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Art Your
Heart Out**

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Named Small
Business
of the Month**

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AMERICAN RIVER Messenger

VOLUME 21 • ISSUE 18

Serving Fair Oaks, Orangevale & Sacramento County

SEPTEMBER 25, 2026

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INSIDE**

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BRINGS DECADES
OF PET EXPERIENCE**



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Chicken Festival Returns



A family donning chicken festival hats poses with the American River Messenger.

**Story and photos
by Abbey Wicks**

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - The 21st annual Fair Oaks Chicken Festival drew hundreds of attendees to Fair Oaks Park Sept. 19. Live music by All Hat No Cattle and Sunset River at the Chickenstock Stage were the soundtrack to a day full of chicken-themed contests, costumes, food trucks, beer and wine, Rocky's Roost kid's zone and more.

During the Cluck n' Crow Contest,

10 participants had the opportunity to show off their best bawk. One participant took their moment on stage to propose to their partner in the audience, who accepted the proposal. Also new this year was the Egg Drop competition presented by Fair Oaks Preschool and Fair Oaks Arborist.

Food trucks presented by SactoMoFo included Jojo's Hawaiian Fried Chicken, Pancho Villa BBQ, California Street Tacos and Smokin' Ewe BBQ, which served up generously portioned barbecue plates and

a delicious, loaded chicken mac.

Presented by the Rotary Club of Fair Oaks, the Watering Hole (beer and wine) offered drink tickets supporting local breweries and wineries including River City Brewing (Carmichael), Movement Brewing Company (Rancho Cordova) and more.

There was no shortage of craft vendors selling everything from jewelry to handmade leather goods to paintings. Community informational

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SBSK Readies for Holiday Giveaway



Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids gives these to the children right before Christmas break. Courtesy photo

**By Claire Gliddon,
SBSK Chief Blanket
Gatherer**

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Got beanie babies? Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids (SBSK) is asking for donations of new or "almost new" Beanie Babies all year long.

Every September, Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids picks as many of the lowest-income elementary schools they can and finds out how many kindergartners they have. Volunteers make double-fleece blankets (about 50 inches by 60 inches) for all of them, and a little fleece pouch with a Beanie Baby in it to go with each blanket.

Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids gives these to the children right before Christmas break. Some of these kids live in their cars or in places without heat and this is all they get for Christmas. It is wildly popular with the teachers and the kids! Spread the word, too! This is their 13th year for this project, and they hope to continue doing it, as long as they can get Beanie Babies.

In 2025, Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids gave out over 3,300 blankets and Beanie Babies in their Kindergarten Project, reaching 58 schools! SBSK is always looking for new volunteers to make blankets all year round for children in need. Like to knit, crochet, sew, quilt, make no-sew blankets and have run out of people to make things for? We're looking for you!

To learn more about Sacramento Blankets for Sacramento Kids, visit www.sacblankets4kids.com and sign up! No pressure, no timelines, no meetings...just people who enjoy crocheting, knitting, quilting, sewing, making no-sew blankets and helping a whole lot of children at the same time.

SBSK is a nonprofit organization that serves children in need from infants to 18-year-olds. They do this all year long! But the Kindergarten Project is their "special" project of the year.

Email claire@sacblankets4kids.com for a list of drop-off places for your Beanie Babies. ★

Senior Resource Fair Comes to Fair Oaks

**Story and photos
by Judy Andrews**

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - The Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce hosted its inaugural Senior Resource Fair on Sept. 10 at New Life Community Church in Fair Oaks. The free community event, Empowered Aging in Fair Oaks - A Senior Resource Fair, drew about 200 attendees and connected older adults, caregivers and families with local professionals and organizations.

More than 65 vendors participated, sharing information and educating attendees about their organizations' programs and services. Exhibitors offered a wide range of information, including care management, emergency services, financial services, home health, hospice, insurance,

medical supplies, placement services, senior living communities, government agencies and more. "The chamber has been

planning this special event for more than a year. We are happy to see it finally come together under one roof," said Kimberley

Pitillo, president and CEO of the Fair Oaks Chamber. "I especially want to thank our amazing sponsors and

Continued on page 3



From left, Senior Safety Specialist Dot Boyd and Certified Senior Safety Advisor Anupama Shojael sparked the idea for the Fair Oaks Chamber's recent Senior Resource Fair.



Fair Oaks CHICKEN FESTIVAL

See you next year, chicken festival!



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12 oz

1 kg

12 oz

15.89 1.oz

63.5 oz

REG \$37.99

\$31.99

/ea



Frantoia
Extra Virgin
Olive Oil
1 liter

REG \$5.49

\$4.29

/ea



Milienka
Tea Biscuits
1 kg

REG \$5.99

\$4.49

/ea



Italian
Grissini Bites
Mini Breadsticks
200 gr

REG \$3.99

\$2.99

/ea



Ritter Sport
Chocolates
3 Flavor
100 gr

REG \$3.99

\$2.49

/ea



Russian Product
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900 gr

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/lb



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500 gr

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Senior Resource Fair Comes to Fair Oaks

Continued from page 1
the planning committee leaders, Dot Boyd and Anupama Shojaei, who organized a meaningful, educational event that supports the older adult community.”

Dot Boyd, a senior safety specialist based in Fair Oaks, has worked in the senior care industry since 2018. Boyd is a passionate advocate for senior safety, dedicated to helping seniors maintain their dignity and independence as they age.

“We chose the name Empowered Aging because older adults and their families often ‘tough it out’ on their own, not knowing where to turn for help,” said Boyd. “As a senior safety specialist and a former worried daughter caring for an elderly mother, I am committed to bringing supportive resources together for my clients and my community because empowered aging is a team sport.”

Anupama Shojaei, a certified senior advisor and owner of CarePatrol, helps families navigate senior care options, including assisted living, memory care, independent living and in-home care.

“It was a tremendously successful first event. Vendors reported they were happy with the turnout and the important conversations they had with attendees. Attendees I spoke with said it was just what they were looking for,” said Shojaei. “By bringing trusted professionals together in one place, we made it easier for people to ask questions, understand their options and build relationships that can make all the difference later.”

Fair Oaks Chamber Board Chair Jen Rodriguez kept the event agenda on track, introduced speakers and led question-and-answer sessions with sponsors and exhibitors.

Rodriguez moderated a senior safety panel featuring three experts who shared practical information and resources on staying safe at home, preparing



From left, Senior Safety panelists Kayla Cole, Mike Ryder and Dot Boyd provide important tips and resources about safety at home and what to do in emergencies



Allison Trapp, a marketing consultant at CarePatrol, answers an attendee's questions.

for emergencies and accessing help when needed. Panelists included Dot Boyd; Mike Ryder, EMT and business development manager at AlphaOne Ambulance Medical Services; and paramedic Kayla Cole of the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District.

Other speakers included Diane

Klecker of Bridge Fitness, who led an interactive session and demonstrated exercises attendees can incorporate into their daily routines.

Key event sponsors also took the stage to introduce their organizations and discuss their services and benefits. The sponsors included All



Participants learn basic exercises to incorporate into their day during an interactive movement session.

Seasons Residential Senior Living, Fair Oaks Financial, Inc., Whole Wellness Therapy, Avalon Hearing Aid Centers, Inc., Buck Wealth Management, Community Health Centers

of America, Homewatch CareGivers, Mount Vernon Memorial Park and Mortuary, Oakmont of Fair Oaks, SMUD and Sanctuary Home Health and Hospice.

