

**HAPPY  
St. Patrick's  
DAY**

**Luther/Encinal  
Elementary Squad  
Owns the Court in  
Donkey Basketball**

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The Official Newspaper of Record for the City of Gridley and Biggs



# THE GRIDLEY HERALD



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FRIDAY • MARCH 13, 2026 • VOL. 146 NO. 11

**SEE  
INSIDE**

**OAK TREE  
TOPPLES ONTO  
GRIDLEY HOME**



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**SURPRISE! BIGGS  
SENDS TEAM  
OFF IN STYLE**



PAGE 3

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## Little League Season Opens in Live Oak, Gridley Next



A Live Oak Little League player connects with a pitch during the annual hit-a-thon following opening ceremonies March 8 at Berry Field in Live Oak. The event helped kick off the 2026 season with 15 teams and about 180 players participating. Photo by Steven Bryla

By MPG Staff and YSBC Sports

**LIVE OAK, CA (MPG)** - The 2026 Live Oak Little League season opened Sunday, March 8, with opening ceremonies at Berry Field as players, coaches and families gathered to celebrate the start of the season.

Baseball and softball teams lined the outfield beginning with T-ball squads. Announcers introduced each player as they ran the baseline to home plate before joining coaches and teammates for a team photo.

About 180 players across 15 teams took part in the ceremony. Families filled the stands and gathered along the fences as the teams were recognized.

Live Oak's teams this season include three T-ball teams, four farm teams, four minor teams, two major teams, one junior team and one challenger team.

Teams introduced during the ceremony included the Jr. Lady Lions,



A young Live Oak Little League Cubs player races toward first base during activities following opening ceremonies March 8 at Berry Field in Live Oak. Families gathered to celebrate the start of the 2026 season. Photo by Steven Bryla

Major Lions, Major Reds, Minor Giants, Minor Brewers, Minor Texas Longhorns, Minor Oklahoma Sooners, Farm Giants, Farm A's, Farm Vipers, Farm Lions, T-ball

Tigers, T-ball Lions, T-ball Huskies and T-ball Cubs.

Following the ceremony, players took the field for the league's annual hit-a-thon. The day concluded with a spaghetti feed fundraiser to support the league and kick off the season.

The start of the season continues this weekend as Gridley Little League prepares to host its Opening Day on Saturday, March 14 at Manuel Vierra Park.

Opening ceremonies are scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. on the Majors Field, where teams and players will be introduced.

Games are set to begin at 10:30 a.m. across several fields throughout the park as teams play their first games of the season.

Organizers expect the park to be busy throughout the day with games, music from a DJ and snack bar specials for families and fans.

For more local sports coverage, visit [ysbcsports.com](http://ysbcsports.com). ★

## Audit Confirms Stable Finances Amid Rising Pressures

By Susan Meeker

**GRIDLEY, CA (MPG)** - Gridley remains in stable financial condition but continues to carry a multimillion-dollar pension obligation that officials said will require close attention in the years ahead, according to the city's latest financial audit.

The fiscal year 2024-25 audit, presented to the City Council on March 2 by auditor Sheldon Chavan of Chavan and Associates LLP, issued an unmodified opinion, meaning the city's financial statements were fairly presented and in compliance with government accounting standards.

"An unmodified opinion is as good as it gets," Chavan told the council.

The audit shows the city continues to carry an unfunded pension liability of about 14.4 million dollars, one of its largest long term financial obligations. While the liability is slightly lower than the previous year, Finance Director Martin Pineda told the council that ongoing monitoring of pension costs, personnel expenses and broader economic conditions will be critical to maintaining long term fiscal sustainability.

The audit also notes the city's general fund balance declined during the fiscal year, though officials said healthy reserves are maintained. Enterprise funds, including utilities and other services supported by user fees, remained financially strong during the reporting period.

Overall, the city reported a positive net position, meaning the value of its assets exceeds its liabilities.

Chavan reported no material weaknesses in internal controls, no findings of noncompliance and no significant audit adjustments, indicating the city's financial records were in good order when reviewed.

During his presentation, Chavan said an independent audit evaluates whether a city's statements are accurate and complete, a process that includes transaction testing and a review of internal controls. He also credited city finance staff for improving reporting practices in recent years and preparing records in a way that allows the audit to proceed smoothly.

"The city's done a terrific job the last four years of getting things right and getting things caught up," he said.

City officials said the  
*Continued on page 2*

## 'Golden Days & Country Ways' at the Butte County Fair

By Seti Long

**GRIDLEY, CA (MPG)** - As the year moves toward spring and warmer weather, annual activities and events are preparing for their 2026 premiere, including the Butte County Fair.

Butte County Fair CEO Matt Reed briefed Gridley Rotary Club members on some of the events coming up at the fairgrounds, available partnerships and what can be expected at the 2026 county fair.

Reed spoke about upcoming events such as the Monster Truck Show that will be held in the grandstands on April 11, and the new Gridley Gearhead Classic Car Show scheduled for June 20.

Reed reminded the group of businesspeople that the Butte County Fair operates as a nonprofit, so interim events are key to the health of the fairgrounds. Reed has been championing and expanding event

*Continued on page 2*



Matt Reed, Butte County Fair Ceo, speaks to Gridley Rotary Club regarding upcoming events and other upgrades at the fairgrounds expected for the year. Photo by Seti Long

# The New Pi-Line



By Josh F.W. Cook

This from our family friend Dan who moved from CA to Israel: Thanks for checking in and asking how we're doing. The honest answer is: we're actually doing great. The war is real and scary, but in our day-to-day life, we feel safe and well-protected. About 23½ hours of every day, there's no direct danger at all. The remaining little slices of time are when we head downstairs to our shelter and wait out the "booms," which are almost always interceptions overhead, not impacts next to us. We're all together at home, and we're even hosting a dear friend. She just moved to Israel, and her building doesn't have a comfortable shelter, so our house has become a bit of a safe hub. The biggest lifestyle shift is that no one is really going out. It's a lot like COVID in that sense. Errands are quick, plans are close to home, and bike rides and long walks are on pause. One of the stranger parts of all this is how absurdly normal our time in the shelter has become. We'll be in the middle of something totally mundane, making dinner, arguing about old stories, scrolling on our phones, and then the siren goes, and suddenly the whole family is crammed into this reinforced room, picking up the conversation where we left off. The dogs, for their part, absolutely hate the sirens. They know something is up, sometimes before we do. We quickly grab them, and then they pile in with

us, shaking, while we try to act like this is all just another quirky family ritual. Life has shrunk to a tighter physical radius, but within that space we've found a pretty stable rhythm. Emotionally, the hardest part is the duality. Of course, there's fear. But in a strange way, this fear is familiar. Since we moved here, Iran has been an existential shadow hanging over everything, not only through its own threats, but by funding Hamas, Hezbollah, and other proxies that circled us. For years, I've described my biggest concern as a "ring of fire." This is the group of countries around us, aligned and resourced by Iran, all committed to our destruction. Now, that picture looks very different. Today it's really Iran itself and a much-weakened Hezbollah that remain. Hamas in Gaza is still there, but far weaker. That doesn't mean everything is solved, but it does mean that some of the scariest long-term dynamics have shifted in our favor. There's also been something unexpectedly validating about this period. It has underscored, in a very stark way, that Israel fundamentally wants to live in peace, even when many outside insist on seeing us as aggressors or villains. Our fiercest detractors don't just disagree with policies; many simply want us gone. Watching events unfold has only reinforced my sense that we were right about the nature of the threat, and they were wrong about us. At the same time, this hasn't just been political for me. It has been deeply spiritual. It's hard to look at what's happening, the scale of the threat, the narrow escapes, the way history "rhymes" with earlier moments (especially around the just-passed holiday of Purim) and not feel a presence bigger than all of us at work. It's pushed me to think more about meaning, purpose, and our place

in a much longer story. If I could correct one misconception for friends abroad, it would be this. Our lives are not one long emergency. Most of our hours are surprisingly ordinary. Each day brings work, meals, family jokes, all punctuated by brief, intense reminders that there's a war going on. The kids, unfortunately, have become veterans of this kind of reality. They know exactly what to do, and that competence is both reassuring and heartbreaking. We're not living in constant panic, but we're not living in complete normalcy either. It's a strange, tense, very human in-between. Looking ahead, I'm incredibly excited and surprisingly optimistic about our decision to be here. The U.S.-Israel military partnership has proven itself in ways that exceeded even my own expectations. For the first time in a long time, there seems to be a real possibility that a nuclear Iran can be defanged, that a hostile Iran might become at least somewhat less hostile, and that a regional détente could emerge where we all learn, imperfectly, to live side by side. I don't want to project my politics onto anyone else, especially friends whose perspective on the U.S. / Middle East dynamic might be different from mine, but from where I sit, I'm more hopeful than ever that my kids and their children will grow up in a region that is safer, more secure, and more prosperous than the one we inherited. Back to the question, "How are you doing there?" The truest answer is that we're safe, we're staying close to home, and we're living in this weird mix of normalcy and sirens. I'm more hopeful about the future of this place, and our choice to be here, than I've been in many years.

