

The Carmel Pine Cone

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January 9-15, 2026

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New P.G. hotel an instant landmark

By KELLY NIX

A 99-ROOM, four-story, Spanish-style hotel — the Kimpton Mirador Pacific Grove — is on the verge of opening, and city leaders couldn't be more excited about the transformation of a formerly derelict part of downtown.



PHOTO/PAUL MILLER

The 99-room Kimpton Mirador Pacific Grove, which calls itself a "coastal sanctuary," is the latest of just a few new hotels on the Peninsula in decades.

"We've seen some amazing changes in the last couple of years," said one longtime P.G. resident who was on his morning hike Thursday and said he was too busy to give his name. "I love it all."

The 95,000-square-foot hotel at 150 Fountain Ave., which has been under construction since September 2023, is nearly complete, with crews adding finishing touches to the Spanish Revival-style building across from the city's library and Jewell Park and adjacent to the museum of natural history. It joins the renovated Holman Building and the large mixed-use project across from the movie theater — significant new ventures on Pacific Grove's main street, Lighthouse Avenue.

"The Kimpton's goal is to open later this month," city manager Matt Mogensen told The Pine Cone this week.

'Fresh coastal air'

The "luxury boutique hotel," as Kimpton Mirador describes itself, hasn't offered an official opening date, but its website is accepting bookings beginning Feb. 4. Room prices start at \$350 for a 372-square-foot layout with a

See HOTEL page 16A

Frustrated art association to take \$\$\$ plea to city

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CARMEL Art Association has raised roughly half the money it needs to repair damage to its Dolores Street gallery from construction in The Pit next door, according to archivist Sally Aberg. Meanwhile, the non-profit continues to battle with the project's prior developer, Leidig/Draper Properties, which is believed to have caused the damage to the CAA's foundation. The association is planning to ask the Carmel City Council for help.

After Leidig/Draper excavated the 16,000-square-foot property and then abandoned the project in 2019, the art association to the south and The Carmel Foundation's apartment building to the west suffered cracking, sagging and other problems. No one accepted blame for the damage, however, and after years of unsuccessful efforts to get the former owner/developers, the former contractors and/or their insurance companies to cover repairs, the nonprofits resorted to spending their own funds.

Mediation delayed again

The senior-focused Carmel Foundation undertook roughly \$600,000 worth of shoring and repairs that were completed a couple of months ago — redoing the interior of a damaged apartment is next — and the art association launched a campaign in October 2025 to raise \$400,000 to restore the foundation of its historic building and repair its sagging floors and cracking walls and ceiling.

See PLEA page 19A

BUSINESSES PICK UP TAB FOR STATE'S COVID DEBT

■ \$20B loan from feds still to be repaid

SACRAMENTO HAS yet to pay back the \$20 billion it borrowed from the feds during the pandemic to cover the cost of unemployment insurance after Gov. Gavin Newsom forced businesses to shut their doors. Every other state has paid back its Covid-era debt — including, most

unemployment insurance payroll taxes per employee annually, compared to \$42 for employers in states with no insurance debt. It may not sound like a lot, but it creates a disincentive to scale and grow jobs in California, where the unemployment rate of 5.6 percent is the highest of any state's. Repayments on the huge debt are expected to stretch into the 2030s.

"Functionally, this means California employers are facing a decade or more of tax increases," wrote the California Chamber of Commerce in February of last year.

The chamber was urging lawmakers to set aside money for debt assistance in the budget to ease the strain on businesses, but that didn't happen.

Unable to pay

The Covid shutdown wasn't the first time California found itself unable to pay for unemployment benefits. During the Great Recession from 2007 to 2009, the state had to borrow \$11 billion from the feds to make ends meet. But in 2020, more than 2 million Californians lost their jobs when businesses were ordered to shutter, and the cost to cover the claims was double that of the recession.

The Legislative Analyst's Office reported the state entered the pandemic with \$3 billion in its unemployment

See DEBT page 19A

Capitol Access

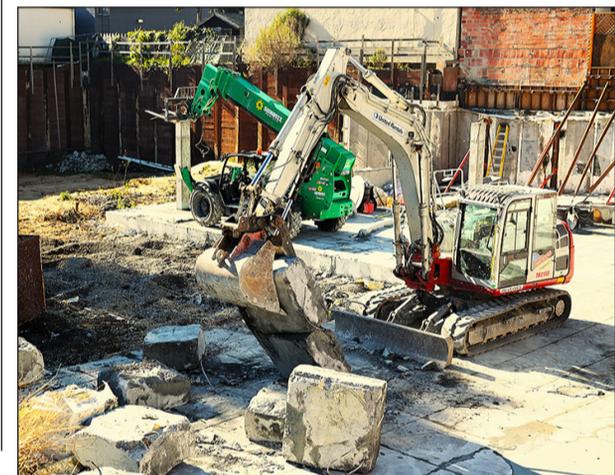
By CAITLIN CONRAD

recently, New York — but not California. Instead, lawmakers have left the tab for businesses to pick up.

Under federal law, employers are required to pony up if a state fails to repay the debt within two years. Employers are paying off the massive bill in the form of additional payroll taxes, to the tune of an extra \$84 per employee per year for businesses of all sizes in 2026. It's a burden that's been going up \$21 a year since 2023 and will continue to do so until the debt is paid.

"This is called, 'the greatest hidden tax,'" said Rob Lapsley, president of the California Businesses Roundtable.

Employers are paying \$126 total in federal



PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

Crews have been busy using heavy equipment and large trucks to demolish and remove the partially built parking garage at The Pit.

Council set to make metal roofs acceptable

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CARMEL City Council could finally put the long-running fight over metal roofs to rest Tuesday, when it considers an updated policy that would add them — but only in earth tones — to the list of materials that planners can approve over the counter. The move would ease the minds of owners who have wanted to reroof with metal to protect their homes from wildfires and ensure they are insurable, but some residents have condemned the practice as a community-character killer.

'Acceptable colors'

The proposed update follows discussion by planning commissioners during four hearings in 2025 that culminated with their recommending the council revise the city's roofing policy so staff can OK a wider range of roof types, including metal and synthetics, as long as they fall within the range of acceptable colors.

The move marks a major shift from the residential

See ROOFS page 13A

One lane open on C.V. Road after landslide

By CHRIS COUNTS

WHILE SOME residents were concerned that a small landslide Tuesday morning beneath the eastbound side of Carmel Valley Road near Sleepy Hollow would force them to take lengthy detours to get to the Peninsula, county spokesman Nick Pasculli reported a few hours later that the unaffected westbound lane was open for one-way



PHOTO/DOUG STEAKLEY

With one lane open, motorists can expect 20-minute delays where a wash-out undermined Carmel Valley Road this week.

traffic. "We were able to get one lane open under alternating traffic control," Pasculli said. "Motorists should expect 20-minute delays through the area."

Several residents reported being turned back earlier in the day. One woman said her partner was told by the California Highway Patrol that he would need to "go through Greenfield and around to get to the Village and beyond."

The CHP also told him the closure was necessary because "there's no dirt under the asphalt."

Temporary signal

Officially called a "wash-out," the erosion comes during an unusually wet start to the rainy season. Several locals claimed that officials had been warned the site was vulnerable and that ongoing maintenance efforts were insufficient.

The county reported that it's expected to take three to six weeks to make the repairs. A flagger was there Wednesday directing traffic, while plans were made to install a temporary signal light. "Traffic will continue to be one-lane-road access while the temporary traffic signal is in place," the county said.

A handful of locals reported delays ranging from 20 to 35 minutes on Wednesday. One noted that many of those driving through were contractors or construction workers headed from the Peninsula to jobs in Cachagua, which suffered serious damage in a 2020 wildfire.

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Sandy Claws

By Lisa Crawford Watson

Making herself at home

It all started when her son was given a kitten, and the family had their first pet. Mom, more interested in getting a dog, had read about pets outliving their people and decided sooner was better than later.

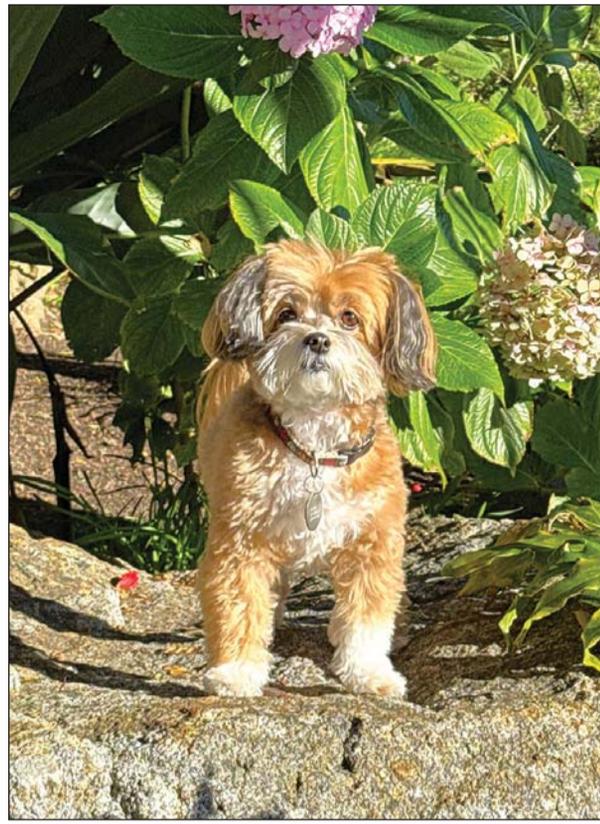
"While I was researching hypoallergenic dogs with pleasing personality traits, the Havanese breed popped up," she said. "All sites said what a joy they are, how much fun they are to be around, that they are people-oriented and don't have a lot of health problems."

"Sign me up," she thought. She started vetting breeders very carefully after a friend was promised their pup, Buster, would stay small but didn't. At tinyjewelpups.com — you really have to see this site — she discovered Maisy and was smitten by the tiny face in the photo.

Except Maisy was spoken for. Yet, as luck or fate would have it, the gentleman changed his mind. Her meant-to-be person scooped her up, changed Maisy to Lila, and brought her home.

"My husband will tell you I didn't ask his permission, and this was all a surprise," her person said. "As you may imagine, Lila is even more his than mine."

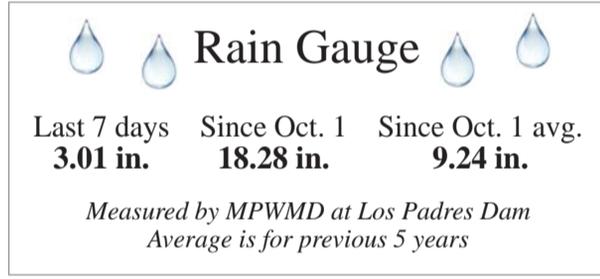
Lila, now nearly 7, has a forever home in Texas and another "just north of Ocean," in a cottage two doors



down from the place her people used to rent.

"She's not a beachcomber — the whole concept is overwhelming," her person said. "But she loves walking uptown to visit Kathy at Carmel Drug Store and Tuyen at Expert Alterations, who both give her treats."

Lila also enjoys the breakfast bunch at Stationary, and just about anyone at Cypress Inn where, since she was mere months old, her people have stopped in for a beverage and an evening with singer Debbie Davis, while Lila visits with the maître d', a vizsla named Dino Ferrari.



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Police chief's quest for Car Week feedback continues

By MARY SCHLEY

SHUTTING DOWN Ocean Avenue for a sanctioned night-time event, figuring out a more direct route to get cruising drivers in and out of town quickly — with lots of cops posted along the way — and consolidating events into fewer days were some of the ideas that came out of the first of two Car Week “listening sessions” organized and hosted by Carmel Police Chief Todd Trayer.

He said the first session, held on a Saturday early last month at the Carmel Youth Center, “went well, I think.”

“The room was full and the conversation was honest, genuine and fruitful,” he said. “I was not sure how session No. 1 would go, but I left feeling like it was very positive, interactive, educational — for me — and I felt supported as a police department.”

Noise complaints

As Car Week — which began with road races and a small show in Pebble Beach in 1950 — has grown to encompass numerous events held throughout the Peninsula over a 10-day span each August, the crowds have grown and changed, too. And during the past decade, social media and the increasing popularity of exotic cars have had a marked effect, too.

“We covered the ‘evolution of Car Week,’” Trayer said, with generations of speakers providing their perspectives, and many commented on what they feel are the biggest impacts: noise and traffic on businesses and overall living conditions in town.

Trayer said feedback on the daytime events — Concours for a Cause, Astons

on the Avenue, the Ferrari Owners Club’s Concours Carmel and Prancing Ponies, as well as some smaller gatherings — was “varied, but overall very positive.”

“Some suggested consolidating events into fewer days. Others adored the current events and crowds,” Trayer said. “It was the nighttime ‘cruise’ that was heavily discussed.”

As potential solutions, community members suggested closing Ocean Avenue from 6 to 10 p.m. and charging people for the privilege of parking and showing their cars inside the barricades.

“I’m accepting any ideas from a few event coordinators who were at the session and proposed a sanctioned event to control the vehicles and noise,” Trayer said.

Unified presence

Speakers also suggested setting up a traffic pattern that gets cruisers in and out of town as quickly as possible, rather than the serpentine route that’s been tried ever since downtown became the scene of an impromptu sideshow during Car Week in 2019.

And during the evenings, officers would step up their enforcement efforts, especially on those with overly loud exhausts and who engage in exhibitions of speed, like burnouts and donuts.

Some said they want more speed bumps installed and recommended working with other agencies to create a more unified police presence, though other Peninsula cities are contending with similar issues during Car Week, as well.

Trayer said several public officials

See **FEEDBACK** page 17A

‘Some suggested consolidating events, others adore the crowds’



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Police & Sheriff's Log

Dogs gotta flee, trees gotta fall

HERE'S A look at some of the significant calls logged by the Carmel-by-the-Sea Police Department and the Monterey County Sheriff's Office last week. This week's log was compiled by Mary Schley.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19

Carmel-by-the-Sea: Found coins turned in at Carmel P.D.

Pacific Grove: At about 2001 hours, officers were dispatched to the 700 block of Asilomar Avenue on a report of a possible domestic incident. Officers contacted an involved party who denied anything physical occurred.

Pacific Grove: A traffic accident occurred at Park Place and Fountain Avenue, and the 71-year-old male driver was determined to be DUI and was arrested for violation of a court order, driving on a suspended/revoked license, and DUI with a prior conviction.

Pacific Grove: Vehicle at Sinex and Alder

marked for 72-hour parking.

Carmel Valley: A female reported an uncomfortable incident during a massage on Valley Greens Drive.

Carmel area: Adult Protective Services report on Touche Pass alleging financial abuse.

Carmel area: Online report of suspicious circumstances at the Crossroads shopping center.

Carmel Valley: Shoplifting from a Mid-Valley Center business.

Carmel Valley: Child Protective Services report involving a residence on Calle de los Helechos.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20

Carmel-by-the-Sea: Hit-and-run against a parked motor vehicle on 10th Avenue. No suspect information.

See **POLICE LOG** page 7RE in the Real Estate Section



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The gavel falls

Verdicts, pleas and sentencings announced by Monterey County District Attorney Jeannine Pacioni

Dec. 18 — Mariano Botello, 60, a resident of Marina, was sentenced to 275 years to life in prison after being convicted by a jury of eight counts of lewd act on a child under 14, in violation of Penal Code Section 288(a); two counts of forcible lewd act on a child under 14, in violation of Penal Code section 288(b); and one count of sodomy with a child 10 or under, in violation of Penal Code section 288.7(a). Judge Stephanie Hulsey presided over the trial.

Jane Doe 1 testified at trial that the defendant sexually assaulted her beginning when she was 6 or 7 years old and continued to abuse her until she reached the age of 12. She told no one until she was 15 years old, when she confided in her older sister, Jane Doe 2.

Doe 2 believed her sister, because the defendant had sexually assaulted her as well,

when she was between the ages of 12 and 14. Doe 2 urged her younger sister to report the defendant to the police, providing her with the support that no one had provided her when she was a child seeking help.

Both victims testified at the defendant's trial and bravely faced their abuser, who had been a household member for many years. Doe 2 not only described her own abuse by the defendant but expressed her guilt for not speaking up sooner and possibly sparing her sister from also being abused, which Hulsey described as "one of the most heart-wrenching moments of the trial."

These convictions constitute 11 strikes under California's three strikes Law. The defendant will be required to register as a sex

See **GAVEL** page 17A

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LION FARMS FAULTED IN CRASH THAT KILLED SEVEN WORKERS

By MARY SCHLEY

A FEDERAL court ordered former Carmel Highlands resident Bruce Lion and his family to pay penalties and back wages following a fatal crash involving seven employees at their ag company in the Fresno area in February 2024, the U.S. Department of Labor announced Tuesday.

Lion, who was arrested numerous times in fall 2023 and early 2024 for alleged acts of violence, trespassing and other allegations — and whose mental health was repeatedly called into question — is an owner of Selma-based Lion Farms, along with his father, Alfred, and another relative, Daniel. All three are named in the case.

“Defendants Lion Farms LLC, Bruce Lion, Alfred Lion and Daniel Lion deliberately ignored the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act’s requirements, which serve to protect workers from unsafe and unlicensed transportation to and from the fields,” reads the complaint filed by regional solicitor Marc Pilotin and others in U.S. District Court in March 2025 on behalf of U.S. Secretary of Labor Lori Chavez-DeRemer. “These violations ultimately led to a van accident that killed seven of Lion Farms’ field workers.”

Supervisor knew

According to the complaint, the company cultivates, grows and harvests 871 acres of grapes for raisins in Fresno and Madera counties and sells its raisins to Lion Raisins, Inc. and other packing houses, where they are processed and packaged under the Lion Raisins label and sold to major national and international retailers.

Lion Farms workers were generally charged a \$13 daily fee for transportation, and on Feb. 23, 2024, a supervisor ordered a field worker, Victor Hernandez, to drive himself and seven other workers from their homes in Kerman to a Lion Farms property 40 miles away to remove grapevine trunks and dead branches.

The supervisor did this knowing Hernandez didn’t have a driver’s license, the complaint said, and when the crash occurred, “according to the California Highway Patrol, six out of the eight agricultural workers did not have their seat belts on during the vehicle accident, and two of those passengers were fully or partially ejected from the vehicle.”

Seven, including Hernandez, died at the scene, while an eighth was severely injured but survived. After the crash, the company continued transporting workers in the same fashion, the complaint said.

Many wrongs

The Labor Department investigated activities at Lion Farms going back to October 2022 and found numerous violations.

“The division found that Lion Farms — owned and operated by Alfred, Bruce and Daniel Lion — violated the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act by failing to ensure agricultural workers were transported to and from their field sites in safe vehicles, and using unlicensed drivers and vehicles without adequate insurance coverage,” spokespeople Ryan Honick and Chaundra Rideaux said Jan. 6.

Further, the transportation fee was deemed illegal because the workers were

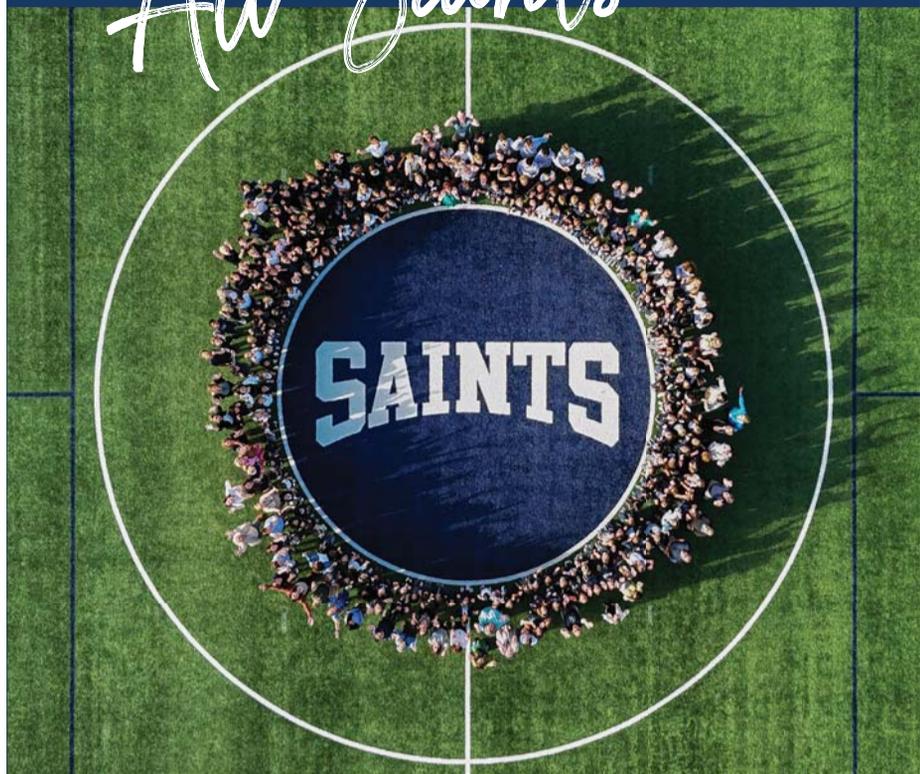
See **CRASH** page 17A

Unsafe vehicles, unlicensed drivers, and payroll problems



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January:

As we welcome the new year—and move through a bridging phase into the Chinese New Year, the Year of the Fire Horse—our word of the month is Align.

“We align first, so we can move forward together.”

This month, we’re letting alignment create momentum, setting the tone for a clear, connected year with both our team and our patients. (And yes... maybe aligning a few teeth too, if you know what we mean.)

