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# Arden Arcade News

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## She's Served 25 Years at United Way

United Way News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - When Amber Lovett joined United Way California Capital Region as a communications manager in 2001, she loved having the opportunity to interview program recipients and donors and share their stories. As she celebrates her 25th anniversary at United Way this year, now as chief marketing and resource development officer, she feels an even stronger connection to donors, volunteers and clients.

"Back then, it always felt like there was someone between us and our donors and clients because our nonprofit partners were the only ones providing direct services, and our workplace giving model didn't allow as much communication with our donors," Lovett said. "Having the chance to interview them was my only direct connection."

Over the past 25 years, the local United Way has honed its mission to

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Amber Lovett poses with her daughter at a United Way event. Photo courtesy of United Way California Capital Region

## Nonprofits Boosted by City-County Initiative



The Sacramento Region Community Foundation and County of Sacramento have announced a Countywide Nonprofit Partnership Initiative to support organizations addressing homelessness and food insecurity across the region. Photo courtesy of Rancho Cordova Food Locker

Sacramento Region Community Foundation News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) -

The Sacramento Region Community Foundation, in partnership with the County of Sacramento, recently announced the 10 nonprofit organizations selected to participate in the inaugural cohort of the Sacramento Countywide Nonprofit Partnership Initiative (SCNPI), a 20-month capacity-building program designed to strengthen the sustainability of mid-sized nonprofits serving Sacramento County residents.

"Our nonprofit partners are essential to delivering critical safety net services across the County. Through this initiative, we are investing in the capacity, tools and resources nonprofits need to sustain and strengthen their impact," said Chevon Kothari, deputy county executive, Health and Human Services Agency, for the County of Sacramento.

Selected organizations work across Sacramento County to address homelessness, housing instability, and food insecurity; some of the region's most pressing challenges.

Through SCNPI, each organization will receive practical training and workshops, one-on-one technical assistance, peer learning opportunities, mentorship from

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## All In for Fun at Special Kids Day



Pictured from left are the Panda Express mascot, cosplayer "Jack Sparrows" and Leo the Lion at the May 16 Special Kids Day event. Photo by Deanna Dyson, Pride of Laguna Creek Lions Club

By Idaly Valencia

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Lions Clubs from across the Sacramento region gathered at Depot Park (16 Business Park Way) on May 16 for the annual Special Kids Day, an event designed to provide youth with special needs a safe and inclusive space to enjoy a carnival-style celebration with their families.

Organized by members of District 4-C5 Lions Clubs, which includes Yolo and El Dorado counties and cities such as Placerville and Elk Grove, the free event featured games, arts and crafts, motorcycle rides, entertainment and booths tabled by local organizations offering resources.

Special Kids Day Co-Chair Kitty Kramer said the event intends to create a welcoming environment for

children or teens with a range of disabilities, such as autism and cerebral palsy, while also providing a fun experience for their parents and siblings.

Kramer told Messenger Publishing Group that she and her husband, fellow Lion Dennis Kramer, helped launch the effort locally about a decade ago after visiting a similar

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# Sacramento Educator Named Teacher of Year

## SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union, the largest credit union in California and the largest serving school employees and their families, in partnership with ABC10 Sacramento and Sacramento State's College of Education, announced that Barbara Brooks, a teacher at Shriners Children's Hospital in partnership with the Sacramento City Unified School District, has been named the 2025-26 ABC10 Teacher of the Year. The award was presented during a ceremony at the Esquire IMAX Theatre in downtown Sacramento on May 13.

Brooks was selected from a pool of 12 monthly honorees. She has more than 30 years of teaching experience, including her work as a teacher at Shriners Children's, where

she supports students as they continue their education during treatment and recovery. As the Esquire IMAX ABC10 Teacher of the Year, Brooks received a \$5,000 prize from SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union.

"Barbara Brooks exemplifies the profound impact school employees can have, especially in non-traditional settings like a hospital," said Josh Smith, vice president of school and community relations at SchoolsFirst FCU. "Her work supporting students as they navigate serious medical challenges speaks to the heart of what this recognition is all about."

In place for over 20 years, the Teacher of the Month program highlights local teachers making a difference in the lives of their students and families. To nominate a local teacher in the greater Sacramento/Stockton/Modesto area for a future Teacher of the Month, visit ABC10

Teacher of the Month at <https://www.abc10.com/teacher-of-the-month>.

SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union is dedicated to improving the financial lives of its Members. Founded in 1934 by 126 school employees, the Member-owned cooperative provides a full range of financial products and services to more than 1.5 million Members and is the largest financial institution dedicated to serving school employees and their families. SchoolsFirst FCU has been named California's top credit union by Forbes for seven consecutive years and recognized by J.D. Power as the #1 Credit Union for Member Banking Satisfaction for two years in a row.

With more than \$36 billion in assets, SchoolsFirst FCU is the largest credit union in California and the third largest in the United States. For more information, visit [schoolsfirstfcu.org](https://schoolsfirstfcu.org). ★



From left, Desiree Sheppard of ABC10, 2025-26 ABC10 Teacher of the Year Barbara Brooks, Britney Owens of SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union and Mark S. Allen of ABC10 present Brooks with a \$5,000 award during a ceremony May 13 at the Esquire IMAX Theatre. Photo courtesy of SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union

# She's Served 25 Years at United Way

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mobilize the community to action so all can thrive. The organization began offering direct services in the areas of healthy community, youth opportunity, financial security and community resiliency alongside its nonprofit partners. United Way also began to broaden its fundraising strategy from primarily workplace giving to include more direct individual and corporate giving.

The new strategies have resulted in deeper partnerships across the region, not only with nonprofits and corporations, but with individual donors and people receiving services in the community.

"Our partnerships are still our superpower, but we've been able to create more direct relationships, so those walls that used to be there have come down," Lovett said. "It's been powerful to see how we can provide direct services while still retaining great partnerships."

We're proud to still be growing, despite the decline in workplace giving, because we've developed other revenue streams."

A year after joining United Way, Lovett was instrumental in starting United Way's Women United action group that leverages group members' passions, ideas, expertise and resources to ensure foster youth are prepared for success once they exit the system. Since its founding in 2002, the group has raised more than \$2 million to help current and former foster youth gain the education and skills they need to thrive.

In addition to contributing her resources as a founding member, Lovett also presented at life skills workshops for the youth, helped host drives, and last year had the opportunity to take some of them shopping for formal wear to attend United Way's United in Purpose Gala where they were surprised with guaranteed income for a year.

"Some of my most meaningful interactions at United Way have been with the foster youth in our programs," Lovett said. "I'll never forget how rewarding it was to present workshops on how to purchase a car and improve your credit. I also was able to bring my daughter with me when we took some of the foster youth shopping for the Gala, and it was really special to have her meet them. All those moments make you feel like all the hard work and challenges are worth it."

For many years, United Way's Women United held a towel drive to ensure foster youth in the program would have new bath towels when they moved out on their own.

"I remember one girl telling me she didn't even have a towel," Lovett said. "She said she just used her clothes to dry off. Here I thought we were just making sure they had new towels. I was shocked."

