

Former '80s Frontman to Play the Ooley Theatre

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We Wish Our Readers A Happy Thanksgiving

American River Messenger

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District Celebrates 100 Years

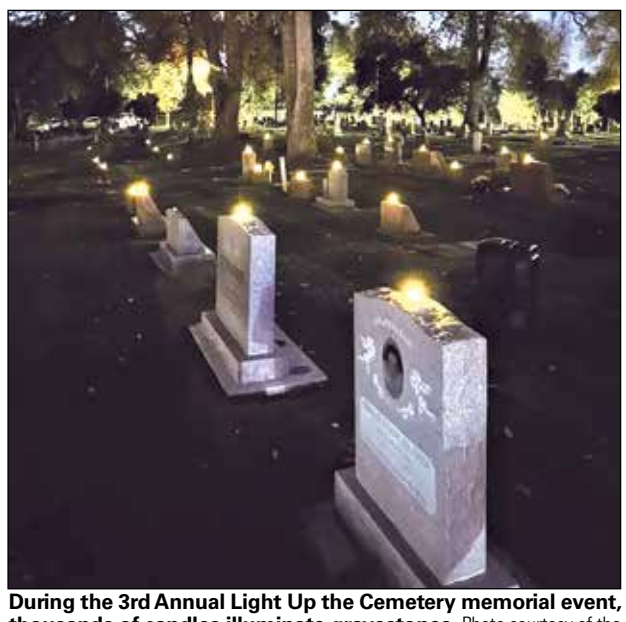


District Manager Guillermo Barron cuts the ribbon, recognizing the district's 100th anniversary. Back row, from left: Don Neufeld, Evan Currie, Carolyn Flood, Mysti Ligenfelter and John Oldham. Front row: Marco Espinoza, Mika Klinsmann, Kendra Johnson, Pete Schroeder, Barron, Keith Wright, Rich Desmond and Jen Rodriguez. Photo by Judy Andrews

By Judy Andrews

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - The Fair Oaks Cemetery District recently celebrated 100 years of service as a special district of Sacramento. Hosted by the Fair Oaks Chamber, the district held a ribbon-cutting on Nov. 5 to mark the milestone, coinciding with its 3rd Annual Light Up the Cemetery memorial event.

More than 100 neighbors, friends, and family members of those buried in the cemetery attended. Local dignitaries and representatives recognized the district and took part in the ribbon-cutting. Attendees included Sacramento County Supervisor and event sponsor Rich Desmond and his assistant, Kendra Johnson; Marco Espinoza from Congressman Ami Bera's office; and Mika Klinsmann from State Senator Roger Niello's office. The senator co-sponsored the event.



During the 3rd Annual Light Up the Cemetery memorial event, thousands of candles illuminate gravestones. Photo courtesy of the Fair Oaks Cemetery District

"The Fair Oaks Cemetery District has been an important part of our community for more than 100 years, offering a peaceful place for families to remember, honor, and celebrate the lives of loved ones," said Fair Oaks Chamber CEO/President Kimberley Pitillo in a moving tribute. "This is a place where generations of Fair Oaks history are preserved and honored by family members whose community roots run deep."

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Annual Tree Lighting Returns

Story and photos by Judy Andrews

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - Everyone's favorite holiday tradition is almost here. Don't miss this year's 43rd Annual Fair Oaks Tree Lighting on Thursday, Dec. 3, from 5-8 p.m., when Village Park comes alive with the sights and sounds of Christmas. Bring the whole family, friends and neighbors for an evening of heartwarming holiday cheer.

Festivities will include

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Jana Dudley and daughter Audrey enjoyed the festive touches at the 2025 event.

Higher Interest Rates, Affordability Lead to Fewer New Home Sales

North State Building Industry Association News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Higher interest rates and affordability issues led to lower than normal sales in the greater Sacramento region in October, the North State Building Industry Association reported today.

A total of 375 sales were reported by BIA members in the eight-county region during the month, which was up 31% from September and down 26% from Oct. 2025. Because there were four reporting weeks in September and five in October, the weekly sales averages were virtually identical — 75 last month compared to 72 in September.

BIA President and CEO Tim Murphy said the market forces affecting housing in most of the country are in play here as well.

"During the month, mortgage interest rates ticked up to around 7.4% and while they have eased slightly since, most experts believe that rates will remain at higher levels until there's a resolution to the war in Iran," Murphy said.

"As a result, housing is less affordable and buyers are keeping their pocketbooks shut. However, it's important to remember that many homebuilders are offering mortgage rate buydowns and other incentives that can make buying a new home more affordable than you might think. People interested in buying should explore what opportunities are available."

The most homes were sold in Roseville (80), followed by Rancho Cordova and Sacramento with 64 each. Natomas came in fourth with 35 and Elk Grove rounded out the top five at 30 sales.

Sales were reported for 200 communities in Amador, El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba counties. ★



District Celebrates 100 Years



Local friends and neighbors gather to honor loved ones and participate in the early evening event. Photo by Judy Andrews

Continued from page 1

In 1902-03, a group of local citizens formed an association and established the Fair Oaks Cemetery at Olive and New York Avenues as a community burial ground. In 1926, the cemetery became a district, managed by a Board of Trustees. Its operating budget is subsidized by property taxes paid by district residents and property owners.

"The Fair Oaks Cemetery District manages the only public cemetery in Fair Oaks, providing its residents with the most economical way to handle the passing of loved ones," said the Board of Trustees Chair Pete Schroeder. "The park-like setting and meticulous maintenance make the cemetery a model to be envied throughout the region."

District Manager Guillermo Barron and Office Manager Mysti Lingenfelter oversee the cemetery's daily operations. The two conceived Light Up the Cemetery, which has become a much-anticipated opportunity for locals and families to gather and share memories of their loved ones.

"Light Up the Cemetery is a wonderful addition to our annual Memorial Day Celebration and parade, which draws hundreds to the grounds. The May event is a significant community tradition honoring the men and women who served their country and whose final resting place is the Fair Oaks Cemetery," added Schroeder.

"The Fair Oaks Cemetery District has long been a valued pillar of the community. Of the many veterans buried there, about a dozen served in the Civil War."

The historic cemetery is located at 7780 Olive St., Fair Oaks. For more information, visit: fairoakscemetery.com. ★

Annual Tree Lighting Returns

Continued from page 1

live performances by community groups, crafts and children's activities, vendor booths and more. Kids can take photos with Santa, the Grinch, and Elsa from Frozen between 5 and 7 p.m. (lines close at 6:30 p.m.).

Marvel at the beautifully decorated Festival of Trees on the Plaza, then stay for the lighting of the 34-foot Holiday tree and a stunning Light Show at 7:30 p.m.

Holiday Giving Donations

Consider bringing a non-perishable food item to the Orangevale-Fair Oaks Food Bank donation area on the Plaza; new, unopened hygiene items to support the Fair Oaks Youth Advisory Board's Hygiene Drive for the unhoused at the Bandshell stage; and new pajamas, any size, to support the Kiwanis Club Pajama Drive (drop-off at the Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District booth).

The Fair Oaks Tree Lighting is presented by the Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District and the Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce. The event will be held rain or shine (some activities are weather permitting).



The tree will be lit at 7:30 p.m.

Village Park is located in the heart of the Fair Oaks Village at 7997 California Ave. and Fair Oaks Blvd. Please note that some roads and parking spaces near the park will be closed during the day for the event. Carpooling and ridesharing are strongly recommended. General parking is first come, first served.

For more event information, visit: forpd.org. ★

Laugh Your Head Off Comedy Show Returns Dec. 5 to Benefit Local Children

Helping Hands OV News Release

ORANGEVALE, CA (MPG) - Five comedians, an evening of laughter and an opportunity to make the holidays brighter for hundreds of children will come together Saturday, Dec. 5, at the third annual Laugh Your Head Off Comedy Show.

Presented by Jay Gonzo Effect, the free community event begins at 6 p.m. at Scotty's Hideaway, 9353 Greenback Lane, in Orangevale.

While admission is free, organizers are asking attendees to bring a new bicycle helmet to support Helping Hands OV's holiday collection of bikes, scooters, skateboards and helmets. The effort aims to provide wheels and safety equipment for more than 150 local children and 400 children in foster care this holiday season.

The evening will feature five comedians: Morty Stein, Kay Davis Schrudder, Stevie Cee, Robert Berry and Ben Miller.

Stein, a Sacramento-based comedian, producer and podcaster, is known for his clean, relatable storytelling and family-friendly humor. Schrudder, a Fair Oaks comedian, brings self-deprecating humor and real-life stories to the stage. Stevie Cee is a multi-platform comedian bringing laughs from left field. Berry, a Northern California comedian, writer and author, is known for his blend of absurdity, dark humor and pop culture nostalgia. Miller, an Orangevale resident and Helping Hands OV volunteer, puts a comedic spin on everyday life as a husband and father, taking dad jokes to a whole new level.

In addition to the comedy lineup, guests will have several opportunities to win prizes throughout the evening.

Helping Hands OV is bringing the community together to ensure more children experience the excitement of receiving a bike, scooter or skateboard this holiday season, along with the safety equipment they need to enjoy it.



Helping Hands OV is bringing the community together to ensure more children experience the excitement of receiving a bike, scooter or skateboard this holiday season. Photo courtesy Helping Hands OV

The message behind the event is simple: Come for the laughs, bring a helmet and help local children roll into the holidays with a smile.

About Helping Hands OV

Helping Hands OV brings people, businesses and organizations together to support local families, children, seniors and veterans through community volunteer efforts. Its mission is to connect our community one hand at a time. ★

Assemblyman Hoover Names Warren Searls Veteran of the Year

Assemblyman Josh Hoover News Release



Assemblyman Josh Hoover (R-Folsom) announced he has named Warren Searls as the 2026 Veteran of the Year for California's 7th Assembly District. Courtesy photo

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Assemblyman Josh Hoover (R-Folsom) announced he has named Warren Searls as the 2026 Veteran of the Year for California's 7th Assembly District.

A lifelong aviation enthusiast, Warren's story embodies dedication, service, and a commitment to inspiring future generations. Passionate about flying since the age of 12, Warren earned a degree in civil engineering before joining the United States Air Force with the goal of becoming a military pilot. His exceptional aptitude quickly set him apart, finishing first in his Air Force pilot training class, third in academics and first overall, earning three trophies for his performance.