\*\*\*  
Josh F.W. Cook is an educator and administrator. ★

MEMORIAL

## CLAUDE (BUD) MACEY - 05/30/1931 – 03/04/2026

Our beloved father passed away on Wednesday March 4, at home in Gridley.

At 95 years old – He had a wonderful life. He served our community and others as a mortician, retired in Susanville, CA. He helped many families in their time of loss. Now we share our loss of him. He was loved and will be in our hearts forever. He is survived by his wife

of 45 years Raquel (Rocky) Macey Kapu Skinsky and her daughter his stepdaughter Rayne Ford. His daughter Jennifer Sharpe and husband John of Gridley, son Jeffery Macey of Chico, son Stephen Macey and wife Julie of Mountain View, CA., a stepdaughter Marianne Lobmard and husband Eddie of Gridley and a stepson Rick Kapu

Skinsky of Susanville. He had 11 beautiful grandchildren, from them 20 great grandchildren and two great great grandchildren.

We will be planning a Celebration of Life on his birthday May 30, 2026 (Saturday) in Gridley to be announced for family and any friends to come share our love for our father Claude (Bud) Macey.

## 'Golden Days & Country' Ways at the Butte County Fair

*Continued from page 1*  
offerings, which can be challenging due to the size of Gridley and rival fairgrounds in larger metro areas such as Chico and Yuba City.

Meanwhile, planning for the fair continues.

One of the most notable potential changes Reed discussed was that Butte County Fair board members are considering a date change for the 2027 fair. Board members are considering potentially moving the fair to the second week in August, which is listed on their March 10, 2026, agenda.

Reed said the mentality behind the possible date change would be to give students who participate in animal showing and auctions additional time before the start of the school year to prepare.

Traditionally, the fair is held at the end of August, with students going straight from fair weekend into their first day of school the following Monday.

"We're trying to separate from school start," said Reed.

There are some caveats to that plan, concerning the "loop," or E. Hazel Street, that runs in front of the main entrance to the grounds and around in front of Gridley High School, which is owned by the fairgrounds.

Reed explained that if the fair board voted to move the dates of the fair, the school was planning to advance its start date, beginning earlier than the last week of August, which Gridley Unified School District has been doing for more than 40 years.

"There are some issues... If we move up, school's following us and they're moving up with us," said Reed, explaining that the fairgrounds owns the streets in front of the school and that passage cannot be made during fair time.

"Do we rock the boat by moving or do we stay with the quirks and continue our path?" questioned Reed.

Changing the fair dates also creates other concerns, notably weather conditions that can exceed

100 degrees during August. High temperatures typically do not yield high carnival attendance, Reed said.

To combat potential heat issues, the fairgrounds has had air conditioning installed in Farmers Hall.

Other changes at the Butte County Fair will be seen at the grandstands, with the free Becker-Mardesich Team Roping event kicking off the festivities on Friday.

"Last year we had 100 teams," said Reed of participation turnout for the event. The event will begin earlier, with preliminary rounds held throughout the day so that all teams have a chance to participate.

Saturday night, the Butte County Fair will host a new sport at the grandstands, flat-track motorcycle racing, followed by the Destruction Derby on Sunday night.

Join the Butte County Fair, themed "Golden Days & Country Ways," Aug. 27-30. Information on upcoming events and how to participate in the Butte County Fair is available at [buttecountyfair.org](http://buttecountyfair.org). ★

## Audit Confirms Stable Finances Amid Rising Pressures

*Continued from page 1*

annual audit provides an independent review of the city's finances and helps ensure transparency for residents and policymakers. They said the findings also give the council a clearer picture of the city's

long term obligations as it plans future budgets and evaluates major projects.

The council voted to formally accept the fiscal year 2024 25 financial statements and independent audit report as part of its regular meeting agenda. ★



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## Regional Meat Processing Facility Tour Set for March 30



During a recent tour attended by producers, Yuba-Sutter fair representatives and agricultural professionals, organizers outlined plans for inspections and operations. Initial processing is expected to begin under CDFA inspection, with USDA inspection to follow once federal approvals are finalized. Photo by Lloyd Green

By Lloyd Green

**COLUSA, CA (MPG)** - Organizers have announced another public tour of the developing USDA and California Department of Food and Agriculture certified meat processing facility at the Colusa Industrial Park.

The guided tour will take place Monday, March 30, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and will give producers, community members and interested residents a closer look at the project as construction continues.

The facility, located at Colusa Industrial Properties in Colusa, is being developed by Colusa Industrial Properties Corporation and is designed to process cattle, swine, sheep and goats. Once completed, the plant is expected to help address the limited availability of inspected meat processing facilities serving Northern California.

During an earlier tour of the project, organizers explained the growing need for regional processing capacity.

"The demand for this type of facility is real, and it has been growing for years," said Jacob Kley of Colusa Industrial Properties. "We've seen older USDA facilities closing across the state, and there's a clear bottleneck for small and mid-sized producers trying to access inspected processing."

The project has expanded from its original concept as partners worked to meet regulatory standards and respond to industry demand.

Community Development Services has helped coordinate outreach for the project and is working with producers and community members throughout the region.

"The goal is not just to build a facility, but to make sure it serves the people who need it most," said Andy Lucas of Community Development Services. "That includes small producers and communities that have not always been part of traditional economic development efforts."

Organizers say tours are intended to provide transparency about the project and gather feedback from potential users.

"We want to hear from producers about their needs," Lucas said. "That feedback helps guide how the facility operates and how it grows."

The first phase of construction is approximately 80 percent complete with anticipated completion in June 2026. Phase one includes a 3,600 square foot slaughter facility and a 1,000 square foot cold storage space.

Grant funding through the California Jobs First program and the We Prosper Together collaborative is helping support construction and community engagement efforts tied to the project.

Those interested in attending the March 30 tour are encouraged to register in advance.

To RSVP, visit <https://tinyurl.com/schedule-tour-meat-facility>

For more information contact Colusa Industrial Properties at 530-458-2118 or visit [cipcorp.com](http://cipcorp.com). ★

## Surprise! Biggs Sends Basketball Team Off in Style



Loaded and ready to go, the Biggs Varsity Basketball team heads to Petaluma. Photo by Seti Long

By Seti Long

**BIGGS, CA (MPG)** - The student body came out in strong support of the Biggs Varsity Boys Basketball Team as they left for the state playoff game Wednesday, March 4.

While the team met with coaches inside the gym as they prepared for departure, students

of Biggs High School and athletes' families gathered outside the doors, holding signs and creating a tunnel of celebration.

As the unsuspecting team opened the doors, cheers of congratulations rang out as the school celebrated its team.

The team was cheered on as they made their way down the tunnel and to their caravan,

which was escorted out of town by Engine 73 from CAL FIRE's Biggs Fire Department.

The Biggs Wolverines traveled to St. Vincent de Paul in Petaluma, CA, to take on the Mustangs.

Despite a phenomenal season, the Biggs boys suffered a loss of 64-52 to St. Vincent de Paul. ★

## Oak Tree Topples onto Gridley Home, Displaces Family

By Seti Long

**GRIDLEY, CA (MPG)** - Emergency crews responded to Little Avenue the morning of March 6 after a large oak tree toppled onto a home while residents slept inside.

"I thought something had exploded," said neighbor Alyssa Garcia.

Garcia said she was getting her children ready for school when she heard the massive oak tree come down on the neighboring home.

"It was incredibly loud," Garcia said.

First responders arrived quickly. CAL FIRE Butte County Station 74 crews responded along with the Gridley Police and Butte County Technical Rescue units. Crews worked to ensure the safety of the residents and remove family members and pets from the damaged home.

A small dog trapped inside the house was safely retrieved and returned to its owners by



First responders and neighbors gather along Little Avenue in Gridley on March 6 after a large oak tree fell onto a home while residents were inside. Crews from CAL FIRE Butte County Station 74, Gridley Police Department and technical rescue teams responded. No injuries were reported. Photo by Seti Long

firefighters.

No injuries were reported, though the home sustained significant damage.

Neighbors said the oak tree had stood on the property long before the surrounding housing development was built. The land previously operated as a prune orchard until the late 1980s.

