

## Coleman Park Phase-1 Done



Workers with J Bruce Kies, Const., CXT Precast Concrete Products and Bragg Crane Service lift and drop into place a pre-fabricated restroom at Coleman Park in Morro Bay. The new restroom marked the completion of Phase-1 of the Coleman Park Improvements Project was nearly finished.

Photos and Story by Neil Farrell

With the strength of a massive crane, the new Coleman Park restroom was lifted off the lowboy trailer, and gently eased into place marking the near completion of the first phase of the redevelopment of the bayside public park.

The operator of the 350-ton capacity, six-axle crane fired up the massive diesel engine and extended the arm with a massive strap cradle hanging from its hook.

A semi-truck towing a the heavy load trailer parked on Coleman Drive adjacent to the park and workers attached the cradle to the pre-cast lifting hooks built into the pre-fab, concrete block restroom that arrived a few hours late because of a permit snafu with SLO County.

Seems the trucking company hadn't received a heavy load transportation permit from the County before last Thursday, May 14.

It was originally scheduled to arrive in Morro Bay about 6 a.m. from the Texas factory where it was constructed.

Though it all got started a few hours late, the work progressed quickly once the cradle was attached to the

75,000-pound building.

The big crane from Bragg Crane Service of Santa Maria, easily lifted the building over the temporary construction fence around the park, and workers on the ground guided it into the proper position to bring it down with the stall doors facing the park's new playground.

Naturally, the in-ground pipes didn't quite match up with the pipes of the building forcing the crew from J Bruce Kies, Const., the contractor on the job and CXT Precast Concrete Products of Spokane Valley, Wash., the manufacturer of the restroom, to do some fast footwork to make it fit. This was one of those "measure two or three times before you install it" jobs.

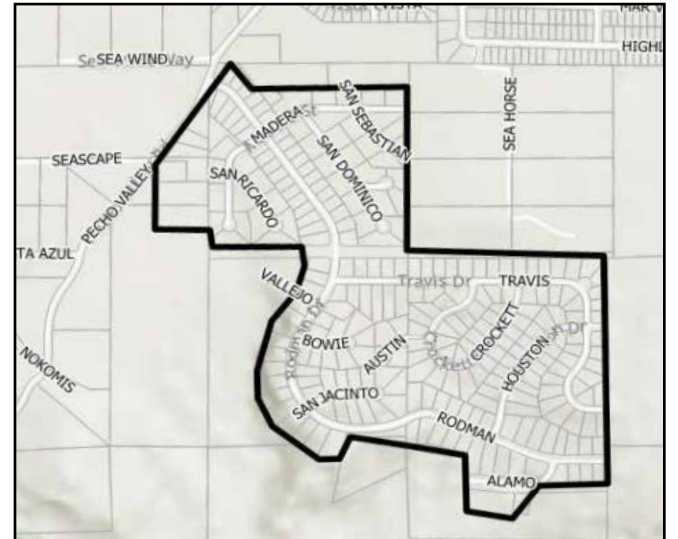
After some quick fixes the pipes lined up and the crane lowered the building the last 3-feet down to rest on the ground.

And with that the "Coleman Park Improvements — Phase 1," work essentially ended. Well almost.

City Engineer Nate Stong said they would remove the construction fencing by Friday, May 22 unofficially re-opening the park, but they still had to wait for Pacific Gas & Electric to come out and hook up the electricity to the

Coleman Park Continued on page 20

## Supervisors Won't Fund Cabrillo Estates Sewer Project



Street map shows the Cabrillo Estates neighborhood of Los Osos outlined in black. Map courtesy SLO County

By Neil Farrell

A hillside neighborhood in Los Osos wants to connect to the communitywide sewer system, but the County slammed the brakes on that idea until the neighborhood can show that it has the means to pay for it all.

On May 5, Supervisors were asked to approve the "Cabrillo Estates Sewer Project" a new effort to resolve a wastewater problem for the Cabrillo Estates neighborhood made up of 202 single family homes that sit high on a hill with a panoramic view of Los Osos and Morro Bay. It's a neighborhood of large, expensive homes and apparently affluent residents.

The project is a hangover from the County's community sewer project that was completed in 2016 after over 30 years of haggling with the State and residents.

"Public Works staff," reads a report from Public Works Deputy Director, Courtney Howard, "were approached by members of the Cabrillo Estates Property Owners Association (CEPOA) requesting that the County lead a project to construct the infrastructure necessary to connect their area to the WRF."

WRF is the County's Water Reclamation Facility, the official name for the sewer treatment plant it built off Los Osos Valley Road east of town behind the Los Osos Cemetery.

While the community sewer project used an assessment district on private property that encompassed most of the homes within Los Osos proper, Cabrillo Estates was one of the very few areas that were not required to be included. Instead, Cabrillo Estates homes are "utilizing on-

Sewer Project Continued on page 21

## Dantona-Woody Square Off in Cayucos Forum

By Neil Farrell

The two men vying for the Dist. 2 County Supervisor seat met for the last time before the June 2 Election to discuss issues specific to Cayucos.

Jim Dantona and Michael Erin Woody were hosted by the citizen's group, Preserve Cayucos and held before a standing room only crowd at the Boradori Garage, the candidates answered an impressive 41 questions posed by the audience, mostly dealing with the various issues facing Cayucos residents.

And once again, Shelley Higginbotham, who also moderated a Rotary Club sponsored forum in Morro Bay last month, moderated the forum.

Asked to describe their relationship with the Cayucos Citizens Advisory Coun-



Dist. 2 County Supervisor Candidates Jim Dantona (left) and Michael Erin Woody were grilled by Cayucos residents on Saturday, May 16 in the final candidate forum before the June 2 Primary Election. Photo by Neil Farrell

cil or CCAC, Dantona laughed because he used to sit on that body, which advises the Dist. 2 Supervisor on land use issues.

He already has a close relationship with the advisory council, Dantona said. He added that since the start of his campaign he's attended all their monthly meetings, as well as the advisory council meetings in Los

Square Off Continued on page 23

## Our Stories:

### Pandora Nash-Karner – The Discoveries of Travel

By Judy Salamacha



Bon voyage! Safe journey! Welcome home! Like me, I'm sure you've had to answer the question why we travel beyond our California Central Coast paradise. My answer was verified recently by Pandora Nash-Karner.

Throughout my 24 years living in Morro Bay, Pandora has been an active presence in her hometown of Los Osos. However, when I requested an interview, she surprised me. She preferred to explore her tomorrows instead of yester-years. Her current Facebook page states Pandora is a

Pandora Continued on page 22

## City Set to Buy Sewer Plant

By Neil Farrell



The divorce between the City of Morro Bay and Cayucos Sanitary District is almost final, with the close of escrow on a purchase by the City of their jointly owned properties on Atascadero Road due in June.

The CSD is a 40 percent owner of the old sewer treatment plant, a former cement batch plant, a portion of the Morro Dunes RV Park and a segment of beach that the plant's offshore discharge pipe runs through.

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Music Exchange Page 7



Police Blotter Page 8



MBHS Swim Team Wins Page 23



## Smart Mystery Continues; A.G. Search Doesn't Find Missing Woman



A new billboard has gone up on Hwy 1 seeking information on the whereabouts of missing Cal Poly freshman, Kristin Smart, who vanished some 30 years ago. Photo by Neil Farrell

By Neil Farrell

Hoping to finally solve the mystery of where is Kristin Smart, the Sheriff's Department served a search warrant at the home of the mother of the man convicted of her murder hoping to finally locate her remains, but apparently came up empty.

Sheriff's spokesman Tony Cipolla announced on May 9 that the department was serving a search warrant at the Arroyo Grande home of Susan Flores, mother of Smart's convicted murderer Paul Flores.

"The Sheriff's Department," Cipolla said, "is conducting an additional investigation into the property in the 500 block of East Branch Street in Arroyo Grande. This investigation is related to the Kristin Smart disappearance. This activity is the result of a search warrant signed by a Superior Court Judge."

Smart was a 19-year-old Cal Poly freshman who disappeared over Memorial Day Weekend in 1996. Though numerous searches have been conducted trying to locate Smart over the ensuing 30 years, her body has never been found.

In 2022, Paul Flores, who was the last person Smart was seen alive with on the night she went missing, was convicted of her murder and sentenced to life in prison.

His father, Reuben Flores, was also charged as an accessory, accused of helping his son dispose of her body. The father was acquitted of all charges in his trial, which was held concurrent with his son's trial after being moved to Monterey County in a change of venue due to excessive pre-trial publicity.

The case had been speculated about and talked about for over 25 years before Flores was arrested. In the end the case prosecutors presented at trial was essentially the same story that had been the theory of the crime from the beginning — that Paul Flores had killed her and his father helped him dispose of her body.

The case seemed to languish unsolved for decades, even though the younger Flores was almost immediately under suspicion and no one else has ever been named as even a person of interest.

It was the true crime podcast, "Your Own Backyard," with Chris Lambert who began digging into the case uncovering new witnesses that brought the case back into the spotlight.

The Sheriff's Department arrested Paul and Reuben Flores — Paul in Southern California where he lived and his father at his home in SLO County — in April 2021.

They went on trial in July 2022. Paul was convicted and Reuben acquitted in October 2022.

Paul Flores has been in State Prison since his conviction and has already lost one appeal. With the criminal case now seemingly over, the mystery of where is Kristin Smart continues, and this latest chapter appears to not have turned up much in the way of clues to where her remains

are now.

One of the reasons Reuben Flores was arrested was because a Sheriff's Department search of his residence located traces of human remains in a shallow grave underneath his back porch, however, the trace amounts were not enough to be positively identified that it was actually Smart who had been buried there.

That's why the elder Flores was acquitted. However, the son could not escape justice, as the evidence against him, while purely circumstantial, was enough to win conviction.

Paul Flores, now in his 40s, was sentenced to 25-years to life in State Prison.

So what did they find in the search of Susan Flores' home? "We did not recover Kristin Smart," Cipolla said. "Detectives will be evaluating any evidence we have recovered to aid in the investigation."

Though clearly disappointed that the search, which included the use of ground penetrating radar but apparently no actual digging, the Sheriff's Department isn't giving up on trying to find Kristin Smart and bring closure to the department's most infamous unresolved case and some peace to her family.

"The Sheriff's Office remains fully committed to finding Kristin and bringing her home to her family," Cipolla said.

District Attorney Dan Dow, whose office prosecuted both of the Flores men said, "Since the jury convicted Paul Flores for the murder of Kristin Smart, the District Attorney's Office has continued working in coordination with the Sheriff's Office to fulfill our shared commitment to the Smart Family and this community: to bring Kristin home."

"The District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation is assisting with today's search, and Assistant District Attorney Eric Dobroth supported the Sheriff's Office in advance of their obtaining judicial authorization for this warrant. While those responsible for Kristin's death — and those with knowledge of her whereabouts — could provide answers at any time, we remain firmly committed to using every lawful tool available to locate Kristin's remains and to support her family until she is brought home."

Both agencies continue to ask for the public's help in finally putting to rest this enigmatic mystery. "If you have any information, no matter how small, please submit your tip to San Luis Obispo County Crime Stoppers (anonymous): 1-800-549-STOP (7867).

Crime Stoppers has also erected a new billboard on ranchlands adjacent to Hwy 1 between Kansas Avenue and the California Men's Colony. The billboard features the now famous photo of Smart as a freshman college student full of life, and information on where to send tips. There is still a \$100,000 reward being offered by the Smart Family for information that leads to her whereabouts.

## Walgreens Will Open in Former Rite Aid Space



Walgreens is coming to Morro Bay. The pharmacy giant erected signs on the front of the former Rite Aid store on Quintana Road last week, announcing its intentions to open here. Photo by Neil Farrell

By Neil Farrell

Morro Bay will be getting another pharmacy chain store, after Rite Aid closed last year and left a huge hole in the local drug store market.

Walgreens, a major pharmacy chain with thousands of stores across the U.S. is preparing to move into the former Rite Aid space at 740 Quintana Rd.

The rumor mill has been working overtime for quite a while, but the company hadn't announced anything until last week. That's when Walgreen's erected two temporary signs on the front façade announcing that Walgreens would be opening soon.

Estero Bay News stuck a nose into the opened front doors and asked a workman inside if he knew of any target date for opening the store? He said he didn't and that work on the store was behind schedule.

Rite Aid left the store shelving in place when they shut down and Walgreens appears to have removed some of the shelving, apparently to make room for its own displays.

One local online news source reported on Walgreens' plans.

Cal Coast News reported that Walgreens was advertising job openings in Morro Bay, including a store manager, pharmacy manager, cashiers, and customer service associates, among others.

Estero Bay News sought to confirm this report with Walgreens but emails to their media office went unanswered.

Ebn also contacted the property management company seeking confirmation, but they were no help either.

Last week's new signage would appear to end the speculation. The signs also list a website for anyone interested in getting a job, see: [Walgreens.com/Careers](https://Walgreens.com/Careers).

On the Walgreens website, EBN found one remaining job listing in Morro Bay for Customer Service Associates, a job that pays from \$16.90 to \$19 an hour (see: <https://jobs.walgreens.com/en/job/morro-bay/customer-service-associate/1242/93214007792> if interested).

It's an old company and well-recognized brand. Walgreens was founded in 1901, some 125-years ago, by Charles R. Walgreen, Sr., who purchased the pharmacy where he worked on the South Side of Chicago.

Over the ensuing decades Walgreens has changed the meaning of pharmacy, introducing the world to the malted milkshake and childproof prescription caps, among numerous other innovations.

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Nestled near the peaceful Elfin Forest in Los Osos, this property offers a compelling mix of coastal charm, artistic character, and strong rental potential. Currently used as an income-producing rental, it's an ideal opportunity for investors or those seeking a versatile coastal getaway. The home showcases unique design elements throughout, including a spa-inspired bathroom with a jetted soaking tub, warm textured finishes, and creative lighting. The kitchen features durable tile countertops that complement the home's eclectic aesthetic, blending function with style.

Whether you're expanding your investment portfolio or looking for a distinctive property with income potential, this Los Osos gem delivers location, versatility, and undeniable character.

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# News

Today there are 8,000 Walgreens locations across all 50 States and Puerto Rico. The nearest one to us here in the Estero Bay Area is on El Camino Real in Atascadero.

When Walgreens opens in Morro Bay, it will fill the large retail space that had housed Rite Aid since the Cypress Plaza Shopping Center was built in the later 1990s. It will also fill the spot that Rite Aid held as one of the City's biggest sources of sales tax revenues and a major private employer in town.

Rite Aid had been in business for some 60 years but filed for bankruptcy last year and over 2,000 stores closed last summer at roughly the same time including two in San Luis Obispo, and one each in Los Osos and Morro Bay.

Rite Aid still had some 56 stores still open but by October 2025, those too were closed.

Though Rite Aid left a big hole, Estero Bay communities were not left entirely without pharmacies.

Los Osos still has two — one inside the Ralph's Supermarket, and the independently owned Rexall.

## One Dead, Two Injured in DUI Crash

One man died and two others were injured in a single car crash in rural Paso Robles, the Highway Patrol said in a news release.

According to Lt. Darren Gennusa, at about 7:19 p.m. Sunday, May 10 CHP officers responded to a report of a crash on Nacimiento Lake Drive west of Frazier Road, in the foothills west of Paso Robles.

"Upon CHP arrival," Lt. Gennusa said, "it was determined a 44-year-old male and Paso Robles resident, Joseph Mitchell Pate, was driving a 2015 Chevrolet Camaro westbound on Nacimiento Lake Drive at an unknown speed. For unknown reasons, the Camaro traveled off the north roadway edge [right hand side] of Nacimiento Lake Drive. Mr. Pate then turned left and over corrected, which caused the vehicle to travel across both traffic lanes, where it subsequently collided with a tree south of the roadway."

A 48-year-old man, sitting in the back seat "succumbed to his injuries at the scene,

Morro Bay saw the opening of a small, takeout drug store, the Pill Shop in North Morro Bay. In Cayucos, the Cayucos Pharmacy remains open. But the lack of a large retail pharmacy was definitely felt by the community.

But Rite Aid may not be totally dead. There is something calling itself "The New Rite Aid Team."

On a website entitled, "Riteaid.com/what-happened," it reads, "People who filled the same prescription at the same counter for twenty years had to figure out somewhere else to go.

