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# AMERICAN RIVER Messenger

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Serving Fair Oaks, Orangevale & Sacramento County

JANUARY 23, 2026

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## Fair Oaks Honors Its Best



The Best Event of 2025 was the Chicken Festival. Members of the Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District pose to accept the award. Photo courtesy of Michelle Massaro

By Judy Andrews

**FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG)** - Celebrating 10 years, the Best of Fair Oaks 2025 winners were announced at the Fair Oaks Chamber's annual gala held on Jan. 15 at North Ridge Country Club. With a glittering Winter Wonderland theme, more than 250 attendees, including local dignitaries, gathered to celebrate the evening and each other.

Online voting to determine the first, second, and third-place winners took place over five weeks in November and December. More than 470 nominees



Best Wine Spot went to Bodega Biondi. Owners Franco and Katie Biondi pose for a photo. Photo courtesy of Michelle Massaro

completed in 90 different categories, and close to 19,000 votes were received and tallied through bestof-fairoaks.com.

"We started this event in 2016 with only 20 categories," said Fair Oaks Chamber CEO/President Kimberley Pitillo. "I'm amazed to see how large it's grown and how it's become the most anticipated event in town. It's quite an honor to be nominated."

Pitillo served as the event's MC, while students from the Chamber's Fair Oaks Youth Outreach

*Continued on page 3*

## Rob Kerth Elected SMUD Board Vice President



Rob Kerth. Photo courtesy SMUD

SMUD News Release

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - SMUD's Board of Directors elected Rob Kerth as Vice President of the Board, effective Jan. 1, 2026, through December of 2026. Vice President Kerth was first elected to the SMUD Board of Directors in November 2008 and served a four-year term. He was re-elected in 2014 and is serving his fourth term. He represents Ward 5, which includes midtown, downtown, North Sacramento, Natomas, Rio Linda and Elverta.

Rob is a third-generation Sacramentan and former two-term city councilman who got his start in public service as a neighborhood activist for the historic Woodlake district of North Sacramento. While on the Sacramento City Council, he was recognized as a major force for revitalization efforts not only in his district but also in other long-established neighborhoods.

During his time with the city of Sacramento, Rob also specialized in regional problem-solving. His assignments included the Sacramento Area Council of Governments, Sacramento Regional Transit District and the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency. Rob developed notable expertise on infrastructure issues throughout the six-county Sacramento region.

Rob founded Ice Unlimited, which brought Sacramento and Folsom their original holiday ice rinks. He is also responsible for the design of ice rinks in Sacramento's Arco Arena and at Squaw Valley U.S.A.

A graduate of Stanford University, Rob holds a master's degree in mechanical engineering with an emphasis in controls and systems. He and his family still live in Woodlake, less than three blocks from his childhood home.

As the nation's sixth-largest, community-owned, not-for-profit electric service provider, SMUD has been providing low-cost, reliable electricity to Sacramento County

*Continued on page 5*

## Break out Your Dancing Shoes

By MPG Staff

**FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG)** - Celebrate a weekend devoted to connection, joy, and dancing at the Sweetheart Dance Series, a three-day celebration designed to bring the community together for memorable moments on the dance floor. Guests will enjoy lively music, light refreshments and photo opportunities to capture the joy of the occasion.

The celebration begins on Feb. 6 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Clubhouse, 7997 California Ave. with Father-Daughter Night, a special evening created for fathers or father figures and daughters to share music, dance together, and create lasting memories.

The festivities continue Feb. 7 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Clubhouse with the Family Valentine Dance, where families are invited to come together for a night of fun, music and laughter while celebrating love in all its forms. The weekend concludes



Families are invited to come together for a night of fun, music and laughter while celebrating love in all its forms. Photo courtesy Freepik

on Feb. 8 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Clubhouse with the Senior

featuring timeless tunes and opportunities for joyful connection.

General admission tickets are available for \$20 per person. All guests must have a valid ticket to attend, and each ticket is valid for one event only. Guests who wish to attend more than one dance must purchase a separate ticket for each event. Tickets are non-transferable, non-refundable, and valid only for the date purchased.

Fair Oaks Recreation & Park District is the only authorized organization permitted to sell tickets for the Sweetheart Dance Series. Attendees are advised not to share payment information or purchase tickets from individuals not directly associated with the district. Guests should remain alert to fraudulent ticket offers, particularly on social media, as tickets may not be transferred or resold under any circumstances.

Tickets may be purchased at forpd.org/467/Sweetheart-Dance-Series. ★



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# Nature Center Welcomes Christina Preston

**Effie Yeaw Nature Center News Release**

**CARMICHAEL, CA (MPG)** - The Effie Yeaw Nature Center (EYNC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Christina Preston as its new Director of Strategic Development, a role focused on strengthening long-term support for the Nature Center and advancing its mission of connection, stewardship and lifelong learning.

Preston brings more than 20 years of nonprofit experience, with a career rooted in environmental stewardship, public history and collaborative work with Native Nations. Her background includes nonprofit operations, strategic development and consulting, and she has been recognized with multiple awards for leadership and service. She holds a Master of Science in Community and Regional Development from the University of California, Davis, a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and a certification from UCLA's Native Nations' Law & Policy Center.

In her new role, Preston will focus on advancing fundraising, partnerships and strategic initiatives that help sustain Effie Yeaw Nature Center's educational programs, care for the land and deepen community connection.

"Christina brings a rare combination of strategic expertise, lived connection to the Nature Center and American River, and deep respect for both the natural and cultural history of the land," said Rachael Cowan,



**Christina Preston brings more than 20 years of nonprofit experience, with a career rooted in environmental stewardship, public history and collaborative work with Native Nations.** Photo courtesy of Effie Yeaw Nature Center

Interim Executive Director of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. "Her leadership will play an important role in strengthening the long-term support that allows the Nature Center to serve our community today and for generations to come."

Preston's connection to the Nature Center and the American River Parkway is longstanding. Raised along the Parkway, her love of nature began early and continues to shape her life and work. She is an avid outdoor enthusiast — whitewater kayaker and rafter, scuba diver and equestrian trail rider — with training and experience in search-and-rescue. Most recently, she served for six years as the operator of Cal Fire's Pilot Peak fire lookout in the Sierra foothills, where she led a dedicated team of 30 volunteers responsible for wildfire monitoring and coordination.

As a certified California Naturalist and lifelong

learner, Preston brings together hands-on field experience, academic rigor and collaborative leadership. Her work reflects a deep commitment to caring for landscapes, honoring cultural knowledge and supporting the partnerships that allow places like the Effie Yeaw Nature Center to thrive.

"I'm honored to join the Effie Yeaw Nature Center at such a meaningful time," said Christina Preston. "The Nature Center has long been a refuge for learning, curiosity and connection. I look forward to helping strengthen the support that allows people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with nature, each other and to carry forward the stewardship of this special landscape."

*The Effie Yeaw Nature Center is where people of all ages and backgrounds connect with nature and with each other. As a community hub for environmental education along the American River Parkway, the Center sparks curiosity, nurtures stewardship, and shares the natural history and living cultural heritage of the land. Effie Yeaw Nature Center offers a museum, animal ambassadors, and a 100-acre Nature Study Area that showcases the region's oak woodland and riparian habitat. Effie Yeaw Nature Center is operated by the American River Natural History Association, a nonprofit organization dedicated to environmental education and community engagement. Learn more at [www.effieyeawnature.org](http://www.effieyeawnature.org).* ★

# California State Fair to Move to Fall Beginning in 2027



Fairgoers ride a carnival attraction during the California State Fair this past summer in Sacramento. Fair officials announced the event will move to fall dates beginning in 2027. Photo by Shamaya Sutton

**By MPG Staff**

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - The California State Fair will shift from its traditional summer schedule to a fall timeframe beginning in 2027, fair officials announced.

The change is intended to address increasingly extreme summer temperatures in the Sacramento region and improve conditions for fairgoers, staff and vendors. The 2027 fair is scheduled to run from Sept. 17 through Oct. 3.

Officials said the 2026 California State Fair, set for July 17 through Aug. 2, will

be the final fair held during the summer months.

According to fair leadership, the decision follows several years of evaluation and planning, including consideration of public safety, attendance patterns and operational impacts related to prolonged heat. Many other state fairs across the country already operate during fall months.

Fair organizers said the schedule change is a long-term shift and part of broader efforts to adapt the event to changing climate conditions while preserving its traditions. ★

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# Fair Oaks Honors Its Best



More than 250 attendees, including chamber members, dignitaries, nominees, and guests, came out to celebrate at the Best of Fair Oaks. Photo courtesy of Michelle Massaro

Continued from page 1

Scholarship Program handed out award certificates to first-place winners throughout the evening. Ticket proceeds from the event supported the youth program. Presenters and helpers included Phineas Bragado, Zoelle Flores, Abby Lingenfelter, Zac Lingenfelter, Gray Mihalakos, Ella Strubli and Noah Wright.

Marina Pitillo served as the event DJ, keeping the atmosphere lively with her fun, creative playlist.

## AWARD HIGHLIGHTS

Below are some notable 2025 new and repeat winners:

Best Burger, Best Restaurant, Best Taco: Brahma Bar and Grill (Brahma won first place in all three categories.)

Best Bakery: O Café Bakery Bistro

Best Bar/Brew Pub: Fair Oaks Brew Pub

Best Bartender: Joyce Winstead (Player's Pub, Fair Oaks Blvd.)

Best Boutique: French in the Village

Best Coffee Spot, Best Sandwich Shop: Fair Oaks Coffee House & Deli (They won in two categories.)

Best Entertainment: Concerts in the Park

Best Event of the Year: Fair Oaks Chicken Festival

Best Gym/Fitness Center: Rollingwood YMCA

Best Hair Salon: Rustique Salon

Best Home-based Business: Color Street Nails, Mysti Lingenfelter

Best Insurance Services: Katie Yount, State Farm

Best Non-profit: Orangevale-Fair Oaks Food Bank

Best Park: Village Park in Fair Oaks

Best Realtor: Carla Hart, Windermere Signature Properties

Best Skin & Beauty: Skinned & Lashed by Jen (Jen Rodriguez also won Best Winter Wonderland Storefront.)

