was a huge mistake, and one that has benefited the Denver Nuggets greatly.

No one could see or even imagine a Kings team with Domantas at the #4 and moving Valanciunas to the #5.

Any way you look at it, the Kings shot themselves in the foot when they let Jonas walk away.

Defensive standout Keon Ellis is getting less and less playing time, logging all of 6 minutes in the loss to the Grizzlies, and fans attending home games have taken to collectively calling, "we want Keon, we want Keon!"

This is not a good look, but it begs the question, why? Why do fans have to beg the coach to play a player that could obviously help the team?

Player evaluation, it's as simple as that.

Don't put all the blame for a 5-16 record solely on the players and give the coaching staff a pass.

All the best!  
Your thoughts are always welcome at [vgharriskingsfan@gmail.com](mailto:vgharriskingsfan@gmail.com). ★

## New Studies Gives Lowdown on California's Sky-High Living Costs



By Dan Walters,  
CALMatters.org

We Californians know, or should know, that while living in this state has many positive aspects, we are paying through the nose for the experience.

A flurry of recent studies drives home how deeply California residents must dig to meet costs of living that are either at or near the highest of any state.

One comes from the Legislative Analyst's Office, the Legislature's advisor on the state budget, delving into the astronomical costs of buying a home.

The LAO study found "California home prices far exceed the rest of the country." Mid-tier homes, those roughly in the middle of the price range, are more than twice as expensive as the typical mid-tier home elsewhere in the U.S. Monthly payments for such homes run about \$5,500 in California, 74% more than what they were 25 years ago.

The study also found that the annual household income needed to qualify for a mortgage on a mid-tier California home in September was about \$221,000 — more than two times the median California household income in 2024, which was \$102,000.

For a bottom-tier home, about \$136,000 in annual income is needed to qualify for a mortgage — about 33%

higher than median household income was in 2024.

The data illustrate why California has the second lowest rate of home ownership in the nation. Just 55.3% of Californians live in homes they or their families own, slightly higher than New York's ownership rate.

It's not surprising that hundreds of thousands of California residents, unable to aspire to home ownership, have decamped for more affordable states, such as Texas, where home prices are a fraction of California's.

Those who do migrate to other states find not only are houses much less expensive but fuel for their cars and utilities to light, heat and cool their homes are markedly less expensive.

The Center for Jobs & the Economy, an offshoot of the California Business Roundtable, continuously monitors energy costs in California and other states. Its latest report says gasoline, averaging \$4.64 a gallon in California, is as much as \$1.50 a gallon higher than in Texas and other states. California's electrical power rates are roughly twice as high.

Another take on California living costs comes from the Transparency Foundation, a conservative economic think tank.

It gathered a wide variety of factors and calculated living costs for an upper-middle class California family with a \$130,000 annual income. It concluded the family would pay \$29,753 more per year than the national average for housing, utilities, health care, taxes and other costs of living.

"This report should be a wake-up call to all Californians, that they are

being unfairly punished by the bad policies imposed on them by their politicians — and they are literally paying the price for it," Dave McCulloch, the foundation's chairman, said in a statement about the report.

A new poll by the Public Policy Institute of California confirms that Californians worry about living costs. Nearly a third of those polled said they, or someone in their household, have reduced food purchases to save money.

The California Farm Bureau revealed that a traditional Thanksgiving dinner for 10 people will cost a California family \$72.61, well above the national average of \$55.18.

Finally, there's a new report from WalletHub, a website devoted to personal finance, implying that Californians are taking on more debt to pay their rising bills.

In this year's third quarter — July through September — the average California household added \$880 in new debt, increasing the total owed to \$259,773, second only to residents of Hawaii.

All together, Californians' personal debt increased by \$11.8 billion during the quarter.

Now it's nearly \$3.2 trillion, just a bit lower than their \$3.6 trillion in annual personal income.

A truly staggering number.

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. ★

# SECURITY LOGS

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

## Nov. 18

5:55 p.m., Resident Lane gate arm incident: Guest arrived to North Gate, checked in with officer, proceeded through the gate without waiting for a gate arm to open, did not stop and continued into Murieta North. Patrol unable to retrieve vehicle license plate due to system rebooting during incident. Vehicle white, late-model GMC pickup. Patrol unable to locate the vehicle. Gate arm functioning without any issues.

