

LIFE in Los Banos

ANNUAL PUBLICATION 2023

BUSINESS AND LOS BANOS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2023 MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY



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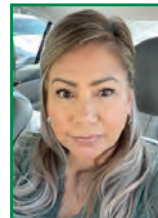
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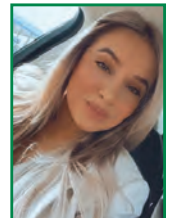
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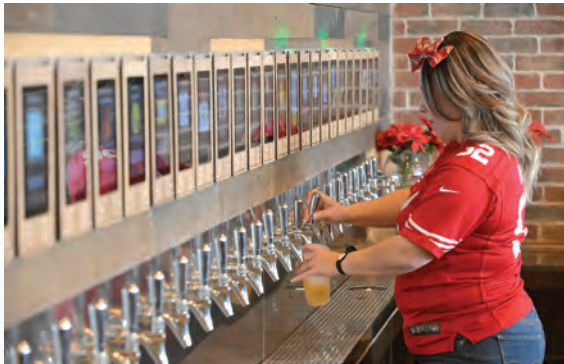
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PHOTO BY GENE LIEB/ glieb@TheWestsideExpress.com

Robert Huddleston, a member of the Los Banos Arts Council, demonstrates how to use a pottery wheel during the Fall Membership Appreciation event held in October.

On the cover: Capturing the natural splendor of Los Banos, this stunning photograph by renowned photographer Gene Lieb features a picturesque duck gracefully swimming in one of the wildlife's pristine bodies of water. Los Banos boasts a diverse range of wildlife, providing visitors with an unparalleled opportunity to witness the beauty of nature firsthand. We invite you to experience the captivating allure of Los Banos' wildlife during your visit.

The Life In Los Banos magazine is an annual publication. For those interested in being included in the 2024 edition, please call Publisher, Gene Lieb at (209) 704-3831



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A Los Banos Easter tradition for more than a half-century

By Mike Neu
PASTOR, ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Since the mid-1960s, the SonRise Easter Service has been a Los Banos tradition. Hosted by St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church since the inception of the service, it is an ecumenical celebration of the resurrection of Christ Jesus.

The inaugural service was held in Pacheco Park but was moved the following year to the shores of O'Neill Forebay, across Highway 152 from San Luis Reservoir. The celebration is held annually to the left of the boat ramp, next to one of the day use picnic areas. Scattered trees and the forebay itself form a backdrop, as the sun rises over the distant Sierras, reflecting off the water through the trees.

The SonRise Service, as St. John's calls it, includes several ministers from other Los Banos-area churches. In the past, clerical participants came from First Baptist, Calvary Baptist, United Methodist, St. Alban's Anglican and Crossroads, among others.

An offering is collected as part of the service, 100 percent of which is donated to a local charity. Last year, \$300 was provided to support the Feed the Need program run by Los Banos Rotary Club.

The entire community is invited to attend the service, regardless of your church home or lack thereof. St. John's provides some folding chairs, but many arrive with their own chairs, not to mention blankets. Early spring mornings can be chilly and a challenge for the musicians to stay in tune!

The San Luis SRA management has been generous in recent years to



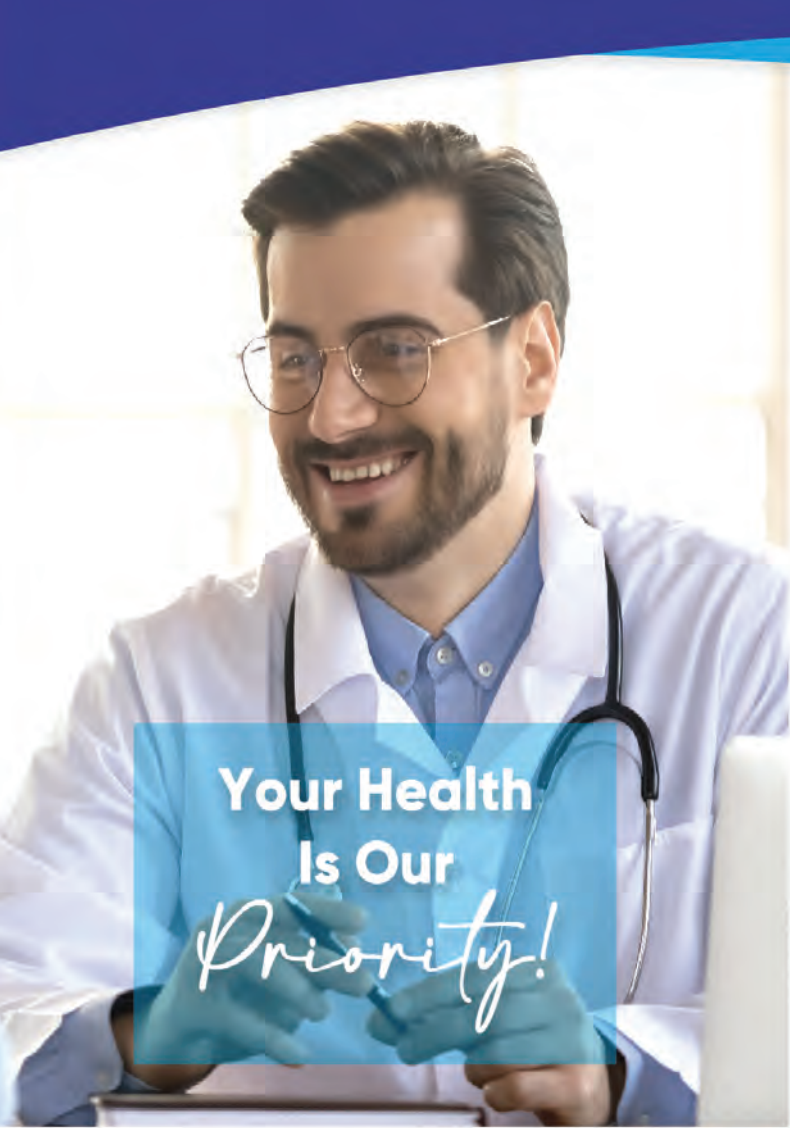
The Los Banos Sunrise Service in 1967, one of the first such services held at the O'Neil Forebay.

The entire community is invited to attend the service, regardless of your church home or lack thereof.

accommodate this event, including providing free parking passes good for the duration of the service only.

While the service went on hiatus in 2020 due to the pandemic, the State Park made contact in 2021 to find out if St. John's would resume the tradition. The service resumed its place in Los Banos lore.

Plans are to continue this year, pending permission from the State Park. The gates open to the Forebay at 6 a.m., with the service starting at 6:30. Keep an eye for announcements in the Westside Express concerning scheduling and pass availability.



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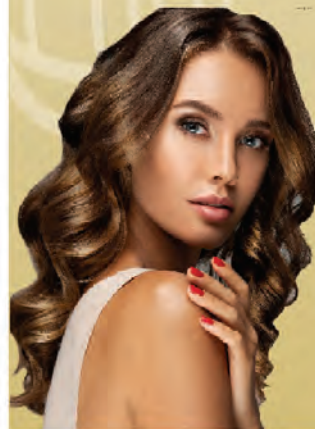
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Welcome to Los Banos!

By Diana Ingram

Welcome. I am very glad you are here. Let me introduce myself. I am the spirit of Los Banos, a warm and welcoming place.

Los Banos is over 100 years old, mature, with a fine history, but also keeping up with the times. Just about anything you may need you will find here.

Los Banos is centrally located - at the crossroads of California, on Highway 152 between Interstate 5 and Highway 152. It's just a short drive from Los Banos to many and varied spots of interest, including the Bay Area, Yosemite, San Juan Batista and Monterey.

If you visit the city's downtown area, you will see it has many original buildings and is a repository of history. Visit the Milliken Museum on Pacheco Boulevard, and you will know the city's roots are deep.

Los Banos is filled with traditions that you can enjoy and adopt as your own, including downtown street fairs where you can stroll, eat, talk and shop. Los Banos annually hosts the Merced County Spring Fair, a Tomato Festival, and parades for May Day, Veteran's Day and Christmas. Who doesn't love a parade?

