



THE NEWS

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SCOE TEACHER
OF THE YEAR



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National Night Out Brings Community Together



Twin Rivers Unified School District police officers attended National Night Out on Aug. 4. Photo courtesy of Twin Rivers USD Police Department

By MPG Staff

RIO LINDA, CA (MPG) - The 43rd annual National Night Out brought residents, community organizations and law enforcement together for a night of valuable connection on Tuesday, Aug. 4. Hosted by Rio Linda Elverta Neighborhood Association, Rio Linda Elverta Teen Council and Youth Program and the Rio Linda

Library, the evening saw a solid turnout, while not its largest. Among participants was the Rio Linda Lions Club whose booth offered fresh watermelon and games. The organization took to Facebook after the event to thank those who showed up and engaged with the club. “A huge thank you to all of our volunteers, community partners, and

everyone who came out to celebrate with us. We can’t wait to see you all again at our next community event!” the Lions Club wrote. Also present was the Rio Linda Elverta Recreation-Parks District. The district used the community event to discuss the Park Master Plan and Central Park Horse Arena, an equestrian facility maintained by the
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Sacramento Selected as New Sample Area for the Consumer Price Index

United States Department of Labor News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The United States Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) will begin collecting data for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in the Sacramento area in October.

According to Regional Commissioner Chris Rosenlund the communities of El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento and Yolo Counties make up one of six new areas in which CPI data will be collected beginning this year, the first addition of new areas to the CPI sample since its 2018 revision.

Data collected in the Sacramento area will be included in the following geographic area indexes: U.S. City Average, West Region, West Size Class B/C and Pacific Division.

The Consumer Price Index is one of the nation’s most important economic indicators. It is a principal gauge of inflation used widely in the formulation and evaluation of economic policy; adjusting cost of living payments (COLA) under many government programs including payments to Social Security beneficiaries, retired military and federal civil service employees and survivors; adjusting agreements including rentals/leases, collective bargaining and wages and pensions.

It is a measure of the average change in prices paid by urban consumers for a fixed market basket of goods and services. It is an estimate based on a group of representative prices paid for items including food, clothing, shelter, fuels, transportation, medical services and other goods and services people buy for day-to-day living.

The Consumer Price Index periodically updates the geographic areas across the country in which prices are collected. The last time the areas were updated was in 2018 based on the 2010 Census of Population. The new design reflects shifts in the U.S. population based on the 2020 Decennial Census. During this time, 14 new areas will be added and work in 14 current areas will be discontinued, and the counties covered in other areas may change as well based on updated information from
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SacDOT Unveils Roadway Chip Seal Program



In July, SacDOT launched a unique Chip Seal program to provide a more economical approach to repairing damaged roads. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento County Department of Transportation (SacDOT) has begun a new preventative maintenance aimed at extending the lifespan of pavement along the unincorporated roadways. In July, SacDOT launched a unique Chip Seal program to provide a more economical approach to repairing damaged roads. The Rio Linda area was the first location to receive the new maintenance work.

So how does it work?

Crews apply a binding agent that enhances the cohesive strength of the pavement. That step is immediately followed by a layer of aggregate rock using a chip spreader. Then

the surface is compacted with three passes by pneumatic rubber tire rollers then a sweeper to remove excess material. SacDOT finishes the final step four days later when an additional measure, known as a Fog Seal, is added to make the road as waterproof as possible.

A cost effect approach to maintenance.

SacDOT purchased the Chip Spreaders and two Pneumatic rollers to perform this preventative maintenance work. This new process offers a less intrusive option, compared to a larger asphalt overlay project. Instead of tearing up the road to rebuild it, the Chip Seal process allows maintenance crews to fix the road faster.

This preventative maintenance

approach is also cost-effective per mile compared to normal asphalt concrete overlays, deep base repairs or complete reconstruction. Using the asphalt overlay process takes maintenance crews a day to cover between three quarters to one mile of roadway. Using the Chip Seal allows crews to cover up to three miles a day. The new application also prevents water from seeping into the base of the road, maintaining pavement integrity.

What can drivers expect?

If you encounter crews working on the road, expect minor travel delays during maintenance operations. SacDOT will post signage at entry points to alert residents and service providers of the preventative
Continued on page 10

Home is More Than a House

How One Family Changed Lives Through Foster Care

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - What is home? For many of us, we will say an address or point to a neighborhood on a map. We might say home is someone or something familiar we are fortunate enough to keep returning to. But for hundreds of foster kids in Sacramento County, a home can be much harder to define and belong in – particularly one where they feel like they fit in. More than ten years ago, Britney and Erin Eason decided they would become a home for both children and teens who needed a safe space to feel accepted and loved.

Sitting on their couch one summer afternoon, surrounded by three very talkative tweens, a babbling baby and one quieter child – Britney and Erin shared their journey to becoming resource parents in Sacramento County.

“People will always say, ‘the kids are so lucky to have you,’ and that’s not it. We are lucky to have these kids. They are going through the hardest time of their lives. They are not lucky. They’re picked up, swooped up and they’re put in a stranger’s home,” Erin said.

“Maybe a really cool stranger’s home with some really cool pets, but we’re still strangers, right?” Britney added, gesturing at their home filled with animals – including an iguana, one cat, several spiders and two very friendly Irish wolfhounds.

Britney and Erin said what many people might not realize is even in a supportive foster home, kids and teens will face challenges many of us may never think about.

“We have different foods, different rules,

different smells. They don’t have their favorite blankies or their favorite stuffies. They don’t have the clothes that they like to wear. They may have to change schools. We try to keep them as plugged in as possible, but they may have to,” Britney said.

“When we moved into this house, a bigger house, our goal was to have more kids in general,” Britney, a resource parent said.

While fostering comes with challenges, Britney and Erin say they would not change this incredible journey. The couple became resource parents when there was a need to provide a home to a relative’s child – their now-adopted daughter Leilani. Since then, they’ve helped provide a home for more than 40 children and teens in foster care, and they have adopted five of the kids who came into their care.

“I like that both of my moms are very passionate about what you love and, like, the activities that you’re into,” Leilani said.

Once Britney and Erin became licensed resource parents through Sacramento County, they felt called to continue helping kids, even eventually moving to a larger home so they could foster additional children.

“When we had our license, our initial goal, moving from the smaller house into this house, was to be able to have more kids in general. But once we got here, we realized there was a big need for sibling sets. So that was kind of how we started, was getting, like, sibling sets of, like, two to five,” Erin said.