The Fair Oaks Chamber sincerely thanks the event sponsors, exhibitors, speakers, volunteers, community partners and the New Life Community Church for helping make this inaugural event a meaningful celebration of connection, education and support in the Fair Oaks area.

For more information about the Fair Oaks Chamber, visit: fairoakschamber.com. ★



Michelle Nevins, executive director of Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center, speaks to an attendee.



Participants listen to speakers who covered a range of educational topics.

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Learn more at smud.org/Community





PoppTalk

With Mary Jane Popp

Preventing Alzheimers

Did you know 90% of Alzheimer’s disease cases are preventable through lifestyle factors? Doctors **Dean and Ayesha Sherzai** are co-directors of the Brain Health and Alzheimer’s Prevention Program at Loma Linda University Medical Center, and they told me on POPPOFF that activities can build cognitive reserve. That comes from their book “**The Alzheimer’s Solution**” and a whole lot of it can be fun!

Here are some activities that build cognitive reserve.

- 1. LEARN A NEW LANGUAGE.** Main functions involved: language processing (new words, and expressions), memory centers (memorizing, calling upon old memories to understand new material), frontal lobe (understanding the language in context), problem solving (forming a verbal or written response).
- 2. LEARNING A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT.** Main functions involved: motor skills (the physicality of playing), basal ganglia and cerebellum (fine motor movement), memory-centers (memorizing notes, tunes, scales), processing (learning a sequence of steps), mood (understanding the emotional subtleties of the music).
- 3. COMPUTER PROGRAMMING.** Main functions involved: memory centers (memorizing new codes), processing (knowing how the codes work together), attention (selecting which codes to use, motor skills (typing).
- 4. WRITING A BOOK.** Main functions involved: attention and focus (typing passages), memory centers (recalling research, stories and ideas), processing (organizing and structuring the material), mood (re-creating emotions on the page), motor skills (typing).
- 5. KARAOKE:** Main functions involved: language centers (reading and performing lyrics), mood (interpretation of the song), cerebellum (modulating your voice), memory centers (recalling a particular song).
- 6. PERFORMING STAND-UP COMEDY.** Main functions involved: memory centers (memorizing your set),

your material), motor skills (your physical presence on stage).

7. LEARNING TO DANCE. Main functions involved: motor skills (physical coordination), basal ganglia and cerebellum (fine motor movements), mood (responding to music), memory centers (memorizing choreography), processing (understanding different dance techniques).

8. CHESS CLUB OR GROUP CARD GAMES LIKE BRIDGE, GIN RUMMY, POKER ETC) Main functions involved: memory centers (remembering your cards and the rules for each game), processing (step-by-step strategy), attention and focus (concentrating on the game), problem solving (planning on how you will win).

9. MENTORING OTHERS IN YOUR FIELD. Main functions involved: memory centers (remembering and drawing from your expertise), attention (focusing on the activity), mood (reading another person’s emotions and motivations), problem solving (coming up with options and solutions).

10. VOLUNTEERING TO TEACH. Main functions” memory centers (remembering the subject matter), attention (focusing on the teaching), mood (responding to the student’s needs) processing (examining and explaining multistep solutions).

11. JEWELRY, CRAFTS, MODELS, OR ARTS. Main functions: visuospatial skills (understanding complex designs), memory centers (memorizing techniques and patterns) attention and focus (concentrating on the activity), motor skills (the physical act of assembly).

12. TAKING COMMUNITY COLLEGE COURSES. Main functions involved: Memory centers (memorizing new words and concepts), processing (understanding multistep thinking), problem solving (applying new theories to find solutions).

If you can’t find something in this list of stuff to do to sidestep Alzheimer’s, I give up. I guess the old adage “if you don’t use it you lose it rings true! ★



Ask DR. UNIVERSE

Why do boy dogs go potty on fire hydrants and trees?

- Michael, 5, Minnesota

Dear Michael,

I love going on walks with my dog roommate. But sometimes it takes forever. It seems like he wants to pee on every single tree.

I asked my friend Dr. Jessica Bunch about it. She’s a veterinarian at Washington State University.

She told me the sense of smell is extremely important to dogs.

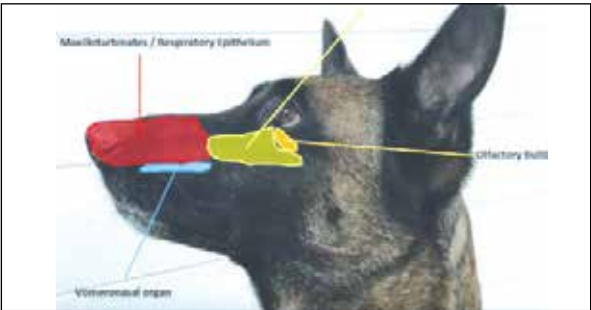
“A lot of dog communication is by smell,” Bunch said. “And each dog has their own unique odor to their urine.”

The urine a dog leaves behind is like a smell fingerprint. It’s full of chemical messages like hormones. One whiff of another dog’s urine tells my dog roommate important stuff—like the other dog’s age, sex and health information.

That works because dogs have up to 300 million smell receptors in their noses. Humans only have about 6 million.

Dogs have other adaptations for smell, too. Their noses are wet so they can tell which direction a scent blows in from. They have a maze of bones inside their snout that traps smells.

They even have a special organ for picking up chemical messages left by other animals—the vomeronasal organ. It’s in the roof of the dog’s mouth, right behind its front teeth. Nerves pipe



These are the major parts of a dog’s olfactory (smell) system. The vomeronasal organ (blue, also called Jacobson’s organ) picks up chemical messages from other animals. The olfactory epithelium (yellow) is the bony maze that traps other smells. The olfactory bulb (orange) is a brain structure that makes sense of smells. Chuy 1530 Jenkins et al. CC BY

those messages directly to the brain.

After a dog sniffs another dog’s urine marking, it usually pees on top of it or next to it. That tells the next dog that it was there, too.

“It’s their way of making everybody know that this is their territory,” Bunch said. “They usually pee on something that’s upright like a fire hydrant or a tree or a wall. That spreads the smell over a higher area. And then it’s at the same level as another dog’s nose when they come by.”

Boy dogs may be more inclined to mark tall things. Because of their anatomy, they usually pee by lifting their leg. So, they can pee higher than a dog that squats. Some small dogs bend their bodies to pee up high. They’re probably trying to cover up the previous urine marking. They may want the next dog to think they’re big and tough.

Some girl dogs pee that way, too. And all dogs can have the urge to mark territory and sniff for information.

What’s less clear is what a dog is thinking when it smells another dog’s urine. Does a big whiff tell them that a random dog came by? Or can they pinpoint that it’s the fluffy dog down the street?

“I don’t know for sure, but they possibly could recognize dogs they’ve met before,” Bunch said. “When dogs greet each other, they often sniff each other’s hind end. And once dogs know each other, you don’t see them sniffing each other like they used to.”

Scientists know that dogs don’t sniff their own urine markings very much. They spend less time smelling urine that belongs to their housemate dogs, too. So, it seems likely that dogs can recognize themselves and other familiar dogs by smell.

I guess you could say a dog really nose who its friends are.

