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# AMERICAN RIVER Messenger

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Serving Fair Oaks, Orangevale & Sacramento County

JUNE 12, 2026

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## Ceremony Honors Veterans



Brothers Torsten and Tiersen present the colors in the Memorial Day Flag Ceremony with Troop 380.

Story and photos  
by Judy Andrews

**FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG)** - Hundreds gathered for the 28th Annual Memorial Day Ceremony at the Fair Oaks Cemetery District on May 23. The moving tribute honored fallen soldiers and local veterans. This year's theme celebrated the USO's 85th anniversary.

The ceremony began with its traditional parade through the cemetery grounds. Bagpipers Kurt Baird and Maxine Barish-Wrenden, along with drummer Mike Marquette, led the procession down the Avenue of Flags, followed by the American Legion Riders Chapter 521, Rio Linda.

Pete Schroeder, chair of



Commander Gary Burns from VFW Post 6158 and Chris Siegfried from American Legion Post 383 led the Laying of the Wreath.

the Fair Oaks Cemetery District Board of Trustees, opened the program with introductions and special recognitions, followed by an invocation by Mark Rice of American Legion Post 383.

"The Annual Memorial Day Ceremony brings

the community together to honor loved ones, past and present, who served their country and sometimes made the ultimate sacrifice," Schroeder said. "It's a cherished tradition for many of our Fair Oaks neighbors and local service organizations. I'm honored

to be part of it."

Guest dignitaries and speakers included Senator Roger Niello and representatives from the offices of Congressman Ami Bera and Supervisor Rich Desmond. Congressman Bera donated the flag that will fly over the Veterans Memorial Monument at the cemetery.

Senator Niello read a poem honoring the USO and acknowledged the beautiful, park-like cemetery grounds, where flags and crosses adorned more than 2,000 veterans' gravesites for the holiday.

Scout Cooper, a member of Scouting America Troop 380, delivered the keynote address, discussing the

*Continued on page 2*

## FORPD Board Approves Potential Capital Improvement Projects

By Shaunna Boyd

**FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG)** - At the May 20 meeting, the Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District (FORPD) Board of Directors considered the Fiscal Year 2026-27 Capital Improvement Plan, presented by Parks and Facilities Manager Sean Ventura.

The project list includes interior renovations and roof and HVAC replacement at the Old Library (\$191,400), updates to the District Master Plan (\$200,000), ADA walking path panels (\$11,000), amphitheater food services equipment (\$100,000), amphitheater operational shelving (\$15,000), amphitheater lighting/tech equipment (\$90,000) and districtwide bleacher replacement (\$120,000).

Staff recommended a Capital Improvement budget of \$396,000 to complete a few high priority projects from that project list. Board approval of the full plan allows staff to pursue additional funding sources, and each project will still come before the board for official approval.

The \$2.4 million preschool renovations are not included here as staff are seeking federal grant funding from Senate Appropriations for that project.

Board Chair Raymond James Irwin said his only hesitation was the district master plan: "I don't know if we really need to spend that kind of money to find out what the community wants. I think there's a lot that we could do internally with the district that would not have to incur such a large cost."

Irwin said they are already familiar with a lot of community priorities and could gather more input through public meetings.

Director Delinda Tamagni said, "I like the idea of a master plan because it's a road map, but I'm open to exploring how we do that."

District Administrator Mike Aho explained that the district needs to update their master plan every 10 years to be eligible for federal grant funding. The last update was in 2010, "so we are out of compliance for federal funds," he said.

While it is possible to complete the master plan in-house, Aho cautioned that the process "is beyond burdensome." It would require a new full-time

*Continued on page 4*

## Helping Hands OV Seeks Volunteers

*Requests for small job services surge*

Helping Hands OV  
News Release

**ORANGEVALE, CA (MPG)** - Helping Hands OV, a volunteer-driven nonprofit serving Orangevale, Fair Oaks and surrounding communities, is reporting a significant increase in requests for assistance in 2026, highlighting the growing need for community members to get involved.

Helping Hands OV connects labor businesses and volunteers with individuals and families who need help with small jobs they are unable to complete on their own. These jobs often include yardwork, minor home maintenance, light cleaning, debris cleanup and other basic tasks that can make a meaningful difference in someone's daily life.

