

Moving Forward: MB Bird Festival Redesigned for Worldwide & Local Growth

By Judy Salamacha

Looking for a holiday gift? It is not too late to register for the 27th Annual Morro Bay Bird Festival. Although it doesn't happen until next month, reservations have usually been sold out by now, but Program Co-Chairs, Robbie & Bob Revel, want Estero Bay residents to know they are particularly interested in locals' attendance. January 4 by 8 a.m. is the final date to register at www.morrobaybirdfestival.org. Check it out. So much to choose from!

Why haven't locals jumped at the chance to attend the West Coast's largest bird and wildlife festival? Maybe because it's in our own backyard? Why are we not taking a staycation on a 3-day weekend for many of us? Why not celebrate while learning about our Morro Bay's bountiful estuary and bird sanctuary positioned on the Pacific Coast Flyway? On December 16, volunteers participate in the annual national winter bird count. Morro Bay is typically in the top five areas for number of species counted in the US. Species number 200 and during the year our numbers will have upwards to 50,000 birds migrating, hanging out, and feeding in our area.

January is a prime time migrating birds are traveling through. Don't we explore new sites and book excursions on our vacations? The Morro Bay Bird Festival's all-volunteer committee has 27 years of experience assembling savvy guides — neighbors in the know and imported professionals — to direct 200 trips and programs, including renowned speakers, authors, artists, photographers leading excursions focused on the Central Coast's feathered, furry, bay-life, and SLO wildlife.

Last year I met Bob and Robbie Revel at a Morro Bay Chamber member appreciation event. Their energy was contagious. They had been festival supporters before they moved permanently to the Estero Bay. Their first year as program chairs, however, was during last year's atmospheric deluge, yet they pressed forward, and Estero Bay businesses welcomed more than 500 visitors that experienced the outdoor activities in rain gear.

The Revels goal for 2024 is to include more locals, more families, and more teens in the festival. They intend to break the cycle where locals have been left out mostly because we tradition-



A young birder working on photography skills.

ally wait until January to register.

Bob said, "Yes, registration opened November 4 and by noon 130 trips were full. We've added a fourth day — Thursday — more locations and 40% more capacity this year. We have room for 750. So as of today (11/27)), 60 trips still have room."

The festival planners have also made it easier for registrants to check in once and then meet-up on location instead of coming into Morro Bay daily to pick up their information. They've added locations, including Sweet Springs, SLO Botanical Gardens and the Elephant Seals overlook. Early-pick-up is on Wednesday afternoon at the Morro Bay Community Center and packets include badges, tickets for all events registered for, and a list of restaurants and businesses offering discounts that Susie Reddy, Outreach Coordinator, has assembled to be available during the festival.

Bob is proud of what he calls the Bobolink he designed. "Once registered we now have a link on our phones that will show everything registrants need to know such as where and when to meet, their guide, directions to sites, and activity descriptions." Room for more activities? The link shows what is open and how to add to the schedule.

Robbie detailed new experiences added this year to diversify the program. "We have created activities for community members who might not be into the birds as much."

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CSD Board Oks Pipeline Environmental Review



Map is from the LOCSD's environmental report on a project to tie-in to the state water pipeline [Chorro Valley Pipeline] that runs along Hwy 1 [at the left side of the map], down South Bay Boulevard to Los Osos and the 16th Street tank farm. Map courtesy LOCSD

By Neil Farrell

The Los Osos Community Services District has approved the environmental review of a project that would build a pipeline to Hwy 1 and tie-into the water pipeline that delivers drinking water to Morro Bay.

The LOCSD's Board of Directors on Dec. 7 approved the staff's "negative declaration" or "neg-dec" environmental review for the "Water Supply Resiliency Intertie Project" (Intertie Project) a scheme to initially bring 200-acre feet a year of State Water Project water to Los Osos and supplement the existing groundwater supplies, which have been in overdraft status for some three decades.

Though there are three water purveyors in Los Osos, they all have straws (wells) dipping into the same groundwater basin, Los Osos' sole source of drinking water. Because of the over-pumping, seawater has been intruding far inland in the water basin.

SWCA Environmental Consultants of San Luis Obispo prepared the Intertie Project's environmental review, which the board got last week. The neg-dec simply means that no environmental impacts were found with the project that can't be either avoided or fully mitigated.

The project would, "allow delivery of potable water to the LOCSD's water distribution system, which would reduce the amount of local groundwater pumping from the Los Osos Groundwater Basin and provide further protection against seawater intrusion," the neg-dec's introduction said.

The project seeks to tie-into the Chorro Valley Pipeline, which runs along the north side of Hwy 1 through Chorro Valley, and build a pipeline from there to the LOCSD's 16th Street water

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Arcade Nirvana in Los Osos



Boss Battles Arcade owner Christian Esparza, his fiancé Valerie Watson and their two children, Olivia and Leonardo.

Photos and Story by Theresa-Marie Wilson

If you were a teenager between the seventies to early nineties, a roll of quarters and time spent shooting monsters, fleeing from gobbling ghosts or fighting in space with friends was a rite of passage. Boss Battles Arcade in Los Osos is beacon to gamers both old and new alike.

Boss Battles' origin story is a somewhat romantic one. Owner Christian Esparza and his

now fiancé, Valerie Watson took a road trip up north to Portland, OR where she showed him one of her favorite arcades and bar combo.

"At the time, I knew I wanted to open a type of business," said Christian. "I just wasn't sure what I wanted it to be related to but something that I was very passionate about — it was games. I fell in love with it and thought it was such a great concept. I kind of had that light turning on. I said, 'This is it; this is what I'd like

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Next Road Repair Project Gets Council Nod

By Neil Farrell



Though its streets repair project from past fiscal years aren't yet done, the City of Morro Bay is starting already on its list of road repairs for next year and it may have more money than normal to spend.

The City Council approved the project list for the City's Fiscal Year 2023/24 Pavement Management Plan job, that's the annual road repairs the City does to try and keep up with the maintenance of its over 33 miles of paved streets in town.

The budget for FY 23/24 will likely include over \$260,000 from the State's SB-1 monies, the "Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017," that increased gas and diesel fuel sales taxes hiked

Road Repairs Continued on page 16

City Seeking Financial Advisor

By Neil Farrell

The City of Morro Bay is looking for some financial advise with regards to its substantial investments and a new consultant could be selected sometime in January or February.

In a request for proposals, the City said it was looking for "proposals from qualified firms for Investment Advisory Services," according to the notice dated Dec. 4.

Normally, the assistant city manager/administrative services director handles the investing. "The City's Assistant City Manager/Administrative Services Director serves as the City Treasurer," the RFP reads, "and currently handles the day-to-day administration of investments."

There's a substantial amount of money the City is sitting on. "The City's current investment portfolio is approximately \$69

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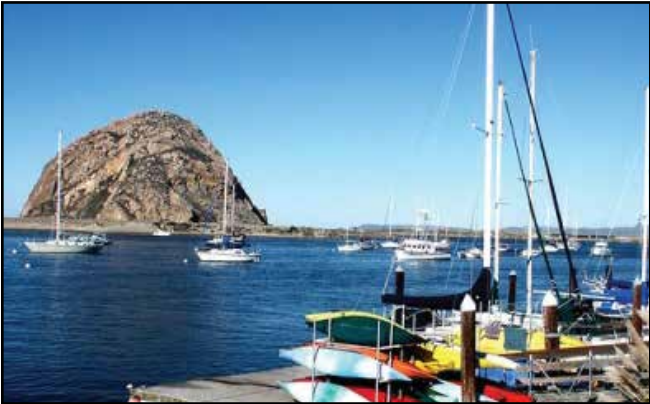


Photo courtesy of the City of Morro Bay

By Neil Farrell

It's the life force of Morro Bay and the location of the most interesting events in town. And Harbor Director, Ted Schiafone, produces a monthly Harbor Report to the advisory board. Estero Bay News thought we'd delve into this report and relate some of the highlights to readers.

Life Jacket Rescue

For several years the harbor patrol has had a life jacket loaner kiosk erected by the public launch ramp, until last winter, when it was lost in a storm.

"This is a safety tool," Schiafone said, "that originally was donated by a local citizen with the intention slogan, 'Kids Don't Float.' During the storms last winter the original structure was damaged and beyond repair."

The Department of Boating and Waterways, which is under State Parks, agreed to pay for "new lumber, signage and life jackets with the premise of safe boating campaign," he said.

Naturally, there was a catch — the department had to drive to Sacramento to pick it up, a round trip of some 600 miles. Some local volunteers came to the rescue. "The Coast Guard Auxiliary," Schiafone said, "volunteered to pick up all these supplies and the Friends of the Harbor Department paid for all fuel costs. We are truly thankful for the collaboration and happy to provide this valuable tool to the public."

Foghorn to Bellow Again

Locals have a love-hate relationship with the foghorn mounted at the end of the North Jetty, sounding a haunting bellow when visibility drops. It's a key maritime navigational aid that over the years has driven some folks a bit batty, sort of like a dull tooth ache in the ears.

Harbor director Schiafone said it is being repaired. "You may be hearing the foghorn again," he said, "or not, as the Coast Guard Aids to Navigation Team has been working on making repairs to this structure on the tip of the North Jetty. The foghorn provides a sound warning mariners of hazards ahead."

It had been updated. "In 2020," he explained, "the Coast Guard installed a radio operated system that made an automated sound when a VHF radio was keyed five times on Channel 83a. During last winter, large swells broke this technology."

The USCG put her back ship-shape, only to have the Pacific Ocean break it again. "Last month the foghorn was restored to sounding 24/7 and surprised many locals," Schiafone said. "However, after large swells last week, there is no sound at all again. This has been reported to the Coast Guard and we are awaiting repairs."

Dry Dock Thefts

Schiafone reported on some recent thefts along the waterfront with many from boats dry docked in a City storage yard.

"There has been a string of reports taken for theft on the waterfront," he said, "specifically on boats in the City managed dry boat storage lot near the Maritime Museum and on boats down by Tidelands dock."

Used to be there were a lot of people, fishermen mainly, that lived on the moored boats in the harbor, and kept an eye on things down there. It was one such fisherman who first spotted and reported the late-night fire that destroyed the Golden Swan Gift Shop building.

Now, with most of those vigilant fellows gone, the city hopes everyone will take precautions against this kind of skullduggery.

"We are asking all boat owners to keep their valuables locked up and report any lost property to the police department."

Swells Have Been Swell

Morro Bay winters are often marked by huge swells on Morro Strand Beach, which while thrilling to surfers, can spell trouble for the boating public and folks foolish enough to defy Mother Nature and venture out onto the North Jetty.

"A few large swells," Schiafone said, "that make the Morro Bay Harbor Entrance dangerous have kept Harbor Patrol busy. "On Oct. 20, we had multiple calls for emergency assistance.

"Our boat went to Cayucos for a swimmer in distress and later that same day to Montaña de Oro for a surfer attempting to scale up the bluffs just south of Spooner's Cove needing assistance."

The harbor mouth has roared a few times, too. "Multiple contacts were made at the Harbor Entrance," Schiafone said, "for small boats wanting to transit outside the harbor and were advised to alter their plans."

One adventurer had a rough day on the Sandspit.

"On Nov. 11," he said, "a report of a broken down jet ski washed up in the surf on the Sandspit."

The owner apparently had quite an odyssey. "The owner crossed over the dunes and made it back to his vehicle at the launch ramp," Schiafone said. "His surfboard was tied to kelp adrift out in the ocean."

The harbor patrol retrieved the jet ski. "Three days later, when the swell had dropped enough, Harbor Patrol Officers with incredible skill were able to tow the broke down jet ski off the Sandspit and return it to its owner at the launch ramp."

The guy even got his surfboard back. "The surfboard," Schiafone said, "was found by a commercial fisherman more than 5 miles north of the last known location."

Washed Away

They also had some poor guy get washed off the jetty. "On Nov. 25, a citizen was washed off the top of the North Jetty approximately halfway out to the tip by breaking waves over the entire length of the jetty."

It might not sound like it, but the guy was lucky. "A Harbor Patrol boat was in the area and witnessed the fall," Schiafone said, "and requested a land unit send a swimmer in the water to help the victim back to shore."

The guy escaped serious injury or worse. "The victim was incredibly lucky to survive the fall and released by paramedics at scene after a full assessment."

Readers are advised to never turn your back on the ocean and if you go down to Morro Rock to watch the impressive, and often massive, surf pounding the jetty, stay well back and out of harm's way.