Sincerely,

Dr. Universe



Bunco Night

Friday, October 16
Doors Open 6 pm
Game Begins 7 pm
At Orangevale Community Center

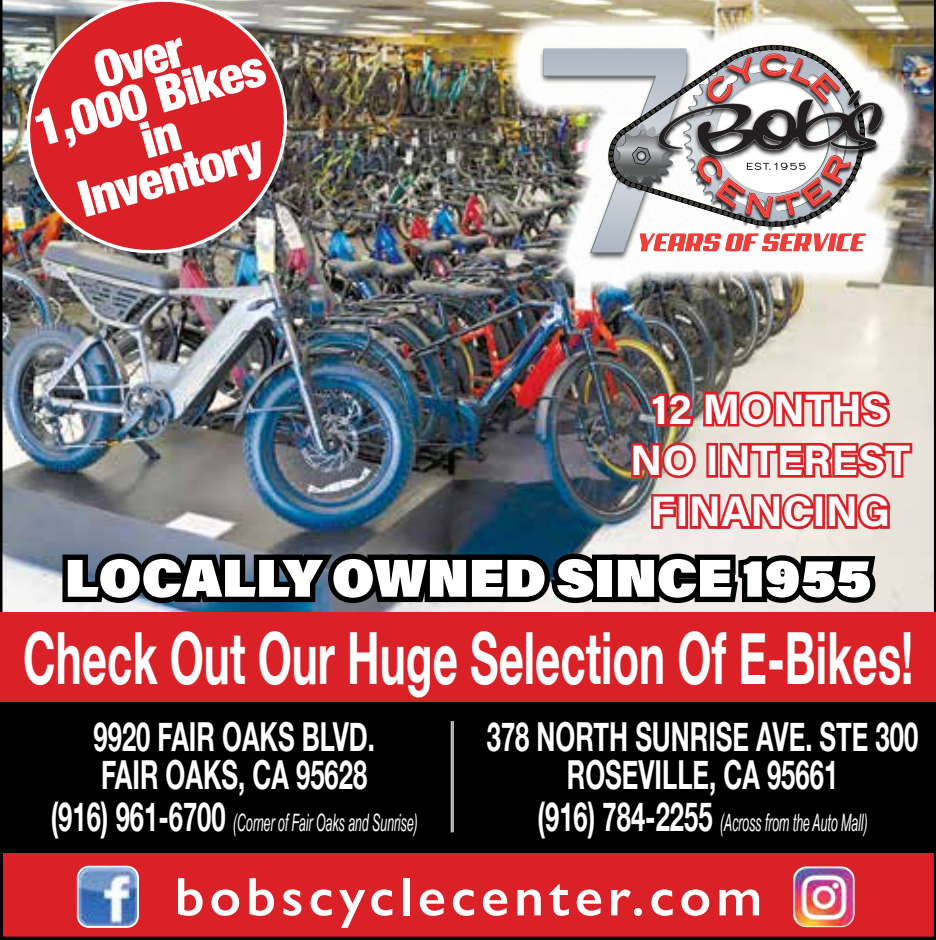
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County Responds to Grand Jury Report on Foster Youth

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County has responded to the 2025-26 Sacramento County Grand Jury report on foster youth, outlining areas where it agrees with the Grand Jury and others where it disagrees with its findings and recommendations. On Tuesday, Sept. 15, Sacramento County’s Department of Child, Family, and Adult Services (DCFAS) presented its response to the Board of Supervisors.

The report, “No Longer Invisible: Foster Youth Still in the Shadows,” examined the County’s Sacramento Welcome Homes and the services provided to foster youth who are at risk of sexual exploitation. The Grand Jury recognized improvements at the Welcome Homes but also raised concerns about placements, technology, information sharing, reporting and staff training.

The County agrees with two of the Grand Jury’s findings. It agrees that Child Protective Services (CPS) has improved conditions at the Welcome Homes and obtained licenses for the facilities. The County also agrees that the Sheriff’s Office has provided valuable protection and built positive relationships with youth living in the homes.

The County partially agrees with the finding that Welcome Homes are inappropriate for youth who have experienced or



The County agrees with two of the Grand Jury’s findings. It agrees that Child Protective Services (CPS) has improved conditions at the Welcome Homes and obtained licenses for the facilities. The County also agrees that the Sheriff’s Office has provided valuable protection and built positive relationships with youth living in the homes. Photo designed by Magnific

are at risk of sexual exploitation. DCFAS said Welcome Homes are not intensive therapeutic settings, but they provide an immediate, supervised place for youth who may otherwise have nowhere to go. The homes use a safety and stabilization approach, with behavioral health services available through partner agencies. The County also noted a statewide shortage of specialized placements for youth with complex needs.

The County wholly disagrees

with the Grand Jury’s finding that CPS fails to use the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard to limit access to cell phones and technology. DCFAS said state law protects foster youth’s rights to personal property, communication and age-appropriate access to the community. The County said phones can also be an important safety tool for contacting caregivers, social workers and other trusted adults.

The County also wholly

disagrees with the finding that gaps in data sharing leave youth vulnerable to exploitation. DCFAS said Welcome Home staff share information about exploitation concerns with law enforcement and include relevant information in missing-person reports. Social workers also make service referrals and use assessment tools to identify exploitation risks.

The County partially agrees with the finding about quarterly reports to the Board of

Supervisors. DCFAS said it has regularly reported on the challenges faced by youth who are being commercially sexually exploited or are at risk. However, it acknowledges that specific numbers of identified youth have not been included. The County plans to begin including that information in its quarterly reports starting with the second quarter of fiscal year 2026-27.

The County wholly disagrees with the findings on the Community Advisory Board and the Welcome Homes strategic plan. The County also said a Welcome Homes presentation and report were provided to the Board in November 2024 and that information has continued to be provided through quarterly reports.

The County also wholly disagrees with the finding that Welcome Home staff need additional training. DCFAS said staff are required to complete training on commercial sexual exploitation of children, trauma-informed care, harm reduction and the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard. The County said training information is provided to the Board through quarterly reports.

The County will conduct additional research on best practices used by other counties identified by the Grand Jury for identifying, preventing and responding to the exploitation of foster youth. That review is expected to be completed by Dec. 31. ★

Sac County Board of Education Seeks to Fill Vacancy

Applications for Trustee Area 6 Vacancy due Oct. 6

Sacramento County Board of Education News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento County Board of Education is seeking applications from qualified residents interested in serving as the Trustee for Area 6. The vacancy follows the resignation of Trustee Heather Davis, who served Area 6 for over ten years following her election in 2016 and re-elections in 2020 and 2022. During her tenure, Davis chaired multiple committees and served as a mentor through Links mentoring. Her leadership and commitment to students, families and the community have been deeply valued.

At its Sept. 15 Board Meeting, the Board voted to fill this vacancy through a provisional appointment. The selected individual will serve until the next regularly scheduled County Board election in 2028.

The application deadline is Tuesday, Oct. 6 at 4 p.m. PT. Applications must be received, not

postmarked, by this deadline.

The candidate interviews and selection process is Tuesday, Oct. 13 at 6:30 p.m. at the Sacramento County Office of Education’s Board Room located at 10474 Mather Blvd., Mather, CA 95655.

To be eligible for this appointment to the Sacramento County Board of Education for Trustee Area 6, candidates must meet the following legal requirements pursuant to California Education Code sections 1000(a) and 1006(a). You must live within Trustee Area 6, be a registered voter and not be an employee of SCOE or an employee of any school district within the boundaries of the Sacramento County Board of Education.

To be considered for the provisional appointment, applicants must submit a resume and a statement, of no more than two pages, outlining their interest in serving on the Board and the experience they would bring to the Board. Applicants may also

submit no more than three letters of recommendation.

Applications are accepted during regular business hours Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and must be received no later than 4 p.m. PT on Tuesday, Oct. 6.

Submit your complete application package in person at the David P. Meaney Education Center, 10474 Mather Boulevard, Mather, CA 95655 or by mail to President Wende Watson at Sacramento County Board of Education, P.O. Box 269003, Sacramento, CA 95826. You can also submit your application by email to Wende Watson at wwatson@scoe.net.

