

Pacific Wildlife Care for the Win



Pacific Wildlife Care representatives among nominees for 2026 Defender Service Awards at the award ceremony in Temecula, California. Photo submitted

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Pacific Wildlife Care was named the winner of the 2026 Defender Service Awards under the category of Animal, Wildlife & Marine Mammal Welfare. The prestigious recognition that spans the U.S. and Canada celebrates charitable organizations whose dedication, innovation, and service create lasting impact in their communities. The prize — a land Rover Defender 130 and \$30,000 to support their wildlife rehabilitation mission.

The six 2026 Defender Service Awards winners were announced during a special celebration at Destination Defender in Temecula, California.

"I was in attendance at the awards ceremony. It was pretty surreal," Kristin Howland, executive director of Pacific Wildlife Care told Estero Bay News. "I had spent the last 24 hours with the other 11 finalists and all of them were tremendously deserving organizations. All the organizations were truly grassroots organizations making a difference in their community. It was absolutely inspiring. And there was no way to know who was going to win."

"Winning this award truly feels like a win for our entire community. The incredible support we saw throughout the voting period was a wonderful reminder of how many people care deeply about wildlife here on the Central Coast."

The winner of the big award was based strictly on the number of votes the organization received. Although PCW doesn't know the number of votes cast in favor of their work, the total number of votes across all six categories was 250,000. That said, the 3-minute video PWC submitted video highlighting its work was picked to be a finalist based on criteria weighed by judges.

Additional to the prize winnings, PCW also got one of the most important things a non-profit organization can receive, visibility.

"It was such an amazing process to be a part of," said Howland. "People from all over North America were introduced to our organization and what we do."

The Defender 130 will be PWC's first organizational vehicle and is expected to arrive in early 2027. The vehicle will help PWC expand its educational outreach, transport equipment and supplies, participate in community events and take its wildlife conservation message across San Luis Obispo County and other areas on the Central Coast.

"We will be working with the Defender team to design the wrap and choose how we want the vehicle outfitted," Howland said. "Two of our staff will attend a weekend training to learn about this capable vehicle. Once the funds are received, they will likely go into a reserves account to cover maintenance and ongoing vehicle expenses. This is our first organizational vehicle, so the first order of business is creating an Organizational Vehicle and Driver Policy."

This award comes during one of the most significant milestones in the organization's history. Pacific Wildlife Care is currently constructing a new home, the Kim & Derrel Ridenour Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in San Luis Obispo County that will dramatically expand its ability to care for wildlife and serve the community for decades to come.

"Between our new rehabilitation center and now our first organizational vehicle, we are entering an exciting new chapter for Pacific Wildlife Care," said Howland. "This recognition is a wonderful reminder of how much our community believes in the

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Our Stories: Discovering the Morro Bay National Estuary Program



A group of folks in 2023 who volunteered at The Cloisters during regular beach and waterway cleanup days put on by the Morro Bay National Estuary Program.

Photos by the Morro Bay National Estuary Program
Story by Judy Salamacha

"Morro Bay is a national treasure, providing habitat for an incredible diversity of species. It is also our home and the core of our community. The Morro Bay National Estuary

Program continually leads and organizes the efforts of our residents to protect the bay for all the species that use it, including local citizens. Because of these efforts, the bay is accessible, cleaner, healthier, and more protected," states Ethan Bell, senior aquatic ecologist at Stillwater Sciences the nonprofit's informative website at www.mbnep.org.

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MBHS Named Among Top U.S. High Schools



Morro Bay High School's administration building is the main entrance to one of the best high schools in America. Photo by Neil Farrell

By Neil Farrell

Morro Bay High School administrators, staff and students are celebrating a milestone achievement, as they break through into the Top-10 percent of U.S. high schools in an assessment conducted by a national magazine.

U.S. News & World Report recently named its Best High Schools list for 2026-27 and MBHS landed inside the Top 10 percent in the nation. The school also ranked second best high school in San Luis Obispo County behind the other district high school, San Luis Obispo High, school Principal Michael Franklin said.

"Five years ago," he said, "we were No. 7 in the county. Then 2-years ago we were No. 3. We're literally 2 percentage points below San Luis High."

He added that the high rankings were "A testament to our district as a whole. It's hard to be in the Top 10 percent in anything."

He said anyone thinking about bringing their child into the district can rest assured that SLO and Morro Bay have top-notch educational facilities.

Both schools have also recently undergone extensive upgrades and remodeling projects after district taxpayers approved the Measure D bond to fund modernization efforts at the San Luis Coastal Unified School District's two main high schools (Pacific Beach High, a continuation school, is also being upgraded).

The U.S. News & World Report rankings looked at some 18,000 high schools of every stripe — public, private, parochial, charter and specialized academies — and Franklin explained Morro Bay was ranked within the Top 6.5%.

A large part of this has to do with [retired Principal] Scott Schalde and the work ethic he instilled here," said Franklin, who is in his first year at MBHS. Schalde's philosophy was to do right by the kids, he added. He set up a foundation of love for the kids.

Franklin said the school also has experienced and dedicated teachers who have on average from 14-16 years experience teach-

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Supervisors Deny Baywood Project Appeal

By Neil Farrell



County Supervisors denied an appeal on a 2-story mixed use — motel-retail — project slated for an old gas station property on 2nd Street in Baywood Park.

The property at the corner of 2nd Street and Santa Maria Avenue (1300 2nd St.) was once a gas station but was closed decades ago. It was a small office space for many years, but that building was eventually torn down over 15-years ago. It has sat vacant since then. It's main use has been as the location for the live music stage and beer gardens during the Annual Oktoberfest

Baywood Project Appeal Continued on page 22

Moss Landing Cleanup Enters Final Stages

By Neil Farrell



Clean up continues at the fire-destroyed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility in Moss Landing and the Federal Government has given the OK to begin the final stage of the mop up.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced Sept. 8 the start of the final phase of the clean-up at Vistra Energy's Moss Landing plant, which caught fire and was destroyed in a spectacular blaze in January 2025.

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A View to the Deep

Endurance Swimming and Deep-Sea Exploration

By Christine Heinrichs

Central Coast residents greet all kinds of visitors along the coastline! In September, an endurance swimmer swam through on her way from Oregon to Mexico, and a rare deep-sea squid swished through far below her.

900-Mile Swim
Endurance swimmer Catherine Breed set out to swim the length of California's coast, 900 miles, from Oregon to Mexico, in July. She passed through San Simeon and Morro Bay the first week of September.

She holds records for swimming across Monterey Bay (25 miles in 12 hours, 53 minutes) and the Farallon Islands to the Golden Gate Bridge (29.7 miles in 13 hours 54 minutes).

One of the goals of her endurance swimming is to "challenge conventional ideas of endurance, shifting the focus from records alone toward purpose-driven adventure that leaves lasting impact."

"It was never just about swimming," she says on her website. She swims about a mile offshore, about five hours each day, covering roughly 10 to 15 miles daily. Lighter winds in the early morning hours make the swim easier.

Her support team accompanies her on a 52-foot Beneteau sailboat. Check out more at swimcalifornia.com.

Two Miles Deep



Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute and NOAA scientists, including onboard collaborator Andrew DeVogelaere (left), were surveying the seafloor near Davidson Seamount when they caught a fleeting glimpse of a bigfin squid. Photo by Olivia Soares Pereira

Breed won't see the creatures that live deep below her in the ocean, in the protected area off the Central Coast, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. But Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute's (MBARI) remotely operated vehicle documented a rare creature, two miles deep.

It happened during the MBARI's flagship research vessel David Packard's August 3-12 Seamount Hotspot expedition to Sur Ridge and Davidson Seamount. A rare bigfin squid (Magnapinna sp.) floated into the screen from the camera on the ship's remotely operated vehicle (ROV) Doc Ricketts. Its two large fins waved in the water, amidst its eight trailing arms and two tentacles. They used the Doc Ricketts' laser measuring system to estimate that the squid's size, approximately 1.25 meters (4.1 feet) long from the top of the body to the ends of the arms.

The expedition was surveying the abyssal seafloor near Davidson Seamount when the team was surprised to see the bigfin squid hovering over the seafloor. They were studying unexplained furrows in the mud, trying to determine whether they were created by beaked whales feeding in the waters around the seamount.

"I was focused on the seafloor and all of a sudden an elegant creature with undulating, angel-like 'wings' swam into view,"



A rare bigfin squid was discovered two miles deep in the protected area off the Central Coast, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Photo by MBARI

recalled Andrew DeVogelaere, a research ecologist with NOAA's Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and a longtime MBARI collaborator. "I was stunned — this is the first confirmed bigfin squid sighting in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and a powerful reminder of what we still have to discover in the ocean's depths. We live next door to a magical place."

Bigfin squid have been documented only 70 times before, worldwide. In 2001, MBARI geologists observed a bigfin squid during an expedition to Hawaii.

On board the David Packard, team member Olivia Soares Pereira, MBARI postdoctoral fellow, immediately recognized the squid. She'd seen several during a summer Schmidt Ocean Institute expedition to the Doldrums Megatransform and Fracture Zone in the Atlantic Ocean that observed several bigfin squid.

"After this recent sighting, I texted another MBARI scientist from the Doldrums expedition, 'How many Magnapinna will I see this year?' I never thought I'd see enough of them to actually make that joke!" she said. "Each sighting is such a privilege and highlights the incredible diversity of life that thrives in the unknown deep underwater and needs our protection."

Soares Pereira specializes in benthic organisms, the critters that live on the sea floor in the deep sea, 200 meters (600 feet) and deeper, such as crabs, clams, marine worms, and sea urchins. She's always been curious about the animals that live down there, in the dark and cold, and years ago made an Instagram video about Magnapinna, just because she thought it was interesting. She wants those of us living on land to understand that although animals like Magnapinna look eerie, they aren't aliens. They live on earth with us. They pose no danger.

"I never expected I would see one," she said. "They are so rare, how little we know about them."

Some of the other scientists in the control room had never heard of bigfin squid. Now that Soares Pereira has seen several, her friend called her the Magnapinna Whisperer.

Davidson Seamount is included in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, even though it is separated from the main coastal section of the sanctuary, 80 miles southwest of Monterey. It's 26 miles long, 8 miles wide, 4,101 feet deep at the summit, and 11,581 feet deep at the base. Davidson Seamount was added to Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary in 2008. MBARI began exploring it in 2002 as a biological hotspot. It's an oblong series of volcanic cones, last actively volcanic nearly ten million years ago.

The near-freezing temperature of the water there supports ancient deep-sea corals and an octopus nursery where thousands of octopuses brood their eggs. It takes years to hatch octopus.

Large whales and seabirds (including world-record abundance of the seabird Cook's petrel) also visit the seamount, although its peak doesn't break the surface. The seamount directs deep-sea currents toward the sea surface, concentrating nutrients and food to support wildlife communities above the summit.

"Every dive into the deep brings an opportunity to see something new. You never know what you'll encounter," said Soares Pereira. "I was sitting right next to the screens in the control room when I saw what looked like tentacles coming into the top corner of the video. I thought it might be a cool jelly, but as soon as the little 'elbows' appeared, I knew exactly who this was and immediately screamed 'Magnapinna!' before the rest of the squid even came into the screen. It was incredibly exciting!"

The Seamount Hotspots expedition was supported by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, a longtime supporter of MBARI's work.

See video of the bigfin squid the researchers saw at mbari.org/animal/bigfin-squid.

Correction

Last issue's story about the City Council approving the purchase of Morro Elementary School had some inaccuracies the City has asked us to correct. According to a letter from City Manager John Craig:

- The Council's vote was not unanimous as reported; it was 4-1 with Councilwoman Cyndee Edwards voting "No."
- "Council member Edwards," Craig's letter said, "voted against the motion, citing several reasons for her dissent, including cost suitability and balance considerations identified in the due diligence report."
- We reported that the City had not yet announced how it would pay for the purchase.

Craig said the City Council has the option of accepting a seller-financing offer from the school district to pay the remaining \$4.8 million according to the following schedule: \$0 due by Oct. 31, 2026, beyond the \$500,000 deposit already made; paying another \$500,000 by Oct. 31, 2027, with the rest (\$4.3M) paid over time at a 2.0% interest rate; \$2 million on the principle due Oct. 31, 2028, with the remaining principle of \$2.3 million due Oct. 31, 2029, plus 2 years of accrued interest.

"The City Attorney," Craig said, "is currently working with counsel for the SLCUSD to prepare formal documentation of these terms for Council consideration."

• Craig said the cost of the due diligence report was \$125,000 total, and the main consultant, EMBC Planning Solutions' portion was 15% of that total. The rest went to other firms that were brought in on specific areas of the study. EBN reported EMBC's contract was for \$125,000.

• The depth of the due diligence study was reported as not digging too deeply into the condition, "which might typically include checking the building's stability, structural strength, plumbing, electrical and mechanical systems, among other things."

Craig said the due diligence report "included every one of the items listed." And, "the inspection was not limited in the manner described."

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Community Mourns the Passing of Frank Lanzone

Listeners of KCBX and NPR are mourning the passing of longtime president and general manager.

Frank Lanzone, who led the station for more than 45 years died September 10 after a brief illness. He was 77.

Lanzone announced his retirement in February 2026. After stepping down, he continued to serve as vice president of KCBX and as executive director of the Live Oak Music Festival, an event he helped launch in 1989.

“For the past 46 years, no one was more dedicated to the station, people and the community than Frank,” said KCBX President and General Manager Chris McBride. “We are grateful for his decades of leadership, mentorship and friendship. We will miss him tremendously.”

Lanzone first came to KCBX as general manager in April 1980, when the station operated from Chorro Street in downtown San Luis Obispo. In 1985, the station moved to its current location on Vachell Lane. Over the past four and a half decades, Frank secured the station’s finances, built operations and expanded the station’s reach to encompass three Central Coast counties. He increased goals and met the station’s funding needs through pledge drives as well as community and fundraising events, such as the KCBX Central Coast Wine Classic and Live Oak Music Festival. He oversaw the installation of five translators to serve Cambria, Cayucos, Avila Beach, Shell Beach, Santa



Ynez, and Santa Barbara. Lanzone also grew the station significantly by establishing the KCBX Newsroom in 2014.

“Mr. Lanzone’s passing is a huge hit- we all know that so many wonderful times and informative programs happened because of Frank’s tireless dedication to the quality of KCBX and to the KCBX community,” said SLO County Board of Supervisors’ said Dawn Ortiz Legg on social media. “Thank you, Frank, you are already missed but forever respected and loved.”

KCBX will be celebrating both Lanzone and long-time station Operations Manager Hank Hadley, who passed away on August 30, during the upcoming second annual Central Coast Sessions event at The Rock in San Luis Obispo on November 7. Additional details will be announced soon.

Delays on Hwy 41 for Shoulder Work

Motorists needing to travel over Hwy 41 should watch out for a Caltrans construction zone they’ll encounter between Morro Bay and Atascadero.

Caltrans Dist. 5 announced they will be doing work on the shoulder of Hwy 41 through the end of the month.

“Travelers will encounter daytime one-way reversing traffic control on Highway 41 between Atascadero and Morro Bay,” Caltrans said.

“Drivers can expect traffic control with a flagger and pilot car from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Highway 41 from Los Altos Road in Atascadero to Bear Ridge Road in Morro Bay.”