Watching the waves can be awe-inspiring but getting knocked down onto jagged, granite rocks can do a lot of damage.

Burn Permits Released



By Neil Farrell

Cool temperatures and early rains have reduced fire dangers enough that the County fire department decide to lift a suspension on burn permits, as SLO County gets a few months reprieve from the seemingly endless fire season.

Cal Fire/SLO County Fire announced that it was lifting a permit suspension it enacted earlier this year due to high fire danger.

"Cal Fire San Luis Obispo Unit Chief John Owens," reads a news release, "is formally cancelling the burn permit suspension and advises that those possessing current and valid agriculture and residential burn permits can now resume burning on permissible burn days."

This announcement isn't a license to just fire up any old burn pile. "Agriculture burns must be inspected by Cal Fire prior to burning until the end of the peak fire season," the announcement reads. "Inspections may be required for burns other than agriculture burns. This can be verified by contacting San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District."

While the fire department must do the inspections, it's APCD that issues permits.

Most burn permits are issued to agriculture operations that burn things like clippings from orchards and can only be done on so-called "burn days."

"Cooler temperatures, higher humidity and the chance of winter weather have helped to begin to diminish the threat of wildfire," the announcement said. "Property owners and residents

are asked to use caution while conducting debris or agriculture burns, follow all guidelines provided, and maintain control of the fire, at all times."

If your controlled burn gets loose, you'll be the one that gets burned. "Individuals can be held civilly and/or criminally liable for allowing a fire to escape their control and/or burn onto neighboring property."

Besides ag burn permits, there are also so-called "backyard burn permits," but they too have conditions. For example, one must live outside of town. "To qualify for a Backyard, Burn Permit you must occupy a single family or duplex residence outside of cities and URL/VRL [urban] areas."

Even ag burning is strictly regulated. "Agricultural burning may only be conducted by agricultural operations that derive income from the growing of crops or the raising of animals or, vegetation, forest, or range management."

And to be clear, you must get a permit from both Cal Fire and APCD for an agricultural burn. Requirements include:

- Only dry, natural vegetative material such as leaves, pine needles and tree trimmings may be burned;
- The burning of trash, painted wood or other debris is not allowed;
- Do NOT burn on windy days;
- Piles should be no larger than 4-feet in diameter and in height. You can add to pile as it burns down;
- Clear a 10-foot diameter down to bare soil around your piles;
- Have a shovel and a water source nearby; and,
- An adult is required to be in attendance of the fire at all times.

Though it sends lots of black smoke into the air, burning is apparently a valuable tool when done right.

"Safe residential pile burning of forest residue by landowners is a crucial tool in reducing fire hazards," the announcement said. "State, Federal and Local land management and fire agencies will also be utilizing this same window of opportunity to conduct prescribed burns aimed at improving forest health and resiliency on private and public lands."

And with the ban lifting it didn't take long for the County to strike a match. Cal Fire/County Fire announced that from Dec. 4-8 it would be burning some 200 piles of debris "above the Cayucos Cemetery" in conjunction with landowners and overseen by firefighters. The fire department said it's necessary.

"Prescribed burning," reads an announcement from Cal Fire spokeswoman, Toni Davis, "is an important tool used to minimize fire hazards and the likelihood of uncontrolled future wildfires that would have the potential to induce significant air quality impacts on the local community. Should conditions not be suitable for good consumption and optimal smoke dispersal, the burn will be rescheduled."

Readers with burn permits can check the APCD website to see if weather conditions are OK to proceed on a given day, see: SLOCleanAir.org.



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News

Skate Park in Cambria Recommended for Major Grant



By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Skateboards have reason to add a few more tricks to their roll in Cambria. California State Parks selected the Cambria Community Services District as one of sixteen projects to proceed with post-selection federal requirements to create a new skatepark facility.

State Parks evaluated more than 79 Land and Water Conservation applications totaling \$154 million, for the available \$35.6 million in the application cycle. Recommended applicants will proceed with post-selection federal requirements prior to the projects being forwarded to NPS for review and federal funding approval.

“This project [on Main St.] will develop the vacant asphalt lot and adjacent dirt parking area in Cambria into a skatepark facility,” CSD General Manager Matthew McElhenie in a news release. “The site for this project has historical significance to the community as it was the location of the original unpermitted skatepark that served many generations of Cambrians.

“Building a new skatepark at this location will restore a critical public asset and recreational opportunity lost when the old park was removed and is a high priority for the community of Cambria,” McElhenie. “Beyond building a skatepark, this project will create a youth-friendly space in Cambria where people of all backgrounds and skill levels can gather and connect.”

In the Spring of 2020, the unpermitted skatepark was removed due to safety concerns related to the deteriorated condition of the park. Since then, the community and Skate Cambria have been fundraising to build a new skate park.

In 2021, Skate Cambria was formed with a youth run board of directors in place along with a core group of adults with the mission to rebuild the park. They began a capital fundraising campaign with an estimated goal of \$650,000. Near the close of that year the wheels really started turning when the Cambria Community Services District, which oversees the land, passed a resolution to commit a total funding amount of \$178,000, over the period of three fiscal years, in the amount of \$59,333 each year.

Plans for the concrete 6,000 square-foot skatepark are not full of bowls or vert ramps but instead include a mix of street and transition features such as grind boxes and rails that will support skaters with a range of interests and abilities. It will be open to skateboarders, roller skaters, bicyclist, scooter riders, or even specialty wheelchairs. The development will also include constructing a seating section with a shade structure, landscaping, a parking lot, and a restroom stall.

Following National Park Services approval, grantees will participate in a mandatory grant administration workshop, receive grant contracts from State Parks, and begin work to complete their projects, said McElhenie.

CHP to Etch VINs on Cars

Worried about some scoundrel stealing your car? The Highway Patrol is holding a special event tomorrow that might help you get it back, should it be stolen.

The CHOP Coastal Division in San Luis Obispo is holding a “window etching” event from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, Dec. 15 at the Division HQ, 675 California Blvd., in SLO.

The etching involves scratching your car’s Vehicle Identification Number or VIN into the window glass to make it harder for thieves to hide a stolen vehicle’s identification from authorities. One of the first things car thieves do is remove the VIN, which is etched into a metal strip and mounted at the base of the dash where it meets the windshield. However, it won’t stop thieves.

“It is important to note,” said a press release from CHP, “this will not prevent the theft of a vehicle, but, will assist law enforcement in locating and identifying your stolen vehicle. With every appointment, a free steering wheel lock will be provided.”

If you’d like to get this service done, you must go online and schedule an appointment, see: <https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/CHPVINEtching@CHP2go.onmicrosoft.com/bookings>.

In the photo, a CHP officer etches a VIN onto the window of a vehicle. Photo courtesy CHP.



protect and serve our community,” Chief McCrain said, “allowing us to respond even more effectively in times of crisis. The funding will pay for modern rescue tools and provide training to first responders that is critical for the care of those injured in crashes.”

The new hydraulic powered tool will allow the department to “extricate patients more safely and effectively from modern vehicles,” Chief McCrain said. “The goal of this program is to reduce the time an accident victim is trapped in their vehicle, increasing the survivability for victims.”

With car crashes, as with all emergency incidents, time is critical. “Delays in providing care to crash victims,” Chief McCrain said, “impacts the ‘Golden Hour’ of survival, a core principle in the emergency medical services industry. Reducing the time it takes to get to the patient, treat what can be treated, and transport the patient to the hospital helps increase the chance for recovery.”

The money comes from the California Office of Traffic Safety, but originates at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and is amassed via federal fuel taxes.

Developed by George Hurst of the Hurst Power Tool Company, it was nicknamed the “Jaws of Life” for its role in snatching victims from the “jaws of death,” according to the Hurst website. They are also known as hydraulic cutting tools.

George Hurst, who had made a fortune helping make cars go faster, was at the Indy 500 in 1961, where he saw a horrific crash and the hour it took to free the driver from the wreckage. He reportedly thought there must be a better way.

“When he looked into the tools that rescue crews use,” the website said, “he found that traditional circular saws just weren’t, well, cutting it. The saws created sparks, increasing the risk of fire or explosion, and were extremely loud, which caused distress for the trapped victim. And, of course, they took too long to get the job done.”

Hurst patented the first “hydraulic rescue tool” in 1961. “The initial design was a 350-pound hunk of metal, far too large for even a team of rescuers to handle. In the span of a decade of tinkering and refining their rescue device, Hurst and (Mike) Brick downsized the prototype to only 65 pounds, calling it the ‘Hurst Power Tool.’”

Ten years later they took their refined devices to the SEMA Trade Show for specialty equipment and it was a big hit.

The various tools can cut (with a scissor-pinching movement) and spread, so in a crash, firefighters can cut the roof off a car, or use the spreader to pry open a smashed in door to get to a victim.

Running them with hydraulic oil means they don’t create sparks, which in a car crash can be dangerous and ignite spilled fuel.

George Hurst died in 1986 at age 59 and society owes him a debt of gratitude. “Thanks to Hurst’s innovative thinking, victims of car accidents across the globe have been able to escape serious injury and even death.”

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Estero Bay News Briefs

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Baywood Pier Sign Makes a Comeback



Baywood may have one of the smallest piers on record, but it is — one that receives gigantic support from community members.

The Baywood Pier sign is now back in place in downtown Baywood Park thanks to local community volunteers and Dos Osos Timber Works, the old sign has been replaced with a brand new one.

The sign was originally installed in the 1970s as an Eagle Scout Service Project completed by a young man who is now a police officer in Santa Cruz, CA.

“Over time and with some tender loving care by members of the Baywood Navy, the sign has been tended to, mended, and repainted,” said longtime community volunteer George Brown. “The ravages of time had taken their toll, and the sign had a heavy list toward the ground.”

Local contractor Bill Hurley and his crew from the Dos Osos Timber Works provided the expertise, skill, and energy to fabricate an entirely new sign. Starting from drawings made from a photo of the sign, they sandblasted, painted, and installed the new replica to welcome locals and visitors alike to the pier.

“With thanks to the community spirit and teamwork of many folks the sign is back home for many more decades of showing off the pride of Baywood Park, said Brown.

Pictured are the crew behind the project: Bill Hurley, Candice Bello, Thomas Perez, Henry Catalan, Albert Garza

Los Osos Middle School Among Honored

Los Osos and Laguna middle schools were honored with the prestigious designation of National and State Schools to Watch. The recognition, awarded by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform in partnership with the California League of Educators, celebrates middle schools’ commitment to excellence in education and their outstanding support for students.

The schools received word of their designations last week. For Los Osos Middle School, this year’s designation marks their third such award, and second re-designation. Laguna Middle School is receiving the honor for the first time.

“To be one of 186 Schools to Watch model programs out of over 7,000 middle schools in California is an awesome honor,” said Karl Blum, principal at Los Osos Middle School. “And while the designation itself is great, the process is equally meaningful because it allows us to self-reflect on our successes and grow where we need to grow.”

Los Osos Middle School’s focus these past three years on Equity and Inclusion and meeting students’ needs socially and emotionally has been a priority as they continue to maintain high academic standards.

“Los Osos has worked with a site equity team to highlight student differences and tolerance of others in a world where these values sometimes are forgotten,” Blum said. “We have specifically supported students with additional counselors and supports as these needs have grown within our student population over the past few years.”

The Schools to Watch designation recognizes exemplary middle schools based on a reflective self-study in four areas:

- Academic Excellence
- Developmental Responsiveness
- Social Equity
- Organizational Processes and Procedures

The application is reviewed by multiple middle school educators from current Schools to Watch sites from across the state. If it is approved, the school hosts a validation visit where students, staff, and parents are interviewed to ensure the application reflects true practice. If the school meets the rigorous expectations according to the Schools to Watch criteria, they are awarded this prestigious designation.

Schools to Watch is a national network of over 600 schools in 17 states.

New Phone Scam Alert

The SLO County Sheriff’s Office is warning residents of a phone scam currently making the rounds.

“We have received numerous reports today that someone claiming to be from the Sheriff’s Office has contacted individuals to inform them they were due in court for jury duty,” said Tony Cipolla, Sheriff’s spokesperson, in a news release. “The caller ID ‘spoofed’ an actual number which made it appear to be coming from the Sheriff’s Office.”

The caller proceeds to explain that individuals can clear the matter by paying a fine through the use of bitcoin or other cryptocurrency.

“One resident was almost bilked out of \$1,700 but the transaction was not successful,” Cipolla said.