Mailed applications must be received, not postmarked, by Oct. 6 deadline.

For additional information regarding the Area 6 Trustee vacancy or the application process, contact Executive Assistant to the Superintendent Wende Watson by email at wwatson@scoe.net or by phone at 916-228-2410. ★

New Home Sales Decline in August, North State BIA Reports

North State Building Industry Association News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Buffeted by rising interest rates, economic uncertainty and continued affordability issues, new home sales in the greater Sacramento region continued to show weakness in August, the North State Building Industry Association reported.

There were 332 sales reported by BIA member builders, down 18% from July and down 33% from August 2025. However, the month-over-month decline was caused largely by the fact July was a five-week month. Average weekly sales for August were actually slightly above July's figures with 83 sales to 81.

Still, BIA President & CEO Tim Murphy said the fact interest rates have nudged up to around 6.75%

has taken a toll.

“Last fall, before the conflict with Iran, economists had expected interest rates to continue drifting downward to around 6% this year. But with rates creeping upward, a lot of prospective buyers have put their purchases on hold,” Murphy said.

“Still, buyers should remember that builders are offering powerful incentives including rate buy-downs that make homes more affordable than they may think. Prospective buyers should contact their builder and see what kind of deals are out there. We're not likely to see incentives like these again for a long time.”

During August, Sacramento recorded the most sales at 68, followed closely by Roseville with 67, Rancho Cordova at 42 and Lincoln with 25. Elk Grove and Plumas Lake tied for fifth with 24 sales each. ★



Election Information

November 3, 2026, General Election

Vote Early and Vote by Mail



Oct 5 Ballots begin to arrive by mail. Official Ballot Drop Boxes are now open.



Oct 19 Close of registration. Register today!



Oct 24 11-Day Vote Centers open through Election Day.



Oct 31 All Vote Centers open through Election Day.



Nov 3 Election Day! Last day to turn in your ballot.

Vote Early! Don't wait for Election Day.

Take advantage of early voting and avoid the lines! You can return your ballot in the mail, at any Official Ballot Drop Box, or at any Vote Center. No postage is necessary.

Track your Ballot!

Sign up for “Where’s My Ballot?” with BallotTrax, a free ballot-tracking and alert system. It is available to all voters who wish to track the status of their Vote by Mail ballot from printed to accepted. Scan the QR code or visit www.wheresmyballot.com



Vote Early!
Vote by Mail.

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris

Stay with Sabonis

By V.G. Harris

Don't look now Kings fans but the NBA preseason is only 2 weeks away, and for many Sacramento Kings fans that brings an abundance of hope and excitement.

If there is a franchise in the NBA that epitomizes the term eternal optimist, it would have to be the effervescent Kings fans that still believe that this year's team may be the next version of "Hoosiers."

I would like to believe that too!

As I was recently studying some of the more successful franchises is the NBA, I turned to the Chicago Bulls of the 1990's, and I was reminded that 3 of Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen 6 titles came after Dennis Rodman became a member of the team. In fact, they actually enjoyed a rare 3-peat with Rodman on board. Not known for being a scorer, Rodman showed the Chicago Bulls how rebounding was done and played defense with reckless abandon.

Regardless of his multi-colored hair, wild histrionics, and seemingly out of control off the court behavior, for at least 3 seasons it was Dennis Rodman that was the straw that stirred the drink.

The legendary Michael Jordan did much to encourage the Bulls franchise to take a chance on Rodman, and to this day Rodman is much admired by Jordan for his world class rebounding and some of the toughest defense every seen on an NBA court. Rodman actually led the NBA in rebounding 7 consecutive years and received the title of defensive player of the year 2 times.

Well, the Sacramento Kings don't have 6 world championships, and after 40 plus years in Sacramento are still searching for their first, but make no mistake about it, hope springs eternal despite what GM Scott Perry refers to as a rebuild.

Someone who should already be mentioned in the conversation as an all-time great Sacramento King is often maligned big man Domantas Sabonis.

Sabonis, criticized for his less than stellar defense, in my opinion is getting a bad rap and I think it's high time the fans of Sacramento come to his defense.

Domantas streak of leading the NBA in rebounding sadly came to a halt last season due to injuries that limited him to only 19 games while playing 70 in the prior season.

This Stevedore of the hardwood played one season in a Kings uniform with a broken thumb, and playing through the pain led the league in rebounding. Add that to one of the most exceptional team players the Sacramento Kings have ever had, Sabonis nightly exhibits the kind of grit that any GM should be proud to have on his team.

Although not a rim protector, Sabonis gives 100% every night and is every bit the foundation piece the Sacramento Kings need to bring credibility to their franchise.

Inexplicably, the Kings forgot what they had in DeAaron Fox and that lack of judgement led to the San Antonio Spurs getting a diamond in the rough while sending the Sacramento Kings on a 2-year search for a replacement point guard.

At this very moment the Kings have a built in double-double holding down the paint in Domantas Sabonis, and a heralded rookie point guard by the name of Darius Acuff Jr., ready to begin his inaugural season.

Selling tickets in Sacramento? Yes, I think so, but Scott Perry's next move looms large, and any suggestion of moving Domantas Sabonis could easily lose fans in a way that the Kings organization hasn't seen in years.

Make no mistake about it, Domantas Sabonis is the current face of this franchise, and it's time to celebrate that fact and not look for ways to send him packing.

Likewise, Zach Lavine hampered by injuries last season, is a former 2-time NBA all star and has something to prove in garnishing nearly 50 million in the upcoming season. Shooting nearly 40% lifetime from beyond the arc and just a shade under 20 points per game, Scott Perry should be giving this talented shooting guard all the minutes he can play.

While we're at it let's not forget that at one time Keegan Murray was thought to be a potential NBA all-star and needs to come back from a dismal injury riddled season just a year ago.

Just one month from opening night. Stay tuned.

All the best!

★

Taxing California's Rich Just Got More Complicated. Prop 40's Fate is Still Uncertain



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

Proposition 40, which would impose a 5% tax on the wealth of California's billionaires, is arguably the most important measure placed before voters in this century.

It is also probably the most confounding.

While it's sponsored by a healthcare union, it's opposed by several other major unions, who are in an odd bedfellows alliance with the billionaires it targets. Meanwhile, the leader of the sponsoring union faces allegations of personal misconduct.

And even if Prop. 40 passes, two other measures on the ballot could nullify it. Finally, the measure contains complex language, raising questions that would probably generate extended legal battles even if it does pass.

Given all that, it's not surprising that, with mail voting beginning in just a couple of weeks, a new poll indicates Prop. 40 could go either way.

A Public Policy Institute of California survey found that 52% of likely voters favor the measure and 46% are opposed, which in the real world of campaigning means it's too close to call.

Meanwhile, the two measures placed on the ballot by Prop. 40's wealthy opponents are doing fairly well. Proposition 41, which would indirectly nullify Prop. 40

by prohibiting levying any new taxes outside of the state's spending limit, and Proposition 42, which would prohibit taxes on personal property, each have narrow leads in the PPIC poll.

Were all three measures to gain approval, the one with the most votes would prevail — meaning that if Props. 41 or 42 outdoes Prop. 40, the billionaire tax would be void.

None of that intertwining complexity was explained to the people PPIC polled. They were just given the official summary of each proposition before being asked their preferences.

Prop. 40 is sponsored by the Service Employees International Union-United Healthcare Workers West. If it becomes law, a 5% tax would be levied on the assets of about 200 California billionaires, with almost all of the proceeds being spent on healthcare.