Erin’s reference to “sibling sets” refers to Sacramento County’s efforts to keep siblings who are removed to be placed



As of July 2026, more than 800 kids and teens were in foster care in Sacramento County. Many of the youth placed in foster care are in supportive homes – but some are still waiting for placement. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

in the same home as often as possible. It can be challenging to find resource homes for sibling sets, as some licensed parents may not have enough space or may already be fostering other children.

“When I met Erin, that kind of changed my life,” Jalen, a former foster youth who lived with Britney and Erin said.

“We left our license open from zero to 18, so we eventually started getting calls for teenagers,” Britney said.

When Britney and Erin began fostering, they wanted to stick with children because of fears over safety issues since Leilani was young at the time. That mindset stuck – until Erin went to meet 15-year-old Jelan.

“I had something going on, and so I wasn’t there, but she came back [from meeting Jelan], and she was like ‘yep, that’s my kid,’” Britney said.

Jelan is now in his 20s, and he keeps in touch with Britney and Erin through video calls and comes over for dinner.

“I think I was 15 going on 16, so around 2015. It was around that time that I met Erin. I was at the receiving home at that time, and I was going in and out of the receiving home,” Jelan said.

The Children’s Receiving Home provides temporary congregate placement for foster youth who are waiting on

a resource parent or relative placement. Many of the youth they serve are teens. And for Jelan, a gay teenager – finding an understanding home over a decade ago was challenging.

“I was very persistent in advocating for myself to get a home because I didn’t want to stay in the dorm for too long,” Jelan said.

Jelan represents a large number of foster kids in Sacramento County. According to data, more than a third of children in foster care identify as LGBTQ+. But Jelan said that shouldn’t matter – resource parents should accept children no matter what. Jelan says he will never forget meeting “mama Erin” for the first time and how she immediately accepted him for who he is.

“When I met Erin, that kind of changed my life.” Jelan felt so happy in his new home – that he wanted to share that love.

He met foster teen Lottie at school – he said he could tell she was going through a difficult time and approached her.

“I was going to a new school. We had class together, and I was quiet. I was just kind of, like, living day by day, just trying to figure out what I’m doing the next day, how I’m surviving, all the things. And so, he came up to me and kind of burst my bubble,” Lottie said.

The teens started talking about their pasts and living situations – quickly becoming friends.

“So, one day I was just like, ‘Can I meet your moms? Like, I want to know,’ like, it sounded so good, I just didn’t believe it, so I was like, ‘I want to meet you. I want to see this,’ Lottie said. “And so, um, he went back and told them about me, and then one day, uh, Mama Brittany was coming up in the truck, and I was like, ‘Hey,’ like, ‘I want to move in with you,’ like, ‘Can I be your new daughter?’”

Eventually, Lottie made the move into Erin and Britney’s home. She is now in her 20s and has a child of her own. She still keeps in touch with the Eason family – and they continue to support her by offering advice as seasoned parents and by being the occasional babysitters for Lottie’s child.

The Eason family fosters through Sacramento County’s Department of Child, Family and Adult Services. They said the resources and classes provided by the County helped build their confidence as parents.

“We’re able to find whatever supports are necessary – whether it’s educational, mental health, physical health, whatever it may be, we’re able to really get peer mentors, family advocates, whatever we need and whatever the kids need,” said Brittany.

As of July 2026, more than 800 kids and teens were in foster care in Sacramento County. Many of the youth placed in

foster care are in supportive homes – but some are still waiting for placement. 887 is the exact number of kids in Sacramento County Foster Care as of July 1. On average, 15 kids are usually awaiting placement. Britney and Erin are aware of the need for more resource families and said they always start conversations about how others can get involved – even when they’re meeting strangers in public.

“I tell strangers that I meet if they come up and talk about our kids ... that they can just contact the county. Get set up with orientation. It doesn’t cost anything. It’s free. Just go down there, ask questions,” Erin said.

Erin is right; there are regularly scheduled orientations where people can go and ask social workers and other staff questions about the requirements and what it’s like to be a resource parent. No commitment is required at the initial orientation. You can find a list of upcoming orientations on the DCFAS website.

“There’s no rush. The County doesn’t pressure you to rush,” Erin said.

Once a potential resource parent completes an orientation, they can start the interview and application process at their own pace. You can read a full list of requirements for resource parents on the DCFAS website. Going through the process not only changed Britney and Erin’s lives but the lives of the dozens of youths they’ve helped over the years.

“I still looked at them as family, like, over the top. Like, they’ve done things for me that my family has not even done, and that’s, that’s why I stand by, you know, blood doesn’t make you family. It’s really about the things that people do and the stuff that, the actions and the care of love, you know, and the way they show love. So, I really appreciate Erin, and just Brittany and everyone who was involved in my life, cause that did impact me. I don’t know where I would be. You know, I’d probably be somewhere else if I wasn’t placed in their house,” Jelan said.

The words from Jelan are emotional for the two moms. Erin said those words are also an important reminder about why they chose to help kids and teens in need – even when those children were struggling sometimes with grief, the loss of their home, anger and anxiety.

“We’ll figure it out. We’ll get through it together. We’re going to find a way to make this work, you know? And we’re still supporting those kids in the transition from our home to wherever it is their next place may be.”

Currently, there are 539 families approved to foster in Sacramento County. More than 300 of those families are relatives or non-related family members (NREFM). A NREFM placement can refer to a person known in a foster youth’s life, like a pastor, coach or tribe member, that the child already has a relationship with. Being placed with family or an NREFM can sometimes ease the transition into foster care because the child is not placed with a stranger. However, not every family has people they can rely on during difficult times that lead to youth ending up in

foster care, and applications are always open for people to become resource parents.

“We could not do this without our resource parents, the families who are willing to step in for the children in their lives, and our non-related family members, and all our community partners,” Child Protective Services Deputy Director, Melissa Lloyd said. “It is a privilege to know so many people who help our foster youth during what is often one of the most difficult times in their lives. Over the more than 25 years I’ve worked with Child Protective Services, I’ve seen so many people rally around these kids and lift them up – but there is always a need for more support. This commitment and the day-to-day responsibility of caring for foster kids are not always easy – but we must realize that it is often much more difficult for the youth who are placed into our care.”

If you are interested in helping a foster youth but are not in a situation to become a resource parent, you can still support the youth in different ways.

Since the 1980’s, Sacramento County employees have gathered donated gifts for foster youth and older adults in need. The gifts and any financial donation go directly to foster youth or adults who are Adult Protective Services Clients. Recently, the program leaders realized there was a year-round need for basic items and birthday presents. Reach out to GFTH@saccounty.gov to find out how you can make a difference.

The Sacramento LGBT Community Center is a community partner that helps all LGBT youth with a welcoming space. More than one-third of Foster Youth identify as LGBTQ+. You can find out about how to donate or volunteer by visiting the Sacramento LGBT Community Center website.