During his military career, Warren served at assignments in Laredo, Texas; McClellan and Mather Air Force Bases in California; and Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. He advanced to instructor pilot in just eight months, developing the technical expertise and leadership skills that would shape his future contributions to aviation and education.

After completing his military service, Warren returned to California and built a successful career as a civil engineer. Following retirement, he began volunteering at the Aerospace Museum of California, where he discovered the Museum's flight simulators and an opportunity to share his passion for aviation. Since then, Warren has contributed nearly 18,500 volunteer hours to the Museum, equivalent to almost nine years of full-time service.

For nearly two decades, Warren has served as Director of the Museum's Flight Zone, helping develop it into an interactive aviation experience where children, students, and families can take the controls of flight simulators and learn the fundamentals of flying. Through thousands of hours of instruction and mentorship, he has introduced countless visitors to aviation while encouraging young people to explore educational and career opportunities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

"Warren represents the very best of our community and the enduring spirit of service that defines our nation's veterans. From his distinguished military career to his extraordinary commitment to inspiring the next generation, Warren has made a lasting impact on countless lives," Assemblyman Hoover said. "It is an honor to recognize his service to our country and our community. Please join me in congratulating Warren Searls as our 2026 Veteran of the Year for his remarkable dedication to duty, service and country." ★





Water Reliability Depends on More Than Water Supply

By Robert P. Wichert, Director, Sacramento Suburban Water District

Groundwater is one of California's most important water resources, and for many regions, it provides the only reliable source of drinking water.

Through regional collaboration and innovative planning, the Sacramento Suburban Water District (SSWD) implemented sustainable groundwater management practices years before the state mandated it under the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

This long-term stewardship is especially important because groundwater remains the foundation of SSWD's water supply. Today, the District operates more than 80 wells throughout our service area. Keeping those wells running reliably requires continual maintenance, repair and, as infrastructure ages, more significant rehabilitation. As with most technical fields, maintaining groundwater infrastructure requires specialized expertise that cannot be easily or quickly replaced. California requires well drilling contractors to have at least four years of experience and pass state licensing examinations. The work itself can include drilling, casing, cementing, cleaning, repairing and rehabilitating wells and their pumping systems.

Our state has seen what can happen when demand for those skills increases. During the state's severe drought a decade ago, the Contractors State License Board expedited licensing for well-drilling and pump contractors to help meet increased demand for their services. The state also encouraged other qualified contractors to pursue well-drilling licenses to help expand capacity.

For water agencies, access to this unique expertise matters. When specialized contractors are difficult to secure, routine maintenance can be delayed and unexpected equipment failures can leave important water sources offline longer than anticipated. SSWD experienced this challenge firsthand when we became increasingly concerned about our ability to secure specialized well contractors when we needed them. A prolonged outage at one well is manageable. Multiple wells awaiting specialized repairs can begin to affect the flexibility and reliability that water systems depend on.

Although often overlooked, access to specialized expertise is a water reliability issue.

In 2023, SSWD entered into an exclusive five-year agreement with Kirby's Pump & Mechanical, a groundwater well contractor, to ensure we had prompt, reliable access to the expertise needed to maintain and repair our wells. Over the following three years, that arrangement gave us an opportunity to see the value of having specialized expertise consistently available when we needed it. It also prompted us to think differently about how we could address our workforce needs over the longer term.

This year, that thinking led SSWD to purchase KPM and bring its specialized expertise in-house.

It was an unconventional step, and not one that will make sense for every water agency. Before moving forward, our Board commissioned an independent cost-benefit analysis to determine whether the approach made financial and operational sense. The analysis projected that the purchase could pay for itself in less than three and a half years and save approximately $7 million over 10 years.

But the larger lesson isn't about one acquisition.

California spends considerable time planning for the physical infrastructure and water supplies we will need in the decades ahead. We should bring that same long-term thinking to the people and specialized skills required to operate and maintain those systems.

That means asking practical questions. Do we have the expertise needed to maintain critical facilities? Where are we vulnerable to shortages in specialized skills or contractor availability? Could a lack of specialized expertise leave infrastructure unavailable when we need it most? And are there different ways to secure those capabilities before a problem becomes an emergency?

The answers will look different for every agency. But for SSWD, bringing a specialized contractor into our workforce ensures a resilient water delivery system backed by the skills needed to keep our infrastructure working long into the future.

Robert P. Wichert represents Division 3 on the Sacramento Suburban Water District Board of Directors and lives in Citrus Heights. ★



Popp Talk

With Mary Jane Popp

Thanksgiving Fact or Fiction

Let's take a look at some of the stories we hear about the Pilgrims, like who they were and how they lived. First of all, they didn't call themselves Pilgrims. They called themselves "Saints" and "First Comers." Of the 102 people on the Mayflower, only 50 were so-called Pilgrims. The others were members of the Church of England who had signed on simply as laborers, soldiers, or those who were looking to gain property in the "New World."

MYTH In pictures and pageants we see them in black and white clothing with buckled shoes and top hats. **FACT**. They didn't wear buckled shoes. The myth that they dressed like this stems from the popular clothing style of the day in England. They didn't wear buckled hats either. They simply wore much cheaper leather laces to tie up their shoes and hold up their pants. They also didn't wear only black and white. Their common garb was quite colorful. They only wore black and gray on Sundays. The rest of the time they wore heavily dyed clothing in many colors that could be achieved with natural dyes. Here's an example, a Pilgrim by the name of Brewster left his clothing in his will to someone. Here's what he left… "one blew cloth suit, green drawers, a violet clothe coat, black silk stockings, sky blew garters, red grosgrain suit, red waistcoat, tawny colored suit with silver buttons." Seems pretty bright to me.

Then came the meal both Pilgrims and Native Americans ate. Turkey and all the fixins' right? **MYTH**. Yes, wild turkey was on the menu but what about mashed potatoes? **FACT**. Dream on. At the time that first Thanksgiving happened, most Europeans had never even seen a potato. Same goes for the Native Americans. Corn was likely on the menu, but mushy, turned into a thick porridge that you can slurp down with a spoon. **MYTH**. It was all turkey and corn. **FACT**. Turkey, venison, lots of lobsters and other seafood even eels and mussels, and all the vegetables that they had planted from onions, beans, spinach, lettuce and other greens was on the menu. **MYTH**. Had to have pumpkin pies. **FACT**. Pilgrims liked pumpkins. But they hollowed them out, filled them with milk and honey to make a custard, and then roasted the orange orbs in hot ashes. No pies! They were out of luck because you need butter and wheat flour. They didn't have much of either.

MYTH. They loved cranberry sauce. **FACT**. By fall of 1621, Pilgrims were essentially out of sugar. So, no cranberry sauce. It was a new little berry to them. Native Americans made dyes out of cranberries. **MYTH**. It was called Thanksgiving. **FACT**. That first get together was in fact a harvest festival celebrated in October not November. They were just grateful to be alive as half of their company died during the first bleak winter.

Let's face it, we have so much to be thankful for…family and friends, good eats and lots of football. ★

HAPPY THANKSGIVING AND BLESSINGS TO ALL!

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Former Contractors Behind Anchored Tiny Homes Face Felony Charges



Colton Paulhus and Austin Paulhus each face 33 counts of diversion of construction funds, one count of conspiracy to commit a crime, and one count of employee wage theft. Photo designed by Magnific

Contractors State License Board News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Following investigations by the Contractors State License Board (CSLB) and Sacramento County District Attorney's Office, two brothers behind former company Anchored Tiny Homes have been charged with 35 felony counts related to unfinished accessory dwelling unit (ADU) projects.

Colton Paulhus and Austin Paulhus each face 33 counts of diversion of construction funds, one count of conspiracy to commit a crime, and one count of employee wage theft. Their charges come after CSLB investigated more than 200 consumer complaints across 18 California counties alleging abandoned ADU projects, unpaid subcontractors, payments in advance of work performed or often not performed and funds paid by homeowners that were not used for the homeowners' projects.

A settlement conference hearing initially scheduled for last week has been continued until Jan. 12, 2027.

Due to the volume and severity of the allegations, CSLB pursued a criminal investigation against Anchored Tiny Homes and took the most serious administrative enforcement action available to the Board by filing an accusation with the California Attorney General's Office seeking revocation of its contractor's license. CSLB revoked Anchored Tiny Homes' license in Nov. 2024.

After the revocation, CSLB continued to receive and investigate consumer complaints, and in collaboration with the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office, began referring cases for possible criminal charges.

CSLB remains committed to protecting consumers from financial harm and ensuring integrity within California's construction industry. The Board's investigative and enforcement efforts play a critical role in reducing and preventing unlawful activity and unprofessional conduct in California's construction industry.

Contractors building ADUs must follow home improvement payment law restrictions regarding down payment and additional payments, known as progress payments. Down payments should never exceed $1,000 or 10 percent of the project's total cost, whichever is less. Any additional payments cannot exceed the value of the work performed or material delivered. CSLB's Fast Facts: Tips for Building a Residential Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) outlines other important information about ADUs.

For ongoing information and updates, visit www.cslb.ca.gov. ★



Vote for the Best of Fair Oaks 2026



Voters have until Dec. 17 to select their favorites in more than 85 categories. Winners will be announced on Jan 21, 2027. Photo courtesy of Michelle Massaro



By Judy Andrews, Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - Help us celebrate the people and places that make this community shine. Vote for your favorite local business, store, church, service group and more as Best of Fair Oaks kicks off its 11th year.

"We started this event in 2016 with only 20 categories," said Fair Oaks Chamber CEO/President Kimberley Pitillo. "Last year, close to 19,000 votes were cast in 90 different categories. It's great visibility for smaller businesses, and an honor just to be nominated."

Voters have until Dec. 17 to select their favorites in more than 85 categories at bestoffairoaks.com. Popular categories include favorite food places, coffee shops, bars, hair salons, gyms and fitness centers, massage, schools, entertainment and so much more.

Your votes will determine the first-, second-, and third-place winners in each category. We'll announce all winners at the Best of Fair Oaks Annual Awards Gala at North Ridge Country Club on Jan. 21, 2027. Event tickets go on sale Jan. 1, 2027, at bestoffairoaks.com.

