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AMERICAN RIVER Messenger

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Serving Fair Oaks, Orangevale & Sacramento County

APRIL 24, 2026

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**2025 YEAR IN
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Local Herbalist Voted Best



Herbalist Deborah Jane opened the Botanica Village Apothecary in 2018. Photo by Judy Andrews

By Judy Andrews

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - Stepping into the Botanica Village Apothecary is a magical experience that awakens the senses and soothes the soul. Located at 10112 Fair Oaks Blvd., #5, the apothecary is owned by Deborah “Deb” Jane, a modern-day medicine woman whose passion for plants and deep connection to Mother Earth began right here in the heart of Fair Oaks.

Earlier this year, Botanica Village Apothecary was named the



Deborah Jane, owner of the Botanica Village Apothecary, poses with her children, Kailani (19) and Kamilo (31), at the Best of Fair Oaks Gala. Photo by Michelle Massaro

2025 Best Specialty Shop in Fair Oaks, an impressive

lifelong dedication to her craft.

“As a licensed herbalist, I help guide my customers through the process of finding balance in health. My goal is to help others optimize their vitality by introducing them to safe, natural folk remedies,” Jane said. “Having the teas, tinctures and oils we need at the ready is personal power to help ourselves in the early stages of a perceived issue. Sometimes that’s all we need, and it’s right at our fingertips.”

Having grown up in

Annual Big Day of Giving Approaches

Sacramento Region Community Foundation News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Every year in May, thousands of people in the Sacramento region come together during a 24-hour giving drive to support hundreds of nonprofits that take care of our most vulnerable residents and vital local causes. The annual celebration, called Big Day of Giving, is coming up on May 7 and has raised more than \$117 million since it began across the four participating counties of El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento and Yolo. Big Day of Giving is already breaking records with 910 nonprofits signed up to participate, the highest number since the event was launched in 2013 by the Sacramento Region Community Foundation (Foundation).

“Big Day of Giving is a critical fundraising tool for local nonprofits that help our children thrive, put food on the table for families, care for older adults, welcome new immigrants, protect animals, and bring the arts to life in our communities,” said Kerry Wood, chief executive officer of the Foundation. “With hundreds of nonprofits to choose from, donors can easily support causes that matter to them and discover organizations making a difference right in their own community.”

All 910 participating nonprofits have a profile at bigdayofgiving.org, which features a new tool this year called the Discovery Assistant to match donors with causes aligned with their interests. Donors can also search and filter nonprofits by location, mission, budget size and populations served.

The Foundation works year-round to support nonprofits with everything from setting fundraising goals to developing marketing plans. As Big Day of Giving approaches, they host free training workshops to provide peer support and inspiration. The success of Big Day of Giving has caught the attention of communities across the country, with more than a dozen reaching out to the Foundation for advice on how to launch their own giving days.

Donors can start making donations when Early Giving launches on April 23 through Big Day of Giving on May 7 as nonprofits host gatherings and special events throughout the region to celebrate. The mini-

Broadway Lands in Sacramento

Jazz Hands Optional, Fun Guaranteed

Rancho Cordova River City Concert Band News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Cue the overture and warm up those imaginary jazz hands – the Rancho Cordova River City Concert Band is bringing the bright lights of Broadway to town with not one, but two toe-tapping, show-stopping performances of “Showstoppers! A Musical Spectacular.” And the best part? No tickets, no tuxedos, no travel to New York required.

Join the band at 3 p.m. Sunday, May 3 at Koreana Plaza, and again at 3 p.m. Saturday, May 16 at the Cordova Performing Arts Center. Both concerts promise an afternoon packed with melodies you know, love, and might accidentally sing out loud (we won’t judge). This musical romp



Under the direction of its talented conductor, Tom Seaton, the Rancho Cordova River City Concert Band continues its tradition of bringing high-quality live music to the community. Courtesy photo

through Broadway will feature hits from crowd favorites like “Phantom of the Opera,” “Hamilton,” “Chicago,” “The Lion King,” “Wicked,” “Little Shop of Horrors” and more. Vocalist Michelle

Pavolva and announcer/narrator Larry Womac will join the band for both performances. The May 16 performance will also feature vocalists from Golden State Performing Arts and dancers from Ignite Dance

Academy to help bring the magic of Broadway to Rancho Cordova. Expect drama! Expect romance! Expect at least a few tunes that will be stuck in your head all the way home.

Continued on page 2

A Night of Timeless Music

Karla Bonoff Brings a Lifetime of Songs to Fair Oaks

By Omella Rossi

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Singer-songwriter Karla Bonoff will bring decades of music to Fair Oaks offering audiences an intimate performance shaped by a career that began in one of Southern California's most influential music scenes.

Bonoff is scheduled to perform at 7 p.m. May 1 at the Fair Oaks Theatre Festival, 7991 California Ave., where she plans to deliver a stripped-down set featuring songs that span her catalog.

"I travel with a great guitar player," Bonoff said, referring to longtime collaborator Nina Gerber. "She plays electric and acoustic, I play piano and acoustic, and I do songs from all the way back from my first album up to stuff that's more current. It's a lot of fun."

The performance reflects a shift from the large-scale touring productions of her early career to a more intimate format. Bonoff said the smaller setting allows for a closer connection with audiences.

"It's more of an unplugged kind of intimate situation," she said. "When I was opening for someone like Jackson Browne, sometimes there'd be 10,000 people. It's just a different thing."

Bonoff emerged from the Los Angeles music scene of the late 1960s and early 1970s, a period centered around the famed "Troubadour." The club became a hub for singer-songwriters who would go on to define an era, though Bonoff said the significance of the moment wasn't clear at the time.

"Those of us that were around in the late '60s, early '70s ... were really lucky to kind of come up in that time," she said. "When you're living in the middle of it,



Bonoff is scheduled to perform at 7 p.m. May 1 at the Fair Oaks Theatre Festival, 7991 California Ave, where she plans to deliver a stripped-down set featuring songs that span her catalog. Photo courtesy of Karla Bonoff

you don't think about how far we would go. But looking back, I realize it was a pretty magical time."

Like many young artists, Bonoff said she was focused less on legacy and more on navigating early adulthood.

"Everyone was just young and kind of trying to learn how to write and sing and perform," she said. "You're just focused on trying to put one foot in front of the other."

Her path into music began in West Los Angeles, where she started playing guitar at age 12 and developed a passion for songwriting. Influenced by artists like Judy Collins, Bonoff said she was drawn to live performances and albums that

shaped her early ambitions.

"I didn't like school very much, and I would look forward to coming home and playing the guitar," she said. "That's what my passion was."

A turning point in her career came through her association with Linda Ronstadt. Introduced through mutual connections, Bonoff found herself in the right place at the right time as Ronstadt's career was rising.

"She was looking for songs, and all of a sudden she did three of mine on one of her albums," Bonoff said. "That was kind of mind-blowing for me because I'd kind of gone from zero to 60."

Hearing her songs performed by another artist was both disorienting and affirming, she said.

"When those songs come out of your DNA, you feel them a certain way," Bonoff said. "But when you're 22 or 23 and a big artist does your song, you're so excited. It's such a validation."

Bonoff's songwriting process has remained consistent over the years, rooted primarily in melody.

"I've always come at it with the music first," she said. "The music kind of is what gives me that inspiration to write lyrics."

Now in her 70s, Bonoff said her perspective on her work has shifted toward gratitude, both for her career and for the listeners who have connected with her songs across generations.

"To see people who've been following me for 40 or 50 years

come back and love those songs ... there's something gratifying about feeling like you made a tiny little notch of meaning in somebody's life," she said.

Her touring schedule has also evolved. Where once she performed multiple nights in a row with full bands and production teams, Bonoff now emphasizes pacing and sustainability.

"I used to be able to do seven nights in a row," she said. "I can't really do that now. So it's about pacing and taking care of yourself."

Despite those changes, she continues to perform regularly, driven by the connection with audiences and the enduring relevance of her music.

