

Avian Flu Not Found in Area Elephant Seals



A researcher collects a nasal swab sample from a symptomatic elephant seal weaned pup for avian influenza testing. Photo by Frans Lanting for the Beltran Lab / UC Santa Cruz under NMFS Permit 28742

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

The first ever outbreak of avian influenza among elephant seals in the state has researchers on alert. In February, seven weaned elephant seal pups in Año Nuevo State Park, just north of Santa Cruz, tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), also known as the bird flu. The outbreak marks the first case in marine mammals in California and the first detection in northern elephant seals. The disease decimated populations of a related species, southern elephant seals, in Argentina in 2023.

Currently, about 35 marine mammals are being tested for suspected influenza virus infection at Año Nuevo, but what about our rookery at Piedras Blancas in San Simeon? As of March 5, the elephant seals who breed in the area have not been affected, which is good news, but caution is still in play.

“As far as we have seen, it looks like the virus spilled

over from birds to seals, but there is no evidence of seal-to-seal transmission at this point. That means it is unlikely that seals will bring the virus down from Año Nuevo” Heather E.M. Liwanag, Ph.D., a Cal Poly professor who runs the team that is monitoring the local population, told Estero Bay News. “It is possible that we could get spillover from birds to seals here, like what happened at Año Nuevo. We have been worried about that for a few years now, and the event at Año Nuevo is the first time we have seen it happen.”

Año Nuevo State Park is home to an elephant seal colony with approximately 5,000 seals during the winter breeding season. About 1,350 seals were present on the beach when the outbreak began. California State Parks has temporarily closed public access to seal viewing areas at that location and cancelled its popular guided elephant seal tours for the remainder of the season while officials investigate the wildlife health threat.

The Piedras Blancas Elephant Seal Viewing Area and
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More Money Donated to Fix Rotting Wharf



Photo from the support structure for the Morro Bay Fishermen's Wharf and a deteriorated timber cap. Photo courtesy M.B. Harbor Dept.

By Neil Farrell

More money has been donated by local fishermen to help the Harbor Department repair a rotting wharf that's a key facility to the local commercial fishing industry. The Morro Bay Community Quota Fund has granted \$150,000 to the Harbor Department to assist with needed repairs to the Fishermen's Wharf, a fish unloading dock located just south of the North T-pier.

It was the second large donation made by commercial fishers to help fix the aging structure. Last September, the Morro Bay Commercial Fishermen's Organization turned over a \$400,000 grant it received from the Joint Cable-Fisheries Liaison Committee. With the Quota Fund's donation, the local fishers have now given some \$550,000 towards fixing the wharf.

An inspection of that and other harbor facilities conducted by a consultant through the Harbor Department showed numerous issues, including missing support piles, an undermined seawall, and a deteriorating support timber.

Called The Brady Report, that study inspected all the City-owned facilities, identified problems and rated the various areas as to the severity of the problem at each one. It was an eye-opening report that estimated the total

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100 Years Young — Elaine LaLanne to Celebrate Century Mark

By Neil Farrell

Morro Bay's most famous citizen is about to celebrate a milestone few people reach and perhaps fittingly, she'll do it after being inducted into another Hall of Fame.

Elaine LaLanne, widow of the late fitness guru and world-famous health and fitness entrepreneur, Jack LaLanne will turn 100 on March 19, just days after she and Jack are inducted into the Health And Fitness Association Hall of Fame at a special ceremony set for March 15 in San Diego. In 2017, she was inducted into the National Fitness Hall of Fame.

“Elaine LaLanne is a true trailblazer,” wrote Liz Clark, President and CEO of the Health & Fitness Association, “whose influence spans generations. Her lifelong dedication to exercise, nutrition, and helping others live healthier lives has



Elaine LaLanne flexing her muscles is about to turn 100-years old on March 19. Submitted photo

left an indelible mark on our industry.

At nearly 100-years young, Elaine is quite simply the most youthful 99-year-old I have ever met, and she personally inspires me — not only to keep moving my body,

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Our Stories: Denise deLancillotti — Spreading Sunshine One Outfit at a Time!

By Judy Salamacha



Denise deLancillotti is an independent woman with a heart for community as big as her husband's. She and Bobby deLancillotti, the recognized founder and CEO of the Estero Bay Kindness Coalition, recently announced Sunshine and Seed, their cost-free youth clothing store, had recently reopened in larger quarters at El Morro Church in Los Osos. The program offers free gently used clothing to elementary school children generally attending Monarch Grove, Baywood Elementary, and Del Mar

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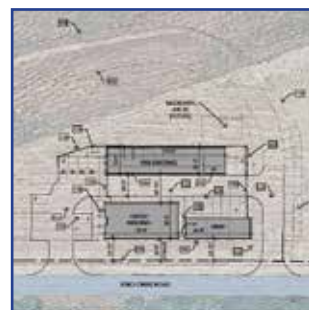
Marine Mammal Center Finds New Home

By Neil Farrell

The non-profit organization that rescues sick and injured marine mammals looks like it will be rescued too.

The Marine Mammal Center and Cayucos Sanitary District have taken one more step towards an agreement that would allow the MMC to build a new triage facility on property owned by the District on Toro Creek Road.

That's where the CSD built its new Water Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF) to treat the sewage generated by Cayucos. The property is located at 800 Toro Creek



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Movement on Demolishing Old Sewer Plant

By Neil Farrell

Even after their divorce, the City of Morro Bay and Cayucos Sanitary District appear to have issues communicating, but they're working on it.

In partnership on a jointly owned sewer treatment plant on Atascadero Road from 1964-2023, the two agencies have had what could probably best be described as a rocky relationship that crumbled after their proposed new sewer project to replace the old plant collapsed in 2013 when the Coastal Commission denied on appeal an already approved plant project. It was appealed by 14 different entities, and most were from Morro Bay.

The two sides had been working together on that project, located at the same Atascadero Road property since 2003 after the Regional Water Quality Control Board ordered the old plant be upgraded to eliminate a special permit under the Clean Water Act.

When it became known that just-elected members of the City Council had lobbied against the project, which the previous city council had approved after much debate, Cayucos divorced itself from the joint project and struck out on its own, eventually building a new treatment plant called the Water Resources Recovery Facility on Toro Creek Road.

For its part, the City moved forward with a new plant of its own moving the new facility to ranchlands at the terminus of South Bay Boulevard and now called a Water Resources Center.

The two agencies had always met every few months to discuss business. And during the former project's review, the two boards met monthly. Since the split, now over a decade ago, they have not held a single joint meeting.

That's left the old treatment plant on Atascadero Road loosely holding the relationship together, a bit like a child caught between divorcing parents.

Morro Bay has been working on demolishing the old plant and cleaning up whatever they find in the process, with an eye at future redevelopment, preferably into something that matches the visitor-serving commercial zoning of that area and brings in tax revenues to the City. But where does the CSD fit into those plans?

Last June (2025) the City Council hired a consultant to design the decommissioning project, bringing in AQEA and awarding a \$901,000 contract for "Design of the Demolition and Decommissioning of the WWTP," according to a staff report from June 2025.

AQEA was the lower of two bids the City got for the contract.

AQEA's contract came with a 5% contingency (\$45,050), bringing the overall contract budget up to \$946,000.

This cost is coming out of the Water Reclamation Center's original budget, which allowed for the decommissioning work as part of the original Coastal Development Permit that the Coastal Commission finally settled upon when it approved the new, re-located plant.

Back in June, the City predicted AQEA's design work would be completed in 10 months, giving a target date for its completion upcoming in May.

Recently, the City asked Cayucos to give the OK to do archaeological testing on the old plant site, taking 15 core samples, 15-foot deep at sites scattered all over the property. Cayucos has initially said "No."

David Athey, the District's General Manager, recommended, and the board agreed, to withhold permission to do the drilling until he has "more time to evaluate the request," Athey told Estero Bay News. "It's just so I can make



Morro Bay's old treatment plant located on Atascadero road. a good recommendation back to the board."

The permit for the demolition goes all the way back to the CDP for Morro Bay's new plant. "The City's Water Reclamation Facility program's Coastal Development Permit from the California Coast Commission," reads that June 2025 report, "includes a special condition to decommission and demolish the WWTP.

"The Demolition and Decommissioning project requires a thorough removal of all plant components [e.g., building, fences, storage tanks, etc.], with potential exception of those specified in the Wastewater Treatment Plant Removal and Restoration Plan Special Condition No. 7 [Maintenance Building, Administration Building, Chlorine Building, and Collection Shed], and the site restored to a safe and level condition, comparable to the surrounding areas."

The CDP may require removal of the old plant but there are risks involved. "Several structures extend below the groundwater table, and dewatering in such proximity to the coastline raises significant concerns about impacts to the local groundwater basin, including the potential intrusion of seawater."

The City was negotiating with the Commission to "limit excavation to components within five feet of the existing ground surface.

"In addition, there is a high likelihood of encountering hazardous materials during demolition, including lead-based paint, asbestos-containing materials, and potentially mercury.

"These materials must be identified, removed, and disposed of in accordance with all applicable regulations to ensure the safety of workers, nearby residents, and the surrounding environment."

All excavation activities in the Atascadero Road/Hwy 41 corridor and along Morro Creek, including the old plant site are tricky. It's a known archaeological area.

Indeed, pretty much every project done in the area from the beach stretching back to the eastern edge of town and following the creek, has encountered Native American artifacts of one kind or another.

Shards of pottery to arrowheads and even human remains, have been found in various spots on either side of Morro Creek and along the roadway.

That's because in ancient times, this was one of the centers of civilization for Native Americans who made their home here for thousands of years.

So it was with some surprise that Athey went to his board requesting they delay the City. "The District was not notified, consulted or involved in any way with the City's application to the California Coastal Commission for a Coastal Development Permit for demolition and decommissioning of the jointly owned WWTP and was unaware of the conditions of approval until recently."

He wonders why they are drilling down so far. "The borings will be approximately 15-foot deep; however, it is unknown why the 15-foot depth was chosen. This is well below the water table where cultural resources and remains are not likely to be present. An overall archaeological work plan has not been provided to District staff. Therefore, staff cannot adequately evaluate the impacts and scope of the

proposed borings."

Athey told EBN since that Feb. 19 meeting that he's been working with the City on getting the information he needs for an informed recommendation to the CSD board and appears satisfied at this point with how the two agencies are working together.

No mention has been made about cost sharing. The property ownership is a 60:40 split with Cayucos holding the minority share.

That's also the breakdown that's mainly been used over the years when divvying up the old plant's operating and maintenance costs and was the source of many of the past disagreements that have boggled the partnership.

The plant also includes an undersea discharge pipeline that the City needs to dispose of the highly treated wastewater from its new treatment plant, at least until it finishes the water recycling portion of its project. Then it will still be needed to dispose of the unusable brine wastewater from the new plant's desalination process, the final step in the recycling system.

Cayucos now uses an undersea pipeline left over from the former Chevron Estero Marine Terminal, for its discharge needs. It too plans to eventually recycle the treated wastewater. For now, money doesn't appear to be an issue.

"There is no direct fiscal impact of this work," Athey said, "as the District was not a party to the Coastal Development Permit application and is not a party to, nor has it seen, the contract for the proposed work. However, this project may impact the Property's value as it pertains to future uses."

The two sides have also been negotiating, Athey said, on how the future of the property shakes out. One option that's been discussed is for the City to buy out Cayucos' interest in the property, with terms and price still to be determined.

The costs for demolition of the old plant and remediation, if contaminants are discovered, could factor into this as well.

So, like most divorces, there will be a price to be paid by both parties.



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News

Long-Time Harbor Advisor Replaced

By Neil Farrell

The City of Morro Bay's advisory boards have new members, and the change marks the ending of one man's long tenure representing the Back Bay and Los Osos.

Gene Doughty had applied for another 4-year term on the Harbor Advisory Board, a position he'd held for some 38 years.

Former Dist. 2 County Supervisor Bill Coy recommended him for the job when the Harbor Board was first formed, Doughty told Estero Bay News. Over the years, he's served with many other people who had strong connections with the bay, men like Dean Tyler of the Morro Bay Aquarium and Jody Giannini who had a family chandlery business serving the commercial fishermen and the boating public.

Doughty said he was the longest serving advisory board member the City has ever had. Coy's idea was that Los Osos should have a representative on a Harbor Advisory Board, he explained, and it made sense. "It's the same bay," Doughty said. Los Osos residents have a vested, albeit less-economic center, interest in the bay and how it's managed and protected.

But a while back, the seven-member HAB was cut to five members and Doughty's seat was changed to an "at-large" position, meaning someone who isn't from Los Osos could fill it.

But Doughty's replacement, former City Manager Andrea Lueker, who was unanimously approved by the council, also lives in Los Osos and has strong ties to Morro Bay, having just ended a temporary stint as Interim City Manager while the Council looked for a new, permanent manager.

She's a board member on the Community Quota Fund, a non-profit organization that manages the local federal catch shares program for commercial fishing, so she's also got that connection to the bay.

"I have been interested in this position for quite some time," Lueker said in a letter to the council included in her application, "and am thrilled to finally be in a position to submit my application for the at-large designation.

"I believe my expertise in local government, including seven years as harbor manager at Port San Luis will be beneficial to the City of Morro Bay, and specifically the Harbor Department. I also have extensive experience working on volunteer boards and enjoy the camaraderie of working with a group of citizens tasked with making recommendations to a governing board/entity."

In contrast, Doughty's application was rather blunt, though anyone who knows him might not be too surprised.

Asked what experience he brings to the position? He simply wrote, "Been on the board for some time."

Asked why he is interested in serving on the board, he wrote, "to continue to advise the City."

Doughty said he was disappointed that he's been replaced, but feels Lueker will be a good fit. He may have sealed his fate in December when he was critical of the City Council.

"I told them they need to pay more attention to the harbor," Doughty said, adding that the Embarcadero is the heartbeat and main economic engine of the community.

He said the City has already lost two lease developments — the former Libertine Pub and Gray's Inn — and is in danger of losing another, the redevelopment of the Associated Pacific Constructors lease site, which has an approved project on the books to build a small motel and restaurant complex.

It's been a long standing trend with re-development projects on the Embarcadero, as the City — and Coastal Commission — have required more and more public amenities from lease holders, which add costs but bring little benefit to the business.

It's an added financial burden to an already cumbersome process.

He said, "The Council isn't backing the lease holders." And, "It's sad nobody works or lives on the water anymore."

Doughty, who also leases out offshore boat moorings in addition to his marine engineering, architecture, and construction business, added that he sees what's happening on the water every day.

The current categories for making up the board are: one person from the Morro Bay Commercial Fisherman's Organization (plus an alternate); one waterfront leaseholder; one marine-oriented business; one representing recreational boating; and, one at-large member.

Retired commercial fisherman, Jeremiah O'Brien is the current member from the MBCFO.

Doughty wishes they could have had someone with the kind of connection he has with the Bay, like his friend, Jim Kroll, a legendary harbor patrolman, who's been retired for quite some time.

Doughty said while he's disappointed his tenure on the Harbor Board has ended; he's OK with it. "I have my grand kids to play with," he said.

Lueker was also appointed to fill Doughty's spot on the Waterfront Master Plan Advisory Committee, which she was nominated for at the very first Harbor Advisory Board meeting she attended.

Also on the Master Plan Committee, a representative from the National Estuary Program (NEP) had to be approved after the NEP's representative, Melodie Grubbs, left the agency "to pursue a new opportunity," according to the City report on the appointments.

Carolyn Geraghty, the NEP's restoration program director, was nominated to replace Grubbs and was approved by the Council.

The Council also filled two spots on the Parks & Recreation Commission, choosing James Costanzo and Blake Lopez out of three applicants. The third was June Swall.

Costanzo was unanimously approved and Lopez got four of five votes.

