Local News, Arts & Entertainment, Schools, Business, **Environment** 

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# **Storm Brings Mudslides to Los Osos**

By Theresa-Marie Wilson and Neil Farrell

SLO County got pummeled by a successive set of storms with high winds and torrential rain that left a path of destruction from mudslides to flooding and power outages. Officials declared a countywide state of emergency.

'Virtually every community is having flooding, evacuations, and road closures," said County Public Information Officer Jeanette Trompeter in a news release.

About 20 homes in the Vista de Oro Estates in Los Osos were damaged by a mudslide when a levy wall collapsed in the late afternoon on Jan. 9 forcing an evacuation (see photos).

Resident Alice Stone and her son were in their home when the wall of mud and water hit.

"It sounded like a heavy roar," Stone said. Her catio, an enclosed patio for cats, was destroyed, but all the cats were safe.

"It was total devastation inside the houses," said EBN Publisher, Dean Sullivan who was on the scene. "Residents were walking around in what appeared to be a state of shock or disbelief. Several people I talked to said that their insurance wouldn't

"Many people came with shovels to help in anyway they could. It was very moving to witness."

In some cases, water, mud and debris was about 3-feet high in the homes.

In Morro Bay, the City officials declared a local emergency. Most of the major roads in and out of the city were flooded and closed.

"Pacific Gas & Electric had to cut power to Morro Bay and portions of Los Osos due to flooding of their local infrastructure," the City's website stated on Jan. 9. Power was restored later that

The State declared a state of emergency for California, and the Federal Government (FEMA) extended a federal emergency declaration to SLO County for this storm event. More information will follow once officials submit reports and assessments of landmarks.

Mud Slide Continued on page 2





About 20 homes in Los Osos were damaged by a mudslide on Jan. 9 following intense rainfall resulting in levy breach. Photo by Bob Crizer



Photos by Dean Sullivan

# Citizen's Group **Fighting for Los Osos**

By Neil Farrell

hey say a small group of motivated people can move mountains, but what about fighting city hall; or in this case, County Government?

Emily Miggins, Becky McFarland and Pam Hoestetter are three neighbors in Los Osos who are among the core of a politically active group of citizens called, "Los Osans for Good Governance."

The group is not an official non-profit, political action group or anything like that, but are just like-minded folks concerned about the future and more specifically the water supply in Los

#### **Start Was About Wildfire**

Miggins explained that their group started with working with the Fire Safe Council on making Los Osos safer from potential

"We tried to come together as neighbors," she said, "to reduce the fire risk."

Their members live all over town and are regulars at meetings of the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Community Services District, the Los Osos Citizen's Advisory Council and the Board of Supervisors, as well as others.

Through attendance at all these meetings, and after comparing notes, they concluded, "Something's not right," Miggins said during a recent sit-down interview with all three women at the Nautical Bean in Baywood Park.

#### Who Are They?

The group isn't large, averaging about 15-16 active people, they said, and have been doing work they believe is on behalf of the whole town. Though they admit there are many issues in Los Osos their focus has for the past nearly a year, been on one project in particular that was approved by the County Planning Department with an over-the-counter or ministerial permit and built at a house right in their neighborhood on Highland Drive. Indeed, the "guest house" project was at a home behind Miggins' home.

That small, 2-story, stand-alone addition to an existing home is a 1-car garage on the bottom and a small apartment on top. It's small but it raised the hackles of the ladies, who wondered how was this allowed?

#### **Process Should Involve the Public**

The normal process would have the County receive an application and then send notices to anyone within 300-feet of a project site, McFarland explained, which has been done in the past for similar Los Osos projects.

Notices don't go out on ministerial permits, which the Coun-

When the lengthier, public process is followed, Miggins explained, people have a chance to comment and more importantly, to appeal a decision, ultimately, to the California Coastal Commis-

Citizen's Group Continued on page 18

# **Moving Forward: The 2023 Morro Bay Bird Festival**

By Judy Salamacha

ne of my all-time favorite movies is "The Big Year" with Steve Martin, Jack Black and Owen Wilson. The three criss-cross North America in a quest to count more species of birds than anyone else. I watch it at least once a year. The LOL movie ould easily have been filmed on the Central Coast. We have the perfect venue. Each year the Morro Coast Audubon Society has volunteers counting birds in December as part of a national registry.

Our Estero Bay hosts multiple species of birds all year long, but even more during the bird's migration on the Pacific Flyway. And San Luis Obispo County and Visit Morro Bay grants funds to help to produce the Morro Bay Bird Festival (www.morrobaybirdfestival.org) each Martin

January 13-16. This festival started in 1997 and has always been a strong collaborative effort among the Morro Coast Audubon Society, CA State Parks, the Central Coast Natural History Museum, Friends of the Estuary, Small Wilderness Area

Luther King celebration weekend - this year



Morro Bay Bird Festival Board members Robbie and Bob Revel invite everyone to mix and mingle with approximately 900 birders on Friday evening 5-6:30 at the Morro Bay Bird Festival Bazaar, the opening night for a mega-weekend of birding activities during the 2023 Morro Bay Bird Festival

Preservation, and Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce. Until 2022 a committee within the Morro Coast Audubon Society organized the events, but like most events that were produced on the Central Coast, 2020-22 was without the Morro Bay Bird Festival. It is back better than even in 2023 under independent leadership.

During 2020 a small group of previous committee members decided to reorganize and become its own nonprofit. Paperwork and pro-

Bird Festival Continued on page 19

# **City Manager Names Interim Department Heads**



Police Cmdr. Amy Watkins

By Neil Farrell

With two of its department heads retiring at the end of 2022, the City of Morro Bay in December named interims department heads that will take over while the search continues for permanent hires.

#### **MBPD Commander Named Interim Chief**

On Dec. 16, Morro Bay City Manager Scott Collins announced that he was naming Police Cmdr. Amy Watkins to be the interim chief of police, while the search is on to replace retired-Chief Jody Cox, whose last day with the City was Dec. 31.

"I conducted surveys of the Morro Bay Police team and the community," Collins said, "and there was resounding support for

**Department Heads** Continued on page 19

# With Castle Wind Out, Where Does **That Leave Morro Bay?**



Bv Neil Farrell

 ${f F}$  or nearly a decade, the City of Morro Bay has been working with potential wind farm company Castle Wind in anticipation of a big lease sale by the federal government for offshore floating wind energy development.

But in December, Castle Wind finished out of the money in the bidding for three huge offshore areas, located in a nearly 400-square mile area some 20-30 miles off the coast at San Sime-

The winning bids went to: Central California Offshore Wind,

Castle Wind Out Continued on page 17

**Police Blotter** Page 8



Brrrr, That's Cold Page 10



Surf's Up Page 14



Mud Slide From page 1



#### **Storm Death and Missing Child**

·· A search continued on Jan. 10 for Kyle Doan, a 5-year-old boy who was swept from a car passing on a flooded stretch of road near San Marcos Creek on Jan. 9.

"The search operations had to be discontinued yesterday after approximately five hours because the extreme weather conditions were making it unsafe for first responders to continue their efforts," said Sheriff's Spokesperson Tony Cipolla in a news release. "A break in the intense storms is allowing today's search which will involve all available resources of the Sheriff's Office including the USAR (Underwater Search and Rescue) Team and air operations. The conditions, however, remain extremely dangerous. The water level is high and continues to be fast moving." · On Jan. 10 at about 8 a.m., Morro Bay Police were contacted regarding a possible deceased person inside of a stored boat on the property. Officers arrived on scene and located a 78- year-old male inside of a boat unresponsive. Fire arrived and confirmed male was deceased. Cause of death is undetermined. Investigation

·· A person died in Avila Beach on Jan. 9 along Avila Beach Drive after their vehicle got caught in floodwaters.

#### Initial Storm – Jan. 4 - 5

At least two roads were closed temporarily last week after a fierce storm dropped over an inch of rain overnight in Morro Bay causing localized flooding and toppling over a Downtown street



The storm that hit Jan. 4 and raged overnight caused flooding on State Park Road, and the State Parks Department closed the road until it was safe to drive over. The flooded location was not at the Chorro Creek Bridge area, formerly called "Twin Bridges" before it was built nearly 30-years ago. That site often flooded and closed off the only direct route between Morro Bay and Los Osos.

Since Twin Bridges was replaced with the Chorro Creek Bridge, Chorro Creek has not flooded there, but it has flooded State Park Road numerous times, collecting in a low spot.

Also, a City tree toppled over in the 900 block of Main St., at Horizon Realty and the Morro Bay Appliance Store. City crews barricaded off that entire block of Main Street, while the tree was removed and the area cleaned up.

According to a post on the MBFD Facebook Page, the ocean was roiling too. "The waves crashing over the Morro Rock jetty are spectacular, but being in the water wouldn't be! Take care out there," the post said.

Though there's been no official declaration that the recent drought is over, having so much rain this early in the season is no doubt a good sign for a state that's still heavily reliant on groundwater sources and whose reservoirs and lakes have dropped to really low levels over the past couple of years.

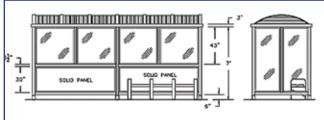
As of press time on Jan. 10, conditions were as follows: · Parts of Los Osos were without power for the third time. On Wednesday, January 4, some residents were without power for 19 hours: on Jan. 9, power was out for the majority of residents for

Mud Slide Continued on page 18

## **Bus Shelter Job Out for Bids**



The current bus stop at City Park in Morro Bay (above) and a rendering of the stop that will replace it. (below)



BY Neil Farrell

he City of Morro Bay will soon award a contract to demolish 1 the bus stop in City Park and replace it with a new, mod-

The City went out for bids in December and set the deadline for Jan. 12. Under scope of work the project lists: "providing all tools, materials, labor, equipment, and incidentals necessary for the removal and replacement of a bus shelter, sidewalk, driveway approach, curb ramp, spandrel, fencing, bike rack, lighting, irrigation, sign and pavement restoration."

And, "The work will also include any required traffic control, signage, public notifications, storm water control, shoring, formwork, and all other work necessary to render the infrastructure/facility complete and operational."

The City has been working on the project for several years now, after getting a grant. In the Public Works Department's most recent projects list, released to the public at the October PWAB meeting, the bus shelter project is listed at \$480,000.

Under "Justification" it reads, "Need for more user friendly, ADA accessible transit hub with modern shelters." It lists construction for early 2023.

The existing bus shelter was transformed into a public artwork by the Morro Bay Public Art Foundation about 10-years ago. The bus shelter, which is a concrete block building open on two sides, was decorated to resemble, "Grandma's Living Room," with original artworks painted on the walls by local artists and a concrete "leather sofa" made by an Atascadero artist. It is the most unique bus shelter in the entire county but will soon meet the

In the only rendering the City could provide, the new bus shelter is depicted as a steel and plastic structure, open to the elements, and installed where the current bus shelter sits.

The City is expected to award a construction contract at an upcoming City Council meeting.

# **New Harbor Director Hired**

By Neil Farrell

orro Bay has a new harbor director and the interim director, who was just appointed Dec. 29, will still fill in for the next month or so, the city manager announced Jan. 5.

City Manager Scott Collins hired Ted Schiafone as the City's new Harbor Director to replace the now-retired Eric Endersby, and after an extensive interview process. That process included "interviews with community members, Harbor Department staff, waterfront users and economic development professionals," the City news release said. He starts work here on Feb. 13

Meanwhile, Becka Kelly, the Harbor Patrol Chief, will continue as interim director, the City said.

I he Harbor is central to the City's success and is facing some big challenges," Collins said. "We need someone with strong business and leadership experience to build a long-term financially viable waterfront and begin to address the growing Harbor infrastructure needs."

He added, "Ted is the right person for the job, and I look forward to him leading the Harbor Department and joining the

Schiafone brings over 30-years of "related harbor and business experience," the City said. He is currently the Division Manager for the City of Oceanside, Calif., Harbor District and manages a \$9 million budget, "with over 20 employees, 958 boat slips, the retail village, real estate leases, and Harbor Beaches."

Schiafone previously owned and managed commercial businesses and real estate developments, the City said, over a 20-year period. "His largest project was the \$7.5 million redevelopment of a full-service marina on the West Coast of Florida," the release

That project apparently was similar to California's permitting maze requiring, "intense navigation of the extensive environmental, permitting, and entitlement issues. In addition, Ted served in leadership roles in the banking industry."

He earned an MBA in finance and marketing from Rollins College, a bachelor's degree from Upsala College, and holds relevant certifications and licenses.

"I am thrilled to become a part of the Morro Bay Community," Schiafone said, "and work with the talented team of professionals the City has assembled."

Kelly will fill in until Schiafone comes in, actually doing three jobs — interim director, patrol officer and patrol chief. The department currently has seven full time employees and several part-timers with seasonal lifeguards coming on beard in summer,

He'll be running into a mountain of paperwork as the Harbor Department is taking a hard look at its future. "Key upcoming Department initiatives," the release said, "include completing the organizational assessment, assisting the Public Works Department in assessing Harbor capital needs, and developing revenue enhancement options for the waterfront."

Schiafone's banking experience might be handy as the department's main issue is that of revenue, or rather the shortage of it, as one estimate pegs repair and maintenance needs to public harbor infrastructure at \$10 million and there's no plan on how to address that. Indeed, harbor finances played a big part in the last city council election.

One avenue of revenue died at the polls in November as the Measure B-22 parcel tax initiative failed to garner enough support. It would have placed a \$120 a year tax on all private property within the City Limits, raising some \$680,000 a year to start.

On the harbor business horizon are the completion of Harborwalk Plaza, a motel-restaurant-retail redevelopment now under construction; and the future of the Libertine and Three Stacks and a Rock lease sites (the former Morro Bay Aquarium).

The North T-pier needs extensive structural work and the public boat launch ramp needs rebuilding - part of a larger project that's been identified but lacks funding.



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# City Hall Has Expanded Hours in 2023

BY Neil Farrell

City Hall took off for the holidays this year. The City of Morro Bay on Dec. 24 announced that it would be closed the week after Christmas through New Year's to Tuesday, Jan. 3, and then reopening with expanded hours.

"City Hall," the announcement said, "Public Works/Community Development, Community Center/Senior Center, Police, Fire and Harbor offices will be closed during that period."

But of course the City didn't completely shutdown, as public safety and emergency crews with the water and sewer departments, and core maintenance workers stayed on the job, which was probably a smart move considering the storms that came through that week, dropping a couple of inches of rain and bringing high winds.

And in 2023, City Hall and Public Works (planning, building, engineering and maintenance/parks departments) will be open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays, and closed to the public on Fridays.

According to City Manager Scott Collins, City Hall and Public Works had been open from 8 a.m. to noon Mondays-Thursdays and closed Fridays "for the past year or so." Apparently the rather odd hours fit with the work schedules of much of the staff. Collins explained, "The Friday closure helps accommodate the 9/80 schedule most workers have, which limits the number of staff available on Fridays. The 9/80 schedule is a key past of the City's employee recruitment/retention strategy."

He explained the 9/80-work schedule. "On a 2-week work schedule," he said, "the employee works 9-hours each day for eight days, then 8-hours one day, and then a day off." So employees on this schedule get a 3-day weekend every other week.