The Sacramento CASA Program is a volunteer-based program that supports foster youth. You can become a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate). As a CASA, you advocate for the needs of the child you are matched with. A CASA gets to know a child’s situation, communicates with professionals on the case, and makes sure the child’s needs are being met. CASAs also get to enjoy fun activities with the child they are assigned – many take them out for activities like bowling or going to the park so the child can find joy during a stressful time in their lives.

Home isn’t always the place where you’re born or the address on your driver’s license. Sometimes, it’s the people who choose you, stand by you and remind you that you matter. For Jelan, Lottie, Leilani and so many others, Britney and Erin didn’t just provide a place to sleep; they gave them something every child deserves: a home and a sense of belonging. Britney and Erin’s story is a reminder of what is possible when a community chooses to show up for its children and teens. Every child deserves a place to belong—and together, Sacramento County can help make that possible. ★



‘Rough’ Peach Crop Caps a Bitter Season

Harvest is expected to conclude later this month for California cling peaches, which are used for canning. For the first time, nearly all the fruit is bound for a single processor-Pacific Coast Producers-after Del Monte Foods filed for bankruptcy last year and closed its Modesto cannery earlier this year. The loss of Del Monte’s business puts California cling peach growers at a precarious crossroads, with several dozen growers going without a buyer for some or all their fruit. As a result, about 3,000 acres of peach trees are expected to be removed this year, according to the California Canning Peach Association. “It’s a huge setback,” said Sarb Johl, who grows cling peaches in Yuba and Sutter counties, and has pulled 80 of his 120 acres of peach trees this year. “They’re all pushed out and burned up.” Cling peach harvest, which started in late May, has hardly improved fortunes. A heat wave this past spring sped fruit ripening before the crop had a chance to size up, with a lot of peaches being rejected for being too small. “The fruit is looking pretty rough,” Johl said.

Processed Tomato Growers Hope for Market Recovery

After their big crop in 2025, California growers of processing tomatoes are harvesting fewer acres this season. Higher inventories of tomato products and decreased sales led California tomato processors to cut how many acres they want growers to plant this year, with contracted acres at their lowest in more than 30 years. The hope is that the reduced acreage will allow inventory levels to come into balance with market demands, said Mike Montna, president and CEO of the

California Tomato Growers Association. “It’s going to take a couple of years,” he said, adding that the industry has “turned the corner” on slower sales. Unusually warm weather in March accelerated plant growth, leading to an earlier start to harvest this year. Growers with later plantings expect to finish harvest by the end of October. Fresno County grower Don Cameron described the quality of his crop as good, with yields exceeding his contracted amount. But with months of harvest left, Montna said weather could still impact the crop.

State’s Farmers Seek Fairness in Trade Talks with Canada

California farm groups are closely watching the trade relationship between the U.S. and Canada-the state’s top export market for its agricultural products-as negotiations of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement continue. The Trump administration last month announced new tariffs on some Canadian goods and chose not to automatically extend the trade pact, leading to annual negotiations. California Farm Bureau hosted a meeting last week with Canadian officials and various agricultural commodity groups to discuss trade concerns and ways to strengthen cooperation. One major issue is Canada’s ban on U.S. alcohol sales, which caused California wine exports to Canada to drop sharply. The decline has made conditions more difficult for California’s struggling wine sector, which is already facing lower global demand and an oversupply of grapes. Matthew Viohl, director of federal policy advocacy for the California Farm Bureau, said California farmers want to ensure trading partners follow labor and environmental standards outlined in trade agreements. “What we really stress when it comes to trade is stability and fairness,” he said. ★

Lions Host Second Annual Western Ranch House Barbeque

MPG Staff

RIO LINDA, CA (MPG) - Nonprofit organization, The Rio Linda Lions Club is hosting their 2nd annual Western Ranch House Barbeque. The barbeque will take place at the iconic Dry Creek Ranch House located on 6852 Dry Creek Road from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 26.

Come hungry! This western-themed family-friendly event will feature a delicious

barbeque steak dinner with baked beans and salad on the side along with a no host bar.

Although attendees may initially come for the barbeque, you'll want to stay for the various entertainment offerings available.

Get your dancing shoes on there will be live music, an exciting raffle as well as the opportunity to take a hayride around the property. After an evening full of country charm and fun, simply wind down

beside a relaxing bonfire.

Come out and show your support for The Rio Linda Lions Club! Every ticket goes towards supporting their many projects and programs to give back to our community.

Presale tickets are on sale now for \$45 a person and \$360 for a table of eight. Contact 916-243-0557 for cash or check payments or Zelle 916-868-2988. Make checks payable to Rio Linda Lions Club. No tickets will be sold at the door. ★



This western-themed barbeque will feature a delicious steak dinner with baked beans and salad on the side along with a no host bar. Photo designed by Magnific

Destination Aviation Takes Flight

California Capital Airshow connects local students with aviation professionals, hands-on experiences and career opportunities

California Capital Airshow News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - California Capital Airshow (CCA) will host Destination Aviation, a free youth program designed to introduce middle and high school students to career pathways across the aviation industry, on Saturday, Aug. 22 from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Mather Airport.

Destination Aviation is a curated program for students ages 12 to 18. Students will have the opportunity to engage directly with pilots, engineers, mechanics, air traffic controllers, aerospace manufacturers, military representatives and educators, gaining a firsthand look at the range of careers available within aviation.

“A student can’t pursue a career they don’t know exists. Destination Aviation puts that career in front of them, in person, so they can picture themselves in it,” said Darcy Brewer, CEO of California Capital Airshow. “The pathway to that career becomes real to them in a way a classroom can’t replicate.”

Following a Q&A panel with experts from the nation’s top aerospace and defense organizations, students will move through the event space and engage directly with panelists and exhibitors representing the full spectrum of aviation

careers. Students will have the opportunity to explore hands-on displays, working equipment, simulators and prototypes.

Destination Aviation is one of several year-round STEM programs CCA offers to local youth, made possible in part by proceeds from the nonprofit’s annual airshow. This year’s California Capital Airshow, set for Oct. 10-11 at Mather Airport, will mark CCA’s 20th anniversary alongside the nation’s 250th, and feature the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds, the Canadian Forces Snowbirds and the return of the Night Show.

Destination Aviation is free to attend. Registration is open now for students eager to explore a future in aviation or aerospace at bit.ly/26DestAviat.

