

THE SENTINEL

Family history

Family member gets quilt back, PAGE B1



Track and field

Lemoore Kiwanis meet PAGE C1

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Corcoran: We're ready

Levee work, emergency plans described at town hall meeting

SETH NIDEVER
Staff Reporter

CORCORAN – Officials sought to reassure Corcoran residents at a packed town-hall meeting this week that they're taking steps to protect the town from potential flooding.

The possibility that the old Tulare Lake will start filling up and

encroach on the city is a real concern due to a far-above-normal snowpack in the Sierra that, for the most part, hasn't melted yet.

Three rivers – the Kings, Kaweah and Tule – naturally feed into Tulare Lake, once the largest body of freshwater west of the Mississippi River before the three waterways were dammed and channeled and the dried-up lake bottom was converted into farmland.

In really wet years like the one we're in now, water from the Kern River sometimes flows north out

of Kern County to spill into the lake's southern end.

J.G. Boswell Co., by far the largest grower in the lake bottom area, has developed a system of huge dikes, levees, channels and holding basins to control floods.

Sometimes, however, the floods are so great, even the might and ingenuity of Boswell can't contain the rising waters.

When that happened in 1983, the only thing that stopped the lake from swamping Corcoran was a hastily erected levee west and south of town.

Fast forward to the present. Officials at the Cross Creek Flood Control District, fearing a repeat of the 1983 event later this spring, are working seven days a week almost round the clock to raise that levee, now known as the Cross Creek Levee, to a uniform height of 192 feet above sea level.

The flood risk is enhanced this year because the levee has been sinking due to subsidence. That's the phenomenon of the ground sinking because of large amounts

Story at a glance

- Local officials say they're ready to evacuate residents if flooding occurs later this year in Corcoran.
- Officials are concerned that a huge, mostly unmelted Sierra snowpack will flood four rivers that feed into the old Tulare Lake southwest of town, causing the old lake to fill and back up toward the city.

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JULISSA ZAVALA PHOTOS, THE SENTINEL

Lemoore High School ceramics teacher Mario Gonzalez brought his students onstage as he accepted the award for teacher of the year from the Kings County Office of Education Thursday in Lemoore.

Educational excellence awards in Kings County

Local educators recognized at ceremony

JULISSA ZAVALA
Staff Reporter

LEMOORE – Applause erupted and dozens of teenagers flooded the stage Thursday night at West Hills College Lemoore's Golden Eagle Arena when they learned their favorite Lemoore High School ceramics teacher, Mario Gonzalez, was named Kings County Office of Education's teacher of the year at its 2017 Excellence in Education awards ceremony.

Not only did Gonzalez, a 22-year teaching veteran, have a large crowd of students at the ceremony to support him, he received a standing ovation from the crowd of his peers when his name was announced.

Gonzalez was described by Master of Ceremonies Kopi Sotiropoulos as having a great rapport with students by keeping them engaged and excited to learn. Sotiropoulos went on to say students want to be in Gonzalez's ceramics class because he has "energy and compassion for every person he comes into contact with."

Gonzalez previously told the Sentinel he loves teaching because he considers the job the ultimate opportunity to get students out of



Corcoran Unified School District head groundsman, Mark Burden, speaks after receiving employee of the year at the Kings County Office of Education's Excellence in Education awards ceremony Thursday in Lemoore.

their comfort zones and provide them with all the tools they need to become confident, motivated, inspired and well-rounded individuals.

When Gonzalez's name was called, he said he wouldn't accept the award unless the real reasons he was nominated and selected were there as well, so his students piled on stage with him as he gave his acceptance speech.

Gonzalez thanked the school, the district, his principal, Rodney Brumit, and his family. He thanked his students, but also thanked

their parents and all the parents in the audience for the hard work they do in raising children.

"Probably one of the highlights in my career at LIS is I had four children come through the program, and I had them in class for four years each," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez wore a large blue puzzle piece around his neck during his speech in support of Autism Awareness Month. He also pointed out the fact that he and his students wore either

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The Finalists

Administrator/Manager of the Year

- Stephanie Eggert, Assistant Principal—Frontier Elementary School, Pioneer Union Elementary School District
- Alfred Guerrero, Principal—Reef-Sunset Middle School, Reef-Sunset Unified School District

Teacher of the Year

- Tracy Cassina, Teacher—Meadow Lane Elementary School, Lemoore Union Elementary School District
- Mario Gonzalez, Teacher—Lemoore High School, Lemoore Union High School District
- Rose Huff, Teacher—J.C. Montgomery, Kings County Office of Education