Los Altos Road is on the edge of the Atascadero City Limits, east of the Halfway Station a couple of miles. Bear Ridge Road is past the Halfway Station near the “S” curves on the downhill side of Hwy 41.

Caltrans crews “will be performing shoulder

backing work,” Caltrans said, “which will create a smooth, level surface along the shoulder that allows drivers to safely steer back onto the highway.”

They will set up message and directional signs to alert drivers “in advance of the areas

under traffic control.” Motorists can expect a 15-minute delay.

Road information and updates can be found on Caltrans Dist. 5 Social Media platforms: X at: @CaltransD5, Facebook at: Caltrans Central Coast (District 5) and Instagram at: Caltrans_D5.

Woman Pleads to Manslaughter

A San Luis Obispo woman pled guilty to vehicular manslaughter in connection with a 2024 hit-run crash where she hit and killed an elderly man riding a bicycle in San Luis Obispo.

District Attorney Dan Dow said that Vanessa Rose Noblitt, 44, pled guilty to vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated in the fatal hit and run accident.

Noblitt admitted to being drunk on July 23, 2024, when she was driving southbound on South Higuera Street in SLO at about noon and drifted into the bike lane striking cyclist Saul Goldberg, 86, knocking him off his bike and suffering fatal injuries.

His cycling companion, Martin Suits, 72, is believed to have crashed into Goldberg and been thrown from his bicycle suffering a concussion and other injuries.

Noblitt fled the scene and was later arrested after she hit a parked car inside a mobile home park, the news release said.

It was determined she had a blood alcohol level of .31% at the time of the crash, and 0.08% is the legal limit to drive in California.

The case was apparently heading to trial but during a probable cause hearing on Aug. 14, Suits testified to his recollections and injuries from the accident, with Goldberg’s Family in attendance.

“After careful consultation with victim Martin Suits and Mr. Goldberg’s immediate family both before and after the preliminary hearing,” the release said, “a plea offer was made to Noblitt that Mr. Suits, and Mr. Goldberg’s family were in support of.”

Her plea to vehicular manslaughter and



Vanessa Rose Noblitt, 44, pled guilty to vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated in the hit-run death of an elderly cyclist Submitted photo

DUI with great bodily injury or death “is a violent strike offense under California’s Three Strikes Law. Noblitt also admitted a factor in aggravation that the victim was particularly vulnerable.”

As a result of the plea, on Oct. 13 she will be given the maximum sentence under the law — 9 years, and 8 months in State Prison.

The SLO Police Department investigated the case, and the prosecutor was Dep. D.A. Delaney Henretty. Victim support services were provided by Victim Advocate Tristan Millage and Witness Coordinator Eloiza Basinger.

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Sheriff Arrests 10 Suspected Gang Members



Photo shows the arsenal of rifles and pistols, mound of cash and cocaine seized by the Sheriff's Department in a recent gang bust in Nipomo. Submitted photo

The Sheriff's Gang Task Force conducted a major sweep of suspected gang members and drug dealers, scooping up 10 men from South County and confiscating cash and an arsenal of weapons.

Sheriff's Spokesman Tony Cipolla announced Sept. 11 that the GTF and other investigators had concluded a lengthy investigation and made the arrests of suspected members of Nipomo 13, a criminal street gang in Nipomo and Santa Maria.

"On Sept. 10 and 11," Cipolla said in a news release, "Detectives from the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Office and the Sheriff's Office Special Enforcement Detail [SWAT], with assistance from several other law enforcement agencies including the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department and the Portland Ore., PD arrested multiple individuals on outstanding arrest warrants.

"The arrests are the result of a lengthy investigation conducted by the Sheriff's Office Gang Task Force."

He said the investigation centered on suspected sales of illegal drugs "that benefitted the Nipomo 13 criminal street gang based in San Luis Obispo County," Cipolla said. "The investigation also uncovered information regarding a conspiracy to sell controlled substances from two businesses, Munchiez 805 restaurant located in rural Arroyo Grande and Head Liners barbershop located in Nipomo."

The moniker "13" when affixed to a gang's name, connotes an affiliation with MS 13, the multi-national gang from Mexico and Central America.

GTF's search warrants led to the seizure of 2.2 kilos of cocaine with an estimated street value of \$220,000; 25 firearms; \$60,426 in cash; "along with evidence related to drug sales and gang activity."

After the seizures, Cipolla said, GTF detectives then identified suspected co-conspirators, conducting interviews, reviewing social media and cell phone evidence, analyzed surveillance video," and more. The arrested men are:

- Rolando Belmontez, 41 of Santa Maria. Conspiracy to sell cocaine with a gang enhancement.
- Robert Ramirez, 43 of Nipomo. Conspiracy to sell cocaine with a gang enhancement.
- Josef Ramirez, 27 of Nipomo. Conspiracy to sell cocaine with a gang enhancement.
- Carlos Jovani Torres, 36 of Portland, Ore. Conspiracy to possess cocaine for sale with a weight enhancement involving more than 1 kilogram.
- Carlos Antonio Torres, 67 of Santa Maria. Conspiracy to possess cocaine for sale with a weight enhancement involving more than 1 kilogram.
- Emmanuel SilvaSerna, 33 of Nipomo. Conspiracy to possess cocaine for sale with a weight enhancement involving more than 1 kilogram.
- Efren Rodriguez, 31 of Nipomo. Conspiracy to possess cocaine for sale with a weight enhancement involving more than 1 kilogram.
- Alonzo QuintanaCastillo, 33 of Nipomo. Conspiracy to possess cocaine for sale with a weight enhancement involving more than 1 kilo.
- Joseph Silva, 31 of Orcutt. Conspiracy to possess cocaine for sale with a weight enhancement involving more than 1 kilo.
- Esteban CarrilloGomez, 31 of Grover Beach. Conspiracy to possess cocaine for sale with a weight enhancement involving more than 1 kilogram.

But investigators aren't done charging some of the men. Cipolla explained that GTF detectives are seeking additional

charges of "felony child endangerment, sales of a controlled substance within 1,000 feet of a school, possession of assault weapons, maintaining a location for the sale and use of a controlled substance, and active participation in a criminal street gang," with potentially more charges to come.

He did not say which of the arrestees could have these additional charges added to their legal woes.

Fresno Woman Dies in Hwy 41 Crash

The Highway Patrol has identified the victim in a single vehicle accident on Hwy 41 who died in the thus far unexplained crash.

According to CHP Lt. Darren Gennusa, at about 10:08 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 8 officers were dispatched to a report of a single vehicle crash on Hwy 41 at Rocky Canyon Road. That location is east of the Atascadero City Limits.

Arriving officers determined that a 42-year-old woman from Ceres, Calif., identified as Jenny Ritter, was driving a black, 2008 Mercedes ML500 southbound at an unknown speed.

"For unknown reasons," Lt. Gennusa said, "Ms. Ritter allowed the Mercedes to travel from the southbound lane across the roadway and down a dirt/grass embankment, where it subsequently crashed into a concrete drainage wall."

Ritter and her female passenger had to be extricated from the vehicle by responding fire fighters and were transported to Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center in San Luis Obispo.

The passenger, later identified as Ruby Arballo, 42 of Fresno, died at the hospital from her injuries. The extent of Ritter's injuries were not reported by the CHP but she survived the crash.

"Alcohol and/or drugs were not suspected to have been a factor in this crash," Lt. Gennusa said. The CHP in Templeton continues to investigate the cause of the crash.

Celebrate Los Osos, Volunteers Needed Oct. 3



Photo by Pandora Karner-Nash.

The median along Los Osos Valley Road has sprouted a very healthy (unfortunately) crop of weeds and the non-profit Celebrate Los Osos is holding a weed pull, Saturday, October 3 at 9 a.m.

"Come get your hands dirty and join us for a community weed pull along the median," said Pandora Karner-Nash, president of CLO. "We will provide the safety vests. Please bring a trowel, rake or any weed pulling device you might have handy.

CLO has twice replanted the Los Osos median strip, an 1100 linear median along Los Osos Valley Road, starting at South Bay Blvd. They have maintained, repaired, replanted and nurtured the median for 15 years and they pay for the water.

"This is the entrance of our town and impressions are important," Karner-Nash said. "The aesthetic qualities of roads leading into towns leave an important and lasting impression. Approach roads are a significant part of a commuters' daily landscape, and their aesthetic qualities have an effect on the

commuters' psychological processes, traffic behavior and quality of life. For visitors, entrances—an expression of the identity of a place—change the viewer's impression of the place they are approaching or passing by. The quality of the view and the overall visual perception of the environment speak volumes to the visitor. A long median with weeds does not tell our story. The median is the entrance to the local retail area and should make a positive statement."

To volunteer, please contact Ellie at volunteer@Celebrate-LosOsos.org. Meet in front of the former Beach Hut Deli. CLO asks that participants do not cross the street until everyone is all together.

South Bay Fire Open House, Oct. 17



The South Bay Fire Department in Los Osos is hosting an Open House and everyone who loves fire fighters is invited to come down and check out the stationhouse and learn about the department.

The Open House is set for 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 17 at Station 15, 2315 Bayview Heights Dr. Free and open to the public.

Activities include: tours of the fire engines, you'll be able to climb up into the cab and check out the various rescue and firefighting gear; a fire extinguisher demo where you can learn the right way to put a fire out; hands-only CPR and basic First Aid demos; a chance to meet the crew; and there'll be junior firefighter helmets and goodies given away to the kids.

For more information call 805-528-1053.

South Bay Fire or CAL FIRE/County Fire Sta. 15 serves the greater Los Osos Area with emergency medical first response services, firefighting and other fire department-related activities and services.

The Department is a division of the Los Osos Community Services District and funded by local fire district property taxes. It's staffed through a contract with CAL FIRE/County Fire.

Wanted Man Flees, Gets Shot and Killed by Officers



Screen shot from a Sheriff's Department dash cam shows Randall Kelley exiting his crashed utility truck holding a handgun, shortly before he reportedly aimed it at deputies and Paso Robles Police Officers and was shot dead. Submitted photo

By Neil Farrell

A man who rammed a Sheriff's patrol car in Paso Robles and then fled the scene in a high-speed pursuit was shot and killed by law enforcement officers after pointing a handgun at them, the Sheriff's Department said in a news release.

Wanted Man Flees Continued on page 8

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Estero Bay New Briefs

By Theresa-Maria Wilson

Cleanup Week and Hazardous Waste Drop-Off

Hazardous Waste Drop Off Sept. 26

The San Luis Obispo County Integrated Waste Management Authority (IWMA) invites folks to safely dispose of their household hazardous waste (HHW) at an upcoming temporary collection event held at Cuesta College on Saturday, September 26, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Cuesta College - SLO Campus Parking Lot 3 off of HWY 1. Residents may bring up to 15 gallons or 125 pounds of accepted household hazardous waste for safe, free disposal. Check out the list of Items accepted include old paint and stains, household cleaning products, motor oil and automotive fluids, batteries and electronics (E-waste) and more. See the list at iwma.com/hazardous-waste.

Fall Cleanup Week is slated for Sept. 28-Oct. 2 and the garbage company is reminding everyone of what they need to do to take advantage of the free service.

- Single-family residents can place up to six additional 32-gallon size bags of trash out at the curb for free on the morning of your normal pick up day.
- All additional bags will go directly to the landfill and are not reviewed for recyclables or organic materials. Make sure organic and recycle materials are sorted properly. Extra organic and recycling pickups are available, call the Garbage Company for details.
- Bulky items must be neatly bundled or bagged.
- No hazardous materials, or concrete in trash bags, nor items longer than 4-feet (i.e. rugs, tables, pipes, lumber, etc.)
- All bulky item pickups during Clean Up Week must be called in or scheduled online at least 3-days prior to your regular pickup day by the service account holder.
- Call the Garbage Company for more information or to schedule a bulky item pickup at: 805-543-0875.
- To keep things out of the landfill, garbage companies suggest using local resources for reducing and reusing the items.
- Have larger items that are still in decent shape? Try Habitat for Humanity, they might even pick up certain things.
- How about e-waste? Perhaps iFixit can get you the hard-to-find parts, and share the know-how, to get it done.
- Or, try a repair cafe! 5 Cities Repair Cafe hosts events throughout the County, see their website for details.
- Otherwise, most e-waste is accepted free of charge at our Cold Canyon Landfill, and some local retailers.
- New this year: Try “Trash to Treasure”, where you can give away your used, but still working, items, for free to another community member. Visit iwma.com/trash-to-treasure for more information.

Project RattleCam Reveals Baby Snakes



A Colorado Prairie rattlesnake and pups (including one pictured in the middle of this image) recently were captured cuddling on the Project RattleCam livestream. Photo submitted.

It's the season for babies in the snake world and Project RattleCam is capturing magical moments.

The livestream camera feed has revealed footage of a live birth, dozens of newborns and even observed the cycle of life as a five-year-old snake, Iris, first seen in 2021 as a baby in California recently gave birth to her own offspring.

And for the first time, the project captured the activities of baby Timber rattlesnakes in Pennsylvania, after that latest camera went live in May.

“After witnessing the first days of life of two other rattlesnake species on our cams, I can say that seeing brand new Timber Rattlesnake babies basking in the sun and exploring their new world is a huge privilege and endlessly fascinating,” said Emily Taylor, a Cal Poly biological sciences professor and co-director of Project RattleCam, in a news release.

The initial observations of newborns took place July 30 in California, Aug. 11 in Colorado and Sept. 8 in Pennsylvania. More than 60 newborn rattlesnakes have been observed in Colorado.

Project RattleCam allows the public access to observe snake activities and researchers to monitor the behaviors of the animals in their natural habitats without human disturbance.

On both the California and Colorado cameras, viewers have seen females deliver their pups live via the livestream, trailed by the arrival of the Pennsylvania neonates.

“There is literally a handful of people in the world that have seen rattlesnake pups being born from their mother,” said Scott Boback, a Dickinson biology professor and co-director of Project RattleCam. “After spending the whole summer getting to know the individual snakes, viewers, including me, were overwhelmed with joy to be able to see the delivery. It's a tremendous gift to be able to watch timber rattlesnake pups during their first few days of life.”

In past research conducted by Taylor and students gauging people's feelings towards rattlesnakes, when people observe mother-pup interactions it often changes perspectives of animosity and

fear to feelings of respect for the animals. Taylor has led public campaigns to reduce harm and the killing of snakes due to people's false perceptions around aggressive rattlesnake behaviors. In fact, rattlesnakes generally strike as a defense mechanism and seek to avoid human encounters unless threatened.

Voting By Mail in SLO County

Mid-term elections are right around the corner, and the voting process has been in debate. Despite attempts by President Donald Trump and his Administration, mail-in ballots are still a go. The Supreme Court earlier this month declined to allow the U.S. Postal Service to carry out restrictions on mail-in voting for the mid-term elections. Any registered voter may vote using a vote-by-mail ballot instead of going to the polls on Election Day.

The San Luis Obispo County Elections Office says ballots are on track to be sent to all registered voters no later than Oct. 5. After you have voted, insert your ballot in the envelope provided, making sure you complete all required information on the envelope.