## Nov. 24

3:15 p.m., Vandalism, Bridge House Lane: Property owner discovered broken gate when visiting the property. Did

not report any other vandalism/broken property. No forced entry to any of the dwellings on the property. Owner visited the property last time Nov. 4.

7:20 p.m., Vandalism, Via Sansovino: Resident heard a bang in bedroom, followed by glass breaking. Upon entry, she saw a lemon thrown through master bedroom window parallel to Murieta Parkway. Patrol took photos and advised making a police report.

9:55 p.m., RMA Rule Violation, North back area Lake Calero: White Mazda Tribute attempting to access the area. Patrol advised driver of the north back area access hours via patrol vehicle public address system. Driver ignored patrol request and proceeded into the North back area at high speed. Citation issued.

## Nov. 25

4:11 a.m., Highly intoxicated guest of resident asked to leave or decided to

leave community without means to do so. Reporting party a resident who noticed guest at neighbors' knocking on their door. Reporting party or guest notified Sheriff's Department, who arrived shortly after.

## Nov. 26

2:40 p.m., Report of golf cart vs. gate arm accident. Golf cart arrived to the North Gate far resident lane while gate arm was in open position. Golf cart proceeded to travel through the gate. Gate arm closed, colliding with a top part of the windshield of the golf cart. Golf cart attempted emergency braking to avoid the collision, unsuccessful. Front passenger suffered mild redness to top of forehead. Golf cart suffered minor windshield damage.

## Nov. 27

2:15 p.m., Report of guest disabled vehicle parked in front of the North Gate middle lane. Upon arrival located Dodge minivan overheating. Driver waited five to 10 minutes to cool vehicle down and proceeded into Murieta North.

3:15 p.m., North Gate outer arm vehicle vs. gate arm collision. Late model Ford pickup arrived to the outer lane, proceeded through the gate. As vehicle lined up with gate, gate arm closed and collided with the vehicle. Vehicle did not stop and proceeded into Murieta North. Unable to obtain vehicle information due to vehicle traveling too fast through the gate.

## Nov. 29

4:30 p.m., Trespassing, Guadalupe Drive: Resident noticed two individuals trespassing on property via home security camera in outside back area of property. Resident explained that two hooded individuals took approximately 10 golf balls from property.

## Dec. 1

8:37 p.m., Garage Fire, Reynosa Drive: Patrol arrived to see fire department already assisting with fire in garage area. Patrol helped direct traffic away from area. There were no injuries or victims. Damage to garage area and second story. No further assistance needed at 9:05 p.m. ★

# State Dismisses CSD Conflict Complaints

Continued from page 1  
subdivide the 11-acre property, "which I think, by definition, makes him a potential developer."

Jenco rejected the suggestion, noting that General Counsel Patrick Enright had already reviewed a possible conflict in another context involving a drainage easement on his property. He said he had no conflict of interest despite what he described as "wild speculation on social media."

Speaking at the Oct. 15 board meeting, Booth expanded on his concerns and confirmed that he had filed a formal complaint against Jenco with the FPPC.

Merchant also reported that he and Butler were named in a second FPPC complaint alleging they should not participate in discussions about a development moratorium

because of their involvement in circulating a petition urging the board to impose one.

"At least in my complaint, they were careful enough to say I was actively involved in it before I got on the board," Merchant said.

Contacted after the October meeting, Keil confirmed he had filed the second FPPC complaint against Merchant and Butler.

"They shouldn't be allowed to vote on the moratorium because they have a bias that can't be overcome," he said.

## FPPC Response to Booth

The official response to Booth's complaint arrived in a Nov. 21 email from Kendall Bonebrake, chief of the commission's Enforcement Division: "After review

of the complaint, the Enforcement Division will not pursue an enforcement action in this matter, as there is insufficient evidence that the Rancho Murieta Community Services District's decision on September 17, 2025, to initiate a water moratorium, prior to implementation of a water moratorium, would have a reasonably foreseeable financial effect on Jenco's real property."

Asked for comment, Booth said, "I am satisfied with the determination of the FPPC. However, there remain questions of how, why and by whom the property was provided a water hookup, since it reportedly is excluded from the jurisdiction of CSD."

