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Crowd Launch ETC's 25th
Anniversary Concert Season

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RIVER VALLEY TIMES

42ND YEAR • ISSUE 13

Serving Rancho Murieta, Sloughhouse, Wilton

JULY 10, 2026

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IN CELEBRATION
AND GRATITUDE



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Rancho Murieta Marks America's 250th Birthday with its Biggest Fourth of July Celebration



Roger and Joanne Brandt's golf cart literally takes the cake as 43 golf carts decorated in patriotic themes parade through Rancho Murieta on July 4 in celebration of America's 250th birthday.



A gold brocade firework spreads across the sky in a glittering canopy that seemed to hang in the air long after the initial burst.

Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Hundreds of residents and visitors lined Murieta Parkway for the parade as Rancho Murieta celebrated America's 250th birthday with the largest Fourth of July turnout that longtime residents can remember, capping the day with an expanded fireworks spectacular honoring the nation's semi-quincentennial.

The community's signature annual celebration began at 7 a.m. with the Kiwanis Club's pancake breakfast at Stonehouse Park, followed a half-hour later by the 46th annual Fun Run. The festivities continued with the Fourth of July parade, evening music and dancing at the gazebo, and concluded with an enhanced fireworks display over Laguna Joaquin.

A row of Betsy Ross flags along the lake, and a giant American flag suspended from the new RMA aerial lift, underscored this year's special anniversary.

Preparations for the milestone celebration began almost as soon as last year's event ended.

"Planning for this auspicious event started before the street sweepers made

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Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations at a Glance



The Sacramento County Civil Grand Jury operates under the authority of the Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento. Courtesy photo

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento County Grand Jury made 12 findings and 11 recommendations in its June 24 report on the Rancho Murieta Community Services District. Under California law, the Board of Directors must respond to each finding and recommendation within 90 days.

District Finances

Finding 1: The district operated its accounting system without standardized procedures, contributing to years of overdue audits.

Recommendation:

Complete updated accounting procedure manuals reflecting current software systems and accounting processes by Dec. 31, 2026.

Finding 2: Audits for fiscal years 2022-23 through 2025-26 remained delayed, leaving the district out of compliance with state law.

Recommendation:

Complete the 2022-23 and 2023-24 audits by Sept. 30, 2026, and the 2024-25 and 2025-26 audits by Dec. 31, 2026.

Finding 3: The district has not demonstrated that material weaknesses identified in the 2019-20 audit have been fully corrected.

Recommendation:

Prepare a written report identifying which audit findings and material weaknesses have been resolved and which remain outstanding by Sept. 30, 2026.

Finding 4: The Grand Jury credited the hiring of Finance and Administration Director Cecilia Min with making significant progress in improving accounting practices and reducing the audit backlog.

Management

Finding 5: Continued turnover among upper management has hindered district operations. The Grand Jury noted that contracting with HRtoGO for human resources may improve personnel management and reduce future

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Grand Jury Describes CSD as 'Still a Work in Progress'

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Three years after a Sacramento County Grand Jury concluded the Rancho Murieta Community Services District had "lost the public trust," a new Grand Jury report says the district has made measurable progress but remains "a work in progress."

The June 24 report credits the district with upgrading its accounting system and completing two long-overdue financial audits, but concludes it continues to struggle with overdue audits, governance, ethics, management turnover and other issues. The report contains 12 findings and makes 11 recommendations to the district. The report can be found at sacgrandjury.org

The investigation stemmed from complaints alleging the district failed to provide timely financial reports to the Board of Directors, remained



The Sacramento County Grand Jury summarizes its findings about the Rancho Murieta Community Services District on the cover page for its June 24 report. Courtesy photo

behind in completing required annual audits and improperly settled employment-related claims. The Grand Jury said it investigated the financial and governance complaints

but declined to examine allegations involving employment settlements.

When asked for comment, Board President John Merchant responded in a June 30 email.

The District will approve a release at the board meeting, he said.

"We have already begun to work on the formal response, which we will

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Summerfest Presents July 3 Celebration



Several hundred people, most of them families, turn out for Summerfest's free July 3 celebration at Stonehouse Park. Children play in two bounce houses and, in the photo at left, a girl makes a splash landing on the water slide. Families enjoy dinner from three food trucks and music by DJ Veezay before line dancing at 7 p.m., as shown in the photo above. One organizer later observed that the evening was notable because people were talking with one another instead of looking at their cell phones, and families visiting for the Fourth of July had a place to gather the day before the holiday. The children's water balloon contest ended in a five-minute frenzy, but organizers plan to bring it back next year with age divisions and 7,000 ice-cold water balloons. Photos by Gail Bullen

In Celebration and Gratitude



Paul V. Scholl, Publisher of Messenger Publishing Group and President of Western Web, Inc.

By Paul V. Scholl, Publisher
Messenger Publishing Group

July 1st marked the celebration of Messenger Publishing Group reaching it's 20-year anniversary of publishing local news, beginning with the American River Messenger in 2006. It all started in my garage and one converted bedroom into an office in my home in Roseville.

MPG is currently 18 publications strong, 15 of those would not exist if we hadn't rescued them from closure. The Sacramento region would be a local print news desert if these local newspapers hadn't been purchased as the years went on. Through all the tough times, good decisions and bad decisions, oppressive government regulations and overreach, MPG forged on. We did not surrender.

Over the years, many other publications ceased to exist or have been greatly diminished. At the same time, we re-organized and kept printing. MPG now consists of Carmichael Times, Citrus Heights Messenger, Rancho Cordova Grapevine Independent, Elk Grove Citizen, The Rio Linda News, The Galt Herald, Land Park News, East Sacramento News, Pocket News, River Valley Times, Gold River Messenger, American River Messenger, The Gridley Herald, Territorial Dispatch (Marysville/ Yuba City), Colusa County Pioneer Review, Dixon Independent Voice, West

Sacramento News Ledger, Arden Arcade News. Along with our special publications, we publish 722 issues each year. And we don't work on Sundays.

In January of 2026, I purchased Western Web, Inc., a commercial printing company in Northern California to produce and print our publications. Our new printing team has been awesome, and the products now look fantastic. We also print dozens more local newspapers and publications that serve their communities throughout Northern California all the way up to the Oregon border.

We are growing. Leadership matters. Commitment matters. Foundational principles matter. We are founded on "God, Country, Family", the same foundation that our great nation is founded upon. We are leaders in local print news because we are dedicated to a higher power. We lift people up. We lift communities up.

My teams at Messenger Publishing Group and Western Web and I want to thank all those who support us through their advertising, subscriptions, readership, printing work and contributions. I want to thank my entire team for all their hard work, especially when deadlines loom. It takes great teamwork at both companies to produce great products.

