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Gold River Messenger

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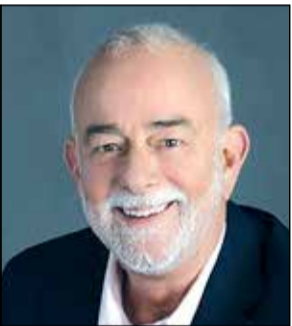
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By Mary Jane Popp



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Dale and Miss Elaine engage with their audience during a magic show. Photo courtesy of Dale Lorz

By Abbey Wicks

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Magicians Dale and Elaine Lorz are taking their magic to the Sacramento Scottish Rite, 6151 H St., on April 17 for a Kids Carnival and Magic Show fundraiser benefiting children's communication.

The family-friendly event will offer food, games, community connection and Dale Lorz's Magic Miracles following a casual dinner. The magician, joined by Miss Elaine, has taken his talents across Sacramento performing for seniors, schools and community



Dale Lorz pulling a rabbit out of a top hat. Photo courtesy of Dale Lorz

events for more than 50 years. The Lorzos' show involves audience participation, humor and

good-old fashioned magic. The duo are members of the Carmichael Chamber of Commerce, with Dale

previously serving on the board of directors. The Lorzos are also members of the Society of American Magicians, the International Brotherhood of Magicians and the Academy of Magical Arts.

"Magic is fun and that's what this whole thing is about, putting a smile on your face and make your day bigger, brighter and happier," said Dale. "The same thing that the language center does is make kids smile who are maybe shy and because they can't communicate. And then after awhile they can carry a conversation."

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Hoover Introduces Legislation to Protect Historic West Steps

Assemblyman Josh Hoover News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - On Feb.23, Assemblyman Josh Hoover (R-Folsom) announced the introduction of Assembly Bill 2445, which would prohibit the demolition of the historic State Capitol West Steps and bring much needed transparency to the Capitol Annex Project by voiding existing non-disclosure agreements (NDAs).

"Taxpayers deserve to know the true cost of the Capitol Annex," Assemblyman Hoover said. "Unfortunately, NDAs have allowed the project to be shrouded in secrecy for far too long. This bill will restore transparency and public trust in taxpayer-funded infrastructure projects."

Under current law, a visitor center is slated to replace the historic West Steps at the California State Capitol. AB 2445 would prohibit the demolition of the West Steps for this purpose and require any future visitor center to be placed elsewhere on Capitol grounds. The bill would also void existing NDAs involving the Capitol Annex Project and prohibit NDAs for future public infrastructure projects funded by taxpayer dollars.

"For generations the West Steps of the State Capitol have been a place where all Californians, regardless of background, have come to petition their government and make their voices heard," Hoover added. "It's imperative that we preserve the historic West Steps for future generations."

In November, Assemblymembers Josh Hoover and Joe Patterson sent a letter to Governor Gavin Newsom asking for his help in ensuring a full accounting of the \$1.1 billion taxpayer dollars that are allocated to be spent on the Capitol Annex Project. One month later the Joint Assembly Rules Committee released a "State Capitol Annex Project Construction Update," the first formal public update since 2021. Hoover criticized this update as "insufficient" following investigative reports by KCRA highlighting an ongoing lack of transparency.

Josh Hoover represents Assembly District 7. ★

WE SUPPORT OUR MILITARY

Braille Production Program Supports Local Business

Society for the Blind News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Nonprofit Society for the Blind in Sacramento is encouraging local businesses and organizations to produce materials in braille for their blind and low vision clients through its braille production program. Since acquiring the Sacramento Braille Transcribers' services in late 2022, Society for the Blind's braille production program has taken on a wide range of companies and organizations who want to ensure their clients who are blind and low vision have the same access to information as those who are sighted.

"It's a win-win because more people who are blind and low vision have access to needed materials in real time, and companies see

Continued on page 3



Jill Guilbeau, manager of Society for the Blind's braille production program, creates a brailled document using the Braillo2 machine in the Sacramento office. Photo courtesy of Society for the Blind



Scan our QR Code for a direct link to our online edition!

PRESORTED STD.
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT 350
Carmichael, CA
OR CURRENT
POSTAL CUSTOMER

National Summit on Volunteer Engagement Comes to Sacramento

Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement (ALIVE) News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Professionals who work with volunteers are invited to gather in California's beautiful capital city this spring for the 2026 National Summit on Volunteer Engagement, hosted by the Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement (ALIVE). The Summit takes place March 18 to 20 at the Sacramento Marriott Rancho Cordova.

The National Summit brings together nonprofit, government, higher education and corporate leaders in volunteerism and service from across the country for three days of inspiration, learning and connection. Whether participants are new to volunteer engagement or seasoned professionals, the summit offers practical tools, innovative ideas and meaningful relationships that strengthen volunteer programs, community impact and reminds them they are not alone in this deeply meaningful work.

Attendees will have opportunities to ignite their passion through inspiring speakers who are trailblazers in volunteer engagement; sharpen their skills by participating in interactive, hands-on workshops packed with practical strategies; connect and collaborate through fun networking opportunities with peers across industries

and sectors; and experience exciting surprises, with special sessions and activities to be announced in the coming months

For registration details, hotel booking information, and ongoing updates, visit www.volunteeralive.org/summit.php.

About ALIVE
The Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement (ALIVE) exists to champion the people who make volunteerism possible. We unite leaders across the country who are shaping how volunteers are welcomed, supported and celebrated in their communities. Through shared learning, advocacy and a collaborative network, ALIVE equips professionals to strengthen organizations and expand the impact of volunteer-powered work. Learn more at volunteeralive.org. ALIVE is a volunteer-powered organization. With one full-time staff member, please allow seven days for a response.

"Volunteer engagement professionals are the backbone of thriving communities," said Shelli Beck, ALIVE Board Summit Committee Chair. "This summit is designed to energize their work, celebrate their impact and equip them with tools they can use immediately."

Community partners, nonprofits, service organizations and local agencies are encouraged to share this opportunity with staff and volunteers who support or manage volunteer programs. ★

Magic Show to Benefit Children

Continued from page 1

The RiteCare Scottish Rite Childhood Language Program (SRCLP) is dedicated to helping preschool aged children who have difficulty speaking or understanding the spoken word or school-age children who have difficulty learning to read. By supporting children who may have remained educationally behind, these children can now thrive and lead productive lives alongside their peers. All services are available regardless of



race, religion or income.