On the Citizen's Oversight/Finance Advisory Committee, which monitors the City's spending of the monies brought in by Meas. Q and E-20, the City's special sales tax measures, there were three people vying for two seats — Michael Dorfman, Bart Beckman and Michael Jones.

Dorfman was unanimously approved and Beckman was also appointed with four of five votes.

Pop-up Safety Grants Available



Caution poles designed to slow traffic at a busy pedestrian crossing is one example of a pop-up safety project. SLOCOG is taking applications now for its 2025/2026 mini-grant program. Photo courtesy SLOCOG

Do you know of a potentially unsafe traffic situation for pedestrians or bicyclists and have an idea how it might be fixed for not a lot of money?

The county transportation agency has a grant program designed to help you become a "Regional Road Safety Champion."

The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) is taking applications now through Wednesday, March 25 for its "2025/2026 Pop-Up Safety Demonstration Mini-Grant Program," funded in part by the California Office of Traffic Safety, SLOCOG announced.

They have grants of up to \$6,000 to "support community-led temporary pedestrian and bicycle safety demonstrations across the region."

SLOCOG is the countywide agency that handles funding for transportation projects in SLO County's cities and the unincorporated areas.

The purpose, according to SLOCOG, is to "test before

Pop-up Safety Continued on page 23

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City to Surplus Former Teen Center

By Neil Farrell

The City of Morro Bay is moving ahead with potentially selling a former teen center on Atascadero Road, after declaring it to be “surplus” property.

Airlin Singewald, the Community Development Director, brought the matter to the Council’s Feb. 24 agenda proposing a Resolution that would start a lengthy process for potentially selling the property at 231 Atascadero Rd., which has sat largely unused since 2020 and the start of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Citing the State’s Surplus Lands Act, Singewald said, the SLA “requires that the City declare property to be ‘surplus land’ before the City can take any action [sale or lease] to dispose of the real property. Surplus land is land deemed not necessary for a local agency’s use.”

Since 2019, when the SLA was amended by Assembly Bill 1486, such surplus lands have to first be offered for re-development as affordable housing, Singewald’s report said.

“The amendment,” he said, “requires that surplus property, which does not qualify as ‘exempt’ under the SLA, must be made available through a specific process, which provides notice of its availability to housing developers and other local agencies.”

“In addition, the SLA mandates reporting of surplus land inventory to the California Department of Housing and Community Development [‘HCD’].”

Ironically, this same SLA process is being followed by the San Luis Coastal Unified School District in its efforts to dispose of the surplus Morro Elementary School property, as well as Sunnyside School in Los Osos.

The City has notified the District it is interested in buying at least part of the Morro Elementary site, and Los Osos voters will be asked to approve a special property tax measure in June that would fund the purchase of Sunnyside for the Community Services District.

Both efforts to obtain the schools have been led by community groups formed specifically to work on the purchases.

Simply passing a Resolution and declaring the old teen center as surplus really just gets the ball rolling towards a



Overhead view of the old Teen Center property on Atascadero Road, which the City Council has declared surplus property. Photo courtesy City of Morro Bay

potential sale.

“The SLA notification process,” the report explained, “requires the City to send a written Notice of Availability [NOA], either by mail or electronically, to other public agencies whose jurisdiction covers the area in which the subject property is located, and prospective affordable housing developers which have registered with HCD expressing an interest in surplus land within the county.”

HCD requires companies and organizations interested in bidding on surplus properties for affordable housing sign up with the agency and become so-called “Qualified Entities” or QEs.

“QEs,” the HCD said, “are entities that are willing to maintain the affordability of the property.”

“QEs are tenant associations, local non-profit organizations and public agencies, regional/national non-profit organizations and regional/national public agencies, or profit-motivated housing organizations or individuals that are interested in bidding on affordable properties and have been deemed certified to own and operate assisted housing developments by HCD.” One simply must apply and meet certain criteria to become a QE.

HCD’s current list of QEs includes dozens that are qualified to operate statewide but only three specifically in SLO County. They are People’s Self-Help Housing, Corp. (PSHH), KDF Communities, LLC, and the Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo (HASLO).

PSHH and HASLO each have existing affordable housing developments in town. PSHH has senior apart-

ments on Elm Street behind Spencer’s Market and Section 8 housing on Sequoia Street, and HASLO has a 35-unit apartment house on Atascadero Road about two blocks from the old teen center.

The property has had an interesting past. For decades it was just vacant land, used by the high school’s agriculture department to grow hay for the school farm. Then it was developed in the latter 1990s, as “The World’s Most Difficult Miniature Golf Course,” and operated for several years as a dinky golf and arcade business. That entity went bankrupt and the City of Morro Bay was able to purchase the site in the bankruptcy proceedings at pennies on the dollar, given its location just about 250-yards from the beach.

The City opened a teen center in 2003 and operated it until the pandemic restrictions forced it to close. It’s never re-opened.

The local Boys and Girls Club reached an agreement to lease the building and re-open as a clubhouse in 2022 but couldn’t get the money together for renovations, so it never opened.

Most recently, the City was approached by the Marine Mammal Center about leasing it to that organization for a new triage center for sick and injured marine mammals, after its lease for a small slice of the Morro Bay Power Plant property was canceled by plant owner, Vistra.

But those talks never went anywhere and the MMC is now planning to lease property from the Cayucos Sanitary District on Toro Creek Road for its new facility.

Currently, some City employees have moved into the old arcade building as temporary office space after the City Hall Annex Building, a small standalone space at 535 Harbor St., across from the Post Office was damaged in a fire last July 9.

The repairs to the Annex building that previously has housed the Dial-a-Ride Office and the planning department, are expected to be done in August and the employees will move back there at that time.

Given the SLA’s time constraints, the timing for a possible sale and the building again being vacant, shouldn’t be a problem.

After the City sends out its Notice of Availability to the QEs on HCD’s list, it starts a 60-day clock ticking for a response to at least express interest in the property.

“The SLA then requires that the City enter into a period of good faith negotiations with responding interested parties for at least 90 days,” the report said.

If the City can’t find a buyer willing to build affordable housing, it has to notify the State, which starts another 30-day clock ticking for HCD to determine if the City has acted in good faith in trying to find a buyer willing to build affordable housing and pay fair market value for the 1.33-acre property that sits about 250-yards from the beach.

Zoning could become an issue, too as it sits in the

Former Teen Center Continued on page 21

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Estero Bay New Briefs

By Theresa-Maria Wilson

Prescribed Burning at Montaña de Oro State Park

Approximately 100 brush piles by Horse Camp Campground and 200 brush piles around Bloody Nose Trail on the east side of Pecho Valley Road are planned to burn through April 3 at Montaña de Oro State Park. Burn days are Monday-Wednesday or Tuesday-Thursday and will be determined by weather and permit conditions. Ignitions may start as early as 7 a.m. with fire activity curtailed by approximately 5 p.m. Personnel will remain on site for the duration of active fire.

The burns will reduce fuel loads and fire hazards as well as enhance the health of the native plant communities, and aid in the control of non-native, weedy species, according to California State Parks who is conducting the activity in cooperation with CAL FIRE and the Air Pollution Control District. For more information, call Dan Falat, district superintendent, San Luis Obispo Coast District, at (805) 927-2065.

Impact Scholarship Application Period Opens

Full-time students looking to earn help paying the cost of higher education, are encouraged to apply for a regional scholarship.

California Legislative Central Coast Caucus Foundation (CLCCCF) Co-chairs Dawn Addis and Gregg Hart announced that applications for the 2026 Central Coast Impact Scholarship are open. Students from Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura

counties are encouraged to apply for the \$4,000 scholarships before the April 30, 6 deadline at 11:59 p.m. PST.

The Central Coast Impact Scholarship supports students who call the Central Coast home. The Foundation launched the scholarship to invest directly in local students who are committed to strengthening their communities.

"As a former teacher of over twenty years, I know that students thrive when they have a community of support and we created the foundation to be part of that support," said Foundation co-chair Dawn Addis, Assemblymember for the 30th District, "This scholarship will honor the hard work of students in our region and help bring higher education financially within reach."

Applicants should go to CLCCCF.org for eligibility requirements, scholarship criteria, and application instructions.

Poly Named Promising Place to Work

Cal Poly was named one of the "Most Promising Places to Work in Student Affairs" by College Student Educators International and the EDU Ledger. It is the seventh time the university received the recognition since 2017.

The university is among 30 institutions of higher learning to earn the honor in 2026. Cal Poly is one of two California State universities recognized, alongside CSU Long Beach.

This year's honor focused on staffing practices and work environment, which included key attributes such as family friendliness, salary/benefits and professional development opportunities.

"This award would not be possible without our talented, collaborative and student-centered team," said Terrance Harris, vice president for Strategic Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, in a news release. "I am thrilled to receive this award on behalf of our division, because it reflects the collective impact of our work to provide

services, support and opportunities for every student."

The division's work is intentionally designed to match Cal Poly's classroom experiences with out-of-classroom opportunities that embody the university's Learn by Doing philosophy and enhance the student experience.

This year's award recipients will be recognized March 31 by The EDU Ledger at the annual American College Personnel Association's (ACPA) Convention in Baltimore, Maryland.

LOCAC Candidate Applications Due March 20

The Los Osos Community Advisory Council (LOCAC) is accepting applications for council seats ahead of its upcoming elections on April 25. Seats are open in all four districts, and residents are encouraged to apply.

LOCAC serves as the community's Advisory Council and informs the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors, the County Planning Commission, and various County departments on land use, transportation, and environmental issues affecting Los Osos.

Applications are due March 20 and are available at local.info. In-person elections will be held April 25 at Sunnyside School, 880 Manzanita Drive, from 2 to 6 p.m. Proof of residency is required to both run and vote.

Residents who are not ready to run for a seat are encouraged to join one of LOCAC's standing committees, which are open to all Los Osos residents.

For more information, go to locac.info or contact locacinfo@gmail.com.

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

Los Osos Community Advisory Council



*Your Voice in
Los Osos*

We advise San Luis Obispo County on land use, transportation, and the environment.

Los Osos Needs You!

LOCAC is looking for council members. If you live in Los Osos and care about your community's future, we want to hear from you. Applications are due March 20, 2026.

Every city has a Community Advisory Committee. As an unincorporated county, Los Osos has the Los Osos Advisory Council (LOCAC).

LOCAC is our voice to San Luis Obispo County on land use, transportation, and the environment.



This is local government at work. Your impact here is real.

In-person elections: April 25, 2026

Where: Sunnyside School, 880 Manzanita Drive

When: 2pm to 6pm

Proof of residency required to run and to vote.

**Not ready to run? Join a committee. All Los Osos residents welcome.
Questions? locacinfo@gmail.com**



News

Decision Expected Soon on Los Osos Fire Service



By Neil Farrell

A decision on the future of Los Osos' fire department could be made in April.

The Los Osos Community Services District's General Manager's latest report said they continue to have talks with both CAL FIRE/County Fire and the Morro Bay Fire Department about a future contract.

Since last September, when the issue was first raised, "staff has been working with both agencies to see if 1) there was interest in contracting with District, and 2) if they would provide a proposal for contract services for the Board's consideration," G.M. Ron Munds said in his report that went to the LOCSD board at its March meeting.

He added that he expected to receive responses "in the coming week" and anticipates bringing it to the Board at its April 2 meeting.

"After the review," Munds said, "the Board will have the opportunity to decide on which direction to pursue and direct staff accordingly on completing the contracting process."

He added that since they will be well into preparing the next budget, the Board will have to make "a timely decision" so it could be included in the budget.

Though it has a fire assessment district, the LOCSD contracts with CAL FIRE/County Fire to run its single station fire

department. The station is a full paramedic unit and has an excellent record of service that pre-dates the contract, going back to the days when it was the South Bay Fire Department. The LOCSD contracted with CAL FIRE in 2004 and at the time it was billed as a cost saving measure.

In a previous report, Munds said, "Since 2004, there have been relatively small increases in the contract amount in the 2% to 4% range."

But that changed in the 2019-20 fiscal year when the County's bill was hiked by 27%, then another 17% in 2023-24, and another 25% for FY 2025-26.

"These increases have outpaced the revenue sources with the projections for the fiscal year 2025-26 running a deficit of approximately \$278,000," Munds said.

That sobering figure prompted the LOCSD to look to Morro Bay about possibly merging the two fire departments.

Like Los Osos, Morro Bay has a single station fire department that is also a full paramedic service. But while Morro Bay's budget comes out of the general fund, in Los Osos they have a special assessment district that pays for it. Raising rates requires a holding a protest vote under Prop. 218, and while that is normally a routine matter, it is possible that taxpayers could balk and reject any future increases.

The Morro Bay City Council, when asked to allow the fire chief to negotiate the matter, agreed to look into a possible

merger of the two departments.

In his previous report, Munds listed the Los Osos fire department's budget for FY 2024-25 at \$3.81 million, rising to \$3.92M in 2025-26, an increase of \$183,000.

But it listed total expenditures for 2025-26 at \$4.27M against \$3.99M in revenues. Leaving a \$278,000 shortfall.

"The current projected deficit," Munds said, "is the first time since the District has contracted with the County/Cal Fire that there has been a shortfall."

It should be noted that the County is at the mercy of the State with regards to pay and benefits paid to all CAL FIRE employees.

So if the Governor negotiates a healthy pay increase for CAL FIRE, it trickles down to all the various counties, cities and districts that contract with CAL FIRE for fire services.

While smaller agencies have advantages that come with a large department providing fire services — lots of personnel, training and equipment purchasing power — the men and women who work at the station in Los Osos are paid according to the contract.

Also, the larger department allows for more movement and opportunity for advancement for the firefighters, though it could mean having to move away from here to realize it.

Cliff Rescue in MDO

By Neil Farrell

CAL FIRE/SLO County Fire responded in the dark to an emergency in Montaña de Oro State Park where a man had fallen off one of the steep, bluff top cliffs.

According to a post on the CAL FIRE X account, emergency crews responded at 7:39 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 28 to MDO, "for a male subject who fell down a cliff near the Bluff Trail."

The Bluff Trail is a 3-plus mile, mostly flat, dirt pathway that follows the edge of the bluff and in some places it's over 50-feet above the shore below.

The bluff drops down to solid rock in most places, with a few small sandy beaches interspersed along the route that are accessible by stairs.

It is a heavily traveled trail, the most accessible and busiest in the park.

It's not a difficult trail nor is it very tricky to follow in daytime, but when one runs out of real estate, the drop to the bottom can be deadly for the victims and very difficult for rescuers.



Photo shows a man who fell off a cliff in Montaña de Oro State Park strapped into a rescue stretcher after being brought up by CAL FIRE firefighters. Photo courtesy CAL FIRE

However, it sounds like this particular rescue went smoothly.

"The subject has been extricated up to the top of the cliff," the X post read, "and is currently being evaluated for injuries by paramedics."

Such cliff rescues that require rock climbing gear, are part of the special training for firefighters in Los Osos, which has the nearest CAL FIRE stationhouse, and for Morro Bay firefighters as well, who occasionally are called to rescue someone that foolishly climbed Morro Rock.