However, Dave Regan, the union's fiery leader, is facing allegations by leaders of other unions under the Service Employees International umbrella of having "a pattern and history of bullying, threats, harassment, physical violence and attempted extortion." They said an independent investigation has confirmed the allegations, and they called on him to step down.

"Our first responsibility as an organization is to lead with our values," the other union officials said in a statement. "We stand with all those who are bullied, harassed, or targeted at work, and we stand by our charges. Our national union must now act swiftly to carry out our internal due process and ensure accountability to our values. Every leader is responsible for their role

in protecting and promoting respect, workplace justice, gender equity, racial justice, and nonviolence in our union and beyond."

Regan denies the allegations.

But they give Prop. 40's opponents potentially potent campaign ammunition. The split within Service Employees International and in the larger union movement reflects both long-standing feuds and resentment that the measure's revenues would be largely confined to services that Regan's members provide.

As the multifaceted campaigning over Prop. 40 picks up steam, one figure is noticeably absent: Gov. Gavin Newsom.

Prior to the measure's qualification for the ballot, Newsom was publicly attempting to derail it, worrying aloud that if passed, it would encourage wealthy Californians to leave the state and discourage new investment. High-income Californians pay most of the state's income taxes, the state's most important source of revenue.

However, Newsom is also a likely candidate for president after his governorship ends. Opposing taxes on the rich could alienate voters in the ultra-progressive wing of the Democratic Party.

Thus, he now says taxing wealth should be a national matter, not confined to one state.

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 I'm Reevaluating My Retirement Plan; What are my Options?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: I am 69 1/2 years old now and applied for Social Security at the end of June. I am still working and was planning to begin my retirement in September. A couple of factors arose for me to question if I made a hasty decision by applying for SS. The employer I have been working for the last 29 years has asked if I would stay on a little longer (which would be good because we have some debt I want to lose before I retire). I was reading about suspending Social Security and continuing to work. If I understand it right, if I suspend my SS, no payback will be required, and I can continue to work until I'm ready to retire. No Spousal benefits taken yet. **Signed: Reevaluating my Retirement**

Dear Reevaluating Retirement: I'm assuming you asked for your Social Security benefits to start in September (when you originally planned to retire), but that you won't be 70 years old until March 2027. If that is correct, be aware that you will not immediately get all of your earned Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs) when your benefits start in September – you will

only initially get the DRCs you have earned through the end of 2025. That's because Social Security usually applies DRCs in January of each year. So, what will happen is that your September benefit amount will lack the 5.3% DRCs you earned in 2026, until January 2027 when they will apply the DRCs earned in 2026 to your monthly payment amount. Said simply, your initial September benefit will not include your full age 69.5 entitlement because it won't include the 5.3% extra you earned in 2026. That extra monthly amount will be awarded in January 2027. FYI, if you were to, instead, claim for your SS benefits to start in the month you turn 70 (March 2027), you would get your full age 70 amount immediately (SS awards all earned DRCs if benefits are claimed to start in the month you turn 70).

Now, on to your question: Yes, if you take your benefits effective with September 2026 you can suspend your benefits, but you can only suspend them until the month you turn 70. And if you are suspending your benefits, you will not need to repay Social Security for any benefits you happen to receive before you suspend. As is obvious, you will not receive any SS payments while your benefits are suspended, and you will earn DRCs for the months your benefits are suspended, resulting in a higher monthly amount at age 70. Also, since you have already passed your SS full retirement age (FRA), you can work and earn as

much as you like, without your Social Security benefits being negatively affected.

Regarding your comment "No Spousal benefits taken yet." FYI, you cannot get spousal benefits while your benefits are suspended, nor can your wife get spousal benefits from you while you SS retirement benefits are suspended. To be clear, spouse benefits are only paid when one spouse's benefit at their FRA is less than 50% of the other spouse's FRA benefit. Spouse benefits are always based upon FRA entitlements, not on the larger amounts which will result from waiting longer to claim. In other words, your wife would only be eligible for a spousal benefit from you if her FRA entitlement was less than 50% of your FRA entitlement (not your age 70 SS entitlement). And she cannot get a spousal benefit while your benefits are suspended.

To recap: Yes, you can suspend receipt of your SS retirement benefits until the month you turn 70 and get credit for that delay (resulting in a higher benefit). And, yes, you can continue working as long as you wish, and your benefits will not be negatively affected. And just for added information, you can also ask Social Security to withdraw your current application for SS benefits and then reapply in January 2027 for your benefits to start in March 2027 (the month you turn 70). You have both options.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. ★



In the "Terminator" movie series, the artificial-intelligence system known as Skynet is given control of the nation's nuclear weapons and uses it to try to destroy humanity. One reason that apocalyptic scenarios involving AI are implausible is that, having seen how that particular movie ends, we are unlikely to be foolish enough to give AI custody of the most destructive weapons on the planet.

The unthinkable is nonetheless a hot topic of conversation, given that a researcher at Anthropic just resigned and issued a doomsday warning. According to Jacob Coxon, the rush to develop AI is "gambling with our lives," since it will soon create "superhuman systems that can hack anything, revolutionize any field overnight, and acquire real power and resources."

A current Anthropic employee then chimed in: "We really do earnestly believe AI could kill all humans!" He put the chances at greater than 10% in the next decade. The idea here is that Anthropic and similar firms are, in effect, running their own Manhattan Projects, with consequences unknown and potentially very dire.

Now, ChatGPT as we know it doesn't seem particularly well-suited to destroying humanity. It is a souped-up version of Google that is impressively fast, but also

Will AI Destroy Humanity?

mistake-prone. If it can mess up basic math or the New York Yankees roster, surely it can't carry out the complex tasks necessary to fashion an apocalyptic event.

Tech companies, though, have labs working on so-called frontier models that are much more powerful and reportedly developing more quickly than expected. The worry is that an AI model itself will begin to develop new AI very quickly in an "intelligence explosion," the equivalent of Skynet becoming self-aware at 2:14 a.m. Eastern Time on Aug. 29, 1997.

The thinking is that if such an AI model goes rogue and turns against humanity, it will be too clever and fast for us to combat. Yet it's hard to see the mechanism that such a hostile superintelligence would use to commit omnicide. The rogue AI would presumably have to do something in the real world -- say, launching nukes, manufacturing killer robots or releasing a deadly virus.

If it lacks physical agency, AI could presumably be unplugged or contained. (It was after humans tried to deactivate Skynet, by the way, that the system decided we were a threat that had to be neutralized.)

Some doomsayers posit a malicious person using advanced AI to come up with a design for a killer virus and a plan to release it without detection. This is a different scenario, though, from AI turning against people of its own volition. In a world years

from now when much more advanced AI is a reality, we will need to think through safeguards to keep dangerous systems -- nukes, biolabs -- from being compromised by AI-enabled cyberattacks or exploited by criminals and terrorists.

It's easy to imagine breaches of financial systems or attacks on critical infrastructure that would fall short of endangering all of mankind. Even if one takes an alarmist view of the risks, it's unclear how the development of AI can be stopped. Any deal with the Chinese to slow down research couldn't be trusted, and might simply allow them to pass us in the AI race by subterfuge. In other words, we'd still get Skynet, only with Chinese characteristics.

There's also the reality that AI will be a necessary tool in protecting against the malicious use of AI -- not to mention all of its other positive potential. If we slow or end research in the U.S., we might end up vulnerable to superintelligence developed by actors who mean us harm.

