



New Year, New Roadside Safety Protections

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Happy Valentine's Day

AMERICAN RIVER Messenger

VOLUME 21 • ISSUE 3 Serving Fair Oaks, Orangevale & Sacramento County FEBRUARY 13, 2026

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'Pancho Villa' Rides Again



From left, Victoria, daughter of husband and wife Luis and Tammy Chavez, center, and their son, Victor, pose behind the restaurant front counter.

Story and photos by Thomas J. Sullivan

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - Following a battle lasting more than three years, including unexpected construction delays due to a lengthy permit approval process from the county of Sacramento, Pancho Villa BBQ and Catering, 6716 Madison Ave., has ridden into town at long last.

Husband and wife duo Luis and Tammy Chavez, and co-partner Alberto Hernandez, are the owners of what was previously a mobile food truck serving the greater Sacramento and Placer counties. Over the years, the business has earned a significant



Once you've placed your order, stop by and say hello to the full-sized skeleton nicknamed "Bob" who is seated at the bar. He's one of the restaurant's unofficial mascots.

following for their smoked American BBQ, with a hint of Mexican fusion cuisine.

The first "brick and mortar" restaurant officially opened to the public on Dec. 3 and a celebratory

ribbon cutting ceremony hosted by the members of the Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce welcoming the public then followed.

Their large, stenciled smoker, parked just outside

the restaurant, is fired up daily, and there's no mistaking the tasty aroma of fresh barbecue rising through the air upon arriving.

"We faced issues of getting our restrooms into proper Americans with Disability Act (ADA) compliance," Chavez said. The stalls of the women's bathroom needed to be enlarged and space from the kitchen was taken for that purpose.

The back and forth in having construction plans revised and approved by the Sacramento County Building Department added months to the overall approval process, she said.

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California Energy Consultant Service Named Small Business of the Month

Assemblyman Josh Hoover News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Assemblyman Josh Hoover (R-Folsom) recently announced that California Energy Consultant Service (CECS) has been named the January 2026 Small Business of the Month for the 7th Assembly District.

Founded in 1981, California Energy Consultant Service has spent more than four decades helping homeowners improve comfort, energy efficiency, and long-term value through high-quality home improvement and energy solutions.

Under the leadership of owner Phil Isaacs, California Energy Consultant Service has built a strong reputation for reliability and excellence through its technical expertise, use of high-quality materials, and customer-first approach on every project. The company offers a comprehensive range of services, including window replacement, siding installation, roofing services, HVAC system design and installation, heat pump conversions, and professional energy consulting.

In April 2021, California Energy Consultant Service expanded its roots to Orangevale, where it continues to serve homeowners throughout the greater Sacramento region. Beyond its professional achievements, California Energy Consultant Service is deeply committed to community involvement. California Energy Consultant Service team members, Jamie and Hailey Miller, actively support the Orangevale community through ongoing volunteer efforts and local outreach initiatives.

California Energy Consultant Service's commitment to service extends well beyond home improvement. Through its participation in Windows for Warriors, California Energy Consultant Service has proudly assisted local veterans by providing critical home upgrades that improve safety, comfort, and quality of life. This work reflects the company's belief that serving the community also means

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Helping Hands OV Hops into Easter

Opportunities to participate in annual Easter Baskets for Kids in Need, Community Carnival and Food Drive

Helping Hands OV News Release

ORANGEVALE, CA (MPG) - Helping Hands OV is once again calling on the community to help put a hop in the step of kids in need through its annual Easter Baskets for Kids in Need Program, an adopt-a-child-style initiative designed to bring joy to local children this spring.

Community members, families, clubs and organizations are encouraged to adopt a child by selecting an age and gender. Donors then receive detailed information about the child or children they are sponsoring, allowing them to create personalized Easter baskets filled with treats, activities and spring surprises.

Families who may be experiencing financial



Helping Hands OV encourages residents to sponsor an Easter basket for a child in need this spring through their adopt-a-child initiative. The organization will also hold a spring carnival and food drive on March 28. Photo courtesy of Helping Hands OV

hardship are also invited to apply to receive Easter baskets for their children. All applications to give or receive baskets must be completed by March 11.

"We rely on the

generosity of our community to make this program possible," said Helping Hands OV President Sydnie Anderson. "These baskets are more than items - they're a reminder

to kids that their community sees them, cares about them and wants them to feel special."

Registration details and full program information

Continued on page 5

New Year, New Roadside Safety Protections

California's Expanded "Slow Down, Move Over" Law Now Covers All Stopped Drivers and Passengers Roadside

California Office of Traffic Safety News Release

CALIFORNIA (MPG) - California's expanded "Slow Down, Move Over" law officially took effect Jan. 1, adding lifesaving protections for all stranded drivers and passengers on the roadside. The strengthened requirement compels drivers to move over, or slow down if unsafe to do so, for any stopped vehicle using hazard lights or emergency indicators, including everyday drivers experiencing mechanical trouble or emergencies.

The change, authorized under Assembly Bill 390, legislation sponsored by AAA, comes during a nationwide spike in roadside deaths that safety leaders are calling a crisis.

"Whether you're a stranded driver or a first responder, standing just feet from high speed traffic has become increasingly deadly," said Auto Club Corporate Communications Manager Doug Shupe. "This law equips California drivers with a clear, enforceable rule that can prevent more needless deaths."

With AB 390 now in effect, California joins 28 other states, and the District of Columbia, with expanded Slow Down, Move Over protections to include all stopped vehicles.

Violations in California can result in fines up to \$1,000 and points on a driver's record for unsafe behavior near stopped vehicles.

"Too many Californians are losing their lives simply because passing drivers fail to slow down or move over," said CHP Commissioner Sean Duryee. "This expanded law makes clear that every person on the roadside, whether a driver or a passenger,



The change, authorized under Assembly Bill 390, legislation sponsored by AAA, comes during a nationwide spike in roadside deaths that safety leaders are calling a crisis. Photo courtesy of California Office of Traffic Safety

deserves the same margin of safety. Obeying 'Slow Down, Move Over' is not just a courtesy; it is a legal responsibility that saves lives."

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, using data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Fatality Analysis Reporting System, reveals roadside fatalities are rising sharply. In California, the number of people killed roadside increased nearly 77% from 2014 to 2023. This alarming trend in people killed roadside is driven by higher speeds, distracted driving and limited shoulder space on modern freeways, data shows.

Additional recent national findings highlight the severity of

the problem. According to the Emergency Responder Safety Institute, 46 emergency responders were killed last year in the U.S. after being struck while assisting at roadside scenes — police officers, firefighters, EMTs and tow truck operators. Tow operators face some of the deadliest conditions on America's roadways. Hundreds of stranded drivers are killed every year while waiting for help or attempting simple fixes like changing a tire.

"Everyone traveling on California's roads and highways deserves to arrive safely at their destination," said Caltrans Director Dina El-Tawansy. "The provisions added to the Move

Over law will help keep more people safe and continue protecting the highway workers and first responders risking their lives to serve others. When we make conscious decisions to benefit the safety of our fellow travelers and dedicated public servants, it creates a safer, more enjoyable travel experience for all."

Daniel Lazaro, a tow truck operator for Preferred Towing, lost his friend at the roadside in October last year. Fifty-seven-year-old Carlos Trejo was struck and killed while helping a stranded Auto Club member on I-110.

"Carlos was a caring person who would always bring up his family in a joyful and proud

way, especially his grandchildren," said Lazaro. "As he would clock out every day to go home, he would always tell everyone clocking in to be careful and to be safe out there."

Many drivers don't understand the law and it's costing lives. An Oct. 2025 national study from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found the following. 36% of drivers captured on roadside video did not slow down or change lanes — violating the law entirely; drivers were least likely to protect tow operators, with only 58% complying near stopped tow trucks; and two thirds of drivers said they were familiar with "Slow Down, Move Over" laws, yet many could not accurately explain what was required.

The research also found that while some drivers do change lanes, many fail to reduce speed, leaving dangerously little margin if something goes wrong.

