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RIVER VALLEY TIMES

42ND YEAR • ISSUE 19 *Serving Rancho Murieta, Sloughouse, Wilton* OCTOBER 9, 2026

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Candidates Outline Priorities for CSD's Future

By Gail Bullen

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Nov. 3 election could shape the direction of the Rancho Murieta Community Services District for years to come. Four of the five board seats are at stake, with 10 candidates offering differing approaches to water security, aging infrastructure, financial accountability and future development. Board President John Merchant is the only director whose seat is not up for election.

To help voters compare the candidates, the River Valley Times invited all 10 to answer the same three questions, with their responses limited to 250 words.

The questions were as follows:

Please provide a brief biography, including your occupation and professional, public-service or community experience relevant to serving on the RMCS D board.

Why are you running for the RMCS D board?

What do you believe are the most urgent issues facing the district? Identify up to three and explain what you would do to address them.

The ballot will feature two separate contests for the district board. Eight candidates are competing for three seats with four-year terms: Jeff Berkheimer, Stephen Booth, Maria Caudill, Tim



Four of the Rancho Murieta Community Services District's five board seats are at stake in the Nov. 3 election, with 10 candidates vying for office. Photo courtesy of CSD

Dec, William Gere, Peter Reagan, Tom Shewchuk and Catherine Silvera. Michael Martel and John Van Doren are competing for one seat with a two-year term.

Seeking Four-Year Terms – Three Seats



Jeff Berkheimer Biography

Jeff is a public utility executive with more than 23 years of experience, including 16 years

at SMUD. He is now utility director for the city of Lodi. He oversees a municipal utility serving over 27,400 accounts with a \$100-plus-million annual budget. His experience includes operations, engineering, infrastructure, planning, rates, and resource management, regulatory compliance, capital planning, reliability and technology. He has led major initiatives in decarbonization, infrastructure, and long-term resource planning and holds multiple utility-related patents. He holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and is a licensed professional engineer.

Reason Running

Rancho Murieta faces critical decisions about water, infrastructure, finances, and long-term

growth. I am running to bring practical utility leadership focused on solving problems rather than prolonging political disputes. We must aggressively pursue water-supply augmentation, maintain our infrastructure, restore financial accountability and responsibly plan for future needs. Future development should pay its fair share, but litigation and delay cannot substitute for solving our underlying water challenges.

Urgent Issues

Financial accountability: Complete overdue audits, restore financial discipline and protect access to grants and affordable infrastructure financing.

Water supply: Pursue every viable augmentation option—including

Continued on page 4

**CSD Forum
Coverage
Coming Online
and in Oct. 23
Issue**

By Gail Bullen

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Oct. 7 Rancho Murieta Community Services District candidate forum, organized by the League of Women Voters of Sacramento County, was scheduled after the production deadline for this issue. A story about the forum will be posted as soon as possible on the River Valley Times website, therivervalleytimes.com, and published in the Oct. 23 print edition.

Candidates Tom Shewchuk, Catherine Silvera and Jeff Berkheimer also announced that they had arranged for professional video recording of the forum, with the recording to be posted on Nextdoor within a few days of the event.

The forum grew out of a candidate's request for the league's assistance, according to Lilli DuVal, a Rancho Murieta resident and league board member who organized the event. Candidate Tim Dec confirmed to the River Valley Times that he made the request.

In a Nextdoor post, DuVal said the league was contacted around Sept. 26. She agreed to help find a meeting space, and community members she consulted favored the Rancho Murieta Association building for the Oct. 7 event.

However, the venue became a source of controversy when organizers learned that attendance would be restricted to RMA members, excluding district residents who live outside the gates.

The exclusion drew strong criticism on social media, with many posters expressing frustration that those residents could vote in the CSD election but could not attend the candidate forum.

DuVal said CSD initially assisted with arrangements to allow residents from throughout the district through the gates, and the first announcement reflected that understanding. The following day, she said, RMA informed her that it would not allow that access. A revised announcement disclosed the restriction.

CSD Board President John Merchant addressed the issue on Nextdoor, saying the district had offered its building for the forum. He cited limited space and the district's desire to remain neutral as

Continued on page 3

'Curiouser and Curiouser'

Queen of Hearts Fashion Show Brings Wonderland to Rancho Murieta



Model Kellie Bindel shows off an outfit from Cho Cho's when the Rancho Murieta Women's Club presents the Queen of Hearts Fashion Show on Sept. 23 at the Rancho Murieta Country Club.

Story and photos by Gail Bullen

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - A queen of hearts, top-hatted escorts and a runway filled with fall fashions brought a touch of Wonderland to the Rancho Murieta Country Club on Sept. 23. The Rancho Murieta Women's Club presented the sold-out luncheon and fashion show,

with all 204 tickets purchased a week before the reservation deadline.

The welcome began in the parking lot, where elegantly dressed "Mad Hatters" shuttled guests to the clubhouse in golf carts. Inside, the men offered guests glasses of bubbly, and hostesses in black helped them find their tables.

Guests followed the

invitation to wear black and white, creating a striking contrast with the red dresses worn by event co-chairs Theresa Ilaga and Erin Bailey.

"I didn't see a single person who didn't wear black and white," Club President Bonnie Kirschman said.

Kirschman praised the organizers for carrying the queen of hearts theme through every detail, from

the escorts and table settings to the programs and a special appearance by Felicia Ragsdale as the queen.

"The fashion show was fabulous from start to finish," Kirschman said. "Erin and Theresa don't miss a detail."

The Murieta Room became a sea of black and red, accented with gold.

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‘Curiouser and Curiouser’

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Volunteers fashioned centerpieces from black top hats, gold trim and roses, adding “Off with Their Heads!” signs. Candelabras and tall candles enhanced the atmosphere, while the program’s queen of hearts logo featured a faux diamond crown and a red jeweled heart.

Afterward, the co-chairs explained their inspiration. “We wanted to bring a little Alice in Wonderland magic to the fashion show,” they said. “Guests were invited to wear black and white, and we carried the playful theme through the event.”

The luncheon featured a blackened salmon BLT appetizer, an Asian-grilled chicken salad, and strawberry shortcake. Raffle drawings followed, with prizes donated by local businesses and individuals.

Jefferson Airplane’s “White Rabbit” played before the fashion show, setting the mood for the afternoon’s main attraction: approximately 55 outfits presented by 18 volunteer models.

Participating stores included Blonde Desperado, Main Street Mercantile, The Clothes Mine and Unique Boutique for U in Sutter Creek, along with Cho Cho’s, Chico’s Palladio and the Rancho Murieta Country Club Pro Shop.