Speaking of new beginnings, the new year also brought the Klinefelter family—and our office—a new mascot: Mr. Theodore Winston Waffles III, affectionately known as “Teddy.” If you spot him around town, don’t hesitate to say hello—he absolutely loves the love!

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Chief names new CPD detective

By MARY SCHLEY

AFTER SEVERAL years without a detective, Carmel P.D. has appointed an officer dedicated to the sleuthing role. This week, Police Chief Todd Trayer announced Elissa Montes — formerly Higgins, and known by her friends and colleagues as “E” — has been promoted to the position.

“Detective Montes’ seven years’ experience and compassion toward our community helped her earn this position in the department,” Trayer said when he announced the promotion Monday. “As an officer, Montes has been on some significant cases here in Carmel, but also has been working on completing her own casework in patrol. Today, she is stepping into the role of detective, carrying forward our promise to serve and protect with excellence.”

Trayer said Montes is well known for her “eye for photography, loves dogs and is excited to take on this new role.” She’s also the department’s defensive tactics instructor.

“She tested for the detective position and was selected,” Trayer said, adding that he wrote the exam for the job. “It was highly competitive, but she won it.”

‘Expedite everything’

For many years, the department had a dedicated detective.

Pete Poitras, now long retired, occupied the position for many years, followed by a succession of officers. Jacob Clifford last filled the detective role for a short term until he was promoted to sergeant four years ago.

Trayer, who celebrated his one-year anniversary with Carmel P.D. Tuesday after working for San Jose P.D. for three decades, said he decided to bring the position back.

“The officers here handle everything — it’s called ‘contact to completion,’” he said. For example, an officer is dispatched to a reported burglary, takes the initial report, interviews the people involved, collects evidence, builds a case, identifies a suspect and sees it through to trial, all while covering patrol shifts and taking calls.

“It’s been successful before, but I think having a dedicated person to be a coordinator makes it a better response for our community,” he said.

“It’s considered a force multiplier to have a detective” who can write warrants, follow up with the Monterey County District Attorney’s Office and handle numerous other aspects of an investigation and its results.

“It will expedite everything,” he said.

See **DETECTIVE** page 17A



PHOTO/CPD

Police Chief Todd Trayer congratulates officer Elissa Montes in her promotion to detective.

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Identity of skeletal remains likely long off

By MARY SCHLEY

IT WILL be weeks — possibly months — before the Monterey County Coroner receives all the information necessary to identify the skeletal remains found by a land surveyor in the Jacks Peak area last week, Cmdr. Andy Rosas said Tuesday. In the meantime, he’s asking that people stop speculating — worse yet, suggesting to the families of missing people that the bones could be or are those of their loved ones.

“I have taken calls from people across the state and country from people because, ‘So-and-so said it might be my brother or it might be my dad,’” he said. “We shouldn’t speculate, because we don’t want to give someone false hope.”

On Dec. 29, deputies were dispatched to a Viejo Road property after a land surveyor reported finding what appeared to be a human skull, according to the sheriff’s office. They confirmed the discovery, secured the area and turned it over to the coroner’s division.

Comparison necessary

“Over the course of several days, the scene was processed, and additional human remains were located and collected,” the sheriff’s office said. “A forensic examination will be conducted to assist in identifying the individual. This process will include DNA analysis and comparison with missing and unidentified persons records through the California Department of Justice.”

Rosas said investigators couldn’t initially determine how long the bones had been on the property or whether they belong to a male or a female.

Depending on which lab the agency hires to do the testing and the extent of its backlog, the DNA results could be weeks or months in coming, he said. After receiving that genetic information, investigators will be tasked with matching it to a known person.

“There has to be a comparison,” Rosas explained. If the person gave a DNA sample at any point — California law requires convicted felons to do so, for instance — finding a match will be more straightforward.

“If the DNA is not on file, then they have to go through different databases to try to find matches,” he said. “It’s going to depend on the circumstances of those samples.”

The coroner’s office will consult with an anthropologist, as well.

In the meantime, Rosas is communicating daily with

civilians and law enforcement officers who believe the bones might be connected to their individual cases.

“There are so many people who are missing, not just in our area, but in other parts of the state and country,” he said. The sheriff’s office and local police departments have numerous open missing-persons cases.

Among the inquiries he’s received was one from

See **REMAINS** page 16A

A lot of records might have to be checked before a match is found

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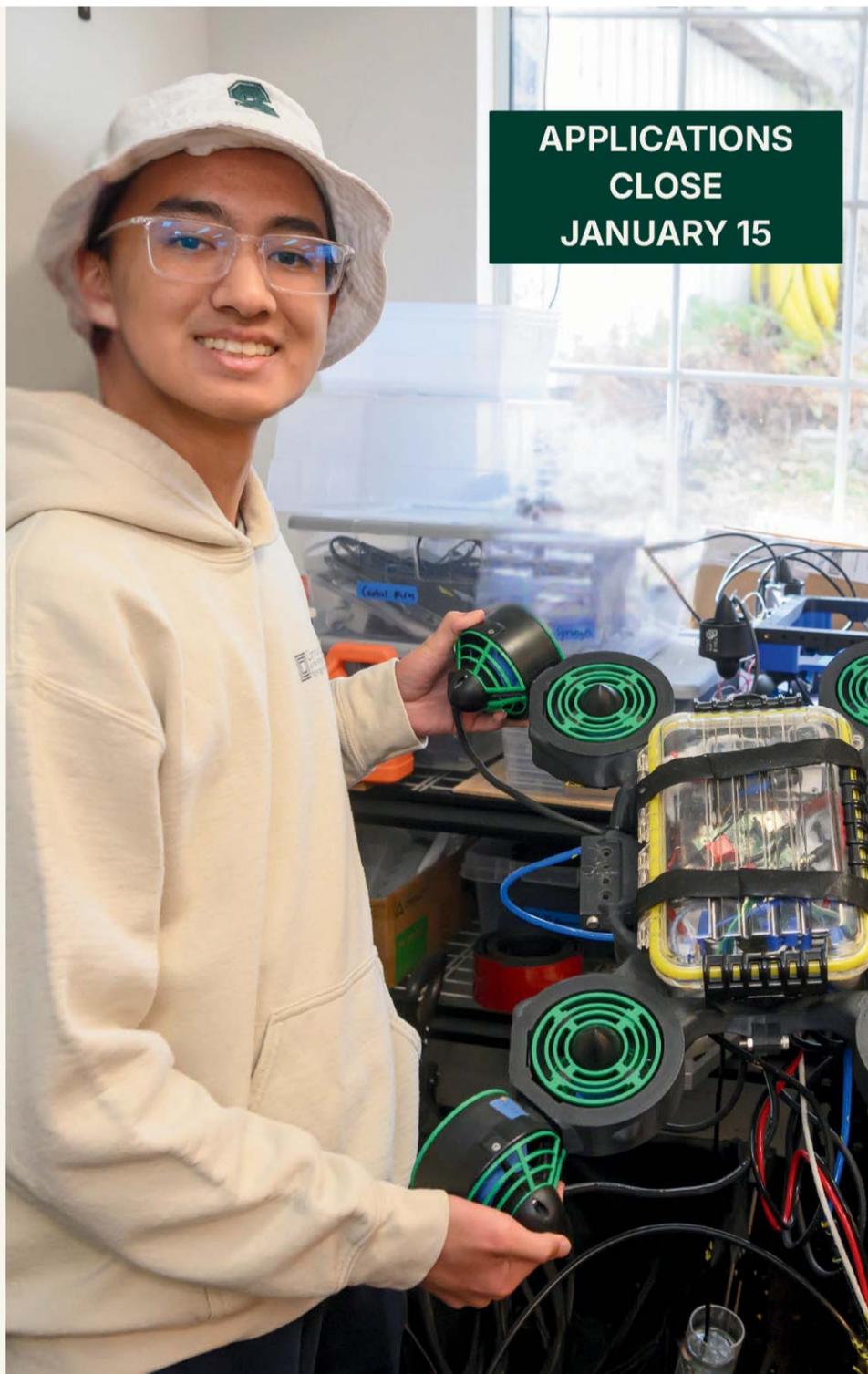
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Caltrans moves quickly to clear new Big Sur slide

By CHRIS COUNTS

A SLIDE temporarily closed Highway 1 just south of Limekiln Creek in Big Sur Tuesday and Wednesday, isolating a small number of people who live between the site and Regent's Slide to the north. Caltrans was able to clear it quickly — but not before its crew missed two days of work at the Regent's Slide.

Caltrans workers were on their way to their jobs at the larger Slide Tuesday morning when they came across the



PHOTO/CALTRANS

A new slide temporarily closed Highway 1 just south of Limekiln Creek this week, briefly halting work on clearing Regent's Slide.

new slide, which is located at the 20.6-mile marker along Highway 1.

Rocks were still coming down on the pavement when the crew arrived, and as a result, Caltrans determined it wasn't safe to pass, spokesman Kevin Drabinski said. As a result, the highway was closed from the Limekiln Bridge to Rain Rocks — about 1.2 miles — according to the state roads agency.

"We went back the next morning and cleared the new slide," he reported, enabling work at Regent's Slide,

See **SLIDE** page 17A

Lawsuit filed over Laguna Seca crash

By KELLY NIX

TWO HOBBYIST racecar drivers have filed a lawsuit against WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca claiming they were injured when a 20,000-pound forklift slammed into their vehicles while they were driving their private vehicles on the track.

Artin Nazaryan and Akihiro Fuchigami said that while they were using the track in December 2025, a large forklift-type vehicle moving tires crashed into them. Such vehicles have "significant blind spots," and its likely the driver didn't see them, the suit says.

The accident occurred under a red flag, which indicates to drivers an emergency or dangerous condition. Per track rules, Fuchigami brought his Nissan Skyline GT-R to a stop near the straightaway area of the raceway. Nazaryan, also driving a GT-R, stopped behind him.

While they waited, the operator of the forklift, which was carrying tires, "violently collided into the rear of Nazaryan and Fuchigami's vehicles," according to the lawsuit filed Dec. 16 in Monterey County Superior Court which also names Friends of Laguna Seca, the racetrack's nonprofit concessionaire, as a defendant.

"The impact from the forklift caused substantial force to be transmitted through both plaintiffs' vehicles, pushing them forward," the complaint describes.

The drivers "sustained life-altering personal injuries" in the crash, the complaint alleges.

A video of the accident shows the forklift plowing into Nazaryan's red Nissan.

'Inadequate training'

The men allege that the unnamed forklift driver, identified as John Doe in their lawsuit, operated the vehicle without maintaining a safe speed, clear line of sight and undertaking measures to ensure the path of travel was clear.

They accuse the defendants of gross negligence, for "creating a high likelihood of catastrophic injury or death," premises liability, negligent hiring and supervision, and other causes of action. The claim they "continue to suffer damages, including physical injuries, pain and suffering, emotional distress, mental anguish, inconvenience, loss of earnings, out-of-pocket expenses and other losses."

A WeatherTech Laguna Seca spokesperson acknowledged "the incident involving a track support vehicle and a racecar during a privately-operated on-track event," adding that the "track continues to work through the process with diligence and timeliness."

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Local Dem lawmakers mad about Trump Venezuela attack

By KELLY NIX

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump’s military operation last weekend in Venezuela that led to the capture of President Nicolás Maduro drew swift rebuke from Rep. Jimmy Panetta and other Democrats.

The Jan. 3 operation, dubbed Absolute Resolve, involved the deployment of dozens of ships, including the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Gerald R. Ford, 150 U.S. military airplanes and more than 15,000 military personnel ahead of the capture of Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, in Caracas. They’re being held in a federal New York detention center.

The mission, the Trump administration said, was to force Maduro and his wife to face criminal charges of narcoterrorism, conspiring “to flood the United States with cocaine” and fentanyl, and undermining “the health and security of the American people.”

‘No credible evidence’

In a social media post on the same day as the military operation, however, Panetta said that it does, “nothing to make our country safer,” nor reduces in the United States the “costs of healthcare, housing, food, fuel, family care and more.”

“As the repressive leader of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro was cruel, inhumane and undemocratic,” the congressman from Carmel Valley said. “However, Trump did not present any credible evidence that Maduro was an imminent threat to justify a large-scale military intervention by the United States under our Constitution.”

He went on to say that Trump has not presented a “coherent strategy” in preventing Venezuela from “descending into chaos” and destabilization.

The military strike comes more than a month after Panetta and several of his

colleagues introduced a bill that sought to prevent the United States from engaging in “unauthorized conflict and disregard of the United States Constitution.”

Panetta called on Congress to vote on the proposed legislation. He also remarked that Trump’s actions “are directly against what he campaigned on, especially when it comes to not dragging us into further foreign wars.”

Democrat Dawn Addis, the assemblywoman for the 30th District, which includes Monterey County, also chimed in on the Venezuelan strike, saying she would introduce legislation this week to “protect our democratic system.”

“While Venezuela’s leaders have caused immense harm to their own people, President Trump bypassing Congress and the American people in a direct takeover does not make us safer,” Addis said in a press release. “We are a nation of laws, and the president must operate within, not outside of, them.”

Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren, who represents the 18th District, which includes part of inland Monterey County, challenged GOP lawmakers to “stand up for the Constitution.”

“Trump illegally attacked Venezuela without constitutionally required approval,” Lofgren said. “Trump says it’s to take their oil and that his cabinet members will run the country.”

While congressional approval is required for a Declaration of War by the United States, presidents from both parties have deployed troops or ordered strikes hundreds of times without any such declaration, beginning with President Thomas Jefferson sending a naval squadron to fight pirates in the Mediterranean Sea in 1801. Congress has declared war just 11 times in U.S. history, and the last time was World War II.

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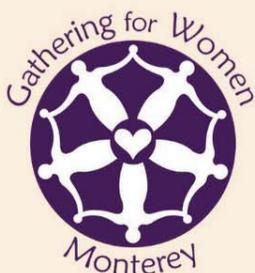
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Suit to protect immigrant truckers

By KELLY NIX

A GROUP of semitruck and school bus operators last month took California to court for its plans to revoke the licenses of more than 20,000 commercial drivers who are in the country unlawfully.

The Dec. 22 complaint comes after California Department of Motor Vehicles in November announced plans to rescind privileges from 17,000 commercial drivers whose license expiration dates are past the time they're allowed to be in the country. That figure rose to 21,000 drivers in December.

Some such licenses, used to drive semitrucks, school buses and other commercial vehicles, expired Jan. 5, and others will in mid-February.

The class action lawsuit, filed by the Asian Law Caucus and Sikh Coalition on behalf of the drivers, contends that California's plan to revoke the commercial licenses does not allow individuals to contest the DMV's decision, provide valid work authorization or reapply for a "corrected license."

"The DMV is aware that its actions will leave thousands of eligible drivers without any resolution," the suit says, "and that the sudden disappearance of them from our roads will disrupt our supply chains and

services on which the public depends."

The complaint, which names three John Does and one Jane Doe as plaintiffs, was filed in Alameda County Superior Court.

Commercial drivers licenses came under scrutiny from the Trump administration after an illegal immigrant from India made an unlawful U-turn on the Florida Turnpike in August, killing three people. The driver, Harjinder Singh, crossed the border in 2018 before obtaining his commercial license in California.

Reversed course

While California initially defended its commercial licensing policies, it did an about-face in November 2025 when the DMV announced it would rescind licenses it provided to some undocumented immigrants.

Transportation secretary Sean Duffy also warned of further action against states that afford illicit driving privileges.

"This is just the tip of the iceberg," Duffy said. "My team will continue to force California to prove they have removed every illegal immigrant from behind the wheel of semitrucks and school buses."

The state started allowing any resident, regardless of immigration status, to apply

See LICENSE next page

Petition launched to save Los Padres

By CHRIS COUNTS

A PETITION drive to stop the demolition of Los Padres Dam was launched last month and now has more than 500 signatures. "The discussion of removing Los Padres Dam has been quietly happening for a while now, and it is time we speak up and make our voices heard that it should not be removed," announced the campaign, which was started three weeks ago by Katie Rodda.

Preservationists contend the reservoir behind the dam plays a critical role in keeping nearby homes safe from wildfires in an area that is extremely vulnerable to them.

"Los Padres Dam is the largest body of water we have to fight fire in the Cachagua area, and Cal Fire has been using it for years," according to the campaign. "The water of Los Padres Dam has even been used by Cal Fire aircrafts to fight fires in the surrounding areas of Carmel Valley, Big Sur, and even Salinas. Removing Los Padres Dam will take away an extremely important water source and put many of us in this community at risk when fires start."

Backers say the dam also offers flood control benefits. "The low-lying neighborhoods along the Carmel River will be put at higher risk for flooding if the dam is

removed," the campaign contends.

The group also called the dam "a beautiful and important part of our community for outdoor activities" and "a great place for us to beat the heat and enjoy the outdoors in the summertime."

The launch of the campaign followed a Dec. 17 public hearing hosted by Cal Am that sought public feedback on the potential teardown of the dam, which was built in 1948 with "mules and one bulldozer."

Environmentalists have long sought to restore what they call "wild" rivers, and the demolition of dams have been the Holy Grail of that campaign. Nine years ago, the much smaller San Clemente Dam, also on Carmel River, was removed at a cost of about \$83 million — setting the stage for the debate over whether to tear down the much larger Los Padres Dam.

A feasibility study for the removal of Los Padres Dam was done in 2023, at a cost to ratepayers of more than \$1 million. Its reservoir once held 3,030 acre-feet of water, but by 2008, nearly half its capacity was gone.

The cost of tearing down the dam and other related work is estimated at \$94.7 million. In comparison, the cost of dredging and expanding the reservoir would be \$183.4 million, along with \$82.1 million for fish passage improvements.



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LICENSE

From previous page

for drivers licenses in 2015 after passage of Assembly Bill 60, which was dubbed the Safe and Responsible Drivers Act. It was signed by then-Gov. Jerry Brown, a Democrat.

Last October, an audit by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration “uncovered systemic policy, procedural, and programming errors in California’s non-domiciled drivers license program which allowed thousands of licenses to be illegally issued to foreign drivers,” Duffy’s office said.

“The audit also found that more than one in four of the non-domiciled drivers license records sampled in California failed to comply with federal regulations,” he said. “This includes issuing licenses that extended well beyond a foreigner’s work permit.”

School bus driver

The plaintiffs are asking the court to allow them and other drivers to “immediately obtain a corrected commercial driver’s license without interruption to their driving privileges,” and a finding that the DMV’s actions to revoke the licenses were null and void.

The unidentified female plaintiff, Jane Doe, obtained her commercial license in

2018 and is a school bus driver in the Central Valley, the lawsuit says.

“She finds joy in supporting the schoolchildren that she transports each day and depends on her job for her family’s

livelihood,” the complaint says.

Another plaintiff, Fresno-based Jakara Movement, represents hundreds of commercial drivers who are in the country illegally.

Memorial service for P.G. teacher

PINE CONE STAFF REPORT

A CELEBRATION of life will be held this weekend for a beloved Pacific Grove kindergarten teacher and longtime resident who passed away in November.

Gary Williams, who was born at Fort Ord on Aug. 19, 1954, and taught at Robert Down Elementary School for almost 40 years, died surrounded by his family Nov. 4 after a lengthy illness. He was 71.

His celebration of life is Saturday, Jan.

10, at 1 p.m. at Greater Victory Temple Church, 1620 Broadway in Seaside.

Williams, who grew up at a home on Sixth Street in Pacific Grove and graduated from P.G. High, was known by friends and family for creating “worlds full of creativity, stories and delight.” A lifelong San Francisco Giants fan and a man of faith, he also enjoyed traveling.

He is survived by his wife, Diane, their three children, three siblings, and his grandson and stepmother.

Visit Carmel annual meeting Jan. 15

PINE CONE STAFF REPORT

VISIT CARMEL, the City of Carmel’s tourism agency funded by hotel and restaurant patrons, will hold its annual meeting and reception at La Playa Hotel Jan. 15 from 3:30 to 5 p.m. The event is open to all community members and will afford them the opportunity to learn more

about the nonprofit “and the many opportunities for visitor-serving businesses in the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea.”

The presentation will take place in the hotel’s Pacific Room and will include appetizers and drinks.

La Playa is located at Camino Real and Eighth. Email info@carmelcalifornia.com to RSVP.

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CSUMB renovates old hall, trades office space for student housing

By CHRIS COUNTS

WORK IS underway on the renovation of Cal State Monterey Bay's 47,000-square-foot Gavilan Hall to convert office space into housing for more than 200 students. Constructed in the 1970s, the building is located at Inter-Garrison Road and Sixth Avenue.

The project is being done to help the university meet the housing needs of its growing enrollment.

"Renovations to the three-story building include replacing plumbing, heating and ventilation systems, and providing all new restrooms and accessibility upgrades," the university announced. "The courtyard will be furnished with an outdoor lounge and other amenities."

The nearby 2,600-square-foot Gavilan Hall Annex building will also be renovated, providing "a common space for residents with a study room, TV room, lounge and kitchen.

The project is expected to cost \$20 million to complete, according to CSUMB spokesperson Walter Ryce.

A bright future

CSUMB President Vanya Quiñones celebrated the start of construction Dec. 4. Located in one of the country's tightest housing markets, the university hasn't added any new housing since 2015.

"Today we gathered with members of

our community as we mark the beginning of a new chapter in our campus story," Quiñones said. "The Gavilan Hall project launch marks more than the renovation of a building — it is a commitment to our students, to their success and to the continued



PHOTO/CSUMB

Cal State Monterey Bay is spending \$20 million to renovate a hall to create housing for more than 200 students.

vitality of our campus experience."

The school's president declared that "each floor, each common area, each study lounge will be a place to build new ideas."