We will continue to grow. We will continue to serve.

God Bless America,
Paul V. Scholl



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Rancho Murieta, a 3,500-acre country-club community, is an oasis of emerald fairways and manicured greens, built along the scenic banks of the Cosumnes River. It encompasses five lakes, greenbelts, rolling hills and stately oaks.

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Blockbusters, Enthusiastic Crowd Launch ETC's 25th Anniversary Concert Season

Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Blockbusters didn't have to work hard to get Rancho Murieta concertgoers on their feet on June 20.

From the opening song until the encore, what became a packed dance floor sang nearly every lyric, cheered every joke and enthusiastically answered the lead singer's playful banter as Entertainment, Theatre & Culture for Rancho Murieta launched its 2026 summer concert season and celebrated its 25th anniversary at the Lake Clementia Amphitheater.

The Southern California band delivered more than 90 minutes of 1990s rock, pop and alternative hits, transforming the dance floor into one giant sing-along. Audience members danced shoulder-to-shoulder throughout the evening, belting out favorites including "All the Small Things," "Sugar, We're Goin' Down," "Stacy's Mom," "Teenage Dirtbag," "Tubthumping," "Jump Around," "Take On Me," "Santeria," "Basket Case," "Mr. Brightside" and the Beastie Boys' "Sabotage."

When the scheduled performance ended, the crowd responded with chants of "One more song," prompting the band to return for an encore of Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit."

Pre-concert Program
The evening began with



The Blockbusters open Entertainment, Theatre & Culture's 25th anniversary summer concert season on June 20 at the Lake Clementia Amphitheater, playing popular 1990s hits.

a community celebration before the first guitar chord.

ETC Board President JT Turner introduced the organization's volunteer board and recognized the sponsors and volunteers who make the annual concert series possible. Vice President Jane Rosetta recognized students who participated in ETC's annual poster contest, and board member Brenda Allen Booth presented a volunteer appreciation raffle basket, which was won by Jeanette Edwards. Turner also thanked title sponsor Karen Hoberg, production volunteers, Sacramento County Sheriff's deputies, emergency medical personnel, and the businesses that supported the event before using a cannon to launch T-shirts and fleece blankets into the crowd.

Turner also led a patriotic tribute honoring Father's Day and the nation's upcoming 250th Anniversary. As he spoke about America's July 4 milestone, Lee

Greenwood's "God Bless the USA" filled the amphitheater while a vintage T-6 warbird from the Aerospace Museum of California made two flybys over Lake Clementia, prompting applause from the audience before the concert began.

The Blockbusters

The Blockbusters, who describe themselves as a high-energy "'90s Hits & Beyond" band, immediately established a playful rapport with the audience.

"I want to live here," the lead singer joked after learning about Rancho Murieta's homeowners association.

Throughout the evening, he traded jokes with audience members, marveled at the number of multi-generational families in attendance, complimented the community and teased residents about the evening's persistent insects. Each comment drew laughter and enthusiastic responses from the crowd, whose energy matched the band's from beginning to

end. Rather than simply watching the performance, concertgoers became part of it, singing every lyric and eagerly responding to the band's on-stage banter.

When Turner returned to the stage to thank the musicians, the audience made it clear the night wasn't over. Chants of "One more song" echoed across the stage until the band returned for its encore, sending dancers into one final singalong before the season opener came to a close.

Post-Concert Comments

The turnout exceeded our expectations," Turner said after the concert. "The Blockbusters drew a fantastic crowd, and the atmosphere was electric all evening long. Seeing families, friends and neighbors gathered together enjoying great music made for a perfect start to our concert season."

"Celebrating ETC's 25th anniversary is a special moment for our organization and community,"



The dance floor crowd sings along to nearly every lyric as enthusiasm builds throughout The Blockbusters' performance. From left are Sarah Hardin, Tara Campbell, Mark LeBlanc and Lilly LeBlanc.



ETC Board President JT Turner, at far left, introduces members of the organization's volunteer board before the concert begins.



Lead singer Paul Johnson takes his performance down to the stage floor.

Turner added. "For 25 years, ETC has been bringing people together through entertainment and community events, and we're grateful to everyone who has supported that mission along the way."

Turner also praised the addition of Drewski's food trucks, calling them "a tremendous addition" and "a big hit with attendees," and noted that the food received favorable reviews throughout the evening.

Drummer Jeff Rocket also commented after the concert, telling the River Valley Times that Rancho Murieta had provided one of the band's best audiences of the year.

"Phenomenal, phenomenal, one of the best audiences we've had ... easily all year so far," Rocket said. "That makes all the difference. When you have a great audience, it's easy to have a great show. The audience is just as important as the performance."

The Blockbusters opened ETC's five-concert summer series. Upcoming performances include Billy Joel 2 Elton John Face to Face on July 11, Titans of Rock on Aug. 1, Hip Service on Aug. 22 and Rhinestone Rodeo on Sept. 5.

See more photos at the-
rivervalleytimes.com. ★

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Study Explores Ways to Keep Jackson Highway Open During Disasters

Story and photos by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

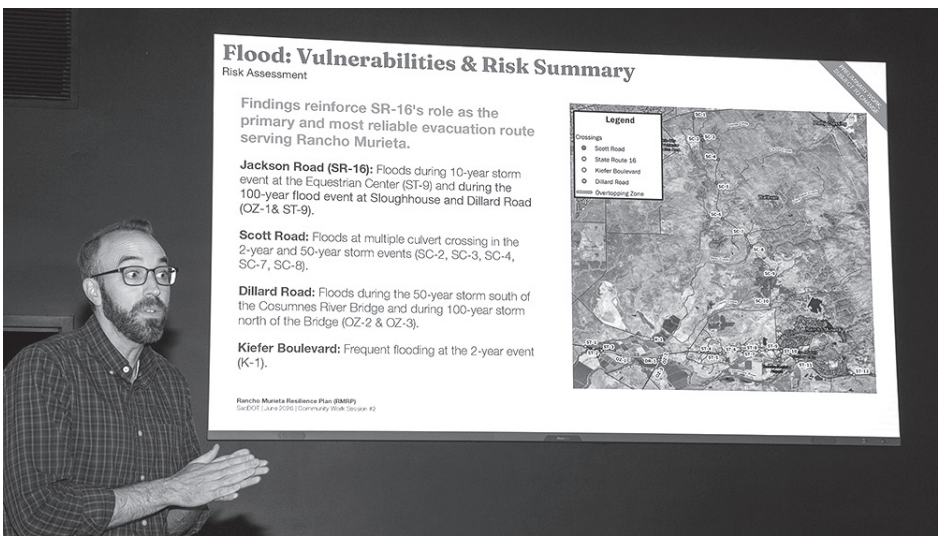
RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Keeping Jackson Highway open during floods and wildfires is the goal of a Sacramento County resilience study that could shape how Rancho Murieta residents evacuate during future disasters. Residents got a second look at the project during two sparsely attended workshops on Jan. 24 at Rancho Murieta Community Church and on June 25 at The Villas Clubhouse, the second of three planned public meetings.