"Employees who had given a decade or more of their careers to Rite Aid found out those careers were over. Not because of anything they did. Because the business failed around them."

It should be noted that CVS Pharmacy bought out most of the prescriptions from Rite Aid when it closed, but customers had the choice to move their scripts wherever they wanted to go.

EBN sent an email to Walgreens' media people via the website, seeking a target opening date but did not hear back before deadline.

"Lt. Gennusa said.

A front seat passenger, identified as Matthew Garcia, 41 of Paso Robles, suffered minor injuries and the driver, Pate, suffered major injuries in the crash.

Pate was reportedly arrested on suspicion of drunk driving, which will likely be elevated to a felony charge because of the injuries and the death involved.

"Due to his injuries," Lt. Gennusa said, "Mr. Pate was transported to Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center [in San Luis Obispo] for treatment."

The name of the passenger who died in the crash was not released pending notification of next of kin. The CHP continues to investigate the crash, Lt. Gennusa said.

Nacimiento Lake Drive is the main road that leads to Lake Nacimiento, a popular North County recreational spot. The winding road through the foothills to the lake is always tricky but made more so if a driver has been drinking.

## New Listings!

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## A.G. Man Missing at Pirates Cove

The Sheriff's Department Search and Rescue Team has been leading the effort to locate a missing Arroyo Grande man, who was last seen at Pirates Cove in Avila Beach.

According to a new release from Sheriff's spokesman Tony Cipolla, at about 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, May 12 they received a missing person report for 78-year-old Gary Kiehl of Arroyo Grande. Kiehl was reported missing after he didn't pick up someone at the train station.

"Friends reported they had become worried when Kiehl was supposed to pick someone up on May 12 at the Grover Beach train station," Cipolla said, "but failed to show up."

The last confirmed contact with Kiehl was at 2 p.m. the previous day, May 11, he added.

Deputies located Kiehl's unoccupied vehicle parked at Pirates Cove in Avila Beach, Cipolla said. They were told that Kiehl liked to hike along the cliffs at the cove, which triggered a full-on search and rescue response.

"The Sheriff's Search and Rescue Team (SAR) responded to the location and began searching for Kiehl," Cipolla said, "which lasted into the overnight hours on May 13."

SAR was joined by the County Office of Emergency Services' Cellular Forensic Team or FALCON, a Coast Guard helicopter and USCG cutter, the Port San Luis Harbor Patrol, and Cal Fire's water rescue craft.



Gary Kiehl, 78 of Arroyo Grande was reported missing on May 12. His vehicle was found at Pirates Cove, and a massive search was launched to find him. Submitted photo

Kiehl is an adult, white, male, 5-feet 10-inches tall, weighing 180 pounds with brown hair and hazel eyes. He has no history of missing person reports, Cipolla said.

"Kiehl is said to enjoy walking along the cliffs in the Pirates Cove area," Cipolla said. "At this time, this incident is not considered suspicious."

Those cliffs, which tower about 200-feet above the beach below, are pretty treacherous. Numerous people have fallen off to their deaths over the years. Pirates Cove is a clothing-optional public beach.

If anyone has information on Kiehl's whereabouts, call the Sheriff's Office at 805-781-4550.

## Cal Poly Students Build University's First Laser



Cal Poly physics students James Mauck and Hannah Bauer align a green light pump laser used as part of a project to build Cal Poly's first laser. A green pump laser excites the crystal, enabling it to emit tunable red and near-infrared light. Photo by Cal Poly Jay Johnston

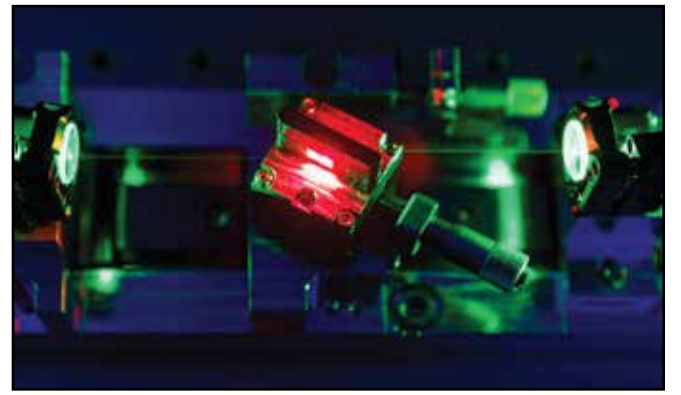
Cal Poly students have built the first solid-state laser in the university's 125-year history.

Undergraduate students collaborated with Insinu Toker, an assistant professor of physics in Bailey College, to construct a titanium-sapphire laser from scratch. The tunable laser, which emits red and near-infrared light, was constructed over three months during the fall and winter quarters.

"This is the very first laser built on campus," Toker said. "This is a very important step for students, especially undergraduates, to develop a rare and valuable skill that has a wide variety of applications for industry and research."

Lasers, which generate highly concentrated beams of light, are used in industrial manufacturing, medical procedures, communications, scientific research, consumer electronics and many other forms.

Toker, who specializes in optics (the study of light and how it behaves) and lasers, joined Cal Poly in 2022, after working as a researcher in Istanbul at the Koç University Surface Science and Technology Center, Turkey's first research center to better understand the surface characteristics of materials and devices, and how they can be modified for specific applications.



A green pump laser beam is directed into a titanium-sapphire crystal mounted inside a copper holder at Brewster's angle inside the laser cavity formed by curved, high reflector mirrors. The red glow shows fluorescence emission from the excited crystal. Photo by Cal Poly Jay Johnston

While lasers can be purchased commercially, the benefit of constructing them includes opportunities for students to gain hands-on knowledge and to learn how to make modifications for specific laboratory uses.

"A research group using multiphoton microscopy to study biological tissues in fields like cancer research and neuroscience is likely to need someone who's capable of understanding and building lasers," Toker said. "Cal Poly students will be ahead of their peers in the field when they enter the workforce with this experience."

Cal Poly's first laser was built after securing parts that would be difficult to manufacture on a university campus. But the rest they built painstakingly piece by piece, assembling the device to ensure proper functionality and energy output.

The team also adapted the laser to emit both continuous light and femtosecond pulses — ultra-short bursts lasting one quadrillionth of a second. Femtosecond lasers are often used in scientific research like materials characterization and deep-tissue imaging, and medical device manufacturing, LASIK (vision correction surgery) and more.

The student team is currently working on an even more complex project, starting from the crystal that amplifies the light in a laser, and building rest of the device, including crystal mounts, lens holders and a rail system to house the components.

Two undergraduate physics students have worked intensively on the project: senior Hannah Bauer, who's minoring in astronomy, and James Mauck, a first-year student who's pursuing a double major in chemistry.

"My role was to set up, align, operate and test the laser," said Mauck, who helped create the laser mount using 3D design. "I had some experience with mechanical design before college. I was really interested in getting involved in research, and this has been a great opportunity."

Bauer, who has an interest in telescopes for astronomy study as well, said that the work involved a lot of testing and adjustments.

"Everything has to be very precisely aligned," said Bauer. "During the building process, when something didn't work, we had to take it all apart and start over. You can actively see how you're manipulating the light, which is

## Embezzler Sent to Prison

A man who embezzled from his employer to pay his debts, will now serve a debt to society in State Prison.

Robert Conrad Vasquez, 38 of Paso Robles was convicted of embezzling more than \$100,000 from his employer, Scott O'Brien Fire & Safety Co., of Atascadero, the D.A.'s Office said. Vasquez had been the company's chief financial officer or CFO.

"From February 2019, through September 2023," the D.A. said, "Vasquez stole company funds to pay his rent each month and to make frequent payments towards his personal credit card debts."

At sentencing, the total amount Vasquez is believed to have stolen was somewhere between \$400,000 and \$600,000. Vasquez had pled "No Contest" to all charges last February and was sentenced to 4 years and 4 months in

Embezzler Continued on page 21

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# News

really amazing.”

Cal Poly’s new laser technology projects will also assist research-based projects, including ongoing biomedical applications for which the lasers will test for optimum wavelength and color for examining tissue types. Students already have signed up for biomedical study applications for their senior projects. And Toker said she expects to collaborate with faculty and student peers across campus to use laser technology on various research projects.

“Over time at Cal Poly, these applications will grow and involve more research-based studies,” Toker said. “We expect to partner with researchers across campus who may send samples for testing and characterizing with specialized optics equipment.”

## Stranded marine mammals are Silent Teachers



Volunteers begin work to take measurements from a Risso's dolphin that washed up dead on a Central Coast beach. Photo courtesy of CCMART

By Christine Heinrichs

Studying dead marine animals that wash onto Central Coast beaches became urgent with the discovery of H5N1, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, in elephant



Barbie Halaska, executive director and senior scientist at CCMART, measures the carcass of a California sea lion, one of the steps in data collection on stranded marine mammals. Photo courtesy of CCMART. Photo sea mammal Barbie Halaska

seals at Año Nuevo State Park in February. But seals and sea lions and other marine animals die of many other maladies.

Their dead bodies are the focus of a non-profit established last fall, Central California Marine Animal Response Team.

Barbie Halaska, CCMART’s executive director and senior scientist, quotes eighteenth century anatomist Giovanni Morgagni, “This is the place where death delights to help the living,” a quote now standard in many pathology rooms around the world. “Marine animals are sentinel species,” she told an educational meeting of Friends of the Elephant Seal docents recently. “They are long-lived in the ocean environment. We can sample them for environmental contaminant monitoring. Their bodies

can reveal pathogens, ecosystem shifts. They are silent teachers.”

CCMART is a dedicated first responder for deceased marine mammals and sea turtles in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties. The organization is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Network. The University of California at Davis is currently handling the H5N1 testing, posting its results at <https://bit.ly/4tz5Bw>.

Marine mammals often strand when they are too sick or wounded to carry on in the ocean. The samples CCMART takes from dead animals, or the necropsy on an entire carcass, comparable to a human autopsy, may reveal not only why it died, but additional information about its life and the ocean conditions in which it lived.

CCMART has the required special permits from State Parks and NOAA to go onto the beach to take samples from dead animals. They report every time they go onto the beach for a dead animal.

### Testing Samples

Whale and seal blubber hold persistent organic pollutants, such as PCBs and PFAS (forever chemicals), and microplastics. Ear wax builds up in whales to form a lifelong plug that can be investigated to reveal events in the whale’s life history, such as hormonal changes that reflect pregnancies.

Dead marine mammals can be indicators for public health, especially sea lions that are affected by domoic acid which can be concentrated in filter feeders such as mussels, clams, and other shellfish and affect humans.

Whale baleen and seal whiskers, formally called vibrissae, can also show an extensive record of environmental contamination or even what the animals were eating before they died.

Other findings can add to knowledge of anatomy, their natural history, and the health of the population, as well as environmental contamination.

### If You Find a Dead Animal

Anyone can report dead marine mammals to CCMART, by phone or through the website, <https://www.ccmartinresponse.org/home>; send an email to [info@ccmarineresponse.org](mailto:info@ccmarineresponse.org); or call the Stranding Hotline at 805-242-3560.

- Stay back at least 150 feet. The possibility of human infection is very low, but dogs might catch something. Keep the dog on a leash.

- Photos help. Try to determine the position of the dead animal in relation to the high tide line.

- Drop a pin or include the coordinates with the report.

- Having a time and location stamp on your photo app helps.

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

## Drowning Victim was Retired Cuesta Professor

A man who recently drowned off Montaña de Oro State Park has been identified as a retired, Cuesta College language professor.

According to Sheriff’s spokesman Tony Cipolla, the man whose kayak was upended by waves on May 2 was identified as Ralph Sutter, 78 of Arroyo Grande.

According to Los Osos resident, Petra Clayton, “Ralph Sutter was a colleague of mine from Cuesta College. He started teaching Spanish the same year (1987) that I started teaching German there. He retired in 2011.”

She added that Sutter was an avid kayaker. “Among other places,” she said, “he had kayaked on the Colorado River.”

Sutter’s final paddle started out at Spooner’s Cove, according to Cipolla. But the accident happened away from the state park’s most popular beach spot.

Drowning Victim Continued on page 6

**COME HONOR OUR VETERANS**

**MEMORIAL DAY**

Los Osos Valley Mortuary & Memorial Park

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MAY 25, 2025

**Program Starts at 10:30 a.m.**



## Lunch with the League ICE Information

When ICE agents show up in a community, the impact is immediate: families are separated, neighbors are frightened, and questions about legality go unanswered. But what does the law require of immigration enforcement? And what happens when enforcement strays outside those boundaries?

Find out at the League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County Lunch with the League webinar on Wednesday, June 3, at Noon on Zoom. Registration required at [www.lwvslo.org](http://www.lwvslo.org).

"ICE and the Law: Rights, Limits, and Accountability" brings together legal experts and community voices to examine how constitutional and federal law are meant to constrain ICE, what rights exist for people in those encounters, and where accountability breaks down in practice.

Moderated by Rita Casaverde, executive director of the Diversity Coalition SLO County, the panel features Sarah Goss, Esq., staff attorney at the San Luis Obispo Legal Assistance Foundation; Primitiva Hernandez, executive director of 805Undocufund; and Jared Van Ramshorst, assistant professor of political science at Cal Poly. The conversation will be grounded in local context and real experience, with space for practical next steps you can take.

## Get Free Bus Passes for a Year

The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) is running a Transit Free Fare Pass Pilot Program allowing eligible San Luis Obispo County residents to ride participating transit services for free. Applications are available now.

Services you can pay for with the Free Fare Pass include local bus networks, regional bus networks through

## Estero Bay New Briefs

By Theresa-Maria Wilson

out San Luis Obispo County, and Amtrak trains starting or ending within San Luis Obispo County

To be eligible applicants must be 65 and older, K-12 students or college students, people with disabilities, Medicare cardholders, veterans, low-income residents, people with long commutes or people who've never used transit before.

Take the survey at <https://bit.ly/43b8vhH> to see if you are eligible. If selected, you'll receive a pre-paid transit debit card that is funded for select transit use in San Luis Obispo County. You can either pick it up, or have it shipped to you.

## Building Density the Problem with Fire



A scene of the destruction in the aftermath of the fire in Paradise, California in 2019. Cal Poly photo by Joe Johnston

A new peer-reviewed study by Cal Poly faculty and scientists found that building density, not urban trees, was the strongest predictor of whether homes were destroyed during the catastrophic Southern California firestorms of January 2025.

The team examined 15,082 structures and 52,893 tree canopies within the Eaton and Palisades fire scars and

evaluated the relative associations of urban canopy and structure density with structure damage.

"Our study shows that during extreme urban firestorms, houses become the primary fuel source," said Reed Kenny, a Cal Poly biological sciences lecturer and the study's lead author. "Once fire enters a neighborhood, structure-to-structure spread matters far more than the presence of trees."

"Urban trees and structure loss in the 2025 Eaton and Palisades fires," which appeared in online format in April, is set to be published in print in the Urban Forestry & Urban Greening journal in July. The article was coauthored by a research team of scientists and faculty from Cal Poly and the San Luis Obispo-based Urban Forest Institute, a nonprofit organization that supports sustainable urban forest management through applied research, community outreach and practical tools.

The study examined two of the most destructive urban-interface fires in California history, representing areas where wildland vegetation merges with human development. Researchers combined Cal Fire damage inspections, building footprint data, LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) mapping, satellite imagery and wind modeling to understand what factors most influence structure loss.

Their conclusion was clear: Houses packed closely together were far more likely to burn than homes in less dense neighborhoods.

As wildfire disasters increasingly move from forests into suburbs and cities, this study reframes a critical question: Are trees the real problem, or are vulnerable building characteristics the larger risk?

The researchers conclude that future wildfire policy should prioritize home hardening and urban design, while carefully balancing the major benefits trees provide to communities.

Read an abstract of the research at [bit.ly/42RrSMR](http://bit.ly/42RrSMR).

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

### Drowning Victim From page 5

The 9-1-1 call came in about 10:20 a.m. on Saturday, May 2. The initial report said there was a kayaker in distress, who had been knocked off his boat by wave action. "As a result," Cipolla said, "it appears the life vest he was wearing somehow slipped off his body. Sutter was located and CPR was performed but he was pronounced dead at the scene."