In all of 2025, Helping



Helping Hands OV is seeking volunteers as requested assistance from the nonprofit surges. Photo courtesy of Helping Hands OV

Hands OV received 25 small job requests. In 2026,

the organization has so far received 52 requests and

has already completed 36

*Continued on page 10*

# Ceremony Honors Veterans



From left, Fair Oaks Cemetery District Board of Trustees includes Evan Currie, Don Neufeld, Pete Schroeder (chair), Carolyn Flood (vice chair) and John Oldham.

*Continued from page 1*

USO's history and significance over the past 85 years.

As noted in the event program, the USO was founded in 1941 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to provide morale and recreational services to U.S. military personnel during World War II. From 1941 to 1947, the USO operated more than 3,000 clubs and launched USO shows featuring celebrities such as Bob Hope to entertain troops. Since its founding, USO performers have given more than 420,000 shows, entertaining more than 130 million service members. Today, the organization continues to operate worldwide, providing support through more than 250 centers.

Under the direction of Scout Leader Elizabeth Ruygt, SA Troop 380 has participated in the ceremony for 20 years. The Scouts assist with event parking, distribute programs, and conduct the Flag Ceremony. Ruygt also serves as the ceremony's event planning chair and writes the keynote speech and program.

"The Fair Oaks Memorial Day Ceremony honoring our veterans is especially meaningful to me as a Gold Star daughter," said Ruygt, whose father was killed in the Korean War before she was born. "To some, Memorial Day is about picnics, but to me it's about honoring those who gave their lives. That's why I have been involved with this project for 20 years."

The ceremony concluded with the Laying of the Wreath presented by members of the American Legion Post 383 and VFW Post 6158. Attendees were invited to stay for refreshments afterward.

On Thursday, ahead of the event, volunteers from local service organizations placed flags and crosses on veterans' gravesites. The groups included members of the American Legion Auxiliary 383, Clean and Sober Living, the Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce, the Fair Oaks Rotary Club, and VFW Post 6158.

Music throughout the ceremony was provided by Anne Peter on guitar and Julie Taggart on bugle. The duo performed the 1940s wartime classic "Boogie-Woogie Bugle Boy."

The Fair Oaks Cemetery District was established in 1902 by the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors and continues to operate under the direction of a five-member Board of Trustees. Recognizing the need to honor local men and women who served in war and peace, the Board of Trustees created the Veterans Memorial and flagpole as a community project, made possible by generous donations of time, services, and funds. The memorial was dedicated during the first Memorial Day Celebration on May 29, 1999.

The cemetery is located at 7780 Olive St. in Fair Oaks. For more information, visit [www.fairoakscemetery.com](http://www.fairoakscemetery.com). ★

# Spirit of San Juan Awards Recognizes Incredible Students and Staff



Honorees at the 13th Annual Spirit of San Juan Awards ceremony were recognized for exhibiting exceptional character, removing barriers and providing an inclusive environment for all. Photo courtesy of the San Juan Unified School District

## San Juan Unified School District News Release

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - It was a night of celebration and honor at El Camino Fundamental High School's Center for the Arts on May 14 for the 13th annual Spirit of San Juan Awards. During the ceremony, four honorees were recognized for exhibiting exceptional character, removing barriers and providing an inclusive environment for all.

Encina High School student Ojehi Benito-Oserogho's active leadership shines across San Juan Unified. Through passion and innovation, she has created and transformed initiatives such as an idea that started out as a clothing drive, and grew into the "Encina Cares" drive that expanded access to resources for surrounding community members

Mesa Verde High School student Nia Blunt is a leader in her school community, and her work is highlighted through Mesa Verde's Mental Health Awareness Team and Black Student Union. Through her admirable advocacy for mental health and underrepresented students, she has created safe environments for all.

Kim Minugh, a teacher at Encina High School, showcased her dedication to equity and inclusion through her teaching. She designs her lessons thoroughly to reflect the diverse cultural identities of her students. Through literature, her students are actively engaged in conversations and practice critical thinking.

The San Juan High School Student Ambassadors, a student leadership group,

is committed to cultivating a welcoming environment for new or transfer students through a diverse group of students with a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Through lived experiences, students establish trust with their peers and remove barriers as they navigate a new environment.

New to this year's ceremony was the recognition of San Juan Unified's 2026 Classified Employees of the Year and the 2027 Teachers of the Year.

Student volunteers from various Career Technical Education (CTE) programs across San Juan Unified high schools showcased their skills throughout the evening.

El Camino represented their school with their media students capturing special moments for attendees through photographs, while the student-run station KYDS played a mixed assortment of music during the reception. Additionally, the Casa Roble Fundamental High School floral program provided beautiful centerpieces that decorated the reception tables.