When former president and CEO Stephanie Bray stepped down, Lovett was tapped as interim president and CEO until the role was filled by Dr. Dawnté Early. Since Early's arrival, the organization has ramped up, with Lovett saying Early has raised the bar on what everyone thought they could accomplish.

Financially, the local United Way went from raising slightly more than \$1 million in grants five years ago to this year targeting more than \$11 million in grants. She is proud to have been part of that work, undertaking the role of grants project manager for the first time and discovering it was a good fit with her skill set.

In 2023, as the local United Way turned 100 years old, the organization held its inaugural gala, in which Lovett was



Amber Lovett, shown with her daughter at a United Way event: "Our partnerships are still our superpower, but we've been able to create more direct relationships, so those walls that used to be there have come down." Photo courtesy of United Way California Capital Region

instrumental.

"There is something hard to replicate about bringing 500 people together for a common cause," Lovett said. "There are a lot of nonprofit events in town, but I think ours is special because we highlight our work in such a creative way. People really get to see the impact of their donations right in front of them. Each year they can see how dollars raised at past galas were put to work immediately to expand and grow."

At the inaugural gala, United Way announced its 100th Anniversary campaign to raise \$3 million so 10,000 kids could excel in school by the end of 2025. It was a tall order for Lovett as head of fundraising, but United Way exceeded its financial goal and also served nearly double the number of children at 19,700 kids.

At this year's gala, United Way announced its "School. Income. Home." campaign to raise \$15 million by 2028 to serve 100,000 children across the region.

"In today's world, children and families are going to need us more and more, and those needs seem to change every day," Lovett said. "As an organization that's been here more than 100 years, we will be able to fill those growing gaps. My job is to make sure we keep those dollars coming in so we can do more of the work, and to tell our story in the community so we can have more people join us. I want us to be able to serve more and more children and families."

Throughout Lovett's tenure at United Way, she has watched her own family grow. After living in East Sacramento and River Park from 2007-2018, she moved close by to Sierra Oaks. She also became a stepmother and mother and is grateful to her neighbors for the connections her family was able to make during the pandemic. She said during the pandemic a neighbor began hosting an outside happy hour on Friday nights so neighbors could connect, and it has cemented those relationships.

"Everyone would bring lounge chairs, make a huge circle, bring our own drinks and just sit out there getting to know each other," Lovett said. "It's just a really cool neighborhood, and I'm grateful to raise my daughter here."

She also said becoming a stepmother and mother has impacted her work in a positive way.

"I realized that, as a mother, you want the best for your children, and that's the great equalizer," Lovett said. "Some kids are born with a lot of opportunity, and some are born with hardly any at all, so we must find ways to give more opportunities to kids who need it." ★

# Nonprofits Boosted by City-County Initiative

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experienced nonprofit leaders, and flexible grant funding to support organizational improvements.

"Nonprofits are on the front lines of our region's most difficult challenges every day, and the strength of their internal systems is just as important as the services they provide."

This initiative is about investing in organizations to build the leadership, infrastructure and sustainability they need to grow their impact over time. We're proud to partner with the County of Sacramento to support these ten organizations and the communities they serve," said Kerry Wood, the Sacramento Region Community Foundation's chief executive.

The 10 organizations selected for the SCNPI cohort, their primary service area, and major programs are:

**AcademySTAY** (Sacramento): Transitional housing and wraparound support for foster youth ages 18-24 pursuing college or vocational training.

**Alchemist CDC** (Sacramento): Connected programs spanning food access, workforce development, entrepreneurship and community space, helping residents move from immediate crisis toward long-term stability.

**Elk Grove Food Bank Services** (Elk Grove):

Comprehensive food access and homeless services through a client-choice warehouse, senior mobile distributions, home delivery and school-based programs.

**Orangevale-Fair Oaks Community Foundation** (Orangevale): Operator of the Orangevale-Fair Oaks Food Bank and HART (Homeless Assistance Resource Team), serving residents across Orangevale, Fair Oaks, Citrus Heights and Folsom.

**Rancho Cordova Food Locker** (Rancho Cordova): A dignity-centered food access program currently transitioning to a community food hub model to expand services and reduce stigma around food assistance.

**Rebuilding Together Sacramento** (Sacramento): Homelessness prevention through critical home repairs, safety modifications, and accessibility improvements for low-income homeowners, seniors, veterans and people with disabilities.

**Refugee Enrichment and Development Association** (REDA) Inc. (Sacramento): Culturally responsive housing, food, education, and mental health services for refugee and immigrant communities across the greater Sacramento Valley.

**Sacramento Cottage Housing, Inc.** (Sacramento):

Permanent supportive housing and wraparound services for individuals and families, with deep, relationship-based coaching designed to break cycles of homelessness over the long term.

**South County Services** (Galt): Providing food distribution and homeless services for rural communities across South Sacramento County, including the isolated Delta region towns where few other services reach.

**Three Sisters Gardens** (Sacramento): Urban agriculture, food distribution, and youth workforce development, paying young people to learn agriculture, food systems and green career pathways.

The initiative builds on the Sacramento Region Community Foundation's more than 40 years of investing in the nonprofits that serve the capital area, including through capacity-building programs like Big Day of Giving and smaller cohort-based efforts that have helped organizations strengthen their leadership and operations over time. It reflects the County of Sacramento's broader commitment to building a more resilient nonprofit ecosystem across the region.

To learn more about Special Kids Day, the Lions Club or how to get involved, visit [sacarealionsclubs.com](https://sacarealionsclubs.com). ★

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# All In for Fun at Special Kids Day



Christian Motorcyclists Association members at Special Kids Day gave motorcycle rides to youth at Depot Park. Photo by Deanna Dyson, Pride of Laguna Creek Lions Club

Continued from page 1

event in the Bay Area. "It's a day that they can bring the whole family, including siblings out, and just have fun," she said. "If they don't have any resources that they aren't aware of, they might be able to find some help here."

As part of Lions Clubs International's broader humanitarian mission of supporting accessible vision and health screenings worldwide, the event also included a mobile vision center in partnership with the Northern California Lions Sight Association (NCLSA) to offer free eye exams for all attendees.

Now in its 10th year, Kramer said Special Kids Day continues to be an important and widely supported event in the Sacramento region because it provides local youth and their families with a place where they feel welcomed and accepted.

"A lot of times when we take a kid with special needs out into the general population...there's a tendency for people to stare at them, or other kids to ask, 'What's wrong with them?'" she said.

"When they come out here, everybody's kind of the same. Somebody's got something going on, whether it's visible or not," Kramer added.

She noted that the event is made possible through its volunteers and donations from the local Lions Club groups as well as its community partners, who help provide the food, activities, prizes and entertainment.

This year's attractions included fire truck tours, a photo booth, several cosplay characters to take pictures with and bounce houses.

Kramer also highlighted a program through the Folsom Lake Lions Club called "Hooks and Needles," in which incarcerated individuals at Folsom Prison create stuffed animals for children attending the event.

"They love doing that because they're giving back," Kramer said.

Among the booths participating at the May 16 event was A Touch of Understanding Inc., a nonprofit focused on building disability awareness through facilitating hands-on workshops in schools that promote empathy and inclusion.