Ilaga and Bailey shared the commentary, greeting models by name, describing their outfits and identifying the stores that supplied them. Their lively exchanges mixed fashion details with suggestions for wearing the clothes to dinner, on vacation, to a winery or out with friends.

The fashions ranged from casual denim and golf attire to elegant dresses and sparkling evening jackets. Embroidered sweaters, reversible jackets, wide-leg pants and fall colors offered plenty of ideas for updating a wardrobe.

Janet Cann brought Western flair to the runway in a rust-colored dress from Blonde Desperado, pairing its flowing sleeves and dramatic high-low hem with cowboy boots. Other looks



Joanne Lehman, left, and Geri Dekker pose with Felicia Ragsdale as the Queen of Hearts.

included a black-and-white sequined jacket from Cho Cho’s and a leopard-print jacket from Chico’s.

Ragsdale made appearances during the show as the queen of hearts, playfully threatening “Off with your head!” as the commentators encouraged guests to keep their royal visitor happy.

The co-chairs said they enjoyed bringing a little Joan Rivers and Melissa Rivers energy to their shared commentary while keeping it conversational and informative.

Behind the scenes, 36 volunteers helped with many details, including fittings, rehearsals, dressing the models, and raffles.

The show ended with a final parade of models, loud applause and flowers presented to Ilaga and Bailey. A gift certificate to The Cupola Spa served as the final door prize.

For new club member Marcia Reimers, attending her first fashion show

made the afternoon a memorable introduction.

“I thought it was absolutely fabulous. The women were beautiful. The clothes were gorgeous. The food was delicious,” she said. “The booths that they had for gifts, I spent way too much money, and I had a wonderful time.”

The event also drew rave reviews on Nextdoor, where attendees praised the festive décor, fashions, luncheon and the many details that made the afternoon special.

Kirschman said the organizers’ talents and enthusiasm were helping bring excitement to the club. “The Women’s Club can’t thank them enough for their hard work and dedication,” she said.

In a follow-up text, Kirschman emphasized her appreciation for everyone who helped: “I left out a very huge thank you to all of the volunteers.”

During the luncheon, Kirschman welcomed 17

new members who had joined since the previous luncheon and announced several upcoming events. The club’s final blood drive of the year will take place Oct. 26 from noon to 6 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church. The

Dec. 2 holiday luncheon will feature a return performance by High Voltage, the El Dorado Musical Theatre youth group. Plans also are underway to celebrate the Women’s Club’s 35th anniversary in January. ★



Natachia Taylor displays the queen of hearts program, featuring a jeweled heart and crown against a black-and-white background.



Fashion show organizers Theresa Ilaga, left, and Erin Bailey address the crowd.

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Summerfest Coverage Coming Online and in Print



Attendees enjoy the brightly lit carnival inside Rancho Murieta’s gates at Stonehouse Park during Summerfest, which ran from Oct. 1-3. This year’s event was another success, according to Sherry Carrillo, president of the all-volunteer Summerfest board. “Everything went really, really well,” she said. Full coverage of Rancho Murieta’s second-biggest event of the year will be posted on the River ValleyTimes website by the time readers receive their Oct. 9 issue and will appear in the next print edition Oct. 23. Photo by Gail Bullen

Music Mike Draws Crowd to Free Kiwanis Concert



Music Mike plays guitar and sings for children gathered around him at the Lake Clementia Amphitheater during the Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta’s annual children’s concert Sept. 27. The free event drew about 250 children, parents and other attendees, according to Roger Brandt. Familiar songs and movement activities kept youngsters engaged while their families spread out on the grassy slope above them. Rancho Murieta Key Club students assisted with the concert. In a Facebook post afterward, the Kiwanis Club celebrated the smiles and enthusiasm of children and parents alike, describing the gathering as a “picture perfect evening.” Photo courtesy Kiwanis Club

CSD Forum Coverage Coming Online and in Oct. 23 Issue

Continued from page 1

reasons the board had declined to sponsor a candidate event.

Merchant said CSD had not anticipated the restriction because district residents previously had been admitted through the gates for community meetings. He said the district renewed its offer of meeting space after learning of the limitation.

DuVal disputed parts of Merchant’s account, saying she had worked with the CSD general manager and had been offered the district’s facility while arrangements with RMA were already underway. She said the league had no

preference between the venues and that CSD subsequently emailed her saying it wanted no involvement in the event.

Before the newspaper’s deadline, the league listed eight confirmed participants: Stephen Booth, Maria Caudill, Tim Dec, William Gere, Michael Martel, Tom Shewchuk, Catherine Silvera and Jon VanDoren. Silvera was added after clarifying that her omission from the initial list resulted from a misunderstanding.

The league described the forum as an opportunity for voters to hear candidates’ views on water, infrastructure, safety, finances and district business practices. ★

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Candidates Outline Priorities for CSD’s Future

Continued from page 1
Clementia, additional wells, storage, and inter-agency backup connections. Under a 1977-type drought scenario, existing demand could exhaust available water in approximately 17 months; adding about 600 homes could accelerate depletion by roughly 3.6 months. The objective must be ensuring adequate water for the entire community.

Effective leadership: Put community needs ahead of political agendas, with decisions based on reliable water, sound finances, infrastructure and long-term planning.

Stephen Booth



Biography

Booth brings experience in labor contract negotiations, human resources, governance, and dispute resolution. He retired in November 2021. Booth worked for labor organizations and three state departments, including a governor’s appointment, and served as associate vice-president at SacRT. Booth also served four years on the Sacramento County Civil Service Commission and as an RMCS D director, gaining firsthand experience in district governance, operations, and community issues.

Reason Running

Booth is running to serve the community’s best interests and help ensure current residents and businesses have access to safe, reliable water. Booth believes future development should be carefully evaluated to ensure it does not compromise water reliability, create demands exceeding available supply or require disproportionate reductions for existing users.

Urgent Issues

Financial accountability: Complete reconciliation of financial records and audits to strengthen community confidence and establish a clear understanding of service-fee and tax revenues, operating expenditures and reserve balances for each of the five utilities; information imperative for planning future water supply, treatment and infrastructure needs.

Water storage: Address the storage-tank capacity shortfall affecting current and entitled properties, including determining the appropriate location, specifications and allocation of costs. The district engineer projected the Rio Oso tank has capacity for current households and 50 of the 198 lots being developed near Stonehouse.

Long-term planning: Develop timely plans and policies addressing water supply, storage, and infrastructure needs. Booth supports improved communication, conflict resolution, and cooperation among community stakeholders as the district evaluates whether and how to support future development.