California Capital Airshow is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Sacramento, California, dedicated to honoring the military and inspiring the next generation of aviation and STEM professionals. The organization produces the annual California Capital Airshow at Mather Airport and supports year-round youth education programs funded through proceeds from the event. The 2026 California Capital Airshow will be held October 10-11 at Mather Airport and marks the organization’s 20th anniversary. For more information, visit californiacapitalairshow.com. ★



Students will have the opportunity to speak to professionals representing the full spectrum of aviation careers at Destination Aviation on Aug. 22. Photo courtesy of Mark E. Loper Photography



Local students ages 12-18 are invited to Destination Aviation on Aug. 22, where they’ll hear from the nation’s leading aviation and aerospace experts and explore hands-on displays that showcase careers in aviation. Photo courtesy of Mark E. Loper Photography

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BY JOSH F.W. COOK

★ CALIFORNIA ★ POLICY AND ETHICS

You’ll Keep Paying for Wildfires on Your Electric Bill Until California Fixes Its Forests

By Josh Cook

If you live in California, you’ve probably seen the ads: “Home insurance rates skyrocket.” “The FAIR Plan is broken.” They urge you to call your legislator and demand a fix. What they don’t mention is who paid for them — Pacific Gas & Electric, Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas & Electric shareholders, through a campaign called Wildfire Victims First.

Despite the name, not one wildfire survivors group supports it.

Meanwhile, the Governor’s staff has been quietly negotiating a wildfire package with lawmakers’ staff. No bill text has been released. The Legislature returned from recess on August 3 and adjourns at the end of the month — the exact window for a “gut-and-amend,” where lawmakers strip an existing bill, drop in new language, and fast-track it to get something done.

Eaton Fire survivors and Consumer Watchdog say the package would cap payments for pain and suffering, block insurers from recovering costs from utilities, and limit attorneys’ fees, making it harder for survivors to find lawyers. Insurance companies agree — and when insurers and fire victims end up on the same side, that’s worth noticing.

Here’s the part almost nobody in this fight is discussing: none of it addresses why the fires get so big, and the answer is not just “climate change”. That is a cop out for years of systematic mismanagement.

Roughly 46% of California is federally owned — national forests, BLM land, parks, refuges. Much of the state’s highest-risk landscape sits on those federal acres. A century of aggressive fire suppression and reduced logging let fuel pile up. Many California forests are far denser today than they were historically, which turns ordinary ignitions into fast-moving infernos. Scientists point to fire exclusion, drought, insect die-off, and a warming climate working together — with excess vegetation driving how these fires behave. Remember, even as our forests burn down, we are importing timber from foreign countries. Bad policy in action.

Fuel loads are measured in tons per acre and vary by forest type. But in overstocked Sierra Nevada forests, they run well above historic levels; they remain a “tinder box”. That’s why mechanical thinning and prescribed burns are so widely recommended. On another note, properly managed forests also get more water in the streams; more on that in a future column.

The problem is pace and political will power. Fuels accumulate faster than crews can treat them; the idea that logging is a bad thing just won’t go away. Tree lovers are loving the forests to death. The Native people actively managed the forests much better than the Federal Government does. Congressional research finds millions of acres still at high hazard, with treatment backlogs growing because new growth outruns current work.

So CA lawmakers continue to argue over who writes the check. Until forests get thinned and maintained, the answer stays the same: you do, every month, on your power bill.

Go to Policy-Ethics.com

CHURCH DIRECTORY

LIFEPOINTE FAMILY OF CHURCHES 7200 Rio Linda Blvd. lifepointenaz.com (916) 991.4624 SUNDAY 9:30AM COFFEE & FELLOWSHIP 10AM ALL AGE CONNECTION GROUPS 11AM WORSHIP SERVICE NURSERY (0-3YRS) KIDZ CLUBHOUSE (4YRS - 6TH GRADE)	ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH (LCMS) 3644 Bolivar Ave. North Highlands (916) 332-4001 Sunday Schedule Worship at 9:30 AM Bible Hour for All Ages at 11:00 AM ZionLutheranNH.org	Calvary Lutheran Church 5th and L Streets Rio Linda <i>Pastor Kirsten Moore</i> Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m. <i>Children's Bible stories & crafts during adult worship</i> (916) 991-2135 www.clcrl.org Mail@clcrl.org <i>Open Arms, Open Hearts</i>
Church of Christ <i>Worship God's Way</i> <i>Minister Eric Smith</i> 6818 4th Avenue Rio Linda, CA 95673 (916) 991-2668 Church 10:30 a.m.	HARVEST MISSIONARY CHURCH 6715 18TH STREET RIO LINDA, CA 95673 PASTOR VALERIY BAYKO SUNDAY SCHOOL 10.00 AM SUNDAY SERVICE 10.30 AM COFFEE & FELLOWSHIP 12.30 AM (916) 915-4611 WWW.HARVESTMC.ORG	NEW BEGINNINGS FELLOWSHIP <i>Pastor Deonte Walters</i> 10th and O Streets (916) 991-2918 Sunday School 9 a.m. Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.
Rio Linda Seventh Day Adventist Church 7535 - 10th St. and U Rio Linda Sabbath School 9:15 a.m. Worship Services 11 a.m.	North Metro Church of Christ 4191 Norwood Ave., Sacramento 95838 (916) 923-1147 <i>Minister Pete Savage</i> SUNDAY Bible Classes: 10 a.m. Worship: 11 a.m. Worship: 6 p.m. Wed. Bible Classes: 7 p.m.	LIBERTY MINISTRIES CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP <i>Pastor Shannon Fannin</i> Liberty Ministries extends an invitation to come and join us for Celebration Worship Sunday 9 a.m. Youth Extreme & Food Closet (916) 922-6442 4840 Marysville Blvd. www.libertymcf.net
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I'm not enough

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I can't keep going

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CARE Program Teacher Lisa Saenz Named SCOE Teacher of the Year

Sacramento County Office of Education News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Teachers play a vital role in helping students learn, grow and thrive. Through expertise, creativity, resilience and compassion, they create safe and inclusive learning environments where students feel connected, valued and empowered to succeed.

Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE) teachers often serve students with diverse and specialized needs, including students who have experienced challenges in traditional educational settings. The annual SCOE Teacher of the Year Program recognizes educators whose skill, dedication and professionalism make a meaningful and lasting difference in students' lives.

Celebrating SCOE's 2027 Teacher of the Year

As SCOE begins a new school year, it is fitting to recognize an educator who represents the dedication, compassion and commitment SCOE teachers bring to students each day.

Following a competitive application and interview process, a selection panel chose Lisa Saenz in late May as the SCOE 2027 Teacher of the Year. Saenz is an alternative education teacher for SCOE's CARE Intervention Program at W. E. Mitchell Middle School.