The event was emceed by Good Day Sacramento anchor and San Juan Unified alum Tina Macuha. All honorees were presented with an award by Superintendent Melissa Bassanelli and Board President Tanya Kravchuk. They also received a certificate of recognition from the office of California State Senator Roger Niello, Assemblywoman Maggy Krell and Assemblyman Josh Hoover.

A special thanks to our sponsors, Western Health Advantage, Republic Services, SMUD and the San Juan Education Foundation. ★

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# FORPD Board Approves Potential Capital Improvement Projects

*Continued from page 1*

staff member dedicated to that project, and the salary and benefits would likely outweigh the cost of hiring a consultant.

The board voted to approve the list of possible projects for Fiscal Year 2026-27.

They also considered an updated purchasing policy to increase the district administrator's spending authority from \$10,000 to \$25,000 for general purchases, from \$20,000 to \$30,000 for construction-related purchases and from \$15,000 to \$20,000 for emergency purchases. Staff said these thresholds improve operational efficiency, reduce delays and provide flexibility by allowing the administrator to make time-sensitive purchasing decisions within the already-approved budget rather than waiting for the next monthly board meeting. Board oversight would remain in place for purchases exceeding the revised authority limits and for any expenditures requiring a formal bidding process.

This proposed update reinstates the district administrator's previous purchasing thresholds, which were inadvertently lowered in a policy update last October. This update would shift the thresholds back to their historical limits.

The board voted to approve the updated policy.

Aho is retiring this summer, so the board has been working with a consultant group to recruit candidates for the position. Aho presented a possible timeline for resume review and interviews to ensure a replacement is ready to step into the role.

The consultant selected six candidates

to move forward, and Aho suggested each director should independently review and rank those resumes. The board decided to conduct in-person interviews with no more than four candidates, so their rankings will be tallied to determine which four are invited to interview in June.

The management team will independently interview the candidates in a separate panel to provide input to the board after all the interviews are completed.

The board also considered the final reconciliation change order for the Village Park Renovation Project in the amount of \$144,267.

Some final costs include \$7,697 to fix drainage and erosion after unforeseen ponding issues at the west steps, \$5,277 for alarm keypads and painting trim at the concession and restroom building and \$3,320 for other minor finalizations.

The County Inspectors also mandated additional ADA improvements totaling \$69,878, and the Fire Marshall required a pedestrian gate at the Clubhouse yard for \$18,100.

Aho understands it's frustrating to still be putting money out on this project, but he said these last-minute costs were unavoidable and relatively minor considering the scale of the project.

The board approved the final change order.

The next regular meeting of the FORPD Board of Directors is scheduled for June 17, and Aho said it will be a long meeting as the board goes over the budget for the next fiscal year. ★

## COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Informing, Empowering & Engaging Readers With Their Community



By Patsy McGavock

For generations, libraries have quietly anchored communities. Often described as places that preserve knowledge, they may increasingly preserve something modern life is quietly losing — shared civic space not filtered by algorithms, income levels or social circles.

Libraries remain places without entrance requirements or appointments, where people of different generations, backgrounds, skill sets and experiences still naturally cross paths — and perhaps learn from each other.

According to Peter Coyl, director of Sacramento Public Libraries, libraries continue evolving to meet community needs.

"Some people really want the quiet temple of learning," Coyl said. "Some want a laboratory for knowledge."

Modern libraries increasingly try to honor both.

Many branches now include quiet reading areas alongside study rooms, community rooms, teen spaces and collaborative learning areas. The library remains a place for concentration and reflection, but also one where conversation, classes, tutoring and shared activity quietly build human connection around learning.

The range of learning itself continues to evolve.

For the first time this past year, Sacramento Public Library's e-book circulation surpassed physical books. Patrons now access digital media, professional courses, maker spaces, literacy tutoring, technology resources and even "Libraries of Things," where residents can borrow practical items instead of purchasing them.

## Rebuilding America's Skill Set: A Mentoring Mindset

Yet, Coyl repeatedly returned not to programs or technology, but to people and access.

"People who are curious and want to learn come to the library," Coyl said. "What you are doing may be different, but the reason you are there is often the same. People are seeking to learn, expand and better their lives. The library is for everyone."

Libraries occupy a unique role in civic life because they remain one of the few public spaces where people can enter freely, Coyl said. "We're open to anybody who has a question."

That openness quietly creates intersections that rarely happen elsewhere.