Maria Caudill



Biography

I have more than 20 years of leadership experience in the public and private sectors and have called Rancho Murieta home for 24 years. My career in California state government and health-care has given me extensive experience in public-agency operations, regulatory compliance, organizational accountability and stakeholder engagement. My career has focused on strengthening organizations, accountability, stakeholder engagement and practical problem-solving.

Reason Running

I am running to bring an independent, experienced voice focused on facts, solutions and results. RMCS D cannot continue moving from crisis to crisis while critical work goes undone. I will work with the board and general manager to establish clear priorities, strengthen planning and accountability, improve transparency and restore public trust. It is time to move RMCS D from reacting to problems to planning for the future.

Urgent Issues

Strengthen RMCS D operations. RMCS D needs clear procedures, defined roles for the board, staff and volunteers, stronger fiscal controls and greater accountability. I will work with the board and general manager to establish clear priorities, responsibilities and measurable results. My experience has taught me that effective oversight and compliance build stronger organizations. I will bring that same discipline to RMCS D.

Improve decision-making. RMCS D cannot afford delayed or reactive decisions. The board needs sound analysis of facts, costs, and options, meaningful stakeholder input, and clear communication before major decisions are made. This disciplined approach is essential to addressing the district’s financial, infrastructure, and water challenges.

Timothy Dec



Biography

My wife and I moved to Rancho Murieta to be near our son’s family in Elk Grove. Rancho Murieta was hands-down the most appealing community we found in the area. I spent my career in the tech industry, concluding at Apple Inc. I now run a technology coaching business and volunteer with a national nonpartisan organization advocating for bipartisan climate solutions. My leadership experience includes serving as an advisory board member, group leader, and state coordinator for that climate organization, as well as treasurer for a local political organization. In 2022, I ran for State Assembly.

Reason Running

I am running because a review of the 2024 RMCS D reserve study revealed that the financial reserves required to maintain our vital water and sewer infrastructure are severely underfunded.

Urgent Issues

Infrastructure reserves: We must establish a transparent, fiscally responsible plan to right-size our maintenance reserves so the

district can reliably manage aging infrastructure.

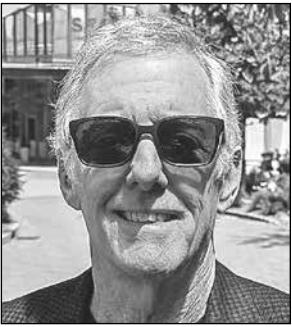
Water security: We need to prioritize our long-term water security by completing viability, cost, and timeline studies. This includes evaluating groundwater wells and assessing Lake Clementia as an additional supply during severe droughts.

Development: Only if additional water supplies allow, I would support limited development using dedicated developer fees first, supplemented by community funds.

For all rate adjustments or bond issuances linked to these priorities, the community will have the final say through a formal Proposition 218 rate process or bond measure.

For more details, visit tim4csd.com.

William Gere



Biography

I began my career as an officer in the U.S. Army. After five years on active duty, I became a professional pilot and business owner. For seven years, I served as the airport business liaison to the city council and was later hired as airport manager. These roles provided valuable experience in municipal government, budgeting, long-range planning, regulatory compliance and public safety.

Reason Running

I am seeking office to continue protecting Rancho Murieta’s water and essential services while preparing the district for the future. We need thoughtful long-term planning, accountability, and investment in critical infrastructure rather than waiting for systems to fail. Development proposals should be neither rubber-stamped nor automatically rejected but evaluated through open communication and careful deliberation.

Urgent Issues

Water security: Our water resources are limited. We must protect existing supplies while evaluating reliable alternatives, including groundwater, lake conversion and partnerships with neighboring water agencies. New development must pay its appropriate share of infrastructure expansion. Committing water to development creates a lifelong obligation, so drought and future supply must be considered carefully.

Aging infrastructure: Our water and wastewater systems require rehabilitation and replacement. I have initiated efforts toward a prioritized, long-term capital improvement program based on condition, risk, cost and reliability.

Financial management and public safety: We must control costs, maintain adequate reserves, pursue outside funding, safeguard ratepayer dollars, and maintain a responsive, financially sustainable security department.

I remain committed to putting existing residents first and protecting our community’s future.

Peter Reagan
Biography

I have worked in underground public utilities for over 60 years in



Sacramento County, first as a laborer, then an owner, and now a consultant to public agencies and engineering firms. I installed pipe in Rancho Murieta’s first unit in 1972. We bought our first lot here in 1976 and currently live on Via Del Cerrito. For several years, I have served as CSD’s inspector for contractors installing utilities. I enjoy resolving engineering problems before they become construction mistakes.

Reason Running

The board needs someone who understands waterworks and how development can improve our community. We should work with developers as partners to improve infrastructure, amenities and services. We need more development. Working together with a comprehensive plan will provide the best outcome for Rancho Murieta.

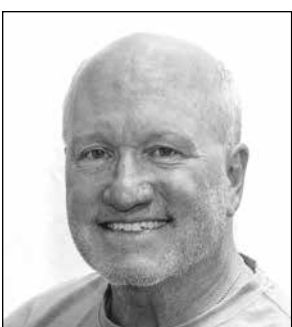
Urgent Issues

Water storage: We need to pursue a second water source or additional storage. Paying legal fees is not accomplishing anything, and eliminating advisory committees does not help. Good ideas should not be buried because they do not fit a narrative.

Water distribution: Moving two control valves and installing a booster pump at the Rio Oso Tank would help the gravity and pressurized systems work together. A third tank would improve water movement throughout Rancho Murieta.

Aging infrastructure: We need to begin lining or replacing deteriorating sewer mains and replacing storm drainpipes. These pipes were designed for 50 years and will not last much longer.

Tom Shewchuk



Biography

I moved to Rancho Murieta in 1991. I worked for Intel in high technology for more than 31 years as an engineering leader. I am very data-driven and taught effective meetings throughout my career.

Reason Running

I’ve attended RMCS D board and improvements meetings for more than two years. It was obvious these would benefit from my data analysis and organizational skills. I tried to help through the Water Vision Working Group, chartered to work on wells; Lake Clementia re-permitting; the UWMP; and water audits. But this was recently disbanded by the SOLOS-controlled RMCS D board, with no new owners defined.

Urgent Issues

Water: For more than 20 years, Rancho Murieta would have run out of water if a drought like the one in the late 1970s occurred. But there have been no new wells, no new potable water storage, no new tanks, a \$400,000 IWMP that remains in draft

form, and no RMCS D-led water audits. We need a new RMCS D board that will stop arguing about the problem and start fixing the problem.