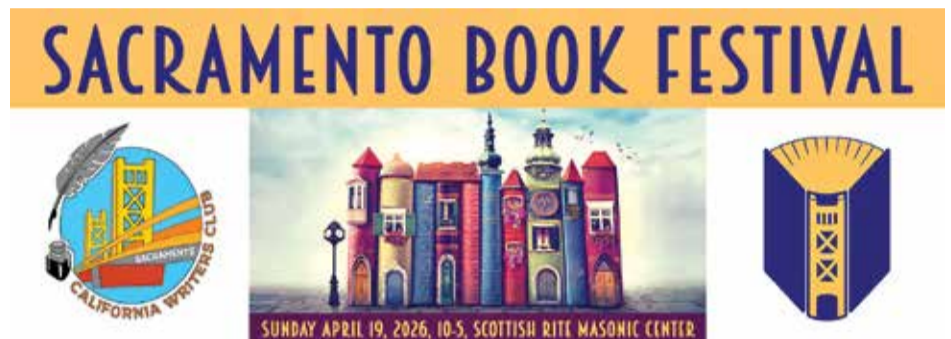
Suggested donations for the event are \$25 for adults and \$15 for children. Net proceeds benefit the RiteCare Childhood Language Center of

Sacramento. To secure tickets, visit: www.casrf.org/event-details/ritecare-childhood-language-center-of-sacramento-kids-carnival-magic-show.

For more information on the Sacramento RiteCare Language Center or to donate, visit www.casrf.org/sacramento.

To learn more about Lorzo's Magical Mysteries, visit www.dalelorzomagic.com or call 916-481-2595. ★

Book Festival Returns in April



Sacramento Book Festival News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - On April 19, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., the California Writers Club Sacramento Branch will launch the third annual Sacramento Book Festival at the Scottish Rite Masonic Center in River Park, just north of the Sacramento State University campus.

The festival will feature over 200 local authors, selling books for people of all ages, performing readings, participating in panels and introducing themselves to Sacramento readers. The roster includes many literary luminaries, including Kim Stanley Robinson, Wendelin Van Draanen, Gail Carriger, James Rollins and Allison Brennan, plus many others whom Sacramento readers will

recognize and enjoy.

As part of the festival's focus on literacy, the Sacramento Book Festival is running a book drive for activity books for the Mustard Seed School (a program of Loaves & Fishes), a free private school for children ages 3-15 years old who are currently homeless.

Sacramento Book Festival will welcome the Sacramento Literacy Foundation to the event; an organization whose mission is to help all children in our community read at grade level.

There will be activities for children, author readings, food trucks and coffee vendors on site, and a passport stamp hunt with prizes. And best of all, the event is free to the public.

For more information, visit www.sacramentobookfestival.com/. ★



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Gold River
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Same-day care for same-day needs.

When life moves fast, your health care should keep up. Dignity Health offers convenient same-day care throughout Greater Sacramento—including Express Primary Care in Elk Grove and Roseville, and Urgent Care in Midtown Sacramento and Woodland. Whether you need relief from minor illness, a routine checkup, symptom management, or a flu shot, our providers are here to help you feel better, faster.

Visit Express Primary Care

Go to Urgent Care

Get in, get seen, and get on with your busy day.
Visit dignityhealth.org/get-care-today to schedule an appointment. Same-day care facilities are a service of Dignity Health Medical Foundation.

Braille Production Program Supports Local Business

Continued from page 1

increased business for providing their customers with accessible store and product information,” said Shari Roeseler, executive director, Society for the Blind. “As we talk to more potential clients, we’re hearing the same thing: We would love to offer braille documents, but where would we get it done? That’s where we come in.”

Society for the Blind’s braille production program produces playbills for the Sacramento Theatre Company, menus for restaurants, newsletters for the Braille and Talking Book Library, and lessons and textbooks for school districts, including math, history, foreign language, science and music.

“Most people don’t understand how involved it is to create braille documents,” Roeseler said. “Transcribers must have a specific certification in Unified English Braille. They also must be certified in specific braille codes to produce documents related to math, science, music, foreign language and more. Proofreading requires additional years of experience. Fortunately, our program has a full complement of skills and certifications to make this an easy process for our clients.”

The program has approximately 15 transcribers on contract with a wide variety of expertise and certification. Program staff reviews each new project and provides a quote to create the electronic braille file and produce the embossed documents.

This year, the organization is reaching out to chambers of commerce and local businesses, including more restaurants who need braille menus for their customers, organizations that produce directories and manuals, construction companies who need braille signage proofread, and museums and art galleries that could provide braille signage for permanent exhibitions.

Society for the Blind provides its clients with a list of local restaurants and businesses that produce braille items, encouraging them to patronize those companies. To request a quote: <https://societyfortheblind.org/programs-services/braille-production/the-braille-production-training-program/>.

For 72 years, Sacramento-based Society for the Blind has continued to create innovative ways to empower individuals living with low vision or blindness to discover, develop and achieve their full potential. Society for the Blind provides low-vision eye care, life and job skills training, mentorship, and access to tools to maintain independence for more than 5,000 youth, working-age adults and seniors experiencing vision loss each year. Since 1954, Society for the Blind has grown from a dedicated group of volunteers to a nationally recognized agency and the only comprehensive rehabilitative teaching center that provides services for a 27-county region of Northern California. Learn more or donate: www.SocietyfortheBlind.org. ★

Foot Health Helps More Than Just Your Feet

By Chiropractic Offices of Dr. Stirton

The foot is one of the most specialized groups of joints in the human body.

I am Dr. James Stirton, chiropractor at Winters Chiropractic and I have been treating feet nearly my entire 25-year career. The foot has one of the most complex functions and responsibilities in human locomotion; not only supporting us as we stand on various surfaces, but also in navigating various responsibilities during the stages of gait.

The foot must support our body through three stages of gait, namely, heel strike, mid-stance and toe off. On heel strike four times the body weight on average impacts the ground so the foot must be rigid to handle that impact, but it translates all the impact into our knee, hip and back. As you move forward onto the foot, the foot loosens and becomes flexible to navigate the various terrain it is on. In the final stage of toe off, the foot must become rigid again as the weight of the body is born on the big toe.

The foot has three specialized structures called arches which act like a bridge as they support the weight of our body on the toes’ pads and the heel. These arches must be healthy to effectively distribute and absorb the forces impacting the body as you step through the different stages of gait. Approximately 80 percent of the forces going into our body are coming from the feet. A failure of the arches to absorb the impact and distribute our body weight appropriately creates a lot of injuries to our feet, knees, hips and the back. The failing arch or arches are known as flat feet but technically it’s a hyper-pronation of the foot.