The change in hours comes on the heels of a new city councilwoman mentioning the hours at City Hall in the Dec. 13 meeting. Shortly after being sworn in, Councilwoman Zara Landrum proposed a future agenda item to discuss the hours that the City is open to serve the public.

But she was assured by the city manager that the hours were already planning to be changed.

"The City hopes the expanded hours will improve convenience for community members to conduct City business," the news release said.

# **WRF Costs Increase Again**

By Neil Farrel

Costs for Morro Bay's Water Reclamation
Facility (WRF) Project continue to climb
with thousands recently added to contracts for
the treatment plant builder, an increase to the
cultural/archaeological resources monitoring,
and for the company installing the conveyance
system.

Anvil Builders is the San Francisco company installing the pipes and building new lift stations to convey the raw sewage from the old treatment plant on Atascadero Road to the new plant above the end of South Bay Boulevard. These newest changes added \$646,000 to Anvil's contract raising it to a new "not-to-exceed" amount of \$34.84 million. The original contract was for just over \$31 million.

Amendment No. 8 in the contract with Filanc/Black & Veatch (FBV) to build the treatment plant rose another \$957,000, bringing the treatment plant portion of the project up to \$78.01 million. The original bid was for \$69 million.

And the contract with Cogstone Resource Management to monitor the lift station and pipe-laying work increased over \$97,000 bringing Cogstone's contract up to \$1.49 million.

With Anvil, the new costs cover a number of hiccups the company incurred while install the conveyance system, including \$130,000 to relocate the City's reverse osmosis line from the old desal plant on Atascadero Road.

It also includes \$200,000 for work done on the RO plant's brine discharge line; and various other added work ranging from a low of \$1,300 to \$82,000.

With FBV, the biggest cost hike was for \$750,000 to "Defer SEED PLANT Milestone and WRF commission," according to the staff report. The plant was slated to start accepting sewage last Fall, but delays with the conveyance system and an activated sludge failure when the plant first took on sewage, pushed that back.

Despite the newest cost overruns, ratepayers still won't get hit with increased fees. "Acceptance of all three contract amendments,"

Cost Increase Continued on page 4

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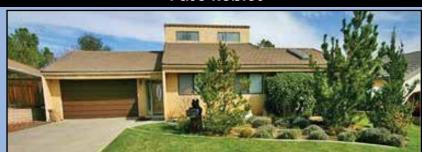
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# Carbajal Brings Home The Bacon

By Neil Farrell

A local Congressman is taking a victory lap for bringing home some bacon in the massive \$1.7 trillion omnibus spending bill recently signed into law by President Biden, who had the 4,155-page bill specially flown from Washington to St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands where he was vacationing so he could sign it right away.

Rep. Salud Carbajal (D—Santa Barbara), who represents San Luis Obispo County in Congress, announced that 14 of 15 requests for funding that he submitted were approved with the omnibus bill. Those were:

- \$7million for U.S. 101 Highway Carpool Lane Expansion;
- \$2M for the Orcutt Branch Library;
- \$1.5M for the Dwight Murphy Field;
- \$1.5M for the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County;
- \$1.38M for San Marcos Road Stabilization;
- \$1.26M for Pioneer Park (in Paso Robles);
- \$1M for the Marian Regional Medical Center's Obstetrics and Gynecology (OB/GYN) Residency Program Clinic;
  - \$500,000 for the Santa Maria Japanese Community Center;
  - \$500,000 for Lake Cachuma's emergency pumping facility;
    \$2.06M for Prado Bridge Replacement (in SLO);
  - \$500,000 for the Arroyo Grande Swinging Bridge Stabili-
  - \$1.5M for Morro Bay's North T-Pier;
  - \$750,000 for E.P. Foster Library; and,
  - \$1M for safe beach access at Mondo's Cove.

Last March, Carbajal had submitted a list of 10 projects to be part of the March 2022 Omnibus Spending Bill. Those were:

- \$5.6M for the County of San Luis Obispo Public Safety Communication System;
  - \$3M for the Goleta Valley Community Center;
- \$2.5M for the Escalante Meadows Community Center in the City of Guadalupe;
- \$2M for the Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo's Anderson Hotel;

#### Cost Increase From page 3

a staff report said, "would not result in an increase in the overall WRF Project baseline budget of \$159.84 million, as adopted in the FY 2022-23 City Budget, nor require any increase for rate-payers. However, the Conveyance Facilities budget and budget for cultural resource monitoring will be exceeded and \$230,029 will need to be allocated to those line items from the \$923,420 program contingency budget."

So the latest price hikes mean the conveyance system's budget is now \$142,000 in the red and Cogstone's monitoring budget is \$87,000 over. The WRF's overall contingency budget sat at \$923,000. Subtract the \$230,000 in Anvil and Cogstone's contracts and there is just \$693,000 left over.

As for what happened to cause the changes, the City report said Anvil had to move the 12-inch RO line in order to create separation from the new sewer pipes; and the company also replaced at the City's behest a collapsed storm drain on Atascadero Road.

The City is also giving Anvil \$34,120 for work to repair a broken water main that occurred back in June that the City said had failed while Anvil was digging through the area behind Lila Keiser Park.

Also of note, the City's first injection well, designed to pump treated effluent into the ground in the Morro Creek Aquifer, has been completed and is in testing mode.

And in a recent Public Works Advisory Board (PWAB) meeting, the Public Works Department's list of projects includes \$9.1 million for "Wastewater Treatment Plant Decommissioning," which refers to the eventual tearing down of the old Atascadero Road sewer plant.

Under "Justifications" the report said, "The Coastal Development Permit for the Water Reclamation Facility (WRF) Program requires removal and restoration (decommissioning) of the existing Wastewater Treatment Plant site to a safe and level configuration that roughly matches the surrounding areas. Funding for planning and project initiation is crucial to be in compliance with WRF permits."

The Cayucos Sanitary District is a co-owner of that old sewer plant, so any costs associated with tearing it down will have to go through that agency. Negotiations between the agencies is reportedly underway however, nothing has yet to be made public on the terms or the plans for decommissioning and potential redevelopment of the site, which is just a short distance from Morro Strand State Beach.

- \$1.7M for LeRoy Park in the City of Guadalupe;
- $\cdot$  \$1.3M for Seismic Upgrades to the Santa Barbara Veterans' Memorial Building;
  - \$900,000 for the Lompoc Health Clinic;
- · \$375,000 for Cambria Community Services District Water Tanks; and,
- \$112,340 for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians Waste Water Treatment Plant.

So where did this eclectic list of pork come from? "Under guidelines issued by the Appropriations Committee," Carbajal said in a statement, "each Representative was permitted to request funding for up to 10 projects in their community for fiscal year 2022. Projects were restricted to a limited number of federal funding streams, and only state and local governments and eligible non-profit entities are permitted to receive funding."

Just one funded project, the money for the North T-pier, falls closest to home for Estero Bay News readers.

According to Carbajal's website, that project is intended to "get the North-T Pier to a 'satisfactory' rated condition for its intended uses includes the following: Replace approximately 50-60 of the pier's 419 structural and fender pilings that were rated with 'moderate' structural deterioration in the 2011 assessment; replace timber cross-bracing, pile caps, wales, stringers and decking as-needed; replace the under-deck fire suppression automatic sprinkler system; and replace and upgrade the electrical service systems on the pier to current codes and materials."

The \$1.5 million seems too little money for all that work, and the City Harbor Department doesn't yet have a project put together for the needed repairs. But there's more to it than simply making the North T-pier safer, there's the anticipated construction of offshore floating wind farms, which the government in early December sold three huge leases to three energy companies.

The justification for spending this taxpayer debt was, "The project provides significant benefits to the local and regional economy, which is likely to be amplified as the offshore wind energy project is developed and goes online. The project also supports the important national defense mission of the Coast Guard vessel stationed at Morro Bay."

That national defense mission was in question after Pacific Gas & Electric decided to close down Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant. Coast Guard Station Morro Bay had been tasked since the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, to patrol a safety zone in the waters off Diablo Canyon, after it was moved under the newly created Department of Homeland Security and out of the Treasury Department.

PG&E had announced plans to completely close the plant by 2025, when its licenses ran out.

But given the performance of the State's energy grid in recent summers, leading to rolling blackouts to avoid over-taxing the system and having it collapse, the State Legislature approved a billion dollar forgivable loan to PG&E with a request the plant remain open for 5-10 more years, a decision that must still survive review by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The City had an agreement with Castle Wind, but that company didn't win a lease. The City has not yet met with the winning wind farm companies to see exactly what they need to make the T-pier and indeed the harbor usable for their boats.

## Sandbag Sand Available



With Old Man Winter firmly upon us, the City of Morro Bay is reminding residents of where they can get clean sand for sandbags and how to report a tree getting blown over in your neighborhood.

The City has put out a big pile of sand for residents to fill sandbags with and guard against minor flooding during what has already been a wet winter.

Sand is available for free across the street from the sewer plant on Atascadero Road. Sandbags are available for purchase at Miner's Hardware or other hardware stores in the area.

The City said there would be a blue sign posted above the sand pile that says, "Sand for sandbags only."

And with Morro Bay's urban forest getting on in years, the

danger of trees being blown over in high winds is very real and the City has a special system online to report downed trees and other weather-related incidents.

See: www.morrobayca.gov/983/Service-Request to report toppled trees. You must also first create an account on the system, called "Citysourced."

"CitySourced," reads a news release, "allows residents to identify issues and report those service requests directly to the City of Morro Bay. Residents can upload a photo or video of the concern and mark the geographic location on a map. Each request can then be tracked for follow up. Requests may be submitted online or using a smartphone."

The City also reminded people that the request for service line is not for reporting public safety emergencies, and if you are experiencing something like that, call 9-1-1.

And if the issue you see is a water or sewer emergency — but not an issue with your water/sewer bill — call 805-772-6281 to reach the Public Works Department.

And in Los Osos, the Community Services District has clean sand available at the CSD corp yard located at 8th Street and El Moro Avenue, during regular business hours.

As for another common storm issue — downed wires — readers are advised that they should never approach and certainly never touch any downed wire.

Though it may be a cable TV or phone line, to be safe, assume it is an electrical line and is energized and able to give you a terrible shock. And don't run over with the car any downed wires either.

Instead call 9-1-1 and let the fire department know about the wire so they can handle the situation safely.

# Man Arrested in New Year's Stabbing

The new year started out violent for at least one San Luis Obispo County family, as a 20-year-old man in Nipomo allegedly stabbed a family member in a New Year's Eve incident, the Sheriff's Department announced in a news release.

According to the Sheriff, at about 12:52 a.m. Sunday, Jan. 1, deputies responded to a disturbance at a home in the 800 block of Southland, Nipomo.

"Upon their arrival," the release said, "deputies discovered a 36-year-old male that had been stabbed during an apparent family disturbance. The victim sustained serious but non-life-threatening injuries."

The victim was not identified, nor was his relationship to the suspect revealed. He or she was treated at a local hospital and released.

Deputies reportedly arrested Angel Rodriguez, 20 of Nipomo on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon and booked him into the County Jail.

# Killer of CHP Officer Paroled Early

A North County woman who was convicted of killing a California Highway Patrol oOfficer with her car while driving under the influence of drugs, has been paroled early and over the strong objections of the district attorney.

"In August of 2011," the announcement from Dow's Office said, "Kaylee Ann Weisenberg, 35, was convicted of second-degree murder and gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated for her June 2010 killing of California Highway Patrol Officer Brett Oswald (48 at the time). She was sentenced in



Kaylee Weisenberg

April 2012 to serve 15-years to life in state prison." And this past December, the State Parole Board granted her release.

The conviction stemmed from a June 2010 accident wherein Weisenberg was speeding around a corner on South River Road, lost control of her car and hit Ofc. Oswald, who was busy putting out flares for a disabled car incident that he was working. He died from his injuries. Weisenberg was not injured. She was subsequently arrested and charged, after her toxicology tests came back for methamphetamine in her blood stream.

It was the second time she had been up for parole, accord-





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# lews

ing to the release, and was approved over the objections of Ofc. Oswald's Family.

"Members of Ofc. Oswald's Family including his widow, sister and parents attended the parole hearing by video and strongly objected to her parole," the D.A.'s Office said. "A San Luis Obispo County Deputy District Attorney represented the office at the hearing and voiced a forceful objection to the release of Weisenberg based on the serious nature of the crime and continued danger to the community should she be released."

D.A. Dan Dow wasn't happy. "I strongly disagree," he said, "with the Parole Board's decision to release Kaylee Ann Weisenberg back into the community after serving only 12-years for taking the life of a California Highway Patrolman. My office will urge Governor Newsom to review and repeal the Parole Board's decision in this case."

Weisenberg was convicted of second-degree murder and gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated, the release said, and sentenced to 15-years to life in state prison. She's benefitted by a subsequent change in the law.

"At the time of her sentence," the D.A.'s Office said, "individuals convicted of murder received no 'good time' credits. Meaning, Weisenberg was required to serve every day of 15-years

**Morro Bay Makes** 

**Charming List** 

The website Travel Awaits named Morro Bay as one of the "20 Charming Small Towns To Visit In 2023." The list

views in oceanside Morro Bay are dominated by the town's

namesake Morro Rock, a unique volcanic rock formation that

sets Morro Bay apart from other California beach towns. The

rock can be seen from most points in the town, and when you

visit Morro Bay, you'll certainly want to spend all your time

outdoors enjoying the pleasant weather and plentiful seaside

activities. The calm waters of the bay are perfect for kayaking

and paddle boarding and offer opportunities to view sea otters

and migratory birds. Morro Bay is also known for its restaurant

scene and a collection of quaint beach shops. The town is situat-

ed in proximity to two state parks, a state beach, and is also a

To see the full list, go to https://bit.ly/3GDlRZQ.

**King Tides Project** 

Take and share king tides photos via the California Coastal

Take and share king times photos via the Commission's King Tides Project. The next King Tides are

January 21-22, 2023. Use your smart phone or digital camera

to participate in the project by taking and uploading photos of

through the King Tides photo upload form at coastal.ca.gov/

kingtides/participate.html. Photos will be displayed on an in-

teractive map. (If you'd like to share a video clip of king tides,

pery areas or near big waves, and always be conscious of your

Be sure to take extra precaution when you walk on slip-

surroundings and the weather conditions. Don't turn your back

on the ocean! Be aware that shore birds may be taking refuge in

email kingtides@coastal.ca.gov for instructions.)

short drive from the beautiful Paso Robles wine region."

The website had this to say about our bit of paradise. "The

covers areas across the United States.

prior to even being considered for parole." California voters changed the game.

"In 2016," the release said, "Proposition 57 was passed, which provides individuals convicted of violent crimes, such a murder, up to a third, or 33%, reduction in their sentences. As a result, Weisenberg was granted parole after serving only 12-years for her murder conviction."

The D.A. vowed to ask the Governor to intervene and deny the Parole Board's decision.

## **Atascadero Man Dies** in DUI Crash

One Atascadero man died and another was arrested for suspi-cion of drunk driving and causing a fatal accident following a single car rollover crash on Hwy 41 east of Morro Bay.