Best Specialty Shop: Botanica Village Apothecary

Best Wine Spot: Bodega Biondi

## SPECIAL CHAMBER AWARDS

Pitillo presented special chamber awards to four deserving individuals and businesses. These recipients were hand-picked for their outstanding contributions to the chamber and the community in 2025:

Business of the Year: Fair Oaks Arborist  
Senior Safety Specialist

Citizen of the Year: Heather Ford, The Restful Roost (She also won for Best Home Design.)

Volunteer of the Year: Anupama Shojaei, Care Patrol of Rancho Cordova

Congratulations to all the winners and nominees!

The Best of Fair Oaks is sponsored by the American River Messenger, Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce, and VoterFly. Gala sponsors included: Buck Wealth Management, County Supervisor Rich Desmond, Fair Oaks Youth Outreach, Heritage Community Credit Union, I Love Fair Oaks, Jessica Rose Balloons, Michelle Massaro Photography, Miller's Ace Hardware, Retro Fit Studio, Sunrise Senior Living, The Recognition Group, and Violet Wellness Spa.

Special thanks to Michelle Massaro for event photography and to Chrysti Tovani and Mike Ward from I Love Fair Oaks for providing a live stream of the event. Tovani won first place in the Best Design and Marketing Services category.

For a complete list of winners, photos, and access to the live stream, visit [bestof-fairoaks.com](http://bestof-fairoaks.com) or [fairoakschamber.com](http://fairoakschamber.com). ★

# CCA Opens Applications for 2026 Aviation and STEM Scholarship Program

## California Capital Airshow News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The California Capital Airshow (CCA) is proud to announce that applications for its annual Aviation and STEM Scholarship Program opened Jan. 13, continuing the organization's long-standing commitment to inspiring and empowering the next generation of innovators, aviators and community leaders.

Each year, the Airshow awards scholarships to outstanding students pursuing education to support careers in aviation, aeronautics, aerospace and related fields. The 2026 program will provide financial support to help students achieve their dreams while fueling the future workforce of these critical industries.

Applications will remain open until May 1, and are available at [californiacapitalairshow.com/scholarships](http://californiacapitalairshow.com/scholarships). Applicants must reside in Sacramento, El Dorado, Placer, Sutter, Solano, Yolo or Yuba counties to be considered.

Since its inception, the California Capital Airshow has awarded more than \$600,000 in scholarships to over 280 students from across the Sacramento region. Each scholarship represents a student whose passion and perseverance

are shaping the future of aviation and STEM.

"The California Capital Airshow is so much more than a weekend of thrilling performances," said Darcy Brewer, Executive Director of the California Capital Airshow. "Our scholarship program is at the heart of what we do year-round, building pathways for students to explore careers that strengthen our region and our nation's future."

Scholarship winners will be announced in early June, with recipients honored as part of the Airshow's 2026 show taking place Oct. 10-11, at Mather Airport.

For more information about the program, eligibility requirements, and how to apply, visit [californiacapitalairshow.com/scholarships](http://californiacapitalairshow.com/scholarships).

Established in 2004, the California Capital Airshow is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to honoring the past, inspiring the future, and showcasing the strength and innovation of aviation. In addition to hosting one of the nation's largest airshows, featuring military and civilian performers like the United States Air Force Thunderbirds, CCA invests year-round in youth programs, scholarships, and community partnerships that inspire the next generation of leaders. ★

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# Girl Scouts of Northern California Kicks off Cookie Season

*Welcomed Exploremores to Cookie Lineup, Bay Area's Adobe a National Sponsor*

## Girl Scouts of Northern California News Release

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, CA (MPG) - Girl Scouts of Northern California kicked off their 2026 Girl Scout Cookie season on Jan. 12. Girl Scouts throughout all 19 counties from Gilroy to the Oregon Border will embark on the highly anticipated cookie season, exploring more possibilities through the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world.

From Jan. 12, consumers can support their local girl entrepreneurs by ordering from the iconic cookie lineup online at [ilovecookies.org](http://ilovecookies.org). Local shoppers can also locate cookie booths starting Feb. 4 for in-person cookie sales. The 2026 Girl Scouts of Northern California cookie season runs through March 15, and all cookie flavors are \$7 a box (shipping fees additional).

"Exploremores", a rocky road ice cream-inspired sandwich cookie, will join the legendary lineup for the 2026 cookie season. Filled with delicious flavors of chocolate, marshmallow and toasted almond-flavored crème, Exploremores reflect the spirit of exploration at the heart of every Girl Scout.

The new flavor will be the 9th cookie flavor to join Northern California customer favorites such as Thin Mints, Caramel deLites, Peanut Butter Patties, and Trefoils. Exploremores will be available for purchase online and in-person during booth sales. Visit [www.ilovecookies.org](http://www.ilovecookies.org) for more information.

"What better way to kick off the new year than with a new cookie for the 2026 cookie season," said Mary-Jane Strom, CEO of Girl Scouts of Northern California. "Behind every cookie sale is a Girl Scout learning essential life skills far beyond just selling cookies. Buying or donating cookies is a delicious and easy way to help cultivate



As this year's national sponsor of the cookie program, Bay Area-based Adobe will encourage girls to express their individuality and think creatively as they pursue their goals this cookie season. Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of Northern California

future leaders, innovators, and change-makers. It is a win-win for all."

The Girl Scout Cookie Program provides invaluable entrepreneurial skills for Girl Scouts across the country and funds a variety of experiences. Each cookie season, Girl Scouts develop important life skills like goal-setting, decision-making, money management, people skills and business ethics through the Cookie Program.

One hundred percent of the proceeds from the cookie program are used locally and provide critical funds for girls' access to affordable programming, the outdoors, camp and program centers, STEM, financial aid and volunteer support services. Girl Scouts and their troops depend on these funds to support their community service efforts.

This year, over 14,000 Girl Scouts in Northern California will



"Exploremores", a rocky road ice cream-inspired sandwich cookie, will join the legendary lineup for the 2026 cookie season. Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of Northern California

participate in the cookie entrepreneurship program with the goal of selling over 3 million packages of cookies.

As this year's national sponsor of the cookie program, Bay Area-based Adobe will encourage girls to express their individuality and think creatively as they pursue their

goals this cookie season. Through a national educational video featured on the Digital Cookie platform, Adobe will equip Girl Scouts with essential skills in online communication and responsible digital design. By sharing these creative tools, Adobe is supporting Girl Scouts to become confident digital

creators and entrepreneurs.

Girl Scouts of Northern California serves over 46,000 youth and adult volunteers across 19 counties from Gilroy to the Oregon border. Girl Scouts bring their dreams to life and work together to build a better world. Through programs from coast to coast, Girl Scouts of all backgrounds and abilities can be unapologetically themselves as they discover their strengths and rise to meet new challenges — whether they want to climb to the top of a tree or the top of their class, lace up their boots for a hike, advocate for climate justice, or make their first best friends.

Backed by trusted adult volunteers, mentors and millions of alums, Girl Scouts lead the way as they find their voices and create change on the issues that matter most to them. To learn more about Girl Scouts of Northern California, visit [www.gsnorcal.org](http://www.gsnorcal.org). ★

# Small Business Comment on Optimism Index

## Improved National Outlook Runs Up Against Golden State Realities

### National Federation of Independent Business News Release

#### SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)

A recent release of the latest National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) Small Business Optimism Index shows a rise of 0.5 points in December to 99.5, remaining above its 52-year average of 98. An increase in those expecting better business conditions primarily drove the rise in the Optimism Index. The Uncertainty Index fell seven points from November to 84, the lowest reading since June 2024.

"Nice to see small business owners across the nation registering a slightly improved outlook even though it's doubtful that sentiment is shared by many Main Street entrepreneurs here," said John Kabateck, state director for the National Federation of Independent Business in California.

"For instance, the day before the release of the National Federation of Independent Business's latest Optimism Index, the U.S. Department of Labor announced in the Federal Register that California has had outstanding advances on its unemployment insurance loans for five consecutive years and as a result, employers here will be paying more in Unemployment Insurance (UI) taxes this year. To cope with the pandemic-caused strain on their unemployment trust funds, 22 states needed to borrow from the federal government in order to keep their Unemployment Insurance trust funds solvent and



An increase in those expecting better business conditions primarily drove the rise in the Optimism Index. Photo courtesy of Freepik

unemployment benefits going to those in need of them. All but one state, guess which one, has paid Uncle Sam back. Only a territory, the U.S. Virgin Islands, has a worse record. Wow. What economic company."

Said National Federation of Independent Business chief economist Bill Dunkelberg, "2025 ended with a further increase in small business optimism. While Main Street business owners remain concerned about taxes, they anticipate favorable economic conditions in 2026 due to waning cost pressures, easing labor challenges, and an increase in capital investments."

According to the recent Optimism Index, the net

percentage of owners expecting better business conditions rose nine points from November to a net 24 percent (seasonally adjusted), contributing the most to the rise in the Optimism Index. This was the first increase since July.

When asked to evaluate the overall health of their business, 9 percent rated it excellent (down 2 points), 54 percent rated it good (up 1 point), 34 percent rated it fair (up 4 points), and 3 percent rated it poor (down 2 points).

Twenty percent of small business owners reported taxes as their single most important problem, up 6 points from November and ranking as the top problem. This is the highest reading since May 2021.

In conjunction with the December report, the National Federation of Independent Business also released a new episode of the "Small Business by the Numbers" podcast. This is the National Federation of Independent Business Research Center's new podcast where Holly Wade, the executive director of the National Federation of Independent Business Research Center, and Peter Hansen, director of research and policy analysis, discuss the data, stories, and economic conditions affecting small businesses nationwide.