The Ted Falasco Arts Center near downtown Los Banos offers a host of wonderful concerts and other entertainments throughout the year.

Los Banos is a place where cows and lambs graze in some fields, while cotton, tomatoes and alfalfa grow in others. Here is an opportunity to stop and smell the roses.

Los Banos is also multicultural. People from Germany, Italy, Portugal, Mexico and Spain came here many years ago and have incorporated their charm, culture, and unique history within the city, which makes it a rich and varied place to call home.



A historical photo of the corner of J and Sixth streets.



A recent look at the corner of J and Sixth streets.

*Schools in
Los Banos
develop successful
students.
Children's and
youth sports
programs
here are well
loved and well
supported.*

Los Banos also has all the conveniences you may want with a variety of shopping options, markets, pharmacies, car lots, gas stations, doctors, veterinarians and a fine community hospital. The city also has community-oriented police and fire departments, and a warm and much-loved library.

Schools in Los Banos develop successful students. Children's and youth sports programs here are well loved and well supported. The city has many well maintained parks, and the active Parks and Recreation Department offers a wide variety of programs supported by the community.

The nearby wetlands and wildlife refuges are rare treasures right in the city's

backyard. Here you will find a sanctuary where you can enter another world.

The nearby San Luis Reservoir and Forebay offer a great place to take your boat, fish or just daydream. The city also has trails for you to walk and canals filled with native ducks to help you relax. If you have a small plane, the city has a well maintained airport

Hungry? Los Banos will keep you well fed. It is home to two restaurants that have been well known for many decades: Wool-grower's Basque Restaurant with family-style meals and Espana's Southwestern Bar and Grill at the Canal Farm historical site where Henry

Miller began the May Day tradition.

The city's other restaurants offer many different types of cuisine, including Mexican, Chinese, Japanese and Italian, to name a few. In downtown Los Banos there is an original old-time soda fountain that serves the best milkshakes you have ever tasted.

There is something for everyone, including service clubs that will feed your love of giving back. And of course, there are a wide variety of churches that can fill your spirit.

Los Banos will provide all the activity you may want and will also let you unwind and feel at home. The hous-



The city of Los Banos installed poles for a downtown banner at the intersection of Sixth and J streets.

ing market is vitally alive, offering many new developments to suit your taste. In Los Banos you'll be buying a home with a lifestyle that will embrace you.

People who have lived here for decades or for months say they have not only a home but a hometown. Once again, welcome to Los Banos.






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New Homes in Los Banos, CA

A wonderful life, now changing, on Los Banos dairy farms

By Kirsten Areias
RETIRED LOS BANOS FARMER

At the 1978 Future Farmers of America Convention, Paul Harvey delivered a speech that has stood the test of time. It was even included in a Super Bowl commercial a while back.

In the beginning of the speech, Harvey said, “And on the eighth day, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, ‘I need a caretaker.’ So God made a farmer.”

“God said,” the commercial continued, “I need somebody willing to get up before dawn, milk cows, work all day in the fields, milk cows again, eat supper and then go to town and stay past midnight at a meeting of the school board. So, God made a farmer.”

This is a wonderful speech, and it touches my heart, but I could have used one more paragraph at the end to address how a farmer deals with change.

I have lived in Los Banos my entire life--63 years to be exact. It is probably quite rare today to still live in the same town you were born in, rarer yet to have never left or lived anywhere else. That allows me to gauge and experience much change.

Change comes at a price. You appreciate that you have been blessed to live in the same place for your “forever,” but along with that is the reality of change, and some of that is difficult.

Agriculture has always been a part of my life and certainly a big part of the development of Los Banos. My grandfather had a small dairy and farmed, as well as my grandfathers-in-law.

The next generation, my father-in-law, farmed and milked cows. My father loved cows, but more those on the beef side, and he was also a pioneer in the beekeeping industry in our area.

My husband and I were also in the dairy industry for 42 years until May of last year, when we decided to retire, and watched our cows loaded up in semi-trucks and hauled to Arizona Dairy to begin their new life, as we remained behind to figure out life beyond cows.



Jack Jensen
(Kirsten Areias' father)

*Not only
have I
experienced
change,
so has my
hometown.
Progress in
agriculture
in our
community
has caused
changes in
many lives.*

Dairy and farming is something all the ancestors I remember did. It was a wonderful life when I was growing up, a wonderful way for my husband and me to raise our children and teach them a strong work ethic. It has been a difficult life to leave behind.

Not only have I experienced change, so has my hometown. Progress in agriculture in our community has caused changes in many lives. In our community of Los Banos, the small dairies were replaced by bigger dairies, the small farms were replaced by larger farms, and much of the farmland became the housing tracts that have changed the rural landscape.

I now find myself caught up in change, but just as my ancestors before me, I understand that this was inevitable.

Farming is not what you do for a



James Areias, Sr. (Kirsten Areias' father-in-law), with his daughter Julie Areias, son Dennis Areias and daughter Cindy Areias Arambel.

*I have been
blessed to
have lived
and continue
to live on
God's planned
paradise, just
without the
cows.*

living, it is how you live for a living. I have been blessed to have lived and continue to live on God's planned paradise, just without the cows. Someday my children or grandchildren might find their way back

to our farm; life has taken them in many directions.

But there is just something about "the dirt" that tugs at your heart, and they too might someday make something of the acres of our paradise.



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Los Banos Arts Council offers concerts, shows, and programs throughout the year

By Sandy Lemas

The Los Banos Arts Council is the heart and focal point for the cultural activities in the Los Banos community. The mission is to support, encourage and promote the arts, cultural and educational activities in Los Banos and to benefit charitable and non-profit activities, including service club activities, in the community.

A major goal of the council is to bring arts and culture to the Los Banos community at affordable prices. The group is very community minded and dedicated. Throughout the years, the arts council has

worked tirelessly on supporting and organizing music concerts, art and photography shows, exhibitions, theater, youth programs and activities.

In 1994 a group of visionary Los Banos residents came to the rescue of the building, which had previously been the home of St. Joseph's Catholic Church. It was also renamed to the Ted Falasco Arts Center to honor the group's primary benefactor, local philanthropist and successful business owner Ted Falasco, following his passing.

There are three other buildings connected to the arts center. The annex is located at 1125 Fifth St., with



PHOTO BY GENE LIEB/gleb@TheWestsideExpress.com

Los Banos Police Commander Ray Reyna stands with his family in front of the quilt presented to him by the Quilters Guild as one of many presented to first responders at the annual Quilt Show at the Ted Falasco Arts Center.

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the Mel Soares Arts Studios next door at 1143 Fifth Street. The fourth location is the Robert Huddleston Crafts Studio located at 510 I St.

The Arts Council schedules a concert series annually.

Evie Ladin Band will be in concert April 21 with a unique style of music and dance. More detailed information is available online. Ticket prices are kept low--\$20 for general admission and \$15 for students.

The Community Theater of Los Banos is another significant program offered for the residents. It is free to join for ages 10 and older. The theater normally holds two productions per year and always welcomes new actors and actresses to join.

Jennifer Ramsey is the Director of Theatrical Production and can be contacted via Facebook through the Los Banos Community Theater page or by calling 408.561.9561. She is currently working on a spring production of "Grease."

The Quilt Guild is another Arts Council group that is focused on build-

ing a community around quilting and inspiring each other in supportive ways. The Guild meets from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Wednesday at the Mel Soares Arts Studios. Beginning quilters can get help on their projects and can connect with expert quilters. Guests are always welcome.

Other classes are taught each year at the arts center include ceramics, painting, pottery, card making and much more.

The Arts Council hosts an Open Mic Night that provides local singers, musicians, poets, dramatists and comedians a place to perform, perfect their craft and show off their talents. It is a great way to spend an evening enjoying all of the untapped talent in the Westside community.

Performers must be 12 years or older and all performances must be family friendly. If you are interested in performing, contact Rhonda Lowe at 209.704.4384.

The tenth annual "Empty Bowls" fundraiser was at the arts center on Feb. 23.

This event is sponsored by Los Banos Rotary, Arts Council and the school district, with all proceeds to benefit local programs that feed the hungry.

Over the years, many other charitable and service organizations have raised much needed funds to help out the community with events at the Ted Falasco Art Center.