As of Jan. 1, drivers must take these simple actions when approaching a stopped vehicle. Change lanes away from the stopped vehicle, if safe to do so. If changing lanes is not possible, slow down to a safe, reasonable speed. The message is clear: See hazards or a stopped vehicle? Slow down. Move over. Save a life.

"As you head out on your next trip, keep in mind that the driver with a flat tire or other roadside car trouble could very well be you," OTS Director Stephanie Dougherty said. "Please move over a lane or slow down for highway workers, first responders, tow truck drivers and other stopped vehicles on the side of the road or shoulder. Make safety the destination we all share by looking out for every vehicle and person on the roadside." ★



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'Pancho Villa' Rides Again

FORPD Approves Employment Recruitment Timeline

By Shaunna Boyd

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - At their Jan. 21 meeting, the Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District (FORPD) Board of Directors discussed appointments for the Fair Oaks Recreation and Arts Foundation, which they are working to shift into to a separate entity, pending bylaw approval by the California Secretary of State.

The FORPD directors have always served concurrently as the board for the foundation, which is a nonprofit serving as the main fundraising agency supporting the district and the Fair Oaks community. Under the proposed bylaws of the new foundation, its board would have five to seven members, with up to two of those seats reserved for FORPD directors.

District Administrator Mike Aho recommended that they select two members to serve on the new foundation board, so the process of appointing community members to the remaining seats can begin as soon as they get official bylaw approval.

Chair Raymond James Irwin and Director Ralph Carhart volunteered to serve on the foundation board, which was approved 4-0, with Director John O'Farrell absent.

The board then considered approval of the district administrator salary range, as Aho is set to retire this June. A consultant group is now undertaking the recruitment process for his replacement.

Based on a regional salary survey from a couple years ago, Aho said the typical salary range for similar positions was \$123,679 to \$148,621.

After adjusting for cost-of-living increases, considering the unique responsibilities of managing the new and expanded district facilities, and ensuring a competitive rate to attract top candidates, Aho recommended a range of \$132,500 to \$164,300.

The board would negotiate benefits packages and set the actual salary from within that range based on the candidate's qualifications and experience.

The board voted 4-0 to approve the salary range and direct the consultants to include it in their recruitment brochure for the position. Chair Irwin added that he would like to hear feedback from the consultants: "If they think this should be adjusted, I would like to know that."

The board also approved a recruitment

timeline for hiring the new district administrator.

With the brochure finalized and the position posted by the end of January, applications will be reviewed by late February/early March and initial interviews conducted by the board's Management and Personnel Subcommittee (comprised of Chair Irwin and Director O'Farrell) later in March. In early April, the full board will interview the top candidates, with the goal of extending an official offer by mid-April so the candidate can begin employment in May.

Director John O'Farrell is planning to resign his seat in June, with his term running until the regular election of November 2028, so the board discussed options for filling his seat.

The board can call for a special election, conducted by Sacramento County Voter Registration Office. However, the district's share of costs for the 2024 general election was over \$58,000, so a special election would be even more expensive.

The board also has the option to appoint a resident from within the FORPD boundaries to complete the term.

If the board does not decide on either of those options, then the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors will appoint someone to fill the vacancy.

Director Carhart said in the past they have posted the vacancy to the community, reviewed applications, and selected a replacement. He recommended that the Management and Personnel Subcommittee would be best suited to reviewing the applicants.

Chair Irwin questioned if there was any conflict with O'Farrell overseeing the process of selecting his replacement. Aho explained that while O'Farrell wouldn't be able to sit in on deliberations or have a vote in the process, he can conduct the interviews and make recommendations to the board.

"I think at the end of the day we're saving our taxpayers a lot of money to do it that way," said Irwin. "I think it's the right decision for us to appoint."

With O'Farrell leaving in June, the board agreed they should vote on the appointment in May. So, the vacancy will be posted in March, with interviews held in April.

The next meeting of the FORPD Board of Directors is scheduled for Feb. 18. ★



Chock full of brightly colored western décor at almost every turn, the main dining room and brightly colored separate gathering areas are a visual feast for the senses. Family members contributed much of the interior décor which now fills the walls.



A sample tri-tip plate entree which includes garlic bread features a plentiful variety of homemade sides to choose from.

to choose from.

The sit-down restaurant offers walk-up counter service. Large overhead display monitors make selection of a menu choice quick and easy. Complimentary fresh chips and fresh salsa and beer and wine are served.

The new restaurant has a capacity of 180 customers and is starting with an initial kitchen staff of 10.

Once you've placed your order, stop by and say hello to the full-sized skeleton nicknamed "Bob" who is seated at the bar. He's one of the restaurant's unofficial mascots.

The restaurant also celebrates "Taco Tuesday" with Tijuana-style tacos including beans, a choice of meat, cilantro, green salsa, onions and avocado sauce. Daily happy hour specials are also featured.

"When you dine and eat with us, you're not just a customer, you've become a part of our family," Chavez said. "And whether you're planning an intimate dinner or a grand celebration, Pancho Villa BBQ and Catering seeks to turn "moments into memories."

Chock full of brightly colored western décor at almost every turn, the main dining room and brightly colored separate gathering areas are a visual feast for the senses. Family members contributed much of the interior décor which now fills the walls.

"Our philosophy is simple, make great food and serve it well," she said.

Pancho Villa BBQ and Catering, 6715 Madison Ave., Suite 5 in Fair Oaks is open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday. For additional information call 916-510-9868 or visit: panchovillabbq-fairoaks.com ★

Continued from page 1

The familiar food truck is officially parked for now as the couple and their co-partner concentrate on day-to-day restaurant operations and enthusiastically greet their customers daily.

The food truck will return to the road this spring where it has been delighting taste buds at various locations in Sacramento County, including breweries, wineries, and major events such as football games and bike events.

Chavez is also looking to increase her catering business and is actively marketing the restaurant as a destination for group and special events.

"We're very excited to welcome our regular customers who just knew us and our reputation through all the events in Sacramento County our food truck traveled to," she said. "Now they will have the opportunity to fully experience the restaurant we imagined."

The 4,400-square-foot restaurant was once a former Godfather's Pizza restaurant in the Madison Village Plaza, near the busy corner of Dewey Drive and Madison Avenue in Fair Oaks.

Chavez's adult children, Victor and Victoria, work behind a sprawling main counter, welcoming customers and quickly taking food orders at the counter.

The menu includes an assortment of reasonably priced popular appetizers, tri-tip torta, burritos, bowls and entrée plates. There's a plentiful variety of homemade sides

Band Director Honored with Jazz Education Award

Sacramento Jazz Education Foundation News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento Jazz Education Foundation (SacJEF) has chosen Josh Murray, band director of Rio Americano High School, for its prestigious jazz educator award. The honor is presented every two years at the annual Teagarden Jazz Festival at Sacramento State, and recognizes a regional jazz educator with a long, consistent record of providing traditional jazz education.

This year's award will be presented at 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 7 at Capistrano Hall, on the Sacramento State campus.

An accomplished saxophonist, Murray has been Band Director at Rio Americano High School since 1998. Rio's AM Jazz Ensemble has been a finalist at the Essentially Ellington Festival twelve times, was chosen as winners of the 2019 national "Perform With Bob Mintzer" competition, recently hosted and opened a concert with Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, and has performed worldwide on tours of Japan, China, Argentina, Italy, Spain, Australia, Ireland, Austria, The Czech Republic and South Korea. Rio's musicians and bands have won dozens of DownBeat Magazine Student Music Awards and are four-time winners of the Charles Mingus Festival's combo category.

Murray's performing credits include shows with Wycliffe Gordon, Phil Woods, Donny McCaslin, Jimmy Smith and the Drifters. He is a contributing author to Teaching Music Through Performance in Jazz, Vol. 2, was selected as a "Sacramento Hero of the Arts" and was awarded the California Music Education Association (CMEA's) Jazz Education Award, both in 2024.

Since its inauguration, the Teagarden Jazz festival has benefitted from Murray's dedication to early jazz education with combos from Rio Americano participating at each year's event and his students consistently recognized with performance excellence awards and scholarships.