"Each brick, beam and room represents an investment in our students and the future of our university," she added. "It shows the bright future we have ahead."

If all goes according to plan, the housing will be ready for students by fall 2026.

According to a state environmental document, the project will also address the building's "seismic, ADA, and infrastructure deficiencies."

The renovation was designed by LPA, and the contractor is Otto Construction.

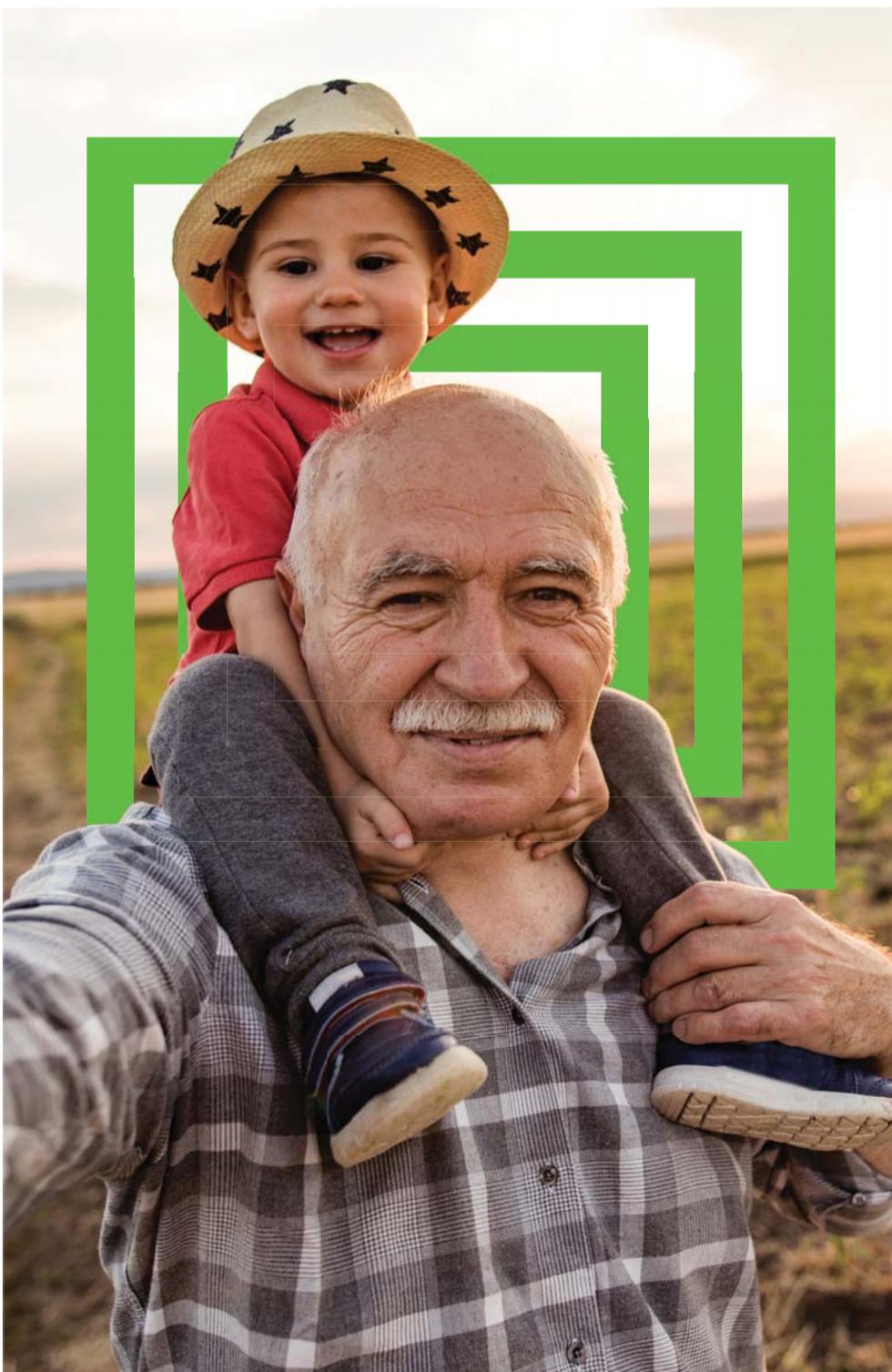
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ROOFS

From page 1A

design guideline that says, “metal, plastic and glass roofs are inappropriate in all neighborhoods,” and required the planning commission to make special findings when deviating from that rule. The practice led to inconsistent decisions — some applicants were allowed to have metal roofs, while others were denied — and prompted the city council to overturn a number of the commission’s denials.

Assistant planner Jake Olander explains in the report he’ll present to the council Jan. 13 that while some have pleaded with the city to streamline approval for metal and other fireproof roofing materials, especially in light of the devastating Los Angeles-area fires a year ago, others maintain they are wrecking the look and feel of the town.

“These residents have stated that the metal roofs are inappropriate for all neighborhoods and believe that they are eroding the village character,” he says. “These residents have also expressed their distaste with the abundance of high-contrast color schemes,” such as dark trim and roofing on a white house.

But based on the planning commission’s direction, Olander revised the policy to allow metal panel roofs and metal tiles, composite shingles, drought-tolerant landscaped roofs, and other materials. “All allowable metal roofing will be a non-glossy/matte finish,” he explains.

Faux material

While a steering committee overseeing the revision of the residential design guidelines — which are the topic of a separate hearing scheduled for the Jan. 13 meeting — objects to roofing made to resemble something else, such as ceramic tiles shaped like wood shakes, Olander left them on the OK list “because their weight, look and cost make them a good alternative to their natural counterparts.”

“If the city council deems the faux materials as inappropriate, they can be removed,” he says.

He then notes that, if approved, the new policy “will allow all appropriate roofing materials to be approved administratively by staff, resulting in reducing review time, permit costs and restrictions for appropriate alternate roofing materials,” while those still deemed “inappropriate” would have to undergo review by the planning commission.

The council will meet during back-to-back sessions Jan. 12 and 13, with Monday’s starting at 3 p.m. with approval of the consent calendar, which includes minutes of prior meetings, the check register, the budget schedule,

a \$90,700 contract for repairs to the Forest Theater stage, and other items of routine business. Consent items can be approved as a whole without comment unless a member of the council or the public requests further discussion.

A few budgetary items will follow, including a presentation on pension liability — a major financial burden for taxpayers — a triennial budget report for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, and a \$216,200 contract for repainting Sunset Center and a \$150,000 allocation toward a new ambulance.

On the water front, the council will be asked to sign a letter of support for removing the State Water Resources Control Board’s moratorium on new hookups, and next will consider appointing two people to the Harrison Memorial Library Board of Trustees.

Finally, councilmembers will review a list of 10 subcommittees — eight of which have been formed since the council did away with all its previously established ad hoc committees a year ago — and consider whether any should be disbanded.

At Tuesday’s regular meeting, which begins at 4:30 p.m. with a couple of presentations and reports from council members and staff, members will be asked to OK,

without further discussion, the final readings of the ordinance banning pickleball in Forest Hill Park and the ordinance amending how addresses are identified. The latter is a necessary component of the shift to numbered street addresses.

They’ll then consider updating the municipal code to comply with the 2025 editions of the state’s administrative, building, residential, energy, mechanical, fire, plumbing, electrical, green building standards, historic building, existing building, and wildland-urban interface codes.

Marisa Bermudez, acting assistant city administrator, will present an updated contract with the police officers association that runs through June 30, 2027, and includes an increased annual cost of \$246,580 for raises and extra pay for special assignments and the like.

The items on roofing and the Design Traditions 1.5 Project — a far-reaching, years-long effort to address and set standards for nearly every aspect of residential design, from rooflines to potted plants, and everything in between — will round out the session.

For more information, including full agenda packets and how to participate in person and online, visit ci.carmel.ca.us and click on the “meetings” tab.



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Since the inception of the Scholars' Cup in 2009, the Men's Golf Association (MGA) at Quail has raised over \$1,000,000 while awarding 153 scholarships to deserving young men and women throughout Monterey County. Additionally, grants of \$87,000 have been awarded to Rancho Cielo Youth Campus and Pay It Forward Foundation to expand the program to include Career Technical Education as well as traditional college education.

The Scholarship Fund recognizes the qualities of academic excellence, a strong commitment to community service and financial need. As we enter the new year, we reflect on the generosity of those who contributed, sponsored, volunteered, and participated in the 2025 Scholars' Cup Tournament at the Quail Golf Club; and we especially appreciate the Quail Golf Club and team for its generous support of this event. We are thankful to have exceeded our goal and appreciate all the support for our community scholarship program in making a real difference in these graduates' lives.



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If you would like to learn more about the MGA Scholarship Fund; recipients, scholarship opportunities or how to contribute, please contact Nic Canning: nic@canningproperties.com | 831.241.4458



HOTEL

From page 1A

a king bed and top out at \$950 for a 774-square-foot Bay View Fireplace suite, the website says.

“Like a breath of fresh coastal air, Kimpton Mirador Pacific Grove welcomes guests with a spirit of ease unique to California’s spectacular Central Coast, both restorative and revitalizing,” says Kimpton.

While pets aren’t allowed to stay overnight, and there’s no pool or spa, hotel amenities include a health and fitness center, vehicle EV charging and valet parking.

“If you find yourself instantly relaxing upon arrival, that’s by design,” the hotel says. “Our luxe amenities are inspired by serenity and connection, with warm, soulful gathering spaces including our verdant courtyard and our restaurant, The Caledonian.”

The Caledonian will offer American cuisine and is accepting online reservations starting Feb. 4, the same date as room reservations. The bar will be open until 11 p.m.,

with happy hour from 4 to 6 p.m.

Pacific Grove Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Christi Metzner said the chamber is eager for the hotel — which is a major upgrade to the city’s downtown — to open. She suggested that it will complement the city’s smaller inns.

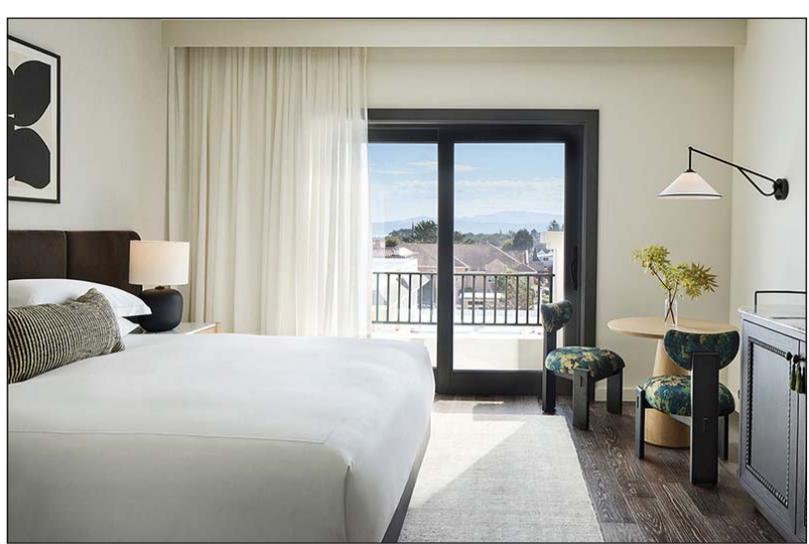
“All of Pacific Grove’s hotels and inns are unique,” Metzner told The Pine Cone. “From budget-friendly to elevated luxury to large conferences, visitors can enjoy a wide variety of accommodations.”

Pacific Grove and its residents will benefit from the hotel through increased tax revenue.

Mayor Nick Smith said he’s also excited about it, predicting, like Metzner, that it would draw more people to shop and dine in Pacific Grove and be a financial boost to city hall.

“I believe the hotel will help the city with some revenue, which we need,” Smith told The Pine Cone Wednesday. “I think it will help strengthen our local businesses as well.”

Mogensen said Pacific Grove estimates “the first full year of transient occupancy tax generated by the Kimpton will be about \$1 million.”



PHOTO/KIMPTON MIRADOR

The new Kimpton Mirador in Pacific Grove isn’t hosting any guests quite yet, but it’s offering glimpses of the hotel on its website.

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At River House Books
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Sunday, January 11, from 2-4 p.m.

Not cookie cutter

Crews razed a dilapidated group of buildings on the property at Central, Fountain and Grand avenues which had been home to a Mexican restaurant, benefit shop, animal adoption center and other businesses. The former

tenants vacated the property in late 2022. The hotel has been on the drawing board for more than a decade. The general manager is Julia Chaland.

Business consultant Moe Ammar, Metzner’s predecessor at the chamber, called Kimpton Mirador a “game changer” and suggested it would draw well-heeled visitors.

“While we appreciate all visitors, regardless of their economic status, Kimpton guests are high end,” Ammar said. “They have done an outstanding job reaching out to residents and businesses and will be a great corporate neighbor.”

Architecturally, Ammar said Kimpton Mirador is a “perfect fit” because it doesn’t resemble other “cookie cutter” hotels on the Peninsula and “highlights Pacific Grove’s history.”

While Kimpton Mirador was undergoing public review, opponents said it would be too large for the property, would cause parking and traffic issues and mar the town’s character, but there’s been little criticism since the hotel was approved.

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New hotels have been a rarity in the Monterey Peninsula. A SpringHill Suites by Marriott in Marina opened in 2017, while another Marriott hotel in Sand City, next to Costco, is nearing completion.

Kimpton Mirador’s operator, IHG Hotels & Resorts, otherwise known as InterContinental Hotels Group, also operates The Clement on Cannery Row.

Robert Leach, president of commercial real estate firm West River Hotels, paid \$100,000 to Pacific Grove in late 2022 for the city’s review of the hotel plans.

In May 2023, the hotel property was sold by Rohnert Park LP, Belvnu LLC, Travel Inn Associates LP and Durrell Pacific Grove LLC to another limited liability company called IC Pacific Grove Property Owner for \$10.8 million.

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REMAINS

From page 7A

someone who’d been definitively told the remains were those of a loved one.

“I had to call and say, ‘There’s absolutely no way at this point we can tell you this is or is not your family member,’” he said, which meant yet more pain for the recipient of that call.

“Be careful with what you say,” Rosas cautioned the public, regarding posting comments about this and similar cases, “because the family members are reading these things, and they have impacts.”

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HOTEL

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The Caledonian will offer American cuisine and is accepting online reservations starting Feb. 4, the same date as room reservations. The bar will be open until 11 p.m.,

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Dogs are welcome, too, according to the general manager.

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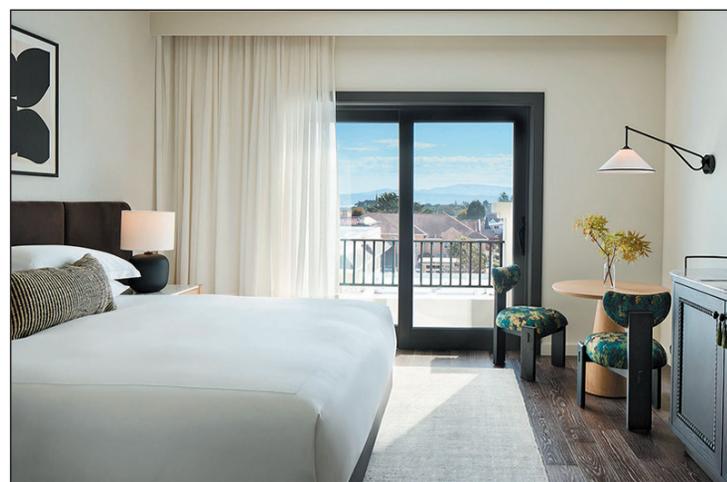
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PLEA

From page 1A

A consultant's January 2020 study concluded the work in The Pit caused the damage on the northern side of the gallery, including sagging of as much as 2 inches. The art association blames the driving of pilings into the ground next to its building and says the contractor dug holes underneath its foundation.

"We have been ignored for seven years," art association board Vice President Joaquin Turner said when the fundraising effort began. "We haven't been able to get anywhere with the city, anywhere with the developer or anywhere with the developer's insurance company. They aren't even acknowledging us anymore."

The association had an engineer and a contractor draw up plans for reinforcing the gallery and secured permits, but the estimated costs exceed the equivalent of the art group's annual revenue, representatives have said.

The group's bid for donations marks the second direct plea in its 99-year history. In general, it's funded through the sales of its member artists' work, with the creators collecting 60 percent and the association keeping the rest.

'Generous supporters'

"CAA's generous supporters have helped us raise just over \$200,000 of the almost half-million dollars we need for restoration, through the Community Foundation for Monterey County (cfmco.org/CarmelArt) and the annual year-end MC Gives fundraising platform," Aberg said this week. "But CAA still needs to raise at least another \$200,000 to cover the gigantic costs to save our gallery's foundation. These costs are necessary through no fault of our own."

Efforts to recover some of those funds from the former developers continue, according to Aberg, though, as has happened in the past, mediation sessions have been scheduled and then canceled by the opposing side.

"In early November 2025, the insurance company counsel for Leidig/Draper extended to CAA their third invitation to sit down to mediate a resolution," she recounted. "It sounded as serious as their two earlier invitations — both of which they canceled on CAA at the last minute."

They settled on Jan. 20, and board members spent the holiday season gathering the necessary records and details to prove the financial impacts of the damage, which she said so far amount to \$418,000, plus \$100,000 in legal fees. They turned over the documents, but the attorney's office "did not sign off on the mediation paperwork, which

would have moved everyone forward toward the mediation date." Instead, on Jan. 5, the association's attorney, Steve Pearson, notified Turner and board President Jeffrey Becom that Leidig/Draper's counsel was "again renegeing on the agreed mediation date and is requiring that it be reset" for sometime in March.

Plea to city

"Naturally, CAA officers will reply with dates that work for CAA. But this repetitious delaying tactic is getting very old," Aberg said. "In my opinion, they now possess access to valuable information that they can try to use against us in the future mediation process, if that should ever happen."

At next week's Carmel City Council meeting, Becom and Turner are planning to ask the taxpayers for help, according to Aberg.

"They will remind the Carmel council of the CAA's nearly 100 years' worth of contributions to the village's artistic culture. They will remind the Carmel council that CAA is on every 'top 10 sites to visit' list for tourists," she said, and that the organization's members have created "more than 70 percent of California's most distinguished art history" since 1927.

"And they will ask the city council to approve CAA's request for a \$50,000 grant to be used towards CAA's capital campaign for repairing our building," she said.

While the association wages its battles, demolition work is underway next door, where Patrice Pastor, who

purchased The Pit from Leidig/Draper for \$9 million in March 2020, is planning to construct his long-sought mixed-use Ulrika Plaza project, which the planning commission approved in 2023 following several years of hearings and redesigns.

According to those plans, the buildings will have a total of 22,443 square feet of floor area, not including basement space, with a 28-space parking garage, 9,000 square feet of retail space divided between 14 shops, and 12 one- and two-bedroom apartments ranging from 622 square feet to 1,863 square feet. The structures will be in Contemporary, Craftsman, Spanish Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival styles, and the layout includes interblock walkways, interior courtyards and new sidewalks, curbs and gutters. The landscape plan calls for trees and plants on the property and in the public right of way, as well as green roofs.

For the past few weeks, crews have been using heavy equipment and large dump trucks to dismantle and haul away the remnants of Leidig/Draper's partially built parking garage, cutting and removing the concrete slab, columns and perimeter concrete walls. The process is expected to take up to two months.

Future phases that will be addressed in a separate management plan submitted with the full building permit application include construction of the complex' superstructure (estimated at four to six months), exterior construction (two to four months), interior buildout (two to four months) and landscaping and site paving (one to two months), according to documents filed with the city.

DEBT

From page 1A

insurance trust fund, but faced an unprecedented \$24 billion in claims, leading California to borrow the aforementioned \$20 billion from the federal government, and to date it hasn't made a dent in the principal of that loan.

At the end of 2025, the debt had reached \$23.3 billion and is on track to keep growing in 2026, despite the state's businesses making payments of \$643 million annually.

Most other states paid their Covid debts using federal stimulus grants, but California lawmakers used their \$36.5 billion in funding, which came from the Cares Act of 2020 or the American Rescue Plan of 2021, for other priorities, such as homelessness, learning loss in K-12 schools, and broadband internet infrastructure.

Newsom had another chance to repay the unemployment insurance loans in 2022 when the state had a historic

\$97.5 billion surplus but didn't take that shot, either.

Newsom's last year in office will be plagued with talk about money problems. Four years after having a big surplus, California is facing an \$18 billion funding gap this year.

Legislative analyst Gabe Petek estimates the deficit will soon grow to \$35 billion a year, unless something is done about it — like making massive cuts to programs or raising taxes big time.

The deficit, like the payroll tax increases, has roots in pandemic aid from the federal government being poorly managed. The \$97.5 billion surplus Newsom touted in 2022 was never really a surplus, but merely the windfall of one-time federal stimulus funds inflating revenue.

Newsom and the legislature spent the money as though it was a permanent increase in cash flow. Together, he and state leaders added new programs — such as healthcare for the undocumented — and spent money that never

See DEFICIT page 20A

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REAL ESTATE, BIG SUR

DEFICIT

From page 19A

materialized in subsequent years.

California's budget is highly reliant on the state's economy doing well, but with that 5.6 percent unemployment rate, it's fair to call the economy sluggish.

The unemployment rate pencils out to more than a million Californians who are jobless, and it's only exacerbating the unemployment insurance problem. In May, the Employment Development Department forecast it would pay out \$7.4 billion in claims in 2025 but collect only \$5 billion in unemployment payroll taxes.

In 2024, the Legislative Analyst's Office warned lawmakers were failing to address a "broken" unemployment insurance model, and that tax collections "routinely fall short of covering benefit costs." The office projects the unemployment fund will run an average deficit of \$2 billion a year if lawmakers don't act — which they haven't. While the system may be broken, what would help is getting more people working.