Shanna Lowder of A Touch of Understanding said the nonprofit's mission is supported by volunteers with disabilities who speak to students at school sites. Volunteers were also at the Special Kids Day booth open to sharing their personal experiences with attendees.

"The idea is by providing a hands-on experience for students to have a better understanding of a variety of disabilities and be more empathetic towards their classmates," Lowder said.

Lowder added that participating in Special Kids Day aligns with their organization's values as it highlights the importance of embracing inclusivity. She explained that her own perspective shifted after attending the event herself for the first time a few years back.

"It really opened my eyes up to it's OK to ask questions; It's OK to engage, rather than to bring stigma on it," she said. "Understanding that we might need different tools to get to the same spot."

To learn more about Special Kids Day or how to get involved, visit [sacarealionsclubs.com](http://sacarealionsclubs.com). ★

# Is There a Hero in the House?



Restaurant owner and musician Joe Gilman, right, receives "Jazz Hero" honors from Jazz Journalists Association representative Joe Wirt. The New York-based organization comprises world-wide media professionals who document and promote jazz.

Story and photo by Susan Maxwell Skinner

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - Sacramento musician and restaurant owner Joe Gilman was recently named a "Jazz Hero" by the Jazz Journalists Association. The international writers' group advocates for the preservation and visibility of jazz.

Carmichael resident Dr. Gilman, 63, is a famed pianist and former teacher for American River College and Sacramento State University.

Upon his retirement, he and his Thai-born wife Kai took over a small Folsom Boulevard eatery. Adding live music to

the menu, the couple created one of the hottest performance venues in Sacramento.

Jazz Journalists Association representative Joe Wirt presented the Journalists' award before a packed Twin Lotus Thai restaurant.

"What Joe has achieved here for jazz and for musicians is incredible," said Wirt. "His venue levels the playing field for a huge variety of artists. His work is multi-dimensional. Most of our award winners are leading musicians. But they don't also run restaurants that support other artists. And he's an Energizer bunny. Where else does a promoter and manager actually play

piano with his performers and wait tables?"

The Jazz Hero accepted his honor and returned to refilling water glasses for Saturday night patrons. His award came as a surprise. "I'm familiar with the Jazz Journalists Association and the incredible artists they recognize," he noted. "But I'd no idea how they came to know what we're doing here."

"I'm grateful and honored," Gilman continued. "It's incredibly affirming to have our work recognized in this way. The award has given me a renewed sense of purpose."

Learn about Twin Lotus Thai and the venue's music programs at [twinlotusthai.com](http://twinlotusthai.com). ★

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# Service Above Self

## DOVIA Awards Celebrate Local Volunteers

Story and photos by Ornella Rossi

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - Who are the volunteers quietly shaping programs for seniors, students, disaster survivors and families across the Sacramento region? That question was answered May 20 as Directors of Volunteers in Agencies (DOVIA) honored 22 nominees during its annual awards reception at Meristem in Fair Oaks.

The event, held at 9200 Fair Oaks Blvd., brought together volunteer leaders and supporters from across Sacramento, Yolo, Sutter, Yuba, El Dorado and Placer counties to recognize service in three categories. The awards included Youth Volunteer of the Year, recognizing volunteers under age 21 with at least 25 hours of service with the winner receiving a \$500 scholarship; Individual Volunteer of the Year, honoring volunteers over 21 with at least 25 hours of service; and Volunteer Manager of the Year, recognizing a paid or unpaid leader for exceptional volunteer program management, with the winner receiving a one-year complimentary DOVIA Sacramento membership.

DOVIA Sacramento, active since the late 1970s, serves as a regional hub for volunteer managers, offering training, peer networking and professional development while promoting volunteerism across nonprofit and public agencies.

"For 48 years, DOVIA Sacramento has celebrated the extraordinary people who uplift our community while also training the volunteer program managers who support Sacramento's many service driven organizations," said Leslie Fritz of the DOVIA board. "One of the tenants of good volunteer management is to remember to thank



Individual Volunteer of the Year nominees included Geri Beck; Fred Bustillos; Brittini Cearley and Kerry Connelly; Tyler Heberle; Sarah Goold, Tawney Lambert, Kim LeClaire and Denise Watts; Kelvin Lee; Betty Marchbanks; Tim McCrink; Robin Payne; Roxie and Ernie Rice; and Sandy Valdez.



Youth Volunteer of the Year nominees included Elizabeth Caton, Kendayl Taber and Lily Lower; Kelsie Johnson; Melvin Lam; Dahlia Monso; Angelica Maltese; and Isabella Sandoval, Madison Dailey, Alyla Parks and Kaitlyn Babitz.

and recognize volunteers. Today we will be doing that."

This year's program was emceed by Fritz. She noted support from Sacramento Venture Philanthropy as program sponsor, with additional contributions from Big Day of Giving donors.

Top honors went to volunteers whose service ranged from youth-led community building to decades of nonprofit support.

Sacramento County Board of Supervisors, including Phil Serna, Patrick Kennedy, Rich Desmond, Rosario Rodriguez and Pat Hume, presented certificates recognizing nominees.

The Youth Volunteer of the

Year award was presented to Angelica Maltese nominated by Blossom Vale Senior Living Center. Maltese, an elementary school student, created an "Adopt a Grandparent" program and has visited her adopted resident weekly since 2024. She also compiled resident recipes into a Blossom Vale cookbook shared with families, which organizers described as a lasting tribute to residents.

Roxie and Ernie Rice of the Firefighters Burn Institute were named Individual Volunteers of the Year. The married couple has volunteered for a combined 37 years, supporting burn survivors

and families, organizing outreach events and helping expand the nonprofit's reach despite its small staff.

Goya Gutierrez nominated by NorCal Resist was recognized as Volunteer Manager of the Year. Gutierrez was honored for developing programs supporting immigrant communities, including an after-school tutoring program for refugee children and volunteer-led assistance for families navigating local services.

All nominees were recognized during the ceremony.

Youth Volunteer of the Year nominees included Elizabeth Caton, Kendayl Taber and Lily Lower nominated by San Juan

Unified School District; Kelsie Johnson nominated by Blossom Vale Senior Living; Melvin Lam nominated by Interim Healthcare Hospice; Dahlia Monson nominated by WEAVE, Inc.; Angelica Maltese nominated by Blossom Vale Senior Living Center; and Isabella Sandoval, Madison Dailey, Alyla Parks and Kaitlyn Babitz nominated by Sacramento County Animal Shelter-Bradshaw.

Individual Volunteer of the Year nominees included Geri Beck nominated by Meristem, Rotary and HART; Fred Bustillos nominated by West Sacramento Community Emergency Response Team; Brittini Cearley and Kerry Connelly nominated by Project R.I.D.E., Inc.; Tyler Heberle nominated by Sacramento LGBT Community Center; Sarah Goold, Tawney Lambert, Kim LeClaire and Denise Watts nominated by Food Literacy Center; Kelvin Lee nominated by SMUD Museum of Science and Curiosity; Betty Marchbanks nominated by Keaton's Child Cancer Alliance; Tim McCrink nominated by Sacramento Valley Conservancy; Robin Payne nominated by Agency on Aging Area 4; Roxie and Ernie Rice nominated by Firefighters Burn Institute; and Sandy Valdez nominated by AARP Foundation Experience Corps-Sacramento.