"That tree has been here longer than any of these houses," a neighbor said.

Some neighbors estimated the tree could have been nearly 300 years old.

Cleanup efforts began over the weekend as crews worked to remove the fallen tree and debris from the property. ★

## Butte County Dogs Compete in 'Pooch Playoffs' Fundraiser

By Lloyd Green

**OROVILLE, CA (MPG)** - A Butte County photographer is inviting local pet owners to showcase their four-legged companions while helping raise funds for animals in need through a community contest this spring.

Erin Lackey Photography will host the fifth annual "Pooch Playoffs," a bracket-style competition designed to crown the "Ulti-mutt Cutest Canine" in Butte County while supporting the Northwest Society for the Prevention

of Cruelty to Animals (NWSPCA).

Portrait sessions for participating dogs will take place throughout March at Erin Lackey Photography's studio in Oroville. Organizers plan to photograph 32 dogs that will be placed into a tournament-style bracket similar to a March sports playoff format.

Voting is scheduled to begin during the first week of April and will take place online, allowing the public to vote for their favorite canine contestants as they advance through each round of the competition.

Each dog entered in the contest receives a professional portrait session. The \$99 participation fee supports the NWSPCA and includes a portrait gift and a swag bag with items from local pet-friendly businesses.

Photographer Erin Lackey said the event began as a way to honor her sister, who passed away in 2017 and had a deep love for animals.

"Supporting the Northwest SPCA is incredibly personal for me," Lackey said. "After my sister's passing, I wanted to

honor her memory in a way that reflects the joy and love she had for animals. Pooch Playoffs is my way of bringing the community together, celebrating Butte County's beloved pets and making a real difference for animals in need."

The fundraiser has grown steadily since its launch. Over the past four years, the competition has raised more than \$12,000 to benefit the Northwest SPCA and its animal care programs.

Organizers hope to fill all 32 available competition spots this

year. Each round will pair dogs head-to-head, with voters deciding which contestant advances toward the championship title.

Final Four winners will receive prizes from local pet-friendly businesses.

Pet owners interested in entering their dogs can schedule a portrait session at Erin Lackey Photography, located at 1447 Huntoon St. in Oroville.

For more information or to register, visit [www.erinlackey.com/poochplayoffs](http://www.erinlackey.com/poochplayoffs) or call 916-415-8667. ★

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# Caregiver Faces 29-Year Sentence

By MPG Staff

**OROVILLE, CA (MPG)** - An Oroville woman pleaded guilty Feb. 11 in Butte County Superior Court to abusing her elderly client for months and now faces nearly three decades in state prison.

Desiree Serena Herrera, 47, admitted to elder abuse and felony assault involving a man in his 70s who was under her care as an In-Home Supportive Services worker.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said deputies first responded in September 2025 after Enloe Hospital staff reported a patient with serious injuries suspected to be the result of

elder abuse. Deputies found the victim covered in bruises and abrasions. He had broken ribs in the process of healing, damage to an eye and a head injury.

Investigators learned the victim had allowed Herrera to move into his home in late 2024. Herrera, who was on parole at the time for theft and drug offenses, later became his IHSS worker through the state-funded program that assists low-income elderly or disabled residents with daily tasks.

The victim told detectives that Herrera began physically and psychologically abusing him in May 2025. He said she refused to let him use his phone, leave the house, control



his finances or see family members. He reported that she repeatedly struck and kicked him, breaking multiple ribs, and prevented him from seeking medical care. On another occasion, she kicked him in the eye while they sat on a couch.

From late spring through the summer of 2025, the victim said Herrera forced him to stand for hours, sleep on the floor and denied him restroom access. He reported that she burned his head and face with a torch lighter and struck him in the head with the butt of a kitchen knife on multiple occasions.

In September 2025, after another beating, the victim escaped and paramedics transported him to Enloe Hospital. Hospital staff contacted law enforcement.

Deputies worked with the District Attorney's Office to obtain an arrest warrant. Investigators arrested Herrera several days later while she

stood in line at the IHSS office in Oroville with another elderly person. Ramsey said that individual had not suffered abuse.

Prosecutors cited Herrera's criminal record, which dates to the late 1990s and includes prior prison terms for robbery, attempted murder and carjacking in Santa Clara County.

Under the plea agreement, Herrera will receive an upper-term sentence of 29 years and 8 months in state prison. She remains in custody at the Butte County Jail without bail and is scheduled for formal sentencing March 11.

Ramsey said the victim has received medical care and now lives in a safe setting. ★

## Community Calendar

**Friday, March 13**

**Choir! Choir! Choir! Presents We Will Choir! You**

Doors open at 7 p.m., show at 7:30 p.m. at Laxson Auditorium, 400 W. 1st St., Chico. Join us for a fully interactive, participatory show that turns audience into performer. Get ready to laugh, dance, and sing your heart out with hundreds of other music-lovers just like you. This is an epic Queen sing-along, so unleash your inner Freddie Mercury, grab your friends and create harmonies that will blow the roof off the place. All voices welcome, no experience necessary. Tickets and more information at [www.chicoperformances.com](http://www.chicoperformances.com).

**Saturday, March 14**

**Gridley CDA Chapter 22nd Annual Banquet**

Doors open at 4:30 p.m. at the Butte County Fairgrounds, 199 E. Hazel St. Tickets are first-come, first-served and limited to 499 attendees. The California Deer Association Gridley Chapter invites you to support conservation efforts in our community. Enjoy a buffet dinner by Hunter Drake Smokehouse BBQ at 6 p.m. and then a live auction starting at 7:30 p.m. including firearms, gear, and outdoor packages – even an awarded 2026 open zone deer tag. There will be exclusive raffle prizes too. For tickets and more information, contact Betsy Teesdale at 530-701-8829.

**Wednesday, March 18 and Thursday, March 19**

**Butte County Farm Bureau Drive-Thru Dinner**

Grab a delicious meal without leaving your car, all while supporting a great local cause. We're serving barbecue tri-tip, rice, coleslaw, and dessert at \$25 per dinner. All proceeds benefit the Gerald M. Geiger memorial Scholarship Fund, supporting Butte County seniors pursuing degrees in agriculture. Wednesday pickup 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Coe Orchard Equipment, 1742 State Hwy. 99, Gridley, or Thursday pickup 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Pape Machinery Agriculture & Turf, 489 Country Drive, Chico. Tickets available online at [www.buttefarmbureau-store.com](http://www.buttefarmbureau-store.com) or from any BCFB Director.

**Friday, March 20 and Saturday, March 21**

**Maker's Muse Art & Music Festival**

Mark your calendar for a street fair celebrating community, art, and local small businesses. It's a free art, music, and dance festival for all ages. Friday, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m., Saturday, noon to 10 p.m. on Orange St. from 5th to 7th Streets, Chico. Enjoy this celebration of local art, live music, and the creative spirit of our community.

**Saturday, March 21**

**Spring Equinox Dance & Auction**

Join the Children's Choir of Chico at their 18th annual family-friendly fundraiser, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the Nettleton Gym, 851 Wall St., Chico. This Mardi Gras-themed event will showcase popular food vendors, plus a no-host bar and a sweet treat dessert concession. Enjoy live entertainment, an amazing array of silent auction items and drawings. Tickets and more information at [www.butte365.com/events](http://www.butte365.com/events).

**"Light Up the Night" 2026 monca Gala**

6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the Silver Dollar Fairgrounds, 2357 Fair St., Chico. This gala is a fundraiser for the Museum of Northern California Art (monca) and the evening's proceeds go toward the expansion of monca's outreach and impact. Our night's theme evokes a spirit of innovation and joy – spark your imagination and return to your essential creative energy. Enjoy a catered dinner and no-host bar among friends, artists and the people who make Chico a hub for arts and culture. More information and tickets at <https://monca.org>

**Meeting Minders**

Ongoing Activities (Current as of publication, please verify schedule with the organization):

**American Legion Bingo**, Thursdays from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the Gridley Veterans Hall, 267 Sycamore St.

**Biggs City Council** meets on the second and fourth Tuesday each month, at 6 p.m. in the council chambers, 3016 Sixth St., Biggs. The next meeting is scheduled for March 24 and more information is available at 530-368-5493.

**Butte County Board of Supervisors** generally meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays each month, 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. at 25 County Center Drive, Suite 205, Oroville. The next meeting is scheduled

for March 24 and more information is available at 530-552-3300.

**ESL Conversation Group** meets Wednesdays from 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Esperanza House Family Center, 630 Washington St. Practice speaking English in this free, friendly group setting. All levels are welcome to attend any or all sessions. There is also a Zoom option from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. Sponsored by the Butte County Library. Contact [literacy@butte-county.net](mailto:literacy@butte-county.net) for more information.