Foot hyper-pronation can result in a variety of conditions affecting just the foot like bunions, hammer toes, foot calluses, as well as more significant problems like plantar fasciitis, tibial band syndrome, hip and back strain and even scoliosis. The bad effects of fallen arches are amplified by the rigidity of our footwear, poor arch support in those shoes, as well as the hard surfaces we spend most of our time on like concrete and asphalt. It is of the utmost importance we support our arches throughout our lifetime to reduce and protect against these damages.

There are effective modern science-based strategies to help protect your feet and body

over your lifetime. It is never too late to start. My office protocol includes treating patients’ feet. We use one of the experienced and best in diagnostic computerized analysis equipment to scan patient’s feet to determine the level of loss of arch integrity and height to determine how significant a patient’s foot hyper-pronation is.

The company our office uses produces prescription foot orthotics for my patients because research shows up to 34 percent of back pain sufferers noticed no or reduced lower back pain after the initial use of foot orthotics. The use of foot orthotics reduces most if not all symptoms related to failure of the arches. These specific functional orthotics also help strengthen the intrinsic muscles of the feet around improved and corrected arch of the patient.

In addition to supporting the arches through orthotics, we also manipulate the joints of the foot as many of those patients have fixated foot joints related to the fallen arches. We prescribe foot stretches and exercises to bolster the results.

One thing I prescribe often is yoga. Yoga really helps stretch and strengthen the muscles of the foot and ankle. Another regular piece of advice is freezing a 12-ounce water bottle and using it as a massage roller on the bottom of your foot. It helps at the end of a long day if you have regular foot pain.

To strengthen your foot muscles, I often advise dragging a towel across the floor with your toes. In any case, if you have questions or concerns about your foot health we invite you to call our office for a consultation and would be happy to determine what’s best for your health. If you’re not certain ask Dr. Stirton DC. To learn more about American River Chiropractic and its services, call 916-776-6362.

About James Stinton

Since graduating from Life Chiropractic College West at the top of his class and attaining magna cum laude, Dr. Stirton has dedicated his 25-year career to mastering the most effective science-based techniques and protocols which are shown not only to add years to his patient’s lives, but life and vitality to those years. Most patients consider their time with Dr. Stirton well spent in the pursuit of their health and longevity with many seeing the best version of themselves within a few months. ★

American River Flood Control District Names Officers

American River Flood Control District News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - The American River Flood Control District elected officers to its Board of Directors and made appointments to represent the district at local flood control committees at its recent organizational meeting.

The officers elected for 2026 are: Rae Vander Werf, President; Steven Maviglio, Vice President; Tim Crush, Treasurer, and Brian Holloway, Secretary. The Board also made appointments to its committees on Personnel and Benefits, Policy/Government Affairs,

Finance, Public Engagement and an ad hoc committee on encampments.

In addition, Brian Holloway and Steve Johns were named as representatives of the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA).

The American River Flood Control District has been providing flood protection to the citizens of the Sacramento community for over 75 years. Formed by an act of the State Legislature in 1927, its mission is to protect the citizens in our District by maintaining the 40 miles of levees along the American River and portions of Steelhead, Arcade, Dry and Magpie Creeks. ★

Area Museums Offer Activations for Homeschoolers

Sacramento Area Museums News Release

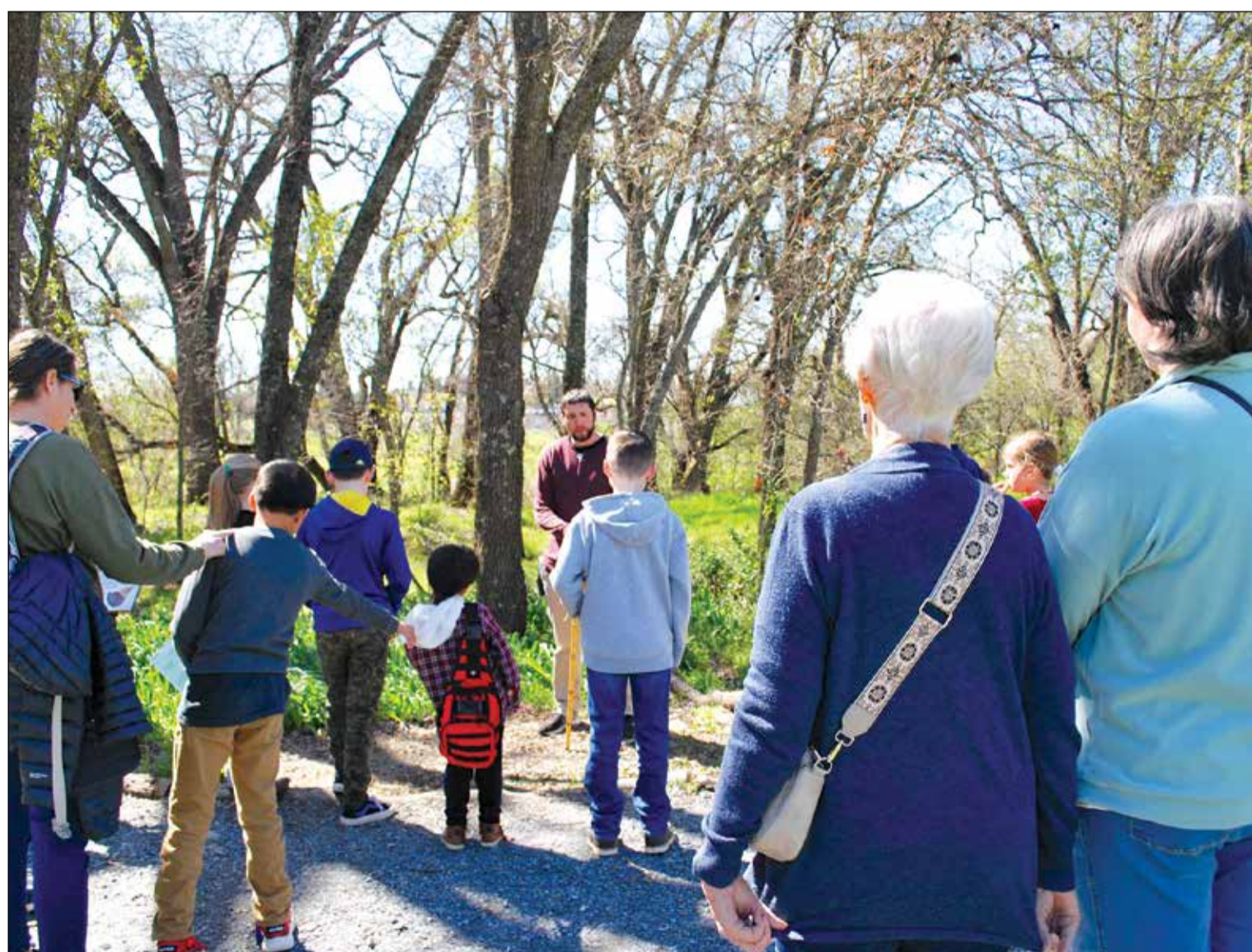
SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Sacramento area museums are proud to amplify learning by offering education related activations and opportunities all year long. Plus, at various times throughout the year, many museums offer special Homeschool Days with dedicated programming designed to support local students and families.