According to Highway Patrol Public Information Ofc. Miguel Alvarez, at 11:55 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 10, a 2004 Suzuki Grand Vitara was traveling on a wet road in rainy weather, southbound on Hwy 41 just south of Bear Ridge Road.

The driver told officers he was going approximately 55 mph

into a right hand curve, part of the highway's infamous "S" curves, when the Suzuki hydroplaned on the rain soaked roadway.

The car collided with the hillside, started to spin and then rolled. The driver of the car was identified as Orion Messina, 19 of Atascadero and there was an unidentified 18-year-old male passenger in the car as well.

Messina was wearing a seatbelt and was uninjured, however, the passenger was not belted in and was ejected from the vehicle coming to rest on the right shoulder of the road.

The passenger, who was also from Atascadero, suffered major injuries and died there on the side of the road, according to the

Ofc. Alvarez said "alcohol was a factor in this collision," and Messina was arrested, though the news release did not say what he was charged with.

Ordinarily, when alcohol is involved in a car crash it is automatically a felony, and when there's a fatality involved, it's a very serious charge, and often times vehicular manslaughter.

Estero Bay News attempted to discover what charge Messina faces but by Dec. 13, he had already been released from custody at the County Jail.

## **News Briefs**

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

areas above the tide line - don't flush them out in the process of

getting your shot. Some of the most powerful images are taken in areas that are subject to flooding and erosion, and of places where high water levels can be gauged against familiar landmarks (such as cliffs, rocks, roads, buildings, bridge supports, sea walls, staircases, and

In addition to uploading photos, you can also share them on social media using #kingtides.

# **SLO COVID Testing Sight Moves**

he COVID-19 community testing site in San Luis Obispo reopened at a new location in the Acacia Creek Business Park at 3450 Broad Street, Suite 111. It replaces the site that previously operated at the SLO Vets Hall.

County Health Officer, Dr. Penny Borenstein, said, "I'm grateful to our community's veterans for so graciously sharing their wonderful space for more than two years. I'm also grateful that demand for testing has decreased to a level where it is possible to meet the need in a different location and return this space to its original use. We remain ready to respond if needs change."

There are also COVID-19 testing sites in Grover Beach (1336 Ramona Avenue, Suite A) and Paso Robles (800 Pine Street.

Patients who test positive for COVID-19 can get "Test to Treat" services at the testing sites and take home a course of the Paxlovid antiviral medication if indicated. In addition to COVID-19 testing, the sites also have rapid testing for influenza.

For those who have health insurance, information will be collected when registering for an appointment and no co-pay is required. There is no charge for those without insurance.

The County of San Luis Obispo and State of California are contracting with OptumServe to provide this service. Appointments are encouraged, see: slopublichealth.org/testing to make an appointment.

For updates on COVID-19 in SLO County, see: slopublichealth.org/COVID19. Public health phone support is available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. call (805) 781-5500 Mondays-Fridays.

Most pharmacies in the county are also still doing COVID-19 testing by appointment.

# **PG&E Encourages Free Safety Inspections**

With colder weather months in full swing, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) reminds customers to call to schedule a free in-home safety inspection of their gas appliances. During the visit, PG&E will also relight pilot lights for customers who have heaters or other appliances that have been turned off during warmer months.

Inspections help ensure that gas appliances, including water heaters, furnaces and ovens, are operating safely and efficiently, reducing the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning within the home. Carbon monoxide is especially dangerous due to the fact that it can't be seen, smelled or heard. According to the Center for Disease Control, every year in the U.S. at least 430 people die from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning and approximately 50,000 people will be sent to the hospital.

To schedule an inspection, call the customer helpline at 1-800-743-5000.

If you suspect carbon monoxide in your home, you should get out immediately and call 911. If a PG&E customer ever smells the distinctive "rotten egg" odor of natural gas in or around their home or business they should immediately evacuate and then call 911 and PG&E at 1-800-743-5000.

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



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# **Real Estate Scam**

Aman accused of fraud in regards to a major proposed redevelopment in Downtown San Luis Obispo has been found guilty, the District Attorney's Office said in a Dec. 14 news release.

D.A. Dan Dow said a jury unanimously found Jeremy Walter Pemberton, 38, guilty of two counts of felony securities fraud, one count of felony financial elder abuse, and two counts of felony grand theft by false pretenses, according to the news release. The jury found true an additional allegation that his



Jeremy Walter Pemberton

crimes totaled more than \$500,000 in losses.

The case alleged that Pemberton "misrepresented the amount of financing he had received from other investors and failed to disclose a default on the lease for 1144 Chorro Street, San Luis Obispo."

That address is the one-time home of the Sports Authority retail store but has been vacant for years after the sports retailer closed.

Pemberton's company, Discovery San Luis Obispo, had put together a proposal to redevelop the large space into a 3-story, multi-use facility "that included a bar, concert venue, restaurant, and six bowling alleys."

Though Pemberton heavily promoted the project, it never came to fruition. "The charges against Pemberton," the news release said, "centered around misrepresentations and omissions by him during the course of fundraising efforts in 2017."

Superior Court Judge Timothy Covello, who presided over the trial, will sentence Pemberton on February 7, 2023.

The case was investigated by the D.A.'s Bureau of Investigation and was prosecuted by Deputy D.A.s Michael Frye and Ken Jorgensen of the Special Prosecutions Major Fraud Unit of the County District Attorney's Office.



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# SLO Man Convicted in SLO Woman Gets Prison in Baby Boy's OD Death

By Neil Farrell

San Luis Obispo woman A has been sentenced to State Prison following the fentanyl drug poisoning of her toddler, the District Attorney announced Dec. 14.

District Attorney Dan Dow said Jennifer Mae Niemann, 30 of SLO, was sentenced to 4-years in State Prison after her conviction of child endangerment resulting in the death of her 3-year-old son. The conviction came after Neimann pled guilty to the charge. The D.A. had recommended the maximum sentence of 6-years, "based on the severity of the crime and the conduct of Niemann after the crime.



Mugshot of Jennifer Niemann of San Luis Obispo, who was sentenced to 4-years in prison for Child Endangerment Resulting in Death in the death of her 3-year-old son from fentanyl poisoning.

Drug Enforcement Administra-

tion illustration of 2 milligrams

of fentanyl (the white pow-

dery substance to the lower

right of the penny), which is

a lethal dose in most adults.

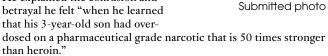
The baby boy's death happened in San Luis Obispo on May 4, 2022, according to the news release. "Niemann made a 9-1-1 call reporting her young child was unresponsive," the release said. "First responders arrived and found the child unconscious. Life saving efforts failed and the child was pronounced dead."

Tests revealed that the boy "died of acute fentanyl intoxication. The child had been in the sole custody and control of Niemann for many days before his death."

D.A. Dow said, "Drug use is not a victimless crime. The life of this precious three-year-old child was tragically taken away as a result of his mother's use of illicit drugs and recklessly exposing her child to them. Our office stands ready to aggressively prosecute anyone who abuses drugs and harms others in our community.'

He had a warning to drug dealers. "To anyone selling illicit drugs in our community, know this: we are looking for you, we will find you, and you will be held accountable," D.A.

Deputy D.A. Danielle Baker, at Niemann's sentencing hearing, read to the court a 3-page written statement prepared by the boy's father, which described his son as "very happy, energetic, and healthy." He explained the confusion and betrayal he felt "when he learned that his 3-year-old son had over-



The judge was provided with three videos showing the child in-life as healthy, active, and charismatic, with the last video showing the child "singing happy birthday to his father the day before his death."

The D.A. issued a warning about fentanyl, a purely inorganic chemical compound that originates in China and is shipped in liquid or powder form to Mexico, where drug cartels make it into fake pills or mix it with meth, heroin and cocaine, increasing the potency, the addictive qualities and dangerousness of the drug.

Indeed, according to government statistics, in 2021 drug overdose became the No. 1 killer of young men ages 18-35, with some 107,000 people dying in 2021 from overdoses, often on pills they thought were fairly innocuous prescription medications.

Add to that the estimated 29,000 people who overdosed but whose lives were saved with Naloxone (brand names NARCAN and Kloxxado among others), a spray medication that immediately reverses the effects of opiates like fentanyl and heroin, and the overall number of "overdoses" is closer to 136,000 in one year.

According to the D.A.'s news release, "Fentanyl is a highly potent synthetic opioid, estimated by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention to be 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine.

"A dose of just 2 milligrams of fentanyl, alone or mixed with another substance, can be fatal depending on the user's size and tolerance. According to the USDEA, 60% of all fake pharmaceutical pills tested by their lab in 2021 contained potentially lethal quantities of fentanyl."

Indeed, simply coming into contact with fentanyl — either through accidental inhalation of the powder or just contact with the skin — can cause an overdose and has led to several police officers being accidently killed or nearly killed when they came across the drug in the field.

The case was investigated by the SLO Police Department with the assistance of the D.A.'s Bureau of Investigation and prosecuted by Deputy D.A. Baker who is assigned to the Sexual Violence and Child Abuse Unit.

#### Morro Bay Chamber Corner

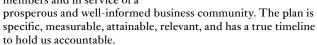


## A Message from the 2023 **Morro Bay Chamber Board Chairperson**

By Ray Riordan

Happy New Year! As the 2023 Morro Bay Chamber Board Chairman, I want to lay out a bit of my vision as we head into this exciting new year. But first, a little background:

The Morro Bay Chamber Board spent countless hours over the last few months developing a strategic plan that is second to none. It is a road map for working on behalf of our members and in service of a



So what is my vision for the Chamber knowing that we have such a great plan to execute? It is fairly simple:

• We will outwork and outthink anything that presents an obstacle to the success of our business community. I know we aren't guaranteed consensus on every issue, but if something makes your register ring and provides jobs and housing for your workers while keeping our community safe, beautiful, and resilient, I think we will have far more to agree on than debate against. If we do reach an impasse, we will do everything we can to follow the Lennon/McCartney philosophy - "We Can Work It Out!"

We will over-communicate. With a background in journalism, I have learned that a well-informed population makes the best decisions. The worst thing for our community is to have factually incorrect statements or opinions repeated without an attempt to reconcile and build consensus. We will over-communicate, but we will also over-listen!

· We will take it personally. We all love this community and when anything happens that hurts one of us - it hurts all of us. It is my intention to set foot in every business in Morro Bay in 2023. Some will be members of the Chamber, and some will not, but all Morro Bay businesses are part of the community with voices that need to be heard.

We will always stay "Humble and Kind." Those of you that know me, know I live a lot of my life through music. No matter who I deal with, I have always found a common denominator in well-written lyrics and melodies. I am personally blessed (as is the membership) that we have experts in almost every aspect of business — all with many years of high-level leadership experience — on our 2023 Board, Governmental Affairs Committee, and Ambassadors Committee. I know what I don't know. Lucky for us to have experts in our ranks that do, and who share their knowledge with humility and kindness.

There is a lot going on in our little community. We can balance the authenticity and charm of yesterday's Morro Bay with the potential of what tomorrow brings, as long as we build a lasting trust with each of you.

Please consider getting in touch with our professional Chamber staff by emailing info@morrochamber.org. Or, give us a follow on social media. We have a limited series in Q1 2023 about fostering a strong community that is open to the public and you are invited. Go to morrochamber.org to register.



# Events Activities

By Theresa-Marie Wilson



The Cambria Center for the Arts, 1350 Main St in Cambria, current exhibit is titled New Beginnings - Member's Showcase. While the intent of this New Year's exhibition is to showcase current CCA members, new and non-members were also welcomed to participate.

The exhibit will adorn the walls through February 26. New gallery hours for 2023 are Friday - Sunday 12 – 4 p.m. For membership and exhibit details, visit CCA's website: https://cambriaarts.org/home. Contact the Gallery with any questions gallery@cambriaarts.org

Pictured: CCA Member Pat Willmott

Morro Bay Art Association, 835 Main Street presents a free demo by Toni Danchik at 835 Main Street, Morro Bay on Feb. 13 from 3 to 5 p.m. During the demo, Telling Your Story & Bringing Vibrancy and Energy into your Work, Danchik will talk about her story and the context for her "Africa" inspired paintings. Learn how living in South Africa impacted her heart to tell the stories of women and children especially those living in shanty towns and rural Africa as well as how she endeavors to connect her work to purpose. Now she resides in Southern California where she has been exposed to the Plein Air movement. She will do a demo on her process and procedures to bring vibrancy into her work. Danchik will also show slides and a video about South Africa, which will precede her painting demo.

Check out her work at WWW.TONIDANCHİKFINEART.

This is the Morro Bay Art Association's free monthly demo meeting. For more information, contact 805-772-2504 or www.artcentermorrowbay.org.



Volumes of Pleasure, 1016 Los Osos Valley road, Los Osos, will hold their 20th annual Chinese New Year Celebration on Saturday, January 21 at 3 p.m. The Cal Poly Lion Dance Team will perform a blessing ritual dating back centuries that is performed to bring good fortune to the store and the Los Osos community.

According to the Chinese calendar, 2023 in the Year of the Rabbit. In Chinese culture, water represents longevity, peace, and prosperity while the rabbit reflects elegance, beauty, cleverness, quietude and good energy. Together they predict a year of quiet contemplation, an excellent time to strengthen bonds with loved ones.

The performance includes taiko drummers and two traditional lion dance dragons. It is colorful, fun and short, so make sure you arrive no later than 3 p.m.

For more information, call 805-528-5565.

The following are free events brought to you by the Los Osos Library 2075 Palisades Ave, 805-528-1862. All library programs will follow current California and County of San Luis Obispo health guidelines.

• **Paws to Read** - Wednesdays, 3:15 - 4:15 p.m. Come and read your favorite book to Berkeley! She's at the Los Osos Library on Wednesday afternoons. School Age.

- Featured Artists Wall artist Ron Baers through January Display Case is Stanley Stern with his Blue Glass
- **Storytime** Thursdays, 10:30-11 a.m.
- Stories, dance, and music for toddlers and preschoolers.

   Stay Young with Qi Gong! Fridays, 9 10 a.m. (rain
- ancels)

  Qi Gong is a system for physical, mental and spiritual devel-

Qi Gong is a system for physical, mental and spiritual development that has roots dating back thousands of years in China. It consists of flowing movements and meditations that cultivate life force energy (called qi by the Chinese). The basics of qi gong are not difficult to learn and practice, and are particularly beneficial for older adults. Instructor Devin Wallace was certified to teach by qi gong master Lee Holden. Devin has taught at hospitals, fitness & yoga centers and also does private classes.

• E-Device Class - Wednesdays, 9:15 - 10 a.m.

Bring your electronic device in and Diana will do her best to answer any questions you have.

- **Read Together** Thursday, January 12, 5:30 6:45 p.m. Jonniepat Mobley facilitates the group reading of a play/script. No audition necessary. This month will be Agatha Christie's, "A Murder is Announced". Come in, take a script and we will read the play aloud together.
- Book Discussion Thursday, January 19, 5:30 6:45 p.m.

Our discussion group will be bringing a favorite book or two to discuss. No need to sign up ahead of time. Just show up, or join us on Zoom! Call the library for details.