**Gridley City Council** meets on the first and third Monday each month, 6 p.m. in the council chambers, 685 Kentucky St. Meeting agendas are posted to the following site on the Friday prior to each meeting: <http://gridley.ca.us/government-and-departments/city-council>

**Gridley Senior Group Breakfast** every Tuesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. includes Bingo at 9:30 a.m. Gridley Recreation Center 194 Washington St. For more information, call 530-846-3264.

**Gridley Unified School District (GUSD) Board** meetings are generally on the first and third Wednesday each month, 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Call 530-846-4721 for more information.

**Live Oak City Council** usually meets on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. in the council chambers at City Hall, 9955 Live Oak Blvd. Call 530-695-2112 for more information. Next meeting will be on Wednesday, March 18.

**Rotary Club of Gridley** meets every Thursday from noon to 1 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church Hall, 446 Kentucky St. For more information or membership, call 530-632-5990.

**Survivors of Suicide Support Group** meets the first and third Wednesday each month at 7 p.m. at the Gridley Recreation Department, 194 Washington Street. Next meeting will be on Wednesday, March 18.

**Butte County Libraries**

Butte County Libraries have the following upcoming events: (G) Gridley branch, 299 Spruce St. and (B) Biggs branch, 464A B St. Call 530-552-5652 for more information.

**Friday, March 13:** Sure Start family play time, 9 a.m. to noon. (G)

**Saturday, March 14:** Ugly art club for adults, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Come join us to create art in a fun and non-judgmental setting with other terrible artists. Materials provided, absolutely no skills required. (G)

**Tuesday, March 17:** Creative writing group for adults, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. (G) LEGO Tuesdays, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. (B)

**Wednesday, March 18:** Color your world, 11 a.m. to noon. Adult arts and crafts. (G) Afternoon kids' club, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. (G)

**Thursday, March 19:** Biggs chess club, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. (B) Movie night, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. (G)

**Friday, March 20:** Family story time, 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. (G) Ladies' night out movie, 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Light refreshments served; men and teens welcome. (G)

**Saturday, March 21:** Afternoon kids' club, 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. (B)

**Community Resources – Find Food**

**First 5 Family Center at Esperanza House**, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday at 630 Washington St., Gridley. Must be pregnant or live with and actively care for a child up to age 17. Call to schedule an appointment: 530-720-2255.

**First Baptist Church of Live Oak Food Pantry**, 1:15 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. on the fourth Sunday of each month, at 2480 Pennington Road, Live Oak. This is a drive-through Food Pantry, with entrance on Gum Street and exit on Pennington Road. Next distribution will be March 22. Call 530-695-2894 for more information.

**Gridley Senior Food Distribution**, 801 Washington Street, Room B. Once a month, call ahead for details: 530-846-4233.

**Gridley United Methodist Church**, 285 Magnolia St. Monday through Friday, during daytime hours. Come by the church and if they have food they will give client a box. Call 530-846-2520 for more information.

**North State Food Bank**, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. monthly at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, 410 Jackson St., Gridley. Next distribution on Tuesday, April 7. Call 530-712-2600 for more information.

**North State Food Bank**, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Biggs Methodist Church, 441 C St., Biggs. Next distribution on Tuesday, April 7. Call 530-712-2600 for more information.

**Sacred Heart Parish**, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., 1561 Hazel St., Gridley on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Call 530-846-2140 for more information. ★

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# Chico Man Sentenced to 11 Years to Life

By MPG Staff

**OROVILLE, CA (MPG)** - A Chico man will serve 11 years to life in state prison for attempting to rape a 22-year-old woman during a 2024 home invasion in north Chico.

Butte County Superior Court Judge Kimberly Merrifield imposed the maximum sentence on

Francisco Gutierrez-Gomez, 40, after a jury found him guilty of attempted rape, assault with a deadly weapon and related enhancements. The jury returned its verdict Jan. 22 after less than 90 minutes of deliberation.

At sentencing, the survivor told the court the attack disrupted her life but said she continues to heal with

support from family and friends. She then turned to Gutierrez-Gomez and read in Spanish, "Soy el sobreviviente de este caso," or, "I am the survivor in this case."

Jurors heard that on May 3, 2024, about 2:45 a.m., Chico Police officers responded to an apartment complex in north Chico. The woman reported

that a masked intruder entered her apartment and assaulted her. She suffered cuts, bruises and signs of strangulation.

She testified that she encountered a shirtless man wearing a ski mask inside her home. She said he tried to strangle her, smothered her with a pillow and struck her in the head with a rock. She fought back,

and the intruder fled, leaving behind a hat and a pocketknife.

Investigators sent the items to the California Department of Justice for testing. Prosecutors said DNA from the hat and knife matched a sample Gutierrez-Gomez provided during a Butte County Jail booking days earlier on an unrelated arrest. Jurors

also learned he lived in the same complex, less than 100 feet from her door.

Defense counsel argued the evidence showed a struggle tied to theft, not an intent to rape. Prosecutor Mike Tufaro told jurors the intruder's actions showed otherwise. The jury convicted Gutierrez-Gomez on all counts. ★

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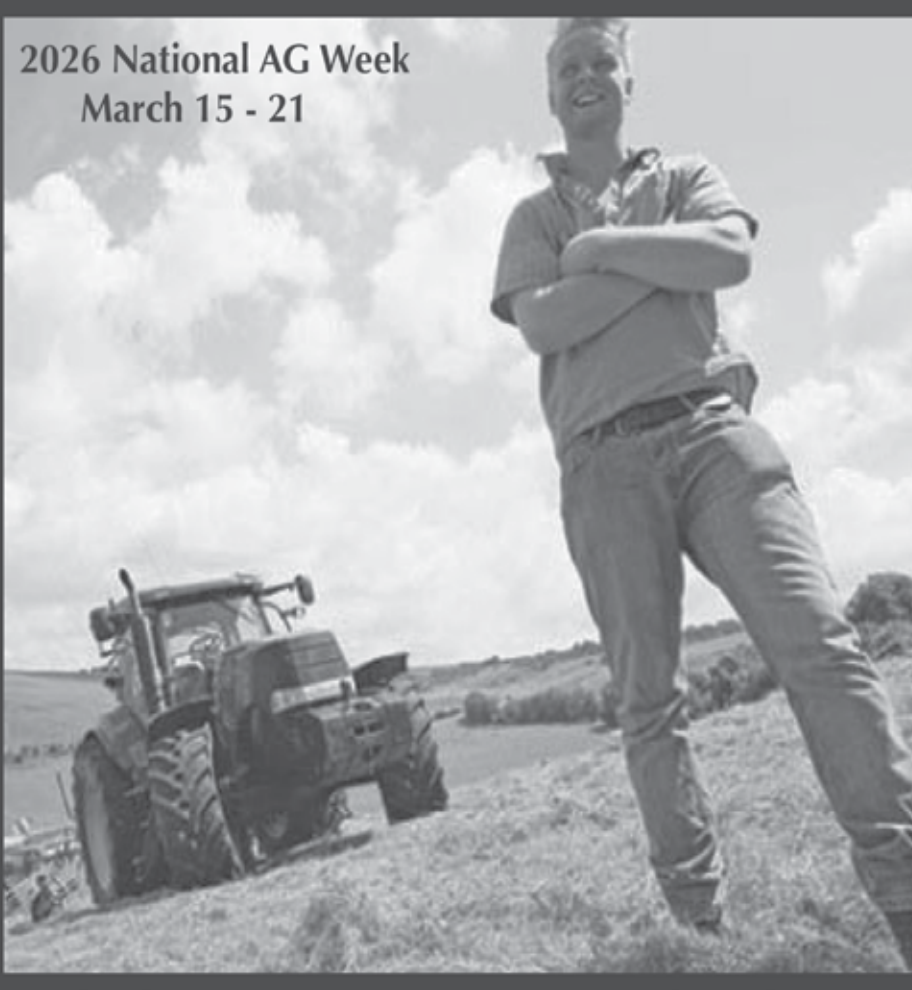
   
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# Gridley Raises Concerns Over Traffic Safety Data

By Susan Meeker

**GRIDLEY, CA (MPG)** - Federal transportation safety data presented to regional officials last month is drawing attention from Gridley leaders after a city representative said crash patterns in the community appear disproportionately high compared with other areas of Butte County.

At the Feb. 26 meeting of the Butte County Association of Governments, regional analyst Brian Lasagna presented federally required Safety Performance Measures used to track fatalities and serious traffic injuries across the county transportation system.