The Golden State has become notoriously expensive for businesses, with high commercial rent, stringent regulations and high labor costs. Now we can add increasing payroll taxes to the list of reasons businesses may look to employ people elsewhere. "Governor Newsom likes to claim he does not support broad tax increases, but by refusing to pay off California's unemployment insurance debt when a surplus was available, he and other Democrats chose to let those tax increases go into effect," wrote California Senate Republicans in an October budget analysis.

Partisan politics aside, driving out business and people has cost California beaucoup bucks. The same analysis cited data showing \$7 billion less in income-tax revenue each year since 2022. Unfortunately, the California Business Roundtable isn't hopeful 2026 will bring about a more friendly business climate in the form of debt relief.

"We're not hopeful at all," Lapsley said on California Politics 360. "There was a deliberate decision by leaders of the state to make businesses pay for this."

Newsom is scheduled to announce his new budget on Friday. We'll find out if he plans to face the deficit he helped create or if that will be a job for his successor.



JAMES 'JIM' ANTHONY PAOLETTI

NOV. 14, 1958 – DEC. 17, 2025

James "Jim" Anthony Paoletti, age 67, passed away peacefully on Dec. 17, 2025, following a courageous battle with complications from Parkinson's disease. A remarkable human being who brought joy and light to everyone he met, Jim touched the very core of what makes us human through his life's work and his spirit.

Born on Nov. 14, 1958, in Burbank, California, to the late Anthony and Thelma Paoletti, Jim's journey was defined by a profound dedication to music and education. He attended Cal State LA, where he earned his bachelor's degree, master's degree and teaching credential. This academic foundation paved the way for a distinguished career spanning more than 30 years with the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District. As a teacher and director, Jim mentored students from elementary through high school, teaching all instruments with a vibrant enthusiasm that was infectious.

Jim was deeply drawn to providing musical experiences to children through Orchestra in the Schools, a nonprofit youth orchestra, where he served as CEO and music director. He believed that every child, regardless of their circumstances, deserved a solid foundation and the opportunity to advance in music and in life. Under his guidance, many students were transformed, becoming not only new musicians but outstanding people in the community.

While he taught every instrument, Jim's own heart belonged to the tuba. He was a mainstay of the Monterey Peninsula's musical landscape, performing with the Wild Coast Brass Ensemble and the Monterey County Pops! He was a true champion for the arts, driven by a sincere desire to share the "magic world of music" with his students. The Monterey area is undoubtedly a better place because of his tireless advocacy and dedication; he was a champion for his students, and they were the true beneficiaries of his life's work.

Outside of the classroom and the concert hall, Jim was an avid and skilled sailor. A proud member of the Monterey Peninsula Yacht Club, he spent his summer breaks seeking adventure on the water, often sailing to Catalina Island or through the San Francisco Bay. Whether on stage or at sea, Jim's life was marked by energy and a love for discovery.

Jim is survived by his devoted wife, Emma; his son, Jacob; his granddaughter, Jamie; his brother, George; and his sister-in-law, Sue. He also leaves behind his constant companion, his cat, Stanley. He was preceded in death by his beloved parents, Anthony and Thelma. The family would like to express their sincere appreciation for their loving care to Eva Kamitonin and Hospice Community Hospital.

Jim Paoletti was a man who understood that music and memories are the things that connect us all. As we mourn his passing, we hold onto the gift he left behind: the music he played, the students he inspired, and the memories that will remain forever.

Family and friends are invited to attend a memorial, which will be announced at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation in James Paoletti's honor to Power Over Parkinson's.

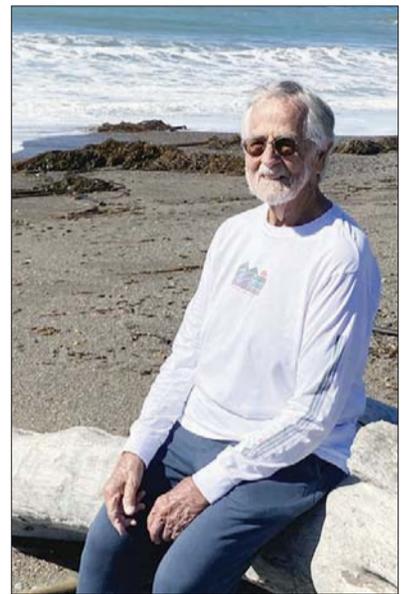
MICHAEL HENRY FICKEL

Feb. 8, 1945 ❖ Jan. 4, 2026

Michael was 80 years old at the time of his passing at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula following complications from surgeries. He was a resident of both Pacific Grove and San Diego, splitting his time between the two cities he loved. Michael was an educator and administrator for more than 40 years in both Laguna Beach and Poway Unified School Districts. After retiring from PUSD, he went to work as an adjunct professor for California State University San Marcos. His professional career always included forming bike clubs for young riders. He was especially proud of the Ride Across America (RAC) club he co-founded, an epic journey that partnered 5th graders and their parent/guardian in a five-day, 230-mile bike ride from the Arizona border to the Pacific Ocean.

Michael is survived by his beloved wife and best friend of 44 years, Kathy; his stepdaughters, Scarlett Riesselman of Martinez and Tricia Bridgewater (Richard) of Independence, MO; niece, Karen Long (Richard) of Winchester; cousins Norma, Tracy and Robin Brainard of Chula Vista; granddaughter, Kelsie Frederick and grandson, Brian Frederick of San Diego and several great-nephews and great-nieces.

Services are planned at a later date in San Diego. In lieu of flowers, the family has suggested donations in his memory to Chautauqua Hall. Donations are being accepted online through the Pacific Grove Heritage Society website, pacificgroveheritage.org/chautauqua-hall-project-2024, or by check.



ROBERT CLINTON ZOBEL

Robert Clinton Zobel, aka Bob, was born on April 21, 1943, in Salinas, California, to Clinton J. Zobel, D.O., M.D., and Marian Zobel. Bob was a wonderful human, always laughing, smiling and shining his light. He grew up in Salinas, where he was highly involved in the Future Farmers of America at Salinas High School, raising, showing and selling prized cattle in auctions at the Salinas Valley Fair in King City, the Monterey County Fair and the Santa Cruz County Fair in Watsonville. My father was a take-charge kind of person. He made special hand-selected feed for his cattle, vaccinated and trimmed their hooves, built a barn ... he did the whole deal.



My father graduated from Salinas High School in 1961 and from California State University, Fresno in 1965. Fresno is where he met my mother, Patricia, in 1966. She was the woman of his dreams and because he was patient, funny and persistent, they bonded and eventually fell in love. Soon after their relationship began, he was drafted to Vietnam where he served from 1969-1971. After Vietnam, my parents traveled Europe and then moved into the Zobel family cabin in Big Sur where they made Christmas ornaments out of pine cones and lived the "hippie life" as they called it, in the redwoods.

My dad was an entrepreneur at heart and started many businesses. In the early '70s he founded Hacienda Hay & Feed Store behind Wolter's Market, where he sold feed, farm animals and hay. His brother Tom was the heart of Hacienda, and worked there long after it was sold to its next owners. The current-day Hacienda still sells hay and feed as well as provides a fun and creative space for the community. He was very proud that his legacy lives on and that the current owners created such a wonderful place.

If you bought a Christmas tree between 1978 and 1992 you probably had an interaction with my dad. He started by planting a Christmas tree farm on Carmel Valley Road close to Mid Valley, and later next to Carmel Middle School. On Scarlett Road he practiced bare root farming, raised seedlings and ran his business: Greener N Ever (Tree Farm). He sold and shipped trees to countries all over the world, as well as farmed trees in Hawaii. He decorated and put up many of the large Christmas trees around our community, and also had the Christmas tree lot next to Brinton's. He was president of the Christmas Tree Growers Association and traveled to tree farms and trade shows all over the states.

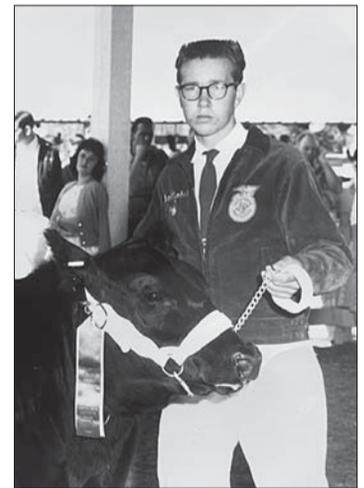
My father eventually left Christmas trees behind and became a financial advisor with New York Life. He loved what he did, which included not only advising and guiding his clients, but sharing wisdom, life stories and experiences, as well as providing a listening ear full of kindness and care. His greatest asset in this career was his genuine desire to help others and a purity in his work with others' finances and money. He was a trustworthy and intelligent man.

My dad made a point to hire people who needed support and also cared deeply for his employees. He hired countless family members, people from his church, as well as military wives and those in need. In all realms, he had an inclination to lift others up and give them the opportunity to succeed. He was a provider, a giver, a helper. He was a gentle man who loved to tease and laugh, one of the nicest people I have ever known.

Lastly, he was a lover of Christ and a faithful member of and dedicated leader at his church, Bethlehem Lutheran.

Bob died Tuesday, Dec. 2, 2025, at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula. He is survived by his wife, Patricia; his daughter, April; Heather Lamas, who was like a daughter; and his siblings, Tom, Phil and Patty; as well as many wonderful nieces and nephews and his beloved grand-cat, Tiger.

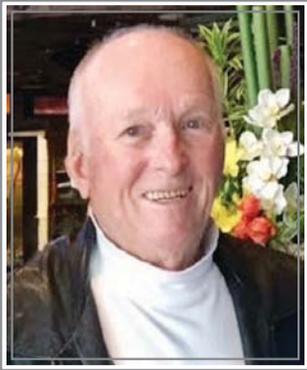
Memorial services will take place 1 to 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 10, 2025, at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 800 Cass St., Monterey. Services will be followed by a celebration of life in the Fellowship Hall from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. If you have one, please wear a Hawaiian shirt to the service in honor of Bob.



JAMES DALE HARRISON

May 6, 1930 – Dec. 17, 2025

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of James "Jim" Harrison on Dec. 17, 2025.



Jim was born on a farm in Woodstock, Minnesota. He enlisted in the United States Navy in 1948, serving his country during the Korean Conflict. In 1954, Jim joined the space program, where he worked on the Apollo Project.

Jim married Mary Currin in 1956 and they moved their young family to Alice Springs, Central Australia in 1969, to continue his work with the space program. Jim lived in Alice Springs for a total of 15 years, from 1969 to 1977 and again from 1983 to 1990. During this time, he was a member of the Alice Springs

Golf Club and was well known for riding his motorcycle to work.

He was a life-long fisherman, a bow-hunter, a golfer and greatly enjoyed playing cards and gardening.

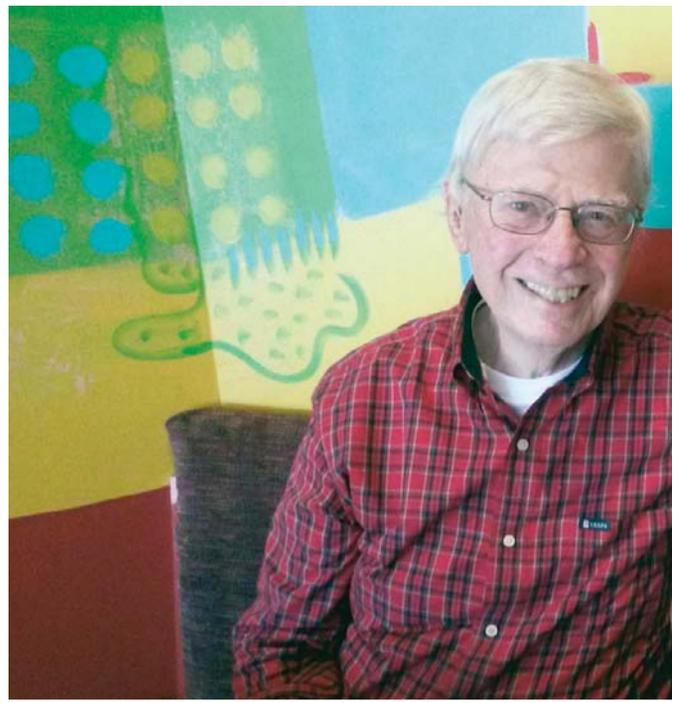
Jim retired in 1990 and moved with Mary to Sedona, Arizona, and later to Dayton, Nevada, where he lived for 28 years. His final years were spent living with his daughters, first in Genoa, Nevada, and then in Carmel Valley, California.

Jim is survived by his three daughters, Sandra McDonald, Linda Nicholudis and Lisa Calnon; his grandchildren, Jessica Rennie, Ross Cleveland and Tessa Cleveland; and his great-granddaughter, Serena Rennie. He was preceded in death by his wife, Mary Harrison; and his grandson, Dustin Rennie.

Jim loved to sing and often used his talent to serenade his wife, Mary. We know he is singing "Moon River" to her once again.

We will miss his sense of humor and his sense of adventure.

May he rest in peace.



IN LOVING MEMORY

ROBERT HUGHES LINDSEY

JAN. 4, 1935 ~ DEC. 19, 2025

Our dearly beloved father, Robert Lindsey, passed away peacefully at Carmel Valley Manor in California with his children, Susan and Steven, by his side as he reunited with the love of his life, Sandra.

Born in Glendale, California, Bob grew up in Inglewood. His childhood was turbulent, shaped by his parent's divorce, his father's abuse and alcoholism, and his mother's gambling, all of which resulted in significant hardships for him growing up. These early challenges became the fuel that propelled him into a remarkable life and career. At the urging of his family, he wrote about his extraordinary life in *Ghost Scribbler*.

Bob was an exceptional journalist, and the author of several award-winning true crime books. He won the 1980 Edgar Award for Best Fact Crime for *The Falcon and the Snowman: A True Story of Friendship and Espionage*, which the New York Times called "one of the best nonfiction spy stories ever to appear in the country."

He graduated from San Jose State where he met Sandra Wurts, whom he lovingly called his "Staff of Life." They met when she attended freshman orientation camp at Asilomar and he was a sophomore camp counselor. After they married, they lived in a small apartment in Gilroy, lived simply, counted their pennies and grew their family. They were married nearly 70 loving years.

Bob began his journalism career at the *San Jose Mercury-News* covering the then small farming town of Gilroy. As the scope of his reporting expanded, he became one of the first journalists to write about the wave of emerging technology companies moving into this central California region, that would come to define Silicon Valley.

In 1968, Bob caught the attention of editors of *The New York Times*, and he was hired to be their aviation reporter. In 1975, he and his family were relocated back to California at his request and he became the Times' LA Bureau Chief. When he retired from *The New York Times*, they presented him with a mock front page referring to him as "The Lindsey Twins" and noted that the net staff loss was three. Known to be extremely prolific, he wrote more than 3,000 articles during his time there.

In 1977 he covered the explosive story of Christopher Boyce and Andrew Daulton Lee, two young men eventually arrested for selling government secrets. This reporting led to his bestselling book, *The Falcon and the Snowman*, which was later adapted into a major motion picture in 1985. After Boyce escaped prison, Bob followed that up with *The Flight of the Falcon*. Bob subsequently wrote *Irresistible Impulse* and *A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Money, Murder and Deceit*, which won the SWA Gold Dagger Award for Nonfiction in 1989.

He assisted both Ronald Reagan and Marlon Brando, who became a close friend, in writing their autobiographies; *Ronald Reagan: An American Life* and *Brando: Songs My Mother Taught Me*.

Bob was known for his kindness, integrity and insatiable curiosity about the world and the people in it. He was deeply engaged at Carmel Valley Manor where he lived with Sandy for 25 joyful years. He served as the resident representative on the board of directors for nine years, working tirelessly on behalf of residents.

Bob amazed his family with his extraordinary memory, recalling the details of their lives — jobs, friends and moments with astonishing clarity. He was a devoted and playful grandfather, delighting his four grandchildren — Erin, Ryan, Adrian and Jessie, with countless hours of horsey-back rides. To his family he was a never-ending source of love, encouragement and unwavering support.

Our family extends heartfelt gratitude to the compassionate staff of Carmel Valley Manor who provided such consistently loving care. What incredibly caring souls work there. Their kindness has made all the difference in each of our lives. Thank you also to the wonderful hospice nurses who tended to him with such great care.

Dad, we miss you so deeply. We saw how brave you were. We are endlessly proud of you, and profoundly grateful to be your kids. You were an extraordinarily warm and loving father. We cherish our memories of you and our family, and are comforted knowing you are now reunited with our Mom, your beloved Sandy. You are both always and forever embedded in our hearts.

Obituary Notices

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Anne Papineau (831) 274-8654 anne@carmelpinecone.com

RICHARD 'RICH' FOX

Richard "Rich" Fox passed on Nov. 15, 2025. Born in New York, Rich was a generous spirit with a keen intelligence, a quick wit, and a kind, open heart that guided everything he did.

He attended Johns Hopkins University and later Northwestern Law School, thriving in environments that challenged his mind. After completing his education, he made his way to California for the sunshine, eventually settling in Malibu and later finding true contentment in Carmel Valley.

Professionally, Rich dedicated his life to service. This was evident in every aspect of his life, from organizing political campaigns that inspired change to the clients he worked with. He founded a strategic communications company with offices worldwide whose mission was to make a meaningful difference and have real impact. He traveled the world to advise some of the world's most respected nonprofit organizations, including Doctors Without Borders, UNICEF, United Farm Workers, the Red Cross, and leading environmental organizations such as, World Wildlife Fund, NRDC and Defenders of Wildlife. Through his work, Rich gave voice to causes that worked to make the world a better place. He continued to consult up until the end.

Rich's three greatest passions were politics, sports (he was an avid Warriors fan) and most of all, his wife Elizabeth whom he met in L.A. Together, they moved from Malibu to Carmel Valley in 2009 and Rich quickly became politically involved (as he was in Malibu) with the Carmel Valley Association offering counsel and advice as a board member for more than 10 years.

For eight years, Rich faced health challenges with extraordinary grace. He never complained, choosing instead to focus on others always ready to share his sharp insights on politics, or the latest sports game. His resilience inspired everyone who knew him.

To those who loved him, Rich was much more than his impressive achievements. He was a man of rare intellect and deep kindness, a devoted husband whose empathy and humor filled any room with light. His conversations were as engaging as they were insightful, leaving friends and family feeling seen, heard and deeply valued.

Rich is survived by his loving wife, Elizabeth; and his devoted brother, Barry, who will forever carry his wisdom, laughter and remarkable heart in their memories. His absence leaves an immeasurable void, yet his legacy of integrity, compassion and love will continue to live on in all whose lives he touched.



Editorial

The cause of inflation

CONSUMER PRICES in the United States rose more than 21 percent while Joe Biden was president, and if you want to understand why that happened, you need look no further than Caitlin Conrad's column on this week's front page, which explains not only the source of the inflation, but also why California employers are suddenly facing major new unemployment taxes.

Sacramento, she reports, borrowed more than \$20 billion from the federal government to pay for the lavish unemployment benefits that were needed to keep the state's workers afloat while the economy ground to a halt during Covid. On top of that, the state received more than \$36 billion in special grants from Washington during the pandemic.

That's \$56 billion from just three programs — money the state immediately and happily spent.

But money isn't something that can just be doled out freely whenever the sun doesn't shine. To retain its value, money must be backed, dollar for dollar, by productivity.

You might think that money is something ordained by the government or banks. But at its core, money isn't even a "thing." Money is a social agreement to facilitate exchange.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle explained this around 2,300 years ago when he observed that money solves the inefficiencies of barter — when people directly swap goods or services — by serving as a medium of exchange, a way to keep track of who owns what, and a way to store value.

Money emerged organically — again, without any government involvement — when people long ago agreed on various things to fill these roles. These early forms of money not only didn't require governments or banks, they didn't even need a physical form. The key was acceptance by others, something that remains true today. If no one recognizes something as money, it's just a useless token, but when they do, voilà, it carries the ability to buy things that can have tremendous value — all in exchange for a few pieces of paper or some numbers in a computer.

The way to create money, then, is to create value by working, investing, inventing something, or even making a great discovery.