Coyl recalled a retired Fortune 500 CEO regularly attending lectures beside a high school math teacher. Another patron, editor of a national news magazine, used the library as a preferred workspace. "You could be sitting next to a person writing the next prize-winning article," Coyl said.

Nearby, one could often find a teenager studying or gathering with friends after school, a parent learning English or a neighbor researching resources to rebuild life after losing housing.

Different needs. Different experiences. Each with something to learn and something to offer.

Some connections remain brief. Others grow over years.

"I don't know that everyone comes expecting community connections," Coyl said. "But I do think it happens."

That may matter more than we realize.

As life continues to move online, many Americans increasingly experience community through algorithms, private routines and highly filtered social circles. More and more, we move through already sorted,

familiar lanes of interest, background and belief.

Libraries don't filter. And increasingly, libraries also help people discern something else: information itself.

In an era increasingly shaped by algorithms and artificial intelligence, Coyl believes personal expertise and library staff themselves remain key.

"Just because the search engine gives you the first result doesn't mean that's the best source," Coyl said. "We teach people how to evaluate information, how search engines and AI choose responses. It's important to understand those nuances."

Then he paused on something simpler.

"Sometimes we need that human connection," he said. "That's something that cannot be replaced."

Perhaps that is part of what libraries quietly preserve.

Not simply information, but the people who share it.

And perhaps, if we enter a little more intentionally — lingering a moment longer, introducing ourselves, sharing what we know, or simply noticing one another and asking about life — libraries may help teach us how to become a mentoring-minded community.

One where knowledge, skills and trust move freely between people as they practice the simple habit of lifting one another in small ways, strengthening the whole community over time.

Because, as Coyl emphasized, you do not need to be a reader to find community at the library.

"There is something here for everyone."

*Patsy McGavock is a volunteer writer informing, empowering and engaging readers with their community. Connect with Patsy at PatsyMcGavock. JustServe@gmail.com ★*

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# SUN Bucks Return This Summer



Summer break is a time for fun, family and sunshine, but for many Sacramento County families, it can also mean higher grocery costs while children are out of school. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

**Sacramento County News Release**

**SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG)** - Summer break is a time for fun, family and sunshine, but for many Sacramento County families, it can also mean higher grocery costs while children are out of school. That's why the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is bringing back SUN Bucks, also known as Summer EBT, for summer 2026, and the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance is here to help.

Eligible families can receive \$120 for each qualifying child to help buy groceries during the summer months when school meals may not be available.

SUN Bucks works like CalFresh food benefits and can be used to buy healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meat and whole grains at grocery stores, farmers markets and other locations that accept EBT cards.

**Who qualifies for SUN Bucks?**

Many children will automatically qualify for SUN Bucks in 2026, including children ages 6-18 who receive CalFresh, CalWORKs and/or Medi-Cal with a household income at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, students approved for free or reduced-price school meals, and children identified by their school as migrant, homeless or foster youth.

Children attending schools participating

in the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program may also qualify.

**How do families receive benefits?**

Eligible families do not need to apply if their child is automatically enrolled. A SUN Bucks EBT card will be mailed directly to the family for each eligible child.

Families who are not automatically enrolled can still apply by submitting a school meal application or Universal Benefits Application (UBA) through their child's school or district by Aug. 31.

Families are encouraged to make sure their mailing address is up to date with both their child's school and their local county social services office to avoid

delays in receiving benefits.

**Important reminders**

SUN Bucks benefits expire 122 days after they are loaded onto the card, so families are encouraged to use their benefits promptly.

Families can manage their benefits using the free ebtEDGE mobile app or by visiting [ebt.ca.gov](http://ebt.ca.gov).

For questions about SUN Bucks, including lost cards or address changes, families can contact the SUN Bucks Helpline at (877) 328-9677.

To learn more about SUN Bucks and other food assistance resources, visit the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance website. ★

# Downtown Sacramento Mural Celebrates Women in Transportation

**SacRT and WTS Sacramento News Release**

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - Sacramento Regional Transit (SacRT) and Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) Sacramento recently unveiled a new mural and transit wrapped train in downtown Sacramento, celebrating the diversity of women in the transportation industry.

Aliyah Sidqe, a Sacramento-born visual artist, muralist, fine artist and educator, was selected to bring this vision to life. Sidqe's art explores themes of identity, emotion and human connection, with a focus on helping people feel seen, confident and celebrated. With more than a decade of experience creating public art through Sacramento, she brings both artistic excellence and a deep commitment to community engagement.

