

County Solar Farm Goes Live

By Neil Farrell



Dist. 2 County Supervisor Bruce Gibson cuts the ribbon on the 1.2-megawatt solar farm. Photo courtesy ForeFront Power

San Luis Obispo County recently cut the ribbon and flipped the switch on a 1.2-megawatt solar energy farm located on Oklahoma Avenue off Hwy 1 in rural SLO.

The solar farm was designed, financed, built and is owned by San Francisco-based, ForeFront Power, one of the biggest solar and energy storage companies in the U.S., according to a news release from ForeFront Power.

As Estero Bay News first reported last November, the solar farm covers about 6 acres of former pasturelands adjacent to the County Honor Farm. The project has 3,294 ground-mounted solar panels made in Vietnam that rotate to track the sun, and will be used to offset energy costs for a dozen County facilities including the Juvenile Services Center, Honor Farm, Main and Women's Jails, County Emergency Operations Center, Sheriff's Offices and other County facilities in the immediate area.

Over the plant's expected 20-year lifespan, the County predicts it will save some \$6 million in electricity costs.

ForeFront Power will provide electricity at a set rate, somewhat below the normal utility company's rates. It will also maintain the facility. It marks the third solar project the company has done for the County.

In 2020, the County and the company installed solar canopies in the parking lots at Dairy Creek Golf Course

City Changes Tourism Promotions

By Neil Farrell

The City of Morro Bay is again getting out of the tourism promotions business, and turning over the spending of promotions monies to the lodging industry, where it started.

The Morro Bay Tourism Improvement District or TBID was formed in April 2009 after motel owners approached the City with the idea to form an assessment district to tax themselves and provide monies for promoting the town's lodging industry.

The switch came at a time when the City was shrinking the budget for the Community Promotions Committee, the city board that worked with the Chamber of Commerce to promote tourism and support special events.

The TBID proposal, which was eventually adopted by the City Council, was to add 3% onto the cost of a room night — paid whether by the guest or by the motel. The money was spent by the TBID board via a non-profit organization of the same name.

While the City Council made the ultimate decisions on the TBID's budget, the board decided how to market the town and also funded a visitor's center.

That system worked well from the start as the motels, vacation rentals, and B&Bs increased occupancy well past the goal of 50% that the TBID started out with. The City also saw a sudden rise in transient occupancy taxes (of 10% on a room night), which became the City's second largest source of taxes behind property taxes.

But the initial successes slowed considerably after 2016, when the City Council voted to create a tourism bureau within the City bureaucracy, and take over control of the TBID's budget, which had quickly grown to nearly \$1 million a year as tourism flourished.

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and the County Health Department Campus on Broad Street in San Luis Obispo.

Those two projects produce a total of 552 kilowatts of power and are designed to supply 80% of those facilities' needs, according to ForeFront Power's news release.

The solar arrays were just part of the equation in getting the County's largest solar project online. The installation was pretty much done last year but PG&E had a part to play for it to actually work.

"The PG&E upgrades," James Cortese of the Gryphon Agency, ForeFront Power's PR firm told Estero Bay News, "included installing an overhead 'recloser' that was installed on their pole. A recloser is an automatic, high-voltage electric switch. Like a circuit breaker on household electric lines, it shuts off electric power when trouble occurs, such as a short circuit."

Making electricity from solar panels is probably the easiest part of it. Solar panels actually produce direct current or DC power, which is incompatible to the power grid's alternating current.

"DC-to-AC conversion happens at the inverter level," Cortese explained. "There are multiple inverters per site, and they are situated at the end of the arrays [rows of panels], as can be seen in the project video. DC is what is

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Appeal Denied in Drug Rehab Project

By Neil Farrell

With little choice, the Morro Bay Planning Commission voted to deny the appeal of a proposal to turn a North Main Street motel into a substance abuse treatment facility.

The Commission had little choice because State and Federal law identify such property uses as having a right to exist in all zoning designations where such facilities are allowed.

"People in alcohol and substance abuse recovery are considered disabled and under both State and Federal law, and are provided protections for housing for the disabled," reads a staff report from Community Development Director Scot Graham. "California Fair Employment and Housing Act expressly prohibits discrimination through public or private land use practices and decisions that make housing opportunities unavailable."

Graham back on Feb. 24 issued an administrative minor use permit that contained the normal conditions, including having to install curb, gutter and sidewalk across the Main Street frontage of the property, which is at 2460 N. Main and is currently called Rodeway Inn, but is perhaps better recognized by its former long-time name, The El Rancho Motel.

Last December, the new owners applied for a minor use permit to switch the 27-room motel into an in-house drug and alcohol treatment facility intended mainly for first responders — police and firefighters — battling addiction.

The project was met with a hailstorm of controversy as rumors and concerns and fears spread quickly on the Next Door Morro Bay website.

In the end Ashley Smith, a concerned neighbor of the

Moving Forward: Debbie Deis, Master Floral Designer D&D Floral, Los Osos

Story and Photos by Judy Salamacha



Debbie Deis has owned and operated D&D Floral since 1983.

Thousands of cars zoom pass Debbie Deis' D&D Floral entrance sign every day. And although she has designed special occasion floral arrangements at 1958 Los Osos Valley Road since 1983, it took a 2020 worldwide pandemic for many of these commuters to notice her directional 'FLOWERS' sign and turn into Deis' acreage of retro-paradise.

"During Covid weddings were non-existent and sixty percent of the funeral business was down," Deis said. Her delivery business grew generated mostly by loyal customers wanting her to stay in business. "It would warm my heart to deliver an arrangement — set it on porch, knock, and watch from my van as they opened the door and see the flowers - become emotional understanding it was a gift from friends or family they hadn't seen for months."

Recently Deis began reaching out to remind customer's Mother's Day is almost here. May is also the month she begins to harvest her bountiful fruit and vegetable gardens and offer them at her public stand adjacent to the shop. In 2020, she started posting walk-through videos on www.facebook.com/SupportLosOsos to make sure nothing was wasted.

"When I talked about my green beans, which were planted with seed stock from my grandmother's 1940s

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property, appealed the project's MUP to the commission. Her main bones of contention were that the MUP did not adequately address the impacts to the police and fire departments, the Chamber of Commerce and tourism; it did not adequately address measures to ensure the safety of the neighborhood; and, the permit does not adequately address the curriculum that will be used.

She wanted the police and fire chiefs and the Chamber to chime in on the permit. Graham's report said the police and fire departments had both reviewed the project and approved it. And the Chamber of Commerce "is not a City agency and has no involvement in the review or approval of City issued permits."

Among the many other arguments against the project was an assertion that the City was trying to sneak the project through without a public hearing.

Graham's report states that State and Federal law prohibit the City from denying the project, and so he issued the administrative permit. The City Attorney echoed that sentiment during the meeting, saying the City could be sued for discrimination if the project were denied.

Graham told EBN, "Most of the issues raised by the public related to concerns about the type of residents that would be housed in the facility, which is not something we can really take into consideration. Folks in drug and alcohol programs are considered disabled and are therefore a protected class under state and fed. ADA laws."

People seeking treatment would come to the facility, which will have a fence around it but will not be a "lock-down" facility, meaning people will be free to come and go but must sign in and out when they do, according to Rich Donald, who is the motel general manager.

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WRF Project
Manager Replaced

By Neil Farrell

There’s been a shake up on the City of Morro Bay sewer project team, as the man who had been the project manager left recently and was replaced by another person from the same firm.

City Manager Scott Collins said he announced to the Public Works Advisory Board and the Citizen’s Finance Advisory Board that Water Reclamation Facility program manager, Eric Caseras with the engineering firm Carollo Engineers, left the firm in April “to pursue a new career path.”

Carollo appointed a new lead person to act as the project manager. “In his stead,” Collins told Estero Bay News, “Carollo assigned Kyle Rhorer to the WRF Program Manager role. Kyle has familiarity with the Morro Bay community and the WRF project.”

Collins said Caseras had been working closely with the whole Carollo team that is acting as project managers for the \$138 million Water Recycling Facility or WRF project now underway in the city.

Rhorer takes over managing a project that’s been somewhat of a snake-bit practically from the start.

In early May 2020, less than 2 months after starting the immense amount of grading needed for the project’s treatment plant site above the terminus of South Bay Boulevard, an estimated 15,000-cubic yard landslide occurred on a slip plane that hadn’t been identified in previous studies.

That left the contractors, Filanc/Black & Veatch, to rework the grading plans and find space to store all that excess dirt, which was eventually added to the tremendous amount of fill dirt needed for the plant site. It also added \$280,000 in costs to the project.

On March 11 (2021) unknown thieves struck at both the treatment plant site and the Quintana Road pipeline construction site. Police said someone got into the locked storage trailers at the plant site and stole some \$150,000 worth of equipment and supplies in the largest commercial burglary in town history.

Police have not said how much or what was lost at the Quintana Road burglary, which was also taken from storage containers.

And on April 7, when work began in earnest on the 3.3 miles of pipelines that must be laid for the conveyance system portion of the WRF, the contractor, Anvil Const., accidentally cut into a water main on Quintana Road connected directly to the Kings Street tank farm. Some 54,000 gallons of drinking water was lost.

Then as a City crew was finishing up repairing the water line, the company accidentally broke an above ground sewer main, installed to bypass a lift station out by South Bay and Quintana, spilling approximately 1,100 gallons of raw sewage onto the roadway and into a small drainage ditch alongside the road. The City was able to recapture 650 gallons.

These two pipeline breaks happened on the first day the company started digging trenches.

The change in project managers didn’t come as too much of a surprise to City officials. “Eric did notify us of the change in advance and he worked closely with Kyle and the rest of the Carollo team on the transition,” Collins said. Casares served as project manager from April 2018 to April 2021, according to Collins.

Carollo’s project management contract is worth from \$10-\$12 million out of a \$138 million project.

City to Hire Temporary
Maintenance Help

By Neil Farrell

The coronavirus pandemic response has forced many changes in everyday life, many with negative results that are easily predictive. But there have been some unexpected changes, too, including the exasperation of litter and sanitation problems on Morro Bay’s waterfront.

Since last spring, when local restaurants went from being closed altogether, to being able to offer takeout, and eventually establishing outdoor eating spaces, an abundance of trash has been produced along the Embarcadero and Morro Rock area overflowing garbage cans. It’s an issue that has crept up on the City over several years.