Don't see your favorites listed? You can still nominate them through Dec. 9. Nominees must be located within the Fair Oaks (95628) zip code or have an active membership with the Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce, which includes businesses outside the zip code.

Chamber members (in good standing as of Oct. 31) will be automatically entered into the contest and nominated in their primary category. Members can also nominate themselves in up to three additional categories.

The Best of Fair Oaks is sponsored by the American River Messenger, the Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce and VoterFly.

To vote and review rules, visit: bestoffairoaks.com.

See you in Fair Oaks! ★

Suspect Arrested in Ongoing Serial Commercial Burglaries

Citrus Heights Police Department News Release

CITRUS HEIGHTS, CA (MPG) - On Oct. 27, at approximately 3:07 a.m., Citrus Heights Police Department officers responded to the 8000 block of Madison Avenue regarding a report of a subject inside a commercial business.

Prior to officers' arrival, the suspect, identified as 36-year-old Gregory Billman, fled the location with approximately $8,000 worth of power tools and other merchandise. Upon arrival, officers deployed a small, unmanned aircraft system (sUAS) and determined that Billman had gained entry to the business through the roof.

During the subsequent investigation, officers located several items of stolen merchandise concealed in nearby bushes. Billman was located nearby, where he was found hiding and in possession of additional stolen property. All of the stolen merchandise was recovered and returned to the store. Billman was taken into custody without incident and booked into the Sacramento County Jail.

"I am very proud of the excellent response by our patrol officers and the determined follow-up by our detectives that led to this arrest and brought accountability for Mr. Billman's previous crimes," said Chief Alexander Turcotte.

Billman was also booked on additional charges resulting from an ongoing investigation involving four additional commercial burglaries in Citrus Heights dating back to 2024. The collective value of merchandise stolen in those incidents is estimated at approximately $500,000.

Detectives are continuing to pursue all available leads and are coordinating with outside agencies regarding the related burglaries that Billman has been linked to outside of Citrus Heights.

Anyone with information about this incident or related cases is encouraged to contact the Citrus Heights Police Department at 916-727-5500. ★

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WEEKLY MEAT SPECIALS
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Beef T-Bone Steak $5.99 /lb
Chicken Thighs Bnls/Sknls $2.29 /lb
Pork Hocks $1.99 /lb
Pork Loin Roast Boneless $2.29 /lb
Pork Country Style Loin Ribs-Bnls $2.49 /lb

WEEKLY HALAL SPECIALS
Chicken Thighs Bnls/Sknls $2.39 /lb
New Zealand/ Australian Lamb Shoulder Chops Bone In $5.99 /lb
Beef Rump/ Bottom Round Roast Boneless $5.29 /lb

Advertised items good at KP International Market - Rancho Cordova location ONLY. We reserve the right to LIMIT QUANTITIES. Not responsible for TYPOGRAPHICAL OR PICTORIAL ERRORS. All advertised items are SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY. Sorry NO RAINCHECKS.
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ELECTRIC RICE COOKER 10 CUPS $59.99
ELECTRIC BBQ GRILL $39.99 /EA
KAIZEN WOK PAN 30 CM $16.99 /EA

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SacRT Awarded State Funding for Transit Improvements

Sacramento Regional Transit News Release



The $87.6 million project represents a major investment in cleaner transportation, improved transit service and infrastructure modernization. Photo courtesy of SacRT

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento Regional Transit District (SacRT) has been selected to receive approximately $57.7 million in state funding through the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) Cycle 8 awards to advance its Northern Sacramento and Yolo I-80 Intercity Zero Emission and Transformative Project.

The $87.6 million project represents a major investment in cleaner transportation, improved transit service and infrastructure modernization. The funding will support the purchase of 21 zero-emission hydrogen fuel cell buses, upgrades to SacRT's McClellan Bus Maintenance Facility, construction of a hydrogen fueling station and additional transit improvements designed to enhance the rider experience. The remaining $29.8 million will come from other state and regional funding sources, including Senate Bill 125 Zero-Emission Transit Capital Program, California Clean Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Project, SACOG State Transportation Improvement Program, California Energy Commission EnergIIZE Transit Set-Aside and Sacramento Metropolitan Air District Low Emission Vehicle and Infrastructure Program.

The 21 hydrogen fuel cell buses will support expanded zero-emission service on three key corridors, bus routes 30, 81 and 138. The Causeway Connection (Route 138), which connects UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento with UC Davis in Davis. As well as bus routes 30 (J Street) and 81 (Florin Road) provide access to employment, educational and medical destinations throughout the region.

These improvements will strengthen regional connections to Sacramento Valley Station, California's third-busiest train station and the region's busiest station, providing important connections to Capitol Corridor, Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) and Caltrain services.

The project includes several additional improvements designed to make bus service more reliable, accessible and comfortable. Cloud-based transit signal priority will be deployed at 30 intersections along bus routes 30 and 81 to help buses move more efficiently through traffic and reduce delays.

To improve connections between transportation modes, 10 BikeLink smart bike parking stations will be installed at UC Davis and four at SacRT's University/65th Street Station. Two heat-resilient bus shelters will also be installed at UC Davis Medical Center along bus routes 137 and 138, providing passengers with greater comfort and protection during extreme heat.

A major component of the project is transforming SacRT's 14-acre McClellan Bus Maintenance Facility (BMF-2) into a state-of-the-art zero-emission bus operations and maintenance hub. The project includes a hydrogen fueling station with potential public access.

The hydrogen fueling station will include a 25,000-gallon liquid hydrogen storage system with the capacity to fuel up to 100 hydrogen fuel cell buses. These investments will provide the infrastructure needed to support the long-term expansion of SacRT's zero-emission fleet and strengthen operational reliability throughout the northern service area.

The project also includes a workforce development partnership with American River College to train, place and retain individuals from underrepresented communities in careers supporting zero-emission vehicle operations and maintenance. The Center for Transportation and the Environment will provide technical assistance and project implementation support.

"This significant investment is an important step forward in modernizing public transportation and creating a cleaner, more efficient transit system for our region," said SacRT General Manager/CEO Henry Li. "With the support of the State of California, we can continue investing in zero-emission technology, improving service frequency and reliability, and building the infrastructure and workforce needed to support the future of public transportation."

"This award represents an exciting opportunity to make meaningful improvements for SacRT riders and the communities we serve," said SacRT Board Chair and Elk Grove Mayor Bobbie Singh-Allen. "From more frequent bus service and improved regional connections to investments in zero-emission technology and modernized facilities, this project reflects our commitment to building a more accessible, reliable and sustainable transit system."

The improvements are projected to increase ridership by approximately 1.8 million passenger trips and deliver substantial environmental benefits. Benefits include reducing greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 116,037 metric tons, displacing more than 91.4 million passenger vehicle miles traveled, reducing fossil fuel consumption by approximately 10.1 million gallons and preventing an estimated 43,677 pounds of nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions and 7,477 pounds of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) emissions.

These investments create an integrated transportation strategy that improves transit performance, expands access to sustainable transportation options and advances California's climate and clean air goals. Project completion is expected by 2030. ★

Sacramento County Mapping a Clearer Path to Behavioral Health Support for Youth and Families

Sacramento County News Release



Sacramento County is launching a new program in hopes of making that process easier. ATLAS (Access, Treatment, Linkage and Stabilization) brings services together to create clear direction and help families find the support they need before challenges become a crisis. Photo designed by Magnific

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - When a child is experiencing behavioral health challenges, parents, caregivers and loved ones may find themselves trapped in a maze as they navigate different systems, programs and providers OR buried under a pile of information unsure of where to start. That's why Sacramento County is launching a new program in hopes of making that process easier. ATLAS (Access, Treatment, Linkage and Stabilization) brings services together to create clear direction and help families find the support they need before challenges become a crisis.

ATLAS connects five children's behavioral health service components under one coordinated system. Rather than requiring families to figure out which program to contact, ATLAS is designed to create a clearer path from early support and outreach to mental health treatment and stabilization services, including support for children and youth experiencing co-occurring mental health and substance use concerns.

"Families shouldn't have to know how the behavioral health system works to get their child the help they need," said Jessica Stockton, Sacramento County Behavioral Health Program planner. "ATLAS brings services together so we can better connect families with the right support, make it easier to navigate available resources and help children get care earlier."

The five core components in ATLAS include:

Children's Outpatient Specialty Mental Health Services: Provides behavioral health assessments, counseling and other specialty mental health treatment, including support for youth with co-occurring mental health and substance use concerns.

Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS): Provides individualized behavioral support to help children and youth develop skills and address challenging behaviors.

Outreach and Engagement: Connects with children, youth and families to help them understand available services and get connected to care.

Early Intervention: Provides early support and helps connect children, youth and families to appropriate behavioral health services and resources when concerns first emerge, before needs become more serious.

Flexible Stabilization Supports: Offers support to help children and families maintain stability and overcome barriers to care, including those related to homelessness and housing instability.

ATLAS will bring these services together through 10 selected community-based providers sited throughout the county. This will help children and families access appropriate services and receive continued support as their needs change. The County estimates ATLAS will serve approximately 9,200 children and youth through June 2027.

ATLAS will also focus on improving access in communities with greater identified needs. The County used multiple data sources to identify ZIP codes where additional attention and coordinated services can make a difference. This approach helps bring support closer to the families who may benefit most while allowing the County to monitor referrals, provider capacity and service use as the program gets underway.

Families may be connected to ATLAS through schools, community-based organizations, other behavioral health providers, child welfare and probation partners, community outreach activities or Sacramento County behavioral health access points. Families may also be able to refer themselves.

To learn more about ATLAS and find out whether the services may be right for your family, visit the Sacramento County Behavioral Health website. ★

Statewide Testing Confirms High Safety Levels in California Produce



Nearly 97% of fresh fruits and vegetables tested in California either contained no pesticide residues or had levels below federal limits set to protect human health. Photo designed by Magnific

California Department of Pesticide Regulation

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Nearly 97% of fresh fruits and vegetables tested in California either contained no pesticide residues or had levels below federal limits set to protect human health, according to the latest annual pesticide residue monitoring report released today by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), underscoring the state's continued commitment to ensuring a safe food supply.

In 2024, DPR collected and tested 3,032 produce samples for more than 500 types of pesticides and breakdown products.