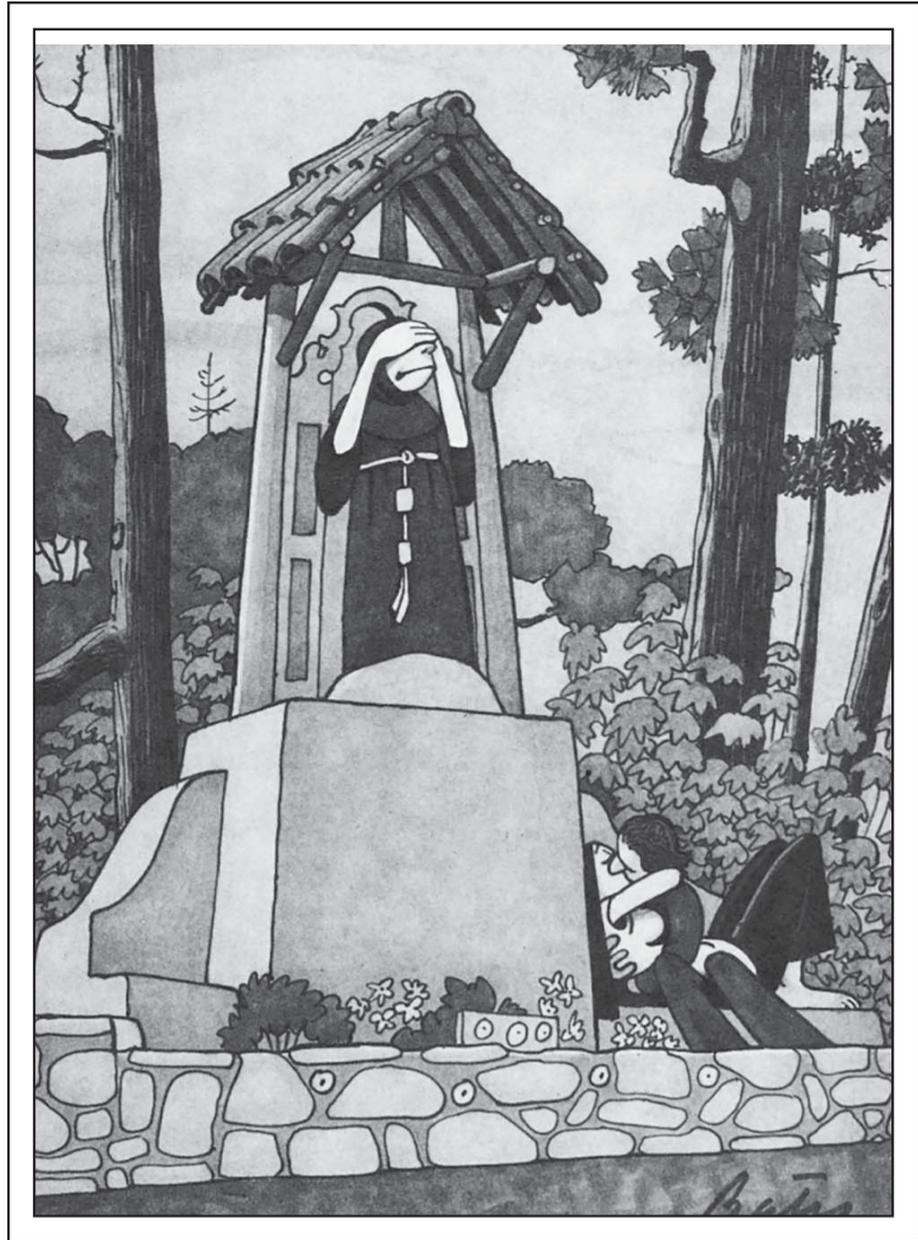
When governments impose taxes by taking money from people who earned it, that money has genuine value, and no inflation can result when the government spends such value-backed taxes. Same thing when the government spends money it borrows from people who earned it. But when the government spends money it does not collect in taxes or borrow from someone who earned it, the result is inflation, because that money is injected into the economy without anything being produced to back it up. And this is exactly what happened during Covid. The government spent colossal sums that weren't backed by anything except Washington's say-so.

According to its own data, during the Covid emergency (2020 to 2022) the federal government ran cumulative budget deficits totaling approximately \$7.3 trillion, and about 45 percent of that, or \$3.3 trillion, was borrowed by the government from itself — which means it was created out of thin air.

Some of that free money was transferred to the kind folks who represent us in Sacramento, which they spent for items of real value. Same thing in other states, and at the federal government itself. And that is what created inflation.

California's government cannot create its own money. It must pay back the sums it borrowed from Washington with real money, which is why unemployment taxes are rising. But when business owners pay them, they can at least comfort themselves that the taxes they pay don't make prices go up.

BEST of BATES



Letters to the Editor

Letters cannot exceed 350 words, and must include the author's name and home town. The Pine Cone only accepts letters to the editor by email. Please submit your letters to mail@carmelpinecone.com

Recovering from the storm

Dear Editor,

As we return to a normal existence following the Christmas 2025 Days of Darkness, many thank you recognitions should be extended. To councilmember Hans Buder for the leadership role he undertook as the hours of lethargic response from PG&E climbed, and for his interactions with managers of the utility, including a Christmas Day conversation with the CEO. To councilmember Jeff Baron for his strong advocacy on behalf of Carmel in the Christmas Day CEO discussion. To our public safety/first responders and public works staff who keep our citizens and our assets protected during the powerless days and darkened nights. To our city managers who provided our citizens refuge at our community buildings. And a special acknowledgement and thanks to The Carmel Pine Cone. Their newsy updates brought light as to what was happening to those of us in the dark throughout our ordeal. Thanks to each of you for your good efforts during the aftermath of the storms.

Doug Schmitz, Carmel

Local electeds are AWOL

Dear Editor,

Supervisor Kate Daniels, the mayors of Carmel, Pacific Grove and Monterey and their city council colleagues are absent without leave. Our annual power blackouts in the winter and the threat of catastrophic wildfire in the summer are caused by their neglect of the same problem. They refuse to selectively remove trees on taxpayer-owned land and rights-of-way and empower residents to do the same to prevent power blackouts and the risk of catastrophic wildfire during high winds. They are not problem-solvers, but problem-enablers.

This is not a money problem. It's one of will. The county and city governments receive gobs of revenue from tourists paying the hotel tax and from property tax reassessments on multimillion-dollar homes, and yet our county supervisor and council members won't lift a pinky finger to address this public safety problem. Why aren't Supervisor Daniels and city officials organizing a joint public forum with PG&E officials to explain and then address the tree problem? It is bigger than one jurisdiction.

One can only surmise that local electeds value the shallow-rooted Monterey tree, whether dead or alive, and the eucalyptus tree, known in fire circles as the "Roman Candle," over the well being and safety of residents, including children, the elderly and disabled. They think that residents will passively accept this man-made problem. I hope not. Statesmen solve problems before

See LETTERS page 27A

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Westminster Kennel Club to honor Carmel's top dog lady

A VIKING would be impressed by Patricia Craige Trotter and her Norwegian elkhounds. In Trotter's hands, the national dog of Norway hasn't strayed far from its 6,000-year-old reputation as a courageous guardian and hunter of antlered creatures 10 times its size. Trotter, who turned 90 last week, has loved them for the better part of a century.

"I've always been dedicated to this breed. They've romped and hiked with me all these years," said Trotter, who registered her first litter with the American Kennel Club as a teenager in 1951. She went on to breed approximately 30 generations of champions, the Vin-Melcas, a dynasty so synonymous with extraordinary hounds that the world's greatest dog show is dedicating a trophy in her honor. The 150th Annual Westminster Kennel Club event broadcasts live on Fox from Madison Square Garden, Jan. 31-Feb. 3, when locals can watch Trotter present the new Vin-Melca Trophy to this year's No. 1 Hound — a title her own have claimed 11 times.

Trotter is known for breeding the top male and female in the history of Norwegian elkhounds, and their direct descendants romp the Carmel Views neighborhood Trotter has called home since 1969. Rain or shine, Trotter, Fancy, Roddy and JJ are up at 6 every morning for their first



PHOTO/COURTESY WESTMINSTER KENNEL CLUB

Patricia Craige Trotter jogs a victory lap with Daggarwood Delight, who won the Hound Group in 2017. It was Trotter's 11th triumph at Westminster.

1992. Flying to show her dogs on weekends, always back by Monday morning, Trotter found fun and purpose educating eighth graders in her other favorite subject: American history.

Speaking of heritage, Trotter is outspoken about the foundational values of competitions like Westminster, first held in 1877. The earliest dog shows were a way for sportsmen to gather the finest stock among "purpose-bred" dogs that excelled at the jobs they were born to do. Preserving ancient instincts takes a curious blend of love and science, and purebred breeding is an unusual calling

See LIVES page 25A

Great Lives

By LILY PATTERSON

walk of the day. Fifty-pound charges aside, Trotter is easy to spot in a baseball cap that reads, "I'm My Dog's Personal Trainer."

The neighborhood sits on the hill opposite Carmel Middle School, where Trotter (then Mrs. Craige) taught from 1962 to

From the mayor's desk —

Is this the year we choose our future?

By DALE BYRNE

AS WE enter 2026, I've been reflecting on a year of listening to our community. After dozens of council meetings, 27 Pine Cone columns and hundreds of conversations, one core question keeps surfacing: What do we want Carmel to look like in the future? Today, many of our challenges are being managed by momentum. To keep Carmel special, shouldn't we be making intentional choices rather than letting the future simply happen to us?

Traffic and tourism gap

Every year, our businesses and the city spend millions inviting the world to our village. It's working — people are coming. But we are doing this without a clear plan to manage the impact of their cars and their presence. The gridlock after Christmas wasn't a one-time event; it was a sign that we are inviting guests to a house that isn't quite ready for the crowd, leaving little room for residents.

While we deliberate, neighboring

communities are not standing still. They are investing heavily in new hotels and retail to attract the same visitors who support our economy, while also building housing for the workers we all depend on. If we don't address our aging infrastructure and housing needs, we risk losing both our competitive edge and the employees who keep our businesses running.

Reality of housing and parking

"Doing nothing" is no longer a viable option. To meet state mandates, we are required to provide 149 affordable housing units on three city-owned parking lots. If we build these without replacing the parking, we lose essential spaces. Worse, our current backup compliance approach could force up to 300 additional cars onto already crowded side streets. We need a strategy that meets state requirements without degrading our quality of life.

The last serious conversation about adding parking ended in 1990 with a Pine

See MAYOR page 26A

The timeless form of a woman

THE BLACK-and-white fine art photography of Alli Wood looks very much in place on the walls of her Carmel gallery, where it hangs alongside images by some of the most celebrated photographers of all time: Edward and Brett Weston, Imogen Cunningham, Roman Loranc and Ruth Bernhard, among others.

Somewhere around the year 2000, when her career as a fine art photographer was merely an aspiration, Wood was an employee at Carmel's Photography West,

was shooting artistic photographs of the female form, a genre that still dominates her portfolio.

Wood will feature those images in her first solo show, "The Shape of Her," which launches May 9 with a reception from 2 to 6 p.m.

The exhibition continues through May 24 at her gallery, Oficino Uno, on the south side of Ocean Avenue between San Carlos and Dolores, located upstairs from The Club Carmel boutique and Carmel Coffee House.

"When I first saw Ruth Bernhard's work, I realized I had never seen anybody photograph a woman like that," she said. "There was just something very sensual about the way she interpreted and appreciated the female form."

Carmel's Artists

By DENNIS TAYLOR

co-founded by Brett Weston. Bernhard, a client of the gallery, walked through the door.

"How many times do you get to meet your idol?" she reflected rhetorically on her encounter with the famous German artist who became internationally renowned for photographing women in the nude.

"She was really tiny ... about this high," Wood said, holding her hand at armpit height. "She was walking all around, looking at everything we had, with these very big eyes."

And, then, the day got better.

It clicked

"The coolest thing was we went out for dinner afterwards," Wood said. "And she told me, 'You've got to look at the world with a child's eyes. Pick up your salad and eat it with your hands ... Follow your dreams!'"

At that moment, "something just clicked," Wood remembered.

Like Bernhard, her emerging passion

Grocery stores and bus stops

Wood strives to create a vintage appearance in her own art using old-school analog methods — black-and-white film, a twin-lens Rolleiflex camera, and hands-on processing and printing in the darkroom of her studio-gallery.

Her images have been likened to those of other fine art photography giants, including Alfred Steiglitz, Horst B. Horst and Manuel Bravo.

The vast majority of Wood's models are local. Many are posing for the first time.

"I meet 90 percent of my models in the grocery store, at a bus stop, or wherever I see them," she said. "I just say, 'Hi, I noticed you. I really like the way you look. I'm a photographer,' and we go from there."

"Most of them are just regular people — not professional models. They want to do it for themselves."

Some have gone on to do additional modeling work, posing for magazines or walking the runway in fashion shows, she said.

Wood grew up in Melbourne, Australia, "painfully shy" but extremely creative — an artist and a dancer. At 21, she left her home to seek out adventures all over the world, traveling to more than 30 countries.

"My dad was true English stock — you were expected to go to school, you had to go to university — and I just didn't want to do that," she reflected. "So he was very disappointed, and I spent a lot of years thinking of myself as a disappointment."

Her father later made peace with her bohemian lifestyle, expressing pride in the accomplishments of the youngest of his five

See ARTIST page 26A



PHOTO/ALLI WOOD

Australian-born Alli Wood specializes in photographing the female form. She's planning a solo exhibition at her gallery in May.



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5K benefiting kids debuts Jan. 10

By MARY SCHLEY

THE INAUGURAL Carmel-by-the-Sea Run & Walk 5K, which benefits a youth-focused nonprofit, will take place Jan. 10 at 8:30 a.m. The walk/run through town will follow a similar route to the now defunct Run in the Name of Love, starting by Sunset Center and heading south through town and then along the beach bluffs to finish at the Del Mar parking lot.

According to the course description, participants will head toward the coast by way of the Carmel Mission, make their way around the point and reach the finish at Scenic and Ocean. The event will be timed and certified, with “bragging rights and perpetual awards given to first place male and female finishers.”

No missing out

The proceeds from registration fees will benefit Girls on the Run Central Coast.

Carmel Valley resident Kelsey Pearson told the community activities commission in October 2025 that she launched the nonprofit after realizing young girls often feel they have no place in school sports, and therefore miss out on the physical and psychological benefits.

The organization trains volunteers to work with schools and after-school programs based on a specific curriculum that’s used nationwide. “At Girls on the Run Central Coast, teaching essential life skills is the cornerstone of our research-based programs,” its mission statement says. “Trained volunteer coaches facilitate lessons that blend physical activity with life-skill development, including managing emotions, fostering friendships and expressing empathy.”

She and board chair Alberto Ramirez said they expect around 850 people to participate.

Registration costs \$45 per person, plus a small processing fee, and participants can bring their dogs, which can be registered for an additional \$15 each.

On race day, San Carlos between Eighth and 10th, Ninth between San Carlos and Dolores, and the Del Mar lot will be closed to traffic from 5 a.m. to 1 p.m., or when it’s safe to reopen. Traffic control will be provided along the rest of the route as runners pass through.

For more information and to register, visit carmel-by-the-sea-5k.com. To learn more about Girls on the Run, go to gotrcentralcoast.org.

Group hopes to revive Osio theater

By CHRIS COUNTS

ONCE A hub for screenings independent and art house films, the Osio Theater in downtown Monterey has been closed since Covid arrived in 2020. But a group has formed to renovate and reopen the theater, and so far, it has raised about \$130,000.

“The Osio Arts Foundation is working hard to reopen the theater as a nonprofit cultural venue,” said Brant Wilkinson, a foundation board member who launched a GoFundMe campaign in mid-November 2025 that has raised more than \$28,000 for the effort, in addition to the other money collected. The campaign is titled, “Help Us Revive the Beloved Osio Theater in Downtown Monterey.”

A former employee donated more than \$1,000 to the effort. “I would love nothing more than to see this theater reopen,” said the woman, who called the theater “Monterey’s most valuable asset in terms of the arts, culture and community.” Wilkinson said he’s hopeful the theater can reopen by summer 2026.

New projectors needed

Another board member, Sam Al-Maqtari told The Pine Cone that the total cost of refurbishing the theater will come to more than \$300,000. “None of the projectors are operable and the sound system is not fully functional,” he said.

According to the foundation’s website,

the renovation will create a performing arts room for live performances and community gatherings, while the remaining four rooms will focus on screening “independent films and experimental media, pro-



A fundraising drive has been launched at GoFundMe.com to help reopen Osio Theater in downtown Monterey.

viding a platform for filmmakers, visual artists, and storytellers to share original work and bold ideas.”

Al-Maqtari said the foundation plans to sublease space for a cafe to a local group to operate it in a creative way. In other words, theatergoers can expect more than just popcorn and candy.

Along with his colleagues, Al-Maqtari believes the theater has a bright future.

“I know so many people in Monterey who have memories of the Osio,” he added. “We think it was a gem for community when it opened, and we believe it can continue to be a gem for the community.”

PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Planning Commission of the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea will conduct a Public Hearing on **Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at 4:00 PM**, or as soon thereafter as possible. Immediately prior to the Public Hearing, the Commission will visit some or all the project sites in person as part of a Tour of Inspection. Interested members of the public are invited to attend both the Tour and the Hearing.

This meeting will be held via teleconference and in person in the City Council Chambers at City Hall located on Monte Verde Street between Ocean and Seventh Avenues. To participate via teleconference, use this link: <https://ci-carmel-ca-us.zoom.us/j/86287177199?pwd=GwHLW4HciBil6Bd8Sbo5RGStbhfPj1>. To participate via phone, dial +1 (669) 444-9171. Webinar ID: 862 8717 7199. Passcode: 001916.

All interested people are invited to attend in person or via teleconference at the time and place specified above to give oral or written testimony concerning this matter. Written comments may be submitted to the Community Planning & Building Department at City Hall located on the east side of Monte Verde Street between Ocean and Seventh Avenues, Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, 93921, or P.O. Box CC, Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, 93921, or by emailing aginette@ci.carmel.ca.us prior to the meeting. With respect to written comments, please submit them at least 2 hours before the meeting to ensure they are provided to the legislative body and made part of the record. Comments received after that time and up to the end of the public hearing will be saved as part of the record but may not be provided to the legislative body prior to or during the public hearing.

The staff report and relevant documents will be available at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting on the City’s website at <http://www.ci.carmel.ca.us> and found by clicking on “Government” and then “Meetings.” The Planning Commission meeting will be broadcast live on the City’s website at <https://carmelbytheseaca.portal.civicclerk.com/> and the City’s YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/c/CityofCarmelbytheSea> and archived there after the meeting. For more information regarding Planning Commission meetings, please contact the Community Planning & Building Department at (831) 620-2010.

Director Referral
Ocean Avenue 3 Southwest of San Carlos Street Block 79, Lots 3 and 4
APN: 010-146-017-000
Consider adoption of a resolution memorializing the Planning Commission’s determination of the A.W. Shucks Cocktail & Oyster Bar Use Permit. The property is located on Ocean Avenue 3 Southwest of San Carlos Street, in the Central Commercial (CC) Zoning District.

Proposed CEQA Action: Find the project categorically exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction) and that none of the exceptions to the exemptions contained in section 15300.2 can be made in this case; OR, find the project statutorily exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15270 (Projects Which Are Disapproved)

DS 25019 (McWhorter)
Eric Miller Architects
Carmelo Street 2 northeast of Scenic Road Block GG, Lots 4 and 6
APN: 010-252-013-000

DS 25019 (McWhorter)
Consideration of a Final Details Design Study, DS 25019 (McWhorter), for the demolition of an existing single-family residence and the construction of a 1,750-square-foot two-story residence, inclusive of an attached garage, located at Carmelo Street 2 northeast of Scenic Road in the Single-Family Residential (R-1) District

DS 25357 (Krugler)
Eric Krugler, Property Owner
Crespi Avenue 9 southeast of Mountain View Avenue Block 104, Lots 10 and 11
APN: 010-054-010-000
Consideration of a Track 1 Design Study Referral for a request to amend the Conditions of Approval with a previously approved Track 2 Design Study Application, DS 21-250 (Krugler), located on Crespi Avenue 9 southeast of Mountain View Avenue in the Single-Family (R-1) Zoning District

Proposed CEQA Action: Find the project categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to section 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction) of the CEQA Guidelines and that none of the exceptions to the exemptions contained in section 15300.2 can be made in this case.

Proposed CEQ Action: Find the project categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to sections 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) and 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) of the CEQA Guidelines and that none of the exceptions to the exemptions contained in section 15300.2 can be made in this case.

DS 25153 (Van Selow)
Franshiska Delgado, Claudio Ortiz Design Group Inc.
Lincoln Street 3 northeast of 4th Avenue Block 33, Lots 14 and 16
APN 010-129-028-000

DR 25313 & UP 25314 (Verizon Sequoia Deployment)
Pete Shubin, Sequoia Deployment Services, Inc.
PG&E utility pole In Front of Carmelo 4 southeast of 10th Avenue
Coordinates: 36.549328, -121.926906
Consideration of a Use Permit, Design Review, and Coastal Development permit for the construction of a Small Wireless Facility on a replacement PG&E pole in the public right-of-way in front of Carmelo Street 4 southeast of 10th Avenue in the Single-Family Residential (R-1) District

Proposed CEQA Action: Find the project categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to section 15301 (Existing Facilities) of the CEQA Guidelines and that none of the exceptions to the exemptions contained in section 15300.2 can be made in this case



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LIVES

From page 23A

that draws dog lovers “from all walks of life,” in her experience.

“Every pet may not be a show dog, but rest assured, every show dog is a pet,” Trotter told an audience of 2.5 million, in a speech she gave before crowning Westminster’s 2021 Best in Show, Wasabi the Pekingese.

Westminster has been televised every year since 1948. In February 1970, CBS followed Trotter, a 34-year-old school-teacher sporting her signature beehive, as she and Vagabond galloped to accept his honors. He was named Top Dog of All Breeds that year, and Trotter was the first amateur handler to pull it off.

A serious pedigree

Vagabond, who is immortalized in the American Kennel Club’s Dog Hall of Fame, took #1 Hound again the next year. His descendants bested the category nine more times, all victories but one before 1995. (The ultimate title, Best in Show at Westminster, still eludes them.) To date, he is Trotter’s top-winning dog, and perhaps the most famous Norwegian elkhound in history — second only to President Herbert Hoover’s pet, Weeje.

Vagabond was also a direct descendent of Trotter’s first elkhound, Candy. The puppy love had come on strong when Trotter, age 11, befriended a neighborhood lady who bred and showed cocker spaniels. The pre-teen was naturally competitive — softball, straight-As, you name it — and this was an fascinating new playing field. That year, a spaniel named Melody won Trotter her first Best in Show at Tidewater, a kennel club near her hometown of Norfolk, Va.