When asked what she hopes listeners take away from her shows, Bonoff pointed to a sense of familiarity and shared experience.

"I hope that they feel like they know me better than just from records," she said. "For people who've been coming back over and over, I just hope it brings back good stuff from their life."

Looking back, Bonoff said she views her career with a mix of pride and reflection.

"I'm proud of myself that I made it this far," she said. "If I had it to do over again, I probably would have been more disciplined, but it's easy to say that looking back. I did the best I could, and so I'm patting myself on the back at this point."

For newer artists, her advice is grounded in the fundamentals that shaped her own development.

"You really had to go out and play for people to hear you," she said. "That made us stronger as musicians and singers. Getting out and just playing is probably the best thing you can do." ★

Broadway Lands in Sacramento

Continued from page 1

Whether you're a Broadway buff or just someone who enjoys a good tune and a great time, this concert has something for everyone. No prior theater experience required – though spontaneous humming is highly encouraged. No tickets are required – just bring your love of music and enjoy the show.

Under the direction of its talented conductor, Tom Seaton, the Rancho Cordova River City Concert Band continues its tradition of bringing high-quality live music to the community. The band is a community-based, non-profit, volunteer-driven ensemble dedicated to bringing quality concert band music to the greater Sacramento area. The band provides opportunities for local musicians

to perform and fosters a love of music through free public concerts and community engagement. These performances offer a wonderful opportunity for audiences of all ages to experience the thrill of Broadway classics in a welcoming, family-friendly setting.

"Showstoppers! A Musical Spectacular" is performing at 3 p.m. Sunday May 3 at Koreana Plaza, 01971 Olson Drive, Rancho Cordova and at 3 p.m. Saturday, May 16 at Cordova Performing Arts Center, 2239 Chase Drive, Rancho Cordova. Admission is free.

For more information, visit rconcertband.org or follow the Rancho Cordova River City Concert Band on Facebook for concert updates and event details. ★

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Regrowing America's Skills for Success: Literacy Part 2

Hidden In Plain Sight: Adult Literacy and a Call to Community

By Patsy McGavock
JustServe.org

"I'd want that to never happen again," said Heather Brandt, English language arts program specialist for San Juan Unified School District.

She shared her father's story. Over dinner at his veterans' home, a man at the table confided his final wish. Nearing the end of his life, he wanted to learn to read.

"This man, who gave his life to serve his country, can't die not being able to read," Brandt said, as she began calling program directors to find someone to teach him.

Part 1 of this column explored the third-grade tipping point, when students move from learning to read to reading to learn, and the current 43 percent pass rate. For many, that continues into adulthood.

54 percent of U.S. adults live below another tipping point, the sixth-grade level, when reading becomes independent and analytical, a reality reflected in three out of four people receiving public assistance.

Yet, according to ProLiteracy, only 10 percent of those who know literacy programs would benefit them enroll. Stigma and awareness are driving factors.

"People often associate difficulty reading with intelligence," said Casandra Keitges, adult learning and literacy supervisor at Sacramento Public Libraries. "People don't realize reading is a complex skill that must be explicitly learned."

Imagine navigating our text-heavy world through images, symbols and color codes, or through words you can sound out but don't fully understand.

Job applications, forms of all kinds, medical instructions, financial documents and digital interfaces all become barriers. This is life for many around us.

The next tipping point, eighth-grade literacy, is considered the threshold to independent daily life. It is the gateway to economic stability, stronger families, more frequent community engagement, even economic development.

Highly capable individuals can find themselves blocked from opportunity -- limits that often carry into the next generation.

A parent's literacy level is one of the strongest predictors of a child's academic success. When literacy improves for one adult, it often shifts outcomes for an entire family.

But I'm writing to readers. Our role is a sensitive one -- to notice, normalize and connect to resources.

Low literacy is often hidden in plain sight.

Brandt recalled a transaction in which an associate struggled to enter information and asked her to complete it.

"It occurred to me later that the challenge may not have been the typing -- but the words."

Recognizing those moments matters. So does how we respond.

Keitges shares face-saving indicators -- claiming they need glasses, becoming frustrated with forms or asking to take them home and relying on visual cues rather than words. Some adults frame it as wanting to finish high school.

"Technology is often also difficult," she said.

Offering support can become part of your routine. In private conversation, normalize the struggle by shifting

focus to the complexity of the task. Offer help in ways that feel natural and focused on the goal, not the skill.

"Forms can be confusing. Want to go through it together?" might open a door. Or "It's hard to keep up with all the reading they expect these days."

Then invite: "I just heard of programs that help with forms, job skills and helping kids with homework. It's free and private."

Keitges emphasizes pointing them to tutoring programs. "Reading aloud with someone is not enough."

It can be as simple as sharing information -- keeping a phone number, flyer or website ready to leave behind when the moment is right. It can mean offering to make a call, attend a first session or sit alongside someone as they take the first step.

Literacy is not just an individual challenge. It is a community one -- shaping workforce readiness, shared health care costs and economic stability.

And like all community challenges, it changes when people choose to see, then engage with each other confidently and compassionately.

"Do what you can, with the capacity you have," Brandt said. "Just one step. One shift."

Because for someone, somewhere nearby, that step could be the one that finally opens the door to everything else.

In Part 3, we'll look at local programs for basic and functional literacy and how to get involved.

Patsy is a volunteer community advocate and writer working to inform, empower and engage readers with their community. Reach Patsy at PatsyMcGavock.JustServe@gmail.com. ★



Roger's Review

By State Senator Roger Niello

By Senator Roger Niello

Many people know actor Bruce Willis from the movies on big screens, but behind the screens in his personal life, he has lived with frontotemporal degeneration, commonly referred to as FTD, since 2022. Bruce Willis' wife, Emma Heming Willis, shares the early stages of the diagnosis on her website where she describes, "I struggled with a sense of powerlessness, feeling as if I had no control over what was happening to my family." Emma Heming Willis acknowledged, "This journey -- our unexpected journey -- doesn't have to feel unrelenting or hopeless. In fact, you may discover, just as I have, that even in the hardest moments, there are unexpected treasures to be found along the way."

FTD doesn't announce itself with forgotten names or misplaced keys. It barges in by rewriting who a person is. For many, FTD is a slowly progressing disease that leads to gradual changes in behavior and speech. It targets the brain's frontal and temporal regions (the centers of judgment, empathy, communication) and as those nerve cells deteriorate, the changes can be as bewildering as they are devastating. Unlike Alzheimer's disease, FTD often strikes people in their 40s to 60s, leading to profound changes in relationships, work and independence. There is currently no treatment or cure, and increased awareness and research funding are crucial.

At Maidu Regional Park in Roseville on a rainy and



From left are Lisa Ferro, Senator Niello and Doug Ferro at the FDT Walk for Hope event. Courtesy photo



From left are AFTD ambassador Terry Walter who spearheaded the event, Senator Niello and event organizer Lisa Ferro. Courtesy photo

cold Saturday this month, 240 people showed up with great spirit and high energy to participate in the very first FTD Walk for Hope. This independently organized event was spearheaded by Lisa Ferro and Terry Walter, whose FTD stories were shared with the walkers and supporters in attendance. I was grateful to be part of this emotional, poignant, and inspirational event and to recognize the people who made it a success. This walk raised over \$37,000 and after expenses, will be donating roughly \$31,500 in support of the Association for Frontotemporal Degeneration.

In the legislature, I am working on legislation to expand the California

Neurodegenerative Disease Registry to include data collection on frontotemporal degeneration diagnoses in the state. If passed into law, Senate Bill 1047 would require healthcare providers to report FTD diagnoses to the California Department of Public Health to strengthen the state's ability to track the disease's impact, improve care pathways, and accelerate research.

The effort to raise awareness never stops! The next event by Terry Walter, Association for Frontotemporal Degeneration Ambassador, is "Food for Thought," which will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 18 at the Woman's Club of Lincoln. ★

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Get Ready for California's 2026 Primary

Your Questions About Voting, Answered

By CalMatters Staff
CalMatters.org

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Where do I vote? Am I registered to vote? Does everyone get a ballot in the mail? Get the answers to your election day questions ahead of California's June 2 primary election.