Volunteer Manager of the Year nominee was Goya Gutierrez nominated by NorCal Resist.

Organizers said judges evaluated nominees independently, noting close competition across categories as they reviewed service completed between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2025. Judges included Brad Squires of Sacramento Venture Philanthropy; Mark Cullum, district director for California state Assemblymember Josh Hoover; and Molly Patterson of the Elk Grove Police Department. ★



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# Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



## The Finals Are Revealing

Well, if we listened to the experts and the NBA prognosticating, we would shortly be crowning the Oklahoma City Thunder with their second Larry Obrien trophy in as many years.

By now we all know that coming from a 3-2 deficit, the upstart San Antonio Spurs did what few thought was possible and not only won two games in a row to win the western divisions championship but put the exclamation mark on their final victory by winning on the opposing teams home court. A herculean task accomplished, and once again the experts let us know that you can watch the finals if you wish, but the outcome is all but decided.

Victor Wembanyama had already put on his superman's cape and punished what most pundits believed was an organization that had put together one of the best consummate teams that anyone had seen in years. Yes, and that's not to say that the Oklahoma City Thunder are not every bit of that, but tremendous credit needs to go to the San Antonio Spurs for putting on an epic performance and one of the best playoff series seen in years.

All that said, the well-rested New York Knickerbockers have been waiting in the wings and would like to be heard from.

Heard from they were, doing the unthinkable by defeating the Thunder on Oklahoma City's home court two straight games, and setting the experts back on their heels in amazement.

NBA fans got an up front and personal look at how team basketball is supposed to be played, and without an MVP or a 7-foot-4 center, the Knicks have posted a commanding two-game lead as the two teams convene at Madison Square Garden Monday night for game three.

Surprising? I would have to say yes, but encouraging is a more apt description.

Although the Knick's had a solid regular season record of 53-29, it paled in comparison to the Thunder's 64-18 or that of San Antonio who posted 62-20.

The city of New York is going crazy as their beloved Knicks haven't secured an NBA championship in 53 years.

Not since Willis Reed, Bill Bradley, Dave Debuscherre, Walt Frazier and Earl the pearl Monroe graced the hardwood of Madison

Square Garden have the New York fans tasted the ultimate success.

New York is a long way from Sacramento to be sure, but don't think that Kings fans aren't paying close attention to what has become a true surprise.

The very fact that the Knick's have won 13 consecutive playoff games is nearly record setting, and two more wins would not only secure the championship, but tie them for the most consecutive playoff wins in NBA history.

Those games have yet to be played, and San Antonio may have something to say about the outcome to be sure, but the fact that without a true superstar the Knick's are boat racing through the playoffs, should give Sacramento fans something to ponder.

Some would argue that Karl-Anthony Towns and Jalen Brunson are superstars and they may have a legitimate argument but credit the Knicks with building a team in the real sense of the word.

As the finals will finish shortly and one of these two teams will be crowned the champion, and heads turn to June 23 when the NBA draft takes place.

General Manager Scott Perry has remained somewhat of an enigma, but that is about to change.

The ability to truly judge talent will be on full display, and a trade just before the draft remains a possibility.

Will the Kings shore up the backcourt and give Domantas Sabonis some help, or once again try to find the point guard of the future after they inexplicably let DeAaron Fox slip between their fingers.

Will Ja Morant enter the picture by way of a trade is still a possibility, but can the organization look past his transgressions that have put him in the doghouse of the Memphis Grizzlies.

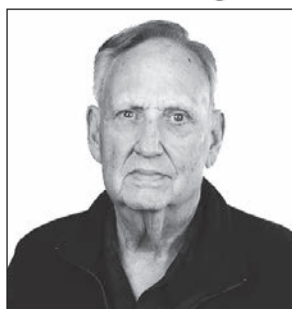
One of the more interesting NBA drafts is about to begin and never let it be said the Sacramento Kings didn't have a chance to enhance their team, because this draft is deep in talent, and one of these hopefuls is about to don a Kings jersey.

Enjoy the finals Kings fans and dream the dream, because that's what New Yorker's are doing right now!

All the best!

★

## California's Population is Stagnating as Immigration and Birth Rates Decline



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

California's population exploded during and immediately after World War II, from 6.9 million in 1940 to 19.9 million in 1970, thanks to waves of migrants from other states drawn to California's surging economy and the famous postwar baby boom.

California absorbed its 13 million new residents by expanding its public infrastructure of schools, colleges, highways, parks and water systems and by welcoming immense private investment in new housing, new retail complexes, new factories and new office buildings.

Population growth slowed in the 1970s in the aftermath of the baby boom and as an economic evolution, from manufacturing to technology and services, changed the job market. The leading politician of the decade, Gov. Jerry Brown, declared that California had entered "an era of limits" and major infrastructure expansion was no longer needed.

However, the 1980s saw a new population surge, driven by immigration from other countries and a new baby boom. California's population jumped by 6 million — 5-plus million of them babies — during the decade, a more than 25% gain.

The increase was so large, relative to the nation as a whole, that California was awarded seven new

congressional seats after the 1990 census.

Unlike California's expansive reaction to its postwar population increase, the 1980s boomlet sparked an adverse reaction in the 1990s, including new laws aimed at denying public services to undocumented immigrants and a power struggle within the Sierra Club over immigration's impact on the environment.

Meanwhile, population growth slowed again, and in this decade virtually halted as immigration and birth rates declined and substantial numbers of people left California, thanks largely to the state's sky-high living costs.

A recent study by researchers Hans Johnson, Julien LaFortune and Eric McGhee at the Public Policy Institute of California found that the total fertility rate has dropped from 2.21 children per woman in 2007 to 1.48 in 2023, far below what demographers call the "replacement level of 2.1 necessary to keep a population from declining."

The state lost a congressional seat after the 2020 census and is likely to lose several more after the 2030 census. However, the impacts of California's population plateau extend far beyond politics.

"A smaller population can offer benefits; it reduces pressure on housing and infrastructure needs," the researchers wrote, "easing congestion and reducing the need for expansive public works projects." They also cited potential improvements in the environment and increasing per pupil spending on education as enrollment declines.

"At the same time," they added, "fewer births — and a smaller population — may

bring challenges: they could accelerate K-12 enrollment declines and strain the state's economic and safety net systems as fewer workers support a larger share of older Californians. Labor shortages could also hinder California's economic development."

Those are all valid points and many more potential impacts could be mentioned. But the underlying issue is whether political policies will reflect the new demographic reality.

The post-World War II population explosion manifested itself in a bipartisan effort to do what was needed to make the transition relatively painless. We haven't seen such political adjustment to changing demographic trends since.

Meanwhile, the state's population is twice what it was in 1970 and we still depend on what politicians wrought in the post-war era — such things as the State Water Plan and our extensive freeway network.

A stagnant population eases pressure for new infrastructure but we still need to maintain what we have and expand it to meet current needs. However, water projects have languished and we no longer build new highways.