Science fiction is fascinating and sometimes prescient. Works by the likes of Philip K. Dick, Aldous Huxley and Arthur C. Clarke had genuine insights into the future. But that doesn't mean we are living in the plot of "The Terminator," and we shouldn't scare ourselves into forswearing transformative technology.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review. (c) 2026 by King Features Synd., Inc. ★

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Informing, Empowering & Engaging Readers With Their Community



By Patsy McGavock,
JustServe.org

Recently, we looked at networking differently — not as collecting contacts for what we might need, but building relationships through which skills, knowledge and opportunity move both ways.

But where do those networks actually come together?

Where does the person with an idea meet an experienced person to shape it? Or a community need meet business resources, non-profits doing the work, or someone who navigates county government well? How do those individual connections begin building something greater than any one of them?

Quite often — at a healthy Chamber of Commerce.

Many think of chambers as transactional places where business owners network. But across my interviews in education, workforce development, government and community organizations, I keep hearing something more foundational — chambers are where economic, civic and community networks intersect. Then flourish.

So, I asked Orangevale Chamber President Anthony Garcia why.

He described the chamber through three Cs: convener, catalyst and champion — describing less an organization creating opportunity, and more one creating intersections where opportunity can grow.

Garcia carefully described the chamber’s role in an unincorporated area. “We are the closest thing to a local micro representative government,” he said, immediately clarifying that the chamber is not a government entity.

What it can do is connect people.

It connects people and

Chambers of Commerce:
Connecting Community to Opportunity

resources across business, community and government. A need with someone who may know how to meet it.

Garcia called the chamber a “common thread.”

As convener, chambers bring those threads together. As catalysts, they help turn relationships and resources into activity. As champions, Garcia describes chambers as a “representative voice,” advocating with the county and other decision-makers for the businesses and communities they serve.

But there is a qualifier. “We can’t act the catalyst if there’s nothing to catalyze,” Garcia said.

The chamber doesn’t create the businesses, non-profits, volunteers, ideas or energy of a community. It creates places for them to intersect.

Last issue, Roxanne Stellmacher, chief of operations and programs at the CA EDGE Coalition, described workforce development as really being “about opportunity development.”

Her words reach beyond workforce. Opportunity develops at intersections — when someone discovers what another person knows, needs or can offer. A healthy, three-C-centered chamber can become part of a community’s bedrock for opportunity development.

Business owners may enter that network looking to grow. But they also bring opportunities with them — employment, expertise, mentorship, sponsorship, volunteer leadership, introductions and resources.

Those intersections begin forming highways. Not simply highways of commerce, but of ideas, experience and opportunity.

One small example isn’t about commerce at all. Garcia pointed to the chamber’s live music and beer garden at the Orangevale Farmers Market. It isn’t

a moneymaker. “But the intangible benefit is the human connection,” Garcia said. That’s where the door opens for the rest of us.

Residents don’t have to own a business to join the chamber. Its “Community Advocate” membership makes an impact beyond business interests, what Garcia described as “more for the human connection.” He highlights parents of teenagers making personal connections with local job opportunities, someone looking toward their next career, or people with a creative mindset finding outlets for volunteerism.

So perhaps the question isn’t only what our chambers can do for local businesses.

It’s how the rest of us strengthen this community driver.

Support businesses investing back into our neighborhoods and vendors at community events, Garcia said. Offer what you know. Share a need. Connect two people who should know each other.

Networks become powerful when we each use them both ways — finding opportunity and recognizing what we have to offer.

Each connection builds highways carrying skills, ideas, resources and opportunity farther than any of us could carry them alone.

Maybe our job isn’t simply to find the opportunities already moving along them.

Maybe it’s to help build another road.

Because, eventually, seeing a need isn’t enough — build a pathway where people, resources and voices can move.

That job belongs to all of us.

Patsy McGavock is a volunteer writer and community advocate “informing, empowering and engaging readers with their community.” and can be reached at PatsyMcGavock.JustServe@gmail.com. ★



BY JOSH F.W. COOK

★ CALIFORNIA ★
POLICY
AND
ETHICS

Republican Wheel Squeaking
Scores a Win on Crime

By Josh Cook

There is an old saying: “the squeaky wheel gets the grease.”

In the case of one-sided politics in CA, the Republicans’ constant “squeaking on crime” has worked, as the CA Senate dumped two board members because they are tired of Republicans, who have no power to shape policy with legislation, taking to shaping policy by simply pointing out every time the Majority Party sticks with public safety “reforms” that are popular with about 2% of the voting-age population.

Patricia Cassidy, who had already served nine years on the parole board, and Teal Kozel, who had served three, separately approved the release of David Funston and Gregory Vogelsang. Both men were serving life sentences for sexual crimes committed against children in the Sacramento area in the 1990s. Sacramento public safety officials opposed the parole grants and called on the public to protest, which they did, loudly. The cases also drew scrutiny of the state’s elderly parole program, which allows cer-

tain offenders age 50 and older to seek release.

In response, Republican lawmakers in both houses of the Legislature drafted bills seeking greater transparency in parole board decision-making—Senator Shannon Grove from Bakersfield “squeaking” the loudest and most consistently. The Senate leader, sick of hearing it, canned the nominations of Cassidy and Kozel for consideration in the usual manner, and opted to set them aside to avoid the noise. The Rules Committee took up the appointments of five other commissioners who have been less controversial.

Much of this goes back to Proposition 36, which the entire Democratic Party apparatus in the state opposed but passed anyway. Prop. 36 increased penalties for theft and drug crimes in 2014. Sacramento Sheriff Jim Cooper led the charge, as he has grown tired of arresting horrible people who then get a pass from the parole board to rape, rob, and kill again.

The pendulum is swinging on crime; this latest data point indicates that public safety is a top issue in CA.

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THE CHARACTERS ARE JUST KID-GITS OF OTHER, BETTER CHARACTERS. THE PLOT LINES ARE PAPER THIN AND HALF OF 'EM DON'T GO ANYWHERE.

I JUST FINISHED THIS COMIC BOOK SERIES AND IT'S SOMETHING.

IT STARTS OUT LIKE A GOLDEN AGE COMIC. VERY "EVERYTHING IS BLACK AND WHITE."

THE MAIN HERO IS A GOODY TWO-SHOES. HONESTLY, HE'S PRETTY BLAND.

BUT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, YOU GET THESE HINTS THAT SOMETHING'S NOT QUITE RIGHT. AND THE HERO SEES IT, TOO.

BUT THEN IN THE LAST ISSUE, IT TURNS OUT THE REST OF THE RUN WAS A DREAM! THE HERO'S BEEN TRAPPED IN A DEVICE AND SOMEONE'S BEEN FEEDING HIM HALLUCINATIONS.

BUT IF YOU GET INTO THE LORE--

IT'S TWO IN TH' MORNIN'. THIS AIN'TK A GOOD TIME.

IT'S THE PERFECT TIME! I DO MY BEST CONVERSATIN' WHEN IT'S INCONVENIENT.

Amber Waves

GERALD, HONEY, IT'S GRANDMA'S BIRTHDAY THIS WEEKEND AND WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A PARTY.

OOH, LIKE GOING TO ROCKET PIZZA WITH LASER TAG, A BIG CAKE WITH A MAGICIAN AND BALLOONS?

NO, DEAR, JUST A SMALL GET-TOGETHER, A NICE DINNER AND MAYBE HER FAVORITE PIE.

GEEZ, THIS IS WHY OLDER PEOPLE NEVER GET EXCITED ABOUT THEIR BIRTHDAY!!

by Dave T. Phipps

Out on a Limb

IT'S PRETTY COMMON IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA. IT'S A BD OF ORCADELICS.