How do I vote? Does everyone get a ballot in the mail? Yes. Under state law, vote-by-mail ballots are sent to every active registered voter.

When will I receive my mail-in-ballot? Counties will begin mailing ballots May 4.

How do I return my mail-in ballot? Mail it to your county elections office; to be counted, ballots have to be postmarked on or before June 2 and received by election offices by June 9. Drop it off at a ballot drop box, vote center or polling location anywhere in the state. Ask someone you trust to do it for you, but that person can't receive payment for doing it.

Can I vote in person? Where is my polling place or vote center? Yes, although mailing your ballot as soon as possible is the best way to get your vote counted fast. You can find out where to vote in the following ways. Visit <https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov/>, text "VOTE" to GOVOTE (468-8683), call the secretary of state's hotline at (800) 345-VOTE, check your county Voter Information Guide or contact your county elections office

If you live in one of 30 counties, you'll have increased options, including as many as 10 days of in-person early voting.

How do I register to vote? Am I registered to vote? You can check the secretary of state's website (<https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov/>). You'll need to enter your name, date of birth and either your California driver license, identification card number or the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you don't have those available, contact your county elections office or the secretary of state via email or phone at 800-345-8683.

If you've changed your name since the last time you voted, or if you moved and didn't notify the Department of Motor Vehicles or U.S. Postal Service, you may have to register again. If you haven't voted in several consecutive general elections, your registration may have been canceled.

How do I register? Visit <https://registertovote.ca.gov/>. You'll need the same information as above.



Where do I vote? Am I registered to vote? Does everyone get a ballot in the mail? Get the answers to your election day questions ahead of California's June 2 primary election. Photo courtesy Freepik

If the DMV has your signature on file, you'll be able to complete the process online. If not, you'll need to print, sign and mail your completed application to your county elections office. You can also pick up a paper application at elections offices, any DMV office and at many post offices, public libraries and government offices. You'll be contacted when your application is approved, or if you need to provide more information.

What happens if I miss the voter registration deadline? The last day to register online for the primary election is May 18. If you are registering or re-registering less than 15 days before May 18, you must complete same-day voter registration and request your ballot in person at your county elections office or polling location.

How do I change my political party if I'm already registered? You'll need to re-register to vote.

What if I need help with voting? What if I need voter information in a language other than English? The secretary of state's office has voter instructions in the following languages: Spanish, Hindi, Chinese, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Tagalog, Thai and Vietnamese. Your county elections office may offer additional languages.

When will I receive my voter guide? The statewide voter

information guide will be available online by April and will be mailed to voters later that month.

What am I voting on? The June primary election is the first opportunity for Californians to choose which candidates will appear on the general election ballot in November. Unlike some other states, California's primaries are nonpartisan, so the top two vote-getters in each race will advance to the November election, regardless of political party.

The ballot is packed with state and federal races, most notably the race to succeed Gov. Gavin Newsom, who is term-limited and cannot run for reelection. In addition to the governor's race, voters will be asked to choose candidates for Congress, the state Legislature and a slate of statewide offices including insurance commissioner and treasurer.

Can I leave work to vote? Yes. California requires time off for voting if employees don't have enough time outside work hours. You can take as much time as you need, but employers are only required to pay for a maximum of two hours. Employers may require advance notice. The time off must be at the beginning or the end of your shift. Employers are required to post a notice about this 10 days before a statewide election.

How can I track my ballot?

Visit california.ballottrax.net/voter/ to register for California's BallotTrax tool, where you can check your ballot status and opt in to receive email or text notifications.

Is my ballot safe? Yes, voting by mail or dropping your ballot in an approved drop box is a safe and efficient way to vote. Fraudulent voting is uncommon and incredibly difficult given California's strict voter verification procedures. Mail-in ballots will only be sent to voters whose address and identity have been verified by county election officials. Their vote will only be counted once those officials verify that the voter's signature on the envelope matches the one on file.

You can find more information about California's election and voting process on the secretary of state's website. The office takes any allegations of election fraud seriously. Anyone can submit a complaint using the following form sos.ca.gov/elections/publications-and-resources/voter-complaint.

What if I have special circumstances? What should I do if I marked my ballot wrong, or otherwise messed it up? If you haven't turned it in yet, you can exchange your mail ballot for a new one at an elections office, ask an election official at the polling place for a new ballot, or

vote using a provisional ballot. If you have mailed or turned in your ballot, there's no way to fix it. Contact your county elections office for a new ballot.

What if the signature on my ballot doesn't match the one on file? County election officials check the signatures on the return envelope against signatures on your voter registration card to make sure no one tries to improperly cast your ballot. It still remains confidential; the ballot is separated from the envelope before it is counted.

Voters with ballots with missing signatures or ones that don't match are notified and given an opportunity to correct the problem before the election is certified.

What happens if I don't receive my ballot? Contact your county elections office.

Help! I dropped off my ballot to a drop box in the wrong county. Don't worry – the county will pass it on to the correct elections office.

I forgot to detach the stub from my ballot. Can I open the sealed envelope and reseal it myself? You can, but the secretary of state's office recommends contacting your local county elections office. They'll ultimately be processing your ballot, and they can offer the best guidance on whether you should reopen it or just leave the stub attached. ★



Election Information

June 2, 2026, Statewide Direct Primary Election

Vote Early and Vote by Mail



May 4 Ballots begin to arrive by mail. Official Ballot Drop Boxes are now open.



May 18 Close of registration. Register today!



May 23 11-Day Vote Centers open through Election Day.



May 30 All Vote Centers open through Election Day.



June 2 Election Day! Last day to turn in your ballot.

Vote Early! Don't wait for Election Day.

Take advantage of early voting and avoid the lines! You can return your ballot in the mail, at any Official Ballot Drop Box, or at any Vote Center. No postage is necessary.

Track your Ballot!

Sign up for "Where's My Ballot?" with BallotTrax, a free ballot-tracking and alert system. It is available to all voters who wish to track the status of their Vote by Mail ballot from printed to accepted. Scan the QR code or visit www.wheresmyballot.com



Vote Early! Vote by Mail.

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



The Ping Pong Balls Are Coming

Yes, the NBA regular season is over, and our hometown ballers are once again watching from the sidelines.

With a grand total of 22 wins the 2025-26 season turned out very different from what the Sactown faithful envisioned.

Within a couple of weeks, the ping pong balls will determine the order of the upcoming draft, and as the Dallas Mavericks can attest, anything is likely to happen.

The Kings franchise and fans collectively will hold their breath, as anything can happen when it comes to the first five picks.

Without a doubt the Kings will get a high draft pick, but the real question is, how high.

Experts and pundits from all corners believe we're looking at one of the deepest drafts in many years, and that bodes well for Sacramento.

But what can we take away from a season bereft with disappointments.

For one thing we can look forward to a starting unit at the start of next season that is 100 percent healthy, and hope that the first-round draft choice in the upcoming draft makes an immediate impact. Something like De'Aaron Fox did when he became one of the best point guards in the history of the Kings franchise.

And what should we make of Keegan Murray after a season of injuries? Will this talented wing man once again return to a consistent 3-point shooter as he was in his rookie year just four short seasons ago?

Keegan had an amazing rookie season followed by one head scratching season after another as his 3-point shooting declined year after year.

Keegan set an NBA rookie record by recording 206 3-pointers, and Sacramento fans thought this was just the beginning.

Sadly, although Keegan shot an amazing 41 percent from beyond the arc, he would not accomplish this again. In the following three seasons Murray shot 35 percent, 34 percent, and in an injury shortened 2026 a dismal 27 percent.

So, will the real Keegan Murray please stand up. The Kings will in all likelihood hold onto Murray and resist trade offers, as his value has slipped just as his percentage has.

