



Rodriguez Outlines
County Challenges

PAGE 6

Garden Club's Plant Sale
Extravaganza Blooms

PAGE 8



RIVER VALLEY TIMES

42ND YEAR • ISSUE 10

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PAGE 6

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PAGE 8

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Two Teens Killed, Three
Injured in Fiery Crash



Debris from the fiery accident along Scott Road can be seen eight hours later as rancher Leland Schneider, left, and his employee Ralph Para repair a fence damaged in an early morning solo accident on May 17. Two teenagers were killed and three others critically injured.

Story and photo by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Two teenagers were killed and three others critically injured early Sunday morning after a solo-vehicle crash and fire on Scott Road north of Latrobe Road near Rancho Murieta, according to the California Highway Patrol and Sacramento Metropolitan

Fire District. Authorities said five teenagers were inside the vehicle when it struck a tree shortly after midnight and caught fire. The three surviving teenagers were transported to area trauma centers with critical injuries. The crash occurred on the west side of Scott Road on the Pilliken Ranch property, according to rancher Leland Schneider, who leases the

land for cattle grazing. CHP officer Angie Monroe said she had limited information about the deceased victims, but identified the driver as a 16-year-old girl and the right front passenger as a 14-year-old girl. Monroe said passing motorists helped the three teenagers seated in the rear of the vehicle escape before

Continued on page 9

Supervisor
Rodriguez
Announces
Scott Road
Paving Plan



Paving of Scott Road from Boys Ranch Road south to Latrobe Road is planned for summer 2028.

Story and photo
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Supervisor Rosario Rodriguez used her first community meeting in Rancho Murieta on May 4 to deliver what she called a “surprise” announcement: Sacramento County will now repave the full length of Scott Road between the area north of Boys Ranch Road and Latrobe Road, completing a long-sought project for Rancho Murieta residents. Speaking at the meeting at the Rancho Murieta Association Building, Rodriguez said the county already planned to rehabilitate Scott Road north from Boys Ranch Road this summer, but she has now committed additional district transportation funding to pave the southern stretch from Boys Ranch Road toward Rancho Murieta in a future phase scheduled for summer 2028. Scott Road connects to Latrobe Road, which then links to Stonehouse Road and Jackson Highway. Rodriguez said the decision grew out of conversations with Sacramento County transportation officials when she first began reviewing district road priorities last year. “So, a year ago, when we looked at the map, when we looked at the map, I get very, very ... I don’t get a lot of money,” Rodriguez said. “And I started asking questions, ‘Where have we not paid attention to in the last 20 years?’ And our DOT guy said, ‘Scott Road.’ And I said, ‘OK, let’s give Scott Road some love.’” Rodriguez noted that she previously dedicated about \$2.9 million in SB 1 gas tax funding to rehabilitate the northern section of Scott Road from Boys Ranch Road northward,

Continued on page 7

Homeless Camp Near Rancho Murieta Raises Concerns



Resident Carole Thames shows aerial photos of a homeless encampment off Stonehouse Road when Sacramento County Supervisor Rosario Rodriguez holds her first community meeting on May 4 in Rancho Murieta.

Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Concerns about a growing homeless encampment near Rancho Murieta surfaced during Sacramento County Supervisor Rosario Rodriguez’s first community meeting in Rancho

Murieta on May 4, after Rodriguez discussed a new county ordinance allowing authorities to clear illegal camping on both public and private property. Speaking at the Rancho Murieta Association Building, Rodriguez said Sacramento County recently strengthened its illegal camping ordinance so the Sacramento County

Sheriff’s Office could enforce camping restrictions on vacant private property as well as public land. She said the change was prompted by complaints about homeless encampments on large vacant lots, whose owners sometimes lived out of state or abroad. Rodriguez said the revised

Continued on page 2

Summerfest Spray Park Opens



Perfect weather and high spirits mark opening day at the Summerfest Spray Park in Riverview Park on May 16. The Rancho Murieta Association Recreation Committee and Summerfest sponsored the event, which drew several hundred youngsters and family members. Volunteers served hot dogs, popcorn, chips and snow cones. At left, youngsters play in the water while parents and siblings relax on the grass. At right, Charlotte Mobley runs through a spray ring while her sister, Hazel, waits for her turn. See more photos at therivervalleytimes.com. Photos by Gail Bullen



Homeless Camp Near Rancho Murieta Raises Concerns

ordinance, passed by the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors last November, has already helped deputies respond more quickly to encampments.

“The sheriff’s department has reported back very positive response to them being able to now enforce camping on both private and public properties,” Rodriguez said.

The discussion prompted Rancho Murieta resident Carole Thames to raise concerns about what she described as an expanding homeless encampment off Stonehouse Road on property adjacent to the community. During the discussion, Thames displayed a poster board with aerial surveillance photographs of the encampment to Rodriguez and the audience.

Thames said the property owner had advertised campsites on Nextdoor roughly two years ago and that what began as a small number of campers had grown substantially.

“The first year there was maybe six, probably non-street legal campers, trailers, whatever on the property,” Thames said.

“Now this has multiplied.”

According to Thames, the encampment is located roughly 1,000 feet from Rancho Murieta homes and close to Stonehouse Park.

“There’s no running water; there’s no sewer. There’s nothing out there,” Thames said.

Thames also expressed concern about wildfire danger and public safety, noting that residents worry a fire at the encampment could spread into Rancho Murieta under windy conditions.

“We don’t want to become another Pacific Palisades or Paradise or something if the wind’s blowing the wrong way,” Thames said.

Rodriguez agreed that the encampment posed potential health and fire risks, including garbage accumulation, human waste and the risk of cooking fires. She assured residents the county would investigate the matter.

“If you contacted 311, or if you sent it to Supervisor Rodriguez, we will get on it,” Rodriguez said.

Resident Bob Keil also reported hearing gunfire in the area the previous night,

which audience members said had been confirmed and was not fireworks.