Finance: All agree that RMCS D finances need help. Once audits are complete, I would like to see Cecilia focus on a true rate study - why are RMCS D rates about twice as high as those in other districts and consider tiered or seasonal billing.

Meetings: A meeting lasting more than four hours with board members arguing among themselves and with the audience is both painful and embarrassing. I’ve offered numerous times to teach “Effective Meetings” to RMCS D. There are easy fixes for this, and significant improvements can be quickly made.

Catherine Silvera



Biography

I’ve spent over 30 years as a local government attorney, representing the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors and serving as chief counsel to the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District. I provided legal advice on topics vital to a well-run public agency, including liability, personnel, and the Brown Act.

Reason Running

In January of 2026, the current CSD board majority attempted to declare a water emergency that would have resulted in a building moratorium. The evidence presented by the RMCS D - a Draft IWMP - fell far short of legal requirements. Seeing this sparked my interest and led me to believe that my expertise in public agency law could make a difference to our community.

Urgent Issues

Legal process: RMCS D needs a strong board that follows sound legal advice to avoid unnecessary legal costs. The agenda policy should be clarified. Committees should work out details first to minimize long board meetings. Staff should manage day-to-day operations and implement policy, while the Board sets policy and provides oversight. There should be better community access to board and committee meetings.

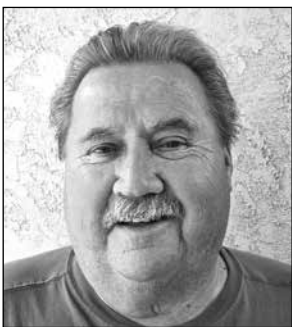
Water goals: Adopt a current set of legally defensible numbers for supply, storage and drought planning. Finish and adopt or supersede the Draft IWMP. Determine solutions, including necessary financing; grants are available and should be explored. Negotiate to preserve open space through a conservancy instead of wasting resources on lawsuits. Open communications and fair treatment get agreements done.

Personnel: Equip the new general manager with the tools to succeed. Hire a director of operations as soon as possible.

Seeking Two-Year Term — One Seat

Michael Martel
Biography

I retired from the Department of Corrections after a 38-year career culminating at the rank of warden, appointed by both Govs. Schwarzenegger and Brown. I was responsible



for the complexities of a 24-hour operation: keeping staff, visitors, and inmates safe; managing a multi-million-dollar budget accurately; navigating government regulations and laws; and working with outside agencies. I have previously served this community on all boards, RMA, CSD, and RMCC since I arrived here in 1987. I participated in the selection of principals at CRES and was selected to serve on a county commission overseeing the sheriff’s office. I helped start and continue to serve at Summerfest since I began in 1999.

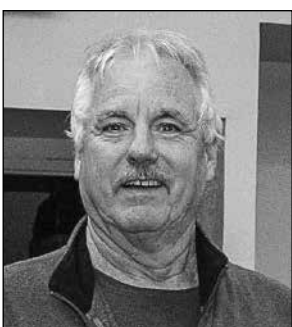
Reason Running

My wife of 44 years, Melinda, and I raised our two sons here and now enjoy watching our grandsons grow up using community amenities I helped develop. My sister Renee also moved here, joining us, my late brother Dennis, and his wife Pahl. The community has changed significantly since the 400 homes were here when we moved in, and many longstanding issues remain unresolved. I can make a difference with my community knowledge, experience, and common sense.

Urgent Issues

The quality and quantity of water, our security, and fiscal prudence are paramount. The developers and staff need to be held accountable, and it's important that the board earns the trust of the community. Involvement of ratepayers on committees is a must to ensure everyone is heard.

John Van Doren



Biography

I am a practicing attorney in both civil litigation and criminal defense and have been for 37 years. I have lived in Rancho Murieta for 32 years and am in my second term serving on the Rancho Murieta Association Board of Directors. I am a founding member of SOLOS.

Reason Running

I am running for the RMCS D board to serve the community on water rights, contractual obligations, and security issues.

Urgent Issues

The most pressing issue facing members of our community is water. We have one source of water, the Cosumnes River. We have two lakes where we can store our water: Lake Chesbro and Lake Calero. Our maximum amount of storage is 3,900 acre-feet of water. A conservative estimate of water loss due to seepage and evaporation is 20 percent.

A drought is not a question of if, but of when. We do not have enough water to continue to build homes beyond what we are contractually obligated to. Our lifestyles and property values are at risk if we take a less conservative approach. ★

SacSewer Warriors Take Second Place in Division 3

Team earns first place in Maintenance and third in Safety, highlighting the people and expertise behind SacSewer’s essential services

Sacramento Area Sewer District (SacSewer) News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento Area Sewer District (SacSewer) is demonstrating the depth of operational excellence behind one of the region’s largest essential service providers, as its Warriors earned second place overall in Division 3 at the Water Environment Federation’s (WEF) Operations Challenge at WEFTEC in New Orleans Sept. 28-29.

Competing against 26 teams in Division 3, the SacSewer Warriors earned first place in the Maintenance Event and third place in Safety. Made up of employees from SacSewer’s collection and treatment operations, the team also posted some of its fastest competition times to date after months of preparation and practice leading up to the event. Operations Challenge brings together skilled water sector professionals competing in events designed around technical skills, and real-world scenarios involved in utility operations including collections, process control, maintenance, laboratory and safety.

While the results are a point of pride for the Warriors, the competition also offers a visible look at the people and expertise behind SacSewer’s essential services. The skills demonstrated in the competition – technical knowledge, safety awareness, teamwork, communication and problem-solving – are the same skills employees rely on every day to operate and maintain critical infrastructure and provide reliable service to the community.



Competing against 26 teams in Division 3, the SacSewer Warriors earned first place in the Maintenance Event and third place in Safety. Photo courtesy of SacSewer

“The Warriors give us an opportunity to showcase the people behind the services our community depends on,” said Christoph Dobson, general manager of SacSewer. “Their performance reflects the professionalism, dedication and pride that our employees bring to their work every day. We’re proud to see the Warriors represent SacSewer and demonstrate the caliber of talent we have throughout our organization.”

The Warriors also represent the interconnected nature of a modern sewer utility. While each area of the organization brings specialized knowledge and expertise, it takes people working together across



Preparing for Operations Challenge gives employees an opportunity to sharpen their technical and leadership skills, practice working under pressure, learn from colleagues in different areas and exchange ideas with other utilities. Photo courtesy of SacSewer

disciplines to safely and reliably collect, treat and recover resources from sewage.