Jerry Brown, who proclaimed the "era of limits" in the 1970s, returned to the governorship in 2011 and declared, "I want to get shit done."

There's still much that should be done.

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

## Social Security Matters

### Why Can't I get a Lump Sum Death Benefit from my Wife?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

**Dear Rusty:** My wife passed away in September 2025 at age 64. We had been married for 43 years and started collecting benefits when I turned 62 and she was 63. She did not have enough work credits to claim her own SS and thus collected on my record. SSA told me that I was not entitled to receive the lousy \$255 death benefit because my wife was collecting on my work record. Is this correct?

**Signed: Grieving Widower**

**Dear Grieving:** We extend our sincere condolences on your wife's passing. But I must tell you that what the SSA (Social Security Administration) told you is correct.

Although we often see assertions that the so-called "one-time lump sum death benefit" is always paid, there are specific rules for when that admittedly small SS benefit is available. And there are also specific rules regarding who is eligible to receive it.

Essentially, the lump sum death benefit is paid when the deceased person

was collecting Social Security retirement benefits (or at least entitled to SS retirement benefits). And that one-time lump sum death benefit usually goes to the deceased person's surviving spouse (more on that later). But for the death benefit to be paid, the deceased person must have been collecting Social Security retirement benefits (or was at least entitled to SS retirement benefits). In your specific case, because your wife was not eligible for her own SS retirement benefit and was, instead, just collecting a spousal benefit from your SS record, you unfortunately are not able to collect the lump-sum death benefit as your wife's surviving spouse. So, what you were told by Social Security about this special survivor benefit is, indeed, correct.

For information, here is a bit more on who can collect the SS death benefit: the one-time lump sum death benefit is normally paid to the eligible surviving spouse of a deceased person who was collecting Social Security. But if there is no surviving spouse to receive the one-time payment, the death benefit may be paid to someone else who was also a dependent of the deceased. That might be a minor surviving child or a surviving adult disabled child who was collecting dependent benefits from the deceased person's SS record. In rare cases, a dependent parent may be

paid if no other surviving dependents are eligible. FYI, ex-spouses are not eligible for a death benefit from a former spouse.

The lump-sum death benefit must be applied for by contacting Social Security and the benefit must be claimed within two years of the person's death. You will need to verify your identity and confirm your eligibility for this survivor benefit, and you will need to provide other information about the deceased also (including a death certificate). There is an SSA form to apply for the lump sum death benefit (SSA-8), but calling your local SS office (or 1.800.772.1213) to make an appointment to apply for the one-time lump-sum death benefit in person is usually all that is needed.

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The U.K. government banned left-wing influencers Cenk Uygur and Hasan Piker from traveling to the country because they blame everything on the Jews -- and, true to form, Uygur and Piker blamed the Jews.

Uygur and Piker were to speak at a South by Southwest conference in London and participate in an event at the Oxford Union when their visas were canceled. They immediately smelled a rat, and, as usual, one emanating from Jerusalem.

"I've been banned for criticizing Israel," Uygur posted on social media. "Are we free anymore? This is oppression of Western citizens by our own governments on behalf of a different country!"

Piker chimed in, "The U.K. has revoked my visa as well. All at the behest of Israel. The West is betraying 'liberal values' for a genocidal fascist foreign government. Soon we will all become Israel."

Like most everything the duo says -- Piker is Uygur's nephew and got his start on his podcast -- this is poisonous nonsense, although it doesn't make the U.K.'s decision any better.

Britain now conducts itself like a nation that has never heard of John Milton, John Stuart Mill or Bertrand Russell, its storied advocates of free speech down through the centuries.

The U.K. routinely ex-

## The U.K.'s Dumb Exclusion of Left-wing Influencers

cludes controversial figures from traveling to the country from abroad, and actively tries to suppress speech offensive to gays, Muslims, trans people, Jews or others. You can get arrested, as TV writer Graham Linehan found out, for posting pungent opinions about biological males using female locker rooms, or for silently praying outside an abortion clinic.

If we needed a reminder of the wisdom of our Founders writing the First Amendment into the Constitution, the free-floating illiberalism of the British government trying to enforce faddish norms provides it.

The Home Office, which was responsible for revoking the Uygur and Piker visas, says that their presence in the country might not have been "conducive to the public good" -- whatever that means.

Certainly, it would be very bad for Britain if the country were to adopt wholesale the malignant views of Uygur and Piker, but that wasn't going to come about as a result of, say, one of them having a 40-minute speaking slot at a South by Southwest satellite event.

Traditionally, in free societies, people are allowed to say dumb and hateful things. Either they discredit themselves by doing so, or perhaps they eventually win people over to their views. Regardless, free and robust debate has been considered a good in and of itself, something a country run by a raucous, free-wheeling Parliament should readily understand.

Are the Jews behind the

exclusion of Uygur and Piker? Yet, there were Jewish groups who didn't want them to come, but excluding them was a decision entirely in keeping with the government's practice of trying to suppress views that it deems extreme. Just a couple of weeks ago, right-wing figures critical of Islam and supportive of Israel saw their visas revoked.

The British government isn't a tool of the Zionists. It is a left-of-center Labour government. The Home Secretary is a Muslim of Pakistani origin who has attended anti-Israel protests. The government has said it would jail Bibi Netanyahu if he travels to Britain, sanctioned Israeli officials, restricted arms sales to the Jewish state, and recognized a Palestinian state.

If the revocation of the visas is an Israeli op, it's a profoundly counterproductive one. In authoritarian societies, people can truly be suppressed -- if China wants to get rid of a nettlesome figure, it simply disappears him or her. In an open society, in contrast, there are many channels for expression, and official hostility tends to make the targeted voices more famous and interesting, whether it's James Joyce or the Sex Pistols.

Surely, Cenk Uygur and Hasan Piker are better known in the U.K. now than they were a few days ago, and that's not, as they say in Britain, conducive to the public good.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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# Girl Scouts Earn Highest Honors



Girl Scouts Heart of Central California honored 167 girls during its annual Highest Awards Ceremony at Hiram Johnson High School Auditorium, recognizing recipients of the Girl Scout Gold Award, Silver Award and the council's Rose Award. Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts Heart of Central California

By Omella Rossi

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)**

Before they earned medals, scholarships and standing ovations, many of the Girl Scouts recognized Saturday, May 16, at the Girl Scouts Heart of Central California Highest Awards Ceremony started their award-winning community projects with a simple question: How can I help?

By the end the answers had taken shape as STEM programs for children, deaf awareness curriculums, and debate workshops and community initiatives designed to last long after the applause faded.

Girl Scouts Heart of Central California honored 167 girls during its annual Highest Awards Ceremony at Hiram Johnson High School Auditorium, recognizing recipients of the Girl Scout Gold Award, Silver Award and the council's Rose Award for projects tackling issues ranging from STEM accessibility and mental health to environmental sustainability and racial justice.

"This ceremony is a powerful reminder of why Girl Scouts matter," said Girl Scouts Heart of Central California Chief

Executive Officer Linda E. Farley. "These girls didn't just complete projects, they identified real challenges in their communities and created meaningful, lasting solutions."