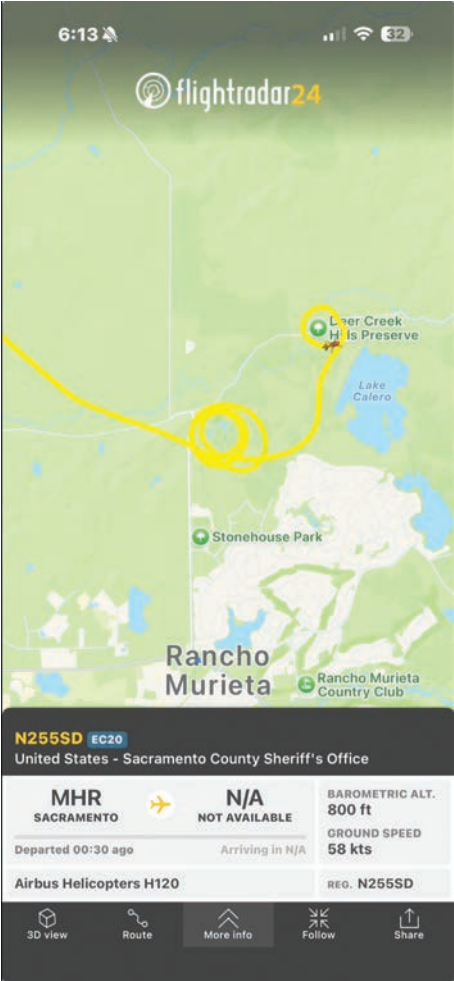
Following the meeting, Thames said she continued communicating with the Sacramento County Sheriff’s Office about the encampment. In a social media post the following week, Thames said sheriff’s officials had believed the encampment had previously been cleared, but updated photographs she submitted on May 5 showed the site had become active again.

According to Thames, the Sheriff’s Office sent a helicopter to survey the area on May 6 after receiving her information.

In a text message sent May 15 while traveling, Thames said the Sheriff’s Office, county code enforcement and the county planning department were all scheduled to inspect the area the next week, before the River Valley Times’ May 22 publication date.

“Things should start moving next week,” Thames wrote.

A screenshot from Flightradar24 shows a Sacramento County Sheriff’s Office helicopter circling over a homeless encampment and nearby in the Deer Creek Hills Reserve on May 6.



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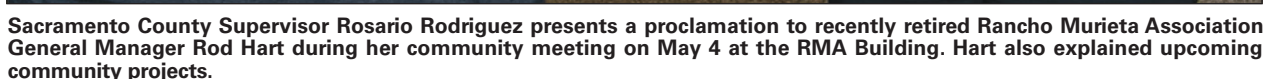
Karen Hoberg,

Broker/Owner

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**Story and photo
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

The meeting also served



Hart said the leadership transition is currently the

Fireworks enforcement

"That has been a huge

He said some residents mistakenly believed recent work covering the former leaking fountain area with

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

Zack Bowden
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Gere Pushes New Tank Site

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - A sharp debate over the location of Rancho Murieta’s proposed emergency water storage tank and a broad review of next year’s capital improvement projects dominated the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Improvements Committee meeting on May 6.

The committee also reviewed emergency culvert work, a throttle valve project at the water treatment plant and the district’s long-range infrastructure spending priorities.

The Improvements Committee is composed of Directors Bill Gere and Randy Jenco, Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder, Interim Operations Manager Travis Bohannon and other staff. The committee looks at infrastructure issues in depth and makes recommendations to the entire board.

Water Tank Site

The most contentious discussion came at the start of the meeting, when developer Bob Keil challenged committee chair

Gere over efforts to reconsider the preferred site for a new emergency storage tank. Site 4 is located on a hill west of the water treatment plant.

Keil said the board and engineers had already settled on “Site 4” for the tank and accused Gere of working “secretly” with Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder to explore alternatives without the knowledge of the board, the public or the district’s contract engineer.

Gere rejected the characterization, saying the district was simply reviewing “the best location for the tank that is the least expensive and the best for the community.”

Gere argued that the district should instead pursue a location near the existing water plant because it already owns the property. He said that would save the district the \$900,000 that the Rancho North developer was asking for the four acres at Site 4. Gere also mentioned that Rancho Murieta Properties was asking for \$1.25 million for the larger parcel.

RMP property manager Jeff Pearson responded to the price tag during public comments. He said that district representatives

(Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder and Interim Operations Manager Travis Bohannon) had approached RMP (Pearson and CFO Tony Valez) to discuss a purchase price for the site. Pearson said they initially asked whether the land could be gifted to the district, which caught them off guard.

“We are perfectly willing to negotiate, but I would not call it a negotiation session at all,” he said.

“We gave a price based upon what we believe to be the market value of the property. We gave an option, and that was it,” Pearson added.

Committee Reviews CIP Priorities

Another major topic was the district’s revised Capital Improvements Project list for the coming fiscal year.

The CIP projects would be funded through district reserves and were reviewed after Finance and Administration Director Cecilia Min asked staff to reduce the overall cost of the district’s infrastructure “wish list.”

One of the most significant decisions was to keep the proposed Urban Water Management Plan project



This graphic from the Rancho Murieta Community Services District engineer depicts what had been the preferred site for a new water tank before the May 6 Improvements Committee meeting. Courtesy photo

– estimated at roughly \$500,000 – on the priority list despite mounting financial pressures.

The committee also discussed trimming or delaying several other projects to conserve reserves.

Among them was the water plant throttle valve project, which had originally been approved to automatically regulate water flows to the Rio Oso tank during periods of high demand.

Bohannon recommended effectively shelving the valve installation, arguing that operators could manually control flows when needed rather than spend potentially thousands of dollars on automation.

“Last year, the district had only a handful of days where that would potentially be needed,” Bohannon wrote in his staff report. “Since it is not an everyday thing, I don’t

see the need to potentially spend \$250,000 or more when the operator at the plant can manually close the valve for the 3 to 4 hours needed.”

At the meeting, Bohannon said the district had already spent some money on engineering and design work for the project, including drawings for the valve and portions of the electrical design, but he recommended pausing further work.

The committee agreed to forward the issue to the full board for further discussion.

Culvert Projects

The committee also received updates on two culvert repair projects.

A change order totaling \$22,540 for emergency repairs at the 14th Hole North Culvert was forwarded to the board after staff said saturated soil,

bypass pumping and additional rock bedding increased costs beyond the original estimate.

Despite the added costs, Veerkamp General Engineering still remained the low bidder on the project, staff said.

The committee also learned that M3 Construction had been awarded the Murieta Equestrian Center culvert repair project with a bid of approximately \$343,000, below a competing proposal of more than \$386,000.