The Los Banos Arts Council was selected to host a fireworks booth this year. The booth will operate from June 28 to July 4. This major fundraiser will help support the many valuable programs that are offered.

There is always something exciting happening at the Ted Falasco Arts Center. For more information about becoming a member of the Arts Council or with questions regarding council activities, upcoming programs and events, check out the Facebook page or call 209.827.4126. The Ted Falasco Arts Center is also available to rent for community events for special occasions.

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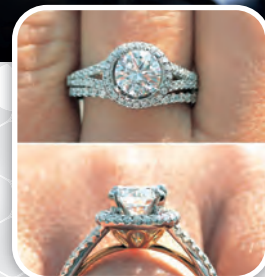


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Los Banos Chamber of Commerce

By Michelle Sandoval
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Working at the Los Banos Chamber of Commerce, I hear much too often, “What does a chamber of commerce do?” As soon as it is explained I always get the same feedback, “Wow!” For those of you that don’t know about all the Los Banos Chamber of Commerce does, here is some good information.

The Los Banos Chamber of Commerce is a form of business network. For example, we are a local organization of businesses whose goal is to further the interests of businesses. Local business owners advocate on behalf of the business community.

Every community has a chamber of commerce, or at least they should. The goal of any chamber as well as our own is to help to further the interests of small businesses in our area.

The Los Banos Chamber offers a variety of different services. For our members we offer an assortment of workforce help, such as labor law updates, networking and resources for businesses in need of help in areas like human resources, payroll, bookkeeping and advertising.

We also offer many different options for business networking and promotional advertising. In addition, our events contribute to our members by giving them a stage to help promote their business by sponsoring an event or setting up a vendor booth to meet the community one on one. Every service has the main goal of the betterment of the community.

Business owners pay membership fees to join the chamber of commerce. Primarily, this remains the chamber’s most likely source of funding. Anyone who desires to join the chamber as a member has to pay the necessary fees. We have an array of different membership packages, ranging from employee count, nonprofit status and

non-business residential associate.

The Los Banos Chamber of Commerce offers members an in-person network of talent and resources in your area. It gives your business the power of a united voice for the small business community. And most of all, it brings you opportunities to learn, grow and connect as a business owner and community member.

The Los Banos Chamber is responsible for improving the local business environment and strengthening communities through advocacy, networking and campaigning. In doing so, we create an easy line of communication for business owners to connect with governing bodies.

Currently the Los Banos Chamber hosts at least six main events throughout the year, and we are constantly gathering committees together so that we can add more events to our lineup. These events are jam-packed with arts and crafts vendors, music, food and live entertainment for the whole family.

The idea of these events is to entertain the residents of Los Banos and make Los Banos a town to visit. When the chamber hosts an event in town, typically downtown on 6th street, we have vendors and



One of many members of the Folklorioco Yoloty dance group perform each year at the Chamber’s bi-annual street fairs.

peopled from the communities of other far and nearby towns come to visit. And these events give something for the community to attend.

It is better for the local economy when residents stay in town and shop at local



Citizens of Los Banos enjoy the variety of vehicles at the Dad’s Day Out car show presented by the Los Banos Chamber of Commerce in downtown Los Banos.

stores, when residents shop locally, 68 percent of that money stays in our community and with that we all win.

The 2023 upcoming year is filled with these types of fulfilled events--in April with our Downtown Spring Street Faire and in June with the Father's Day Car Show. July has the Tomato Festival, September the Downtown Fall Street Faire, and October the chamber's newest event, our Trunk or Treat Halloween Movie Night.

As always, on the first weekend of December, the chamber also sponsors our annual Christmas parade and "Christmas in the Plaza" Holiday Craft Fair. Applications for these events may be found on our website at LosBanos.com or at the chamber office.

Anyone interested in more information on becoming a chamber member, volunteering or sponsoring an event may contact the Chamber office by emailing LBCOFC@comcast.net, calling the office at (209) 826-2495 or coming downtown to our office at 932 6th Street in Los Banos.

Finally, keep this in mind: The Los Banos Chamber of Commerce is your 3-C chamber: Catalyst for business growth and expansion; Connector of people, ideas and resources; and Champion of a strong community!



Musical groups stop to perform for judges during the Annual Downtown Christmas Parade.



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Service at the heart of city government

By Jonathan Simone

The City of Los Banos' government includes a wide array of departments all with the goal of serving the community.

City Council meetings are held on the first and third Wednesdays of the month in City Hall, 520 J Street, where the public may address members of the council. City Council members include Mayor Paul Llanez and Councilmembers Kenneth Lambert (District 1), Douglas Begonia Jr. (District 2), Brett Jones (District 3) and Deborah Lewis (District 4).

City Hall is not only the home of council meetings. It houses several departments for day-to-day operations of Los Banos, including administration, finance, community and economic development and building. From 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., City Hall is open to the public to pay their utility bill, sign up for utility services, obtain a business license, and/or apply for various permits and develop city entitlements.

The City of Los Banos is also home to other groups, such as the Planning



Members of the Los Banos City Council include, from left, Douglas Begonia Jr., Brett Jones, Mayor Paul Llanez, Kenneth Lambert, and Deborah Lewis.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 53 >>



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Downtown Association works to help Los Banos' historic downtown thrive

BY MARIBEL GARCIA
LOS BANOS DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION

The Los Banos Downtown Association serves as a vital resource for its members, merchants and the community. It is planning for a vibrant future and is committed to creating a downtown where every person who visits, works and lives here can thrive.

Its board members are David Sousa, President; Tareq Husein, Vice President; Brett Jones, Past Chair; Tom Kaljian, Treasurer; Taylor Wolfsen, Secretary; and Members Alvaro Sanchez, Sandra Benetti, Eric de la Torre and John Cates.

The board is identifying strategies and actions that integrate the upcoming events planned for 2023, making decisions considering the needs and concerns of landowners, merchants, members and the community.

The Downtown Association is striving to preserve, promote and stimulate the historical appearance and economic vitality of the historic downtown, along with safe streets and a busy business environment.

In December 2023 there was a decision to reorganize the Downtown Association. The association encourages people who would be interested in working with people who want to revitalize the downtown to become board members.

The board has secured an attorney to make sure that the 501c-3 corporation rules have been met and the bylaws are up to date and to ensure its mission, vision, and purpose statements reflect the mission of the organization.

The association has built a website to inform the community of what is going on downtown, creating a master calendar to keep the whole community informed of what is happening.

The master calendar is also a way for the agencies, churches, and community members to book events that do not

overlap. The website is also a marketing opportunity for the businesses. This website will be able to sell tickets for the association's upcoming events.

Casino Night will be April 29. Come and join us for a barbecue dinner and a live auction and play at the tables as you dance and enjoy refreshments. We are expecting over 200 attendees.

The Fourth of July celebration will be July 1 and includes food vendors, arts and crafts, music, an obstacle course and entertainment for the kids. We will be presenting a spectacular firework display at night for the community to enjoy.

The annual Farm to Table event will be Sept. 21, starting with an exceptional spread of appetizers followed by dinner and wine. The event will recognize agricultural leaders and showcase live and silent auctions.

Lunch with the board will be Oct. 20, when the board will be providing information on the downtown projects related to the Property Business Improvement District.

Nov. 30 will be the holiday Lighting Celebration for 2023. This event will start with a Storytime from Mr. and Mrs. Claus, food and craft vendors, a local choir and carolers. There will also be a Christmas Window Contest involving local businesses.



Children pose for photos with the statues at the Henry Miller water feature in downtown Los Banos.

Our website is www.downtownlosbanos.com, which keeps everyone informed of what is happening so that communication is transparent. Businesses can also purchase a membership and pay membership dues on the website.

The contact person for the Los Banos Downtown Association is Maribel Garcia. Emails can be sent to info.lbdowntown@gmail.com or Maribel.lbdowntown@gmail.com. The phone numbers are 209-710-9022 (office) 209-809-5407 (cell). We are located at 907 Sixth Street. And the mailing address is P.O. Box 501, Los Banos, CA 93635.

We are delighted to personally count you among those who strive to create new opportunities in our downtown.