"The primary goal of the Foundation is to pass the torch of jazz music to the


next generation," said Nancy Parker, president of the SacJEF board. "Some of our recent festival clinicians and current band directors at the Teagarden Festival were once Josh's students. There is no finer example of the spirit of our mission than inspiring students to go on to educate the next generation of jazz performers, teachers and fans. He is truly deserving of this award."

The Teagarden Jazz Festival, sponsored by the Sacramento Jazz Education Foundation in partnership with Sacramento State's Jazz Studies Program, is one of the most uniquely educational jazz events in the country as the only dedicated student event focused exclusively on the performance and preservation of Traditional Jazz. More than \$14,000 in individual scholarships and awards are offered as part of the educational, non-competitive festival. It occurs annually in February.

The Sacramento Jazz Education Foundation supports and promotes the education of early jazz for young musicians and educators, teaching teamwork and collaboration skills that build confidence, belonging and fulfillment. We create and support joyful environments for music performance and artistic expression.

Through donations and endowments, the Foundation sponsors and manages programs such as The Teagarden Jazz Camp (two one-week annual summer jazz camps); Teagarden Jazz Festival: for Young Musicians; Music Lessons Awards (presented annually to approximately 25 young musicians so they can afford private music lessons with an emphasis on Jazz); TNT (The New Traditionalists), a regional honor band of High School jazz musicians; Instrument Match (a program to match donated instruments with youth musicians); The Trad Jazz Project (a partnership with local schools to sponsor clinics and music instructors to teach traditional jazz in school band programs).


For more information on the Sacramento Jazz Education Foundation and its programs, visit www.sacjef.org. For the festival, visit www.teagardenjazzfestival.org. ★




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Helping Hands OV Hops into Easter

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can be found at helpinghandsov.org under the Easter Baskets for Kids in Need tab. Donors are urgently needed to ensure every child who applies receives a basket.

In celebration of the Easter season, Helping Hands OV is also excited to bring back its Spring Community Carnival & Food Drive, a free, family-friendly event open to all. The carnival will feature games, activities and free photos with the Easter Bunny, generously sponsored by Rose Senior Placement.

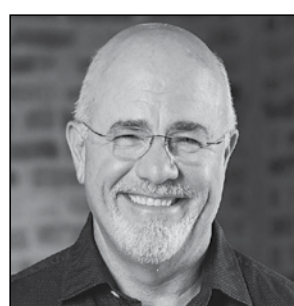
Community members attending the carnival are encouraged, if able, to bring a food donation to support the Orangevale-Fair Oaks Food Bank, where the need for assistance continues to rise. Helping Hands OV is proud to lend a

helping hand by supporting local families facing food insecurity.

School groups, clubs, nonprofits and other organizations are invited to join the fun by hosting a free carnival booth featuring a family-friendly activity. Organizations interested in participating should contact Helping Hands OV at helpinghandsov@yahoo.com by Feb. 28 for more information.

The carnival will take place from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. March 28 at Orangevale Grange, 5807 Walnut Ave.

Together, these programs reflect Helping Hands OV's mission of connecting the community, one hand at a time – spreading kindness, meeting growing needs and creating moments of joy for children and families throughout Orangevale and Fair Oaks. ★



Dave Ramsey

Dave Ramsey Says They Represent Security to Her

Dear Dave,

My wife and I have paid off all of our credit card debt, but she doesn't want to follow your suggestion to cut up the cards and close the accounts. She wants us to keep the cards in a safe deposit box at the bank, and use them for nothing but emergencies. I think this has something to do with the fact she grew up in a poor family. We're doing okay, but it makes me wonder if some part of her is afraid of being poor again. We both know this isn't what you recommend, but what can I do to convince her we should get rid of the credit cards once and for all?

– Geoff

Dear Geoff,

Honestly, I'm not sure I'd approach this with the idea of convincing her of something. Under the circumstances, maybe it'd be a better idea to start off by having a gentle, understanding conversation, and

talking things through.

I say this because one of the things you mentioned is that she grew up poor. In my mind, this could mean that the credit cards represent security for her. But, if you had \$10,000 or so set aside for emergencies, you'd have the security of knowing that a transmission repair, or a new water heater wouldn't really be an emergency—it'd be reduced to a minor inconvenience. On top of that, having an actual cash emergency fund sitting there would mean you wouldn't have to go right back into debt again when something goes wrong.

There are lots of deep emotions involved in this situation, Geoff. Let her know you understand her concerns, and that you respect and sympathize with everything she has experienced. But also explain how financial security wouldn't be disappearing by doing this. The credit cards would be replaced by your very own money. In addition, you'd also be substituting what the credit cards do

with a debit card.

After this, ask her if there's a reasonable amount you two could have in the bank that would make her feel comfortable, and take away the worry and stress. Talk it out, see if you can settle on an amount, and then agree that when you've saved and hit that number, the cards get cut up and you close the account.

You'll have to be patient and understanding. Above all, you'll have to communicate and work together as a team on this. But trust me, it'll be worth it!

– Dave

Dave Ramsey is a nine-time national bestselling author, personal finance expert and host of The Ramsey Show. He has appeared on Good Morning America, CBS This Morning, Today, Fox News, CNN, Fox Business and many more. Since 1992, Dave has helped people take control of their money, build wealth and enhance their lives. He also serves as CEO for Ramsey Solutions. ★

San Juan Unified Receives \$100,000 in Grants

Transformational Projects at Six San Juan Unified Schools

San Juan Education Foundation News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - The San Juan Education Foundation recently announced the awarding of educator grants to six schools across the San Juan Unified School District, made possible through generous support from the Link Logistics Community Grants Program.

These grants fund transformational, site-based projects that strengthen learning environments, expand access to modern tools and technology, and remove barriers to student success.

Grant Funded Projects

\$26,000 to Casa Roble High School will fund upgrades to the school's theatre lighting system, providing students with hands-on experience with industry-standard technology while enhancing safety, instruction and performance quality.

\$20,000 to Mira Loma High School will fund modernization of the Black Box Theatre lighting and control systems to create a safer, more equitable performing arts space and provide students with real-world technical learning opportunities.

\$20,000 to Dyer-Kelly Elementary School will fund improvements to instructional technology and student seating to support inclusive learning environments, strengthen performing arts instruction and expand access for English Learner and intervention students.

Coyle Avenue Elementary School will receive \$19,000. Funding will add shade structures to outdoor spaces, creating cooler, flexible learning areas that support differentiated instruction, collaboration and whole-child learning.

\$14,000 will go to Will Rogers Middle School, funding professional-grade media equipment to strengthen the school's student-produced news program, amplifying student voice and increasing accessibility through improved production capabilities.

Albert Schweitzer Elementary School will receive \$5,000. The purchase of adaptive tricycles will create more

inclusive and joyful play opportunities for transitional kindergarten and kindergarten students of all abilities.

Funding for these projects was made possible through the receipt of a \$100,000 grant from Link Logistics' Community Grants Program, which supports nonprofit organizations through infrastructure investments that expand operational capacity and community impact.

"The San Juan Education Foundation is incredibly fortunate to benefit from Link Logistics' Community Grants Program," said Colleen Cadwallader, executive director of the San Juan Education Foundation. "Thanks to their leadership and the support of our community, we recently surpassed a major milestone – more than \$1 million in grant funding awarded to San Juan Unified educators since 2006."

Guided by the vision of a San Juan Unified School District where funding is not a barrier to equitable opportunity and access, the San Juan Education Foundation harnesses the power of philanthropy and partnership to propel student achievement and enrich the lives of educators.

Link Logistics is a leading operator of last-mile logistics real estate nationwide. With a strong commitment to the communities where it operates, the Company's Community Grants Program has invested \$8 million in more than 75 projects since 2022, supporting education, food security and hyperlocal community needs.

"Link Logistics is proud to support these impactful projects that expand opportunity for students across San Juan Unified. We're inspired by the educators leading this work and grateful to help strengthen learning environments that set students up for long term success," said Bryan McKrell, managing director, Northwest for Link Logistics.