National Federation of Independent Business's monthly Small Business Optimism Index is the gold standard measurement of America's small

business economy. Used by the Federal Reserve, Congressional leaders, administration officials, and state legislatures across the nation, it's regarded as the bellwether on the health and welfare of the Main Street enterprises that employ half of all workers, generate more net new jobs than large corporations, and gave most of us the first start in our working life. The Optimism Index (aka Small Business Economic Trends report) is a national snapshot of National Federation of Independent Business-member, small-business owners not broken down by state. National Federation of Independent Business members span the complete spectrum of small and independent businesses -- from sole proprietorships to firms with hundreds of employees -- across all industries and sectors.

Keep up with the latest California small-business news at [www.nfib.com](http://www.nfib.com) or follow them on X @NFIB\_CA and on Facebook @NFIB.CA.

For over 80 years, National Federation of Independent Business has been advocating on behalf of America's small and independent business owners, both in Washington, D.C., and in all 50 state capitals. National Federation of Independent Business is a nonprofit, non-partisan, and member-driven association. Since our founding in 1943, National Federation of Independent Business has been exclusively dedicated to small and independent businesses and remains so today. For more information, visit [nfib.com](http://nfib.com). ★

# California's Budget Underscores Agriculture's Role

### California Farm Bureau News Release

#### CALIFORNIA (MPG)

Gov. Gavin Newsom's proposed budget highlights California's continued focus on wildfire response, climate resilience and water infrastructure but leaves gaps in direct support and regulatory alignment for agriculture and rural communities, according to California Farm Bureau President Shannon Douglass. She said:

"The budget invests heavily in wildfire response, but funding for proactive strategies on working lands remains limited. California farmers and ranchers are part of the solution. Grazing, vegetation management and stewardship reduce fuel loads and protect rural communities. Expanding



California farmers and ranchers are part of the solution. Grazing, vegetation management and stewardship reduce fuel loads and protect rural communities. Photo courtesy of Freepik

these strategies statewide would strengthen long-term resilience.

"Water reliability is foundational to agriculture. Investments in

flood protection, groundwater recharge and drought resilience are critical, but infrastructure alone is not enough.

Projects must be paired with regulatory efficiency so they

can move forward and deliver real, on-the-ground benefits for farms and ranches.

"Agriculture is increasingly relied upon for wildfire mitigation, water resilience

and climate solutions, yet it is not recognized as critical infrastructure. Aligning investments, regulations and expectations will enable farmers and ranchers to continue producing food, protecting the environment and supporting rural communities.

"Farmers and ranchers stand ready to partner with the state. With the right funding and regulatory support, we can continue producing food, safeguard the environment and strengthen California's rural economy."

California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches as part of a nationwide network representing more than 5 million Farm Bureau members. Learn more at [www.cfbf.com](http://www.cfbf.com) or follow @cafarmbureau on Instagram, LinkedIn, X or Facebook. ★

### North State Building Industry Association News Release

#### SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)

New home sales in the greater Sacramento region returned to pre-pandemic levels in 2025, signaling that the pandemic-era housing boom has ended, the North State Building Industry Association reported today.

Building Industry Association members reported selling 5,747 homes in the eight-county region during the year, down 18 percent from 2024 but still 8 percent higher than 2019. Sales surged during the pandemic era as remote work expanded, migration into the region increased and mortgage interest rates fell to historic lows, at times dipping to below 3 percent.

Building Industry Association President and CEO Tim Murphy said despite generous builder incentives, many prospective buyers have been holding off until mortgage rates dip below 6 percent.

"Interest rates have been trending downward and fell to an average of 6.19 percent in early January. As financing costs continue to decline, we expect more households to reenter the housing market in 2026," Murphy said.

"A recent analysis by the National



Despite generous builder incentives, many prospective buyers have been holding off until mortgage rates dip below 6 percent. Photo courtesy Freepik

Association of Home Builders shows that a 25-basis-point reduction from 6.25 percent to 6 percent could bring approximately 1.1 million additional households back into the buyer pool nationwide, so downward-trending rates are encouraging."

In 2025, Roseville saw the most new home sales with 447, followed by Rancho Cordova (386), Elk Grove (280), Sacramento (262), Plumas Lake (159) and Lincoln (150).

As typical in the region, December sales dropped to a low point, with 338

sales reported by members. That's down 17 percent from November and 15 percent lower than December 2024. For the month, Rancho Cordova was the sales leader with 74, followed by Roseville (59), Sacramento (41), Elk Grove (34) and Plumas Lake (28).

Murphy noted that housing experts at the Building Industry Association's recent housing forecast event predicted the worst of the slump was behind us and that sales will gradually pick up during the next three years.

He added that new homes remain a great option for buyers because of incentives existing homeowners can't offer, and because the supply of existing homes is still well below normal as homeowners with low mortgage rates remain reluctant to sell.

"In addition, buying a new home gives buyers the opportunity to customize many features to meet their family's needs and provides peace of mind since problems are much less likely and any that occur are covered by warranties," Murphy said.

"We are also continuing to improve affordability by working with local governments to streamline procedures and reduce fees that currently average \$109,000 per new home."

Building Industry Association statistics covered 191 new home communities in Amador, El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba counties.

(Note: The annual sales total has been trued up by including figures from Building Industry Association members who do not report on a monthly basis. Thus, the annual figure is larger than the sum of annual sales by county and by submarket.)

For more information, visit [www.northstatebia.org](http://www.northstatebia.org). ★

# Home Sales Return to Pre-Pandemic Levels

# Sacramento Valley Conservancy Launches Vernal Pool Stewardship Program

## Sacramento Valley Conservancy News Release

### SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)

The Sacramento Valley Conservancy (SVC) is proud to announce the launch of its Vernal Pool Stewardship Program, a community-driven effort to protect some of the region's most rare and ecologically important landscapes through hands-on stewardship, education and volunteer engagement.

Sacramento Valley Conservancy is entrusted with the protection and stewardship of more than 8,000 acres of vernal pool preserves in Sacramento County, including 3,300 acres of rare vernal pool wetlands in Rancho Cordova and the surrounding area. These seasonal wetlands support unique plants and wildlife found nowhere else, and play a critical role in water quality, flood management and regional biodiversity.

As part of the Vernal Pool Stewardship Program, Sacramento Valley Conservancy will host a series of "Trash Dash + Vernal Pool Education" outings at Sacramento Valley Conservancy-managed preserves. These events invite community members to help remove trash and invasive plants to support these delicate and unique habitats while learning about the

importance of vernal pools and how pollution affects nearby creeks and waterways.

Vernal pools are one of California's most threatened ecosystems, with over 90 percent of vernal pool habitats destroyed.

"This new program aims to increase interest and understanding of these incredibly special and vulnerable ecosystems that many Sacramentians are unaware of," said Kelly Hopkins, executive director. "We're excited to build upon our existing education and recreation programs by continuing to expand our partnership with Splash."

"Vernal pool ecosystems may be small, but these beautiful, diverse resources provide a wide array of important ecosystem functions. Bringing the community together to steward these sensitive ecosystems will hopefully foster an appreciation for our local natural resources that will help them endure for future generations,"

said Eric Kellegrew, Sacramento Valley Conservancy Stewardship Director.

"Stewardship starts close to

home. When volunteers come together to care for the vernal pools in their own neighborhoods, they build a shared sense of responsibility for the places that connect our communities," said Danny Whitaker, Sacramento Valley Conservancy Stewardship Specialist.

"By joining the Vernal Pool Stewardship Program, we can protect Sacramento's rare wetlands through hands-on cleanup and education. Together, neighbors restore fragile ecosystems, safeguard water quality, support wildlife, inspire awareness,

and build lasting community stewardship for these irreplaceable landscapes locally," said Mark Baker, Sacramento Valley Conservancy Stewardship Specialist.

The Vernal Pool Stewardship Program received seed funding for three events in early 2026 through a combination of private donations, a grant from the Sacramento County Stormwater Quality Program, and in-kind partnerships, which will be leveraged to recruit volunteers, support educational programming, and kick-start the new program. Business sponsorships are available for a single service day or for program sustainability, with opportunities for employee

engagement and collaboration.

Community members, volunteers, and organizations interested in participating or sponsoring are encouraged to learn more at: <https://sacramentovalleyconservancy.org/vpsponsor/>

The first Trash Dash + Vernal Pool Education event is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 17 at the Kiefer Landfill Preserve. RSVP at: <https://sacramentovalleyconservancy.org/event/vpsd-20260117/>

Additional dates are tentatively scheduled for Feb. 21 and March 14, locations to be announced.

Founded in 1990, the Sacramento Valley Conservancy's mission is to preserve the beauty, character, and biodiversity of the Sacramento Valley landscape by protecting and stewarding natural and working lands, and scenic open spaces for the benefit of current and future generations. From oak woodlands to vernal pools and river corridors, Sacramento Valley Conservancy collaborates with willing landowners and community partners to preserve the lands that sustain wildlife, provide local food, and offer outdoor recreation and education. Sacramento Valley Conservancy is a nationally accredited land trust and a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. ★



## Rob Kerth Elected SMUD Board Vice President

Continued from page 1

for more than 75 years. SMUD is a recognized industry leader for its innovative energy efficiency programs, renewable power technologies and for its sustainable solutions for a healthier environment. In 2024, SMUD's power supply was about 62% carbon free, which is largely influenced by the weather and amount of

hydroelectricity produced. SMUD's goal is to completely eliminate carbon in its electricity production by 2030 while maintaining reliability and keeping rates among the lowest in California — on average, 50% lower than its neighboring, investor-owned utility. For more information on SMUD's Zero Carbon Plan and its customer programs, visit [smud.org](http://smud.org). ★

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# Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



What a difference a week makes!

Losing seven straight games and looking like cellar dwellers, the Kings went to a youth movement that saw the hometown boys win four consecutive games and nearly made it five straight as they fell to the Portland Trailblazers for the third time this season.

The mini winning streak had a cold water in the face effect for many pundits and fans, as the Kings easily handled the Rockets, Lakers, Knicks and the Washington Wizards.

Even more surprising was the way the Kings put away the competition, as they won by double digits in each of the 4 wins.

A shot in the arm? You bet it was, and it should give the organization a moment of pause as they reassess what they have regarding talent that resides on this team.