A sampling of Homeschool Days and related offerings at local museums in 2026 includes the following:

California State Railroad Museum – Always popular among homeschool students and their families, the Railroad Museum presents a Homeschool Day each fall with specially designed programming. Typically held in mid-October, the day features hands-on stations located throughout the museum. While the engaging educational activities are designed for K-6 students, everyone is welcome. Stay tuned for more details to follow at a later date via the museum’s website: www.californiarailroad.museum/.

Crocker Art Museum – Special Homeschool Days are planned for March 19, April 16 and May 21, from noon to 2 p.m. each day. The drop-in program allows groups to structure their own experience – at their own pace, in the order they choose – while in community with other homeschoolers. Students follow a customized map that highlights gallery and studio spaces where docents, educators and teaching artists are ready with a discussion or activity centered around that day’s theme then are welcome to stay after the program to explore more of the museum.

Maidu Museum & Historic Site – Recommended for students K-6, a Homeschool



Sacramento area museums are proud to amplify learning by offering education related activations and opportunities all year long, especially for homeschooled students and their families. Photo courtesy of the Maidu Museum & Historic Site

Open House is scheduled for May 19 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Homeschool students can explore and connect with the Indigenous history of this region plus enjoy hands-on crafts and activities (like spear throwing and acorn pounding), take a short tour, and enjoy Indigenous stories throughout the event. Additional details and a complete schedule is available via www.roseville.ca.us/government/departments/library/maidu_museum_historic_site/events_exhibits. Advance registration is required: anc.apm.

activecommunities.com/city-ofroseville/activity/search/detail/14269?onlineSiteId=0&from_online_cui=true.

Sacramento History Museum – Following a well-attended event earlier this year, the museum is proud to host another Homeschool Day on from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Nov. 4. The museum will offer scheduled programs for homeschool students (Print Shop, Heading West), drop-in programs (Museum Scavenger Hunt, History Mystery, Nisenan, Gold Rush, Gold Panning), and

student Underground Tours. For tickets, schedule and more information, please visit: sachistorymuseum.org/field-trips/home-school-programs-2/.

For more information about Sacramento Area Museums, follow on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/SacMuseums, Instagram and X @SacMuseums or visit www.SacMuseums.org.

About Sacramento Area Museums (SAM)

Comprised of approximately 25 greater Sacramento area

museums, Sacramento Area Museums’ mission is to raise awareness of local museums by giving the community the opportunity to discover the region’s fine art, history, science and wildlife treasures. Sacramento Area Museums achieves its mission by implementing cooperative promotions, developing strategic marketing alliances and encouraging the sharing of knowledge and resources among its partner institutions. For more information, visit www.SacMuseums.org. ★

Snowpack Remains Below Average Despite February Boost

California Department of Water Resources News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)

- The Department of Water Resources (DWR) recently conducted the third snow survey of the season at Phillips Station. The manual survey recorded 28 inches of snow depth and a snow water equivalent of 11 inches, which is 47 percent of average for this location. The snow water equivalent measures the amount of water contained in the snowpack and is a key component of the Department of Water Resources' water supply forecast. Statewide, the snowpack is 66 percent of average for this date.

The snow survey results show an increase from last month's measurements following a series of cold, major snow-producing storms that ended a five-week dry period. Unfortunately, the recent storms were not enough to get the state back to average conditions for this time of year. Warmer storms early this week also caused snowmelt at lower elevations.

"Although the storms we saw in mid-February were some of the coldest and best snow-producing storms we have seen since 2023, they were not enough to get us back to average conditions," said Andy Reising, manager of DWR's Snow Surveys and Water Supply Forecasting Unit.

"The snowpack is in better shape than it was one month



The Department of Water Resources (DWR) recently conducted the third snow survey of the season at Phillips Station. The manual survey recorded 28 inches of snow depth and a snow water equivalent of 11 inches, which is 47 percent of average for this location. Photo courtesy of Department of Water Resources

ago, but we only have a month left of our snow-accumulation season and time is rapidly running out to catch up. Statewide, we are only about 57 percent of where we hope to be by April 1."

Storms this season have also been unevenly distributed across the Sierra Nevada. While the Southern Sierra Nevada is 90 percent average for today's date, the Northern Sierra Nevada, where several of the largest major water supply reservoirs are located, is only 46 percent normal for this date.

"Water supply in California increasingly depends on a small

number of big storms," said DWR director Karla Nemeth. "We face higher drought risk when they don't arrive and greater urgency to modernize infrastructure to capture water when they do. The dramatic wet-dry swings this winter remind us again that ever-warmer average temperatures have reshaped the California water cycle. We must adapt."

On average, the largest snow-producing months in the Sierra Nevada are December, January, February and March. Historically, the snowpack peaks on or near April 1, after which the snowpack

transitions to generating runoff into California's rivers and reservoirs.

While the snowpack remains below average, major reservoirs statewide are currently 122 percent of average. State water managers, including the State Water Project, continue to focus on efforts to capture and store as much water as possible. The monthly snow surveys play a critical role in how the State Water Project allocates water each year.

On average, the Sierra snowpack supplies about 30 percent of California's water needs. Its natural ability to store water

is why the Sierra snowpack is often referred to as California's "frozen reservoir." Data from these snow surveys and forecasts produced by DWR's Snow Surveys and Water Supply Forecasting Unit are key factors in determining how DWR manages the state's water resources.

DWR conducts four media-oriented snow surveys at Phillips Station each winter near the first of each month, January through April and, if necessary, May. The next survey is tentatively scheduled for April 1.

For California's current hydrological conditions, visit <https://cww.water.ca.gov>. ★

California Comment on NFIB's Latest Jobs Report

National numbers not reflective of state's below national average on optimism

National Federation of Independent Business News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), monthly Jobs Report released March 5 showed that the Small Business Employment Index ticked up nearly 1 point to 103.5, a 2.3-point increase above the 2025 average of 101.2, and 3.5 points above the historical average of 100.

"Glad to see the positive national numbers holding. Although our Jobs Report is not broken down by state, our new state-specific Small Business Economic Trends report is, and it shows optimism among small business owners here below the national average. This has to change. We recommended some policy changes the Legislature can take to get California back on track and this week released a poll of our California small-business-owning members," said NFIB California State Director John Kabateck.