The results consisted of 1,195 (39.4%) - Zero residues detected; 1,740 (57.4%) - Residues within the legal pesticide residue tolerances set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and 97 (3.2%) - Illegal residues detected.

These findings reflect consistent trends over the past decade, with the vast majority of residue levels within safe limits.

"Californians should feel confident in eating the fruits and vegetables both grown and sold in the state," DPR Director Karen Morrison said. "Our rigorous requirements, statewide monitoring program and follow-up enforcement on violators keep the food families eat safe."

For the full report, please visit our website. ★

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris

Three Things

By V.G. Harris

Do the Sacramento Kings fans want to see a winning team? Of course they do, but most think that this season is already a lost one. That is not true and if the Kings can cure three things expect a turnaround.

Number one: A change in leadership and culture has to happen as soon as possible. The offense is old and predicable and opposing teams are taking advantage of it every night. The players are putting forth a diligent effort, but the mission is not one everyone understands, and that is essential to having a winning team.

Number two: The 3-point shot is a miscarriage of justice on both ends of the court. On offense the Kings don't get nearly enough open looks and as a result don't shoot as many 3's as the competition on a nightly basis. On the defensive end the Kings simply don't know how to guard the 3-point line and the combination of these two glaring faults is a recipe for disaster.

Number three: Sacramento must develop a culture of winning, or they are in jeopardy of mishandling Darius Acuff Jr.'s rookie season. Yes, Darius is doing well in most respects, but when asked by reporters about the difference between college and NBA ball, Darius replied it was the losing. He has been used to a culture of winning from the time he was in high school, and for the first time he's faced with something he doesn't know how to fix.

Coach Christie has had a preseason and a dozen games to find a combination of FIVE players that can work as a team and compliment each other, and all the Sacramento fans see are different lineups every night. Combine that with lack of a culture or a collective effort in how to plant the flag, and it's no wonder the Kings have managed one win to date.

It's obvious to everyone in the arena that something has to change, and in witnessing last nights contest against the mighty Oklahoma City Thunder, it was hard to watch a normally controlled Domantas Sabonis losing his composure and nearly getting a technical foul for language. I can't remember a time that I've seen Domantas so upset, and it's a direct result of the constant losing.

Many pundits and fans alike have said the Kings don't have the horses, but there is more than enough talent on this team to get the job done.

Do they need to add more talent? Of course they do, and I have no doubt that GM Scott Perry will do exactly that.

In the meantime, is it possible for the organization to not broadcast to the entire world what they are trying to do. By now the NBA has clearly got the message that due to expensive contracts the Kings would like to move both Domantas Sabonis and Zach Lavine. Stop it!

Successful trades happen when you play your cards close to the vest, and that is not something that the Kings are good at doing.

How about celebrating the virtues of Domantas and Zach and picturing them for the leaders and all-stars that they are. Both are playing well and are legitimate leaders on this team.

Zach was out in Sunday's game against the Thunder due to an illness, but his 3-point shooting has been an asset, and he is expected back soon.

Sunday's game saw Nique Clifford on the floor but not in a Sacramento Kings uniform. Traded to the Thunder just days ago for two second round draft choices, the Kings brought an end to a project that never took off.

Sadly, the 24th pick in the 2025 draft never gave the Sacramento Kings what they were looking for, and I give Scott Perry recognition for finally realizing that and making room for players with a future on this team.

Maxime Renauld will be back from injury soon, but with the acquisition of seven-foot Mason Plumlee, it is likely his playing time will be impacted. Like Nique Clifford, Renauld has had a tepid impact overall, and his future lies in all probability in a back up role, whether on the Kings roster or elsewhere.

Pay attention Kings fans to the three things the Kings need to accomplish and post your thoughts on my website at thekingskorner.com.

All the best! ★

By Emptying Death Row, Newsom Broke a Promise and Disregarded the Will of Voters



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

Gov. Gavin Newsom's decision to commute the death sentences of 548 inmates just weeks before he leaves office is the latest episode in California's 70-year-long political, legal and philosophical debate over capital punishment.

It also adds complexity, because Newsom's unilateral efforts to stop executions violate promises he made while running for governor to honor voters' support of the death penalty.

While Newsom's actions might bolster his standing among center-left Democratic voters in a potential presidential campaign, a Pew Research Center poll in August found 68% of Americans see the death penalty as justified for those who commit murder. That's 6 percentage points higher than the support in a 2021 poll.

A little history: California adopted capital punishment about when it became a state in 1850, but initially executions were done by counties. The state took over in 1893, and since then 514 people have been put to death, according to state records.

Serious efforts to abolish California's death penalty date from the 1950s, when Caryl Chessman, dubbed the "Red Light Bandit," faced execution for a series of robberies and sexual assaults — but no murders — in the 1940s and became a symbol for death penalty opponents.

Chessman's fate finally landed with Democratic Gov. Pat Brown, who personally opposed capital punishment. In 1960, on the eve of Chessman's execution, Brown's 21-year-old son, Jerry, pleaded for a reprieve and urged him to seek legislative repeal. The elder Brown agreed but the Legislature balked, and Chessman was executed on May 2, 1960.

During the 1970s, California's death penalty underwent a dizzying series of legal and political moves — sometimes in effect, sometimes not, depending on the latest decree from the state Supreme Court, action by the Legislature or ballot measure.

Voters had the last word in a 1978 pro-death-penalty ballot measure. However, Jerry Brown, who had become governor, appointed several members of the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Rose Bird, who consistently rejected death sentences. Voters ousted Bird and two other justices in 1986.

Executions resumed in the 1990s, and there have been 13 since. The last was triple murderer Clarence Ray Allen in 2006.

In 2012 and again in 2016, voters rejected ballot measures to repeal the death penalty while passing a 2016 measure aimed at speeding up capital punishment appeals.

Enter Newsom, who was elected lieutenant governor in 2010 and obviously wanted to become governor. In 2016, when asked about the death penalty by the Modesto Bee, Newsom said he would "be accountable to the will of the voters" if elected governor.

"I would not get my personal opinions in the way of the public's right to make a determination of where they want to take us," he said.

While campaigning in 2018, Newsom said he didn't "want to get ahead of the will of the voters" and wanted to "give the voters a chance to reconsider."

However, shortly after inauguration in 2019, Newsom issued a moratorium on executions but ducked questions about asking voters to repeal capital punishment, which would have been the honorable way to proceed. Instead he waited until the final weeks of his governorship to commute death sentences, subject to state Supreme Court ratification of some cases.

"I take this action because I firmly believe that state-sanctioned killing is incompatible with California's values, undermines the foundation of our legal system, and diminishes each of us," Newsom said in an open letter. "I know we cannot execute people in our imperfect legal system and remain true to our core values, first among them justice and human decency."

Newsom insists he respects voters, "but the constitution also gave every governor clemency authority, and that power exists for moments when law as applied cannot be squared with justice. For me, this is that moment."

The authority he cites was aimed at righting perceived injustices on a case-by-case basis.

Newsom's blanket clemency distorts that process, thumbs his nose at California voters and dishonors victims of horrendous crimes and their grieving families.

We'll learn whether it also impacts his presumed presidential ambitions.

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 Got an Overpayment Notice from Social Security; What Should I Do?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: I received a letter from Social Security saying they overpaid me $12,703 in SS benefits. The letter said "We reduce Social Security benefits if you receive a government pension. We reduce benefits by two-thirds of the amount of your pension. Your benefit is less than two-thirds of the pension. For this reason, we cannot pay you."

FYI, I do receive a pension based on work not covered by Social Security taxes. My problem is that I don't fully understand this. This could be correct, but it doesn't seem right to come back wanting money I didn't ask for. I appreciate your time in getting back and letting me know if there is anything else I could be doing, or if they are entitled to go ahead and get the SS payments back. Thanks. ***Signed: Confused about Owing Social Security***

Dear Confused: From what you have shared, it appears that Social Security has determined that you were subject to a rule called the "Government Pension Offset" (GPO). FYI, the GPO was a provision which reduced Social Security spousal and/or survivor benefits for anyone who had a "non-covered" government pension (that is, a pension earned without contributing to Social Security). It's likely that SS paid you full benefits, but that the GPO should have reduced (or eliminated) the benefits they paid, had they known about your "uncovered" government pension. And that is likely the source of the $12,300 overpayment notice you received.

However, the GPO rule was repealed in January 2025 and no longer applies. In other words, those who have a "non-covered" government pension (a pension earned without contributing to SS) are now no longer subjected to reduced benefits under the GPO. The repeal legislation also provided for retroactivity back to January 2024, so the notice you received from Social Security was probably referring to SS benefits you received prior to 2024. If that is the case, then the notice you received is likely accurate and would need to be repaid. However, if the notice is referring to spousal or survivor benefits you received after December 2023, then it would be in error.

The best way to find out would be for you to file an appeal to Social Security, e.g., a "Request for Reconsideration" (form SSA-561), which will cause an independent review within Social Security to see if you are, indeed, required to repay those SS benefits, or whether you should pay something less (or nothing at all). Just remember that when you actually received the SS benefits in question is the key factor – if you had a non-covered government pension while receiving SS spouse or survivor benefits before 2024, then the overpayment notice you received is likely valid. If not, an appeal as I described above should resolve the issue for you.

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



Britain owes no one an apology

When is the Muslim world going to apologize for its slave raids in Central and Eastern Europe that made off with millions of captives? Not any time soon, we can assume, since no one is asking it to apologize, and presumably no one ever will.

The same isn't true in the U.K., where there is a hot debate over whether the country should apologize for its participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in what would be a stark expression of double standards and Western guilt.

Prime Minister Andy Burnham, whose contemporary Labour Party has a taste for self-abasement, wants to have "difficult conversations" over such an apology, and says that it's "the patriotic thing to do." He is "offering a structured dialogue with those affected by the trans-Atlantic slave trade," never mind that Britain abolished the trade more than two centuries ago.

It's perverse for the U.K. -- pressured by Caribbean countries within the Commonwealth -- to consider a formal apology, given that slavery was a universal phenomenon and Britain had an honored role in snuffing it out.

The ancient Egyptians embraced slavery, and so did the Greeks and Romans. Often, enslavement was the price of military defeat in the ancient world. After the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, the Byzantines, the Vikings and Central Asian societies all relied on slave labor.