The concept of the mural was inspired by a public art initiative led by the WTS Boston's Chapter, which emphasizes the power of art to celebrate community and spark connection. To



Sacramento Regional Transit (SacRT) and Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) Sacramento recently unveiled a new wrapped train, celebrating the diversity of women in the transportation industry. Photo courtesy of SacRT and WTS Sacramento

ensure the mural reflected organization's values and vision, input was gathered through a survey of the Board of Directors,

Advisory board and full membership between February and April 2025. This feedback supported Sidqe's creative direction and

helped inspire a mural that was rooted in community voices.

"After being introduced to Sidqe's work, it became clear

that her creative style, extensive mural portfolio and community centered approach made her the ideal artist for this project," said WTS Sacramento chapter President Amanda Kahn. "Our board was thrilled to partner with SacRT to bring this project to life, amplifying the value women bring to the transportation sector."

"SacRT is proud to partner with WTS Sacramento on a project that uplifts and celebrates the contributions of women in transportation," said Henry Li, SacRT General Manager/CEO.

"This mural is more than a piece of public art; we hope it inspires future generations to see themselves in this industry and to continue shaping the future of mobility in the Sacramento region."

The mural is located at the corner of R Street and 15th Street in Sacramento, on the exterior of Cafe Bernardo, where community members can experience this new public artwork celebrating creativity, connection and the transportation community for the next decade. ★

# Ty Smith Named New City Historian

*Veteran museum leader to advance a broader vision for history, civic identity and heritage tourism in California's Capital City*

**Center for Sacramento History News Release**

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - A new chapter has begun at the Center for Sacramento History. As of June 1, Ty Smith is the new City Historian for Sacramento, bringing more than two decades of experience in public history, museum leadership, interpretation and education through his work with California State Parks.

Smith has served as museum director of the California State Railroad Museum and Old Sacramento State Historic Park, with previous leadership experience overseeing cultural destinations including Hearst Castle and the California State Capitol Museum.

As City Historian, Smith will oversee the Center for Sacramento History while helping shape a broader vision for how Sacramento preserves, shares and elevates its stories as California's Capital City.

"Sacramento has an extraordinary opportunity to make history a more visible and meaningful part of civic life," said Megan Van Voorhis, director of Convention and Cultural Services for the City of Sacramento. "This role is about more than preserving records and collections — it is about helping residents and visitors better understand the people, places and stories that shaped Sacramento, while strengthening culture, education and heritage tourism throughout the city."

Ty Smith, incoming City Historian said, "Sacramento's



As of June 1, Ty Smith is the new City Historian for Sacramento, bringing more than two decades of experience in public history, museum leadership, interpretation and education through his work with California State Parks. Photo courtesy of the Center for Sacramento History

local history is world history. I am honored to be a part of gathering, holding and telling Sacramento's stories. In Sacramento, the past didn't go anywhere; it flows into our lives and expresses itself through our lived experiences."

"The highest calling of a public historian is to help people see themselves in history and, in so doing, help people imagine their futures through understanding our collective past. I look forward to building on the previous success of the Center for Sacramento History and in serving my community," Smith said.

The City Historian serves as both the steward of Sacramento's historical collections and a civic leader helping shape how the city preserves, shares and connects its history to education, culture, tourism and community identity.

"Ty Smith has demonstrated throughout his career that history is not simply about preserving the past — it is about helping communities better understand themselves and envision their future," said John Fraser, district superintendent for the Capital District of California State Parks and Smith's former supervisor. "His transformative leadership at the California State Railroad Museum expanded both the audiences we reached and the stories we told, positioning the museum as one of California's leading institutions for inclusive and forward-looking public history." ★

# 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 O'Brien 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.

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



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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# PoppTalk

With Mary Jane Popp

## It's A Miracle

Do we take our body for granted? I am sure we do after I got the insider story on what this miraculous body does every day. It came from **Dr Susan Smith Jones** on my POPPTALK Radio Show. **Dr Jones** has made extraordinary contributions in the fields of holistic health, anti-aging and longevity, optimum nutrition and balanced living. So when she said let's talk about the miracle we live in every day...our body, I was intrigued. Get a load of what this miracle does for us every day, and we don't even realize it.

1. Each day your heart pumps approximately 2000 gallons of blood through its chambers. It beats more than 100,000 times a day to achieve this incredible feat.