The morning began with a Gold Award Poster Symposium, where attendees explored presentations highlighting projects created by Award recipients. This year's honorees included 36 Gold Award recipients, 83 Silver Award recipients and 48 Rose Award recipients.

The Girl Scout Gold Award, the organization's highest honor, requires at least 80 hours of research, planning and leadership focused on creating sustainable community change.

Among those recognized was Sofia Contreras, who partnered with St. John's women's shelter to create a STEM curriculum for children staying at the facility.

"STEM has always been a really big part of my life," Contreras said. "I wanted those kids to know that it's a place for them too."

Contreras designed hands-on lessons and experiments intended to continue long after her involvement ended, leaving behind supplies and curriculum



Throughout the ceremony, mentors and family members joined recipients on stage during a pinning ceremony celebrating not only the girls' achievements but also the support systems behind them. Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts Heart of Central California

materials for future use.

She said the experience taught her confidence and leadership skills she plans to carry into college and a future career in STEM.

Another Gold Award recipient developed a deaf awareness curriculum for the El Dorado Union High School District focused on communication, culture and respect for the deaf community.

"I think raising awareness is important because many students don't know about deaf culture," the Girl Scout said. "This gives them the opportunity to learn how to respect deaf individuals."

Sofia Yee created a debate

awareness program for elementary and middle school students in the Sacramento area after realizing many younger students viewed debate as intimidating.

"It's really a great way to practice your public speaking," Yee said. "I wanted to break people's stereotypes of what debate looks like."

Working with local educators, libraries and the Sacramento Urban Debate League, Yee developed curriculum materials and hosted a summer debate program that will continue beyond her involvement.

Nora Latif focused her project on increasing representation

in STEM by creating a library program highlighting women of color working in science, technology, engineering and math fields.

"For me and a lot of my friends, we didn't always see people like ourselves represented when people talked about women in STEM," Latif said.

Throughout the ceremony, mentors and family members joined recipients on stage during a pinning ceremony celebrating not only the girls' achievements, but also the support systems behind them.

Madison Kosh said the projects reflect the organization's mission of helping girls discover their voice and leadership potential.

"They're learning how to build relationships within their communities, solve problems and create lasting change," Kosh said. "Those are life skills they'll carry with them forever."

In addition to the awards, Girl Scouts Heart of Central California also recognized scholarship recipients for continued leadership and academic achievement, including Contreras, Yee and Isabella Passerini. ★

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# ABOUT TOWN

## Concerts in the Park

Free Friday night concerts at Cesar Chavez Park, 910 I St. Lineup: Souls of Mischief; June 12, The Temper Trap; June 19, Kid Ink; June 26, Arden Park Roots.

## Area Museum Experiences

A sampling of must-see and must-do experiences and special activations offered by local museums include:

**Aerospace Museum of California** – As a proud partner of Blue Star Museums, active military members along with five additional guests can enjoy free admission through Labor Day (Sept. 7). Details at aerospaceca.org.

**Sacramento History Museum** – “Play Ball! Sacramento in the National Pastime.” The exhibition is filled with historical baseball uniforms, bats, balls, and gloves from different time periods, along with programs, tickets, awards and trophies, an Edmonds field base, home plate and ticket box, along with scrapbooks, news articles, photos and more. Through October. Details at sachistory-museum.org.

**California Automobile Museum** – Broadway Cruise: The Homecoming will be a celebration of art, culture,

community, and history. You’ll see every decade cruising down the street ... and you’re welcome to join the cavalcade! Enjoy drinks and eats from local vendors, take part in the Cruise itself, and join us as Broadway transforms into one huge party on June 20.

**Sunday Drives:** Third Sunday of every month, enjoy a free ride (with paid museum admission) in one of the museum’s many beautiful cars from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. There’s no better way to enjoy history than to experience it firsthand down the streets of downtown Sacramento. Details at calautomuseum.org.

**California State Railroad Museum** – Golden Hour Express Train, Wednesday evenings through Aug. 19. Depart from historic Old Sacramento for a scenic, hour-long round-trip journey along the Sacramento River. Relax in the comfort of our first-class, air-conditioned cars or take in the sunset from an open-air gondola; the choice is yours.

With sweeping riverside views, refreshing beverages (alcoholic and non-alcoholic), and a vibrant social atmosphere, it’s the perfect way to toast the evening. Each ticket includes two drink

tokens to enjoy during the ride.

**The Chinese Railroad Workers’ Experience** offers visitors a view of the Chinese workers who built the western portion of the nation’s first Transcontinental Railroad. Marginalized by history, the Chinese workers were more than a nameless group of laborers. Details at californiarailroad.museum.

**Crocker Art Museum** – “Rebels with La Causa: Royal Chicano Air Force Art and Activism, 1970-1990,” through June 28, explores the expansive production and creative impact of the Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF), one of the Chicano Movement’s most prolific and impactful artist collectives.

Beginning in 1970 at Sacramento State, the group produced individual artworks and group murals, as well as posters for educational, cultural, and political activities. The RCAF’s transformation into a broader collective not only initiated an explosion of Chicano art exhibitions, literary events, performances, and community celebrations, but expanded civic and political engagement.

While RCAF posters served as announcements for these wide-ranging activities, their multicultural aesthetics,

subject matter, and strategic humor redefined Chicana/o art, as well as the history of art and activism in the United States. Details at crockerart.org.

**SMUD Museum of Science and Curiosity Laser Concert Series** – Beastie Boys (18+ event), July 10-11.

This immersive music experience, paired with spectacular full-dome lasers, is the best way to listen to your favorite artists outside of a live performance. Details at visitmosac.org.

## Elks Lodge 6 Calendar of Events

Sunday Breakfast, Doggie Fashion Show, Flag Day Celebration, Member Engagement Fair, Lodge Town Hall, ALL on Sunday, June 14.

Classic Car Show, Saturday, July 18.

Yoga, Monday 12 p.m., Wednesday 3:30 p.m. Lodge members free.

Karaoke Nights, Thursdays and Saturdays, 7 p.m.

Martial Arts, Monday 5 p.m.

Pickleball, Monday, Wednesday, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.; Thursday, 4:30-7:30 p.m.; Sunday, 4-7 p.m.

Wednesday Night Dinner, 5:30 to 7 p.m. See elks6.net for weekly menu. ★

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# Pony Express National Re-Ride Departs June 15

## Historic 1,900-Mile Journey to Feature America 250 Celebration

### National Pony Express Association (NPEA) News Release

**POLLOCK PINES, CA (MPG)** - Riders, history enthusiasts and communities along the historic Pony Express Trail are gearing up for the 2026 National Pony Express Re-Ride. This year's event promises to be an extraordinary milestone as it aligns with the nation's semi quincentennial. The Missouri Pony Express President will officially open the event at 2 p.m., and the first rider will depart from the Patee house in St. Joseph, MO at 3:00 p.m. CDT on Monday, June 15.

The grueling, 1,900-plus-mile journey will continue 24/7 on horseback, following the original 1860-1861 mail route across eight states. The non-stop relay will conclude with the final rider arriving in Old Sacramento, CA at 4:30 p.m. PDT on Thursday, June 25. Riders in authentic attire will carry a traditional mochila packed with 1,570 letters, honoring a vital chapter in U.S. communication history.