City Manager Scott Collins’ March 23 staff report said, “Morro Bay has experienced a significant growth in the number of visitors over the past decade as measured by hotelier receipts and Transient Occupancy Tax [TOT] revenue. By way of example, since fiscal year 2008/09, TOT receipts have increased by a staggering 93% overall.”

That increase in tourism had been fueled greatly by stepped-up promotions coming from the Tourism Business Improvement District’s (TBID), efforts.

TBID charges an additional 3% on the cost of a room night at hotels, motels, B&Bs and vacation rentals, and since inception in 2009, has grown steadily and is now anticipated to be about \$1 million a year. The money is collected by the lodging businesses and managed by the City with TBID’s advisory board.

But the City/TBID haven’t done any promotions since last April, when the pandemic shut down much of the economy and the Governor issued stay-at-home orders. Tourism dried up for several months, with the City even going so far as to take out ads in the Central Valley asking people not to visit the area.

But they came anyway last summer, in droves, as they escaped wildfires in the Sierras and the usual heat waves. At times, the beach was crowded with people and the Embarcadero choked with traffic — on weekdays.

Restaurants were allowed to operate their takeout and outdoor dining and in most reports, the summer was good for them. But it also exasperated the litter problem.

“During the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on indoor dining,” Collins said, “a significantly higher number of individuals order take-out food beginning last summer and continuing through this year. This put added pressure on the City’s trash system, particularly in the Embarcadero, Coleman Beach and Morro Rock parking lot areas.”

The City tried a PR campaign urging everyone to be a “Trash Hero” and not litter, but with seagulls, which raid full garbage cans scattering takeout food containers on the ground, the City had a growing problem.

So Collins asked TBID to agree to put some \$10,000 towards the issue so they can hire temporary maintenance people over the summer. He then asked the Council.

Along the waterfront, “the City provides 63 public trash/recycling bins and 6 public restrooms (several lease sites on the waterfront also have public restrooms, and those are managed by tenants of those lease sites),” Collins said. “During the peak tourist season (late May to early October), several trash/recycling receptacles and the more heavily used restrooms were impacted as thousands of visitors were using the same area simultaneously.

“The physical manifestation of this impact includes, at times, overflowing trash cans near the water, intermittent service disruptions, and untidy conditions in the heavily used public restrooms (in particular, the Morro Rock parking lot).”

Public Works, which oversees the City’s 3-man maintenance crew, made some changes to address the issue, like shifting work schedules; added handicap port-a-potties; started cleaning restrooms four times a day from the previous two or three; added more dumpsters at key places; assigned the Harbor Department staff to also keep an eye on and help empty overflowing garbage cans; and, re-plumbed

the Morro Rock restrooms to handle more flushing, among other things.

The Council, which has been getting an earful of complaints by residents about the trash problems agreed to bring more people on.

“Council,” Collins told Estero Bay News, “approved using some TBID and General Fund [monies] to add more part-time staffing hours to support trash pickup and restroom cleaning along the waterfront and beach areas.”

The Council appropriated up to \$25,000 “for that needed enhancement,” he added, “with \$10,000 coming from TBID and up to \$15,000 from the General Fund. That is on top of enhancements made last year in the form of additional port-a-potties, wash stations, and trashcans and dumpsters.”

He’s not sure how many extra people will be hired, “but the new hire(s) will spend their time on the waterfront/beach areas Fridays through Sundays from April on through October.”

As for Coleman Park’s condemned restrooms, the City wants to use Proposition 68 monies to replace it. That restroom has been closed for about 2-years now and Coleman Park is one of the sites where the Harbor Department set up RV camping spaces, in a program to try and bolster the Harbor Fund.

“Portas will go up at Coleman,” Collins said, “along with a wash station. The Prop. 68 grant requires a local match.” His report to Council said the City needed to come up with “at least \$40,000 in funds or in-kind services.”

The City is slated to get \$177,000 from Prop. 68, the normal amount it would receive based on population. The City also has it’s own, “Park In-lieu” fees charged to subdivision projects in-lieu of providing park space, which can go towards this.

“I anticipate the full first phase of the project,” Collins said, “which includes modern fully ADA complaint restrooms, will cost around \$300,000. We are looking at park in-lieu and other funds to cover the remainder, as well as in-kind service.”

Meanwhile, the City continues with its Be A Trash Hero campaign and residents can assist by notifying the City when they see overflowing cans (and maybe picking up some of the litter too).

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Council Tries for \$20M Federal Grant

By Neil Farrell

The Morro Bay City Council voted to apply for a federal grant that could greatly reduce the City’s share of financing the new Water Reclamation Facility project that has now topped \$138 million.

The Council voted to have the city manager apply for a U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) grant under Federal Title XVI the “Water Infrastructure Improvements to the Nation Act” (WIIN).

Under the grant program’s guidelines and limitations the City could apply for up to \$20 million — the maximum amount available — and the vote was to go for the max.

The City put together a full application package for the program that included details about the City’s WRF financing plan, which entails a \$5 million State Water Resources Control Board planning grant; a \$56.4 million low-interest loan (0.8317%) from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s “Water Infrastructure and Financing Innovation Act” (WIFIA) Program; \$57.3 million low-interest loan from the California State Revolving Fund (SRF) at 1.20% interest — to be used specifically for the wastewater financial component of the project; and, some \$20 million in cash raised through the City’s WRF surcharge of \$41 a month per water/sewer customer.

The idea is if the City can get the federal loan, it won’t have to use so much cash from the surcharges. However, whether or not that would lead to a drop in the surcharge for customers is unclear.

The WIIN amendment, enacted in December 2016 was to “address water resources infrastructure that is critical to the Nation’s economic growth, health, and competitiveness,” according to the City report.

This WIIN amendment to Title XVI allows any wastewater-recycling project to apply for funding, where as previously, only projects approved by Congress could be funded.

As Morro Bay’s WRF’s stated goal is to recycle the town’s wastewater, it apparently is prime for this grant program.

The City’s already got one foot in the door of this money pot. In May 2020, the City sent a “Title XVI Feasibility Study” to the Bureau of Reclamation and it was approved July 22. So the City is officially eligible to pursue funding.

Collins said they’ve put a lot of work into this grant application. “It’s a very competitive grant and awards can go anywhere from a few million up to the \$20M cap,” he told Estero Bay News. “The City and WRF Team have been working on this for a few years, as the grant applicant

requirements are exacting and complex. “We are hopeful given the WIFIA funding and water reuse component of the WRF project will make it competitive for funding.”

The program’s limits are 25% of total costs or \$20 million max. That means there’s a 75% local match requirement, but that too is in the bag as the City can use the WIFIA and SRF loans to satisfy this, as well as the \$5 million planning grant.

And the City even got plenty of big shot endorsements, as letters of support were obtained from local Congressman Salud Carbajal, California U.S. Sen. Diane Feinstein, the California Coastal Commission, State Sen. John Laird, and Lynn Compton, Chairwoman of the SLO County Board of Supervisors.

The WIIN Amendment monies are to support water reclamation projects, which the Bureau of Reclamation sees as a way to stretch water resources in the Western U.S.

While Morro Bay’s project literally has “reclamation” in the title, the current plan is to only inject treated effluent into the Morro Creek groundwater basin a few days a month at most, making the WRF project, which at \$138 million is the most expensive public works project in City history, a supplemental water source and buffer against seawater intrusion. The State Water Project remains the City’s No. 1 source of drinking water.

During a July 2018 Proposition 218 vote, the City told ratepayers the WRF was capable of producing 80% of the City’s annual water needs on a sustainable basis.

It was unclear when the City will find out whether its grant application is awarded and it may be that it gets held over until next fiscal year, though Congress must agree to extend funding beyond the current year for that to happen.

The grant application is the first time the City has put into writing how much it plans to get from the State’s SRF Program. Last year, the State Water Board approved Morro Bay for up to \$100 million in loans and awarded the \$5 million planning grant.

“The final amount of the SRF loan,” Collins said, “is under discussion but it’s in that range, potentially a little

bit higher than \$57 million. SRF staff has told us the agreement should be finalized before next fiscal year.” The State of California’s fiscal year starts July 1.

Previously, the City borrowed \$10 million from the SRF Program, which has already been spent on the project planning work.

COVID Response Lessens Grip

By Neil Farrell



Thanks to falling numbers of new infections, coronavirus pandemic response restrictions for San Luis Obispo County have been lightened up, prompting the County to close down an emergency hospital at Cal Poly and return the building to the students.

And the County Health Department continues to give COVID-19 vaccinations including restarting administration of the Johnson & Johnson single-dose vaccine after halting its use over concerns of a serious side effect that turned out to not be too serious of a problem.

County in the Orange Now

After months in the “Red Tier” the second most re-

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strictive level of restrictions under the Governor’s “Blueprint for a Safer Economy” SLO County was dropped into the less-restrictive “Orange Tier” as of 8 a.m. Wednesday, April 28.

The Orange Tier “Allows counties,” the County Health Department said, “to reopen indoor operations for some additional business sectors and allows for certain activities to resume.”

Among the easing is that restaurants are now allowed to have indoor seating of 50% (up from 25%) or 200 whichever is fewer. Fitness centers can reopen indoor workouts at 25% capacity and wineries and breweries with food services can reopen indoors at 25% capacity.

Churches and other places of worship can now have indoor services with 50% capacity, according to the County Health Department. Bars without food service still can’t open but can serve patrons outdoors under certain restrictions.

Movie theaters can now go to 50% capacity or a maximum of 200 people.

And museums, zoos and aquariums can open at 50% capacity.

Though one might like to take a moment and perhaps breathe a sigh of relief, the County Health Officer is warning against it.

Dr. Penny Borenstein said, “We cannot lose sight of the end goal. To fully restore health to our community, we must remain vigilant: get vaccinated against COVID-19, maintain personal safety measures, and get tested if you have symptoms so we can beat this thing.”

Cal Poly Hospital Dismantled

With the coronavirus pandemic seemingly on the wane locally, the County decided it was OK to takedown an emergency hospital it set up last year at Cal Poly.

“We hoped we would never have to use the ACS [Alternative Care Site] but were prepared for the worst,” County Administrative Officer Wade Horton said. “It’s a relief to say that we no longer need an ACS for our community and that, even during the surge in COVID-19 cases here this past winter, our hospitals were able to provide the quality care our community members needed.”

The County spent \$1 million buying equipment and getting the Cal Poly Rec Center building set up as a field hospital, able to handle hundreds of very sick patients.

They spent another \$3.5 million for medical supplies and equipment, according to Tara Kennon who is with the County’s COVID-19 Public Information Team. Most of those costs were covered with Federal reimbursements and Kennon said it wasn’t wasted effort and money.