2. You take around 17,000 breaths a day on average, and don't have to think about a single one.

3. Your brain doesn't stop working. It is estimated that about 50,000 thoughts pass through it each day on average. That is a whopping 35-48 thoughts every minute.

4. The cells in your stomach lining produce an alkaline substance every few milliseconds to neutralize stomach acid. If they didn't do this, your stomach would digest itself because some of the acids are strong enough to dissolve metals.

5. You blink about 28,000 times a every day, with each one lasting just a tenth of a second. This is a voluntary reflex the body uses to keep the eyes clean and moist.

6. Each blood cell lives for about 40 days before being replaced by a younger model. It's no surprise their life span is short,

having made 60,000 trips around the body. They must be exhausted!

7. You shed more than 1 million skin cells every single day but they are constantly replenished automatically you save you from turning transparent and becoming rather exposed.

8. Your hair (if you still have any) grows about half a millimeter a day, and the average adult with a full scalp has around 100,000 hairs on their head, So that's a combined 50 meters of hair growth every single day.

9. You grow 8mm (.31 inches) every night while sleeping before shrinking back down again the next day. Good 'ole gravity. This saves you from some pretty hefty clothing bills and ensures you don't have to raise the door frames every year or two.

10. Your 30+ million body cells are regenerating themselves every single day without any prompting. This means you have an entirely new set of taste buds every 10 days, new nails every 6-10 months, new bones every 10 years, and even a new heart every 20 years.

**Dr Jones** hit the nail on the head when she said "Next time you think that your body is starting to creak, just think about all the incredible things that are happening inside it every day, because all of us are a miracle. Be thankful for your God-given body and take loving care of it." She is a prolific author with her latest **"A Hug in a Mug"** and **"Uplifted."** Check out her free monthly newsletter and more great information at [www.susansmithjones.com](http://www.susansmithjones.com). ★

# 'High School Musical' Summer Workshop Open to Teens

Valkyrie Theatre  
Company News Release

**FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG)** - Fair Oaks Performing Arts Center and Valkyrie Theatre Company will present a summer musical theatre workshop for middle and high school students featuring "Disney's High School Musical On Stage!" licensed through Music Theatre International.

The workshop runs July 13-31, with public performances scheduled July 31-August 9 at the Fair Oaks Performing Arts Center.

This production will mark a special milestone for the newly opened Fair Oaks Performing Arts Center amphitheatre. After launching with a series of wonderful outdoor concerts, "Disney's High School Musical On Stage!" will be the amphitheatre's first outdoor play/musical production, bringing live theatre to the space for the first time.

Designed for middle and high school students, the workshop offers a fun, fast-paced musical theatre experience where young performers build skills in acting, singing, dance, teamwork and stage performance while rehearsing one of Disney's most popular stage musicals.

"Disney's High School Musical On Stage!" follows the students of East High as basketball captain Troy Bolton and brainy newcomer Gabriella Montez challenge expectations by auditioning for the school musical. With high-energy songs, large ensemble numbers, and themes of



The summer workshop is open to students interested in performing, whether they are new to theatre or already have stage experience. Photo courtesy of Valkyrie Theatre Company

friendship, identity and finding your voice, the show gives young performers a chance to shine both individually and as part of a company.

Valkyrie Theatre Company's education programs focus on creating accessible, supportive theatre experiences for young people, helping students grow in confidence, collaboration and creativity. The summer workshop is open to students interested in performing, whether they are new to theatre or already have stage experience.

"Musical theatre gives students a place to take risks, work as a team and discover what they are capable of," said Alison Gilbreath of Valkyrie Theatre Company. "'High School Musical' is a perfect workshop show because it is full of energy, recognizable music and roles that let young performers feel part of something exciting. We are especially excited

that this will be the first play/musical staged outdoors in the new Fair Oaks Performing Arts Center amphitheatre."

Registration is now open. Families can learn more and register by visiting: [fairoakarts.org](http://fairoakarts.org)

For more information, contact Alison Gilbreath at 916-308-8619.

### About Valkyrie Theatre Company

Valkyrie Theatre Company creates theatre and theatre education programs for young people and the wider community, with a focus on accessible, high-quality performance opportunities that encourage confidence, creativity, collaboration and artistic growth.