You may return your voted ballot by

- By drop box
Drop off your completed ballot in the return envelope at a secure official drop box in your county at any time between October 6 through the close of polls on November 3.
- In person
Drop your completed ballot in the return envelope off at a secure drop box, polling place, vote center, or county elections office by 8:00 p.m. on November 3. Voting locations will be available in all counties before Election Day. Voting locations offer voter registration, replacement ballots, accessible voting machines, and language assistance.

• By mail
Return your ballot by mail as soon as you receive it. Mailed ballots must be postmarked on or before Election Day and received not later than 7 days after Election Day. To ensure your ballot is postmarked by Election Day make sure to mail it at least five days before Election Day, November 3. If mailing on Election Day, get a hand-stamped postmark from a postal employee inside a United States Post Office.

• Authorizing someone to return the ballot on your behalf.
Anyone may return your ballot for you, as long as they do not get paid on a per ballot basis.

When your vote-by-mail ballot is received by your county elections official, your signature on the return envelope will be compared to the signature(s) in your voter registration record. To preserve the secrecy of your ballot, the ballot will then be separated from the return envelope, and then it will be tallied.

All valid vote-by-mail ballots are counted in every election in California, regardless of the outcome or closeness of any race.

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

PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE



Saturday, September 26th from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Southbay Community Center

Tools, Electronics, Sporting Goods,
Household Goods, Small Furniture & Collectibles



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For More Info, Call (805) 528-2626

1/3 of Proceeds will be donated to the Community Center
1/3 will go to support People Helping People
1/3 will be donated to the Annual Needs 'N Wishes Holiday Fundraiser, held on December 12th that benefits both the SLO Noor Clinic and Prado Homeless Services Center

BREAKFAST ON THE BAY

Voterama

Breaking Down the California Ballot

JORDAN CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.
FORMER CALIFORNIA STATE ASSEMBLY MEMBER

JIM GROSS, ESQ.
MBCC BUSINESS ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEMBER

SEPTEMBER 30

7:45 - 9:15 am
doors open at 7:30

Morro Bay Community Center
1001 Kennedy Way, Morro Bay

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- Learn about the 14 measures on the November ballot.
- Get an insider's view about the ballot measure process.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS—DON'T MISS IT!

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Community

Monarch Elementary 5th Grade Car Wash Sept. 27



Mark your calendars, cancel your appointments, and tell your car to get ready. The Monarch Elementary School 5th Grade Car Wash Fundraiser is coming to Los Osos on Sunday, September 27, with one simple mission: help send Monarch’s fifth grade students to Science Camp and get your car sparkling clean while you’re at it.

The car wash takes place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 348 Los Osos Valley Road in Los Osos, California. The cost is \$20 per vehicle, with proceeds going towards Science Camp and end-of-year activities.

At Science Camp students will take part in outdoor education and hands-on learning at Camp Ocean Pines in Cambria, with activities including tide pooling, hiking, kayaking, astronomy, exploration of marine environments, animal adaptations and indigenous cultures. There will also be plenty of classic camp fun, including target sports, campfires, arts and crafts and hammocks.

The fifth-grade Science Camp experience and end-of-year activities cost approximately \$500 per student, or roughly \$23,000 for the entire class. Fundraising efforts are designed to build a common pool of money so that every student can attend.

For \$20 per vehicle, your ride will be rinsed with the purest waters drawn from local wells, washed with exquisite soaps from around the world, rinsed once again and then hand-dried with the finest cloths known to fifth grade car-washing science.

Planned future fundraising efforts include Monarch tote bags, online fundraising through 99 Pledges, a fundraiser at Brightside Pizza in October, pizza sales at the Halloween Dance and a November fundraiser at Nardonne’s.

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New Martial Arts Studio Opens in MB



Gavin Marshall is teaching Muay Thai fighting at the recently opened Team Moreira Martial Arts Studio in Morro Bay. Photo by Neil Farrell

By Neil Farrell

A new martial arts studio in Morro Bay features instruction from a man who used to fight professionally in what’s arguably the most brutal sport in the world.

Gavin Marshall, a former professional Mixed Martial Arts fighter in Thailand runs Rhino Muay Thai, teaching students from beginners to people seeking to fight professionally, in a new studio on Quintana Road, opened by Rob and Jamie Lewis of Team Moreira Brazilian Jiu Jitsu.

The Lewis’ have operated a Jiu Jitsu studio in Los Osos for some 18 years now — 10 at their current location at 1236 LOVR Ste. H — and the Morro Bay site is their second location. The Morro Bay site is in the shopping center at 400 Quintana Rd., by Auto Zone.

According to their website, “Team Moreira Brazilian Jiu Jitsu has been providing exceptional instruction and building a strong community in Los Osos since 2008, and we’re very excited to serve a new city on the Central Coast! Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and Muay Thai classes for kids and adults are now open at our Morro Bay location.”

Marshall, 26, leads the more intense Muay Thai classes, continuing a practice he’s been doing since he was 6-years old. That makes sense as fighting is the family business.

“My dad was a professional MMA fighter for 20 years,” Marshall said. Doug “the Rhino” Marshall, as his father was known during his career, won five world championships. “When he retired [in 2016] he said, ‘I’ve got to pass you the torch.’”

Born in Visalia, Marshall said he moved to Los Osos when he was 9-years old. He graduated from Morro Bay High School in 2018 and spent some 6 months living in Thailand where he fought professionally.

Back home, he learned that the Lewis’ were starting a new studio in Morro Bay. “I was super stoked when I heard they were going to open this studio,” he explained, adding that they wanted to expand their offerings into Muay Thai, “And I was their guy.”

So what’s the difference between the two martial arts? “They do jiu jitsu,” Marshall said, which is mostly grappling and largely done on the ground. He smiled, “I teach people how to punch and kick each other in the face ... safely.”

He’s planning on putting together a team to fight in competitive MMA tournaments, and hopes to have it together and start competing in January.

Team Moreira has a team and is very active in competitions, he said.

His teaching is for people of all ages, he said. He has 20-year olds “ready to fight,” and 50-year olds “ready to fight. Kids 11 or 12 they’ll take a little bit longer” before they’re ready to compete.

“I have clients who just want to come in, get in shape and learn self-defense. I’ve got a 60-year-old woman who comes in with her husband.”

His kid’s classes are for 6-14-year olds, he explained, and once they turn 15 “they go to adults class.”

Currently, he’s training Steven “Savage” Sainsbury a professional MMA fighter and champion who is preparing for a title defense coming up in Fresno, he said.

Right now he’s scheduled classes for Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Kids classes — Lil’ Rhinos — are from 5-5:45 p.m. and adult Muay Thai goes from 6-7. Saturdays have adult Muay Thai from 10-11 a.m. and open sparring sessions from 11-noon.

For information on these and Jiu Jitsu class email to: info@team-morreirabjj.com or call 805-215-6083.

Team Moreira offers Brazilian Jiu Jitsu classes in Morro Bay for kids (called Little Monkeys), juniors and adults. See the website at: www.teammoreirabjj.com got schedule.

Events & Activities

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Cambria Library is having a Halloween costume exchange for children of all ages. From Oct 6 – 10 during library regular hours. For babies to teens. Donate an old costume or pick up a new one during our open hours all week long! It’s totally free! Donation is not required for participation.

...

Parents Helping Parents, SLO County SELPA, and the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) invite local families, educators, and community members to the annual Special Education Parent Institute on Sept. 26 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Loma Vista Community School, San Luis Obispo. This free annual event, themed “Rooted Together: Empowering Families, Schools, and Communities to Support Children with Disabilities,” offers a supportive space filled with practical learning, valuable resources, and connection. Attendees can participate in workshops covering topics such as AAC and Gestalt language processing, ADHD, executive functioning, behavioral support, and self-advocacy.

The day includes a light breakfast, keynote presentation, 10 specialized workshop sessions, an exhibitor hall with local community agencies, lunch, a raffle, and networking opportunities. Se habla español. Registration is at tinyurl.com/ParentEvent2026. For more information, send an email to info@sloselpa.org.

...



Join Greenspace - the Cambria Land Trust for a Bat Experience at the Creekside Reserve on Wednesday, October 14, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Learn about our local bat population from our bat experts, Lisa Murphy and Erin Naegle. The fun starts with an In-tro to Bats class in front of our Learning Shed, then snack on some hot chocolate, hot cider and baked goods before we head into the meadow and down to the creek to track bats using acoustical monitoring units to identify different bat species.

Dress warmly and bring your own chair and flashlight. Limited to 40 explorers. Children are welcome, no dogs please.

Suggested donation \$10 per person. 2264 Center Street, Cambria, CA 93428

RSVP: 805.927.2866 admin@greenspacecambria.org or get tickets at my805tix.com/e/bats.

...

The San Luis Obispo Symphony opens its 2026-2027 season with Rites of Passage, a program that celebrates innovation and legacy by bridging musical past and present. The concert pairs the world premiere of a newly commissioned symphony with Stravinsky’s groundbreaking ballet score “The Rite of Spring,” opening with the vibrant Danse Nègre by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. The season-opening matinee takes place Sunday, October 4, 2026, at 3 p.m. at the Performing Arts Center San Luis Obispo. The concert has been scheduled as a special Sunday afternoon performance, and audiences are invited to walk the red carpet as the Symphony opens its season.

The concert’s centerpiece is the world premiere of Stefan Podell’s “A Sense of Place,” commissioned by Garrett Foulke and Dorothy Correa and facilitated by the American Composers Forum. A tone poem inspired by the views of Zabriskie Point and Lahaina, the piece gives audiences a rare opportunity to witness a brand-new orchestral work at the moment of its creation.

The Symphony is offering community-focused pricing for Rites of Passage, with child and student tickets priced at just \$12, and adult tickets starting at only \$20. These tickets are available

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on a first-come, first-served basis while supplies last. Regular tickets are \$64 - \$84. For tickets and more information, visit slo-symphony.org.

A black and white photograph showing a large group of people gathered on the deck of a ship. In the background, a small building with a sign that reads "COMMUNITY MEETING" is visible. The ship's mast and rigging are also seen against the sky. The people are standing on a wooden deck, and some are looking towards the camera while others are engaged in conversation. The overall atmosphere appears to be one of a public gathering or protest.

Guests will have the opportunity to view tiny marine species through microscopes and learn about whale migrations. Interactive displays will offer insights into local marine environments and scientific studies conducted by Cal Poly researchers and

All info can be found on Facebook on the “Annual Los Osos Community Wide Sale!” page under events, or by visiting face-

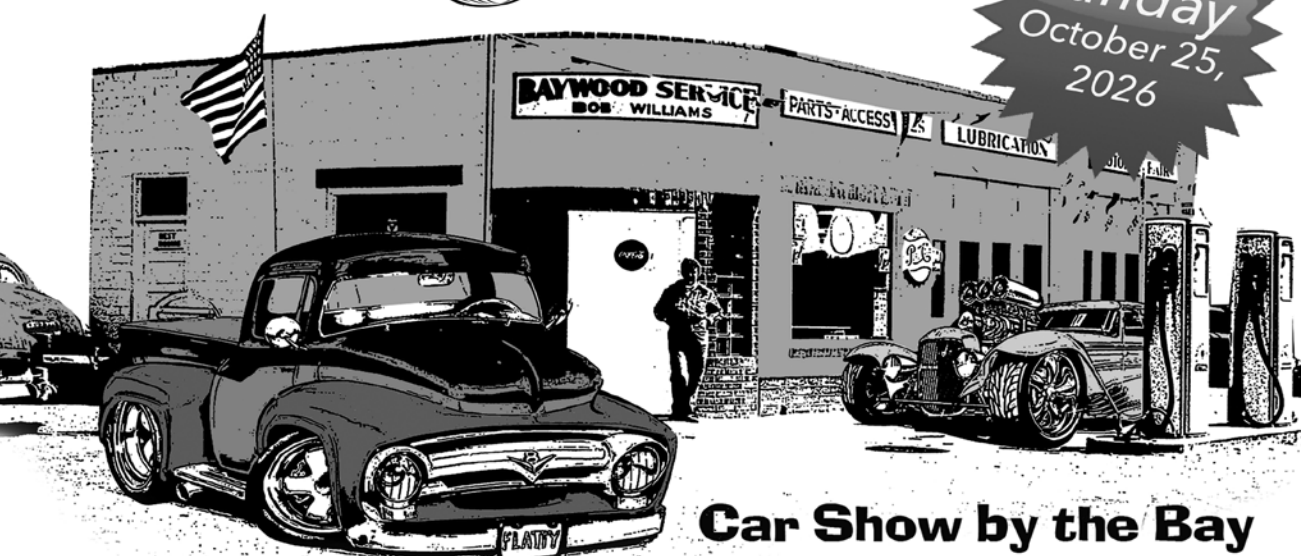
The panel will include an urban planning professor, a local property manager, a local homeowner of a STVR, and the County's new STVR program manager. Input from the audience will be gathered and reported back to the CCAC. Refreshments will be available for purchase by Sand Dollar Kitchen. Send questions to vtamoush@gmail.com or call (714) 362-7676.

**Events Continued on page 9**

Los Osos/Baywood Park Chamber of Commerce

Oktoberfest

**Sunday
October 25,
2026**



Car Show by the Bay

Cooler Little Car Show on The Bay

19th Annual Car & Motorcycle Show by the Bay



Date: Sunday, October 25th. 2026
Day of Registration: 7:00 am
Car Show: 8:00 am to 2:00 pm

Cars and motorcycles will be on display at
2nd Street & Santa Maria in the heart of Baywood Park.

Proceeds from this event fund the car show, the Los Osos Baywood Park Chamber of Commerce, Bay Osos Kiwanis and help provide local school donations and scholarships.

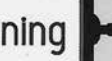
We appreciate your participation in this event

If you have any car show questions, contact:
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- **Sept. 11:** Police responded at 1:24 p.m. to the 100 block of Terra St., where someone had passed away.
- **Sept. 10:** Police responded to a disturbance at 6:36 a.m. in the 400 block of Ascadero Rd., at the Morro Gardens Apartments. Logs indicated someone had battered somebody in a case of simple assault, though the fallout is bound to be complex and made more so by resisting arrest.
- **Sept. 9:** A mandatory reporter reported getting a report of suspected child abuse reportedly in the 600 block of Estero.
- **Sept. 9:** Police responded at 10:49 a.m. to a car crash at the notoriously hazardous South Bay and Quintana.
- **Sept. 9:** At 10:20 a.m. police contacted an urban camper at Lila Keiser Park and cited the apparent Swagman for violation of the City's sleeping where they can't collect a bed tax ordinance.
- **Sept. 9:** Police responded at 7:43 a.m. to the 300 block of Arbutus where another citizen went to bed and passed away in the night
- **Sept. 8:** Police responded at 4:18 p.m. to the 500 block of Morro Bay Blvd., for another hairy car crack up. No word on the extent of injuries.
- **Sept. 8:** Police responded at 9:42 a.m. to the 400 block of Quintana for a report of someone using the ol' 5-finger discount at the discount store Family Dollar.
- **Sept. 7:** At 3:36 p.m. police contacted a suspicious subject in the 1600 block of Main. The apparent bail skipper had failed to appear in court and had a bench warrant.
- **Sept. 6:** Someone came to the police station in the 800 block of Morro Bay Blvd., at 9:37 p.m. to report that some illuminasty perv had committed lewd acts with a child under-14, which ought to be a hanging offense.
- **Sept. 6:** At 12:45 a.m. police stopped a suspicious vehicle at an undisclosed location after it blew through a stop sign. Logs indicated the outlaw was nicked for suspicion of driving thick as a tick, without a valid license to boot, and also had an outstanding though likely unremarkable bench warrant.
- **Sept. 4:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 9:36 p.m. somewhere presumably in town. Logs indicated the tipsy driver was cited for alleged drunk driving and landed somewhere between a bad dream and a natural disaster.
- **Sept. 4:** Police responded at 3:57 p.m. to a car crash. Logs didn't say where this happened nor mention the extent of the injuries or the damages.
- **Sept. 4:** At 12:02 p.m. officers responded to a report of someone being scammed by some scammer for more than \$400, making the scheme a felony.