According to a Fullbean.com profile, Sutter was married to Connie Sutter, an aspiring watercolorist and retired elementary school teacher in Santa Maria. They have two daughters, Wendy and Erin.

Mr. Sutter was Webmaster for SLO Bytes, an online club for PC computer enthusiasts. He earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Spanish from U.C. Riverside and a Master's in Spanish from UCLA. He is quoted as saying, "I spent my junior year studying in Madrid, Spain."

He served in the U.S. Army as a Personnel Specialist from 1971-72 stationed in Atlanta, Ga., and at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico.

He was a master carpenter and self-employed, cabinet-maker, joking, "This was a part-time venture which justified purchasing numerous useful power tools."

Of note, he built all the cabinets in the family's home, according to the post, set all the ceramic tile, laid the hardwood floors himself, and convinced his daughters "that it's fun to shingle a garage roof." He clearly had a sense of humor too.

Clayton said of her former colleague, "He was a man of many interests and talents."

Cipolla, speaking for the Sheriff's Department said, "Our thoughts are with Mr. Sutter's Family and loved ones during this difficult time."

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## COLLEGETOWN

By Michael Walker



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flip the ballot to

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YES

on Measure B-26



# Community

## Little Free Music Exchange in Los Osos



Danielle and Lacey McNamara, the couple who owns Lyrics and Melodies in Los Osos. Photo Submitted

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

The first official Little Free Library was built in 2009 in Hudson, Wisconsin, by Todd Bol. Since then, the concept of the “take a book, share a book” exchange has evolved beyond the boundaries from those in the network to many more that are free range boxes in front of homes, businesses, churches, parks and along roadsides.

Take a walk around neighborhoods in Los Osos and find the hand-built structures containing anything from books, food pantries, dog treats, and now, a music library with sheet music, CDs, and songbooks. This new offering is on display in the parking lot of Lyrics and Melodies Studio and is the concept of the businessowners, wife and wife Danielle and Lacey McNamara.

“We hope it is a hub of sharing,” Danielle told Estero Bay News. “We often have people drop off sheet music at our studio that they have inherited and don’t know what to do with. I think that was part of the inspiration- rather than

throwing it away or leaving it exposed to the elements on the curb, it can be a place for people to share and discover music new and old.”

The music library was built by a co-worker of Lacey’s where she taught drama at Templeton High School. People can drop off anything music/arts related included sheet music, music books, CDs, and scripts.

Lyrics and Melodies Studio started in 2010 in the living room of the couple as they finished up their college degree at Cal Poly, a business degree for the former and theater arts with a minor in music for the later. In 2014 the studio grew and moved to its first commercial space in SLO, and in 2016, they moved to Los Osos and moved themselves here in 2018.

Lyrics and Melodies Studio now employs seven teachers, offers both private and group classes in piano and voice for adults, and has Mini Melodies, parent participation-based music classes, for children up to 5 years old. For adults, there is also The Casual Cabaret where participants learn how to prepare and perform music in the distinctive cabaret style.

“Our goal is to create lifelong music makers- not necessarily professional musicians,” Danielle said. “We try to balance the discipline of learning a skill with the joy of creating with a human first philosophy.

“Having a musical background is an incredible benefit to humans! It is an activity that activates both hemispheres of the brain at the same time — often being a skill that humans retain and remember, even in dementia states. Having rhythm is important for many skills including walking and balance. None of this is including the benefits to mood, benefits of communal music making and more. It is honestly one of the most ancient of human activities. Making music in any capacity is a wonderful thing, professional or not.”

Lyrics and Melodies Studio is located at 2084 9th Street Unit C in Los Osos. More information is at lyricsandmelodiesstudio.com or by phone at (805) 540-1738.

The Little Free Library network became a non-profit in 2012. The first was made from a door and designed to

look like a one-room schoolhouse to honor Bol’s mother, a former schoolteacher. May 17-23, 2026, is marked as Little Free Library Week. There are more than 200,000 registered Little Free Libraries worldwide in all 50 states, in 128 countries and on all seven continents, according to the LFL website. Through them, over 500 million books have been shared since 2009. Not all libraries are registered with LFL, but there is an app to check out locations.

As for local exchange of goods libraries, take a walk winding through neighborhoods and see what you can locate. This writer found four in a short walk from Mitchel Drive to Henrietta and down to 4th Street in Los Osos.

## MBHS Automotive Technology Programs Revs Up



Morro Bay High School Automotive Technology Program's 1989 Ford Thunderbird race car. Gabe Pascual received a Trophy of Excellence on behalf of the school. Photo submitted

Morro Bay High School’s Automotive Technology Program recently completed a high-impact weekend of learning, community engagement, and competitive motorsports success across two events: the Cruisin’ Morro Bay Car Show and Round 3 of the Santa Maria Karting Association race series.

The weekend began at the Cruisin’ Morro Bay Car

Programs Revs Up Continued on page 9

**Vote Democrat Jim Dantona for 2nd District Supervisor by June 2**

*“Like you, I love this place. I ask for your vote on or by June 2. Thank you!”*

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Supervisor Bruce Gibson

Supervisor Dawn Ortiz-Legg

SLO Mayor Erica A. Stewart

**Where’s Woody?**  
What are *Michael Woody’s* core values?

- ✘ **Soft on ICE:** Wants local police to work with ICE
- ✘ **Climate Science Denier:** “I don’t believe in man-made climate change.”
- ✘ **Fluid Core Values:** Recently changed voter registration from **Republican** to “independent”

GET THE FACTS  
[jimdantona.com/realmichaelerinwoody](http://jimdantona.com/realmichaelerinwoody)

**Jim Dantona stands with US and for OUR shared core values.**

- ✔ **ICE must leave SLO County**
- ✔ **Human-caused climate change is real**
- ✔ **No to offshore oil**
- ✔ **Jim’s core values aren’t situational**

[jimdantona.com](http://jimdantona.com)

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# Police Blotter



- **May 10:** A police task force stormed a parked car and cited the offending auto for having expired tags, a hanging offense in some parts.
- **May 9:** Police responded at 7:53 p.m. to a disturbance at some undisclosed location. Logs indicated the call involved some idjit violating a domestic violence restraining order.
- **May 9:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 11:17 a.m. somewhere presumably in town. Logs indicated the driver was nicked for suspicion of driving twisted. The charge was a misdemeanor, so he or she was likely cited and released to someone that's a bit more sober.
- **May 9:** Police responded at 3:30 p.m. to a car crash. No location was listed, nor was the extent of a severity of the possible injuries revealed in media logs, but the cars will never be the same.
- **May 8:** Police responded at 1:10 p.m. to a thrift store on Morro Bay Boulevard after some scalawag shoplifted at Castaways.
- **May 8:** At 9:18 a.m. police took a report of alleged identity theft, as the scourge of the 21st Century continues to wreak havoc.
- **May 7:** At 1:22 p.m. police responded to another car crash, again at an undisclosed location.
- **May 7:** Police responded at 9:19 a.m. to a report of someone finding something apparently of some value at in some motel room at the Best Western, unfortunately there are two Best Westerns in town — the Tradewinds on Beach Street and San Marcos Inn on Pacific Street.
- **May 6:** At 6:26 p.m. police contacted some apparent Swagman at an undisclosed location who had a bench warrant. He or she was likely issued a second disappearance ticket and released to catch another day.
- **May 5:** Police contacted a suspicious subject at 11:15 p.m. who they arrested on suspicion of being high as the stacks on drugs.
- **May 5:** At 8:49 p.m. police followed a suspicious vehicle into Taco Bell and ended up citing the Chalupa Grande for driving on a suspended license that was taken away because he or she got caught driving drunk, which will not make the judge happy.
- **May 5:** Police responded at 1:16 p.m. to a motel at Dunes and Morro, as some trespasser was apparently upsetting the serenity at La Serena Inn.
- **May 4:** Police were called at 4:51 p.m. to break up a fight at an undisclosed location. Logs indicated some ruffian was charged with suspicion of felony making criminal terrorist threats and misdemeanor simple assault, though the victim might not agree with the simplicity of it.
- **May 4:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 2:17 p.m. at the U.S. Coast Guard Station Morro Bay, in the 1200 block of the Embarcadero. Logs indicated the driver of the car was busted for suspicion of driving three sheets to the wind and resisting arrests.
- **May 3:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 10:32 p.m.

- and cited the peanut for suspicion of driving on a suspended license, which was taken away for previously driving roasted.
- **May 3:** Police contacted an urban camper at 2:30 p.m. at Coleman Park and cited the apparent gaggle head for illegally camping where the tourists can see him.
- **May 3:** Police discovered a vehicle with expired tags and cited the fiendish auto sentencing the owner to Purgatory at the DMV.
- **May 2:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 8:59 p.m. at an undisclosed location. Logs indicated the driver was cited for misdemeanor driving trashed and possession of illegal drugs and issued a 1-way ticket to Palookaville.
- **May 2:** Police responded to a report that some apparent thief allegedly boosted a vehicle without permission, aka felony auto theft.
- **May 1:** Police came across a vehicle at 9:11 a.m. that was parked in one place for too long and cited the offensive machine, because you should never bow before hyenas.
- **May 1:** Police responded at 6 a.m. to Albertsons for a report of an unwelcomed fellow refusing to leave, or as logs put it "TRSP FEL REF LV PRVT PRP."
- **April 30:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at an undisclosed location at 5:40 p.m. Logs indicated the chimney fish driver was nicked for suspicion of driving drunk and stoned.
- **April 30:** Police responded to a disturbance at 3:50 p.m.

- at Spencer's Market on North Main. Logs indicated some mulish Mamaluke got spanked for violating a stay-the-hell-away court order.
- **April 29:** Police responded at 11:38 p.m. to a disturbance at an undisclosed location. Logs indicated they rousted some apparent Scuffy Philistine for getting drunk and going all woolly-booger.
- **April 29:** At 9:53 p.m. police stopped a suspicious bicyclist and arrested the sinister cyclist for suspicion of riding on the razzle and violating his or her probationary obligation not to indulge in such nincompoopery.
- **April 28:** Police responded at 2:15 p.m. to a reported trespasser at an undisclosed location. Logs indicated officers cited the dingus and then the Moonraker apparently started resisting arrest, which of course he lost because you can't shovel water with a pitchfork.
- **April 28:** Police responded to a car crash at 11:38 a.m. at an undisclosed location. No word on the extent of the carnage.
- **April 27:** Police responded to the USA Gas Station on Main Street after they uncovered the unauthorized use of a credit card, which could be fraud or identity theft depending on the extent of the skullduggery afoot.
- **April 27:** Police at the high school took a report of petty theft from a motor vehicle. No word on what was stolen but no worry, mummy and poppy will no doubt replace it.

## Letters

### To The Editor Where Does Dantona Stand?



People have been looking into the candidates' past positions on important issues in order to understand their thinking and motivation, and how they will act in the future should they be elected.

Jim Dantona, running for District 2 Supervisor, has showcased his opposition to offshore oil in his campaign mailings and in debates. However, in 2025 as CFO for the Tri-County Chamber Alliance, a lobbying group composed of several Chambers of Commerce, his stance was just the opposite.

Tri-County Alliance's website has a "scorecard" sheet showing that the organization opposed AB1448 (2025-2026), known as the California Coastal Protection Act. Introduced by Assemblymember Gregg Hart, this bill seeks to restrict new offshore oil development by prohibiting the State Lands Commission from approving new infrastructure on state tidelands. It strengthens oversight on pipeline safety and requires a new coastal permit for idling, repairing, or reactivating oil facilities for three years or more.

Mr. Dantona has never addressed this contradiction or explained why his current stated opposition to offshore oil drilling differs from the position taken by Tri-County Alliance in which he holds a leadership position.

Voters deserve an answer to this question. We are tired of politics as usual and of politicians saying one thing to placate the voters and win an election and then doing something different once elected. Mr. Dantona should come clean as to the contradictions in his own record and explain to the public why we should trust him when he is essentially taking both sides of the issue.

Nancy Bast  
Morro Bay

### Why Pay for What We Own

It seems ridiculous to ask the residents of Los Osos to buy Sunnyside School when we already own it. We paid for the property and buildings through our property taxes years ago. Now the LOCS and a few residents want to add to our property taxes a new tax to purchase the closed school. Who knows how much that tax will increase due to maintenance and future modifications to the property.

The property properly belongs under the county parks

department. I understand the county isn't interested because they are broke as the school district seems to be. The county and the school district have failed in not planning for the loss in revenue from Diablo "closing" when they knew it was going to happen years ago. I believe they are now trying to correct the tax problem, but what a failure on the part of our Assembly person, State Senator, and county.

Please vote NO on the measure to increase our taxes again. I can't believe any developer will buy it given our water problems, county permitting, and the required Coastal Commission approval. Let the county take it and manage it as they are much better equipped to do so.

Richard Busch  
Los Osos

### Vote with Confidence in California

By now all eligible California voters should have received their mail-in ballot for the June 2 primary election. If you have not received your ballot, go to registertovote.ca.gov to check your status and register to vote.

The League of Women Voters reminds voters that elections as they are conducted in California are secure. Do not be misled by false claims of voter fraud. Multiple court decisions and research conducted by institutions across the political spectrum have debunked claims that election fraud is rampant. Voter fraud is rare and voting by non-citizens is practically non-existent. Voting by mail is secure, period. Claims of voter fraud are themselves fraudulent.

We urge you to study the candidates and the issues. Be an informed voter. Go to VOTE411.org to look up your personalized ballot. There you'll find information on the candidates, their positions on the issues, and who supports them.

Your vote is your voice and your power. It may be the only power you have to influence the political decisions that affect your daily life. Use it. Make your voice heard. Make sure you are registered to vote and cast your ballot with confidence that your vote will be counted.

Janice Langley, Joanne Schultz, Wendy Brown  
Jacquie Canfield, League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County [www.lwvsl.org](http://www.lwvsl.org)

### Vote Dantona

I've lived in Los Osos since 1980. For 34 years, I worked closely with the Board of Supervisors as District 2's Park Commissioner.

I think there's only one choice for D2 Supervisor: Jim Dantona. His values, experience and knowledge demon-

Letters Continued on page 13

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# Community

Programs Revs Up From page 7



Third-grader Copeland Wimmer won his race competing in the Santa Maria Karting Association race series. Photo submitted

Show, where students contributed directly to event operations through volunteer service during registration, assisting with food distribution and supporting the flow of participants and guests. Their involvement highlighted the program's commitment to community engagement and professionalism beyond the classroom.

Alongside their service work, students hosted a program display booth featuring their 1989 Ford Thunderbird race car and a lineup of student go-karts. The Thunderbird served as a focal point of the display, showcasing ongoing restoration and performance development within the program. Their presentation earned recognition when Gabe Pascual received a Trophy of Excellence on behalf of Morro Bay High School, honoring the craftsmanship and presentation quality of the students' display.

Throughout the event, students also used the environment as a live training opportunity, practicing pit crew operations and refining race-day procedures ahead of competition.

That preparation carried into Round 3 of the Santa Maria Karting Association series, where Morro Bay students transitioned from exhibition and service into full competitive motorsports participation.

A key entry for the weekend was Copeland Wimmer,



Members of the Morro Bay High School's Automotive Technology Program at the Cruisin' Morro Bay Car Show. Photo submitted

a 3rd grade student at Del Mar Elementary, competing in his 2023 Praga Monster Evo3 Cadet kart in the Briggs & Stratton LO206 Junior 1 Pilot class.

Copeland's race day began with a standout qualifying performance, earning a trophy for fastest lap and securing pole position for Heat 1. He capitalized on that advantage with a controlled launch and disciplined drive, ultimately taking the win in Heat 1.

During Heat 2, Copeland's momentum was interrupted when kart #660 experienced a carburetor failure while staged on the grid, resulting in a fouled spark plug just moments before the start. With time rapidly expiring, parents and team members responded immediately to diagnose and resolve the issue. The kart was ultimately returned to the pits, where the team worked quickly to restore functionality.

In the paddock, former MBHS auto tech student Sam Ogle assisted with the repair effort in the tech tent, helping install a replacement carburetor supplied through fellow SMKA racer Mark Blackford. The coordinated effort brought the kart back to running condition in time for the Main Event.

Despite missing Heat 2 and being classified as a DNS (did not start), Copeland was able to rejoin the field for the Main Event, starting from 7th position rather than his earned pole position. What followed was one of the stand-

out drives of the weekend.