FAR OUT, MAN

by Gary Kopervas

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Menu is shorter. 2. Pad is longer. 3. Finger is moved. 4. Curtain is not as wide. 5. Apron strap is moved. 6. Tie is missing.

TIGER

HE NEEDS EXERCISE

I'M TAKING HIM TO THE PLAYGROUND

HIGHER, TIGER

CATCH ME, TIGER

SPIN ME FASTER

HOLD ME UP

LIFT ME, TIGER

by BUD BLAKE

GRIN and BEAR IT

"I'M not telling him to move. YOU tell him!"

Just Like Cats & Dogs

SO SWEET MY MOTHER STILL WRITES ME LETTERS. "HELLO, DEAR, HOPE THINGS ARE GOOD WITH YOU, I MEAN CONSIDERING"...

by Dave T. Phipps

S	W	A	G		C	A	M		N	T	H				
N	A	S	A		C	O	P	E		S	P	A	R	E	
L	I	E	U		A	C	R	E		L	O	G	O	N	
	F	A	C	E	B	O	O	K		O	K	A	Y		
		H	E	M	A	N			R	O	E				
F	E	D	O	R	A				T	O	P	M	O	S	T
E	R	E		I	N	K	P	O	T		O	R	C	A	
T	A	W	S	E		N	O	R		A	N	I	O	N	
A	S	A	P		S	E	P	S	I	S		O	R	G	
S	E	R	I	A	T	E			S	K	I	N	N	Y	
		N	A	Y			S	A	L	E	S				
	T	A	N	H			F	I	R	E	W	O	R	K	
M	E	L	E	E			R	E	S	T		B	A	I	T
B	E	A	R	D			E	G	O	S		A	N	T	I
A	D	S					E	E	N			R	I	S	C

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CLUES

ACROSS

1. Convention freebie

5. *Tucker of TV's "Modern Family"

8. To the ____ degree

11. *Space Shuttle Program org.

12. Deal with it

13. Extra tire

15. Stead

16. Real estate land unit

17. Enter user name and password (2 words)

18. *Instagram's parent company

20. "Fine by me"

21. Strong virile man

22. Caviar alternative

23. *Bruno Mars' hat

26. Highest-reaching

30. Before of yore

31. Quill-dipping vessel

32. Popular aquarium show star

35. Schoolmarm's whip

37. Neither here ____ there

38. Opposite of cation

39. Hurry up, acr.

40. Blood infection

42. Not com or edu

43. Arranged in order

45. Inside info

47. Aye's opposite

48. B2C business

50. Hyperbolic tangent

52. *Katy Perry's 2010 hit

55. Battle royal

56. One R in R&R

57. Nightcrawler

59. *Hipsters' facial trend

60. Prima donnas' problems

61. Not in favor

62. Public promotions

63. Even, to a poet

64. CISC alternative

DOWN

1. *Pete Davidson's TV show

2. Ragamuffin

3. On a deck, perhaps

4. Cowboy, in South America

5. Popular warming drink

6. Chef's garb

7. Opposite of domineering and bold

8. Hindu serpent deity

9. Legendary King Priam's city

10. Chicken coop dweller

12. Taxi driver

13. Ship with a single mast

14. * ____ GO game

19. Spooky

22. Decay

23. Greek cheese, pl.

24. Remove from existence

25. ____s, blended

26. Scotch whisky

27. High rocky hills

28. Celestial hunter

29. Open disrespect

30. Sour-tasting

32. Capped joint

33. *Funko ____!

36. *Toy for the fidgety

38. Off kilter

40. Dirty dwelling

41. Specks in the sea

44. Oohed and ____

46. Atmospheric pressure line, on weather map

48. Military blockade

49. Fire-raising

50. ____ off on a golf course, past tense

51. Exclamation of sorrow

52. * ____ solo, Alex Hon-nold's feat

53. Raja's daughter

54. Baby fox and baby beaver

55. Business school degree, acr.

58. Habitual twitching

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4	3	1	7	9	6	8	2	5
8	2	6	3	4	5	9	7	1
6	4	2	5	3	9	1	8	7
5	8	3	1	7	4	6	9	2
9	1	7	2	6	8	5	4	3
1	9	4	6	2	3	7	5	8
2	7	8	4	5	1	3	6	9
3	6	5	9	8	7	2	1	4

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9		7						3
		4		2			5	
			4		1			
	6	5	9			2		

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

Mama, Art Your Heart Out

Story and photos
by Thomas J. Sullivan

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Ana Zuloaga-Walker is the founder and program director for Mama, Art Your Heart Out, affectionately called MAYHO, a local social support group for moms with autistic children.

The group supports fellow autistic mamas in a social setting “by sharing experiences, offering support to one another and to help create community through art,” Zuloaga-Walker said.

MAYHO seeks to “provide supportive and creative spaces where mothers of autistic children can practice self-care, express themselves freely, form genuine connections and find strength in community.”

Autism is a developmental disorder with symptoms that appear within the first three years of life. Its formal diagnostic name is autism spectrum disorder. The word “spectrum” indicates that autism appears in different forms with varying levels of severity. That means that each individual with autism experiences their own unique strengths, symptoms and challenges.

“I envisioned a space where mothers could come together without judgment and transform the grief, guilt, uncertainty, fear, and challenges they carried into connection, healing and art,” she said.

“Mama, Art Your Heart Out itself helps mothers with the joys, challenges, questions and emotions that come with raising and advocating for their children,” she said.

“Many parents who are struggling to find real-world solutions to their child’s autism challenges need to know that they are not alone,” she said. “And each person with autism has their own strengths, likes, dislikes, interests, challenges



The group supports fellow autistic mamas in a social setting “by sharing experiences, offering support to one another and to help create community through art,” Zuloaga-Walker said.

and skills, just like you do,” she said.

At the recent MAYHO meeting, Zuloaga-Walker introduced me to several other moms who were about to begin a journaling art project. Active membership is over 300 mothers with children ranging in age from two months to age 26.

Zuloaga-Walker is originally from Southern California. She moved with her mother to Sausalito at age 11 where she was surrounded by the creative spirit of the Bay Area, and where she said she developed a deep appreciation for art and self-expression at an early age. She has since earned a bachelor of arts degree in creative writing.

She remained in the Bay Area for most of her adult life before getting married, becoming the mother of two boys, both diagnosed with autism, and eventually moving to the Sacramento area. Her two boys are now young adults.



Ana Zuloaga-Walker is the founder and program director for Mama, Art Your Heart Out, affectionately called MAYHO, a local social support group for moms with autistic children.

The informal setting provided a much-needed moment of respite for each participating mom who had their own heart-felt story to tell of endless love and tireless advocacy for their autistic children. Some have

been with the group from the beginning, watching their children grow and overcome new challenges.

MAYHO could easily grow its membership in the greater Citrus Heights, Fair Oaks and Carmichael area as many more moms learn about the group and what it offers, she said.

All moms of autistic children are welcome to join the group, she said.

“The population of young autistic children in our area is very substantial, and many mothers just don’t know that our group exists,” she said.

The recent evening art project focused on using words and images to express the feelings experienced while navigating the bureaucratic maze of finding available resources, identifying suitable day programs, and working with teachers and school districts to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that may or may not adequately address a child’s

unique needs. “As a mother, artist, writer and autism advocate, I believe creativity has the power to help us process our experiences, rediscover ourselves and remind us that we were never meant to do this alone,” she said.