### About Fair Oaks Performing Arts Center

Fair Oaks Performing Arts Center provides a community space for theatre, music, education and live performance in the Fair Oaks region. ★

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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 **Ornella 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, 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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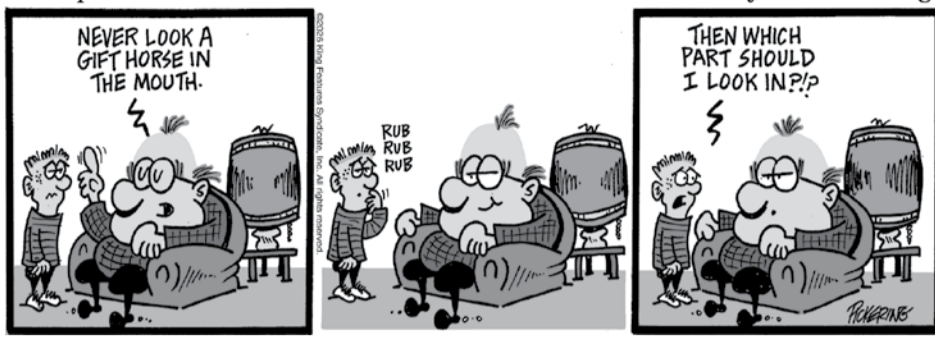
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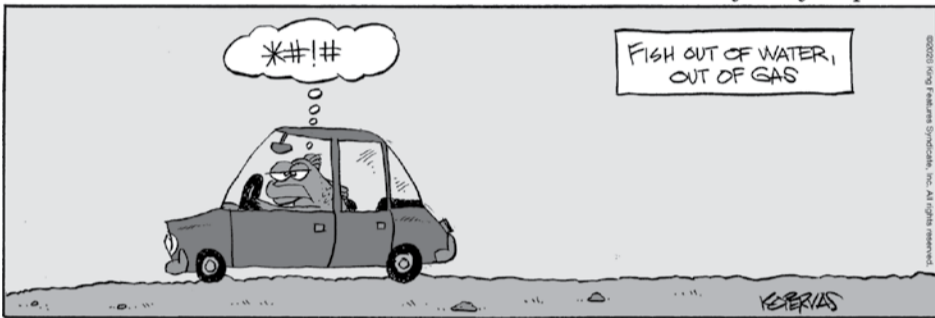
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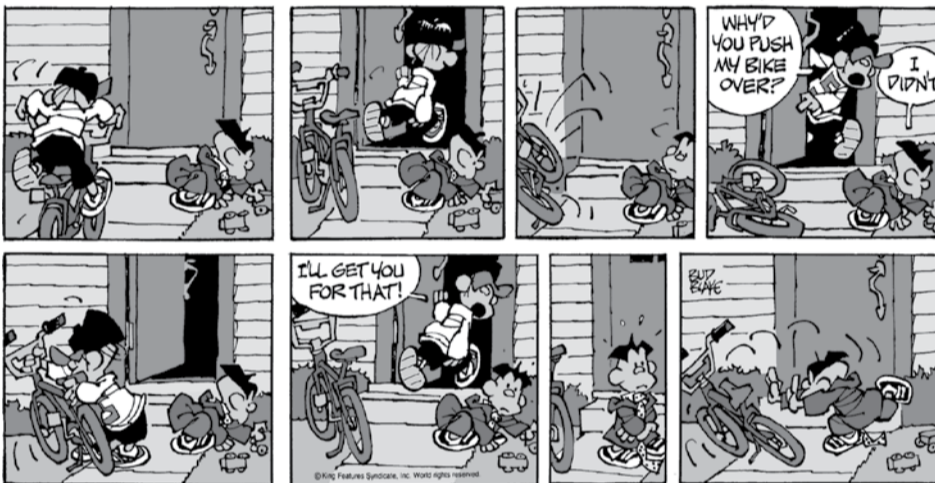
## Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



## TIGER

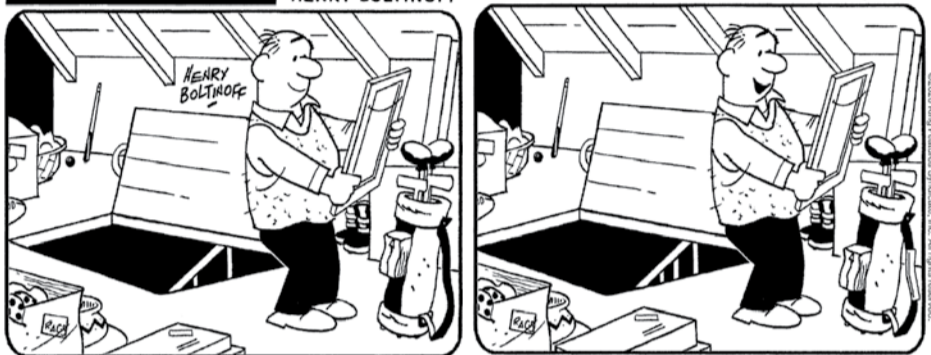
by BUD BLAKE



## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Strip on golf bag is different. 2. Mouth is wider. 3. Shaft rattling is different. 4. Door opening is wider. 5. Pocket on golf bag is moved. 6. Mouth is open.