“The site,” she said, “served several other critical functions: More than 250 Medical Reserve Corps volunteers were trained to staff the site and have since put that training to use for a far brighter purpose — providing vaccines to their fellow community members. The site was also used to store supplies, like ventilators and PPE, which were provided to hospitals as they battled the pandemic.”

Though it proved in the end to not be needed to handle what was feared to be an overflow of COVID-19 patients, it was good training for future pandemics.

“The ACS at Cal Poly,” the County said, “was meant to relieve local hospitals by caring for patients who were too sick to care for themselves at home but did not need acute care provided at the hospital.

“The County partnered with Cal Poly, Dignity Health, Tenet Healthcare and RRM at the start of the pandemic in March 2020 to quickly transform the Cal Poly Recreation Center into an alternate care site for COVID-19 patients. Local contractors included Trust Automation, Thoma Electric, McCall Plumbing and others, who quickly answered the call to ‘stand up’ the facility.”

Vaccinations Set Record

On April 23, the County did a little back patting about its vaccination efforts.

“More than one in every 100 SLO County residents received a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine yesterday at one of three County mass vaccination clinics,” a news release announced. “The County’s clinics in Arroyo Grande, Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo administered 3,144 vaccines,

the most in a single day since the County began providing COVID-19 vaccine in December.”

From April 19-23 the County said its three sites provided 10,957 vaccines and a total of 137,805 to date. Vaccinations are also being done at pharmacies and health clinics and the County estimated about 48% of all County residents (estimated pop. 231,000) had been given at least one dose (some vaccines require two shots taken a month apart).

The County made a couple of other changes to its vaccine protocols — first expanded the eligible age groups down to anyone 16 older and then by switching to the State’s vaccination appointment system, myturn.ca.gov.

The County closed its own registration system “recoverslo.org” in favor of the State’s system. Readers who want to make an appointment for the vaccine through the County need to do so through myturn.ca.gov or call (833) 422-4255.

My Turn is a web-based application available through a computer, smart phone or tablet.

Anyone without Internet should call the State’s COVID-19 hotline at 1-833-422-4255 for appointment assistance Mondays-Fridays, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., or Saturdays-Sundays 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

And if you don’t speak English, My Turn is available in a dozen languages — Armenian, English, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog, Traditional Chinese, and Vietnamese. The COVID-19 hotline is staffed by agents who speak English and Spanish and has a real-time language translation service that supports over 250 other languages.

Airport Starts Testing

Visitors flying into the SLO Airport can get a rapid COVID test in lieu of potentially spending time in quarantine.

SLO County announced that as of May 2, Templeton-based Nova Labs, LLC, would set up at the airport terminal to administer tests for \$100 to inbound and outbound travelers, as well as airport personnel.

“While more Americans are getting vaccinated against the coronavirus, many counties, states, and foreign countries still require proof of negative COVID-19 tests prior to arrival,” the County said. “The SLO airport will offer two types of testing: a Molecular RT-LAMP saliva test with results available in 4 hours and a Molecular PCR test, with results available within 48 hours.

“Travelers may choose their test based on requirements at their destination, their travel schedule, or their personal comfort level.”

How it works is that “passengers with an arriving or departing airline ticket may upload the required personal information, book a COVID-19 testing appointment, and then receive test results directly from Nova Labs. Testing will be available in the airport terminal from Sundays–Fridays, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.”

For updates on COVID-19 in SLO County, see: ReadySLO.org or call the recorded Public Health Information Line at (805) 788-2903. A staffed phone assistance center at (805) 543-2444 is available Mondays-Fridays, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., to assist with COVID-19 questions.

A.G. Molester
Convicted Again

An Arroyo Grande man has again been convicted of child sexual abuse stemming from events that occurred in 2016, the District Attorney’s Office said.

District Attorney Dan Dow said a jury convicted Cody Julian, 31 of Arroyo Grande of sexual abuse of a child under the age of 10 following a 1½-week long trial that was actually the state’s second shot at him, after the first conviction was overturned on appeal.

“We thank the jury for their efforts in this sensitive and emotional case,” said D.A. Dow in a news release. “The survivor demonstrated remarkable courage by reporting the crimes and participating in the criminal and victim justice process necessary to bring this predator to justice. We are optimistic that this conviction will encourage victims of sexual assault to report the conduct to law enforcement.”

Sentencing is scheduled for June 16 before Superior Court Judge Jaqueline H. Duffy. Julian faces life in prison.

The County Sheriff’s Department and the D.A. Office’s Bureau of Investigation investigated the case. Deputy D.A. Christopher White prosecuted it.



Cody Julian

Household Waste
Facility to Stay Open
Another Year



Local residents will be able to continue to drop off household hazardous wastes at the Morro Bay-Cayucos Sewer Treatment Plant on Atascadero Road for another year, and the City, County and Cayucos will work on a new long-term arrangement.

The City Council last week voted to extend an agreement with the countywide, “Integrated Waste Management Authority” (IWMA) to allow the agency to use part of the

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News Briefs
By Theresa-Marie Wilson

County Celebrates
Mental Health Month

The County of San Luis Obispo Behavioral Health Department is celebrating May Mental Health Awareness Month by hosting a series of community wide events that promote self-care, resiliency, and recovery. The month has historically helped reduce stigma, build wellness, break down barriers to treatment, and has strengthened our local community.

One out of every five Americans will experience a mental health challenge in their lifetime. Taking care of one’s mental health has never been more important than after a yearlong battle with COVID-19 that has left Americans with increased rates of isolation, anxiety, and depression. Maintaining good mental health and reaching out for help are two things the County wishes to make easier this month through a series of community events.

“There is so much conversation happening,” said Behavioral Health Director Anne Robin. “Our community members have been extremely resilient this last year. Throughout the pandemic they have focused on remaining physically healthy, and many are now turning their attention on how to stay mentally healthy as well. It’s inspiring to see so many open conversations about mental health and recovery.” The Behavioral Health Department is partnering with several organizations in May to promote mental wellness.

The second annual ‘Mental Health Resource Drive Thru’ takes place May 21, at Transitions Mental Health Association from 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. The drive thru will provide residents with mental health care packages and information on how to receive mental health support. The department will also provide mental health care packages at select SLO Food Bank Distribution sites in May.

Behavioral Health is also collaborating with San Luis Obispo County Office of Education to host a virtual ‘Investing in Youth Mental Health Town Hall’ on May 13. Youth who attend will learn about mental health resources available to them. A mental health poetry contest is now open and winners will present their submissions live at the Town Hall. SLO County youth are encouraged to submit poetry entries as well as Town Hall panel questions online before the event. Community members and mental health advocates can show their support for Mental Health Awareness month by visiting www.slocounty.ca.gov/MayMH and/or by following Behavioral Health on Facebook and Instagram. The website includes information about all the May Mental Health events as well as offers downloadable resources and activities meant to inspire the community to take care of their mental health.

Woods CEO
Celebrates Two Years

Woods Humane Society’s CEO Neil Trent, who celebrates two years with the nonprofit dog and cat adoption center this month, has spent more than three decades facilitating the humane treatment of animals amidst major crises, so he was as prepared for the pandemic as could be. From war-torn Bosnia, to drought-plagued Australia, to tsunami relief efforts in Indonesia, Trent has gone around the world to aid animals in times of critical need. Luckily for the homeless animals of the Central Coast, Trent was here to provide that crucial expertise and perspective which helped Woods to pivot and maintain its adoption, veterinary, and community programs throughout the chaos of the last year. The organization enacted safety measures and operational changes so that it could remain open, continue its life-saving work, and find homes for thousands of dogs and cats in 2020.

“When the pandemic started I had real misgivings about how we would survive without our fundraising events,” Trent said.

Under his guidance, Woods was able to swiftly transition to virtual platforms for its two main events in 2020, and will do so again on June 12 for a virtual gala and auction, “There’s No Place Like SLOme,” which Trent will host. “We have appealed to the community, and they have been there for us. It is that vital volunteer and donor support that allows us to continue to raise the bar for the highest possible care and welfare of dogs and cats—even in a pandemic,” he said.

Trent has seen the full spectrum of animal welfare over his career, which he began as an animal inspector for the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) in the United Kingdom. He still vividly remembers the first dog he rescued at the RSPCA, a German shepherd named Pippa who weighed only 32 pounds, when Trent scaled the barbed wire fence and busted into a locked barn to save her in an animal cruelty case.

From the RSPCA, Trent moved on to work in more large-scale, global efforts. He was the Regional Director for the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) and Executive Director of the Humane Society International, the international arm of the HSUS, where he led rescue and relief efforts as well as worked with local governments in far-flung places like Ethiopia, to change their policies of cruel and inhumane treatment of animals.

When he came to Woods two years ago, Trent said, it was a welcome return to that initial passion ignited by Pippa of making a difference, one-on-one, for one dog.

“I consider myself very fortunate to be a part of this team and to use my experience and skillset to continue the growth of the organization and to improve the lives of even more animals.”

To support Woods Humane Society’s ongoing mission,

visit WoodsHumane.org/Donate. Tickets to the fund-raising event “There’s No Place Like SLOme” go on sale on May 12, 2021 at www.WoodsHumaneSociety.org/SLOME.

Tree Cutting Law
Reminder



As the sound of chirping baby birds fills the spring-time air, Morro Bay residents are being reminded of the City’s tree ordinance and the restrictions on cutting down or even pruning trees during bird nesting season.

The City sent out a reminder of its “major vegetation” (tree) ordinance that prohibits “the removal of major vegetation during bird nesting season. Annually bird nesting season runs from February 1 through June 30, where tree removal is not allowed unless imminent danger is present,” the City notice reads.

The ordinance spells out when and for what reasons trees can be removed at this time of year. “During bird-nesting season,” the City said, “trees can be allowed to be removed if trees are diseased, damaged, and/or aged and pose an imminent danger to persons and/or property upon City review of an arborist report attesting to the need.”

There’s a permit required. “Generally speaking, a permit is not required for the removal of less than 3 [or 2 total] trees in any 12-month period for single-family residential homes and is only allowed during non-bird nesting season.”

Tree protections are included in the Coastal Act under “major vegetation,” so if one needs to do this, they need a coastal development permit from the City.

The City Planning Division will answer questions readers might have about removal of trees or other major vegetation. Call (805) 772-6261.