Wanted Man Flees From page 4



Photo of the realistic pellet/BB gun the suspect reportedly pointed at officers, who shot and killed him. Submitted photo

According to Sheriff's Spokesman Tony Cipolla, at 11:24 a.m. Thursday, Sept. 17 Sheriff's deputies tried to contact a man sitting in a white utility truck in a parking lot in Paso Robles, who was wanted in connection with a felony stalking case.

As deputies approached the truck, Cipolla said, "The suspect accelerated back striking a Sheriff's patrol unit. He sped off and a pursuit began."

The high-speed chase entered Hwy 101 northbound to San Miguel. The suspect swung the truck around near Mission Street in San Miguel and started back towards the chasing units.

Deputies tried putting out a spike strip to disable the car but that didn't stop him. "As the suspect approached Paso Robles," Cipolla said, "the Sheriff's Office terminated the pursuit due to safety concerns." Deputies lost sight of the truck at that time.

Some time later, the suspect crashed while traveling south on



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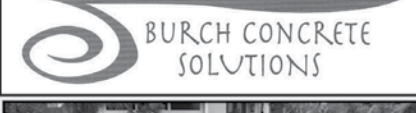
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Events From page 7

● ● ●

A Book Publication Celebration takes place Sunday, September 27 from 4 - 6 p.m. at The Bunker SLO, 810 Orcutt. Four current and former Cuesta Emeritus writing students will read from their recently published books, with a Q&A to follow. The books are: "The Life You Get: A Memoir of Recovery, Reward, and Reflection" by Donna Andersen; "Unlocking Ordinary Wonders: How Reiki and the Healing Arts Opened My Heart" by Carolyn Chilton Casas; "Gathering: Family, Grief, Resilience" by Patsy Truxaw; and "Lady of the Waves: Love in the Time of Climate Change" by Sharon D. Sheltzer. The authors will be selling and signing their books. All are welcome.



for one another and the planet we share. It takes place Saturday, October 3 from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Alex and Faye Spanos Theatre. For more than 15 years, the Oakland-based Alphabet Rockers have created music that sparks connection, joy, and belonging, earning national recognition for their innovative work with young people and communities. From the Kennedy Center to Lollapalooza, they have inspired audiences of all ages through songs that encourage authenticity, courage, and collective action.

Recommended for ages 5+. Children under 12 months of age do not require a ticket. Tickets are \$29 - \$39 and are available at pacslo.venue.net.

October is National Dessert Month, and this year San Luis Obispo is celebrating in style. What began as a simple idea — gather friends around cake — has grown, in celebrations like it around the world, into a joyful ritual of creativity, community, and abundance. Inspired by the viral cake picnic trend, the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden (SLOBG) is bringing Cake-a-Palooza, a botanically themed cake celebration to the Garden on October 3, — arriving just eleven days ahead of National Dessert Day (October 14) and kicking the county's dessert month off with hundreds of cakes and cake lovers!

Cake-a-Palooza invites bakers of all kinds to enter their very best work — the boldest decor, the most delicious flavors, a beloved family recipe, or a showcase cake from a favorite local bakery. Whether it's a garden-inspired masterpiece or a treasured heirloom recipe, every cake is welcome. Pro bakers can compete for visitor votes and take Best in Cake Show bragging rights back home!

The day unfolds in two delicious acts:
The Display: Hundreds of participant cakes are arranged in long, winding rows — a visual runway of frosting and fondant, ready for admiring, photographing, and marveling over.

The Tasting: Once the viewing is done, attendees divide into groups and rotate through the tables, armed with boxes to cut and collect slices of the cakes that catch their eye.

Tickets are on sale now. Entry is \$25 plus a cake (minimum 8" diameter x 3" high) — both a ticket and a cake are required to participate. No exceptions. Proceeds support SLOBG's mission of education and conservation. Located on 150 acres within El Chorro Regional Park, the Garden receives no Parks funding entirely on community giving, grants, sponsorships, and events like Cake-a-Palooza to sustain its gardens and programs.

More information: slobg.org/cakeapalooza.



Camp San Luis Obispo is set to host a thrilling and family-friendly “Zombie Invasion” on October 3. All proceeds will benefit Central Coast Autism Spectrum Center programs, like Camp Expedition, monthly events for kids, teens, and adults, and inclusion training for business and community partners.

Camp San Luis Obispo will come alive with the excitement of the annual Zombie Invasion SLO, welcoming participants of all ages for a day filled with fun, community, and charity. The morning kicks off with an untimed 1-mile walk/run or 5K walk/run - both courses will traverse paved and unpaved terrain, obstacles, and zombies. Great visuals with zombies, survivors, and families, perfect for photo opportunities!

Attendees may choose to participate as either Zombies or Survivors, or both! Zombies are encouraged to come dressed in full costume, or make use of on-site zombification services (old, ripped clothing recommended as it may be stained). Customizable flag systems ensure everyone can enjoy the experience according to their comfort level. Zombie Invasion SLO will offer post-run activities in our Survivor Village, such as live music, food, drinks, a bounce house, and much more for families. Whether a spectator, runner, or dedicated zombie, there's something for everyone.

All are welcome. Join the invasion, outrun (or become) the zombies, and support a worthy cause. CCASC is inviting businesses and supporters to donate items for the event or volunteer for a hands-on role in the festivities. For donation or volunteer details, contact Carly Spears at cspears@sloautism.org or Elizabeth Denny at edenny@sloautism.org. To purchase your tickets to this event, go to rungsioput.com/Race/CA/SanLuisObispo/ZombieInvasionSLO2026.

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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Top Harriers Meet at Morro Bay Invitational



The Morro Bay High Boys Varsity team gets ready to race at the MBHS Invitational Sept. 12. Photos by Neil Farrell

By Neil Farrell

Morro Bay High School hosted some of the best cross country runners in California at the 2026 Morro Bay Invitational Meet, held Sept. 12 at the high school.

And while no Pirate runners managed to win any of the races, one of the varsity boys came close, and the girls Varsity squad finished a very respectable second in team scoring in the 2.75-mile Girls Small School race.

That race was won by McFarland High's Jennifer Diaz in 18-minutes, 15.6-seconds, with Bella Tomasini of Atascadero High second in 18:22.9. The race had 98 runners entered and all of them finished.

Morro Bay senior Wendy Wilson led the way for the Pirates taking fifth place in 19:21.8. She was followed by a close trio of MBHS runners as Abigail Bautista took 16th (20:43.3); Shelby Taylor was 17th (20:43.6); and Sophia Waldman 18th in 20:44.8.

Lilith Buller was the fifth runner for Morro Bay coming in 36th in 22:12.17; and Isabel Gomez also ran for the team finishing 47th in 23:43.4.

Teams scores saw McFarland win with 62 points and Morro Bay was second with 81. SLO High School was third with 85; Atascadero fourth with 126 and Templeton took fifth with 130.

Of note in the Girls Large School Race, defending Div. 2 State Champion and 2025 MBHS Invitational champion, Isabella Vasquez of El Diamante HS ran away with another first-place finish clocking 17:58.3 and besting her rival, Teagen Bivena of Los Osos HS, who finished in 18:11.3.

The two also finished one-two in last year's State Championships, as well as the MBHS Invitational. Both were shoulder-to-shoulder throughout most of the race, including the path through the tunnel of trees, and through the loose sand on Morro Strand Beach. But Vasquez eventually pulled away as they returned to campus via the paved bike path parallel to Hwy 1 at about the 2-mile mark. Though both finished strong, Vasquez won by about 30 yards.

In the Boys Small School Varsity race, Morro Bay's Abe Gade finished second in 15:36.8 just a few seconds behind race winner Christian Hoover of Central HS in 15:30.7.

Third went to SLOHS' Rudy Uribe (15:44.6) and he was closely followed by teammates Gavin Wells (15:56.6) and Kaden Gearhart (15:58.3) who were fourth and fifth respectively.

Morro Bay's other runners were: Oliver Zalta (12th, 16:48.8); Hunter Torlano (36th, 17:45.0); Cameron D'Aundy (39th, 18:00.5); and, Joseph Beard (74th, 19:13.3).

SLOHS won the team score registering just 35 points (lowest score wins in cross country) with Lompoc second with 96. Santa Ynez was third with 107 and Morro Bay fourth with 143. Atascadero took fifth with 215 and mighty McFarland was sixth with 224.

In the Boys Small School junior varsity race, McFarland's Fabian Abundis edged out SLOHS' Colin Heying by a tenth of a second — 16:37.4 to 16:37.5 — in the closest finish of the day.

Frankie Sullivan of SLOHS was third (17:06.7) and Halen Powell of Templeton was fourth (17:15.7).

Of note, Coast Union's Jayden Brannon took 13th in 18:22.7 and his teammate Josh Johnson was 45th in 19:31.2.

Morro Bay's first finisher was Nico Woollaston (25th, 18:47.2). MBHS' Eli Collins (54th, 18:47.4) and Tev Perkin (58th, 20:03.6) also ran the race.

Morro Bay Invitational Continued on page 20



MBHS Girls Varsity runners, front to back: Abigail Bautista; Shelby Taylor; and Sophia Waldman came in 16th-18th in the Girls Small School Race.



Morro Bay's Wendy Wilson was fifth in the Small Schools Girls Varsity race.



McFarland High's Jennifer Diaz won the Girls Small Schools race.



MBHS's Wendy Wilson runs at the three-fourths of a mile mark.



MBHS' Shelby Taylor runs in the Small Schools Girl's Varsity race shown here at about the three-fourths of a mile mark.



Defending meet and Div. 2 State Champion, Isabella Vasquez of El Diamante High, ran away with the Large Schools Girls Varsity race.



Morro Bay High's JV girl's runner Megan Phipps competes at the Invitational.



Nico Woollaston runs for the MBHS JV boys.



Eli Collins running for the MBHS JV Boys Team.



McFarland's Fabian Abundis (left) edged out SLOHS' Colin Heying by a tenth of a second to win the Boys Small School JV race.



Liam Werner sprints for the finish line in the Boys Small School JV Race.

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- ★ Race Ends at Tidelands Park
- ★ Morro Bay Dragon Boat will be our "Ducky Wranglers"

Community

Takin' Care of Business From page 11

The project also added all-gender restrooms on every floor, two seminar-style classrooms and expanded study seating. Improved exterior insulation, new high-performance glazing and upgraded heating and cooling systems reduced the building's energy use by 30%.

Hub24, the university's 24-hour study space, expanded to include the library's first and second floors. Students also have access to the Digital Scholarship Studio, which offers a research help desk, group study space, computer workstations and support for data science projects.

In presenting the award, the jury said the project "brought new life to this brutalist campus landmark," adding that the renovation "appreciated the existing building for what it was and respectfully made it better without over-renovating it."

Enjoy Fall at Cambria Nursery



Fall has arrived at Cambria Nursery with a celebration of seasonal traditions, family-friendly activities and community spirit. Guests can enjoy the locally grown pumpkin patch, shop seasonal produce at the Nursery's 46 Ranch Farmstand, visit the friendly goats and chickens and join hands-on fall workshops.

Starting October 1st, the streets of Cambria will be even more colorful with hundreds of handcrafted scarecrows as the beloved Cambria Scarecrow Festival returns for the season.

The Nursery's annual pumpkin patch is open and ready for fall fun. Grown locally at 46 Ranch, pumpkins in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors are available for everything from porch decorating and carving to favorite fall recipes. From classic orange pumpkins to unique varieties, the pumpkin patch has something for everyone.

No visit to Cambria Nursery is complete without saying hello to adorable animals! Their two friendly female Nigerian Dwarf goats, along with our happy flock of chickens, are always ready to

charm guests of all ages. Visitors can even feed the goats, making it a fun stop for families exploring the Nursery this fall.

In addition to these fantastic fall activities, Cambria Nursery is getting hands-on and will host a series of workshops throughout the season. The first is the Secret Fairy Garden Workshop on Sept. 26 at 11 a.m. Create a magical fairy garden with succulents, moss & whimsical details. Space is limited, \$100 and includes all materials.

More workshops to be announced. All workshop materials are included. For more details, visit the Nursery's cambrianursery.com.

Non-Profit Events Calendar Available

Spokes, an organization providing resources and support to the San Luis Obispo County nonprofit community, has launched a new Major Nonprofit Fundraising Events Calendar designed to help local nonprofits avoid scheduling conflicts when planning their most important fundraising events.

Developed in collaboration with Cal Poly's student-run Hack4Impact, the calendar allows nonprofit organizations to post their major fundraising events and see what other organizations have planned throughout the year.

"Our SLO County nonprofit community hosts many important fundraising events each year, often drawing from the same pool of attendees, donors and sponsors," said Michael Simkins, Ed.D., CEO of Spokes. "Having one place to see what's already scheduled gives organizations another tool to plan strategically and set their events up for success."

Nonprofits can create an account or use a Google login to post event details, ideally several months in advance. The calendar can be filtered by date and geographic area, making it easier for organizations to identify potential conflicts. Those who already have an account for Spokes' Nonprofit Job Board can use the same login.

Any nonprofit can submit an event to the calendar, with postings subject to Spokes approval. Spokes members also receive additional event promotion in the Spokes newsletter.

Nonprofits can access the Spokes Major Nonprofit Fundraising Events Calendar under the Services tab at Spokesfornonprofits.org.

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Surf 'N Turf With Elvis



Celebrate a night of surf & turf with the King of Rock 'n' Roll when the Morro Bay Rotary Club hosts a '50s dinner dance at the Morro Bay Community Center.

The "Shake, Rattle & Roll — Surf 'N Turf" is a high energy, 1950s-themed fundraiser dinner set for 5:30-10 p.m. Friday, Oct. 23 at the Morro Bay Community Center, 1001 Kennedy Way.

Early bird tickets are \$75 a person through Sept. 20 and then go up to \$95. If you'd like to sponsor a table email Rotary President Kim Cade at: kimberlycade805@gmail.com.

Entertainment is by Elvis impersonator, and tribute band-leader, Jeremy Pearce. There will also be a Best Dressed contest (poodle skirts, leather jackets, and penny loafers, etc.), with a surprise guest emcee.

Enjoy a delicious Surf 'N Turf (seafood and beef) or vegetarian dinner sponsored by SLO Fish Co., with tri-tip from Cal Poly Meats. Sip on exceptional wines from Rotary's Premiere Wine Sponsor, Absolution Cellars.

Proceeds support the club's scholarship program for Morro Bay High School seniors, grants to local non-profit organizations, and Rotary's various community service projects.