To learn more about the San Juan Education Foundation or how to support educator grants and student opportunities, visit www.sanjuaneducationfoundation.org. ★

California Energy Consultant Service Named Small Business of the Month

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honoring those who have served our country.

"It is a privilege to recognize a local business that exemplifies experience, integrity, innovation, and service," said Assemblyman Josh Hoover. "California

Energy Consultant Service truly represents the entrepreneurial spirit and community commitment that make small businesses the backbone of our district."

California Energy Consultant Service is located at 9380 Orangevale Ave., Orangevale CA. ★

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Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



A Win is Just Around the Corner

There's an old saying, "it's always darkest before the dawn. Well, for the Sacramento Kings the dawn is here and very real.

Nursing a 12-game losing streak fans are more than ready to put the darkness away and welcome in the dawn. Currently, the Kings have the worst record in basketball at 12-42, and have lost four consecutive close games to Washington, Memphis, the LA Clippers and the Cleveland Cavaliers. All told the Kings lost by a total of 17 points total over a four-game span!

Many have remarked that the Kings are not as bad as their record, and if that's true, why is their record the worst in basketball?

Look no further than the resplendent coaching staff led by Doug Christie, and I say that tongue in cheek.

The game rotations are so frenetic that no one even has a guess as to who will and who will not enter the game at any given time.

Perhaps the best 3-point shooter on the team was suddenly awakened and asked to contribute six minutes in the last loss against the Cavaliers. Yes, none other than the forgotten man Doug McDermott. Someone I would like to see on a regular basis, but I have no such aspirations. Doug took one shot and returned to the bench for the rest of the contest.

Professionals simply can't succeed on a regular basis when they have no idea whether they will play or not.

While I agree with coach Christie playing the younger players given the current record, everyone on this team needs to clearly understand their role, and this team does not.

I have long wanted to see what first round draft choice Devin Carter has to offer, and finally he has managed to crack the lineup, and with notable success.

In the Cleveland game Carter was actually given 27 minutes and contributed 18 points! In addition, he had 4 rebounds, 4 assists and was 2-5 from beyond the arc. Likewise in the Clipper contest Carter contributed 14 points in just 22 minutes, adding once again 4 rebounds and 4 assists. Constantly mentioned in trade rumors,

it's time to find out what the Kings really have in a player that has been used sparingly and appears to have a big upside.

Recently, coach Christie has been putting him on the floor alongside Nique Clifford, and the tandem has produced good results.

Whether Carter and Clifford play the 1 or the 2, it's high time to find out what they each can bring to the floor every night.

Another bright spot has been the animated play of fan favorite Dylan Cardwell, who has demonstrated not only a penchant for blocking shots, but has been putting up double-doubles on a nightly basis.

Have the Kings finally found a big man to compliment Domantas Sabonis? They very well may have, and with addition of De'Andre Hunter fans are wondering what this lineup will look like when a healthy Keegan Murray returns.

No one wants to hear excuses, but the Sacramento Kings have been the walking wounded of the NBA for the vast majority of the season, and what everyone is waiting for is a healthy team that can give us an honest look into what the future may look like.

Scott Perry thankfully has resisted opportunities to trade Domantas Sabonis thus far, and I for one want to see this team build around a proven winner and someone with an attitude that is difficult to match.

Even with rotations that make fans scratch their heads, the Sacramento Kings are showing signs of life, and the recent games have been fun to watch.

Let's see if this coaching staff can bring it together and run off some impressive wins.

Nothing has been cast in stone except for the faithfulness of the Sacramento fan base, so let's give these gladiators the best we have!

The first 20 games of the season, the Kings were given one of the roughest schedules in the league, but that also means that the schedule is about to get easier.

Gird your loins Kings fans, because it's just possible that the missing piece may be either in the upcoming draft or just around the corner!

All the best!

★

Once Soaring Population Has Hit a Plateau, So Will its National Political Clout



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

The federal Census Bureau annually announces new population numbers for the country and its 50 states based on calculations of how births, deaths and migration have changed the numbers from July 1 to June 30 of the previous year.

The state Department of Finance annually announces new California population numbers, based on its calculations of those same demographic factors during the same 12-month period.

The numbers often differ, and in past years differentials of a million persons or more have emerged from the two agencies' California calculations.

In December, the state agency declared that as of last July, California's population was 39.529 million, a gain of 19,200 since 2024. Although arithmetically insignificant, the tiny gain was hailed by officialdom and media as proof that California is no longer losing people.

Last month, the Census Bureau released its latest estimates, fixing California's population at 39.355 million, a decline of 9,465 souls from the previous year. It implies that California's slide, which began in the COVID-18 pandemic, is still happening, with a net loss of 200,394 residents since the

2020 census.

Although the 174,000 difference between the two numbers is relatively tiny, from a sociopolitical standpoint one shows growth while the other shows shrinkage. Thus California officialdom claims that predictions of the state's impending collapse are false, while its critics say California is still in decline.

There is, however, no doubt that California is, at best, at a population plateau — either gaining or losing very slowly after a 175-year history of sometimes stunning levels of population growth. During the 1980-90 decade, for example, the state's population soared by about 6 million people, a nearly 25% gain, thanks to high levels of immigration and a lofty birth rate.

Its current stasis, whatever the exact numbers, reflects stagnant levels of foreign migration, a much lower birth rate and an ongoing net loss in state-to-state migration.

Hans Johnson and Eric McGhee, demographers for the Public Policy Institute of California, have charted that trend and in a recent report declare, "This migration, over the decades, has the power to reshape the state. From 2010 through 2024 (the year of the latest data) almost 10 million people moved from California to other states, while just over 7 million people moved to California from other parts of the country, according to the American Community Survey. In fact, according to Department of Finance estimates, the state has lost residents to other states every year since 2001."

PPIC found that most of those leaving the state

are adults without college degrees. Texas is their top destination, and one could assume they are fleeing high living costs.

California is not alone in population stagnation or loss. New York and Illinois are two others and, overall, slow- or no-growth states tend to be politically blue, while the big gainers, such as Texas, Florida and the fastest grower, South Carolina, lean to the right.

The growth differential between red and blue states will likely bite the latter after the 2030 census, when the nation's 435 congressional seats are divvied up. Two new studies by reputable organizations project that California and other major blue states will lose a chunk of seats to fast-growing red states, based on the new Census Bureau data.

The American Redistricting Project and Jonathon Vervas at Carnegie Mellon University both see California losing four of its 52 seats, Texas gaining four and Florida getting either two or four.

The shift of congressional seats, of course, also shifts presidential electoral votes, meaning Republican candidates' prospects will improve and those of Democrats will decline after 2030.

There's an old saying that demographics are destiny. What's happening now underscores that truism.

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

Why is my Social Security Retirement Benefit So Small?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: Can you help me understand? I have paid into Social Security since I started working in 1978. I did have a lot of tax deductions, but I don't understand why I only receive \$350 a month from Social Security. **Signed: Befuddled Senior**

Dear Befuddled Senior: Your Social Security benefit is based upon your average monthly earnings for the 35 years over your lifetime that you earned the most while contributing to the Social Security program (however, your benefit isn't based on your contributions to SS). Your average lifetime earnings amount is called your "AIME" or "Average Indexed Monthly Earnings," which are adjusted for inflation for years before you turn 60. Your earnings (your net earnings if self-employed) are provided to the SSA by the IRS. Your average lifetime earnings number (your "AIME") is subjected to a formula which calculates your "Primary Insurance Amount" or "PIA," which is the SS benefit you receive if you start benefits in the month you reach your full retirement age. Your personal full retirement age (FRA) depends on the year you were born which, if you were born in 1960 or later, is age 67.

However, if you claim Social Security before reaching your FRA, you will get only a percentage of your PIA (reduced from what you would get if you claimed at your FRA).

For example, if you claimed at age 62, you would only get 70% of the amount you would have gotten had you waited until age 67, or if you claimed at age 63 you would get 75% of your age 67 benefit. The reduction is less as you get closer to your FRA; if you claimed at age 65, you'd get about 87% of your full retirement age amount.