Other topics included updates on GIS mapping software, raw water storage data, dam insurance and ongoing discussions on the Integrated Water Master Plan.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook.



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***Sacramento County
Voter Registration and
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News Release***

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News Release***

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Rodriguez Outlines County Challenges

**Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County Supervisor Rosario Rodriguez used her first community meeting in Rancho Murieta on May 4 to outline countywide challenges ranging from homelessness and illegal fireworks to budget pressures tied to federal funding cuts.

The meeting at the Rancho Murieta Association Building drew county officials, community leaders and residents who questioned Rodriguez about issues affecting both Rancho Murieta and the county as a whole.

See separate stories in this issue on Supervisor Rosario Rodriguez’s surprise announcement about additional Scott Road paving and her presentation of a proclamation to recently retired Rancho Murieta Association General Manager Rod Hart.

From Migrant Roots to County Supervisor

Rodriguez opened with personal remarks about her background and path into public service.

She described growing up in a migrant farmworker family after her parents immigrated from Mexico and said she learned early the importance of hard work and education.

Rodriguez said she spent 24 years working in health care before opening her own restaurant business in Folsom about 10 years ago. Sacramento County’s official biography states that she launched a San Francisco-style taqueria in Folsom’s Historic District in 2016.

Before being elected to the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors in November 2024, Rodriguez served on the Folsom Cordova Unified School District board and later on the Folsom City Council, where she served as mayor when elected to the Board of Supervisors.

She said her district stretches from Rancho Cordova and Folsom south through Rancho Murieta and into the Delta communities, giving her responsibility for a large, diverse area.

Rodriguez emphasized that she wanted the community meetings to provide direct access to county leadership and staff.

“I want to make sure people know who to call and how to get help,” she said.

The County Board of Supervisors elected her chair in January.

County Budget Concerns

Rodriguez spent considerable time discussing the county’s worsening budget outlook, focusing on the impacts of H.R. 1, the federal legislation commonly nicknamed the “Big Beautiful Bill.”

She explained that the county would



Sacramento County Supervisor Rosario Rodriguez holds her first community meeting in Rancho Murieta on May 4 at the RMA Building. She was elected as the chair of the Board of Supervisors in January.

have faced \$40 million in costs under “normal conditions,” but estimates have risen dramatically due to reductions in federal support.

According to Rodriguez, cuts to Medicaid, known in California as Medi-Cal, and the federal SNAP food assistance program, known in California as CalFresh, could push the county’s financial exposure to \$100 million or more.

She warned that counties throughout California are increasingly being asked to shoulder costs formerly covered through federal programs.

“We are very concerned,” Rodriguez said. “Those are services people rely on every day.”

Rodriguez said Sacramento County is now negotiating with the state over which level of government will absorb various costs as federal funding support declines. She said county leaders are still trying to determine the full impacts while preparing for difficult budget decisions ahead.

Rodriguez also said she would oppose cuts to public safety services, arguing that unincorporated areas of the county, such as Rancho Murieta, would likely “get the short end of the stick” when budget reductions occur because resources are concentrated in more urban parts of the county.

Homelessness

Rodriguez also spoke at length about the county’s efforts to address homelessness. She said the county recently expanded its illegal camping ordinance to allow the Sheriff’s Office to clear homeless encampments on both public and private property, including vacant parcels where owners may be absent or live out of state.

She said sheriff’s Homeless Outreach Teams also work to connect homeless individuals with county services, including behavioral health, addiction treatment and housing assistance, while breaking up



Greg Mahoney, the chief building official for Sacramento County and a Rancho Murieta resident, answers a question about construction permits.

illegal camps.

Resident Carole Thames raised concerns about a homeless encampment located on privately owned property in the hilly area south of Stonehouse Park. Thames said she fears a fire could start in the encampment and quickly spread into the surrounding community.

Rodriguez acknowledged the concern. “That’s not OK,” Rodriguez said, referring to people living long-term on undeveloped private property without sanitation or utilities. She said the issue would likely involve both the Sacramento County Sheriff’s Office and Sacramento County Environmental Management officials responsible for environmental health enforcement.

Rodriguez encouraged residents to continue documenting problems and reporting concerns so county agencies can track conditions and determine appropriate enforcement action.

Fireworks Enforcement

Rodriguez said illegal fireworks continue to create serious fire danger throughout Sacramento County, especially in Orangevale and Antelope.

Rodriguez said the county plans a strong enforcement campaign ahead of the Fourth of July and warned that people caught using illegal fireworks could face fines “up to \$10,000.” She said the Sheriff’s Department plans to use drones, targeted enforcement areas and videos submitted through 311 to identify violators.

Rodriguez said videos and photos submitted by residents through 311 can help investigators identify violators.

“We need the community’s help,” she said.

Construction Permit Delays

Resident Mike Martel questioned Rodriguez about ongoing frustrations with Sacramento County’s building permit



County Executive Dave Villanueva also answers the permitting question. He, too, lives in Rancho Murieta.

process, particularly delays and difficulties encountered during construction projects.

The issue prompted responses from both Sacramento County Chief Building Official Greg Mahoney and Sacramento County Executive David Villanueva, both Rancho Murieta residents who attended the meeting.

Mahoney acknowledged past problems within the permitting system and said the county has been working to improve response times and coordination between departments.

Villanueva also addressed the issue, saying Sacramento County leadership recognizes the need for modernization and streamlining.

Both officials referenced ongoing work by Deputy County Executive Dave Devani to improve the county’s permitting and development processes.

Rodriguez said county staff would continue to work on reforms and encouraged residents to keep documenting specific problems so they can be addressed.

311 System

Rodriguez encouraged residents to make greater use of Sacramento County’s 311 service system to report problems ranging from illegal dumping to road hazards and code enforcement issues.

She described the system as one of the county’s most valuable tools because complaints and requests can be tracked and routed to the appropriate departments.

Rodriguez urged residents not to assume someone else has already reported a problem.

“If you see something, report it,” she said.