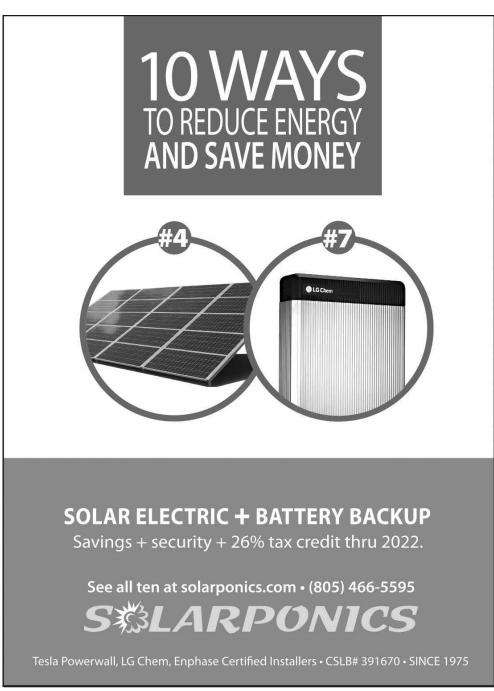
The Cal Poly Theatre and Dance Department presents the Orchesis Dance Company's 53rd annual concert, "Falling Forward," on Friday and Saturday, Jan. 20 and 21, and Thursday through Saturday, Jan. 26-28, in the Spanos Theatre. Performances begin at 8 p.m. on all days, with a matinee scheduled at 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 21.

The Orchesis Dance Company dancers chose the title "Falling Forward" to celebrate a strong commitment to creativity and unbridled expression. Performances include choreography by faculty, guest and student choreographers in multiple genres. The concert features original and reworked dances created during fall quarter and is directed by Professor Diana Stanton and assisted by faculty member Michelle Walter. Cal Poly staff member Clint Bryson serves as both lighting designer and technical director.

For the first time since the pandemic, the Orchesis Dance Company hosted artists in residence this year. Internationally recognized professional choreographer Tamica Washington-Miller of the Los Angeles-based Lula Washington Dance Theatre created "Shedding," a thought provoking, postmodern dance for 14 dancers with music by Steve Reich.

Tickets for "Falling Forward" are \$20 for the public and \$12 for students, seniors and children. Tickets can be bought at the Performing Arts Center Ticket Office from noon to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday. To order by phone, call 805-SLO-4TIX (805-756-4849). Tickets can also be purchased online at pacslo. org (an additional handling fee of \$1 for students and \$2 for public will be assessed at time of purchase).

**Events** Continued on page 9





# Police Blotter



- Dec. 25: Police responded to the 1400 block of Teresa Dr., for a reported case of suspected elder abuse.
- Dec. 24: Police contacted a suspicious subject traipsing down the 800 block of Main at 6:41 p.m. Logs indicated the 58-year-old swizzle stick was nicked for suspicion of public insobriety.
- Dec. 23: Lord have mercy! Someone reported a local pastor for "possible sexual misconduct."
- **Dec. 23:** Police contacted a suspicious woman at 2:49 p.m. in the 2900 block of Alder. Logs indicated the She Devil, 54, was arrested for suspicion of being tore up from the floor up on illegal
- Dec. 21: Someone came to the station house to report a case of
- embezzlement; sorry, no further juicy details were available. • Dec. 21: Someone in the 2600 block of Main reported vandalism, as the graffidiots have struck again.
- Dec. 21: Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 6 p.m. on Hwy 1 north. Logs indicated the 36-year-old carousel rider was arrested for suspicion of possessing narcotics, a weapons violation, and a parole violation, which explains how he got caught.
- Dec. 21: Police responded at 8:15 a.m. to a disturbance in the 800 block of Pacific. Logs indicated the resident filed a complaint of her apparent ex violating a domestic violence, keep-the-hellaway court order.
- Dec. 21: Police contacted a suspicious fellow at 1:05 a.m. lurking about in the 700 block of Quintana. Logs indicated the little squit, 28, had a bench warrant and was issued another to ignore and released to slither away.
- Dec. 20: Yet another suspicious fellow was contacted at 9:42 p.m. somewhere on Main. That urchin, 36, had one felony and four misdemeanor warrants and got arrested. But he picked up another charge when he was allegedly found to be possessing drug paraphernalia.
- Dec. 20: A local real estate agent told police that "For Sale" signs had been removed from two listings in the 1300 block of







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• Dec. 19: Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 10:08 p.m. on Morro Avenue. The 18-year-old rookie driver was nicked for suspicion of driving full as a tick.

• **Dec. 19:** Police responded at 9:50 to a car crash in the 100 block of Atascadero Rd. No injuries reported.

• **Dec. 23:** Police responded to the 300 block of Sequoia at 4:40 p.m. for an alleged case of suspected child abuse.

• Dec. 18: Police responded to a home in the 500 block of Main where the resident said he or she'd been robbed of some valuable treasure that was stored in the carport.

• Dec. 18: Police responded at 10:30 a.m. to a disturbance in the 1200 block of Main. Logs indicated a 36-year-old humanicus dooficus was arrested for violating a stay-away court order. It was the fourth violation the mulish chap committed in just a few days, the others being on Dec. 14, 21 and 20, all at the same location. The case from the 14th was sent to the District Attorney for possible inaction; while the incidents on the 20th and 21st resulted in his being taken in for a photo shoot.

• **Dec. 16:** Police responded at 8:40 a.m. to a disturbed woman causing a ruckus at Dolly's Donuts in the 1000 block of Kennedy Way. The 33-year-old apparent saucy fritter was arrested for felony resisting arrest and was dunked into the County lockup.

• Dec. 16: Police responded at 2:12 a.m. to the 300 block of Morro Bay Blvd. A 39-year-old woman and a 65-year-old man were nicked for suspicion of being schwasted in public, disorderly conduct, possession of drug paraphernalia and multiple bench

• Dec. 15: Someone reported a suspected case of petty theft at Morro Bay High School, which is after all the Home of the Pirates.

• Dec. 15: Police responded to a reported disturbance at 5:36 a.m. at Main and Hwy 41. A 32-year-old borracho was arrested after reportedly "displaying objective signs and symptoms of being under the influence of a controlled substance while in public," i.e. being stultified where some tourist might see you.

• Dec. 15: At 2 a.m. police contacted a suspicious fellow in the area of Main and Radcliff. The apparent scruffy Philistine, 30, had five bench warrants and was taken to the hoosegow.

• Dec. 14: Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 11:08 p.m. in the 1500 block of Main. Logs indicated the driver, 21, was arrested for suspicion of driving twisted. He was cited and released at the police station to a responsible party, a case where it's good to have some sober friends.

• Dec. 14: Police responded at 3:20 p.m. to a fender-bender at Pacific and Main, you know, the place the neighbors asked for a 4-way stop to be installed but were overruled by the bureaucrats. No injuries reported.

• Dec. 14: Police stopped another suspicious car at the highly suspect time of 1:09 a.m. at South Bay and Hwy 1. The driver, 39, was nailed for suspicion of driving hammered.

• Dec. 13: Police stopped yet another suspicious car at 9:47 p.m. in the 1600 block of Main. The driver, a 37-year-old fellow was arrested for suspicion of being clocked out behind the wheel and got checked into the County B&B.

**Dec. 13:** Police responded to the 500 block of Atascadero Road where a citizen told a tale of woe and identify theft after some scalawag tried to buy a bunch of no doubt useless crap on his or her good name.

• Dec. 13: Police contacted a suspicious man at 3 p.m. at Main and Zanzibar. The 51-year-old dude was nicked for suspicion of possessing drug paraphernalia, his stash apparently already gone up in smoke.

• Dec. 13: Police responded at 10:49 a.m. to a reported theft and vandalism at a business in the 300 block of Quintana, as the crime wave continues.

• Dec. 12: Police made a dash to Estero and Piney Way, where an apparently Irish lad had a bit too much of the blarney. He was tossed to the gaol, kit and caboodle and all, for being gattered to

• Dec. 12: Police responded at 3:51 p.m. to a traffic crash at Surf and West. No injuries reported.

• Dec. 12: Police responded at 1:10 p.m. to Blue Sky Bistro in the 600 block of Embarcadero. Logs indicated someone found "drug related items" in a restroom.

• Dec. 11: Police were called at 8 a.m. to a reported trespasser in the 1400 block of Quintana. They arrested a 21-year-old, rather disagreeable fellow on suspicion of resisting arrest and trespassing. The interloper was hauled off to the gaol.

• Dec. 10: Police spoke to a juvenile on Monterey Avenue who reported a sex offense that apparently occurred in September 2021, but no doubt felt like it happened just yesterday.

• Dec. 10: Police contacted a suspicious woman at 9:30 a.m. in the 1000 block of Market. The 33-year old had three bench warrants. The model citizen was also charged with suspicion of possession of drugs and drug paraphernalia, as it was apparently early in the morning to be stoned, too.

• Dec. 10: Police responded at 1 p.m. to a disturbance in the 300 block of Dunbar. Logs indicated they arrested a 21-year-old woman for suspicion of being high as the stacks on drugs.

• Dec. 9: Police stopped a suspicious car at 8:20 p.m. at Main and Atascadero Road. A woman driver, 40, was nicked for suspicion of

• **Dec. 9:** Police responded at 11:30 a.m. to a business in the 400 block of Morro Bay Blvd., as some funky monkey broke into and vandalized the Tiger Monkey Tattoo Shop.

• **Dec. 8:** At 10:51 p.m. police contacted a suspicious fellow at Anytime Fitness in the 600 block of Quintana. Logs indicated the 30-year-old citizen of the year also had three bench warrants and was taken to workout at County Jail.

• Dec. 8: Police responded to a report of a deceased person at 5 p.m. in the 100 block of Sandpiper Ln. The Coroner's Office was notified

• Dec. 8: At 1:30 p.m. police towed away an offending vehicle that was parked too long in the 2200 block of Emerald Cr.

• Dec. 8: Police contacted a suspicious fellow at 12:10 a.m. in the 400 block of Atascadero Rd. The 30-year-old scofflaw was arrested for seven bench warrants; as in this crapshoot of life, seven equals snake eyes.

• Dec. 7: Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 8:09 p.m. in the 700 block of Quintana. Logs indicated Pearl Harbor Day came down hard on the 30-year-old driver who was hit for allegedly driving bombed on a suspended license, and having two bench warrants to boot. His ship was torpedoed into the hoosegow.

• **Dec. 6:** Police responded to a disturbance in the 1300 block of Clarabelle at 5:45 p.m. and arrested a 30-year-old mulish fellow for violating a stay-the-hell-away protective order. He went to the

• Dec. 6: Police responded to a disturbance at 1:37 p.m. at Rite Aid in the 700 block of Quintana. A 30-year-old ruffian was charged with suspicion of battery.

• Dec. 6: Police contacted an annoying flesh monkey at midnight in the 600 block of Quintana apparently being a pest at Anytime Fitness. She had a bench warrant and police took her to the stationhouse, where they cited and released her with a new disappearance ticket.

• **Dec. 5:** Police contacted a suspicious subject at 11:49 p.m. in the 500 block of Quintana. The 38-year-old fellow had three bench warrants and was given his future fourth and released to go forth and sin no more. About an hour earlier, in the 1400 block of Main, another slacker was caught with just one bench warrant. He too was cited and unleashed on society.

• Dec. 5: Police responded at 8:18 a.m. to the 300 block of Quintana for another Morro Bay felony — someone vandalized a trash dumpster, in this week's example of why we need SWAT.





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Kevin says,

"Look

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8

**Events** From page 7



Art Center Morro Bay presents its annual, For the Birds exhibit from January 19 – February 20, 2023

This exciting exhibition celebrates Morro Bay's vast array of indigenous species of birds and all things bird-related! During this exhibit, Art Center Morro Bay will feature the hand blown glass of George Jercich.

Pacific Wildlife Care will be at Art Center Morro Bay during the opening reception, January 22, 2-4 p.m., with at least one or more of their fascinating, rescued birds! Pacific Wildlife Care is San Luis Obispo County's only licensed rehabilitation center caring for injured birds, mammals, and reptiles.

During this exhibit, attendees will find bird related fine art paintings, photography and three dimensional art to include pottery, sculpture, jewelry, glass and more. Don't miss this exciting exhibit and artist reception featuring live birds! This event is free and open to the public. Art Center Morro Bay is open from 12 p.m. – 4 p.m. daily. For more information, go to www.artcentermorrobay.org. Image: Great Tailed Grackle is copyrighted and courtesy of Sara Danta

A rtists are welcome to apply for the next jurying for membership in Gallery Los Olivos closing on Sunday, March 26. They welcome a range of subject matter and styles – both contemporary and traditional. A confirmed reservation is required, and they encourage early applications. For information and to apply,

go to www.gallerylosolivos.com and click on the Artist Submissions tab

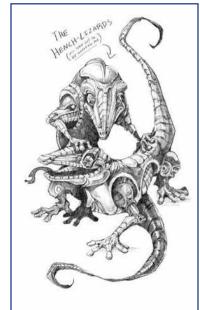
Art Center Morro Bay introducec Amelie Butkus, a young writer and illustrator from Morro Bay, who will conduct the demo "Understanding Situational Character Design: How to Tell a Story with One Person" on Monday, January 23 from 3 -5 p.m.

Amelie has written and illustrated the young adult mystery novel "A Lamplighter in Larkeney" set to be released this winter on Kickstarter. She has illustrated for multiple books, podcasts, and comics and is an accomplished character designer and illustrative artist. Her work spans

from traditional, retro-influenced situational pieces to digital cyberpunk. You can find her work and portfolio at booksofamelie. com and @ameliebutkus on instagram.

During this demo, Amelie will begin with an introduction of herself and share how she works her way through a single rendered full-body character in pencil, talking about motion and fluidity in blocking shapes, and expressing emotion in both facial and body language. This art demonstration is free and open to the public.

Bring paper if you would like to draw along. This fast paced and fun demonstration is a precursor to her workshop, "Storytelling Through Character Design," on January 28 and 29, 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. The workshop is designed for students and young adults, however, everyone is welcome. Space is limited. Students may reserve a seat in this workshop online at https://artcentermorrobay.org/index.php/products/. For more information, go to www. ArtCenterMorroBay.org or call 805-772-2504





**D**RUMline Live will perform two shows 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. for Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Jan. 16 at the Clark Center in Arroyo Grande.

Complete with dazzling choreography and explosive percussion, DRUMLine Live! is a thrilling spectacle that pays homage to the show-style marching popularized at historically black colleges and universities, while providing a soul-stirring revue of some of America's favorite music. With musical highlights from hip-hop, Top 40 (including Michael Jackson and Prince), American soul, gospel, jazz, big band and other musical genres, the 30-member cast — a world-class ensemble of percussionists, musicians and dancers — takes the audience on a journey infused with colorful, choreographed routines, vibrant costumes, and heavy doses of drum riffs and cadences.

Tickets range from \$20-\$55. They can be purchased online at www.clarkcenter.org or by phone at 805-489-9444.

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.