Right in the middle of this euphoric 4-game run was none other than 6'11" big man Dylan Cardwell, that has come out of nowhere to become a fan favorite. Just 24 years old, the Kings have stumbled onto a diamond in the rough, and no one on this team plays with greater enthusiasm than Cardwell. Comparisons are being made of Dennis Rodman, as Cardwell bounces down the court with arms uplifted, energizing the crowd and getting fans on their feet.

Not known for his scoring, Cardwell went undrafted a year ago, and the Kings signed him to a 2-way contract for this season. Smart move and one that's already paying off.

Cardwell might not get 20 points per game, but his affection for blocking shots and playing ferocious defense is just what the Kings needed to get them back.

The question will be as the trade deadline approaches, will the Kings realize what they have in Cardwell and value him to the point of not including him in a trade. Don't do it! And by the same token, do not trade Precious Achiuwa!

For the first time in many years the Kings can put a big lineup on the floor and it's showing results.

As the center piece of the Kings Domantas Sabonis was sidelined with a knee injury, coach Christie had no choice but to use both Achiuwa and Cardwell side

by side, and the results were astounding.

Not to be forgotten is rookie Maxime Raynaud who although not as impressive, is coming along, and I'm hopeful the Kings hang onto Raynaud as well.

The idea of blowing up this team in my opinion was never a good one, and I am in favor of the Kings either finding a trade that will add a topflight scorer, or worst case scenario, hold down the fort, work with the existing squad, and make your move in the next draft.

OKC and others have proven that the draft can be your friend. If the Kings can begin to assess talent, there is a real possibility that the upcoming draft, that is predicted to be a talent laden one, can produce another player of DeAaron Fox quality.

Every reason to start getting excited Kings fans.

Domantas Sabonis is back, and will Christie have the wherewithal to play Cardwell and Sabonis at the same time. Is it just a pipe dream to have Achiuwa, Cardwell, and Sabonis all playing on the court at the same time? Wow, what a rebounding trio, and with scorers like Murray, DeRozan, and Lavine to compliment the big men, what might this team look like.

Say your prayers for coach Christie that the talent fairy will tap him on the shoulder and give him good common sense to see what he has right before him.

As I have said many times before, look no further than your bench to find talent, and stop sending quality players away where they make teams better.

The Sacramento Kings really are better than their 12-31 record reports, and the second half of the season really does matter.

Scott Perry, don't make hasty decisions, and let this team continue to gel while giving the youth of the team a chance to show what they're made of.

If you haven't gotten out to a game there is no better time than right now. These guys will get you on your feet over and over again!

Go Kings and let's tweak things and by all means not blow it up!

All the best!

★

## Homelessness Crisis Remains One of Newsom's Biggest Political Liabilities



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

While delivering his final State of the State address and proposing his final state budget last week, Gov. Gavin Newsom clearly sought to neutralize an issue that has haunted his political career for more than two decades and could torpedo his hopes of becoming president: homelessness.

First, a bit of history.

Just months after being elected mayor of San Francisco in 2004, Newsom unveiled a plan he said would clear city streets of homeless people in 10 years. Fourteen years later, while running for governor, Newsom declared that homelessness in San Francisco had "never been worse."

He said eradicating homelessness would be a high priority and promised to appoint a homeless "czar" who could cut through red tape and intergovernmental friction to get the job done. Later, when pressed by reporters over the czar pledge, he snapped, "You want to know who's the homeless czar? I'm the homeless czar in the state of California."

Despite that self-appointment and devoting almost all of his 2020 State of the State address to homelessness, the number of unsheltered Californians continued to rise to record levels. As it did, Newsom began blaming local governments for not spending

state homelessness grants effectively and threatened to withhold annual funding.

However, in 2024 State Auditor Grant Parks excoriated Newsom's own California Interagency Council on Homelessness for failing to effectively monitor and coordinate homelessness programs — even though the state had spent more than \$20 billion during Newsom's governorship.

He later reorganized the council and last year it issued a glossy "Action Plan for Preventing and Ending Homelessness." Newsom hailed it as "not just a report of our investments, but a directive for continued accountability and action towards specific quantifiable goals."

It listed multiple things that should be done to alleviate the homelessness crisis, but never mentioned how its lofty goals should be achieved nor said anything about how the state's deficit-ridden budget would pay for them.

In last week's State of the State address, Newsom sang the political version of the World War II tune, "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive," cataloguing his accomplishments during the last seven years, including progress toward eliminating homelessness.

"When I began as governor, there was no homeless plan, no mental health plan and certainly no housing plan," Newsom told legislators. "There was no accountability and little investment. The responsibility fell to cities and counties, with little interest from Sacramento."

Newsom ticked off the efforts he had made and bragged that, "Early data, just compiled, shows that the number of unsheltered

homeless people in California dropped 9% in 2025," while "the nation saw an 18.1% overall increase in homelessness. Our investments are paying off."

He could not, however, resist another jab at local officials, saying he is "providing counties what they've been asking for: the predictable funding for housing and substance abuse treatment. No more excuses — it's time to bring people off the streets, out of encampments, into housing, into treatment. Counties need to do their job."

County officials took umbrage. The California State Association of Counties, in a statement, complained that Newsom's budget shifts the financial burden for several health and welfare programs to county governments and fails to protect them from federal reductions.

The organization also cited the new budget's omission of an annual bloc grant for homeless programs, and the administration's stalling the delivery of cash from a past allocation, "which was approved by the Legislature 18 months ago."

While Newsom cites a 9% drop in homelessness, if true it would be from a base of nearly 200,000 Californians without homes. There are still plenty of squalid encampments to be videotaped and featured on ads attacking a potential presidential candidate named Newsom two years hence.

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. ★

## Social Security Matters

### I'm Divorced; Can I Get Benefits from my Ex-husband?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

**Dear Rusty:** After 16 years of marriage, we were divorced. I have never remarried, but he has. When he starts collecting Social Security (he is 64 now and still working), is it true that I can claim ex-spousal benefits or does that go to the current wife? How would I find this info? **Signed: A Divorced Spouse**

**Dear Divorced Spouse:** The fact that your ex-husband has remarried has no influence on your ability to collect benefits based on his record. If you are eligible for ex-spouse benefits (because you did not remarry), you can get those benefits regardless of whether his current wife collects benefits on his record. In other words, both you and his current wife can both collect spousal benefits from your ex-husband's earnings record.

Your eligibility for an ex-spouse benefit is determined by comparing your own SS retirement benefit amount at full retirement age (FRA) to his — if your

own SS benefit at your FRA is less than 50% of your ex's FRA benefit entitlement, and you were married to your ex for more than 10 years, are not currently married and are at least 62 years old, then you can get a "spousal boost" (an amount added to your own Social Security retirement amount). In fact, if you have been divorced for over two years, you can get an ex-spouse benefit even though he is not yet receiving his own SS retirement benefit.

Be aware, however, if you claim any Social Security benefit (both your own SS retirement amount and your ex-spouse "spousal boost") before you reach your full retirement age, the monthly amount you get will be reduced according to how much before your full retirement age you claim. Spouse and ex-spouse benefits reach maximum at your full retirement age but are reduced if claimed earlier than your full retirement age. Claiming your benefits as an ex-spouse will also result in you receiving your own SS retirement benefit (reduced if you haven't yet reached FRA).

I suggest you contact Social Security at 1.800.772.1213 to make a telephone appointment to evaluate whether you are entitled benefits as an ex-spouse. If your own SS retirement benefit at your FRA is less

than half of your ex's FRA entitlement, you will be. To apply for those benefits you will need a copy of your divorce decree (and perhaps your marriage certificate), and your ex-husband's Social Security number (if you do not have his SSN, you can provide his date and place of birth and his parents' names, and SSA will likely be able to locate your ex's SS record).

SSA will be able to tell you what your total monthly benefit as an ex-spouse will be when you meet with them, at which point you can decide whether to claim your benefits early or wait until your FRA to achieve your maximum amount as an ex-spouse.

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## Yes, We Need a \$1.5 Trillion Defense Budget

ly match the total annual spending of all non-U.S. NATO countries. The percentage increase would be the highest since the Korean War and double the biggest annual increases of the Reagan years.

"We still talk about the Reagan buildup," Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said in a speech last month, "and my kids and yours will someday talk about the Trump buildup."

The Trump proposal would not just be a down payment on that promise, but a big step toward fulfilling it.

If our military is highly proficient -- as demonstrated in the Venezuela raid -- it also doesn't have the materiel to wage a protracted major war.

Defense analyst Mackenzie Eaglin of the American Enterprise Institute has long been ringing the alarm. She recently noted that during the short Israel-Iran war, we fired 150, or one-quarter, of our THAAD missiles, exceeding our annual purchase rate by three times. In the Red Sea, the Navy fired more Tomahawks in January 2024 than it bought in all of 2023.

These shortfalls, as Eaglin points out, are especially disturbing when compared to the building capacity of our adversaries. Whereas the Russians make more than 300,000 artillery shells a month, we make only 40,000 155mm shells. "Beijing builds six naval combatant ships," she writes, "for every 1.8 ships the U.S. builds."

Even The New York Times -- not known for

beating the drums for more defense spending -- devoted a splashy editorial last month to the sorry state of our military-industrial base.

In his new book, "War and Power," scholar Phillips Payson O'Brien relates how wars between great powers are usually not won by brilliant battle plans, or by the commitment or proficiency of the troops. Rather, it is productive capacity -- and the ability to degrade that of the enemy while maintaining or increasing your own -- that makes the difference.

The Nazis weren't going to win the Battle of Britain when the Brits were producing twice as many aircraft as Hitler.

On top of this, a nation needs to make shrewd choices about what it is building (the Nazis also had the wrong planes for the Battle of Britain -- bombers with payloads that were too small and fighters with limited range).

The U.S. needs to make sure that it is not overinvesting in the weapons systems of the past, although a defense budget on the scale that Trump is discussing would relieve some pressure from these choices. We could very well have our traditional subs and jet fighters, and our cutting-edge drones, too.