“The beauty of SacSewer’s work is the way all of these people with diverse skills come together to serve our community,” Dobson said. “The Warriors are one example of that collaboration. Whether someone works in collections, treatment, the laboratory, engineering or another part of the organization, every role brings a different area of expertise to the work we do. Together, those contributions allow us to safely and reliably serve our community.”

Preparing for Operations Challenge gives employees an opportunity to sharpen their technical and leadership skills, practice working under pressure, learn from colleagues in different areas and exchange ideas with other utilities. SacSewer has captured the Warriors’ preparation, competition and experiences through a series of videos that offer a behind-the-scenes look at the skills and teamwork required to compete – and the benefits Operations Challenge brings to SacSewer and the community we serve. To watch a video demonstrating why Ops Challenge matters, visit: youtube.com/watch?si=Rh-GHvV8g1ZCsRL5F&v=yn-LU-UoG5Js&feature=youtu.be

The experience also provides an opportunity for employees to learn from one another and bring new ideas and perspectives back to their work at SacSewer – an added benefit of participating in a competition that celebrates the expertise and professionalism of utility operations. ★

FAA Awards Contract for New Air Traffic Control Tower at SMF

Sacramento International Airport News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has awarded a design-build contract to Walsh Federal LLC for a new air traffic control tower at Sacramento International Airport (SMF), marking a major milestone in the long-planned replacement of the airport’s existing tower, which has been in service since 1967.

The contract was awarded Sept. 19, with work scheduled through early 2030. The new tower is expected to become fully operational around 2030.

“This contract award is a significant step forward for the long-term safety, efficiency and resilience of our airspace operations at Sacramento International Airport,” said Harry Barrett Jr., assistant director of airports for Sacramento County. “We have been ready for this investment for many

years, and we are excited to see the project move from planning toward construction.”

The FAA previously identified SMF as a priority site for tower replacement in 2016. SMF is one of eight airports nationwide selected for new tower construction as part of a broader FAA initiative to modernize aging air traffic infrastructure. The program is supported in part by funding from the \$5 billion allocated to the FAA Air

Traffic Organization through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

The current SMF control tower presents operational and accessibility limitations as well as challenges associated with aging facility systems. The replacement tower will be located on the airport’s north campus and will provide improved sightlines and a modernized working environment designed to better support FAA air traffic controllers. The

new location will also enhance security by relocating critical operations away from public-facing airport areas.

The FAA contract with Walsh Federal covers design and construction of the replacement tower, with a period of performance extending through February 2030. Construction is currently expected to begin in summer 2027. The new tower will remain FAA-owned and FAA-operated upon completion. ★



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November 3, 2026, General Election

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- View your voting history

Scan the QR code or visit myvoterportal.saccounty.gov



Visit www.elections.saccounty.gov or call toll-free (800) 762-8019

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



Get Excited Kings Fans

By V.G. Harris

Time to wake from a summer slumber and embrace the 2026-27 season, because the Sacramento Kings will be in action Monday night against the daunting Los Angeles Lakers.

While the Lakers are without Lebron, they are arguably packed with talent and last year’s rookie Adou Thiero is just waiting for an opportunity to show the Laker fans what this highly athletic NBA forward can bring to the hard court.

Likewise, the Kings are blessed with a deep team, something that they have struggled with in the past, and that brings with it the looming question, who will be Doug Christie’s starters, and who will garnish the majority of minutes off the bench.

Minutes are a precious commodity in the NBA, and players like Malik Monk simply cannot get lost in the shuffle as new faces enter the arena, and the tendency is to play newcomers and rookies early while sometimes forgetting who it is that got you there.

Not lost on anyone is the paltry 22 wins of a season ago, but most fans have put that agonizing number in the “lost to injury” column and I believe rightfully so.

It’s the reason Doug Christie is back for a second season, and with a solid draft and the acquisition of an apparently healthy Ben Simmons, Christie has the chess pieces to make last season’s 22 wins a distant memory.

Without question this team will need to walk before it can run. Putting too many minutes on rookie Darius Acuff Jr. or veteran Ben Simmon’s should be the last thing coach Christie should do, and developing a rotation that satisfies minutes while producing results is the balancing act that he has before him.

This is why we watch the game Kings fans, and while the offseason may not have been as active as you would have liked, I am grateful that the Kings have a post presence led by Domantas Sabonis and backed up by youngsters clamoring for playing time. Both Precious Achiuwa and Dylan Cardwell will undoubtedly get quality minutes and they should.

Coming out of the gate Sabonis needs to establish who he is, and once again be the cleaner of the boards that the NBA has seen

over the past four seasons. With that rebounding acumen comes stopping the competition from second chance points and presents fast break opportunities for the Kings.

Many were critical when the Kings brought in Domantas Sabonis and sent Tyrese Haliburton to the Indiana Pacers, but with that trade the Sacramento Kings became the No. 1 scoring team in the NBA.

It was a magical season that saw the Kings win 48 games, make the playoff’s outright, and take the archrival Golden State Warriors to a seven-games series.

So, what will the partial rebuild from Scott Perry bring us this year?

Only time will tell, but I can assure every basketball fan reading this column that there is no shortage of talent on this team.

The Looming question resides in the coaching staff, and whether this team can play together and find a real identity. Every team needs one, and most have one.

If you talk to coach Christie, he will tell you defense is the name of the game, but my question is can you teach defensive strategies, and will this team that is getting younger buy into what you’re teaching?

No one is going to argue that the Kings need to play defense, but will your veterans step up and lead by example or simply buy into what the national pundits want to banty about.

Enter Keegan Murray who needs to impress and do it early!

Yes, the clock is ticking with regards to Keegan Murray’s tenure as a King, but the ball is still in his court and the opportunity starts tonight.

I still have faith that Keegan can find the game that made him the NCAA scoring champion in the nation, and he just needs to remember the accomplishments of his rookie year.

His defense has taken a step forward. Now, it’s time to find the shooting stroke that suddenly went dormant.

Mentorship, teaching, are not just words, they are where leadership begins. I’m waiting to see if this coaching staff and Scott Perry have it, but the question will be answered soon.

Get excited Kings fans!
All the best! ★

Californians Are in a Sour Mood but Don’t Want to Change the Political Status Quo



By Dan Walters,
CALMatters.org

Californians are in a sour mood these days, and for good reason.

The state’s economy is stuck in neutral with scant job creation since the end of the COVID pandemic. Major sectors, such as high technology, are experiencing layoffs and job shrinkage and California is tied with two other states for the nation’s highest unemployment rate.