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## Thousands Ring in New Year in Cayucos



Photos by Neil Farrell

Several thousand people turned out New Year's Day for the 43rd Annual Cayucos Polar Bear Dip braving 54-degree water (with the air temperature at a chilly 52 degrees) and fairly rough surf to ring in 2023 with a chilly splash.

As always the action on the beach before the noon dip began was wildly fun, with groups of dippers coming in costumes that included a bunch of Troll Dolls, Vikings and Valkyries, a group of Minions, dandy pirates, and in case you wondered where Waldo was, he (and she) were in Cayucos clad in red-and-white striped shirts and nerd glasses.

The oldest dipper this year was 81, as determined by the costume contest emcee, Phil Howard, who with partner Kevin Crawford of CNH Productions, has led the beach party for some 25 years.

The youngest dipper was just 8-months old (and dressed as a pirate), and the person who came the farthest for the event was from Germany. Other distant locales represented included Fiji, Poland, South Africa, Prague and Spain.

By noon there was an estimated 6,000 people crowded onto the beach north of the Cayucos Pier, but when the celebrants dashed into the waves, over half of them stayed on land.

Those that braved the surf were rewarded with "Certificates of Stamina" suitable for framing and issued by the Chamber of Commerce, which also sponsors the event, which is dedicated to Carlin Soulé, who started this traditional bit of madness over four decades ago.

As is normal, the local Cal Fire crew was supported with rescue swimmers, lifeguards, the Coast Guard and Morro Bay Harbor Patrol, with no doubt a few Sheriff's deputies mixed in with the crowd to keep the celebration a happy one.











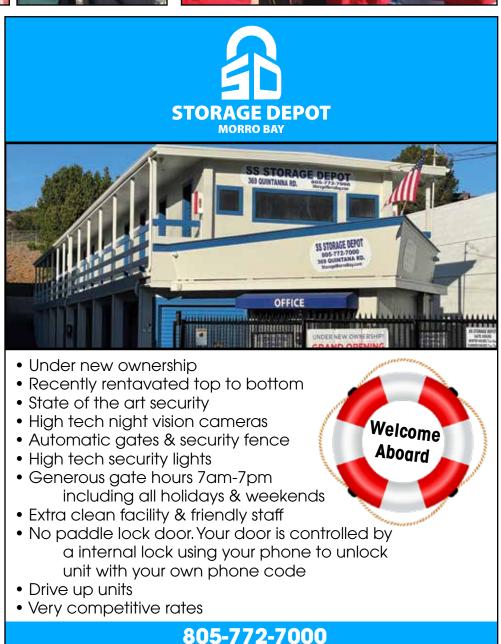












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# WITH THE BOOKSHELF WRITERS The BookShelf Writers consist of four Estero Bay women who have been writing & critiquing together for over five years. For more samples of their work, please visit www.thebookshelf.writers.com Each issue, this column will feature one of the BookShelf Writers: Debble Black, Catherline "Kild" Kornreich, Judy Salamacha and Susan Vasquez

## **Walking Valencia Peak**



By Susan Vasquez

It rises 1,347-feet from the ocean to the crest of the mount. Central California's Valencia Peak in Montano de Oro State Park lies just a few miles away from my home in Morro Bay, and just a few rational thoughts away from a trek I should take. But, my family has a now-and-again tradition of taking challenging hikes, and many of those treks defy what I should be doing, town-walker that I am. I have done this scramble before, and know that today will be complicated by a rocky path, gut-wrenching views straight down, and a slick granite dome in order to reach that last, highest step in the climb. I don't live dangerously with any amount of ease. But I am determined today to at least be in the vicinity of the top of the peak.

My husband and son must be mountain goat people. Or perhaps neither likes to entertain the thought that there are events that should be thought about and reasoned with, rather than plunged into on a whim. Mesquite brush blocks the view for much of the early, easy part of this venture. My two companions walk ahead, chatting as if there was no mountaintop ahead of us, ignoring the growing distance between what they can do and what I can do

They are apt to stand at the edge of sea cliffs and play as if no ground beneath their feet will ever give way. I have always been the one who pulls them back so they will survive and one day have a chance to appreciate how un-smart it is to stand so high above water coursing over jagged rocks.

Today, our challenges lie eastward. Rocks and sand begin to tumble away from the path as we hit the grades heading away from the tides. Mounds of granite begin to crop out from the path and bits and pieces crumble away. The disintegrating stone gathers into crevices in the trail and creates 1/4 inch of unsteady dry mash between me and the earth.

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"Mom? You okay?" I hear several times. Yes, I'm okay. But how much farther? What if I wait and the two of them can tromp the rest of the way while I sit and enjoy the view? I suggest it to my son, who seems disappointed. We continue on, them picking up their chatter again and me not slipping around as much as my complaints would indicate.

We walk above cloud cover. Then, the mist follows us up the hillside and we walk inside a bubble of cool steam. There is no perspective and no way to gauge how much farther to the next bench. There are really only two resting places, and maybe we have already passed one. I plan to sit for a while when we reach the next bench and let my two companions continue on, because my trepidation at the height of the mountainside has become replaced with a long-lost sense of vertigo. I am walking into something I can't see, and away from something that is no longer there.

I never see the bench. Three times I think we are at the top. Three times I continue on, urged by my son that the summit "is really, really right up there," just around the corner of the trail where he and his dad are walking.

I make it. The view is fabulous. I stand back from the two of them, watching them look out over the edge, safe in their sitting-down perch on the crest of the peak, still chatting, still secure that the ground will always hold beneath them.

Like life itself, this walk becomes a competitive game of philosophy versus reality. When you have walked as much as you can, endured as many cross-backs as you should have to, do you then jump across a slick granite path to reach some ultimately theoretical goal? Sometimes you do, and sometimes you don't. But today, even though I am tempted to just refocus the camera to seem as-if I am on the edge of the mountain height, I take that last step to claim the territory I am walking.

Maybe next time, I'll find the bench and wait.

Susan Vasquez has taken walks in many of the world's most interesting spots, but especially enjoys her strolls around Estero Bay. She is the author of four books and blogs at One Small Walk, and is a member of the Bookshelf Writers, four Estero Bay women whose writing can be found at http://www.thebookshelf-writers.com



By Theresa-Marie Wilson

#### State Parks Close to Campaign Goal

The Central Coast State Park Association is less than \$100 away from thier goal for the year-end campaign, "Faces of Wonder!"

Thanks to a generous donor, any gifts will be doubled and will support ongoing access to educational programming in our State Parks. Contributions support rotating exhibits at the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History and Spooner Ranch House, informative panels along trails, school group transportation, guided tours and hikes, and many more programs that foster existing and future environmental stewards.

To make a donation, go to bit.ly/3VibH5m or text WON-DER22 to 44-321.

# Woods Expands Dog Behavior & Training Program



Due to increasing demand for dog training support from the community, Woods Humane Society announces a newly expanded Behavior & Training team in 2023; a wide variety of affordable, training classes for the public that begin in time for January's National Train Your Dog Month; and a brand new class called Rocket Recall, beginning in February 2023.

As a result of the "pandemic puppy boom" as well as the safety guidelines that limited in-person training opportunities in recent years, Woods says that many local pet owners have expressed their need for help with dog behavior issues.

The Woods University training program offers a variety of affordable dog training classes, from puppy socialization classes to basic obedience classes to agility and more, in addition to online programs and individual consultations. The department worked with an estimated 500 owned dogs in the community in 2022, in addition to the many hundreds of shelter dogs it serves annually.

To view current programs and services and sign up for an upcoming course, visit www.WoodsHumane.org/Training. For more information, visit www.WoodsHumane.org or call (805) 543-9316

#### **Grants for Climate Resilience**

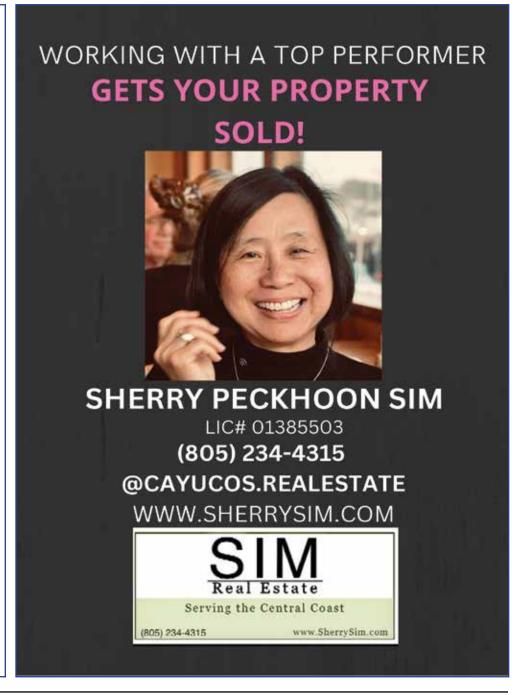
Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) and The PG&E Corporation Foundation (Foundation) awarded \$900,000 across two grant programs intended to support climate resilience efforts in PG&E's hometowns, while also protecting and restoring land, water, and air in habitats and communities across California.

- Through the Better Together Nature Positive Innovation grant program, the Foundation will award \$500,000 to five grantees one in each of PG&E's five regions that preserve California's unique biodiversity, focusing on land, air quality, and water stewardship. A Central Coast organization is listed below as one of the five grantees.
- Separately, through the Resilience Hubs grant program, PG&E is issuing \$400,000 to seven grantees to support communities in building a network of local climate resilience

Takin' Care of Business Continued on page 12



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Takin' Care of Business From page 11

hubs. Both grant programs prioritize projects that address the needs of disadvantaged and/or vulnerable communities.

#### Better Together Nature Positive Innovation Grants

Through the Better Together Nature Positive Innovation grant program, the Foundation is reinforcing its focus on environmental stewardship and pursuing opportunities to invest in partnerships that will promote protecting and restoring land, water, and air in habitats and communities across our service area.

For 2022, the Better Together Nature Positive Innovation grant program has awarded five \$100,000 grants. The local recipient is Central Coast State Parks Association for increasing the exposure of underserved K-12 students to coastal habitats.

#### **Resilience Hubs Grants**

Recognizing that communities across California face growing threats from extreme weather events such as coastal and inland flooding, heat waves, wildfires, and more powerful storms, the Resilience Hubs grant program seeks to fund and establish physical spaces, or a set of resources, that support community resilience in the face of these climate-driven events. Once developed, these hubs can also be accessed year-round to build and sustain community-adaptive capacity in a trusted location.

For 2022, the Resilience Hubs grant program awarded \$400,000 (\$25,000 to each) to seven organizations.

Additionally, the program awarded \$100,000 each to three Design and Build Projects toward the design and/or creation of a resilience hub. Through these projects, the organizations will either plan and design new physical spaces or mobile resources, or retrofit existing buildings or structures to support community

#### Dine Out in SLO for Gift Cards



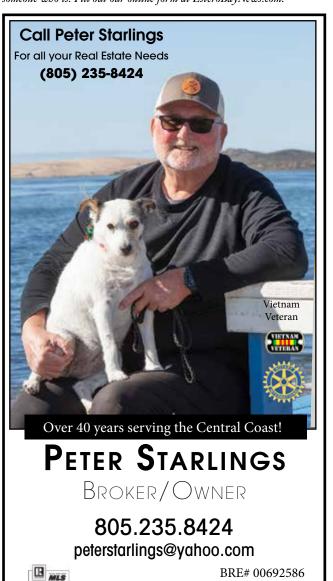
 ${f R}$  eaders who get hungry while hanging out in San Luis Obispo can get a gift for eating at a list of restaurants.

To support eateries, breweries, bakeries and coffee shops, the City of San Luis Obispo started a the Eat Local Bonus program where diners who spend \$100 at any food or beverage establishment in the city and bring a copy of their itemized receipt(s) to the San Luis Obispo Visitor Center are eligible for a \$25 gift card. The program runs through January or until funds are depleted. Diners can qualify up to three times.

The City of San Luis Obispo and San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce are partnering for the first time on Eat Local Bonus, an iteration of Buy Local Bonus, a program created in 2020 to give back to businesses hardest hit by the COVID pandemic. The City is purchasing gift cards from local businesses to create an incentive to dine locally and support SLO's economic vitality.

For details, go to slocity.org.

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.



# **Obituaries**

## Carol Irene Martinez (Larson) 1953 - 2022



Carol Irene Martinez (Lawson) of Los Osos died on December 21, 2022, after a ten year battle with dementia. She leaves behind her children, Luis, Anthony, Marcus Martinez, and Olivia, daughter-in-law Lily, grandson Maddex Martinez, and sister Benita Evans.

A San Luis Obispo native, Carol was born on February 21, 1953, to Doris and Benny Lawson. After graduation from San Luis Obispo High School, she married Marty Martinez and they start a life together in Los Osos.

Carol carved out a career as a pharmaceutical technician at the Los Osos Rite Aid and, later, at Ralph's Market. Her many customers remember her as a kind and caring person. Carol's popularity made grocery shopping a challenge for the children as she would stop to have a conversation with co-workers and customers in the store.

A woman of faith, Carol belonged to the El Moro Church of the Nazarene and the Rock Harbor Christion Fellowship. She read the Bible regularly and enjoyed many retreats with church members.

An avid fan of her children's sporting activities she watched as they competed in a variety of sports. She never knew the rules to any game but loved watching them play.

Exploring nature was a favorite pastime of Carol's as the family spent many summers camping at Big Sur and near Red Rock. Many a four-legged stray brought in by the children found their forever home under Carol's roof.

Ceramics and rock collecting were favorite hobbies, the latter picked up from her father and continued in his honor.

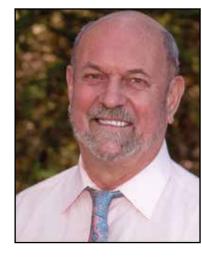
Carol loved to be surrounded by people who shared with her their laughter and joy. Her children's friends could always catch a meal as she was "mom" to many "adopted" neighborhood children.

Carol was preceded in death by her parents, brothers Bob and Bill Lawson, nephew Benjamin Evans and brother-in-law

A Celebration of Life will be held on February 18, 2023, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Little School House at the Los Osos Community Park.

Donations in memory of Carol may be made to the Woods Humane Society of the Central Coast.

# **Craig John Lotz 1947 - 2022**



Craig was born in August 1947 in Camden, NJ to John W. and Edith G Lotz. He passed away at home in

Los Osos on November 24, 2022 after a short battle with metastatic lung cancer, his loving wife Sheree was at his side.

Craig was raised in Pitman, New Jersey until his family moved to Newark, Delaware during his senior year in high school. He graduated from Newark Senior High School in 1966, enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1968 and was an Air Defense Radio Repairman until 1970 when he was honorably discharged. Craig graduated from Monterey Peninsula College with an associate's degree in computer information systems in 1993.

Craig lovingly raised and nurtured three children from his first marriage, Jonathan Hambleton (Brandi), Lizbeth White (Daron) and Abby Lotz.

Craig lived in Monterey County and worked as a chef/cook. He moved to Los Osos in 1994 and met and married his best friend and life partner Sheree in 1996. He was step-father to Sara Strange and

Kathryn Goddard (Brett). In total Craig and Sheree have 11 grandchildren.