Project Scope
Sacramento County engineering manager Gary Gasperi said the study covers Jackson Highway (State Route 16) from Grant Line Road to Ione Road, including six signalized intersections. Funded by a Caltrans planning grant, the Rancho Murieta Resilience Plan will document how flooding and wildfire affect access to and from the community – particularly given its large population of residents age 60 and older – and identify improvements to keep emergency access and evacuation routes open during disasters.

Gasperi stressed that the effort is a planning study, not a construction project. Instead, it will provide the data, climate and traffic modeling, and project documentation needed to compete for future state and federal funding for improvements.

Flood Risk
Hydrology consultant Joseph Albani of Sherwood Design Engineers said flood modeling confirmed Jackson Highway as Rancho Murieta's primary evacuation route, with Dillard Road serving as the best alternate. However, both routes are vulnerable during major storms. Jackson Highway near Sloughhouse and Dillard Road north and south of the Cosumnes River could be overtopped by floodwaters, potentially cutting off both primary and backup access at about the same time.

Albani said possible improvements include



Hydrology consultant Joseph Albani discusses flood risks along Jackson Highway during the first of two Rancho Murieta Resilience Plan workshops held June 24 and 25.



Twelve people attend the June 25 workshop at The Villas Clubhouse. Those pictured also include Sacramento County and consulting staff. The June 24 workshop at the church drew six attendees.

larger culverts, replacing multiple small pipes with box culverts, raising sections of Jackson Highway, and strengthening embankments with riprap. The goal is to reduce flooding where possible and, when overtopping occurs, prevent washouts so that roads can reopen quickly.

During public comment, resident John Long said the analysis should also consider levee failures, noting that the breach of the Deer Creek levee was the key cause of widespread flooding three years ago. Albani said the team is considering adding levee-breach scenarios to the study, pending further project scope and county supervisor approval in July.

Wildfire Threat
Wildfire specialist Carol Rice of Wildland Resource Management said the team is using updated vegetation maps, 25 years of weather data, and computer modeling to evaluate wildfire threats to Rancho Murieta and their impact on evacuation. The simulations focused on hot,

dry northeast wind events and modeled three ignition points – two near Latrobe Road and a third near Clementia Circle – to show how rapidly fires could spread toward Rancho Murieta and Jackson Highway under worst-case conditions.

Rice said the scenarios allowed the traffic team to test whether residents could evacuate before fast-moving fires reached the community and Jackson Highway.

She recommended reducing roadside fire hazards along Jackson Highway by mowing grasses, removing hazardous trees, reducing ladder fuels, hardening power poles, and, where feasible, undergrounding utilities and adding highway turnouts for disabled vehicles and firefighting access.

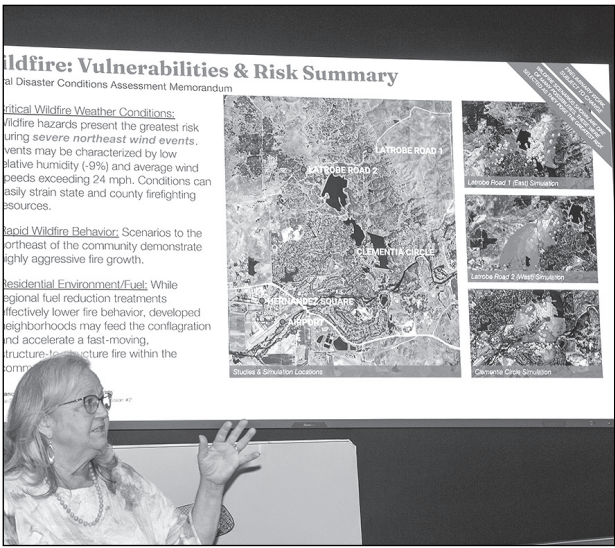
Project facilitator Travis Shappell emphasized that the resilience study is limited to public road facilities and their impact on evacuation. It does not evaluate house-to-house firefighting tactics or Rancho Murieta's internal water and hydrant

systems.

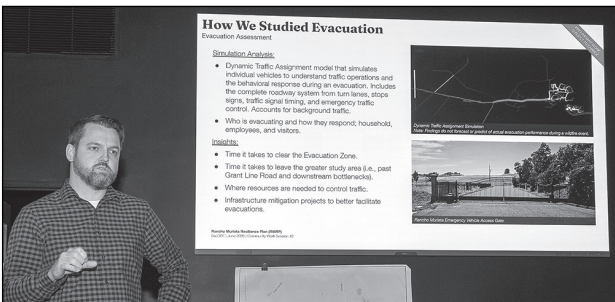
Evacuation, Traffic Operations
Randy Johnson of DKS Associates said traffic simulations modeled every local street, gate and signal to evaluate how residents could evacuate under different wildfire scenarios. In phased evacuations, where only portions of Rancho Murieta are ordered to leave, he said traffic could clear the study area past Grant Line Road within the roughly two-hour departure window assumed by the model.

The greatest challenge comes during a worst-case, full-community evacuation involving about 5,700 vehicles, including traffic from a major event at the Equestrian Center.

Johnson said the study tested several routing options using the Escuela emergency gate, Stonehouse Road and Scott Road in addition to the main gates. As with the other scenarios, Rancho Murieta North traffic would likely be directed west on Jackson Highway,



Wildfire specialist Carol Rice explains computer modeling used to evaluate wildfire threats to Rancho Murieta during the June 24 workshop at Rancho Murieta Community Church.



Traffic consultant Randy Johnson outlines evacuation modeling during the June 24 workshop at Rancho Murieta Community Church.

evacuation signal timing, backup power for traffic signals, cameras and traffic sensors, widening the Jackson Highway shoulders to serve as emergency lanes, and remote operation of the Escuela emergency gate from the guardhouse. He cautioned that Stonehouse Road may still need to be reserved for firefighting operations, so the emergency gate would be opened only when incident commanders determine it is safe.

Next Steps
In closing, project facilitator Travis Shappell said the Rancho Murieta Resilience Plan is about halfway complete. The presentation and a follow-up questionnaire will be posted online to gather additional public input. A third community meeting is planned for the fall to present proposed flood, wildfire and evacuation projects before the plan is finalized.