Meanwhile, Californians’ cost of living — especially housing, utilities and fuel — has climbed sharply, more than 100% since 2000, while personal income, adjusted for inflation, has actually declined fractionally since 2020.

A recent poll by the Public Policy Institute of California reflects the angst.

“Majorities of California adults (54%) and likely voters (52%) say the state is headed in the wrong direction,” PPIC found. “This belief is held by nearly all Republicans (94%) and a majority of independents (55%), compared to one in three Democrats (32%).”

PPIC continues, “Californians are much more pessimistic about economic conditions over the next year, with seven in ten adults (71%) and likely voters (73%) as well six in ten or more across parties (61% Democrats, 90% Republicans, 72%

independents) expecting bad economic times for the state.”

If Californians are dissatisfied with the present and sour on the future, one might assume that they would express that negative frame of mind by rejecting the state’s political status quo in favor of candidates who promise change.

However, with voting by mail beginning in a few days, the Democratic Party that has dominated California politics for the last three decades can comfortably expect to maintain — or even increase — its hegemony.

All of the statewide offices, including the governorship, will remain in Democratic hands. Polls by PPIC and UC Berkeley’s Institute of Governmental Studies have found Democrat Xavier Becerra with a double-digit lead over Republican Steve Hilton for the governorship.

Democrats will retain supermajorities in both houses of the Legislature and probably gain a few congressional seats, thanks to gerrymandered districts that voters adopted last year to help neutralize Republican gerrymanders in other states.

A handful of legislative and congressional districts are in play but the macro results favoring Democrats are certain. Republican candidates, from Hilton down, are handicapped by low voter registration and Californians’ deep disdain for President Donald Trump. Just 27% of California voters approve of Trump’s performance, according to the Berkeley IGS poll.

The most uncertain — and therefore most interesting — aspects of this year’s election are a very close battle for the mayoralty of Los Angeles, pitting veteran incumbent

Karen Bass against a left-leaning city council member, Nithya Raman, a few Democrat vs. Democrat duels for congressional seats, and some polarizing ballot measures.

Five of the 14 statewide ballot measures relate to taxes, including two that would increase them and three that would make increases less likely.

The biggest and most controversial is Proposition 40, which would impose a one-time 5% tax on the wealth of about 200 billionaires, with proceeds mostly going to shore up healthcare services.

Prop. 40 is sponsored by a healthcare worker union and generally draws support from some, but not all, Democratic political figures and unions. Meanwhile, billionaires are spending hundreds of millions of dollars to oppose Prop. 40 and pass two other measures, Proposition 41 and Proposition 42, that would undermine Prop. 40’s implementation if it survives the election.

Until recently, Prop. 40 was ahead in the polls, although barely. More recent surveys found that its base was eroding as the massive opposition campaign cranked up, so the result is very much in doubt. And even if Prop. 40 wins, it still could be neutralized by the passage of Props. 41 and 42.

Prop. 40 exemplifies the nation’s social and political polarization and its outcome, whatever that may be, will reverberate for years to come.

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 Mom Worries Daughter Making Bad Social Security Decision



By Russell Gloor,
AMAC Certified Social
Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: My question is not for me, but for my daughter who 62 years is old. She does not want to take her Social Security now. Her husband was a doctor and passed away recently. She had been married to him for more than 10 years and, in the meantime, he married someone else. I thought the President erased taxes on earned money so that people could collect what was due them no matter what they earned. My daughter keeps telling me she has already earned too much this year and cannot collect her widow’s benefits until next year. I don’t understand what no tax on Social Security means then. Also, she wants to wait until she is 67 before she collects her own money. She has been a nurse and believes her own benefits may be larger than her widow’s benefits. Is she correct to wait for that long?
Signed: Worried Mom

Dear Worried Mom: Your daughter is likely correct. There are two factors which come into play in your daughter’s circumstance — one is the Annual Earnings Test (for those collecting early SS benefits), and the other relates to Federal income tax on SS benefits received. I’ll try to clarify both of these for you:

If your daughter claims her widow’s benefit at age 62, her benefit will be significantly reduced (by approximately 20+%) from what she would get at her SS full retirement age, and that would be a permanent reduction. And, if she works (which you imply she does) she would also be subject to Social Security’s Annual Earnings Test (AET) which limits how much she can earn by working prior to reaching her SS full retirement age (her “FRA,” which is age 67). The earnings limit for 2026 is \$24,480 (changes yearly) and, if her annual 2026 earnings exceed that amount, Social Security will take away \$1 of benefits for every \$2 she is over the annual limit. For example, if she is \$25,000 over the limit, SS would take way benefits equal to \$12,500. That would mean she wouldn’t get any SS benefits for the remainder of this year and likely some of next year also. And, if her earnings are significantly more than the annual limit, she may even be temporarily ineligible to receive a widow’s benefit (until she either reaches her FRA or earns less money). FYI, the Annual Earnings Test will go away when your daughter reaches age 67 but, until then, the AET will likely restrict her ability to receive Social Security benefits if she continues to work full time.

The next factor to be aware of is the so-called “One Big Beautiful Bill” (OBBB) which the President claimed means “no tax on Social Security.” This is an entirely different factor than the Annual Earnings Test (AET) described above. The above AET discussion dealt with SS earnings limits while

taking benefits before FRA, whereas the OBBB deals with income tax on Social Security benefits actually received. The OBBB (enacted last year) provides an extra \$6,000 deduction per person (on the tax return filed with the IRS) for those 65 years of age or older. That extra IRS deduction is designed to offset (either totally or partially) any income tax which is levied on Social Security benefits received by those age 65 or older. It’s also important to know that the OBBB only provides temporary income tax relief, because the law expires after the 2028 income tax year.

All of which leads me to conclude that your daughter’s decision to wait longer to claim her widow’s benefit from her deceased ex-husband is a prudent choice. As long as she is working and earning more than the annual earnings limit before age 67, the AET will restrict how much Social Security she is able to receive. If she later stops working or goes to part-time employment, she can revisit her decision at that time. And, depending on her own personally earned Social Security benefit amount at age 67 (vs. her widow’s benefit), she can assess whether to claim her personal SS retirement benefit or to, instead, claim her benefit as her ex-husband’s widow if that amount is larger than her own SS retirement. And, unless Congress later extends the OBBB prior to 2029, she will, at that time, likely need to pay income tax on the Social Security benefits she receives.

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In 2016, Donald Trump’s support for tariffs helped propel him to a shocking electoral victory. In 2026, his tariff policy may help tank Republicans in the midterms. This turnaround counts as a surprise of Trump’s second term, and an unwelcome one for the president and his party.