## FPPC Response to Keil

Bonebrake also sent an

official response to Keil on the same date: "After review of the complaint and evidence provided, the Enforcement Division will not pursue an enforcement action in this matter, as there was insufficient evidence to establish either public official named had a financial interest in a governmental decision."

Asked for comment, Keil said the FPPC only addressed whether Merchant or Butler had a financial conflict, acknowledging the commission does not make rulings on bias.

"I still think they have a bias that won't allow them to make an objective decision," Keil said.

Keil added that, in his view, the district has forgotten its reason for existence and has become political.

"We need people on the board who can complete

the vision of the community founders, not punish developers," he said. "Without developers, Rancho Murieta wouldn't exist. People forget that."

## Jenco's FPPC Response

After Booth filed the complaint against Jenco, Jenco submitted a response to the commission explaining the circumstances involving his property.

Jenco said he and his wife purchased the property in 2017 after it became available, with the intention of building a home for their personal use. They obtained permits to construct a barn and to demolish the old house, and they have applied for a building permit for the new home. He said that, contrary to Booth's complaint, easily attained public records show the property already had water service from the district. An existing septic system will handle sewage.

Jenco wrote that even if

he wanted to develop the property – which he does not – it would not be feasible because the eastern and western portions lie in a floodplain, which is off-limits to construction. Access is also limited.

"Passage of the moratorium issue (or not) referenced in the complaint will not affect me personally, one way or another," Jenco wrote.

Jenco also addressed the Sept. 17 moratorium vote in his FPPC response.

"My belief, which I have been very public about, is that the only result of a moratorium will be a rush to lawsuit by landowners that will see their property values decline due to this action," he wrote. "The CSD ratepayers will end up paying the costs for defending the district and all damages incurred, due to this ill-advised act. That is why I voted against the motion."

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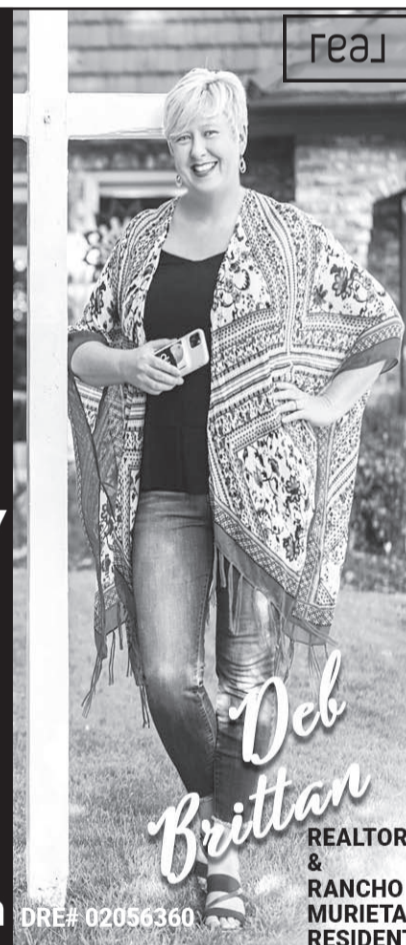
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# Developer Fees, Water Plan are District Topics

Story and photos  
by Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times  
Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - Developer fees, an emergency lift-station repair and continuing disputes over the Integrated Water Master Plan dominated the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board's Nov. 19 meeting, which ran more than five hours and covered a long list of other issues.

## Development Fees

The agenda called for the board to review and accept the Development Impact Fee Study prepared by Lumos & Associates, introduce an ordinance to replace the existing developer fees with the significantly higher fees recommended in the study, and schedule a Dec. 17 public hearing prior to final adoption.

After almost two hours of discussion, the board postponed action on the fee study to allow revisions and scheduled further discussion at the Dec. 3 Improvements Committee meeting.