Craig worked in the auto collision repair business as a parts manager until his retirement in 2016. He volunteered at Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center for six years and enjoyed it improved to the control of the c

Craig was a talented musician and played trombone, tuba and just about any instrument available in

his youth. He played bass guitar in local bands in Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties and loved it!

Craig is survived by his two siblings, sister Judi Paxson (Tom)

and Randy Lotz (Linda) and five nieces and nephews.

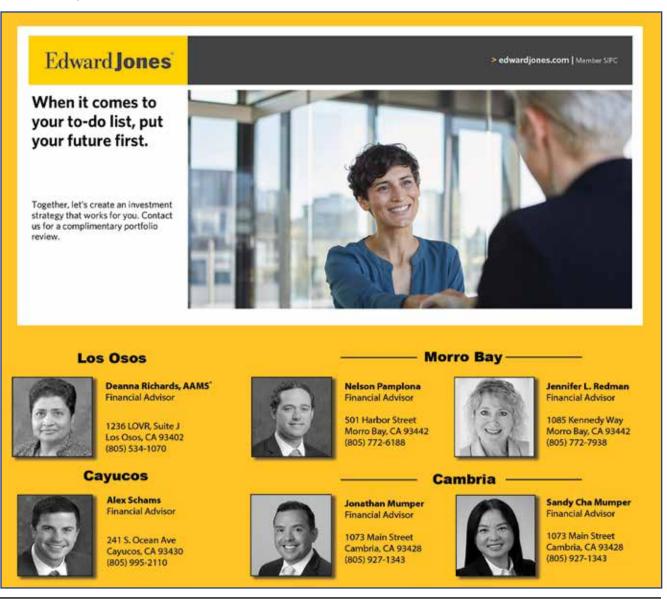
Craig loved to dance, was an excellent photographer, and an

avid gardener. He was a super fan of the San Francisco 49ers.

Craig's quick wit, sense of humor, engaging personality and beautiful smile will be missed by all who loved him and were fortunate to have known him.

Much thanks to Dr. Howard Hayashi and Dr. Jim and Jessica Malone for their selfless help in coordinating Craig's care.

A memorial service will take place at Los Osos Valley Mortuary on January 27, 2023 at 11 a.m.



## Poly Float Wins Extraordinaire Award at 2023 Rose Parade



Cal Poly universities' 'Road to Reclamation' received the Extraordinaire Award for the most extraordinary entry among the parade's 39 floats. It was the schools 62nd award in 74 parade appearances since 1949.

Photos by Tom Zasadzinski, Cal Poly Pomona

al Poly universities' "Road to Reclamation" float that takes a small scene on a forest floor, featuring animated snails and colorful mushrooms, and blows it up to gigantic proportions received the Extraordinaire Award at the 134th Rose Parade on Jan. 2.

The honor recognizes the parade's most extraordinary float, including those 55 feet in length and greater, said Annie Doody, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo team president. It's the second time the schools have been lauded for creating the parade's most extraordinary float; the first was 2019's outer-space entry, "Far Out Frequencies."

"I am so proud of everyone on this team and all the hard work they put into making this happen," said Doody.

The entry exemplifies the parade's 2023 theme of "Turning the Corner" — celebrating the unlimited potential that each new year brings. "Road to Reclamation" transforms a small scene in nature and magnifies it to bigger-than-life proportions showcasing nature's regenerative power.

It stood out among other entries because of its cuddly assembly of colorful gastropods. Snails are very important to their ecosystems as they consume dead leaves on a forest floor and ultimately return it to the environment as soil. In addition, snails are a great food source for other creatures in the food chain.

Mechanical engineering student Benjamino Cruz, a four-year member of the Cal Poly team, submitted the original concept for "Road to Reclamation." Cruz is the San Luis Obispo team's construction chair who oversaw the yearlong process and drove the float on the 5.5-mile parade route.

"That's big — that's big," Cruz said of the honor. "It just gives us a solid idea that we really achieved something."

Earning another award is more than icing on a cake, it's a form of validation for a year of hard work by scores of full-time students who also moonlight as part-time float builders on the two

The animations on the float brought to life the three largest snails. Along with moving eyestalks, the front and back snails had articulated necks. The front snail was devouring a leaf, while the back snail put on a show of its own. It rode a flat-topped toad-

stool to a height of 25 feet; from its vantage point the snail's head moved to gaze at parade-goers as the float rolled along. A trio of small "baby" snails moved in a circle on the branch as if chasing each other. Finally, three ladybugs scattered across the diorama unfurled wings in preparation for flight.

"This year one of the things our electronics team has been working on is actually redesigning an animation system," Doody said. "They've written some script, and they've been figuring out how to connect hydraulic cylinders and motors to it so they actually will be using this new animation system for the parade. We're all very excited about it."

More than 70 students, equally split from each university, worked to finish the float, aided throughout the year by hundreds of student volunteers who turned out to assist on campus float workdays.

"Our student float builders combine the best of NASA innovation and ingenuity with the gee-whiz enthusiasm of a Broadway show; I couldn't be prouder of them and their justly acclaimed reputation as dreamers, designers and float builders," said Cal Poly President Jeffrey D. Armstrong, who was in Pasadena to

The Poly entry was one of only six self-built entries in this year's extravaganza. The parade included 38 other floats, including one for the Royal Court and each of the Rose Bowl teams, Penn State and the University of Utah, as well as 21 marching bands, 16 equestrian units and the 2023 grand marshal, former Arizona U.S. Rep. Gabby Giffords, whose recovery from a January 2011 assassination attempt epitomizes the parade's 2023 'Turning the Corner" theme, organizers said.

Rose Paradeofficials estimate that 700,000 people saw the event in person, while last year 28.5 million Americans and a worldwide audience estimated at 28 million watched it on TV. In 2022, viewers in 70 nations tuned in to the coverage.

The students' creativity extended to the decorations. Shifts of students and decoration volunteers in the week before covered the entire visible surface of the 18- by 55-foot float with an estimated 20,000 flowers and natural materials.

The branch rested on a forest floor of mixed greens including student-grown clover mats, interspersed with mixed verdant

Decoration materials included seeds, mums, cabbage, carnations, roses and oranges. Cornhusk, sewn together, was used to make the mushroom gills. Tree bark was used to

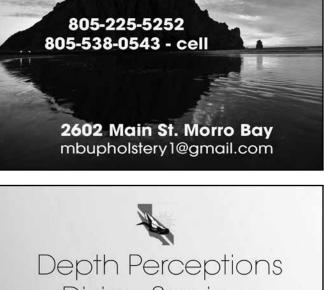
floral and foliage — green roses, green trick, kale and ferns. Reflecting the float theme of renewal and giving old materials new life, the branch bark was real: donated and foraged ponderosa pine and redwood bark. Between bark slabs of was dried moss or floral material that represent mosses and lichens. Chrysanthemums, kale and Gerbera daisies, among other materials, helped create the

Snails were festooned with a variety of materials — chrysanthemums, carnations, nuts and roses. Deep-purple carnations were used on the tallest snail. This "moonshade" variety is not a color commonly found in floral material.

Mushrooms were topped with such materials as mums, carnations, roses, flower petals, fresh produce, seeds and beans. To achieve interesting textural elements on the mushrooms, students used slices of eggplant, orange slices, cabbage leaves and other produce, along with dried, sewn-together cornhusks for the ruffled mushroom gills. And the ladybug shells were covered with cranberry halves that provided a dimpled surface of one of the entry's animated features.

For more information about the parade, visit www.tourna-





A crew of four operators controlled the float from below its decorative foam shell. From left, Logan Hauptman of Cal Poly, Pomona, animation operator Jerimiah Lee, driver Benjamino Cruz and Collin Marfia, engine operator, all from Cal Poly, SLO.



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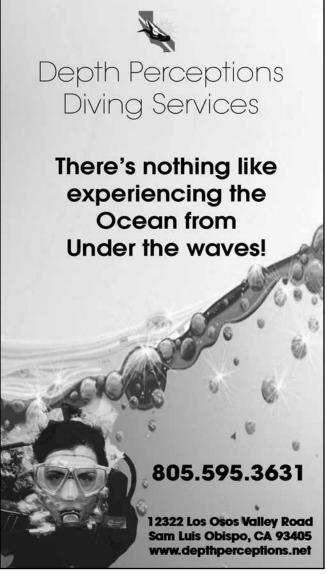
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## **Retracing Civil Rights History**

By Ruth Ann Angus

In the mist of an early October morning, they stood on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama reflecting on that day in 1965 when thousands joined Martin Luther King, Jr. to march for freedom for Black residents of the Deep South.

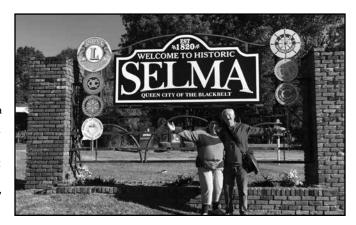
Gina Whitaker, president of the People of Faith for Justice SLO, and her husband, Ken Hill, of the Central Coast Center for an Ecological Civilization were participating in a

Living Legacy Pilgrimage. Now they are sharing all they learned on this U. S. Civil Rights Trail by presenting a program entitled "Weaving Our Garment of Destiny" on Sunday, January 15, at 3 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 2201 Lawton Avenue, in San Luis Obispo.

Whitaker and Hill participated in Reggie Harris' Mississippi Living Legacy Pilgrimage that took them along the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. They learned how events occurring in Mississippi and Alabama during that time were primarily responsible for the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 National Voting Rights Act. King, who had been working on nonviolent actions for almost two decades, successfully held the huge Selma to Montgomery march in 1965 after the violence of the first attempt, which came to be known as Bloody Sunday.

Their program on MLK Sunday consists of attendees singing songs of the era as well as Whitaker's and Hill's in-depth reflections including "Early Morning on the Edmund Pettus Bridge," telling of their experience walking across this historic structure. Whitaker offers "The Long Ride to Freedom," the story of the Freedom Rides and Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat on the bus. Then Hill will speak on "Faith and the Movement," and they both offer "Our Shared History: Continuing the Journey to Freedom" as we deal with present day racial tensions

Whitaker is prompt to note that the presentation is not a travelog but is a presentation of spiritual and personal reflections she and Hill had as they toured places like the Bethel Baptist Church, a National Historic Landmark, the civil rights sculptures in Kelly Ingram Park, and the





52-mile trail to Montgomery that began at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma.

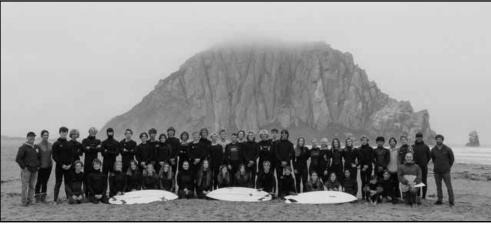
"We learned about the Living Legacy Pilgrimages (www.livinglegacypilgrimage. org) through singer songwriter Reggie Harris (www.reggieharrismusic.com) and realized how wonderful and educational a tour of this area in the south could be," Whitaker explained. "Sites in the Mississippi Delta where so much loss of life and struggle went on, and in Alabama like Selma, Birmingham and Montgomery were places we'd heard about long ago. We felt it was important to see the actual sites and hear the stories."

People of Faith for Justice returns to their yearly honoring of Martin Luther King, Jr. on this weekend in January after a three-year absence and does so in collaboration with Yes! We Can Peacebuilders and the Central Coast Center for an Ecological Civilization.

"We are happy to present this program on the power of nonviolence over violence," Whitaker and Hill said.

Learn more about People of Faith for Justice at www.peopleoffaithforjustice.org and Yes! We Can Peacebuilders at www.yeswecanpeacebuilders.org.

## **Surfers Shred Dos Pueblos**



The Morro Bay High Surf Team recently shredded Dos Pueblos High 71-50 in a surf competition.

According to the MBHS Principal's Newsletter, the meet saw "Pirate surfers represent in every finals division."

Jackson Meyer, a SLO High student, placed first and Fin Weitzen as second in Boys' Short-board.

Reed Hammer was fourth and Ben Resnick fifth in Boy's Longboard.

Lola Weatherly took second and Sydney Phillips took third in Girl's Shortboard and Summer Ridout placed second and Ginger Russell placed third in Girl's Longboard.

Jane Hotaling took second place in Co-ed Bodyboard.

The Surf Team is not an official CIF sport and is a club team at the school.

Coach Josh Beckett is elated about his team's success this year.

"We are still in our season," Beckett told EBN. "We have two more contests to go. We are 3-0 overall on the season. Huge success with the team this year!"

In the photo the MBHS surfers pose for a group picture after wiping out Dos Pueblos. Photo courtesy MBHS

## 4-H Busy at Christmas

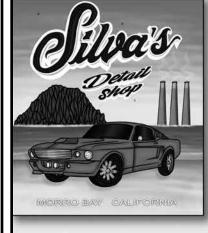
The members of the Morro Bay 4H community service project, said 4-H Reporter Bailey Dunn, were busy making Christmas ornaments, place mats and cards to donate to the residents of Casa de Flores senior living facility located in Morro Bay.

Though the Morro Bay 4-H has already started its year, kids from 5-19-years old can join the club, which has numerous activities available. Current list of projects includes beef, sheep, goats, swine, poultry, turkeys, hiking, rabbits, gardening, Legos, leadership, community service, arts & crafts

If young readers are interested in 4-H, they should contact the community club leader, Carla Wixom, at: at 805-441-7057. Information is also available on their website, see: https://ucanr.edu/sites/slo4-h.

Shown in the photo back row from left are: Amaya, Sanaya, and Bailey. Front row from left are James, Aiden, and Rocko [sorry, last names were not provided]. Submitted photo





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# Community Santa in San Simeon



Thanks to the generosity of many people in the community, 43 children in the Oceanside Apartments in San Simeon had a very merry Christmas.

On December 21, Santa (aka Rotarian Tom Tierney), along with a group of very helpful elves, delivered packages of gifts for each of the children and their parents.

Cambria Rotary's Secret Santa's purchased three of the gifts the children asked for in their letter to Santa. An anonymous Cambria Rotary member donated a pair of shoes to each of the children. Cambria Connection and Cambria Rotary both gave each family gift cards for groceries, another anonymous donor gave each family a Target gift card, several San Simeon businesses chipped in so that each family could receive household items (detergent, soap, shampoo, cleaning items, etc.) and Rotary donated a soccer ball to each of the kiddos.

# In Print and On Line esterobaynews.com

# New Courses at Leffingwell School



By Aiden Latham

Students at Leffingwell High School in Cambria enrolled in a marine biology course over the past several weeks. Students learned about whales, sea otters, and other sea mammals with a local expert John Meinke.