Trump's taste for gilding everything can be over the top. It'd be a national service, though, if he manages to make the U.S. defense budget golden.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review. (c) 2026 by King Features Synd., Inc. ★



# Spiritual Psychology

Have you ever heard the term spiritual psychology? Well, **Steve Rother** is a trusted voice in metaphysical circles for nearly three decades. He channels a collective of angelic beings known as “The Group” whose practical, deeply insightful messages offer clarity and direction in uncertain times. And boy we are definitely in uncertain times. That was thirty years and some seven books ago. “The Group” is a made up of nine. They are not abstract but practical, uplifting, and deeply human. For some twenty-seven years, **Steve** co-hosted “The Virtual Light” broadcast from Las Vegas.

**Steve** has a powerful guide to soul growth and personal empowerment that’s captivated readers and podcasters alike in **Spiritual Psychology**. He is a gifted communicator. He was the first person to teach channeling at the United Nations, and his online community, *Espavo*, has inspired millions. Channeling means reaching a spirit or person on the other side, a medium if you will. It is a heart-centered approach. It’s a manual for living with authenticity, courage and grace. With warmth, humor, and grounded wisdom, he shares real time messages from “The Group” with stories from his spiritual journey and practical tools navigating awakening, change, and challenge. And he explores twelve soul-level lessons we each came to master, offering readers a roadmap for healing, purpose, and conscious evolution. Here are those twelve lessons he shared with me on my POPPTALK Radio Show.

1. **ACCEPTANCE.** Release expectations and “BE.”
2. **ADAPTATION.** Ability to live in change.
3. **BE-ING.** Feeling incomplete. Often

4. **CHARITY.** Ability to feel others or lack of it.
5. **COMMUNICATION.** Ability to communicate from the heart. A favorite of males today.
6. **CREATION.** Ability to see your own creations-leads to hypercreativity.
7. **DEFINITION.** Ability to define boundaries. To say NO with love in your heart and a smile on your face. Draws in master manipulators. A favorite of females in today’s world.
8. **INTEGRITY.** Ability to be real.
9. **LOVE.** Often played out in relationships, but is about loving oneself.
10. **TRUST.** Set ups often include abandonment or abuse issues.
11. **TRUTH.** Passion for truth often leads to teaching.
12. **GRACE.** To walk in the fifth dimension now.

Have you ever wondered how YOU could have a powerful guide to healing, purpose, and soul remembrances? We’ll leave that to **Steve Rother** and his book **Spiritual Psychology** to explain how these twelve lessons can help us change our lives. After all, he is a spiritual pioneer. If you need additional information, go to [www.spiritual-psychology.org](http://www.spiritual-psychology.org) or [www.steverother.org](http://www.steverother.org) to make your day a little bit more positive. I think we all want to make our lives more meaningful for our own sake and for all those around us too. So why not let 2026 open new ways of thinking, so that life can carry new and exciting meaning. I’ll join you too! Channel that energy to new heights of purpose. Let’s make it a very **HAPPY NEW YEAR!** ★



By Patsy McGavock  
JustServe.org

If you want to grow – personally, professionally, and as a community member – there’s almost nothing more powerful than surrounding yourself with people who aren’t like you.

I was struck by Harvard economist Raj Chetty’s research when exploring whether social capital – dense networks between people and groups – impacts economic success. He found something powerful: cross-class friendships had more influence on upward mobility than school quality or neighborhood income. In short, diverse networks shape our futures.

Sociologists call this bridging capital: relationships that reach across lines of difference – age, culture, income, belief systems. While bonding capital, which connects us with people like ourselves, provides strong, supportive relationships, bridging capital opens doors to new resources and perspectives beyond our immediate circle.

Communities rich in bridging capital, not only do individuals benefit, but the entire community. There’s a “spillover” effect even for those with fewer personal ties. The more people who reach beyond their comfort zones and authentically connect, the more we all rise.

Research shows such communities benefit at every level – from stronger schools and civic engagement to better health and crisis response, and even something deeper: a rising sense of shared purpose and a more abundant way of living together.

But while research gives us

## Be Diverse by Design

the why, stories often show us the how – and those stories stay with us in moments of decision.

Six blind men encounter an elephant for the first time. One feels its trunk. “A snake!” he declares. “No, a tree,” says another, touching the leg. “A spear,” insists a third as he finds the tusk. Each is partly right – but entirely wrong. They can only feel part of the elephant. The lesson?

Intentionally inviting voices that see differently makes us clearer, not weaker. When not viewed as a threat, it offers insight. We begin to understand – sometimes with empathy we didn’t know we lacked.

Now, imagine a house built by many trained hands – carpenters crafting fine trim, electricians wiring light into every room, plumbers bringing in clean water and taking waste away, roofers sealing out wind and rain, tile layers adding beauty and function. A home – warm, lit, protected and alive with possibilities.

If built by only well-acquainted carpenters, lacking other connections, the ‘home’ would have a fine frame but be cold, unlit, and unprotected from coming storms. Bonding capital gives a strong foundation, but only bridging capital completes the house.

A single stone dropped in a pond ripples outward – but few intersect. A handful of pebbles yields a different result – an array of intersecting waves, bouncing, touching, connecting in beautiful and unexpected ways.

Whether building a house or rippling across a pond, it’s the intersections that matter. A kind of highway system emerges – where skillsets, ideas, and resources move more freely. But most important are the relationships, carrying wisdom, support and

opportunity farther than any one person.

Bridging differences is rarely comfortable. It isn’t accidental. It’s intentional. It requires vulnerability and a willingness to sit in uncertainty. But when we lean into those moments rather than retreat – that’s where bridges are built.

Michelle Obama once said, “It’s harder to hate up close.”

Empathy is contagious. When we meet difference with curiosity, courage, and patience, we shift the atmosphere. Authentic connection can’t be faked – but it can be chosen. Enter with expectations of good, and let that quiet fear.

As Priya Parker writes: “Thoughtful invitations shape who belongs, and belonging is the gateway to connection.”

What does this look like? Like going out of your way to join groups where not everyone looks or thinks like you. Choosing the seat next to someone you don’t know. Listening more than talking when you get there, and asking questions not to challenge, but to understand.

It also means accepting that you won’t always get it right – and having grace when you try again.

If we want a more abundant future, we must build it – on purpose. Diverse by design. One welcome, one bridge, one shared purpose at a time.

I’ll be highlighting specific cross community connection, their specific value, and local opportunities as the year goes on. Check in next issues for successful tips on how to learn by someone who’s been there.

*Patsy McGavock volunteers as a community advocate informing, empowering, and engaging readers with their community. Contact Patsy McGavock. JustServe@gmail.com* ★

# Chamber Announces New Board of Directors



By Judy Andrews,  
Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce

**FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG)** - The Fair Oaks Chamber recently announced its new board of directors for 2026-27. The board is led by Kimberley Pitillo (CEO/President). Officers include Jen Rodriguez (Board Chair), Mysti Lingenfelter (Vice Chair), Doug Proctor (Secretary), and Katie Yount (Treasurer). The new board of directors includes Janice Jordan Row, Cassie Kendall, Kristi Noonan, Norman Plotkin, Michel Row, Anumpama Shojac, Keith Wright, and Noah Wright (Fair Oaks Honorary Mayor).

Board members were sworn in by Sacramento County Supervisor Rich Desmond at the Chamber’s December Luncheon. We look forward to learning more about the chamber’s plans, activities and collaborations this year.

**Welcome New Members**  
Please show your support for the following new chamber members: Cobex Air, Club Pilates, Fair Oaks Flooring, Greg Gibbs, Hoppe Home Loans, Pitch and Fiddle

Fair Oaks, Retro Fit Studio, SacTown Tire & Auto Service, Swartz Foggy Law Group and TEC Realty.

Interested in becoming a member? Visit [www.fairoakschamber.com](http://www.fairoakschamber.com) for more information.

**Upcoming Fundraisers**  
The Fair Oaks Historical Society is hosting its 19th annual Soup Night on Saturday, Feb. 7, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at Faith Lutheran Church, 4000 San Juan Ave., Fair Oaks. This is the non-profit’s biggest fundraiser, which helps keep the Fair Oaks History Center running while preserving the town’s history and heritage.

Located at 10340 Fair Oaks Blvd (next to Sunflower Drive-in), the History Center is managed by volunteers and open to the public from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

Soup Night will feature a silent auction, raffle, and door prizes. Donations for the raffle and silent auction are appreciated and can be dropped off at the History Center during regular hours by Jan. 31.

Tickets for Soup Night 2026 are \$40 each or \$320 for a table of eight. They must be purchased in advance and will be available at check-in on the event night. The event is expected to sell out beforehand.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit [www.fairoakshistory.org](http://www.fairoakshistory.org).

org. For questions, contact Claudia Thorn at (916) 747-1535 or [cjthorn17@commcast.net](mailto:cjthorn17@commcast.net).

The **Rotary Club of Fair Oaks** will host its 33rd annual Mardi Gras Crab Feed and Auction on Saturday, March 7, from 5:30 to 9 p.m. at the Citrus Heights Community Center (6300 Fountain Square Drive, Citrus Heights). Proceeds from the event will support Fair Oaks community projects, such as new shoes for students at a local school, a new greenhouse for the Orangevale-Fair Oaks Food Bank, Safe Halloween in the Fair Oaks Village, and others.

Tickets are \$95 per person or \$950 per table, which includes two drinks, all-you-can-eat crab, minestrone soup, pasta, salad, and bread. Dessert will be available during the dessert auction. The event also features a live auction, a silent auction, and a fun draw. The dress code is Mardi Gras-themed or casual.

Tickets are available at [www.rotaryfairoaks.org](http://www.rotaryfairoaks.org). For questions, contact Victoria Porter at (916) 208-8626. For sponsorship inquiries, contact Katie Yount at (916) 627-9300.

The Rotary Club of Fair Oaks has been serving the community since 1948, providing countless volunteer hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations and sponsorships.