NFIB's Jobs Report is a national survey of NFIB-member small-business owners, not broken down by state. The NFIB Small Business Employment Index is a new measure of the current state of the small business labor market. The Index integrates actual and planned changes in employment and employee compensation into a singular data



While the overall market remains in balance, employers need more skilled workers to fill open positions. Photo courtesy Freepik

point. A higher Index reflects an overall tighter labor market; a lower Index reflects an overall weaker labor market.

"February's numbers show a growing tightness in the small business labor market. While the overall market remains in balance, employers need more skilled workers to fill open positions," said NFIB Chief Economist

Bill Dunkelberg.

Highlights from the Latest NFIB Jobs Report include the following.

A seasonally adjusted net 12% of owners plan to create new jobs in the next three months, down 4 points from January and the lowest level since May 2025. Despite the decrease, hiring plans are close to their

average of a net 11%.

In February, 15% of small business owners cited labor quality as their single most important problem, down 1 point from January and the fourth consecutive monthly decline. The last time labor quality, reported as the single most important problem, was this low was in April 2020. Labor costs, reported as the single most important problem by small business owners, remained at 9%.

Seasonally adjusted, a net 34% of small business owners reported raising compensation in February, up 2 points from January and the highest level since March 2025. A net 22% (seasonally adjusted) plan to raise compensation in the next three months, unchanged from January.

Keep up with the latest California small business news at www.nfib.com. Follow us on X @NFIB_CA and on Facebook @NFIB.CA.

For over 80 years, NFIB has been advocating on behalf of America's small and independent business owners, both in Washington, D.C., and in all 50 state capitals. NFIB is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, and member-driven association. Since our founding in 1943, NFIB has been exclusively dedicated to small and independent businesses and remains so today. For more information, visit nfib.com. ★

CalHR Named Gallup Exceptional Workplace Award Winner

California Department of Human Resources News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)

- The California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) has been named a 2026 Gallup Exceptional Workplace Award (GEWA) winner for strengths development. The award recognizes organizations that create workplace cultures that help people do their best work.

"As we work to modernize and streamline state government operations, prioritizing employee engagement is not just good practice, it is essential for delivering better services efficiently," said CalHR Director Monica Erickson. "Winning this award affirms our commitment to treating employee engagement as a strategic priority. Our success with strengths development sets a powerful example for how investing in people drives effectiveness across California's government. By helping people work from their strengths, we

improve how CalHR serves state departments and ultimately how the state serves Californians."

CalHR launched its Getting Started With Strengths roll-out in 2025 and embedded CliftonStrengths into onboarding, leadership forums and internal communications. To date, 85 percent of CalHR employees have completed the CliftonStrengths assessment, reflecting strong internal participation. The CliftonStrengths assessment is an online tool from Gallup that helps people discover their natural talents and how they think, feel and act. Based on decades of research, it shows 34 common talent themes.

CliftonStrengths gives individuals and teams a simple way to understand and use their strengths. This supports leadership and professional growth by focusing on what people do best. CalHR has reported measurable gains in employee engagement scores since the program's launch, including: supporting recruitment efforts

with over 150 statewide recruiters providing job information and guidance to more than 3,400 participants across 36 events; enhancing employee benefits customer service through a redesigned website with over 871,000 views and an innovative chatbot that provided timely answers to over 4,500 benefit-related questions, helping employees and their families make informed decisions about their health and financial wellbeing; and delivering 2.5 million hours of training through 225,000 course enrollments to over 100,000 active users, empowering state employees to develop skills and advance their careers

In a public sector environment where employee engagement is often overlooked, CalHR's recognition stands out. Previous Gallup Exceptional Workplace Award Winners for strengths include Charles Schwab, Mercedes-Benz and Mercedes-AMG, Southwest Airlines, U.S. Bank and other multinational companies.

CalHR delivers critical services

that impact the lives and careers of more than 227,000 public employees and 237,000 retirees across California, represented by over 150 state departments. By leading this approach, CalHR is paving the way for other state agencies to harness employee engagement as a driver for improved service delivery statewide.

The initiative was piloted within CalHR and is only available to only CalHR staff. CalHR intends to expand the model to support other state departments in the future and is designing the program to be scalable across the broader state workforce. State of California department leaders who are interested in employee engagement can visit the Employee Engagement webpage for more information at: benefits.calhr.ca.gov/state-employees/engagement-resources/employee-recognition-week/.

For a complete list of GEWA winners, visit: [www.gallup.com/workplace/702278/announcing-2026-gallup-exceptional-](http://www.gallup.com/workplace/702278/announcing-2026-gallup-exceptional-workplace-award-winners.aspx)

[al-workplace-award-winners.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/workplace/702278/announcing-2026-gallup-exceptional-workplace-award-winners.aspx).

Learn more about the awards at www.gallup.com/workplace/329768/gallup-exceptional-workplace-awards.aspx.

About CalHR

CalHR is responsible for all issues related to employee salaries and benefits, job classifications, civil rights, training, exams, recruitment and retention. For most employees, many of these matters are determined through the collective bargaining process managed by CalHR. For more information about CalHR, visit www.calhr.ca.gov/.

About Gallup

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world. For more information, visit www.gallup.com/home.aspx. ★



With Mary Jane Popp

Connect With Yourself

Do you feel burnout in your life? Do you seek calm, clarity, and confidence, but it seems like all this slips away and has you baffled as to why it's happening? Great questions, but now we need answers. **Tracy Doyle** to the rescue. She is an emotional wellness advocate and creator of **The Aurora Method**, and also author of **"Life Storms: Finding Your Clear Sky"**. She actually wants you to connect with YOURSELF! You're probably saying WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? She expressed that we may look put together on the outside, but inside we are drowning in self-doubt and even self-pity. She went through all this herself. She was overwhelmed because she was doing it all by herself, and angry because she never said no. Here she was the CEO of a multi-million-dollar medical communications company, and completely burned out. And it didn't happen all at once. It was gradual until the woman she worked so hard to become was barely recognizable. That experience led her to develop a practical, psychology-informed framework. She named it, as I mentioned earlier, **The Aurora Method** after the Greek goddess of dawn, because no matter how dark life seems, a new beginning is always possible. I suspect her degree in Psychology and counseling kicked in to help herself and others to heal. She shared eight of the practices with me on POPPTALK.

1. **BEST ASSESSMENT:** Pause the blame and begin with honest reflection. This practice helps you recognize your patterns—not from shame, but from clarity. It's about looking in the mirror without judgment and seeing where change truly begins.