School Employee of the Year

- Mark Burden, Head Groundsman—Corcoran High School, Corcoran Unified School District
- Astrid Garrovillo, Administrative Secretary—Lemoore High School, Lemoore Union High School District
- Kathy Simas, Lead Secretary—Pioneer Elementary School, Pioneer Union Elementary School District

Day spa suspects plead no contest

Police continue fight against illicit massage businesses

MIKE EIMAN
Staff Reporter

LEMOORE – Two massage parlor employees arrested in 2016 for allegedly offering sex acts to an undercover officer have pleaded no contest to misdemeanor charges of engaging in or soliciting lewd conduct in a public place.



Xiang Li

According to the Kings County Superior Court, Guang Xiang Li and Jianqin Wang entered the plea Thursday. Both women are scheduled for sentencing on Oct. 3.



Wang

Lemoore police officers conducted an undercover compliance check on June 6, 2016, at the Sakura Day Spa, located at 344 W. D St. Police arrested Li and Wang after they reportedly

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California governor declares end to drought

SCOTT SMITH
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO (AP) – Gov. Jerry Brown declared an end to California's historic drought Friday, lifting emergency orders that had forced residents to stop running sprinklers as often and encouraged them to rip out thirsty lawns during the state's driest four-year period on record but not in Kings County.

The governor lifted the drought emergency in all California counties except Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Tuolumne.

The governor's order that keeps in place conservation measures came as a springtime

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DISCOVER DIGITAL



- Galleries: Kings County's most wanted retail shops
- Videos: See local videos of events and sports

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CLASSIFIEDS	C5	OBITUARIES	B2
FAITH	B3	OPINION	A3
LIVING	B1	SPORTS	C1



Solicitation

From A1

offered to perform sexual acts on an undercover officer in exchange for money.

The Lemoore Police Department and other local agencies have been taking additional steps to fight and shut down illicit massage businesses.

The California Massage Therapy Council recently provided free training to local agencies about state laws and tactics for dealing with businesses that may facilitate crimes like prostitution or human trafficking.

Lemoore police Cmdr. Maggie Ochoa said the training stressed the sharing of information between agencies.

"This helps our officers go into these businesses and check compliance," Ochoa said.

Ochoa said Lemoore's Problem

Oriented Policing (POP) team conducts regular checks at all-licensed massage businesses. City ordinance requires anyone who provides massage services to be certified by the California Massage Therapy Council every two years.

Rick McElroy, director of the council's professional standards division, said in a statement that the training encourages agencies to work closely with the California Massage Therapy Council to shut down illicit massage parlors.

"As the public demand for accessible therapeutic massage increases, it is critical that we work with all stakeholders to weed out the bad apples," McElroy said.

Ochoa said illicit massage businesses often move around to avoid prosecution. Working with agencies in Kings County and surrounding areas can help stop illegal massage business in their tracks.

The Kings County District Attorney's Office, Corcoran Police Department and the Visalia Police Department also participated in the free two-hour training.

Ochoa said police may have to use other tactics to deal with unlicensed massage businesses that try to fly under the radar. Li and Wang were not licensed to operate a massage business in the city.

"If necessary, we have officers who can set up investigations and go into establishments," Ochoa said, "even if that means sending in an undercover officer."

Deputy District Attorney Phil Esbenshade said cases involving prostitution at massage parlors can be challenging to prosecute because they're often linked to human trafficking operations. Human trafficking victims may be coerced or forced to perform labor or sexual acts.

"We didn't have any indication in this case that that was occur-

ing," Esbenshade said.

Esbenshade said human trafficking operations are largely shifting away from brick-and-mortar businesses like massage parlors, and instead moving to internet-based services. He said street gangs are increasingly using human trafficking as a source of revenue.

"You can sell a drug once," Esbenshade said. "You can sell a gun once. But you can sell a person over and over again."

Lemoore police had problems with other massage businesses at 344 W. D St. over the past few years. Officers raided Fresno Health Care in August 2009 amid reports of illegal activities. Massage therapist Livia Lim was arrested on suspicion of prostitution.

The incident prompted city officials to put an ordinance requiring massage therapists to obtain a city permit. Applicants were

required to show a diploma or certificate from a recognized institution and pass a written exam to demonstrate basic knowledge of anatomy, physiology, hygiene and massage practices.

Police investigated another massage business called Green River Spa in 2012 following claims that an employee had agreed to have paid sex with customers. Gui-Xiang Ma was arrested on suspicion of prostitution in October 2012 after agreeing to perform a sex act with an undercover officer in exchange for money.