Morro Bay
ROTARY

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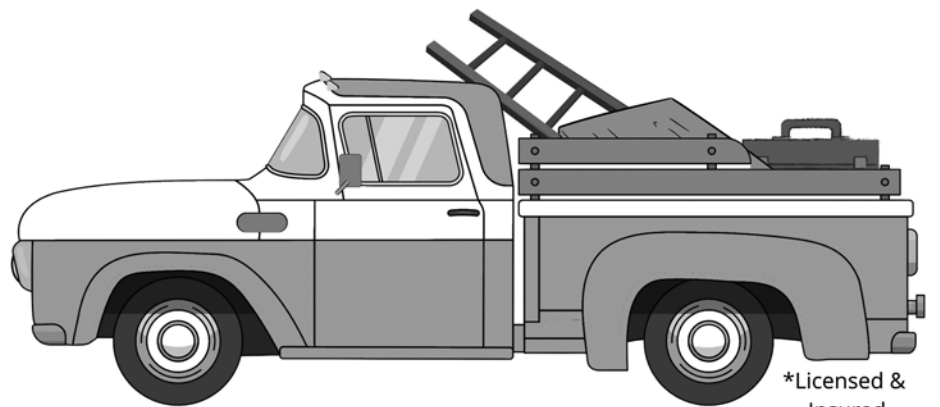
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Elaine LaLanne poses in her Morro Bay home with a trophy given to late-husband Jack on the occasion of his 90th birthday. Submitted photo

but to make every moment count. Honoring Elaine while celebrating her 100th birthday is a rare and meaningful moment for the entire health and fitness community.”

Elaine recently took time from what continues to be a busy schedule to reflect on her life with Estero Bay News.

She was born Elaine Doyle, March 19, 1926, in Fairview Hospital in Minneapolis, Minn., she said over a Zoom call. Though born in the city, she recalls that she spent a lot of time with relatives on their farm in Iowa including summers.

The farm was in Roland, Iowa, she says, a town of just 500 people. “I think it’s still 500,” she laughs. They did finally get a freeway though.

She spent much of her early days playing baseball. A catcher, she recounts times when batters threw their bats,



Jack and Elaine LaLanne do lunges during the Jack LaLanne Show. Submitted photo

hitting her in the face a few times.

“I had my tooth knocked out by a thrown bat,” she says. Back in those days dentistry wasn’t like today. She says she had to have a gold band inserted in her mouth. She also got hit more than once in her left eye, damaging it for life. Baseball was a tough sport.

Nevertheless, “I loved baseball,” she says. She also loved swimming.

She performed with the Minneapolis Aqua Follies, swimming in a one-piece suit. Several of the photos given to EBN for this story show the youthful Elaine in her swimsuit, photographed in the way glamorous movie stars of the day posed.

She was with the Follies in 1945 when she came out to California to visit relatives. This was after her boyfriend was killed in the Battle of Iwo Jima during World War II, she says.

Her cousins were working in the shipyards, she recalls, helping build the craft that won the war.

“I stayed” in California, she says. She got into radio during its early days at the NBC Radio Institute. “I went into radio,” she recalls, “way before television.” She had moved to San Francisco when TV came to Los Angeles. She used to visit L.A. a lot and was working in San Francisco demonstrating 45-RPM record players at The Emporium store, when her life’s direction changed.

“A woman asked me if she could get Bing Crosby on a 45,” Elaine says. “I said ‘No, but you can get Perry Como. He sounds just like him.’”

A popular local disc jockey was starting a new TV morning talk show on station KGO, an ABC affiliate in San



Jack and Elaine LaLanne flex their muscles in this portrait taken in Morro Bay. Submitted photo

Francisco, in 1948. “He needed someone to book guests,” she recalls, “and to appear as his ‘Girl Friday,’ today that’s a co-host.”

Early on she was told about a man from Oakland who said he would come on the show and do push-ups for the entire broadcast. “It was an hour and a half show,” she says. They used a radio orchestra for the show at the time.

“So I put this guy on — it was Jack LaLanne, and he did push-ups through the whole 90-minute show.”

“I didn’t see him again until 1951,” she says. This was after they’d moved the TV show to a proper studio. Their show was on from 4:30 to 6, she says, and Jack’s show came on at 9. She got the health and fitness talk right away.

“He would see me smoking cigarettes, eating bear claws and donuts,” she says. “He’d tell me, ‘You should eat apples.’”

She recalls Jack bringing a guy on who’d lost 50 pounds and told him he’d take 30 pounds off him in 30 days. And he did it too.

He also showed her pictures of lungs blackened by smoking, comparing them to healthy pink lungs. “I thought, ‘Oh God, I’m going to have black lungs,’” she says.

So she changed her ways — stopped eating candy bars for lunch and quit smoking. She took up Jack’s philosophy. “He’d say ‘If you do everything in moderation, you can’t go wrong.’” It’s something she still lives by.

They married in 1959 and she became not just an integral part of his morning exercise show, but a partner in their various ventures, from establishing the first membership fitness centers to the famous infomercials selling the Jack LaLanne Power and Fusion Juicer. She’s appeared in countless TV shows as a guest and fitness expert. Among the shows are The Today Show, The Early Show, Friends, Fox and Friends and Howard Stern.

She’s authored seven books on the subject, too, specifically for older people helping them get and stay fit. All of her books, as well as the numerous books bearing Jack’s authorship, are available on Amazon.

Among her books is Dynastride! A Complete Walking Program for Fitness after 50.

“I wrote five books in the 1980s,” she says. “And three books since the early ‘90s.”

There’s a new one coming out soon exploring “legacies,” telling the stories of women authors including herself. “Everybody has a legacy,” she says. “I never thought I had a legacy. I had no idea what would happen when I went in with Jack.”

Reflecting, she says the best thing about turning 100 is her attitude. “A positive attitude about everything,” she explains. “It’s not easy being 100-years old. You have to accept and persevere. Once you accept what is, you have to persevere.”

“A lot of people have problems,” she continues. “You can get through it if you accept and persevere. That’s been my philosophy the past 100 years — be positive. Too many people give up.”

The worst thing about turning 100 for her is physical. “I made the wrong decision,” she says, “I should have had a new knee put in but I was too busy writing books. I said, ‘I’ll do it later.’ now my knee is giving me fits. But I accept it. I made the wrong decision.”

After she and Jack’s Hall of Fame induction, the Association plans to throw her a grand 100th birthday bash that will include many of the leading fitness advocates of today. Then on March 21 she’s planning a local birthday party with friends at her home in Morro Bay.

In the end, she lives the message of some of her books, “If you want to live — get moving!”

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Police Blotter



- **March 1:** At 5 p.m. police responded to Lila Keiser Park to obtain some no doubt super-secret information on some earth-shattering matter.
- **March 1:** Police responded at 1:44 p.m. to an undisclosed location to deal with a trespasser. No word on the interloper's fate.
- **Feb. 28:** Police were notified at 6:56 p.m. of the passing of some poor unnamed soul.
- **Feb. 28:** Somebody found something sometime before 1:32 p.m. someplace in town and gave it to some police officer.
- **Feb. 27:** Police contacted a suspicious subject with at 8:54 p.m. with felony warrant and checked him or her into the no-star iron bar hotel.
- **Feb. 27:** At 4:21 p.m. police stopped a suspicious vehicle in the 2900 block of North Main. Logs indicated the driver was popped for suspicion of driving in a beer fog.
- **Feb. 27:** Police responded at 2:03 p.m. to a report of some scoundrel breaking into a presumably parked vehicle. Sorry, police didn't say where it was.
- **Feb. 27:** At 7:22 a.m. police responded to a reported car crash some place in town. No word on the extent of the carnage.
- **Feb. 26:** Police contacted a suspicious subject at 9:37 p.m. somewhere under the rainbow and cited the scarecrow for suspicion of possessing drugs.
- **Feb. 26:** Police responded at 12:43 p.m. to a disturbance in the 200 block of Atascadero Rd. Logs indicated some dim bulb was causing the ruckus because he or she was a bit sideways at Motel 6.

- **Feb. 26:** Police responded at 9:39 a.m. to a disturbance. Logs indicated it was a case for County Mental Health.
- **Feb. 25:** Police contacted another suspicious subject at 1:52 p.m. at an undisclosed location. Logs indicated the citizen of the year was nicked for suspicion of possessing drugs.
- **Feb. 25:** Police responded at 11:20 a.m. to Motel 6 on Atascadero Rd., where a guest said he or she had been robbed.
- **Feb. 25:** Police responded at 1:19 a.m. to a reported disturbance. Logs indicated some apparent gaggle head was arrested for suspicion of being blitzed on drugs.
- **Feb. 24:** Police responded at 9:24 p.m. to the 1000 block of Main to arrest someone with a misdemeanor warrant at the Coastal Breeze Inn, another apparent case of arrive on vacation and leave on probation.
- **Feb. 24:** Police responded at 7 p.m. to the 200 block of Beach for a disturbance at the Best Western Tradewinds Motel. Logs indicated they nicked some stultified cowboy for suspicion of being fuzzy in public.
- **Feb. 24:** Police responded at 5:52 p.m. to Albertson's Market on Quintana Rd., where they apparently caught a sticky-fingered customer using the help-yourself checkout line.
- **Feb. 24:** Somebody at the Maritime Museum on Front Street found something and gave it to police for some reason.
- **Feb. 24:** Police responded at 10 a.m. to an undisclosed location where someone reported an animal left in an over-heated vehicle that was apparently in distress.
- **Feb. 24:** Police contacted a suspicious subject at 10 a.m. somewhere in town who turned out to have a bench warrant. The schmoe was issued another disappearance ticket and released to catch another day.
- **Feb. 23:** Police were called at 9 p.m. regarding some suspicious subject who was trespassing. The Snallygaster was also allegedly in possession of drugs and was issued a citation and advised to take his or her shoes for a walk.
- **Feb. 23:** At 9:04 a.m. police issued a citation to a parked car at Tidelands Park because the driver was overdue with paying the DMV his annual pound of flesh.
- **Feb. 22:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at the suspect time of 11:15 p.m. at some no-doubt unsuspecting intersection in town. The suspect was suspiciously reeking of hooch and police arrested the bloke for suspicion of

- driving schammered.
- **Feb. 22:** Police responded to a disturbance at 1:26 p.m. at an undisclosed location. Logs indicated the disturbance was some disturbed drunken fellow who was distributed into County Jail for drunk and disorderly conduct.
- **Feb. 20:** Police responded at 12:55 p.m. to a report of suspected child abuse. Logs indicated the case involved great bodily injury and a felony.
- **Feb. 19:** Police contacted a model citizen at 4:43 p.m. who had an outstanding bench warrant.
- **Feb. 19:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle for some no doubt trumped up code violation, at an undisclosed location. Logs indicated the scofflaw had a suspended license and no current registration. He or she was ticketed and sentenced to life at the DMV.
- **Feb. 19:** At 11:06 a.m. police came across a suspicious parked vehicle with an expired registration, a hanging offense in some states.
- **Feb. 18:** Police were called to a disturbance at 8:55 p.m. at an undisclosed location. Logs indicated the case involved suspected battery of an ex-spouse, which no doubt explains the "ex" part.
- **Feb. 18:** At 3:58 p.m. at an undisclosed location, police contacted a suspicious subject. Logs indicated he or she was nicked for alleged possession of illegal drugs, a misdemeanor or whoopsy-poopsy offense.
- **Feb. 18:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 12:40 p.m. that reportedly blew through a stop sign. The driver also had a suspended license; a case of it takes two to make one trouble.
- **Feb. 17:** Police contacted a suspicious subject at an undisclosed location in town. Logs indicated the fiend was allegedly playing ring around the nose and in possession of illegal drugs, too.
- **Feb. 17:** Police at 8:35 a.m. contacted a suspicious subject at another undisclosed location. Logs indicated the sneaky sneak was in possession of suspected drug paraphernalia, his or her stash apparently already shot.
- **Feb. 17:** Police responded to Envoy Mortgage in the 300 block of Morro Bay Blvd., after they'd found some treasure and turned it over to police.
- **Feb. 16:** Police responded at 10:35 p.m. to an undisclosed location after someone reported a citizen had passed away.



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Two Men Arrested on Drug Charges in Morro Bay

A Paso Robles man and another from San Luis Obispo were arrested in Morro Bay for allegedly being in possession of narcotics for sale among other related crimes.

On March 6, at about noon, Morro Bay Police Officer conducted a traffic stop on a 2002 Dodge Dakota for a moving violation.

"On contact with the driver, Carmelo Colaccino, [32 of Paso Robles] the officer could see several items within the driver's compartment that could be used as weapons including a large knife," said a news release from MBPD. "The driver was asked to step out of the vehicle for safety of the officer. The passenger, Lucas Hay, [29 of San Luis Obispo] was also asked to step from the vehicle. Once out of the vehicle, a consent search of the driver for weapons resulted in the locating and seizure of suspected fentanyl. Officers conducted a search of the vehicle and located over five ounces of fentanyl, .15 grams of methamphetamine, drug paraphernalia, and evidence inductive of drugs sales."

The driver, Colaccino, was arrested and booked into the San Luis County Jail on recommended charges of felony possession of a controlled substance for sales, felony transportation of a controlled substance, felony possession



Drugs and paraphernalia reportedly found in a car stopped for a traffic violation in Morro Bay.

of narcotics with priors, possession of fentanyl, possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of a concealed knife.

The passenger, Lucas Hay, was reportedly found to be in possession of fentanyl, methamphetamine, and drug paraphernalia. Hay also had four outstanding warrants for drug possession, under the influence of controlled substance and theft. Hay was booked into San Luis County Jail on recommended fresh charges of possession of narcotics with priors, possession of fentanyl, possession of drug paraphernalia, and adding and abetting a felony crime.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact the Morro Bay Police Department, (805) 772-6225 or San Luis Obispo County Crime Stoppers at (805)549STOP. The investigation is ongoing.

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News

Digging a Gas Leak in Avila

By Neil Farrell

The warning, “Call before you dig,” got a real-life example recently, when a trenching company ruptured a natural gas line in Avila Beach, and ignited a full blown emergency response.

According to a Cal FIRE news release, on Feb. 26 at 10:15 a.m. fire crews responded to the 2100 block of Canvasback Ln., Avila Beach, “after a trenching operation struck a large-diameter natural gas line, resulting in an active leak within a residential neighborhood.” According to a post on the department’s X account, it was a 1-inch diameter gas line.

The arriving engine crew immediately detected the leak, which CAL FIRE described as “a significant gas release,” and set up a safety perimeter.

“Out of an abundance of caution,” CAL FIRE said, “approximately 100 residents were evacuated, and an additional 200 residents were directed to shelter in place while utility crews worked to isolate and secure the damaged line. Evacuations included the Bay Estates area.”

The County Sheriff’s Department and Port San Luis Harbor Patrol assisted with the evacuations and safety notifications. Pacific Gas & Electric, which owns the gas line, responded to the scene.

“The gas utility company responded promptly and



A gasman repairs a rupture in a 1-inch gas main in Avila Beach that caused the evacuation of about 100 people. Photo courtesy CAL FIRE



CAL FIRE caution tape marks the perimeter set up after excavation workers ruptured a gas main in Avila Beach. Photo courtesy CAL FIRE

successfully mitigated the leak at approximately 12 p.m.,” the release said. “Once the area was deemed safe, evacuation and shelter-in-place orders were lifted.” There were no injuries reported in the incident, which CAL FIRE said went smoothly, despite being a multi-agency incident response.

“This incident,” CAL FIRE said, “highlights the importance of coordinated, multi-agency response and the cooperation of our community. We appreciate residents for following safety directions and our partner agencies for their swift assistance.”

Any job or project where digging is involved, you must first call 811 that will put you in touch with officials who will contact local utility companies that will come out and determine where any underground utilities are located and mark them with color-coded paint. It’s also required by law.

According to the website, usanorth811.org: “811 is a free national service designed to keep you and your community safe. Before you start any digging project, contacting 811 ensured that you avoid hitting any buried utility lines. This simple call can prevent serious accidents and costly repairs.”

And, “811 is for professional excavators, homeowners, DIYers, agricultural operators or anyone who needs to perform any digging activities. It is designed to prevent

damage to underground utilities by ensuring these utilities are marked before excavation begins, enhancing safety and compliance with legal requirements.”

Buried utilities can be of several types besides gas, including electrical lines, cable and communications, water and sewer pipes. “Striking one of these can result in power outages, gas leaks, water contamination or even property damage.”