At the drop of the green flag, Copeland delivered a flawless launch, immediately committing to the inside line into Turn 1. In a decisive opening sequence, he executed clean, aggressive but controlled passes through traffic, moving forward four positions in a single corner to emerge inside the top three before the end of the opening complex.

From there, he settled into race rhythm and quickly closed the gap to the leaders. Lap by lap, he applied consistent pressure, capitalizing on mistakes ahead while maintaining composure in traffic. By mid-race, he had reeled in the front group and positioned himself in contention for the lead.

In the closing stages, Copeland completed the charge to the front and secured his first career race victory, completing a full recovery from grid failure to top step in the same event.

"This weekend showed the full scope of what our students are capable of," said Ritchie Wimmer, automotive technology instructor. "They served the community, solved real mechanical problems under pressure, and then went out and competed at a high level. That's real-world learning in action."

The doubleheader weekend reflects the program's expanding impact in both automotive education and grassroots motorsports, blending service, technical development, and competitive racing into a cohesive learning experience that extends far beyond the classroom.

## 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](http://www.thebookshelfwriters.com)

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

## Waiting for the Bushtit Brigade

By Susan Vasquez

It sits outside in early morning. Cold, I wait for the tiny bird that may or may not appear. It's a test of patience. Or, more likely, a challenge to the precarious sense of control that rules the world of us humans. In my yard, creatures do what they want and I simply watch.

Bushtits are fairly new to me. I noticed them



Find the Hiding Bushtit

Bushtit Brigade Continued on page 10

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Charter Member

# Community

Bushtit Bergade From page 9

traversing our yard, or nearby, three years ago, not knowing their name or habits or what brings them irregularly our way.

Every so often, they march through the canopy of leaves that shades the patio. A rustle of sound and flutter of color traces their progress from the colonnade of Coastal Redwoods along the neighborhood's main street. Something invites them this way, but I can't guess what that may be. Why they come one day and not the next is something they keep secret. But it makes my attempts to study them haphazard. Maybe I miss them by coming out three minutes too late. Or they could pass by in the four minutes I am inside the house to refresh my tea.

I think of this grouping of tiny birds as a nomadic cult. They seem to have rules I do not understand and a method of behavior that is natural to them, a mystery to me.

Every morning as I sip and warm my toes by the fire pit, I wait for their parade. Many mornings, I am disappointed. But on occasion, the brigade honors my backyard by passing through. They leave me in awe of their coordinated movement, the economy of their marching efforts, and the smart fact that these tiny birds – not larger than hummingbirds, just fatter – chose to band together. They go about their daily business, proving each time, the wisdom of strength in numbers.

I have not yet seen individual birds, not distinctly, just a passing of a similarly-clad troupe of soldier birds. Merlin identifies their call. Bushtits, the app says. Peterson's guide verifies their tiny size – 4 1/2 inches – and their propensity for group foraging. But the pictures on Merlin and in the guidebook do not seem like the picture I have in my mind. I want details.

Camouflaged inside the leaves of the Crape Myrtle, Plum Cherry and Chinese Pistache trees, I watch their march from below. A rippling movement, a flutter of air, a soft push of stem against branch and every so often a 'pstt'. I imagine them, each bird, using a Star Trek-like cloaking device to hide them all, because I never see the bird, only the movement.

Yet, they march in the canopy on those lucky days when their path is through my yard. One floor up from where I sit, ground level, tea cup now cold and suspended from my hand, I watch the passing of the many. I imagine them as having not only the science fiction cloaking device, but also Elven silver wings that hide them from my eyesight. I imagine they have multi-grasping feet that work independently as their eyes focus in and out with an almost automatic mechanism. All these miracles of engineering are housed in a tiny bird body, a natural living creature.

I hope to be here the next time these accumulations of like-minded birds pass by. It's a good, safe hope because nature's guarantees are its seasonal habits. Nature wants to keep its promises. It wants to give assurances that Bushtits will come back another day. If I am patient.

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

## Takin' Care of BUSINESS

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

### Support May Madness and Fireworks in Cayucos

Time is running out to get tickets for the Cayucos Chamber's May Madness Party on May 23 from starting at 6 p.m. Cayucos Elementary School.

"This isn't your average fundraiser," said organizers. "It's part community celebration, part high-energy auction night, part 'we can't believe we just won 49ers tickets' excitement."

May Madness helps fund the Cayucos 4th of July celebration, including fireworks over the pier, the parade, sand sculpture contest, Front Street Faire, foot races, and all the traditions that make our little beach town sparkle every summer. And putting it all together takes nearly \$50,000 each year.

Buy tickets for an evening filled with a wine pull, reverse drawing, live and silent auctions, and dinner. VIP Sparkler Tables are still available and include premium seating and extra goodies for your crew.

Tickets available at [cayucoschamber.com/shop/may-madness-tickets](http://cayucoschamber.com/shop/may-madness-tickets). Folks who can't attend can purchase reverse drawing tickets. Winning ticket has to be present, but folks can appoint someone to be in charge of their ticket for the reverse drawing. Every ticket helps keep the boom over the bay alive for the next generation of Cayucos kids standing barefoot in the sand with their faces lit up by fireworks.



### Poly Student Teams Win \$30,000 at Quest Competition



Cal Poly Developers of Fere, a specialized desktop operating system application for Apple computers that is designed to visualize, monitor and manage network connections and running processes, received the \$10,000 Rich and Jackie Boberg Innovation Award. Pictured, from left, are Peter Falzon, Rich Boberg, Siddharth Balaji, Rahul Thennarasu, Snehil Kakani, Thomas Katona and Jackie Boberg. Photo submitted

Three student startup teams split \$30,000 at the Cal Poly Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship's (CIE) annual Innovation Quest competition where students pitched inspired business ideas to a panel of judges to fund their startups.

"Innovation Quest draws such a diverse range of students from all corners of campus," said Sophie Hosbein, CIE's manager of student innovation programs "This year, we had entrepreneurial students from all six Cal Poly colleges working on ideas ranging from novel medical devices to guilt-free desserts.

"After working with each team one-on-one, it was impressive to see how far they had come from their first pitch to the final presentation."

Since the first high-stakes Innovation Quest, or IQ, was held in 2004, hundreds of thousands of dollars have been

Takin' Care of Business Continued on page 12

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<p><b>FOR SALE</b></p> <p>515 Jelecote #28, Morro Bay              \$445,000, 3 Beds/ 2 Baths              Choose Your Finishes              Sample Photos Coming Soon              Call Kathy for Info</p>	<p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>500 Atascadero Rd. SPC C9,              Morro Bay, \$299,000              2/2 built in 2015              Plantation Shutters              Space Rent: \$999/mo  <a href="http://www.silvercityC9.com">www.silvercityC9.com</a></p>	<p>REMEMBER AND HONOR  <b>MEMORIAL DAY</b></p>

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“It’s been my honor to represent Cayucos, Los Osos, and Morro Bay in the State Assembly *I hope to earn your vote and continue serving our special communities.*” *-Dawn*

**DAWN’S LEADERSHIP has been recognized with the following awards:**

**Community Power Protector Award**  
California Environmental Voters

**Courage Award**  
California Faculty Association

**Disability Rights Award**  
Disability Voices United

**Equality Champion Award**  
Equality California

**Health Consumer Champion Award**  
Health Access California

**Ocean Champion Award**  
Monterey Bay Aquarium

**Reproductive Healthcare Champion Award**  
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California

**Transparency Award**  
The Utility Reform Network (TURN)



**DAWN ADDIS** is a former Morro Bay Councilmember and co-founder of Women’s March SLO who has represented the Central Coast in the State Assembly since 2022. Prior to her election, Dawn taught in the San Luis Coastal Unified School District for over 20 years.



**DawnAddis.org**

Paid for by Dawn Addis for Assembly 2026

# Community

Takin' Care of Business From page 10

awarded to student startups that have blossomed into thriving businesses. The top three presentations and proposals in the annual competition receive cash prizes: third pick gets \$5,000; a \$10,000 prize for second; and \$15,000 for first.

PNOIA, a suffix from the Ancient Greek verb pnein, meaning “to breathe,” received the top prize at the event.

“Building PNOIA from day one has been a labor of love, and having the CIE believe in our vision is incredibly motivating,” said Jack Mahoney of Santa Barbara, California. “This opens real doors for us to get our technology into the neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) that need it.”

PNOIA is a low-profile nasal pillow CPAP, or continuous positive airway pressure, interface designed specifically for premature infants (before 37 weeks) that unlike a ventilator improves therapeutic reliability, reduces clinical complications and simplifies care in the NICU. The startup creators include mechanical engineering student Mahoney; biomedical engineering majors Josiah Waltner and Madeline de la Concha; mechanical engineering fifth-year Aidan Geurts; and business administration senior Jordan Garver.

The Rich and Jackie Boberg Innovation Award, of \$10,000, went to Fere, a specialized macOS desktop application designed to visualize, monitor and manage network connections and running processes. It operates by analyzing active network activity, providing a live, graphical representation of ports, network connections and services that gives developers a real-time visual map. The app was created by a trio of computer science freshmen: Rahul Thennarasu, Snehil Kakani, and Siddharth Balaji.

“Placing second at IQ means a lot to us. Fere started as something we built to solve our own problems as developers, and now we feel it could be something real,” Kakani said. “In the future, we want to build with the community, not just for it, and this win gives us the opportunity to do that.”

Anthropology junior Benjamin Cooper and computer science senior Nipun Batra from UC Santa Cruz received the Bakir Begovic Innovation Award, of \$5,000, for their startup Rogue wave, a surf company that created what they call The Surfers' Headphones, with an IPX8 high-level water resistance designation.

“It feels infinitely rewarding to win third place at IQ,” Cooper said. “We are so grateful to be acknowledged for all the time and effort both Nipun and I have put into this business — there were so many impressive startups and being among so many like-minded people was amazing.”

Eleven finalists from more than 60 applicants pitched their innovative ideas in Cal Poly's Nash Family Entrepreneurship Lab. In addition to prize recipients, eight finalists were chosen.

IQ was founded 21 years ago by Cal Poly electrical engineering graduates and business leaders Carson Chen, Boberg and Pickering. Since its launch in 2004, participants have received more than \$400,000 that has helped launch several successful businesses, such as iFixIt, Grinds Coffee Pouches, Mantis Composites, Guardian Bikes, Liftgator and Alydia Health.

## Keeping Local Restaurants Cooking with PG&E Grants

For the sixth straight year, The PG&E Corporation Foundation (PG&E Foundation) will fund grants to support independent restaurant owners and their staffs through the California Restaurant Foundation's (CRF) Restaurants Care Resilience Fund. The grants will support a record number of restaurants in Northern and Central California this year.

Resilience Fund grant applications will be accepted at [www.restaurantscare.org/resilience](http://www.restaurantscare.org/resilience) June 1 through June 30.

The PG&E Foundation is contributing nearly \$1.3 million to the program this year —

more than any other year. The grants are designed to help build more resilient hometown businesses for the long term. A total of 213 restaurants and commercial caterers in Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E) service area will receive \$5,000 grants. That number is up from last year's 188 grant recipients.

Since 2021, PG&E and the PG&E Foundation have contributed nearly \$5.6 million to the CRF's Restaurants Care Resilience Fund. This has provided grants to 863 local restaurants within PG&E's service area. With this year's contribution, the total number of restaurant grants awarded in PG&E's service area will exceed 1,000.

Grants can be used for vital business needs, including technology and equipment upgrades. They can also help with employee training and retention and unforeseen hardships.

CRF began the Resilience Fund to support restaurants recovering from economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the fund has provided more than \$11 million in grants to restaurants and caterers across California.

PG&E and The PG&E Corporation Foundation have supported the program since its inception.

California-based restaurant owners and commercial caterers in PG&E's service area can apply.

Applicants can have up to five locations (although only one location can apply). Annual revenue cannot exceed \$3 million for the location. The restaurant must be in operation for one full year to qualify, and previous grant recipients are eligible to apply for a different location or concept. Existing food businesses that are expanding into a brick-and-mortar location are also eligible to apply.

For more information on the California Restaurant Foundation, Restaurants Care, or the Restaurants Care Resilience Fund, go to [restaurantscare.org](http://restaurantscare.org).

## Directors Roundtable

This is a opportunity for development directors or those serving in a fundraising role presented in collaboration with the Association of Fundraising Professionals of San Luis Obispo County.

The facilitator is Loren Leidinger, who is currently the outreach and development director at the Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo and is the past president of the board of the Association of Fundraising Professionals of SLO County.

Spokes roundtables are facilitated, peer networking and problem-solving opportunities held monthly. At the start of the roundtable, participants introduce themselves and share some good news or something that's “keeping them up at night.” They may also offer a “spotlight topic” for consideration during the meeting.

A hallmark of the roundtables is confidentiality. The explicit norm is “what's said in the roundtable stays in the roundtable.” This encourages mutual support and a candid exchange of ideas.

Participants are required to have their video on. Meeting information will be provided once you register at [spokesfornonprofit.org](http://spokesfornonprofit.org).



Join Spokes Development Directors Roundtable on May 28 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. Admission is \$10.

## Attorney General Warns of Scams

State Attorney General Rob Bonta issued an alert warning about the prevalence of fraudulent investment scams across Meta platforms, including on Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, as well as on other online platforms. Scammers are increasingly using deceptive advertisements (ads) and deepfake technology to lure people into high-stakes scams to then defraud them of their savings.

“Californians, we've seen an uptick in investment scams across Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp,” Bonta said. “These scams have cost some people their life savings and typically use photos of well-known or trusted people without their permission to create the necessary trust to get into consumers' pockets. I encourage Californians to learn about common scams and review tips to protect themselves, and I urge investors to scrutinize social media investment ads before investing.”

### Common Social Media Scams

**The Pump and Dump Scam:**

In a pump and dump scheme, victims are lured into online investment groups and convinced to invest in low-priced stocks or deal in volatile cryptocurrencies.

**The Bait:** Scam ads appear on Facebook or Instagram featuring recognizable figures, like Cathie Wood (Ark Invest), Joe Kernin (CNBC), or Kevin O'Leary (Shark Tank), without their permission. Other ads may feature less well-known financial advisors, also without their permission. The ads often promise exclusive “insider” memberships or “guaranteed” high-return investment tips.

• **The Shift:** Once a user clicks the ad, they are pressured to move the conversation to WhatsApp or other encrypted platforms such as Telegram.

• **The Hook:** Victims are funneled into group chats where they receive so-called “expert” advice and false testimonials. Eventually, victims are coerced into buying stocks or crypto, with the initial fraudulent tips sometimes appearing successful and generating a profit. Victims are convinced to spend large amounts in a stock or cryptocurrency, which then goes up in price and which the scammers sell off at this inflated price, leaving the victims to lose their money once the price plummets.

**The Confidence Scam:**

In confidence scams, fraudsters develop trusting relationships with their victims and convince them to “invest” using fake investment platforms that drain the victims' money. These scams can also follow a three-step process:

• **The Bait:** Scammers post ads suggesting that investors can make money using an investment platform or strategy. Once the user clicks on an ad, they may be asked to enter their contact information or taken to a different website to do so.

• **The Investment:** After the user provides their account information, they are contacted by scammers who develop a relationship of trust and confidence with the victim.

• **The Scam:** Once the victims seek to withdraw their profits, they are told they need to pay some kind of fee, such as a commission or tax, to do so.

Be very cautious before responding to any social media investment ads and making related investments. Reputable broker-dealers and investment advisors typically do not advertise their investment strategies on social media.

No legitimate investment is “risk-free” or offers a guaranteed return. Verify Before you invest and beware of “Deepfakes” and AI. Protect your identity at all times.

Anyone who may have fallen victim to these types of scams can report it to the California Department of Justice at [oag.ca.gov/report](http://oag.ca.gov/report).

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# Community



## NATURAL HISTORY NUGGETS

### Bridge Project Leaves Migrants Homeless



South Bay bridge wrapped to prevent swallow nests. Photo by Dean Thompson

By Dean Thompson

Before the sun crested the horizon, they took off in mass. Thousands of them, rising from the marsh in southern Uruguay. Ancient instinct guided their little streamlined bodies and quick, tireless wings north over Paraguay, Bolivia, and towards the Latin American land bridge connecting North and South America. After their nightly rest, groups of hundreds to thousands of birds continued by day toward their nesting grounds, feeding on flying insects as they made their way northward. This 7,000-mile annual migration of cliff swallows to North America has been made

by countless generations. Their single purpose: to find a suitable place with cliffs, water, mud, and insects, to raise the next generation who will continue the ritual.