Saenz is a dedicated, compassionate and accomplished



Lisa Saenz has been named the Sacramento County Office of Education 2027 Teacher of the Year. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County Office of Education

educator whose work exemplifies SCOE's commitment to supporting students with diverse needs. Her previous work in the juvenile justice system shaped her belief in education's power to change lives. Seeing daily opportunities to reach incarcerated youth inspired her to become a teacher and help students beyond the walls of the juvenile justice system.

"My motivation is to challenge my students to do their best, to see the good, and to never give up," Saenz said. "My desire to help teach future citizens of the

community is my passion."

Saenz creates a safe, structured and relationship-centered classroom grounded in clear routines, consistent expectations and positive reinforcement. She builds a sense of family in her classroom, so students feel respected, valued and motivated to learn.

Drawing on her special education background, Saenz uses individualized support, collaboration and project-based learning to engage students with different strengths and needs. She helps students recognize their abilities,

build confidence and experience academic and personal success.

The selection panel also recognized Saenz's professionalism, composure and leadership. During the 2025–26 school year, she served as an administration designee, expanding her ability to support students throughout the school community. In that role, she consistently demonstrated positive energy, sound judgment and a deep commitment to student success.

Education and Experience

Saenz began her education career in 2012 as a

special education teacher at Capital Academy. She joined SCOE's CARE Intervention Program in 2017.

She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and an Education Specialist Credential from Sacramento State and a master's degree in educational leadership from Concordia University. She also completed the SCOE Leadership Institute and earned a Preliminary Administrative Services Credential in 2018.

Her previous honors include SCOE Employee of the Month recognition and the Above and Beyond Principal's Award in May 2026.

Saenz credits her young daughter with inspiring her each day. Outside the classroom, she enjoys traveling, attending live sporting events, trying new restaurants, and dancing and singing with her daughter.

Saenz will represent SCOE in the Sacramento County Teacher of the Year competition.

Celebrating Sacramento County's 2027 District Teachers of the Year

Congratulations to Lisa Saenz and all sixteen 2027 District Teachers of the Year from across Sacramento County who represent charter schools and the 13 local school districts. The teachers will be recognized at an annual ceremony being held later this month, where the two Sacramento County Teachers of the Year 2027 will be announced. ★

Shaping the Future of Commercial Corridors



"Our commercial corridors are where people shop, eat, work and do business every day," said Crystal Bethke, director of Sacramento County's Office of Economic Development. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County has released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an Investment and Revitalization Strategy that will deliver an actionable plan to guide future investment in commercial corridors throughout the unincorporated County.

Interested applicants should review the RFP and submission requirements at: procurement.opengov.com/portal/saccounty/projects/283816

"Our commercial corridors are where people shop, eat, work and do business

every day," said Crystal Bethke, director of Sacramento County's Office of Economic Development. "We want to understand what each area needs to attract more investment and create places that better serve the people and businesses who rely on them."

The effort is led by county's Office of Economic Development in partnership with the Department of Community Development. It will create a practical roadmap to identify redevelopment opportunities, prioritize public and private investment, and recommend specific actions that support stronger neighborhood business districts, housing

opportunities where appropriate and long-term economic growth.

"Revitalizing our commercial corridors is about creating communities that are resilient, connected and built for the future," said Troy Givans, Sacramento County's community development director. "This effort will help us shape places that support housing, local businesses and public investment while ensuring redevelopment reflects the unique needs and identity of each corridor."

The selected consultant will evaluate 15 commercial corridors, assess market conditions and redevelopment potential,

identify priority opportunity sites and their highest and best uses, recommend policy and infrastructure improvements and develop implementation plans for pilot corridors. The strategy will build on previous county planning efforts and focus on market-driven actions that are realistic and reflect the opportunities and needs of each corridor.

Consultant proposals are due by Sept. 4. The county anticipates beginning the project later this year, following evaluation and approval by the Board of Supervisors. ★

Sacramento Superior Court Expands eCourt with Launch of Criminal Case Access

Superior Court of California News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento Superior Court announced Aug. 3 the launch of criminal case information on its eCourt platform, marking another milestone in the court's efforts to improve access to court information.

As of Aug. 10, criminal case information will be available through eCourt, the court's electronic case management system developed by Journal Technologies. The implementation replaces the court's Public Case Access System, which has supported case management for many years.

"The launch of criminal case information on eCourt is the result of years of planning, collaboration, and dedication by court staff and our justice partners," said Court Executive Officer Kelly Sullivan. "This milestone represents an effort that will streamline court operations and management of criminal case information."

The court first implemented eCourt in May 2023 with the launch of civil and probate case information. Small claims and unlawful detainer case information were added in June 2024, and Juvenile case information followed in July 2024. The addition of criminal case information represents the latest phase

of the court's transition to a newer, unified electronic case management system.

Users will be able to search for criminal case information in eCourt using several search options, including a party's first and last name, last name and first initial, or case number. Available case information includes case numbers, hearing dates and calendar information, such as upcoming court appearances. The portal will also enable the electronic submission of some documents in criminal cases.

Individuals seeking to view publicly available criminal case information may use public kiosks on the second floor of the Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye Courthouse. Legacy paper case files that have not yet been digitized will remain available for in-person review upon request, subject to record availability.

"The court is continually looking for ways to improve the experience of those who interact with our justice system while preserving the protections required for confidential and sensitive information," said Sullivan. "The addition of criminal case information to eCourt provides the public, attorneys and justice partners with a more efficient way to access important case information and reflects our commitment to a modern and accessible court system." ★

No Kid Hungry Urges Families to Apply for SUN Bucks

No Kid Hungry News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Don't miss out! California's Summer EBT program, known as SUN Bucks, is back. This summer food program provides families \$120 per eligible child in grocery benefits when school is out for summer and children do not have access to school meals.

While most children who qualify are automatically enrolled to receive SUN Bucks grocery benefits, some children will need to apply by the Aug. 31 deadline.

Parents and guardians whose children did not yet receive a 2026 SUN Bucks card in the mail can check their child's eligibility by visiting www.summerebt.org/states/california.

To apply, parents and guardians can simply ask their child's school for a Universal Benefits Application (UBA). Complete and return the form to their child's school by the Aug. 31 deadline. The form will be evaluated to determine if their child is

eligible for SUN Bucks.

"SUN Bucks helps connect kids with important nutrition, so they can return to school happy, healthy and ready to learn," said Kathy Saile, director of No Kid Hungry California. "We're thankful for the many state and community partners who have worked hard to sustain and promote SUN Bucks this summer. It is important that families know about this opportunity and apply by August 31st." It's also important for families to use SUN Bucks benefits before they expire. Benefits expire 122 days after they are issued. Any unspent benefits will expire after this time and cannot be reloaded.