*See you in Fair Oaks!* ★



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# COMICS & PUZZLES

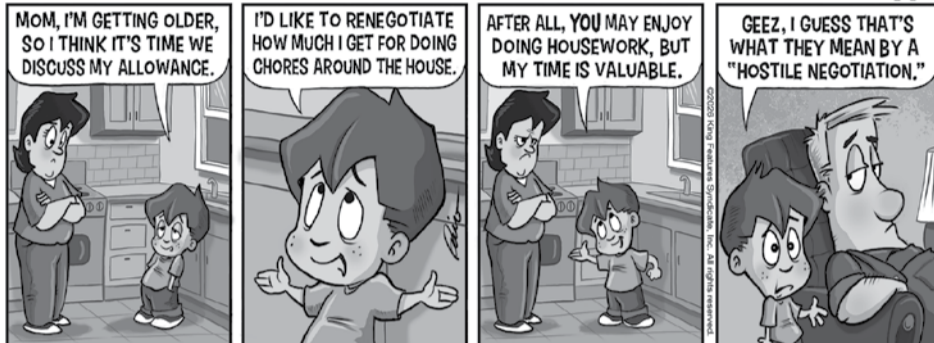
## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



## Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.



## TIGER

by Bud Blake



## GRIN THE BEAR IT

Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



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**CLUES**

**ACROSS**

- Pakistani attire
- Research location
- Partridge's fruit tree
- \*Grid follower
- \*Upshaw, multiple Super Bowl winner
- Canada's national tree
- Like Homer Simpson's head
- Allege
- Agenda entries
- \*Adding a rushing player
- Aphrodite's lover
- Not host
- Tire meas.
- Composure under strain
- More distant
- Thompson of "Some Kind of Wonderful"
- Ubiquitous deciduous tree
- Genealogical plant
- Poetic feet
- Dream time, acr.
- The Romanovs, e.g.
- Song for solo voice
- Dishevel, as in hair
- Clever humor
- \*SoFi, Super Bowl LXI venue
- \*Last year's Super Bowl winners
- Web robot
- Tesla Roadster with Starman location
- a.k.a. podagra
- \*The only NFL team with perfect season
- Plant-based laxative
- Symphony member
- "No \_\_\_ for you!"
- No gains without them
- Retired, abbr.
- Field worker
- Bohemian
- Not Miss or Ms
- Poker amount

**DOWN**

- Bro to bro
- Speedy steed
- Chuck Berry's "\_\_\_ Over Beethoven"
- Rainbow color
- \*Santa Clara's Stadium, Super Bowl LX venue
- Beside, archaic
- Titanic's frozen enemy
- \*Team with most Super Bowl appearances
- Fencing weapon
- Charitable contributions
- Hi-\_\_\_
- Garden shelter
- Unhealthy atmosphere
- Little hills
- P in m.p.g.
- Mark Twain to Samuel Clemens
- Lively
- Vampire of Greek mythology
- \*One of two teams to win while hosting Super Bowl
- Long fishing line
- Like haunted house
- What the defense does?
- High school dressy affair
- Romanian money
- \*Super Bowl LX halftime show headliner (2 words)
- Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young: "\_\_\_ Your Children"
- Egyptian boy king, for short
- Long jump
- 1 to Greeks, pl.
- Rob Marshall's 2005 movie "Memoirs of a \_\_\_"
- On the wagon
- Land parcels
- \*Shoulder pads and cleats
- "Put a lid \_\_\_!"
- College dwelling
- High part of day
- Edible fat
- Facial site
- \*Charlie Puth and Brandi Carlile, \_\_\_ game stars

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# Board of Supervisors Chair and Vice Chair Elected

## Sacramento County News Release

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - The annual vote to elect a new Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, Jan. 13. This year's elected Chair is Supervisor Rosario Rodriguez of District 4, and Supervisor Pat Hume of District 5 was elected Vice Chair.

"It is an honor to serve as Chair of the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors in 2026," said Supervisor Rodriguez. "I step into this role with a clear focus on results, respect and responsibility. Many of our residents are struggling, and they deserve a County government that acts with urgency and delivers measurable outcomes. As Chair, I will run disciplined, productive meetings and demand results, accountability and follow-through on every commitment we make."

"Respect begins with listening to the people and the communities we serve and



**Rosario Rodriguez, District 4 Supervisor will serve as Chair on the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors.** Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

ensuring their voices are reflected in our decisions. Responsibility means turning those voices into action. Working with my fellow Supervisors, County staff, and community partners, I will advance solutions



**Pat Hume, District 5 Supervisor will serve as Vice Chair on the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors.** Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

that strengthen neighborhoods and ensure Sacramento County operates transparently, effectively, and with real impact for the public."

Board Chair responsibilities include

presiding over the Board meetings; the Vice Chair assumes the role in the Chair's absence or inability to act. If the Chair and Vice Chair are absent or unable to preside, the members present will select a member present to act as temporary Chairperson.

Additionally, the Board Chair acts on procedural matters or questions, recognizes a member of the board desiring to speak on an item, is entitled to vote on all matters before the Board, participate in discussion relating to any matter, make motions without relinquishing the Chair, and second any motion without relinquishing the Chair.

The Board Chair sits on other boards/commissions as a representative of the County of Sacramento and is the point of contact for questions from the public regarding the meetings (i.e., coordination of resolutions/presentations and general questions not specific to a district, etc.).

The Chair and Vice Chair serve annual terms. ★

# Most Americans Support Impaired Driving Countermeasures in Cars

## AAA Northern California News Release

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - With impaired driving still a persistent, and deadly, threat on American roads, a majority of people support a range of impaired driving countermeasures that could significantly reduce fatalities, according to a new AAA survey.

The annual AAA Traffic Safety Culture Index (TSCI) examines changes in driving patterns and concerns people have about driving in general. The results from last year's study highlight a clear pattern: most Americans want stronger safeguards that prevent impaired driving, including advanced vehicle technologies and stronger legal standards even though some drivers admitted to taking dangerous risks themselves.

The study found strong public support for tougher measures to address impaired driving. Nearly two-thirds of respondents, 67 percent, said they support requiring all new vehicles to be equipped with alcohol impairment prevention technology. A slim majority, 51 percent, also favor lowering the legal blood alcohol concentration limit from 0.08 to 0.05.

While many participants acknowledged that impaired driving was unacceptable, some admitted to doing so anyway. That follows other AAA research that found a



**Majority of people support a range of impaired driving countermeasures that could significantly reduce fatalities, according to a new AAA survey.** Photo courtesy Freepik

recent rise in other unsafe behaviors like speeding, distracted driving and even road rage.

An overwhelming 93 percent said driving after drinking is very or extremely dangerous, yet 7 percent admitted they had done so within the past 30 days. Similarly, 70 percent of respondents said driving within an hour of using marijuana is very or extremely dangerous, but 6 percent reported engaging in that behavior anyway.

"The reality is impaired driving has negatively impacted everyone in some way," AAA Mountain West Group Spokesperson Doug Johnson said. "While it's encouraging to see widespread support for new safety measures, there's no replacement for a common sense approach to saying no to drinking and driving."

The survey also found that risky behavior persists in several other areas, particularly distracted and aggressive driving. When

it comes to distraction, an overwhelming majority of respondents acknowledged the danger. Nearly all participants said scrolling through social media on a hand-held phone is extremely or very dangerous, while 94 percent said the same about texting or emailing and 90 percent about reading on a hand-held device. Despite this widespread awareness, many drivers admitted to engaging in these behaviors anyway. About 28

percent said they texted while driving, 37 percent reported reading messages, and 36 percent said they talked on a hand-held phone behind the wheel.

Public opinion on enforcement measures was more divided. While 79 percent of respondents supported a ban on hand-held phone use while driving, support dropped sharply when it came to hands-free use, with only 40 percent favoring limits on those systems.

The survey also highlighted concerns around aggressive driving and speeding. Nine in 10 respondents viewed aggressive driving as extremely or very dangerous, and 80 percent said the same about running red lights. Speeding, however, was perceived as less dangerous than other risky behaviors, even though it remains a major contributor to crashes. Although 58 percent of drivers believed they would be caught if they drove 15 miles per hour over the speed limit, about half admitted they had done so within the past month. Support for automated enforcement was limited as well, with only 46 percent backing the use of speed cameras on residential streets.

For more information on survey methodology, data considerations, and results refer to the full Traffic Safety Culture Index report. Visit [newsroom.aaa.com/asset/2024-traffic-safety-culture-index-technical-report/](https://newsroom.aaa.com/asset/2024-traffic-safety-culture-index-technical-report/) ★

# Head Start Families Receiving Local Produce Deliveries

## Sacramento County Office of Education News Release

### SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG)

Despite being surrounded by fertile farmland, many families in Sacramento County face significant food insecurity, with the Sacramento Food Bank reporting that more than one in four residents struggle to access nutritious food. The Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE), through its Early Head Start Home Visiting Program, is taking a bold step toward improving family health and school readiness by launching a Farm to Family Project that provides monthly boxes of fresh, locally grown produce to families enrolled in Early Head Start (EHS) programs, along with healthy cooking and nutrition experiences.

The Sacramento County Office of Education has partnered with two local agencies to launch the new project. Sacramento's Goodful farm-fresh food delivery service is helping to distribute the produce boxes. The Alchemist Community Development Corporation is hosting community meals where families create healthy lunches and learn about recipes they can make with the food they receive. Children



**Twice each month, Alchemist (shown with Early Head Start staff at an information table at Stanston Park) is hosting a community meal where families learn to use the produce they receive to make healthy lunches.** Photo courtesy of Sacramento County Office of Education

are encouraged to help prepare the meals. A \$200,000 farm-to-school grant from the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) funds the project.

As part of Sacramento County Office of Education's Sacramento County READS Literacy Initiative to empower all learners to reach their age- and grade-appropriate reading and literacy milestones, the Farm to Family Project has integrated early literacy development into its nutrition education efforts. Families receive a children's book each month, centered on themes of farming, healthy eating, or sustainability.

Along with the book,

families get a comprehensive activity guide, designed to spark curiosity and learning at home. It features playful, age-appropriate activities, things like cooking projects, discussion prompts and ideas for sensory play activities. Families are encouraged to read the story together and engage in the activities, creating meaningful connections between food, learning and family time.