The real question is can this talented player

return to form and show Kings fans that his rookie year was no fluke.

I believe he can and he will.

Zach Lavine has received considerable criticism for his drop in 3-point shooting this year as well, but the question is can Zach return to normal next season and provide Murray with someone that carry spread the floor.

Once again, I believe that's exactly what Lavine can do, and if he does, and Domantas Sabonis can stay healthy, look out western division, because here comes the Kings.

We don't know what GM Scott Perry is thinking of, and whether he will keep this group together, but we honestly never had a real opportunity to see this group play together.

Let's not forget that DeMar DeRozan is one of the most talented mid-range shooters in the league, and like Zach Lavine, can open the floor for others.

The point guard position is once again the conundrum it has been since the departure of DeAaron Fox, and we must wait and see if the draft will provide front court help or perhaps the point guard the Kings have been looking for.

Devin Carter and Nique Clifford had moments this past season, but neither has made the statement that says the point guard for the future has arrived.

Not to be forgotten is the arrival and surprisingly so of Dylan Cardwell and Precious Achiuwa. Both players acquitted themselves admirably, and Kings fans will be watching to see if one or both can take that next step in their NBA career and become a force to be reckoned with.

A lot to chew on for the Sacramento faithful, and opinions are all over the board, but for my money I hope that Scott Perry looks hard before he leaps.

There is a lot of talent on this team right now, and the real question is whether they can gel.

A winning franchise is much closer than last season's 22 wins would make you think, so say your prayers Kings fans and keep your fingers crossed.

We are one impact player from watching a playoff team so keep your eyes on those ping pong balls and let's all root together! ★

Candidates For Governor Ought to Get Serious About These Pressing Issues



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

Eric Swalwell's abrupt departure from the campaign for governor due to revelations about sexual transgressions leaves nine men and women remaining as serious contenders for spots on the November ballot.

So far their campaigns have produced a scattershot of positions and promises that have only occasionally touched on California's real world issues. However, by sheer coincidence, there's been a recent flurry of think tank reports and articles on those issues that should be required reading for would-be governors and moderators of forums to question the candidates.

In no particular order:

Schools

The Public Policy Institute of California delved into the worrisome lack of academic achievement among in California's public schools. It notes that in state tests just 49% of students met or exceeded state standards in English language and 37% in math.

Results of federal tests were even less satisfactory, with only 29% of fourth-graders and 28% of eighth-graders proficient in reading and 35% and 25%, respectively, in math.

Mississippi, long a laggard in academic skills, got serious about raising reading

comprehension by adopting phonics. California, after years of political debate, finally semi-adopted phonics, although not completely requiring it. An article in Atlantic magazine reveals that in Mississippi, just adopting phonics was not enough; statewide mandates, coupled with state oversight, were needed to make phonics work — a suggestion maybe California needs to follow suit.

Jobs

Outgoing Gov. Gavin Newsom loves to brag about California's \$4 trillion economy but rarely mentions the darker side — several years with virtually no job growth. The Public Policy Institute of California digs into that stagnation and reports, "Job gains have been limited to a few key sectors like health care and local government, while stock market gains have been driven by AI. Unemployment has not increased much in the past two years, though it remains higher than in 2022 and above almost all other states.

"One major challenge for the next governor will be providing expensive services like health care to a growing older adult population while the share of workers shrinks," PPIC says.

The conservative Pacific Research Institute plows the same economic ground in a report. "The data shows that California's economic challenges are no longer theoretical — they are measurable and worsening," said Wayne Winegarden, one of the report's authors. "The state's weak job growth and shrinking private sector signal that California is at a crossroads. Without meaningful policy reforms, the gap between California and the rest of

the country will continue to widen."

One aspect of California's economic sluggishness is an outflow of workers due to its sky-high living costs. Another report from the Public Policy Institute of California says the state has seen a net loss of nearly 1.3 million people since 2020. The outflow, coupled with a record low birth rate, makes California especially reliant on immigration for new workers, which in turn is affected by turmoil in federal immigration policy.

Homes

A study by UC-Berkeley's California Policy Lab delves even further into the state's loss of population to other states, citing high living costs, especially for housing, as the prime factor.

It notes that "in 2012 the state's median household income was roughly sufficient to qualify for a mortgage on a mid-tier home, but it now falls substantially short of the level needed to qualify for even a bottom-tier home."

However, those who abandon California more easily become homeowners due to much lower prices and see improvement in their overall financial wellbeing.

This is not an exhaustive catalogue of California issues that the campaigns for governor should address. Water supply and homelessness also need attention, as well as the insurance crisis and the state's chronic budget deficits. But these reports are a good start for serious debate.

Dan Walters is one of the most decorated and widely syndicated columnists in California history, authoring a column four times a week that offers his view and analysis of the state's political, economic, social and demographic trends. ★

Social Security Matters

Must I Set Up a Social Security Account to Enroll in Medicare?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: I turn 65 this November 2026. Someone told me I need to set up a Social Security account at least 3 months ahead of time before applying for Medicare for the first time. I do not intend to take any Social Security benefits until, perhaps, age 67 or later. Please advise and thank you. **Signed: Looking Ahead**

Dear Looking Ahead: You don't technically need to "set up" an online SSA account to enroll in Medicare, but it would be more efficient to do so. We always recommend creating your online "my Social Security" account at www.ssa.gov/myaccount well before you are ready to claim your Social Security benefits. That's because you can monitor your projected Social Security benefits to help you decide when to claim, but it also facilitates other things you might need to do at the Social Security

Administration (such as claiming your SS retirement benefits online and enrolling in Medicare online).

As for Medicare, you can enroll in Medicare up to 3 months before the month you turn 65, and you can contact the Social Security Administration by phone up to 3 months prior in order to schedule an appointment to enroll over the phone (call 1.800.772.1213 to make the appointment). You can enroll via telephone, even if you don't have your "my Social Security" online account set up. However, an advantage to creating your personal online Social Security account is that you could then enroll in Medicare online as described at this link: www.ssa.gov/medicare/sign-up. And you can, as you wish to do, enroll only in Medicare without also taking your Social Security benefits at this time.

I want to also make you aware that if you are still working and have "creditable" healthcare coverage from your employer ("creditable" is an employer group plan with at least 20 participants), then you can delay enrolling in Medicare until your employer coverage ends (thus saving the usual Medicare Part B monthly premium). When your employer's

healthcare coverage ends, you will enter a Special Enrollment Period during which you can enroll in Medicare without incurring a Late Enrollment Penalty.

Finally, please be aware that whenever you claim your Social Security benefits, you will be automatically enrolled in Medicare Part A (inpatient hospitalization coverage) and Part B (coverage for outpatient medical services). Since there is a monthly premium associated with Medicare Part B (but not with Part A), you can choose to decline Part B if you are still working and covered by your employer's creditable healthcare plan, until your employer's healthcare coverage ends.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-dvisory) or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. ★



As far as showdowns between popes and secular leaders go, President Trump versus Pope LEO hardly rates.

Pope LEO hasn't forced Trump to come see him and stand for three days in the snow, the way Pope Gregory VII did to Henry IV, the Holy Roman Emperor, in 1077. Nor has he issued an interdict, a tactic favored by Pope Innocent III, against the United States.

On the other hand, Trump hasn't sacked Rome and forced the pope to submit to his will, in a repeat of Emperor Charles V's 16th-century gambit against Pope Clement VII.

It's still been a remarkably testy exchange between Pope LEO and Trump over the Iran war. The president of the United States -- stung by the pontiff's criticisms of his decision to launch the war and his ensuing rhetoric -- has denounced Pope LEO in his characteristic terms, all but saying that His Holiness "doesn't have what it takes."

It's easy, meanwhile, to interpret LEO as taking veiled shots at Trump. "Enough with the idolatry of self and money!" is not an unusual sentiment for a Holy Father, but who can be certain he didn't have our gilt president in mind when he said it in a homily the other day? A pope who doesn't

Trump vs. the Pope

rebuke a president of the United States for threatening to bring a foreign civilization to an end isn't doing his job, yet it's important to understand that the Bible is not an injunction for pacifism, and it doesn't entail a condemnation of the Iran war.