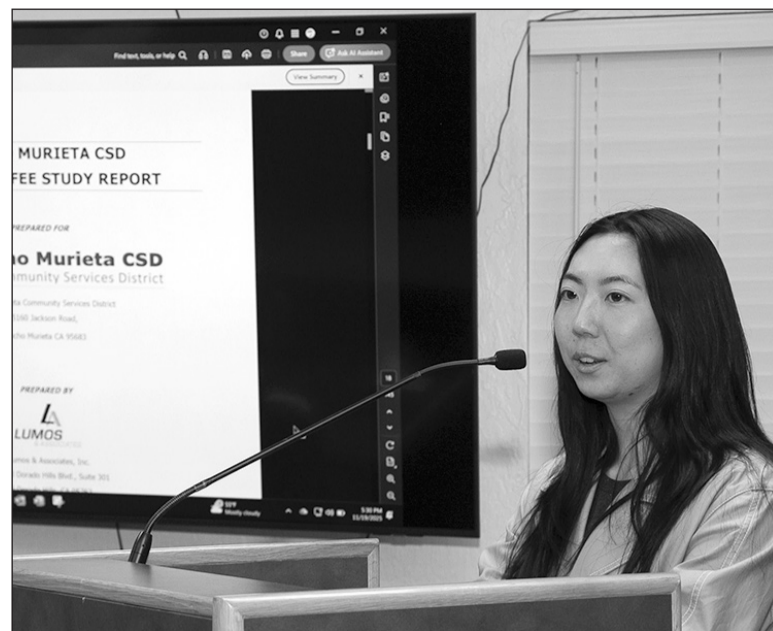
Enright opened the discussion with a PowerPoint presentation that outlined the legal framework governing how special districts may establish and implement development impact fees.

Lumos consultant Kristi Thompson reviewed her 22-page report analyzing proposed updates to connection fees for water, sewer, drainage and security: fees that have not been revised since 2017 and that no longer reflect the district's current list of capital improvement projects. Her summary table showed the existing total fee of \$13,709 and a proposed increase to \$29,084. She also outlined two alternatives for the water fund, noting that it does not generate enough revenue to support scheduled capital projects.

During the ensuing discussion, several speakers said they accepted the Lumos methodology but questioned the underlying



District Counsel Patrick Enright outlines the legal considerations involved in raising developer fees to fund new infrastructure during the Rancho Murieta Community Services District board meeting on Nov. 19. The board ultimately tabled the proposed fee increases. Photos by Gail Bullen



Lumos & Associates consultant Kristi Thompson explains her report.

numbers provided by the district. Board President John Merchant was skeptical of the \$15 million estimate for drilling wells, emphasizing the uncertainty around finding water and achieving projected yields. Developer Bob Keil said he wasn't opposed to fee increases but suggested slowing down the approval process to get the numbers right. Director Tim Maybee said it was important to sit down with the developers to see where they were regarding fees.

At one point, Merchant suggested a workshop approach.

"Maybe we just do something like a workshop where we get together and come out of it with an eight and a half by 11 sheet of paper that's got the numbers we're going to live with."

## Integrated Water Master Plan

Director Randy Jenco explained why he had asked for action on the district's water-needs assessment to be placed on the agenda. He said he still doesn't have a clear answer on water requirements for existing customers and new development, adding that "the only way to get definitive answers" would be to finish the study. Completing it, he said, would demonstrate due diligence in water planning and could withstand legal scrutiny. His motion was to seek a proposal from engineer Lisa Maddaus to complete the

study. Maybee said he was seconding the motion "for the sake of discussion."

Merchant, in an extremely lengthy response, strongly opposed revisiting the Maddaus-Adkins report. He said the Working Group had already extracted the information it needed and agreed with Maddaus' figures for current and future development. He argued the district should instead be working with Water Systems Consultants.

"The only thing I'm not all in on is just rehashing this Maddaus stuff," he said. "I've seen it four times and I don't want to see it again."

District Counsel Patrick Enright said the board should begin preparing for an Urban Water Management Plan, which will be required once the district reaches 3,000 water connections. He recommended developing a request for bids so that any qualified firm – including Maddaus and Water Systems Consultants – could submit a proposal.

Jenco and Chief Plant Operator Travis Bohannon noted that Water System Consultants had previously submitted substantial bids to redo the Integrated Water Master Plan and prepare an Urban Water Supply Plan. The costs were so high, they said, that the board ultimately narrowed the scope to a more limited study focused on identifying potential well sites.

Jenco told Merchant he wasn't approaching the water-planning process correctly, particularly if the district moved toward enacting a development moratorium and the matter ultimately landed in court. The central question, he said, would be where Merchant's numbers came from.

"I don't think you want to say that we did this water plan, but we didn't like it, so we got some of the SOLOS people together, and we came up with some numbers we thought were better than the engineers'," Jenco said. "You might as well hand them your checkbook and say, 'Take everything I've got.'"