The measures are part of a national performance-based planning framework requiring metropolitan planning organizations such as BCAG to monitor crash trends and set safety targets in coordination with the California Department of Transportation and local jurisdictions.

Lasagna said statewide safety targets adopted by Caltrans call for roughly 3% to 5% annual reductions in fatalities and serious injuries, including crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists. The targets are reviewed annually and used to guide transportation planning and project funding decisions.

The presentation also included a regional crash map showing clusters of fatal collisions across Butte County.

During discussion, Gridley Vice Mayor Bruce Johnson said the map appeared to show a concentration of fatal crashes in the Gridley area relative to the city's population.

"Just looking at the map overall, it looks like per capita maybe Gridley has the highest fatality rates right there," Johnson told the board.

Johnson suggested traffic speeds along Highway 99 through the city may be contributing to the problem, describing portions of the corridor as a "50-mile-an-hour racetrack."

Johnson later told the Gridley City Council the data presented during the BCAG meeting showed unsafe speed and

DUI together accounted for about 67% of fatal crashes, reinforcing concerns about traffic conditions through the city.

BCAG officials said the state highway corridor falls under Caltrans jurisdiction but noted safety improvements could be incorporated into future highway projects. Lasagna also pointed to planned design changes along Highway 99 through Gridley, including separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities, lane reductions, and potential roundabouts intended to slow traffic.

Board members also discussed whether growing use of electric bicycles may be contributing to safety concerns.

Lasagna said current crash data does not distinguish electric bicycles from other non-motorized users, but staff would continue monitoring trends.

"Not much has changed regionally over the last year," Lasagna told the board. "Fatalities are exactly the same, but we did see a slight increase in serious injuries among non-motorized users."

BCAG officials said the safety data is shared with the agency's Transportation Advisory Committee and incorporated into project scoring when transportation funding opportunities arise, allowing jurisdictions to prioritize projects that address crash trends.

Following discussion, the BCAG board approved Lasagna's recommendation to support the 2026 statewide safety performance targets and continue planning and programming projects intended to help the region meet those goals.

The BCAG board also heard a presentation from transit planning firm Jarrett Walker and Associates outlining options for a Butte Regional Transit routing study focused primarily on service in Chico and Oroville.

Johnson reported to the council on March 2 that the presentation was "pretty interesting," describing how the study is examining potential tradeoffs between a system designed to maximize ridership and one that provides broader geographic coverage, with the possibility of a hybrid approach combining the two. ★

# Supervisors Back Sheriff's Basement Repairs

By Susan Meeker

**OROVILLE, CA (MPG)** - Repairs and upgrades are moving forward for the basement of the Butte County Sheriff's Office after a sewer system failure flooded the facility last year.

Butte County supervisors approved a \$1.16 million renovation project to restore and modernize the basement area of the sheriff's office at 5 Gillick Way. The damage dates back to April 23, 2025, when a sewer lift pump failure caused flooding that significantly damaged the interior of the basement.

The space has long been used for several sheriff's office functions, making the damage disruptive to daily operations, officials said.

Interim General Services Director Dennis Schmidt said county staff moved quickly after the flooding to bring in a contractor to clean the facility and document the damage so an insurance claim could be filed.

The next phase of the project will restore the basement while bringing parts of the facility up to current standards. Planned improvements include updated bathrooms, new men's and women's locker rooms, upgraded office areas and new flooring throughout the basement.



County officials said the work will be completed using a Job Order Contracting process, which allows the county to move more quickly on repairs using pre-qualified contractors rather than a traditional public bidding process. Because the work will take place inside a secure law enforcement facility, contractors must meet security requirements.

"When you're working in a sheriff's facility, you can't have every average construction worker in there," Schmidt said. "They all have to be background checked."

Funding for the work will come from a combination of insurance reimbursements and public safety funding. Schmidt said the county expects about \$214,304

in insurance payments for cleanup costs and another \$453,846 for restoration of the damaged areas.

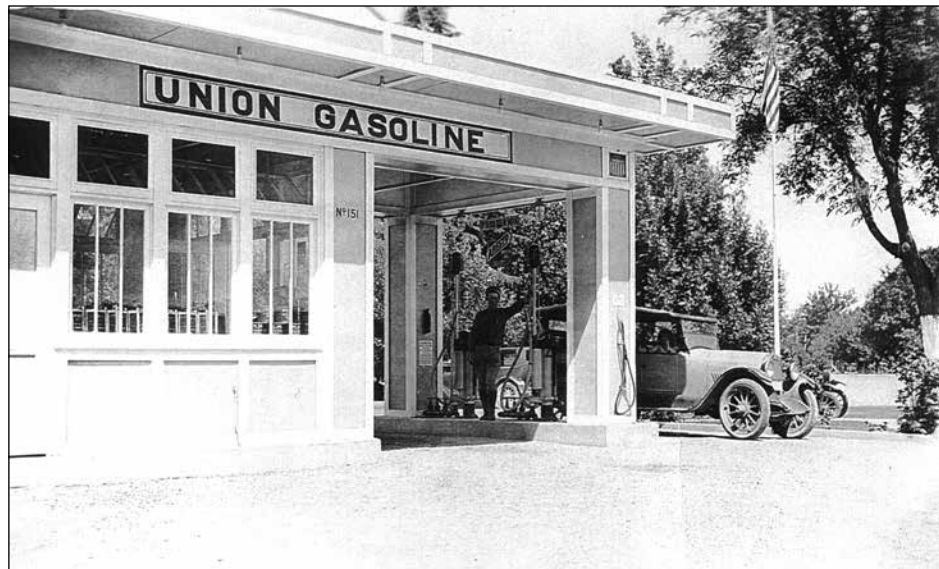
The sheriff's office also secured \$500,000 through the Community Correction Partnership to support the upgrades. Together, the funding sources bring the total project budget to \$1,168,150.

Supervisors approved the project in February, along with the required budget amendment, and authorized construction to proceed. The board also approved a notice to proceed with Whole Construction and appointed the county's General Services director to oversee the project.

The renovation will restore the flood-damaged space while improving facilities used by sheriff's personnel, officials said. ★

# Then and Now

## Gridley Museum's Photo Contest



Shown is a historic Gridley building in its prime back "Then." Based off this photograph, where was this building and what is located there "Now"? Please submit your guess of what/where the building is to the Gridley Museum in writing. Must include: The number of the photo you are submitting your guess on, your full name, best contact phone number and email address (if possible) and your guess. Limit one guess per photo/person, contest open to residents of Gridley, Live Oak and Biggs ages 12 and up. An answer key will be posted after the contest ends July 4, 2026. The Gridley Museum is located at 601 Kentucky St., Gridley and can be reached at 530-846-4482. Photo courtesy of the Gridley Museum.

# Gridley Thumbs and Roots



By Barbara Ott

As I was working in the greenhouse I saw a tiny movement. I looked closer and was delighted to see that I have baby Praying Mantis in the greenhouse. They'll make it outside because this time of year I open the door every day or the greenhouse would be too hot. I have another egg case that I've been watching, hoping it hatches soon.

I did not know I had them in the greenhouse. The case must have been inside a pot when I moved it in for the Winter. These signs of the determination of life to exist is always wonderful to me. I noticed that I have many tiny mosquito fish added lately also.

While I cleaned the patio and moved pots to make room for everyone who has wintered in the greenhouse I found a beautiful dead butterfly. I see these black with spots butterflies all of the time in the Spring. What I discovered with this dead creature was that its underwing was a spectacular series of orange, blue and green dots and swaths of color. I looked it up and it is called Pipevine

Swallowtail. Needless to say, I kept that well preserved butterfly with intact wings and put it on a nature shelf in the house. Now when I see these dark flutters go through the yard, I will envision the beauty I cannot see under their wings.

Our plan to safe the water hyacinths over the winter without them freezing worked. My husband made a top with triple wall greenhouse siding for the tank the plants were in. I just replaced the alive but freeze nipped plants in the turtle tank with fresh new plants that look great. I hope the freezees are truly over. If not then I'll pop on the tops and save them again. It is almost official Spring. ★

# Live Oak Council Receives CEDS Report

By Shaunna Boyd

**LIVE OAK, CA (MPG)** - At the March 4 meeting of the Live Oak City Council, members heard a presentation on the Yuba-Sutter Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2025 Annual Performance Report.

Brynda Stranix, director of the Yuba-Sutter Economic Development Corporation, presented the annual report with updates about regional projects, overall economic strategy and current economic conditions.