Steve Soares enjoys the spread of appetizers at the Farm to Table Dinner.





Michael K. Larson, CPA & Associates

Mike Larson, CPA
(209) 826-6190
Fax: (209) 826-5733

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mike@mklcpa.net



Senior Brown Bag Program

Senior Brown Bag Program takes place on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of every month from 9:00am to 11:00am in Los Banos and Dos Palos at the following locations

Los Banos - New Beginnings Church - 821 West L Street
Dos Palos - Carver Center - 21475 Reynolds Ave
Dos Palos - Living Well Cafe - 931 Center Street

If you are 55 or older with an income at or near \$1,707.50 you may qualify for the program. You can register on the day and time of the distribution at one of the locations listed. You would need to bring Proof of Income, Proof of Address, and ID.



Currently, in Merced County there are over 21,000 seniors whose income is at or below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines - which equals \$1,286 a month or less.

This year, our low-income seniors (who's average social security check is less than \$1,000) are being particularly hard-hit by the rise in gas costs, rent increases, sales tax increase and the added costs of food and healthcare.

For many of us, these small increases are an inconvenience and we adjust our budgets, and/or work more hours to make up the difference.

However, for those of our neighbors who live on fixed-incomes and can't work, there is only one choice - sacrifice something to make up the difference.

Often, that sacrifice is nutritious food.

The Senior Brown Bag program is here to fill that gap for thousands of our elders and is entirely supported through individual and business contributions.

Merced County Food Bank's Brown Bag Program provides supplemental nutritious groceries twice a month to over 3,500

older adults at 16 distribution sites in Merced County.

Seniors receive groceries from distribution sites set up throughout our service area, usually churches, senior centers, or community resource centers.

There is no cost to the individuals served and eligibility is determined by using the federal income guidelines for poverty.

Senior Brown Bag Program participants are also provided with opportunities to volunteer at their food pickup site, which offers them social connections and a sense of belonging and purpose. Every month, more than 200 volunteers gather at Senior Brown Bag sites to sort, bag, and distribute food to their peers. Many participants have built new friendships and renewed their sense of community by volunteering.

After a lifetime of hard work, 63% of the households with older adults (50+) that Merced County Food Bank serves find themselves being forced to make difficult but unavoidable choices such as whether to purchase their medications, pay for their housing, and/or pay their utilities. Buying food, especially nutritious food, is often last on their list.

Sample Senior Brown Bag food items:

- Chicken
- Eggs
- Fresh Produce
- Cereal
- Rice
- Other staple items

And as the baby-boom generation ages, the number of seniors facing hunger is only expected to increase. MCFB is working hard to prevent this.

It takes just \$60 annually to help feed a senior for a year through the Senior Brown Bag Program.

Please join us in the fight against hunger in our community and sponsor a senior or a group of seniors.

Merced County Food Bank - 2000 West Olive Ave, Merced CA 95348 (209) 726-3663 - www.MMCFB.org





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Merced County, Los Banos Branch Library

The Los Banos Library is the third largest branch in the Merced County Library system and was established in its present location at 1312 Seventh Street in 1965.

The Los Banos branch offers many different programs year-round, like the Summer Reading Program where participants can earn a free book and other prizes. Spring brings the annual Cover-to-Cover reading program where children can earn free hamburgers from In-N-Out. New this year is a reading program from Panda Express where children (5-11) can earn a free child's meal after reading five books.

Los Banos library offers three weekly Storytimes, including Tiny Tales (ages 3-6), Bilingual (ages 3-6), and Family Storytime. Crafts are included in the programs. Also offered are Sensory Playgroup, Family Movie Time, and Family Lego Time.

Monthly craft and coloring days are available with themes that fit the holidays or seasons. Throughout the year we have other programs with performers and shows.

The Los Banos library offers public computers for everyone to use. The local library offers unlimited access to available online databases and in-library online access to subscription databases.

The Los Banos library also offers literacy tutoring, and its helps connect veterans to services they might need.

Library cards are free. Children 17 and under are registered through a parent or guardian. A valid photo ID is required.

The hours of operation are Tuesday 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Wednesday 10a.m.-8 p.m., Thursday 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Friday 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m.-5 p.m. the library is closed Sunday and Monday. Our phone number is 209-826-5254.



PHOTOS BY GENE LIEB/gleib@TheWestSideExpress.com

Brandon Gray, owner of Wild Child Adventures performed his bubble show at the Los Banos Library for 24 children and a few parents. The show was funded by the Merced County library system. Gray's hour-long performance included not only his skill at blowing various size bubbles, but also educated children on how bubbles are made, the shape and also the reflections seen in a bubble. He ended his show by standing each student in his bubble pool and created a bubble around them.

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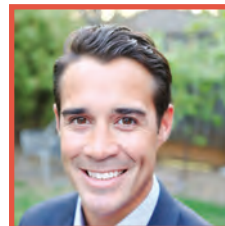
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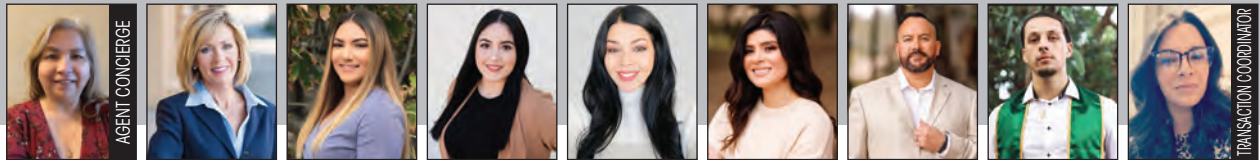
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Higher Education Dreams Fulfilled for Los Banos Students

The Merced College Los Banos Campus, a satellite site of the Merced Community College District, opened its doors in 1971 to give Westside Merced County residents easier access to education and job training.

Fast-forward more than 50 years later and the Los Banos Campus has continued to grow, now serving nearly 2,500 students each semester with academic offerings ranging from general education requirements to career technical education programs, such as the popular Welding and Medical Assisting programs.

In addition, the campus has robust noncredit offerings to serve adult students in achieving their GED, learning English, becoming a U.S. citizen, and acquiring basic computing skills. Virtual instruction at the campus was expanded in Fall 2022, with courses taught by Merced Campus faculty being streamed live to Los Banos.

Students at the Los Banos Campus receive “wraparound” student services that include personal and academic counseling, a food pantry, tutoring services, book vouchers, and programs for special populations. The campus also endeavors to cultivate a full college experience for Westside students, with active student-run clubs like Social Sciences and MEChA. Both clubs participate in community events, such as the local Trunk-o-Treat and Kindergarten Book Giving.

Child Development Center

April Heft, a new faculty member charged with leading the development of the Child Development Center at the Los Banos Campus, brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the role.

Heft helped open the first non-profit center, Children Today, to serve homeless children and families in the Long Beach community. Then in the Newport-Mesa Unified School District,

she was instrumental in establishing the first inclusion preschool program in the district, serving children with special needs.

Now, Heft is fulfilling a much-needed gap at the Los Banos Campus, becoming the first full-time child development faculty member there in nine years. Her presence will enable the college to offer Westside students access to all the core child development coursework without having to travel to the Merced Campus for certain courses.

Heft also has a leading role in the development of a new child development center at the campus. Set to open in Fall 2023, the Los Banos Child Development Center will serve two important purposes: first, serving as a laboratory site where students can be coached and mentored as they develop and refine their teaching practices; and second, as a high-quality early childhood care and education school, which will serve children from three months to five years old.

What’s New and What’s Next

The future is bright for the Los Banos Campus, which is looking to add more new instructional programs like Agriculture and Computer Technology Information Systems. A campus beautification project will bring new exterior and interior paint, a new student café, and a renovated food forest.

Also new to the Los Banos Campus is a Welcome Center in which Student Services staff can assist students from start to finish on their journeys. Services available in Los Banos include EOPS, CARE, CalWORKS, DSPS, and the Food Pantry.