Background
The study grew out of years of advocacy by the Rancho Murieta Regional Fire Safe Council, following the January 2023 storms, which exposed the community's vulnerability when flooding cut off access. Retired traffic engineer John Long, who helped write the successful Caltrans grant application, worked with Fire Safe Council President Greg Pryor, council member John Merchant and then-Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost to secure the \$400,000 planning grant that launched the project.

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

Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations at a Glance

Continued from page 1
employment litigation.

Finding 6: The board waited about 10 months before beginning the search for a permanent general manager and instead relied on an interim general manager whom the Grand Jury concluded lacked the qualifications and experience to lead the district.

Recommendation: Follow the recruitment schedule and hire a qualified permanent general manager by Sept. 30, 2026.

Governance and Ethics
Finding 7: The district's Conflict of Interest Code is outdated, creating confusion about which positions are required to file Form 700 Statements of Economic

Interests.

Recommendation: Update the Conflict of Interest Code by Sept. 30, 2026.

Finding 8: A board member's participation in discussions about a possible water connection moratorium created the appearance of a financial conflict of interest.

Recommendations:
Update procedures governing conflicts of interest and recusals.
Improve oversight and public access for Form 700 Statements of Economic Interests.

Finding 9: Only one board member had completed governance training through the California Special Districts Association or a similar organization.

Recommendation: Ensure board

members receive governance training.

Finding 10: The district lacks a formal procedure to ensure board members and appropriate staff complete required ethics and fiscal training.

Recommendation: Establish procedures to ensure compliance with required ethics and fiscal training by Dec. 31, 2026.

Country Club Agreements
Finding 11: Although the district is permitted to recover the cost of delivering reclaimed water to the Rancho Murieta Country Club, it has not sought reimbursement for more than 37 years.

Recommendation: Determine the cost of delivering reclaimed water and publicly report the lost revenue by Sept. 30, 2026.

Finding 12: The repayment schedule for the district's loan to the Rancho

Murieta Country Club does not fully disclose the interest ultimately owed because it does not account for increases in the Local Agency Investment Fund (LAIF) interest rate.

Recommendation: Report the total interest owed by the Country Club under the loan agreement by Sept. 30, 2026.

Editor's note: This sidebar summarizes the Sacramento County Grand Jury's findings and recommendations. The accompanying River Valley Times story provides additional context on several issues, including the district's recent progress in addressing audit deficiencies, the California Fair Political Practices Commission's decision not to pursue an enforcement action involving Director Randy Jenco, and a board member's publicly stated reasons for delaying the search for a permanent general manager.
This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★



Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris

Darius Acuff Debut

By V.G. Harris

A new era has begun, and Darius Acuff Jr. will be a focal point in that new era.

Beginning with a rousing 79-76 victory on the Fourth of July over the visiting Nets, Darius Acuff Jr. received by far the most rousing applause from a frenetic Golden One crowd poised to see what the future will look like.

A lot of pressure on young Darius produced a shot that wasn’t falling, and after one quarter Acuff missed all but one shot from the field and contributed a paltry three points.

But this crowd was inspired, and as it turns out, so was Darius. Putting doubters to rest, Darius showcased excellent ball handling skills throughout and exhibited court management like a veteran.

What impressed me the most as I sat and watched the Kings No. 1 draft choice in action, was his determination to get the job done, and seemingly no number of missed shots was going to deter him.

Playing alongside older and more experienced players, this young 19-year-old looked like a much older player as he simply put his head down and refused to quit.

The Nets led this game nearly the entire way, but with less than three minutes to play, Acuff sank his first NBA 3-pointer, and would prove to be the margin of victory.

Last year’s No. 1 draft choice Nique Clifford made the deciding bucket with a “nothing but net” three-pointer on an assist from Acuff, but without a doubt Darius had made his presence felt, and his first NBA action ended with a win.

Criticized to some degree for his lack of defense coming in, Acuff showed a natural ability and even looked comfortable on the defensive end of the court.

Overall, the Kings fans were treated to an NBA debut that few will forget, and in spite of not having his best shooting night, Acuff finished the contest with a game high 25 points.

Not to be lost in all of this drama was the electric play of Dylan Cardwell, who picked up where he left off from last year, and kept the Kings in the game with his high intensity

play. Without question, Cardwell is an intrinsic key into the success of this year’s team, and his joy for the game is contagious and enthusiastic.

Stepping from the shadows was the almost forgotten man, 45th in the draft Emanuel Sharp, who added a well received 13 points and played a brand of defense the Sacramento Kings have been hoping to see for ages.

Defense seemed to come naturally for young Sharp, and he seemed to be everywhere at once. At 6-foot-3 and 210 pounds., Emanuel looked every bit of the NBA ready guard he appears to be, and what a welcome sight that is for a team that has struggled with defense like few other teams.

Although Alex Karaban did not see action due to a rolled ankle, both Acuff and Sharp carried the day and opened more than a few eyes, as the Kings did something that the Sacramento fans saw little of a year ago. They actually closed out a game.

The second game of summer league saw the Kings face their archrival, the Golden State Warriors, and although Darius Acuff was given the night off, once again Emanuel Sharp came to play, and just as the Kings had done the night before, they came from behind to post a solid 91-85 victory.

The final game at Golden One will take place on Monday night, and I expect to see Darius Acuff back in action. Look for attendance to be good as Kings fans are feeling the crescendo that is taking place with a bevy of rookies that are vying for a spot of the big squad.

It’s hard to wish for more positivity than this young squad has presented to the Sacramento faithful in the first two games, but if you haven’t been paying close attention so far, it’s not too soon to get excited.

These guys don’t like to lose, and that kind of energy is contagious.

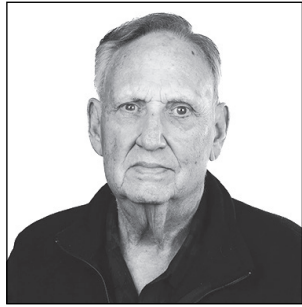
Now surround them with the likes of Domantas Sabonis, Keegan Murray and Zach Lavine, and watch the temperature go up.

The real question is how many times will this new unit light the beam this year?

Stay tuned Kings fans, because the fun is just getting started!

All the best! ★

California Voters will Decide 14 Ballot Measures, Billionaire Tax Included. There Could’ve Been More



By Dan Walters,
CALMatters.org

When California voters in 1978 passed Proposition 13, the iconic property tax limitation, they simultaneously rejected Proposition 8, which had been placed on the ballot by the Legislature as an alternate tax relief measure. While Prop. 13 flatly limited property taxes, Prop. 8 merely empowered the Legislature to lower property taxes on owner-occupied homes.

It may have been the first use of a campaign tactic that later became known as a “countermeasure.” Rather than just oppose a measure, a rival interest group could place its own measure on the ballot, thus muddying the waters. Voters would either choose between the two or be confused enough to reject both.