Stranix said Sutter and Yuba counties have seen labor force growth of more than 7,300 over 10 years and the area has a 30% lower cost of living than the average California family. The regional gross domestic product (GDP) was \$8.8 billion last year with a net of 233 new business establishments year over year. She said this is consistent growth since COVID, with numbers exceeding those before the pandemic. "Progress isn't measured by plans but by outcomes," said Stranix.

Over the last year, the Yuba-Sutter Economic Development Corporation worked with 3,800 businesses on business planning, financial assistance and marketing and lent \$230,000 to local businesses through its independent loan program.

Their efforts helped create more than 70 new jobs last year and Stranix emphasized that "small businesses remain the backbone of the community."

The manufacturing workforce is expanding to meet the needs of local employers, housing



projects are increasing across all income levels, arts and culture are drawing visitors and parks and trails are revitalizing downtown areas.

In order to unlock more development opportunities, the Yuba-Sutter Economic Development Corporation is supporting infrastructure investments to build regional capacity for the future, including a water and wastewater project. Long-term projects will support housing, jobs, transportation and environmental resilience.

Without existing infrastructure, economic development is a challenge, so these projects will make the region more competitive. In fact, Stranix said the region missed out on many large development projects last year due to a lack of infrastructure.

Sutter County has about \$1.2 million in annual "retail leakage," which Stranix said occurs when residents purchase items in other counties instead of where they live, causing the local economy to lose that sales tax revenue. Over the coming years, officials will focus on bringing in more businesses that meet those retail needs so sales tax stays local.

Stranix announced

a grant received from the California Finance Consortium, through the Wells Fargo Foundation, for a downtown revitalization strategy for Live Oak and Wheatland. This will give the city a playbook for development, including cleaning up existing businesses and attracting new businesses.

Councilmember Ashley Hernandez said the strategy will give the city a "path forward," and Vice Mayor Aaron Pamma added that the Yuba-Sutter Economic Development Corporation is a great resource for the city.

Mayor Jeremy Chapdelaine said the organization does significant work for the region.

"You always give it your all for every jurisdiction," Chapdelaine said, adding that the downtown area is a priority, so he appreciates that they were able to secure this funding to focus on that mission and find new opportunities.

The council voted 4-0, with Councilmember Nancy Santana absent, to approve the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2025 Annual Performance Report.

The next meeting of the Live Oak City Council is scheduled for March 18. ★

## Oroville Man Admits 16 Felony Thefts

By MPG Staff

**BUTTE COUNTY, CA (MPG)** - An Oroville man pleaded no contest to 16 felony counts of grand theft in a multi-county retail theft case involving 30 shoplifting incidents at Home Depot and Lowe's stores across three counties.

Matthew Jay McCraney,

42, entered the plea in Butte County Superior Court in a case alleging that between January 2023 and July 2024 he stole merchandise from stores in Chico, Oroville, Yuba City and West Sacramento. Authorities reported that about \$21,395 in merchandise was taken.

According to the Butte

County District Attorney's Office, McCraney loaded electric lawn mowers, air conditioners, miter saws and other tools onto flatbed carts and left stores without paying. Investigators recovered information from McCraney's social media accounts that showed he accepted pre-theft orders from

customers in what prosecutors described as an "I boost, you buy" arrangement.

District Attorney Mike Ramsey said Deputy District Attorney Dave Garner began prosecuting the case when it involved only a few incidents, many under the \$950 felony threshold. Garner contacted surrounding counties and compiled additional reported thefts to aggregate the losses, which allowed

the charges to be filed as felonies. The Sutter and Yolo County district attorney's offices granted permission for their cases to be prosecuted in Butte County.

Under the plea agreement, McCraney will be sentenced to 12 years and eight months in state prison when he returns to court March 26. Ramsey noted that Proposition 36 did not apply because the thefts occurred before December 2024. Prosecutors said that

had the law been in effect at the time, McCraney could have faced 22 years in prison.

Prosecutors asked the court to revoke McCraney's bail and remand him into custody pending sentencing. Butte County Superior Court Judge Virginia Gingery denied the request and allowed McCraney to remain free on a \$126,000 bail bond until the March hearing. ★

## Magalia Mother Pleads to Child Endangerment

By MPG Staff

**MAGALIA, CA (MPG)** - A Magalia mother pleaded no contest to five felony counts of child endangerment after allowing her 11-year-old daughter to drive a vehicle that crashed into a home, injuring several children.

Cathryn Kreceman, 41, entered the plea in Butte County Superior Court in connection with the Aug. 4, 2025, crash. She faces a maximum sentence of 11 years in state prison when she returns to court for sentencing March 25 at 9:30 a.m.

According to Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey, the California Highway Patrol responded at about 12:22 a.m. to the 14000 block of Bridgeport Court after the child lost control of a 2006 Jeep Liberty on a curve and struck a house.

Officers found Kreceman at the scene. Her daughter was trapped inside the vehicle and fire personnel extricated her. The girl was taken to a hospital with major injuries. Two 10-year-old girls were also transported to a hospital, one with a broken nose and the other with head contusions. Two boys, ages 11 and 13, were not injured and were released to a guardian.

Investigators reported that no one in the vehicle wore a seat belt except Kreceman, who was not injured.



Law enforcement collected surveillance and cell phone video that showed Kreceman allowed all five children to take turns driving the Jeep that night, according to prosecutors. At one point, a child drove while other children rode on top of the vehicle. Prosecutors said Kreceman remained inside the vehicle during the activity and was seen scrolling through social media while seated in the passenger seat.

Ramsey said Kreceman first told officers she had been driving. Later, at the hospital, she said her daughter had been driving and told officers she allowed it because the child's father had let her drive on a ranch.

Kreceman has remained in custody at the Butte County Jail since her arrest in August 2025. Bail is set at \$350,000. ★

## Chico Man Pleads to Attempted Murder

By MPG Staff

**CHICO, CA (MPG)** - A Chico man pleaded no contest to attempted murder for stabbing a co-worker at a local radio station in June 2025.

Kevin Richard Leeson, 30, entered the plea in Butte County Superior Court in connection with the June 18, 2025, attack. He faces an upper-term sentence of 10 years in state prison when he returns for sentencing March 25, 2026. Leeson has remained in custody since his arrest.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said the stabbing occurred about 8:30 a.m. at the Chico radio station where both men worked. Leeson, who worked at the front desk, entered a recording studio where the victim was working and stabbed him in the back shoulder with a pair of scissors.

Prosecutors said the victim did not

suffer serious injuries because the scissors had rounded ends that did not penetrate the skin. The victim and other employees left the building and waited outside until Chico police officers arrived and arrested Leeson.

During questioning, officers found that Leeson had written a to-do list that morning that included "Kill Tim" and "Kill Autumn," both co-workers, according to prosecutors. Leeson told officers he believed the station operated as a front for a child sex trafficking ring. He also told officers he had been abused as a child and believed killing the victim would bring him closure.

Before entering his plea, Leeson requested mental health diversion. After an examination, a superior court judge found Leeson had a mental health history but denied diversion based on the seriousness of the offense. ★

## Stolen Motorcycle Found in Driveway

By MPG Staff

**OROVILLE, CA (MPG)** - Paul Seim, 33, of Oroville, was arrested Feb. 25 by Butte County Sheriff's Office deputies on suspicion of possessing a stolen motorcycle, possessing ammunition as a prohibited

person and committing a

felony while on release. Deputies conducted a search at about 7:43 a.m. in the 900 block of Plumas Avenue in accordance with Seim's pre-trial supervision terms.

During the search, deputies located ammunition

in Seim's bedroom. Authorities also found a motorcycle in the driveway that was confirmed stolen.

Seim is prohibited from possessing ammunition. Deputies transported him to the Butte County Jail, where he was booked without incident. ★

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### Precision is Key to Reducing Antibiotic Use on Dairies

When cows develop mastitis—inflammation of a cow's udder—dairies often respond with immediate antibiotic treatment. That approach has long protected animal health and milk production. But research suggests treating every case the same way may not always be necessary. Christian Bernal-Córdoba, a veterinarian and graduate researcher at the University of California, Davis, said the discussion around antibiotics should focus less on cutting use and more on improving precision. "Antibiotics themselves are not the problem," he said. "The problem is how we use them." Rather than emphasizing reduction alone, Bernal-Córdoba said producers should focus on optimizing antibiotic use by applying treatment when it provides clear benefit. At the same time, reducing unnecessary treatments lowers drug costs on the farm, decreases discarded milk during withdrawal periods and reduces time spent managing dairy hospital pens.