Traditionally, cliff swallows built their mud nests in the western part of our continent underneath horizontal rock ledges on the sides of steep canyons or on rocky bluffs and escarpments. But as people built buildings, roads with bridges and culverts, the swallows exploited the suitability of these structures for nesting and expanded their range east.

Occasionally, they will nest solitarily, but more often they nest in colonies that can range from several hundred to 2-6000 nests in size. The swallows make numerous trips to their nest sites with mouthfuls of mud from nearby wetlands. These mud pellets are attached to vertical cliff faces, entrances to caves, under eaves of buildings, in highway culverts, overhangs on dams, and under bridges to form enclosed, gourd-shaped nests.

Where I live, close to Morro Bay, there is a bridge that has served as perfect habitat for cliff swallows for 60 generations. Right next to the salt marsh, the bridge spans the muddy Los Osos Creek channel. It is prime real estate for the little birds. That is, until this year. The old bridge has reached the end of its lifespan and needs to be replaced.

The new bridge will be built adjacent to the existing structure. Unlike the old bridge, it will have bike lanes and pedestrian access. Once it's built, the old one will be demolished. The whole project is expected to take almost two years to complete and will be a vast improvement. There is one wrinkle, however, the swallows.

Cliff swallows are protected by law under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. It is illegal for any person to take, possess, transport, sell, or purchase them or their parts without a permit. The term "take" means killing, but also includes "harm," such as "significant habitat modification or degradation" that results in death or injury. Or, by significantly impairing the wildlife's behavior, such as breeding, feeding, or sheltering.

The construction and demolition of the bridges fall into this category. So, the way to get around impacting

them for the five to six months they are here is to use exclusion measures. Early this year, before the swallows arrived, barriers were installed on the existing bridge. They wrapped the whole underside where the swallows normally nested with plastic. They also hung wind chimes and plastic owls to discourage the birds and prevent new nests from being built. It worked.

But there is always a ripple effect on anything done in nature. When the thousand or more cliff swallows arrived in April from their long journey north, they discovered they had been locked out of their ancestral homes. Instead of being able to nest where generations before them did, they now had to seek new places to raise their families.

It turns out those places just happened to be where many of us have raised our families, our houses. For the first time, many people living on the North-east side of Los Osos near the bridge have been beset by hundreds of swallows seeking eaves to build their mud nests. My house had over 20 pairs trying to set up residences.

As a naturalist, I found it fascinating and wished in some way I could accommodate them. It would be cool to watch them go through their cycle, watch the food deliveries, and the young fledge. But as a homeowner and a naturalist, I knew the mess, smell, damage, and future ramifications of allowing them to use my home as their home. Their young would be back next year. Alas, they are not allowed to stay.

I know the rules; it is illegal to interfere with nesting native birds, and completed nests during the breeding season cannot be touched without a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. But the keyword is "completed." So, if you are like me and have swallows trying to move in and you don't want them, you need to follow the USFWS guidelines: "Wash away mud nests frequently, in between nest construction. They may eventually give up on that site if they are not successful in building a nest. You may only destroy nests that DO NOT have eggs or chicks within."

The good news is that once the new bridge is complete, there will be plenty of nesting spots for the birds. Provided there will be birds who remember their way back here.

*Dean Thompson is a naturalist and storyteller who has worked as an educator and field biologist for the past 42 years, primarily in the Estero Bay area. His writings, Ruminations of a Naturalist, can also be found on Substack.*

Letters From page 8

strate he will be an outstanding County Supervisor. He understands the uniqueness of our area, has a long history of working in and with local government, he listens and asks good questions and is eager to work with all interests to create good solutions. He has the knowledge to get things done for us.

Woody's core values are not clear. Until recently he was a Republican — he's stated he doesn't believe in man-made climate change, that he'd be willing to have local law enforcement cooperate with ICE and he's supported allowing teachers to carry guns into the classroom.

Woody was quoted by the Trib, "...I need people to point out where I'm missing pieces to the puzzle."

Jim knows the issues and has the background and ability to be the leader we need right now. Woody seems to be missing what D2 voters care about. Vote Dantona.

*Pandora Nash-Karner, Los Osos*

## Please, No More Industrial Plants in M.B.

I believe that Morro Bay deserves environmental justice. For over 60-years we have been disproportionately impacted with industrial hazards that are a detriment to our health, marine life and tourist economy.

We have endured acid rain, noise pollution and unsightly, monstrous smokestacks and industrial buildings.

It is unfortunate that certain government and citizen groups have proposed to increase the toxic industry in Morro Bay for monetary gain. This has resulted in our exposure to harmful pollutants and greater health risks.

Instead of San Luis Obispo County asking us to host another large noisy, marine life-killing desalination plant, they should be offering to help the Morro Bay community remove the abandoned toxic smokestacks and buildings.

We deserve the opportunity to improve our natural beauty and tourist economy. Removing the toxic PG&E stacks and buildings is the first step to Morro Bay becoming a top ten tourist destination.

We can find comfort in knowing that for 60 plus years we provided electricity to residents all over California. It is okay to think about and do what's best for the residents of Morro Bay. No more toxic industry.

*Judy Lynn Setting Morro Bay*

## Support Measure B-26

As proud Los Osos residents of 46 years, we are thrilled at the recent influx of babies and young children-bringing smiles to all of our faces. While those of our vin-

Letters Continued on page 15

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# Obituaries

## Jean Marie Johnson 1958 - 2026



Morro Bay lost one of its outstanding citizens. Jean Marie Johnson, who was known for her enthusiasm, community activism, love of gardening and making of essential oil concoctions to heal people and animals. Jean beaded wonderful jewelry for those she cared about. She also taught classes on oils and gardening, and self-care.

Jean also helped established an herb memorial garden. She was also on the Morro Bay Citizens Financial Advisory Committee.

Jean was born in Duluth, Minnesota and lived in Mexico, New Jersey, Texas, Virginia, and Washington before finding her final destination in Morro Bay.

Jean graduated from Duke University and spoke seven languages.

Jean, along with her mom, Claudia, loved to travel and have new adventures.

She was preceded in death by her mother, Dr. Claudia Johnson-Upshur; father, Ray Johnson; aunt and uncle, Peggy and Paul Stocke; cousin, Paula Stocke; and uncle, Bobby Anderson.

She is survived by her sister, Julie J. Cooper; niece, Stephine Cooper-Witcher; great-niece, Claudia "Shy" Cooper; nephews Jason R. Cooper and Cory R. Cooper; great-niece, Kinsey E. Witcher; her great-nephews, Kasyn R. Cooper and Evan L. Cooper; and cat Cleo II.

Jean lived her life her way and passed away her way.

Remember to live life to the fullest. There are always new adventures waiting for you.

### On Line and In Print



[esterobaynews.com](http://esterobaynews.com)

## Elaine Dian Fogler 1948 - 2026



We remember Elaine Diane Fogler (née Barlup, formerly Railsback and Borden) of Paso Robles, as a woman blessed with sharp wit, tremendous zeal for life, deep compassion and a wonderful sense of humor. She was called home to be with the Lord on February 1, 2026, passing away at the Vineyard Hills Health Center just days after her 78th birthday. She had been a resident of San Luis Obispo County for over fifty years.

Elaine was born January 16th, 1948, in Hagerstown, Maryland. She was the youngest child of Gerald and Thelma Barlup, following siblings Jack, JoAnne, Jerry, and Alan. Upon seeing his newborn daughter and her vibrant copper colored hair, Elaine's father is said to have exclaimed, "Gosh, she sure is RED!"

The now complete family of seven soon moved across the country pursuing economic opportunity. They lived for a while in the Midwest, where Elaine attended some elementary school. Eventually they settled in sunny Southern California in the town of Gardena, where her dad found his calling working as a project estimator for aerospace giant Northrup.

A product of the post-war baby boom, Elaine came of age in the 1950s and 60s in the rapidly expanding Los Angeles Basin. Her class at Gardena Sr. High School was especially large, and as a result they were split into two cohorts. She proudly graduated in early 1966 with the winter commencement class. As a young adult she studied business at nearby El Camino College and worked at Continental Airlines in Los Angeles.

While attending Gardena High, she met Ed Railsback, a handsome football player two years her senior with aspirations of becoming a teacher and coach. They wed in 1967 when Elaine was just nineteen. In 1969, the young couple moved north to California's Central Coast, a spot they had explored while honeymooning, hoping to start a family. They were successful: in 1970, Jeffrey Edwin Railsback

came along, and they welcomed Chad Alan Railsback in 1973. Now settled in Paso Robles, aside from supporting Ed's growing career in the public schools and raising her two boys, Elaine spent the 1970s working and earning success in the local banking industry.

The 1980s and '90s brought multiple moves within the county, and many relationship changes for Elaine. Always emphasizing continued career growth and community involvement, Elaine carved out niches for herself first as a mortgage broker and later as an executive assistant. Ultimately, she leveraged her many years of business experience to start her own enterprise as an independent administrative assistant and bookkeeper, supporting local businesses and nonprofits, which she did continuously until her retirement circa 2015.

Elaine was an enthusiastic doer. In Paso Robles she was a leader in the Chamber of Commerce's Junior Women's Club where, among many other projects, she helped organize the California Mid-State Fair pageant. She also served on the board of the local Confederate Air Force Squadron, at the founding of the Estrella Warbirds Museum.

In Los Osos, Elaine became an avid supporter of the coastal jazz scene, making many wonderful friends and organizing charitable concerts. She was also a devoted congregant and champion of Saint Benedict's Episcopal Church for two decades. She volunteered for years as treasurer of their Abundance Shop thrift store and particularly enjoyed a complex project which repurposed an historic army chapel from Camp Roberts to become their new church building in Los Osos.

Many of the aforementioned causes that Elaine championed in her lifetime are still thriving today; they are part of her lasting legacy. The family suggests donating to any one of these wonderful organizations in Elaine's honor, but especially St. Benedict's of Los Osos due to their extensive charitable reach.

In her golden years, Elaine eagerly welcomed and thoroughly enjoyed four grandchildren. She lovingly looked after her special needs brother, Alan, continuing a tradition begun in their childhood. She pursued her twin passions: gardening, and cooking "gourmet" family meals. She was especially fond of entertaining for St. Patrick's Day. Forty years after high school graduation, she served as president of her class reunion committee. She enjoyed all these pursuits and many more special adventures with her loving and devoted husband, Scott Fogler, (originally of Orange County, California) over the course of their 20-year relationship.

In April 2020, Elaine suffered a debilitating stroke. Scott faithfully cared for her at their home in Paso Robles for several years before entrusting her to skilled nursing care in the fall of 2025. She is survived by her husband, Scott Fogler; her brother Alan Barlup; her sons Jeff Railsback (Tanya) and Chad Railsback (Jennifer); and four

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# Obituaries

grandchildren: Keegan, Chloe, Reece, and Finn. A service in her honor will be held on Saturday, June 6, at 11 a.m. at Plymouth Congregational Church, 1301 Oak Street, Paso Robles. A memorial reception will follow immediately in the church hall. All are welcome.

## James "Jim" Bruce Pierce 1945 - 2026



James "Jim" Bruce Pierce passed away peacefully at his home, surrounded by family. For the last 10 months of his life, he courageously fought a reoccurring Oral Cancer with dignity and positivity.

A proud third-generation Central Coast local, he was part of the first class to attend and graduate from Morro Bay High School. Known as "Jimmy" in his youth, he excelled in basketball and baseball. As a kid growing up in Morro Bay, he always wanted to be a commercial fisherman. He spent most of his spare time in the "bay" catching crabs and fishing. When he was older, he worked processing abalone and commercially diving for it. He had many fond memories of those times and was proud to be part of the Pierce family Abalone Clan.

Jim went on to graduate from Cuesta College and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and began a long career with the phone company, working as a lineman, engineer, and

manager. After retiring, he owned local businesses and real estate, including Paul's Liquor on Ocean Ave., Cayucos Hardware, and Pierce Telecommunication Engineering.

An active member of the community, including the Cambria Fishing Club and the Cayucos Lions Club (celebrating his 50-year membership), where he served many roles from president to, most recently, July 4th parade 2024 coordinator. He also served as the chairperson/organizer (three yrs.) of the Cayucos Lions High School Speaker's contest. He was awarded Cayucos Lion of the Year in 2024. He was the guy you called when you needed help. He served as an honorary Mayor of Cayucos (1990).

However, one of his most cherished roles was "Dad" and "Grandpa." Jim was a beloved, caring, and dedicated husband, dad, grandpa, son, brother, and friend. Jim was happiest in nature, spending hours fishing, hiking, camping, deer hunting, or on the family "Ranch" in Santa Margarita. He loved flying his Cessna with his brother Lloyd and taking long road trips with his wife, Jill.

In his retirement, Jim became a master kayak fisherman. He fished the coast from Cayucos to Big Sur. He was a mentor to many in the fishing community. When he was in his 70s, he was often 30 to 40 years older than many of his kayak-fishing buddies and could out fish them. Many memorable summers were spent in Albion, California, at Schooner's Cove campground, diving for abalone and fishing for salmon. He camped at Albion four or five times a year, often with large groups of family and friends. There were many great abalone feasts and good times.

Jim also made numerous trips to Alaska and British Columbia with Jill, his brother, Lloyd, his dad, Whimpey, and friends to fish for salmon, halibut, and ling cod. There were many adventures clamming and crabbing in Alaska. In 2016, some great memories were made when Jim and Jill, and their cousins, Morty and Joan Pierce, took a road trip from Cayucos to the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska, pulling their travel trailers.

At 79, he landed a 219 lb. bluefin tuna off the coast of San Diego. It was the biggest fish caught on the boat for the season. He was happy to share his catch, sashimi style, at the annual July 4th house party. Most recently, he enjoyed

clamming during low tides in Oceano with friends and neighbors.

To say the least, he had a great life and lived life to the fullest! He loved caring for and sharing with family, friends, and neighbors. Last year, we were able to celebrate his 80th birthday party at Borradori's Garage in Cayucos with a large group of those special connections. It filled his heart with joy and love!

He will be deeply missed. No need to send flowers, but for those who can partake, drink an Irish cream and coffee on his behalf. He was known for his "special" coffee and loved to share it with all, and made sure your cup never went dry.

Jim was preceded in death by his son Sean Pierce (2023). Jim is survived by his wife, Jill, and his partner of 36 years; daughters, Regina Pierce-Brown and husband Carlton; Serina Seder and husband Scott; Dawn Marie and her mother De; Jessica Mastrippolito and her husband Domenic; son, Isiah Miller; and daughter-in-law, Mika Richardson; nine grandchildren; (Bruce, Katrina, Shelby, Sara, Shane, Miranda, Ella, Lucas, Sophia); four great-grandchildren (Wyland, Dylan, Harper, Hudson); his siblings Lloyd Pierce and Barbara Burchfield; and many loving nieces, nephews, and cousins.

A heartfelt thank you for all the compassionate care and support to Jim and Jill during his cancer journey. Especially Dr. Brian DiCarlo and his supporting staff at UCLA, San Luis Obispo, Cancer Care & Oncology. Central Coast Home Health Palliative Care; his nurse, Melody Bloom, was there with Jim and Jill with expertise, support, compassion, and friendship through all the ups and downs of his care. Susan Gollnck, his dietician, was with him till the end, supporting Jim and Jill with the challenges of the feeding tube with expertise, kindness, and support.

Central Coast Hospice, his nurse Carri, and all the other nurses and staff who cared for Jim with support, compassion, and positivity. Cayucos Cal Fire Department; Vic Carillo and his crew, who took care of Jim on many occasions with care and compassion.

You will forever be in our hearts, Jim.

Birthday party at Borradori's Garage in Cayucos with a large group of those special connections. It filled his heart with joy and love!

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You will forever be in our hearts, Jim.

Letters From page 13

tage can enjoy the cordoned pathways of the Elfin Forest and Sweet Springs Nature Preserve, kids need space to run and play. That's why we strongly support the purchase of Sunny Side School.