They weren't alone; the institution spanned every type of society. Historian Stewart Gordon notes that Ethiopia's legal code in the mid-13th century "recognized slaves as central to the economy and defined the acquisition and holding of slaves as the natural order of things." In the 16th century, he writes, Ethiopia "was a full slave society."

The trans-Atlantic slave trade couldn't have operated without the participation of West African rulers, who took slavery for granted before European slavers showed up and continued the practice after they left.

Something that's almost never mentioned in the debate over accountability for slavery is that North African slave traders enslaved enormous numbers of white Europeans between the 16th and 18th centuries.

Also inconvenient to an anti-Western narrative is that, as James Walvin writes in his "A Short History of Slavery," "Islamic societies were characterized by the widespread and generally unchallenged use of slavery. Indeed, slavery was commonplace throughout Arabia well before the rise of Islam. But as Islam spread between the eighth and 15th centuries, and especially to black Africa, it extended and confirmed the commonplace use of slavery and slave trading."

As part of the so-called Arab slave trade, more than a million slaves were taken from East Africa in the 19th century, and the flow continued apace into the 20th century. According to Gordon, "Perhaps the last large-scale movement of East African slaves to the Middle East was in the 1920s."

As for Britain, beginning in earnest in the 17th century, it became a central cog in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, an industrial-scale enterprise of stomach-turning cruelty. Its ships transported millions of slaves, while the plantation economies of its Caribbean possessions depended on slave labor.

Then, in an extraordinary triumph of morality over unjust profit-making, William Wilberforce and his fellow abolitionists convinced British society to abolish the slave trade and eventually slavery itself. If the institution of slavery was very old, the influence of this Christian-driven attitude to human rights was new. The British went further than simply turning their back on slavery, and used their navy to suppress the slave trade and their diplomatic sway to push other countries to give up the trade as well.

At considerable cost to itself in terms of military effort and financial resources (it paid off Spain, for instance), the U.K. did much more than its share to make abolition the international norm, on top of its other outsized contributions to the creation of the modern world. Rather than contemplating a groveling apology, the attitude of the U.K. should be: "A simple 'thank you' will suffice."

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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COMMUNITY CONNECTION
Informing, Empowering & Engaging Readers With Their Community



Becoming Local Problem Solvers: Curiosity, Compassion and Collaboration

By Patsy McGavock

Over the past few weeks, we've explored politics as people and policy, and finding common ground without surrendering our principles. We've learned from legislators in California's Problem Solvers Caucus. What they described were human skills, not legislative ones. How do we put those skills to work here, where we live? How do we find the courage to begin?

Two weeks after a defining midterm election, some may feel finally heard. Others may wonder whether their voices still matter. We are experiencing this moment differently. But we are still neighbors.

Let's step back to June. A German visitor attending the World Cup reportedly observed, "If you want to hate America, read the news. If you want to love it — drive through it." Initially concerned for his safety, he came to love America through the hospitality of its people.

Perhaps that's part of our challenge. Political labels can make strangers of neighbors. Better understanding one another can challenge our assumptions. As Assemblywoman Anamarie Ávila Farías described it, we live in "50 shades of blue" — or red. Our experiences, values and ideas don't fit neatly into opposing camps.

Nothing shuts down a conversation faster than defensiveness and fear. We can enter a discussion prepared to protect ourselves from an adversary or prepared to understand someone whose concerns differ from our own.

Consider an exercise. Participants stand in a circle. Each chooses an adversary, trying to keep a defender between them. The room becomes a scramble as everyone moves away from someone else.

Now reverse the assignment. Each chooses someone to protect, staying between them and a perceived threat. Suddenly, everyone moves toward the center. (Try it at home. It's immediate and remarkable.)

In the public square, how do we meet on common ground? Expect collaboration and assume goodwill, and you will bring collaboration and goodwill. Defend it.

I've been considering three essential tools:

Curiosity helps us discover what matters. Compassion helps us recognize why it matters to others. Collaboration helps bring people, ideas and resources together to do something about it.

Our strongest disagreements may become part of the solution, revealing aspects we might otherwise overlook. We can discover shared concerns, identify non-negotiables, then bring different perspectives, knowledge and resources together to develop solutions.

We can be the local expression of the cross-partisan collaboration we've been learning about.

It begins with listening.

You can't meet a need you don't understand. Listening isn't simply about understanding the problem. It's about understanding the person.

Ask first. Listen. Understand. And in understanding, find a purpose bigger than either of you.

Our differences don't disappear, but they become smaller beside what we're trying to accomplish together. That tempers our listening with humility. We collaborate better. Listen better. Consider more possibilities. And we develop a more complete solution.

We don't have to start from scratch.

Matt Hedges, chief of staff to Sacramento County Supervisor Rosario Rodriguez, shared an observation: "The core of the community is full of people who truly want to help. Overflowing." People who care, organizations doing good work and networks of relationships.

The challenge, he explained, is connecting them.

Think of that potential we could set in motion!

We've discussed our community hubs with wheels already turning: chambers, community councils, service clubs and libraries. Places to learn, find partners and discover who's working on the concerns we've noticed.

Connecting people is a beginning. Shared purpose helps us keep moving.

Sheri Merrick, executive director of the Citrus Heights Chamber of Commerce, offered encouragement in a conversation last year: "If you're doing it for the right reason, you will always be moving forward. You'll be doing it for the reasons that make your heart happy."

That sense of purpose can sustain us when progress is slow, or our first ideas don't work.

Writing this column often takes me beyond my comfort zone, including interviewing legislators. Yet I've discovered a natural progression: Each conversation deepens my understanding and introduces me to another person who may be part of a solution. I've discovered those people are closer than we imagine.

Next time, we'll explore how these connections can help us become effective advocates, bringing neighbors, nonprofits and government together to address the needs of our communities, and perhaps our nation.

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

Defendant Sentenced for Murdering His Parent for Financial Gain

Sacramento County District Attorney's Office News Release

ELK GROVE, CA (MPG) - The Honorable Michael Bowman sentenced Mark Andre Tomas Navarrete to two consecutive life in prison without parole sentences. On Oct.16, Navarrete was convicted by a jury of two counts of first-degree murder. The jury also found true allegations that Navarrete committed multiple murders, and that the murders were carried out for financial gain.

On June 28, 2024, Navarrete drove from his Elk Grove home to his parents' neighborhood and parked a few blocks from his parents' house. He then put on a mask and gloves and rode a kick scooter to his parents' home. Navarrete went through the side gate to avoid detection by his parents' front porch Ring camera and met his parents at the backyard door.

After getting his parents into the garage, Navarrete struck both his mother and father on the head with an object and strangled them to death while facing them. Navarrete then drove away in his parents' car, parked it a short distance from where he originally parked and rode away on the scooter back to the car. Later that morning, Navarrete texted his deceased parents asking them if they wanted to come over for dinner. After Navarrete's sister became worried when she could not reach her parents, Navarrete drove to his parents' house with his children and "discovered" his deceased parents.

Upon investigation, detectives found the kick scooter in Navarrete's garage and DNA analysis revealed his DNA under his mother's fingernails. It was also revealed that Navarrete had been scamming his friends and family with fake investments and promising to repay them at exorbitant interest rates. Detectives determined that Navarrete's parents paid back other family members for debts owed by Navarrete, and that Navarrete began to resent them. At the time he killed his parents, Navarrete stood to inherit half of his parents' estate.

The case was solved by the Elk Grove Police Department in part due to Flock cameras and other traffic cameras that captured Navarrete's movements. ★