Maybee noted that unless the board adopts the current Integrated Water Master Plan, the district must continue relying on the 2010 plan for its numbers.

He acknowledged that the draft master plan contains some discrepancies but said they could be resolved later. Drawing on his own experience being interviewed by the Grand Jury, Maybee added that the district's water-planning process could also be at risk of scrutiny.

Merchant said the district is not legally required to complete an Integrated Water Master Plan, though it will have to prepare an Urban Water Management Plan once it reaches 3,000 connections. He also noted that the county will require

a Water Supply Assessment when the Rancho North project completes its application. In the meantime, he added, "We have no risk when we are below 2,999 (connections)."

Enright also addressed a future water supply assessment, saying Maybee had made a good point.

"We should at least have accepted the numbers, although we don't accept all the conclusions and recommendations," he said. "This is so we have current numbers and not those from 2010 or 2016."

Merchant said that once the water supply assessment is requested, the district would manage the process and the developer would pay for it, so "it would absolutely be free."

"But I'll do it any other way than going back to Maddaus again, but I am just one of five," Merchant added.

Although the Working Group agreed with Maddaus' water demand figures, "I am not in favor of approving the rest of it," Merchant said. "I am definitely not going to endorse those mitigation strategies because they are ridiculous."

Audience member Jim Farrell, who essentially wrote the Working Group report, agreed that the group accepted much of the draft Integrated Water Master Plan. However, he said they still had a series of questions he believed could be better answered by Water

Systems Consultants. The Working Group members who reviewed the draft master plan and produced the report were Farrell, Merchant, Operations Director Eric Houston – who is currently on leave – and Janis Eckard.

The discussion concluded with a vote on Jenco's motion to ask Maddaus to finish the report. Jenco and Maybee voted yes, while Merchant and Directors Linda Butler and Bill Gere voted no.

Afterwards, it emerged that the contract with Maddaus and Adkins Engineering had already been cancelled. Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder said Houston signed the cancellation on Aug. 21. Merchant explained that Water Systems Consultants could not begin working with the district until that contract had been terminated.

Director Bill Gere asked whether the contract cancellation should have required board action. Enright said it depended on whether the project had been completed.

When Jenco asked whether Maddaus had been paid for the remainder of the contract, Enright replied that the consultants had been paid in full in 2024.

"For the last three or six months, they have been basically working for free," Enright added.

This story is at [therivervalleytimes.com](http://therivervalleytimes.com) and on Facebook. ★

# Unsung Hero Singh Remembered at Association Meeting

By Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times  
Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - Gyan Singh, who served in the Rancho Murieta Association maintenance department for 50 years before retiring in 2023, was memorialized by General Manager Rod Hart at the RMA board meeting on Nov. 18.

Singh, who died Nov. 13 at age 76, "was the biggest asset RMA ever had," Hart said.

"For the last 10 years, most people knew him as the guy in the street sweeper, and before that the guy on the mowers," Hart said. "But truly, Gyan touched every single thing there is here at Rancho Murieta."

## A Human Encyclopedia

One of Singh's most extraordinary contributions was his knowledge of the community. When Singh began working for RMA in 1974, Murieta Parkway ended at Alameda Drive, Laguna Joaquin was still being excavated, all the roads in the back country were dirt, and only about a dozen homes dotted the landscape.

Hart explained that early construction practices under Operating Engineers Local 3 (OE3) left the community without reliable maps of the underground installations.

"Back when this place was first built, as-builts were unheard of," Hart said. "OE3 basically built the infrastructure: They built it, and you get whatever you get. Sometimes you have plans. Sometimes you don't."

Because pipes and valves were laid before many streets, lawns and drainage basins were fully formed, crucial components ended up buried under grass, soil, landscaping or even later improvements. That made troubleshooting extremely difficult for later generations of maintenance staff, except for Singh.

"We'd have a main line break somewhere," Hart said, "and Gyan would just walk out in the middle of the lawn. You couldn't see any valve boxes. But he'd take his probe and say, 'There should be another valve about right here,' and tap the ground, and it would be there every single time."

Hart said the accuracy of Singh's memory "sounds like an exaggeration," but

it never failed.