In 1949, Trotter got Candy. Candy’s parents had hunted brown bears in the Great Dismal Swamp of southern Virginia, not long removed from the first elkhounds to arrive in the U.S. in the 1920s. By 1951,

Trotter had her own litter on her hands, which she raised with the help of her parents and younger brother.

“All the dogs I’ve ever had have come from that first family,” said Trotter.

She also grew up volunteering with the YWCA, and becoming a teacher in her early 20s was no mere supporting act for her canine career. In 1961, Trotter visited Carmel at the invitation of Doberman owners she knew from Virginia, who had come by way of the Naval Postgraduate School. The next year saw Trotter and her three hounds taking back roads — the interstate system wasn’t yet complete — to return here. She landed a job at Carmel’s new middle school, which opened in 1962.

Bright kids and big dogs have always fought for the larger share of her heart.

“I’ve never had a student I haven’t found good in, and I’ve never had a dog I couldn’t love,” said Trotter, who gets a lot of joy from mentoring junior showmanship contenders, ages 9 to 18. She recently entrusted the granddaughter of her last Westminster-winning dog to friends in Ohio, who have a 13-year-old daughter. Trotter feels they might be just the family to carry on the name of Vin-Melca, and raise the next generation of champions.

The breeder’s bible

Not that Trotter, 90, is quite finished. After “retiring” as a handler in 1994 to focus on judging, her last win at Westminster took place in 2017, a victory lap with her girl, Daggarwood Delight. An AKC Lifetime Achiever and a Purina Hall-of-Famer, Trotter’s accolades precede her in dogdom. She traveled nearly every month last year to competitions from Alaska to Georgia, judging as many as 175 dogs per day, on her feet for 7 hours. Come February, Trotter will take her fourth turn as a Westminster official.

“There’s only one,” as the slogan goes, a fact Trotter expounds in “Born to Win, Breed to Succeed.” Her book, first published in 1997, is commonly referenced as “the dog breeder’s bible,” she said — a 300-page guide for those aspiring to

produce contenders worthy of the dog world’s Super Bowl.

“To breed a dog worthy of winning Westminster is to climb a stairway to the top. It is a dream come true for any owner, handler, breeder or judge who is part of the equation. It is the ultimate,” Trotter wrote.

One of her favorite books — a two-volume set on English sporting dogs “published when Jefferson was president” — served as inspiration for her own. The cherished volume was a gift from her late husband, Charles “Chuck” Trotter.

Must love dogs

She met him at the shows, where he was a familiar face on the panel at a number of competitions around the country. Trotter remembers the relationship as “cordial” — until they hit it off at a dinner with friends in 1993.

“I probably wouldn’t have judged if I

hadn’t married him,” Trotter said. From 1994 until Chuck’s last show in 2021, the couple judged together from Tokyo to Oslo, Australia to South America.

Next month, Trotter will return to Westminster to present her kennel’s namesake trophy to this year’s Hound Group winner.

“What am I looking forward to? Getting through it,” Trotter joked — before confiding that she’s “very emotional” about it all. Dedicating the new Vin-Melca Trophy is a fellow Westminster veteran named Thomas Millner, who believes this is “something that will never be repeated,” she explained, referring to her run of first-place hounds.

It will always be a little funny, seeing the name of the kennel she started at 15 etched in sterling. It’s a portmanteau of her maiden name, Vincent, plus Melody (the spaniel) and Candy (her first elkhound).

“I realized it was kind of corny — but by that time, I was on a roll,” said Trotter.



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MAYOR

From page 23A

Cone cover story showing lots on the north and south Sunset Center sites. Then, nothing happened for 35 years. To restart the discussion, here are two broad paths to consider.

■ Bold vision

We could create village “gateways” by building discrete underground parking at Vista Lobos and Sunset Center to intercept cars before they reach downtown, paired with electric shuttles for local travel. Through public-private partnerships, developers could fund the parking lots while also building affordable, senior, and market-rate housing, high-end hotel rooms, and even reconstructing aging police and public works facilities through leaseback agreements.

These projects would generate significant revenue through parking, occupancy tax, and property tax revenue but would require broad community support and, in Carmel, be a very heavy lift.

■ Step-by-step approach

Alternatively, we could focus on smaller, incremental fixes: freeing up downtown parking, identifying off-site lots, expanding shuttle use and addressing housing through the revised housing element. We could also scale

back promotional spending during peak periods to manage demand.

This approach may feel less disruptive, but it would likely require voter approval of new local taxes to cover rising maintenance costs and pension obligations as traditional revenues plateau, potentially requiring a supermajority vote and requiring us to become a charter city.

■ Setting our priorities

There are other options as well. But whether you favor

ARTIST

From page 23A

children, the one who eschewed a college education to follow her passion.

In her 20s, Wood traveled the world with a 35 mm camera — a gift from her grandfather when she was 13 — photographing interesting architecture, scenery and intriguing people.

“I love photographing people,” she said. “Someday, I’d like to go back to Australia and shoot photos of the aboriginals.”

A favorite portrait in her collection is a glowering, grizzled-looking uniformed porter she spotted in New Orleans, leaning against a post with a cigarette in his left hand and a dollar bill in his right. Another is her image of a handsome mariachi musician in full costume, spotted in Costa Rica.

Her keen eye and strong instincts carry over to the nudes she shoots today.

A cigarette and nothing more

She recalled taking photos in her warehouse-style studio one day when her model said she needed a cigarette.

“So, take off your clothes and have that cigarette,” Wood suggested. “Is that OK?”

The resulting photo, she said, was “Helmut

bold action or smaller steps, we should be having an open conversation about what it will take for Carmel to remain a beautiful, livable, and sustainable village. On Jan. 22, the city council will hold a strategic planning session to set priorities for the year ahead. If an issue isn’t on that list, it likely won’t get addressed. Please join us, speak up, or email your thoughts to cityclerk@cbts.us.

To hear a podcast generated from this column, visit cli.re/ourfuture.

Dale Byrne is Mayor of Carmel-by-the-Sea. His email is dbyrne@cbts.us.

Newton-style,” referring to the German-Australian fashion photographer whose images are known for edginess and attitude.

Wood met her future husband, professional photographer Reg Galado, while traveling down the U.S. coast with three other women from Western Canada.

“We got our visas, hopped on a bus, rode 45 minutes from Victoria to Seattle, walked up the hill to a youth hostel, and there he was,” she said.

Regalado, managing the youth hostel at the time, checked her in and checked her out.

“It wasn’t until the other three girls started saying, ‘Oh, he’s so cute!’ that I started thinking, ‘Hmm ... yeah, he kinda is.’”

“So, we had fun, but we didn’t get serious about each other until later,” she said. Regalado’s Monterey Peninsula roots were part of the reason they settled in Carmel. She didn’t become aware of the Peninsula’s astounding art history until she got here.

“I struggle to describe this place to people back in Australia, because Carmel is almost like a European history,” Wood said. “And Carmel’s photography history just blows my mind — the Westons and Ansel and many others. I just feel so fortunate to have found this place.”

Many of her intimate photo shoots take place amid breathtaking coastal scenery, frequently in Big Sur.

Romeo and Rocket

Wood and Regalado have two sons. Romeo, 12, has a creative talent for creating his own artistic toys from boxes, tubes and packaging materials.

“He has a very architectural mind,” Wood said with a laugh.

Younger brother Rocket (his real name) is a 9-year-old speedster — “The Wildfire,” his mom calls him — who got Rookie of the Year honors this year as a running back and wide receiver for his Monterey Youth Football team, the Seaside Raiders.

Falling in love with the land of Ansel Adams, the Westons, Morley Baer, Imogen Cunningham, and other giants of her medium was easy for Wood, whose studio-gallery is a mini-museum of tributes. So, too, are her websites.

Images of Wood’s art and that of many other photography greats can be viewed online at alliwood.com and oficinouno.com.

Oficina Uno Fine Art Photography is open by appointment. Contact Wood at (831) 241-4548.

Dennis Taylor is a professional freelance writer in Monterey County. Contact him at scribelaureate@gmail.com.

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LETTERS

From page 22A

people get hurt. Our local electeds' lack of leadership reminds me of Daniel 5:27: "Thou art weighted in the balance and art found wanting."

Kevin Hanley, Pacific Grove

Quick action

Dear Editor,

Sincere thanks for the initiative taken, and the time spent over the holidays, by councilmembers Hans Buder and Jeff Baron in launching a crisis intervention effort with PG&E and communicating status and future plans to engage PG&E leadership with frequent updates to Carmel residents.

Through their efforts, Carmel's recovery was hastened. They recognized the absence of other anticipated leadership communications and quickly went into action on behalf of the city.

Jim Beck, Carmel

Carmel or Mayberry?

Dear Editor,

As full-time residents of Carmel-by-the-Sea for the past two years, we are continually reminded that this is a community that truly cares.

During the recent power outage, city council members Hans Buder and Jeff Baron stood out. Hans not only provided clear and timely email updates but went further — personally pressing PG&E for answers, arranging in-person meetings that revealed the utility company was understaffed, and even being seen around town checking where crews were (or were not) working. He continues even now, pressing them to ensure this doesn't repeat itself and making them accountable. His leadership, advocacy, and accessibility made a real difference.

We also wish to thank the Carmel Library and the Carmel Foundation for opening their doors so residents could

charge phones and warm up — no questions asked. We were especially touched when Kim Stemler, president and CEO, personally welcomed us into her office and soon after brought us a turkey dinner. The next day, she greeted us by name on the street and asked, "Would you like some pizza?" In that moment, we thought, we live in Mayberry!

Thank you, Hans Buder and Kim Stemler. You are remarkable ambassadors for Carmel, and we deeply appreciate your passion and commitment.

Mica & Lauren Hill, Carmel

State housing mandates

Dear Editor,

Thanks to the Pine Cone for its Jan. 2 article, "P.G. grapples with state's housing demands." The article provides an excellent account of the years-long process culminating in the Pacific Grove City Council's Dec. 17 decision to approve a plan for 1,125 new homes and apartments by 2031. The Pine Cone did a fine job of explaining this longstanding regulatory saga and included a broad spectrum of residents' comments on this most important and controversial housing initiative.

And kudos to the P.G. City Council and staff for their decision to green-light construction of this critically needed and legally mandated new housing in our community. Hopefully, these new housing units will address P.G.'s chronic shortage of moderate-and low-income homes for schoolteachers, public safety workers, small business owners and others who are currently priced out of the Pacific Grove housing market.

What many NIMBY P.G. residents have overlooked in their longstanding opposition to new housing projects is that these new units are mandated by state law — which supersedes contrary local government efforts to limit or prevent construction of new housing stock. Efforts by other California cities to ignore or oppose these state housing mandates — Huntington Beach being the poster child for such defiance — have been uniformly rejected

by California courts. And such obdurate opposition by cities and counties means that under state law, those local jurisdictions will lose any role in making required new housing consistent with the existing communities' desires and values, in favor of unwisely transferring that authority to the private sector. As P.G. councilmember Paul Walkingstick aptly observed at the council's Dec. 17 hearing, "If we don't approve this, we are abdicating our role to developers."

To be sure, the City of Pacific Grove is a full three years late in fulfilling its explicit obligation under state law to "meet its fair share of regional housing needs." That delay is disturbing — at least to this longtime resident. But, hopefully, state officials will ratify the housing plan P.G. has belatedly completed and approved, and critically needed new housing for our community can move forward without further hurdles.

It's high time that Pacific Grove assumed its legal and moral responsibility to help solve California's longstanding housing crisis.

Richard Frank, Pacific Grove

Power shortage?

Dear Editor,

The California Legislature has required local governments to provide for additional housing. It is a worthy goal. However, given the latest in a series of power failures on the Monterey Peninsula, has anyone given a thought regarding the source of additional electricity to service new housing when existing power sources to service existing residences are inadequate? Just wondering!

Stephen Millich, Monterey

School spending

Dear Editor,

It is sad but not surprising to hear that MPUSD has been quietly using a loophole to avoid mandatory minimum teacher salary increases for the last two years. MPUSD prefers to sidestep mandates — something that sounds all too familiar to

local MPUSD taxpayers.

This year residents within the Monterey Peninsula School District saw property taxes rise due to Measure A, a 2024 \$340 million school bond measure. MPUSD stated this money was because "all of our local schools are over 50 years old and need essential repairs and updates." In 2018, MPUSD promised that a separate \$213 million bond would be used for "the most urgent needs." However, many of the current 2025 needs are still the same needs MPUSD deemed "urgent" in 2018.

California laws mandate oversight of taxpayer school bond funds, and MPUSD promised transparency and accountability. The California Constitution states the governing board of a school district "shall establish and appoint members to an independent citizens' oversight committee within 60 days of certification of the election results." MPUSD has not done this. The California Education code states that this committee "shall consist of at least seven members." MPUSD has not done this. Superintendent PK Diffenbaugh and the MPUSD Board appear to not understand the meaning of a mandate, or the word "shall," or have any concern for public oversight of millions of our taxpayer dollars.

Currently MPUSD is planning several multimillion-dollar school construction projects including new swimming pools, a new gymnasium, theater, and baseball/softball complex, and has argued that smaller projects to improve student and staff school facilities, such as restroom upgrades, better lighting, new windows, and more outlets, are apparently "not cost effective" and take resources away from their larger, loftier goals.

Meanwhile, Diffenbaugh cited various excuses for not improving teacher salaries and instead essentially threatened teachers by implying "we have been fortunate to avoid large-scale layoffs to this point."

MPUSD needs to focus on teacher retention, the needs of our school facilities, and put students and education first.

Marta Kraftzcek, Monterey

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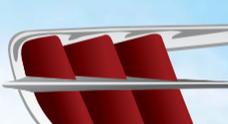
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4Q 2025 | Market Update



The markets across Carmel, Pebble Beach, Carmel Highlands, Preserve, Quail Lodge and Meadows, Tehama and Monterey continued to build momentum this year with 314 sales for a total of \$1.13B, which is a nice uptick in deal flow from last year (294), but off a touch from the \$1.15B total investment in 2024. The top of the market continues to hold strong, but we've seen particular strength in the \$1.5-2M and \$2.5-3M brackets this year, which is what drove the increased deal flow over last year. Pebble Beach had a particularly strong quarter with 31 deals that closed for \$102M, which is about on par for what we expect to see in Pebble in the fourth quarter. Carmel slowed to 29 deals, which is also fairly standard for this area as seasonal buyers tend to focus on ski vacation homes, rather than beach houses. The Highlands had a nice uptick in sales this quarter with 9 escrows, up from the 3 last quarter. The Preserve had 5 sales this quarter, which is a strong quarter for that region. Quail and Tehama didn't have any sales this quarter, which is a bit of an anomaly for the Mid-Valley area, although Monterey sold a brand-new house for a very strong \$6.25M.

Prices have softened overall with buyers getting more room off the list price, with an average 6% discount rate this quarter, double what it was in 3Q25 as sellers finally softened

their stance on the list price. While median sales prices appear to be falling, coming in at \$2.95M this quarter, down from \$3.97M last quarter, this is mostly because more deals are closing at the bottom of the market. As is typical for this market, the top of the market would rather hold than sell in a market dip, which is something we saw this quarter, with 23 listings above \$4M come off the market in the 4th quarter. We anticipate most of these to still be available and likely to come back to the market in the spring.

From a larger market perspective, San Francisco and Manhattan had some of their strongest years and quarters as we're seeing more buyers come back to the city after leaving during the COVID years. Our market tends to trail behind the Bay Area and SF by about 6-9 months, so we're anticipating a particularly strong spring and summer this year. While there are a lot of headlines that warrant attention these days, the stability of a small, sophisticated town will continue to be a large draw, and we anticipate that to continue through this year.

Jessica Canning
Carmel Specialist



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Section 2

Padres, Pirates have their hearts — and players — in the right places

THE BEATING heart of a soccer team can typically be found in the midfield, where players have a not-so-simple assignment: Keep the ball moving toward the opponent's goal and away from their own.

The forward and defender positions can feel even more important — the whole world notices a mistake near either

The Carmel Padres return every starting midfielder and forward from a team that finished in second place last season in the PCAL's Cypress Division, where they expect to be title contenders again this year.

The competition is traditionally tougher in the Mission Division, where Stevenson will compete again, but the Pirates' success will depend heavily on their players in the middle.

The Padres front row includes returning starters Georges Guerree on the right and sophomore Miro Balaban in the middle.

"We're going to be a high-scoring team," predicted Carmel coach Scott Hirschfield, who saw Guerree, Balaban and Melton score four goals each in the Padres first six games.

Peninsula Sports

By DENNIS TAYLOR

goal — but middies pull the levers in the control center, setting up defenders and attackers to succeed.

Postseason aspirations begin in the middle of the field for the boys soccer teams at Carmel and Stevenson, where both schools have talent, athleticism and experience as they wade into regular-season play in separate divisions of the Pacific Coast Athletic League.

A wealth of midfielders

Carmel's leading scorer during last year's 11-6-1 season, senior middle Rigo Carrera (second-team All-Cypress), found the goal 11 times from his left wing position.

Carrera's speed, intensity and well-rounded skills also enable him to play center-forward, or deepen the already well stocked center-middle area, where tireless senior captain Bodhi Melton (second-team all-division) and attacking center-middle Jose Mario Valdez are returning starters. Junior Alex Castagna, a varsity Padre as a freshman, returns to CHS after playing in Spain last season. Castagna is a powerhouse talent who can play any position on the field.

Another senior captain, Sebastian Blessing (second-team All-Cypress) figures into the midfield equation at times, but he's also at the heart of the Carmel's defense as one of two exceptional center backs.

Also in the middle of the defense is returning starter Liam Rodriguez (second-team all-division), a senior captain who plans to play Europe next season.

The back-row leadership of Blessing (who is adept with either foot) and Rodriguez is a boon to a pair of sophomores who occupy the outside defender spots. Brayden McIntyre is a returning starter at left back, and Drew Arnold is a skillful and physical right-side defender.

Another sophomore, Chase Jones, the first-year varsity starter at goalie, is tasked with filling the shoes of four-year stalwart Tyler Hendricks, the 2025 Defensive Player of the Year in the Cypress division.



PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

Carmel's Alex Castagna, white jersey, battles Stevenson's Zach DaSilva, left, and Blake Jones, center, for possession during a nonleague game in December.



PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

Stevenson's Zach DaSilva, right, battles Bodhi Melton, left, of Carmel, for control.

Guerree has four assists, and Castagna, an outstanding playmaker on the wing, has three.

Deepening the roster for the Padres are freshmen Sam Sigley and Gabi Martinez, left-footed, physical, heady sophomore Daniel Carrera (Rigo's brother), plus seniors Julien Cho (a state-qualifying golfer) and Ian Lome, along with juniors Nick Kraut and Myles Will.

Nonleague losses to Santa Cruz (4-2), King City (4-2) and Monterey (2-0) were educational, Hirschfield said, mainly because, "We learned that we can compete with

Continues next page

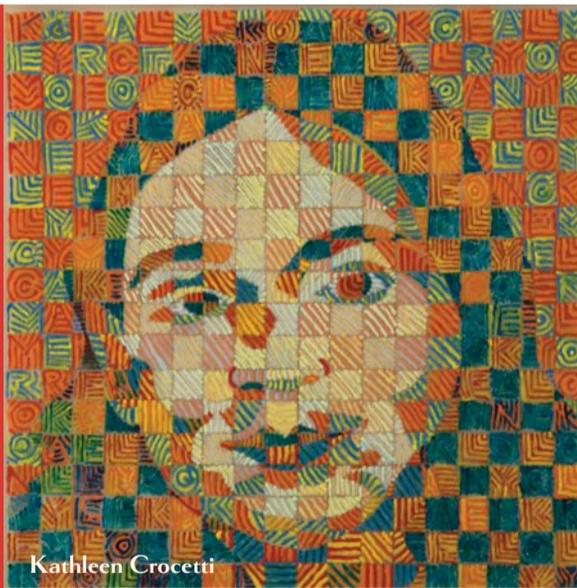
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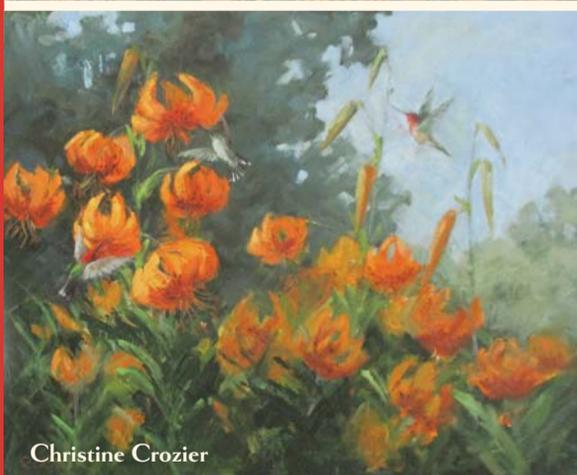
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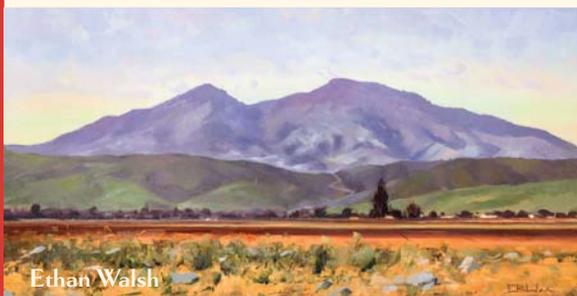
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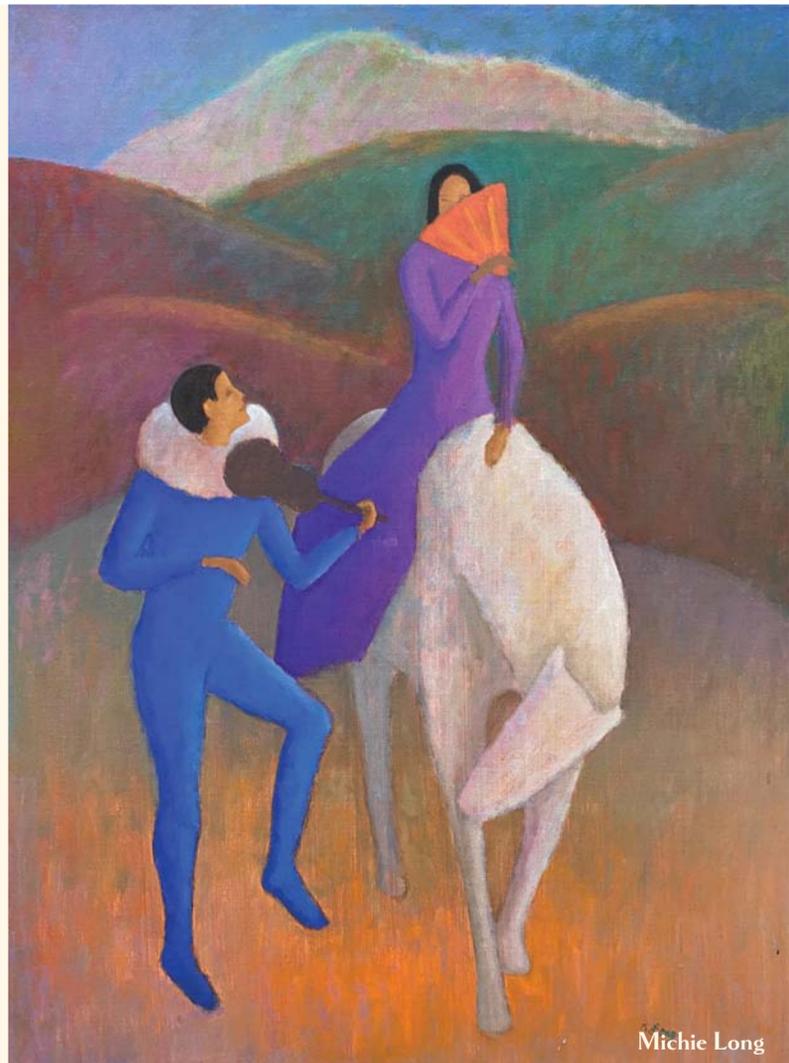
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From previous page

anybody.”