Calling 811 first can save you a lot of headaches, and potentially avert disaster, too.

County Employee Held on Child Porn Charge

Sheriff’s Investigators arrested an Oceano man who was also a San Luis Obispo County employee, on suspicion of possessing child pornography, a Sheriff’s spokesman said.

According to a news release, dated March 6, on Feb. 17 the department received a report of suspected child sexual abuse material, said Spokesman Tony Cipolla.

The ensuing investigation identified a suspect, Michael Schmidt, 46 of Oceano, who they learned is also an employee of SLO County in its IT Department.

On March 5, investigators along with the Fresno County Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, served a search warrant on Schmidt’s home.

“Schmidt was taken into custody without incident,” Cipolla said. He was charged with suspicion of possession of child sexual abuse material.

But the revelations didn’t end there. “During the investigation,” Cipolla said, “investigators discovered Schmidt was also a local Cub Scout leader in the Five Cities Area.”

A check of the jail information on March 6 listed Schmidt as still in custody and Cipolla said Schmidt was being held without bail.

The department is asking anyone with additional information to contact the Sheriff’s Office Detective Division at 805-781-4500 or Crimestoppers at 805-549-7867.

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Community

A Funeral for a Hairdo



Preston Sky King, seated, is about to say 'good-bye' to his hair, as Jon Elliott of Mike's Barbershop prepares to send it off to the great beyond, and Preston's wife, Sarah, reads a eulogy. Submitted photo

By Neil Farrell

People these days hold memorial services for more than just relatives and loved ones. Some folks hold a service for the loss of a beloved pet — cats, dogs, horses, and more. But a Morro Bay man recently ventured into virgin territory when he organized a memorial service for his receding hairline.

As Jon Elliott, owner of Mike's Barbershop in Morro Bay, explains, one of the shop's long-time regular customers, Preston Sky King, decided to give in to the inevitable and shave his hair off.

"For the past 10 years," Elliott says, "we had talked about this 'Hair Funeral' and memorial party as his hair got thinner and thinner."

King's patronage of Mike's pre-dates Elliott's taking over the shop, though it doesn't go back to the shop's origins on Dec. 6, 1941, one day before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

Like most major decisions a man makes, his wife played a part. "His wife," Elliott says, "had been telling him it was time for a few years, and he posted a picture on Reddit to a group asking if it was time to cut it off?"

The overwhelming response, Elliott says, was "Yes!"

I know what you're probably thinking, any excuse for a party, right? And where better to hold a funeral for something most everyone spends so much time and money caring for than a funeral parlor?

"He wanted to do it at a funeral home and rent it out," Elliott explains. "He called them and they said no way



Barber Jon Elliott being to buzz the hair off Preston King's head. Submitted photo



Preston Kings gives the ol' crazy eye after Jon Elliott finishes buzzing his hair off. Submitted photo

and gave a few excuses and reasons why not. So, we did the haircut in the barbershop and had the memorial in the Pizza Port courtyard."

Pizza Port is next door to Mike's Barbershop, and its outdoor dining area often hosts celebrations, though this one could be a first. Plus, they serve beer.



After the buzz comes the shave and hot-towel treatment at Mike's Barbershop. Submitted photo



Hair 2-day, Gone Tomorrow, reads the custom celebratory cake at Preston King's hair memorial service. Submitted photo

Ending the life of a man's hairdo doesn't just involve a buzzing set of clippers.

"We started by washing the Pomade out of his hair," Elliott says. "Then I gave him a Marine, military-style, horseshoe flattop to show him his last option to hide the bald spot, if he ever wanted to grow it back."

But such a monumental decision is not made lightly, and it was apparently too late to turn back.

"I then buzzed his whole head," Elliott says, "and gave him a hot towel shave."

And what memorial service would be complete without someone saying a few kind words.

"I read a brief eulogy," Elliott says, "and his wife [Sarah] read a longer one. I made him a homemade, custom, red velvet cake with cream cheese frosting that said 'Hair today, Gone tomorrow!'"

With the deed done, it was time to celebrate.

"About 50 people total attended," Elliott says. "This was the first of its kind on the Central Coast and we welcome more as a great time was had by all!"

If you've been thinking about putting an end to the war against a receding hairline, and think this sounds like a fun way to send it off into the great hair bin in the sky, Mike's Barbershop, located at 280 Morro Bay Blvd., is open for appointments, call 805-772-9262.

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 "Kix" Kornreich, Judy Salamachia and Susan Vasquez

The Black Phoebe

By Susan Vasquez

A Black Phoebe waits behind a knob in the plum tree ten feet above my head. Since I have decided, at least for now, this is my favorite bird, I should get to know it better.

Black Phoebes often sit alongside my path as I walk, allowing a short moment to appreciate these songbirds. Their feathers must be soft, since they appear ready to fluff, velvety and touchable. But I doubt I will ever touch one, as each time I have a

moment of nearness, it truly is just a few seconds before the closeness is over and my chance is gone. The bird, also.

Still, I see the top-knot, the dark close-to-black coat, and the nimble feet. The piercing eye warns me my moment to observe is short. I swear that eye speaks to me on my walks when the bird is close. It seems to know it is controlling our encounters and, of the two of us, is the one that comes and goes by choice.

The bird in the tree above is too far away for me to see this taunting, but I am sure the expression is there, and I have a good amount of respect for the bird because of it. Larger than I would have guessed, it is bigger, I think, than the Bushtits that come in a brigade through my neighbor's yard. The Bushtits are wary of me while the Phoebe seems to want to play. Maybe that's why I place my attentions on



A Black Phoebe, Photo by stephmcblack

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Community

the Phoebe first.

In hundreds of walks around my neighborhood, I have seen the Black Phoebe maybe 50 times, been able to focus for a moment perhaps ten times. I haven't yet truly seen a Bushtit. They hide themselves in a way Phoebes don't seem to need. Phoebes nearby assess me with an observer's patience, not quite friendly, not unfriendly, just adhering to a remote curiosity that gives them the right to fly away. And soon.

Too soon for me, as I have forgotten to repeat verbally what I see. Experienced bird observers tell you to say aloud the attributes of the birds as they appear to you. It's a memory trick that should help identify them later. I haven't learned that trick yet, so I hope that the picture I have in my mind is enough. Dark, pointy head, soft-appearing, six or so inches long or tall, compact. There is strength in those six inches.

Merlin, the birding app, tells me they are often posed on a branch or in a bush. The photos in the app are like the image in my mind, but I hadn't noticed the delightful fluff of a double chin. The Peterson Field Guide agrees. Peterson gives their size at six to seven inches, classifies them as fairly common sightings and says they are flycatchers. Wouldn't I love to see them in the act of catching a fly?

Today, I am satisfied to learn what I can and know that on my next walk, I can confidently tell my husband when a Black Phoebe is looking at us as we pass by.

Visit Susan Vasquez and her stories at <https://susanvasquez.com>.

CambriaCA Dissolves Publication Efforts

CambriaCA, the online public service announcement newsletter, has begun the process of dissolution according to an email sent by publisher Kristine Fox.

Fox had been researching the means to pass the publication on to local community media consultants when her non-profit provider, Ecologistics, disclosed the options were too limited to make it happen. The final edition posted was February 19.

Begun during the challenging Covid 19 pandemic in 2020, Fox's partner John Rohrbaugh laid the foundation for an "experiment in community journalism" for the year prior, before the first edition came to fruition. He died two years later, and Fox continued the project guided by a five-member non-profit board.

The publication had more than fifty contributors working through non-profit organizations and the Cambria Chamber of Commerce. The online publication focused on providing a voice for fund-raising and events for the Cambria/San Simeon area.

Former Estero Bay News contributor Connie Pendleton wrote articles for CambriaCA as well until a Covid 19-generated heart failure limited her physical and medical ability to continue.

Iconic Sign in Baywood Restored



Bob Crizer stands in front of the landmark sign he restored and returned to the Baywood Pier. Photo submitted

The volunteer group Celebrate Los Osos is always on the lookout for ways they can beautify or improve the area. They decided to take on the restoration of an iconic sign in Baywood Park.

The Baywood Pier sign, a local landmark, had been

battered by decades of harsh coastal weather and stood on the brink of total disintegration. The wood was riddled with severe rot, the paint was long gone, and it was nearly impossible for visitors to read.

"We asked local contractor Bob Crizer if he would merely look at it and offer a, perhaps futile, assessment on saving it with epoxy and framing," said Pandora Nash-Karner, president of Celebrate Los Osos. "While others might have seen a hopeless, rotten wreck, Bob saw a piece of history worth saving. He stepped in with the dedication of a craftsman, taking the broken sign into his own care. Several weeks later, he informed us with characteristic modesty that the 'sign is finished.'"

Crizer restored, repainted, and personally reinstalled the landmark.

"There are rare souls in this world who do not just occupy space but quietly weave magic into the fabric of our daily lives, year after year," Nash-Karner said. "Among them is Bob Crizer, a stalwart champion of our Los Osos community. It is a testament to the character of our town that people like Bob Crizer work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure our special corner of the world remains a perfect place to live."

Check out other projects and more that Celebrate Los Osos gives to the community at celebratelososos.org.

Takin' Care of BUSINESS

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Speakeasy, Feathers, Fedoras — Los Osos Cares Fundraiser

It was a dark, cold and gloomy day in February, when Los Osos Cares received a phone call at the Resource Center for assistance. An elderly woman named Sally (not her real name) was struggling with past due bills, while facing medical challenges. She had been in and out of the hospital and was bedridden. Her family was helping as much as they could, but

Sally's utilities were about to be shut off due to nonpayment. With no utilities, Sally would not be able to survive in her home



Linda Quesenberry will be honored at the Los Osos Cares Fundraiser

Takin' Care of Business Continued on page 12

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Community

Takin' Care of Business From page 11

and had nowhere else to go. Her social worker reached out to Los Osos Cares (LOC) and their "Womenade Program" for assistance.

"Unfortunately, the amount owed exceeded Womenade's assistance limit, but the dedicated LOC Resource Center volunteers were not about to give up," said Mary Meserve-Miller, LOC's new executive director. "Together, they combined a small grant from the LOC Resource Center Program with another grant from Womenade, to not only pay the utility bills, but also provide medically necessary nutrition and a few personal necessities for Sally.

"Sally's family felt that this assistance would help them get back on track and be able to maintain her care in her home. LOC didn't know anything, except the facts about Sally's case, until the payments and purchases were made, but when her full name and address were given, it was discovered that Sally had been one of LOC's generous donors in the past."

Meserve-Miller and her executive assistant, Jenna Feliciano, are busy preparing for a fun-filled "Feathers and Fedoras Speakeasy Gala" on Monday, March 23 at the Morro Bay Theater. The costume 1920s theme gala starts at 4:30 p.m. and includes a showing of the movie "Chicago," a no-host bar, gourmet appetizers and desserts, red carpet photographed entry, and silent and live auctions. Tickets are \$25 each or two for \$45 at Lososocares.com.

The mission statement of LOC is "Creating a culture of care by building community, identifying needs and providing immediate assistance and referrals to address the needs of the underserved in Los Osos, Morro Bay, and Cayucos."

Los Osos Cares was started by Linda Quesenberry along with Reverend Caroline Hall in 2016 to help folks in the community. Linda retired in 2024; she will be honored at the fundraiser with the very first "Linda Award" honoring LOC's Volunteer of the Year.

Local Duo Release Second Album



Two musicians with ties to the Central Coast have released their second studio album. Rock duo, The Taproots, dropped "Comedy Of Fools" available for streaming now.

Following their critically acclaimed, "Tales Of Wonderland," this album offers another collection of original, lyric-driven compositions. Drawing from musical styles of Americana, Rock, Country, Reggae and Folk, this new recording blends both traditional rock instrumentation with more traditional instruments such as ukulele, pedal steel, accordion and mandolin.

The Taproots feature singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Tom Walters, of Morro Bay, and award-winning vocalist Nicole Cassingham, best known for their weaving of multiple musical influences with strong harmonies with compelling storytelling.

Walters cut his first track on vinyl with Weird Al Yankovic in college, followed by an album for international release with the duo Iverson and Walters through Eagle Records in Nashville. He has since performed in an array of bands ranging from acoustic roots to modern jazz, sharing stages with such artists as Jerry Douglas, Edgar Meyer,

Country Joe McDonald, Bryan White, Maria Muldaur, and others.

Nicole Cassingham is a singer and ukuleleist. She grew up performing in musical theater and at then at numerous fair venues and competitions on the West Coast. In college she joined a jazz ensemble with George Lewis and other bands, going on to record the full-length album, Mood Swing, in the California alternative rock group, Monkey Wagon. As a trained music therapist, Nicole also works with people who have mental illness, developing wellness and skills through music.

Lyrics and full album credits are available at taprootsmusic.com

Spring is Blooming at Cambria Nursery



Cambria Nursery is welcoming spring on California's Central Coast with fresh plant arrivals, fun hands-on workshops, and locally made honey that reflect the spirit of the season.

As peak planting season begins, guests can explore a wide variety of citrus trees, vibrant camellias, spring décor and small-batch honey, sourced from the Nursery's sister property, 46 Ranch in Templeton.

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Nursery is introducing small-batch, locally harvested honey from Templeton's 46 Ranch to the Farmstand. Made in collaboration with Sierra Honey Farm, this golden honey reflects the diverse coastal blooms of California's Central Coast, offering a naturally floral flavor and a true taste of the region.

The hives are located at 46 Ranch, where regenerative farming practices focus on improving soil health, increasing biodiversity, and caring for the land for future generations. Through cover cropping, thoughtful grazing, and reduced soil disturbance, the Ranch supports a healthy ecosystem that benefits pollinators and native plants alike.

Throughout the season, Cambria Nursery will host a series of hands-on workshops, designed for gardeners and creatives of all experience levels. These workshops offer an opportunity to learn new skills, gain confidence, and connect with others who share a love of plants and design.

• Succulent Mushroom Workshop on Saturday, March 21 at 11 a.m.

• Guests will create a mushroom-inspired succulent arrangement

• \$45 per person, includes all materials

• Space is limited and tickets must be purchased online in advance

Additional workshops will be announced throughout the season. Full workshop details and registration can be found at cambrianursery.com.

Pet Portraits Help Fund Food Pantry

Amy Marlan Photography is back with its third annual Pet Portraits with a Purpose fundraiser for the New Life U-Pick Pantry in Pismo Beach. In its first two years, more than \$6,000 in session fees and dog food donations were raised for the pantry. This year, PETS Hospital in Orcutt is matching every donation dollar-for-dollar — doubling the impact for the first time in the fundraiser's history.

For every \$175 pet portrait session booked through the Pet Portraits with a Purpose fundraiser, Amy Marlan Photography donates \$150 to the grocery-store style pantry.

For Pet Portraits with a Purpose, Marlan meets with each client before the session to learn about their pet's personality and discuss their vision. Each participating pet



owner will receive a custom metal pet luggage tag and a sWAG bag from the fundraiser's business sponsors: UPS Store Nipomo, Pismo Beach Veterinary Clinic and Holistic Family Healthcare, who are also donors to the pantry.

Following the session, clients have the opportunity to select artwork of their pet for their home.

"I employ a variety of techniques to help your pets feel comfortable and safe so that the session is enjoyable for them. I have been called the 'fur whisperer' on more than one occasion," said Marlan.

Pet Portraits with a Purpose runs through March 31. To book a session, go to <https://www.amymarlan.com/PPP>.

The New Life U-Pick Pantry was founded in 2020 by New Life Community Church and inspired by Gina Nicola, New Life pastor and community outreach director. She is a licensed marriage and family therapist who serves adults, teens and families through its counseling center. There, she saw many struggling with hunger — and that food insecurity was profoundly affecting their mental health and ability to function in life.