The Bible presents a realistic view of the inevitability of human conflict. As Ecclesiastes says, there is "a time for war, and a time for peace." In the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel or Kings, it is often a time for war. The key question is whether or not a war is righteous -- the difference between Israel, say, prevailing in the Battle of Deborah, or seeing the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem.

On Palm Sunday, Pope LEO cited Isaiah 1:15 for the proposition that God doesn't listen to the prayers of those who wage war: "Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen: your hands are full of blood." The context of this verse, though, is the injustice and corruption of the people of Judah -- in other words, their self-abasement.

It makes no sense, as a broader matter, to cite Isaiah as an injunction against waging war or evidence that God pays no heed to the prayers of those who fight. Later in the book, King Hezekiah of Judah prays for God's help in stopping an Assyrian army threatening Jerusalem, and 185,000 Assyrian soldiers are struck down. Jesus preaches love

and mercy, of course, but that is not a war-rant for pacifism. The great Christian thinkers St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas gave us just war theory, reconciling Christian ethics with the existence of evil in the world and the necessity of warfare. According to this view, which is embraced by the Catholic Church, a war can only be fought for a just cause and has to be waged in keeping with moral standards, minimizing harm to civilians.

Pope LEO has wrongly made it sound as though no war can possibly be just, and regardless, his opposition to the Iran war isn't dispositive or binding on anyone else.

The pontiff might consider that Trump first talked of attacking Iran when the regime was in the midst of slaughtering thousands of protesters in the streets, and if the current government fell and gave way to one with more respect for the rights of its people, it would be a boon to Iranians and a large step toward a safer and more peaceful region.

Trump's wild threats are understandably anathema to Pope LEO, but they don't define the Iran war or change the fact that the Bible portrays warfare as a tragic fact of human existence. Yes, as Isaiah says, they shall beat their swords into plowshares, but not yet.

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

WE SUPPORT FIRST RESPONDERS

Local Herbalist Voted Best

Continued from page 1

Fair Oaks in the 70s, Jane spent much of her time outdoors rafting, cycling, running, hiking and swimming in the American River. At home, her parents laid the foundation for her botanical journey.

Jane recalled, "My dad always kept a beautiful garden and found great peace there. I'd watch him sniff an herb or flower that had just blossomed, and it would visibly change him. Plants can have that effect. My mom cooked with the fresh herbs my dad grew. Gourmet cooking was her passion."

In the late 80s, Jane met world-renowned herbalist Dr. Christopher Hobbs while attending UC Santa Cruz and began taking his night courses. She continued her herbal studies with several teachers, including Kami McBride at the Living Awareness Institute. McBride inspired Jane to create products from herbal extracts, using mixing bowls, blenders and cookpots.

"Deborah's connection with the earth and plants is so deep and profound," said McBride on Jane's website. "Her herbal medicines are so rich and healing, and her oils are some of the best I've ever used. Quality plant remedies don't just come from technique. Good medicine comes from the alchemy of being truly connected, tuned in, and in love with the plants, as practiced by the skilled medicine maker."

In 2018, Jane's dream of owning an herb shop came true, and she opened Botanica Village Apothecary at its current Fair Oaks location.

Over 90 percent of the natural herb products Jane carries in the store are carefully handcrafted by her to ensure top quality and care. Many ingredients are sourced directly from her organic garden, guaranteeing freshness and purity. Jane makes her own medicinal loose-leaf teas,



Jane uses organic ingredients from her garden to make herbal products. Photo courtesy of Deborah Jane



Herbalist Deborah Jane opened the Botanica Village Apothecary in 2018. Photo by Judy Andrews

a complete botanical facial line, salves and balms, moisturizing lotions, therapeutic massage oils and potent tinctures made from concentrated plant extracts – each uniquely designed to enhance wellness and natural beauty.

She also carries high-quality



Jane's line of natural facial products, which she makes from scratch, is popular with her customers. Photo by Judy Andrews

essential oil blends created by aromatherapist Emily Via and sources her essential plant oils from Original Swiss Aromatics at the Pacific Institute of Aromatherapy in San Rafael. Anyone new to herbs and wild-crafting can learn more from the variety of books she sells or buy

and art by local artists.

Jane is generous about sharing her knowledge of herbs, plants and medicinal recipes with her peers, other practitioners and novices who want to learn from her. She gives public talks and hosts educational events on herbs at the shop a few times per year. Her favorite thing to do is

mentor local youth, including high school students, for their school's career week and in-depth senior projects or internships. She also hosts small after-hours group gatherings, including book clubs, small parties and other special events.

"People have used herbs and natural remedies since ancient times," Jane said. "I'm doing the same work my ancestors did, which is why I feel the knowledge and experience I've acquired are meant to be shared, not kept secret. It is my great joy to serve the community in this way."

Deborah Jane belongs to several professional and local organizations, including the American Herbalist Guild, United Plant Savers, Save The American River, Permaculture Fair Oaks and the Native Plant Society.

For more information about the herbalist and the Botanica Village Apothecary, visit her website at www.botanicadeb.com. ★



PoppTalk

With Mary Jane Popp

Angel Lady

They call her "The Angel Lady" and that moniker fits her to a 'T'. Sue Storm has devoted her life to helping us find our angels. She tackles issues like relationships, careers, even money matters. But most of all, she opens our eyes to a new way of thinking. Top all of that with being an international author, inspirational speaker and prosperity consultant. Oh, and she has a special connection with the angels which provides accurate information to jumpstart all aspects of our lives. Of course, I had to ask her how it all started for her, and you won't believe what she told me on my POPPTALK Radio Show.

Sue's first encounter with angels was at the age of...this one will shock you...eighteen months when she saw them hovering overhead during a near-death experience. From that moment til this day, she has been able to see, hear, and feel the presence of angels. In particular, Archangel Michael has been her personal guide since childhood. Through her angelic guidance, Sue is able to offer direction to make better decisions and attain maximum success. As the author of the "Angel First Aid" Series of books, she is sending the message of the angels across the globe.

So that's all well and good, but can I talk to the angels? She was quick to give it an enthusiastic YES. She told me we all have three angels at our side...two Guardian angels and one Archangel. So, naturally, I

wanted to know their names. I thought back to my parochial school days when the nuns told us we all have a Guardian angel. Then Sue told me about Sarah who stands for harmony and peace and Timothy who stands for good fortune. Those were my two Guardian angels, and Archangel Gabriel was my third angel. So, who or what are the angels I asked? First, there are the Archangels who were never human. I guess they have been with us forever. Then there are other angels that we also never human, but can appear in physical form to help us when we need them. So, do we need to know the names of our angels? Not necessarily. She told me you can talk to the angels anytime you wish for whatever you need to know. That sounds good because everyone has a different way of reaching out. Some do it through prayer, but you can also just talk like you are talking to a friend. If you want to reach out for a physical connection, she said take a deep breath and put out your hand, and you might just feel a touch. I'm definitely going to try for a touch.

I love talking to my angels, and I truly believe they are hearing me and guiding me always. If you want to learn more, check out www.theangellady.net. You can check out her books there and Amazon, and her "Angel First Aid" podcast too. It's good to know we are not alone, isn't it? **BLESSINGS!** ★

Five Benefits of Buying a New Home

By Tim Murphy, North State Building Industry Association

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Every April, the homebuilding industry celebrates New Homes Month, a time to remember that even in today's challenging market, new homes offer strong long-term value for buyers in the Sacramento region.

There's no question affordability is a concern. Higher interest rates and rising home prices have made many prospective buyers more cautious. Even so, people continue to purchase homes because it remains one of the most important investments they can make in their future.

One of the first decisions buyers face is whether to purchase a new or existing home. Older homes may offer charm or be located in established neighborhoods, but they often come with hidden costs. Outdated systems, deferred maintenance and the need for upgrades can quickly add up, turning what appears to be a lower upfront price into a more expensive long-term investment.