She also encouraged residents to contact her office directly by email with ongoing concerns or unresolved issues at supervisorrodriguez@sacounty.gov.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

ETC Grants Support Arts Programs at Three Schools

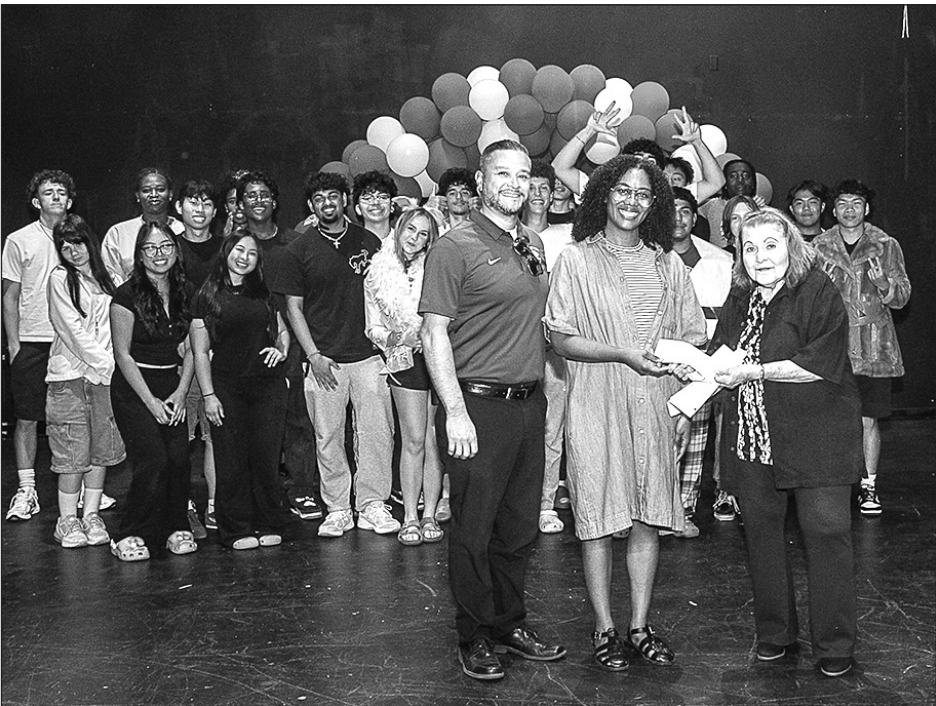
**Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Entertainment Theatre & Culture for Rancho Murieta (ETC) continued its support of arts education on May 13 by presenting \$1,000 grants to three local schools to help fund theater productions, costumes, equipment and other arts-related needs.

ETC Philanthropy Chair Stephanie Stanislaus visited Katherine L. Albani Middle School, Pleasant Grove High School and Cosumnes River Elementary School to present the checks and speak with students about the importance of the arts.

“Our goal is to keep the arts alive in the community,” Stanislaus told students during the presentations. She said participation in the arts helps students develop empathy, critical thinking skills and a better understanding of different cultures and perspectives.

At Katherine L. Albani Middle School, Stanislaus presented the grant to theater arts teacher Michelle Campbell and Principal Chris Rauschenfel. Campbell said the money will be used to build additional costume storage racks for the school’s growing theater



Stephanie Stanislaus, right, philanthropy chair for Entertainment, Theatre & Culture for Rancho Murieta, presents a \$1,000 check to Pleasant Grove High School Principal Omar Carreon and theater arts teacher Ashley Shapiro on May 13.



Stephanie Stanislaus speaks to students at Cosumnes River Elementary School about the importance of the arts.

department.

The school recently completed its production of “Chitty Chitty Bang Bang Jr.,” a musical based

on the beloved family fantasy about an eccentric inventor and his magical flying car. The show featured colorful costumes,

lively musical numbers and fantasy adventure elements familiar to generations of audiences.

Campbell said ETC’s

grant from last year helped to pay for this year’s production. The performances were staged May 8-9 by the Katherine L. Albani Theatre Company at the Pleasant Grove High School Black Box Theater.

During her visit, Stanislaus encouraged students to remain involved in the arts and spoke about how theater and visual arts help them to become more understanding and expressive.

At Pleasant Grove High School, Stanislaus presented the check to theater arts teacher Ashley Shapiro and Principal Omar Carreon. Shapiro said the ETC grant will help to pay expenses connected to next year’s productions of “Legally Blonde” and “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” She said ETC funds received last year helped to support this year’s productions of “Annie” and “A Christmas Carol.”

Shapiro also said 12 Pleasant Grove students recently traveled with Franklin High School students and chaperones to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon, where they attended performances of “A Raisin in the Sun,” “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” and “Come From Away.”

Two students also told Stanislaus how theater has affected them personally. Jordan Brown said theater taught him “to express kindness to all and to

value other people’s opinions,” while Judd Zeki said participating in theater helped him to become “more expressive and communicate with more confidence.”

At Cosumnes River Elementary School, Stanislaus presented the grant to Principal Ashley Hannon and teacher Vandy Passmore. Hannon said the funds will help to cover costume expenses and other costs associated with three grade-level plays, as well as replacement stage lighting.

Hannon also mentioned the school’s expanding arts opportunities through Proposition 28 funding. Proposition 28 – officially the “Arts and Music in Schools Funding Guarantee and Accountability Act” – was approved by California voters in 2022 and provides ongoing state funding for arts education in public schools.

This school year, Cosumnes River Elementary used Proposition 28 funds to bring the Young Rembrandts art education program into some classrooms and to support an after-school art program. Hannon said she hopes to bring the program back next year. She also said the school plans to use Proposition 28 funding to support a new music teacher next year.

See more photos at therivervalleytimes.com. ★

SECURITY LOGS

Following is a summary of activity for the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Security Department for the following dates. Note: these log entries are condensed. For full security log details, go to the CSD website at rmcsd.com.

May 1

10:22 p.m., Patrol observed a black Infiniti occupied by multiple subjects inside Riverview Park after hours. Patrol utilized the loudspeaker to advise the group the park was closed. Subjects departed without incident.

10:48 p.m., Lake Calero. Patrol observed a white Cadillac Escalade, two golf carts and multiple individuals near the Lake Calero boat ramp after hours. Upon patrol arrival, the vehicle and one golf cart departed the area. A second golf cart occupied by two adult males remained and used profanity

toward Patrol. Patrol checked for a valid barcode and none was located. Subjects departed the area without further incident.