You can see your lifetime Social Security earnings record at your personal "my Social Security" online account at www.ssa.gov/myaccount (you will need to first create that online account), or you can call Social Security at 1.800.772.1213 to request an "Earnings Statement" be sent to you. That statement will show your lifetime earnings by year, the 35 highest of which were used to calculate your PIA (your Social Security benefit at your FRA). Generally, your Social Security FRA benefit will be about 40% or less of your average indexed monthly earnings.

So, to recap, your SS retirement benefit isn't based on your contributions to the program; it's based on your average monthly lifetime earnings. If you had less than 35 years contributing to the program, SS would still use 35 years in the benefit formula by using zero dollars in earnings for some number of years, which would result in a smaller AIME. Thus, if you claimed before your full

retirement age of 67, your SS benefit was reduced because you claimed early. And if you had less than 35 years of SS-covered employment, your AIME was less, resulting in a smaller PIA. And that is likely why your monthly Social Security retirement benefit is low.

One other thought to consider: if you are married and your spouse's monthly SS benefit is considerably more than yours (e.g., more than twice as much as yours), you may want to explore your options for spouse benefits.

I hope this explains how your SS benefit is calculated, but if you still question your monthly SS retirement amount, I suggest you first obtain your "Earnings Statement" to review the lifetime earnings SS has on file for you. If there are any discrepancies in your Social Security's earnings record, there are correction remedies available to you. If that is the case, please feel free to contact us again for more information.

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Alex Pretti wasn't killed while "protesting." This is a common description of what he was doing on a Minneapolis street the fateful morning when a confrontation with federal immigration agents ended in his tragic shooting. But if Pretti had been a mere protester, he'd very likely be alive today.

Now that we've seen videos of an earlier struggle with federal agents and learned more about the organized nature of the anti-ICE resistance, it's become clear that the better word for Pretti was agitator, or perhaps even operative.

A protester, as typically understood, is someone who is making a point, often as part of a gathering of other like-minded people and, usually but not always, in opposition to something.

A protester might hold a sign outside a coal-fired power plant calling for it to shut down. He might go to Union Square Park to hear speeches from bullhorns whenever something happens that outrages the left. He might march against the Iraq War -- or the Vietnam War -- or in favor of Hamas.

This kind of activity is not to everyone's taste -- personally, I hate the drums and the chants -- but there is no doubt that it is a legitimate form of political advocacy. Depending on the cause, it can even be admirable.

What we've seen in Minneapolis, though, is

Don't Abuse the Word 'Protest'

often quite different. Run-of-the-mill protesters don't seek out federal agents and harass and obstruct them. They don't follow and block their vehicles or establish a robust communications network to deploy resources to create maximum disruption of their operations.

Pretti was part of this effort, which is more a form of low-level and (by and large) nonviolent insurgency than conventional protest. In his first confrontation, 11 days before his death, Pretti was every bit an anti-ICE street brawler. He challenged, at close quarters, an agent to assault him, while screaming insults at him. He spat on a federal vehicle and kicked out its taillight.

If Pretti was an "observer," in the euphemism preferred by anti-ICE politicians and activists, he was observing how much unhinged behavior he could get away with. There's no doubt that at this event, he was the violent instigator.

After Pretti damaged the vehicle, agents got out and pushed him to the ground. For all the talk of ICE being the equivalent of the Gestapo, they didn't even bother to arrest him, despite his having committed a crime. If he'd been arrested and charged, Pretti might never have shown up at the other ICE operation and would still be with us today.

That Pretti, we now know, made it a practice to court violent encounters with federal agents while armed was incredibly irresponsible. He was fortunate that the first struggle didn't escalate into some-

thing much more hazardous to him and to others if an agent had noticed his gun.

The firearm wouldn't have been an issue in the second incident, meanwhile, if he'd really been protesting. If that were the case, he would have stayed on the sidewalk and held up a sign, or chanted, "ICE go home," and the officers might have been annoyed, but there never would have been an interaction to potentially go catastrophically wrong.

The calculation in Minneapolis, though, has been that this kind of benign activity is less effective than direct action, and unfortunately --with public opinion swinging against Operation Metro Surge -- this assessment looks to be accurate.

Why simply express a point of view when you can act to stop arrests and to create a hostile, threatening environment for agents?

This doesn't mean that Pretti got what he deserved, or that the officers acted appropriately. It does mean that the state and city officials should have been telling people not to "monitor" DHS activity, but to stay well clear of legitimate law-enforcement activities.

Reasonable people can disagree about the desirability of the goal that Pretti was pursuing, but there's no doubt about how he was going about it, and it didn't involve conventional protest.

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



Heartspace Valentine

Ladies and Gentlemen, did anyone teach you about him or her before you got into a relationship? Most likely not! But Susan Allan says we really need some tips if you are tired of imploding and exploding partners. And here's a real reality check. Most relationship pain is not caused by lack of love. So what does cause that pain?

Susan says it's the work that is the foundation of Heartspace, and boils down to a live trilogy which teaches what most of us were never taught about dating, partnership, and intimacy. She gets into it all in "Three Essential Guides of Lifelong Love." With her 25 years as a coach, I'm sure she has probably heard it all or most of it. She has taught Heartspace to thousands of people, and told me on POPPTALK that it's clear that relationships don't fail because of a lack of love. They fall apart when couples don't understand what is required...SKILLS! So she shared these Top Ten Heartspace Tips for Creating Lifelong Love.

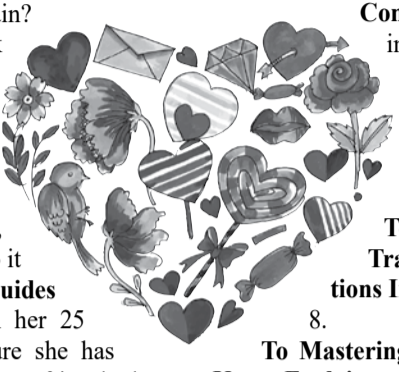
- 1. Consciously Choose Your Partner.** Love thrives with someone whose values and goals align with yours. Never settle for a mismatch.
- 2. Discuss These Heartspace 19 Domains Of A Successful Marriage And Agree On Specifics.** A. Sex B. Monogamy. C. Morality D. Love E. Health F. Money G. Investments H. Appearance I. Home J. Careers K. Fun L. Family M. Meals N. Children O. Child-raising P. Lifestyle and Hobbies Q. Religion and Spirituality R. Chores S. Retirement.
- 3. Attraction Is Not Compatibility.** Great chemistry cannot be altered. Find that someone and build compatibility that sustains love.
- 4. Study Your Partner's World View**

And Motivate Instead Of Arguing Or Ignoring.

- 5. Use The Language Of Feelings And Needs Developed By Nonviolent Communication.** Love grows when partners express needs instead of judgments.
- 6. Always Calm Yourself Before You Communicate.** Brain-Breathing is the gateway to peaceful, productive conversations throughout marriage.
- 7. Master Your Conversation To Prevent Conflict By Transforming Conversations Into Peaceful Solutions.**
- 8. Recommit Yourself To Mastering Marriage Daily, So It Keeps Evolving.**
- 9. Create Intimacy On All Levels.** That includes emotional safety, thrilling touch, and sacred sexuality.
- 10. Practice Loving Your Partner Every Day.** Lifelong love means choosing empathy, honesty, and cooperation, especially during challenges.

According to Susan, When love is approached consciously, relationships don't just survive, they evolve, deepen, and become more fulfilling every day and decade, so that vow of two into one is fulfilled. I can attest to that conscious relationship. My dear Rick and I were married 53 years when he passed, but that spirit of his being with me continues to this day over two years after his passing. Love is a building process and every day a new brick is added so that that relationship I call it your construction of love. If you need more information, check out "Three Essential Guides of Lifelong Love" and discover what Susan Allan calls her Heartspace LOVE Trilogy. ★

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY AND ALL YEAR LONG LOVE!