The pantry is distinctive in that it operates like a grocery store with fresh produce and refrigerated items where users shop on their own. It utilizes a point-based system that allows anyone with a photo ID to select what they need.

"We're trying to help people shop with dignity by selecting what they need instead of receiving a pre-packed bag of groceries. We want to help them feel seen and loved through the difficulty of not having enough food," said Nicola.

When the pantry opened, it served 100 families. Today it serves more than 40,000 people a year.

The New Life U-Pick Pantry is located at the New Life Community Center on Crest Way in Pismo Beach. For pantry hours, donation needs, and volunteer opportunities, visit newlifepismo.com/pantry.

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 EditorEBN@gmail.com.

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Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary Website Resources



Randall Smith's photo of an eared grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) catching a pipefish (*Syngnathinae*) in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is a Second Place award winner in the 'Sanctuary Life' category. Photo by Randall Smith.

By Christine Heinrichs

In January, a waved albatross, a critically endangered species from the Galapagos Islands and South America, was seen off the Central Coast. The bird had traveled about 3,300 miles from its typical range, earning it an avian "vagrant," the term used for birds outside their usual range.

Fortunately, Tammy Russell, a marine ornithologist on board the research vessel Reuben Lasker, was there to see and recognize this unusual bird, and tell the world, as reported in the New York Times.

While that sighting was exceptional, Central Coast residents and visitors can see lots of other birds and other wildlife in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary that spans from Marin County in the north down to Cambria. Learn about what you can find from the Sanctuary's new website, montereybay.noaa.gov. It's a wealth of information and resources to use and enjoy.

Virtual Dives, under the Multimedia tab, takes you under the surface, to the world of sea lions and kelp, the landscape of fish, anemones. Divers remove lost fishing gear and nets, "Ghost Nets," that can entangle and snare marine life. Browse through the Multimedia Gallery at bit.ly/4rOrycm.

The dramatic coastline is dangerous to sailors. The Piedras Blancas Light Station, and others within the Sanctuary, were built to warn mariners, but many ships have sunk over the years. The website has a gallery of ship-

Sanctuary Website Continued on page 14

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Obituaries

Clemens Van Beurden 1940 - 2026



Clemens Van Beurden, known to all as Clé, passed away peacefully in his sleep on February 28, 2026. Born on June 11, 1940, in Indonesia, Clé lived a rich life that crossed continents, cultures, and decades. His warm personality and infectious laugh left an indelible mark on everyone who knew him.

The oldest of 10 siblings, Clé's early years were shaped by the turmoil of World War II. From 1943 to 1946, he was held with his mother and two siblings in a Japanese prisoner camp for women and children in Indonesia. After liberation, the family was aided by nuns, reunited with their father, and traveled to the Netherlands aboard a refugee freighter. They settled in Tilburg, where Clé spent his formative years attending Catholic schools and church. He had fond memories of spending each August holiday biking to the seaside with his family.

In 1957, Clé and his entire family, sponsored by the Catholic League, immigrated to the United States. They departed Rotterdam by ship, arriving at Ellis Island before embarking on a four-day train journey to Fresno, California, where they began their new life. Clé's passion for travel by sea and train carried through his entire life.

Clé attended Fresno State University from 1960-1964, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in economics. He then embarked on a career as a restaurateur, managing Degnan's in Yosemite, where he met his first wife Marilyn and they were married from 1964-1978. Clé and Marilyn had two beautiful daughters, Carrie and Monique.

In 1968, he fell in love with the Central Coast and decided to put down roots. Those roots ran deep as he called the Central Coast home for over the next 60+ years. He owned and operated with his family five different local establishments: the Flying Dutchman, Hofbrau, The Grey Heron, The Sandpiper, and the famous Friar Tucks. It was at Friar Tucks where he met Joan—they married in 1980 and had two children together, Nick and Ariana.

In the 1980's he transitioned from the restaurant busi-

ness to work with his brother Bill at Van Beurden Insurance Agency where he ran the personal lines department and managed the offices on the coast. He retired in 2015.

Clé was an avid music lover; he hosted musicians at his restaurants throughout the years and later in life was on the Board of the Directors of the San Luis Obispo Symphony. He began a Buddhist practice and was a member of the White Heron Sangha.

Clé is survived by his partner Joan Ghilotti Van Beurden, and four children Carrie Van Beurden, Monique Van Beurden Richetti, Nick Van Beurden, and Ariana Van Beurden; five grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; eight siblings; and two half siblings. He is preceded in death by his mother Maria, father Cornelius, and brother Joost.

His memorial will be held Sunday, March 29, at 11 a.m. at the Cayucos Vet's Hall at 10 Cayucos Drive. In lieu of flowers, please donate to the San Luis Obispo Symphony.

Donna Jean Cuvelier 1947 - 2026



Donna Jean Cuvelier, 78, passed away peacefully at home on January 23, 2026, in Los Osos. Born on April 15, 1947, in Glendale, California, Donna lived a life rooted in faith and guided by compassion and love.

Donna was an empathetic listener who offered comfort without judgment. She earned her bachelor's degree and

teaching credential from UCLA, which laid the foundation for a meaningful career as a paraeducator, spanning over two decades in San Luis Obispo County schools. Students of all ages and abilities benefited from her warmth, patience, and understanding.

Donna was a devoted wife to her husband Daniel; a loving mother to her son Eric Cuvelier and daughter Carrie Ellis (Chris); and a proud grandmother to Mason and Ryan. She also shared close bonds with her sister Linda Mattingly (John) and brother Roger Anderson (Judy). She was preceded in death by her sister Gayle Wunder and parents Stan and Bonnie Anderson.

Her life was filled with joyful and collective pursuits that reflected her caring spirit. She found delight in aqua aerobics, traveling, and all activities that involved her grandsons. A gifted writer with a sharp wit, Donna brought laughter and insight to devoted readers of her Christmas letters and thank you cards. Her love of history and current events revealed a vibrant mind, while her ability to form enduring friendships — her cherished "forever friends" — spoke volumes about her committed interest in others.

Among the many ways Donna expressed love was through the family tradition of making jam preserves. From the same boysenberry vines grown by her father and still growing in her backyard, Donna transplanted, nurtured, and harvested vines that continue to bloom and bless her family and friends.

Faith was the cornerstone of Donna's life. She found spiritual nourishment at El Morro Church in Los Osos, where she deepened her connection with God and community.

A memorial service will be held on March 28, at 2 p.m. at El Morro Church, 1480 Santa Ysabel Avenue, Los Osos.

In honor of Donna's memory, donations may be made to the El Morro Church of the Nazarene or your favorite animal charity. May her legacy of kindness, faith, and love continue to inspire all who knew her.

Psalm 91:4 "He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection."

Sanctuary Website From page 13

wreck profiles, reflecting the hazardous conditions sailors faced along the rocky Central Coast. The sanctuary has a database of all known aircraft and ship losses, open to the public at bit.ly/3P4VItj. The Submerged Cultural Resources Study by Smith and Hunter (2003), lists 463 vessel and aircraft losses.

Archaeological remains of hundreds of sunken ships may well be within the sanctuary, for which no records exist. No database will ever be complete, but the sanctuary seeks all historical documentation, to protect whatever cultural and historic resources are hidden beneath the surface. View some, such as the Casco, a steam schooner which sank off Point Piedras Blancas in 1913.

The Sanctuary has archived 20 years of publications, from the otters and fish to effects of human noise and the demographics of the Central Coast. Got an interest? Find resources for the wide variety of subjects encompassed by the sanctuary in its library at sanctuaries.noaa.gov/library/

Bring your camera! Several photos taken within the MBNMS were selected as winners in the 2025 Get Into Your Sanctuary Photo Contest.

Christine Heinrichs is the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council SLO At-Large member. Follow her on Facebook, Bluesky, LinkedIn, and Substack.

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Obituaries

Julia Vance Held 1938 – 2026



Julia Vance Held died on February 18, 2026, at her home in Cayucos, California, after a brief illness. She was 87.

Julia was born in 1938 in western Pennsylvania and was educated at Briarcliff College in New York. Eager for adventure, she headed west in 1960 where she met Gordon, a Navy officer stationed in San Diego. What followed was 65 years filled with travel, adventure and a legacy.

Julia's highest priority was family, and she received great pleasure from so much family living nearby. She is survived by her loving husband of 65 years, Gordon; her sons Gregory Held (Kathleen), Smith Held (Hannah), and Jeffrey Held (Roberta), all of Cayucos. She is survived by grandchildren Matthew Held (Sarah) of Tyler, TX; Emma Held of Eureka, CA; and Molly Held, Alison Held, Caroline Held and Ryan Held, all of Cayucos; as well as four great grandchildren and three nieces.

Until the very end she was committed to her daily walks with Gordon — on the beach, or through the neighborhoods, or to the ranches behind Cayucos. She was generous and kind, a little mischievous, and could be wonderfully funny. She shared her wisdom, asked insightful questions and wanted everyone to live a life that made them happy.

A fifty-year resident of Cayucos, and lifelong Episcopalian, Julia worshipped at St. Peter's By The Sea in Morro Bay. In addition to family and community in Cayucos, Julia delighted in the bright lights and fast pace of San Francisco, where she maintained a home and lived part time, enjoying the theater, dining, and friends.

A Celebration of Life will be held this spring in Cayucos. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations be made to the Alzheimer's Association (www.alz.org).

Lynn Lewallen 1948 - 2026



Lynn Lewallen, 77, passed away peacefully on February 13, 2026. Born on September 13, 1948, Lynn lived a life defined by love for her friends, her family, and hard work.

Lynn was a devoted wife married to the love of her life for nearly 61 years. (March 7, anniversary) Together they built a life and raised two daughters. She and her husband were part owners of wholesale green houses, Sun Spirit Green Houses, from 1978-1985.

She began her career working at JCPenney in 1980 and worked her way through the ranks to senior management and retired in 2006. She was looked up to by many and assisted other senior managers throughout the region and beyond. Her intelligence, determination, and strong work ethics earned her the respect of work colleagues, friends, and everyone who had the privilege of knowing her.

Lynn will be remembered for her sharp mind, kind heart, and dedication to her friends and family. She was deeply loved and will be greatly missed by so many.

Lynn is survived by her husband John of nearly 61 years, her daughter's Dawn Lewallen (partner Dale Higham) of California and Tracy Trevino of Las Cruces; grandchildren Depeche Salcedo (husband Tom Salcedo) of Morro Bay, Tristan Trevino, and great grandchildren Rocko Salcedo and Wylder Salcedo. She was preceded in death by her father Philip Stevens, mother Marie Stevens, and brothers Paul Stevens and Alan Stevens.

Her legacy lives on in family she cherished and the countless lives she touched.

Funeral Services were held on March 4 in New Mexico. Inurnment will take place at a later date. For online condolences logon to www.bacasfuneralchapelslacruces.com.

Lunar New Year Celebration



Volumes of Pleasure Bookshopp recently hosted the Cal Poly Lion Dance team to bring in the Year of the Fire Horse. It was the 24th year the business hosted the cultural event.

Store owner Carroll Leslie, who started this event with her partner Barbara, was among the 300 people in attendance.



"The Cal Poly Dance Team blessed both the community and Volumes of Pleasure with an excellent performance that shared both tradition and dance," said Mona McKelvy, who is part of the bookstore team. "The children in attendance were very excited to be able to interact with the lions."

The Lunar New Year celebrations officially started Feb 17 and ended Feb 27. The year of the Fire Horse is a year of alignment, direction, and forward motion — meaning you are no longer shedding (last year was the Year of the Snake), you're becoming.

For information on future events contact Volumes of Pleasure Bookshopp 805-528-5565.

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Community

Events and Activities



By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Cal Poly Arts presents Cirque Kalabanté on Friday, March 20, from 7:30 to 9 p.m. Afrique en Cirque is a show by Yamoussa Bangoura, inspired by daily life in Guinea. This performance shares the beauty, youth and artistry of African culture. A colorful show beyond its scenery, costumes and staging, it makes any theatre vibrate with energy and represents the strength, agility and life's joys of young Africans. Watch acrobats execute gravity-defying moves and human pyramids on Harold Miossi Hall's grand stage, accompanied by the contemporary sounds of live Afro-Jazz, percussion, and kora. Tickets range from \$33 to \$69 and are available at pacslo.org.

...



The San Luis Obispo Blues Society presents Wrockinfoose, Leslie and the Soulshakers, and Blues Asylum in a dance concert at the San Luis Obispo Veterans Hall, Saturday, April 4, at 7 p.m. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. This show is dedicated to the memory of the late, great longtime emcee and board member, Bill "Boogie" Newell.

Wrockinfoose is proof one does not have to travel far to hear funky rhythm and blues New Orleans style. This seven-piece band features the finest musicians from the Monterey Bay area performing mind bending originals and give their unique take on standards. The band is led by keyboardist Luca Fredricksen who spent five years with the legendary NOLA blues and soul artist, Walter "Wolfman" Washington, he was also a longtime member of the Pontiac Blues Band and has more recently toured with former Tower of Power vocalist, Lennie Williams. With a name like Wrockinfoose you know they have to be good.

Bringing a dancing soul and blues groove will be Leslie and the Soulshakers. Their brand of soul rocking blues will get your hips shaking. The band features local guitar legend, Dorian Michael, performing fave tunes like "Papa was a Rolling Stone" and "Mama, He Treats Your Daughter

Events Continued on page 16

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News

Events From page 15

Mean.”

Blues Asylum, the house band at the Niffy's Merrimaker for the bi-monthly blues jam opens the evening. They take well known blues songs and transform them into gems. Leader and blues harp player David Wolff, and guitarist Richard Manuputy and Michael Melchione and the rest of the band play a brand of rockin' blues shaken to the core.

Tickets are \$26.80 via sloblues.org (\$25 plus \$1.80 fee) or \$35 cash only at the door the evening of the show. Wine, beer, and snacks are available. The San Luis Vets Hall is located at 801 Grand Avenue in San Luis Obispo.

Art Center Morro Bay hosts Ross Neder as a featured artist in a fundraiser and unique exhibit, “Glass and Bronze In Motion” This blown glass and bronze collection will be on view daily 12-4 pm, through Mar. 31, 2026. Neder is donating 20 beautiful large-scale creations at wholesale prices to benefit the SLO Food Bank programs. Buyers will receive a 75% charitable tax deduction (less fair market value, with 25% going toward Art Center Morro Bay's expenses.

“Glass and Bronze In Motion” is in conjunction with Central Coast Watercolor Society's prestigious annual painting

exhibit “Aquarius” along with ACMB's diverse member show, “A Shift in Perspective.” View Neder's work at rossneder.com.



Pismo State Beach and the Central Coast State Parks Association welcomes all to the 3rd annual Pismo State Beach Sandcastle Competition on June 13 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. This is a free family fun activity to either participate in or just to come down and watch all the builders. This is a casual contest for all ages and all skill levels. Register teams at 805-474-2664.

The American Association of University Women, Morro Bay Branch welcomes their “Women in History” essay contest winners and their families to their March meeting. Three winners, from Morro Bay High School's freshman classes, were chosen for their original essays on women who have influenced history in a meaningful way. Each winner will read their essays to the group. The meeting takes place Saturday, March 14 beginning at 10 a.m. at Saint Peter's Episcopal Church, 545 Shasta, Morro Bay.

The final preparations for AAUW Morro Bay's Annual Garden Tour, on April 26, from Noon to 4 p.m. will be discussed. Tickets and posters will be available. Tickets can also be purchased from My805tix.com. This year there will be four gardens to view. Nancy Nagano will play her cello in one of the gardens and refreshments will be served at another.

Anyone, who is interested in the AAUW mission to advance equity for women and girls through advocacy and education, is welcome to attend meetings. For membership information contact Mary Jo Rogers at goldcoastmj@gmail.com.