Additional information about the SUN Bucks program, including eligibility criteria and frequently asked questions, can be found at cdss.ca.gov/sun-bucks. Families can also call the SUN Bucks helpline at 877-328-9677. Live agents are available Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. ★



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Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris

Rate the Referees

By V.G. Harris

With the upcoming season looming less than three months away, my thoughts turn to the state of the league as it relates to NBA officiating.

Ironically, the NBA decided to release the best and the worst ratings for NBA referees for the first time recently and they broke it down into three categories. Three tiers from excellent being tier one, good or solid representing tier two, and finally needs improvement in tier three.

Although I don't often write about the officiating because it does little good, I have long believed the NCAA has somehow ferreted out a better class of officials than the NBA currently enjoys. I don't believe the NBA officials are sordid or lacking in officiating acumen as much as I simply understand that no two officials are ever going to be the same.

Today's officials are employed year-round, and at times I wonder what training classes are you attending, because it often appears the crowd gets the call right more than the officials do.

Obviously, the NBA realized they had a problem, or coaches challenges would not have been implemented in 2019-20. Did it make a difference? Only to the extent that games were won and lost because of a coach's ability to question a call made by a referee.

I heartily applaud the NBA's decision to implement this critical element to ensure a fairer outcome, but I'm all for taking it to the next level. For my money, as long as a coach wins a challenge that coach should continue to have a challenge available to him. Simply being given a number of challenges that runs out and potentially leaves that team wanting during crunch time, makes no sense when the object is simply to get it right.

So, with the release of this critical information what did it reveal?

411 NBA players from all 30 teams participated in the voting or analysis of the current NBA referees, and a total of 20 referees found themselves in the bottom category.

You may or may not find that acceptable, but I do not. That number represents nearly 30% of the referees in the NBA and that number is far too high for me.

The fact the NBA saw fit to finally release

the ratings of their current referees speaks volumes, and it tells me the commissioner's office recognizes a problem.

I've already cited one potential remedy and there are certainly more, so let's not let any grass grow under our feet Adam Sliver, and start making some cogent tweaks to the existing system.

On a sad note, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the passing of basketball legend Don Nelson who at one time was the winningest basketball coach in NBA history. Currently ranked second all-time with 1,335 wins, Don Nelson was a basketball maverick in a good way and was responsible for the first point forward as it relates to running an unconventional offense.

Steph Curry cites Nelson as one of the key factors in him being drafted by the Golden State Warriors, and although Curry played just one season for the legendary coach, Don Nelson made an indelible mark on Curry that he never forgot.

Always an entertaining interview Nelson would undoubtedly have some pointed thoughts on the current state of affairs with NBA refereeing and was an ardent supporter of the value of free throw shooting.

In 150 playoff games as a player, Nelson shot 50% from the field and 82% from the line.

At one time tormented by his inability to shoot free throws at a high percentage, Nelson pioneered the one-handed shot-put version that propelled his career and made him an asset at the line as opposed to a liability.

Rest in peace Don Nelson and thank you for the many years of competitive greatness as you won five NBA championships with the Boston Celtics.

His No. 19 jersey was retired by the Celtics, and although he was never inducted by the hall-of-fame as a player, the Celtics acknowledged his contributions with the retiring of his jersey.

Nelson would reach the Hall of Fame as a coach inductee in 2012, and it was so well deserved.

Would that the Sacramento Kings could have this intrepid inventor back for just a day to give some guidance to a young squad in need.

All the best Kings fans!
All the best! ★

Pension Boosts for California Police, Firefighters Could Spur Increases for Other Workers



By Dan Walters,
CALMatters.org

It may be just a coincidence, but when California's public employee pension system touted very high earnings on its investments last month, it was a political windfall for unions seeking to increase retirement benefits.

They could argue that the California Public Employees Retirement System's report of a 14.8% gain during the 2025-26 fiscal year indicated that California could afford to boost pensions for police and firefighters with little or no impact on taxpayers.

Conversely, the CalPERS report was a setback for local governments that oppose the pension boost, contending it would open the door to higher pensions for other categories of public workers and would exacerbate budget shortfalls.

Opponents of the pension increase proposed in Assembly Bill 1383 appear to face an uphill battle. The legislation passed the Assembly with an overwhelming bipartisan vote prior to the Legislature's summer recess and could gain Senate approval before adjournment in a few weeks.

The situation is similar to what happened 27 years ago, shortly after Gray Davis was inaugurated as governor. Davis had survived a bruising primary battle in 1998 against two

wealthy, self-financed opponents and a tough duel with Republican Attorney General Dan Lungren, thanks largely to big donations from public employee unions.

Davis repaid his political debt to the unions by sponsoring two benefit increases, one in unemployment benefits, the other in pensions. He and the unions contended the pension boost could be covered without new taxes because CalPERS said as much.

However, investment earnings cratered during the Great Recession a few years later. Local governments struggled to pay the increased contributions that law requires them to make when pension fund investments falter.

Local officials argued that the mandatory increases in contributions to cover the pension system's weak earnings were diverting money that otherwise would support vital and popular services, including police and fire protection.

Eventually that led to a major overhaul of pension benefits and the contributions to finance them in 2012 — changes that AB 1383 would partially undo. Among other things, the reforms didn't affect pensions of current retirees or employees, but reduced them for future hires.

The 2012 reforms would, it was believed, slow the increase in pension costs as workers retired and replacements were hired with lower pension guarantees. However, the impacts of the Davis-era increases continued to affect local budgets.

It was common for California cities to pay 50 cents into the pension fund for every dollar in salary for

their police officers and only slightly less for firefighters. Lodi's city manager at the time, Steve Schwabauer, told CalPERS trustees at a meeting, "I have the unfortunate obligation to tell you that Lodi is on a slow, inexorable slide toward insolvency if you maintain your present course."

Three California cities — Vallejo, Stockton and San Bernardino — declared bankruptcy, with fast-rising pension costs as major factors. During Stockton's bankruptcy, the presiding federal judge, Christopher Klein, declared the city could reduce pension benefits to improve its financial position, touching off a brief but fiery debate. However, none of the three cities acted on Klein's advice.

Back to AB 1383. Sweetening the pensions of public safety employees would increase costs for the state and local governments by \$4.8 billion, an analysis by CalPERS actuaries estimates, with contributions by employers rising by \$233 million a year.

That's a hefty number. The true impact of passing AB 1383 could be much higher, because once the pension limits on police and firefighters hired since 2012 are breached, unions representing other categories of workers will demand parity. And a Legislature dominated by union-friendly Democrats will be hard-pressed to refuse.

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

Is the Medicare Part B Premium a Percentage of our Social Security Amount?