During his political ascent in 2015-2016, Trump exploited issues where there was a disconnect between popular and elite opinion, and trade was prominent among them. His protectionism -- expressed in pungent and excoriating terms -- poached traditional Democratic ideological territory and appealed to the working-class voters that allowed him to crash the traditional Democratic “Blue Wall” states. In sheer political terms, what could go wrong? Well, nothing -- until he got his way.

It turns out that Liberation Day was the beginning of the end for any appreciable political support for his tariff policy. The assumption has usually been that the politics of tariffs favor protectionism -- the benefits are very visible and focused for specific sectors and businesses, so they will be highly committed to maintaining them, while the costs are widely dispersed among people who won’t care so much.

The logic here has been turned on its head, though. The costs felt by

The Revolt Against Tariffs

all the people with no direct stake in protectionism are tanking support for the tariffs. On top of this, there’s the fact that Trump won the second term promising to reduce prices, whereas import duties increase them. The Yale Budget Lab estimates the costs to households as about \$1,000 a year. The shambolic and arbitrary rollout of the tariffs, as well as the dubious legal basis for many of them, hasn’t helped, either.

According to a poll that the libertarian Cato Institute conducted with Morning Consult, 74% of Americans say the tariffs increased the prices they pay, including 66% of Republicans. Fifty-three percent of the public says that the tariffs have weakened the economy, and 49% say they have hurt their quality of life. Regarding the latest trade spat with Canada, a Politico/Public First poll found that 56% of Americans think the tariffs against Canada were “wrong.” According to a CBS/YouGov survey, people prefer a candidate who opposes Trump’s tariffs over one who supports them, by 26 points.

Democratic Senate candidates are promising to reverse Trump’s tariffs, even the card-carrying protectionist Sherrod Brown is critical. And some Republican candidates in states with lots of trade with Canada have dissented from the trade war with Our Friendly Neighbor to the North.

The Midwest is a trouble spot for the GOP in the midterms, and it’s not hard to understand why. China cut its purchases

of U.S. farm products in retaliation for Trump’s tariffs, and the farm sector has been slammed. Exports of wheat, cotton, beef and pork to China plummeted last year, and overall agricultural exports to China fell by 66%.

When you layer on top of this the price of diesel fuel jumping 80% and fertilizer increasing 15% because of the Iran war, it’s a formula for a revolt. The tariffs have led to a tangle a little more than a month before the election. Trying to address complaints about high grocery prices, the administration wants to relent on beef tariffs to help consumers, but farmers -- hurt by other tariffs -- are balking at a measure that will reduce prices at a time when they are struggling.

One way or another, someone is going to be unhappy. Even if Trump’s theory of the tariffs is correct -- that higher import duties will lead to re-industrialization -- the policy involves immediate disruption and increased costs in exchange for a protectionism-driven build-out that will take years to be fully achieved.

Long before then -- indeed, by January -- an opposition congressional majority hostile to the president and his tariffs may be entrenched in Washington. In politics, it’s often “careful what you wish for,” especially if it involves higher prices on an inflation-fatigued public.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.
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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



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

mess at 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.” ★



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.

SECURITY LOGS

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

Sept. 17
4:16 p.m., Welfare Check, report of disoriented male near Murieta Parkway an Alameda Drive. GOA.
4:56 p.m. Subject from prior welfare

check located near Lake Joaquin. Family contacted and advised that no medical assistance was needed. Subject returned home on foot.

Sept. 18
5:46 p.m., Parking, subject found sleeping in vehicle at country club. Subject was advised to leave and was escorted from the community.
10:16 p.m., Riverview Park, citation for parking after hours.
11:14 p.m., Trespassing, Lake Clementia, group

and two vehicles after hours with litter left behind. Citations issued.

Sept 24
3:43 p.m., Welfare check, Guadalupe Drive, the reporting party said she couldn’t reach her parents. Patrol contacted her father and was advised to contact her. Both parents were in good health.
8:23 p.m., resident complaint, report of after-hours access in the north back area with several vehicles reportedly entering Lake Chesbro. Upon

arrival, patrol saw two boaters leaving the area. No additional activity was observed.

Sept. 25
10:38 p.m., vehicle accident, patrol was dispatched to an export of vehicles driving erratically near Lake Chesbro and to a vehicle collision on the gravel road leading toward the Water Treatment plan. Patrol located a white Toyota off the roadway after it struck a tree. The driver, a 17-year-old resident

stated he lost control of the vehicle. On juvenile passenger was also present. But no identifying information was obtained. The incident was turned over to CHP and fire personnel after they arrived on scene. No RMA property was damaged.
11:56 p.m., trespassing, Riverview Park, report of subjects in park after hours. Patrol located a Toyota Tacoma belonging to the reporting party. A citation was issued. Later the reporting arty

contacted dispatch and stated he was intoxicated and would be walking home, leaving his vehicle parked.

Sept. 29
4:47 p.m. Chevron Station, report of panhandling. Patrol located the subject sitting on the curb on Chevron property. A Chevron representative said they had contacted the man and asked him to stop panhandling. But he refused to comply. Patrol told him to leave the property, and he did. ★



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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Wilton Chili Cook-Off
Set for Oct. 17

The Wilton Firefighters Association will hold its chili cook-off from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 17, at the Wilton Community Center and Dillard Elementary School. Admission is free, with chili tasting kits available for \$5. The event will feature a chili competition, car show, vendors, food trucks, music, cornhole, a beer and wine garden, raffles and a children’s activity zone. Proceeds will benefit the Firefighters Burn Institute and other local charities. Organizers are seeking chili teams, car show entries, vendors and donated raffle baskets valued at \$100 or more. For more information, visit wiltoncommunitycenter.com.

Community Invited to Van
Halen Tribute

The community is invited to a concert

by Atomic Punks, A Tribute to the Early Van Halen Band, at 8 p.m. on Oct 17 at the Rancho Murieta Country Club. Tickets are \$35 or \$20 for members and \$30 for nonmembers. Tickets at on sale at the club, Barcode Barbers and Ace Hardware. The event will raise money for Terrace Patio Improvements. David Lee Roth the original lead vocalist and flamboyant frontman of Van Halen has been quoted as naming the Atomic Punks as “the best tribute to Van Halen ever.”

Bookmobile Changes Rancho
Murieta Schedule

Sacramento Public Library Mobile Services, formerly known as the Bookmobile, has changed its Rancho Murieta schedule and will now visit on the first and third Wednesdays of each

month from 10 a.m. to noon outside the Murieta Village Clubhouse. The Mobile Services will offer a Halloween storytime at the clubhouse at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 21.