Send your news, community and business briefs to Editor@EsteroBayNews.com. Be sure to include the who, what, why, where and when information along with a contact person.

sewer plant property for its portable collection station that accepts household chemicals like old paint, used motor oil, pesticides, herbicides and more.

The initial 10-year agreement went into effect in April 2000 and was extended to April 2020 when that first term ran out, according to a staff report. The agreement is between the IWMA and Cayucos Sanitary District and the City, as the CSD and City co-own the plant property.

That situation will eventually have to be dealt with by the two agencies, as the date for the old plant’s planned obsolescence grows nearer every day. Cayucos’ new treatment plant is nearly finished and the CSD is expected to disconnect from the old plant sometime this year.

The City must shut the old plant down in 2024 by order of the Regional Water Quality Control Board. It’s plant and conveyance system is about a year behind Cayucos.

What becomes of the plant property with the prime location near the beach will be an interesting future issue and

the epilog for the nearly two-decades-old sewer plant saga.

The Council’s April 26 action extended the operating agreement through Aug. 5, 2022.

The Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) turn-in facility is at 170 Atascadero Rd., and is open Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dropping off items is free but you may have to wait in a line of vehicles to get in.

“At the HHW collection facility the IWMA provides to the public a modular storage unit and a roll-off box used for providing waste collection and proper disposal of household hazardous waste that cannot be safely and properly disposed of in the trash or in the gutter,” according to the City.

The IWMA is responsible for obtaining necessary permits, complying with federal, state and local laws, and handles proper “storage, handling, transportation and disposal of the HHW collected at the site complies with applicable federal, state, and local statutes,” the City report said.

The 1-year extension is meant to give the City, CSD and IWMA time to figure out what will be done in the future for what all agree is a necessary public service but will have to find a new home when the old plant shuts down.

“That should be sufficient time for the City, CSD and IWMA to discuss HHW options moving forward,” the City report said, “as the City will be transitioning Utility staff to the new Water Reclamation Facility in late 2022 and the City and CSD discuss the future of 170 Atascadero.”

There is no argument that an HHW facility to collect chemicals and pollutants for safe disposal isn’t vital to help keep them from being dumped somewhere and spoiling the environment.

But storing such materials at home can be dangerous too, as some of them are poisonous, caustic and/or flammable. The HHW accepts up to 15 gallons or 125 pounds of waste materials at one time. It is free and open to the public.



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News

Obispo County Fire, Emergency Medical Dispatch, County Office of Emergency Services, San Luis Obispo County Probation, Public Works, Health Agency, along with other state and local agencies including local law enforcement and fire departments.”

He added that the current LMR system was custom built by the County IT staff “using multiple vendors’ components, creating a system that has been in service approximately 20 years. During those 20 years of operation, the system has performed nearly flawlessly.” They’ve been mixing and matching various components to keep it up and running all these years.

But communications have moved on from the County’s old system to Internet-based systems but still working with microwave technology. Changing the system now will allow the County IT Department to continue to upgrade the system to keep up with industry standards.

Back in August 2020 the IT Department took bids for the change and got four. The County decided to split the project in two with one portion for the radio transmitters and receivers and the other for the Internet connections and required hardware.

The project actually has three parts — first was an upgrade to the microwave technology, which was approved in late 2019 and is now completed.

The total costs for the 3-phase project is \$6.1 million, according to Milei’s report.

Completion of the LMR overhaul is being timed to coincide with a County project to build a new combined dispatch center on Kansas Avenue that would merge the County’s law enforcement and fire department dispatch services under one building.

Currently, law enforcement dispatch is done through the County Office of Emergency Services Building and the fire dispatch is done through the dispatch center at the Cal Fire/County Fire Headquarters on Hwy 1 just outside SLO City.

Once the initial millions are spent on the new radio system, the annual maintenance costs are estimated at \$25,000 a year.

Noise Pollution and Plants



A piñon pine seedling grows amid a cover of oak leaves. A Cal Poly study reveals that human noise pollution affects an ecosystem’s plant life diversity even after the din has stopped. This is the first study to explore the long-term effects of noise on flora.

Though noise may change by the moment for humans, its effect on trees and other plants lasts longer. A Cal Poly study published earlier this month reveals that human noise pollution affects an ecosystem’s plant life diversity even after the din has stopped.

In a study conducted 12 years ago near natural gas wells in a New Mexico woodland dominated by piñon pine and juniper trees, researchers found that there were 75% fewer piñon pine seedlings in noisy sites as in quiet ones. This was most likely due to the noise driving away the Woodhouse’s scrub jays, which plant thousands of pine seeds while storing them to eat during the winter months.

Researchers recently returned to the sites to find out whether the piñon pine had recovered over time.

This is the first study to explore the long-term effects of noise on flora. It was published in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B.

Natural gas companies sometimes use loud compres-

sors as a part of the extraction process. When companies move the compressors, previously noisy sites become quiet. The research team found that in these areas, there were fewer seedlings and saplings compared to sites that didn’t have compressors added to the well pad to speed up gas extraction. The decrease in saplings results from the time when the site was noisy, but the decrease in seedlings revealed that piñon pine seeds still weren’t sprouting despite stopping the noise.

“The effects of human noise pollution are growing into the structure of these woodland communities,” said Clint Francis, a Cal Poly biology professor and senior author of the study. “What we’re seeing is that removal of the noise doesn’t necessarily immediately result in a recovery of ecological function.”

While it’s possible that the piñon pine has decreased because of a lack of opportunities to produce, it’s more likely that the Woodhouse’s scrub jay hasn’t returned to the formerly noisy area and so isn’t planting seeds. Piñons depend on scrub jays to carry their pine seeds away from the parent tree, and scrub jays are known to avoid noise.

“Some animals, like scrub jays, have episodic memory,” said Jennifer Phillips, the lead author, who worked on the project while a post-doctoral researcher at Cal Poly and who now is a professor at Texas A&M at San Antonio. “Animals like the scrub jay that are sensitive to noise learn to avoid particular areas. It may take time for animals to rediscover these previously noisy areas, and we don’t know how long that might take.”

Researchers also found differences in juniper seedlings and communities of flowering plants at the site depending on current noise levels and whether the levels had recently changed because compressors were moved. Sites with greater noise had fewer juniper seedlings and different types of plants than quiet locations.

Because of the complexity of ecosystems, the cause of these changes is still unknown.

“Our results reveal that plant communities change in lots of ways with noise exposure,” Francis said. “We have a decent understanding of how and why foundational trees like piñon pine are affected by noise from our previous work with jays, but we are also seeing large changes in plant communities through changes in the abundance of shrubs and annual plants.

“These changes likely reflect impacts of noise on animals that eat plants — deer, elk and various insects — plus the many pollinators that are important for plant reproduction. In essence our research indicates that the consequences of noise are far-reaching and reverberate throughout the ecosystem through lots of species.”

Future studies can offer a more fine-tuned look at how noise causes these ecosystem changes. Researchers want to know more about which herbivores, seed dispersers and pollinators avoid or are attracted to noise, and how changes in insect and animal behavior combine to affect plant communities.

Based on patterns from over a decade of an ecosystem experiencing noise pollution, evidence suggests that plant communities may require a long time to recover from the effects of human noise. Still, co-author and lead botanist

Noise Pollution Continued on page 8

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Police Blotter



Morro Bay Police Logs

- **April 24:** Police warily stopped a suspicious vehicle at the highly suspect time of 1:19 a.m. in the 500 block of Atascadero Rd. The driver, 40, had a suspended license and was cited and released, presumably on foot.
- **April 23:** Police are investigating a lunacy of larceny in the 500 block of Atascadero Rd.
- **April 23:** Police in the 200 block of Beach contacted the same woman numerous times who was acting suspiciously. At 11:12 a.m. they decided she needed mental health treatment.
- **April 23:** At 8:55 a.m. police contacted a familiar female, 34, who had an arrest warrant. The scofflaw was thrown into the gulag.
- **April 22:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 11 p.m. headin’ out of town in the 800 block of Atascadero Rd. The driver, 36, was arrested for suspicion of driving spanked, and got taken downtown, where a sober friend picked him up.
- **April 22:** Some anarchist vandalized Giovanni’s Fish Market, 1001 Front St.
- **April 22:** Some thievin’ bilge rat stole power tools out of a working man’s truck in the 800 block of Embarcadero. Police have no leads, as the snake no doubt slithered away.
- **April 21:** A citizen in the 300 block of Main reported getting terrorist threats. A report was sent to the D.A.
- **April 21:** Police responded at 3:47 a.m. to Highway 41 Antiques Mall, 540 Atascadero Rd., for an apparent burglar alarm. Logs indicated the master criminals didn’t get inside but did vandalize the building in the attempt.
- **April 20:** At 3:19 p.m. in the 1700 block of Main police came across a pair of regular customers — a man and woman both 45 — who each had two bench warrants. They were given their future third warrant and released to go

- about their scofflaw way.
- **April 20:** Someone got into two locked storage units in the 1000 block of Quintana Rd. No word on the lost treasures taken.
 - **April 19:** Someone reported a case of credit card fraud in the 400 block of Atascadero Rd.
 - **April 19:** Police took a missing person report in the 700 block of Quintana. No word on if he, she, they/them or it had returned.
 - **April 19:** At 8:55 a.m. police recovered a stolen car abandoned at South Bay and State Park Road. The responsible rapscaillon apparently got away.
 - **April 18:** Police contacted some night owl out hootin’ around at 2:14 a.m. at Motel 6 in the 200 block of Atascadero Rd. Logs indicated the 46-year-old screecher was arrested for suspicion of getting boorishly bombed in public.
 - **April 17:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 10:24 p.m. at Beach and Main. The driver, 50, got nicked for suspicion of being half cut at the wheel, and on a suspended license no less!
 - **April 17:** Police responded to a missing person call in the 200 block of Easter but the missing was apparently resurrected or at least returned home.
 - **April 17:** Police towed abandoned vehicles from the 1000 and 1100 blocks of Monterey for expired tags, a potential death sentence no one will protest.
 - **April 17:** Police were called at 2:15 a.m. to Motel 6 in the 200 block of Atascadero Rd., for some woman apparently having a bag lady moment. The howler, 33, was nicked for suspicion of being tanked in public, which explains a lot.
 - **April 17:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 12:17 a.m. somewhere on Main. The driver, 33, was hauled to the gaol for suspicion of driving full as a tick.
 - **April 16:** The door revolved once more for a regular

- customer police came across at 9:30 p.m. on Morro Bay Boulevard at Napa. The scofflaw, 46, had a bench warrant and was issued his next one and released.
- **April 16:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 8 p.m. at Main and Kern. The 24-year-old borracho was arrested for suspicion of driving drunk and taken in for arrestitution.
 - **April 16:** Some apparent graffidiot left his mark in the 3100 block of Main. Police made note of it.
 - **April 15:** Police responded to a suspicious subject lurking around at 9:30 p.m. in the 500 block of Atascadero Rd. A 36-year-old Mamaluke was arrested for suspicion of prowling and being high on illegal stimulants. He crashed in the County sober living facility.
 - **April 15:** Police responded at 9:45 a.m. to a business in the 800 block of Shasta for a bungled burglary report.
 - **April 14:** Police were called at 2:10 p.m. to Coleman Drive for a reported case of animal cruelty. A crime report was filed with the district attorney.
 - **April 14:** Police responded at 1 p.m. to the 2800 block of Alder where a local resident left paradise for Heaven.
 - **April 13:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 8:18 p.m. in the 900 block of Morro Bay Blvd. Logs indicated the driver, 33, got nicked for suspicion of driving kootered but she was spared a trip to the hoosegow and was mercifully cited and released to a sober friend.
 - **April 13:** Police took a report for petty theft in the 400 block of Errol. No word on what treasure was pilfered.
 - **April 12:** Police responded to the 300 block of Kodiak for a theft report. Some scalawag broke into a locked storage unit. No word whether the victim remembers what was stored there.
 - **April 12:** At 11:40 a.m. police discovered a small, plastic, baggie presumably on the ground in the 1300 block of Main. Police thought it was methamphetamine and booked it for flushing.