May 6

9:38 p.m., RMCS D Patrol observed a black Lexus traveling inbound on Pera Drive. After passing the stationary LiDAR unit on Pera Drive, the vehicle appeared to accelerate quickly. Patrol continued behind the vehicle and observed it traveling approximately 40 mph, based on the RMCS D patrol vehicle speedometer. The vehicle approached the intersection of Pera Drive and Guadalupe Drive and, without coming to a complete stop, turned left onto Guadalupe Drive inbound.

The vehicle continued on Guadalupe Drive toward Puerto Drive at approximately 40 mph. Patrol followed the vehicle to obtain identifying information. Once the vehicle license plate

was obtained, Patrol cleared the area. Citation issued.

May 7

6:15 p.m., RMCS D Patrol met with a resident regarding a golf cart collision investigation from March 15. An ABDI barcode search showed the golf cart entered Murieta North through the Lago inbound gate at approximately 7:07 p.m.; no exit activity was recorded at any community gate afterward.

The reporting party advised the golf cart traveled between Murieta North and Murieta South through unknown pathways and was later operated by another juvenile identified as without the reporting party’s knowledge.

The reporting party stated the golf cart was returned damaged at approximately 10 p.m., reportedly advised he collided with a post near the Riverview pathway while traveling between Murieta North and Murieta South.

May 11

8:30 a.m., Security Supervisor Arino was dispatched to a call regarding a transient camped behind Ace Hardware. Upon arrival, the subject was located sleeping against the curb in the fire lane near the dumpster area. Subject was advised of trespassing concerns and provided directions out of the area. Subject complied and began packing belongings.

10:07 p.m., RMCS D Patrol Officer Davis and Officer Perepelka responded to a report of suspicious activity in the FAA Business Park. RP reported two juveniles were observed on camera attempting to open multiple business doors. Upon arrival, officers contacted the subjects and advised them of the complaint. Subjects identified themselves as residents of Rancho Murieta. Officers advised the juveniles they were not to check or attempt to access

business doors or facilities. Subjects complied and left the area without incident.

May 12

2:39 a.m., Patrol observed a female subject in distress crossing the intersection toward the patrol vehicle near the entrance to North Gate at Highway 16. Patrol observed the female yelling across the roadway toward a male subject who remained inside a vehicle at the Chevron station. The female advised she had been involved in an argument with her ex-husband and stated he had taken her phone. The female requested use of Patrol’s phone to arrange transportation. Patrol advised the female to proceed to North Gate where she could safely make the call. Approximately 20 minutes later, the female arrived at North Gate requesting additional assistance. Patrol remained while she awaited transportation. ★

Supervisor Rodriguez Announces Scott Road Paving Plan

Continued from page 1

calling it the largest road project funded in her district that year.

Matt Hedges, who is chief of staff for Rodriguez, explained in a May 5 social media post that residents had welcomed the original announcement, but also noted that the southern portion of Scott Road toward Latrobe Road was in even worse condition. Hedges said Rodriguez therefore decided to dedicate another \$2.8 million from this year’s allocation to ensure the remainder of the road would also be resurfaced.

“Allocating this much funding to one road was not an easy decision, especially in a district with many road needs,” Hedges wrote. “But Scott Road has been neglected for far too long, and Supervisor Rodriguez believed it was important to follow through and make sure the entire road was addressed.”

Rodriguez told residents the county could not justify improving only part of the roadway.

“You can’t have one portion that is beautiful, and then have the other portion that’s not,” she said. “So, it was easy.”

During the meeting, John Merchant said the repaving project would help address mounting traffic and safety pressures on Scott Road caused by regional growth and delays in completing the Capital SouthEast Connector.

Merchant said Rancho Murieta leaders originally supported the Capital SouthEast Connector because it was expected to eventually modernize the Grant Line and Jackson Road intersection with turn lanes in all directions. But he said the timeline has stretched dramatically.

“Now it appears that it will be at least 10 years before we reach Grant Line,” Merchant said. “So, the real concern for us going forward is between Caltrans and the mitigation money of all of the Sunrise Corridor, what can they do to reduce that timeframe?”

Merchant said continued delays would place increasing strain on Scott Road.

“Until we get an expedient road, you’re going to put more and more pressure on Scott Road,” he said.

He also referenced an environmental impact report prepared for a proposed solar project, saying traffic studies documented about 1 million annual trips on Scott Road.

“There’s more and more pressure to use that,” Merchant said, adding that Rancho Murieta residents have repeatedly requested turnouts along the road for safety reasons.

Merchant further urged Rodriguez to investigate whether transportation mitigation funding collected for Sunrise Corridor development projects could be redirected to improve the Scott Road connection to the Connector corridor.

After the meeting, Merchant said residents were grateful to simply see the long-discussed improvements finally moving forward.

“I think, No. 1, it’s great,” Merchant said. “We’re at a point 30 years later that

we will take anything we can get. All we’ve ever gotten is yellow signs.”

But Merchant cautioned that improving the southern portion of Scott Road could be far more complicated and expensive than many residents realize.

“It’s not just paving a road,” he said. “There’s drainage, there’s hills, there’s blind spots.”

Merchant said the county could also face easement or property-ownership complications along portions of the route. “There’s also, I believe, they may need, legally, something ... easements or something,” he said.

He said he especially appreciated the county’s plans to pave the northern portion of Scott Road because increasing drainage problems are already emerging there due to upstream development.

“We know that development to the north is generating a lot more volume,” Merchant said, referring to runoff flowing into Deer Creek. “That’s why we flood more than we used to at the bridge or at the culverts.”

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★



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Garden Club's Plant Sale Extravaganza Blooms

**Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The annual River Valley Garden Club Plant Sale Extravaganza drew a steady stream of shoppers to the Rancho Murieta Association parking lot on May 9, with organizers calling the fundraiser a major success for both the club and the community.

The popular spring event featured flowers, vegetables, herbs, succulents, houseplants, raffle prizes, garden art, children's activities and advice from a Master Gardener, creating what organizers described as the club's largest event of the year and its primary fundraiser.

"We always get wonderful support from the community and our garden club members," said Deborah Rooney, chair of the event. "Overall, the sale went exceedingly well."