For most of the community, the cost will almost certainly be offset by the increase in property values, but for all of us, the benefits to our younger folks will be priceless. We urge you to join us in supporting our youth and voting yes on Measure B-26.

Rick and Julie Rodewald  
Los Osos

## Vote for Woody

On June 2, the coastal communities have a chance to choose a new County Supervisor to represent Los Osos, Harmony, Cayucos, Cambria and unincorporated areas in District 2. Bruce Gibson has held the position for 20 years.

Gibson has hand-picked his replacement Jim Dantona and gone so far as making him his current legislative assis-

Letters Continued on page 19

# Obituaries

## Richard Allan Steuck 1945 - 2026



Richard Allan Steuck, age 81, passed away on May 1, 2026 after a very brief battle with Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML). He left behind his loving wife Alaine, sons David Steuck (Nancy), Edward (Diane) Wilson and David (Shawna) Wilson; grandchildren Garret Steuck (Julia), Emily Richardson (Daniel), Ian Steuck (Emily) and step-granddaughter Natosha Koltweit (Keith); sister-in-law Patricia Steuck; nephew Jeff Steuck (Paulette). He is preceded in death by parents Karl E. and Ruth (Pietschman) Steuck, his brother Karl William Steuck, and niece Kathy Sprungl (Jeff).

Rich was born March 23, 1945, in Sandusky, Ohio. He graduated from Margaretta High School in the class of '63, Miami University Oxford, Ohio in '67, and earned the Chartered Financial Analyst Designation (CFA) in 1975. His career was focused on security analysis and managing investment portfolios. He first worked at National City Bank, Cleveland before moving to Arizona where he was with First National Bank of Arizona (now Wells Fargo), and concluded his career at the investment counseling firm of L. Roy Papp and Associates (Phoenix) before retiring in 1995.

In retirement he enjoyed sharing homes with Alaine,

first in Scottsdale, AZ and then Morro Bay, CA, travel, ocean sailing — both competing and for leisure in their boat — ballgames, theater and helping others. He also supported the arts by establishing an endowed music award at Miami University plus supported many local Morro Bay charities and organizations.

At Rich's request, no memorial service will be held. Interment will be in Oakland Cemetery, Sandusky, Ohio at a later date. Memorials may be made to the Richard A. Steuck Music Award in care of Brad Bundy, Miami University 725 Chestnut St., Oxford, Ohio 45056 or one's favorite charity.

## Events and Activities



By Theresa-Marie Wilson



The Cayucos Historical Society is holding a grand opening of its new home inside the newly rebuilt and historical, Cayucos Landing — i.e. the Cayucos Vets Hall.

The grand opening is set for 11 a.m. Saturday, May 30 at the Cayucos Landing Annex (the entrance is on the east side of the building opposite Ducky's Chowder House). All

are welcome.

Currently the Historical Society museum is open weekends. Admission is free.

"In our new space, we are able to give our visitors more access to information, pictures, displays, and more related to the history of our town," a representative said. "We have docents available to greet you and answer questions about our organization. But we still need a few new volunteers who would be willing to give us time on either a Saturday or Sunday once every other month.

"Feedback from our visitors has been very positive. So, stop by. Say hello and take your time browsing around. We think you'll enjoy your visit and I know we'll enjoy the opportunity to make new friends. And watch for our History Night coming at the end of September.

...

Cal Poly Soundings will present "Music of the Spheres" at 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, May 28-29, in the PAC Pavilion. Soundings is an interdisciplinary program that joins original compositions by music technology and composition students with contemporary choreography by dance students. The performances will feature visiting artists T.J. Borden, cello, and Mari Kawamura, piano, of the [Switch~ Ensemble]. Julie Herndon is the show's director, and Diana Stanton is the dance director. Tickets at Pacslo.org.

...



Don't miss Taste of Mexico on Sunday, May 31 from 3 – 5 p.m. at Camp Ocean Pines \$55 for one and \$100 for two. Taste incredible food and change lives with Cambria Rotary for a vibrant afternoon featuring authentic Mexican cuisine, local favorites, and a community coming together for something bigger.

Every ticket helps bring reliable, daily access to clean water to the village of San Jose Piedras Blancas in Michoacán, Mexico where families currently receive water only a few hours every other day. Get your tickets at [tasteofmexico.fundraiser.support](http://tasteofmexico.fundraiser.support).

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### 21 12th st, Cayucos \$1,395,000

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The upper level includes two additional bedrooms with soaring ceilings and ocean views, along with a three quarter bath and a large hallway closet. A chair lift is included for accessibility. From the south facing bedroom, there are also glimpses of the Irish Hills beyond Morro Bay, adding to the coastal appeal.

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DRE 01297036



# ANNUAL summer barbecue

## BENEFITING PROJECT SURF CAMP

**Project Surf Camp** is a local nonprofit that uses surfing, the beach, and other ocean activities as an educational modality to build self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy in individuals with special needs.

**June 6th from 12-4 pm**  
Movement for Life - Morro Bay  
890 Shasta Ave

- TRI-TIP BBO
- REFRESHMENTS
- DONATE NEW/USED WETSUITS
- SUPPORT PROJECT SURF CAMP

**Suggested Donation**  
**\$15.00**

questions? (805) 772-4325

# Community

...



Join Central Coast State Parks Association for movie night on June 3 at 6 p.m. at The Palm Theater for a screening of "The Last Forests Project" — an inspiring evening of ocean storytelling and kelp forest conservation.

The Last Forests Project was born out of a passion for the beauty of Northern California's beautiful kelp forests, and the difficulty of watching them disappear firsthand. This loss had a profound effect not only on these marine ecosystems, but the communities that surround them.

This environmental disaster inspired three ocean loving friends to come together and bridge the gap between the science and the public, as well as the land and the sea. The evening will also feature a special pre-screening of Holdfast: Keepers of California's Kelp, presented by Seatrees.

Together, these films create a powerful night dedicated to the protection, restoration, and future of our coastal ecosystems! Tickets are \$24.34 and are available at My805Tix.com.

...

Central Coast Dance Community Presents: "Saturday Country Dance" on May 30, at the Morro Bay Veterans' Hall from 5:30 to 8 p.m.

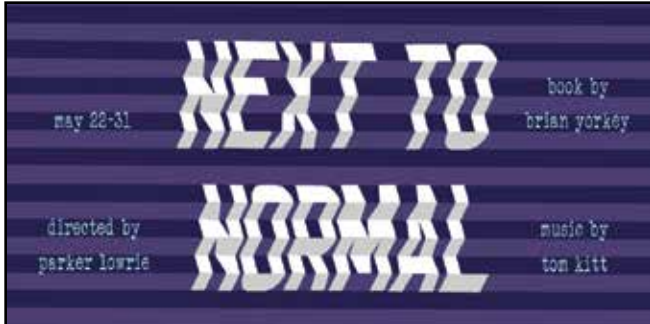
The evening begins with a Country Two Step dance lesson from 5:30 pm to 6:15 pm led by our own dance instructor Shari Fortino. Following the lesson, the Rockin' B's Band will perform from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. Julie Beaver is a powerful country/blues violinist and vocalist

who turns on the afterburners when it's time to rock. Kenny Blackwell, Guitar and Vocals; Wally Barnick, bass and vocals; and Art Dougall on the drums. They will play danceable music for us.

Admission is \$10 and includes both the lesson and the live performance.

The Central Coast Dance Community is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing live music and dance opportunities in Morro Bay. In addition to the last Saturday of the month evening dances at the Morro Bay Veterans Hall, the group meets every third Wednesday at the Morro Bay Community Center for a 12 p.m. potluck followed by a dance lesson and dancing until 3 p.m.

...



Get tickets to see "Next to Normal" at the Cambria Center for the arts Friday May 22 - Sunday May 31 (Friday, 7 p.m., Saturday, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., and Sunday, 2 p.m. Tickets are at My805Tix.com.

"Next to Normal" is a powerful, contemporary musical by Brian Yorkey and Tom Kitt that explores the hidden struggles of a seemingly typical American family. Winner of three Tony Awards and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, this groundbreaking work reshaped modern musical theater with its emotional depth and soaring, rock-infused score.

Dad is an architect. Mom packs lunches. Their teenage children are bright and full of life. But beneath the surface, the family is navigating the long and complicated impact of bipolar disorder. As memory and reality collide, each mem-

ber fights to hold on to connection, stability and hope. Raw, intimate and deeply human, "Next to Normal" offers an unflinching look at love, loss and resilience and the strength it takes to keep going.

Content Advisory: This production contains mature themes, including drug use, self-harm and suicide. Recommended for teen and adult audiences.

...

The San Luis Obispo Vocal Arts Ensemble presents three lively choral concerts in late May. The concert series entitled "Sing Come What May" will bring you traditional, classical and contemporary selections from our amazing chorus of dedicated singers. They will also feature an original song composed by Cuesta College Music professor and Associate Director of Vocal Arts, John Knutson. The concerts are held in three locations, in South County at Trilogy Monarch Dunes Nipomo on Thursday, May 28 at 7 p.m. The second concert is at San Luis Obispo United Methodist Church on Saturday, May 30 at 3 p.m., and the final concert is on Sunday, May 31 at the SLO Presbyterian Church at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$35 for adults and \$10 for children under 12 and students with ID. For more information, go to vocalarts.org or call (805) 541-6797.

...



The Summer Reading Challenge is Coming! Stop by your favorite County of San Luis Obispo Public Libraries branch between June 6 - August 8 to pick up your Summer Reading & Activities Guide. The Summer Reading Challenge and activities are free for all ages and abilities.

Read what you want, when you want! Anything goes: Easy books, hard books, cookbooks, audiobooks...we're here for it all. Kids, teens, and adults read (or are read to) for at least five hours to earn a prize, the prizes get better the more you read. Track your reading in your Summer Guide, then claim your prizes at your favorite library branch between June 6 and August 8.

...

The Cap Poly Arab Music Ensemble Spring Concert at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, May 30, in the Performing Arts

Events Continued on page 18

## Morro Bay's 4<sup>th</sup> 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of July

# 2026 WEEKEND CELEBRATION

### FRIDAY JULY 3RD & SATURDAY JULY 4TH

AT TIDELANDS PARK!

### FRIDAY NIGHT FESTIVAL

- 6pm - CONCERT: The Molly Ringwald Project
- 9pm - DRONE SHOW
- FOOD TRUCKS
- FLOATING BAR
- BEER GARDEN

The Molly Ringwald Project

Rosewood and Honey

### SATURDAY FAMILY FUN DAY

- 10:30am - BIKE PARADE  
↳ Northside of Morro Creek Bridge
- 11am - CONCERT: Rosewood and Honey
- 12pm - OPENING FLAG CEREMONY
- 12:15pm - HOT DOG EATING CONTEST
- 1pm - CONCERT: Sound Investment
- BBQ, FACEPAINT, GAMES

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# Community

Events From page 17

Center will be shared with a special ensemble of guest artists performing Iranian music. The set with Bahram Osqueezadeh, Siamak Bozorgi, Arash Bahrololoomi, and Javid John Mosadeghi will be centered on “Dastgah-e Rast Panjgah,” and intricate and expansive modal system in Persian classical music. AME will perform songs by Egyptian composer Sayyid Darwish, Greek and Romanian selections and more. Tickets are \$12 to \$22 at PacSLO.org.



Author and eco-activist Robin Greenfield returns to San Luis Obispo to share his immersive journey of foraging 100% of his food and medicine for an entire year, living directly from what the Earth provides. His talk takes place on Tuesday, June 2 at 7 p.m. at French Hospital Copeland Pavilion, 1911 Johnson Avenue, San Luis Obispo. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and admission is free. Register at bit.ly/4eQyWAw. The talk is presented as part of the Ecologicals Critical Conversation Series.

Through stories from his travels and experiences across the country, Robin explores how reconnecting with nature can strengthen community resilience and support more localized, sustainable food systems. Robin will also introduce the 1 Million Community Fruit Trees Initiative, a grassroots effort inviting communities to plant fruit and nut trees nationwide.

Movement for Life Physical Therapy, 890 Shasta Ave Morro Bay, invites the community to come together for a special BBQ fundraiser benefiting Project Surf Camp on Saturday, June 6, from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. The event will feature classic barbecue favorites provided by Bay-Osos Kiwanis, fun prizes, community connection, and opportunities to support Project Surf Camp.

Funds raised during the event will directly support Project Surf Camp’s mission of creating accessible surf experiences and outdoor recreation opportunities for participants and their families. All donations welcome. There is a \$15 donation recommended for BBQ. Beer, wine, prize tickets are additional money. Community members, local businesses, and supporters are encouraged to attend, donate, or sponsor the event.



The SLO Greek Festival 2026 takes place May 30 – 31 – Saturday 11 a.m.- 7 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. at the Madonna Expo, SLO. Enjoy live Greek music, dancing, authentic Greek cuisine, wine, beer and ouzo specials. Presented by Saint Andrew Greek Orthodox Church. A portion of the proceeds will be given to the Noor Foundation and SLO Food Bank.



The Cal Poly Bands conclude their season with a concert titled “Journey Home” at 3 p.m. May 31, in the Performing Arts Center. A highlight will be the world premiere of “Imprints That Shine” by Laura M. Kramer, which was commissioned by the Cal Poly chapter of Kappa Kappa Psi to celebrate the 44-year career of music Professor Emeritus William Johnson. More than 50 band alumni will join in the performance. Tickets are \$17 and \$22 general, \$12 students and are available at pacslo.org.

If you’ve been looking for an honest conversation about difficult times and a genuine reason to feel hopeful, the League of Women voters SLOCO Spring Meeting on Saturday, June 6, is worth your morning. Doors open at 9 a.m. at Ventana Grill in Pismo Beach (2575 Price St.), with the program running from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Guest

speaker Kaila Dettman, executive director of The Land Conservancy of SLO County, will share “Finding Hope in Nature,” and the League’s Civil Discourse Committee will lead a conversation on “Coping With Chaos.” Ed Cabrera’s year-in-review slide show rounds out a morning that is equal parts grounding and energizing. Tickets are \$40 per person and include a continental breakfast. Members and non-members welcome. Seats are limited. Contact them at events@lwvslo.org with questions.



Los Osos Valley Mortuary and Memorial Park will hold a Memorial Day event to honor and remember the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in the United States Armed Forces on Monday, May 26 at 10:30 a.m., at the memorial park, 2260 Los Osos Valley Rd. Community members, veterans, families, and local organizations are encouraged to attend and pay tribute.

Memorial Day is a time for our community to pause and reflect on the sacrifices made by so many brave men and women. We are honored to provide a place where families and community members can gather together in remembrance and appreciation.

Attendees are encouraged to arrive early for seating. Families are also invited to visit the memorial grounds throughout the holiday weekend to honor loved ones and veterans laid to rest there.

For additional information, contact Los Osos Valley Mortuary and Memorial Park at (805)528-1500.

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.

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Letters From page 15

tant so he can learn his agenda. That agenda has included some annoying stances that include denial of the water crisis in Los Osos and a push for new development here, support for offshore wind power and infrastructure, agreement to keep Diablo Nuclear Plant in business beyond its safe operating life, and other lack-luster responses to multiple community needs.

Jim Dantona is a close friend and Cayucos neighbor to Bruce Gibson and appears to be able to follow his legacy and seems prepared to continue in his style.

Michael Erin Woody brings a fresh energy and understanding of our challenges because of his generational involvement along our coastline. He left the Republican Party six years ago and thinks in a non-partisan way looking at issues and solutions in a practical way,

Unlike the rumors being circulated that he's a Republican in disguise and has a secret agenda to turn the Board back to a 3-2 vote, Woody speaks clearly about advocating for our Coastal region and its protection. He is experienced and has my vote.

Please listen to some of the debates, google District 2 Debates and decide who will best represent our communities into the future!

Linde Owen  
Los Osos

## I wasn't Invited

Why I won't be performing at this year's National Memorial Day Concert in Washington D.C.:

- Solidarity with artists protesting Prez Trump's re-naming of the Kennedy Center
- Objection, broadly, to Trump's megalomania and irresponsible governance
- I wasn't invited.

John Verdi  
Los Osos

### Letter Policy

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

The views expressed are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the newspaper, its staff, or its publisher.

Email letters to editor@esterobaynews.com.

### Viewpoint

## REACT's Proposal for Negotiation of Lease

By Saro Rizzo, Esq.