Local Author Debuts Novel, 'The Palace'

Takes readers on a journey into grief, love and the human mind

By Abbey Wicks

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - A Sacramento local and former publisher of Go for It Magazine, Robert Austin Cox recently became an author with the release of his debut novel "The Palace," an exploration of the human mind and foreign policy.

The idea of writing a novel first came to Cox while discussing with his daughter Shauna the possibility of becoming a life coach to share his personal philosophies he's developed over the years.

But rather than go down the life coach path, Cox instead decided to pack his wisdom into one concise novel, which takes readers on a journey across the globe to Tibet, where political uncertainty creates a sense of anxiety and divisiveness, much like the world we live in today.

The novel's characters grapple with real life problems such as grief, domestic violence and political division.

"I've always found that when people come to me for advice or just to share something that they're struggling with it's a huge compliment," Cox said. "It says that they trust me and they respect me enough to share something that they're dealing with that's causing them some sort of pain."

While publishing his self-help magazine, Cox wrote a column each month diving into a personal experience or struggle and exploring how using one of his personal philosophies might result in tackling the problem in a new way.

Cox used a similar approach while writing "The Palace," choosing instead to create a fictional world and characters, with much of the novel's protagonist's life being based on Cox' own life and experience with grief after the loss of his second wife Diana.

"A lot of the experiences I share in the book were things that I actually experienced in my own life," Cox said. "I wanted it to feel real. I wanted the protagonist to feel like a real person."

The novel also grapples with religion, specifically the Buddhist faith.

"The Buddhist faith has always been something that, out of all the religions that I've encountered in my life that I've learned a little bit



Robert Austin Cox poses with debut novel, "The Palace." Photo courtesy of Gerianne SanFilippo

about, that's always had the most resonating feeling with me," Cox said.

"Just the idea of God being within you, it seems to make sense," Cox said. "If we were created by God, wouldn't the DNA of God be in each one of us? When we have that opportunity to access that divine information, we can let the information come to us freely instead of overthinking it."

While Cox himself does not identify with any particular religion, he said with the novel's setting of Tibet, as well as current global events in Russia and Ukraine, and the real-life Potala Palace in Tibet, a sacred Buddhist palace which draws thousands of visitors each year, the novel organically came together.

The first one-third of the novel was written on a personal vacation, with much of the rest of the novel unfolding for Cox over the following year like episodes of a television series.

It was important for Cox not to put himself under a time constraint or attach the amount of time the project took to his success or quality of his writing, allowing weeks or even months to pass between writing sessions. This strategy was rewarding for Cox, as he said he often felt transported into the world of the novel in those epiphany moments.

As more of the novel unfolded in Cox's mind, an exciting, head over-heels love story began to develop when Cox realized there was a shortage of female

characters in the novel. The female protagonist, Amina, represents the refugee community from Kazakhstan, sharing their culture and experience of uprooting their lives in pursuit of a better situation. She also represents falling in love again after losing a life partner and struggling with grief.

Writing a love story into the novel opened Cox up to experiencing romantic connections in his own life after going through his own personal grief journey.

"I realized I really do miss a lot of the craziness of having another person in my life," Cox said.

It was Robert's son who encouraged Cox to explore dating sites. It took just one day on the site for Cox to meet his now wife Gerianne, who had intended to quit the site that month.

Cox' approach to problem solving and conflict has played a positive role in fostering his relationships, including his marriage.

"These aren't concepts he blurts out lightly. He lives what he says and I find that admirable," Gerianne shared.

Cox hopes readers can gain from the novel healthy mindfulness, deciding which thoughts to entertain, but also recognizing that not all negative thoughts are bad.

"There's more power behind the struggle," Cox said. To me, that's what makes life so interesting."

"The Palace" by Robert Austin Cox is available on Amazon and at Barnes and Noble. ★

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Informing, Empowering and Engaging Readers with Their Community



By Patsy McGavock JustServe.org

Creating Comfort in Uncertainty

If you're unsure you share the same understanding of a word, ask: "What does that mean to you?" A helpful clarifier when asked a question is: "Why do you ask? So I can best answer you."

Coming from different backgrounds means you'll see things differently, but disagreement doesn't have to mean disconnection. It broadens our experience. Acknowledge: "I see this differently, and I value this conversation."

Normalize pauses. Let silence do its work. It allows for reflection and emotional processing. Saying, "I'm thinking," or "I'm digesting that," shows engaged respect.

Pausing also lets you track fatigue or respond thoughtfully when a new idea challenges you—moments when emotions can rise, even when intentions remain true.

True connection requires presence – and presence takes energy. Somatic awareness – tuning in to physical signals – helps assess your capacity in real time. Feeling at capacity isn't failure – it's feedback. And it's part of being human.

When needed, exit with appreciation and purpose: "Thank you for sharing with me," or "Let's keep this going another time." People remember how conversations end more than how they begin.

Linda Miner, of the Orangevale Women's Club, answered a local flyer for ENGIN, a program connecting English speakers with Ukrainians through weekly video calls.

"My conversations with Ksenia make me more compassionate and grateful," Linda shares. "We live in a diverse country, but I don't often interact intentionally with people

who are different. Knowing Ksenia makes me more open to doing that."

She now better understands Ukrainian cultural cues – like how reserved public behavior and well-dressed presentation reflect pride and respect, not distance. Her confidence has grown, too. "Now I don't think about it – I just do it. Even a passing comment can feel good. It makes me feel part of a bigger world."

From my own experience in recent years, I've found that stretching outside my norm consistently builds comfort. Elements in the community that once felt foreign now bring a sense of well-being. Years ago, I read that if you see a man wearing a turban in the U.S., it's 99 percent likely he is a practicing Sikh. In conversations with local Sikhs last year, I learned the turban is a public declaration of their principles, including a commitment to serve and protect others as children of God. Now, when I see a turban in the park, I feel quiet reassurance and gratitude for that person in my community.

These practices won't guarantee comfort, but they will build a growing capacity. That capacity becomes your bridge to others and can grow into that beautiful network of glistening intersections. Belonging often follows presence – not the other way around.

As Rumi wrote, "There is a field beyond right and wrong. I'll meet you there."

Let's meet each other there – even if uncertain; open, and ready to grow.

Patsy McGavock is a volunteer writer and community advocate informing, empowering, and engaging readers with their community. Contact her at PatsyMcGavock.JustServe@gmail.com. ★

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SCOE Holds Ceremony for Fall Graduates

Achievements Demonstrate "A Foundation No One Can Take Away"

Sacramento County Office of Education News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The new year got off to an inspirational start as 145 students from Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE) schools and student programs received diplomas at a ceremony on Jan. 6 at the Scottish Rite Masonic Center.

In his keynote address, Pastor Timothy Raymond Jemmott of the HAWK Institute ("Pastor Tim" to students) praised the graduates for continuing to strive despite significant difficulties.

"You did not quit," he said. "Some of you came through things that no one knows about. Late nights. Early mornings. Heartbreaks. Losses. Heavy responsibilities. And still, you continued."

The pastor also commended the "village" of teachers, staff, administrators, counselors, and family members who helped students get to this moment.

"You are standing here today



More than 100 students from SCOE's Community School and Senior Extension programs received their diplomas in a ceremony this January. Photo courtesy of SCOE

because a community surrounded you, they lifted you, they pushed you – and they believed that you were worth the investment."

Deputy Superintendent Nancy

Herota also congratulated the graduates for their hard work and resilience in the face of unusual obstacles. She reminded them that their future may be brighter given all they've been through,

quoting American writer and civil rights activist James Baldwin: "If you know whence you came, there is really no limit to where you can go."

Among the graduates was

Alicia Rositas, who earned her diploma through SCOE's Senior Extension Program. Despite significant personal hardship, Alicia finished her coursework while welcoming her daughter, displaying resilience and perseverance to complete her studies.

Daniel Hernandez, principal of Ethel Phillips Elementary School and president of Capitol Charter, has nominated Alicia for regional recognition through Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Region 3. She is now enrolled in college and aspires to a career in healthcare.