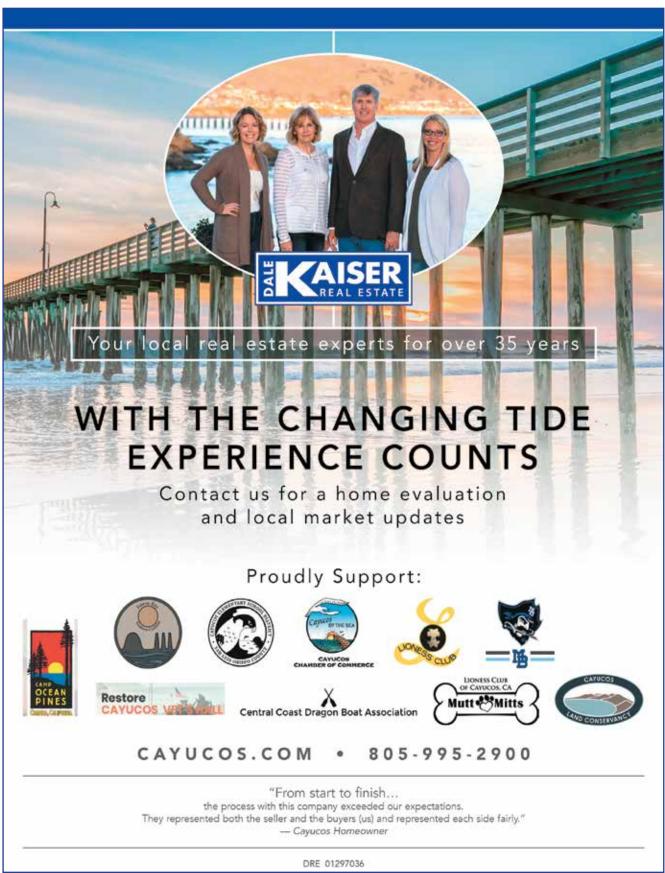
Students also examined elephant seals with volunteers from the Friends of the Elephant Seal non-profit. They studied how the seals behave, eat, their migration cycle, and more.

As part of the course, the Morro Bay Natural History Museum was another field trip where the students were taught about local wildlife and habitats. They had an opportunity to examine the mudflats and tour the Museum.

Once completing the field trips, they traveled to the Monterey Bay Aquarium to explore all matters of ocean life. Although a long drive, students said they enjoyed the self-guided tour of the aquariums, especially the sea otters.

Leffingwell also started art classes and completed several different projects including looming, where students built their own 4-foot by 3-foot loom and designed a pattern or picture with textiles. Students reported that the relaxation of weaving their designs, and the quiet environment provided a break from stress or anxiety. Some of the students chose to created free-hand. One used macramé to make a hammock shelf and another used crochet

Marine Biology Continued on page 16





# New Board Elected for San Simeon CSD







Karina Tiwana SSCSD Vice-Chairperson

At a recent special meeting of the San Simeon Community Services District (SSCSD), the Directors unanimously elected the two newest Board members, Jacqueline Diamond and Karina Tiwana, to serve as board chairperson and vice-chairperson, respectively. Daniel de la Rosa, Michael Donahue, and Gwen Kellas will contine in their terms as board directors.

Chairperson Diamond served for over ten years supervising special education programs in the Madera Unified School District prior to forming JMD Special Education Consulting in 2017. She completed an undergraduate degree in business administration and accounting, as well as a Master of Arts degree in special education and teaching, at the California State University, Fresno.

From 2000, Vice-chairperson Tiwana worked at Alcatel-Lucent first as a contract manager, then as a corporate counsel, and beginning in 2014 as general counsel, vice president and corporate secretary. In 2020, she was honored as "Legal Affairs and General Counsel of the Year" by Lawyer Monthly. She earned her Juris Doctor degree at the Lincoln Law School of San Jose.

The SSCSD is searching for two volunteers to serve on the Budget/Finances Standing Committee and three volunteers to serve on the Water/Facility Standing Committee. According to the Policies and Procedures of the SSCSD, the former committee is concerned with the financial management of the District, including the preparation of an annual budget and major expenditures. The latter committee is concerned with the formulation of plans for arranging, realizing and/or achieving the District's goals in regard to alternative water sources and facility maintenance and upgrades.

Consistent with the SSCSD Policies and Procedures, Chairperson Diamond will appoint three to five members of the public, as well as one or two board members, to serve on the two standing committees subject to Board approval. Committee members for 2023 will be announced at the next regular SSCSD Board meeting. The document that contains the Policies and Procedures of the SSCSD can be viewed at: tinyurl.com/2p8h6zju.

by Cambriaca.org

# In Print and On Line esterobaynews.com

# Fun and Exercise Await at Cambria Pickleball



By Gregg Whitfield

Cambria is set to have six state-of-the-art pickleball courts. Cambria courts are open daily from 9 a.m. to 5:. p.m. Members meet from 9:00 to 12 p.m. when guests can come and play with a \$3 drop-in fee. There are loaner paddles.

Why is this sport one of the fastest growing sports? Pick-leball is a relatively easy game for the young and old. Players get some valuable exercise; multiple skill levels can play together at the same time, it is very affordable, and the current players offer an excellent avenue for socializing. In addition, most cities now have pickleball. In SLO County, for example, Paso Robles has five existing courts with eight more being built, Templeton has eight courts, Atascadero and Morro Bay each have four. When a pickleball player travels with a small paddle, there will be courts almost anywhere. The one negative is that it is addictive.

Most of the play is doubles. Each end of the court is only 10 feet wide, while the side of the court is about 15 feet long. Players are able to move around to get in position to any ball that lands on their side of the court. With the ball being a plastic wiffle ball, the speed and bounce makes for a fun sport to play. Anyone who has ever played a racket or paddle sport will love this game. If you view exercise as a very beneficial activity for your overall health, you should give this sport a try.

Cambria pickleball courts are located at 1350 Main Street immediately behind the parking lot. For more information, visit the Club website at: cambriapickleballclub.shutterfly.com.

 $\textbf{Marine Biology} \; \text{From page 15}$ 

to create a lap blanket.

Students also built birdhouses, which involved sanding and cutting wood to fit individually selected layouts.

The school encourages community-building activities such as the Thanksgiving dinner they shared. A long table filled with food and drink brought by students and teachers made for a fun way to end the week before the break. A couple of students who had taken the culinary class made apple pies for all Coast Unified District sites, using apples picked from the orchard next to the transportation department.

This spring, Leffingwell plans to help the community by working with Greenspace and Friends of Fiscalini Ranch Preserve. Any local organization needing help with an event or project should be aware that the students at Leffingwell are always looking for community service opportunities.

Leffingwell Continuation High School serves the needs of alternative education students in the communities of Cambria, San Simeon and Cayucos.

To
The Editor

Letters

# **Estero Bay News is Tops**

When Dean Sullivan began publishing the Estero Bay News in January 2019, I knew, judging by his long track record and line up of writers and reporters, that it was going to be a gem. Every two weeks since then, rain or storm, COVID or not, the paper has been hitting the racks and made available everywhere from the library to a variety of local businesses. We have had the opportunity to read and follow editor Theresa-Marie Wilson, and have been treated to Neil Farrell's quality, on the edge, and unflinching reporting, which I've followed for over twenty-five years. As the paper evolved, we were introduced to the sharp writing of Judy Salamacha, Jill Turnbow, and Ruth Ann Angus. I do miss the music and entertainment features by Paul Irving.

The "Coffee with Joan" column has been a delight to read. Joan Sullivan takes us back, as only Joan can, to the past found in the histories of Los Osos, Baywood Park, and beyond. Joan's genius is well-known. It is seen in her art and in the pages of her local history books. She is a pioneer of local journalism and history.

The Estero Bay News provides a true connectivity between paper and reader. Los Osos, Morro Bay, and the North Coast now have a voice. The coverage of local news, arts and entertainment, schools, business and the environment is superb. There is a place to submit an editorial, an announcement, or an article. The means to promote an event is right at your fingertips. It is an attractive paper exhibiting good judgment, style, and taste. The photography and art are superb.

I vote the Estero Bay News be named the top local newspaper of San Luis Obispo County for 2022, to include recognition for all years back to its brilliant inception. Thank you.

Ken Kenyon Los Osos

## Thank you Lila

Lila Kaiser did all of us a service when she negotiated a donation of the land behind PG&E and across from the high school, for use as a public park.

With a children's playground, two full size baseball diamonds and a large grass area, it serves the needs of everyone; kids learning the rudiments and subtleties of soccer, seniors playing weekly softball games, people exercising their dogs, a restroom you can actually use, and a full picnic and BBQ area available for reservations.

The City of Morro Bay maintains the park well. It is clean and well cared for. Thank you, City Of Morro Bay!

Shelagh Considine Morro Bay

Please include your full name and town you live in on all letters sent. Although we do welcome longer opinion pieces, publishing is as space permits. Estero Bay News reserves the right to edit for length and clarity. Email letters to editor@esterobaynews.com

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Castle Wind Out From page 1

LLC, which bid \$150.3 million for 80,418 acres; Invenergy California Offshore, LLC, which bid \$145.3 million for 80,418 acres; and, Equinor Wind US, LLC, which bid a total of \$130 million for 80,062 acres of what is essentially deep, open water.

There were also two lease sales in an area off the Coast of Eureka in Humboldt County. Those winners were: Eureka, RWE Offshore Wind Holdings, LLC, which paid \$157.7 million for 63,338 acres; and California North Floating, LLC, which paid \$173.8 million for 69,031 acres.

The five lease sites cover a total of 373,268 acres and raised over \$751 million.

#### City to Meet Winners

The City had some preliminary discussions with some of the three local lease holders but had gone much further with Castle Wind, so far as to sign an agreement with the company to work together and support Castle's bid for a lease.

It was essentially one of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) requirements of the companies — to work with local cities and counties and so-called stakeholder groups. Those were listed as such entities as local Native American tribes and commercial fishermen.

Castle has also signed onto to something called, "Morro Bay Lease Area Mutual Benefits Corp.," with the Port San Luis and Morro Bay Commercial Fishermen's Organizations.

Now with Castle's failure to win a lease, any agreements the city and stakeholders had has dissipated in the wind.

"With regard to Castle Wind," Morro Bay City Manager Scott Collins told Estero Bay News, "that Castle Wind and City agreement was predicated upon Castle Wind obtaining a BOEM lease. So with them not obtaining as lease it is no longer operative"

Collins said the City has spoken with some of the other over a dozen bidders, more of a feeling-out than anything concrete.

"Several of the firms that won bids," Collins said, "have spoken with the City in the past [prior to the auction] to understand our goals regarding wind, as well as the potential impacts and potential benefits related to the industry potentially coming to the Central Coast."

The City pointed them towards the fishermen. "In conversations with these firms and other firms," Collins said, "we have encouraged them to talk with the local commercial fishing organizations as that industry is important to Morro Bay and will be the most impacted by offshore wind. We also encouraged them to engage with our community as Castle Wind has done in the past."

Time to Engage the Community

With the lease sale finally over (it took over 2 years to hold the auction) and the companies chosen who will now be able to put together actual projects, the City anticipates they will come calling sometime soon.

Community engagement is one of the ways that BOEM has set out for the companies to earn credits off their winning bids, potentially saving them tens of millions. Plus the City needs to know what facilities the companies will need — for boat moorings, potential office space, communications, and maintenance — inside the harbor

Indeed, the City got a \$1.5 million grant from the Federal Government to pay for upgrades and repairs of the North T-pier, and in anticipation of addressing the needs of the offshore wind companies.

"I anticipate that the City will be talking with these firms in the near future," Collins said, "to engage in similar conversations."

The wild card in all this is of course the newly elected city council members as the City swore in a new Mayor, Carla

Wixom, and two new Councilwomen, Cyndee Edwards and Zara Landrum, none of whom spoke very enthusiastically about the wind farms coming here or about a proposed battery energy storage system for the power plant property during the campaign.

After the lease sale, EBN asked the new Mayor how she felt about Castle Wind falling short and where it leaves the City.

"A lot of wait and see," Mayor Wixom said. "I am hopeful there will be financial opportunities to benefit our Harbor needs."

Those needs were addressed in the November 2022 Election with Measure B-22, a parcel tax of \$120 a year on all privately owned properties in town. But B-22, the "Morro Bay Harbor Infrastructure Act," which would have raised about \$680,000 a year fell well short of being approved, garnering just 36% of the vote to 64% voting "No."

#### **New Subcommittee Needed**

The City Council also had a 2-person subcommittee but former Mayor John Headding and Councilwoman Dawn Addis (now State Assemblywoman Addis), are both gone, so a new subcommittee is slated to be appointed.

"The Offshore Wind Council Sub-committee," Collins said, "will be set by City Council at the Jan. 10, 2023 Council meeting.

"An outfall lease with offshore wind company (or companies) could be in the cards for the City, and Council would determine how those potential funds would be allocated.

"In the past," Collins continued, "when the power plant was operational, the outfall lease revenues helped support the Harbor Fund. In addition, there is the potential for small operation and maintenance facilities and operations to be developed in the Harbor to support offshore wind."

There's an upcoming Council goal-setting session, usually in February, that could be very important for the offshore floating wind farms' future or at least how the City Council will handle negotiations.

"Council will likely take up the broader issue of offshore wind during the City goal setting process early in 2023," Collins

#### **Show Us the Money**

That outfall canal lease — where the power plant's heated cooling water was discharged into Estero Bay — is a key to whether or not or better perhaps, how much the City will cash in with the offshore wind farms.

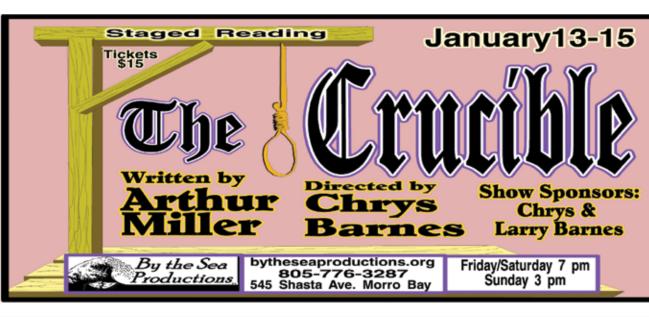
It was originally between by Pacific Gas & Electric and the County. Enacted back when the power plant was built in the early 1950s, it didn't pay the City anything for the lease. In the early 2000s, that lease was renewed by Duke Energy with the City this time after Duke bought the power plant from PG&E; part of the State's flirtation with deregulation of the energy industry.

Duke agreed to pay City Hall a minimum of \$2 million a year — including \$250,000 a year to the Harbor Department in lease payments — if and when Duke's power plant replacement project was completed.

But that never happened and Duke abandoned the project and sold all of its California power plants. The power plant has been on a downward spiral ever since and was shutdown entirely in 2014 by then owner Dynegy, which is now a part of Vistra Energy.

The outfall canal has silted completely in and the power plant now sits as an abandoned relic of the town's industrial past, but it could also hold the keys to its future.







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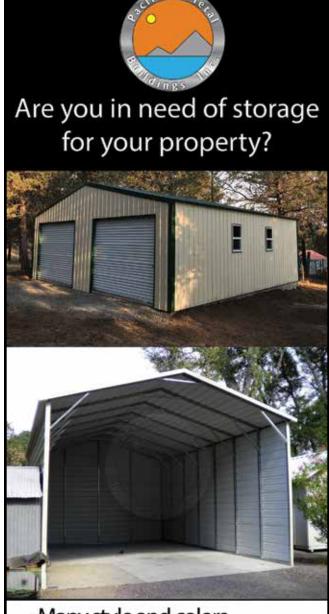


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#### Mud Slide From page 2



Alice Stone surveys damage to her home in Los Osos Photo by Dean Sullivan

six hours; and at about 11 a.m. power went out again for residents in the Cuesta By the Sea area and had not returned.