“We want to caution residents this is a scam. The Sheriff’s Office reminds you that it is not our practice to contact residents by phone regarding these matters. Anyone who receives a call like this should report it to their local law enforcement agency.”

The Sheriff’s Office asks that people family and friends about this scam, so they can be prepared in the event they receive a call like this.

Sustainability Training Program for Campus Peers

An interdisciplinary team of Cal Poly students has designed a sustainability training program aimed at raising awareness and changing behaviors among their campus peers.

The 30-minute training, Sustainable Living Edu, which is offered to all incoming students, broadly addresses sections on consumption and fossil fuels, water, transportation, and waste management. Continuing graduate students as well as university employees can also access the training. And the students hope it can expand to serve as a model for other California State University campuses, from San Diego to Eureka.

“It is a student-led effort to prioritize sustainability at Cal Poly and establish a culture of environmental awareness, stewardship and involvement among all students, staff and faculty,” said Kalea Conrad, a graduate student seeking a master’s in environmental sciences and management.



The prototype was produced in the spring of 2022 during the Hermosa Beach, California, resident’s final quarter of her bachelor’s in environmental management and protection at Cal Poly. It was the culmination of the quarter-long, seven-person group project in Environmental Design 406 course: Implementing Sustainable Principles, a sustainable environments minor course offered by the College of Architecture and Environmental Design.

The aim of the training is to communicate the necessity for focus on environmental preservation among all students and disciplines, not only College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences or College of Architecture and Environmental Design majors. With significant input from project advisors, professors, Cal Poly Sustainability Coordinator Kylee Singh and many others, the pair fine-tuned the script and videos were recorded in collaboration with Cal Poly theater students.

The Sustainable Living Edu training, by the nature of its student-led creation, is specific to the community of San Luis Obispo. Its creators recognize the training will need to be adapted or recreated entirely to address the unique status of waste management guidelines and other sustainability efforts relevant to the other CSU campuses. Conrad and Furr recognize that the greatest challenge for this training is that it is currently optional, and there are few ways to engage returning students with training content beyond CSU-mandated trainings.

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County to Beef Up Opioid Treatment Program

By Neil Farrell

San Luis Obispo County will beef up a program designed to help people addicted to opiates transition from lockup to a treatment facility, in a program projected to help hundreds of people over its 3-year run.

Supervisors recently accepted a \$1.3 million grant from the Federal Department of Justice’s “Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program” or COSSUP that will go into the Behavioral Health Department’s program providing “peer recovery support services to an estimated two hundred individuals suffering from opiate use and stimulant use disorders,” reads a County staff report from the director of BHD. “The target population is adults who have both opiate use disorder and stimulant use disorder, primarily methamphetamine, who are at high-risk for overdose.”

The County currently has but one person running this entire program and the demand is great. This grant, which is spread over 3 years (expiring in 2026) will add two more, limited time case



workers. It’s a hands-on program.

“The BHD,” reads the report, “will provide recovery support services in the form of Recovery Residence stays [drug and alcohol-free living] to all COSSUP participants in San Luis Obispo County, one of the least affordable housing markets in the nation, who need this level of care. All Recovery Residences pro-

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News

vided funding with this grant will be Medication Assisted Treatment [MAT] compliant to serve those with opiate use disorders.”

The County annually contracts out these types of residential placements to approved treatment facilities in both Northern and Southern California, as such facilities in SLO County are scarce.

These arrangements, arising through several different BHD, Probation and court programs, total several million dollars a year. The new hires will jump right in.

The case managers will, “provide intensive case management services to COSSUP participants while in custody and while in treatment after being released from custody. The Case Managers will provide transportation and an initial supply of hygiene items to provide a warm welcome from custody to outpatient treatment in conjunction with the Recovery Residence.”

The program’s goal is essentially to save lives. “This grant will address both mental health and substance use disorders in coordinated integrated care to provide the bridge from County Jail to community-based treatment and builds upon the results of BHD’s previous efforts to bend the curve of opioid overdose fatality rate in San Luis Obispo County.”

The report lays out the budget for the grant, listing \$160,000 in salaries and benefits for Fiscal Year 2023-24, plus \$34,000 to support the salary of the existing case manager; and \$110,000 for services and supplies, for a total budget of \$305,000 in direct costs and another \$19,000 in indirect costs for a grand total of \$324,000.

Future annual budgets go up from there to \$433,000 in FY 2024/25 and FY 25/26 and then dropping to \$109,000 in a shortened FY 26/27, eating up entirely the \$1.3 million grant.

The salaries, in case readers thought they might apply for these jobs, start out at \$34,000 for the rest of this year, and \$64,000-\$66,000 next fiscal year; and topping out at \$68,000-\$70,000 in FY 25/26. These jobs also come with a complete benefits packages.

The program’s goal is to help 25 people a year get into residential treatment from County Jail with an average stay of 3 months (90 days). They also place time limits on delivering their services.

“COSSUP,” the report said, “will initiate ninety percent of referrals within seven days and seventy percent of COSSUP admission will have at least two treatment contacts within 14 days of admission.”

The program makes a bold claim. “As a result, there will be a measured improvement in employment, decreased drug, and alcohol use, and decreased legal involvement as measured by pre-test and post-test measured by objective drug testing results, for self-reported employment status, and by review of arrest information prior to program participation and at discharge to ensure that the participants meet the goals, initiation and engagement are predictor measures of successful long-term outcomes regardless of completion.

“Participants in the COSSUP will have achieved and sustained a lifestyle of sobriety and recovery, including learning skills to better manage their lives. There will be decreased criminal recidivism, decreased impact on criminal justice and behavioral health care systems, and re-stabilized lives which will contribute to the County vision of a safe and healthy community.”

BHD got support letters from local law enforcement agencies including the County Sheriff and Probation Departments, as well as the Superior Court, and because it’s coming from DOJ, a law enforcement organization will oversee it. “This grant will be overseen by the Community Corrections Partnership as this

is a Department of Justice grant with the lead agency being the Health Agency BHD.”

The Community Corrections Partnership is an obscure public agency that was created after passage of Senate Bill 678 — The California Community Corrections Performance Incentive Act of 2009, according to the agency’s webpage, located through SLO County’s Home Page.

“This bill requires that each county that receives funding under the act convene a local Community Corrections Partnership,” the website explains. “Moreover, the bill requires that the partnership is chaired by the Chief Probation Officer and includes: The Presiding Judge of the Superior Court; the County CAO; the District Attorney; the Public Defender; the Sheriff; a Police Chief; the county heads of: Department of Social Service; County Mental Health; Alcohol and Drug services; employment; County Office of Education; and a representative from a community-based organization.”

Committee chairman and Probation Chief, Robert Reyes said, “Our ability to make progress toward this goal requires collaboration and partnership with all of the components of the adult criminal justice system, education, social services; substance abuse, mental health, and community-based services in San Luis Obispo County,” as the reason the County formed the CCP.

Gym Owner Owns Up in Hidden

The former owner of a women-only San Luis Obispo gym pled guilty to charges that he installed a hidden camera to spy on clients and illegal possession of a handgun, the District Attorney’s Office announced.

District Attorney Dan Dow announced Nov. 28 that Cole Charles Corrigan pled guilty to “illegally video recording two patrons of the now closed CCC Fitness and being a felon in possession of a handgun. He faces 364-days in County Jail and formal probation.” He is slated to be sentenced Dec. 19.

The charges for the illegal videotaping are misdemeanors, Dow said, and the handgun charge is a felony. He also admitted in court that he had a 2007 felony conviction for possession of illegal drugs for sale. It was that drug conviction that came back to bite him in this latest case. The secret camera portion happened back in August (2023) and the gun was found in September, as a result of a search warrant. It was also one of the so-called “ghost guns” or “undetectable firearm” that are assembled out of loose gun parts and are untraceable due to no serial numbers on the gun. He also had some 60 rounds of ammunition, according to court papers.

In the charging document released by the D.A., Corrigan, 36, was in possession of a small amount of the illegal steroid, testosterone, that was also uncovered with the search warrant.

As for the illegal video taping, the charging document said Corrigan “did unlawfully use concealed camcorder, motion pic-



Cole Charles Corrigan

ture camera, and photographic camera to secretly videotape. film. photograph. and record by electronic means another identifiable person — Jane Doe 1 — under and through the clothing being worn by that other person; for the purpose of viewing the body of and the undergarments worn by that other person without the consent and knowledge of the other person; and with the intent to arouse, appeal to and gratify the lust, passions and sexual desires of that person and invade the privacy of that other person under circumstances in which the other person has reasonable expectation of privacy.”

CCC Fitness, located at 81 Higuera St., closed soon after his arrest, which made headlines in the papers in SLO. A Tribune article recounting an October interview with Corrigan, said he placed the camera in the bathroom “to catch a thief,” and that it was only live streamed and no recordings were made.

However, SLO Police exposed that as a lie when they reportedly found video copies of the two women, Jane Does 1 and 2, during their Nov. 3 search at the gym. It was a patron of the all-women gym that found the device.

Corrigan was also reportedly trying to sell the gym but an online search noted it was “permanently closed.”

The case was investigated by the SLOPD and the prosecutor is Dep. D.A. Kimberly R. Dittrich of the Sexual Assault Prosecution Team.

Nipomo Man Charged with Child Sex Abuse

A Nipomo man was arrested and charged with suspicion of sexually abusing two teenage girls, the Sheriff’s Office announced.

According to Sheriff’s spokesman Tony Cipolla, the department received a report of a child sexual abuse allegation and immediately started to investigate.

“During the course of the investigation,” Cipolla said, “two victims were identified. Both victims are female and 15-years old. The sexual abuse began when both victims were age 14.”

The investigation led to a suspect and deputies arrested him on Dec. 1. “A suspect was identified as 21-year old Elijah Eric Machado of Nipomo,” Cipolla said. “It was determined Machado committed various sexual acts with both victims over several months.”

Upon his arrest, Machado was charged with suspicion of “unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor, oral copulation with a minor, sexual penetration with a minor and using an underage person for obscene matter.”

Cipolla said they are asking the public for any additional information. “Anyone with additional information about this case or know of other potential victims should contact the Sheriff’s Detective Division at 805-781-4500,” he said.



Elijah Eric Machado

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News

Poly Center for Military-Connected Students Opens New Location

Cal Poly has renovated and doubled the size of its Center for Military-Connected Students, creating a space with many enhanced benefits for students, including more indoor and outdoor study space, new computers, free printing and a bigger food pantry that has received more than 850 visits since the start of fall quarter.

The new space is ADA-compliant and air conditioned and features an outdoor courtyard area. Students can access resources, grab a snack, study and find community through the Student Veterans and Dependents Club.

“Relocating the center to this new, larger location has allowed our community to expand, as more students can now access these crucial resources,” said student veteran David Gaspar-Martinez.

The center serves more than 700 student veterans, active-duty students, and students with a service connection through their



Student veteran David Gaspar-Martinez, accompanied by speakers and special guests, prepares to cut the ribbon in recognition of the CMCS facility opening.



Student veteran David Gaspar-Martinez addresses attendees at the new CMCS facility grand opening. Photos submitted

staff accomplish for our students. This new space will help them achieve their goals of advocating and advancing the interests of our military-connected students.”

Construction of the center was funded in part by \$55,000 in grants from the local area budgets of San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors Arnold and John Peschong. Another \$20,000 was contributed for programming purposes by the County Veterans Service Offices, led by Veterans Services Officer and Cal Poly alumnus Morgan Boyd.

Community donations are welcome and are used to improve the services and experiences of Cal Poly’s military-connected students. Visit <https://militaryconnected.calpoly.edu/content/giving> to learn more.



Clint Weirick, representing State Sen. John Laird’s office, presents CMCS Lead Coordinator Kari Leslie with a State of California Senate Certificate of Recognition.

parent or spouse.

“This is their space,” said Kari Leslie, lead coordinator for the Center for Military-Connected Students. “We want students to feel incredibly comfortable and use it as they need it. We want to provide whatever they need to navigate their day.”

In September, U.S. News & World Report’s annual Best College’s guidebook ranked Cal Poly as the top school in the West for veterans for the fourth straight year. The listing shows the most veteran-friendly universities among public and private institutions that participate in federal initiatives helping veterans and active-duty service members pay for their degrees.

“The Center for Military-Connected Students provides students with the tools, support and community they need to succeed at Cal Poly,” said Vice President for Student Affairs Keith B. Humphrey. “We are so proud of the work that our center

able deaths.