To make the experience even more engaging, links are provided to allow children to watch the authors themselves read their stories, ensuring families can enjoy the stories in multiple formats.

To learn more about this initiative visit [scoe.net/](https://scoe.net/) ★

## Sacramento County News Release

### SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG)

Sacramento County is highlighting a major milestone in community-driven early childhood investment following the approval of \$4,172,410 in funding by the First 5 Sacramento Commission for 35 community-based organizations. All awarded organizations are first-time recipients of First 5 funding, marking a significant expansion of support to historically under-resourced communities.

The funding was awarded through First 5 Sacramento's Racial Equity funding pathway and reflects a transformative shift in how early childhood investments are designed and distributed across the county for programs located in historically underfunded communities.

This historic funding decision was led by First 5 Sacramento's Equity in Action Committee, a 15-member body made up of parents, caregivers and community leaders who live in the neighborhoods where the grants will be implemented. Through this committee, First 5 Sacramento implemented a Participatory Grantmaking Model that intentionally



**The funded programs are culturally responsive and community-driven, addressing long-standing inequities in early childhood development.** Photo courtesy of First 5 Sacramento

places decision-making power in the hands of community members rather than institutions.

As a result of this process, funding will support organizations serving children and families in 27 high-priority ZIP codes throughout Sacramento County. The funded programs are culturally responsive and community-driven, addressing long-standing inequities in early childhood development.

"This bold new grantmaking process is rooted in trust — recognizing that community members closest to the challenges often have the most effective solutions, yet are rarely asked to lead," said Phil Serna, Chair of First 5 Sacramento and County Supervisor representing the First District. "By prioritizing equity, lived experience

and local expertise in funding decisions, and through the thoughtful leadership of the Equity in Action Committee, First 5 Sacramento is reaching more families in the neighborhoods where resources are needed most."

The participatory approach ensures that early childhood programs supported through this funding are grounded in lived experience, cultural knowledge and strong community relationships — key elements for effective and sustainable outcomes.

More information about the funded organizations and their programs, the Equity in Action Committee, and First 5 Sacramento's participatory grantmaking model is available on the <https://first5sacramento.saccounty.gov/About-Us/Pages/History-Equity-in-Action.aspx>. ★

# Republic FC Acquires Forward Mayele Malango from Monterey Bay FC

## Sacramento Republic FC News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento Republic FC announced Jan. 8 that the Club has acquired forward Mayele Malango (MY-el Muh-LAWN-go) from Monterey Bay FC via transfer. Malango has also signed a new contract with Republic FC. Per club policy, the terms of the transfer and contract will not be disclosed. Malango will be available pending league and federation approval and is expected to wear No. 7 for Republic FC.

“Mayele is a dynamic attacker with a diverse and impressive journey through multiple levels of U.S. soccer,” said Republic FC Head Coach Neill Collins. “His pace, strength and finishing ability give us more options in the final third, and we’re excited to integrate him into our system.”

Malango, 28, featured



Malango will be available pending league and federation approval and is expected to wear No. 7 for Republic FC. Photo courtesy of Sacramento Republic FC

prominently for Monterey Bay FC during the 2025 USL Championship season, making 29 appearances across league and USL Cup play with five goals and two assists. His contributions included scoring the club’s first goal of the

season and earning a USL Championship Team of the Week honor early in the campaign for a stand-out performance against Oakland Roots SC.

“I would like to thank God for this opportunity, and also thanks to all the coaching staff and front

office members for believing in me, and for making this transfer to happen. I’m super excited to join the team and can’t wait to contribute to the team’s success on and off the field,” said Malango. “I can’t wait to meet all the fans and play in front of you all. I will give everything I have for the team. Let’s make memories together as we fight for another championship.”

Prior to joining Monterey Bay FC, Malango built a varied and productive professional career in the United States. He began his pro journey with New England Revolution II in 2020, where he appeared in 14 matches. In 2021, he signed with New

Amsterdam FC of the National Independent Soccer Association, scoring an impressive nine goals in 14 appearances to earn an All-League First Team selection. In 2022, he continued his development with Albion San Diego in NISA, finding the net three times in 20 matches, helping the team reach the NISA Championship Final. From 2023 to 2024, Malango starred for Chattanooga Red Wolves SC in USL League One, where he recorded 12 goals and five assists in 68 total appearances.

A native of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malango and his family spent 10 years in Malawi as

refugees before coming to the U.S. and settling in Massachusetts. He made a name for himself on the local soccer scene before moving on to the collegiate level. He began at Salem State University, where he scored 17 goals in 19 appearances and earned both MASCAC Player of the Year and Rookie of the Year honors on the way to a conference title. He then transferred to UMass Lowell, competing at the Division I level before turning professional.

Mayele earned his first call up to the Malawi National Team for World Cup Qualifiers in September 2025 and recorded an assist in his debut. He later joined The Flames for two international friendlies in November, scoring his first goal against Lesotho on Nov. 18.

Republic FC’s 2026 season officially kicks off on March 7 when the club hosts FC Tulsa at Heart Health Park. Season ticket memberships are on sale now, offering a range of benefits including discounts on merchandise and access to exclusive fan experiences, as well as priority seat selection in the new Republic Stadium at The Railyards. For more information, or to purchase a membership today, visit SacRepublicFC.com/Memberships. ★

## Open Call for River Cats National Anthem Auditions

Demos for Potential Performers Must be Submitted Prior to Jan. 30

### Sacramento River Cats News Release

#### WEST SACRAMENTO, CA

(MPG) - If you have ever dreamed of getting a baseball game underway by singing the National Anthem, now is your chance as the Sacramento River Cats have announced their National Anthem auditions for the 2026 baseball season will take place at Sutter Health Park on the evening of Feb. 17.

Auditions are open to all soloists and instrumentalists, and those interested in performing prior to a River Cats game must submit an audition demo by Friday, Jan. 30. Demos received past this date will not be considered.

All demos submitted must be an A capella version or original performance of the Star-Spangled Banner, sung in full with clear, consistent and correct lyrics. The full performance must not exceed 90 seconds.

To submit a demo, email a mp3 or

YouTube link to marketing@rivercats.com.

The subject line should read “2026 National Anthem Demo” and include a name, phone number and email address in the body of the email.

Submissions that do not meet this requirement will be automatically rejected.

The River Cats will invite the top demos submitted to Sutter Health Park for a live audition on Feb. 17.

Due to the volume of applicants, performers will only be contacted if they are selected to audition in person. Selected performers will be contacted the week of Feb. 9 with further instructions.

Sutter Health Park is the West Sacramento home of the three-time Triple-A Champion Sacramento River Cats, proud affiliate of the three-time World Series Champion San Francisco Giants. Memberships, mini-plans, and suites and hospitality spaces for the 2026 season may be purchased now by calling the River Cats Ticket Office at (916) 371-HITS (4487), emailing tickets@rivercats.com, or visiting www.rivercats.com. For information on other events at Sutter Health Park, visit www.sutterhealthpark.com. ★



## Softball Sets Schedule



The Aggies will host 28 games in Davis, while hitting the road for their other 25 games. Photo courtesy of UC Davis Athletics

### UC Davis Athletics News Release

DAVIS, CA (MPG) - UC Davis softball has set in place its 2026 schedule, with the season opener set for Feb. 5 at home against Sacramento State and the Big West Conference opener against Hawai’I scheduled at La Rue Field over the weekend of March 6-7.

The Aggies will host 28 games in Davis, while hitting the road for their other 25 games. UC Davis will take part in four tournaments, performing hosting duties for two, while playing in five games at neutral sites along the with host schools at two other tournaments.

2026 begins with the NorCal Kickoff where UC Davis will open against Sacramento State on Feb. 5 before playing San Diego, Colorado State and Saint Mary’s in the yearly tournament that runs from Feb. 5-8.

UC Davis then plays its first of seven midweek games, traveling to Pacific on Feb. 11. The Aggies will also make midweek trips to Santa Clara (Feb. 17), Sacramento State (Mar. 24) and Saint Mary’s (Apr. 14). Pacific will make the return trip on Mar. 3, joining Utah Valley (Mar. 9) and Stanford (Apr. 7) in making midweek trips to La Rue Field.

UNLV hosts the next tournament the Aggies visit, and running from Feb. 13-15 the Aggies will face Seattle, Quinnipiac and hosting UNLV. UC Davis will twice see Seattle and UNLV during the Las Vegas, Nev., tournament. Over Feb. 20-21 the Aggies will also head to St. George, Utah where they will face Weber State and Utah Tech in back-to-back days for a total of four games over the 48 hours spent in the high desert.

As the calendar rolls into March, the Ags host their final tournament of the season when over the stretch of Feb. 27-Mar. 1 UC Davis will see Nevada (twice), Santa Clara, Sacred

Heart and San Jose State.

The Aggies open Big West play by hosting Hawai’I over the weekend of Mar. 6-7. The Ags will go on to host CSU Bakersfield (Mar. 21-22), Cal State Fullerton (Mar. 28-29), CSUN (Apr. 11-12) and UC Santa Barbara (Apr. 25-26). On the road in conference, the Aggies will visit UC San Diego (Mar. 13-14), Long Beach State (Apr. 3-4), UC Riverside (Apr. 18-19) and Cal Poly (May 1-2). The Big West Championships are set to get going at Cal State Fullerton from May 6-9.

UC Davis returns All-Big West honorees Ashley Sawai, Alyssa Dethlefsen, Caroline Grimes and Sydney Polli. Last season Sawai finished top 10 in the Big West in innings pitched (eighth), batters struck out (ninth), wins (ninth) and saves (second). The Aggie right-hander also tossed a career-high 15 complete games, placing her fourth in the conference and 38th in the nation.

Dethlefsen also found her name inside the top 10 of a pair of Big West statistical categories. She led the conference in triples (five), and her 19 stolen bases placed her fourth in the league. During the season, Dethlefsen was not caught once and along with Grand Canyon’s Savannah Groshong-Kirk she is one of two student-athletes in the country to have not been caught stealing this season with at least 19 stolen bases.