Onward and Upward

Local students with their sights set on a bachelor’s degree, a master’s degree, or even a Ph.D. don’t have to travel far. Merced College provides associate degrees that promise an easy transfer to a four-year university, and the college



PHOTO BY GENE LIEB/glieb@TheWestsidepress.com

Students can learn how to weld through the welding technology program on G Street in Los Banos.

has established pathway programs for transferring to local colleges like CSU Stanislaus, UC Merced and Fresno State.

Located in Turlock, CSU Stanislaus is a comprehensive university and part of the California State University system. It has ranked among the best colleges in the nation for 17 consecutive years, according to The Princeton Review, gaining high marks for academic excellence and social mobility.

Another great option for Los Banos students is UC Merced, the newest campus in the world-renowned University of California system. UC Merced offers a top-quality education and student support, with cutting-edge research and technology.

Fresno State, one of the flagship campuses of the CSU system, is another popular choice for local students. With over 150 programs to choose from, students can find the perfect fit for their future career goals. The university is known for its strong academics, vibrant campus life, and close-knit community.

From the local community college to outstanding four-year options and more, there’s truly never been a better time to be a college student in Los Banos.

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Friday 8:15 AM
(Our Lady of Fatima School Mass)

Weekend / Fin de Semana

Saturday	8:00 AM	(First Saturday)
	4:00 PM	English
	6:00 PM	Español
Sunday	7:00 AM	English
	9:00 AM	Español
	11:00 AM	English
	1:00 PM	Español
	7:00 PM	Español

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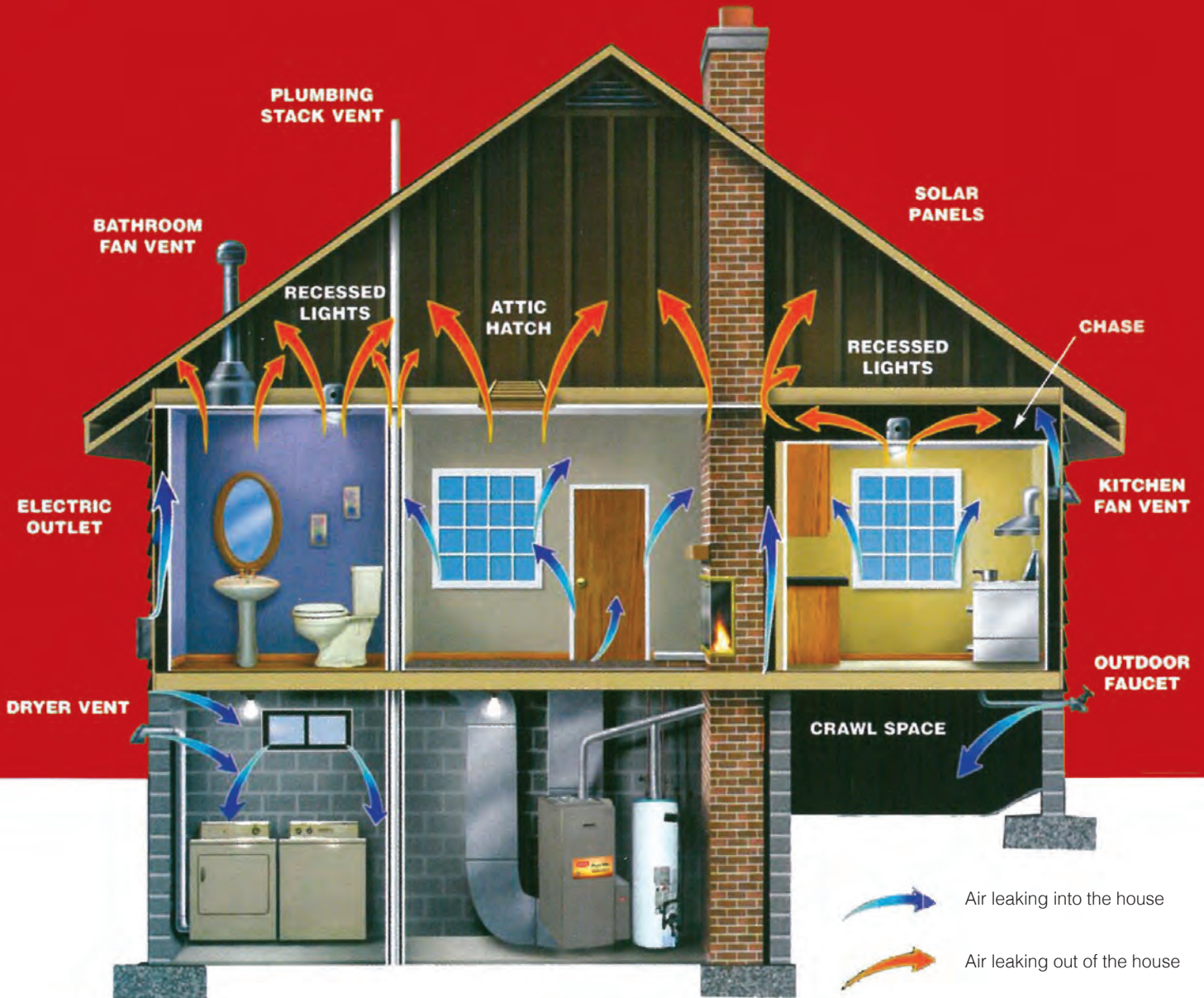
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Wildlife refuges near Los Banos provide unique outdoor attractions

By Kim Yancey

One of the wonderful things about living in Los Banos are the nearby special outdoor attractions, some unique to the state and all free to enjoy.

The San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex headquarters is a short drive north on California State Highway 165 to Wolfsen Road and then two miles east to the refuge entrance. The complex is comprised of three refuges – San Luis, Merced, and San Joaquin River – which in total include about 47,000 acres of varied wildlife habitat. All three refuges are open year-round from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Visitor services personnel staff the visitors center from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday except on federal holidays when the building is closed. They can answer questions about the refuge complex and the flora and fauna that might be seen there. Maps of the refuges' auto tour routes and walking trails are available inside the center and can also be viewed on the refuge website (<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/san-luis/>).

At the San Luis refuge is a large herd of tule elk, a species almost hunted to extinction in the late 1800s. The herd at the refuge lives within a large enclosure and an auto route, about 5 miles, runs along the perimeter. Elk can be seen from the auto route or the

observation platform on the west side of the enclosure most of the time.

A longer auto route provides visitors a chance to see some of the many species of birds and other wildlife that inhabit the refuge either seasonally or year-round. During the winter, tundra swans can often be seen in the wetlands and sandhill cranes in the uplands, all visible from the auto route. The route also leads to parking at trail heads for walking trails.

The Sousa Marsh trail is slightly longer than one mile and leads to a newly refurbished wildlife observation platform which provides visitors an elevated place to view the upper Sousa Marsh and, during the winter months, a chance to look at thousands of ducks, geese and other migratory waterfowl which frequent the wetland.

Visitors to the Merced National Wildlife Refuge in the spring can often see wide swaths of flowers from their car along Sandy Mush Road before coming to the entrance to the refuge. Inside the refuge there are areas of pasture where native clovers and other wildflowers grow. But far outnumbering flowers at Merced refuge are the migratory waterfowl and other birds that live there from fall to late winter.

Two of the most enjoyed attractions to the refuge in winter are the largest population of lesser sandhill cranes along the Pacific Flyway and more than 60,000 snow and



A black-necked stilt is one of many birds that can be seen in the local refuges.

Ross' geese. More than 10,000 cranes roost there in the wetlands at night. Watching and hearing them fly in from feeding grounds in all directions just before sunset is an unforgettable experience.

During the winter season visitors can also easily see thousands of ducks, and other waterbirds like ibis, egrets, herons, and migratory shorebirds from the auto route as well as a number of raptor and songbird species. Occasionally bald eagles can be seen hunting over the wetlands.

Closer to Los Banos, vernal pools, so named because they are generally filled with water in springtime, are sources of magnificent displays of wildflowers as the weather warms and the pools begin to dry. The Kesterson unit of the San Luis refuge has many natural pools and other areas that, while not technically vernal pools, provide spectacular displays of goldfields and downingia, flowers typical to native pools.

There is no vehicle access to Kesterson (except to hunters during waterfowl season

and refuge personnel) but it's a flat, relatively smooth and rewarding walk to the pools. The unit is described as "free roam" meaning, once inside, visitors can walk wherever they desire. Access to the refuge parking lot is off California state highway 140 between Stevenson and Gustine.