“Medical procedures related to this mandate must be fulfilled by a Forensic Pathologist who is specifically skilled and licensed to determine the cause of death and provide testimony in court proceedings.”

The County hired a full-time pathologist in September 2017, even as it stood up a new coroner’s facility out by the SLO County Airport. It’s apparently not easy to find a real life “Quincy.”

“The recruitment and hiring process took approximately 9 months,” the Sheriff said. “Since early 2022 the Forensic Pathologist was out on injury and separated from the Sheriff’s Office in September 2022.”

The Sheriff said he had to contract out these duties and had previously selected NAAG Pathology Labs for a short-term contract while they put out a request for proposals, which unfortunately has turned into long term.

“In April 2022 Central Services-Purchasing assisted in running RFP 1669 for pathology services, resulting in only one response, from NAAG,” Sheriff Parkinson reported. County Supervisors extended NAAG’s old contract through June 2022 while a new one was negotiated based on the RFP, which only NAAG responded to. That resulted in a 13-month contract (covering from October 2022-October 2023). That gave them time to run another recruitment for an in-house pathologist, but they didn’t get a single application, according to the report.

“At that time, it was decided that the Sheriff’s Office would need to contract for services in order to continue fulfilling our legal mandate of determining the method and manner of certain reportable deaths.”

With NAAG seemingly the only game in town, the Sheriff sought a \$1.6 million, 3-year contract starting at \$336,000 this year, with another \$30,000 in “autopsy services as needed” for a total of \$366,000 for FY 2023/24. But he discounts a salary savings of \$474,000 from the vacant pathologist position and so the net to the County this year was \$108,000 in savings, according to the Sheriff’s report.

Going forward, the costs jump to \$520,000 for NAAG’s contract in FY 24/25 and \$546,000 in FY 25/26. The final, shortened year drops NAAG’s contract to \$185,000. The salary savings are applied to these budgets too.

Overall, the contract will mean increasing the department’s general fund bite to \$75,000, \$94,000 and \$34,000 for future years. When this new contract expires, the Sheriff will be back to the Supervisors.

“In FY 2026/27,” Sheriff Parkinson’s report said, “the Sheriff’s Office will either start the recruitment process again for the Forensic Pathologist or will request to continue contracting for pathology services.”

Fortunately, SLO County’s murder rate is pretty low with just a handful of actual murders a year. However, essentially, the Coroner’s Office is called out to anyone’s death that wasn’t witnessed by someone or readily explained by an existing condition, such as a terminal illness. While local police most often are first on scene at a death, they almost always call in the Coroner’s Office to formally investigate.

Such investigations seek to determine whether a death was from natural causes, the result of an accident, or actual foul play — the so-called manner of death, as well as when and where a death occurred, among numerous other factors of a person’s demise.

As for NAAG, their website explains their mission. “We are an independent agency committed to offering high-quality forensic pathology services to the criminal justice community. Our services encompass providing autopsy support to California’s Sheriff-Coroner sector and consultations to prosecutors, defense attorneys, and child protection professionals.”

County Awards New Coroner’s Contract

By Neil Farrell

The County Sheriff’s Department has signed a new contract with a private San Diego-based forensic-pathology lab to fulfill its requirements under the law to investigate all deaths, from foul play or not.

County Sheriff Ian Parkinson’s staff report on the matter explained that the County lost its in-house pathologist and has had to contract out those services for some time.

“The Sheriff-Coroner,” Sheriff Parkinson’s report said, “is mandated to determine the method and manner of certain report-

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Morro Bay Eagles members, Michael Murphy, Cindi Cagle and club President, Shary Goulart recently delivered a sleigh's load of Christmas toys for needy kids at Del Mar Elementary. School Principal, Michael Wood, at right, gladly accepted the gifts. Photo by Neil Farrell

By Neil Farrell

Members of the Eagles Aerie in Morro Bay made their fourth annual donation of toys and gifts to disadvantage students at Del Mar Elementary to help kids and their families have a little better Christmas. Toy drive organizer, Cindi Cagle, said she was able to stretch their budget this year by shopping at Hooray for Hollywood, a memorabilia and collectibles store on the Embarcadero that recently closed. The owner held a big sale and Cagle said she was able to get some very nice toys at up to 70% off. She shopped around at Walmart and Target, too. They also got 20, \$50 gift certificates to Spencer's Market for the families. The money was raised through the Eagles' regular community dinners and raffles, so all the members contributed. Staff will pick the kids who receive the presents, and their parents will be invited to come to the office and pick something out for their child, said Eagles President Shary Goulart. Del Mar has about 265 students in grades K-5. Principal Michael Wood accepted the gifts on behalf of the school and staff thanking the Eagles for the annual donations. Of note, not a single present was an electronic gadget or cell phone. Instead the Eagles picked out dolls, super hero action figures, dinosaur figures, board games and more imaginative toys. Goulart explained that phones are too expensive, and you have to keep paying for them through a service.

MBHS Athletes of the
Month — November 2023

By Neil Farrell

The Morro Bay Athletic Boosters would like to announce that the Student/Athlete of the Month of November all come from our Cross Country Team! These athletes have exhibited excellent character as well as tremendous athleticism as they represent our school! "Congratulations to Otis Kelly, Noleena Fahy, and Eli Waldman!" the Booster's said in the announcement. First year Cross Country Head Coach, Jennifer Frere led the Lady Pirates to an Ocean League Championship, and both the boys and girls individual league titles. "Otis [Kelly]," the coach said, "has consistently been our No. 1 Varsity runner throughout the season. He won the Ocean League Finals Meet this year and led the team to a second place finish."

The senior and local native son, "leads with a positive attitude and is a great role model for our younger runners," Coach Frere said. "He has a strong work ethic, is willing to push through hard workouts and does what he needs to excel in distance running. He is also a talented cyclist and triathlete with a love for endurance sports." Kelly is planning to continue running in college, the coach added. "We can't wait to see what his future in athletics holds." At the recently run State Meet, Kelly finished 26th. "Noleena [Fahy]," the coach said, "has run all four of her years at MBHS. She is committed to distance running and has been making solid gains this season. She has been a wonderful leader to our freshmen, helping them navigate practices and meets." Fahy finished ninth at the CIF Meet last year, "and will be a strong contributor to the team's performance this year as well. Noleena is also an exceptional AP science student who participated in the Cal Poly Chemistry — MBHS internship project last summer." Fahy is a senior. The third Athlete of the Month is a junior. "Eli [Waldman] has been a consistent leader and our No. 2 runner on the varsity team. He has made drastic improvements in his course times this year, which is due to his consistent training and challenging himself in every workout. He has the potential to do even more, and we are looking forward to him leading the team as a strong senior next year. Eli is well positioned to run fast in the postseason and track this Spring." The MBHS Athletic Boosters Club is a non-profit organization supporting all Junior Varsity and Varsity athletics at Morro



Eli Waldman, junior, is the No. 2 runner on the varsity Morro Bay High School Cross Country Team. Photo submitted

Bay High School. The Boosters meet regularly and hold a number of volunteer fund-raising events throughout the year. Estero Bay News congratulates the November 2023 Athletes of the Month.

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

Walking, Weather
or Not



By Susan Vasquez

Have you ever looked out the window and wondered if you should postpone taking a walk because of what you saw? Today, I was presented with two views out my window. To the south, sunny and brilliant, what I saw encouraged my feet. The view north, dark clouds leapfrogging to the coast, told me in complete certainty that I shouldn't be stepping out the door. Then a rain-bow spread over the sky. Against the dark clouds, the colors were beautiful and perplexing at the same time. Walk or no walk? Of course, I went. And the weather went with me. Down to the beach, one side of the sky filled with brilliant sunshine and the other, a flip side of dark threatening clouds. Threatening what, I wanted to ask myself? I want to think of rain as a promise, not a threat. Still, this hope for rain didn't make me wish for it right here and now. Would the rain wait until I finished my walk? Nature honestly doesn't care about my dry feet, so I wasn't sure at all. Even so, that didn't make me turn around and head for safety. But thinking that perhaps I should find a dry place to perch made me pause to admire the tenacity of the shore birds along the way. The night herons lined up diagonally along the wave line, facing the wind as the weather began changing from coolly invigorating to cold and rainy. They might change their behavior with the weather, but they don't consider leaving as I do. Brave creatures, staying close to the tide and waiting out the drop in air temperature from 60 degrees F to 52. Living along this coast,

Out & About Continued on page 10

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Rehearsal starts: February 5th
Performances: March 1st - 10th (8 shows in 2 weekends)
Annie - The Musical
Auditions: January 13 & 14
Call-backs: January 14 & 15
Rehearsal starts: June 17th
Performances: July 24th - August 4th (9 shows in 2 weekends)
OPEN AUDITIONS

Police Blotter



• **Dec. 3:** Police responded to a disturbance at 9:30 p.m. in the 800 block of Morro. Logs indicated the source of the ado was discovered to be a 40-year-old ululating woman who was nicked for suspicion of being raucous in public.

• **Dec. 3:** Police responded to a disturbance at 7:12 p.m. in City Park in the 700 block of Harbor. Logs indicated the source of the kerfuffle was a 66-year-old intoxicated apparent humanicus dooficus who was taken to jail for her own good.

• **Dec. 3:** Police were called at 12:51 a.m. to a disturbance in the 200 block of Atascadero Rd. A 58-year-old was hit with the grand slam — suspicion of domestic violence, violating a stay-the-hell-away order, false imprisonment, preventing wireless communications, and elder abuse. He was taken to the hospital for evaluation before being thrown into the dungeon with the rest of the sinners.

• **Dec. 3:** Police espied a swizzle stick outside Bottle Liquor in the 900 block of Main St., at 12:25 a.m. Logs indicated the 56-year-old borracho was arrested for suspicion of being too soused to remain in decent society.

• **Dec. 2:** Police contacted a suspicious fellow at 9:06 p.m. in the 600 block of Quintana. Logs indicated the scofflaw had three bench warrants and was issued another disappearance ticket and let go.

• **Dec. 2:** Police responded at 8:47 p.m. to the 400 block of Quintana where logs said a man was outside Dollar Tree Store possibly doing drugs. Logs indicated the dingle berry, 28, was cited for alleged possession of illegal drugs, in this week’s example of why they call it dope.

• **Dec. 2:** At 11:32 a.m. police received an anonymous 9-1-1 call from a woman “stating there was a bomb at the Morro Bay Community Center,” which seems like a waste of a perfectly good bomb. The place was searched but no bomb was found, and since the community center didn’t explode, the bomb threat was apparently a dud.

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• **Dec. 2:** Police contacted a suspicious woman at 1:56 a.m. lurking around the 700 block of Quintana. Logs indicated the 22-year-old apparent night owl had three bench warrants and was issued a future fourth and released back into the wild.

• **Dec. 2:** Police contacted another suspicious woman at 1:38 a.m. in the 500 block of Quintana who also had a bench warrant out of Kings County and she too was cited and released, a case of the juice not being worth the squeeze.

• **Dec. 2:** Police contacted a pair of suspicious fellows, 39 and 58-years old, at 12:53 a.m. in the 900 block of Main. They too were wanted fugitives, one with four warrants and the other two. They were cited and released to await re-capture.

• **Dec. 1:** Police responded at 1:16 p.m. to the 500 block of Atascadero Rd., after two sticky-fingered apparent customers took advantage of a help-yourself aisle and shoplifted items from Miner’s Hardware.

• **Dec. 1:** Police responded at 11:27 a.m. to a home in the 2400 block of Ironwood passed away.

• **Dec. 1:** Police responded lights and sirens to The Siren Saloon in the 900 block of Main where some apparently unwelcomed barfly was buzzing around. Logs indicated a 48-year-old woman was nicked for suspicion of the heinous act of trespassing, in a bar no less. This same model citizen on Nov. 30 at 2:40 a.m. in the 1000 block of Las Tunas, was arrested for suspicion of being stoned on drugs. Also, on Nov., 27 at 7:55 p.m. she was stopped by police in the 1700 block of Main and arrested for suspicion of drunk walking.

• **Nov. 29:** Police responded to the 5400 block of Esplanada Ave., for a report of a missing or run-away hooligan.

• **Nov. 29:** Police towed off an offensive vehicle from the 900 block of Allesandro because the DMV hadn’t gotten its pound of flesh in over 6 months.

• **Nov. 29:** Police responded at 2:55 p.m. to the 200 block of Atascadero Rd., where graffidiots had left their mark on the teen center.