By Russell Gloor,
AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: I have a simple question: Is the amount we pay for Medicare Part B premium a percent of our Social Security amount we receive?

Signed: Curious

Dear Curious: Your Medicare Part B premium is not based on a percentage of your monthly Social Security benefit amount. Medicare Part B premiums are set in October of each year by CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) and are based upon anticipated total costs of the Medicare program in the forthcoming year. Generally speaking, Medicare Part B enrollee premiums are expected to offset about 25% of CMS' anticipated total Medicare Part B costs; the rest is borne by the Federal Government. So, when CMS estimates Medicare program costs for the upcoming year, they also look at the number of anticipated Part B enrollees. They then divide 25% of total anticipated Part B program costs by the number of expected Part B enrollees, resulting in the "standard" Medicare Part B premium for next year. For 2026, the standard Part B premium amount is \$202.90. The standard premium for 2027 will be announced in October 2026

and will likely be different.

It's important to understand also that not everyone pays the "standard" Part B premium. Some lower income seniors may pay less because of the so-called "hold harmless provision," and some higher income folks may pay more than the "standard" monthly Part B premium because of a provision called "IRMAA."

The "hold harmless provision" says that monthly Social Security benefits cannot decrease as a result of a Medicare premium increase, so if the annual SS COLA (cost of living adjustment) is insufficient to offset any increase to the standard Part B premium, then the SS beneficiary may pay a smaller Part B premium amount so that their SS benefit doesn't decrease (note there are exceptions to this rule).

Conversely, those with a higher "provisional income" (an IRS definition), may pay more than the standard Medicare Part B premium. That's because of a provision known as "IRMAA" (Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount), which adds a supplemental amount on top of the standard Medicare Part B premium. IRMAA supplemental amounts are determined using a sliding scale to define the required higher Part B premium for each income level category, and IRMAA will cause the Part B premium to be more than the standard premium amount. For those with exceptionally high incomes, the Part B premium can be as much as \$690 per month.

FYI, income reported to the IRS two years ago is used

to determine if an individual is subject to IRMAA for the forthcoming year. The reason for this is timing: when next year's Part B premium is determined in October of each current year, the IRS has processed all tax returns for the preceding year but doesn't yet have individual income for the current year. Thus, they must use a person's income from October of the preceding year to determine who will pay the standard Part B premium next year, and who will pay a higher IRMAA amount.

And just to complete this picture, you should be aware that IRMAA also applies to Medicare Part D premiums. And that means that those with higher incomes who are affected by IRMAA for Part B will also pay a higher Medicare Part D premium. (Medicare Part D is private insurance coverage for prescription drugs). But none of this is related to your Social Security benefit amount.

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An Iran war that was supposed to be brief, and then was supposed to be over, is imposing an increasing price on Donald Trump's presidency.

We've seen a second term of a Republican administration go this way before. There are distinct echoes of George W. Bush's Iraq War -- the conflict that Trump has long excoriated -- in the president's predicament.

Now, the Iran War is different from Iraq. There is no ground invasion, no regime change, no occupation, no counterinsurgency. The casualties aren't close to the same scale, and Donald Trump has been fighting Iran for months, whereas George W. Bush was embroiled in Iraq for years (and so were his successors).

Yet, the political trajectory looks similar. Then, as now, an unpopular conflict is putting downward pressure on a Republican president's approval rating.

Mainstream pollsters routinely have Trump's approval rating below 40%, and some put it below 35%; Fox News has him at 39%, while CNN (34%) and AP (33%) are lower. At this juncture of Bush's second term, his average approval rating was a roughly comparable 38%, although he had further to fall as the war continued and the financial crisis hit.

If the Iran War is not exacting nearly the same price in blood and trea-

The Iran War is Eating Trump's Presidency

sure as the Iraq War, it is inflicting a direct economic cost on Americans that wasn't present during the Iraq war.

It was often said of violent clashes in the streets of the U.S. in the 1960s, "The Vietnam War has come home." Well, the Iran War came home the first time the average price per gallon of gasoline went above \$4. Trump would have much more leeway to engage in a protracted operation to bring Iran to heel if the public could, in effect, forget about the war for a while, but there's a reminder every day of what's happening in the Strait of Hormuz on gas signs across America.

In the CNN poll, 28% approve Trump's handling of Iran, while 25% approve his handling of inflation and 21% of gas prices. These issues are related. Trump wants his presidency to matter. So, rather than being content with doing whatever he could at the margins to lower prices, he went for big, legacy-defining initiatives -- tariffs and the Iran War -- that raised prices. In so doing, he forfeited his signature issue of economic stewardship. In the latest Fox News poll, 33% approve of his handling of the economy and 67% disapprove.

When the memorandum of understanding with Iran was signed, Trump boasted about how, by reopening the strait, it would avoid greater economic distress; he said he didn't want to be another Herbert Hoover. Now, the strait is basically closed

again. Absent another deal, he's faced with the choice of escalation or an ongoing low-level conflict, neither of which is going to be palatable to the public.

The CNN poll found that nearly three-quarters of Americans think Trump hasn't paid enough attention to the country's most pressing problems. The fact is that Iran wasn't a priority for the public and there was no attempt by the White House to make it one until after it had already launched the war.

Just as Bush's success in toppling the Taliban created the predicate for the Iraq War, Trump's stunning capture of Nicolas Maduro made it easier to believe that the Iran war would be a cakewalk. The idealistic establishment Republican and the "America First" populist both got lured into overestimating the efficacy of American military power.

We still don't know how the Iran war will end. Perhaps Trump will manage a satisfactory conclusion, and he has more room to bounce back up again politically than Bush did after years of the Iraq War. Still, the next Republican president would be well served to be more prudent and mindful of worst-case scenarios when launching major military operations than either of his two, otherwise very different, GOP predecessors.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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National Night Out Brings Community Together



Among participants was the Rio Linda Lions Club whose booth offered fresh watermelon and games. The organization took to Facebook after the event to thank those who showed up and engaged with the club. Photo courtesy of the Rio Linda Elverta Recreation-Parks District

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district, with residents.

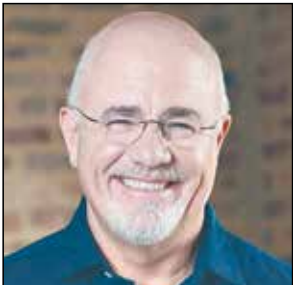
“Your input is invaluable and helps us make informed decisions that reflect the needs and interests of our community,” the district wrote on its Facebook page.

As the event seeks to connect residents with law enforcement officials in a casual, neighborly setting, police officers from Twin Rivers Unified School District were present at the event, engaging with children and providing community resources. Representatives from the Sacramento County Sheriff’s Office and Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District were also present.