2. **EMOTIONAL CLARITY:** Learn to name and what you feel, and understand

where it's coming from. The practice moves you from reaction to awareness, so you can stop spiraling and start choosing responses that align with who you want to be.

3. **PATTERN RECOGNITION:** Trace today's reactions back to old, unprocessed experiences. By revealing the "why" behind the "what," helps you break cycles that no longer serve you.

4. **PERSPECTIVE SHIFTING:** Shift out of inherited or habitual negative thinking, and reshape the beliefs that shaped you. This is about rewriting your internal narrative and leaning into what is possible.

5. **MENDING:** Rebuild trust—with yourself first, and then with others. Mending focuses on small, meaningful repairs to the relationships that are important to you.

6. **CONNECTION:** Practice presence, honesty, and openness. This step reframes vulnerability as strength—when it is groomed in truth and self-awareness.

7. **DAILY MINDFULNESS:** A simple five-minute daily practice personalized to you—breath work. Stillness, or intentional focus—designed to help you recenter and return to yourself, even in the chaos of everyday life.

8. **CONSCIOUS ACTION:** Transformation becomes visible here. You don't just think differently—you live differently. This practice supports real-world shifts like healthier boundaries, calmer reactions, and decisions aligned with your values and well-being.

That's just the beginning. The rest of the story is in **"Life Storms."** And you can check out more at www.TracyDoyle.life. What I got out of our talk is **THINK POSITIVE TO THE MAX!** ★

California State Fair Announces New Chief Wine Judge



Tim McDonald, California State Fair chief wine judge.
Photo courtesy of California State Fair

California State Fair News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The California State Fair appointed Tim McDonald of Napa as the new Chief Judge of the California State Fair Commercial Wine Competition. The competition opens to California winemakers on Feb. 1, with entries due by April 24.

McDonald brings more than 40 years of distinguished experience in the wine and spirits industry, with expertise spanning public relations, trade relations, marketing and sales, event management and beverage education. A highly respected judge, he has participated in more than 200 competitions throughout North America. He currently serves as the Director of Wine Judging for both the California Craft Spirits and Central Coast Wine Competitions, Chairman of Pacific Rim International Wine Competition and former Head Judge at the San Francisco International and Las Vegas Global Awards. He is the founder

of Wine & Spirits Spoken Here, a Napa-based company dedicated to sharing the unique stories behind wines and spirits.

McDonald's career also includes senior leadership roles with several prominent beverage companies, including E. & J. Gallo Winery, where he served as Marketing Director of Fine Wine Communications; Jim Beam (Peak Wines) as Vice President of Marketing and Communications; Trinchero Family Estates as Director of Trade Relations; and Heublein Spirits & Wines as Director of Trade and Public Relations. He also held sales positions with Seagram Distillers and Heublein.

"We are honored to have a leader of Tim's caliber guiding the California State Fair Commercial Wine Competition," said Tom Martinez, CEO of the California Exposition and State Fair. "For generations, this competition has celebrated the excellence of California's wine industry, and his expertise will ensure that tradition continues."

As Chief Judge, McDonald will oversee the annual review of competition procedures, recommend enhancements, select the final panel of judges and preside over the three-day judging process taking place May 6 to 8.

The upcoming California State Fair runs from July 17 through Aug. 2. Details about

exhibits, concerts and tickets will be updated regularly on the website at castatefair.com.

About the California State Fair Commercial Wine Competition

Dating back to 1854, during the Gold Rush Era, the California State Fair Wine Competition is the oldest wine competition in the country and ranks among the most respected in the nation. It is widely recognized for its integrity, commitment to excellence, fairness and professionalism. Only wines made with fruit grown and produced in the eleven growing regions across the state may be judged in the competition in order to recognize the best wines produced in the state.

About the California State Fair

Cal Expo is home of the California State Fair, an international award-winning fair, receiving top honors at the International Association of Fairs and Expositions out of more than 1,100 fairs worldwide. For the past two years, the Fair was ranked the best State Fair in the nation. Established in 1854, the California State Fair is dedicated as a place to celebrate the best the state has to offer in agriculture, technology and the diversity of its people, and trends that shape the Golden State's future. ★

Life Center Launches Community Drives to Support Local Families

Sacramento Life Center News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento Life Center is inviting the community to take part in two upcoming drives designed to support local families and provide essential medical services through the organization's free clinic, Sac Valley Women's Health.

Throughout the spring, the nonprofit is hosting both its Annual Baby Bottle Fundraiser and a Founder's Day Diaper Drive, two community-driven initiatives that help fund critical services for women and families across the Greater Sacramento region.

The annual Baby Bottle Drive encourages schools, churches, organizations and individuals to collect spare change, cash or checks in baby bottles distributed across the region. Donations raised through the drive support Sac Valley Women's Health, which provides free medical services and resources to women and families who may not otherwise have access to care.

Funds from the campaign help provide services including free pregnancy testing and limited ultrasounds, well-woman exams, baby essentials and parenting resources, emotional support and guidance and no-cost medical services for women navigating pregnancy and early parenthood.

The fundraiser runs throughout March, with bottles returned in the weeks leading up to Easter.

In addition to the regional fundraiser, Sacramento Life Center will celebrate its 54th anniversary with a family-friendly

community event, the Founder's Day Diaper Drive.

The event will take place on March 20 from noon to 3 p.m. outside Leatherby's Family Creamery in Arden, 2333 Arden Way, Sacramento. Community members are encouraged to bring a pack of diapers of any size to donate. As a thank-you, participants will receive a free scoop of ice cream.

Organizers say the event offers a fun and simple way for families to give back while helping stock essential supplies for new parents.

"Diapers are one of the most requested items for families with newborns," said Executive Director Marie Leatherby. "This drive helps ensure parents have the supplies they need during an important time in their lives."

Community members who cannot attend the diaper drive can still participate by donating online through Sacramento Life Center's Virtual Baby Bottle Drive at saclife.org/donate

Both initiatives highlight the organization's mission of strengthening families by providing compassionate support, practical resources, and access to free medical care for women and parents throughout the Sacramento area.

About Sacramento Life Center
To compassionately offer judgment-free support, resources, and free medical services to materially and emotionally equip women and families facing an unplanned or unsupported pregnancy, empowering them to make informed choices and build strong futures. You can learn more at saclife.org. ★

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MEALS ON WHEELS SACRAMENTO COUNTY

Flawed and Unnecessary Cardroom Regulations Put Safety, Community and Economic Vitality at Risk

By Sue Frost, Al Fox
and Bill Van Duker

CITRUS HEIGHTS, CA (MPG) - Attorney General Rob Bonta's newly finalized cardroom regulations impose unnecessary burdens that could destabilize responsible cardrooms, jeopardize local jobs, reduce city revenues and ultimately harm the very communities these policies claim to protect throughout California. These regulations will have major negative impacts on the City of Citrus Heights, which is home to Stones Gambling Hall.