## GRIN and BEAR IT



## Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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## STATEPOINT CROSSWORD • TV DADS

### CLUES

- ACROSS**
- Calculus, e.g.
  - Emerald \_\_\_ borer
  - Web journal
  - Eurozone money
  - Ginger beer cocktail
  - Overabundance, pl.
  - "Mike Brady's sons in "The Brady Bunch"
  - Taylor Swift's sixth tour, with The
  - Bob Marley, spiritually speaking
  - \*Howard Cunningham's TV show
  - Answer from a tunnel
  - Calms
  - Albanian currency
  - House that's mostly gable
  - Smallest
  - Ante-
  - Magi's gift, pl.
  - Of a particular kind
  - Like Scotch whisky, flavor-wise
  - "\_\_\_ the land of the free..."
  - \*Fred MacMurray in "My \_\_\_ Sons"
  - Nessie's hangout
  - Passport-giving organization, e.g.
  - A Beetle bride
  - Give right or privilege
  - 3.26 light-years
  - Sun, in Spain
  - The Gem State capital
  - London native, e.g.
  - \*Danny Tanner's show
  - Make awake
  - Popular sandwich cookie
  - Elephant trainer's poker
  - Loathing
  - Hot rum drink
  - Goodness gracious!
  - Yeearnings
  - Letters of distress
  - Infamous Roman Emperor
- DOWN**
- Crystal in the street
  - Atmosphere
  - Acid "journey"
  - Commotion
  - Pertaining to ear
  - Kills a dragon
  - Hitler's deputy
  - \*Dre Johnson's show
  - Verdant
  - "The Simpsons" palindrome
  - General Services Administration
  - Assortment
  - \*Dr. Leonard \_\_\_ of "Friends"
  - Delectable
  - Fleur-de-\_\_\_
  - Granny Smith, e.g.
  - Banned aerosol propellant
  - Strike back, e.g.
  - Through, for short
  - #12 Across, pl.
  - Part of an act
  - \*Sandy Cohen's show
  - \*Johnny \_\_\_ of "Schitt's Creek"
  - High-\_\_\_ image
  - \*Jack Pearson's show

CROSSWORD													
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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

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# Service Above Self

## DOVIA Awards Celebrate Local Volunteers

Story and photos by Omella 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. ★

# Helping Hands OV Seeks Volunteers

Continued from page 1 of the projects.

“The increase in requests shows that the need in our community is growing,” said Helping Hands OV founder Sydnie Anderson. “Many seniors, veterans, individuals with disabilities and low-income residents need a helping hand, and we rely entirely on volunteers and business partners to make that possible.”

So far in 2026, Helping Hands OV has provided more than \$11,300 worth of small job labor services to local residents in need, all at no cost to those receiving assistance.

Community members interested in volunteering are encouraged to attend Helping Hands OV’s monthly meet-up and meeting, held on the



Helping Hands OV connects labor businesses and volunteers with individuals and families who need help with small jobs they are unable to complete on their own including yardwork, minor home maintenance, light cleaning, debris cleanup and other tasks. Photo courtesy of Helping Hands OV

second Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. Meeting locations occasionally change to support local businesses, so attendees are encouraged to visit

HelpingHandsOV.org for current details.

With summer underway, Helping Hands OV is also inviting local teens to participate in

its Green Teen Project. Through the program, teens perform free yardwork for community members outside of their own households. Participants earn

prizes for every 10 yards completed while gaining valuable volunteer experience and making a positive impact in their neighborhoods.

All teens are welcome to participate and must be supervised by a responsible adult as well as use their own equipment. Volunteers are encouraged to work in teams, making the program a great opportunity for friends, families and groups to serve together.

To register as a Green Teen, learn more about volunteer opportunities, request assistance or support the organization’s mission through a donation, visit HelpingHandsOV.org.

Helping Hands OV believes that when neighbors help neighbors, communities grow stronger — one helping hand at a time. ★

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# 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 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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