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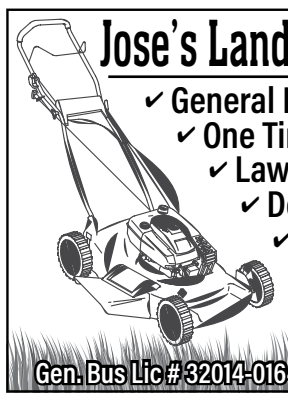
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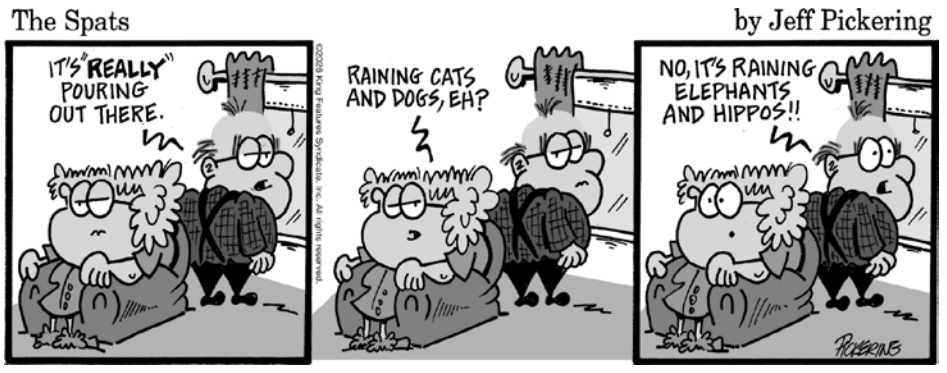
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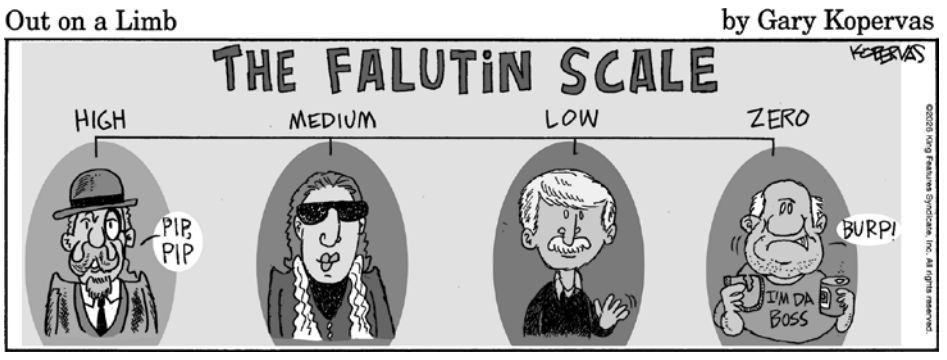
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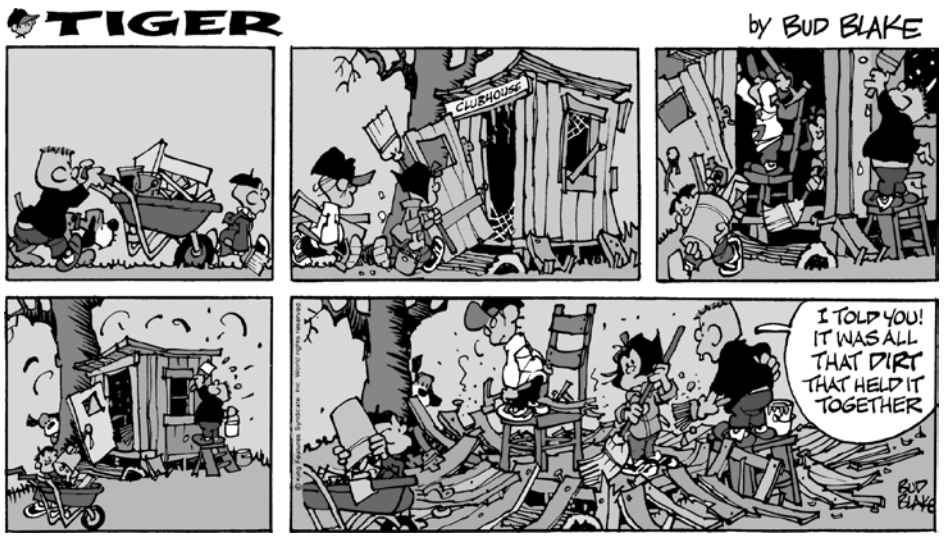
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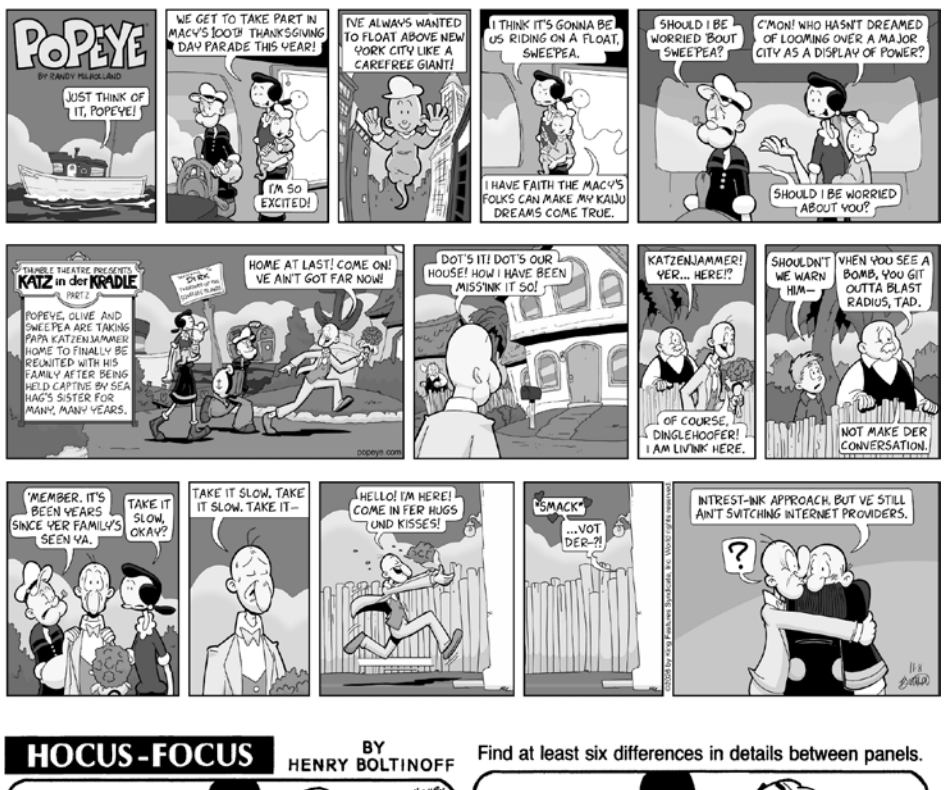


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"We've had a few minor problems ... misdemeanors, mostly."

Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



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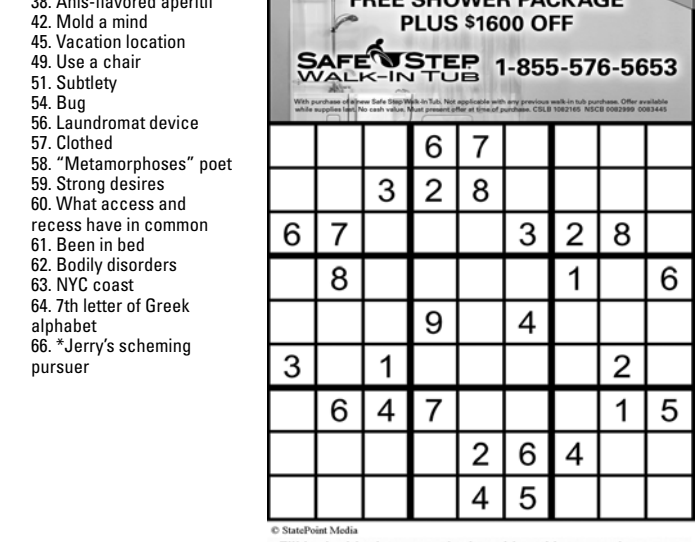
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CLUES

ACROSS
1. Had, with thou
6. Not NFC
9. Sinbad's seven
13. Intense
14. George Gershwin's brother
15. Exclamation of regret, arch.
16. *Speed ____ in the 1960s cartoon
17. Neither's partner
18. Aggressive
19. *Electric-type Pokemon
21. *The Sailor Man
23. Grazing field
24. *Marge to Homer
25. Amazon's entertainment acquisition, acr.
28. Ocean motion
30. Remote
35. Miscellany
37. Narc's unit
39. Russian money
40. "Atlas Shrugged" author
41. Adam Sandler's "____ Gems"
43. One of three square ones
44. More true
46. Do like goo
47. Hindu dress
48. Approvals
50. Express complaint
52. Witch's work
53. Location
55. Cow chew
57. *Road Runner's nemesis
60. *"Peanuts" protagonist
64. Young eel
65. "He ____ and drank the precious Words..."
67. African antelope
68. Tarnish
69. Message in a bottle, acr.
70. Plasters, as on a ship
71. Puts two and two together
72. Emergency responder, acr.
73. Hollywood director Lubitsch

DOWN
1. "Jack and the Beanstalk" strings
2. Popular smoothie berry
3. *Donald or Baby Huey
4. *What Gru does to the moon
5. Three-line poem
6. Japan's indigenous people
7. To's follower
8. Carpus, pl.
9. Uncontrolled swerve
10. "Piece of cake!"
11. Advil target
12. Limit, to some
15. Come into view
20. Kind of #5 Down
22. Mosquito enemy!
24. Wilkommen, in U.S.
25. *Grandson of Rick Sanchez
26. Sunlight interference
27. Subtraction sign
29. *Pet of Bedrock City
31. Eggnog spiker, pl.
32. West African spiritual practice
33. Bell-bottoms bottom
34. *Cat of silent animation era
36. Lyric poems
38. Anis-flavored aperitif
42. Mold a mind
45. Vacation location
49. Use a chair
51. Subtlety
54. Bug
56. Laundromat device
57. Clothed
58. "Metamorphoses" poet
59. Strong desires
60. What access and recess have in common
61. Been in bed
62. Bodily disorders
63. NYC coast
64. 7th letter of Greek alphabet
66. *Jerry's scheming pursuer

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Ask DR. UNIVERSE

Do bugs have hearts and brains?

– Nick

This updated Ask Dr. Universe story originally published February 2015.

Dear Nick,

All mammals have hearts and brains. It's something you and I have in common.

Our four-chambered hearts pump blood around our bodies. That's how we move oxygen and waste.

Our brains sit inside our skulls. They're how we think, sense the world around us, and move our bodies.

I asked my friend Laura Lavine if bugs have those organs, too. She's an insect scientist at Washington State University.

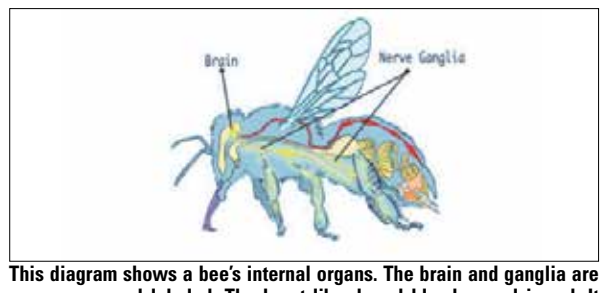
It turns out insects aren't mammals like us. They aren't even vertebrate animals with backbones. They're arthropods.

An arthropod has a "skeleton" on the outside—an exoskeleton. That's a hard outer shell that protects and supports its body. To grow, an arthropod secretes a new exoskeleton and sheds its old one. Arthropods also have jointed limbs and segmented bodies.

Tons of animals are arthropods. That includes all insects, arachnids (spiders, mites, ticks and scorpions), crustaceans (crabs, lobsters, shrimp and pill bugs) and myriapods (centipedes and millipedes).

Your heart is part of a closed circulatory system. Your blood travels inside blood vessels. Your heart pumps oxygen-rich blood all over your body.

An arthropod has an open circulatory system. Its "blood" is called hemolymph. It mostly flows freely inside the arthropod's body.



This diagram shows a bee's internal organs. The brain and ganglia are neon green and labeled. The heart-like dorsal blood vessel is red. It pumps the blood forward to the brain. (Bee's Internal Sensory Receptors, Nebraska Public Media, Used under PBS download and share license)

Lavine told me that some insects ooze a little hemolymph when they're threatened. That's called reflex bleeding. That can be toxic or just send a message.

"It warns the attacker that they're dangerous," she said. "Then they escape."

Unlike your blood, hemolymph doesn't usually carry oxygen. Insects don't even have lungs. They take in oxygen through a row of tiny openings on their sides called spiracles.

Then they pipe that oxygen directly to their cells through a system of tiny tubes called tracheae.