For Alicia and each of her fellow graduates, a diploma represents the culmination of one chapter and the promise of more successful chapters ahead.

"Today we are here to honor not just your completion," Pastor Jemmott said. "We are here to honor your continuation."

"This achievement is now a part of you, a foundation no one can take away," concluded Deputy Superintendent Herota. ★

Children's Oral Health Matters



Nearly one in four California children aged 5 to 11 have untreated tooth decay, a rate higher than the national average, and it remains the most common chronic disease among children. Photo courtesy Freepik

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County Public Health (SCPH) remains committed to reducing preventable dental disease and expanding access to care during National Children's Dental Health Month and throughout the year.

Nearly one in four California children aged 5 to 11 have untreated tooth decay, a rate higher than the national average, and it remains the most common chronic disease among children. Tooth decay causes pain, infections, missed school days, learning setbacks and costly emergency visits.

Sacramento County has nearly 287,000 children aged 14 and under, representing more than 18 percent of the county's population. SCPH Oral Health Program data shows many children continue to face barriers to routine dental care, particularly in communities with limited access to providers.

The good news is Sacramento County Public Health offers education and service resources for families to better care for their children's oral health.

How Families Can Protect a Child's Oral Health

Brush children's teeth twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste. Daily habits reduce the risk of cavities and support long-term oral health.

Schedule a child's first dental visit by age one.

Limit sugary foods and drinks.

Use preventive treatments such as fluoride varnish and dental sealants when recommended. Fluoride varnish and sealants reduce cavity risk when used early.

Oral Health Resources for Children and Families

Sacramento County Public Health Oral Program: Call (916) 875-5869 or email oral-health@sacounty.gov to get connected to dental care and for additional resources.

Sacramento Covered: Call (916) 414-4833 or visit <https://cohevo.org/> to find a dentist or insurance. Assistance is available in many languages.

Early Smiles Sacramento: Call (916) 245-1674 or visit www.centerfororalhealth.org/early-smiles-sacramento/. The Center for Oral Health program assists with connecting underserved children with the dental care they need.

It's a true team effort to improve children's oral health in Sacramento County. It requires action from local governments, families, schools, healthcare providers and community partners.

To learn how to make an appointment with a Medi-Cal dentist, and for more oral health resources and dental care information, visit the Sacramento County Public Health Oral Health Program website. ★

McDaniel Named Women's Transportation Seminar Member of the Year



Pictured is Mikki McDaniel, Sacramento County Department of Transportation (SacDOT) principal planner. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) Sacramento Chapter has named Sacramento County Department of Transportation (SacDOT) Principal Planner, Mikki McDaniel, the organization's member of the year at the annual Women's Transportation Seminar Scholarship and Awards Program in Sacramento on Jan. 28.

McDaniel first joined SacDOT as an assistant civil engineer in 2019, after moving over from the Department of Regional Parks. At SacDOT, she has led the development of the Sacramento County Active Transportation Plan. The plan is a guide for county staff, public officials, residents and developers to build a balanced transportation system that supports and encourages active modes of travel.

McDaniel sees herself as a public servant whose mission is to get people where they need to go by bus, bicycle, walking and rolling. Several of her projects at SacDOT highlight her drive to improve alternative forms of transportation around unincorporated Sacramento County. They

include the County's Zero Emission Bus Plan, Safe Routes to School Program, Bell Streets Safe Routes to the School, Stockton Boulevard Complete Streets and the Whitney Avenue Road Diet and Multimodal Improvements Project.

"It wasn't a natural fit – Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) Receptions Chair, but I learned a lot from being the gatherer. We need joyful spaces to meet with our colleagues from other agencies – to learn and connect – it all translates into better projects for Sacramento County in the end," said McDaniel.

With degrees in engineering and city and regional planning, McDaniel was promoted to her current role as principal planner where she is now spearheading a unique project that will provide safer pedestrian travel and better accessibility for the elderly and members of the disability community.

McDaniel says the recognition from the Women's Transportation Seminar is a real surprise and hopes to continue assisting Women's Transportation Seminar in promoting the advancement of women in the transportation industry. ★

Sacramento County Honored with North State BIA 'Friend of Housing' Award

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County has been recognized by the North State Building Industry Association (BIA) with its prestigious Friend of Housing Award, honoring the county's ongoing efforts to improve housing development processes and make Sacramento County the best place to build in the region.

The award was presented on Friday, Jan. 30, during the North State BIA Installation of Officers

Dinner, marking a rare distinction for the organization. Traditionally awarded to an individual, this year's honor was presented to the entire Sacramento County team in recognition of broad, organization-wide improvements that support housing development.

The recognition reflects Sacramento County's commitment to improving customer service, modernizing internal processes and updating county codes, fees and programs to create a more efficient, transparent and responsive development experience



Sacramento County was awarded the Friend of Housing Award on Friday, Jan. 30, during the North State BIA Installation of Officers Dinner. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

for applicants and partners. These changes are designed to reduce barriers, improve predictability and foster stronger collaboration with the development community.

"Receiving this award is a meaningful acknowledgment of the significant progress our teams have made to better serve our customers and support housing production," said

Dave Defanti, Deputy County Executive for the Community Services Agency.

"This recognition reflects our commitment to improved processes, strong customer service and being a trusted partner. I'm incredibly proud of the work being done across Sacramento County to help get much-needed housing built."

In recent years, Sacramento County has implemented a series of improvements aimed at streamlining development review, enhancing the customer experience

and creating a more business-friendly environment, all while maintaining the county's commitment to public health, safety and community standards.

While this recognition is a honor and milestone for Sacramento County, the work is ongoing.

"This award is not a finish line, it's a very good sign that we're on the right path," said Defanti. "We will continue to improve, innovate and partner with our community to ensure Sacramento County remains the best place to build in the region." ★

Gymnastics Sweeps MPSF Weekly Awards

UC Davis Athletics News Release

DAVIS, CA (MPG) - For the first time this season UC Davis gymnastics has brought home Mountain Pacific Sports Federation weekly awards sweeping all three following the weekend with Amelia Moneymaker (Gymnast of the Week), Molly Osborne (Freshman of the Week) and Avah Reichow (Specialist of the Week) all bringing home the honors.

UC Davis used the top performances by the three Aggies to win its quad meet at Sacramento State on Saturday, Jan. 23, besting the Hornets, Western Michigan and UW-Whitewater at the Nest.

For the 18th time in her career, extending her school record, and 13th-straight time (school record) going back to last season Moneymaker broke the 39,000 threshold in the all-around, winning the title at Sacramento State with a mark of 39.275. Along the way she posted the first 9.900 (beam) by an Aggie this season and won the individual floor (9.875) and beam events. The



Pictured is Molly Osborne, who was named UC Davis Gymnastics Freshman of the Week. Photo courtesy of UC Davis Athletics

Aggie all-arounder added a season-high mark of 9.825 for a second-place finish on bars to help power the Aggies to the quad meet victory.

Moneymaker was named the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation (MPSF) Gymnast of the Week four times in 2025, with this being her first of 2026.

Osborne played her part on beam, posting a career-high

mark of 9.800 that gave her a fourth-place finish on that event. Osborne also had solid marks on vault (9.700) and bars (9.725) to add to the Aggie totals that eventually gave them the meet victory, sending stingers down.