Stones Gambling Hall has become one of Citrus Heights' most recognizable and reliable anchor businesses, elevating the city's profile along the Interstate 80 corridor and contributing meaningfully to our local economy and community life. That is why the California Attorney General's recently finalized cardroom regulations are so concerning, not just for Stones, but for cardrooms and the communities they support across the state.

Like most California cardrooms, Stones Gambling Hall is far more than a place to gamble. It serves as a gathering space for local and regional organizations, hosts community events and fundraisers, supports local nonprofits and offers dining and entertainment options that draw visitors into Citrus Heights. It is also a highly regulated, licensed business that provides substantial tax revenue to the city. That revenue helps fund public safety services and other essential community programs.

Since Citrus Heights was incorporated, the city has worked to define itself as a safe, welcoming place to live, work and explore. When Stones was built, it helped accelerate that progress. Over the



Stones Gambling Hall has become one of Citrus Heights' most recognizable and reliable anchor businesses, elevating the city's profile along the Interstate 80 corridor and contributing meaningfully to our local economy and community life. Photo courtesy of Freepik

past decade, the cardroom has proven itself to be a true community partner, engaged, responsive and invested in the city's success. Stones has consistently shown a willingness to collaborate with city leaders, law enforcement and local organizations to help make Citrus Heights a better place for everyone.

In 2024, Stones Gambling Hall celebrated its 10-year anniversary, a milestone that reflects both its longevity and its commitment to the community. Over those ten years, the cardroom has created hundreds of local jobs and contributed hundreds of

thousands of dollars to charitable causes throughout the region, including the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Glass Slipper, the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, the Sacramento County Sheriff's K-9 Association and Saint John's Program for Real Change.

Given this track record, the question becomes clear: why were additional sweeping regulations adopted for businesses that are already highly regulated and demonstrate consistent efforts to give back and support their communities? Citrus Heights has been home to licensed cardrooms

for decades. For more than fifty years, these businesses have operated in compliance with the law and, in turn, provided meaningful economic and community benefits.

Cardrooms in California existed long before tribal gaming. Since tribal casinos entered the California market, these businesses have coexisted, each operating under different regulatory frameworks and serving different roles within the state's gaming landscape. This is not an argument against tribal gaming, which plays an important role in California. It is a concern about

regulatory imbalance. Pushing cardrooms out through overregulation risks creating a de facto monopoly, at the expense of cities like Citrus Heights that rely on anchor businesses like Stones for economic vitality, community engagement and public safety support.

As finalized, these regulations increase compliance costs and operational uncertainty in ways that could force responsible cardrooms to reduce jobs, limit services or reconsider long-term investments in the communities they support.

We urge Attorney General Rob Bonta to reconsider and amend these finalized regulations before they cause irreversible harm. Cardrooms deserve a seat at the table and a meaningful dialogue about how to address tribal concerns without dismantling licensed cardroom businesses and the community partners that are doing more than their part.

Citrus Heights knows Stones Gambling Hall not as a problem, but as a partner. Our community values its presence and wants it to remain a part of the city's future. Thoughtful policy should protect communities, not undermine them.

We encourage Citrus Heights residents to speak out and urge Attorney General Rob Bonta to revisit and revise these regulations to protect cardroom communities. Residents can email Attorney General Rob Bonta at rob.bonta@doj.ca.gov.

Sue Frost is a Former Sacramento County Supervisor - District 4 and former Mayor of Citrus Heights.

Al Fox is a former Citrus Heights City Councilmember and retired state law enforcement officer.

Bill Van Duker is a longtime Citrus Heights businessman. ★

Social Security Matters Is There Income Tax on Social Security Benefits?



By Russell Gloor,
AMAC Certified Social
Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: The Trump Administration is saying that now there will be no taxes on Social Security benefits. Since we're getting ready to start our 2025 income tax return, can you explain how this all works? **Signed: Confused Taxpayer**

Dear Confused Taxpayer: You are obviously referring to the so-called "one big, beautiful bill" and how that bill affects income tax on your Social Security benefits. And this is because of the publicity surrounding the so-called "one big, beautiful bill" (OBBA) enacted last year, which claims to "eliminate income tax on Social Security benefits." Well, that bill did, yet technically didn't, fully eliminate income tax on benefits." Allow me to explain.

The OBBA does eliminate income tax on most SS benefits, but it does so in a somewhat unique way -- by providing an additional \$6,000 (per person) deduction to your federal taxable income as reported to the IRS. Thus, you will pay less total income tax when you file your taxes with the IRS because of that additional deduction to your taxable income. The extra deduction is available to those over age 65 and is meant to offset the income tax

which will still be levied by the IRS on the SS benefits you received in 2025.

Essentially, the rules governing income tax on Social Security benefits have not changed. The IRS will still levy income tax on your SS benefits if your combined income from all sources (known as your "provisional income") is over \$32,000 as a married couple filing jointly, or more than \$25,000 if you file as an individual. If your provisional income is below the threshold for your IRS filing status, you will pay no income tax on your received 2025 SS benefits. But if your provisional income exceeds the threshold for your IRS filing status, then somewhere between 50% and 85% of your received SS benefits will be taxed (how much SS income to be taxed depends on your combined income in 2025).

By now, you should have received form 1099-SSA which advised of your 2025 Social Security income, including any income tax you had withheld from your SS benefits. This income should be reported when submitting your 2025 income tax return. If your "provisional income" is over \$32,000 as a married couple filing jointly (or over \$25,000 as an individual filer), then your 2025 SS benefits will still be taxed by the IRS. But when completing your 2025 Income Tax Return, you will also be able to claim an additional \$6,000 per person (\$12,000 if you file jointly), which will likely offset any income tax you must pay due to the SS benefits you received in 2025. If you use a tax preparer (or tax preparation software), they will guide

you through this calculation. Note, too, that the \$6,000 per person deduction amount will be less if your combined taxable income is more than \$150,000 as a married couple (or more than \$75,000 as a single filer).

Be aware, though, that the OBBA is temporary tax accommodation which expires after tax year 2028. And that's because the process used to pass the bill in Congress (a "budget reconciliation" process) didn't actually change SS law; rather it provided a way around it to offset income tax paid on SS benefits.