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Community



NATURAL HISTORY NUGGETS

Big Fat Nuts



Photo by Thomas Nevesely

By Dean Thompson

The high country of the Sierra Nevada is a unique spot, and the tree line up there can be a stark, arid place. The landscape is covered with porous granitic soil scattered between rocky outcrops and boulders that were rounded by ancient glaciers. But amazingly, life exists here. The hardy wildflowers, shrubs, trees, and small mammals living above 9000 feet have had to adapt to harsh conditions like hurricane-force winds blasting them with ice and deep snow, intense UV light, poor soil, a short growing season, and, of course, freezing temperatures. It's a nice place to visit, but you wouldn't want to live there. Still, I love it up there; it's beautiful, and it's home to one of my favorite trees, the Whitebark pine that in CA can only be found in the High Sierra.

The Whitebark Pine is a tough little tree with a stout trunk that can sometimes grow up to 65 feet tall. More often it's way shorter, with a twisted trunk rising out of gaps between granite boulders with a few wind-gnarled branches attached to it. Those branches, of course, are covered in needles and cones, but unlike many other pines, their cones don't fall to the ground, and their seeds have no wings for the breeze to carry afar. Instead, this tree relies on its very survival with a little help from a friend.

Enter the Clark's Nutcracker. This sleek gray bird with black wings and flashy, white tail feathers is a member of the crow family. It looks like a beefed-up scrub jay dressed in Raiders colors. When Capt. William Clark, of Lewis and Clark fame, first saw the bird's impressively long, black, sharp beak, he thought it was a woodpecker. On their return trip east, Clark realized the bird was not pecking wood with that beak but cracking cones to get at nuts, and its absolute favorites are the nuts of the Whitebark pine.

The pine's big fat nuts, (I know, an interesting way to put it) are big and fat and loaded with calories, protein, carbs and fats, to the point where they have the per-ounce nutritional value of butter! Chickadees, squirrels and even grizzly bears love to eat them; but it's the Clark Nutcracker the tree counts on.

The nutcracker uses its beak to pry, pound, and tear into

those cones and get the seeds. But here's the cool thing: the bird's sublingual pouch, nestled under its tongue, can hold up to 100 seeds. After harvesting them, the nutcracker caches them for a later meal. They scatter about 90,000 seeds per year in bunches around their territory, some of which may have been collected as far as 20 miles away.

Nutcrackers have what we all wish we had when we can't find our keys or phone: an amazing spatial memory. This memory enables them to relocate seeds they cached as long as nine months later, even under three feet of snow! But here's the good part, as you have probably figured out, they don't relocate 100% of them. The rest of the seeds can lay viable for years, cached underground in the perfect habitat, at the perfect depth, waiting for just the right conditions to sprout! It turns out this is pretty much the only way the Whitebark pine tree can reproduce, and it's been this way for millennia.

It's just one of the many examples of what scientists call co-evolved mutualism. But I like to think of it as the Whitebark Pine and the Clark's Nutcracker being evolutionary soulmates; it's good to have friends in high places.

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, titled "Ruminations of a Naturalist", can also be found on Substack.

OUT & ABOUT WITH THE BOOKSHELF WRITERS

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

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

CC Writers Conference: Updates Before 9/25/26 Conference

By Judy Salamacha

In 2011 Meagan Friberg had no idea that this September 25 and 26, she would be managing her second year as the director of the 42nd Cuesta College Central Coast Writers' Conference. Before the conference begins on Friday, she wanted to offer one last minute message for writers who still want to register. "It's not too late to attend this year's conference. If not Friday, join us all day on Saturday. Walk-ups are welcome and you can still register. Find all the details at cuesta.edu/writers-conference/index.html."

Meagan often says, "I had always wanted to attend the conference, but I felt I didn't belong because I had never published a book." Like many of the first-time attendees she believed the



Meagan Friberg returns as the director of the 42nd Cuesta College Central Coast Writers' Conference September 25 and 26. Photo submitted

conference was specifically for those that already had their name printed on the outside cover of a book and could rightfully claim they were published authors. Admittedly, that is one purpose for attending the conference. "If you have the desire, the idea, the time is now to invest two days in yourself to follow your dream."

"When I finally worked up the nerve to attend in 2011, I was greeted by others who wanted to write but needed that push." She noted everyone was welcoming. Presenters were more than willing to share their challenges and pathways to success either from the podium or while at lunch or during the conference's evening socials. "The volunteers and staff welcomed me with open arms. It was an amazing experience, and I was hooked!"

As director Meagan also wanted to announce two more bonus opportunities to all who attend the 2026 conference. She explained, "While attending the San Francisco Writers Conference I learned about AMA – Ask Me Anything." She brought the concept back to CCWC this year. Soon after registration opened for the 2026 conference, she coordinated monthly Zoom sessions with several of the upcoming presenters – all-inclusive with registration. The last session before the conference featured keynotes Jonathan Maberry and Christina Fairchild in the informal discussion.

Why attend a writer's conference? Just a couple golden nuggets of the pre-conference insights were offered to all those who attended the 9/11 AMA session:

Jonathan said, "We need to be the messengers of our brand. We are always asked what we write, but no one wants the entire story. You must learn how to tell them in a single sentence or they'll run away. Presenters are all approachable. Just ask. People in the biz want more successful people in the biz."

Christina offered, "A writers' conference challenges you to look at your work differently and shows you where you need to go next with your work-in-progress." Both agreed that writers and poets attend conferences both for the inspiration they can glean from other writers and to develop a network with fellow associates.

Another bonus opportunity offered for 2026 registrants will be the opportunity to receive direct feedback on your work-in-progress after the conference. Meagan has come up with a new way to provide this service that will continue to enhance your experience post conference. A number of 2026 presenters have agreed to participate after the conference to review your work. You attend their workshop, glean the information offered, take time after the conference to apply what you have learned, then send the requested number of pages formatted as directed to the selected presenter for review and schedule a Zoom meeting to receive valuable feedback from the professional you enjoyed meeting at CCWC.

During the AMA session both Jonathan and Christina agreed it was important to select the workshops that will help you achieve what you have decided you want to achieve and actively network with as many fellow writers as you can. While the workshops provide writing strategies and recommendations to succeed, networking is bonus time to discover insights from others who have already been there. Getting to know your fellow writers – your tribe – takes active listening and assertive networking.

So, before you meet-up with Director Meagan Friberg here's a bit of information I gathered so you won't need to ask her. She grew up in Bakersfield, attended Garces High School and Cal State Bakersfield before moving to San Luis Obispo to graduate from Cal Poly. She briefly lived in Santa Barbara but eventually returned to the Central Coast.

"She worked full-time as a sports reporter for Paso Robles Press before becoming a freelance writer for a variety of publications including Edible SLO, SLO County Visitors Guide, Paso

Out & About Continued on page 14

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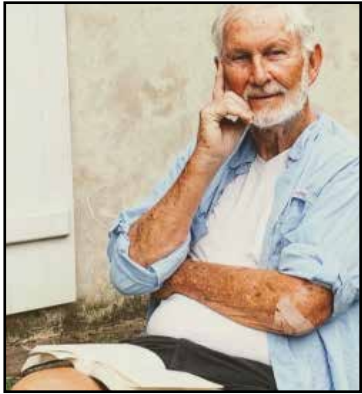
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Obituaries

Daniel Kelly McCabe
1942 - 2026



Daniel Kelly McCabe, a man of boundless humor, love, and service, passed away peacefully on August 22, 2026, surrounded by family and friends after a long and adventurous life.

Born on January 24, 1942, in Neenah Menasha, Wisconsin, Dan's life was a testament to resilience, passion, and unwavering dedication to those he loved. Dan was the son of Marcella (Marie) and Edward McCabe, both of whom predeceased him, along with his brothers Patrick and Mike, and sister Mary. He is survived by his devoted wife of 40 years, Cynthia Roberts McCabe, his cherished children, son Kean Evans (Siobhan) and daughter Molly Kelly, of whom he was very proud, and his beloved grandchildren, Isla, and Saoirse, who brought delight to his life.

After graduating from Menasha High School in Wisconsin, Dan moved to California to try out West Coast life and to be near his brothers. He joined the US Army from 1964-1966 and was stationed in Ansbach, Germany. After two years he took a European discharge, and he explored the continent with curiosity and adventure during a year-long hitchhiking journey, which set the course for lifelong travel.

Back in California he pursued higher education with determination, earning his bachelor's degree in international marketing from Long Beach State and later in life, a Master of Social Work from Fresno State University.

His experience living abroad ignited a lifelong love for Europe. Leading his family on a hike from Coast to Coast in England, was the first of many epic Euro adventures, including walking the Camino towards Santiago with Cynthia, starting first in Porto, Portugal to Finesterre and then again starting in Munich, Germany and walking to Cahors, France in five stages. He and Cynthia biked the Canal du Midi and the Canal de la Robine and Vélo Loire in France and at age 80 he cycled the Ring of Kerry in Ireland. These trips were such highlights for him, and he was excited to share them with his family.

Dan's professional life was as varied and vibrant as his personality. He began his career as a house painter in Los Angeles, eventually transitioning to a role as a Psychiatric Technician at Atascadero State Hospital which thankfully brought him to the Central Coast where he met Cynthia. His dedication to helping others led him back to university to pursue a master's degree, after which he served the hospital for 20 more years.

Retirement for Dan was merely the beginning of another chapter, as he became a Marriage and Family Life Consultant for the US Military, traveling the world to support troops and their families. This job was the highlight of his career as helping young men and women serving our country filled his heart with compassion and pride.

Dan's passions extended far beyond his professional life. An ardent lover of soccer, which began while watching his children play, he played the game until the age of 80 with the lovely community of soccer players in Los Osos. At 80 years of age, he discovered a new passion for golf. His weekly games with friends were a source of joy, especially when he won a few dollars for "best hole." A connoisseur of culinary arts, Dan delighted in watching cooking channels, reveling especially in the diverse flavors of Asian and Southeast Asian cuisine, and his famous and overflowing condiment drawer was a testament to his adventurous palate.

Known for his offbeat sense of humor, Dan's quick wit and comedic timing were a hallmark of his interactions, leaving both friends and strangers with smiles and laughter. His favorite sayings, "be excellent to each other" and "so, what do you think of me so far?" were reflections of his playful spirit and his genuine interest in connecting with others on a personal and lighthearted level.

A celebration of Dan's life will be held on October 16, at 5 p.m. at The Red Barn, 2180 Palisades Ave., Los Osos. In lieu of flowers or other gifts, the family kindly requests donations be made in honor of Dan's love for the game of soccer and youth in

Out & About From page 13

Robles Daily News, A-town Daily News, and Paso Magazine. She always dreamed of traveling the states in an RV so, once her children were grown and her husband retired, they explored the states and volunteered at various historical sites. After the pandemic, they followed some of their children to Washington and now live on the Washington Coast to be near them.

Meagan said, "I love staying connected to the many creative people I have met and worked with over the years working as a volunteer and now the director of CCWC. It keeps me motivated. I still take time to do a few freelance articles, and work on my two 'works in progress' — both YA novels. Directing the Central Coast Writers Conference, however, is truly a passion project. I know the past directors agree with me since they are still offering their advice and participation in a variety of ways."

Meagan also felt it was important to recognize Cuesta College for their dedication producing the conference the last 42 years. "Cuesta College and the Community Programs staff led by Wes Martin need a huge applause for hosting and sponsoring this event annually. In fact, the Cuesta College Foundation earmarked scholarships for this year's event. I appreciate their continued full support."

our community. Donations to the South Bay Soccer Association (SBSA) to aid in scholarships for those not able to afford the costs associated with playing may be made as follows: by Venmo @SB-SALosOsos1 or by check to: South Bay Soccer Association, P.O. Box 6432, Los Osos, CA 93402. Add the name Daniel McCabe to the memo line.

The McCabe family extends their deepest gratitude to the golf and soccer group, and the many devoted friends and caregivers who surrounded Dan and family with love and support during his final months. Forever changed, forever grateful, we all carry his memory in our hearts and continue to be inspired by his legacy of service and playfulness.

Donna Eilene Ramos
1936 - 2026



Surrounded by her adoring family, Donna Ramos danced her way through the gates of Heaven on September 9, 2026; she was 90.

Born May 23, 1936 in Goleta, CA, Donna spent her childhood in Bakersfield, CA, with her parents, Walter Shaw and Helen (Henderson) Shaw, and siblings, Jackie, Walter, Donald and Robert, graduating from East Bakersfield High School in 1954. Three years later, in 1957, she married Gerald H. Ramos and together, they would spend their lives raising a family and embedding themselves in the community of Morro Bay, including her 31-year career at the City.

A deeply caring person known for her unbridled spirit, witty sense of humor, and a hug that could make anything better, Donna was love in action. She embodied authenticity and creativity; she painted, gardened, played music and danced; and she saw the beauty in everything — and in doing so, became a beacon of light for those around her finding their own way. She placed her family and friends at the center of her life, always encouraging them to explore their own creativity and find their authentic voice. She was the grandma in the stands, always making it clear which grandchild was hers. She never met a stranger, and anyone in her sphere became an honorary family member.

To her family, Donna was the hub, the safe place, and where you were loved for exactly who you were. She will be deeply missed, but her beautiful soul will carry on through her children; Terri Lewis (Jimmy) and Joe Ramos (Paige); grandchildren; Brooke (Jason), Cameron (Oliver), Ciara (Chris), Hunter, Tia (Nicky) and Joseph (Riley); and, great-grandchildren; Pierson, Deven, Copeland, Rylee, Eames, Greyson, Beckham, Alden and Cara.

The family will gather for a private celebration of life. Any charitable donations would be greatly appreciated by St. Jude.

Community

Cayucos Rotary Raises
\$1,700 for Harvest Food
Bag Program



Community members enjoyed the Cayucos Rotary Labor Day Pancake Breakfast that raised \$1,700 for the Harvest Food Bag Program. Photo submitted

A long-standing Cayucos tradition continues to give back. The Rotary Club of Cayucos welcomed 158 community members to its annual Labor Day Pancake Breakfast, raising \$1,700 in donations for the Harvest Food Bag Program through Cayucos Community Church.

The annual breakfast is about more than pancakes; It is a tradition of neighbors coming together to support neighbors and an example of Cayucos Rotary's commitment to ensuring funds raised through its community events make a meaningful difference locally.

"Rotary is about service, but in a small community like Cayucos, it is also about being part of the fabric of the community," said Cayucos Rotary President Jen Gaviola. "The Pancake Breakfast showed once again what can happen when our community comes together. We are incredibly grateful to everyone who joined us, volunteered, and donated so generously."

The Harvest Food Bag Program helps provide food to local children and families in need. The \$1,700 raised at this year's breakfast will go directly toward supporting the program and its work in the community.

Cayucos Rotary extends a special thank-you to Cayucos Community Church for generously providing the facility and helping make the annual breakfast possible.

The club also recognizes Duckie's(Cayucos)/Dorn's (Morro Bay) Restaurants for its generous donation of the pancake mix, sausage, and fruit served at the breakfast. Their support allowed community donations to have an even greater impact for the Harvest Food Bag Program.