Art Center Morro Bay is holding “An Introduction to Soft Pastels & the Art of Pastel Painting” on March 18 - 20 from 1-4 p.m.

The cost is \$157.50 for members (use code member at checkout) and \$175 for non-members

Pastel artist Greg Trombly, work picture, will teach the class that focuses on capturing light and its corresponding shadow, in a variety of settings. Not just sunsets and sunrises, but how it is filtered through ocean, forest and floral settings that results in a wonderful composition

Though this workshop is introductory,

all interested, regardless of experience, are encouraged to attend and will be accommodated. Each session takes place within a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. The instructor will do a demonstration each day at the beginning of class and then work individually with each participant.

Registration at artcentermorrobay.org/workshops.

Programs at the Los Osos Library, 2075 Palisades Ave. All programs are free.

Current Featured Wall Artist: Randy Ayala paintings on wood and canvas.

Current Featured Display Case: Faylla Chapman – All about eggs!

• **Storytime - Thursdays**, 10:30 – 11 a.m. Stories, dance, and music for toddlers and preschoolers.

• **Build a Marble Run** – Friday, March 13, 2:30 – 4:30 p.m. Come to the library and play with marbles! Build your own creations and have lots of fun. Preschool, School Age.

• **Fairy Tale Engineering** – Friday, March 20, 2:30 – 4:30 p.m. Engineer a happy ending to your favorite fairy tales! Build a chair even Goldilocks can't break or a house strong enough no wolf can blow it down. STEM fun for ages 3+.

• **Nintendo Switch** – Friday, March 27, 2:30 – 4:30 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, Just Dance and Super Smash Bros. School Age, Tween, Teen.

• **Teen Advisory Board** – Saturday, March 28, 3 – 4 p.m. Calling all teens. Looking for volunteer or community service hours? Help Librarian Emily run the Teen Advisory Board. Participation can be listed on job, scholarship and college applications. Snacks provided. Tweens and Teens.



The Morro Bay Shanty Project performs historical (and hysterical) songs of the sea at Tognazzini's Dockside Too, 1235 Embarcadero, Morro Bay, on Friday, March 27, from 11 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.

Enjoy lunch and sing along at this waterfront venue. Tips benefit the Morro Bay Maritime Museum.

For more information, send an email to

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Lots For Sale



731 Butte, Morro Bay \$310,000

Rare Vacant Lot with special location in a quiet neighborhood, but close to major Morro Bay streets, Kings and Quintana. Highway One access is also near. The mix of small to medium sized houses includes many styles, most are in good to excellent condition. Nearby a new two-story home is under construction. Most area parcels are 50 feet wide adding to the spacious feel. Depths vary - the subject is 107ft deep. Views will include Morro Rock and from a second story perhaps a peek of the sea. Don't miss this opportunity to acquire a lot offering excellent size, location and view potential.



Ash Avenue, Cayucos \$795,000

Street to Alley lot with Commercial Zoning & Exceptional Potential This unique parcel offers a rare opportunity in a desirable area with commercial zoning and a mix of surrounding uses. Located just moments from downtown Cayucos, beaches, the pier, and Cayucos Creek Road, the site is ideally positioned for a wide range of potential developments. Frontage on Ash Avenue—across from several fine residences—plus access from a well-maintained rear alley, adds to the flexibility and appeal of this property. Whether you're envisioning a boutique business, mixed-use development, or a custom project, this location supports your vision. Don't miss out—properties like this are hard to find and quick to go. Explore the possibilities today.



2651 Richard Ave, Cayucos \$349,000

This large 6,100 sq. ft. upslope lot has remarkable views extending from north of the Cayucos Pier all the way to Morro Bay. The county has previously approved construction on this lot of a large house over 3,000 sq. ft. and in 2023 approved construction of a smaller three-story 1,781 sq. ft. house with a rooftop deck, that is featured in this listing. This lot is just 3/4 of a mile south of downtown Cayucos. Located on the upper street of a quiet neighborhood, this lot backs up to beautiful hillsides and open land that is unlikely to be developed in the future -- offering more privacy, serenity and wider coastal views than most lots or homes in downtown Cayucos.



the back of the property are ideal for a garden, small vineyard, or fruit trees—a perfect extension of the coastal lifestyle. Bring your builder and vision—this is a unique chance to create a modern hillside retreat using today's construction technology and design, with five years of careful planning and approvals already complete.

3579 Gilbert Ave, Cayucos \$385,000
Hillside Ocean View Parcels with MUP-Approved Plans A rare opportunity to build your dream coastal home on this spacious downslope parcel with MUP-approved plans—five years in the making and ready for building permit application. Designed to maximize the ocean views and natural setting, the home features an upper-level driveway from Chaney with a 2-car garage and off-street parking, a premium in this neighborhood. The main level offers a great room with expansive windows, ocean-facing decks, and an open-concept kitchen with island, ample counter space, and direct deck access. A cozy fireplace and powder room complete the upper living space. Downstairs, the layout includes a primary suite and guest bedroom, each with en suite baths. The primary bath features a soaking tub, walk-in shower, and double vanities; the guest bath includes a shower and single vanity. Bedroom separation by the central staircase enhances privacy. Bonus: Additional lots at

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Local Sport Fisher Settles Civil Case

By Neil Farrell

A Morro Bay sport fishing boat operator has settled a dispute over relatively minor violations of fishing regulations, agreeing to pay thousands to get past the troubles.

District Attorney Dan Dow on Feb. 23, said his office had reached a settlement with Black Pearl Sportfishing LLC., the owner of the “Black Pearl” fishing vessel, and its operator, Brian Walker, for \$12,600 to settle violations he said dated back to last summer.

“The Black Pearl charter boat service,” Dow said in a news release, “regularly takes dozens of paying passengers on deep-sea fishing trips along the coastal



The sport fishing boat, Black Pearl, recently settled a civil case with the District Attorney's Office over violations of State fishing regulations.

waters of San Luis Obispo County.”

The incident happened in the waters off San Simeon. “On July 12, 2025,” the release said, “California Department of Fish & Wildlife officers were on patrol in the Bluefin [patrol] vessel in foggy conditions near Piedras Blancas in San Luis Obispo County when they identified on radar a suspected

Civil Case Continued on page 22

Community

morrobayshantypoint@gmail.

San Luis Obispo Repertory Theatre (SLO REP) continues its 2025-26 season with Edward Albee's landmark drama "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" running through April 12.

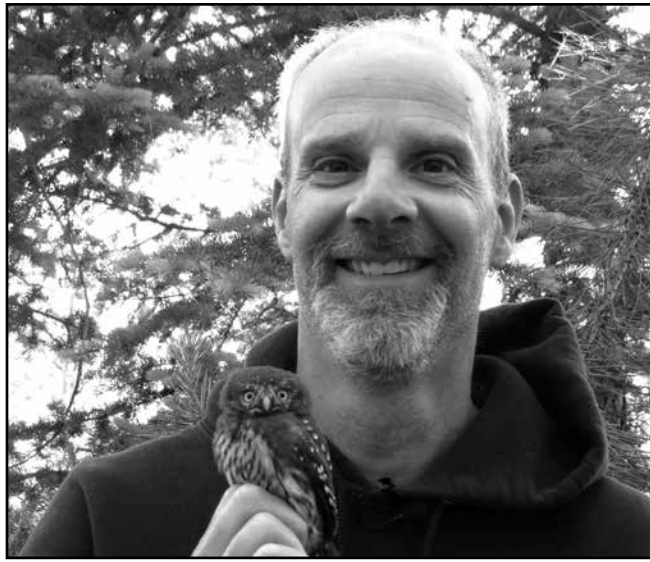
One of the most celebrated plays of the American canon, "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" pulls back the curtain on George and Martha, a middle-aged couple whose late-night gathering with a younger pair spiral into a blistering battle of wits, secrets, and emotional brinkmanship. By turns darkly comic and deeply unsettling, Albee's masterpiece examines illusion, ambition, love, and the fragile architecture of truth. The production is directed by Kevin Harris, SLO REP's managing artistic director, and features a powerhouse cast: Billy Breed as George, Suzy Newman as Martha, Michael Gould as Nick, and Carley Herlihy as Honey. Shows are Thursdays and Saturdays at 7 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays at 2 p.m. Due to the intensity of the material, the production is recommended for mature audiences. Tickets are available through the SLO REP Box Office and online at www.slorep.org.

The Cal Poly Wind Orchestra and Wind Ensemble will bring an exciting conclusion to the Band and Orchestra Festival as they continue their musical travels across the globe.

The festival and concert are being produced in collaboration with the Iota Pi chapter of Kappa Kappa Psi, national honorary band fraternity. Twenty middle and high school bands and string orchestras will participate in the festival Friday and Saturday, March 13-14, which will offer performance adjudications and professional clinics.

The capstone for Friday's events is the Cal Poly Wind Orchestra and Wind Ensemble's concert of new works for concert band, titled "Musical Journey Around the World." Student musicians are looking forward to the performance.

Tickets (\$17 and \$22 general, \$12 students) are available at pacslo.org.



Morro Coast Audubon Society's March Zoom Community Program is "Small Mountain Owls," presented by Scott Rashid on Monday, March 16, at 7 p.m. This program will not be recorded. It will only be available to be viewed live online on the evening of the program.

For Zoom Information, see the MCAS Events Calendar at <https://www.morrocoastaudubon.org/calendar>. All MCAS Zoom Community Programs are free and open to the public. All ages are welcome. No signup/registration required to attend.

If you have questions, email Wendy McKeown, community programs chair at CommPrograms@morrocoastaudubon.org.

This presentation covers four small mountain owls found in the western mountains and especially in and around Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP). It will cover the natural history of Northern Pygmy-Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Boreal Owl, and the Flammulated Owl.

Scott has been working with these owls, researching and rehabilitating them for more than 30 years.

Artist, Researcher, Bird Rehabilitator, Author, and Director of the nonprofit organization, Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute (CARRI), are only a few things that describe Scott Rashid. Scott has been painting, illustrating, and writing about birds since 1989. He has been passionate about birds ever since he was a young boy living in Wisconsin.

Scott's books include "The Great Horned Owl," "The Northern Goshawk, the Gray Ghost," "Exploring the World of the Barn Owl," and "Small Mountain Owls, Revised and Expanded Edition."

Local residents are invited to attend a free educational in-service designed to help buyers and sellers successfully navigate today's real estate market hosted by Joel Pace, Broker-Owner of Joel Pace Real Estate. This informative session will break down current trends, financing realities, pricing strategies, and insider tips that can save time, reduce stress, and maximize results.

Buyer's Seminar takes place Sunday, March 22, from 10:30-11:30 a.m. at 317 Morro Bay Blvd, Morro Bay.

Seller's Seminar takes place Sunday, April 5 from 10:30-11:30 a.m. at 317 Morro Bay Blvd, Morro Bay.

Both seminars are free, but reservations are recommended. RSVP to joelpacere@gmail.com or (805) 703-0778.

Send your event listing at least three weeks in advance to EditorEBN@gmail.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. We do not guarantee publication but try to include as many as we can.

A Dose of Good Dogma



Drama and Trauma at the Vet Clinic

By Lisa Ellman

Several years ago, I went back to dip my toes into the world of veterinary technician work. A job I had done off and on over the years. This time, I worked for two months at a very busy clinic in Southern California. I witnessed,

Good Dogma Continued on page 18

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News

Good Dogma From page 17

and partook in, some fascinating cases; a necropsy on a St Bernard that had just “dropped dead.” A bandage wrap on a necrotic wound using store bought honey. A week later the wound was still open, but the tissue was now bright pink and healthy! Astonishing stuff to witness for a former biology student.

But the topic I want to address specifically, what absolutely disturbed me, was the mundane, like a nail trim, a fecal exam, trying to examine a dog’s mouth. Many dogs came into that clinic terrified and anxious before we even got them back to the treatment room. I saw one dog so terrified that the owner had to literally drag her to the back, just to get a nail trim. I won’t go into gory details, but I vowed to never participate in that kind of traumatic treatment to an animal again. A trauma like that, for any animal, will only be worse next time. And it wasn’t the first time with this particular dog. I’ve heard there are now some vets that tell the owner that they will not go forward with an exam/procedure because the dog is too anxious and stressed. That is the right thing to do.

When I was in school, and longer ago for veterinary students, classes in dog psychology and behavior weren’t required, and only in the last couple of decades have they become part of the curriculum. Previously, there was some information in the textbooks about how to work with anxious or frightened dogs, but it was very elementary. Some of what I had observed, at this particular clinic, seemed contradictory to easing any stress and anxiety. As a vet tech, part of our job is to do whatever it takes to assist the vet, prevent them from getting bit and or perform tasks requested by the owner. And we do whatever it takes to get the job done. To that end, there are many ways to get your dog comfortable, and even relaxed, when visiting a scary place like the vet clinic.

First and foremost, do some refresher training (i.e. sit, stay, down). Then head to the clinic to acclimate your dog to the environment (smells, sounds). Go in and just sit in the lobby. Bring lots of small treats to give your dog when they look at you or relax a bit. Hangout for 5-10 minutes then leave. Do this until your dog loves going. Then, practice getting them on the scale, give treats! Introduce them to all the staff. On another visit, ask if you can take your dog into an exam room. Sit there while the dog investigates. Give treats. On a subsequent visit, ask a tech (if not busy), to take your dog to the treatment room to meet people and sniff around, again with treats.

Between your introductory visits, make sure you are engaging your dog in exam desensitizing routines; touching the feet and toes (nail trims), gently cleaning your dog’s ears (otoscope for ear infections), lifting their lip and gently massaging the gums (brushing teeth), opening their mouth to look inside (foreign objects). Ask the techs to do this with your dog as well. Once you think your dog is comfortable and ready, take them in for a nail trim, or a body check; then assess the results to determine if more practice is needed. It should be a fun adventure going to the vet, not a terrifying catastrophe.

Speaking of cats, I’ve only discussed dogs in this column because cats are from another planet, and there’s no reasoning with them.



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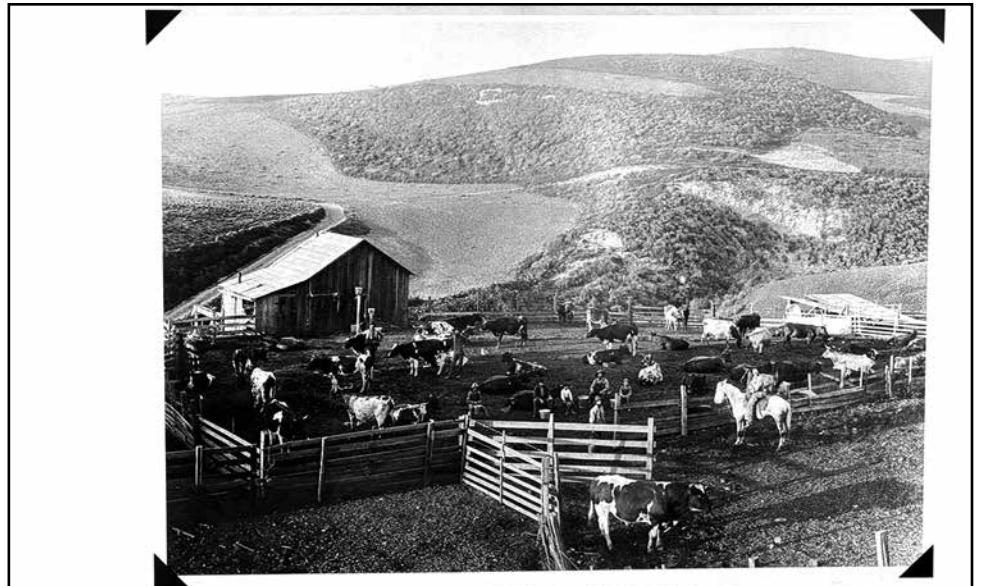
The Dairy Industry Brings Vitality to the Central Coast

A devastating drought in the early 1860s simultaneously changed the landscape and transformed the ranching industry of San Luis Obispo County. Huge tracts of land known as ranchos had dominated agriculture along the Central Coast. The sprawling ranchos were self-reliant communities, applying Spanish ranching traditions to produce food and provide transportation. Cattle trade was sparked by the soaring demand for beef in the east where rapid industrialization was taking place.