According to the National Association of Home Builders, nearly half (47 percent) of owner-occupied homes nationwide were built before 1980. Since then, building codes, materials and construction practices have advanced significantly. Today's new homes are built to higher safety standards, designed for modern living and equipped to accommodate evolving technology.

Here are five of the top benefits of buying new:

1. High-Quality Construction

Professional homebuilders take pride in their work and must meet strict building codes and inspection requirements. New homes are built using modern materials and methods and typically include warranties, giving homeowners added peace of mind.

2. Features That Fit Your Needs

New homes are designed for today's lifestyles, with open floor plans, flexible living spaces and ample storage. Buyers can often personalize finishes such as cabinets, countertops, flooring and paint colors, creating a home that reflects their preferences without the

need for costly renovations.

3. Built for Efficiency

Energy efficiency is a major advantage of new construction. Improved insulation, high-performance windows and ENERGY STAR® appliances help regulate indoor temperatures and reduce monthly utility costs. Over time, these savings can be significant.

4. Ready for Today's Technology

New homes are built to support modern technology, including smart home systems, high-speed connectivity and integrated security features. This allows homeowners to take full advantage of today's digital tools without the need for retrofitting an older property.

5. A Strong Sense of Community

Many new home developments are designed with community in mind. When families move in around the same time, it often creates opportunities for connection. Builders frequently support this by hosting neighborhood events that help residents get to know one another.

In addition to these benefits, builders today are offering a range of incentives to help improve affordability, including interest rate buydowns and closing cost assistance. These programs can make a meaningful difference for buyers navigating today's market conditions.

And the Sacramento region offers a wide variety of options, with nearly 200 new home communities providing choices for different price points, lifestyles and locations.

For buyers weighing their options, it's important to look beyond the initial purchase price and consider long-term value. A new home offers modern design, greater efficiency, lower maintenance costs and the reassurance of current safety standards.

In a market where affordability remains a concern, those advantages make new homes well worth considering.

Tim Murphy is President & CEO of the North State Building Industry Association, which represents builders, developers, subcontractors, suppliers and related professionals dedicated to providing new housing opportunities in the Greater Sacramento region. ★

Annual Big Day of Giving Approaches

Continued from page 1

mum donated is \$10, and donors can pay online with a credit card, Apple Pay, Google Pay, PayPal or Venmo. Local businesses can also get involved by sponsoring the event, encouraging employee giving, offering matching gifts or helping spread the word to customers and partners. The

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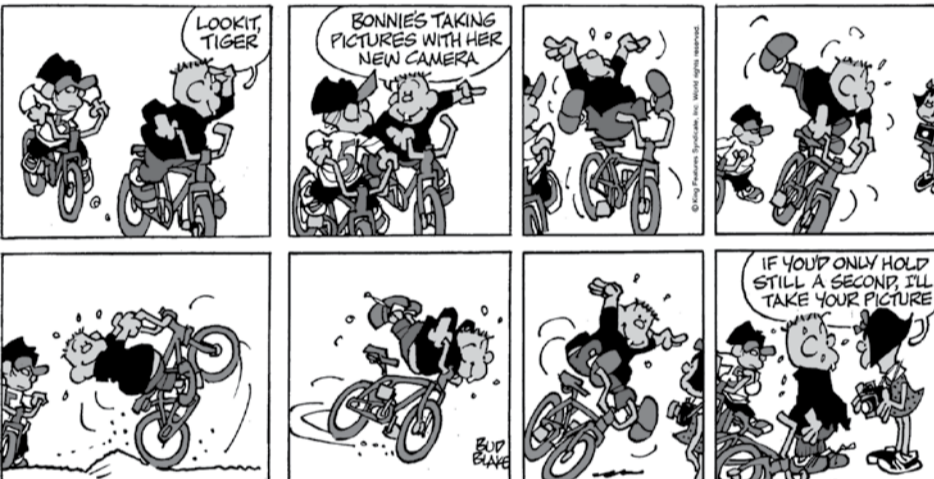
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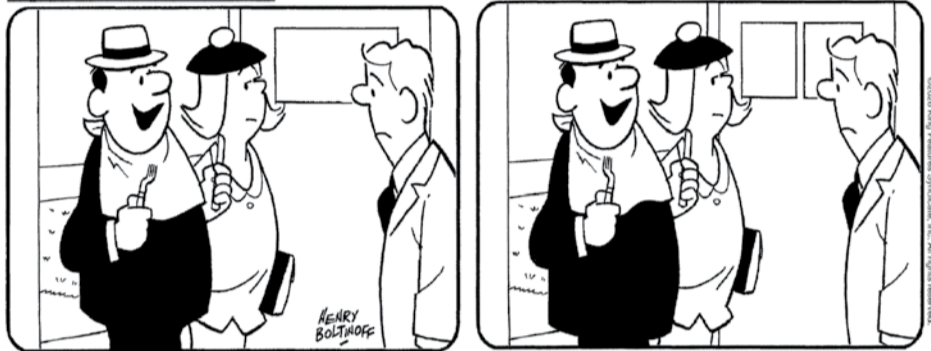
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Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Purse is moved, 2. Fork is reversed, 3. Napkin is different, 4. Doorway opening is not as wide, 5. Window in door is different, 6. Jacket is longer.

GRIN AND BEAR IT

Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



S	L	U	R		E	R	A		M	A	P	S			
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STATEPOINT CROSSWORD • THE 1970s

- CLUES**
- ACROSS**
- Verbal abuse
 - *Failed constitutional amendment, acr.
 - Google ____, navigation aid
 - Strip of roadway
 - Dripping faucet sound
 - Chef's headgear
 - Tel ____, Israel
 - Prima donnas' problems
 - Occupied (2 words)
 - *1974 scandal
 - Flight-related announcements, acr.
 - Attempt again
 - Male aristocrat's honorific
 - Town, in Spanish
 - Recitation of wedding vows, again
 - Santa ____, winds
 - Apnea, in U.K.
 - Operatic solo
 - ____ or do nothing
 - Finish line
 - *1976 Woody Guthrie biopic: "Bound for ____"
 - Field worker
 - Avian rest stop
 - What lintel and mantel have in common
 - Ring-shaped
 - *1979 Nobel Prize-winning nun
 - *Alfa Romeo Giulietta, e.g.
 - Italian bowling
 - Type of tournament
 - *#33 Down Oscar winner
 - Lie in wait
 - Place one's stake
 - Skin woe
 - *"Roots" by Alex
- DOWN**
- Deli side
 - * ____ lamp, 1960s invention popular in 1970s
 - Newton, e.g.
 - Echo
 - "Pomp and Circumstance" composer
 - ____ Tooty Fresh 'n Fruity
 - Cathedral part
 - *1976 Summer Olympics location
 - Caribbean color
 - Boot-wearing cat
 - *Johnny Nash's "I Can See Clearly Now"
 - Spinning toy (2 words)
 - Make a logical connection (2 words)
 - 4 x 4 race
 - Dead one or Black one, e.g.
 - Ottoman Empire bigwig
 - Teamsters, e.g.
 - Consumed
 - *"Sanford and Son" star
 - *"That's all she ____"
 - Buenos follower

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County Releases 2025 Year in Review Annual Report

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County has released its 2025 Year in Review Annual Report, highlighting a year of measurable progress, service delivery and continued investment in the community.

The report provides a comprehensive look at how the County's \$9.2 billion budget and more than 12,500 employees worked to support residents across all service areas. Highlights are also available in the 2025 "By the Numbers" video.

"This report reflects the real impact of County services in people's everyday lives," said David Villanueva, County Executive. "From housing and health care to public safety and infrastructure, our focus remains on delivering results that strengthen our community."

Highlights from the 2025 Year in Review are as follows.

Health and Human Services

Foster care entries declined by 58% since 2015, with child removals down 65%, demonstrating a strong focus on prevention and family preservation.