During warmer or inclement weather, books and other materials will be available inside the clubhouse. Residents can obtain library cards, reserve materials online and pick up books, audiobooks and DVDs for children and adults. A seed library featuring flower and herb seeds is also currently available.

Blood Drive Slated Oct. 26

Vitalant will hold its next Rancho Murieta Community Blood Drive from noon to 6 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 26 at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, 14673 Cantova Way. The event is sponsored by the Rancho Murieta Women’s

Club and the Knights of Columbus. Donors are encouraged to make appointments online at donors.vitalant.org using blood drive code SMFM053 or by calling Vitalant at 877-258-4825. Walk-ins are welcome and will be accommodated if space allows. Donors will receive a coupon for a free appetizer from the Backyard BBQ. Donors also will be entered into a drawing for a \$50 credit from the Backyard BBQ donated by Carole Thames of Town and Country Real Estate. Donors will also be entered into a Vitalant drawing for a chance to win a \$10,000 gift card. Eat well and drink plenty of water before donating and bring a photo ID. For eligibility questions, call 877-258-4825 or visit vitalant.org. One donation can save more than one life—there’s no substitute for volunteer blood donors. ★

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Rhinestone Rodeo Provides Rousing Finale

By Gail Bullen

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - With a mix of country favorites and pop hits, Rhinestone Rodeo brought singing, dancing and a spirited finish to Entertainment, Theatre & Culture’s 25th anniversary concert season Sept. 5.

ETC President Jeremy Turner said the Utah band drew a strong turnout for the season finale, with an enthusiastic amphitheater audience engaged from beginning to end.

“Being our final concert of the season made the evening feel a little extra special,” he said.

The band’s promotional material posed the question, “Pop or Country? Why not both?!” Turner said the performance delivered on that promise, pairing the country sound concertgoers expected



Rhinestone Rodeo brings a mix of pop hits and country favorites to Rancho Murieta on Sept. 5 for the finale of ETC's 25th-anniversary concert season. Photo courtesy of ETC

with enough variety to appeal to a broader audience.

“Their musicianship, vocals and stage presence were outstanding,” he said.

Rhinestone Rodeo has won two Utah Best of State awards, in the party/cover band and specialty act categories. Its blend of pop and country encourages audiences

to sing and dance along — a response Turner said was evident throughout the evening.

One standout was the band’s rendition of “The Devil Went Down to Georgia.”

“That’s not an easy song to pull off live, and they absolutely nailed it,” Turner said. “It was definitely one of those moments that grabbed the crowd’s attention.”

He also singled out a tribute to Dolly Parton, praising the band’s celebration of her music and legacy.

“Dolly’s music has meant so much to so many people over the years, and I thought Rhinestone Rodeo handled the tribute beautifully,” he said.

Throughout the concert, Turner heard positive comments about the band as audience members

sang along and danced.

For Turner, the evening also offered a chance to reflect on the board members, volunteers, sponsors and community supporters who helped make ETC’s anniversary season possible.

“Every concert has its own personality, and Rhinestone Rodeo gave us exactly what you hope for in a season finale — a great band, a great crowd and a whole lot of fun,” he said.

Seeing concertgoers enjoying the evening together reinforced why the organization puts so much effort into its events, Turner said.

“More than anything, I’m just incredibly grateful for the continued support this community gives ETC,” he said. “We couldn’t do any of this without them.” ★

Dinner Supports Students Who Overcome Adversity

By Gail Bullen

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta hosted its fifth annual Farm-to-Fork Dinner Sept. 18 on the Rancho Murieta Country Club’s event lawn, bringing the community together to support scholarships for students who have overcome significant challenges.

Organizers sold 107 tickets for the fundraiser benefiting the club’s Turn Around Scholarships. The awards help students who have made substantial improvements in their academic performance but may not qualify for traditional scholarships to colleges, universities or trade schools.

Make this mesh better: The evening also marked the final dinner organized by co-founder Carol Prinzo after putting her heart and soul into the event for five years.

The scholarship program carries a personal meaning for Prinzo.

“This particular fundraiser has touched my heart from a personal perspective because I personally experienced what the Turn Around Scholarship recipients have experienced,” she said. “I understand what they have gone through and how much the support means to them.”

Prinzo and fellow organizer Jeannette

Edwards launched the fundraiser in 2022 after attending a Kiwanis board meeting to propose new community events. Edwards brought the scholarship idea from her former Kiwanis club in Campbell, and Prinzo suggested supporting it with a farm-to-fork dinner.

The first two dinners took place at Lake Clementia before the event moved to the country club in 2024, easing the organizers’ work while retaining an outdoor setting.

This year’s dinner featured a four-course meal prepared by Chef KC Brown, with Key Club members from Rancho Murieta, Sheldon High School and Pleasant Grove High School serving guests. Key Clubs are Kiwanis-sponsored service clubs that give high school students opportunities to volunteer and develop leadership skills. Prinzo praised the young volunteers for doing “a stellar job serving.”

Volunteer table hostesses supplied decorative centerpieces. “The tables were beautifully decorated by some incredibly talented people,” Edwards said.

President Joanne Brandt and Prinzo spoke during the evening. Brandt thanked guests for supporting the scholarship program and recognized the student servers, organizing committee and table hostesses.



This year’s recipients of the Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta’s Turn Around Scholarships display their awards at the Elk Grove Regional Scholarship Foundation’s dinner in May. From left are Chidinma Igbokwe, Aliza Ali, Kiwanian Jule Ledson, Ivan Voong and Jordan Rhyner Hurynh. Photo courtesy Kiwanis Club

Prinzo also thanked Troy Schaffner, Rancho Murieta Association maintenance manager, and his crew for putting up the tents, along with the country club, chef, student servers and Kiwanis volunteers.

“You made my final event so worthwhile!” she wrote.

Although organizers had hoped to sell out, Edwards said they believed the Friday date and early starting time kept some people from attending. The club has already tentatively booked next year’s dinner, which will return to a Saturday.

The program’s 2026 scholarship recipients were recognized at the Elk Grove Regional Scholarship Foundation’s dinner in May. They are Chidinma Igbokwe, Aliza Ali, Ivan Voong and Jordan Rhyner Hurynh.

The community’s continued support made Prinzo’s farewell event especially meaningful.

“We want to thank the RM community and are always happy with how the community supports our kids and the fundraising efforts Kiwanis puts on to support those kids,” she said. ★

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