### How joining FFA has Impacted its Members

Current and former members of FFA, formerly known as Future Farmers of America, from across California shared how the student-led organization has affected their lives in a special Ag Alert® series. "My biggest misconception about agriculture before joining FFA was that only farmers can be involved and have a career in this industry," said Ella Rolland, an FFA member at East Nicholas High School in Sutter County. "Since joining

FFA, I've been exposed to many career paths that allow us to serve others and support the industry that feeds and protects the world every day." Destiny Reyes, a Stanislaus County college student and recent FFA member, said she has the organization to thank for some of her closest friends. Brendan Black, a Tulare County agriculture teacher, said he chose his career path "purely off of my FFA experience." And Timmy Klittich, a Ventura County nursery operator and former FFA member, said his participation in the organization "was where I started to learn real leadership skills."

### FFA President Shares What Leadership Has Taught Her

Lily Vaughan, the 2025-26 California FFA state president, reflected on what it means to lead the youth organization in an Ag Alert® commentary. "I joined FFA my freshman year for a practical reason. While I didn't grow up immersed in agriculture, my family began raising and showing market hogs for the county fair when I was in middle school. I wanted to continue showing market hogs, which meant enrolling in an agriculture biology class and officially joining the Las Plumas FFA chapter," Vaughan said. "Serving as California FFA state president has taught me that leadership is deeply personal. It is not about having the fanciest resume or the most impressive title. On the hardest days, leadership means asking for help and admitting when I cannot give my best. It means leaning on my team, my adviser and the people who reminded me that I was never meant to do this alone." ★

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# Butte County Dispatch Logs 3,557 Calls in February

By Lloyd Green Jr.

**BUTTE COUNTY, CA (MPG)** - Butte County dispatchers handled nearly 3,600 calls for service in February, according to data released March 1.

The report shows a total of 3,557 calls into dispatch during the month.

Of those, 712 were classified as Priority 1 calls, which include 911 emergencies requiring an immediate response.

Dispatch also recorded 544 Priority 2 calls, defined as incidents that require an immediate response but are not considered life threatening.

Another 634 calls were categorized as Priority 3, which are non-immediate response incidents.

The largest category was Priority 4 calls, totaling 1,667. These calls generally involve routine responses such as traffic stops or other non-emergency service requests. ★

# Gridley Man Arrested on Child Pornography Charges

By MPG Staff

**GRIDLEY, CA (MPG)** - Gridley police arrested a 65-year-old man Feb. 12 on felony charges related to possession of child pornography following a months long investigation.

Darren Anderson of Gridley was booked into the Butte County Jail after officers obtained an arrest warrant, according to the Gridley Police Department.

Police said the investigation began in October 2025 when staff at the Gridley Post-Acute Center reported seeing inappropriate material on several of Anderson's electronic devices. Officers



secured a search warrant and later obtained judicial authorization to conduct a forensic examination of the devices.

During that examination, a detective located hundreds of images of child pornography, police said.

Authorities said the investigation remains active and anyone with additional information about the case may contact the Gridley Police Department. ★

# Chico Man Sentenced in Fatal Fight

By MPG Staff

**CHICO, CA (MPG)** - A Chico man was sentenced to 17 years in state prison for the killing of his roommate during a fight inside their shared apartment in May 2024.

Hunter Harris, 30, pleaded guilty last month to voluntary manslaughter with use of a deadly weapon and admitted a prior serious felony conviction. The conviction stems from the death of Austin Robert

Olson-Swanick, 29, on May 26, 2024.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said Chico police detectives investigated the case after the two men, who were staying in an apartment in the 2500 block of the Esplanade with several others, became involved in a fight that morning.

Surveillance video showed the confrontation began with a verbal dispute outside the apartment. Olson-Swanick led Harris outside and punched him at least once, according to prosecutors.

After a brief physical altercation, both men returned inside and separated for a short time.

A second fight broke out inside the apartment. During that altercation, Harris struck Olson-Swanick in the head and shoulder several times with a golf club putter. The putter head broke off and the broken shaft punctured Olson-Swanick's neck. Prosecutors said Olson-Swanick died from severe blood loss caused by the puncture wound.

Ramsey said Harris fled the scene after the assault. Chico police located and arrested him about two hours later. ★

# Democratic Angst and Gerrymandering Threaten California's Political Reforms



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

Turmoil within the California Democratic Party over this year's election for governor and fallout from the party's naked grab of congressional seats could have long-term effects, undoing two important political reforms — the top-two primary system and redistricting by an independent commission.

The turmoil is over having nine Democratic candidates for governor, creating the possibility that two Republicans could finish one-two in the June 2 primary, thus resulting in a GOP governor being elected in November.

A recent Public Policy Institute of California poll of voters found that Republicans Steve Hilton (14%) and Chad Bianco (12%) are 1st and 3rd in support, with Katie Porter (13%) the leading Democrat, followed by Eric Swalwell (11%) and Tom Steyer (10%). The other six Democrats are all 5% or less.

Filing for the primary ballot closes this week, and Rusty Hicks, the Democratic state chairman, is publicly pleading for lower tier Democrats to drop out and thus reduce chances of a 1-2 GOP finish.

This week, in a public letter, Hicks said a 1-2 GOP primary outcome may be implausible, but "it is not impossible, and I know we are collectively committed to taking the steps required to avoid that possibility."

So far, none of the bottom six has volunteered to quit. The angst is likely to fuel efforts to do away with the top-two system and return to closed party primaries, thereby eliminating any possibility of a future backdoor Republican win.

Neither party liked the top-two system when it was proposed during a stalemate on the state budget in 2009. Republican Sen. Abel Maldonado, backed by then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, said he'd vote for the budget only if Democrats placed the top-two system on the ballot, arguing that it would reduce polarization.

Democrats caved and Proposition 14, creating the system, was approved by voters in 2010. Given their dislike of the top-two system in the first place and what happened this year, it's highly likely Democratic leaders will seek to eliminate it.

Leaders of both parties also disliked it when Charles Munger Jr., a wealthy Stanford University scientist, proposed the state shift the redrawing of legislative and congressional districts away from the Legislature to an independent commission. Munger, backed by Schwarzenegger, contended it would end self-serving gerrymanders.

A Munger-financed ballot measure in 2008, Proposition 11, created the commission for legislative districts, and in 2010 Proposition 20 extended the commission to congressional districts. The commission drew new maps after the 2010 and 2020 censuses.

Last year, however, to counter a Texas effort to shift five congressional seats from Democrats to Republicans, Gov. Gavin Newsom proposed and voters passed Proposition 50. It

gerrymanders California's 52 congressional districts to gain at least five Democratic seats this year.

Newsom said the gerrymander was needed to blunt President Donald Trump's efforts to skew the 2026 congressional election. Newsom promised that the radically revised districts would last for only three election cycles, and the commission system would return after the 2030 census.

But will it?

Let's assume that the gerrymander gives Democrats five more California seats, creating a 48-4 partisan split. California is destined to lose at least four and perhaps five seats in total after the 2030 census, due to population stagnation. Nationally, blue states such as California and New York will lose congressional seats to faster-growing red states such as Florida and Texas.

Restoring the commission system could reduce Democratic ranks by as many as 10 seats, since the state's more conservative interior counties are outpacing the liberal coastal region in population growth.

For all of these reasons, California Democratic leaders will be under tremendous pressure from the national party — and the Democrats who won seats in 2026 — to minimize losses. They can only do that by eliminating the commission and returning redistricting power to a Democratic-controlled Legislature.

*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. ★*

# Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



## A Win Over Chicago

Well Kings fans, with a 15-50 record and a paltry 17 games to go, is there reason to celebrate the Kings?

If your name is Russell Westbrook there is! Helping the Kings to a 126-110 win over the Chicago Bulls Sunday night at Golden One Arena, Westbrook put on a show with his record setting 208th triple double of his NBA career.

It will likely not be the last, perhaps not even the last this season, so yes, there is reason to celebrate.

For the faithful that turned out to see a spirited Kings team take the court, you were treated to a combination of young and old, as youngsters like Maxime Renauld put up 26 big points to go with 11 boards, and Daeqwon Plowden got his first start of the season adding 16 points of his own.

Once again, Sunday night's win proved when inspired this team can not only put up points but play together. Although the Kings allowed far too many layups throughout the game, overall, they played a complete game and never allowed the Bulls to think they had a chance at winning.

It was the kind of win Kings fans have been hungry for, and it bodes well for the future.

Of course, much depends on how this team finishes and how the ping pong balls bounce. Without question, the Sacramento Kings will secure a very high round draft choice. My hope is that Scott Perry has his sights set on A.J. Dybantsa from the Utah Cougars. At age 19 and already at 6'9", A.J. could very well still be growing, and the Kings are in sore need of players that can play the four and five position.

Dybantsa recently made headlines when he scored 20 or more points for the 24th time this season. Without question he can score, and the Kings need to look no further than A. J. if this talented young man is still available when their first-round selection occurs.