Preseason victories for the Padres have come against Pacific Grove (3-0), Soquel (3-1) and Stevenson (5-1).

All six opponents are from higher divisions, and Monterey, a Gabilan team, is 6-1-1 in preseason games.

Stevenson, 1-4-2 before the holiday break, also has tested itself in preseason games, defeating San Jose-based Cindy Avita (3-2), losing to Harbor (6-0), Greenfield (1-0), San Jose Leigh (4-0), and the Padres (5-1), and playing Marina and Sacramento's Valley to ties.

“We've faced some high-level teams already, and we know the Mission Division is going to be tough,” said coach Cristian Materazzi. “But the culture of our program is good, and we've got players who are willing to work for each other.”

“We just need to make some little connections and develop a bit more chemistry,” he added. “If we can do that, I think we might be able to make a run at it.”

Like Carmel, the Pirates also graduated an exceptional goalkeeper, first-team All-Mission standout Luke Brandler, a four-year starter at the position.

First-year goalkeeper

His understudy for the past three years, Soren Hillman, steps into the spotlight as a senior and is already showing good leadership, Materazzi said.

Critical pieces of the defense are varsity veterans Mario Salim, a junior who started a year ago, and senior Anthony Perez Saldivar, both center backs, and right-side defender Ian Knight, another junior.

The leader in Stevenson's midfield is junior captain Zach DaSilva, the center middle, who is the team's most experi-

enced player.

“He plays competitive soccer for Santa Clara Sporting Club, and he absolutely runs the show for us out there,” the coach said.

Other center midfielders are juniors Mikey Moore and Blake Jones, both varsity veterans.

Freshman leads in scoring

A breakout player in preseason games has been Dylan Hirst, a freshman forward who leads the Pirates with four goals and has an assist.

“Dylan doesn't play club soccer and hasn't touched a soccer ball since middle



PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

Carmel's Miro Balaban threads the ball between Stevenson defenders in a preseason game.

school, but he's a natural talent and a great player,” Materazzi said.

Other future standouts who have earned starting positions are sophomores Connor Aeschelman, a forward, and David Yeh, who got varsity experience at the end of his freshman year. Dexter McIntosh, returning from a knee injury, also figures to make a contribution, along with junior Max Beallo, who has seen significant playing time as a defender.

“Our center midfield, with Zach, Mikey and Blake, is our strength. If we can get those guys firing together, we're going to be very, very good,” Materazzi said.

See SPORTS page 36A



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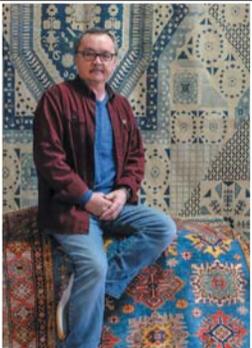
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One-time teen star visits Golden State, piano trio performs at Sunset

NEARLY A half-century after his remake of the Crystals' "Da Doo Run Run" shot to the top of the Billboard pop charts, singer and one-time teen idol **Shaun Cassidy**

the Top 10, along with his first two albums. He was only 18 when the "Da Doo Run Run" hit No. 1.

In the years that have passed since his heyday, Cassidy has found success as an actor, a television producer and screenwriter.

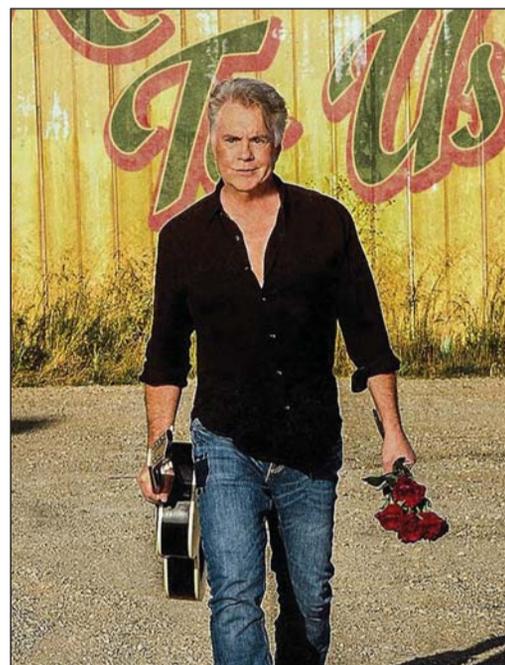
Tickets for his concert start at \$35. The theater is located at 417 Alvarado St.

For tickets, call (831) 648-1070 or visit goldenstatetheatre.com.

composer Mieczysław Weinberg and contemporary Israeli composer Udi Perlman.

With its "inventive programming and thoughtful connections across cultures and eras, the Lysander Piano Trio shares Chamber Music Monterey Bay's commitment to presenting both celebrated works and lesser-known gems," the group added.

Tickets start at \$30. Sunset Center is located at San Carlos and Ninth. For tickets, call (831) 625-2212 or visit chambermusicmontereybay.org.



A one-time teen idol, singer Shaun Cassidy went on to become a successful producer and playwright. He plays Thursday at Golden State Theatre in Monterey.

On a High Note

By CHRIS COUNTS

ssidy takes the stage at Golden State Theatre in Monterey Thursday at 7 p.m.

The son of Tony Award-winning actor Jack Cassidy and Academy Award-winning actress Shirley Jones, Cassidy found fast stardom in the late 1970s when three of his singles — "Da Doo Run Run," "That's Rock 'n' Roll" and "Hey, Deanie" — made

Passionate playing

Chamber Music Monterey Bay's 2025-26 season continues Saturday with a concert by **The Lysander Piano Trio** Saturday, 7:30 p.m., at Sunset Center.

Featuring violinist **Itamar Zorman**, cellist **James Kim** and pianist **Liza Stepanova**, the trio is known for its "passionate playing, articulate and imaginative ideas, and a wide palette of colors," the chamber music group said.

The program includes music by 19th century Czech composer Antonín Dvořák, 20th century Polish

Historical and modern

A local choral group dedicated to playing early music, **Madregalia** perform Saturday and Sunday, 2:30 p.m., at All Saints Episcopal Church. The concert will feature music based on "Renaissance forms, both historical and modern," singer **Kellie Morgantini** said.

Much of the music for this concert was written by Madregalia member **Jefferson DeMarco**, who said the program will feature "some early baroque instrumental pieces interspersed with modern takes on Renaissance dance forms." Founded 23 years ago, Madregalia includes members of the Carmel Bach Festival chorus.

Besides choral music, the concert will feature instrumentals by **The Pastyme Consort**. The musicians will play a variety

of instruments that may not be familiar to many people, including the viola da gamba (a fretted and bowed string instrument), the dulcian (a predecessor to the modern bassoon) and the shawm (a double-reed woodwind).

Tickets are \$30 and are available at

See MUSIC page 37A



The Lysander Piano Trio takes the stage Saturday, 7:30 p.m., at Sunset Center.

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FOOD & WINE

Neighbors helping neighbors, new chefs taking charge, and finding momo

WELCOME BACK to your regular routine. With the new year come some changes of the guard in a couple of local kitchens, an appeal to help a popular local spot preserve its history, and some ideas for a deli lunch — or an international affair.

Helping Happy Girl

Nearly a year ago, Happy Girl Kitchen owners Jordan and Todd Champagne — who have been running the family business for more than two decades — learned that the landlord for their longtime location at 173 Central Ave. had died, and the building's heirs want to sell it.

Roy Pina, who owns the spot with his brothers and a business partner, said it was a good source of income for his mother, but now that she is gone, they are ready to sell. It was a sentimentally difficult decision, since his father, George, built it and ran a successful Dutch Boy paint store there for 40 years. Said the 71-year-old Pina, "I've been going in and out of that building for 70 years." It was also home to the Granary, a longtime health food store.

Jordan Champagne said she is simi-



(Left) The Champagne family has been turning out good food at Happy Girl Kitchen for decades. They're turning to their customers and community for help to buy the café's building.

to a page with numerous ways to do that. There's a \$1,200 gift card priced at \$1,000, and a branded thermos — also \$1,000 — that includes 365 days of beverages, plus other commemorative items and recognition on a donor wall.

For Champagne, it's more than a place of business. It's where the kids — now 18 and 23 — grew up. She described happy memories of them roller skating and skateboarding around indoors, napping on a couch in the back, and helping out once they were old enough. "To buy the building your business is in is a dream," she said — one she hopes the community will help make come true.

Bud's gets new chef

Bud's at La Playa is a special place. It's a dimly lit, well-appointed, classic bar staffed by adept bartenders who offer a wide range of cocktails and have a deep selection of liquor, beer and wine on which to draw. It's frequented by locals, some of whom are members of its Cabinet Soci-

ety, which allows them to store bottles purchased through the bar (at the appropriate markup, of course) and have drinks made from them exactly to their liking. The kitchen provides food for the bar, the restaurant that includes a lounge and terrace, and catering for banquets.

That complex identity has consistently presented a challenge to culinary teams, as they've sought a balance between elegant yet accessible dishes that appeal to diners and items that will satiate bar patrons. New executive chef Jose Mejia, who has 19 years of experience in the hospitality business, is the latest to take a crack at it.

"Mejia brings a polished yet approachable style shaped by his work in celebrated kitchens across the country," according to La Playa's management, including a stint as exec chef at The Meritage Resort

in Napa Valley and time in the kitchens at Michelin-starred Bouchon Bistro in Napa Valley, the Pump Room in Chicago's Public Hotel, and Parkshore Grill in St. Petersburg, Fla. His culinary philosophy "is centered on authenticity, balance, and a deep respect for seasonal, locally sourced produce."

Cabinet society

The menu at Bud's has changed several times in recent years, first under former chef Boris Ilabaca, who was in charge of the kitchen when the bar reopened in 2019 under the Bud's moniker, with a new-but-classic vibe, and debuted the Cabinet Society. After Ilabaca left in 2024, a consulting chef stepped in to revise and refresh the

See **FOOD** next page

Soup to Nuts

larly attached. She thought about moving the operation — a combination canning facility, bakery, classroom and cafe — but quickly became discouraged in her search. When the building was appraised, however, "I realized I had already 'bought' it once in rent," Champagne said, and that buoyed her hopes of purchasing it. She made an offer (she's staying mum on the amount) and the owners accepted it. All that's left to do is come up with a \$200,000 down payment, and for that, Champagne has gotten creative and is asking the community to help out.

A fundraiser link at the top of the business' website, happygirlkitchen.com, leads

and skateboarding around indoors, napping on a couch in the back, and helping out once they were old enough. "To buy the building your business is in is a dream," she said — one she hopes the community will help make come true.



Temple Beth El in Salinas is holding its 70th annual Drive-Thru Deli Pack sale, with pickups in Salinas and Monterey. In addition to a pound of specially selected corned beef or pastrami, those who pony up the \$45 fee will get a loaf of Jewish rye bread, salad, cake and (apparently) coveted pickles.

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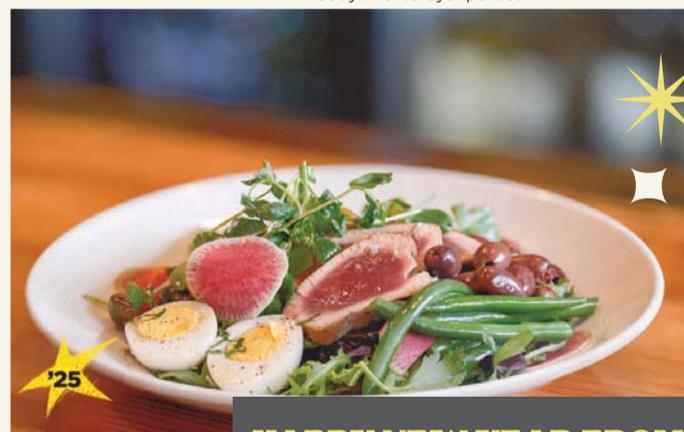
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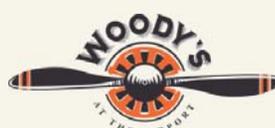
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FOOD & WINE

FOOD

From previous page

menu, working in classic dishes like oysters Rockefeller and steak frites.

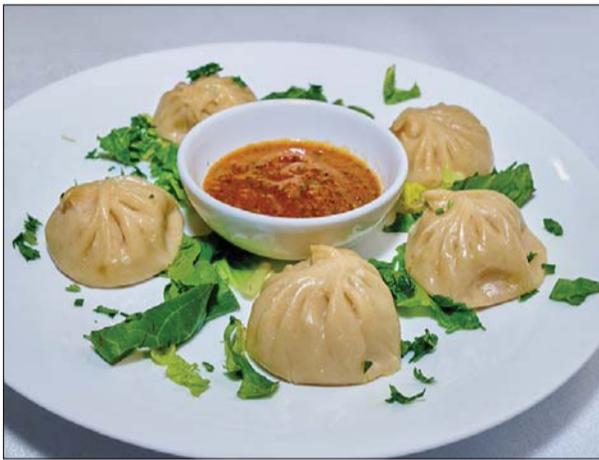
Under Mejia, the lineup has been overhauled, with pan-roasted flatiron steak and spicy Dungeness crab pasta headlining the entrées at \$52 and \$44, respectively. Shareable items include raw oysters, a shrimp cocktail, a cheese and charcuterie board, Spanish-inspired patatas bravas, and kabocha squash toast with apple, with prices ranging from \$14 (the potatoes) to \$32.

Guests craving salads can opt for a little gem Caesar or a chicories salad with apple, fromage blanc and apple cider vinaigrette.

The two items that have remained consistent through the years and leadership changes — the comforting grilled cheese and tomato bisque (\$20) and the excellent Bud's burger (\$25) — are still the top sellers.

For those who would enjoy a simple snack like mixed nuts or popcorn to nibble on while enjoying their cocktails, however, the Bud's menu consistently falls short. A dish of olives and breadsticks, reminiscent of the free treats provided in upscale London bars, came close, but that offering was short-lived.

That small aspect aside, it continues to be a favorite Carmel spot, especially on Tuesday and Sunday nights,



Open since May, Lighthouse Bistro Global Cuisine offers lots of bites of delicious food from around the world, including savory dumplings, called momos, from Nepal.

when Dave Morwood and his guest musicians are playing jazz, and during folkYEAH's vinyl sessions on Thursdays.

Bud's is open daily from 3 to 10 p.m. La Playa is located at Camino Real and Eighth. Find more information at budscarmel.com.

■ Harshman takes Shearwater helm

Shearwater Tavern in the Carmel Mission Inn on Rio Road welcomed Cory Harshman as its new executive chef in September. Harshman, a graduate of Johnson & Wales' flagship Providence, R.I., culinary program, has previously worked at Casanova, Bernardus Lodge, and La Playa.

A native Virginian, Harshman's first job was in an IHOP. His mother was a manager, and when he turned 14 — legally old enough to work there — he became a host. At 16, when he was old enough to bus tables, he embraced the dirty work, noting that customers at the fast-casual outlet were not always kind to hosts and servers. After a number of restaurant jobs — and a stint in a warehouse — he headed to Johnson & Wales. A friend's wedding brought him to Santa Cruz, and he moved to California almost on a whim.

"There were way more opportunities out here," he said. At Shearwater, he hopes to build an upscale menu around the fresh produce that's available year-round. He's already added a roasted beet salad with toasted pistachios, fennel, and pomegranate seeds, seared sea bass with lentils, leeks, maitake mushrooms, and a hanger steak spiffed up with roasted potato cake, cipollini onions, maitakes and black garlic sauce. To learn more, visit shearwatertavern.com.

■ Drive-thru deli

Temple Beth El's annual Drive-Thru Deli Pack Sale returns Feb. 5 and 6, offering some Jewish favorites for pickup in Salinas, where the synagogue is located, and Monterey.

Now in its 70th year, the popular community fundraiser offers meal kits that customers can assemble. Organizers expect the event to sell out and are encouraging advance purchases. For \$45, you get a pound of either corned beef from Detroit or pastrami from Watsonville's Freedom Meat Co., plus a loaf of rye bread from Wise Sons Deli in San Francisco, salad, half of a locally baked chocolate cake and four of the event's signature pickles.



Chef Jose Mejia has recently taken over the kitchen at La Playa and is bringing his signature style to the menus there. But don't worry — the grilled cheese and tomato soup are still there, as is the Bud's burger.

Online ordering is available at templebethsalinas.org, or hungry-but-internet-averse customers can call (831) 424-9151 to arrange payment by credit card, cash or check during office hours.

■ International flair

Lighthouse Bistro Global Cuisine at 570 Lighthouse St. in Monterey was opened in May by local hospitality veteran Ralph Elrayes and his partner and chef, Sunil Sthapit. Lighthouse Bistro brings the flavors of the owners' native cuisines — Elrayes is Lebanese and Sthapit is Nepalese — and many other international classics. The duo is passionate about food and service, and it shows. The spot is just right for an exceptional breakfast, lunch or dinner. It offers a nice range of benedicts, as well as dishes like a California omelet with bacon, avocado, cheese and country potatoes. And who can't go for chicken and waffles for brunch?

"We have a lot of sandwiches and salads on the lunch menu," said Elrayes, who highlighted a popular roasted beet salad and the fattoush salad, a Lebanese dish characterized by the use of sumac, a spice known for its tangy flavor and often found in Mediterranean dishes. They also serve kibbeh — Arabic dumplings — and chicken and beef momo, Nepalese dumplings. "I make the momo shells by hand because they don't come in the size I need," Sthapit explained.

The humble chicken finds its way into kebabs, Alfredo sauce, and butter chicken, as well as the signature pomegranate chicken, marinated in Mediterranean spices, grilled, and drizzled with pomegranate molasses. It has just the right amount of zing and is served alongside rice and seasonal vegetables. Choose from a nice selection of wine, beer and wine-based cocktails, mocktails and other beverages. And you shouldn't leave without something sweet.

"We are famous for our baklava," Elrayes said. His wife makes it fresh daily. It's a blend of cashew and walnut filling inside several layers of phyllo dough and — because it sells so briskly — it's always crispy and fresh. They offer catering and an option to rent the space for private parties. Learn more or view the menu at lighthouse-bistro.com.

Mary Schley, Elaine Hesser and Sally Baho contributed to this week's column.



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FOOD & WINE

Carmel Art Association, P.G. Art Center and other galleries welcome 2026

KICKING OFF the New Year with a bang, shows open at a number of local galleries this weekend, including Carmel Art Association, Pacific Grove Art Center and the Center for Photographic Art.

The Carmel Art Association hosts a free public reception with live jazz Saturday at 4 p.m. for mixed media artist Kathleen Crocetti, who “uses light as a metaphor for the spirit that lies within all living beings.”

“Color is made of light, and without

light there is no color,” the gallery’s Lili Mendez told *The Pine Cone*. “These two elements are entwined with one another, and their relationship has been a long-standing fascination for Kathleen — each body of work explores this relationship within the context of a personal narrative.”