**Honoring the Past, Celebrating America 250**  
Each year, the National Pony Express Association (NPEA) commemorates the legendary Old West mail service by carrying a historical mochila filled with commemorative letters. However, the 2026 Re-Ride holds unique historical significance.

An America 250 highlight of this year's re-ride will take place on Tuesday, June 24 in Carson City, Nevada, where the NPEA will partner with the Carson City Historical Society to present "Saddle-up Carson City". A special Presentation by Chautauquan Kim Harris will be featured - listen to the story of Warren Upson and the important role the Pony Express Played in



Youth Rider near Cold Springs, Nevada. Photo courtesy of Petra Keller

keeping the Union connected: <https://nationalponyexpress.org/celebrating-the-250th-birthday-of-america/>.

"Community support is what keeps this tradition alive, but tying this year's ride into the America 250 celebration adds a profound layer of pride," said Petra Keller, NPEA corresponding secretary. "The Pony Express exemplifies the enduring American spirit of perseverance and connection. We invite everyone to come out to Carson City and all along the trail to celebrate this monumental piece of our collective heritage."

**Event Details & Public Invitation**  
The continuous relay will press through Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and California. The public is highly encouraged



Swearing in Riders in Nebraska. Photo courtesy of Petra Keller

to participate in the festivities:  
**Attend Local Events:** Spectators are welcome to witness live mochila exchanges, meet the riders and horses, and engage with trail volunteers.

**Track the Ride Live:** A

real-time GPS tracking map will be active around the clock at: [nationalponyexpress.org/re-ride/follow-the-ride/](https://nationalponyexpress.org/re-ride/follow-the-ride/).

**Join the Conversation:** Share your photos, experiences, and community celebrations on

social media using the hashtags #2026PonyExpressReRide #PonyExpressAmerica250th #PonyExpressReRide2026.

To help raise awareness and support along the trail, the NPEA encourages local businesses, organizations and residents to display the official 2025 Re-Ride Flyer, now available online. The flyer includes key information, and a QR code for live tracking during the Re-Ride.

**About the National Pony Express Association (NPEA)**  
The NPEA is a nonprofit, volunteer-led organization dedicated to preserving the history and legacy of the Pony Express (April 1860 - October 1861). Through educational programs, trail preservation, and annual reenactments, the NPEA keeps the spirit of the American West alive for generations to come. ★

# Sixth Year of Resilience Fund Supports Independent Restaurants

## \$1.28 Million Available to Help California's Food and Beverage Businesses Invest in Growth, Stability and Long-term Success

### California Restaurant Foundation News Release

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - The California Restaurant Foundation (CRF), a nonprofit dedicated to strengthening California's restaurant community for 45 years, announced the launch of the sixth annual Restaurants Care Resilience Fund with \$1,280,000 in grants to be awarded in 2026 through the continued support of The PG&E Corporation Foundation (PG&E Foundation) and SoCalGas.

Through June 30, eligible independent restaurants and commercial caterers across the state can apply for \$5,000 grants that help operators strengthen their businesses, support their teams and navigate ongoing industry challenges.

"The Resilience Fund has evolved into a powerful engine for growth and stability within California's restaurant community, and each year, we see firsthand how these grants help operators overcome immediate challenges while also investing in their future, whether that's upgrading kitchens, adopting new technology or supporting and retaining their teams," said Alycia Harshfield, president of California Restaurant Foundation. "As the industry continues to navigate new pressures, this fund remains a critical resource for helping independent restaurants adapt, grow and thrive."

Resilience Fund grants support the most critical areas of restaurant operations, from kitchen equipment upgrades and technology improvements to employee



Grants are available to eligible restaurant owners and commercial caterers who are customers of PG&E or SoCalGas, operate in California and meet program requirements, including having one to five locations and annual revenue of up to \$3 million at the location for which they are requesting funding. Designed by Magnific

training, retention and recovery from unforeseen hardships. These investments go beyond day-to-day needs, helping operators run more efficiently, elevate the guest experience and build stronger, more sustainable businesses. At a time when costs remain high and margins are tight, this type of targeted support gives independent restaurants the flexibility to reinvest in their operations and continue serving their communities.

"We are proud to partner with the California Restaurant Foundation as it continues to grow its support for our hometown restaurants. The PG&E Foundation has contributed nearly \$5.6 million in charitable funding

to date for CRF's Restaurants Care Resilience Fund. This funding has provided grants of up to \$5,000 each to nearly 900 Northern and Central California restaurants — and we're excited to do it again this year. The success of our local restaurants strengthens our local economies and communities," said Carla Peterman, president of PG&E Corp., and executive vice president of customer and corporate affairs and chair of the board of the PG&E Corporation Foundation.

Since its inception in 2021, the program has delivered more than \$11 million in funding to 2,087 independent restaurant

operators and caterers across 50 counties in California, reinforcing its role as one of the state's most meaningful investments in small business resilience. Over the past five years, the Resilience Fund has supported a wide range of operator needs, with 31% of grants going toward equipment upgrades, 21% toward employee training and retention, and additional funding addressing impacts from COVID-19 (15%), natural disasters including recent Los Angeles fires (12%), technology upgrades (9%), and industry disruptions such as the Hollywood strikes (8%). Notably, 90% of grant recipients are single-unit operators, with an average of 10

years in business, collectively employing more than 26,500 people across the state.

"SoCalGas is proud to continue supporting the California Restaurant Foundation's Restaurants Care Resilience Fund, delivering critical grants that help stabilize local economies, sustain jobs and strengthen independent restaurants across the region. Our collaboration invests in businesses that play a vital role in California's long term economic stability," said Sarita Figueroa, senior manager, Community Affairs & Relations, SoCalGas.

Grants are available to eligible restaurant owners and commercial caterers who are customers of PG&E or SoCalGas, operate in California and meet program requirements, including having one to five locations and annual revenue of up to \$3 million at the location for which they are requesting funding. To qualify for the grant, a restaurant must currently be open and have been in operation for at least one full year. Previous grant recipients may apply again for a different location or concept. Existing food businesses that are expanding into a brick-and-mortar location are also eligible to apply.

Applications for the 2026 Resilience Fund will be accepted until June 30, with grant recipients to be announced the week of August 23. To apply or learn more about eligibility requirements, visit <https://restaurantscare.org/resilience>. For more information about the California Restaurant Foundation or Restaurants Care, visit [www.calrestfoundation.org](http://www.calrestfoundation.org). ★

# Jordan Fisher Rated Nation's 8th Best Returning Running Back



Hero Sports has ranked UC Davis senior running back Jordan Fisher among the top returning players at his position, placing the Aggies tailback eighth nationally among FCS running backs in its 2026 preseason preview. Photo courtesy of UC Davis Athletics

## UC Davis Athletics News Release

**DAVIS, CA (MPG)** - Hero Sports has placed UC Davis football senior running back Jordan Fisher among the country's best backs, rating the Aggie tailback as the eighth-best returning running back in the Football Championship Subdivision as part of their 2026 FCS previews.