Cayucos Rotary is also grateful to Morro Bay Rotarians Dan and Linda Costly for volunteering their time and helping make the morning a success. Their participation reflected the spirit of Rotary and the strength of neighboring clubs working together in service.

"What makes the Pancake Breakfast so special is that it combines fellowship with a direct benefit to local families," Gaviola said. "People come together, share breakfast, reconnect with neighbors and friends, and know that their donations are going right back into helping our community."

Throughout the year, Cayucos Rotary continues this tra-

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Community

dition of service by supporting local students and educational programs, scholarships and youth activities, veterans, families in need, community organizations, and other charitable causes.

For generations, Cayucos has been a community where neighbors step up for neighbors. Through traditions like the annual Pancake Breakfast, Cayucos Rotary is proud to help carry that spirit forward.

“Cayucos may be a small town, but it has an incredibly big heart,” Gaviola said. “We are proud to continue this tradition and grateful to every person and organization that helps us turn community support into community impact. We really are better together.”

Giant Birds Soar Together in Cal Poly Universities Rose Float Design



A rendering of the planned “Soaring as One” float that Cal Poly Pomona and Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo will enter in the 2027 Rose Parade.

Cal Poly Universities’ 78th Rose Parade float, “Soaring as One,” depicts a vibrant flock of flying and usually flightless birds soaring together through a colorful, sunset sky, celebrating the Tournament of Roses’ Parade theme of “Welcome” by sharing a story of inclusivity, acceptance and belonging.

The only student-designed and student-built float in the Rose Parade, “Soaring as One” is a joint effort between California State University students at Cal Poly Pomona and Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, who collaborate on all aspects of the float despite being separated by 250 miles.

A Canada goose, with a 16-foot wingspan, leads the signature V-formation, which includes a mallard duck, nene goose and great blue heron who have welcomed a few of their usually earth-bound friends to experience the flight. A kiwi bird flying a hang glider. A blimp provides a perch for a peacock and Rhode Island red chicken, and a set of prosthetic wings lift a jungle fowl high above the clouds.”

“Soaring as One” was chosen to capture the uplifting feeling

of belonging and being included” says Cal Poly student and design chair, Sarah Vali. “With their newfound ability, the birds are embraced as one flock as they learn to fly alongside the others.”

The Cal Poly Universities have some major challenges this time around including an update to the hydraulic system to allow more control and precision in the movement of individual elements, seamlessly concealing a mechanism to lift and lower the 2,000-pound blimp, and growing some of the float’s flowers and plants on each campus.

“We’re growing plants we have never tried to grow on campus before, including my personal favorite, celosia” says Natalie Cano, the Cal Poly Pomona decorations chair. Celosia and gomphrena are one example of the roughly 42,000 flowers estimated on the float to emulate the fluffy and feathery look that defines the birds. Additionally, dianthus, chrysanthemums, as well as other

large leaves will mimic the patchwork-feel of the blimp’s fabric, as if constructed by the birds themselves.

“Our program has always been about inclusivity and finding a place for students to feel as though they belong,” says president of the Cal Poly team, Bennett Parisi. “We have around 60 student leaders and hundreds more who take responsibility for building and designing every mechanical animation, welding structural supports, shaping the elements, testing decorative materials and operating the float throughout the year and during the parade itself.”

Since the two universities began their collaboration on entries for the Rose Parade float in 1949, the students have garnered 63 awards, including winning the Sweepstakes Award at the 2026 Rose Parade for their “Jungle Jumpstart” float.

Class of 1976 Celebrates 50th Reunion



The Class of 1976 celebrated its 50th class reunion on September 12 at the Eagles Lodge in Morro Bay. The celebration brought together 73 classmates and 40 guests for an evening of memories, friendship and fun. The Santa Cruz Family Band entertained the crowd with hit music from the 1970s.

Attendees enjoyed a delicious dinner from Olive Garden while catching up with old friends and celebrating five decades since graduation.

The festivities continued the following day with a reunion picnic at Del Mar Park. Photo by Diane Strang

COLLEGETOWN

By Michael Walker



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Community

International Festival in Los Osos

Photos by Dean Sullivan

The annual International festival fundraiser took place at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church in Los Osos on Sunday. The event offered food vendors featuring diverse global dishes, including Mexican, Peruvian, Filipino favorites, and international sweets. There was live music, a children's dance by Paso A Pasito, and other activities.



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Letters
To
The Editor



Police Blotter Cheers

I would like to echo the words of Pete Swanberg of Modesto (Vol 18, Issue 18), who complimented the Police Blotter writer. We were visiting from Fresno and the San Francisco Bay Area. I cut out the blotter section and kept it on the dining room table so the five of us could each read from it and laugh. I never thought I would be so entertained by what is normally a dull section.

Whoever the writer is, maybe they have a future as a standup comedian in your area — and beyond?

Thanks for employing this writer and for making the newspaper a special part of our trip. I kept two copies (after scouring a few stores to find extra newspapers) and I will mail them to friends.

Dianne Jacob
San Leandro, CA

Setting the Record
Straight on a
Tough Decision

My job as a council member is to balance risk with fiscal responsibility on behalf of this community in the decision-making process. I don't have the luxury of basing decisions on desires. That's not what you want from an elected. It makes many of the decisions brought before us tough. Therefore, understanding the context of a vote is as important as casting it.

For the record, I voted "no" on the purchase of the Morro Bay Elementary School. A vote I based on the findings staff presented and rooted in a history of decision-making in our city.

The article published on September 10 was correct that

Council voted to move forward with the purchase of the elementary school and that a due diligence report presented identified a series of findings organized around the "suitability" of the purchase.

From my perspective, the report's findings were revealing and left me with grave concerns including cost and balance considerations. Not just the initial cost of purchase, but the costs moving forward based on one singular working scenario of moving city hall into the school house and developing housing. A scenario that has not been voted on nor have other options been presented publicly.

Given this scenario, I believe we will need to collectively affirm the housing development and have a concrete funding plan in place in order to offset the future costs. As stated in the report, we would need between 100-200 units to get close to satisfying the funding gap. The fewer the houses means the bigger the gap. Moreover, we will likely need to offload additional surplus land to avoid dipping into our reserves. Furthermore, affirming housing could mean a loss of green space. I'm not sure our community can reach consensus on this.

Regardless of my vote, I remain optimistic. I want to have faith in this staff, this council and those to come, and in this community even when there's differing opinions. There's a lot of work to do now that we made the decision. I encourage every citizen to watch or attend council meetings as we will be looking at the funding, site options, and how this item works in with other priorities in future goal setting.

Please feel free to contact me at cedwards@morrobayca.gov
Council Member Cyndee Edwards
Morro Bay

Cheers for Art in
the Park

Wow, what a wonderful Art in the Park Labor Day weekend!

I want to give a very special and heartfelt thank you to all of the amazing musicians who shared their time and talent with us at our two music venues. I honestly can't tell you how much I appreciated having you there. Your music brought such a wonderful energy to the park and made the weekend feel alive.

I personally loved being able to stop, listen, and enjoy the incredible talent we have right here in Morro Bay. You didn't just

provide music; you helped create the atmosphere and the memories that made this weekend so special.

The vendors were happy, our visitors were enjoying themselves, and our volunteers had a great time. But for me, one of the best parts was seeing our community come together around the music, the art, and each other.

To all of you musicians, thank you for making the weekend so much fun. I loved hearing you play, and I hope you had as much fun as we did listening to you. You guys were terrific!

And a special thank you to Ray [Riordan] for organizing and scheduling all of the musicians and filling the weekend with such great sound. Ray, you made it look easy, but I know there was a lot of work behind the scenes to make it all come together. We really appreciate you!

We so hope you'll join us again in 2027. You are now part of the Art in the Park community, and it just wouldn't be the same without you.

Kathleen Heil
Morro Bay Art Association

Prepare to Vote Now

The November 3 election is fast approaching. Now is the time to find out who is on your ballot and where they stand on the issues. The League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County is joining with community sponsors to moderate candidate forums throughout the county. Candidate forums provide the public with an opportunity to hear from the candidates and ask them questions.

Visit slovote.gov to check your registration status, register to vote, or change your address.

The League of Women Voters reminds voters that elections in California are secure. To make sure your ballot is counted, mail or drop it off before October 30.

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 sure you are registered and cast your ballot with confidence that your vote will be counted.

Janice Langley, Joanne Schultz, Wendy Brown
League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County

Vote Galvan for School
Board of Trustees

I don't usually like to write about politics, but this one is personal for me!

Michael Glavan is my partner in life, and I've had a front row seat to all the work, the conversations, and the thought he's put into running for San Luis Coastal Unified School District Board of Trustees - Trustee Area 2.

What you see publicly is only part of it. Behind the scenes, he's constantly listening to parents, teachers, school staff, and community members trying to understand what's working, what's not working, and where we can do better for all our kids. He genuinely believes strong schools come from strong partnerships between families, educators, support staff, and the community; and I've watched him put that into practice every single day!

He cares deeply about transparency, open communication, and making sure parents feel heard and included. He talks a lot about supporting teachers, improving trust in district leadership, and keeping the focus where it belongs, on all our students and their success!

I know I'm biased, but I also know his character. He shows up, he listens, and he follows through. Our schools matter to him not just as a candidate, but as someone who is invested in this community long-term.

If you're starting to look into school board candidates for the November election, I hope you'll take a few minutes to learn more about him and what he stands for glavanforschools.com

Brandon Leibowitz-Glavan
Los Osos

Vote Marilyn Rodger
for School Board
of Trustees

School Board elections used to be straightforward enough. Just select a candidate that had the will and experience to improve our schools and keep them current in this changing world. Now, national political and/or religious factions are targeting school board elections. Their aim is to control boards and thereby control the learning agenda. Look around the world to see countries where political philosophy or religion dominates the schools. Not good, and not what we are in this country. Fortunately, I can recommend a good candidate for the San Luis Coastal Unified School District trustee area 1 for the upcoming November election, Marilyn Rodger, whose only aim is to stick up for what's best for the children. She's getting my vote and I hope yours too.

Lynda Merrill
Morro Bay





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News

Adopt a Boat This Weekend



A limited number of Cuesta Inlet boats are now looking for new owners. Their first boat cleanup has cleared the way for a handful of boats that are ready for their next adventure.

The communities of Morro Bay, Los Osos, Cayucos and Cambria, and the Integrated Waste Management Authority and Waste Connections are helping to redistribute landfill-bound items through a community-wide treasure hunt!

Trash to Treasure is a free, interactive map where residents can post items they no longer want (“treasure”), and treasure hunters can follow the map to retrieve them! See the map at iwma.com/trash-to-treasure.

Starting Friday, September 25, visit the Trash to Treasure map to see the available boats. Then from Saturday morning, September 26 at 7 a.m. to Sunday evening, September 27, folks may come pick up boats at the designated location. First come, first served.

Give a boat a second life. Give yourself a new adventure. And help keep a good boat out of the landfill.

As a reminder, newly adopted boats may be launched from Cuesta Inlet at any time but may not be stored at the Inlet until all phases of their boat cleanup are complete sometime in 2027.

In Print & On Line



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HISTORICAL SOCIETY of MORRO BAY

Building Toward World War II

President Roosevelt gave us the common story of the start of World War II with his “Day of Infamy” speech the day after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The attack was a surprise when it happened (though the degree of surprise is still debated). We had been preparing for war in the Pacific for a long time, so Pearl Harbor was not a surprise in the broadest strategic sense.

The industrialization and militarization of Japan during the Meiji Restoration beginning 1868, and its 1905 victory in the Russo-Japanese War announced the rise of an aggressive force in Asia. American military planners began developing strategic plans for conducting a war against Japan in 1924 and revised them many times, as late as 1938.

The plans included describing the military resources needed to defend the West Coast and to support a war in the Pacific. During that time-period the planners assumed that the war would consist of a deadly slog hopping from island to island, culminating in a decisive naval battle. The deadly slog happened, although technology rendered the events of the war differently, beginning at Pearl Harbor. Air power, not battleships, created the Japanese success in Hawaii.

San Luis Obispo County was part of the buildup on the West Coast. Camp Merriam, later called Camp San Luis Obispo, was established in 1928 at its current location as the first home of the California Army National Guard. The US Army took over the Camp in 1940, modifying it extensively to accommodate a training mission. Eventually, it could host 10,000 trainees at a time.

The Camp expanded to almost 15,000 acres, including 8,810 acres for the Baywood Park Training Area that was used for maneuvering and live fire training. Unexpended ammunition was a concern that the Army Corps of Engineers addressed several times and warnings are still in place even though the threat is low.

Camp San Luis Obispo facilities have changed a lot since the end of WW II and the Korean War, but they are still used. The US Army returned the base to the California National Guard in 1965 when it included about 5,800 acres. The re-



maining land was given to public uses (like Cuesta College) or returned to its private owners.

An even larger base was built in 1940 as Camp Roberts, named after WWI Medal of Honor recipient Corporal Harold W Roberts. Located at the northern boundary of SLO County on both sides of the Salinas River, this huge base trained up to 30,000 soldiers at a time or a total of about 436,000 during the war. Camp Roberts has been run by the California Army National Guard since 1971 and hosts the Camp Roberts Historical Museum.

Preparation for the war also included the Navy Section Base in Morro Bay that was dedicated on November 16, 1941, just 3 weeks before Pearl Harbor. Using fill from the estuary, the Navy built new land in the estuary where about 45,000 soldiers were trained for amphibious assault in 1944-45. They were preparing for the island-hopping war that was envisioned in plans 20 years old.

On November 7, the Military Officers Association of America will sponsor an even to commemorate the 85th anniversary of the dedication of the Navy Section Base. This public event will be saturated with the history of the war on the Central Coast. Sign up for emails at historicalmorrobay.org to get updates.

Photo source: spl.usace.army.org. If you have a story or photo to share about the history of Estero Bay, contact info@historicalmorrobay.org.



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June 15 - Launch! Tour of the museum, see our new exhibits! Build your own boat or submersible with different materials.

June 22 - Navigation, Lighthouses, and more!

June 29 - Create a Weather Station - A fun STEM project!

July 13 - Sea Life! Octopuses and Squids, and more! **Plus:** **Special visit from the Central Coast Aquarium on Tuesday, July 14!**

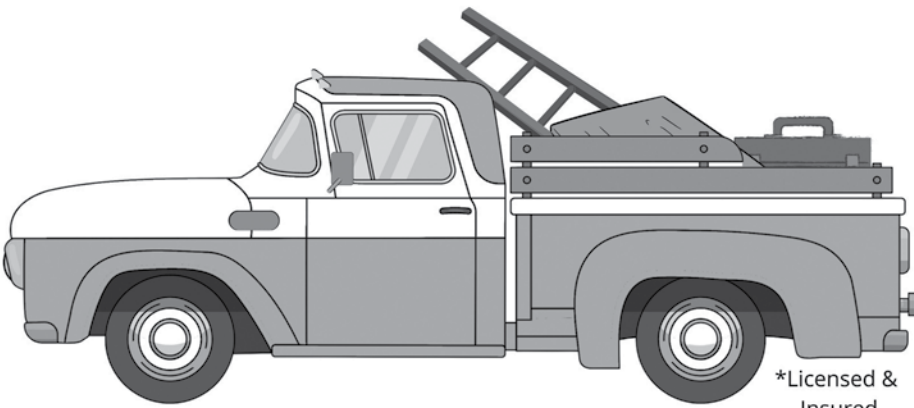
July 20 - Roots of our maritime history and the Salinan Tribe

July 27- Maritime Skills - Knot tying, and more!