Anyone not bothered by a couple-mile walk and the absence of any facilities will find treasure at the state of California's Great Valley Grasslands State Park. None of the nearly 3,000-acre park has ever been farmed so many native plants can be found there, although fighting a losing battle with invasive species of exotic cool-season grasses and forbes.

While the flowers that live in them are common to California the type of vernal pools at the state park exist nowhere else. Visitor access is by foot or bicycle only, off California state highway 165 just south of the San Joaquin River. Follow the road to the first tee intersection then go south on that road and keep an eye out for flowers.

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Parks and Recreation provides green spaces and activities throughout the year

By Joe Heim

Los Banos Parks and Recreation Operations Manager

At the heart of Los Banos is its growing parks and recreation offerings.

Los Banos enjoys over 260 acres of public landscape, and nearly 13,000 trees make up its tree canopy. Users are able to enjoy two expansive trails that cross the city along the Rail Trail Corridor and the through the H.G. Fawcett Canal Trail.

The city offers over 40 green spaces and parks to enjoy passive and active recreation amenities including 37 playgrounds. Ten shade structures offer space for family picnics. Fourteen basketball courts, a skate park, three sand volleyball courts, two bocce ball courts and six horseshoe pits offer users countless hours of relaxation and fun.

The recently constructed dog park is one of the city's most popular amenities, where a park spanning almost acre offers small dogs and mixed-sized dogs plenty of room to run.

The city's small-town nature lends itself to peaceful afternoons to enjoy over 300 days of sun each year. Los Banos residents appreciate the many family activities offered throughout the year.

The most popular activities are the city's wide array of annual events, including the Egg Hunt held each April at Oliveira Park, Movie Nights in

A child chooses her pumpkin at the city of Los Banos Parks and Recreation Halloween celebration at the Ag Sports Complex.



PHOTO BY GENE LIEB / glieb@TheWestsidepress.com

the Park during the summer, Arbor Day each March and a spooky night at the park at October's Halloween Fest.

In September local senior citizens are invited to the annual Salute to Seniors event. Salute to Seniors has become the premier senior event in the area, and each year it chooses a new theme. This year's 'space' theme is "Our Seniors are out of this World!"

Near the end of the year residents and visitors are invited for a special Breakfast with Santa event at the Community Center, where attendees enjoy a pancake breakfast, crafts and fun games including home-made mini-golf.

Kids, adults and seniors are always welcome at the home of Los Banos Parks and Recreation, the Community Center. The Community Center, constructed in 2010, offers programs and activities every day ranging from Bingo and Arts and Crafts classes to youth dancing, yoga and sports classes.

Los Banos is famous for its natural wildlife, surrounding wetlands and its agricultural base.

Sports leagues are also offered throughout the year. The city's Jr. Warriors Youth Basketball League has been rapidly growing, while Summer Youth Volleyball has become one of the city's staple programs.

The Community Center offers a beautiful Grand Room space for weddings and Quinceañeras. Two other recreation facilities, College Greens and the historic Miller and Lux Building, offer additional meeting and event space.

As the city continues to grow, so do its facilities. Los Banos is anticipating the fu-

ture construction of pickleball courts and two additional parks. Residents will be able to enjoy increased amenities such as the addition of future shade structures, solar lighting and additional trees.

New programs and activities are beginning monthly as the city continues to see growth in all its recreation offerings.

Los Banos is famous for its natural wildlife, surrounding wetlands and its agricultural base. As the city has grown as a family-based community, residents can enjoy big-city offerings while still living in intimate neighborhoods and enjoying hundreds of acres of public landscape.

The Los Banos Parks and Recreation Division is proud to be at the heart of offerings for residents and visitors of all ages. To visit Los Banos Parks and Recreation, visit us online at LosBanos.org, on the Los Banos Parks and Recreation Facebook page or in person at the Community Center, 645 7th St.

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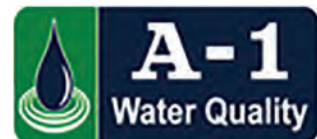
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Los Banos VFW and American Legion Posts combine to provide services to veterans

By Patricia McCoy
VETERAN

American Legion Post 166 was established in Los Banos in 1920, and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2487 was established in 1932.

In most parts of the country, the American Legion and VFW function separately and rarely join together for activities. However, in Los Banos, the two organizations have joined together in a combined effort to serve veterans and the local community.

The Veterans Memorial Hall, located at 615 E Street in Los Banos was dedicated in 1968 to the two posts for their use. Members of both posts meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 am.

The Veterans Memorial Hall houses



PHOTO BY GENE LIEB/ glieb@TheWestsideExpress.com

Los Banos veterans ride on one of many floats during the annual Veterans Parade in Los Banos.

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Another service provided is the presence of the Veteran Service Office, which visits the Veterans Hall on the first and third Thursday of each month to assist veterans with understanding their benefits and filing claims.

The commanders of both posts created a Veterans Commemorative Plaque Wall located on the outside of the building. People in the community can purchase a plaque to be placed on the wall in honor of their military loved one. It's a beautiful sight to see and all are encouraged to visit and read the names on the wall.

Aside from posting colors for local events, the members of both posts also provide Honor Services at the San Joaquin

The Los Banos Veterans Parade is always the Saturday before Veterans Day.

National Cemetery in nearby Santa Nella and also sponsor many community programs and activities, highlighted by the Flag Service Program and the Annual Veterans Parade.

The Flag Service is a fundraiser for the VFW in which people sign up to have

veterans place an American flag outside their home on eight specific holidays a year. It's a wonderful display of patriotism that people see when driving through the City of Los Banos.

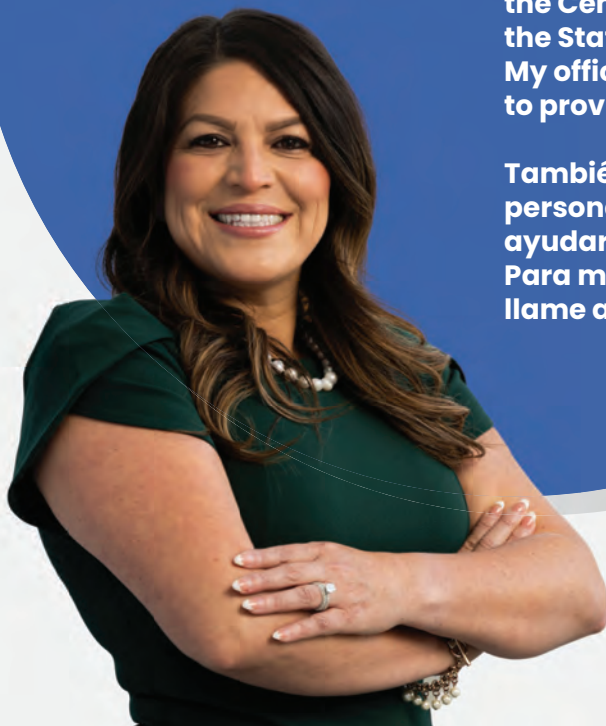
The Los Banos Veterans Parade is always the Saturday before Veterans Day. This parade is sponsored by Veterans for Veterans. One exciting feature is the Most Patriotic School Contest.

Each year the parade has a theme, and most of the schools participate in creating floats based on that theme. Independent judges are selected and score the entries. There are three winners for the following categories: elementary, junior high and high school. These schools do an amazing job of honoring the veterans.

The American Legion Post 166 and the VFW Post 2487 are very active in the community. To learn more about membership and the various activities, visit their website at: losbanosveterans.org



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How the older adult population is getting more accessible healthcare in Los Banos



Valley Spring Memory Care held a Los Banos Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting in January of 2023 soon after opening in December of 2022.

By Dr. Arvindselvan Mohanaselvan, M.D.,

The older adult population is growing at a steady pace. By 2050, adults more than 65 years of age will contribute to approximately 30 percent of the population in the United States.

Los Banos is no exception with its diverse and culturally rich population. What was once an agricultural town is now booming with new businesses and growing healthcare.