Child Support Services collected more than \$134 million, increasing financial support to families across the region.

Behavioral Health expanded capacity with 154 new residential treatment beds, including withdrawal management services.

The County provided Medi-Cal coverage to approximately 666,000 residents and CalFresh benefits totaling more than \$606 million.

Veterans Services assisted



Outreach teams served 1,882 individuals and helped 763 people move out of unsheltered homelessness. Photo courtesy Freepik

13,000 veterans, securing \$21.4 million in federal benefits.

Addressing Homelessness

Safe Stay communities served hundreds of individuals, helping many transition to permanent housing.

Outreach teams served 1,882 individuals and helped 763 people move out of unsheltered homelessness.

The County launched a first-of-its-kind regional governance effort to strengthen coordination with city partners.

Community Services

The County issued more than 23,000 building permits, representing \$1.4 billion in construction value.

Economic development efforts supported 408 new jobs and \$254.5 million in capital investment.



Animal Care Services helped place more than 7,700 animals into homes and reunite over 1,200 pets with their families. Photo courtesy Freepik

More than 637 businesses and entrepreneurs received support, resources and technical assistance.

Sacramento International

Airport served nearly 13.9 million passengers.

The Department of Transportation filled over 100,000 potholes and completed major

roadway improvement projects totaling more than \$120 million.

Waste Management programs expanded, with 3,500 tons of free compost distributed to residents and nonprofits.

Public Safety and Justice

The District Attorney's Office launched a historic regional task force addressing Missing and Murdered Indigenous People cases.

The Public Defender's Juvenile Pre-Trial Program contributed to a more than 50% reduction in youth incarceration.

Probation programs advanced rehabilitation outcomes, including job placements and firearm recoveries.

Administrative Services

Animal Care Services helped place more than 7,700 animals into homes and reunite over 1,200 pets with their families.

The County Assessor's Office was honored with the 2025 National Association of Counties Achievement Award for Innovation for its Accessory Dwelling Unit Characteristics Program.

The Clerk Recorder's Office issued 9,150 marriage licenses; processed 38,000 birth, death and marriage records; and issued 78,800 copies of birth, death and marriage certificates.

Your Tax Dollars at Work

The report also provides transparency into how property tax dollars are distributed: 49% to schools, 17% to special districts, 16% to the County, 11% to cities and 7% to redevelopment.

The 2025 Year in Review highlights Sacramento County's continued commitment to innovation, fiscal responsibility and improving outcomes for residents. ★

Photography Exhibition Featuring the Work of Phil Serna Opens at the Sacramento County Board Chamber Gallery

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County's Office of Economic Development sponsors bi-annual art exhibitions in the Board Chambers. The next time you attend a meeting in the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors Chambers, be sure to check out the rotating art on display.

"Learning to See," an exhibition of 24 photographs by Phil Serna, is the next installation and opens on April 29, in conjunction with Photography Month Sacramento at the Sacramento County Board Chamber Gallery (700 H Street, Suite 1450, Sacramento, California).

The public is invited to a reception for the artist on April 29 from 5 to 6:30 p.m. in the Board Chambers.

The exhibition runs through Jan. 1. Visitors are welcome to view the art when meetings are in session. To check when the next meeting is scheduled, visit bos.saccounty.gov/#gsc.tab%3D0&gsc.tab=0 to view the online Board



The exhibition traces Phil Serna's passion for photography, highlighting his time refining both a distinct artistic vision and honing his technical ability. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

Meeting Calendar

The exhibition traces Phil Serna's passion for photography, highlighting his time refining both a distinct artistic vision and honing



The collection of monochromatic images not only serve to express his interests and unique vantage point, but also his own self-identified fallibility. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

his technical ability, both of which he insists are endless pursuits. Serna's work reflects not only his growth as a photographer but also his love for the art form. Through this

collection, viewers are invited to witness the evolution of his craft, shaped by countless experiences and a persistent commitment to capturing compelling images.

Phil Serna describes his exhibition as a deeply personal exploration of his journey as a photographer. The collection of monochromatic images not only serve to express his interests and unique vantage point, but also his own self-identified fallibility and potential that define a dynamic artistic practice.

Each photograph was carefully selected by Serna from thousands, representing moments he has observed, individuals he has met and unique places he has experienced. Together, these images offer viewers an opportunity to appreciate how Serna feels he has "learned to see" the world around him, using photography as his preferred method to convey perspective, and provoke thought, emotion and reflection.

To learn more about Phil Serna visit bos.saccounty.gov/content/bos/us/en/district-1/about-phil-serna.html#gsc.tab=0. ★

Child Abuse Prevention Month

Creating a Better Future for Every Child

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Dozens of blue pinwheels are planted outside Sacramento County's Department of Child, Family and Adult Services (DCFAS) offices this April, each one representing hope, awareness and a shared commitment to protecting children.

On April 14, Sacramento County DCFAS staff, partners and community members came together for the annual pinwheel planting in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month. The event is part of a national effort to raise awareness about preventing child abuse and neglect and to promote the well-being of children and families.

The pinwheels remained on display throughout April as a visual reminder of the community's role in keeping children safe. The 2026



On April 14, Sacramento County DCFAS staff, partners and community members came together for the annual pinwheel planting in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

National Child Abuse Prevention Month theme is "Pinwheels of Possibility," focusing on creating a future where every child grows up safe, healthy and supported.

Sacramento County's DCFAS has a longstanding commitment to making sure children in our community grow up safe and feel supported when they do come into contact with Child Protective Services.

"During National Child Abuse Prevention Month, we are reminded that the safety and well-being of children is a shared responsibility. We call on all residents to play a role in prevention, because every child deserves to feel safe, supported and valued," said Melissa Lloyd, Deputy Director, Child Protective Services, Sacramento County. "Whether it's strengthening families, checking in on a neighbor

or speaking up when something isn't right, each of us can make a difference. Together, we can build a stronger, safer community where every child can thrive."

You can show support by planting blue pinwheels in your own yard. You can also raise awareness for child abuse prevention by learning to recognize potential signs of abuse and neglect.

Here are some simple but

meaningful ways you can ensure children in your life are safe, healthy and supported. Be a friend to a parent you know and offer support when needed. Be a positive presence in a child's life, show interest in their well-being and activities. Talk with neighbors about looking out for one another and the children in your community. Donate items to families in need to help reduce financial stress. Volunteer your time with programs that support children and families.

To report suspected child abuse in Sacramento County, call the 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline at 916-875-5437. In case of an emergency, call 9-1-1.

To learn more about Sacramento County CPS, visit dcfas.saccounty.gov/#gsc.tab=0.

To learn more about National Child Abuse Prevention Month, visit preventchildabuse.org/cap-month-2026/. ★

Lund Construction Selected to Build Critical Public Infrastructure for Republic FC Soccer Stadium

Sacramento Republic FC News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento Republic FC announced April 2 the selection of Lund Construction to build the public infrastructure surrounding the Club's new soccer stadium at the Downtown Sacramento Railyards. As part of its agreement with the City of Sacramento, Republic FC is responsible for delivering the streets, utilities and public amenities that will connect the stadium to the surrounding neighborhood, laying the physical foundation for one of the most transformative developments in the city's history.

Lund Construction's scope of work includes new and improved streets, sidewalks, a paseo, water and sewer infrastructure, storm drain systems and a new public bike trail. The work will create a connected, walkable public realm around the stadium and provide the backbone infrastructure for the broader buildout of the 31-acre plot that will also include a new neighborhood for the region.

"With groundbreaking behind us, the focus now turns to execution and that's exactly why we chose Lund Construction," said Pegasus Development CEO Art Zargaryan. Pegasus Development is leading the entire project for Wilton Rancheria and Republic FC. "Their decades of experience building infrastructure throughout the region and their firsthand knowledge of this site, make the team at Lund Construction a strong pick to help us accelerate our plans for a transformative neighborhood and stadium project."