Fisher had a breakout year in 2025, breaking the 1,000-yard rushing mark for the first time in his career while earning Big Sky All-Conference honors. The Aggie senior racked up 1,121 rushing yards on 185 touches, adding eight rushing touchdowns on his way to totaling the 13th-most rushing yards in the nation and third most in the conference.

He also snagged 287 yards through the

air on 26 receptions, scoring three receiving touchdowns to end his season with 1,408 all-purpose yards and 11 total touchdowns. In the Hero Sports ranking, Fisher rates as fourth-best Big Sky running back with four-out-of-the-five conference backs sitting inside the top 10.

UC Davis opens 2026 fall camp on July 29 and will kick off the 2026 season on Aug. 29 in a Big Sky showdown at Portland State. The Aggies will open UC Davis Health Stadium on Sept. 19 when Stetson makes the cross-country trip to Davis. And on Oct. 3, ESPN2 visits Davis to showcase the 2026 homecoming game against Eastern Washington on national television.

Season tickets start as low as \$100 for new alumni (2017-26 UC Davis graduates) and \$140 for the general public. And fans can expect a large collection of perks that

include priority access to postseason tickets, select away games and parking. All season ticket holders get a dedicated Aggie Ticket Representative that oversees their account, flexible payment plan options and access to exclusive season ticket holder events. Get your season tickets today at <https://ucdavisaggies.eventue.net/list/FB?path=football>, emailing the Aggie Ticket Office at [aggietickets@ucdavis.edu](mailto:aggietickets@ucdavis.edu) or by calling the ticket office at 530-752-2471.

Football group ticket discounts start at just 10 tickets, and provide a great opportunity for company outings, family gatherings, and parties to enjoy Aggie football together. Create the birthday experience of a lifetime with a player high-five tunnel or enjoy a personal tailgate space prior to the game with your colleagues that's already set up and ready for you!

Give the Aggie Ticket Office a call at 530-752-2471 and we can customize an unforgettable experience for your group! Fans can visit <https://ucdavisaggies.eventue.net/events/FBS> to purchase their group ticket packages.

*UC Davis, the No. 2 ranked public university by the Wall Street Journal, is home to 40,000 undergraduate students and 12,000 employees. Ranked No. 1 in Agriculture and Forestry as well as No. 1 in Veterinary Medicine, UC Davis is located in a true California college town nestled between world-class destinations such as the San Francisco Bay Area, Napa Valley and Lake Tahoe. Over 650 Aggie student-athletes compete in 25 Division I varsity sports, with 16 sports transitioning to the Mountain West Conference beginning in 2026-27.* ★

## Women's Tennis Adds Reigning Horizon League Player of the Year for 2026-27

### Sacramento State Athletics News Release

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - Belgium's Nel Van Hout, the reigning Horizon League Player of the Year, has announced that she will continue her academic and athletic career with the Sacramento State women's tennis program, Head Coach Sophie Breault announced June 2.

"We are very excited to welcome Nel to our Hornet family," Breault said. "Her collegiate experience and success at the top of the lineup will be invaluable to our team as we strive to win another championship. Nel has a very solid all-court game and brings a strong work ethic every day. It's exciting because we believe there is still so much room for growth in her game. Nel will thrive in our championship culture and we can't wait to help her reach her full potential and make an impact as a Hornet."

Van Hout becomes the fourth commitment for the Hornets leading up to the 2026-27 campaign, joining South Africa's Jessica Schilz, Italy's



All-Horizon League

first team selection, she became the first Milwaukee player to record 20-or-more wins in both singles and doubles in the same season since 2013-14, while her 21 singles wins stand tied for 10th on the program's single-season list.

After posting an 8-1 record in the fall, Van Hout opened her spring campaign with six consecutive wins splitting time between the No. 1 and No. 2 positions, then won her final four heading into the Horizon League Championship. IN doubles, she won four straight following a slow start, then ended the year by winning four of her last five, including a win in the conference tournament where the Panthers were the No. 2 seed.

Prior to her year at Milwaukee, Van Hout spent her freshman season at Marshall University in West Virginia where she was 5-2 in singles play and 16-4 in doubles — including a 6-2 mark against Sun Belt Conference opponents in the latter. She helped the Thundering Herd to a 20-6 overall team record and a runner-up finish at the conference tournament.

Van Hout attended Atlas College in Genk, Belgium, prior to beginning her collegiate career. ★

**Nel Van Hout becomes the fourth commitment for the Hornets leading up to the 2026-27 campaign.** Photo courtesy of Sacramento State Athletics

## Republic FC Unveils Plans to Celebrate the World's Game This Summer

### Sacramento Republic FC News Release

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - The FIFA World Cup is coming to North America this summer, and Sacramento Republic FC is making sure the region has a front-row seat. From a free Downtown kick-off party to a two-day street festival in the heart of the city, the Indomitable Club is going all-in to celebrate the world's biggest sporting event right here in the Capital City.

To help fans find the action all tournament long, Republic FC is launching the Sac Soccer Guide, a regularly updated hub for World Cup watch parties and soccer events happening across the greater Sacramento region. Whether you're looking for a neighborhood bar showing the early match or a packed outdoor viewing party, the Sac Soccer Guide will have you covered. The guide will be updated weekly throughout the tournament, and restaurants, bars and venues interested in being featured can add their events by visiting [SacSoccerGuide.com](http://SacSoccerGuide.com).

The marquee event of the summer arrives on June 24 and 25, when Republic FC takes over Downtown Plaza Park at 910 I Street for back-to-back Soccer Block Party events presented by Bank of America. On June 24, fans can gather to watch Mexico play its final group match; on June 25, the spotlight shifts to the United States as USMNT

takes the pitch for its own Group Stage finale. Each night will offer a unique experience with a variety of family-friendly activities, food trucks, live music, and special appearances from Republic FC players and coaches. The all-ages block parties are free, but require a ticket for entry. Fans can secure their spot today at [SacSoccerGuide.com](http://SacSoccerGuide.com).

Of course, there's plenty of Republic FC soccer to go along with all the World Cup action. On Saturday, June 20, the club's beloved annual Brewfest returns to Heart Health Park, giving fans a chance to catch World Cup matches at the stadium before Republic FC takes on New Mexico United later in the evening.

Then, on Wednesday, July 8, the first scheduled off-day in the World Cup schedule, Republic FC steps in to keep the soccer going, hosting one of just two matches taking place in American Soccer that night. If there were ever a day to be at Heart Health Park, that's it.

And for fans lucky enough to be attending World Cup matches in person, Republic FC wants to see Sacramento on the world's stage. Fans are encouraged to rep the Indomitable Club in their gear, scarves, kits, or custom signs and share their photos on social media using #WCwithSRFC.

For a full list of World Cup events and to add your venue to the Sac Soccer Guide, visit [SacSoccerGuide.com](http://SacSoccerGuide.com). ★

Francesca De Matteo and Russia's Viktoriia Sedova.

A native of Heusden-Zolder, Belgium, Van Hout put together an impressive season at Milwaukee last season, becoming the first student-athlete to earn Horizon League Player of the Year honors after posting a 21-6 mark in singles and a 20-9 record in doubles at the top two spots in the Panthers' lineup. An



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