• **Nov. 28:** Police responded at 9:20 p.m. to a disturbance in the 2500 block of Greenwood. Logs indicated a 46-year-old bent fellow was nicked for suspicion of being drunk and disorderly and multiple bench warrants. He was taken for treatment of a case of cranial-rectal inversion disease in the County B&B.

• **Nov. 28:** Police responded at 12:17 p.m. to a report of a dog biting juveniles in the 1200 block of Clarabelle Dr. Police will investigate as it was apparently more bite than bark.

• **Nov. 27:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle for a code violation at 11:56 p.m. at Dunes and Market. Logs said they could only get the 41-year-old driver on a suspended license, an apparent case when tee-totaling paid off.

• **Nov. 27:** Police responded at 3:33 p.m. to a traffic crash in the 200 block of Atascadero Rd. No injuries, nor bloody and gory details were released.

Paso Molester Gets Life

A Paso Robles man has been sentenced to life in prison after pleading guilty to molesting two children under the age of 10.

According to a District Attorney’s Office news release, “Eric Allen Moore, 33 of Paso Robles, has been sentenced to 50-years to life in State Prison after his plea of guilty to two counts of engaging in sex acts with children under the age of 10.”



Eric Allen Moore

Moore in a Dec. 3 hearing also reportedly admitted to two aggravating factors. “The crimes involved victims who were particularly vulnerable and that he took advantage of a position of trust or confidence when he committed the crimes.”

The crimes took place in Paso Robles between March 4, 2017

• **Nov. 27:** Someone turned in some ammunition they were aiming to get rid of.

• **Nov. 25:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 10:54 p.m. cruising’ round the roundabout at Quintana and Morro Bay Boulevard. Logs indicated the driver, 54, was nicked for suspicion of being a tad under the weather and a bit over the limit, and booked into the County B&B to sleep it off.

• **Nov. 25:** Some thieving bilge rat stole a wetsuit in the 1100 block of Front St.

• **Nov. 25:** Police responded at 7:41 a.m. to a disturbance in the 2400 block of Ironwood. Logs indicated a 37-year-old battleaxe was arrested for suspicion of domestic battery and simple assault, in a case that’s no doubt complicated.

• **Nov. 24:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 7:40 p.m. in the area of Beach and Main. Logs indicated a 47-year-old woman driver was arrested for suspicion of driving spun on a suspended license, and tossed into the hoosegow for a no doubt restful nappy.

• **Nov. 24:** Police responded at 11:20 a.m. to a disturbance in the 900 block of Pacific. Logs indicated a juvenile was suffering a bout of vapors and was taken for a 72-hour timeout at County Mental Health.

• **Nov. 24:** Police responded at 1 p.m. to the 300 block of Kern. An elderly woman told police that an “un-allowed tenant of hers caused her to suffer pain and suffering,” and police filed an incident report, so he’s in trouble now.

• **Nov. 23:** At 8:20 p.m. police contacted a regular customer, 37, at Las Tunas and Quintana. She had multiple bench warrants and earned a trip to County La-La-Land.

• **Nov. 23:** Police responded to a disturbance at 10 a.m. in the 2600 block of Main. Logs indicated the disturbance was tracked to a disturbed woman, 48, who was arrested for suspicion of being schwasted on drugs, which explains a lot.

• **Nov. 22:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 12:03 a.m. on Hwy 1 at Easter St. The 23-year-old woman driver was nicked for suspicion of driving thick.

• **Nov. 22:** Police responded at 12:08 a.m. to a home in the 2600 block of Juniper for an attempted burglary report, as the gang that couldn’t shoot straight rides again!

• **Nov. 21:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 8:20 p.m. in the 900 block of Allesandro. Logs indicated they cite/released the 38-year-old driver for a suspended license, a hanging offense in this state.

• **Nov. 20:** Police responded to the 1100 block of Quintana for a reported vandalism to a vehicle and a task force will no doubt be formed to hunt the vandalasses responsible.

• **Nov. 20:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at the suspect time of 11:30 p.m. in the 1700 block of Main, also known as “DUI alley.” The 34-year-old fellow driving had a suspended license and apparently failed miserably a roadside sobriety test too, and was hauled off to the lockup for his crimes against humility.

and March 3, 2022, according to the charging document released by the D.A. The charges accused him of having sex with and sodomy of a child under 10; both were “first times” for both girls; and each set of charges was repeated for both of his victims.

Other charges involve using his hands and other objects on the victims, including “Chapstick in vagina.” His crimes also included lewd and lascivious acts on the two victims.

The charges require Moore to submit to an AIDS test and to register as a convicted sex offender for the rest of his life, in or out of prison.

“While it is tragic to see children so terribly victimized by someone they are supposed to trust most,” Dep. D.A. Kristin Barnard said, “I am amazed at the resilience and courage shown by these two young survivors. I commend both for having the strength to speak up and not stay silent.”

The case was investigated by the Paso Robles Police Department and the D.A.’s Bureau of Investigation and prosecuted by Dep. D.A. Barnard who is part of the Sex Crimes Prosecution Unit.

It’s the latest in a string of felony convictions by the Sex Crimes Unit that has cracked down offenders resulting in life in prison sentences.

COLLEGETOWN

By Michael Walker



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At the Morro Bay Chamber Foundation, we are committed to shaping a brighter future for the youth of Morro Bay. We believe in nurturing the potential of our young minds by providing them with opportunities to excel. Our primary focus is on raising funds to award scholarships to deserving students of Morro Bay High School, fostering the next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs in our vibrant community.



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As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the Morro Bay Chamber Foundation relies on the generosity of individuals and businesses. Your donations are not only a charitable contribution but also a meaningful investment in the future of our youth. Plus, all donations to the Morro Bay Chamber Foundation are tax-deductible.



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Head to The Siren for a New Year's Eve Bash with Bon Bon Vivant ~ An evening of genre bending New Orleans jazz & soul for a chance to donate to the Morro Bay Chamber Foundation! The Siren "Supports Underage Thinking" and will be having a donation jar at the event to support this cause.



By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Help an Animal in Need this Holiday Season

While you are hitting the stores and checking off those lists, don't forget animals in need this holiday season. Misty Gin, owner of the Pet House in Los Osos and the leader for Central Coast Girl Scout Troop 45130, will help make the giving easy. The troop has decorated a Giving Christmas tree at the Pet House with stockings for animals at the San Luis Obispo County Animal Shelter. Each stocking has a picture and biography of the animal. To help, individuals may come by and place any enrichment items (toys or treats) in a stocking on the tree. To complete the community service project, the girl scout troop will deliver the donated items to the Animal Shelter The Pet House, 1010 Los Osos Valley Rd Los Osos, is open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Give them a call at (805) 528 5611.


Cambria Chamber Dinner and Awards Celebration

The Cambria Chamber of Commerce's Annual dinner and awards celebration is slated for Tuesday, January 16 to celebrate the 2023 Cambria Chamber of Commerce Citizen and Business of the Year.

Out & About From page 9

where creatures - all of us - have discarded the notion of seasonal migration, is a funny reminder that we live in a bubble of weather bliss. But there is still a possibility of rain. Even when it is a temperate climate, getting wet is still getting wet, and something my socks don't want to. At one point in the walk, the sky literally split, with one side being blue and the other cloudy gray. Will we have enough rain this season? Since we moved here, my walks at home have been mostly dry drought walks. Tiptoeing through puddles hasn't gotten old — not for me and my damp socks, nor for the glorious life springing up from a wet earth. Before the walk ended, that threat had come true. My glasses spotted over with rain drops. I remembered how important hats were, having forgotten mine for the hundredth time. And I felt the dampness seeping into the sandals I am lucky enough to wear every day. Here I am, loving the rain in central California. More, please.

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, she is a member of the Bookshelf Writers, four Estero Bay women whose writing can be found at <http://www.thebookshelfwriters.com>



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The Business of the Year Award goes to Boni's Tacos, 2253 Main St., and the Citizen of the Year Award goes to Dave Ehlers. During the festivities, retiring president Mel McCulloch will be honored. Vice President Oz Barron will also review the year's activities by the Chamber, including a successful car show, participation in community events, the strong return of Hospitality Night, and the upcoming Art & Wine Festival. The celebration doesn't end there. The 2024-2025 board will be formally installed and introduced. It all takes place at San Simeon Beach Bar & Grill, with a "terrific dinner with their usual wonderful staff." Book your reservations now at <https://form.jotform.com/233386682658067> or call 805.927.3624.

CCSPA Appoints Interim Co-Executive Directors

The Board of Directors of the Central Coast State Parks Association (CCSPA) has two new interim co-executive directors. Julie Lewis and Sierra Emrick will replace Kristin Howland, who has taken an executive director position with Pacific Wildlife Care. "The CCSPA Board is excited to have two talented and intelligent team members able to step in and lead us through this transition," said Valerie Glahn, CCSPA board chair. "Kristin has left big shoes to fill but has laid a foundation for our two new co-directors to be successful. "The current CCSPA staff is comprised of an exceptional group of professionals. Julie Lewis was hired in 2020 and is currently the Retail Operations Manager. She brings invaluable institutional knowledge and business expertise in overseeing CCSPA's retail operations. Sierra Emrick, hired as the Community Outreach Coordinator in August of this year, contributes her experience in program management, outreach, and non-profit governance." Come January, Lewis and Emrick will assume their roles. Together, they will collaboratively provide guidance, motivation, and support to the staff, State Parks Partners, and stakeholders, aiming to advance the mission and impact of the Central Coast State Parks Association. "CCSPA is an ever-expanding community that I am proud to be a part of," said Lewis. "In the past four years, I have seen

CCSPA grow to new levels I could never have imagined. I cannot wait to make an even greater impact here and continue to support our amazing State Parks. Co-directing CCSPA is both an honor and privilege, and I am excited to build upon the strong foundation Kristin has laid to continue to foster the next generation of environmental stewards".

Poly to Tackle Power Grid Challenges

Driven by a mission to transform power grids, Cal Poly Assistant Professor Jason Poon has secured \$496,000 in grant funding to develop innovative computer methods for managing power systems. The award from the National Science Foundation is a collaborative grant that sends \$267,000 to Cal Poly and \$229,000 to the University of Minnesota for the three-year project, "Electronic Analog and Hybrid Computing for Power and Energy Systems." "Managing the grid has become much more complex in the last 10 to 20 years," said Poon, who began teaching electrical engineering at Cal Poly in 2022. "And existing computing tools are limiting our ability to make the grid more sustainable, reliable and efficient." The evolution can be attributed to the rapid adoption of distributed energy resources, such as solar and wind, which can introduce rapid fluctuations in energy generation due to factors such as weather conditions, along with the increased adoption of electric vehicle (EV) charging that can contribute to higher electricity demand, especially during peak charging times. Using these new energy sources and loads is crucial to achieve global sustainability targets, Poon said, but incorporating them into the grid poses challenges in planning, operation and monitoring. The teams at Cal Poly and the University of Minnesota are aiming to evaluate the feasibility of radical new computing tech-



Takin' Car of Business Continued on page 12

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Community

Takin' Care of Business From page 11

niques that have the potential to be much faster and more capable than conventional computing tools used in grid applications, such as cloud-based servers or industrial-embedded processors.

"The development of these new computing techniques could enable faster, real-time decision-making, as well as support the adoption of advanced algorithms for control and prediction, including techniques based on artificial intelligence," Poon said.

Poon hopes to enlist undergraduate and graduate students across Computer Engineering, Computer Science and Software Engineering and Electrical Engineering — the three departments under the umbrella of the newly launched Noyce School of Applied Computing.

"I think there are a lot of opportunities here to support the goals of the Noyce School, both in research and teaching, and I'm excited to collaborate with students and faculty across all three departments," he said.

The project's emphasis on sustainability likely will appeal to a wide swath of students across the College of Engineering.

"A lot of students and young people today are rightfully very passionate about sustainability and addressing climate change, and I hope this project can show them that having hard technical skills in engineering can provide them with the ability to make a meaningful impact on this space," Poon said.

The computing tools developed through the project could have applications well beyond the electric grid.

"Computing — particularly real-time computing — is essential in a variety of applications, including transportation, manufacturing and consumer electronics," Poon said. "What we're developing could provide transformative benefits for all these areas."

Save Energy with the Holiday Feast

This time of year, the kitchen becomes more popular as friends and family gather to share the joys of the season, but things aren't so jolly if your utility bills rocket up to the top of the tree.