When I initially started working in Los Banos in 2021, physicians were rarely going to nursing homes to treat the aging adults. Since then, three physicians from the local medical group Apex have started seeing patients in the nursing homes that are in town, including New Bethany Nursing Home, Los Banos Nursing Home and the newly opened Valley Springs Memory Care Nursing Home specific for dementia patients.

From a geriatrician standpoint, there

Most of the time, the older adults are not aware of the availability of resources to them,

is no greater sense of fulfillment to see physicians from other fields like Outpatient Internal Medicine and Family Medicine taking up the helm in helping the older adults in the rural population. These are areas where healthcare access is limited.

We have veterans, farmers, agricultural land workers, factory workers, welders, electricians and people from all walks of life aging gently and being taken care of by physicians.

The current census is a total of 7,300 geriatric physicians in the US with 1.07 per 10,000 older adults. Even in comparison to a bigger metropolitan city,

the increasing availability of geriatric care in Los Banos is higher and the reason for this is most of the geriatricians in larger cities are part of an educational institution and outpatient access is limited at best.

Most of the time, the older adults are not aware of the availability of resources to them, thinking that it is part of getting old and refrain from reaching out. I urge all of us who have aging older adults in our houses to teach and inform them that help is just round the corner, and all they have to do is just reach out.

This is just the beginning of growing healthcare needs and opportunities and as our town expands and develops. I am sure there will be more physicians coming in and making healthcare even more accessible.

Dr. Arvindselvan Mohanaselvan, M.D., is a physician board certified in internal medicine, with a subspecialty in geriatrics. He currently works at Apex Medical Group as a primary care and geriatric medicine provider.

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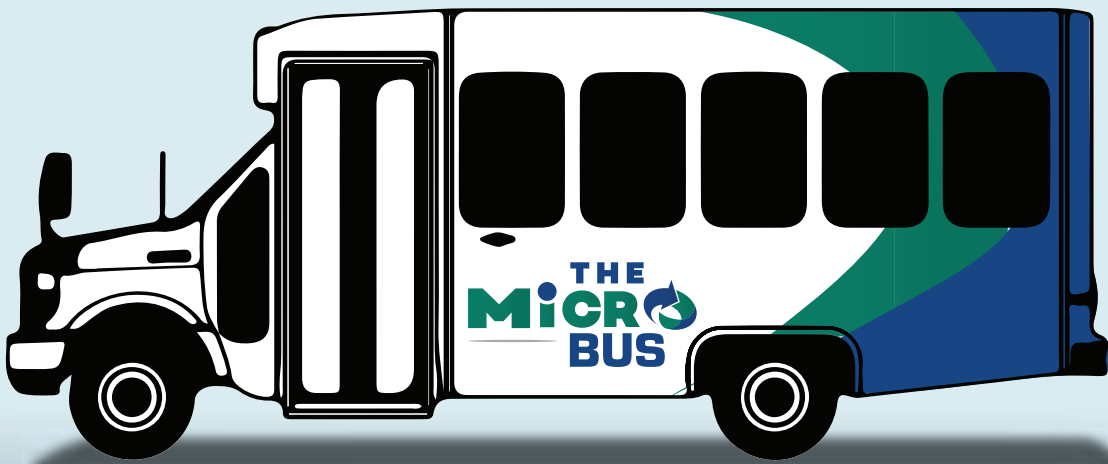
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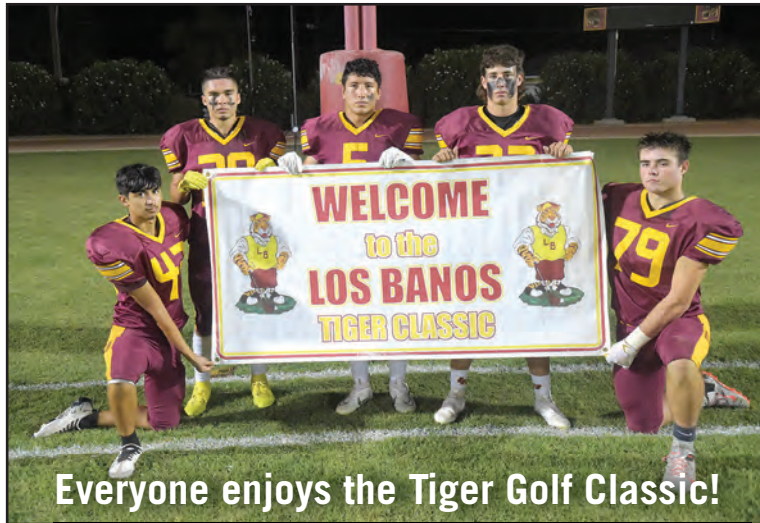
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Everyone enjoys the Tiger Golf Classic!

Members of the 2022 Los Banos Tiger Varsity football team display the welcome banner for the "Tiger Golf Classic". Left to right, Diego Calderon, Joel Alverango, Adan Salas, Cole Ramos and Jett Lindeman.



Ayden Barcellos



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Dustin Caropreso

The Los Banos Touchdown Club will be hosting the 18th Annual Tiger Golf Classic on Sunday, June 11, 2023. The golf tournament is the major fundraiser for the Touchdown Club which supports the Los Banos High School football program. The tournament will be held at the Rancho Del Rey Golf Club in Atwater, with a 10 a.m. shotgun start. Please call Gary Caropreso at (209) 617-5231 if you are interested in playing, sponsoring or volunteering in the upcoming Tiger Golf classic tournament.

Pickleball players anticipate expansion of facilities in Los Banos

By Malina Duran

An activity that has gained popularity in Los Banos within the past few years is the sport Pickleball.

Pickleball, known as the “fastest growing sport in America,” is a mixture of badminton, tennis, and ping pong as players use a paddle to hit a wiffle ball over a short net. Only two people are needed to play the game, but there can be up to four players on one court.

The pickleball community in Los Banos is expanding. There are well over 100 active players in Los Banos with new faces showing up at the courts each week. The most popular locations in the city to play pickleball are on weekdays at 9 am. to 1 p.m. in the Community Center, located at 645 7th St., and at Los Banos Fitness & Racquet Club, located 1520 Racquet Club Dr.

The two USA Pickleball Ambassadors in Los Banos are Laurie Balatti and Dayna Valadeo, both of which promote pickleball in the city and offer lessons in pickleball, which involves teaching important safety tips, hitting techniques and scoring rules.

Pickleball has seen a surge in popularity primarily among retirees in Los Banos, but the pickleball community is played among all age groups, with ages ranging from pre-adolescence to people in their 80s. Balatti emphasized that since pickleball is a sport for all

ages, it presents a unique opportunity for connection between younger and older generations.

The size of four pickleball courts is equivalent to one tennis court. Since four people can play on one pickleball court, that means a total of 16 people can fit in the space of a tennis court.

A game of pickleball can be played at close range, allowing for more interaction between players, which, on the courts in Los Banos, includes helpful feedback, laughter and encouragement.

Many players said they love the sport because it gives them an opportunity to exercise in a way that is fun and exciting, but they put a special emphasis on their ability to socialize and connect with others through pickleball.

“The conversation that you get to have during play is a big aspect to me,” said Kat Young, a pickleball player and mother of two. “It’s nice to get to know your community members in a playful environment. You see the best of people.”

“I’ve only been here for four years,” Young added. “Now I feel like, all of a sudden, I have friends.”

Cresthills Park, located at 700 Pioneer Rd. was initially being evaluated for the location of six new courts, replacing an existing volleyball court. However, several members of the city council instead considered putting 12 courts in the downtown area, possibly west of the Henry Miller Plaza on the Rail Trail.

Although the location and scope of the project has not yet been determined, dedicated players see a bright future for pickleball in Los Banos.

Balatti hopes to get the youth more involved in pickleball by creating youth leagues and making pickleball an intramural sport in schools.

With so many people taking interest in pickleball, the sport will continue to grow and connect an even larger community of positive, healthy, happy individuals in Los Banos and afar.



PHOTO BY GENE LIEB/gleib@TheWestsideExpress.com

Tom Balatti keeps the ball in play while playing a competitive Pickleball match.