A classic example occurred in 2022 when California’s casino-owning Indian tribes proposed a measure to give them a virtual monopoly on sports wagering and digital sports betting companies countered with a measure of their own. Hundreds of millions of dollars were raised for the rival measures and voters rejected both, thus preserving the state’s ban on sports wagering.

It also exemplified another aspect of ballot measure politics: the tendency of competing interests

take their issues to the ballot when the Legislature could not resolve them.

Over time, both trends had made the ballot measure process — rather than legislation — California’s dominant method of resolving big issues.

Legislative leaders disliked being forced into a reactive role. Thus, in 2016, the Legislature changed the rules of the ballot measure game to reassert its place. It decreed that even after they had qualified for the ballot, sponsors of initiative measures could remove them up to a deadline.

Sponsors of rival qualified measures could negotiate compromises with input from legislative leaders, have them written into law and avoid very expensive pro and con campaigns.

The 14 measures that will appear on the Nov. 3 ballot were going to be as many as 20 before last-minute compromises settled three dueling measure conflicts. One pitted personal injury lawyers against ride-share companies, a second involved hospital executives and a health care union, and the third dealt with vote minimums for local taxes.

Whether the compromises make policy sense or not, contending parties got enough out of them to warrant dropping their ballot measures.

However, the most prominent ballot measure conflict — over whether California should impose a 5% wealth tax on billionaires — defied resolution. The measure, sponsored by the SEIU healthcare workers union, will be Proposition 40 and will compete with two countermeasures sponsored by billionaire Sergey

Brin and other Prop. 40 foes, Proposition 41 and Proposition 42.

They could, if passed with higher vote counts, kneecap the wealth tax.

At one point the wealth tax advocates offered to reduce its bite to 2% as a compromise, but made no headway with opponents, most prominently Gov. Gavin Newsom.

Another tax measure, sponsored by the California Teachers Association, would make permanent a temporary surtax on high-income taxpayers first enacted in 2012 — but it could get caught in the shootout over Prop. 40. Democratic legislative leaders gave it some protection with a last-minute decree that it would be appear on the ballot as Proposition 3. Thus voters will deal with it before confronting Props. 40, 41 and 42 much further down the ballot.

Given its high stakes and the attention it is getting in national media, the wealth tax is destined to be not only the single most controversial ballot measure this year but probably have the most expensive dueling campaigns, possibly setting a record.

At a webinar on Tuesday covering the array of ballot measures voters will face in November, campaign consultant Tino Rossi said “the pace car (for spending) is the billionaire tax.”

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. ★

Grand Jury Describes CSD as ‘Still a Work in Progress’

Continued from page 1

make in accordance with the GJ request for comment within 90 days.”

Financial Improvements

Unlike the 2023 report, this year’s Grand Jury investigation acknowledges the district has made measurable progress.

The Grand Jury credited the district with upgrading its accounting system, improving accounting procedures and completing the fiscal year 2020-21 and 2021-22 audits. Nevertheless, investigators concluded the district remains several years behind in completing the annual financial audits required by state law.

According to the report, audits for fiscal years 2022-23 and 2023-24 remained incomplete as of May, while work on the 2024-25 and 2025-26 audits had been delayed.

Finance and Administration Director Cecilia Min reported at the June 17 board meeting that the 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial statements had been submitted to the outside auditors in mid-May and were expected to be completed within about three months. She said staff expect to complete the remaining audits by the end of 2026.

The Grand Jury also reported it had not received confirmation that the material weaknesses and significant deficiencies identified in the 2019-20 audit had been fully corrected. Min told directors on June 17 that some of those findings will reappear in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 audits because they reflect historical conditions. But many of the underlying deficiencies have already been corrected through changes to accounting procedures and financial controls. Other findings, she said, cannot be corrected retroactively or will require additional work beyond those audit years.

Over the past year, Min has provided regular updates describing efforts to rebuild the district’s accounting system, resolve longstanding reconciliation problems and prepare multiple years of financial records for outside auditors.

Ethics, Conflict of Interest

One of the report’s strongest criticisms concerns ethics and conflicts of interest.

The report recommends that the district update its conflict-of-interest

code, strengthen oversight of Form 700 Statements of Economic Interests and improve its ethics compliance procedures.

The Grand Jury concluded that Director Randy Jenco’s participation in discussions regarding a possible water service moratorium created the appearance of a conflict of interest because he owns undeveloped property within Rancho Murieta that could be affected by future water policy.

The report, however, does not mention that the same issue was the subject of a 2025 complaint filed with the California Fair Political Practices Commission by former Director Steve Booth.

That complaint alleged Jenco should recuse himself from discussions involving future development because of his ownership of the Granlees property. Jenco told the FPPC that the property on which he is building a home already had district water service and a septic system. Jenco added that even if he wanted to develop the property, which he doesn’t, he couldn’t because it is in a flood plain.

The FPPC declined to pursue an enforcement action regarding Booth’s complaint, citing insufficient evidence, a development not referenced in the Grand Jury report.

The Grand Jury also found no apparent procedure to ensure board members complete the required ethics training.

The 2005 District policy requires directors to complete at least two hours of ethics training every two years, with the district maintaining records of completion. They meet this requirement by completing a two-hour online class offered by the California Special Districts Association.

District Counsel Patrick Enright conducted a public training session on ethics at the Oct. 15, 2025, Board meeting and on Brown Act updates and new state fiscal training requirements during the May 27 board meeting.

Personnel, GM Delay

The report identifies management instability as another continuing concern.

Grand Jury investigators found the district has had five general managers in six and a half years, four directors of operations in four years, and four finance directors in six years. They also criticized the board for waiting nearly 10 months after former General Manager Mimi

Morris resigned before hiring an executive search firm in March.

The Grand Jury concluded that the district’s interim management structure contributed to a serious governance error. According to the report, a letter requiring a developer to invest \$8 million in a water storage tank was sent before receiving full board approval. The board later rescinded the letter. The report said that negotiations between the district and the developer have not been finalized.

Despite those criticisms, the Grand Jury commended the district for “promptly filling the general manager position with an interim general manager and ad hoc committee for additional support,” saying the arrangement allowed district operations to move forward.

After General Manager Mimi Morris resigned in May 2025, the board’s Administrative Ad Hoc Committee assumed oversight of many administrative functions. Board President John Merchant initially served as the committee’s sole member. Following Bill Gere’s appointment to the board at the July 16, 2025, special meeting, he joined Merchant on the committee.

The board appointed Amelia Wilder as interim general manager on Sept. 17, 2025, five months after Morris’s departure. During that meeting, Merchant said the board was in no rush to hire a permanent replacement.