With career highs on both beam and floor, Reichow brought home her first career Mountain Pacific Sports Federation weekly award after top finishes across

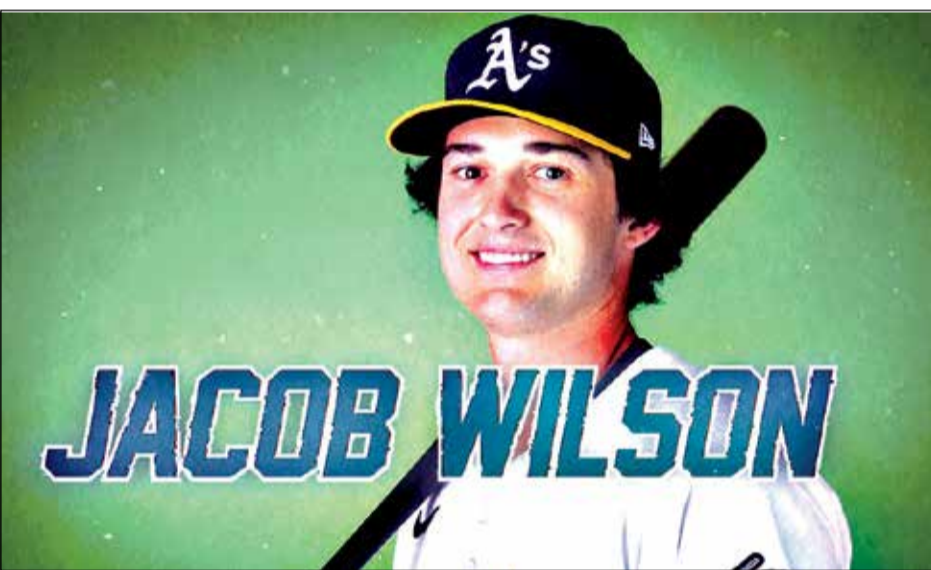
three events. On floor, Reichow finished second just behind Moneymaker, posting a 9.850 to help UC Davis sweep the podium and win the overall floor event. While on vault her 9.750 gave her a fifth-place finish to go along with her 9.700 on beam.

General admission for all meets runs \$13 while youth (3-13), UC Davis staff members and fans Seniors (65-plus) can

get in the door for \$10. Group outings (minimum of 10) can get their tickets at \$10 apiece. With the \$80 Flexbook, fans receive 10 general admission ticket vouchers that can be redeemed for any of the four home meets during the season in any combination desired. Fans can secure their spot in the University Credit Union Center by hitting the link, by calling the Aggie Ticket Office at (530) 752-2471 or by emailing the Aggie Ticket Office at aggietickets@ucdavis.edu.

About UC Davis Athletics
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 No. 1 in Agriculture and Forestry as well as No. 1 in Veterinary Medicine, UC Davis is 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. ★

A's Agree to Terms with SS Jacob Wilson



The Athletics have agreed to terms with shortstop Jacob Wilson on a seven-year contract through the 2032 season. Photo courtesy of MLB

Athletics News Release

LAS VEGAS, NV (MPG) - The Athletics have agreed to terms with shortstop Jacob Wilson on a seven-year contract through the 2032 season with a club option for 2033, the club announced today.

Wilson batted .311 with 13 home runs, 63 RBI, .355 OBP and an .800 OPS in 125 games last season with the A's. He struck out just 39 times in 2025 and his 13.41 strikeouts per plate appearance were second fewest in MLB behind San Diego's Luis Arraez (32.14). His .311 batting average was tied second highest in MLB in 2025 behind New York-AL's Aaron Judge (.331) and tied with Toronto's Bo Bichette.

Wilson earned American League Rookie of the Month honors for the month of May after posting a .368/.437/.538 slashline with six doubles, four home runs, 16 RBI and just eight strikeouts in May. He was the runner-up for American League Rookie of the Year to teammate Nick Kurtz, marking the first time a team has had the first and second place finishers in American League Rookie of the Year Voting since the 1984 Mariners (Alvin Davis, Mark Langston).

Wilson was elected by the fans as

starting shortstop for the American League in the 2025 All-Star Game and became the first rookie shortstop to be elected by the fans. He was also the second rookie shortstop to start an All-Star Game along with the Orioles Ron Hansen, who started both All-Star Games in 1960. He was the first Athletic to start an All-Star Game since Josh Donaldson at third base in 2014 and the first shortstop since Bert Campaneris made three straight starts from 1973-75.

Since debuting on July 19, 2024, Wilson is a career .301 hitter with 13 home runs, 66 RBI and a .772 OPS in 153 games in two seasons in the majors. He was the A's first round selection in the 2023 First-Year Player Draft out of Grand Canyon University.

Wilson is one of four players under contract through at least the 2028 season, when the A's are scheduled to open their new ballpark in Las Vegas. He joins Lawrence Butler, who inked a seven-year deal through the 2031 season with a club option for 2032 on Mar. 10, 2025, Brent Rooker, who signed a five-year contract through 2029 with a club option for 2030 on Jan. 23, 2025, and Tyler Soderstrom, who signed a seven-year contract through 2032 with a club option for 2033 on Dec. 29, 2025. ★

Midfielder Pep Casas to Join 2026 Campaign

Sacramento Republic FC News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento Republic FC recently announced that the club has signed midfielder José "Pep" Casas. He will be added to the team's roster pending league and federation approval. Per club policy, the terms of the contract were not disclosed.

"Pep fits the mold for the types of talented, up-and-coming players who do well in USL Championship," said Republic FC Head Coach Neill Collins. "We look forward to welcoming him to the Indomitable Club and are excited to be a part of this next step in his career."

Casas added, "I'm really excited to join Sacramento Republic. It's a club with a great culture and passionate fans, and I can't wait to get started and give everything I have for the team."

A native of Barcelona, Spain, Casas got his start in FC Barcelona's famed youth academy, La Masia. He later made the move to English club Ipswich Town before closing out his youth career in Spain with CE Europa. The 25-year-old came to the United States to begin his collegiate career Indiana Tech before transferring to University of North Carolina Wilmington. With the Seahawks, he appeared in every game possible and recorded two goals and two assists and earned selection to the 2023 Coastal



Sacramento Republic FC recently announced that the club has signed midfielder José "Pep" Casas. Photo courtesy Sacramento Republic FC

Athletic Association Second Team.

In 2024, Casas was selected 61st overall in the Major League Soccer (MLS) SuperDraft by Inter Miami CF. He made two Major League Soccer appearances for the club before joining Inter Miami CF II. With the Major League Soccer (MLS) NEXT Pro side, he made 25 appearances and added two assists, while maintaining an impressive 86 percent passing accuracy. Last year, he joined Nashville SC's reserve side Huntsville City FC and played over 2,000 minutes to help the team reach

the postseason for the first time. He closed out the season with a stellar 91 percent pass success rate.

Sacramento Republic FC will open the 2026 season at home on March 7 when the Indomitable Club hosts Western Conference Champion FC Tulsa. Kickoff for the 13th season is set for 7 p.m. at Heart Health Park. Fans secure their seat for the entire 2026 season by becoming a member today and lock in the lowest prices of the year. Group tickets are on sale now and single match tickets will be available beginning Feb. 5 at SacRepublicFC.com. ★

Men's Tennis Wins the 2025 CCCAA Team GPA Award



American River College Athletics News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - For the second consecutive season, and the third in four years, the ARC men's tennis team won the CCCAA Team GPA Award. The honor goes to the men's tennis team that

had the highest cumulative team GPA in the state of California. The Beavers also won the award in three consecutive seasons from 2008-2010. In 2025 the program posted its highest team GPA in their history, with an overall GPA of 3.89, far surpassing their previous record of 3.53 set in 2024. ★

For the second consecutive season, and the third in four years, the ARC men's tennis team won the CCCAA Team GPA Award. Photo courtesy American River College

Defendant Sentenced to 248-Years to Life for Child Sexual Assault

Sacramento County District Attorney's Office News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Honorable Carlton Davis sentenced Mitchell Weston to 248 years to life in prison. On Dec. 18, 2025, a jury convicted Weston of 16 counts of lewd act upon a child, nine counts of oral copulation/sexual penetration with a child under 10 years old and three counts of sexual intercourse or sodomy of child under 10 years old.



preyed on their vulnerability. Both victims disclosed the abuse which included molestation, oral copulation, digital penetration and sexual intercourse.

Under current California law, Weston (age 36) will become eligible for release at an Elder Parole hearing once he turns 50 years old and has served 20 years of his 248-years to life prison sentence. With his in-custody credits, that will be in approximately 16½ years. Additional material on Elder Parole can be found at: www.cdcr.ca.gov/bph/wp-content/uploads/sites/161/2022/03/Elderly-Parole-Fact-Sheet3_18-1.pdf. ★

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