August 3 - Morro Bay Estuary Program!

August 11 - Sea Shanties Workshop / Tall Tales of the Sea

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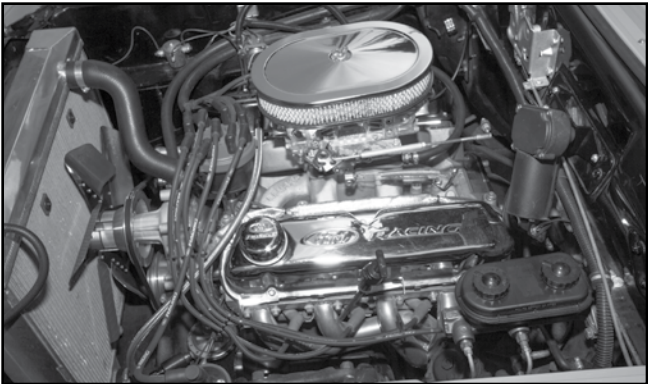
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Photos by Dean Sullivan

Local car enthusiasts were on display for Gearwood in front of Beerwood in Baywood showing off vintage cars and motorcycles in memory of Michele Fellows, of Los Osos.

“She had this incredible way of lighting up a car show, not just because she loved the cars, but because she loved the people, the energy, the stories behind every vehicle, and the food,” organizers said. “You could feel that same energy here today with over 60 vehicles. Every revving engine, every handshake, every smile, & every pint of beer, you could feel Michele celebrating the gathering.”



First Save Cuesta Inlet Clean-up Day a Success!

In less than three hours, more than 30 Save Cuesta Inlet volunteers filled two dumpsters with 31 boats and nine catamarans, all of which were derelict and abandoned vessels. They also assisted owners and moved 12 of their boats off of the inlet, and even helped one of the neighbors move their fence.

“This was a huge undertaking led by our Boats Committee, who in the past year have made thousands of phone calls to boat owners, did aerial footage and mapping, documented and know every single boat (750, now 698), and have done so much more work behind the scenes,” SCI said.

ECOSLO also brought an additional 30 volunteers who collected more than 200 lbs of trash, including broken boat pieces, disintegrated oars, rebar, plastic bags, misc plastic, and more.

SCI is not done yet! This was the first of many clean-ups with the next one tentatively planned for October.



Morro Bay Invitational From page 10

SLOHS took the team title with 48 points and McFarland was second with 72. Highland was third (73), Coalinga fourth (149) and Coast Union was sixth with 191. Morro Bay took eighth with 198.

In the Girls Small School JV race, Lompoc’s Valentina Diaz was first in 20:12.01 with Kaysie Wong of Fowler second in 20:56.5.

Coast Union’s Natalie Edwards finished ninth in 21:35.9, and her teammate, Ava Edmonds was 30th in 23:55.4. Morro Bay High’s Megan Phipps was 98th.

In team scoring McFarland scored just 28 points to win. The lowest possible score in cross country is 15 (finishing 1-2-3-4-5). Highland took second with 65 and SLOHS was third with 72.

The meet also had 1.64-mile boys and girls middle school races with kids from Los Osos and Laguna Middle Schools participating.

The boys race had 110 runners and saw two runners from Kastner Intermediate go 1-2 as Bodie Ellard was first in 9:04.6 and David Guzman second in 9:37.7.

Laguna MS’ Nicholas Uribe was fourth in 10:06.9. LOMS’ Ian Clansy was 20th in 11:04.1 with Laguna’s Duncan Brown close behind in 21st at 10:06.7.

Miles Casey of LOMS was 41st in 11:48.7

In the Girl’s Middle School Race Kastner took the top four spots with Sophia Owens first, Madison Crandall second, Kunz Liv third and Aria Guerrero fourth.

LOMS’ Sierra Pascual was fifth (11:22.8), spoiling Kastner’s shot at a sweep.

But Kastner’s Faith Vargas was fifth, so the school from Fresno almost scored the extremely-rare sweep, taking five of the Top-6 spots.

Other high finishers included Laguna’s Avery Laurie in 12th and Magnolia Sullivan in 14th.

Cat Noir CC

The Snitch

The human is coming to you live from the grocery store. My life is so fascinating, I spend my day off getting food cat supplies.

Cell phones rings

Human: Hello.

Voice: Meo ... I mean bark ... hi

Human: hi

Voice: I was waking by your house while you are out shirking your duties, and I have never seen so many cats. The music is blaring, and I heard that there are cats under the bed, THE SPACE OF SAFETY.

Human: Did you call the police?

Voice: No, the siren might scare ... someone. Oh, and they filled the bath tub with all different kinds of kibble. It is a disgrace. There is this big one who thinks he is in charge.



There is also a totally weird one with all kinds of colors, stripes, spots and a pink noes. The things she said to me ...

Human: Who is this?

Voice: I can’t tell you that, but it is not Virgil!

Human: I’m walking in the gate now! Follow CatNoirCC on Facebook and Instagram for daily posts.



Kristin Howland, executive director of Pacific Wildlife Care, gives a speech after her team won the grand prize of a Land Rover Defender 130 SUV and \$30,000. Photo submitted

work we do.”

The new 10-acre site will include a main building with treatment areas and staff/volunteer spaces, specialized animal enclosures, pools, and flight aviaries and other necessary site improvements and solar power infrastructure.

Key highlights include a centralized location in San Luis Obispo County allowing for quicker response times and increased accessibility, a floor plan that minimizes occurrence of human interaction and imprinting on wildlife for best chances of successful release after care, the ability to adequately separate prey and predator species to minimize stress for best chances of rehabilitation, and an increased capacity and updated facilities improve operational efficiency and create safer working conditions for staff and volunteers.

Construction is expected to be complete by the end of 2026. “Construction continues to move forward, and we remain on track to complete the new Wildlife Rehabilitation Center later this year,” Howland said in a previous interview. “It’s an exciting milestone for our organization as we prepare to transition into a state-of-the-art facility that will significantly expand our ability to care for injured and orphaned wildlife while serving our community for decades to come.”

Founded in 1984, Pacific Wildlife Care, the only licensed wildlife rehabilitation organization in the county, provides year-round rehabilitation for injured, orphaned and sick wildlife. In 2025, PWC cared for a record 3,144 wild animals and responded to more than 6,100 wildlife-related calls through its hotline. The organization is supported by professional staff and hundreds of dedicated volunteers who contribute tens of thousands of hours each year.

The non-profit also receives support from community members who are on the lookout for and report injured animals. With fall rapidly approaching, Howland offered some things we all can do to help.

“As fall approaches and nights become longer, community members can help protect local wildlife by driving carefully, making windows safer for birds, and keeping trash and fishing line out of the environment,” Howland said. “This is also a season when we see more seabirds on local beaches. If you see a beached seabird that appears to need help, give us a call. Small changes that make your home, yard and neighborhood more wildlife-friendly can go a long way.”

Anyone who finds an injured or orphaned wild animal in San Luis Obispo County can call the Pacific Wildlife Care hotline at 805-543-WILD (9453) for guidance. PWC encourages the public to call before attempting to care for wildlife, as the appropriate response can vary considerably by species and situation.

Over the last four decades, PWC has grown from a small group of dedicated home rehabilitators into a successful non-profit organization with a well-equipped rehabilitation center, a full-time wildlife veterinarian, a small paid staff, and nearly 200 volunteers.

Most of the animals PCW treats are impacted by human activity: tree trimming that disrupts nests, attacks by domestic pets, vehicle collisions that leave young animals orphaned, well-meaning but improper care, and more. In many cases, these animals are suffering because of human actions, not natural causes, the PCW website says.



U.S. News & World Report named Morro Bay High among the Top 10% in its Best High Schools rankings. Photo shows the award mounted on the wall in the school admin building. Photo by Neil Farrell

ing. The national average, he said, is eight to 10-years experience. “People have vested their careers here at Morro Bay.” And yet, “We have people with enough energy to try different things and the experience to know what works.”

He added that the kids’ families are extremely supportive of the school and collaborative with “what’s going on at this campus.”

He notes a Back to School Night they held before school started up this year was standing room only in the school theater, which easily seats 300.

“The teachers said there’s never been that many before,” Franklin said.

He’s also met with the mayor, police chief and school resource officer, as well as local business leaders and all expressed support and interest in the school.

“I want to make sure the school does stuff for the community,” he explained, talking about a desire to have the kids do lasting community projects.

Vice Principal Will Wallace explained the methods the online magazine used to rate the schools and develop the rankings. It starts with so-called Advanced Placement or AP classes. These are advanced learning curriculums that often translate into actual college credits.

It involves a lot of testing, Wallace said, “AP testing.” Any student at the school can sign up for the variety of AP classes they offer. “It’s our view that the kids get a lot of access to those classes,” Wallace said. It starts freshman year with an individual meeting with he and the other V.P. Ben Davis, who met with every incoming freshman before school started.

“We try to grab as many kids as possible into those AP classes,” Wallace said. AP classes are challenging and call for a lot of dedication to get through them, especially for teenagers who might have a wide variety of interests. But Wallace said it hasn’t led to a drop in any meaningful measure of success. “We tripled the number of kids in AP classes and the success and pass rate has risen.”

A kid doesn’t just sit in an AP class they have to pass a test too for the credits to count. These are super hard classes, Wallace explained and they try to get all the kids to take the AP test, which is voluntary.

And, “Anyone can take an AP class,” Franklin explained. They aren’t just for upper classmen.

Seems the kids at MBHS want the challenge. Franklin said there are more students in the AP history class than the regular history class. AP history starts at the beginnings of civilization itself and works forward to modern time, much as a History of Western Civilization class in college would do.

How does the magazine’s ranking work? According to the website: “The U.S. News Best High Schools rankings include data on more than 27,000 public high schools in 50 states and the District of Columbia.

“Nearly 18,000 schools were ranked on six factors based on their performance on state assessments and how well they prepare students for college.”

The best schools had to earn it. “The highest-ranked U.S. public schools,” the magazine said, “are those whose students demonstrated outstanding outcomes above expectations in math, reading and science state assessments, earned qualifying scores

on an array of college-level exams, and graduated in high proportions.”

- Scoring is as follows:
- 30% college readiness. College readiness index is measured by the proportion of a school’s 12th graders who took and earned a qualifying score on the Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate [IB] exams.
 - 10% college curriculum breadth. Calculated among a school’s 2023-2024 12th graders from the percentage who took and the percentage who earned qualifying scores on multiple AP or IB exams.
 - 20% state assessment proficiency. Scoring on state standardized tests measuring student proficiency in subjects related to math, reading and science.
 - 20% state assessment performance. This is derived from math, reading and science state assessments.
 - 10% underserved student performance. Learning outcomes among Black, Hispanic and low-income students.
 - 10% graduation rate. Measured as the proportion of students who were freshmen in the 2020-21 school year vs. percentage who graduated in 4 years (2024).

A large part of Morro Bay High’s success has come from peer pressure but not the stereotypical negative peer pressure that leads kids astray.

V.P Ben Davis said typically a student starts with AP classes as a sophomore, 10th grade. “That’s when they jump up to AP classes,” he said. This year they had more than 100 kids ask for AP classes and “They’re doing it because of their peers, they’re moving with the herd.”

The students have high expectations of each other. Wallace said they have another program — AVID or Advancement Via Individual Determination — which is for kids whose parents didn’t go to college. That program identifies these kids and steers them towards classes that will lead to college, Wallace explained.

Davis added, “We take real good care of these kids and it’s like a tsunami that’s taken over the campus.”

A few years ago the school was steering towards a so-called STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) curriculum, even spending some \$6 million on a STEAM lab during the Measure D upgrades. How does STEAM fit in with this AP class focused award?

Davis said STEAM is still a focus at the school, noting the great things the kids are doing in their refurbished automotive shop.

“You’re changing people’s generational identities,” Davis said. One extra step has been introduction of internships in the STEAM curriculum. With courses in auto and engineering, he said, you enroll in the class and look for an internship. “These are usually seniors.”

As an intern, a student gets on-the-job learning and training, to compliment their classroom work. And if the internship presents something they aren’t ready for, they can ask their teachers for help in school.

It’s a brand new aspect to the school, Davis said. And as the programs become more defined they can reach more students.

Franklin said if you’re looking for a good place to send your child to high school, Morro Bay is about as good as you’ll find. “You’ll get an education that rivals the Top 10 percent in the country. If you come here, your kid is going to be supported.”

Davis added that the excellence shows up in other ways too. “You can see it appear in other places,” Davis said. “Our suspension rate was less than 1% last year. The kids treat this place differently.”

The latest award comes on top of the school also being named a Distinguished School some time ago.

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The Morro Bay National Estuary’s Mutts for the Bay program provides thirty-six containers of bags for dog waste for easy public use in Los Osos and Morro Bay.

Back in the 1980s local scientist Dava Paradies was the first president of the Friends of the Estuary at Morro Bay. The Friends became aware of a new federal program that would help create national recognition and potential funding to maintain continued pristine waterways in our area. They applied to the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) to be federally recognized as a National Estuary Network. It took a second application and the group’s diligence was rewarded. One could say the Estero Bay was at the right place at the right time with the right volunteers! The EPA estuary recognition program would close forevermore after the second year to future applicants. For the last 30 years Morro Bay has had an interactive program with partial funding helping it keep our waterways environmentally protected.

Recently I met with Forest Lurz, the program’s education & outreach coordinator at MBNEP’s office and public display area upstairs in Morro Bay at 601 Embarcadero Suite 11. He announced that on Monday, October 12 at the Morro Bay Theater their organization is collaborating with the Morro Bay Maritime Museum to tell the original MBNEP story how these forward-thinking “Friends” essentially protected and saved our Estero Bay waterways. This documentary film, “Of Marshes and Morro,” was directed and co-written by Simo and Carol Nylander with additional filming provided by Andy Kulikowski and Tom Wilmer, who narrates the story. Doors open at 5 p.m., film begins at 5:30 and is a fundraiser for the Morro Bay Maritime Museum. The donation is \$15.

Note: A second film will be shown called “Speara” about Mitsuki, a woman who left Japan at 16 and by age 26 became a world champion spear fisherwoman while working as a chef and living in California. The film directed by Florian Baron has stunning underwater action photography.

Forest plans to have a table display of the many programs currently operated by the MBNEP. He explained, “Every three years we are required to assess our programs. We will have free brochures of the State of the Bay 2026 available. Recently, we presented to the Morro Bay City Council the outcome of our



Members of the Morro Bay National Estuary Program conduct sediment monitoring.

assessment.” The full color brochure pictures staff and volunteers in recognizable locations throughout our estuary. Discover the answers to the following questions: Is water in the creeks and bay clean enough for aquatic life? Does Morro Bay support healthy eelgrass beds? Is Morro Bay safe for swimming? Is the bay clean enough to support commercial shellfish farming? What about the population of steelhead? How stable is our land for our bird population? How are the bay and creeks impacted by accelerated sedimentation?