UC Davis, the No. 2 ranked public university by the Wall Street Journal, is home to 40,000 undergraduate students and 12,000 employees. Ranked #1 in Agriculture and Forestry as well as #1 in Veterinary Medicine, UC Davis is located in a true California college town nestled between world-class destinations such as the San Francisco Bay Area, Napa Valley and Lake Tahoe. Over 650 Aggie student-athletes compete in 25 Division I varsity sports, with 16 sports transitioning to the Mountain West Conference beginning in 2026-27. ★

## Former Hornet Abigail Lopez Makes Pro Debut with Club Puebla

### Sacramento State Athletics News Release

#### SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)

- Former Sacramento State women’s soccer standout Abigail Lopez has joined the professional ranks, signing with Club Puebla in Mexico’s top women’s division and making her debut on Jan. 4 against the Rayados de Monterrey in the LIGA BBVA MX Femenil closing tournament.

Lopez joined the club back in December of 2025, just in time to make her debut in early January. She played all 90 minutes of her club’s 4-0 loss to Monterrey in the opening match for both clubs.

A four-time All-Big Sky Conference honoree during her career with the Hornets, Lopez earned first-team all-league laurels in each of her final two collegiate campaigns and was named to the second team as a freshman and sophomore. She is one of only



Lopez joined the club back in December of 2025, just in time to make her debut in early January. Photo courtesy of Sacramento State Athletics

four former Sacramento State players to win four All-Big Sky honors in a career, joining Katie McCoy (first-team honors in 2005-07 and a second-team award in 2004), Kara Taylor (first-team honors in 2005, 2007-08 and an honorable mention award in 2006), and Aubrey Goodwill (first-team honors in 2021-22, a second-team award in 2020, and an honorable mention selection in 2019).

Lopez is also one of only 11 Hornets to earn multiple All-Big Sky first-team awards.

Starting all 21 matches for Sacramento State as a senior in 2024, she led the team in scoring with four goals, three assists, and 11 points on the year, helping the Hornets capture the Big Sky Tournament title and a berth in the NCAA Tournament against USC.

She finished her career ranked tied for eighth in all-time points with 37 and tied for seventh in career goals with 15. Her 134 shot attempts are seventh on the school’s all-time list.

Lopez scored at least four goals in three of her four seasons with the Hornets, while her 11 points as a senior were a career high, surpassing the 10 she accounted for as a freshman in 2021. Overall, she appeared in 72 matches for Sacramento State, making the starting lineup in 63 of those — including 38 consecutive starts to close out her career. ★

# Deal Me In

## Local Casino January Events Calendar

By MPG Staff,  
Compiled from Hard Rock  
Sacramento,  
Thunder Rock Casino Resort  
and Sky River Casino

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - Fight fans, music lovers and nightlife enthusiasts have an action-packed lineup to look forward to as Hard Rock Live, Thunder Valley Casino Resort, and Sky River Casino present a series of must-see events featuring legendary athletes, chart-topping artists and unforgettable nightlife experiences.

**HARD ROCK**

On Saturday, Jan. 24 at 8 p.m., Xavi will take the Hard Rock Live Sacramento stage with his X-Tour featuring special guest Fabio Capri. Xavi is the leading voice of Música Mexicana's new generation, with over 4.8 billion career streams. Born in Phoenix and raised between the U.S. and Nogales, Sonora, the singer-songwriter blends traditional corridos with R&B, pop, and urban influences. He rose to global prominence in 2024 with "La Diabla," which topped Spotify's Global 200 and became the longest-running #1 Latin solo song in the chart's history.

Hard Rock Live inside Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Sacramento at Fire Mountain will host A1 Combat 33: Legends Collide on Friday, Jan. 30.

The event is headlined by a highly anticipated Combat Jiu-Jitsu Superfight between MMA legend Urijah Faber and Cisco Rivera, alongside 17 total bouts in the cage. Doors open at 4 p.m. with the main card taking place at 7 p.m.



Hard Rock Casino is starting the year strong with a lineup of concerts, UFC fights and more. Photo by Shamaya Sutton



Sky River Casino is located on 1 Sky River Pkwy, Elk Grove and has a full calendar of events. Photo by Idaly Valencia

The event will be broadcast live on YouTube and UFC FIGHT PASS. For the full bout card, visit A1COMBAT.COM. All bouts subject to change or cancellation. No refunds. **THUNDER VALLEY** A country music icon, ★

Brad Paisley his the Thunder Valley stage Friday, Jan. 30 to celebrate over 25 years of chart-topping success. A Grand Ole Opry member since 2001, Paisley has written 21 of his 25 No. 1 hits and amassed nearly 5 billion career streams, with classics like "He Didn't Have to Be," "She's Everything," and "We Danced."

This is a show country fans won't want to miss.

Grammy Award-winning artist Gary Clark Jr. brings his genre-blending sound of blues, rock, soul, and hip-hop to The Venue, featuring hits such as "This Land," "Pearl Cadillac," and "Don't Owe You a Thang."

Joining him is the Marcus King Band, adding even more high-energy, soulful performances to the night.

Tickets for Thunder Valley Events are available on TicketMaster.

**SKY RIVER**

Ladies Night will take place Wednesday, Jan. 28 at 5 p.m. Grab your friends to enjoy cigar specials, a curated drink menu and entertainment

Come out Thursday, Jan. 29 for High Stakes, Slow Smoke. This event brings together the bold character of High West Whiskeys and the craftsmanship of My Father Cigars for a curated pairing experience designed for true connoisseurs. Admission is \$75. Reserve your tickets now on Open Table.

Party @ 32 Brews Street returns each Friday 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. Come alive at 32 Brews Street with DJs spinning the latest hits! Feel the beat and dance the night away with all your favorites playing. ★

**KP International MARKET**  
FOOD COURT NOW OPEN  
10971 Olson Drive, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670  
916.853.8000

**KP KARAOKE SPECIAL**  
Sun-Thu Come before 6pm (Valid Time)  
Fri-Sat Come before 5pm (Valid Time)

- For 6 people \$115.00 + Gratuity
- For 12 people \$210.00 + Gratuity
- For 14 people \$230.00 + Gratuity
- For 18 people 295.00 + Gratuity
- For 28 people \$395.00 + Gratuity

Dishes To Choose From

**FROZEN & FISH DEPT**

- Abalone Style Shellfish 340 g REG. \$12.99/EA **\$8.99/ea**
- Masago Capelin Roe 170 g REG. \$7.99/EA **\$4.99/ea**

**WEEKLY MEAT SPECIALS**

- Beef Rump/Bottom Round Roast-Bnls **\$5.49/lb**
- Beef T-Bone Steak **\$5.49/lb**
- Chicken Breast Bnls/Sknls **\$1.89/lb**
- Pork Neck Bones **\$1.99/lb**
- Pork Butt-Bone In **\$2.59/lb**
- Pork St Louis Ribs **\$3.99/lb**

**WEEKLY HALAL SPECIALS**

- Chicken Breast Bnls/Sknls **\$1.99/lb**
- New Zealand Lamb Shoulder Stew Bone-In **\$5.99/lb**
- Beef Rump/Bottom Round Roast-Bnls **\$5.79/lb**

**FRESH PRODUCE**

- Whole White Mushroom 8 oz **\$1.99/ea**
- Mini Sweet Pepper 1 lb **\$2.49/pk**
- Mexican Squash **99¢/lb**
- Lemon Cello 2 lb **\$1.89/bag**
- Yuca Root **\$1.79/lb**
- English Cucumber **99¢/ea**
- Enoki Mushroom 150 g **\$1.59/ea**
- Russet Potato 10 lb **\$1.99/bag**

**AMERICAN/HISPANIC GROCERY**

- Swanson Chicken Broth 32 oz **\$2.69/ea**
- El Mexicano Pinto Beans 29.6-oz **\$1.99/ea**
- Rosarita Refried Beans 16 oz **\$1.49/ea**
- Kellogg's Rice Krispies Treats 6.2 oz **\$3.49/ea**
- Bonne Maman Blackberry & Blackcurrant Jelly 13 oz **\$3.99/ea**

**ASIAN GROCERY**

- Cu'u Long Vietnamese Rice Stick 2.2 lb **\$4.29/ea**
- Saigon Quail Eggs in Brine 30 oz **\$4.99/ea**
- Emperor Rice Cooking Wines 25.3, 20.1 oz **\$2.49/ea**
- Hula Oriental Type Saimin Noodle 7 oz **\$3.99/ea**
- Chin-Su Vietnamese Hot Sauce 35 oz **\$4.99/ea**

**EUROPEAN GROCERY**

- Zergul Roasted Sweet Red Peppers 5.8 oz **\$9.99/ea**
- Big Sprats in Oil 240 gr **\$3.29/ea**
- Veres Zucchini Spread 500 gr **\$3.99/ea**
- Damia Assorted Soft Candy 850 gr **\$6.99/ea**
- Nessi Chocolate Hazelnut Spread 750 gr **\$7.99/ea**

**EUROPEAN DELI**

- Columbus Cracked Pepper Turkey Breast **\$12.49/lb**
- Columbus Black Forest Ham **\$9.19/lb**
- Green Olives Stuffed with Almonds **\$6.39/lb**
- Kalamata Olives with Garlic and Pepper **\$6.39/lb**

**FROZEN & FISH DEPT**

- Dover Sole Fillet Wild Alaska 2 lb **\$4.99/pk**

**HOUSEWARE**

- Electric Rice Cooker **\$5.49**
- Electric Rice Cooker **\$5.99**
- Electric BBQ Grill **\$39.99**

Advertised items good at KP International Market - Rancho Cordova location ONLY. We reserve the right to LIMIT QUANTITIES. Not responsible for TYPOGRAPHICAL OR PICTORIAL ERRORS. All advertised items are SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY. Sorry NO RAINCHECKS. PRICES EFFECTIVE JANUARY 21 - JANUARY 27, 2026.

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