Insects have just one blood vessel. That's sort of like a heart. It runs along the insect's back. It pumps hemolymph from the insect's rear end to its head.

That bathes the brain in the insect's head with nutrients and chemical messages. Then the hemolymph sloshes through the insect's whole body.

But the insect brain isn't as centralized as the mammal brain.

An insect's brain connects to a long nerve cord that run along its belly. Along this cord are bundles of nerve cells called ganglia. They help control different body parts. The brain and ganglia work together to help an insect sense its surroundings and respond to them.

That takes less energy than powering one big brain. It also maximizes how fast an insect can act.

"If you had little brains everywhere else, you would also be much quicker," Lavine said.

It's not always easy to relate to animals that are so different from us. But that's just how we each adapted to our environments. And those brains give some insects sophisticated abilities—like bees sniffing out bombs or diseases.

I guess you could say that's just another way to bee an animal, surviving on planet Earth.

Sincerely,

Dr. Universe

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Giles Named Offensive Player of the Year

Five Hornets Listed on Men's Soccer Honor Roll

Sacramento State Athletics News Release



Sacramento State senior Zac Giles was named The Big West Offensive Player of the Year. Photo courtesy of Sacramento State

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento State senior Zac Giles was named The Big West Offensive Player of the Year and earned a spot on the first team while four other Hornet players were named to the league's postseason honor roll as voted on by the head coaches and announced on Nov. 6.

Giles becomes the first-ever Sacramento State men's soccer student-athlete to be named the top offensive player in The Big West and joins Midfielder of the Year Paul Geyer (2017) and Freshman of the Year Benji Kikanovic (2018) as major award winners in the league since the Hornets joined the conference in 2012.

The Lincoln, Calif., native is also the first Sacramento State player to be named player of the year in any conference since Ernesto Carranza took home the award in the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation in 2009.

In also earning a spot in the all-conference first team, Giles became only the seventh Hornet to earn that honor in the program's Big West era, joining Donovan Sessoms (2024), Austin Wehner (2022), Cylus Sandoval (2017), Geyer (2017), Chimdum Mez (2014) and Matt Linenberger (2012).

Joining Giles on the honor roll is junior midfielder Hiroshi Yang on the second team, Sean Battistessa and Nick Strangio on the honorable mention team, and newcomer Adrian Alvarenga on the league's all-rookie team. The group represents the most All-Big West honorees for the program since Sacramento State placed five on the all-conference team and had three more on what was then known as the all-freshman team.

Enjoying a storybook senior season, Giles finished with 11 goals and five assists for 27 points, putting 39 of his school single-season record 72 shots on goal. A three-time Big West Offensive Player of the Week and two-time National Team of the Week selection by Top Drawer Soccer, Giles finished the regular season atop The Big West in shots, shots per match (4.24), shots on goal, shots on goal per match (2.29), goals, points, and points per match (1.59), while finishing tied for fifth in assists.

He set a school Division I era single-match record with four goals in a 5-1 win at CSUN on Oct. 24 for his first career hat trick, while his eight points in that contest were tied for the most in a single match in school history. Giles wrapped up the year ranked tied for eighth on the single-season list in goals and tied for seventh in points while adding school single-season records in points per match (1.59) and shots.

Yang finished third on the team with 12 points thanks to four goals and four assists, ranking second on the team with 39 shots and 17 on goal. He netted his first goal of the season — and the first for the team in 2026 — in the season-opening win over UC Davis, then added a brace against UC Riverside (Sept. 23) and the team's opener against Cal State Bakersfield (Oct. 3).

Two of his assists came in a 4-2 victory over Pacific and added helpers against UC San Diego (Oct. 14) and CSUN (Oct. 24). One of his two goals in the win over the Highlanders was selected as the No. 9 play of the day in ESPN SportsCenter Top 10 plays.

Battistessa finished second on the team with 14 points on six goals and two assists, staring 16 of the team's 17 matches. The Fair Oaks, Calif., native also scored in the regular season opener against UC Davis and added a three-point performance in a win over UC San Diego (Oct. 14). He also scored against San Jose State (Sept. 6), Pacific (Sept. 17), UC Santa Barbara (Sept. 30) and Cal State Bakersfield (Oct. 3).

Strangio was a mainstay on the back line for the Hornets in 15 starts while adding a pair of goals against Saint Mary's and CSUN, while Alvarenga joined him in his rookie season, collecting a pair of assists in the process against UC Santa Barbara and Gonzaga.

All four all-conference honors were the first of their respective careers, while Alvarenga gave the Hornets a representative on the league's all-rookie team for the third consecutive season and became the 17th Hornet freshman to be recognized overall. ★

Memo Rodriguez and Lee Desmond Named to USL Championship All-League Teams

Sacramento Republic FC News Release



Midfielder Memo Rodriguez earned a spot on the All-League First Team and defender Lee Desmond was named to the All-League Second Team on Nov. 10. Photo courtesy of Sacramento Republic FC

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Nov. 10, USL Championship announced the 2026 All-League Teams. Republic FC was represented twice among the top players from the season, with midfielder Memo Rodriguez earning a spot on the All-League First Team and defender Lee Desmond named to the All-League Second Team.

"Memo and Lee have been invaluable to our success this year – both on and off the pitch – and we're incredibly proud to see them deservedly recognized as All-League players," said Republic FC President and General Manager Tim Holt. "Both play an important role in setting the standard for our club, and their leadership remains key as we continue our postseason push."

Rodriguez led the league's midfielder corps with 16 goal contributions and played a key role in Sacramento's stellar form in the second half of the campaign. After suffering an injury early in the season, he worked his way back into form and scored his first goal for Republic FC on July 25. A week later, he recorded three assists in a 5-0 win over Sporting Club Jacksonville.

In Week 30, Memo led the Indomitable Club past New Mexico United with a two-goal, one-assist performance that earned him Player of the Week honors. He then went on to play a massive part in Republic FC's 13-game undefeated streak to close out the regular season, posting nine goal contributions in the final six matches. He earned recognition consistently throughout the year as a six-time Team of the Week honoree and finalist for October Player of the Month.

Team Captain Desmond has earned his first selection to the All-League Second Team after posting his best single-season performance since joining Republic FC in 2022. The 31-year-old centerback was on the pitch for all but 45 minutes of the regular season and led the team with 150 clearances and 159 duels won, while maintaining an 84% passing accuracy. With Desmond anchoring the backline, Sacramento posted double-digit clean sheets for the fifth consecutive year and conceded just 28 goals to lead the Western Conference. He also contributed on the other end of the pitch with two goals, including one in his monumental 400th career appearance on Aug. 1. ★

Kamaria Charlo Named Hawk of the Week

Consumnes River College News Release



Women's basketball student-athlete Kamaria Charlo has been named the CRC Athletics Hawk of the Week following an impressive two-game stretch that helped the Hawks extend their season-opening winning streak to 4-0. Photo courtesy of Consumnes River College

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Cosumnes River College women's basketball student-athlete Kamaria Charlo has been named the CRC Athletics Hawk of the Week following an impressive two-game stretch that helped the Hawks extend their season-opening winning streak to 4-0.

Charlo delivered a standout offensive performance throughout the week, totaling 42 points, six rebounds, five assists and seven steals across wins over Feather River College and College of San Mateo.

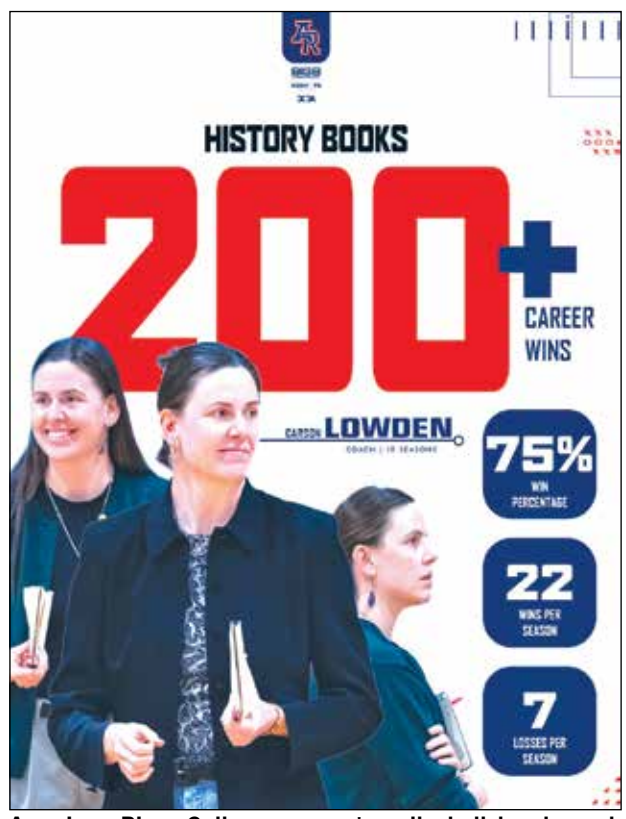
In the Hawks' 60-44 home victory over Feather River on November 5, Charlo finished with 11 points, five rebounds, three assists and three steals, contributing on both ends of the floor as Cosumnes River earned the win at Clark Court.

She followed that performance with a career-best offensive showing against College of San Mateo on November 7, pouring in 31 points to help the Hawks secure a convincing 79-53 road victory. Charlo shot 12-of-23 from the field, including an impressive 6-of-12 from beyond the arc, while adding four steals and two assists.

Her six three-pointers and 31-point performance highlighted a dominant road effort as the Hawks closed out the week with consecutive victories, remaining undefeated at 4-0 to open the season. ★

Lowden Secures Historic 200th Career Win as Beavers Dominate

American River College News Release



American River College women's volleyball head coach Carson Lowden secured her 200th career victory in a win over Diablo Valley. Photo courtesy of American River College

PLESANT HILL, CA (MPG) - American River College women's volleyball head coach Carson Lowden secured her 200th career victory in spectacular fashion, leading the Beavers to a commanding 3-0 sweep on the road against Diablo Valley College.

The historic milestone underscores Lowden's elite tenure at American River College, where she has built the Beavers into a perennial powerhouse. Her squad left no room for doubt on the Vikings' home court, executing a flawless game plan to earn the sweep in straight sets.