“We are not going to go forever without a general manager, but we have four people in the top line I feel pretty good about,” Merchant said. “I’d like to give it an opportunity to settle down and decide what we really want to do and what we really want to look for in the next hire that we make.”

The Grand Jury also commended the district for hiring an outside human resources firm, saying it has contributed to a more smoothly run organization.

Reclaimed Water Revisited

The Grand Jury also revisited its 2023 criticism of the district’s reclaimed water agreement with the Rancho Murieta Country Club.

In response to the 2023 report, the district rejected the Grand Jury’s recommendation that it begin charging for reclaimed water used to irrigate the

golf courses. The board argued the 1988 agreement requires the district to provide treated reclaimed water to the country club as part of its wastewater disposal system, does not authorize charging for the water itself, and helps the district comply with state regulations governing disposal of treated wastewater.

This year’s report reaches a different conclusion. It states the agreement requires the district to deliver reclaimed water but also allows the district, upon written request, to recover the cost of delivering reclaimed water to Bass Lake. According to the report, the district has never requested reimbursement.

The River Valley Times reviewed the district’s 2023 response but was unable to determine from the available contract documents whether the reimbursement provision cited by the Grand Jury appears in the original 1988 agreement, a later amendment or an exhibit incorporated into the agreement.

Lawsuit Count Questioned

The Grand Jury report also states that five former employees “brought suit” against the district since the 2023 Grand Jury report.

However, a review of Sacramento County Superior Court records identified two employment-related lawsuits filed after the 2023 Grand Jury report and four employment-related lawsuits filed since 2020. The report does not explain how it arrived at its total of five lawsuits.

Looking Ahead

The report recommends completing all overdue audits by December, updating the district’s conflict-of-interest code, strengthening ethics and governance training, improving oversight of Form 700 filings, reviewing the Rancho Murieta Country Club loan agreement and addressing personnel management issues.

Under California law, the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board of Directors is required to formally respond to the Grand Jury’s findings and recommendations within 90 days.

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

CSD Details Response to June Manganese Flare-Up

Story and photo
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Rancho Murieta Community Services District operators dumped approximately 200,000 gallons of treated water into Lake Clementia, temporarily shut down both water treatment plants, and relied on water already stored in the system to prevent elevated manganese from reaching customers during last week’s precautionary water advisory on June 19 and 20.

Chief Plant Operator Travis Bohannon said he chose to notify residents before manganese levels in the district’s storage tanks exceeded the district’s operating threshold because the situation was still unfolding.

“I felt it was better to do that while I was trying to resolve the issue,” Bohannon wrote. “Not knowing how long or how bad this manganese flare-up was going to last or how long it was going to take me to get it under control, I made this decision out of concern for the district’s residents.”

The June 19 advisory was issued after manganese levels in treated water leaving Water Plant 1 exceeded the district’s 0.05 milligrams-per-liter operating threshold. Rather than continue sending that water into the distribution system, operators temporarily diverted treated water away from customers while they corrected the problem, relying instead on treated water already stored in the Rio Oso and Van Vleck tanks.

The new information, provided by Bohannon in response to questions from the River Valley Times, explains how the district managed the incident without interrupting water service and provides additional details that were not available before the newspaper’s initial story went to press.

Storage Tanks Keep Water Flowing

One of the biggest unanswered questions after the advisory was how Rancho Murieta continued receiving water after Bohannon wrote that Water Plant 1 had been put “to waste” and Water Plant 2 had been shut down.



Chief Plant Operator Travis Bohannon speaks at a recent Rancho Murieta Community Services District board meeting. He also serves as the district’s interim operations manager.

Bohannon said the district had sufficient treated water in storage to meet customer demand throughout the incident.

“At the time that I started wasting, there was plenty of water in the tanks to supply the district with water,” he wrote. “I was monitoring the tank levels at all times, and the tanks never got below an acceptable level. There was never any danger of the tanks running empty at that time.”

Approximately 200,000 gallons of treated water were diverted into Lake Clementia rather than being delivered to customers.

Why 0.05 mg/L Matters

The district repeatedly referred to the 0.05 milligrams-per-liter manganese level during the incident because it corresponds to California’s secondary drinking water standard for manganese.

The standard is intended primarily to prevent yellow or brown water, staining of plumbing fixtures and laundry, and other aesthetic problems.

State health officials

have also expressed growing concern about prolonged manganese exposure in sensitive populations, particularly formula-fed infants and young children, who absorb and retain more manganese than adults. Earlier this month, the California Division of Drinking Water revised its health-based notification and response levels after reviewing studies linking elevated manganese exposure to potential neurological and developmental effects in formula-fed infants.

According to Bohannon’s report, the flare-up began when raw water entering Water Plant 1 measured 0.171 milligrams per liter of manganese. After treatment, the plant’s finished water measured 0.077 mg/L: an improvement, but still above the district’s 0.05 mg/L operating threshold.

Those measurements were included in the district’s report posted after the River Valley Times’ initial story went to press.

During the incident, Bohannon used the 0.05 mg/L level as his

operational threshold and issued a public advisory before manganese concentrations in the storage tanks reached it.

According to his report, the highest manganese reading in the Rio Oso tank was 0.01 mg/L, while the Van Vleck tank reached 0.04 mg/L.

Echoes 2019 Yellow-Water Event

The incident echoes Rancho Murieta’s well-publicized 2019 yellow-water episode, when elevated manganese caused discolored tap water and generated approximately 80 customer complaints.

District officials reported at the time that the newer membrane-based Water Plant 1 could not adequately remove dissolved manganese by itself, while the older filter-bed Water Plant 2 continued producing water with non-detectable manganese after treatment. Operators resolved the problem by adding pre-oxidants that converted dissolved manganese into particles that could then be removed during treatment.

Bohannon said the same approach helped to resolve

last week’s flare-up.

“The numbers were the initial numbers that were initially reported to me,” he wrote. “Once pre-oxidants were turned on, that is when I started to get better results. There were no pre-oxidants being fed at the time this incident started due to not being needed until this flare up happened.”

Plants Monitored Separately

Bohannon also clarified how the district monitors water quality when both treatment plants are operating.

He said “finished water,” also known as potable water, refers to treated water leaving each individual treatment plant. Each plant is monitored separately before the two water supplies are blended.

“We have analyzers for each individual plant,” Bohannon wrote. “Once the water leaves the water plant, it is blended in the distribution pipes going to the tanks.”

In-House Testing Speeds Response

Bohannon said the district’s in-house manganese

analyzers allow operators to make immediate operational decisions while certified laboratory results, which typically take about two days, are pending.