So, to recap, the IRS can still levy income tax on your received Social Security benefits but, because of the OBBA, you will likely also (depending on your provisional income level) receive an extra deduction which offsets any taxes calculated on your Social Security benefits.

Finally, be aware that if your first husband also predeceases you, you will then become eligible for a surviving ex-spouse benefit from him, even if he has remarried.

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The Disgraceful Ravings of Candace Owens

and interest anew with something even more perverse. And what is more demented than portraying the wife of the victim of a shocking assassination as a black widow?

Whereas most of have seen in Erika Kirk a Christian woman bearing up under an intolerable burden and stunningly forgiving the alleged murderer of her husband, Owens purports to see Clytemnestra, the mythical Greek figure who betrayed her husband Agamemnon upon his return from the Trojan War.

The title of her series is "Bride of Charlie." Get it? Like the "Bride of Frankenstein." As a so-called investigator, Candace Owens is like Perry Mason if the fictional attorney had been a schizophrenic high on crack. Her method is to pile will-o'-the-wisp connections one on top of another, often buttressed by flagrant factual mistakes, and insist that if she's debunked, it just shows how she must be on the right track.

Her mantra is that "we don't know-know, but we know" -- in other words, her malicious, irrational intuitions are superior to actual knowledge backed by facts. She now says that "Erika Kirk should be dragged into a police precinct for questioning," and anyone who disagrees is "a full-blown fraud." According to Owens, "the amount of evidence that is now piling up, I would say, against Erika Kirk, is almost akin to an NBC Dateline episode."

Usually, conspiracy theories spring up around as-

sassinations that are hard to fathom or have some ambiguity about them. It is clear that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing JFK, but it's understandable that there have been questions about the event. It is the depraved achievement of Candace Owens to make a bonkers true crime drama, with all sorts of mysteries and twists, out of an open-and-shut murder case.

Kirk's accused killer, Tyler Robinson, had a motive, left a trail of damning evidence and confessed to multiple people. To dismiss all this and call for Erika Kirk to be frogmarched into a police station is so mad it makes Owens' conviction that both the moon landing and dinosaurs are fake look well-grounded by comparison.

It is a symptom of our time that such malevolent buffoonery is rewarded with a huge audience. It is impossible to discredit Owens because she is not in the credibility business to begin with. In the attention economy, denunciations are just as useful as praise, especially if a media figure is posing as a brave truth-teller -- so brave that, in this case, she's willing to drag through the mud a mother of two who saw her beloved husband murdered less than six months ago.

It's not just that decency is not necessary in the Candace Owens business model, it would be an obstacle.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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3 Hours Karaoke + 2 Pizzas + Pitcher Soda + 4 Main Dishes (Dishes To Choose From)
- For 18 people \$295.00** + Gratuity
3 Hours Karaoke + 3 Pizzas + Pitcher Soda + 6 Main Dishes (Dishes To Choose From)
- For 28 people \$395.00** + Gratuity
3 Hours Karaoke + 3 Pizzas + Pitcher Soda + 6 Main Dishes (Dishes To Choose From)

Dishes To Choose From: Beef, Chicken, Pork, Fish, etc.

FROZEN & FISH DEPT

Cooked Clam Meat 340 g
REG. \$6.99/EA
\$3.99/lea

Yellow Croaker Gutted & Scaled 1.5 lb
REG. \$6.99/EA
\$4.99/lea

WEEKLY MEAT SPECIALS

Beef Cross/Rib Shoulder Roast-Bnls **\$5.79/lb**

Beef T-Bone Steak **\$5.59/lb**

Chicken Drumstick **79¢/lb**

Pork Hocks **\$1.99/lb**

Pork Country Style Ribs - Bnls **\$2.99/lb**

Pork Tenderloin **\$3.99/lb**

WEEKLY HALAL SPECIALS

Chicken Drumstick **89¢/lb**

New Zealand Lamb Shoulder Chop Bone-In **\$5.99/lb**

Beef Cross/Rib Shoulder Roast-Bnls **\$5.99/lb**

FRESH PRODUCE

White Potato 10 lb Bag **2/\$3.00**

White Onion **59¢/lb**

Rainbow Bell Pepper 2 lb **\$3.59/bag**

Green Grape **\$2.59/lb**

Garlic 5pc Sleeved **\$4.99/bag**

Assorted Mushroom 400 g **\$2.59/ea**

Spinach **\$1.19/bunch**

Russet Potato 10 lb Bag **\$1.99/bag**

AMERICAN/HISPANIC GROCERY

Bauducco Panettone 24 oz **\$5.99/lea**

El Mexicano Pinto Beans 29.8-oz **\$1.99/lea**

Gerber G&C Snacks 2.25-6 oz **\$0.99/lea**

Laffy Taffy Rope Candies 0.81 oz **3/\$1.00**

Kleenex Facial Tissue Holiday Design 30 ct **\$1.69/lea**

ASIAN GROCERY

UFC Pancit Canton Noodle 16 oz **\$3.99/lea**

Three Crab Fish Sauce 23.06 fl.oz **\$7.99/lea**

Ginger Honey Crystal Beverage Mix 18.3 oz **\$6.99/lea**

Yeo's Soy Milk Drink 10.1.1 oz **\$1.29/lea +CRV**

Chaokoh Coconut Milk 12X13.52 Oz **\$1.99/lea +CRV**

EUROPEAN GROCERY

Bakings Sunflower Seed 500 gr **\$4.79/lea**

Rogachey Condensed Milk 380 gr **\$3.29/lea**

Zepit Vegetable Spread Hot Ajvar 18 oz **\$3.69/lea**

Sadat Plain Salt 737 gr **\$1.29/lea**

Stanokievskiy Kvas 2 liter **\$2.99/lea**

EUROPEAN DELI

Hickory Smoked Turkey Breast **\$12.19/lb**

Columbus Appleswood Ham **\$9.19/lb**

Green Olives Stuffed with Almonds **\$6.39/lb**

Green Olives Stuffed with Feta Cheese **\$8.59/lb**

FROZEN & FISH DEPT

Duru Duru Dumplings Vegetable and Pork 709 g **\$5.99/lea**

HOUSEWARE

Electric Rice Cooker **\$5.49**

Electric Rice Cooker **\$5.99**

KAIZEN WOK/PAN 30 CM **\$16.99/ea**

Electric BBQ Grill **\$39.99/ea**

Advertised items good at KP International Market - Rancho Cordova location ONLY. We reserve the right to LIMIT QUANTITIES. Not responsible for TYPOGRAPHICAL OR PICTORIAL ERRORS. All advertised items are SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY. Sorry NO RAINCHECKS. PRICES EFFECTIVE MARCH 11 - MARCH 17, 2026.

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