Chipping Event to Promote Fire Safety

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Fire season in California starts earlier and ends later each year. According to Cal Fire, thus far statewide in 2021, close to 4000 acres have burned, stations have responded to 1546 incidents and as of April 28 there were five still active fires.

There will be a free public chipping event in Los Osos for residents to reduce the fire fuel load around their homes on May 16 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Fairchild Way between Los Olivos and Santa Ynez.

“I want Los Osos neighbors to know that we are surrounded by public lands both state and county owned,” said Emily Miggins, event coordinator and Fire Safety Council Los Osos representative. “These lands are very dry and combustible if the opportunity arises with the right wind conditions and an illegal warming fire, [a not fully extinguished] cigarette butt, firecrackers, or sparks created by everyday mechanical equipment, unfortunately, we could see a large scale fire in our community.

“Both CAL Fire and Cal Poly have estimated 4-6 tons dead dry biomass on our public lands as is the case with Morro Dunes Ecological Reserve and the County owned sewer mitigation property at Broderson trail. Due to various endangered species protections the state and county have not allowed routine maintenance on our public land to create fuel breaks for our homes and firefighters.”

Generally fire stations across the state warn that it is not a matter of if we will have a large-scale fire, but when. State law requires that people clear out flammable materials such as brush or vegetation around their buildings to 100 feet or the property line to create a defensible space or buffer.

Folks can bring material to the event to be offloaded by personnel on site. Branches must be no larger than 6 inches in diameter. No soil, rock or construction material (treat-



ed or untreated) will be accepted. Attendees are asked to follow CDC guidelines for COVID-19 protection.

“This Fire Safe Council funded chipping event with the Los Osos Community Service District and Station 15 is a terrific opportunity to reduce fuel loads around our homes,” Miggins said. “It takes the people and homeowners of Los Osos to help each other get the work done. I am asking everyone to pitch in - in a COVID safe way to help your neighbors move wood materials to our chipping event. Do you have a pickup truck, a horse trailer, or a box truck to help your neighbors clear brush around their homes to be chipped? If you do, let’s get busy talking to our community and preparing materials to be chipped and composted and moved out of our town. Let’s come together and make our community more prepared and fire safe.”

For more information, check out LOS OSOS FIRE & Emergency Preparedness or FSCSLO.org.

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Noise Pollution From page 7

Sarah Termondt, a Cal Poly research affiliate, emphasizes the need to understand the full and lasting costs of noise.

“Continuing to look at long-term changes in floristic inventories over time will elucidate whether communities do eventually recover after long periods of noise pollution, even once it is removed from the landscape,” she said.

When changes to plant communities are viewed along-

side the growing evidence for the problems that human noise creates for animals, it is increasingly difficult to ignore the near absence of noise regulations across the U.S., the authors stated.

To see the study, visit the Proceedings of the Royal Society B website: <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rspb.2020.2906>

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Community

New Owners for Anderson Inn

By Neil Farrell



A look inside of one of the bay view rooms at the remodeled Anderson Inn, now owned by Chris and Cyndi Kostecka.

A Temecula couple who first invested in the Morro Bay waterfront in 2019, and then opened a boat-bike rental business last year, has now gone all-in a third time purchasing their second boutique motel on the Embarcadero.

Chris and Cyndi Kostecka on Feb. 23, closed escrow on the Anderson Inn purchasing the 8-room boutique hotel and the master lease for the City-owned property that includes two tenants — the Galley Seafood Grill & Bar and By the Bay Art Gallery.

The couple also has Estero Inn and Estero Adventures, which rents electric boats, kayaks and fat-tire beach bikes (510 Embarcadero), down on the south end of the waterfront. They got the Estero Inn in 2019 and opened the rental business just last year.

They had three chances to buy the Anderson Inn, Chris said. They were approached over a year ago by the Andersons, who built the Inn in 2005 but had the lease site for some 50 years, about buying it.

Chris said they were still too new to the hotel business and had to turn them down. The Kosteckas were real estate professionals in Temecula when they bought the Estero Inn and felt they didn't know the motel business well enough to run two.

The Andersons had a couple of potential sales fall through with one even reaching the point where the City approved reassigning the lease to a San Diego motelier at one point, but that deal fell through.

COVID and the restrictions placed on the lodging industry by the Governor had a lot to do with it. That's also why Chris said they turned down a second chance to buy it. And then it came up again, and as they say — third time's a charm.

"We said, 'Maybe we're meant to buy it,'" Chris said.

Cyndi said they bought the Estero Inn, "honestly, not knowing anything."

But they're smart business people and have picked up the motel business enough to think they could handle another property. The Estero and Anderson Inns are two

of the newer, and nicer lodging properties on the Embarcadero, which helped with their decision.

"We got two of the most modern properties," Chris said. He praised the people who designed and built them both — Ken Scott and Chuck Eras.

He called them "nice" properties and in exceptional shape structurally, especially given that they are both on the waterside of the street.

Of note, the sale marks the exit from the Embarcadero for the Anderson Family, which has been a presence on the waterfront since the 1960s when their late parents, Bud and Rita, opened The Galley Restaurant, a family operation that all three kids — Rodger, Molly and Jeff — worked.

Asked if they were going to change the name, Cyndi said, "We'll keep the name. They worked hard and were here forever. Our goal is to maintain their legacy through this property."

Both of their subleases — The Galley

and By the Bay — will stay open too.

Since taking over, the Kosteckas have been busy giving the rooms a freshening up with new flooring, beds, furniture and paint. They upgraded the beds to all king size. About the only things that remained were the showers and tubs, she said.

That wasn't easy, as Chris explained, because the cost of everything — from the flooring to wood to the paint — has risen and the supply of a lot of things like fine furniture has dropped. It took some doing but they eventually got everything they needed for the remodel.

"They [the Andersons] built an incredible property," Chris said. While they were remodeling, he said people were stopping by often to say hello. "Everybody's sad to see them go."

The Anderson Inn is now fully re-opened and if anyone wants to check it out, see: andersoninnmorrobay.com; email to: info@andersoninnmorrobay.com; or call (866) 950-3434.

Barefoot Concerts Returning



Stellar

Los Osos' beloved "Barefoot Concerts on the Green" will return to Sea Pines Golf Resort in May for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic response shut everything down in March 2020.

The Spring Series of shows kicks off Saturday, May 15 with the Cuesta Ridge Band. Shows are free admission and food and drinks are available at the Clubhouse Grill, the golf course's bar and restaurant.

Shows run from 2-6 p.m.

The line up from there is: Stellar, May 22; Unfinished Business, May 29; Rockin' Reunion, June 5; Back Pages Band, June 12; The Mother Corn Shuckers, June 19; and MCB & Friends, June 26.

From there Sea Pines will go into its Summer Series with shows TBA and running Saturdays, July 3 to Aug. 28.

Summer shows will be followed by Fall

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Community

Events From page 9



Shows starting Sept. 4 through Nov. 6. There are a limited number of chairs provided and readers might want to bring a fold-up lawn chair or blanket to sit on. Admission is free and everyone is invited to kick off their shoes and dance on the practice green's carpet-like grass.

Events and Activities

By Theresa-Marie Wilson



Do you think bats are scary? The next Morro Coast Audubon May Community Meeting will help change that on Tuesday, May 18at 7 p.m. via Zoom. Join them for a talk by Melinda Alvarado, a wildlife rehabilitator, conservationist and educator since 1989. Her presentation includes a slide show and features live, tame bats of several species for viewing and discussion. Myths, superstitions and misconceptions about these highly beneficial mammals are discussed and replaced with factual learning about the ecological importance of bats and their roles in many ecosystems as insect controllers, pollinators and seed dispersers. Discover why bats don't get headaches from hanging upside down and why you don't have to worry about bats getting stuck in your hair. All ages

kindergarten through adult will benefit and appreciate this chance to examine the real world of bats. For Zoom information, go to <https://www.morrocoastaudubon.org/p/calendar.html>



Honor Flight Central Coast California is usually on the receiving end of donations, but this May, it's turning the tables to help local wineries who have supported the organization that takes local military veterans on all-expense paid trips to visit military memorials in Washington DC. For the last several years, SLO County wineries have participated in "Vino for Vets," a Memorial Weekend fundraiser that donates a portion of wine sales to Honor Flight. This year, Honor Flight leaders want to show their appreciation and support for partners hard hit by COVID-19 and other challenges and will forego the on-site fundraiser and instead conduct a Vino for Vets Wine Raffle. Honor Flight collected wine to be assembled into five "six pack" collections and are raffling each for a \$25 entry fee. Only 150 entries will be offered for a chance to win one of the six packs. Since its founding in 2014, Honor Flight Central Coast California has taken several hundred local veterans (half of them WWII veterans) on all-expense paid trips to Washington, D.C. for VIP tours of the memorials that were built in their honor. The all-volunteer organization, 100 percent dependent on donations to fund the trips, is hopeful flights will resume later this year. McGill said the Vino for Vets fundraiser generates significant funds for the group as well as showcases who Honor Flight is and what it does. "Our winery partners have been so good to us, and this year, we want to help them." He said that despite Honor Flight's plan to purchase all wine, winery partners are donating, discounting and offering fine wines to enhance the value of the raffle. The Vino for Vets Wine raffle runs for the month of May, subject to the availability of the 150 entries. In addition to wine and logo glasses, each six pack will contain a special gift: a bottle of the Honor Flight 2020 special red blend commemorative wine created by Pianetta Winery in Paso Robles. The five winners will be announced in a

Facebook Live event on June 6, the 77th anniversary of the D Day invasion. Entries may be purchased by check or credit card; purchase information and entry forms are on the Honor Flight website, www.honorflightccc.org/vino-forvets.