“The in-house testing meters provide enough information to make on-the-spot operational decisions for process control,” he wrote. “The samples sent to the lab just confirm that what we are doing is correct. The meters don’t provide extremely accurate information, but good enough to make sure the right decisions are being made.”

Bohannon said he still does not know what triggered the manganese flare-up, describing it as more severe than he had previously experienced. After treatment adjustments and consultation with a chemical engineering specialist, manganese levels dropped to non-detectable levels, allowing the district to return both treatment plants to normal operation and lift the advisory the following morning.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook.



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SECURITY LOGS

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

June 22
8:26 p.m., Patrol located an older model Toyota Corolla parked in a no-parking zone near the County Bridge. Patrol also observed two adult male subjects fishing approximately 100 yards upstream from the Yellow Bridge within Rancho Murieta property.
Patrol contacted both subjects, advised them they were trespassing on private property, and directed them to leave the area. Both subjects complied without incident.

June 23
7:55 p.m., North Gate middle resident lane-Gate Arm Collision: A non-resident vehicle attempted to follow a resident vehicle through the middle resident lane. During the gate arm closing cycle, the

gate arm struck the non-resident vehicle. Driver identified as residing in Clovis, CA. Vehicle involved: Dodge Ram. No damage was observed to the vehicle. The gate arm sustained significant damage, breaking at the midpoint and rendering the lane inoperable.
The middle resident lane was secured and blocked from use pending repairs. The driver was unable to provide proof of insurance. Driver departed the community without further incident.

June 24
6:02 p.m., Patrol responded to a report of an unresponsive white male adult lying on the ground near the southeast corner of the playground at Laguna Joaquin. Upon contact, the approximately 25-year-old subject stated he was resting after walking from Sacramento and was not experiencing a medical emergency.
The subject was advised that the property was private and was requested to leave the area. The subject complied without incident.

June 25
4:39 p.m., Domingo Drive: Patrol responded to a report of a door-to-door solicitor from Hawk Pest Control. Upon arrival, patrol contacted the subject and advised them of the community's No Soliciting policy. The subject complied with instructions and left the area without incident.
11:24 p.m., Guadalupe Drive: Patrol responded to a report of a group gathered in front of a residence. Investigation determined the individuals were a resident and invited guests from a nearby home. Patrol advised the group they were creating a disturbance and requested they relocate to the residence. The group complied without incident.

June 26
12:05 a.m., Guadalupe Drive: Patrol responded to a follow-up resident complaint regarding a vehicle parked near the reporting party's residence. Upon arrival, the involved group had relocated as previously requested. Although no driveway

obstruction was observed, patrol requested the vehicle be moved farther from the residence to avoid further disturbance. The group complied without incident.
11:25 p.m., Patrol observed two vehicles at North Beach after park hours, including a resident vehicle and a guest vehicle. Contact was made with the resident, who advised the occupants of the guest vehicle were their guests. The resident instructed their guests to leave the area, and both vehicles departed without incident.

June 28
2:33 a.m., Patrol observed a golf cart on Murieta Parkway occupied by four juvenile males sounding an air horn, creating a noise disturbance while violating community curfew. During the incident, the resident driver submitted a false complaint reporting another golf cart was causing the disturbance. Patrol contacted the juveniles, advised them of their curfew violation and directed them to return home immediately. Citation issued for the curfew violation. ★

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Blood Drive Slated July 27
Vitalant will hold its next Rancho Murieta Community Blood Drive from noon to 6 p.m. Monday, July 27 at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, 14673 Cantova Way. The event is sponsored by the Rancho Murieta Women's Club and the Knights of Columbus.

Appointments can be made online at donors.vitalant.org using blood drive code SMFM053 or by calling Vitalant at 877-258-4825. Walk-ins will be accepted as space permits. Donors will receive a coupon for 10% off a purchase from Yogurt Pop and will be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Yogurt Pop gift card donated by Carole Thames with Town and Country Real Estate. Donors will also be entered into a drawing for a

\$50 credit for the Murieta Inn & Cupola Spa donated by the Murieta Inn.
Eat well and drink plenty of water before donating, and bring a photo ID. For eligibility questions, call 877-258-4825 or visit vitalant.org. One donation can save more than one life: There's no substitute for volunteer blood donors.

RMCC Plans Car & Art Show July 25
The Rancho Murieta Country Club will host a Car & Art Show on July 25 featuring collector vehicles, local artists, live music and dining. The event begins with no-host cocktails, a car show and an art walk on the 18th Fairway from 3 to 5 p.m. A barbecue buffet dinner will be served at 6 p.m., followed by a performance by the Engine 4

Band on the Terrace Patio at 7 p.m.
The buffet dinner and concert package is \$30. Concert-only admission is \$5 for club members and \$25 for nonmembers. Vehicle and artist/crafter entries are \$10.
For more information, contact club.office@ranchomurieta.com or call 916-354-3416. Vendors may call 916-354-3421.

Corvette Club Slates Poker Run
The Rancho Murieta Corvette Club will host its annual Poker Run on Sept. 26 to raise money for its Thanksgiving dinner project, which provides holiday meals for local families in the River Valley area of south Sacramento County. The event is dedicated to the memory of longtime club member and past

president Jerry McDonald, who died in 2024.

Participants will follow a predetermined route, collecting playing cards at five stops in an attempt to build the best poker hand for prizes. The drive, which travels through the foothills and lower Sierra, ends with lunch and awards at Castle Oaks Golf Club. Written directions will be provided.
The Poker Run is open to all vehicles, including sports cars, sedans, SUVs and trucks: not just Corvettes. The \$30 entry fee includes two poker hands, one for the driver and one for a navigator. Registration forms are available by emailing pcargts@yahoo.com. Entries and payment must be received by Sept. 12.
The club's Thanksgiving project has grown over the years from donating turkeys to the

Sacramento Food Bank to instead providing complete holiday dinners to local families in need.

CSD Announces Openings for Four Board Seats
Rancho Murieta residents will elect four directors to the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board in November. Residents interested in serving their community are encouraged to run for office.

The candidate filing period opens July 13 and closes Aug. 7. Nomination papers are available from the Sacramento County Voter Registration and Elections Office, 7000 65th St., Suite A, Sacramento. Additional information is available from the Sacramento County Voter Registration and Elections Office website. ★



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Events open to Rancho Murieta residents, real property owners and their guests, ETC sponsors and Rancho Murieta business owners. Tickets available at Ace Hardware and ETC ticket tables.

Note: Discounted tickets for ETC Members are only available at Ace Hardware and ETC ticket tables.

Memberships: Joelle Maggio 951-544-0858

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California Museum Exhibitions, Events Through September Announced

California Museum News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - America turns 250 this year, and we're celebrating all month long. Book a group of four or more anytime throughout the month and save 10% on admission. There's no better time to discover the lesser-told stories of California, the 31st state and what they reveal about the American story.