Kevin Lund, president of Lund Construction added, "For more than 65 years, Lund Construction Co. has played a meaningful role in shaping the infrastructure



Republic FC's new downtown home will be the biggest pro sports and entertainment venue in the region and will serve as the anchor for a new neighborhood that will help double the size of Downtown. Rendering courtesy of Sacramento Republic FC



Lund Construction's portfolio throughout the Sacramento area encompasses complex joint trench systems, multi-utility coordination, and large-scale infrastructure delivery. Rendering courtesy of Sacramento Republic FC

of the Sacramento region. At the heart of our work is a simple belief: strong communities are built by dedicated people. That principle continues to guide everything we do. We are honored to contribute to the future home of Sacramento Republic FC and proud to partner with the

Wilton Rancheria Tribe. It is a privilege to help build projects that will serve and strengthen this community for generations to come, and we remain committed to delivering that work with integrity, respect, and lasting pride."

Lund Construction's portfolio

throughout the Sacramento area encompasses complex joint trench systems, multi-utility coordination, and large-scale infrastructure delivery, reflecting the technical depth and operational capacity this project requires. Lund Construction has successfully executed a

range of projects demonstrating Lund's capability to handle large-scale, high-stakes assignments efficiently. The team's experience includes civil and utility infrastructure work within the Railyards district, navigating the site's distinctive environmental and logistical conditions. That firsthand familiarity with the site's complexities informed the RFP evaluation and distinguished the Lund Construction team.

Republic FC's new downtown home will be the biggest pro sports and entertainment venue in the region and will serve as the anchor for a new neighborhood that will help double the size of Downtown. Vertical construction on the site will begin later this year, with the stadium on track to open in 2028. Fans can secure their spot in the region's largest venue by placing a deposit at 20KStadium.com. ★

Women's Tennis Adds Italy's De Matteo for 2026-27



Francesca De Matteo has committed to continuing her academic and athletic career with the Hornets beginning with the 2026-27 season. Photo courtesy of Sacramento State Athletics

Sacramento State Athletics News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento State head women's tennis coach Sophie Breault announced April 14 that Francesca De Matteo has committed to continue her academic and athletic career with the Hornets beginning with the 2026-27 season.

"We are thrilled to welcome De Matteo to our Hornet family," Breault said. "She brings so much passion and energy to her game, along with a strong competitive mindset. De Matteo possesses a well-rounded, all-court game in singles and is also an outstanding doubles player, adding valuable depth to our lineup. She will be a fantastic addition and we expect her to make an immediate impact as we compete for Big West Conference championships."

A native of Naples, Italy, who attended the G. Mazzini secondary school is the second signee for the program this year, joining South Africa's Jessica Schilz, who officially committed to Sacramento State back in November.

Over the last two years, De Matteo has earned a spot in the prequalification rounds for the Internazionali BNL d'Italia in both

singles (2025) and doubles (2026) at the Foro Italico in Rome, a tournament that features some of the top international players and is known as one of the premier clay-court tournaments in the world.

She reached the final in singles in one of the prequalification tournaments in 2025 and won a doubles championship in another one of the events alongside her partner in 2026.

De Matteo, who has been ranked as high as No. 905 in the ITF junior rankings, also received a wild card for the Internazionali Femminili di Tennis Città di Caserta in both 2024 and 2025, an yearly event that features some of the top up-and-coming talent and established players on the International Tennis Federation circuit.

Among her best results during her junior career, she has reached the semifinals in singles of a pair of J5 events in Dakar and Croatia and another semifinal of a J60 tournament in Dakar.

In doubles play, she claimed a title at a J5 tournament in Cyprus and reached the final three times of tournaments in Bari, Paola, and Livorno in her home country.

In addition, De Matteo has also represented Italy as part of the national team for European Summer and Winter Cups in 2019 and 2020. ★



Eight Aggies Named to the MPSF All-Academic Team

UC Davis Athletics News Release

DAVIS, CA (MPG) - Eight UC Davis gymnasts have been named to the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation All-Academic Team, showcasing their skills in competition and in the classroom.

Student-athletes are named to the MPSF All-Academic team based on a specific set of criteria, all of which the eight Aggies successfully met to earn the honor.

To qualify, a student-athlete must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.00 or higher, be at least a sophomore academically, and have completed one full academic year at the institution prior to the season in which the award is received. In addition, the student-athlete must have participated in at least fifty percent of the institution's competitions in their respective sport.



Student-athletes are named to the MPSF All-Academic team based on a specific set of criteria, all of which the eight Aggies successfully met to earn the honor. Photo courtesy of UC Davis Athletics

The group of Aggies is made up of four sophomores, one junior and three seniors.

UC Davis MPSF All-Academic Team Members include McKenna Knecht, Cady Chiu, Avery Marshall, Amelia Moneymaker, Jehaan Poonja, Milla Gideon, Alana Kim and Avah Reichow. ★

Nique Clifford Presented with the 2026 Community Crossover Award

Sacramento Kings News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Ahead of the April 10 game, the Sacramento Kings honored rookie Nique Clifford with the 2026 Community Crossover Award presented by Kaiser Permanente. In his first NBA season, Clifford was recognized for his outstanding commitment on and off the court, as well as his meaningful impact in the Sacramento community.

Clifford has quickly made his presence felt beyond basketball through hands-on community engagement. During the holiday season, he fulfilled wish lists for five local families affiliated with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Sacramento. He provided gifts, holiday dinners, Kings tickets and signed memorabilia, creating memorable experiences for participating youth and their families. His efforts reflect a genuine dedication to uplifting underserved communities and building lasting connections with Sacramento families. Clifford's willingness to give his time and resources has made an immediate and positive impression throughout the region.

Beyond the holidays, Clifford participated in several Kings community events, including Eat Like a King, Kingpin Classic and Season Ticket Member parties. His engagement with underserved youth, connection with fans and continued community involvement reflect his commitment to making a lasting impact.

On the court, Clifford has shown strong promise in his rookie campaign, bringing energy, versatility and a team-first mentality to every game. His work ethic and poise continue to establish him as a valuable contributor for the Kings.

The Community Crossover Award, established in 2003, honors a Kings player who exemplifies excellence both on and off the court. Previous recipients include Chris Webber (2003), Vlade Divac (2004), Peja Stojaković (2005), De'Aaron Fox (2019), Domantas Sabonis (2023) and Malik Monk (2024, 2025). Clifford now joins this distinguished group, continuing the organization's tradition of celebrating players who make a meaningful difference in the community. The complete list of honorees can be found by visiting nba.com/kings/history-community-crossover-award. ★

Woman's Thursday Club to Hold Plant Sale



Pictured is the Woman's Thursday Club of Fair Oaks' 2025-26 Board. Top row from left are Rosemary Lamb, Judy Faught, Sue Connell, Bobbi Salzman, Phyllis Williams, Ann Henderson, Lynn Steen and Sandra Navarro. Bottom row from left are Linda Poya, Bonnie McClain, Mary Mussel, Terrie O'Donnell, Patricia Speere and Sue Estes. Missing are Laurie Parker and Marilyn Sugimoto. Photo courtesy of Woman's Thursday Club of Fair Oaks

By MPG Staff

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - The Woman's Thursday Club of Fair Oaks will hold its parking lot plant sale from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, May 2 at 10625 Fair Oaks Blvd. The club will sell seedlings, succulents, vases and pots, perennials, garden décor, bouquets and more at the sale.

The club was organized in March of 1902 by a group of like-minded women in the community, according to its website. Their interest in literary, musical and social activities brought them together on two Thursdays a month.

"Working together for over 120 years, WTC

members have served their community and the nation by supporting charities and community events and by providing services to area residents," its website states.

Meetings are held at the clubhouse on the second Thursday of each month, from September through May. Varied programs of special interest to members are presented at these meetings. Club sections include Books, Arts & Crafts, Games Day and Good Earth Garden. Annual membership dues support the operation of the club.

The clubhouse space on Fair Oaks Boulevard is available to the public as a rental. ★

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