Vice President, REACT Alliance

I am writing to you on behalf of the REACT Alliance (Responsible Energy Adaptation for California's Transition), a grassroots coalition of California Central Coast residents. In light of the April 27, 2026, announcement regarding the Golden State Wind project, we strongly urge Equinor to enter into immediate negotiations with the Department of the Interior (DOI) to likewise cancel its lease off the Central Coast for its Atlas Wind project, if you have not already begun doing so.

As you are aware, the current administration in Washington has made its opposition to offshore wind clear, citing high costs, national security concerns, and a preference for traditional energy over projects deemed expensive, unreliable, and intermittent. This resistance is mirrored by the majority of people on the Central Coast who do not wish to see these industrial projects on our coastline and in our ocean.

Furthermore, we must address the infrastructure requirements of your project. The massive operations and maintenance port facility needed to support your turbines would fundamentally destroy the environment and character of Avila Beach and Port San Luis. This area is one of the most beautiful in California, a Sunset Travel Award winner and top-ranked tourist destination. Its current pristine state is a hard-won victory; the coastline was only restored in the mid-1990s after a lengthy cleanup of a massive Unocal oil spill caused by leaking underground pipelines. Does Equinor truly want to be associated with a project that will destroy this idyllic beach community once more? We believe not.

Crucially, that cleanup was the direct result of a relentless grassroots local lawsuit brought by residents who refused to let their community be destroyed. Having fought once to save Avila Beach and Port San Luis from industrial negligence, our community is prepared to use every legal and political tool available to prevent its reindustrialization. Beyond local opposition, the project remains speculative at best.

To date, Equinor has not submitted Site Assessment Plans (SAP) or Construction and Operations Plans (COP) to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). Industry and state agency projections now admit these projects will not be operational until at least 2035, if ever. Furthermore, the technology for its massive floating turbines in 4,000-foot-deep water has not yet been developed, making the project a high-risk gamble. Additionally,

Viewpoint Continued on page 22

**WOODY FOR SUPERVISOR**  
DISTRICT 2 NATIVE SON  
Brains of an Engineer Heart of a Neighbor

**SUSTAINABLE WATER**

**AFFORDABILITY FOR FAMILIES**

**INLAND SOLAR SOLUTIONS**

**RESPONSIBLE AGRICULTURE**

VOTE 4 WOODY

**FIRE SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS 4 ALL**

**NO TO B.E.S.S.**

**NO TO OFFSHORE WIND**

SAVE THE WHALES!

**VOTE FOR WOODY!**  
HE BELIEVES IN AQUIFER SCIENCE.

**Navigating a Fresh Approach**  
for District 2

**No More Stale Politics as Usual**  
Backed by Taxpaying Citizens  
not Career Politicians

**Paid for by District 2 Neighbors**

# Community

**Sewer Plant** From page 1

The two sides have been partners in a treatment plant since 1954, with a major rebuilding of the plant in 1984. Their joint powers agreement was intact through the 2003 notice by the Regional Water Quality Control Board to upgrade the treatment plant to a capacity that could ensure full secondary treatment of all effluent before discharge into the ocean. That ultimately led to the dissolution of the agencies' marriage when they couldn't agree on a project to replace the old plant.



The old sewer treatment plant located on Atascadero rd. collect the City's 10% transient occupancy taxes (TOT), easily making it the City's best paying tenant (including the lease sites on the Embarcadero).

The future use will trigger another series of moves by the City.

"Once future property use is determined," Craig said, "City Council may exercise the option to have the General Fund purchase the applicable property interests from the Sewer Fund at fair market value, as determined by an independent appraisal or appropriate valuation method, ensuring that the transaction is conducted in accordance with applicable financial and government accounting standards."

"The reallocation of assets would allow the General Fund to directly manage and utilize the property in support of governmental services and allow the Sewer fund to reinvest proceeds in its core operations and capital needs."

In order for the City's General Fund, which is the fund with the tightest budget and pays for most of the city's

essential functions — fire, police, administration, public works, recreation, maintenance etc. — to reap the rewards of redeveloping the treatment plant site, and potentially the old cement plant, it would have to be transferred into the General Fund's control.

So long as it's owned by the Sewer Fund, revenues will have to be used for the sewer department's needs, with the exception of the annual intergovernmental transfers, which allows the City to move money out of its various so-called enterprise funds into the general Fund ostensibly to pay for services like payroll, human resources, city attorney and administration.

Those transfers are the fourth or fifth highest revenue source in the City's annual General Fund budget.

For the past several weeks the City has been conducting its due diligence and investigating the old sewer plant site and absorbing those costs.

Craig's report lists the costs for the sale at \$3.86 million purchase price, \$30,000 for "environmental due diligence" including testing of the soil for contaminants, and \$5,000 closing costs.

Last June the City hired Anchor QEA to do the environmental work on the treatment plant site.

Once this purchase is completed and the CSD is out of the picture, the City can move forward with decommissioning and demolition of the old plant's facilities. It already has a Coastal Commission permit, which was included as part of the CDP the City obtained for its WRF Project.

The City has a lot riding on this site, which is zoned commercial/visitor serving, and given its location so close to the beach, it should bring significant benefit to the City and the overall tourism business.

"Approval of the

Agreement," Craig said, "would allow the City to become the sole owner of the Property [and all other jointly-owned assets] and is expected to provide significant benefit to the City and its residents, including by simplifying the process for the demolition and decommissioning of the WWTP and potential future reuse of the Property for visitor serving and coastal uses."

**Coleman Park** From page 1

building, so there wouldn't be any lights. But all the other utilities would be usable, he said.

So the City's newest public restroom will have to close at dusk at least until PG&E gets out and turns the power on.

But that's the same schedule for all of the City's public parks; they are open from dawn to dusk no matter the time of year.

Nevertheless, the improvements have transformed Coleman Park from a sad, little sand covered space to a modern design with its most striking feature a special rubber matting on the ground of the playground that Stong said they imported from New Zealand.

It's approved by the Coastal Commission, he explained, because unlike other artificial rubberized surfaces, this one doesn't decompose and flake off. "They're worried about micro-plastics getting into the bay," Stong said.

The surface is made up of squares in various shades of blue set down in a checkerboard pattern. Walking on them is a bit like walking on a wrestling or a tumbling mat that you'd find in a gym — almost spongy.

It has a life expectancy of 15 years, Stong said.

Of note the new Coleman Park has a new swing set with one unusual feature — a two-seater "tandem" swing

Cayucos broke off from the City's plans for a new plant in 2013 and went on to build its own treatment facility on Toro Creek Road that opened in 2021.

The City pushed ahead with its Water Reclamation Facility (WRF) Project choosing to build a new plant on a hillside at the terminus of South Bay Boulevard, some 3.5 miles and 240 feet higher in elevation than the old plant.

Cayucos' new treatment facility cost some \$24 million and the City's topped \$175 million.

The CSD ceased using the old treatment plant after its new facility went on line however, the City still uses the discharge pipeline to dispose of its highly treated wastewater and unusable brine water until it can complete a recycling program that's under study and design now.

The two agencies have always had a rocky relationship often disagreeing on costs, in particular how much is Cayucos responsible for — is it 40% of total operating and maintenance costs, or should it be charged by the actual flow to the plant?

But after the 2013 split, the only remaining issue between the two has been disposal of the old treatment plant site. Now that appears about to be settled as well, though the City is still conducting studies on what they'll actually be buying.

The agreed upon sale price is some \$3.86 million and escrow is slated to close June 22. The sale includes the treatment plant property, the old cement plant, a portion of the RV park, and the beach parcel, which is surrounded by State Parks-owned property.

With the City committed to buying the former Morro Elementary School for \$5.3 million (a funding source has yet to be identified and escrow is set to close at the end of October), where is the City going to get the money to buy out Cayucos?

According to a report from City Manager John Craig, they will tap the sewer fund.

"The acquired interests," Craig said, "will initially be Sewer Fund capital assets, and the purchase will therefore be recorded in the Sewer Capital Fund."

That fund is the result of charges the City makes to its sewer service customers, and is mainly based on their water usage. Customers also pay for the water delivered by the City.

However, when the City put together the financing for the WRF project it raised monthly rates in anticipation of needing some \$23 million in cash to complete the financing, estimated at the time at about \$125 million. The remainder was to come from low interest loans both State and Federal, and grant monies.

In the end the State Revolving Loan Fund made some \$100 million available for the WRF Project, so the City didn't need so much cash, however, it didn't lower sewer rates. The initial rates for the WRF Project were a minimum of \$191 per month per customer.

Like most everything with the City's finances, this is complicated.

"Consistent with the City's established budgetary practices," Craig said, "the purchase will require a three part budget amendment to add budget for the (1) transfer out of cash from the Sewer Operating Fund; (2) transfer in of cash in the Sewer Capital Fund; and, (3) create the Sewer Capital Fund expenditure budget."

The City's plan for the treatment plant site, given its close proximity to the beach, was always to redevelop it into a revenue generating use.

But the Coastal Commission has set down some pretty daunting restrictions for the future of the site when it denied the City (and CSD) a Coastal Development Permit for their first, jointly proposed replacement project at the same site.

The Commission decided a new plant had to be moved away from the coast to avoid "coastal hazards," including potential tsunami run up, flooding by Morro Creek, and sea level rise.

That coastal hazard avoidance requirement is still in effect for whatever redevelopment is ultimately pursued by the City.

One possibility would seem to be most logical — another RV park like Morro Dunes. The long-time and popular park is adjacent to the old plant and is the City's most lucrative tenant. In its initial lease agreement the park was to pay a minimum of \$179,000 a year to the City, and also

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Morro Bay City Engineer, Nate Stong tries out the tandem swing solo at the newly refurbished Coleman Park.

seat that is hefty enough for adults to use, too.

The playground also has a small spiral slide, something the old park didn't have. There's a new drinking fountain too and a stylish rock wall around the playground where parents can sit and watch the kids play.

The pathways through the park are now concrete with picnic tables sitting on compacted crushed granite, which should make the footing much safer than the loose sand that used to cover the park.

It wasn't cheap. The restroom cost \$333,000; Kies Const.'s contract was for \$724,000 (plus any change orders that may have been made); RRM Design got \$192,000 for the design work; and the City spent \$40,000 for construction management. The overall budget that the City Council approved came to \$1.4 million, but final costs won't be known until change any orders and cost overages are settled, and the City closes the books on the project.

Of note, the City had predicted that the restroom would be delivered and dropped into place before Memorial Day Weekend and they beat that target date by nearly two weeks.

## Sewer Project From page 1

site septic systems," Howard said.

Complicating this is the fact that the neighborhood sits within a "Nitrate Loading Focus Area" for Montaña de Oro. That designation is coming out of something called the County's "Local Agency Management Plan" or LAMP.

LAMP requires homes on septic systems that also lie within a nitrate loading zone to do more advanced sewage treatment than a septic system provides — essentially primary separation of solids and anaerobic digestion of wastewater in a leach field — and called a "supplemental treatment system" or STS.

This measure is required once a septic system fails. Howard said there is already one STS installed and operating in Cabrillo Estates and another is in permitting now.

Installing an STS could be waived if the area meets certain requirements, which the County doesn't believe Cabrillo Estates can do.

The property owners association is hoping for a third option. "CEPOA," Howard said, "is requesting to connect to a County constructed community system instead."

But that would be a "discretionary" action, Howard said, because there is a remedy through the LAMP — making homeowners design and install their own STS on each individual parcel.

Supervisors were asked to allocate \$500,000 out of the General Fund contingencies to get started on a potential project, which Howard estimated would take from seven to nine years to design, permit and construct.

But the Supervisors balked at paying up front for the project.

Howard told Estero Bay News that she was directed to tell the Cabrillo Estates residents they need to show the Supervisors that they are able to pay for the entire project.

The CEPOA isn't an official entity in the way a "Home Owners Association" or HOA would be. She said they are like volunteers and have no standing to enter into contracts or agreements.

Supervisors wanted a proper structure such as an official HOA registered with the County in place before they'd put any money up front and wait for reimbursement that might not come if a Prop. 218 vote fails to form an assess-

ment district.

"There is a lot of work before we get to a Prop. 218 vote," Howard said.

And if the neighborhood can come together in an official capacity, the costs to do as they've asked will not be cheap.

According to an estimate the County put together, it would cost about \$1 million to get through the preliminary steps.

According to the County's proposed project budget, that includes hiring a temporary staffer to work on the project (\$400,000), spending \$100,000 working on changes to policies; and \$500,000 to conduct a Prop. 218 vote.

If the project is a "go" the costs increase dramatically. Howard's report lists \$2 to \$3 million for "project development," to include environmental analysis, endangered species consultation work, plus all the normal things that come with any development project like design, permitting and developing funding processes.

Actual construction is estimated at \$11 million to \$15 million and would take two to three years.

There are also the buy-in costs that would have to be paid in order to connect to the community sewer.

Howard did not list what those might be, however, when the initial assessment district was formed, property owners had an option to pay some \$23,000 up front or pay over time with charges added to their bills.

Despite Supervisors' hesitation, there appears to be a lot of support for the project. The property owners association has already taken several steps including holding town hall, neighborhood meetings; getting a \$40,000 grant to commission a study; started working with County staff in 2024 on the potential project; and they've polled the residents.

According to Howard's report, 75% of the owners are in favor of connecting to the County's sewer system.

In comments sent to the Supervisors several people argued that Cabrillo Estates was an affluent neighborhood with multi-million dollar homes and did not warrant having the County pay for the up front costs for a project.

Local activist, Julie Tacker, argued that San Simeon, which is a similar size to Cabrillo Estates in terms of the number of residences, is more deserving of County assistance.

A few of the neighborhood residents wrote in urging Supervisors to approve starting the project.

Asked what happens next? Howard said she would notify the property owners of the Supervisors vote and then it's up to them on how they want to proceed.

Howard's presentation outlined a pretty straightforward project.

The County would come in and install a gravity-fed collection system, running collection pipes up every street in the very hilly Cabrillo Estates and installing manholes and cleanouts.

Property owners would be responsible for installing a lateral pipe out to the sewer main in the street, and then to decommission their septic tanks.

The alternative is installing the STS on each individual septic system as they fail, with homeowners picking up all the costs.

But LAMP also has a potential light at the end of the tunnel.

"The requirement for installing an STS may be waived," Howard explained, "if the results of a site-specific hydrogeologic investigation, performed by an engineer, geologist, or environmental health specialist (i.e., qualified professional), determines that the following conditions are present:

- 3D modeling of groundwater related to nitrogen percolation, which demonstrates that discharge will not impact groundwater.
- The nitrogen concentration in the groundwater underlying the subject property is 1.0 mg-N/L (nitrates per liter) or less."

Nitrates are a form of nitrogen associated with septic discharges and the main pollutant that caused the town to put in a community sewer in the first place.

Howard doubts Cabrillo Estates can meet the waiver criteria. "This area is known to have conditions that would likely not meet the waiver requirements."

## Embezzler From page 4

State Prison for his crimes.

The D.A. had agreed to seek no more than 6 years in a plea agreement.

Dep. D.A. Ben Blumenthal "argued to the Judge that the defendant's conduct supported a sentence to every day of the 6-year maximum sentence under the plea agreement, strongly advocating for that sentence."

But the judge did not agree. "After hearing the victim impact statement and arguments from the prosecutor and defense counsel," the news release said, "the Honorable Judge Michael S. Frye imposed a sentence of four years and four months."

Vasquez was ordered into the custody of the Sheriff's Department immediately after sentencing, "so he may be transported to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to begin serving his sentence forthwith."

However, his court ordeal isn't quite over yet. Vasquez will have a Restitution Status Determination hearing on June 24, the release said.

The case was investigated by the Atascadero Police Department and prosecuted by Dep. D.A. Blumenthal.

Victim services were provided by a team of Victim Advocates from the Christopher G. Money Victim Witness Assistance Center.

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Pandora From page 1



Pandora at the Louvre in Paris this past May.

ceramic and digital artist.

"I work with clay and pixels. As an internationally award-winning graphic designer, I have transferred three decades of experience to new media and forms," the page states.

Pandora has always been a versatile creative that has now moved forward to the next chapters of her life. Those who know her, know she lives life largely pouring her heart and multifaceted experiences into whatever she dedicates her talents to at the time. An engaged Los Osos resident and community advocate, she is a supporter and producer of cultural and creative arts, an active business owner, and a friend to all who take time to get to know her.