Book in advance with code AMERICA250 at checkout. For walk-up admission, mention the America's 250th group special. Not valid on field trip tours or with other discounts or promotions. Offer only valid now through July 31. Learn more at CaliforniaMuseum.org/America250.

Here are the exhibitions and events facilitated by the California Museum, 1020 O St., now through September.

'Reflecting On The Land' Temporary Exhibit

Centering the voices, knowledge and visions of California's Indigenous peoples, "Reflecting on the Land" challenges visitors to reckon with the stories that have shaped our understanding of this land, and those that have been left out. The display will

run from Aug. 25 to Oct. 4. From the landscapes of 250 years ago to hard-won victories like the restoration of the Klamath River, the exhibit traces the living legacy of more than 200 tribes across the state and looks ahead to radical, hopeful visions of what sovereignty and self-determination can look like on this land.

Thought-provoking, timely and deeply rooted in community, this is an exhibit for anyone ready to engage with California's past, present and future on its own terms. "Reflecting on the Land" was developed by Exhibit Envoy in partnership with California Humanities, and tours through Exhibit Envoy thanks to generous funding from the 11th Hour Project, By the People: Conversations Beyond 250 and the Weingart Foundation.

Community Appreciation Day (Free Admission)

In celebration of surpassing our Big Day of Giving fundraising target, the California Museum is offering free admission for all on Sunday, Aug. 30 during regular business hours, noon to 5 p.m.

Stop by and explore our new temporary exhibit, "Reflecting on the Land," on its opening



The California Museum, 1020 O St., announced several exhibitions and events that are happening now through September. Photo courtesy of California Museum

weekend, then explore permanent exhibits such as "Women Inspire," "California Hall of Fame" and more! Details will be posted by Aug. 1 to CaliforniaMuseum.org/Events.

Alebrije Painting Workshop

Kick off Hispanic Heritage Month in September with a hands-on alebrije painting workshop from 1 to 3 p.m. Sept. 20 at the California Museum.

Led by Balam Arts, this bilingual (English/Spanish) program explores the history and folklore behind alebrijes, the fantastical, vividly painted wooden figures rooted in Zapotec tradition. Then pick your very own creature and bring it to life

with brushes, sponges and acrylic paint. You'll also take home a guide to the art and stories that have shaped Mexican culture for generations. Details will be posted by Aug. 25 at CaliforniaMuseum.org/Events.

Blue Star Museums Free Admission Through September

A collaboration between the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families and the Department of Defense, the Blue Star Museums program provides free admission to all active-duty, National Guard and Reserve military personnel and up to five family members from Saturday, May 16 (Armed Forces Day) through Sunday, Sept. 7

at the California Museum. Note the Museum is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. Advance ticket registration is encouraged but not required. Learn more or purchase tickets at CaliforniaMuseum.org/BlueStarMuseums.

Field Trips Fall 2026

The California Museum is now booking seven unique in-person and online field trip experiences to inspire and educate students on California's rich and diverse history and culture during the 2026-27 school year.

Bring learning to life with a one-of-a-kind interactive learning experience, aligned with state

standards. To learn more about each experience and how to book, visit CaliforniaMuseum.org/FieldTrips.

Docent On Duty

Join docents Steve Sasaki and Kris Sasaki in "Uprooted: An American Story" at designated times each month. Steve and Kris will be in the exhibit, ready to share their unique family experiences of life in the incarceration camps and returning home after World War II.

Available for full guided tours or quick Q&A, no reservation is needed to speak with them; just stop by the exhibit and join the conversation. View the current Docent on Duty schedule at CaliforniaMuseum.org/DocentonDuty.

Fourth Fridays

The California Museum invites all current California state employees to visit for free on the fourth Friday of each month from noon to 3 p.m. Free admission will be provided to the first 100 state employees with a current state employee ID badge who visit the Museum during the noon to 3 p.m. Fourth Friday timeframe. Walk-in only. Offer does not apply to advance ticket purchases. For more, visit CaliforniaMuseum.org/FourthFridays.

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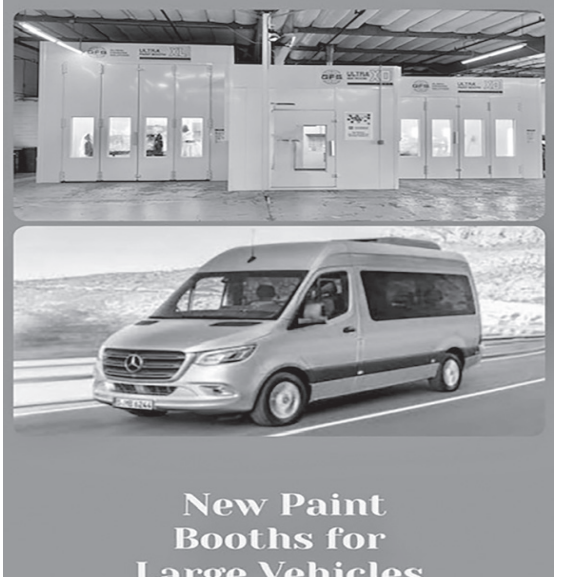
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Rancho Murieta Pickleball Club Scores Strong Showing Against Rollingwood

By Alan Chase
President, Rancho Murieta Pickleball Club

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - The Rancho Murieta Pickleball Club's travel team turned in an impressive performance on June 6 during a series of matches against the Rollingwood YMCA Pickleball Club in Fair Oaks.

Competing in mixed doubles and women's doubles play, Rancho Murieta players posted winning records across multiple divisions during the friendly interclub competition.

The event featured rally scoring to 21 points per game and was organized by Travel Team Manager Hayley Friedman.

In 3.0 mixed doubles play, Phyllis Banducci and Paul Melnick led the way with a perfect 4-0 record. Alan and Susie Chase, along with the team of Hayley Friedman and Greg Brown, each finished 3-1. Galey Betzler and Steve Detrick split their matches, posting a 2-2 record.

In the 3.5 division, Ken Hanlon and Friedman compiled a 3-2 record against their Rollingwood opponents. Rancho Murieta and Rollingwood evenly split the women's doubles matches.

The Rancho Murieta Pickleball Club has more than 100 active members. Its travel team regularly visits other pickleball venues to compete against clubs outside the community. Friedman manages the travel squad and hopes to host a future interclub event at the Stonehouse Park pickleball complex.

The competition provided both strong play and an opportunity for players from both clubs to enjoy a day of friendly rivalry and camaraderie.



The Rancho Murieta Pickleball Club travel team gathers before competing against the Rollingwood YMCA Pickleball Club of Fair Oaks on June 6. Courtesy photo

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