## From Fiji to Maui to Rancho Murieta

Singh was born in Fiji, later lived and worked in Maui, and came to California at the invitation of his uncle, Henry Singh, the original golf course superintendent at Rancho Murieta Country Club, Hart said.

Henry Singh visited Maui on vacation, met up with his nephew and encouraged him to relocate. Singh soon moved to Rancho Murieta in 1972, splitting time between Murieta Village and the golf course before joining the association full-time on Sept. 16, 1974.

Singh helped to maintain the irrigation that supplied the parks and townhomes, and he eventually served as one of the association's lead electricians. As maintenance crews turned over across generations, Singh became the institutional memory that otherwise would have been lost.

## A Mentor and Co-Worker

Current Maintenance Supervisor Troy Schaffner said Singh was a mentor to "just about everybody" who passed through the

department.

"He could remember something from 40 years ago like it was yesterday," Schaffner said. "He was really sharp. He kept the crew together."

Schaffner noted that the association has always had long-term employees, but Singh was unique: there from the beginning, with knowledge that cannot be replaced. "It's something that will never be repeated."

## A Man of Kindness

Beyond technical skill, Singh was known for kindness and attentiveness. Hart said Singh could sense when a coworker was having a hard day.

"He'd talk to you, and by the time you were done, you were a lot chipper than you otherwise would have been," Hart said.

Singh was proud of his children and grandchildren, but he also wanted to hear about others' families. He arrived at work early – often an hour and a half before his shift – and remained the steady center of the maintenance team.

## A Life Honored

Hart, Schaffner and many members of the RMA maintenance crew



Gyan Singh is pictured near the Rancho Murieta Association logo in an undated photo. Courtesy photo

attended Singh's funeral service on Nov. 18.

Board President Patrick O'Hern noted that Singh's daughter's Facebook tribute – describing her father's journey from Fiji to a life built from hard work, steadiness and example – captured his character beautifully.

"He lived an exemplary life," O'Hern said.

Rancho Murieta's early development depended on people whose work

happened behind the scenes. Singh – the man who could locate a buried valve by memory, who built the systems residents rely on every day, and who helped generations of employees learn the community inside and out – was one of them.

"We'll miss him," Hart said. "There will never be another."

This story is online at [therivervalleytimes.com](http://therivervalleytimes.com) and on Facebook. ★

# Tree Lighting Draws Crowd to Stonehouse

*Continued from page 1*

a long line of children eager to share their Christmas wishes, along with dozens of families excited for a photo op.

This marked the fourth year that RMA Director Tom Reimers portrayed Santa at the event, and the first time that Ellison Cowles stepped into the role of Mrs. Claus.

Reimers said the kids seemed especially happy this year, and he didn't hear any heartfelt requests. Most asked for their own cell phones, even some younger than 5.

"They wanted to play games and call their friends," he said.

One youngster asked for a guinea pig, and another wanted a puppy: Any kind would do.

Although not on the official program, a surprise visitor bearing gifts added to the merriment this year. RJ Combs, a retired upholsterer from Sacramento, attended the event with his daughter, Jennifer Marsh. Several years ago, Combs began collecting stuffed animals throughout the year and pinning them to his jacket to give to his grandchildren at Christmas.

Since then, his giving spirit has only grown.

"Now wherever he goes to a Christmas event, he hands them out," Marsh explained. "I was worried that he was going to trump Santa Claus."

That didn't prove to be the case. Youngsters like Jack Leslie happily accepted a stuffed animal – Jack immediately named his new dolphin Nutcracker and tossed it into the air – but the gifts didn't distract them from telling Santa about the rest of the presents on their lists.

The Optimist Club of Rancho Murieta presented the annual tree lighting ceremony for 20 years, until the club disbanded in 2023. Fortunately, its final president, Renee Bechthold, had joined the RMA Board of Directors. As chair of the Recreation Committee, she ensured the continuance of what had long been a cornerstone community event.

See additional photos at [therivervalleytimes.com](http://therivervalleytimes.com) and on Facebook. ★



With stuffed animals pinned to his coat, RJ Combs waits for Easton Fowler to pick his present with encouragement from his parents, Judy and Craig Fowler.



Charlotte and Jackson Nunez warm their hands at a fire pit.



Enjoying the hot cocoa and cookies are, from left, Galahad, Aedan and Kirstin Hughes.