Kitchens can consume up to 15% of your home's energy, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. From casseroles to cornbread stuffing and other wintry weather fare, the energy required to cook your seasonal feast can gobble up a significant

part of your holiday energy bill.

Before you roll up your sleeves this year, Pacific Gas & Electric offers these energy and money-saving tips:

- Convection Connection: If your oven has a convection setting, use it! It cooks food faster and at a lower temperature, which saves energy, money and keeps your kitchen cooler.
- Keep a Lid on It: Roast your turkey and side dishes with lids on pots and pans and use glass or ceramic dishes. This reduces cooking time and saves energy and money.
- Don't Peek: Every time the oven door opens, the temperature inside is reduced by as much as 25 degrees, forcing it to work harder and use more energy. Use the oven window instead.
- Call in the Crockpot: Use a crockpot, hot plate, or microwave for smaller meals instead of the stovetop or oven to serve up energy savings.
- Use the Dishwasher: Skip the rinse — just scrape and go! Using your dishwasher is more energy efficient than washing by hand. Wait until there is a full load before starting the dishwasher and be sure to stop it before the heated dry cycle.
- Potluck Power: Encourage your guests to bring their signature dishes, reducing the energy load on your oven and stovetop.
- "Watt" Else Can You Do? When the feast is over, dim the lights and switch to low-energy activities like board games or sharing stories. Make memories without maxing out your energy bill.

Are you or a neighbor Taking Care of Business. Is your business, including non-profits, supporting our community? Maybe you're launching a new business, or you're making updates to your current business model, or re-opening. 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. Submit your awesome local efforts for publication to Editor@EsteroBayNews.com.

Events and Activities

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

By the Sea Productions presents "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" based on the book by Barbara Robinson.

Directed by Jill Turnbow, a former Estero Bay News contributor, it's the story of a small-town Christmas pageant that includes a family of misfit kids whose performances bring a funny and

wonderful appreciation of the true meaning of the holiday.

The cast includes Gregory DeMartini, John Geever, Kate Kravets, Brandon MacDonald, Janice Peters, Zoe Saba, and Jude Walker.

"Christmas Pageant" is a staged reading and plays one week-end only, December 15-17, Friday and Saturday at 7 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. at 545 Shasta Ave. Morro Bay. Reserve tickets at bytheseaproductions.org or call 805-776-3287.

Experience the sounds of the season trumpet style on Sunday, Dec. 17 at 2 p.m. at the Harold J. Miossi CPAC at Cuesta College. The exuberant SLO County Trumpet Alliance comrades are excited to share a fun and festive concert with you. This holiday matinee will showcase a variety of Brassy Christmas hits, leading audiences of all ages in this jubilant winter celebration. Parking in Lot 2A is included with ticket purchase: tickets.cuesta.edu.

Due to popular demand, and a recent large donation, the Morro Bay Friends of the Library are holding their first ever pop-up book sale at the Morro Bay Library, 625 Harbor St. on December 16th from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

All proceeds benefit the library. The sale showcases a large selection of quality and large format books in all subjects, from art to zoology. There are many unusual titles and fascinating items. Additionally, there will be hundreds of quality DVDs, sorted by type. This includes drama, action and adventure, comedy, children and family films, and even a good selection of documentaries.

All music CDs will be available with hundreds of popular and classical titles to choose from. The sale is in the Program Room and takes place rain or shine! There may even be a few surprises while you shop for holiday gifts.

Grinch Photo Op - He's a mean one, Mr. Grinch, but you know you want to meet him and soak in his grumpy cheer. The Morro Bay Peace Officers Association present a meet the Grinch photo event at the Morro Bay Veteran's Hall on Surf St. from 4 to 8 p.m. on Dec. 15 and 16.

There will be free hot chocolate and cookies, and a snow machine for children. Bring your camera to get a memorable shot.

A \$20 donation per family will be asked for before entering the facility. Proceeds collected go towards future events hosted by the Morro Bay Peace Officers Association.

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The San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden (SLOBG) presents Nature Nights, an immersive outdoor holiday light, art, and music experience. Visit the gardens to enjoy this second annual event - newly reimagined! The December nightly schedule brings exciting new additions to Nature Nights, including: Popups from Crave Mini-donuts (Fridays and Saturdays) and Sichuan Kitchen SLO (12/15, 12/22, 12/29, 12/30, 12/31 only) and live music from Walk the Whale on December 15 and 16. Santa will visit the Garden on 12/23 from 6:30 – 8 p.m.

SLOBG continues to feature amazing live local music with Bellissima Handbells on December 15 and 16, a special holiday performance by the fabulous SLO Jingle Belles on December 22 and 23, and a closing weekend with Hakeem on December 29 and 30.

Nature Nights also features enthralling lighting exhibitions and art throughout eight acres of the Garden. Local culinary treats, regional wine, and beer will also be available.

Nature Nights runs through December 31 at the SLO Botanical Garden, 3450 Dairy Creek Rd, San Luis Obispo. For more information, the public may visit www.slobg.org or call (805) 541-1400. Tickets are \$27 for adults, \$17 for youth, and children 5 and under are free. Readers can get 10% off tickets with the code “ESTERO.” Tickets can be purchased at my805tix.com.

Photo courtesy of E.Wand Photography

Free upcoming December programs at the Morro Bay Library - 625 Harbor St, (805) 772-6394

• Hexbugs - Wednesday, December 20, 3 – 5 p.m.

Create mazes for these motorized bugs, race them and more! All ages welcome.

• Nintendo Switch - Wednesday, December 27, 3 – 5 p.m.

Master your gaming skills and make new friends with our Nintendo Switch! We will provide one Switch for up to 4 players at a time - feel free to bring your own too. Games include Mario Kart and Just Dance.



Don't miss the Jingle Jazz Holiday Part featuring the Big Riptide Band presented by the The Basin Street Regulars on December 17 from 1 to 4 p.m. at 780 Bello St. Pismo Beach. Indulge in a festive feast by Sonny and April Paz, the culinary maestros behind our Sunday sessions. The menu? A scrumptious spread featuring ham, turkey, scalloped potatoes, butternut squash casserole, Italian green beans, and rolls. All this, plus the joyous tunes of the Riptide Big Band, awaits you for just \$25, which includes both the meal and entertainment. Silver members enjoy complimentary entry, and everyone gets a sparkling champagne toast with their ticket.

To secure your spot, RSVP to Shonda Croly at (805) 837 2419 or shamrockshonda59@gmail.com. RSVPs are a must for meal tickets! Reserve your spot online at My805tix.com and Eventbrite.com.



Usher in the holidays with the 2nd annual Kingdom Come drag show, a night of drag king royalty at Bang the Drum Brewery on December 22, doors open at 6 p.m. Enjoy performances by a variety of male and genderqueer drag talent for a show that is sure to make your winter merry and gay! Co-hosted by Pandora Mystere and Jackson Havoc, music by DJ Cryptid, and food and drink from Bang the Drum Brewery, expect a cheerful night of queer celebration to herald in the end of the year.

This event is hosted in partnership with the GALA Pride and Diversity Center and the House of Mello-Havoc. Tickets are \$20 and available at my805tix.com. 21+

Book club fans rejoice. Cozy Winter Reading is Coming Jan 1 - Feb 10 at San Luis Obispo County libraries. It's

all about warm blankets and big books to kick off the new year! Kids, teens, and adults are invited to track and rate their titles for fun and for bookish prizes. Look for Cozy Winter Reading at your favorite library in January.



Cal Poly Arts presents Jake Shimabukuro: Christmas in Hawaii on December 19 from 7:30 - 9 p.m. at the Performing Arts Center (PAC). Tickets are \$34 – \$56 and are available at www.calpolyarts.org/20232024-events/jake.

Don't miss SLO Rep's presentation of "A Christmas Story" through Dec. 23.

Humorist Jean Shepherd's memoir of growing up in the Midwest in the 1940s follows 9-year-old Ralphie Parker in his quest to get a genuine Red Ryder BB gun under the tree for Christmas. Ralphie pleads his case before his mother, his teacher and even Santa Claus himself at Goldblatt's Department Store. The consistent response: "You'll shoot your eye out!" All the elements from the beloved motion picture are here, including the family's temperamental exploding furnace; Scut Farkas, the school bully; the boys' experiment with a wet tongue on a cold lamppost; Ralphie's father winning a lamp shaped like a woman's leg in a net stocking; Ralphie's fantasy scenarios and more. "A Christmas Story" is a Central Coast holiday tradition!

Check dates, times, and tickets at SLOrp.org.

Join the Grover Beach Library and Exploration Discovery Center on Dec. 16 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. for a visit with Santa. We will give away children's mini books about kindness to attendees while supplies last at 867 Ramona Ave., Grover Beach. (Note this is across the street from the library.) Bring your cameras and save the moment for years to come.

• Day-pass and membership rates apply.

• \$15 - Adults

• \$5 - Kids (2-12yrs)

• \$10 - Seniors (65yrs+)

Half off one adult day pass admission available for active-duty military, first responders and nurses.

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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**College
Readiness
101**

by Robin Haas, M.A.Ed.

On January 25, 2022, the College Board announced that the SAT Suite of Assessments planned to change to a digital format internationally beginning in 2023 and in the U.S. in 2024. Likewise, ACT has followed suit, announcing its plans to run a pilot of its own digital testing option in the United States this December. Both new digital tests must be taken at an official test site. The main difference is that SAT encourages students to use their own devices whereas students who take the online ACT cannot use personal devices.

According to the College Board, 80% of students who participated in the SAT digital pilot in November 2021 reported that the overall experience was less stressful while 100% of educators favored the new format. Some things will remain the same such as being scored on a scale of 1600 as well as tests being administered either in schools or testing centers only.

This big change from pencil and paper to an all-digital format may have many consequences, both positive and negative, for neurodiverse (ND) students and those with learning differences (LD) who are entitled to standardized testing accommodations. There is a good chance that for ND/LD students, the changes will be mainly positive. Let's examine those positive changes first!

For students who struggle with attention issues, a shorter test will undoubtedly prove to be a more positive and less stressful experience. Students faced with fine motor control challenges will have a much easier time because they will no longer have to track tortuous rows of tiny bubbles. Honestly, I think that change will benefit all students. Moreover, students with reading challenges will have access to a highlighter tool which is crucial when note taking as well as the ability to create more space between lines of text. Other features that will help students with visual processing and reading challenges will be the ability to increase the font, colors, and background. New shorter reading passages will also aid struggling readers because they will be

To Test or Not to Test: That is the Question?

afforded more time to comprehend what they are reading.

Another positive SAT change will be a text-to-speech feature. By changing the speed of the reader's voice, students who need it will have more time to process text. To increase focus, students will be able to eliminate distractions by choosing to view one line of text at a time as well as a zoom feature to increase the font. One of the biggest advantages of the new SAT is questions that are dynamic that adjust to a student's ability. This feature alone is likely to decrease frustration and improve performance. Time management tools such as a countdown clock that provides warnings may prove useful too. Like the ACT, calculators will now appear on screen throughout the test.

With the new digital version, it is hard to imagine many cons; however, it is possible a student might persevere on the new adaptive feature which could result in an anxiety attack and/or a lower test performance due to distraction. Some students may not be comfortable using a borrowed computer at the testing site that is different from the one a school normally provides. Nevertheless, these new changes are on the way. Hopefully, the benefits will outweigh the possible negative consequences. One way students can prepare for the new digital SAT is by taking digital practice tests ahead of time in order to familiarize themselves with the new tools.

Perhaps you aren't sure which test will match your strengths and test taking style. The best thing to do is to take a diagnostic ACT and SAT to compare the process and the results. Whichever test you ultimately decide to stick with, be sure to take that test more than once to have an opportunity to "superscore" your results by combining your highest scores from different sections of the test. Many colleges will allow you to submit your "superscore" rather than individual test results. FairTest keeps an updated list of the schools that are test-optional and test-free, and over 1,800 institutions are on the test-optional list for Fall 2023.

You are probably wondering when is the

Collage 101 Continued on page 17

Community

Letter to
The Editor



New Candidates Needed

This November it’s going to be a tough choice between candidates for President of the United States — the one being sued for failure to prevent genocide or the one being sued for fraud. What must the rest of the world think of us? Hopefully both parties will find someone else to run for the job.

Cynthia Hawley
Environmental Protection Attorney, inactive

Viewpoint

Is Morro Bay in
danger of being
“industrialized”?