Many County library doors opened this week for Grab & Go service.

Browse the shelves, pickup holds, or use express computers at the Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Los Osos, Morro Bay, Nipomo, and San Luis Obispo libraries 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Per State and County guidelines, they require face coverings and social distancing, and we ask everyone to limit visits to 30 minutes. Want to change the pickup location of your holds? Log in to your account at SLOLibrary.org or call one of our open branches Need more information about your visit? Visit SLOLibrary.org for answers to frequently asked questions, or feel free to call an open branch, or hit Reply on this email Wondering why your local library isn't open yet? Stay tuned: They expect to open more branches and to fine-tune hours as soon as more staff return from County COVID-19 assignments.

...

Join Mike and Rosemary Bauer along with other fellow artists for a curated art show and sale at Four Sisters Ranch Vineyard and Winery, 2995 Pleasant Rd. in San Miguel as part of Wine Festival Weekend on May 22 from 11 a.m.-4:30 p.m. There will also be live music from 12- 3 p.m. featuring The Blood Brothers acoustic duo, who are two childhood friends, Ron and Spike, with a uniquely woven twin guitar sound with some mandolin and harmonica thrown in. Current to classic, but always acoustic. Dog

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Community

and family friendly. Reservations recommended for wine tasting. No outside food or beverages allowed; however, Hurricane Kitchen food truck will be there. For more information go to www.foursistersranch.com or call them at 805-467-2046.



The Rotary Club of Los Osos is collecting electronic items to be recycled. Collecting runs through Saturday, May 8 at the Los Osos Trinity United Methodist Church at 490 Los Osos Valley Rd. Specifically, TVs including older CRT, flat screens, and computer monitors of all types as well computer laptops and desktops can be brought to the site. Unfortunately, other electronic items are no longer being recycled. Los Osos Rotary has recycled over 100 tons of electronic items. With help from the County’s Integrated Waste Management Authority, The club will also provide information on how to get rid of non recyclable items.

Send your event listing at least three weeks in advance to Editor@EsteroBayNews.com. Make sure to include the who, what, why, where and when of the event and contact information. Please, type out in paragraph form rather than attaching flyers.

OUT & ABOUT

WITH THE BOOKSHELF WRITERS

The BookShelf Writers consist of four Estero Bay women who have been writing & critiquing together for over five years. For more samples of their work, please visit www.thebookshelfwriters.com

Each issue, this column will feature one of the BookShelf Writers:
Debbie Black, Catherine "Kiki" Kornreich, Judy Salamacha and Susan Vasquez

And This Too Shall Pass, But Can Some Things Please Stay?

Story and Photo By Debbie Black

This week I attended a five-day national writers conference with over 4500 other attendees from all over the world — not a mask in sight. I sat a mere two feet away

from each of the twenty presenters. I wore jeans and Uggs, sipped coffee in the morning, red wine during the late afternoon sessions, and got up to stretch whenever I needed. The presenters were brilliant, witty and, most importantly, relaxed. All of us were participating from the comfort and safety of our own homes.

What an opportunity! I wouldn’t have attended that New York conference under normal circumstances, due to cost and distance. Instead of paying \$950 conference fee, plus hotel, food, and airfare, I paid \$150, slept in my own bed, ate my own food and only had to travel sixteen steps to my home office to attend a conference of national caliber. A video recording of all the workshops is now available for my leisurely review for thirty days. There’s certainly a lot to be said for virtual conferences.

No kidding, this has been a horrible fourteen months. Worse for some than for others. There isn’t a person on Earth who isn’t ready to put this behind them, and move forward and beyond. But amidst it all, there have been some beneficial spin-offs that would be nice to keep.

For instance, the astounding amount of online content—some free, some at a very reasonable cost. The Mars landing, ballets, plays, art exhibits, concerts, movies, courses on just about anything--so much to learn, see, do.

And don’t forget Zoom! That’s a word few of us knew before March 2020. Yet now we’re all proficient at meeting up with folks we haven’t connected with in years. Will we stay this connected when the world gets back to normal? If this pandemic has taught us anything, it’s the importance of our peeps. Strangers too, for that matter. Over the past year, we may have occasionally eyed strangers like lepers, yet I see more impromptu kindness than I’ve ever seen before. Our common pain, angst, caution, and uneasiness may have united us more than driven us apart. It’s like we’re all wearing the same uniform—in the same army—in the war against the virus.

Post-pandemic, what might remain? The slower pace, the worldwide connection of humans, quieter streets, less pollution, more time for thought and creativity? Will our dogs, cats, and children (not in that order) still enjoy as many hours of our attention? Will Zoom get-togethers keep far-flung friends and family connected? Will Telehealth become a permanent medical tool for patients to more easily see doctors, especially in remote areas? Will some people keep an improved work/life balance by partially or fully working from home? Will we continue to show kindness and generosity to strangers once our lives get jam-packed again with our own doings?

My heart hurts for those who’ve lost family, friends, jobs, or whose lives have taken an unfortunate detour. In the face of that, I feel a bit superficial mentioning the things I’ve missed—some of which we’re getting back now, some will have to wait: seeing smiles; listening to live music at Sea Pines; movies at The Bay; getting together in person with my writers group and other friends; family reunions; volunteering at Woods; the Cayucos 4th of July parade; the Sea Glass Festival; early breakfast inside a warm, bustling Sea Shanty; traveling; the simple enjoyment of shopping.

When all of this is behind us, I will not miss wearing a mask that steams up my glasses. I will not miss the crowded beach, though I’m grateful we have the perfect place for families to stretch their legs in the fresh air. I will not miss the twinge of wariness toward fellow human beings. I will

not miss the chronic anxiety when reading about lives lost, or seriously disrupted.

I will, however, appreciate even more those simple things in life that I took for granted. Hopefully, they will all return—and sit side-by-side with the good things that have come out of a bad situation.



And this too shall pass. Unfortunate times always do. Debbie Black is a member of The BookShelf Writers. To see more of her work, visit www.thebookshelfwriters.com

Book to Action with Jason Reynolds

The County of San Luis Obispo Public Libraries recently announced that its annual Book to Action community reads program will include a live webcast with best-selling author Jason Reynolds on Wednesday, May 26, at 6 p.m.

Reynolds was named the 2020-2021 National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature, has won Printz Medal, Newbery, and Coretta Scott King honors, was a National Book Award finalist, and has appeared on “CBS This Morning” and “The Daily Show” discussing his work with young people. His latest book is the New York Times no.1 bestseller “Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You,” co-authored with Ibram X. Kendi.

The Book to Action program, sponsored by the California State Library and the California Center for the Book, with additional funding from Friends of the Library groups from San Luis Obispo, Atascadero, Arroyo Grande, and Cambria libraries, connects readers to current issues and community engagement opportunities. This year’s selected book is Reynolds’ Stamped.

“Many folks are interested in discussing antiracism and continuing the discussion. We chose Jason because he has such a cool and inspiring way with words, stories, and conversations,” said Erica Thatcher, Outreach and Marketing Coordinator for the Library. “Our goal with Book to Action is to connect people to stories and community resources.”

Book to Action Continued on page 12

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Community

Book to Action From page 11

Visit SLOLibrary.org for event registration and for other Book to Action resources and activities in partnership with RaiseUp SLO/RACE Matters SLO, Cal Poly Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and Cal Poly School of Education. Book to Action runs through June 1.

Root, Petal & Leaf
HOLISTIC WELLNESS

Defining Wellness

By Shari Sullivan

Wellness is hot right now. Certainly, this pandemic has a hand in that, but the trend definitely started before the virus showed up and messed with all our lives. It's great that wellness is so popular, until the profiteers and charlatans crash the party sowing confusion and potentially triggering eating disorders or even worse. So, let's unpack this concept a bit, shall we?

At its core, wellness is defined by you. Yes, studies and doctors will confirm that a sedentary lifestyle and a diet of processed food will contribute to dis-ease and disease. Beyond that though, it's up to you. Are you happy with your level of vibrancy and your engagement in your life? Are you excited to start your day? Do you feel healthy?

That puts a lot of pressure on each of us to be honest with ourselves about some of the things we may want to hide from. Do you thrive with high-quality dairy in your diet, or are you really in denial about a problem giving up excessive amounts of cheese and ice cream? Are you getting a healthy amount of movement or are you avoiding the trail/gym/pool for fear of others' judgement? What elements of wellness aren't even on your radar that could make a huge impact in how you feel?

So, what does wellness really look like? Does it mean you've gone Keto? Or vegan? Or that you've nailed crow pose in your daily 90-minute yoga practice? As you've likely already guessed, there is no single answer. Each of us has our own, beautifully unique path to feeling our best. What we eat and how often we exercise is only a small piece of that path.

Yup. The food you eat very often is not the most important thing.

Imbalances in areas of your life like career, relationships and environment are often a much bigger issue.

Take a solid look at your job, finances, home environment, relationships, social life, spirituality and creativity. Anything make you cringe? Addressing those cringy spots,

even just making small positive changes, can make huge positive impacts on your wellness.

For example, working a job that's a poor fit for you can create, or add to existing, anxiety, depression or deep dissatisfaction. Those feelings, in turn, can demotivate you to eat well or be a cause for emotional eating. They can undermine your exercise level. Who hits the gym after a long, soul-sucking day at the job? And they can prevent you from doing things that bring real joy. For example, I found myself sitting in front of a TV and foregoing creative work that I knew would make me happy while working one job I really disliked.

The goal is to become aware and be honest about what works for you and what doesn't, then take small steps toward a better balance and greater wellness.

Shari is a certified integrative nutrition health coach with advanced training in gut health, a 20-year student of herbalism and an artist working in mixed media and metals and a soon-to-be certified yoga and mindfulness instructor.