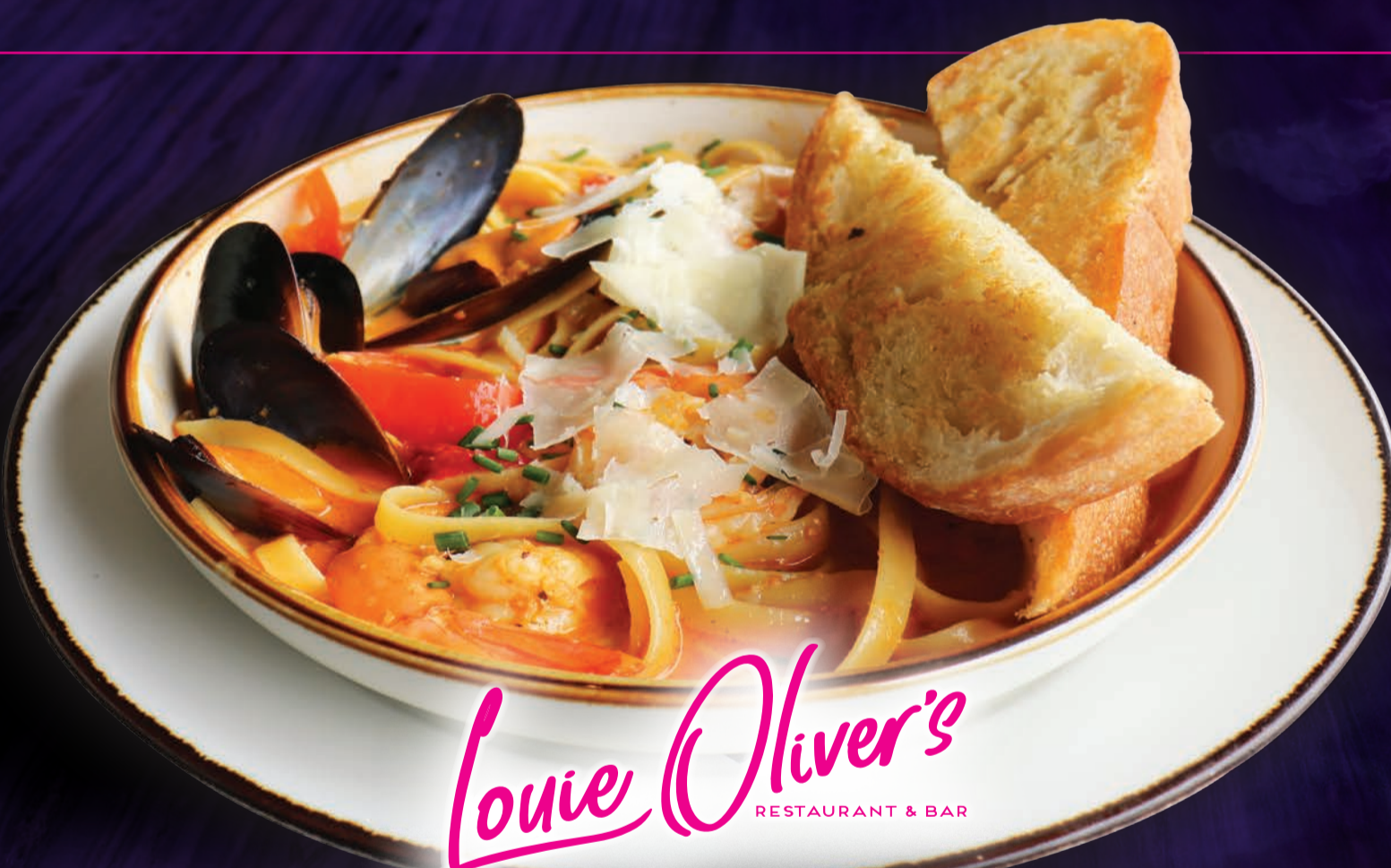
Taylor and Pricilla Deluna encourage their friend's child, seated in Santa's lap, to pose for a photo.



From left, Cal and Grady Duval tell Santa what they want for Christmas.



Dressed in their pajamas, the McCarthy family poses with Santa and Mrs. Claus. From left are Amy, Keegan, JJ, Dillon (the dog) and Jimmy.



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