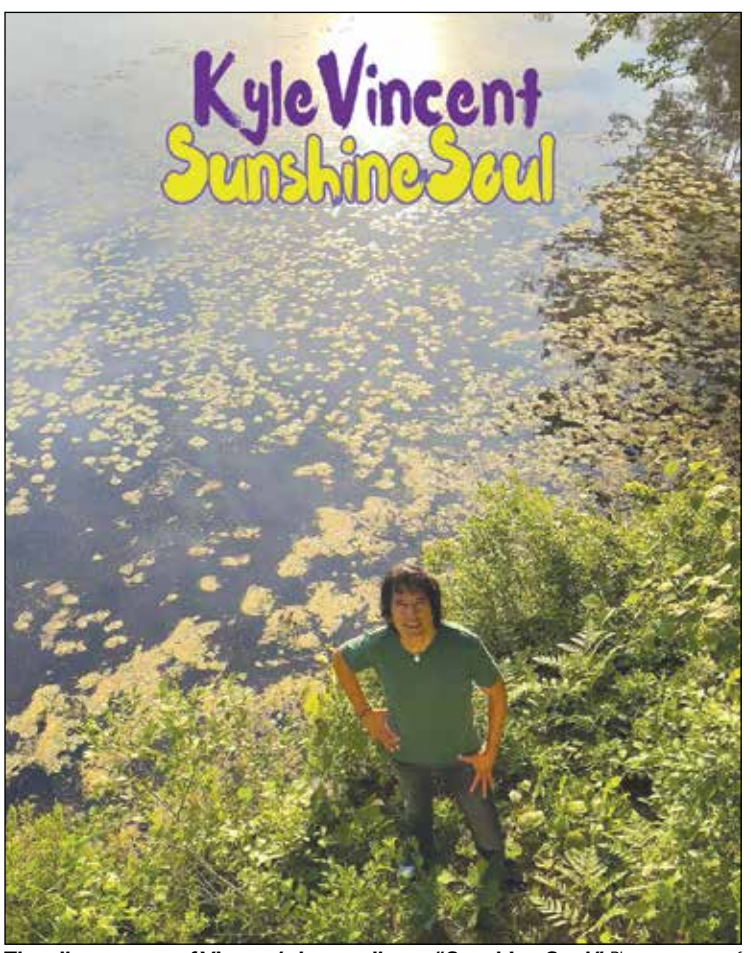
The Beavers asserted their dominance from the opening serve, controlling the tempo and keeping Diablo Valley out of system. ARC took the first set 25-17 before putting on a masterclass in the second and third frames, capturing them 25-10 and 25-9 respectively. ★

Former '80s Frontman to Play the Ooley Theatre

Singer-songwriter Kyle Vincent comes to town Dec. 5



The Berkeley-native is the former frontman of '80s pop band Candy. Photo courtesy of Kyle Vincent



The album cover of Vincent's latest album, "Sunshine Soul." Photo courtesy of Kyle Vincent

By Abbey Wicks

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Kyle Vincent has traded the noise of Los Angeles' glam and punk rock scene for the quiet of a wooded acre in New England.

"It's just woods and nature and quiet," he said during a phone interview. "It is lovely."

But the musician, who once spent his nights playing Sunset Strip clubs and befriending future rock stars, hasn't lost his appetite for the stage. On Dec. 5, he'll bring his songs to the Ooley Theatre, a 35-capacity theater in Midtown.

Vincent was born on Feb. 12, 1968, in Berkeley, Calif. as the youngest of four siblings. He credits the diversity of the city, the first to desegregate its public schools using two-way busing, in exposing him to a wide variety of cultures, ideas and especially music.

"There was a cross contamination (of music)," he said.

At a young age, Vincent fell in love with listening to the radio, where he would hear anything from Van Halen to Earth Wind and Fire to Barry Manilow.

"Everything was music in my brain all the time," he said "It was my solace. It was my friend. It was everything."

At eight years old, Vincent enrolled in an experimental jazz program for youth through Berkeley Unified School District. By the age of nine, he was learning jazz improvisation on saxophone.

"Without that program, not a chance I'd become a musician, a professional musician," he said.



Kyle Vincent will play The Ooley Theatre in Sacramento on Dec. 5. Photo courtesy of Kyle Vincent

Eventually, the young musician got "jazzed out," temporarily retiring his saxophone and enrolling in vocal lessons, during which he discovered his ability to sing.

"It was a brilliant decision on my part," Vincent said with a chuckle.

Singing took Vincent to Los Angeles, where he co-founded pop band Candy, of which he was the lead singer. The band released their first and only album "Whatever Happened to Fun..." in 1985.

"You don't realize the historical significance when you're in it," Vincent said of his Candy days, when most nights consisted of playing a rotation of nightclubs along the Sunset Strip. "You don't appreciate it when you don't understand it. And it's the same with LA."

He became immerged in the scene, while also questioning if his heart and soul were truly in it.

"It was an extremely exciting time," Vincent said. "I do sometimes wonder if that was the right road, because it really wasn't what was inside of me music-wise."

Following Candy's disbandment, Vincent honed his songwriting craft as he embarked on his solo career, eventually becoming scouted by Barry Manilow's manager, landing him a record deal and a spot as an opening act on Manilow's "Greatest Hits and Then Some" tour.

Manilow would coach Vincent as a performer, as he continued to hone the skill.

In one teaching moment, Manilow advised Vincent on microphone placement when playing a large arena.

"I never forgot it," Vincent said. "He says, 'You're covering your face with the microphone. They can't see your pretty face. Put the mic down.' And I never thought of that before."

In addition to Manilow, Vincent credits artists like the Bee Gees and Gilbert O'Sullivan as inspirations. But just like in his youth, Vincent continues to find new artists and songs that inspire him.

"I'll be running around and hear something, and I'll Shazam it on my phone," he said. "I'm like, 'Man, that's a good song."

Vincent released his latest album, "Sunshine Soul," in 2024, which features 10 original tracks.

His setlists usually consist of a mix of hit songs like "Wake Me Up (When the World's Worth Waking Up For)" and new songs or personal favorites. When performing the hits, he tries to stay as close to the original track as possible, he said.

"I'm also a music fan, and when I go see one of my favorite artists, I want to hear the song…I actually do want to hear the song like I know it," he said.

Vincent is no stranger to playing intimate, living room-style shows like the one he'll play in Sacramento.

When it comes to playing a small show, his mindset as a performer doesn't differ too much from playing larger theaters and arenas, he said.

"The songs themselves that I write and sing are kind of intimate, heart on my sleeve, honest songs," said the songwriter. "So you're kind of immediately naked as soon as you walk out there anyway."

Vincent describes his shows as theatrical, which lends well to performing in a theatre setting.

"I don't just go up there as a brooding songwriter," he joked. "'Here's the next song about when she left me,' you know?"

At a Kyle Vincent show, audience members can expect to hear not only songs, but stories, too.

"I guess I feel a little more comfortable telling stories in front of a smaller audience because you do you feel like you're surrounded by family."

Each of the artist's shows is a unique performance, he said. Except for rare occasions, he generally discourages the use of recording on cell phones. "I really want this to be a one-time, special moment."

"My job as a performer is – it amazes me how some performers don't understand this – I only have one job, and that is to make you leave the show feeling better than when you walked in," Vincent said.

As of press time, tickets are still available at $32.50 apiece. To purchase, visit: kylevincent.com.

You can find Kyle Vincent on his YouTube channel: KyleVincent Videos and his music on Spotify and Apple Music. ★

San Juan Unified Launches Early Literacy Pilot with Ampact Reading Corps

The Title I-funded initiative will provide daily, one-on-one reading tutoring at two high-need elementary schools.

Sacramento County Education Coalition News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - San Juan Unified School District (SJUSD) is launching an evidence-based, one-on-one tutoring program with Ampact's Reading Corps to accelerate reading proficiency for kindergarten through third-grade students.

Developed following collaborative advocacy from the Sacramento County Education Coalition (SCEC) and its community partners – including representatives from the Latino Parallel School Board (LPSB) and the Special Education Advocacy PTA of San Juan Unified School District (SEPTA) – the pilot will place trained tutors directly into classrooms at two high-need Title I elementary schools.

The partnership comes at a critical juncture for local early literacy. Following recent California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) data showing a decline in third grade reading proficiency among high-need students, SCEC, the LPSB and SEPTA worked together to advocate for the adoption of Ampact's high-dosage tutoring model. San Juan Unified implemented the program as an eligible use of federal Title I funds under the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), allowing schools to deploy targeted reading interventions without straining local general funds.

SACRAMENTO COUNTY EDUCATION COALITION

"Through shared vision and a deep commitment to our students, we are taking a definitive step forward to ensure our young readers receive the proven literacy support they need and deserve," said Sharon Thurmond, president of the Sacramento County Education Coalition.

"We extend our sincere gratitude to the leadership at San Juan Unified," added Rose Ramos, President of the Latino Parallel School Board, "for embracing this opportunity to ensure our students – regardless of background – are taught to read at or above grade level."

"Teaching our kids to read is critical to their success in school and beyond. Families in our community have been advocating for stronger reading support across all grade levels in San Juan Unified, especially for students receiving special education services," said Ryan Digman, founding president of the Special Education Advocacy PTA of San Juan Unified School District (SEPTA). "This pilot is an important step toward getting more children in the early grades the consistent, one-on-one support they need to build reading skills and confidence."

Tanya Kravchuk, president of the San Juan Unified Board of Trustees shared, "Every child deserves to become a strong reader, and that starts with instruction that's structured, evidence based and grounded in data. That's why I'm thrilled to bring Ampact's Reading Corps to San Juan Unified. I'm excited for our families to see the difference it makes."

Ampact's Reading Corps is a nationally recognized clinical model that places trained tutors in schools to provide daily, data-driven reading interventions. By integrating this model into San Juan Unified School District, the district aims to rapidly lift third grade reading proficiency metrics and provide teachers with a robust, reliable layer of classroom support.

The collaborative rollout between San Juan Unified School District and Ampact will begin immediately, with both entities working together to ensure a seamless launch that prioritizes the highest-need school sites ahead of the upcoming terms. Sacramento County Education Coalition will continue to collaborate, reach out to community members and monitor progress of this initial pilot. ★