You will hear much debate on this issue, as many pundits and fans have been extolling the virtues of Darryn Peterson from the University of Kansas. At 6'6"

Darryn is unquestionably a great college player and ranked No. 1, but he represents another guard on a team that is in desperate need of front court depth.

The other candidate is 6'9" Cameron Boozer of Duke University, and it's hard to find fault in that selection. Cameron is the son of former NBA great Carlos Boozer, and at 6'9" and 250 pounds and only a freshman in college, this young man portends to be a carbon copy of his old man.

So, for this writer's draft picks in order, it would be A.J. Dybantsa, Cameron Boozer and then probably draft and trade Darryn Peterson.

The real question is will the Kings have the opportunity of drafting in the No. 1, 2, or 3 position?

Anyone's guess, but with just 17 games to go the interest is heating up, and how these three plays in the upcoming NCAA tournament will likely tell the story of how they will be drafted.

For me, the good news is that the Kings discovered Precious Achiuwa and Dylan Cardwell, and these two big men need to be coveted, not traded. Both big bodies are what Domantas Sabonis has been waiting for and with the likely addition of a high and capable draft choice just around the corner, fans are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

I would be remiss if not to mention the stellar play of one Malik Monk who led the team over the Bulls with 30 points off the bench. This stevedore of the hardwood deserves a chorus of at-a-boys for the professional way he has handled his business this season. A constant topic of trade all season long, Malik has been the bastion of how a pro goes about his business, and I for one hope to Malik in a Kings uniform next season.

Once again, we need to hear talk of third man of the year and look for Monk to be the first player off the bench each game.

Keep the faith Kings fans, because this team is about to undergo a facelift, and with it a team that gives Kings fans playoff tickets every year.

*All the best!*

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### ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME

THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter shall appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing April 22, 2026, 9:00 a.m. Department TBD, Room TBD, Superior Court of California, County of Butte, North County Courthouse 1775 Concord Avenue Chico, CA 95928

Filed on February 26, 2026  
Stephen E. Benson, Judge of the Superior Court  
Publish: March 13, 20, 27, April 3, 2026  
VAGDARYTE 4-3-26

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA  
COUNTY OF BUTTE

### ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE CHANGE OF NAME

Petitioner Jordan Smith filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows: Jordan Smith to Jordan Simmons.

THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter shall appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing May 6, 2026, 1:30 p.m. Department TBD, Room TBD, Superior Court of California, County of Butte, North County Courthouse 1775 Concord Avenue Chico, CA 95928

Filed on February 20, 2026  
Stephen E. Benson, Judge of the Superior Court

Publish: March 13, 20, 27, April 3, 2026  
SMITH 4-3-26

### NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE

NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF KELLY L. MOORE AKA KELLEY MOORE AKA KELLY LYNN MOORE AKA KELLY MOORE AKA KELLEY L. MOORE

CASE NO. 26PR00055  
To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, and contingent creditors of and persons who may be otherwise interested in the will or estate of Kelly L. Moore aka Kelley Moore aka Kelly Lynn Moore aka Kelly Moore aka Kelley L. Moore. A Petition for Probate has been filed by Jaime Pagano, in the Superior Court of California, County of Butte, requesting Jaime Pagano be appointed as personal representative(s) to administer the estate of the decedent.

The petition requests the decedent's will and codicils, if any, be admitted to probate. The will and

any codicils are available for examination in the file kept by the court.

The petition requests authority to administer the estate under the Independent Administration of Estates Act. (This authority will allow the executor to take many actions without obtaining court approval. Before taking certain very important actions, however, the executor will be required to give notice to interested persons unless they have waived notice or have consented to the proposed action.) The independent administration authority will be granted unless an interested person files an objection to the petition and shows good cause why the court should not grant the authority.

A hearing on the petition will be held in this court as follows: April 14, 2026, 9:00 a.m. in Dept Probate, Room TBD, Superior Court of California, County of Butte, 1775 Concord Avenue, Chico, CA 95928.

IF YOU OBJECT to the granting of the petition, you should

appear at the hearing and state your objections or file written objections with the court before the hearing. Your appearance may be in person or by your attorney.

IF YOU ARE A CREDITOR or a contingent creditor of the deceased, you must file your claim with the court and mail a copy to the personal representative appointed by the court within the later of either (1) four months from the date of first issuance of letters to a general personal representative, as defined in section 58(b) of the California Probate Code, or (2) 60 days from the date of mailing or personal delivery to you of a notice under section 9052 of the California Probate Code. Other California statutes and legal authority may affect your rights as a creditor. You may want to consult with an attorney knowledgeable in California law.

YOU MAY EXAMINE the file kept by the court. If you are interested in the estate, you may file with the court a Request for Special Notice (form DE-154) of

the filing of an inventory and appraisal of estate assets or of any petition or account as provided in Probate Code section 1250. A Request for Special Notice form is available from the court clerk. The name, address and telephone number of the Attorney for Petitioner is: William G. Apper, 1600 Humboldt Road, Suite 4, Chico, CA 95928; 530-680-6511  
Publish: March 13, 20, 27, April 3, 2026  
MOORE 4-3-26

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# Luther/Encinal Elementary Squad Owns the Court in Donkey Basketball

By YSBC Sports

**LIVE OAK, CA (YSBC)** - The Live Oak High School Future Farmers of America (FFA) hosted a fundraiser that mixed animals and athletics in the same field on March 6 as Donkey Basketball took over the campus.

There was a four-team tournament from within the Live Oak community that consisted of Luther/Encinal Elementary, Live Oak Middle School, Live Oak High School and the FFA.

The donkeys were the show of the night as four riders from each team saddled up and hopped on the back of the donkey.

There was a designated player on the court, who was able to throw in-bounds passes throughout the court and the main



The Luther/Encinal Elementary team won the Donkey Basketball tournament on March 6 at Live Oak High School. Photo by Steven Bryla

rule of all was a player could not go after a ball without being within leash distance of their rider.

The Luther/Encinal won the trophy as they knocked

out the middle school in the first game and defeated the high school in the eight-minute finale.

This was the first time that the Luther/

Encinal squad has ever won a match in Donkey Basketball.

There was a brief intermission throughout the night where anyone in



Riders from opposing teams reach for the ball during a game of Donkey Basketball hosted by Live Oak High School FFA on March 6 in Ron Pritchard Gym. The community fundraiser featured teams from Luther/Encinal Elementary, Live Oak Middle School, Live Oak High School and FFA. Photo by Steven Bryla

attendance had the opportunity to pet the animals and give them some extra love.

For more sports coverage on local schools, visit [ysbcsports.com](http://ysbcsports.com) today. ★

# Field of Dreams or Reality? Gridley Little League Needs More Space

By Seti Long

**GRIDLEY, CA (MPG)** - A worsening problem for Gridley as the population base grows is the availability of recreational space for its youth, especially youth sports.

In past years, parks and recreation directors have approached the City Council, addressing the difficulty of finding more practice spaces for teams during soccer season. As Gridley Little League begins practice, those challenges continue.

With only one field dedicated to softball and two others for farm and major fields, excluding the T-ball backstop, Manuel Vierra Park struggles to sustain Gridley Little League teams alone.

Coaches and teams find creative alternatives, such as

Christian Life Church on Humble Avenue, which has been gracious enough to let them use its space.

To remedy that, locals have looked to other spaces.

Gridley High School sits on the property line of the Butte County Fairgrounds. Fairgrounds CEO Matt Reed recently said that Amanda Schohr and Brett Rogers are spearheading a project that could potentially create a new practice space for softball players.

“Gridley Little League is utilizing what we call the livestock parking lot or rugby lot,” said Reed.

“At some point, probably in the early '90s, it was used as some sort of baseball diamond,” Reed said.

Reed said that Schohr and Rogers applied for a grant through

the Aaron Rogers Foundation on Monday, March 2, using the Butte County Fairgrounds 501(c)(3) nonprofit since the location is on fairgrounds property.

“There is a really good opportunity for them to receive those fundings and be able to improve that,” said Reed in regard to the potential new play space.

Reed shared that the fairgrounds have applied for a security and safety grant through Cal OES for state and federal funding and plan to install \$150,000 worth of lighting projects throughout the fairgrounds.

Reed said the lighting will be installed throughout all areas of the fairgrounds, including at the hoped-for baseball diamond.

The addition of a well-lit playing field would be a boon for local athletes. ★



As Gridley Little League begins a new season, it faces the familiar challenges of finding enough practice spaces for teams to play. Photo by publicdomainpictures via Pixabay



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