Get more health and wellness info at bit.ly/RPL-news

Spring for the Arts

By Jill Turnbow



On May 16, the Cambria Center for the Arts invites readers to a virtual benefit and silent auction to preview their upcoming events. Spring For the Arts will help CCA prepare to open their doors. They have assembled an exciting, jam-packed program that will preview the upcoming schedule of events, shows, and classes. This benefit will help make some of the needed improvements to the facility.

Virtual attendance is free. When you sign up for a ticket, you will be given a link to join in on the program. Each of the branches of CCA will highlight their plans for re-opening. You will see art demonstrations, a short film, and musical numbers from the theatre. Plus, the silent auction will be ongoing throughout the program.

The online silent auction begins May 9 on the website Cambriaarts.org. Bids can be made through the end of the virtual program. CCA has assembled a collection of beautiful art pieces as well as several one-of-a-kind experiences

like a tap class with Shirley Kirkes-Mar, an acting class with Zoe Saba, Improv with Sabrina Pratt, an art class with Laurie Hendricks and a Bocce Party at the home of one of the CCA board members. Visit the website for details.

The live virtual program will feature a duet from Cambria the Musical, the show that was just about to open prior to the lockdown. The theatre has plans to bring the show back in October. The duet features two of the lead performers, Sarah Smith and Anthony Toohey. Other performers include Greg Gorrindo, Lacey McNamara, Bryce Prunty, and local favorite, Brynn Albanese. Viewers will also learn about upcoming concerts and a night of Flamenco, coming in July and August.

The Gallery will feature art demonstrations by Jeanne Aird and Laurie Hendricks. And Dennis Frahmman will update the plans for the 2022 Cambria Film Festival and premier a short film that features some of the past filmmakers. Alan Fraser, owner of the Love Story Project, produced the film and created the videos for this program.

Another feature of the program will be a quick look at some of the incredible photography that was submitted for the recent "A Day in the Life of Cambria" photo challenge. Almost 200 images were submitted and several have been chosen for the compilation and will be made into merchandise to be sold in the new CCA Store. All proceeds from those sales as well as the donations made during the benefit will go to the facility improvements.

The benefit begins at 4 p.m., May 16. You can register anytime prior to the start of the program. The online silent auction opens May 9 and bidding is available for the entire week until 6 p.m. the day of the benefit.

To learn more about this event and how to reserve your spot and make a donation, go to Cambriaarts.org and click on Spring in the Arts.



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Community



Cows being rounded up. Photo by Joan Sullivan 1990s

The dictionary defines roundup as the driving together of cattle or horses for inspection, branding and shipping to market. I learned a lot about roundups cattle ranching when I was privy to attend many roundups on ranches around the County in the 80s and 90s An important aspect on all cattle roundups is having a good ranch dog. Sparky was just such a dog I met when I attended a roundup of the Louis Mello Los Osos Valley family ranch. I rode in a jeep sitting next to the rancher and watched while Sparky chased cows through the hills behind the Los Osos Cemetery. There were other cowboys on horseback also gathering herds for the occasion. The cows were rounded up and driven into fenced pens. Then

the cowboys separate the cows from their calves. Ranch dogs seem to know what the job entails rounding up the cattle and driving them into the waiting pens. Often cowboys ride their horses through the hills in search of straying cows. As I recall, each member taking part in the roundup has his or her own job helping out with the process of branding, tagging the ears, cutting the horns and giving shots to the newcomers. Ranchers, I was told, love their cattle and are sympathetic to any pain that accompanies the process of adding newcomers to their cattle herds. One of the many worry’s rancher Louie Mello entertained was the wild dogs that roamed the hills attacking his cattle. Those were not the only potential predators. On one occasion when I was privileged to help count the calves within the herd of cows, I saw a mountain lion in the brush.

New Tenured Faculty at Cuesta



Cuesta’s new tenured faculty: Kelli Gottlieb, Erich Tucker, Shelby Burnett, Jenel Guadagno and Zachary McKiernan.

Five Cuesta College faculty members were recently awarded tenure by the San Luis Obispo County Com-

munity College District Board of Trustees. Tenure is granted to faculty members who demonstrate consistent qualities with the college’s ideals of educational excellence. These faculty members must uphold specific standards in their interactions with students, colleagues, and the community and pursue growth and development in their discipline.

The Faculty:

• Shelby Burnett, mathematics

Shelby Burnett obtained her M.S. in mathematics from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. She has taught and tutored math at the middle school, high school, and college levels. She started her Cuesta College career as an adjunct instructor while also teaching math part-time at Cal Poly.

• Kelli Gottlieb, physical sciences

Kelli Gottlieb is a chemistry instructor in the physical sciences division teaching general and organic chemistry. She earned a B.S. in chemistry from Cal Poly and a Ph.D. in chemistry at UC Davis. Her work’s primary focus was developing synthetic methodology in the synthesis of potential drug targets containing carbon, nitrogen, sulfur, and oxygen atoms.

Gottlieb also serves as the Physical Sciences division’s Academic Senate representative. While chemistry dominates most of her thoughts, days, and conversations, she is also a big fan of singing, hiking, gardening, cooking, video games, and Disneyland.

• Jenel Guadagno, athletics

Jenel Guadagno is in her fourth year of teaching and coaching softball at Cuesta College. She began her athletic and academic career at Cerritos College, then transferred to Point Loma Nazarene University and earned a bachelor’s degree in physical education. She got her master’s degree at Concordia University in exercise and sports science with an emphasis in coaching and athletic administration.

When she is not on the field or in the classroom, Guadagno serves on the Web and Technology Committee and fills in for Academic Senate as needed. She is the Western State Conference Cuesta College women’s sports representative. She enjoys hiking, camping, snowboarding, surfing, biking, riding, fishing, and cooking.

• Zachary McKiernan, social sciences

Zachary McKiernan teaches World History at Cuesta College. He received a B.A. in history at Loyola University Chicago and earned both an M.A. in Latin American studies and a Ph.D. in history from the University of California Santa Barbara.

He is a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Central Coast Queer Archive, and the National Council on Public History. Additionally, his grant-funded research, scholarly, and public work has been with human rights organizations in Chile and civil rights veterans in Virginia.

In all of his experiences, he has endeavored to use past knowledge to inform the present. He holds that historical knowledge highlights and improves the human condition, solve problems, and build community. He is supported by his loving spouse, Dr. Meghan McKiernan, and their three sons, Finn, Lobe, and Luke.

• Erich Tucker, Languages and Communication

Erich Tucker was raised in Chicago as the only member of his family to be deaf. Diagnosed at the age of 5 with hereditary progressive hearing loss, he became fully deaf at 21. He received a bachelor’s degree in pre-law with an emphasis in interdisciplinary Studies (political science/justice studies) from Arizona State University and a master’s degree in teaching American Sign Language from the University of Northern Colorado. He is currently a doctorate student at Lamar University in Texas pursuing an education doctorate in deaf studies / deaf education.

Tucker has been married to his wife, Sarah, for 15 years and has four children. He has taught at Cuesta College since 2013 and is the first tenured fully deaf faculty member ever hired in the county of San Luis Obispo. He is passionate about sharing his language, culture, and customs with students in the classroom and allowing them an opportunity to explore their passions.

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Solar From page 1



A ground-level view of a 1.2-megawatt solar farm's over 3,200 panels. Photo courtesy ForeFront Power

produced by the panels; AC is what flows through the grid. “The inverter outputs get combined, then stepped-up to a higher voltage to make the long-distance run towards the tie-in point. Then we step down in voltage and run a short distance to the main customer electrical panel/switchgear, which is at 480 volts.

“We tap their bus bar between their meter and main breaker. The other meters on-site are offset virtually through the PG&E net metering aggregation program.”

The County’s Energy and Water Coordinator, Annie Secrest, who spearheads the County’s recent move toward solar and battery storage projects, said, “This project is a significant step forward to reaching our County goal of procuring 20 percent of our energy from renewable sources. With this project energized, the County now derives over 12-percent of its energy from solar power. This helps us mitigate increasing electricity rates and better control our operating expenses.”

ForeFront’s Project Manager, Casey Miller, said, “We are pleased to have helped the County of San Luis Obispo reduce electricity costs through on-site solar generation. Together with our two previously installed canopy systems, the County Operations Center solar project adds more clean, renewable energy to help the County achieve its long-term energy and climate goals.”

The County picked ForeFront Power through the State’s “Renewable Energy Aggregated Procurement (REAP) Program” offered by SPURR, a Joint Powers Authority “dedicated to simplifying the electricity procurement process for California’s public agencies,” reads the release. “REAP allows any California public agency to obtain the best solar and energy storage pricing and terms from a competitive statewide solicitation. Over 40 California public agencies have used REAP to develop hundreds of megawatts of solar and storage projects to date.”

ForeFront Power has done over 1,300 community solar projects totaling nearly 1 gigawatt of power, the company said. Frisco is the headquarters but they also have offices in New York City and Mexico City, Mexico. ForeFront Power is a wholly owned subsidiary of Mitsui & Co. Ltd., a global energy infrastructure and investment company.

As for what’s on the solar horizon for the County, Secrest said they are still working on a floating solar-panel project that would go in a pond at the Los Osos Wastewater Treatment Plant to cut that facility’s energy costs.

Debbie Deis From page 1



garden, I’d tell them to be here early. Soon after opening, the beans would all be gone. Some days I’d have to restock three times.” Anticipate berry-rich vines and a variety of row crops.

It has taken years to develop her property to model the gardens she remembered blooming on neighboring farms as she grew up in Los Osos. Her mother, Mary Jorge Garcia, always maintained a huge garden. She cannod to get the family through the winter. Deis and her siblings, Domingos, Jr., Bernadette Crye, and Cynthia Garcia helped their dad, Domingos Garcia, run lease cattle up and down the coast.

She is proud of her 2020 installation. Dorothy Dana, her fourth grade teacher at Sunnyside School, willed her the windmill Deis had long admired. “Her son and I stayed friends. She used to buy my eggs. It took six years and the help of a friend to restore it.”

Designing floral arrangements was always Deis’ dream career. She and her sister would enter the Mid-State Fair in Paso Robles. Her entries would compete in the floral hall while her sister raised 4H animals. A high school summer job earned her the money to take Bob Gordon’s Cal Poly floral design class. Then she studied at Cuesta College and ultimately graduated from Cal Poly. She “apprenticed” working three different shops in Southern California, but preferred coming home to Los Osos. She tried working in area floral shops, but when she couldn’t sustain a living she took a job working security at Diablo Canyon until she was financially stable enough to pursue her dream. During those years she honed her craft and built her clientele working weekends designing floral features for weddings, funerals, and special events like the Cayucos Portuguese Festival.