By John Lindt, Los Osos

There is a popular mantra going around that plans for a battery storage plant and offshore wind project 20-30 miles off the coast will add up to “industrialization” of the pristine fishing village of Morro Bay.

A look at the history books and the giant industrial smokestacks that today preside over the town tell a noticeably different story.

Industry, energy production, military use and tourism have co-existed here for almost 85 years. That includes the fishing industry fleet that has shrunk from times past due to overfishing. But make no mistake, there was a sizable industry that thrived here including onshore processing and canneries with a significant abalone, sardine and albacore business. It was the largest West Coast port for abalone shipments. The fishing industry had its heyday until the 1990s when it began a sharp decline in fish landings. Industrial techniques were applied according to one historical account. “They used a new method called trawling, which involved dragging a net over the seafloor to catch any marine life that was caught underneath. For three decades, this tactic was the primary means to catch fish and millions of pounds of seafood were caught annually. However, fish were being harvested faster than they could repopulate and the sea habitats along the Central Coast were quickly raked up. “

A 2006 LA Times story reported that the fishing fleet at Morro Bay was down from several hundred boats to perhaps 50. Changing their focus to more sustainable practices, the smaller fishing industry here has recovered.

Morro Bay’s landscape has been heavily altered for military use during World War II when troops heading to Normandy practiced the invasion along the dunes here. War with Japan convinced the Navy to build a 130-acre base at the north end of the estuary creating a flat staging area.

Morro Bay is far from natural — it is an artificial harbor constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Morro Rock itself was originally surrounded by water, but the Army built a large artificial breakwater and road across the north end of the harbor, linking Morro Rock and the mainland. Some of the rock used for this and for the artificial breakwaters was carved out from the rock.

In the 1950s PG&E bought the same land from the Navy to build a large oil-fired power plant with three 450-foot tall smokestacks that have, to this day, towered over the town. The large plant next to the estuary also included giant oil tanks that received oil by ocean pipeline. The infrastructure next to the plant

Morro Bay Lighted Boat Parade



Photos by Dean Sullivan

included a large electric substation and transmission towers that today crisscross the hills of San Luis Obispo County. None of this “industry” scared away tourists.

Industry, energy production, military use and tourism have co-existed here for almost 85 years.

More large oil tanks were built on the hillside of Morro Bay to help ship San Joaquin Valley oil by pipeline to ships for export. Like the oil tanks next to the power plant, the hillside tanks have now been removed as oil era infrastructure is being dismantled.

Right where the six 34-million gallon combined tanks next to the power plant were removed, the owner of the mothballed 100ft tall power plant now wants to build several 30-ft tall battery storage warehouses.

All those old fossil fuel facilities contaminated our soil, pumped lung-harming particulates and greenhouse gases into the air and polluted our marine estuary with wastewater needed to cool the plant. Regulators have now banned dumping of wastewater into the ocean or estuaries because of clear harm to sea life. We should be glad to say goodbye to all that.

The oil industry has dominated the Morro Bay landscape on its northern edge as well with Chevron’s oil receiving facility, now abandoned, allowing the valley and hillside to return to open space again.

Our harbor has never been pristine - it was envisioned as a place to ship goods safely including products from the Central Valley and as WW2 loomed, the Navy built an amphibious training base on its shore. Altering the landscape, engineers added “new land” along the bay from dredged material, notes a Morro Bay Historical Society account. The harbor was carved out by the federal government.

Yes, if you’re worried about the industrialization of Morro Bay, you’re about 85 years too late with your concerns. The good news is that the oil industry is removing itself year by year, including those huge offshore platforms along the coast that spoiled our beaches and birds with oil over the years. That old economy is being replaced by clean renewable energy - solar, wind, thousands of MWs of energy storage across the nation and on the Central Coast, not a reason to complain but a reason to celebrate.

Morro Bay does have a clear and present danger from rising seas, stronger storms and ocean acidification. About a quarter of the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels is absorbed into the ocean. There it causes a chemical change resulting in ocean acidification. Ocean acidification poses an economic threat to the health and prosperity of the \$100 million a year West Coast shellfish industry and the aquatic food chain.

All of these calamities are caused by the overheating of our atmosphere. Morro Bay can lead the charge to save ourselves, keep the lights on and protect the wildlife that live here.



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Community

Los Osos Holiday Parade



Christmas in Cayucos



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Season's Greetings

Here's to all good things this holiday season.



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Community

Road Repairs From page 1

vehicle registration fees and enacted a special registration fee on electric vehicles, which don't pay gas taxes but do use the public roads.

SB-1 monies are doled out on a per capita basis and Morro Bay, being such a small city, always gets the minimum, which this year at \$260,000 is more than it has gotten in the past.

"No local matching funds are required to receive this year's SB-1 funding allocation," reads a staff report from Public Works, "however, the City must keep in good standing with its commitment on 'Maintenance of Effort' over time to qualify for the continued receipt of SB-1 funds."

The City is also fortunate that voters approved two local sales tax measures — Measure Q (approved in 2006) and E-20 (2020), which tack on 1.5-percent sales taxes on all taxable goods and services sold in the City.

The two tax measures are unlike the State sales tax, i.e. Sacramento can't take them away to fix its own budget messes.

For FY 23/24 the City has budgeted \$1.84 million in M-Q & M-E-20 monies. So there's a total of \$2.1 million to spend.

Though neither M-Q or E-20 are designated to be spent in any particular way, the City put them forth to voters with the promise they would be used for police and fire department needs (both), and road infrastructure repairs and storm drain repairs (M-Q).

Statewide there's a tremendous amount of money generated by SB-1. "SB-1," the report said, "generates over \$5 billion annually at full implementation for the State; \$1.5 billion of which will be distributed to local agencies and counties through the Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Account [RMRA]."

SB-1 had a graduated implementation of the gas taxes and in 2020, the full amount came due. The City's share, which was about \$100,000 the first few years, have remained pretty steady for the past 2-3 years, according to the City's report, with the City getting between \$250,000-\$300,000 each year "dedicated to

roadway projects. SB-1 includes accountability and transparency provisions to enable local residents to remain aware of the projects proposed to be funded by SB-1 in their local area. As part of these provisions, it is a requirement for local agencies to adopt project lists before the start of every fiscal year. The project list must include all projects proposed to receive funding from the RMRA."

These project lists have to be approved annually by the City Council via Resolution, which the Council approved and the list was sent off to the California Transportation Commission for approval.

If all goes right, the City expects to get started on the next roadway repairs sometime next spring.

Picking which streets to repair is done scientifically, and not entirely based on which streets garner the most citizen complaints.

"Project selection," the report said, "is developed by the Public Works Department utilizing the City's pavement management system, StreetSaver, in coordination with recommendations from Public Works staff and engineering/pavement consultants."

Busier streets get priority. "Streets that are heavily traveled generally will be prioritized because of the high volume of usage by the public. Critical point management, which targets treating roads that are at the bottom of one category of maintenance before they fall into another more costly treatment category, is widely used by many jurisdictions and is what also contributes heavily to street selection."

So while readers might believe their street needs to be completely torn out and rebuilt, the City is more likely to consider different fixes to improve it to a point it can wait for that total overhaul.

"These strategies," the report said, "are standard best practices for pavement management and are incorporated to utilize the limited funds on streets that will have the best possible impact on the pavement condition index (PCI) of the City's collective road network. Additionally, when possible, the City will make efforts to distribute projects equitably geographically in the community."

But as anyone in construction could probably tell you, construction schedules are not set in stone and any number of things could cause delays, especially the weather.

The City is behind in its two previous repair projects.

"The FY 22/23 project has yet to be completed and is slated to be a surface seal project totaling between \$1.5-1.7 million," the report said. "The FY 21/22 project was delayed and is near completion with the recent repairs on South Bay Boulevard, Main Street, Harbor Street, and other high-volume roadways."

They anticipate the FY 23/24 project to get started sometime next spring but it's dependent on the weather. Forecasters are predicting another El Niño weather pattern for this winter, so we could see big storms like we did at the start of 2023. Such storms seem to tear up the roads faster than they can be repaired. The City plans to target some of the town's worst roads.

"The target project for this fiscal year," the report said, "is rehabilitating some of the lowest pavement condition index [PCI] residential roads that are in poor and very poor condition in order to slow down the rapidly declining PCI citywide."

Among the streets slated to be repaired next year are: Panay Street, Panorama Drive, Surf Street, Oahu Street, Dunbar Street, Dogwood Avenue, Java Street, Paula Street, and Orcas Way.

The repairs that are being planned should extend the life of these streets by 15-20 years, according to the City report.

The City has already gotten to work on the design of the repair project and according to the report, they expect the work to be completed in August 2024. But first they will have to put together a bid package and solicit bids. After a set time — usually 45 days — the bids will be opened and the lowest, qualified, responsive bid should be awarded the contract.

Obituary
Richard Joseph
Sylvester



With heavy hearts, we announce the passing of Richard "Dick" Sylvester on November 13th at his longtime home in Morro Bay, with all his daughters by his side.

Dick was born in March of 1939 in San Luis Obispo to Pauline and Joseph Sylvester and was the oldest of five children. Dick spent most of his childhood between his grandparents' ranch and the waterfront in Avila Beach. As he got older, he would help in the Sylvester's Abalone Shop, and on his father's fishing boat where they would catch salmon and crab. In his spare time, he enjoyed hunting and working on welding projects. In 1960, Dick Sylvester wed the love of his life, Trudy (Pierce). In 1963 he purchased his fishing boat and named it the "Trudy S" after his young bride. Dick and Trudy had four daughters, and over the years they enjoyed countless family gatherings and barbecues. He was an avid spokesperson for the fishing community and was an influential part of the Morro Bay Commercial Fishermen's Organization. He continued to fish commercially until 2017.

Dick was preceded in death by his wife, Trudy; siblings, James "Butch" Sylvester and Eleanor Lucas; and parents, Pauline and Joe Sylvester.

His life will be remembered by his daughters: Tina (John) Perry, Terry (Bruce) White, Tammy (Ron) Ellis, and Tracie (Russell) Mitchell; siblings: Edward Sylvester and Kathleen Luis; his ten grandchildren, ten great-grandchildren, and many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

A Celebration of Life will be held following the Holidays. Please contact a family member for details. In lieu of flowers, the family is requesting donations be made to:

Morro Bay Commercial Fishermen Org.
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Please note with check: "For the restoration of the Trudy S"



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Community

Bird Festival From page 1



Jon Dunn, renowned ornithologist identifying a Burrowing Owl on Morro Rock during the Annual Morro Bay Bird Festival.

Authors and avid journal writers, listen up! Nature journaling has nine events on the scheduled. Sharon Lovejoy, who many locals will recall visiting her garden shop in Cambria, is the author of several New York Best Selling Children’s books. She has several sessions teaching how to observe and describe birds in nature.

Artists Alert! Several professional artists will be instructing sketching classes, including Fiona Gillogly, a protégé of John Muir Laws.

Robbie continued, “All day Saturday, we have a free Community Family Day at the Morro Bay Community Center. Journaling, craft making, meet-up with the Pacific Wildlife raptors. We have touchable reptiles this year.”

The vendor bazaar has everything from jewelry to trinkets, souvenirs, and books – even purchase Big Year Coffee. “And you can dissect an owl pellet.”

Excuse me? Dissect an owl pellet? Robbie explained, “The kids love it! Owls don’t digest all their food and when they regurgitate it, we discover what they’ve eaten – bugs, bones, and stuff.”



Shorebirds return to Morro Bay for the winter.

Bird festival traditions continue to highlight premier keynote speakers. Featured guests for 2024 include Jennifer Ackerman, John Muir Laws, and Jon Dunn. Jennifer is the author of several books including her latest, “What an Owl Knows.” John Muir Laws is a naturalist, artist and educator who has dedicated his work to connecting people to nature through art and science. Jon Dunn is a renowned bird expert who has co-authored seven editions of National Geographics’ “Birds of North America.”

Youth outreach is major focus for 2024 with younger people led by younger people. Several programs are on deck, many are free. Max Taylor is a local 17-year-old birding expert. Lara Jseng, also 17, is an expert birder in college. Fiona Gillogly, 20, is a birder, artist, and nature journalist. Susie and Robbie have also visited the high schools and middle schools to invite local youth.

Might landscape design and gardening be your preferred interest? Would you like monarch butterflies in your garden and want to know what attractive pollinators to plant? Have you been to SLO Botanical Gardens recently? It is one of the sites where master gardeners will be available with information about SLO’s native plants.