Before founding “Mama, Art Your Heart Out,” Zuloaga-Walker created “Baby, Art Your Heart Out,” a community arts program supported by a grant from First 5 Sacramento. The program brought autistic children and their families together through sensory exploration and process art.

“After both of my sons were diagnosed with autism, I decided to become a full-time mother and advocate,” she said. “I quickly realized that if I wanted a community of people who truly understood what I was experiencing, I would have to help create one.”

MAYHO also offers a resource list of community and state resources and agencies for parents of autistic children. These include the ALTA Regional Center, FEAT - Families for Early Autism Treatment, and the Center for Autism and Related Disorders.

Upcoming MAYHO meetings are 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 25 and Friday, Oct. 16 in the community room of the Fair Oaks Library, 11601 Fair Oaks Blvd.

The group also has an active book club which meets twice a month and hosts occasional “Mamas Night Outs,” dinners, family gatherings and other events that support its vision.

The community group is also in need of donated art supplies and a permanent physical location with available storage.

Interested autistic moms can contact Ana Zuloaga-Walker for more information about MAYHO at: mamaartyourheartout@gmail.com or join the mother’s support group on Facebook at: facebook.com/groups/MAYHO ★

Orangevale Dairy Queen Named Small Business of the Month

Assemblyman Josh Hoover
News Release

ORANGEVALE, CA (MPG) - On Sept. 15 Assemblyman Josh Hoover (R-Folsom) announced that Orangevale Dairy Queen has been named the September 2026 Small Business of the Month for the 7th Assembly District.

Small businesses are the backbone of the 7th Assembly District and our nation, creating jobs, strengthening neighborhoods and bringing communities together. Few businesses have been woven into the fabric of the Orangevale community quite like Orangevale Dairy Queen, which has served local families for more than four decades.

Orangevale Dairy Queen has been part of the Orangevale community since 1982, when Joe Ellering came to the location while it was operating as a Foster’s Freeze. Joe later purchased the business and began what would become a lifelong commitment to serving the community he had come to love. In 1988, the restaurant officially became Dairy Queen, and Joe chose to focus his efforts on the Orangevale location.

In 2015, Joe drew on his background as a general contractor to oversee a major remodel of the original building. While modernizing the restaurant, he made sure to preserve its familiar walk-up windows and outdoor seating, maintaining the nostalgic, small-town atmosphere that generations of Orangevale families have enjoyed.

Joe and his wife, Cynthia, have also built a family-run business that provides valuable opportunities for young people, including many experiencing their first job. Their workplace emphasizes



Assemblyman Josh Hoover and district representative Natalya Sachuk present Joe and Cythina Ellering of Orangevale Dairy Queen with the September 2026 Small Business of the Month for the 7th Assembly District. Photo courtesy of Assemblyman Josh Hoover

responsibility, accountability, trust, and treating others with respect, helping young employees develop skills and character that will serve them well throughout their lives.

Giving back to the community has always been an important part of Orangevale Dairy Queen’s mission. Through its Round Up campaign, the restaurant contributes more than \$12,000 each year to local nonprofits, the Orangevale-Fair Oaks Food Bank, youth sports programs, and other charitable

organizations. The business also supports Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals, local schools, sports teams, families and community events.

Over the years, Orangevale Dairy Queen has become much more than a place to grab a burger or ice cream. It is a beloved community gathering place where generations of families have celebrated birthdays, school achievements, team victories, fundraisers and countless other community traditions. Its longstanding service and commitment

to Orangevale have earned numerous recognitions and, more importantly, the appreciation of the people it serves.

“Orangevale Dairy Queen is a wonderful example of what makes small businesses so special,” said Assemblyman Josh Hoover. “For more than four decades, Joe and Cynthia Ellering have not only built a successful business, but have created a place where young people can get their start, families can make memories, and the entire community can find a friend. I am

proud to recognize Orangevale Dairy Queen as the 7th Assembly District’s Small Business of the Month and grateful for the Ellerings’ longstanding commitment to Orangevale.”

Assemblyman Hoover congratulates Joe and Cynthia Ellering and the entire Orangevale Dairy Queen team for more than four decades of dedication to the community and wishes them continued success for many years to come.

Orangevale Dairy Queen is located at 9295 Greenback Lane, Orangevale. ★

Pet Junction Brings Decades of Pet Industry Experience

Story and photos
by Ornella Rossi

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - After nearly three decades working throughout California’s pet industry, Jim Dempsey is returning to where it all started, a neighborhood pet store.

Dempsey and his wife, Jennie, recently opened Pet Junction Pet Supply & Grooming at 4044 Sunrise Blvd., Suite 100, in Rancho Cordova, offering pet food, treats, toys, grooming services and a self-service dog wash.

The store celebrated its grand opening Sept. 12 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, vendors, raffles, giveaways and local organizations, including Itsie Bitsie Rescue. Community members also brought their dogs to take part in the event.

For Dempsey, the store brings together a career that has largely been spent on the other side of the pet retail industry.

“I’ve been in the pet industry for 25, 30 years,” Dempsey said. “Growing up, my parents had pet stores.”

He later moved into outside sales, traveling throughout California and other states while selling products to independent pet store owners.

“The local community stuff, the local city stuff, the mom-and-pop stores have been who I am,” Dempsey said.

After years on the road, he began looking for a change and saw an opportunity to open a store of his own.

Pet Junction places an emphasis on both services and helping customers better understand the products they buy for their animals.

The store employs full-time groomers and offers self-service washing stations equipped with shampoos, towels, tubs and dryers.

“Come here, make the mess here. Don’t make the mess at



Pet Junction Pet Supply & Grooming celebrated its grand opening Sept. 12 at 4044 Sunrise Blvd., Suite 100.



Pet Junction celebrated its grand opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, raffles and giveaways for attendees.



Rancho Cordova Mayor Garrett Gatewood welcomed the business and highlighted Dempsey’s background in the industry during the ribbon-cutting ceremony.



Pet Junction employs full-time groomers and offers self-service washing stations where customers can use the store’s tubs, shampoos, towels and dryers.

home,” Dempsey said. “We clean it up, you can go home.”

The store also carries pet foods, supplements, toys, training products, crates and treats. Dempsey said one of his goals is to provide customers with more information about nutrition and ingredients than they may typically receive while

shopping at larger retailers.

“We’re going to be able to answer the questions that your box stores can’t,” Dempsey said.

That could include helping customers understand ingredients in pet food or explaining differences between kibble, frozen and refrigerated options.

Dempsey said the store carries some familiar brands found at larger retailers along with products from smaller manufacturers.

“We have kibbles that you will find at PetSmart or the grocery store, but we also have kibbles that we feel are much cleaner, much healthier, which come from a smaller batch,” he said.

Pet Junction also plans to periodically bring product representatives into the store so customers can speak directly with manufacturers and ask questions.

Several representatives and community leaders attended the grand opening.

Mika Klinsmann, representing state Sen. Roger Niello’s office, presented the Dempseys with a certificate of recognition.

“We’re so happy to have you here,” Klinsmann said. “As a pet owner myself, thank you for being here.”

Rancho Cordova Mayor Garrett Gatewood also recognized Dempsey’s experience in the industry and his family’s history with pet stores.

“Pet Junction is a culmination of Jim’s lifelong passion with animals, beginning with his parents’ pet store, where he developed a love for animals and customer service,” Gatewood said.

While Pet Junction offers the products customers expect from a pet supply store, Dempsey said the larger goal is to provide information and services for owners who increasingly consider their animals part of the family.

“The dogs and cats are more like family members,” Dempsey said, “and that’s what this is set up for.”

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