Then the three-year drought from 1862 to 1864 decimated cattle herds on the ranchos. Without their cattle, owners were forced to sell off their lands at a loss.

When the drought ended and rainfall returned, local residents saw opportunity in the reorganization of land ownership. Smaller tracts opened up the land for independent farmers and enabled the growth of a new industry, dairy farming. The climate allowed herds to remain outside year-round and the soil produced grass for grazing. These conditions made raising milk-producing breeds possible, and local dairies soon became known for their superior quality of cheese and butter.

With new owners came new methods. Alden Spooner devised a water wheel to power butter churning. Patrick O’Connor pioneered grazing practices that produced a



Spoooner's original herd of 50 Holstein cows. Each cow was hand milked twice a day by herdsman using buckets and milking

superior quality of cheese. The present town of Harmony is the former site of Excelsior Cheese Factory, the original cheese-making factory operation in the state. Franklin Riley founded the town of Morro Bay in 1870 as a trading port to transfer these dairy farm and ranch products.



Further dairy expansion attracted immigrants. The area’s population of 600 could not supply the labor needed to raise and milk the herds. Young men from the Azores left the hardships caused by earthquakes and failing economies. Thousands of Italian Swiss and Portuguese with suitable occupational skills learned in their homelands came to the central California coast, having a

Dairy Industry Continued on page 23





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News

Our Story From page 1

Elementary schools. The by-appointment-only clothing program augments the Coalition's food pantry family give-away program created in 2020.

As Bobby was launching the Kindness Coalition's food program, Denise asked herself, "What's my part?" She thought she might fill a different community need by creating another giving program that she would manage. "During COVID I was vacuuming one day and saw a picture of myself as a young girl always dressed nice even though I came from a somewhat dysfunctional family," Denise said. The concept of dressing for success came to mind. "Everyone should be blessed with dignity. Showing up with the clothes one feels comfortable in not only provides dignity but strengthens one's personal confidence."

Like the food pantry the free clothing program works through the schools' administrations to identify potentially interested families. Once confirmed by telephone, the family provides names and sizes. "At first, I selected from donated clothing, which was left on the family's doorstep like we do the food bags."

The all-volunteer Estero Bay Kindness Coalition, managed by Bobby, continues to serve the growing need for food subsistence within the Estero Bay. It sources the food primarily through partnerships with the SLO Food Bank, local farms, and community donations. Approximately two tons of food is purchased from the SLO Food Bank and supplemented by local produce and Cal Poly eggs, bagged and delivered by volunteers weekly. Meanwhile Denise manages the Coalition's Sunshine and Seed.

At first, the Coalition coordinated food deliveries in donated space at the Morro Bay Presbyterian Church. When the food pantry operations outgrew what the church had available, it moved to space offered by Mike Wolfe at the Avocado Shack (Morro Bay Main Street). The clothing program then had room to create its "store" at the Presbyterian Church simulating a retail store for children to come and pick out what they liked. However, when the Presbyterian Church's Kid's Ministry program needed more room, Bobby, a retired pastor, was able to ask around his network of active ministers and El Morro Christian generously agreed to provide space for the "store." It continues to operate by appointment only by connecting with Denise.

"We're in the back adjacent to the parking lot," Denise said. "Recently we put flyers in the Kindness food bags to let people know we have moved." She will coordinate an appointment time. "It is important to me that the kids come and look and choose clothing they like. I know how special it is to have your own shopping experience."

And her shoppers will find a wide variety of shirts, pants, shoes and jackets to choose from. "The family is welcome to come to the shopping experience. Lately, I've



Denise deLancillotti operates Sunshine and Seed, a free, used clothing store for children in Los Osos. Photo by Judy Salamacha

noticed the older siblings showing some interest, so I hope to expand to larger sizes someday soon." She admitted middle school and high school siblings are more particular often following clothing trends, so their store needs to offer current styles to be successful.

Besides local area donations, Denise has developed partnerships with some retail outlets to purchase more personal items at a discount. During the holidays, for example, the shopping experience included socks, underwear and even pajamas, if in stock. She said, "Old Navy is very helpful." She also mentioned that generous donors provided new hand made products for their Adopt-a-Family program. "Besides caps for the kids, Mom got a gift — a

crocheted blanket." The store also has a donor who funds their First Books Program. "When the children shop, they can pick out a book. If we get low our donor has said to order more, and just give him a call to pay the bill."

"Periodically, when we get low on inventory we will reach out on social media for donations." When someone is interested in answering the request, Denise needs the clothing to be washed, ironed if needed, and in like-new condition with no stains or rips, and, of course, what an elementary child would feel good wearing to school or family outings.

Most people hear about their services from the schools or the Food Bank, but the Kindness Coalition will include information in their regular flyers delivered in the food bags so satisfied word-of-mouth clients will pass along their good fortune. "Social media is another source that they learn about us," Denise said. "We're blessed to have our daughter Kathryn doing our social media and other publicity."

Speaking of Kathryn deLancillotti, she is a regular active member of the family team often coordinating their fundraising special events. For example, calendar the evening of April 18 at Moonstone Cellars. Kathryn will join two of her fellow award-winning poets, Rebecca Evans and Luke Johnson, at the Cambria-based winery based for poetic readings then open mic time. A \$5 donation is requested going directly to the Estero Bay Kindness Coalition. And, of course, Moonstone will have their wines available by the glass or bottle for the evening's benefit event.

In 2017, Bobby deLancillotti asked the principal of Del Mar Elementary how his family might help other families, and Principal Janet Gould provided him names of ten families. The Kindness Coalition provided and delivered food bags directly to their homes and has since sourced and managed the fully free food pantry and clothing program for those who need a leg up throughout the Estero Bay area. If readers would like to help in person or by becoming a donor, check out esterobaykindnesscoalition.org for contact information and more details.

Local Walk for Peace



Meg Syfan leads a group in a peace walk on Los Osos Valley Road. Photo submitted

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

A small peace walk was recently held in solidarity with the Buddhist monks who walked 2300 miles over 108 days from Fort Worth, Texas, to Washington, D.C. to raise awareness of peace, loving-kindness and mindfulness across America and the world.

"We are all walking the same path — each of us seeking happiness, each of us searching for peace," reads a post on the official monk's Walk for Peace Facebook page. "Un-

Peace Walk Continued on page 23

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News

Elephant Seals From page 1



An adult male northern elephant seal attempts to mate with an adult female near the end of the breeding season. Photo by Frans Lanting for the Beltran Lab / UC Santa Cruz under NMFS Permit 28742



A team of researchers including a veterinarian wear personal protective equipment as they walk out to monitor and sample the elephant seals at Año Nuevo State Park. Photo by Frans Lanting for the Beltran Lab / UC Santa Cruz under NMFS Permit 28742.

Visitor Center remain open to the public. It is a popular place for locals and tourist who go to the beach to see between 4,500 and 5,000 pups born each year, which corresponds to a total population size between 20,000 and 25,000 seals. Researchers are monitoring the elephant seal population, but the avian flu is not likely to reach the local rookery.

“We have been on alert for the avian flu for a few years, since it decimated southern elephant seal populations in Argentina in 2023,” Liwanag said. “Although it is concerning to see the first jump to northern elephant seals ever, the current evidence does not indicate that we should be more concerned than we were before we saw the spillover event at Año Nuevo. Previous spillover events in the U.S., which infected harbor seals, were localized. At this time, it appears the event at Año Nuevo is also discrete.”

Should any of the elephant seals in San Simeon test positive, what would that entail?

“Right now, we are more focused on neurologic symptoms,” Barbie Halaska, a biologist with Central California Marine Animal Response Team, told Estero Bay News. “Currently, confirmed affected animals are from the Año Nuevo Reserve and contained to a small section of that state park. As it relates to Piedras Blancas, different protocols are being reviewed and adapted based on the evolving situation, as each rookery is unique. At this point, we are actively monitoring for the live symptoms and then will make updates about confirmed cases at pandemicinsights.ucdavis.edu/h5-marine-outbreak

“CCMART was able to go out and do a dead animal survey on several of the beaches by taking swabs from a couple of individuals for HPAI testing to monitor this population. At this point in time nothing is out of the ordinary.”

California State Parks says, “While risk of infection to

the general public is low, HPAI can spread between animals and people. Do not touch live or dead seals or allow pets to approach them. This helps protect people and pets and also gives sick animals space”

Should readers encounter a sick, injured or dead marine mammal in California, Oregon or Washington, call the NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region Stranding Hotline: (866) 767-6114. Do not attempt to move sick wild animals, as this can spread disease and cause stress or harm to the animal.

Signs of the bird flu include “abnormal respiratory and neurological signs, including weakness and tremors,” Halaska said. “All the animals that were seen with these symptoms were found dead 24 hours later. At this point only weaned elephant seal pups are those being affected at a small, contained section of Año Nuevo Reserve.

“This age-class, weaned pups, are learning how to swim, forage on their own and adjusting to life without mom present. They are not able to swim very long or far and spend most of their time on shore near where they were birthed. Additionally, the animals that are displaying the HPAI symptoms are dying withing 24hrs.”

CCMART is a new non-profit organization that responds to dead marine mammals and sea turtles in San Luis Obispo county. They ask that if anyone come across a dead marine mammal to call at 805-242-3560 or go to their website, ccmarineresponse.org/, and fill out a dead animal report. For any live marine mammals, call the West Coast Stranding Hotline at NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region Stranding Hotline: (866) 767-6114.

While risk of infection to the general public is very low, HPAI can spread between animals and people.

“People and their pets should avoid all contact with

sick or dead wildlife because HPAI can spread between animals and people (and their pets),” Halaska said. “Although the risk of infection to the general public remains low, beachgoers should not touch live or dead seals or allow pets to approach seals. They should maintain a safe distance of 150 yards or more away. And please respect closures and follow guidance at sites where special precautions are implemented.”

Since the detection of this outbreak, scientists have worked closely with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries, California State Parks, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Public Health, local health officials, The Marine Mammal Center, the West Coast Marine Mammal Stranding Network, and other marine mammal researchers that monitor wild elephant seal populations.

Researchers are monitoring the situation at Año Nuevo via regular drone flights and surveys to evaluate animal health, collect samples, and screen for HPAI activity in birds and mammals.

Former Teen Center From page 4

midst of a Visitor-Serving Commercial area dominated by two big RV parks and three motels.

The zoning is one of four main issues with the property, which Singewald’s report listed as:

- It’s Visitor-Serving Commercial zoning designation, and exclusion from the Mixed-Use Residential Overlay;
- Residential uses are not permitted within the VSC zone if properties are not included within the Mixed-Use Residential Overlay;
- The high value of the property due to its location;

and,
• Existing buildings on the site that would hinder the development of a large-scale housing development without demolition.

The old teen center is one of three properties on that end of Atascadero Road that could hold big promise for Morro Bay’s future. The former sewer treatment plant property is beginning the process now of being demolished and cleared for potential redevelopment, and there’s another sizable private property across the street bordering the dunes that has been For Sale for quite some time now.

Each has its own peculiar issues to deal with, as the vacant lot has willows growing on much of it (considered protected wetlands); and the sewer plant has “coastal hazards” as declared by the Coastal Commission over a decade ago when it denied the City’s project to build its new treatment plant there.

So, while the town has several sizable parcels near the beach that could be re-developed into commercial, tax producers for the City treasury, various boggles loom large over each of them.

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News

Rotting Wharf From page 1

costs for needed repairs at from \$25.5 million to \$54.6 million.

Estero Bay News met with Quota Fund Executive Director, Dwayne Oberhoff, and board members Andrea Lueker and Jeremiah O'Brien in December to talk about the donation and catch up on the Quota Fund's work.

The Quota Fund was started in 2013 as part of an extensive government overhaul of the trawl fishing industry, under fire for perceived damage to the seafloor done by dragging trawl nets across the bottom.

The fishery targets the "deep-water simplex," consisting of a number of fish species that live in the deep water. Targeted species include Petrale sole, black cod, various rock cod species and others.

The Federal Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC), which sets federal regulations for the West Coast (except Alaska and Hawaii) set strict catch limits on the trawl industry, which had been the backbone of the local industry, bringing in the most fish and keeping the docks busy.

From that evolved a catch shares program that assigned each fishing boat a certain share of the new limits.

Then The Nature Conservancy environmental advocacy group got involved in an attempt to end trawl fishing and bought up nearly every permit and fishing boat from Port San Luis to Monterey.

But these permits are required to be fished by law and couldn't simply be retired. So, a quota system was developed, and local quota committees were established to ensure that fish caught in local waters are landed at local ports.

The MB Quota Fund was established to manage the allotted quota in Morro Bay and Port San Luis (Avila Beach), explained Oberhoff.

The Quota Fund leases out its share of the overall catch to local fishermen who then go out and catch the fish.

It's a complex system with strict limits for each species of fish, making it difficult to navigate.

If a fisherman pulls up more of any species he or she has quota for, they must buy extra quota space or face shutting down for the season, or potentially face stiff fines.

They also have quotas for some fish species, like whiting, that are not fished in local waters, so the Quota Fund is free to lease those fish to fishermen up north, where whiting is commercially fished.

It's a very complicated system and at this time there is only one local fisherman working it and he uses traps, not a trawl net.

But Oberhoff said they hope to soon have a second boat working the local quota. With a shortage of fishermen, the Quota Fund is free to lease out unused quota to fishermen from other ports.

Those lease payments support the Fund, which also has a grant program.

That grant program has been taking applications since early January and had a March 6 deadline for its 2026 Research Fund. They have some \$200,000 available for "research projects that address needs relevant to the fishing communities of Morro Bay and/or Port San Luis," the Quota Fund said in its announcement. They plan to

announce the awards in May.

O'Brien said some of their money can also be used to support critical infrastructure, such as the wharf in Morro Bay, in addition to research projects.

He said Harbor Director Chris Munson had asked for grant monies during one of their board meetings and the board voted to make the donation.

EBN asked Munson for comment about the donation and the extent of the work that needs to be done on the wharf, but he wanted to wait on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) he's putting together to lay out exactly what the City would use the money for.

Lueker added that repairing vital infrastructure like the wharf has a direct link to commercial fishing. "It's the only place the quota that we lease can be off loaded," she said.

O'Brien, who also played a hand in the MBCFO's \$400,000 donation, said the Cable Liaison Committee's donation would not necessarily go towards fixing the same issues with the wharf. "The connection is commercial fishing," he explained.

Oberhoff said the money "came from leasing the quota since the start [2013]." Also, when the local fund started out it had to purchase its quota from The Nature Conservancy, which owned it but wasn't using it.

"We were paying them for the first six years," Oberhoff said. But now that debt has been paid off freeing the Quota Fund to help the overall industry.

While they've funded grants for research in the past this is the first time the Quota Fund has allocated money to repair infrastructure.

O'Brien called it a "one-off" allocation, as they don't anticipate donating to repair infrastructure becoming a regular thing.

Oberhoff added that they make sure the quota they lease outside this area is at least fished and landed in a California port. "We lease about 7-8 million pounds of fish overall," he said.

O'Brien said, "That's what we own, the 'catch shares' and we can buy, sell or lease it."

Oberhoff said they sold off some of their quota to pay off The Nature Conservancy. As for the work the City is planning, O'Brien said they only want to make sure it goes to what they agreed it would go to.