If your garden has lots of birds but you don’t know what species are visiting, there are master classes available on falconry, gulls, and how to recognize bird sounds.

Ever heard of the Beaver Brigade? This trip allows you to



Bird festival trip leaders celebrating the last event of the 2023 festival. Left to Right: Curtis Marantz, Chris Cameron, Robbie and Bob Revel.

walk out into a river in north county and investigate beaver dams. The group’s goal is educating, conserving, and protecting the species.

Maybe you enjoy meeting visitors from other areas of our world? Through the years Morro Bay has attracted many of the 45-million American “birders” who will spend \$43 billion in equipment, visits and festivals worldwide. Our friendly residents mixed into this year’s trips and sessions, whether festival volunteers or registered attendees, automatically become ambassadors for Morro Bay. Robbie said registrants from more than 30 states are already registered. Typically, 70% come from out of the area. Fact! Morro Bay Bird Festival is the largest ecotourism event on the West Coast. This is, indeed, positive for our local economy.

Isn’t it time we take a break from the noise and join our visiting birders who have treasured this festival for now 27 years. Susie reminded us that taking time to “take a walk, meditate and enjoy the nature is relaxing. Why not take a weekend to reflect on the beauty around us — the birds in flight or acting out before us in their habitat? It’s therapeutic to get away from our busy lives and news about worldwide conflict and drama. And Martin Luther King weekend is a good time for reflection about how we want to live our lives the rest of the week and great time for a walk discovering and enjoying our piece of paradise – our Central Coast environment.”

And, even I can navigate the amazing list of activities on the website www.morrobaybirdfestival.org

Photos courtesy of Morro Bay Bird Festival

Storm Preparedness Guidance.

The City of Morro Bay is offering tips to help community members be prepared for the predicted El Niño weather patterns and potentially damaging weather conditions that it could bring to Morro Bay this winter.

According to an August 2023 ENSO forecast by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), there is a greater than 95% chance that El Niño conditions will continue through the 2023-24 winter, and a 66% percent chance of a strong El Niño. Past strong El Niños have been characterized by extended periods of high intensity rainfall, triggering heavy runoff, floods, mudslides, debris flow, and landslides both inland and along the coast.

Check List:

- Inspect slopes: Visually inspect all sloped areas for signs of erosion gully, surface cracks, and slumping. If signs of slope movement are observed, consider contacting a California-licensed geologist or geotechnical engineer for a site inspection.
- Inspect bare ground: Large bare areas may be sources for

mudflows during rain.

- Inspect drains and gutters: Storm water runoff should be directed into appropriate drainage control areas to avoid excessive soil saturation.

- Inspect structures
- Inspect Roofs

The City will make available mounds of sand for sandbagging in the library parking lot before major storms. The City does not provide the sandbags or a shovel. The public is also encouraged to prepare for severe weather and other natural disasters by ensuring they have taken steps for personal emergency preparedness. The recommendation is to have sufficient supplies in your residence to sustain each occupant for at least 72 hours. This includes food, water, medications, clothing, batteries, flashlights, sanitation supplies, blankets or bedding for warmth, and sources for backup power such as battery packs, generators, etc. to charge cell phones and radios.

College 101 From page 15

best time to sit for an official exam? Should I finish testing before the SAT goes digital? Would the ACT be a safer bet? First of all, begin with your top priority: test date or test format. Check out the schedules for the next year. Do any of these dates conflict with an important personal commitment? If possible, you should allow yourself time to sit for 2 - 3 official exams to maximize your point increases and continue to build familiarity with your test of

choice over time. Clearly, there is a great deal to consider. While it may not be your idea of a great time, taking diagnostic exams is a great place to start.

Robin Haas, M.A.Ed. is the founder of Haas College Connections and can be reached at Robin@HaasCollegeConnections.com. She is a member of the Independent Educational Consultants Association (IECA) and earned a Certificate in College Counseling with Distinction from UCLA.

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Map shows the route of a proposed water pipeline that would bring state water to Los Osos. The pipeline would follow existing roads [Quintana and South Bay Boulevard] and is depicted in red. The shaded area is the Morro Bay City Limits. The remaining area is under County jurisdiction. Map courtesy LOCSD

storage tanks, which the neg-dec said was only 2.5 miles.

“The intertie [to the Chorro Valley Pipeline],” the report said, “would be constructed to the north of the southbound lane of Highway 1 and the proposed pipeline alignment would begin at this location, cross under Highway 1 and extend south toward Quintana Road, west along Quintana Road toward South Bay Boulevard, south along South Bay Boulevard, and would terminate at the LOCSD’s basin at the intersection of Santa Ysabel Avenue and South Bay Boulevard.”

That alignment would place the actual tie-in somewhere near the intersection of Quintana and Hwy 1 (San Bernardo Creek Road on the other side of the highway).

The Morro Bay City Limits extend out Quintana from South Bay Boulevard and down South Bay a ways past the intersection with State Park Road (in the “S” turns).

“The entire project,” the report said, “would be located within the public right-of-way and within the unincorporated San Luis Obispo County, under the jurisdiction of the County of

San Luis Obispo, except for the portion of the project beginning approximately 600-feet north of the Cerro Cabrillo Trailhead/ Quarry Trailhead parking lot/turnout [on South Bay] to approximately 1,200-feet south of the South Bay Boulevard and Quintana Road intersection, which would be located in Morro Bay city under the jurisdiction of the City of Morro Bay.”

It may only be partly located in the City Limits, but the entire project is within the coastal zone and under the watchful eye of the Coastal Commission, which the LOCSD GM said has appeal authority.

“I have had several discussions with the County,” LOCSD General Manager Ron Munds told Estero Bay News, “and they are supportive of the project but there hasn’t been any type of official negotiations yet. Morro Bay does not own the Chorro Valley Pipeline; the County owns it so the CSD does not need their permission to connect. We will need an encroachment permit to install the pipeline within their City Limits.”

Morro Bay solely paid for much of the Chorro Valley Pipeline (CVP) as part of its subscription to the Coastal Branch of the State Water Project, which had been in the planning for decades and was built and completed in the mid-1990s. It delivers State Water from a treatment plant — Polonio Pass — off Hwy 46 and provides drinking water to subscribers in SLO and Santa Barbara Counties. The Central Coast Water Authority owns and maintains and operates the plant and the Coastal Branch Pipeline.

Morro Bay is the last subscriber hooked into the CVP, which dead ends at the City’s Kings Street tank farm. The City gets 1,313-acre feet a year, with a like amount in reserve, a so-called “drought insurance” allocation.

Excess water, which the City didn’t ask be delivered in a given year, is stored in the San Luis Reservoir, one of the main reservoirs for the whole State Water Project system (plus the Federal Central Valley System).

According to the County’s “Integrated Regional Water Management Plan” from 2020, “The Chorro Valley Water System includes these entities: CMC, Camp San Luis Obispo, Cuesta College, and San Luis Obispo County Operations Center/Office of Education.”

That water system includes state water and water from the Whale Rock Reservoir (via the Whale Rock Pipeline), as well as numerous private water wells.

“CMC operates a water treatment plant (for Whale Rock water) to provide potable water to CMC facilities and wheels water to Camp San Luis Obispo, Cuesta College, County Operations Center (which includes Fleet Services, the Water Quality Lab, Juvenile Detention Center, County Jails, Office of Emergency Services), and the County Office of Education.

“These entities have several inter-entity agreements relating to entitlements to their shared water supplies, which include Whale Rock Water, Chorro Reservoir, and State Water. Camp San Luis Obispo also has first rights to one on-site well (County Well No. 1).”

Los Osos’ plan is to build the pipeline and take state water during drought and below average rainfall years, so it too should be able to build up a reserve bank of water, as Morro Bay has done.

Such a reserve bank of water comes in handy when the State cuts deliveries because of a low snowpack in the Sierras, where all that water originates.

The Coastal Commission has played a large role in Los Osos’ water situation having declared it would not approve any coastal development permits issued by the County if it means adding to the water demand and in turn the overdraft situation.

That decree has effectively placed a moratorium on CDP permits based on the water supply. This after the town fought over a sewer moratorium for over 30 years before the County finally got it built in 2016.

It remains to be seen if the commission will support this project to supplement the Los Osos water supply or if they will condition it to prevent growth in the community, which the halt on CDPs has effectively done. For now, they’re out of it.

“The neg-dec,” Munds said, “isn’t appealable to the Coastal Commission but the project will need a Coastal Development Permit from the County and Morro Bay. Those permits would be appealable to the Coastal Commission.”

The LOCSD also doesn’t need permission from its customers to proceed. Asked if the project would need a Prop. 218 — the Right to Vote on Taxes Act — vote, Munds said it didn’t.

“A Prop 218 vote,” Munds said, “is not required since the project will be paid by rates and charges, grants and possible low interest loans.”

And the price at this point seems almost like a bargain. “The preliminary engineering cost estimate is approximately \$8 million dollars,” Munds said. “This would be shared with the other water purveyors who have expressed interest in the project.

“To put this into perspective, the Program C well we are working on will cost about \$3 million but doesn’t add a drop of ‘new’ water to our water system [the groundwater basin].”

And because the community sewer system the County put in recycles much of the treated wastewater back into the basin, bringing water in from outside will add a certain amount to the basin after it’s run through homes and businesses and fully treated by the County. There’s a large leach field facility that goes with the County’s sewer system located above Broderson Avenue where water is to be recycled.

And because state water is treated with different chemicals than the LOCSD’s water, they will need to switch that out too. “The water purveyors,” Munds said, “will need to switch from using chlorine to chloramine for disinfection. This is not an issue. No added storage tanks will be needed. The CSD will use the two existing storage tanks on 16th Street as the terminus for the intertie pipeline.”

The project has a long ways to go and many of the details, like capacity, have to be worked out and ultimately designed into the project. Among these is the final capacity of the pipeline, as 200-acre feet a year and only when there’s too little rainfall, seems like a small of an amount of water to solve the town’s water issues.

How long is this project expected to take? “The timeline,” Munds said, “is difficult to estimate at this point. It is the CSD’s hope to have the project well underway later in 2025. The initial 200-acre feet is the amount estimated that is needed to offset water production [pumping] in the basin that will halt and maybe reverse the seawater intrusion the groundwater has been experiencing for many years. There will be extra capacity in the pipeline if needed in the future.”

It’s important to decide up front just how much water the town wants to get. The County Flood Control District has thousands available, and once a pipeline is installed, the capacity will be set.

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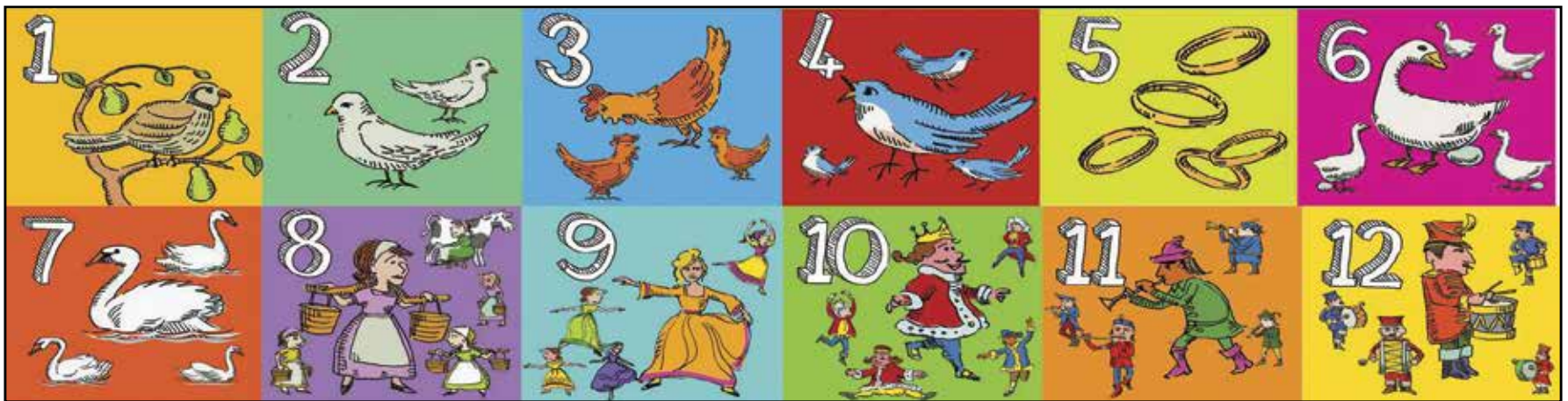


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