An advertisement for 'SMOKE SHOP & GIFTS'. The top part features a black tray filled with various items: a Zippo lighter, a pipe, a pack of incense, a sticker, a yellow and blue object, a green leafy object, and several pens or pencils. Below the tray, the text reads: 'ZIPPO • JEWELRY', 'INCENSE • STICKERS', 'PIPES & ACCESSORIES & MORE!', '525 I St., Los Banos', '(209) 827-6433', 'Follow us for exclusive offers', and '@FunZoneHeadShop' with an Instagram icon. The background is a light green with faint cannabis leaf patterns.

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The Los Banos Club is always looking for people to join us who want to make a difference in our community, our country and our world!

Rotary is international! Check it out at www.Rotary.org.

Rotary meets twice a month in Los Banos. If you are interested in knowing more about the Los Banos Rotary Club or have questions call Rotarian Tanya Price at (209) 509-3296.



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For Crab Feed tickets or for more information about Rotary, contact Gene Lieb at **(209) 704-3831** or at ilovephotography1963@gmail.com

See what we're doing at www.LBRotary.com

How a picnic in 1890 developed into Los Banos' current May Day Fair

The May Day Picnic, created in 1890, has become a tradition that morphed into the town's cherished May Day Fair, also known by its official name, the Merced County Spring Fair.

When people hear the word "fair," they tend to think of the livestock exhibitions, carnival rides and deep-fried funnel cakes. Yet the Merced County Spring Fair does not just entertain but also gives students an opportunity to show off their skills ranging from livestock tending all the way to welding. The fair also educates the public, honors agriculturists and empowers a sentiment of belonging.

The annual fair excites individuals, delegates a feeling of involvement, and creates an everlasting impression as the leaders of our town come

together to make it an unforgettable experience. What started off to bring a few families together, now brings communities together.

From the well-known carnival rides and agriculture-related exhibitions to the rodeo and tractor pull, it's clear that the fair commemorates various groups of people and effortlessly finds a way to unite people together for a week of fun.

The May Day Fair has progressed a long way from where it started. Los Banos -- always full of life, vibrant, passionate, and inspirational--would not be as it is without the Spring Fair.

The Spring Fair is one of the staples of the community and maintains a strong foundation for our community through its progressivism, diversity, and beaming individuality.



PHOTO BY GENE LIEB / glieb@thevestsideexpress.com

Rides at the Merced County Spring Fair are provided by Butler Amusement and are enjoyed by all.



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◀◀ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

Commission, Airport Advisory Commission, Tree Commission, Traffic Safety Committee, Parks and Recreation Commission and Committees for Measure H and Measure P.

Los Banos has two operating fire stations, one on 7th Street and one on West I Street. Both are led by Fire Chief Paul Tualla, who has over 30 years of experience in various first responder roles.

The Los Banos Police Department is currently on 5th Street, but there are plans in the works for the building of a new station. The department is headed by Chief Gary Brizzee.

The new and improved police station will reside at 1111 G Street, near the new Merced County Courthouse. With its completion scheduled for October, the new station will house all of the departments under one roof, which the city hasn't seen since staff were moved



Los Banos Fire Chief Paul Tualla oversees two city fire stations in Los Banos.

into the police annex in 1999.

The facility will have a state-of-the-art 911 dispatch communications center, a training room, a type 1 jail, an exercise room, locker rooms and other efficient workplaces.



PHOTOS BY GENE LEBE/ gllebe@TheWestsideexpress.com

Los Banos Police Chief, Gary Brizzee developed the department motto, "Pride in Service, Integrity in Action."

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PLEASE VISIT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR ALL THE EVENTS THAT ARE AVAILABLE AT THE LIBRARY!

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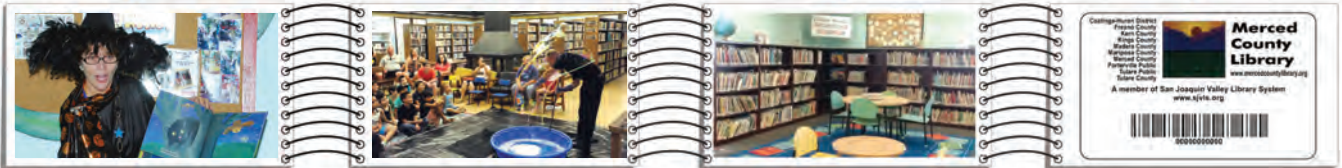
Do you want to help promote Literacy? Become involved in the read and Succeed program that provides literacy tutoring for teens and adults.

For more information on how to join the Friends of the Library call Gerry Geisel at (209) 826-2989

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The Colleen Menafee children's corner gives kids a space to read and create.

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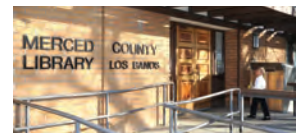
Teen Programs every 3rd Wednesday of each month 4:00-5:30 Family Lego Time every 3rd Friday of each month



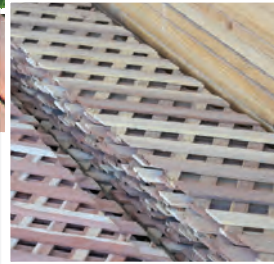
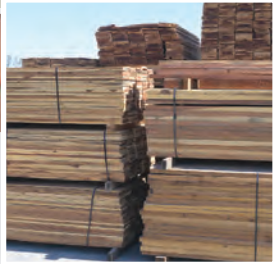
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VOLUME 2 No. 9 WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 2023



Community event: Empty Bowls a success

The Los Banos Empty Bowls event on Feb. 23 at the Ted Palomo Arts Center was a success. Many people attended the event and enjoyed a variety of soups from 17 local restaurants and health care facilities.

Nearly all members of the Los Banos Rotary Club



Eligible Los B businesses can apply for grant up to \$25,000

BY MALINA DURAN
Westside Express

Community and Economic Development Director Stacy Elms shared details about the new Small Business Assistance Program, designed to help small businesses and nonprofits in Los Banos that experienced losses due to COVID-19 at the Feb. 22 meeting of the Los Banos Planning Commission.

Elms explained that the maximum grant awarded to eligible business is up to \$25,000. Some of the requirements that a small business must meet in order to qualify for the grant include meeting the criteria to be considered a small business, experiencing a loss in revenue due to the pandemic, and being in operation since December 2022.

"It's structured as a loan currently," Elms then after four business days once they show most all of their details about the grant.

Elms said the program must show that the business owner is fully, such as the individual owner and/or experienced owner in volume COVID-19.

"The grant is a nonprofit grant, meaning that it is only seen come Merced County," Elms added.

City Council also will implement the program along with businesses in this grant, but they have been negatively impacted.

GRANTS.

Los Banos fundraiser March 15 supports veteran Honor Flight

BY JOHN SPEVAK
Westside Express

On March 15, veterans, FFA members and ag boosters will join together in Los Banos to help fund opportunities for veterans, including Los Banos veterans to participate in a unique experience between 4 and 7 p.m. at the Los Banos FFA Hall (1155 I Street), Los Banos Veterans and Ag Boosters and FFA students will serve a drive-through registration with all proceeds going to the Central Valley Honor Flight.

Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased from any Los Banos veteran or by calling veteran Mike Hughes at 209.796.5300. The drive-through registration includes a generous portion of expenses, a meal and a voucher.

The Honor Flight drive has been a tradition in Los Banos for many years, raising a total of more than \$125,000 to support Honor Flight. The idea began with Los Banos High School

Banos Ag Boosters (parents and friends of Future Farmers of America) and also joined to provide support for the event, said Elms and Don Baker.

The Central Valley Honor Flight is a nonprofit organization committed to honoring local WWII, Korean War veterans by sending them to Washington, D.C., to see their memorials.

For the past 10 years, Central Valley Honor Flight have transported veterans and their guardians to the nation's capital. The most recent flight took place in October 2022, carrying 60 veterans.

"One of the founders of the Central Valley Honor Flight is Paul Loefler, who is a longtime supporter of Los Banos. Loefler has been a longtime supporter of FFA, broadcasting Fresno football, baseball and basketball games. Loefler also is the general manager of the

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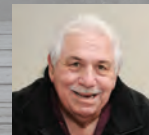
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