The MOU, when it comes out, should spell all that out in contract form.

Civil Case From page 16

boat drifting inside a restricted fishing area. The captain of the Bluefin lowered a small patrol boat and dispatched two officers to investigate."

Getting help from the Bluefin to navigate the fog, the launch was able to find and identify the Black Pearl as the vessel inside the no fishing area.

The game wardens, "observed 20 customers fishing in waters seasonally prohibited to fishing," the D.A. said. That original violation led to the discovery of others.

"Later, an audit by the CDFW of the electronic fish logs submitted to the State by the crew of the Black Pearl revealed it was not accurately recording the species of rock fish being caught by its passengers."

The game wardens took their allegations to the D.A., and he contacted the Black Pearl's owner.

"Black Pearl Sportfishing LLC, immediately took steps to come into compliance with reporting requirements by replacing the vessel's computer hardware system and training the crew members in its usage."

The D.A.'s Special Prosecutions Unit pressed the case using a civil litigation process, rather than a criminal case. Such fishing violations can be charged as either. The case was resolved in late January.

"On Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026, San Luis Obispo County Superior Court Judge Craig Van Rooyen approved the settlement stipulation and issued an order that requires Black Pearl Sportfishing LLC, and Mr. Walker to pay \$10,600 in civil penalties.

"They also agreed to pay \$2,000 to the San Luis Obispo County Fish and Game Fund."

That fund, fed by fines for Fish & Wildlife violations, is "exclusively used for programs and projects that benefit the fish and wildlife of San Luis Obispo County," the D.A. said. The County's Fish & Games Fines Advisory Committee advises the County Board of Supervisors on how to grant that money out to different projects.

Also, the settlement prohibits the boat from exceeding daily catch limits and "requires the boat's crew to report the specific species of rockfish that its customers catch."

Some fish species are difficult to tell one from another and sport boats have long lumped them together under the catchall category, "unspecified rockfish."

D.A. Dow said, "Civil enforcement actions like this are essential to protect our precious marine resources and to make sure that everyone who does business on our coast plays by the same rules.

"By holding violators accountable, we safeguard the longterm sustainability of our coastal waters and ensure a fair marketplace for the many lawabiding commercial fishermen who depend on them."

The Black Pearl responded in a Facebook post shortly after the D.A.'s announcement hit the news.

"The incident in question occurred during a drift in which the vessel was attempting to hold near the 300-foot mark, but with current and wind conditions drifted into about 320 feet of water which was beyond the regulatory limit in effect at that time. Though the captain had already called our anglers up and signaled a boat move, we take full responsibility for our obligation to maintain constant awareness of our vessel's position relative to current fishing regulations, including in-season adjustments that may alter allowable fishing areas, and acknowledge our responsibility in insuring that at all times, regardless of conditions we maintain a position unquestionably within the proper boundary lines."

The company added that this is the only violation the captain has had in over 40 years of professional fishing.

When they checked their equipment, they found a problem.

"During our internal review, we identified that certain onboard navigation and regulatory reference technology was outdated. That equipment has since been fully replaced and upgraded to ensure real-time accuracy and full compliance with all applicable state and federal regulations moving forward."

Addressing the identification issues, "questions were raised regarding fish reporting classifications. Specifically, certain species of rockfish were recorded under the broader category of 'unspecified rockfish' rather than being itemized individually.

"While this has been a common reporting practice within the broader California sportfishing fleet, we acknowledge that regulatory expectations require precise species-by-species identification."

They put the captain and crewmembers through some training to better identify the different species of fish.

That issue illustrates the complexity of fishing regulations, as the rules have been detailed down to when you can fish, where you can fish and what depth of water, how many fish you can catch, and even what fish species you can take. The regulations also differ in many aspects from one area of the state to another.

And the regulations can be changed at any time by either the State Fish & Game Commission, or the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC). That's the federal agency that regulates fishing on the West Coast. That aspect makes it a challenge to keep up to date with the current regulations for sport and commercial fishers, as well as the game wardens that do the enforcement.

The Pearl's statement added that for them the ocean is more than just a place to earn a living.

"The ocean and its rich ecosystems are not just our workplace," the post said, "they are our life and our passion. We deeply value the privilege of sharing these waters with our guests and community. Sustainable fishing practices, regulatory compliance, and responsible stewardship are foundational to who we are and how we operate."

The issue with the Black Pearl marks at least the second time a local sport fishing boat has been dinged for much the same issues with tracking the fish passengers landed. Some time ago the Endeavor had similar issues with the catches by their passengers, and they too reached a civil settlement with the D.A.

The Black Pearl operates out of Morro Bay Landing. See the website at: www.blackpearlsportfishing.net to book a fishing trip online.

The rockfish season is slated to officially open April 1.

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<p>3/20 - 4/1 PROJECT HAIL MARY <small>(PG-13) 2 hr 36 min</small> <small>Fri-Sat & Tues-Wed 3:30 pm & 7 pm</small> <small>Sun 12:30 pm & 4 pm</small></p>		
<p>MONDAY SPECIALS * ONE SHOWING ONLY AT 5:30 PM</p>		
<p>3/16 PAPER MOON <small>(PG) (1973)</small> <small>1 hr. 42 min.</small></p>	<p>3/23 CHICAGO <small>(PG-13) (2002)</small> <small>1 hr. 54 min.</small> <small>FUNDRAISER FOR LOS OSOS CARES</small></p>	

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News

New Home From page 1

Rd. and is the site of a solar energy plant that powers the WRRF.

The CSD's facility sits on former farmland that it purchased from Chevron when the oil company liquidated its Estero Marine Terminal and adjacent lands, which it had been leasing out to farmers for decades.

At its Feb. 19 meeting, the CSD Board approved a Resolution declaring that the portion of its WRRF is "surplus land," meaning it is not needed for use by the treatment plant. That step should free up the two sides to move forward with a formal lease agreement and seal the deal for the MMC.

The Center has been in search of a new home for over a year after it was notified that its lease on a facility on the Morro Bay Power Plant property by plant owner *Vistra* would not be renewed.

The Center has used that facility for over 20 years to treat and stabilize seals, sea lions, and other marine mammals that it has rescued off SLO County beaches.

The Center had approached several governmental agencies — County Supervisors and the Morro Bay City Council among others — looking for a new home, without success. Then a few months ago, they approached the CSD and now it appears they will be able to continue this important work.

The CSD Board was unanimous in support of having the MMC join them on Toro Creek Road and had few concerns. One thing they did want however, was for the new facility to match the design of its WRRF, with the appearance of farm buildings to fit in with the rural setting. The conceptual designs that were presented to the Board in February seem to do just that.

In the Project Description, the new facility is a 1-story building for offices and animal care and treatment. There will be regular full and part-time staff plus volunteers throughout the year.

Site amenities include pedestrian and vehicle circulation and a parking lot, with water (fresh) being supplied by the CSD's well at the treatment plant next door. The sewer services will also be connected to the WRRF.

"The project is designed to comply with the California Green Building Code and will incorporate several green building materials," the report said. "Measures include low flow plumbing fixtures, LED light fixtures, ample insulation, energy efficient windows and doors, provisions for future solar panels and drought tolerant landscaping."

The site is 1.15 acres (50,000 square feet). The office building is 2,500 s.f., the animal pens another 2,400 s.f., and a gear storage shed is listed at 1,200 s.f. Overall, the buildings take up just 6,180 s.f. of the site.

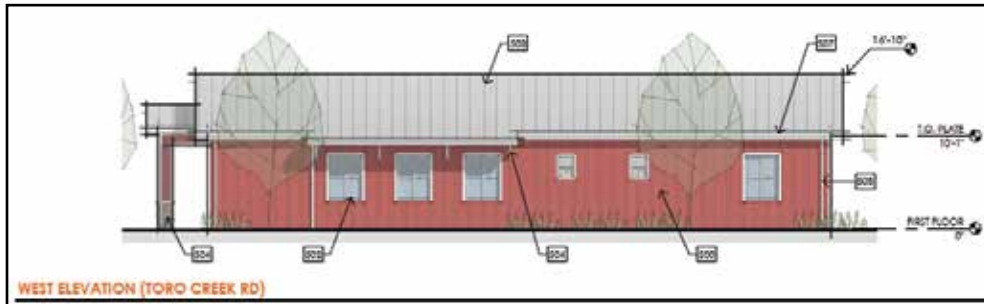
It seems like more room will be taken up with parking, as the design document lists a total of 31 parking spaces. Just 10 are needed for the staff, and one for a rescue van, and a dozen are listed as guest parking.

It calls for four electric vehicle spaces — three standard charging stations and one EV accessible space. It also has bicycle parking, a rack and some lockers too.

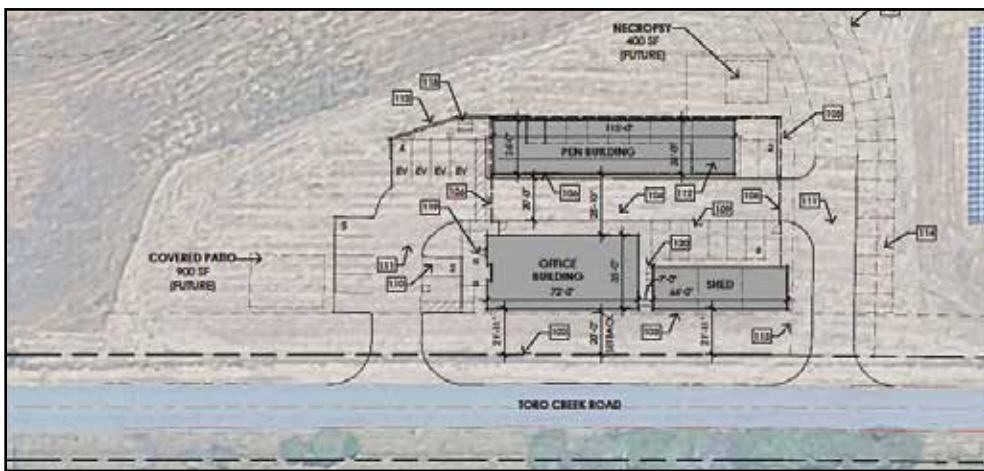
The design shows red buildings with stone veneers and metal roofs. That would be a close match to the WRRF's design. The office building and shed will be located close to Toro Creek Road with the animal pens behind it.

The CSD must report the "surplus land" finding and a finding that the site is exempt from the Surplus Lands Act to the California Housing and Community Development Dept.

The SLA is a State Law that requires public lands that are no longer needed by a government entity must first be



Drawing shows the design of a new Marine Mammal Center as it will look to someone driving along Toro Creek Road. Photo courtesy Marine Mammal Center



Drawing shows the layout of a proposed Marine Mammal Center facility on Toro Creek Road. At the far right edge is a solar energy plant that powers the Cayucos Sanitary District's treatment facility next door. Photo courtesy Marine Mammal Center

offered — for sale or lease — to other government agencies for affordable housing development.

If none are interested it also restricts any private interests that might want the property to also building affordable housing and if no one bites, the property can eventually be sold or leased without restrictions.

But the CSD has declared this site to be "exempt" because of the location and a lack of available public services, and ag zoning, so the State shouldn't have a problem approving the declaration.

The MMC must go through the County Planning Department for necessary permits to build its facility. Of note, the site is outside the Coastal Zone, so they shouldn't have to go through the Coastal Commission to get approval.

When asked by EBN about the latest step in this process, the MMC was optimistic but cautious.

Dr. Jeff Boehm, the chief external relations officer at MMC, said that while the Center is making progress in ongoing and good faith discussions regarding a new potential site of operations, no lease has been signed nor is there an agreement in place at this point with the Cayucos Sanitary District.

Pop-up Safety From page 3

we invest," or to try out simple inexpensive potential solutions to safety problems.

It's also an opportunity for SLOCOG to build up support for an upcoming vote in November on a 0.5% sales tax increase that would go to repairing and maintaining local road projects.

The pop-up safety grants are for temporary projects and events — one-day, two-day, up to a week in duration, and can include things like pop-up crosswalks, curb extensions, day-lighting treatments, school-area circulation pilots, and protected bike lane demonstrations, all supported by community engagement and data collection, SLOCOG said.

SLOCOG held an online informational meeting Feb. 26 that has been posted on its website, see www.slocog.org.

According to SLOCOG, "Each project will install temporary treatments such as curb extensions, high-visibility crosswalks, or short-term bikeway elements to help residents experience proposed improvements in real-world conditions."

"All demonstrations will include simple data collection and evaluation, allowing SLOCOG and local agencies to learn from user experience and support future applications for permanent safety improvements,"

Grant applications will be reviewed by SLOCOG's

Regional Road to Zero Committee. Winning projects will be implemented this spring and summer making for a pretty quick turnaround.

Information is available on the SLOCOG website at: www.slocog.org/programs/highways-streets-roads/safety/road-zero-pop-safety-demonstrations.

(And if anyone actually wins one of these grants, contact Estero Bay News at: neil@esterobaynews.com when it's ready to roll out.)

Dairy Industry From page 18

similar climate and offering economic opportunity in the dairy industry.

These skilled pioneers became prominent in the dairy industry—men whose names still identify landmarks, businesses and areas of importance. Joseph Fiscalini arrived from Switzerland with the skills he needed to thrive. George Tognazzini and John Filippini formed a profitable partnership. E.W. Steele, a well-known dairyman found his farm to be in what he called "cow heaven."

By 1883, San Luis Obispo County was the second largest producer of butter in the state and first in production of cheese. It had transformed from its rancho roots to become a thriving area for dairy farms.

Photo source: Spooner Ranch House archives. Do you have a great photo that tells story? We'd love to see it and maybe add another column to this series. Contact us: info@historicalmorrobay.org.

Peace Walk From page 20



Peace walkers and supporters at the SLO County Courthouse after 23-minutes of peaceful silence in solidarity with the Buddhist Monks in their Walk for Peace. Photo submitted

derstanding this shared journey, let us be mindful not to destroy the very things we are looking for."

Meg Syfan organized the local walk from Los Osos to the SLO County Courthouse last month.

"As much as I would have enjoyed meeting the monks along their journey, it was not possible," Syfan told Estero Bay News. "The intention for me was to walk in solidarity with them spreading their message of peace, loving kindness, and compassion."

With a peace flag in hand, 11 local walkers, ranging in age from 50 to 70-years-old, started at Clark Canyon Rd. in Los Osos and hoofed the nine miles to the SLO County Courthouse in about four hours. Once there, the group acknowledged the miles that the Monks had traveled by taking 23 minutes of peaceful silence, one minute for every one hundred miles of their journey.

"We were received well by drivers on our route with horns honking and hand gestures of peace signs," Syfan said. "The monks remind us that although the walk has been completed, the message of peace, loving kindness, and compassion toward all beings continues. They inspired me with their dedication to their mission of spreading their message for 2300 miles without any other agenda or attachment to the outcome. Seeing how much of an impact they had on the thousands of people who followed them through social media or took the time to greet them along the road, and the sincere appreciation, love, and support they received, touched me deeply."

March 20-22

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**Bay Osos Mini Storage
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**South Bay Mini Storage
2110 Mountain View, Los Osos**



**Morro Mini Storage
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– Storage Special –

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 - **LOWEST RATE MATCHED GUARANTEED**
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Bay Osos Property Management

Are you tired of managing investment property? Tired of the late night calls and fee negotiations with contractors? Tired of trying to find qualified renters and ensuring your investment is cared for? Bay Osos Property Management has over 30 years experience on the Central Coast and knows how to handle the unique challenges this rental market faces. With hundreds of properties already managed by Bay Osos Property Management, we know how to get things done.

Matching our knowledge with integrity

Contact us to see how we can help take the work out of your investment
805-528-1133 or bayosospropertymanagement.com



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