Proceeds from the fundraiser help support scholarships, grants and beautification projects throughout Rancho Murieta. Rooney said the club-funded community projects include the flower beds at Local Bean, the Cosumnes River Elementary School garden and landscaping at the Rancho Murieta Tennis Club.

Colorful displays of plants filled the parking lot as customers browsed



The River Valley Garden Club's Plant Sale Extravaganza unfolds in the Rancho Murieta Association parking lot on May 9 as club member Diane Raggio explains the virtues of the calibrachoa plant to customer Linda Beagle.

offerings ranging from tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers to succulents, geraniums, lavender, salvia and amaryllis.

A children's activity table returned by popular demand, while Master Gardener Pam McCabe answered gardening questions throughout the day. Floral design demonstrations and bouquet sales added a touch of Mother's Day to the event. The club also offered a large selection of garden art displayed on tables and along a fence line surrounding the sale area.

Sponsors, Raffle, Volunteers

One of the biggest attractions was the raffle,

which featured an assortment of gardening-themed prizes donated by local businesses and supporters. Among the prizes were a garden cart filled with gardening tools and supplies, a Meyer lemon tree from Green Acres Nursery & Supply, a mandarin tree from Strutz Garden Center, a basket from Tractor Supply, gift certificates to Go Fore Pizza and Illume, an antique rocking chair paired with a flowering maple, and a whimsical gnome succulent garden.

Rooney said the raffle is always one of the most popular parts of the event.

Sponsors also played a major role in the fundraiser's success. Rooney credited Margaret

Watson-Hopkins with helping to secure support from numerous businesses and sponsors throughout the community, including Green Acres Nursery & Supply, Strutz Garden Center and Thompson's Garden Center, all of which donated plants and other support for the event.

"Margaret Watson-Hopkins did a fabulous job touching base with so many businesses and sponsors within our community," Rooney said. "We are extremely grateful for every single sponsor."

Planning for the Plant Sale Extravaganza began in January, with Garden Club members spending months organizing donations, preparing plants and



Garden club member Mo Young congratulates Emmy Broddrick after she creates a Mother's Day gift at the children's activity table.



Melanie Bennett selects one of the bouquets created by members Roseann Stevenson and Kathleen Riebe.

coordinating logistics for the large event. Rooney said many club members and family volunteers participated in the preparation and setup.

The Rancho Murieta Association maintenance crew helped by delivering tables and setting up canopies before the sale, while Rancho Murieta Boy Scouts assisted with

takedown and cleanup afterward.

Garden Stroll Returning

The club also announced plans to bring back the Rancho Murieta Garden Stroll in May 2027 in conjunction with next year's Plant Sale Extravaganza.

See more photos at therivervalleytimes.com. ★

Security Operation Faces Financial Crunch

**Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Rancho Murieta Community Services District officials warned during a May 6 Security Committee meeting that the district's security operation is facing a major financial crunch, with members considering nighttime gate automation, reduced staffing and the need for community input on the future of security services.

Committee Chair Linda Butler also announced that she plans to step away from chairing the Security Committee, the Personnel Committee and the Camera Working Group in the coming months due to health issues.

The Security Committee is composed of Butler, Board President John Merchant, Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder, Security Sgt. Brandon Arino and other staff. The committee looks at security issues in depth and makes recommendations to the entire board. Butler was the sole director serving on the committee for more than a year.

Security Budget Shortfall

Butler opened the meeting by saying the district is facing a shortfall of about \$200,000 in the security budget because Measure J limits annual security fee increases to 2%, while operating costs continue to rise.

She also referenced a Sacramento County Grand Jury recommendation that property tax revenues not be used to subsidize security operations.

"We are operating on



Director Linda Butler and Board President John Merchant discuss the future of the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Security Department during the Security Committee meeting on May 6. She is resigning as chair due to health issues.

a shoestring, literally a shoestring," Butler said, describing the challenge of maintaining 24-hour gate staffing and patrol coverage with current staffing levels.

She said staffing shortages become especially difficult when employees are sick, on vacation or dealing with family emergencies. The district currently employs seven full-time gate officers, six part-time gate officers and four full-time patrol officers.

Gate Access Proposal

A major focus of the meeting was the district's possible use of the "Go Access" gate entry system, which officials said could automate gate operations during overnight hours.

Go Access representatives were originally scheduled to give a presentation at the May 6 meeting, but the presentation was canceled after the company was unable to attend. Committee members discussed rescheduling the presentation for a future meeting so the board could hear more details about the system.

District officials said the technology could eventually automate gate entry during low-traffic hours,

allowing the district to eliminate two overnight "graveyard shift" gate positions and reduce operating costs.

Security Supervisor Branden Arino said the actual estimate for the Go Access conversion had increased to about \$71,000 upfront, plus higher monthly service fees. Officials said the savings from reducing overnight staffing could eventually offset much of the cost.

Butler said the district cannot continue operating security the same way without major financial changes.

"We have to get \$200,000 cheaper," she said.

Finance and Administration Director Cecilia Min said the district may have roughly \$50,000 remaining in security impact fee reserves after accounting for prior capital projects. She had tentatively budgeted about \$30,000 for Go Access and another \$5,000 for radio leases, leaving only about \$15,000 remaining, before considering the Lago Gate repair.

Min also cautioned that the \$50,000 figure remains only an estimate because district staff are still reconciling prior years of capital

improvement spending and developer fee accounting.

Residents to Weigh In

Despite discussions about automation, both directors stressed that the community must be heavily involved before any overnight gate staffing is reduced.

Board President John Merchant repeatedly emphasized that residents need to understand the tradeoffs before the district moves forward with unattended gates during late-night hours. He also raised concerns about how visitors would enter the community overnight if the gates become automated and no gate officers are present.

Merchant noted that security historically ranks as the No. 1 reason residents choose to live in Rancho Murieta.

Merchant said broader public discussions are also needed because conversations are beginning about whether RMA could eventually take over security operations inside the gates.

He cautioned that any transfer would involve much more than simply shifting gate responsibilities. Merchant said the district also has



The district is considering a new gate automation system that could eliminate two overnight gate positions as a cost-saving measure.

obligations to residents and businesses outside the gates, including issues involving the shopping center, porch piracy, trespassing and incidents in Murieta Village.

Merchant also said any future discussions with RMA will require agreement on what type of technology and gate systems would ultimately be used.