Other organizations in attendance included Rio Linda High School FFA & Leadership, Gateway Community Charters, Rio Linda Grange, Girl Scouts, Boddie Family Boxing Academy and more. ★



The Rio Linda Elverta Recreation-Parks District handed out themed cookies at their booth. Photo courtesy of the Rio Linda Elverta Recreation-Parks District



Dave Ramsey

Dear Dave,

I’ve spent most of my marriage not being involved in our family finances. To be honest, I’ve not been a very good husband. After being introduced to your show and your books by a friend, I realized how irresponsible I’ve been. When I talked to my wife about it and apologized, I heard for the first time that we have about \$100,000 in debt, plus \$55,000 in debt on a new car and motorcycle I did know about. Of course, we also have a mortgage on our home. She apologized for making a mess of things, but I know it wasn’t all her fault. She hadn’t been sneaking around spending and taking out debt, she just made mistakes and was afraid to tell me. Together, we make about \$150,000 a year. Do you have any advice for us?

– Calab

Dear Caleb,

Brother, I am so proud of you. You made some mistakes, sure. But now you’ve

Dave Ramsey Says Healing Problems... Together

made the decision to man up. And that’s a huge step in the right direction for you *and* your marriage.

To me, what you described is a lot different than her lying and hiding stuff. The truth is you weren’t plugged in. Maybe she wasn’t doing a great job, but then, she didn’t have anyone to talk to about it, did she? Things got worse, and she probably felt ashamed about how ugly it got and didn’t want to tell anyone.

Now you’re at the point where you’ve got to look at all this, and figure out how to fix it with a \$150,000 income. It’s going to mean beans and rice, rice and beans. It’s going to mean a scorched-earth lifestyle and living on a budget, which also means you’re not going out to eat, and you’re not going on vacations.

I’d sell the car and the motorcycle. Get into a couple of very basic, inexpensive cars, and spend about two years being crazy intense to pay off everything but your home. You can clean this up, but you’re basically going to have no

life during that time.

The two of you also have some relationship work to do. It sounds like you’ve already gotten a good start on that, with you owning your part and her owning hers. The thing is not to point fingers. From this point forward you need to always sit down together, and make all your decisions—financial and otherwise—together. I want you to hug on each other a lot, too.

If you’re both willing, you can heal the math problem, the debt problem and the marriage problem all at the same time. God bless you both!

– Dave

Dave Ramsey is a nine-time national bestselling author, personal finance expert and host of The Ramsey Show. He has appeared on Good Morning America, CBS This Morning, Today, Fox News, CNN, Fox Business and many more. Since 1992, Dave has helped people take control of their money, build wealth and enhance their lives. He also serves as CEO for Ramsey Solutions. ★

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SacDOT Unveils Roadway Chip Seal Program

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maintenance work. “No parking” signs are placed on affected roadways during chip seal and fog seal treatments.

SacDOT anticipates this preventative

maintenance program will allow more roadways to receive attention, improve pavement conditions throughout the County, and help to maximize the value of limited maintenance funds. ★

Sacramento Selected as New Sample Area for the Consumer Price Index

Continued from page 1
the Office of Management and Budget.

Employees from the CPI will make personal visits to explain the survey to retail establishments selected from surveys conducted that asked local residents where they bought various goods and services. They will also visit housing units chosen using statistical methods to represent the local housing market. The interviews are brief and no one will be asked to fill out any forms. Data collected from businesses

and households by BLS are held in strict confidence and used for statistical purposes only.

Representatives will carry official identification and are U.S. Department of Labor employees. Local staff members will be part-time Economic Assistants who will be trained to collect data in person and by telephone using portable tablet computers. Job announcements for Economic Assistant positions can be found soon on usajobs.gov. ★



Are self-driving cars safe?

- Aditya, 10, New York State

Dear Aditya,

When I was a kitten, car rides scared me. It took a while to trust my human pals’ driving.

I asked my friend Wei Peng if that’s how humans feel about self-driving cars. He’s a researcher at Washington State University. He studies public opinion on driverless vehicles.

He told me that self-driving technology is getting better.

“The safety performance of self-driving cars is improving,” Peng said. “It has even been deployed on public roads. In San Francisco, people can use a driverless car much like a regular taxi. And according to some studies, certain driverless cars have fewer crashes than cars driven by people in similar places.”

Human drivers scan the road with their eyes. They make decisions based on what they see and what they predict will happen.

But humans get distracted. They adjust the radio. They pay attention to other people in the car. Some people even text while driving. That’s super dangerous.

Self-driving cars don’t get distracted like that. But they can still miss things or make mistakes.

Instead of eyes, self-driving cars rely on sensors. Cameras read signs, spot traffic lights and watch lane markings. Radars send out radio waves to track the locations and speeds of moving objects—like other cars. LiDAR sensors emit lasers to measure precise distances between objects and fill in fine details. All that information makes a 360-degree map. The map changes as the car drives.



This is a prototype self-driving car. It cruised around Mountain View, California in 2017. The black, gumball-shaped device on top contains some of the car’s sensors. There are sensors all over the car, too. Grendelkhan CC BY-SA 4.0, arrow by Dr. Universe

Self-driving cars use a built-in computer with AI to process the mapped data. That’s how the car plans a route. It’s how it makes predictions and driving decisions. It sends out electrical signals to control the steering wheel, pedals and other car parts.

Driving decisions are high stakes. People put their kids and cats in cars. They want them to be safe. The driver—human or automated—must make careful predictions using context clues. For a human, context comes from interacting with the world their whole life. An AI system must be trained to understand all that context without the life experience.

Like, if an AI system spots a van on the side of the road, it needs to piece together what’s happening. Is it a delivery driver unloading a package? Or is it a mom unbuckling a toddler who might run into the road? The system needs to notice possible danger and prepare for what could happen next.

But that’s not the only big hurdle self-driving cars face.

Peng told me that the tech will need to overcome how humans feel about riding in a car that drives itself. It’s scary to see a steering wheel move on its own. It’s hard to relax when your taxi approaches a busy intersection—with nobody in the driver’s seat.

“It’s human nature to want to control the stuff we use,” Peng said. “This is particularly true when our safety is at stake.”

Getting comfy with self-driving cars might just take some time.

Some subway systems have been automated for a long time—starting in the 1960s. At first, people were scared. They worried about safety. They feared that human drivers would lose their jobs. That’s why some early automated trains kept human workers onboard for a while. Now, some subways are fully automated—and have been since the 1980s.

I guess trust is what drives the whole thing.

Sincerely,

Dr. Universe

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