She requested time to contemplate my interview request and then to my surprise and appreciation I received the following gift by email one evening. It was a demonstration of her unique style as a writer and storyteller that I felt I could not improve upon, so I decided to share it:

"Well, let's see. I have a Ham Radio license which is current, a captain's license from the US Coast Guard, and I have sailed 40,000 miles offshore in deep water: from Easter Island to Pitcairn Island, where we got blown onshore for three days. I stayed with a great, great, great, many greats later, Fletcher Christian's granddaughter (of "Mutiny on the Bounty" fame). It is the only tropical island I've ever visited on that I wouldn't wanna live on. It was a dark and ominous place.

"I have sailed through the Austral Islands twice, through French Polynesia several times, the Tuamotu

Islands. They constitute the world's largest chain of coral atolls, featuring 78 low-lying atolls and islands spread across 2 million km square of the South Pacific in French Polynesia.

"I have sailed to the Marquesas Islands which has a fabulous history and evidence of llamas in carvings and sweet potatoes that arrived around 1000 AD. And where did those come from? Was Thor Heyerdahl right after-all? I'd like to think so.

"From the Marquesas Islands, I sailed to the Republic of Kiribati to an island called Fanning Island, probably another island I would never want to live on. From there, I sailed to Hawaii.

"I've done a similar trip from New Zealand back up and one from Hawaii down; and up and down the Pacific Coast from San Francisco to Acapulco and probably lots of other places too. This was mostly on a 65-foot Sparkman Stephens sailboat (sloop); I had a small boat for five years and then a larger, but still fairly small ocean-going sailboat for 25 years in the mooring field in Morro Bay, which I sold recently.

"I have walked a Camino twice (last year it was the entire Portuguese from Lisbon to Porto to Santiago de Finisterre) 455 miles. And I did it solo. I plan to walk a Camino again this year as well as the Cotswolds in England and in the Alps in four different countries.

"I am traveling a lot. Last year I was out of the country seven months. This year I'll only be out about four months. I am a dual citizen, US and Canada. That's probably all the trivia you need for now. I'll ponder some of the other questions.

"While walking the Camino last year alone sometimes through the rain from 16 to 23 miles a day I pondered a number of things. And a few things I've implemented since coming back.

"Maybe those shared aha moments are your today story. At various times of our lives, we learn change can enhance our next stories when we've closed the books on our past and prefer to move on. Hope I'm making sense."

Pandora's closing paragraph made perfect sense to me. I too along with so many of my friends are experiencing lives in transition – a different career path or retirement, relocation and adaption to new friends and activities, empty-nesting, medical challenges or worse – the loss of a loved one. We suddenly realize time is dwindling, so we ponder how we want to spend the time we have left. We question what is most important to us and what we want to accomplish during our tomorrows.

Pandora's words also laser-beamed a bright light on my Bookshelf Writers sister, Kiki Kornreich. She is the mega-traveler in our group and for her January 2026 column, she shared several life-lessons she has learned along the way. Here is one example she offered: "My hotel in Costa Rica had a small sloth sanctuary next door, and I was offered the opportunity to help with the afternoon feeding. Holding out a piece of carrot to a mama, I almost fell asleep while waiting for her long, sloooow arm to reach it. The doe-eyed sloth gave me a look of gratitude that was more rewarding than a paycheck. I was reminded that even when I move slowly, I'm making progress."

In the past two years, this writer and my husband enjoyed two unique travel experiences that reenforced to me how a community is also organic. Change is a constant within its lifecycle. Does that mean we glean from other cities' efforts by copycatting another community's attractive assets? Not at all! It means we look inside to discover the assets we treasure then advocate for what we want our city to project and offer residents and travelers during our tomorrows.

In fact, did you know other communities have defunct power plants with stacks towering high into the sky? Like me, several travelers from Morro Bay have seen – even stayed – at the JW Marriott Savannah Plant, a luxury hotel converted from a 1912 power plant, situated in the heart of the Georgia city's refreshed waterfront. Am I advocating for a hotel on Morro Bay's waterfront? Not necessarily! But I believe Morro Bay's rich history demands it discovers more ways to tell its own origin stories to our visitors, our relocated residents and our own children.

Timing is now that our City Council leadership has asked for our community engagement to craft what will become reinvigorated tomorrows for the paradise we will continue to call our home. As they say, it takes a village. [www.morrobaygov.org](http://www.morrobaygov.org). Scroll down to upcoming workshops and meetings regarding the waterfront planning and pending purchase of the historic Morro Elementary School.

Viewpoint From page 19

the State of California is currently cash-strapped and lacks the billions of dollars required to build out the massive infrastructure needed for the Port of Long Beach and Port San Luis to support such an industry, and the likelihood of receiving federal funding for this is currently zero.

The precedent for an amicable exit has now been firmly established by your former direct neighbor in the Morro Bay lease area. Just days ago, Golden State Wind reached a deal to recover approximately \$120 million in lease fees by agreeing to cancel its lease area and exit the Central Coast. This follows the March 23, 2026, landmark deal where TotalEnergies relinquished its leases in the New York Bight (Attentive Energy) and the Carolina Long Bay in exchange for a nearly \$1 billion refund to focus on U.S. oil, gas, and energy infrastructure.

By following the path set by Golden State Wind and TotalEnergies, Equinor can:

- Secure a Significant Refund: Regain substantial capital that can be redirected to more stable ventures.
- Avoid Protracted Litigation and Political Resistance: Sidestep years of costly legal and political battles over the destruction of Avila Beach, Port San Luis, our coastline, and the marine environment.
- Strengthen Federal Relations: Focus your resources on your vast portfolio of other energy projects in the USA that require DOI approvals and a cooperative working relationship.

The Central Coast community remains committed to preserving our environment. We believe a negotiated cancellation is in the best interest of Equinor's shareholders, including the Norwegian government as the company's largest shareholder, and the people of California.

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## MBHS Boys Win Swimming League Title

By Neil Farrell

Morro Bay's Boys Swimming Team is celebrating an undefeated league season and championship, as a member of the diving squad competes for a State Championship.

Coach Dan Szentesi said the Pirates posted a perfect 6-0 record in winning the dual meets in the Sunset League. At League Finals the boys "won the Sunset League Championship meet with 537.5 points over Cabrillo with 436 and Orcutt Academy with 402.5." The win gave the 2026 team the fourth league championship in school history and the first since the 2019 champs.

That dominating performance was led by senior Jude Moore, who set two MBHS school records and won two events. He clocked 53.79-seconds in the 100-meter Backstroke, Coach Szentesi said, and timed 53.45 in the 100m Butterfly.

Standout performances included junior, Koen Hook, swimming a 5-minute 36.08-second, 500m Freestyle, which was the seventh fastest 500m time in MBHS history.

Senior, Eddie Lu's clocked 2:21.09 in the 200 Individual Medley that earned him ninth place in the Div. 2 CIF Central Section Meet.

The Pirates' 400m Freestyle Relay team with Moore, Caelen Josey, Hook, and Alex Roberts took seventh at CIF with a time of 3:36.18.



Senior Jude Moore set two MBHS school records and won two Sunset League Championships to lead the Boys Swim Team to a Sunset League Championship. Submitted photo

Josey also took honors on the diving board.

Coach Szentesi said Josey won the Sunset League Championship in 1-meter diving with a score of 473.20 and set a new school record. That performance qualified him for the State Championships that were scheduled for Thursday, May 14 at Clovis West High School.

He went into the meet ranked 15th out of 27 divers, according to the Swimming & Diving State Championships program posted on the CIF website.

Woody also said development should stay within the URL and also opposed too-dense housing in town as well, calling it "pack and stack development."

"We need to preserve what this community is," Woody said, and not let it turn into a Los Angeles or other crowded urban cities. They were asked about the recently rebuilt Vet's Hall, now called Cayucos Landing, and the high costs the County set to rent the space? How could they make it more affordable for Cayucos groups and residents to use?

Dantona said it was a "huge issue" and the County has to find a way to give discounts to locals, who raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to help pay for the job.

"The people [of Cayucos] should have a greater discount," Dantona said, "adding that they will need to find the money to pay for it."

Woody said during his campaign he's held town hall meetings in Los Osos, and Cambria and was able to do so because he could afford it. "The locals should pay less than the people from outside," Woody said.

A follow up question pointed out that the citizens of Cayucos raised a lot of money for both the Cayucos Landing and Cayucos Pier projects, and how did they feel about the community having to do this?

Woody, who lives in Morro Bay, said he was tired of watching communities like Cayucos being told the County doesn't have money. He said the tourism promoters use places like Cayucos and Cambria as backdrops to lure tourist here but then the County leaves them wanting when it comes time to spend money on the communities.

Dantona, who is a Cayucos resident, said he too donated money to both the Landing and the Pier projects. He noted the County had to borrow money to fill a funding gap and "you can't eliminate the loan." He advocated for the County doing a better job taking care of the infrastructure and facilities like the Pier and Cayucos Landing.

They were asked about the County cutting the public libraries' hours back to cut costs?

Dantona said cutting hours at libraries, like other budget cuts necessitated by a tight County Budget, are the challenge that the next Supervisor will have to face. He said they need to better prioritize spending and "libraries are definitely a priority."

Woody disagreed, asking how you could say you're prioritizing spending when the Supervisors vote themselves and the staff big raises? "This is the type of policy,"

he said, "we've had for the past 10 to 15 years."

The pair was asked about several County projects that have been halted before being completed, such as repairs to the Hardie Park Pool?

Woody said he wants to see a breakdown on the amount of taxes that are collected vs. the money spent on the community's infrastructure. "I want to make sue that it's very clear to everyone" how their money is being spent.

He said the "design-build" model of project delivery is a good chance to cut time and money off big projects.

Dantona said the pool "has underlying issues," and the County needed to get the pool fixed and reopened. "People deserve to see what is being done," he said. "That's where our kids go."

They were asked their feelings on the County's efforts to hire one person to take on oversight of short-term rentals or vacation rentals (VRs)?

Dantona said one person is not enough staffing. Vacation rentals are one of the biggest housing issues, he said. There are too many of them and there are also illegal (unpermitted) ones, too. He said on the block he lives on in Cayucos there are three full time residents and 27 VRs.

Woody said VRs are essentially a miniature motel operation located in a residential neighborhood.

"They're turning the town into nothing more than Dollywood," he said. All VRs should be treated like what they are — commercial lodging operations — and concentrated in a commercial core area.

Should the County put a cap on VRs?

Woody noted that between Cayucos and Cambria there are about 700 — 400 in Cambria and 300 in Cayucos. Dantona favored setting an overall cap on them and distributing them more fairly throughout the County.

Parking in Downtown Cayucos is disappearing, according to the next question, and what do they propose be done about it?

Dantona said a lot of the problem is the County has granted parking waivers too often and that's making the available spaces more in demand.

The County needs to stop granting waivers and they need to keep the visitors from parking in the neighborhoods.

Woody said they do need to get the parking out of the neighborhoods and the County needs to garner transportation monies (from the State and Federal Governments) and look for vacant parcels that can be turned into parking lots.

They were asked if they thought the County's Community Services Area-10A water system should be privatized, now that the County is looking to raise rates about 25% to pay for water infrastructure repairs?

Dantona thought that was a great idea. Adding that he'd spoken to the manager of Paso Robles Mutual Water Co., one of two private water companies in town, how they operate? He noted that CSA-10A already has debt attached to it, which could complicate going private.

Woody said it's difficult for him to explain to people why a town of just 2,500 residents has three water companies. He favored starting the transformation to private water companies.

He added that CSA-10A was "a cancer that's spread."

Dantona said private water companies can move faster and do projects cheaper because they don't have to go through the whole County process for developments.

They were asked if they believed Cayucos needed affordable housing?

Dantona said yes, everywhere needs affordable housing. He suggested cutting down on the number of licensed VRs could help return some of the homes that used to be rented out to the market. He aid they

also needed to protect the Buena Vista Mobile Home Park in Cayucos, calling it an affordable housing development. They also need to look into having more secondary dwelling units aka granny houses added to single-family home properties.

Woody too wants to protect mobile home parks and believes we need to start building things like duplexes and triplexes, which he said we've gotten away from.

They were asked how more visitors could be enticed to visit Cayucos?

Woody laughed, "That's a problem? You're doing a good job already."

Dantona said no one is begging for more tourists to come here. "You don't need to incentivize more people to come here."

Asked about mental health services, Dantona said, we need more help. He said his nephew was struggling with his mental health and his parents had to take him to Santa Barbara to get him the help he needed. "People realize the need is here," Dantona said.

Woody said he was surprised to learn that two-thirds of the calls for service the Sheriff's Department answers involve some kind of mental health crisis. He blamed the incredible use of recreational drugs for the crisis. "We need to have an honest discussion," he said, "and stop turning a blind eye and start addressing these issues."

They were asked about the Supervisors' 2021 redistricting map that split up the North Coast Communities into three different Supervisorial Districts?

Woody said that map was drawn for political and personal reasons. They needed to make sure the North Coast communities stayed together in the sane district.

Dantona commented that he'd worked on a map that was submitted by the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce, as he was the executive director of that Chamber at the time, and that ended up being much closer to the map Supervisors adopted in 2023.

He said that exercise in redistricting led Supervisors to form a citizen's redistricting commission and the next Supervisor will help draw up the rules for the 2030 Census and the next districting process.

Asked how they feel about District Attorney Dan Dow and how well they will work with him, Dantona said Dow gave his mother-in-law, who works for the Probation Department, an award, so he feels he's a good man. However, he believes some of the decisions on prosecutions Dow has made were politically driven.

"I imagine we will not have a great working relationship," Dantona said.

Woody said he believes the opposite of Dantona, and that it's very important for Supervisors to work well together with the D.W.s Office.

However, he does have some concerns over partisan politics. "That's why I left partisan politics," said the former Fresno City Councilman.

Ballots for the June 2 Primary Election have already been mailed to all voters in Dist. 2 and Estero Bay News readers should have already gotten theirs in the mail. This will be the first chance for all the North Coast communities to vote for Dist. 2 Supervisor since 2018.

Five-time incumbent Bruce Gibson, who has held the seat since 1007, announced last year that he was retiring from the post. Either Dantona or Woody will win the seat in a 2-man race, was a candidate must get 50%-plus one vote to win; unless the election ends in an absolute tie, which is highly unlikely, then the two would have to run again in November's General Election.

The winner will take office after Gibson's term ends in December and get to work in earnest next January.

**Square Off** From page 1

Osos (LOCAC) and Cambria. He said they are one of the most important bodies in the County's sphere.

Woody said he plans to work closely with the CCAC on a hand-to-hand basis and develop personal relationships with them, and "not just pay lip service."

He said he's been to far too many meetings when it looks like the decisions have already been made and citizen's comment or concerns get ignored.

They were asked about the Cabrillo Bridge, the footbridge over Old Creek that the County closed to electric carts, much to the displeasure of South Cayucos residents who have purchased the carts for travel around town.

Dantona said they needed to re-engineer the bridge's structure. "It's cutting off South Cayucos from Downtown," he said.

Woody, who is a civil engineer by profession, said he's inspected the bridge and didn't feel it needed to be rebuilt. "The bollards," he said, "need to come out." (The County installed metal poles in the middle of the path leading to the bridge to prevent the e-carts from driving over it.)

"You don't have a structural problem out there," Woody said.

They were asked if they agreed that the Cayucos Station of Cal Fire needs to have an emergency medical technician on duty at all times?

Dantona said, "Yes," and that it was very important to have fire department medical staff on duty. He said there is much disparity in emergency medical service among the communities in Dist. 2 — Los Osos, Cambria and San Simeon — and he'd like to improve the coverage. But, "We need to find a way to pay for it."

Woody agreed that Cayucos should have EMTs on duty with the fire department.

They were asked about Hang Glider Hill, and what they believed should be done with it. The hill overlooking South Cayucos is a popular spot for hang gliders to take off from and also a popular party spot with young people, who often leave trash strewn about.

Dantona said "It's off limits now," and added that if the question refers to whether development should be allowed on the top of the hill, he said, "No". He added that any development that occurs must be kept within the Urban Reserve Line; the boundary of where public services like water and sewer service could be extended.

He also favored talking about limits on public access to the hilltop.





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