Her business philosophy is relationship driven. “I want my products to touch lives during these special times. I like to hear a client’s story then incorporate something in the arrangement that is unique to them.” She recalled one funeral incorporated antlers from the husband’s hunting collection. After the service she noticed his hunting buddies gathered at the arrangement recalling stories from their times hunting together. “I always say nothing goes out I wouldn’t want to send my Mom.”

However, 2021 is stacking up to be another difficult year for small floral business owners. “Today’s wholesale pricing on flowers is up higher than I’ve ever seen it,” said Deis. “And the availability of varietals is less. I may not be able to get exactly what the bride might want. She will have to understand I can work with her color palette rather than specific flowers.”

Deis concluded there are many reasons America’s small floral farms and shops are adversely impacted today - past tariffs levied on South American imports and competition from grocery chains making quantity wholesale purchases were two reasons. She also said, “There are only

four growers left in the county. Land is now being planted with cannabis particularly as the growers age and their children don’t want to continue in the flower business. Cannabis growers are offering big bucks for them to retire comfortably.”

And so life goes on and Deis intends to make the best of it. “I was once a work-a-holic, but I have learned that’s just stuff — life is too short. Sustaining fragile relationships is what is real.”

Deis learned the hard way to take more time. She continues to celebrate the daughter that was supposed to take over D&D Floral someday. In 2014 Anna lost her life the week before her wedding while training for the AIDS/ Life Cycle ride. For years Anna had volunteered with Phoenix Decorating Company at the New Year’s Day Rose Parade. Many of her friends came to help her mom produce Anna’s celebration of life. Deis now honors her memory by closing the shop and spending the time in Pasadena with the friends Anna introduced her to — also master floral designers from all over the world.

Touism From page 1

The City hired a full time tourism manager and a small staff and took over promotions with the TBID board reduced to an advisory role. But that all came to a screeching halt in March 2020 when the Coronavirus Pandemic hit.

Immediately, the City shut off promotions as initially, motels and restaurants, along with numerous other businesses were ordered closed to fight the spread of the virus.

The City manager shut down the tourism bureau, laid off two of the three staffers, canceled the contract with its marketing firm, and all promotions dried up.

Indeed, the City even took out advertisements in Central Valley media outlets asking people NOT to come here, in an attempt to protect local residents from visitors who in most cases lived in areas with a much higher level of COVID-19 infections.

But motels and lodging businesses were soon allowed to reopen with limited capacity and by last summer, tourism had largely returned to town.

People were still not able to eat inside restaurants, but they beat a path to the cool ocean breezes and fresh air during a summer that had numerous devastating wildfires including several in the Sierras that blanketed the Central Valley in a haze of choking smoke.

But as the pandemic restrictions have lingered on for over a year now, the City took the opportunity to change the TBID back to what it was before, an independent, non-profit that manages its own budget.

That entailed changing the way the TBID assessment district was formed, in essence going from a 1984 law to a 1994 law. The old assessment district had to be voted on every year by the people who benefit from it.

This new version will be voted on every 5 years, so the new charter is good from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2026, when the lodging businesses will be have to re-up the program or vote it out of existence.

Of note, the City Council again declined to expand the TBID to include privately owned RV parks.

The Morro Bay TBID is separate from the County Tourism Marketing District or TMD, which is a county-wide assessment district — charging 1.5% of a room night — and focusing on promoting SLO County as a whole.

The Morro Bay TBID focuses on just promoting Morro Bay.

There is also a County Business Improvement District or CBID which collects 2% of a room night but just from motels, B&Bs and vacation rentals in unincorporated communities — mainly Cayucos, Cambria and San Simeon — with half of that money going back to a local advisory board to spend on local promotions and special events. The other half promotes tourism just in the unincorporated communities.

Morro Bay’s TBID will now have to complete the formation of a new non-profit organization to run the promotions through, and it’s expected that will be completed before the July 1 start of the new arrangement.

The City will collect the TBID charges monthly and remit it to the organization. The City estimated the assessment district would collect \$991,000 a year.

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Kevin says,
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Takin' Care
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By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Morro Bay Chamber of
Commerce Spotlight



The Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce spotlighted Wicked Harvest Bourbon Whiskey, owned by Jim and Gloria Zion, The Chamber says if you haven't tried their farm-to-table spirits yet, grab a taste of their pecan bourbon at local liquor stores and restaurants. They offer pistachio, hazelnut, pecan infused Kentucky aged bourbon, finished in wine/rum barrels with whole pistachios. For 21 and older.

Restaurant Revitalization
Fund Applications

In April, the SBA announced key details on application requirements, eligibility, and a program guide for the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF). Details on application requirements, eligibility, and a program guide are now available in English or in Spanish at <https://bit.ly/2SgDIyJ>. The American Rescue Plan Act established the RRF to provide funding to help restaurants and other eligible businesses keep their doors open. This program will provide restaurants with funding equal to their pandemic-related revenue loss up to \$10 million per business and no more than \$5 million per physical location. Recipients are not

Rehab Project From page 1

Donald contacted Estero Bay News for this story in an attempt to ease fears amongst the neighbors that were expressed at the planning commission's Zoom meeting. "People are afraid of what could possibly happen," Donald said the day after the commission meeting. "One woman said we were going to bring in busloads of pedophiles into the community. No, we're not." He said the people who will run the facility are not the same people who own the motel (Brian Der Vartanian and his wife are the listed owners), and the company doing the change over has done several others like this. The drug treatment facility will be licensed by the State of California, Donald explained. And the people who will check into the facility are not coming from prison or jail, he added. They will not be violent people, or sex offenders, either. There will be no assaultive cases, Donald said. "The people who come here will be from the community and from outside the community to get treatment." Their stays may be just a week or two to several months depending on the time they need to get better. The facility will have medical staff and counselors, Donald, who hopes to be one of those when the facility opens, said. He explained that for 12 years he was in Alaska working in a drug treatment facility for Native Alaskans, work that he really enjoyed. "My mom got cancer and so I came back," he said. For the past 8 years he's worked at the Quality Inn in Pismo Beach, the last four as manager. He just recently got the Rodeway Inn job and had no idea the owners wanted to change it over.

required to repay the funding as long as funds are used for eligible uses no later than March 11, 2023. The SBA will establish a seven-day pilot period for the RRF application portal to conduct extensive outreach and training. The official application launch date will be announced at a later date. Pilot period will be used to address technical issues ahead of the public launch. Participants in this pilot will be randomly selected from existing PPP borrowers in priority groups for RRF and will not receive funds until the application portal is open to the public. Following the pilot, the application portal will be opened to the public. For the first 21 days that the program is open to the public, the SBA will prioritize reviewing applications from small businesses owned by women, veterans, and socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. Following the 21-day period, all eligible applicants are encouraged to submit applications. *Are you or a neighbor Taking Care of Business? Submit your awesome local efforts for publication here. Is your business supporting our community? Maybe you're launching a new business, or you're making updates to your current business model, or re-opening. Or perhaps you have a job opportunity, or have been doing some volunteer work, or are collaborating with another business or a non-profit. Or maybe you know someone who is. Fill out our online form at EsteroBayNews.com/business*

Book Signing a Big Hit

Photos courtesy Scott Mather



Joe Dunlap, seated signs copies of his book 'When Morro Bay Went to War' at a book signing event April 1 at the Maritime Museum. Over 50 people turned out April 1 for a book signing and reception for Joe Dunlap, author of "When Morro Bay Went to War," in an event that turned into a reunion of

"Just when I thought that [counseling] was over for me," he said, "I land a job in Morro Bay that's being turned into a drug and alcohol treatment. It's a full circle for me. I had no idea it was going to become a drug and alcohol place." The treatment facility will have gates and security cameras, but "it can't be a lockdown facility. But they will have to check out to leave," Donald said. As for the notion that they will kick addicts to the curb once their insurance runs out — one of the fears espoused online — he said, "They will be discharged to where they came from. Nobody gets discharged into the community unless they're from the community." He added, "Pretty much everyone wants to go back to their families, to the people they know." Donald estimated it would be a year or possibly two before the switchover is completed. Meanwhile, he said he's at the motel daily and if anyone wants to stop by with questions, he'd be happy to speak to them about the project. He's also starting an online forum (search: "North Morro Bay community forum") to discuss this and other pressing issues that concern residents of North Morro Bay. He was planning to hold the first online discussion May 4 (pre-press time) and the next May 27 if readers would like to join the forum and keep abreast of the project's progress. "This project isn't the only issue North Morro Bay has," Donald said. "We should also be talking about homelessness, mail theft, and other issues."



Joe Dunlap (front row, second from right) poses with members of his high school class

long time friends. Sponsored by the Morro Bay Maritime Museum Association, which sells Dunlap's World War II-era photo book, the event drew local residents almost entirely, said MBM-MA president Scott Mather. "The Morro Bay Maritime Museum preserves, promotes, and celebrates the history of our maritime heritage," Mather said in an email, "for all citizens of Morro Bay and the Central Coast. As I said in my opening remarks it is not my museum or our museum it is 'Your Museum.'" Dunlap's book illustrates how the Navy took over Morro Bay Harbor, after the Army Corps of Engineers dredged the navigation channel and closed off the harbor's north entrance to create a protected harbor. The Navy also built a training base for marines headed for the Pacific Theater to fight the Japanese at what is now the power plant property. WWII transformed the waterfront and set the stage for the tourist destination it is today. Mather commented about how multiple generations of locals turned out, as grandfathers and grandmothers, shared the day with their grandchildren. The Association has ambitious plans for its little slice of the waterfront. Mather said they hope to get the City's permission to build a small "fishing shack" on a dirt area between Embarcadero and the power plant's sound wall. That shack would become a permanent part of the museum grounds and home to an exhibit celebrating the local commercial fishing industry. The museum has numerous items people have donated over the years, but they've had no room to display. They also hope to be able to bring in a Quonset hut that someone wants to donate and install it on the other side of the sound wall behind the museum's storage containers.

That would become a multi-purpose building, used for exhibits, meetings and movies/lectures. When the Navy base was operating, there were dozens of Quonset huts on the site. But that's also where the harbor department has several camping spaces set up last year as part of a pilot program to allow paid overnight camping as a way to bolster the department's sagging revenues. For information about the Maritime Museum and to join the fun, see: www.morrobaymaritime.org.

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