- · HWY 1 is mainly open through town, and folks can get in and out of Morro Bay in both directions
  - · HWY 41 is closed
  - · Portions of Main Street remain closed in Morro Bay.
  - · South Bay Blvd. to Los Osos is closed.
- State Park Road is closed with an undetermined opening date.

Another storm is expected to hit the county, ironically, on Friday the 13th. Officials urge residents who live near creeks or moving waterways to keep an eye on the situation and be prepared to evacuate.



Photo by Dean Sullivan



Comminity members join efforts to help shovel mud. Photo by Dean Sullivan



Main Street and Preston Ln., Morro Bay. Unknown Photographer



Photo by Dean Sullivan

Citizen's Group From page 1

sion once County appeals are exhausted.

#### Commission Disapproves

That's not to say following that process would have automatically led to a project denial, but given the current stance of the Coastal Commission in regards to Los Osos' water supply, it probably would have.

The Commission last April sent a letter to the County all but ordering them to cease issuing any permits that would add to the water demand until it can prove there is sufficient water for both the existing population and any future growth; also claiming that a "will-serve" letter from a water company is not sufficient. The letter demanded the same in Cambria, which has its own water

Last April 19 in a letter from Dan Carl, the Commission's director of the Central Coast Office in Santa Cruz and addressed to County Planning Director, Trevor Keith, Carl points to the wa-

ter supplies and calls for an end to certain Coastal Development Permits (CDPs) being accepted or processed. "As the County is well aware," Carl's letter reads, "including from the County's designation of an LCP Resource Management

"As the County is well aware," Carl's letter reads, "including from the County's designation of an LCP Resource Management System Alert Level III for water supply [i.e., where demand exceeds existing supply, and still does] and from the 2015 designation by the California Department of Water Resources of the Los Osos Valley Groundwater Basin as a high priority basin due to its 'condition of critical overdraft,' there is insufficient water supply to serve even existing development in Los Osos without coastal resource harm [including where an over-drafted groundwater basin can adversely impact sensitive natural resources such as wetlands and marshes, coastal streams and adjacent riparian areas, and marine habitats, as well as adversely impact coastal priority uses such as agriculture and lower-cost visitor- serving development], let alone adding to it new water using development.

"In addition, much of Los Osos is considered environmentally sensitive habitat area [ESHA] by the LCP within which most development, including residential development, is prohibited."

The underground water basin and Los Osos' sole source of drinking water has long been under scrutiny basically because no one really seems sure if the basin can sustain the existing community, let alone increase demand with new construction.

Even a minute increase, like those that come with the permitting and building of "guest houses," aka "secondary dwelling units," or "granny units," essentially small living spaces built at or added to an existing home, are being denied by the Commission.

In a written response, County Planning Director Keith said, "While we continue to review and desire to further coordinate with Coastal Commission staff regarding your concerns, based on our preliminary review, the Department does not believe there is sufficient authority or justification to alter existing County practices regarding submittal and processing of land use permit applications in Los Osos at the staff level at this time."

He defended the County's actions. "Staff believes current Department practices are consistent with both the spirit and letter of the LCP and any new limited new development that is allowed in Los Osos will have a neutral to positive effect on the groundwater basin consistent with the current Estero Area Plan."

The Commission also said the County's community sewer

project permits don't allow for any new hookups either.

#### Community Getting Mixed Signals

Miggins said the community is getting mixed messages. "The Coastal Commission said very articulately 'No more added water hookups."

So why then was a permit to build granted for the guest-house on Highland Drive?

Hoestetter noted that other such projects, including one of her own, had to jump through the bureaucratic hoops, and yet, "One block down from me they're able to build a new house."

She noted that under current rules, it all comes down to bedrooms. "Bedrooms add people," she said. "You could have one bathroom and 10 people living there, but if you add a bedroom, you have more people."

Miggins mentioned another guesthouse that was approved in Baywood Park that did go through the "proper channels" and which they have no problems with.

#### Questions Lead to Lawsuit

Last February, Miggins tried to find out about the Highland project and hit a wall over and over again. An email response she got from the County, "Made no sense," she said.

She got no answers from planning or Supervisor Bruce Gibson, whom she said she once help get re-elected.

Finally, she called the Coastal Commission and, "They didn't know what I was talking about." So she sent them photos and "Within 24 hours, they had contacted the County and the whole thing blew up."

#### **Group Files Writ**

In November 2021, Miggins said, there was a Zoom call meeting with the citizen's Good Governance group and Coastal Commission staff. "They said it was an illegal build," Miggins said.

That eventually led to the group filing a "Writ of Mandamus" (Mandate) lawsuit against the County, essentially challenging the way the Highland project was handled.

A Writ of Mandate essentially asks the court to compel a government agency to follow the law. It doesn't result in a big payout to the plaintiff, though attorney fees are normally awarded.

For Hoestetter it boils down to, "Why does one neighbor have to follow the rules and another doesn't? The County collects money from people when they know projects are going to be denied."

The lawsuit claims the ministerial permit was improperly issued and the County should have noticed neighbors of the project site. There are other issues too, like the County not issuing a "Notice of Final Action" to the Coastal Commission upon issuance of a CDP.

#### Issue Bigger Than One Project

"This is not a witch hunt," Miggins said. "We're standing up for the right of the community to be involved. All we're asking for is sanity; and I want the truth."

Miggins feels their lawsuit, which was recently approved to go forward, could potentially set a precedent, which she feels is why the County isn't going to settle.

Estero Bay News sent email inquiries about the lawsuit to County Counsel Rita Neal and Planning Director Keith. Keith sent the following reply:

"My ability to comment on pending litigation is limited but I can affirm the County disputes the allegations in the lawsuit and also contends the lawsuit is time barred and moot.

"The proposed guesthouse conformed with the development standards under the County's certified Local Coastal Program and only required ministerial/over-the-counter approval, because it was a principal permitted use and was not located within the coastal appealable zone.

"The guesthouse has since been completed and final certificate of occupancy issued."

The County filed a "demurrer" motion in the lawsuit that essentially asked for a dismissal of the lawsuit claiming the facts don't support it. But the judge denied the County's motion in late November.

In a post on the group's Facebook Page, McFarland wrote, "Our suit alleges that we were denied due process by the San Luis Obispo County Planning Department. This lawsuit, we hope, will be great news for our Los Osos Water Basin in that if we prevail, potentially the County must stop finding work-arounds, such as allowing illegally permitted guesthouses to slip into Los Osos neighborhoods that rely on an over-drafted aquifer."

#### Help Needed

Such a lawsuit can be costly and the Good Governance group would like the community to pitch in.

Hoestetter said, "We're trying to make our community better. We feel like we're fighting for the whole community."

Each said this would all not be happening had the County followed the rules. "It's not just this one project," Hoestetter said, "Follow the rules."

If readers would like to know more about the Los Osans for Good Governance, see their Facebook Page at: www.facebook.com/groups/lososans4goodgovernance



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**Bird Festival** From page 1

tocols in place the nonprofit status was approved this past spring. In anticipation, the core committee – now the six-person board of directors chaired by Jeanette Stone — moved forward to plan the 2023 Morro Bay Bird Festival. Her board includes Chris Cameron, Morgan Nolan, Wendi Craig, and Bob and Robbie Revel. Past workshop



leaders and volunteers stepped up to create this year's comeback 2023 edition.

"I think it was pent up demand waiting for another bird festival," said Bob Revel on December 26 when we met for this interview. "Out of 3000-plus spaces available- there are currently less than 100 spots available for a variety of activities. We have already broken records for the most registrants ever with 875 already registered."

The festival offers 160 activities including field trips, presentations, and special events with 100-plus leaders. "There are registrants from 25 states in the USA plus Brazil and Canada, so far." Bob added

Robbie Revel has been all over the Estero Bay with flyers for restaurant owners encouraging them to offer welcoming discount incentives to attract the birders to stay in the Estero Bay for their breakfast, lunch and dinner plans.

She added her thoughts about their successful registration for 2023. "David Sibley is our keynote presenter on Saturday evening at the Cuesta College Performing Arts Center. Then we have John Dunn and Richard Crossley offering master classes. They are experts in their fields. These events are all day immersions in a particular subject. Sibley will be teaching a master class and leading several field trips. These men are all well-known ornithologists and authors of numerous bird books and identification books. It's like winning the trifecta to have all three of them here for the festival this year."

Robbie also suggested if anyone is interested, but not yet registered, "Check in often for cancellations which are posted on the website. Come to our headquarters at the Morro Bay Community Center each day during the festival to check for last minute cancellations that often happen."

Several years ago, Robbie and Bob learned never to leave their home without binoculars. They do not claim to be over the top birders, however, they have developed a keen interest and knowledge they love to share with others.

They met and married while growing up and schooling in Georgia. They both loved the outdoors. She became a science teacher that eventually created a partnership business that offered teachers opportunities to learn new methods to teach science in the classroom. He climbed the corporate ladder within a burgeoning aerospace industry until it downsized. He reinvented himself using the IT skills he had developed during his career.

His career brought them to California, but it was an extended studies course offered by UCLA she had signed them both up for that launched their love of birding. While on tour in Owens Valley near Bishop they saw raptors on poles and other species. But it was the trumpeter swans that became the "aha" moment in time and cemented their future birding activities.

Bob explained, "These swans became agitated. They were calling and calling. A group gathered on the lake and suddenly the group took off together — up into the air the entire group went corkscrew-like. We had witnessed their call to gather for the start of their migration. We were hooked."

Robbie added, "Now all our vacations, sporting events, activities always include birding."

Back in the 1970s they started visiting Morro Bay. "We had read story in the AAA Magazine," Bob said. "There was this town with a bay and a big rock."

It became their home away from home to visit. They eventually bought their home in Los Osos in 2009. Robbie and Bob began to lead bird walks for the Natural History Museum until COVID when tours and events were interrupted. They then joined the Audubon group to offer their bird walks. They were on the festival committee for years and became one of the committee members and board members that would produce the 2023 festival. Their goal is to continue to build the volunteer core and grow the festival even bigger in 2024 and beyond.

Based on his IT skills, Bob's focus since 2020 was to create a festival- tracking App for registrants. Robbie suggested they call it "Bobolink" with the purpose "to bring our birders online. Registrants can navigate their total festival experience." On their smart phones, registrants receive the events they have pre-paid for, can sign up for more, plus learn what's included, time, mapped directions to meet-up, their leaders name, and even a listing of

attendees participating.

The 2023 Festival has 160 events including field trips, workshops, presentations, master classes and special events. All-day and half-day trips take participants to a wide variety of habitats, including deep-water pelagic, oak woodland and riparian, wetland and estuary, and the unique grassland habitat of the Carrizo Plain. Workshops cover a vast array of topics ranging from beginner birding classes to gull identification and a new workshop on bats. Many are geared for photographers, children and are wheelchair accessible.

On opening night everyone, including non-registrants, are invited to the Morro Bay Community Center Friday, January 13 from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Wine and cheese will be offered plus everyone is encouraged to meet and mingle with fellow birders and visitors to Morro Bay at the Bird Festival Bazaar. Vendor booths featuring optics, books, music, nature art & photography, woodcarvings, jewelry, educational exhibits, and more.

Keynote David Sibley will be available to sign his book, "What It's Like to Be a Bird." And as the Community Center is the event headquarters, it will be open for all during the 3-day weekend festival with videos running representing the festivals over the past 25 year.

#### **Department Heads** From page 1

the current direction of the Police Department. Further, many respondents stated their desire for the City to look internally for the next Chief. Amy has prepared herself for this role and I look forward to working closely with her."

Retired Chief Cox supported Collins' decision. "I whole-heartedly support this decision," he said in a statement, "and believe that not only is the Department in a good place now, but it will continue to move forward building upon all the positive work we have accomplished over the past few years.

"I am extremely proud to have been a part of building our current team and each one of you have made significant contributions toward our success. I have absolute faith and confidence that the Department will continue to build upon our accomplishments working alongside Commander Watkins as the Interim Chief."

IPC Watkins was honored to get the opportunity. "It is an honor serving the community of Morro Bay," she said. "I am excited for this opportunity to continue to lead the dedicated men and women of the Morro Bay Police Department."

IPC Watkins came to Morro Bay in August 2019 from the Visalia P.D., where she'd worked since 2000. She graduated from the police academy in 2019. With the appointment, IPC Watkins would appear to be the frontrunner in the search for a new full-time police chief, though it's unknown at this time how many applications Collins has received. So it could be that a new chief will be chosen from outside the community.

If IPC Watkins does get the full time job, she will be just the second female police chief in town history, after former Chief

IPC Watkins, according to a news release, has worked with Chief Cox leading the department through an expansion of community programs including launching a Citizen's Academy, the Police Chief's Advisory Board, and mobile phone app, among others.

Since coming to Morro Bay, she has helped train new police officers and sergeants and served on the City emergency team "to help aide the City and community throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic," Collins' news release said. "Prior to coming to Morro Bay, Amy accumulated 20-years of law enforcement experience with the Visalia Police Department."

#### Harbor Patrol Chief Steps Up

And just before Christmas, Collins named Chief Harbor Patrol Officer, Becka Kelly, as interim harbor director, to fill in for the retired director, Eric Endersby, who also left the City at the end of December.

However, her interim tenure will last about a month, after the city manager announced Jan. 5 that he'd hired Ted Schiafone of Oceanside Harbor to fill the full-time role starting Feb. 13. (See

story on page 2)

"I'm delighted," Collins said,
"that Becka is taking on this inter-

"that Becka is taking on this interim assignment as we continue the recruitment process for the next Harbor Director. I am confident that Becka Kelly will provide excellent leadership during this transition period."

Kelly was hired as a harbor patrol officer in 2006, Collins said. And in 2010, she was named Harbor Patrol chief replacing Endersby, who got the director's job upon the retirement of Rick Algert



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"I am honored to carry the torch during this transition at the Harbor. Eric has left some big shoes to fill, but with one step at a time we will continue to provide our best service to the waterfront and boating community."

Endersby is planning on going to work for Cuesta College, running a new airplane mechanics program out of the County Airport, returning to work he did before hiring on with the Harbor Department.

Kelly said she was honored to step up to the interim director's position. "I am honored to carry the torch during this transition at the Harbor," she said in a statement. "Eric has left some big shoes to fill, but with one step at a time we will continue to provide our best service to the waterfront and boating community."

She's filling her own pair of big shoes as well, as during this time she is holding down three jobs — harbor patrol officer, harbor patrol supervisor and interim harbor director.

According to the news release, Kelly earned a Bachelor's Degree in biology from the University of California Santa Cruz. She is an Executive Committee Member for the Morro Bay National Estuary Program; a board member for the Central Coast Women for Fisheries, which advocates for the commercial fishing industry; and a coach for the Morro Bay High School Surf Team.







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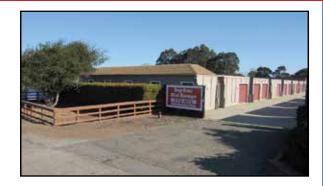
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