Lago Gate Repair

Committee members also discussed repairs to the Lago Gate, expected to cost \$7,000. Merchant said that the repair had to be made immediately, regardless of where the money came from, "because someone is going to crash into someone."

Wilder said she would place the expenditure on the agenda for the next board meeting for ratification, agreeing that the district should not wait until the next budget cycle to address the issue.

Camera Program Remains Unclear

Butler also gave an update on the Camera Work Group, which has been investigating the history and current status of Rancho Murieta's fragmented camera system.

She said there had once been plans to implement a more comprehensive camera program when former General Manager Tom Hennig led the district. Butler said at least \$66,000 had been spent over the years, and both RMCS and RMA currently possess numerous cameras.

However, Butler said the working group has found considerable confusion about the system, including questions about ownership, monitoring responsibilities, camera locations, and whether footage is actively monitored. The workgroup has also been trying to determine whether a formal overall camera plan still exists.

Butler said she has not scheduled another Camera Working Group meeting because district leaders are focused on resolving the gate and security funding issues first. She said the district would need professional help to move forward with the cameras.

The workgroup included Butler, Arino, former RMA General Manager Rod Hart, RMA Compliance Supervisor Chris Smith and former RMCS director Mike Martel.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Bookmobile |Schedule Changes
Starting in June, the Bookmobile from the Sacramento County Library will only be coming to Rancho Murieta on the first and third Wednesday, June 3 and June 17. The time will change, too, from 10 a.m. until noon. This schedule change will allow the library to serve additional communities. The Bookmobile parks in the Village Clubhouse parking lot and with inclement weather, will

be inside the Clubhouse.
VFW Slates Poppy Sales, Memorial Day Celebration
The Rancho Murieta Post of Veterans of Foreign Wars is planning a Poppy Sales event on May 23 and a Memorial Day Celebration on May 25. The poppies will be sold outside Bel Air Market and Tractor Supply between noon and 3 p.m. The donations will help veterans in our community with emergency

monetary needs.
The Memorial Day Celebration on May 25 will be held at the Gazebo at 1 p.m. It will be preceded by a social hour at noon. All are welcome.

Memorial Day Ceremony Slated in Wilton
The Wilton Veterans Group and the Wilton History group are presenting a Memorial Day Ceremony at 10 a.m. on Monday, May 25 at the Wilton Post Office Parking lot. The ceremony will

feature a special military vehicle, a “Fallen Hero” table and a ringing of the bell for local veterans. Following the event, the Wilton Fire Protection District will host a hot dog fundraiser. All are welcome.

Scout Flag Retirement on Memorial Day
Scout Troop 633 will retire worn and tattered U.S. flags on Memorial Day on Monday, May 25 in a ceremony at the Lake Calero fire pit beginning at 6

p.m.
Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta sponsors the troop, which has conducted a flag ceremony for 19 years.
CSD Board Meeting, Budget Hearing May 27
The Rancho Murieta Community Services District has rescheduled its regular May board meeting from May 20 to May 27. The meeting will include the first public hearing on the proposed 2026-27 budget. ★

Two Teens Killed, Three Injured in Fiery Crash

Continued from page 1
firefighters arrived. She said two of the surviving passengers are 16 years old, and the third is 15.
As of May 18, Monroe texted that she couldn’t confirm the city of residence for the five teenagers. “But I am not hearing that any of them are from RM.”
Monroe said that speed “definitely was a factor” in the accident but it was unknown if drugs or alcohol contributed.
Neighbor Fred Hegge, whose property is across from the crash site on Scott Road, said he was awakened by the sound of the collision. He could also hear a young male calling out for help. While he was on the phone with 911, he heard several loud “pop, pop, pop” sounds.
He told the dispatcher that it sounded like gunfire, making him hesitant to go to the scene. Hegge said a neighbor who went to

the scene told him that the noises were tires exploding in the intense heat of the fire. The neighbor also told Hegge that when CHP officers first arrived from Folsom, they approached the scene with their guns drawn, likely because of the report Hegge had given the dispatcher about possible gunfire.
Hegge said he didn’t initially see a fire from his house, but later saw flames shooting high into a tree. “And, then it went up 25 to 30 feet in the air,” he said.
After Hegge got into his truck to determine where the accident had occurred, he encountered a Jeep-type vehicle parked in his driveway, occupied by four young men. They told him they had seen the vehicle involved in the crash earlier on the dirt section of Latrobe Road and had been traveling some distance behind it before the accident occurred.
Hegge then drove back to his house, through his

gates, to reach his property across from the crash scene so he could check his fence line near the horses. By that time, the fire had already been extinguished.
He watched the emergency response for about half an hour as three or four ambulances arrived and departed from the scene. Hegge estimated there were about 10 CHP vehicles at the crash site.
Hegge also recalled seeing a barefooted teenager moving around the scene trying to find a blanket in the cold overnight temperatures.
According to Hegge, the neighbor who went to the crash scene told him that three surviving teenagers were initially placed into a private vehicle before being transferred to ambulances by emergency responders.
Hegge said a Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District battalion chief later told him that the two teenagers in the front of the vehicle

had perished.
Scott Road remained closed for several hours overnight, Hegge said.
About eight hours after the crash, the father of a Folsom teenager visited the scene and spoke with the River Valley Times while local rancher Leland Schneider and one of his employees repaired damaged fencing near the roadway to prevent cattle from escaping onto the road.
The father said his son told him the northbound vehicle that later crashed had sped past him moments earlier at what appeared to be an extremely high rate of speed.
According to the father, his son did not witness the crash. When the teenager came over the hill moments later, he encountered the burning wreckage. The father said his son attempted to help victims escape before emergency crews arrived.
According to the father,

three teenagers in the back seat were already trying to get out of the vehicle, and his son helped pull them away from the scene. The father said his son was unable to reach the other two occupants.
The father also said another Folsom teenager, a girl, stopped at the scene to help while other motorists continued driving past the crash.
“My son said cars were just driving by,” he said.
The father said he did not press his son for additional details because the teenager was emotionally shaken by what he had witnessed.
“He was a mess last night,” he said.
The father said he later drove to the crash site himself to better understand the scene his son had encountered.
Schneider said serious crashes are not uncommon along Scott Road.
“This is every year,”