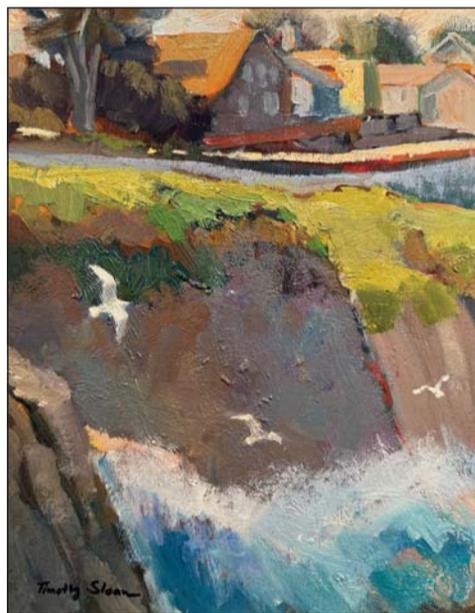
Crocetti is a middle school art teacher who has led a variety of projects adorning public spaces with mosaics in downtown Santa Cruz. Also new at the CAA is an All Members Show featuring work by about 80 artists. “From bold new works that explore fresh perspectives, to cherished pieces brought out from studio collections,” Mendez said, “visitors will be treated to a captivating mix of paintings, sculptures and printmaking, each reflecting the individual voices of our artists.”

The show, she added, “is a testament to the enduring spirit of collaboration and artistic excellence that has defined the Carmel Art Association for 98 years.”

■ Photo wins \$2,500 prize

The Center for Photographic Art just closed its 2025 International Juried Exhibition, but before doing so, handed out an array of awards — including First Place to Margo Cooper for her photo, “Cora and Ralph with Their Son and John.” The effort earned her a \$2,500 prize.

Other winners included Quintavious Oliver (Second Place, \$1,000 prize), Ian McFarlane (Third Place, \$500 prize) and Shane Hallinan, who took home the Salon Jane Award for Women in Photography. An image captured by Kira Bartlett was named the People’s Choice, earning her

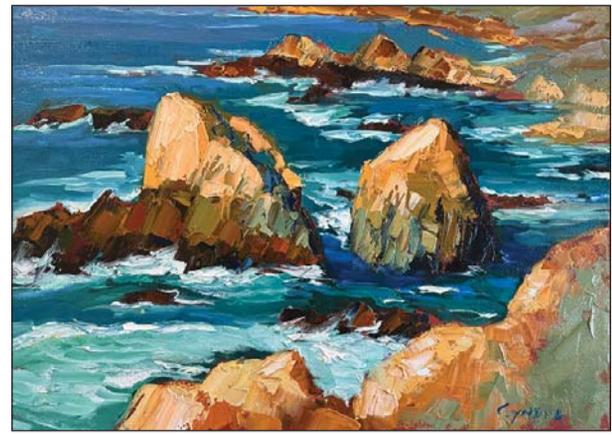


Painter Timothy Sloan captures the beauty and drama of the local coastline in this painting, which is on display at Carmel Art Association.

a \$150 prize. Honorable mention awards were given to Paul Adams, Gina Cholick, Moonsung Lee, Scott Offen and J.P. Terlizzi.

Also, a new show, “The Californians,” by three photographers, Ian Bates, Tracy L. Chandler and Janet Delaney, opens Saturday with a free public reception at 4 p.m., preceded by a talk at 3 p.m. next door at Carpenter Hall.

“We’re honored that Ian, Tracy and Janet will be here in person,” executive director Ann Jastrab said. “Each of these artists lives in California and is making work in and about California, though their work is very different.”



Painter Cyndra Bradford’s “Big Sur, Fall” is featured in a new show at Carmel Art Association.

The show continues through Feb. 8. The gallery is located in Sunset Center at San Carlos and Ninth.

Art Roundup

By CHRIS COUNTS

light there is no color,” the gallery’s Lili Mendez told *The Pine Cone*. “These two elements are entwined with one another, and their relationship has been a long-standing fascination for Kathleen — each body of work explores this relationship within the context of a personal narrative.”

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The show, she added, “is a testament to the enduring spirit of collaboration and artistic excellence that has defined the Carmel Art Association for 98 years.”

The exhibits will be on display through the end of the month. The art association gallery is located on Dolores between Fifth and Sixth. Its website is carmelart.org.

■ New in P.G.

While downtown Pacific Grove celebrates another First Friday on Jan. 9, the Pacific Grove Art Center welcomes five shows, including painter Donald Neff’s “Where Light Falls,” which explores the wild places the artist loves. Subjects include “crystal streams, thundering falls, and granite peaks rising above still lakes — as well as the quiet beauty of ordinary moments.”

“Whether on location or in the studio, Donald captures nature’s timeless vitality,” the art center said. “This exhibi-

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SPORTS

From page 30A

"We still need to develop a little bit composure in finishing," he said. "We're creating a lot of chances, but we're just not putting it in the goal."

Stevenson plays a road game on Monday at Gonzales, then returns home on Wednesday for a 3:30 p.m. start against Pajaro Valley, both Mission Division games.

Carmel is home at 5:45 p.m. Monday for a Cypress Division game against North Monterey County.

Alumni watch: Four Stevenson alumnae — all former teammates at the Pebble Beach school — are preparing for the 2026 NCAA womens water polo season (a spring-season sport in college) at three Division 1 universities.

Sofia Bozzo (Class of '23) took a redshirt year in 2024 at UC Davis, then scored 4 goals in 2025, with four assists, seven steals, and 13 exclusions — fouls resulting in an opponent's temporary removal from the game — in 25 matches.

Bozzo also was named to the Association of College Water Polo All-Academic list, as well as the Big West Conference All-Academic Team.

Sienna Cimoli ('25) is beginning her freshman season as a 2-meter defender at San Jose State.

Emmerson Ferreira ('25) and Miranda Salinger ('25) are freshman teammates this season at UC Santa Barbara. Ferreira is an attacker and Salinger is a center for the Gauchos.

Dennis Taylor is a professional freelance writer in Monterey County. Contact him at scribelaureate@gmail.com.

CALENDAR

Jan. 11 – Meet author Ann Shepphird, 2 to 4 p.m. at River House Books in The Crossroads, Rio Road off Highway 1, Carmel. A limited number of pre-release copies of the latest in her Carmel-based Destinations Murder Mystery series will be available for purchase.

Sundays – Live music 5 to 7 p.m. at Woody's at Del Mesa. Musical guests **Brice and Nina** deliver an eclectic mix of jazz, rock and reggae, 500 Del Mesa Carmel. (831) 624-1854

Fridays – Dino Vera, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., at Terry's Restaurant + Lounge, inside Cypress Inn, Lincoln and Seventh, Carmel-by-the-Sea. For more information, please contact Cypress Inn, (831) 624-3871.

Saturdays – Soulful blues with Debbie Davis and Gennady, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., at Terry's Restaurant + Lounge, inside Cypress Inn, Lincoln and Seventh, Carmel-by-the-Sea. For more information, please contact Cypress Inn, (831) 624-3871.

Jan. 17-18 – Espresso orchestra presents "Swan Song," featuring works by Francaix, Enescu and Wolf-Ferrari. Performances begin 4 p.m. Jan. 17 at Peace United Church of Christ, 900 High St., Santa Cruz; and 4 p.m. Jan. 18 at First Presbyterian Church of Monterey, 501 El Dorado St., Monterey. For tickets and details, visit espressoorch.org

Jan. 19 – Meg Waite Clayton, NYT bestselling author of "Typewriter Beach," in conversation with **BBC journalist & CWC member, Alison van Diggelen, author of "The Love Project,"** 2 p.m. Carmel Woman's Club, San Carlos and Ninth. Open to the public. \$10/guests/members free.

Jan. 20 – Demonstration of Ikebana, the art of traditional Japanese flower arrangement, presented 12:30 p.m. at the Monterey Peninsula Buddhist Temple, 1155 Noche Buena St., Seaside. Guest fee is \$5. Refreshments served.

Jan. 27 – Join us 4:30 to 7 p.m. for a fun-filled evening supporting Project Healing Waters, Monterey Program's work **helping veterans and active-duty service members recover physically and emotionally through the therapeutic activity of fly fishing.** Hog's Breath Inn, San Carlos between Fifth and Sixth, Carmel. Great food! Live and silent auctions! Complimentary parking and shuttle at public lot, Third and Torres. \$50/person. Contact Brian Steckler, (831) 402-1584, for more information or use the QR code to buy tickets.



Feb. 7 – Souper Bowl Saturday, a benefit for local homeless shelters. Takeout meal for two includes 16 oz. clam chowder, sourdough bread, packaged salad and dessert. Select pick-up window between 11 a.m.-5 p.m. at Shuman Heart-House. Enter at 300 Franklin St. and exit on Anthony Street, Monterey. Use QR code to pre-order by Jan. 30.



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MUSIC

From page 32A

pastymemusic.com. The church is located at Dolores and Ninth in Carmel.

■ Acoustic jazz on Wave Street

A group that fuses jazz with folk influences from around the globe, **The Folk Element Trio** plays Tuesday, 7 p.m., at Wave Street Studios in Monterey. The evening will feature “acoustic jazz that incorporates different styles of folk music from around the world, including West African, the Caribbean and Appalachian,” the venue said.

Tickets are \$25 at wavestreetlive774.com. The venue is located at 774 Wave St. in Monterey.

Live music Jan. 9-15

■ Big Sur

Big Sur River Inn — singer and guitarist **Rick Chelew** (folk, Saturday, 12:30 p.m.). 46800 Highway 1.

■ Carmel

Barmel — singer and guitarist **Kyle Kovalik** (Sunday and Thursday at 6 p.m.). Carmel Square on San Carlos north of Seventh.

Carmel Mission Inn — Open Mic Night (Wednesday at 6 p.m.). In the Shearwater Tavern, 3665 Rio Road.

Hyatt Carmel Highlands — singer and pianist **T.J. Kuenster** (jazz, Friday at 4:45 p.m.), singer **Dino Vera** (jazz, r&b and dance music, Saturday and Thursday at 6 p.m.). 120 Highlands Drive.

Cypress Inn — singer **Dino Vera** (jazz, r&b and dance music, Friday at 6:30 p.m.), pianist **Gennady Loktionov** and singer **Debbie Davis** (cabaret, Saturday at 6:30 p.m.), **The Andrea Carter Trio** (jazz and pop, Sunday at 11 a.m.), **The David Morwood Jazz Band** (Thursday at 6 p.m.). Lincoln and Seventh.

Links Club — Dr. T & the Remedy (rock, Friday at 6 p.m.), **The Rogue Roosters** (rock and blues, Saturday at 6

p.m.). Carmel Plaza, Mission and Ocean.

Mission Ranch — singer and pianist **Maddalaine Edstrom** (jazz, Friday through Sunday at 5 p.m.), pianist **Gennady Loktionov** (jazz, Monday through Thursday at 5 p.m.). 26270 Dolores St.

■ Carmel Valley

Bernardus Lodge — pianist **Martan Mann** (jazz, Friday at 6 p.m.), **Andrea’s Fault** (jazz and pop, Saturday at noon), singer and pianist **T.J. Kuenster** (jazz, Saturday at 6 p.m.), guitarist **John Sherry** (rock and blues, Sunday at noon). 415 W. Carmel Valley Road.

Folktales Winery — singer and guitarist **Trianna Feruza** (Friday at 4 p.m.), **Two Rivers** (pop and rock, Saturday at 4 p.m.), **The Peter Martin Trio** (jazz, Sunday



Singer and guitarist Adrea Castiano performs this week in Monterey and Pebble Beach.

at 4 p.m.), singer and guitarist **Lindsey Wall** (Monday at 4 p.m.), singer and guitarist **Tim Brady** (Thursday at 4

See **LIVE** page 39A



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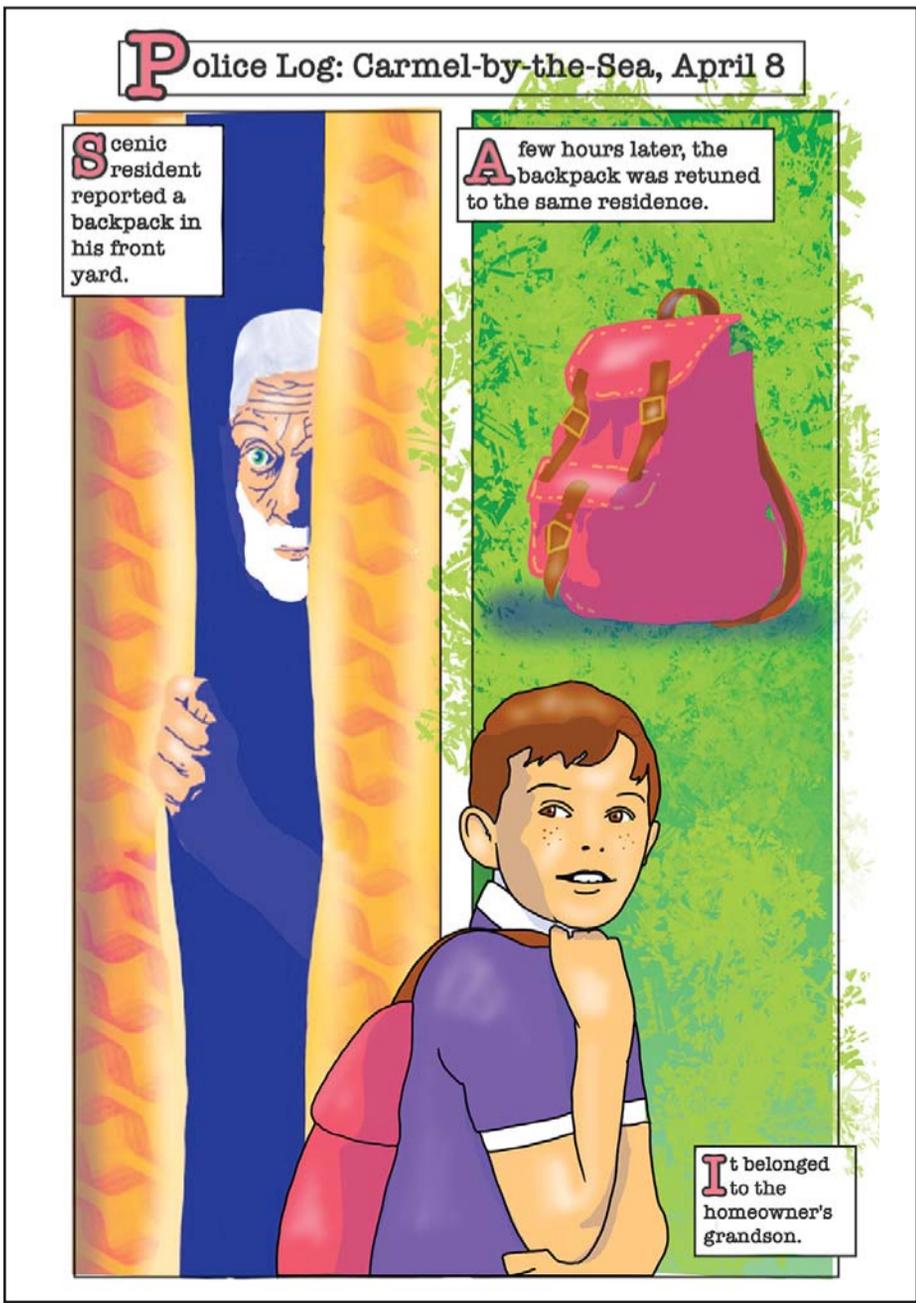
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Police Log: Carmel-by-the-Sea, April 8

Scenic resident reported a backpack in his front yard.

A few hours later, the backpack was returned to the same residence.

It belonged to the homeowner's grandson.



LIVE

From page 37A

p.m.). 8940 Carmel Valley Road.

Quail Lodge — mandolinist **Dave Holodiloff** (jazz, Friday at 5:30 p.m.). 8205 Valley Greens Dr.

Trailside Cafe — singer and guitarist **Scott Fenton** (Saturday at 6 p.m.). 3 Del Fino Place.

Monterey

Albatross Ridge Winery — singer and guitarist **Kito Rayburn** (Friday at 6 p.m.), singer and guitarist **Ryan Sesma** (Saturday at 6 p.m.). 316 Alvarado St.

Bulldog Sports Pub — **Tribe in the Sky** presents a weekly jam (Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.). 611 Lighthouse Ave.

Hyatt Regency Monterey — singer and instrumentalist **Reija Massey** (Friday at 6 p.m.), singer and guitarist **Scott Slaughter** (Saturday at 7 p.m.). 1 Old Golf Course Road.

InterContinental Hotel — guitarist **John Sherry** (rock and blues, Friday and Saturday at 7 p.m.), guitarist **Terrence Farrell** (Spanish, classical and jazz, Sunday at 9 a.m.), guitarist **Glenn Bell** (jazz, Thursday at 6 p.m.). 750 Cannery Row.

Midici Pizza — singer **Lauri Hofer-Romero** and keyboardist **Bill Spencer** (jazz, Sunday at 5 p.m.), saxophonist **Ben Herod** and bassist **Tony Bianchini** (jazz, Thursday at 6 p.m.). 467 Alvarado St.

Monterey Plaza Hotel — pianist **Michael Culver** (jazz, Friday at 6 p.m.), singer and pianist **Scott Brown** (jazz and pop, Saturday at 6 p.m.), pianist **Steve Mann** (jazz, Sunday at 6 p.m.), singer and guitarist **Adrea Castiano** (Monday and Tuesday at 6 p.m.), multi-instrumentalist **Gary Regina** (jazz, Wednesday at 6 p.m.), guitarist **John Sherry** (rock and blues, Thursday at 6 p.m.). 400 Cannery Row.

Pearl Hour — **The Zach Westfall Quartet** (jazz, Sunday at 8 p.m.), **The Ben Herod Trio** (jazz, Wednesday at 8 p.m.). 214 Lighthouse Ave.

Puma Road Winery at Portola Hotel — singer and guitarist **Nick DiSalvo** (Friday at 5 p.m.), singer and guitarist **Matt Masih** (Saturday at 5 p.m.), **The Smoky Vegas Project** ("classic lounge," Sunday at 5 p.m.). 281 Alvarado St.

Sardine Factory — singer and guitarist **Casey Frazier** (Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m.). 701 Wave St.

Sly McFly's — **The Money Band** (pop and rock, Friday at 9 p.m.), **The Speakeasy Band** (classic rock, Saturday at 9 p.m.). 700 Cannery Row.

Pacific Grove

Il Vecchio Restaurant — **The Cena Jazz Trio** (Thursday at 6 p.m.). 110 Central Ave.

Julia's Vegetarian Restaurant — singer and guitarist **Rags Rosenberg** (Friday at 7 p.m.), singer and guitarist **Kevin Smith** (Saturday at 6 p.m.), **Andrea's Fault Duo** (jazz and pop, Monday at 6 p.m.), singer and guitarist **Holysea** (Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.), singer and guitarist **Rick Chelew** (Thursday at 6 p.m.). 1180 Forest Ave.

Lighthouse Cinema — **The Chuck Brewer Band** (rock and blues, Friday at 6 p.m.). 525 Lighthouse Ave.

PG's Meetinghouse — **The Chuck Brewer Band** (rock and blues, Sunday at 11 a.m.), **Open Mic** (Tuesday at 6 p.m., sign up by 5 p.m.). 599 Lighthouse Ave.

Wild Fish — **The Lighthouse Jazz Quartet** (Friday and Saturday at 6:30 p.m.). 545 Lighthouse Ave.

Pebble Beach

The Inn at Spanish Bay — **The Andy Weis Trio** (jazz, Friday, Saturday and Thursday at 7 p.m.). 2700 17 Mile Drive.



Singer and guitarist Nick DiSalvo plays Friday, 5 p.m., at the Puma Road Winery in Monterey.

The Lodge at Pebble Beach — singer and guitarist **Kip Allert** (Saturday at 5 p.m.), singer and guitarist **Adrea Castiano** (Saturday at 5 p.m.), mandolinist **Dave Holodiloff** (jazz, Thursday at 5 p.m.) In the Terrace Lounge at 1700 17 Mile Drive.

To update these listings, email chris@carmelpinecone.com.

SERVICE DIRECTORY

Continues from previous page

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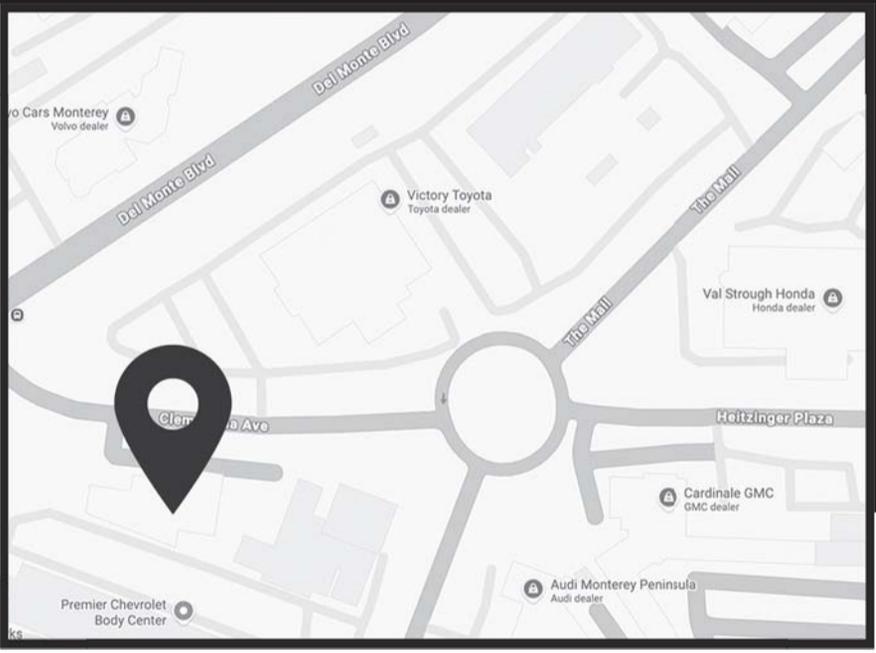
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