And based on weather warnings about this coming winter’s storms, we all should be concerned and relieved that Morro Bay has a strong MBNEP staff and Friends group in place to monitor and create solutions if predictions for an El Nino winter cause havoc.

MBNEP has several ongoing programs we all should investigate, possibly volunteer time, or maybe consider one of the programs in your annual giving support. It’s all about sustaining our pristine waterways. Forest said, “We are one of the smallest NEPs, but have been able to support one of the largest staffs and volunteer corps focused monitoring our environment daily. We are not a federal agency, so we can’t regulate so we depend on our volunteers for support.”

Many of the volunteers are members of other organizations MBNEP partners with. For example, besides participating in the upcoming film presentations at the Bay Theater, Forest participated in a full day of interactive programs geared to teach elementary school children about caring for the estuary at this summer’s Morro Bay Maritime Museum’s summer STEM sessions. Forest will also be at MBMM’s upcoming Family Fun Day on Sunday, October 25.

Forest and other staff members are available to do presentations and offer field trips on land and boat tours on the bay. For example, if your group is interested in the history and geology of Morro Rock as well as a boat trip on the bay, contact Forest at 805.772-3834.

MBNEP staff will also partner with the Morro Bay Triathlon held at Morro Bay’s Beach between Morro Rock and Cayucos on November 1. They hold regular beach and waterway clean up days. Forest noted, “EcoSLO hosted the Coastal Clean-up Day on September 19 and MBNEP also hosts clean-up days on the Embarcadero. Volunteers are often surprised at how little garbage they find. Cigarette butts continue to be an ongoing issue and caustic for our water quality.”

There is a volunteer group called the SLO Beaver Brigade that included 60 volunteers who took a day to shore up restoration needs at the Salinas River. Staff also provided a tour of the area

Correction From page 2

• We reported the report “considered a 0.5% interest rate if the City had to borrow money for the remodel.”
Craig said they received estimates from lenders of “interest rates of between 4% and 8%, leading to the staff report stating ‘5.0% annually over three years.’”
• We also reported that the finance director, at an August public meeting “appeared confident they could get \$4.8 million out of emergency reserves without too much concern.”
Craig said financing options “are known and were discussed at the Aug. 25 meeting. The Finance Director does not believe using this level of reserves offers little concern. Using existing funds to cover the \$4,8 million is not recommended. While drawing on reserves remains an option for the Council to consider, both City staff and Council flagged concerns about whether it would be a prudent use of the City’s reserves.”
We hope this clears up any confusion our story might have raised.
— Neil Farrell

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to an additional 99 attendees. Forest mentioned a new program developed with the support of our county’s ranch owners. It identifies then protects impacted tributaries flowing to the ocean containing bacteria from natural activities on Estero Bay’s expansive working ranch lands.

Possibly one of the more recognized programs by the MBNEP is the Mutts for the Bay program. Thirty-six containers of bags for dog waste are visibly stationed for easy public use in Los Osos and Morro Bay. Contributions fund the program and volunteers keep the 300,000 bags stocked annually.

Forest said, “Dog waste does degrade and it is high in bacteria. We provide the bags in high traffic areas like our parks, hiking trails and Harbor Walk, but we also need the cooperation of the dog owners to pick up the waste and throw the bags away in an appropriate trash container. And, please, not in the green waste.”

MBNEP offers an annual competitive grant program for nonprofits with great ideas to augment additional restoration and teaching programs. The grant cycle for submissions ends September 30.

A popular education program has been developed at Baywood Elementary School in cooperation with MBNEP. An on-campus school garden was planted and is maintained throughout the year by the students. They also celebrate Earth Day each April.

Who knew how much the Morro Bay National Estuary Program has done for the Estero Bay since its creation in the 1980s? There is so much more to learn and potentially volunteer to help if only in your own backyard or park or Harbor Walk. Forest and members of the staff will be at the Bay Theater on October 12 with Morro Bay State of the Bay 2026 brochures and some creative coloring books about Mutts for the Bay and a Marine Protected Area Coloring Book. Be sure and thank this group for all they do to protect the environment we call home.

Baywood Park Appeal From page 1



A rendering of what a new 2-story mixed use development at 2nd and Santa Maria in Baywood Park would look like. Submitted photo

festivities.

The property owner, Alex Benson, who also owns other commercial properties and businesses in Baywood Park, is trying to redevelop the lot. Architect Bob Semonsen designed the project for Benson. Ironically, Semonsen sat on many of the committees through the 1990s and early 2000s that worked on the general plan for Los Osos, ironing out the development standards, requirements and restrictions in use today.

The development would build “a new, two-story mixed-use project consisting of approximately 3,018 square feet of ground floor commercial retail area and 1,983 square feet of second floor residential area, 310 square feet of residential deck area, and associated site improvements,” reads the County report for the project. “The project will result in disturbance of the entire 9,375 square foot vacant parcel.”

The necessary permits — a Coastal Development Permit and Minor Use Permit (CDP/MUP) — were going to be approved by County Planning. Last April, the project was slated to be in the consent agenda before a Planning Department Hearing, but several objections were filed before the online meeting and a public hearing was conducted over Zoom.

Despite several people expressing opposition due mainly to parking and water availability, among other complaints, the hearing officer approved the project. It was then appealed to the Board of Supervisors who heard the case at its Sept. 1 meeting.

Projects that go through the hearing officer are as a matter of policy appealed directly to Supervisors instead of first going to the Planning Commission.

The project has been in the works for a long time, stalled mainly due to the sewer moratorium that was hanging over the heads of everyone in Los Osos for 40 years but was finally solved in 2016, when the County completed the communitywide sewer collection system with a treatment plant east of town behind the cemetery.

The Community Services District has agreed to provide water to the new development.

There is a potential zoning issue with the project, as it sits in a commercial-retail zoning, which doesn’t specifically allow for residential use (the second floor calls for three little apartments rented or leased).

The main contentions in the two appeals that were filed addressed “neighborhood compatibility and public access, and parking concerns related to the project’s approval.”

The appeals contend the project doesn’t match Baywood Park’s “local unique feel,” and doesn’t match the “pedestrian-scale expectations,” in the Estero Area Plan’s standards.

The County said it meets all standards in the plan. The other issue, parking, claimed the development would reduce the available parking for special events like the weekly farmer’s market, which is set up along Santa Maria Avenue; and relies on public street parking “to meet private demand.”

The County pointed out that the project plans would provide “13 improved spaces” — six on-site and located at the rear of the building, and seven along the frontage on 2nd Street.

The location sits within the Estero Area Plan’s boundaries and thus it can be appealed to the Coastal Commission.

EBN queried the County AS to whether the denial had been appealed further to the Coastal Commission. The department’s Administrative Coordinator, Corla Wade, referred us to the Coastal Commission tracking sheet of appealable local projects.

News

After the appeal hearing, one of the appellants told KSBY News he intended to appeal to the Coastal Commission.

The Commission’s tracking sheet lists Sept. 15 as the date it received the County’s notice of action and set a Sept. 29 deadline for the project to be appealed.

“I am unaware at this time,” Wade said, “as to whether an appeal has been filed with the Coastal Commission or the possibility of litigation.”

Moss Landing Cleanup From page 1



In the photo dated July, 31, EPA Deputy Regional Administrator Cheree Peterson (second from right) tours the site of the 2025 battery fire in Moss Landing with members of EPA’s emergency response team and officials from Vistra. Photo courtesy USEPA

Vistra is also the owner of the closed Morro Bay Power Plant and had been proposing to build a BESS plant here but decided to drop the proposal after the Moss Landing fire.

“EPA,” reads the agency’s announcement, “will now oversee the removal and processing of all remaining, severely damaged batteries and remnant material for transport to off-site disposal facilities. The burnt battery storage building is being demolished to allow crews to reach the remaining material.”

EPA’s Pacific Southwest Regional Administrator, Mike Martucci, said, “The beginning of the final phase of battery removal at Moss Landing is a huge milestone in this unprecedented lithium-ion battery cleanup.”

He added that this brings the matter a “step closer to safely eliminating the threat of these potentially dangerous batteries once and for all.”

Vistra has been hard at work cleaning up the fire’s aftermath, starting with the batteries that were easiest to get to and remove.

“Vistra, under EPA’s oversight,” the release said, “has now begun removing all remaining, previously inaccessible battery material. To safely transport this material off-site for disposal at specialized facilities, severely damaged batteries will first be treated on-site at Moss Landing.”

The remaining batteries and fire debris is being tested for “waste characterization purposes,” the EPA said. It will all be sent to a special EPA approved disposal site. The agency will post the testing results on a special website for the disaster, see: www.epa.gov/ca/moss-landing-vistra-battery-fire. The materials that test out safe and can be recycled will be recycled, EPA said.

It should be noted that Vistra is doing the work, including demolition of the burned-out building and batteries, under EPA oversight.

“Air monitoring and air sampling activities,” EPA said, “fire and smoke watch, water collection and testing, battery temperature monitoring, and dust mitigation and suppression activities — such as the application of encapsulants — will continue throughout the process as necessary to immediately detect any safety risks and protect workers and the surrounding community.”

EPA said they are working with local agencies on the clean-up and Vistra is responsible for following an EPA-approved plan. The company will also be notifying all agencies involved if something comes up, like another fire.

Meanwhile, EPA is predicting the project to last well into next year.

“Based on current projections,” the agency said, “EPA anticipates the battery removal process and building demolition will be completed in mid-2027.”

Though it’s now been over a year-and-a-half since the fire, the danger has not yet passed. “Damaged lithium-ion batteries pose an ongoing risk of fire,” EPA said. “Lithium-ion battery fires can produce hydrogen fluoride and other flammable or toxic gases.”

EPA oversaw the aftermath of the fire, and first stabilized the building and disconnected all “accessible” batteries from each



Photo from this past July shows the destroyed building where a 300-megawatt battery storage facility in Moss Landing caught fire in January 2025. Photo courtesy USEPA

other. They were also de-energized for safe transport to EPA-approved recycling facilities in Nevada and Ohio.

During the first phases of the cleanup EPA said they removed the batteries they could access, some 40,000 modules.

Who’s paying for all this? Vistra is, according to EPA. “Vistra is considered a potentially responsible party under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). In July 2025, the company entered into an Administrative Settlement Agreement and Order on Consent, in which “Vistra agreed to perform and pay for the costs of battery removal and disposal under EPA’s oversight,” the agency said.

The BESS facility that burned is one of two Vistra has at the Moss Landing Power Plant property, which Vistra also owns. It had been built inside an old power plant building that has been closed for decades.

A second BESS was built outside the old power plant building and did not catch fire in the blaze. Vistra also owns a natural gas-powered power plant on site and Pacific Gas & Electric has a battery facility on the property, too. That BESS has also had fire issues over the years.

Vistra’s 300-megawatt plant caught fire on Jan. 15, 2025, and burned out of control for three days, briefly reigniting on the third day.

It had some 100,000 lithium-ion battery modules and EPA said about 55% of them were burned in the blaze that broke through the roof and shot hundreds of feet into the air.

A plume of thick, black, toxic smoke was emitted and rose high into the air, spreading across the surrounding area including the protected Elkhorn Slough, which is adjacent to the property.

Surrounding towns — Castroville and Watsonville, as well as Moss Landing Harbor — were evacuated during the fire. Firefighters fought to contain the blaze, which eventually burned itself out.

Fallout from the fire was extensive and included a softening of the positions of political leaders like Dist. 17 State Sen. John Laird (D-Santa Cruz) and Dist. 30 Assemblywoman Dawn Addis (D-Morro Bay). Both had been strong supporters of battery facilities to support renewable energy.

Laird called for increased scrutiny over large battery facilities and Addis withdrew her support for siting such plants in urban areas, such as the proposed Morro Bay plant, which sits nearly in the center of the community.

A local citizen’s group in 2024, pushed through a ballot measure that requires voter approval to change the zoning on the property. Meas. A-24 essentially gives the voters veto power over that decision. The fire, which happened just a couple of months after the November 2024 Election, only served to strengthen the opposition group’s stance and further the town’s opposition to Vistra’s project.

A month before the election, Vistra had informed the City it was placing the BESS Project in Morro Bay on hold and withdrew its proposal from consideration after the fire.

The City of Morro Bay also acted after the fire, and the City Council approved a new municipal ordinance banning all large-scale battery storage facilities within the City Limits.

The BESS Project here has all this and more to overcome, but the project may not be totally dead, as the company hasn’t publicly informed the City what it wants to do with the over 100-acre property.

The City and Vistra have an agreement that sets a Dec. 31, 2027, deadline for the company to either remove the old power plant’s structures — the three, 450-foot tall smokestacks and 165-foot tall power generating building — or pay the City \$3 million.

Various estimates for this removal — put out by Duke Energy and Vistra — have ranged from \$80 million to about \$35 million respectively.

There’s been no word from Vistra as to their intentions, according to a City official.

City Manager, John Craig told Estero Bay News, “We have been in contact with various executives there regarding ongoing property issues, like requesting and negotiating easements from them for injection wells, creek bed remediation, etc., but I don’t believe we’ve had any correspondence regarding the demolition.”

Though the location of the property, adjacent to the bay, would seemingly make it highly valuable, it’s a troublesome situation.

Despite its extensive history as an industrial site, the majority of the property has been given a relatively clean bill of health by the State’s Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), however, the agency has cautioned that it has not tested the soil or groundwater from directly underneath the power building or the smokestacks.

The Coastal Commission has said the property could come under its coastal hazard avoidance policies and possibly other Coastal Act restrictions.

And, former plant owner, PG&E, also placed a deed restriction on the property that makes redevelopment for any use besides industrial difficult to accomplish.

Nevertheless, the City rezoned the property “commercial visitor-serving” when it updated the General Plan and the Local Coastal Program (LCP) a few years ago.

Battery Plant Catches Fire Again

In what could be called a prophetic turn of events, the burned out Battery Energy Storage System plant in Moss Landing caught fire once again, Sept. 18, just as it was about to enter the final stage of cleanup.

The Environmental Protection Agency had last Thursday, announced it would start the final stage of cleaning up the January 2025 fire that destroyed a 300-megawatt BESS plant at the Moss Landing Power Plant property, and owned by Vistra Energy.

According to Monterey County’s Office of Emergency Services, “Firefighters from the North Monterey County Fire District were dispatched to the Moss Landing Power Plant just after 6:15 a.m. for a reported structure fire.

“Crews arrived to find smoke and fire coming from the north side of the facility.”

The fire erupted in some 1,500 damaged battery modules that were still charged with power and had apparently survived the 2025 fire.

“The fire is occurring within an existing structure that sustained significant damage during the January 2025 Vistra battery fire and involves batteries that were previously damaged during that incident,” Monterey OES said. “The current incident is not comparable to the January 2025 fire in terms of its scale or complexity. Based on current conditions, officials anticipate the fire may burn itself out over the next 24 hours.”

The department added that no one was hurt in the latest blaze and firefighters from several agencies responded to the fire and the surrounding area at Moss Landing had to be evacuated.

The fire happened just days before the EPA planned to begin the final cleanup of the tens of thousands of battery modules left inside the burned out building. EPA had warned that fire was still possible in the plant’s damaged modules.

— Neil Farrell

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Sun 12:45 pm & 4 pm

MONDAY SPECIALS * ONE SHOWING ONLY AT 5:30 PM

9/28
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