Schneider said while inspecting damaged fencing near the scene. “Two, three, four wrecks a year.”
Sacramento Metropolitan Battalion Chief Parker Wilbourn, who was serving as the acting public information officer, issued a brief news release after the crash. Wilbourn concluded his release by saying: “Sacramento Metro Fire extends our heartfelt condolences to the families, friends, and loved ones affected by this tragic incident. We remain hopeful that the victims currently receiving treatment will make a full recovery.”
The CHP investigation remains ongoing.
Additional details that came in after the River Valley Times went to press on Monday will be posted at therivervalleytimes.com as they become available.
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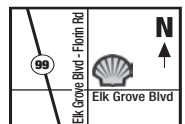
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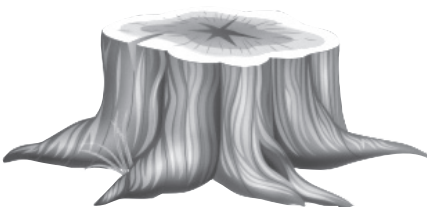
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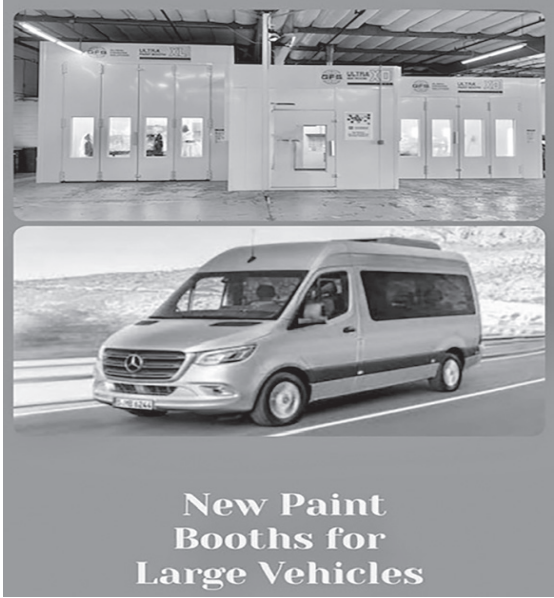
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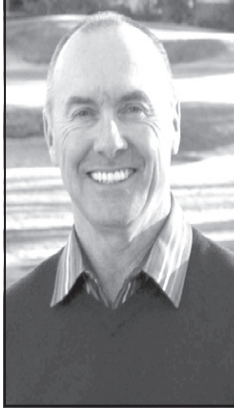
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Niners ‘Play for the Roses’

By Nancy Clevenger

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Rancho Murieta Country Club (RMCC) Nine Hole Golf Club opened its annual Invitational Golf Tournament with the Amador Rodeo Queen, Cooper Cheetham, riding her beautiful horse down the center of 64 carts, kicking off the Play for the Roses Invitational. Both beauties caught the attention of the golfers as they readied for the Kentucky Derby-themed golf tournament. A total of 128 women donned their best hats in Derby style to play the finely groomed course

GOLF SCORES

on a picture-perfect day. With the sun shining brightly from first thing in the morning until the conclusion of the event in the afternoon, the weather cooperated nicely. The course was in great shape with agreeable greens and manicured fairways. The tournament scores reflected the pristine conditions of the club’s facilities. Closest-to-the-pin and drive-accuracy contests were also evidence of the good course conditions. Competition for the ladies occurred on both the front

nine and back nine of the RMCC north course links. In the competition for closest-to-the-pin, winners were RMCC member Mary Lou Deninger, at 17 feet six inches away from the hole, and guest Julie Grabisch, missing the pin at 9 feet 11 inches on hole number 2. On the back nine, hole number 12, RMCC member Carol Randall landed 46 feet from the pin and guest Sandy VanderPol came within 14 feet, 1 inch. Accuracy-drive competitor and RMCC member Carol



First place winners Rich Strike Flight pause for a photo: Sandy VanderPol, Kathy Konz, Barbara Armstrong, Sue Lagomarsino. Photos courtesy of Nancy Clevenger

Kennobi was only 3 feet, 5 inches away from the center mark on the fairway of hole number 3, while guest Trish Stella was seven feet from the accuracy line. RMCC member Joanna Graf was 6 feet, 10 inches from the center of the fairway on hole 11, while guest Barbara King was but six feet from the mark. All four ladies walked away with cash prizes and a satisfied glow. The day’s events concluded with a plated luncheon in the Murieta Room of RMCC replicating Kentucky Derby fare, inclusive of Kentucky Browns and Mint Juleps. Surrounded by a festive format, the teams with the lowest scores were announced by Co-Captain and Chair for the event Alison Gomez and RMCC Golfing Professional Brian Little. For holes one through nine, the Rich Strike Flight, in the fewest number of net strokes were Barbara Armstrong

(RMCC) and guests Sandy VanderPol (Cold Springs CC), Kathy Konz (Brentwood Nine Tees), and Sue Lagomarsino (Castle Oaks Swingers WGC). Playing holes 10 through 18, the Secretariat Flight, finishing with the lowest net score were Therese Yannuzzi (RMCC), Frances Aguilar (RMCC), Terry Wilder-Unruh (Modesto Muni Niners) and D’Carla Davis (Valley Hi CC). Both teams left with monetary rewards for their hard work and fun round of golf. With many winners in golf skills, those visiting the haberdashery were also rewarded in the best Kentucky Derby style. “A moment that stood out to me the most was the hat contest,” explained Chair Gomez. “It appeared all of the ladies truly enjoyed voting for the best hat worn.” Featured hats boasted of three-foot plumes, colorful feathers,

a bounty of roses and miniature racing horses and golfers. The RMCC Niner Invitational is an annual event. This year, 128 women took part – or 32 teams – representing 23 different golf clubs, some traveling from as far away as Crow Canyon Country Club in Danville. “The Niners are a precious group of ladies. We all love golf, but that is not what holds us together,” gushed Gomez. “It’s the friendships that are built, the caring for each other when things go wrong and a willingness to meet new people.” For those interested in attending next year’s event or joining RMCC and the Niners’ golf group, contact Victoria Kalman at Vicki.kalman@outlook.com or by contacting the RMCC office at 916-354-3400, club.office@ranchomuri-etacc.com. See more photos at the-rivervalleytimes.com. ★



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