Ochoa said each of the businesses had different owners, keeping the property owner in the dark until police made the arrests.

"We had a lot of cooperation from the property owner as soon as they were notified," Ochoa said.

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Drought

From A1

storm bears down on the water-logged state.

Brown declared the drought emergency in 2014, and officials later ordered mandatory conservation for the first time in state history. Regulators last year relaxed the rules after a rainfall was close to normal.

Water conservation will become a way of life in the nation's most populous state, said Fel-

cia Marcus, chairwoman of the State Water Resources Control Board, who led conservation planning. Officials already have started charting long-term rules to make California more resilient as climate change makes weather patterns more severe.

Cities and water districts throughout the state will be required to continue reporting their water use each month, said the governor order, which also bans wasteful practices, such as hosing off sidewalks and running sprinklers when it rains.

New rules are expected to permanently ban wasteful practices, such as hosing off sidewalks and watering landscapes in the days after it rains. Officials say they will work aggressively to stop leaks that waste water.

Susan Atkins of the charity Self-Help Enterprises said the drought is not over for more than 900 families who have large water tanks in their yards because their wells dried up during the years long drought.

Most of them are in Tulare County.

Flood

From A1

of underground layers to irrigate crops.

Justin Fuller, general manager of the district, told a packed town hall crowd Thursday at the Corcoran Technology Learning Center, that the exact height is designed to hold back 1.1 million acre-feet of water in the old lake.

"To put it in perspective: That's more than the entire capacity of Pine Flat Lake, the only major dam on the Kings River."

Fuller also told the crowd that the levee is being re-engineered to have symmetrical, gently-sloping banks on each side.

The re-engineering is designed to increase the odds that the levee will hold if tested.

Fuller said he's pushing hard to get the work completed before the weather heats up, melts the snow and swells the four rivers to their peak flows—that could happen in late May or early June depending on the weather.

If water starts rising up against the levee—which, Fuller stressed, is a big if—district officials will carefully monitor how fast it's coming up.

If officials thought there was a chance the water would flow over the top, Fuller said they'd evacuate the whole town seven to 10 days before that happened, thereby giving people time to safely pack up their stuff and go.

Fuller said Corcoran's elevation ranges anywhere from 177 feet to 190 feet above sea level—meaning the whole town would be affected if the lake over-topped the levee.

"If the water breaches that levee, everyone is compromised," he said.

Fuller told the crowd that the district is having to issue IOUs to contractors due to the work on the levee project, which is anticipated to cost \$14 million to \$15 million.

He said that previous work on the levee in 2015 left the district with \$75,000 in reserve cash.

He sought to reassure the crowd that the district is doing everything possible to get emergency funding from the state and federal government so that the burden of paying off the IOUs doesn't fall on Corcoran area property owners.

District officials have commissioned a study to look into how property owners protected by the levee might be required to pay different amounts depending on much property they have and where it's located.

Fuller said he expects the study to identify which areas behind the levee are at greater or lesser risk of flooding. The concept is that people with property in higher-risk zones would pay more than property owners in lower-risk zones.

The study's results are expected to be released next month.

Fuller said the district would only impose the fees as a "last resort."

Meanwhile, he and other officials in attendance sought to reassure people that if an evacuation of Corcoran is necessary, there are plans in place to handle the situation.

Joe Neves, director of the Kings County Office of Emergency Services, said in an interview that authorities will bus people with nowhere to go to the Kings Fairgrounds, where they will be fed and temporarily housed.

He said the whole process would happen in an orderly fashion days after actual flooding occurred.

"It's not going to be where the dam breaks at Pine Flat and we're under water," he said. "It's not that kind of situation."

Many residents who attended the town hall had questions about flood insurance.

Kathryn Monteiro, a representative from Pacific Ag Insurance, said one year's worth of flood insurance for a single-family home, covering up to \$250,000 in damage to the house and its contents, costs about \$450 up front.

Once the up-front fee is paid, Monteiro said there's a 30-day waiting period before the insurance coverage kicks in.

That means that, if a flood happens during the waiting period, the person's property isn't covered.

Corcoran resident Mary Helen Gonzalez said in an interview that she paid \$450 on Monday to get her home insured.

Gonzalez said she was mostly satisfied with what she heard at Thursday's meeting.

"It kind of answered the questions I had," she said.

Awards

From A1

black or white clothing, saying it was a reflection for seeing the world in black and white only, devoid of labels and preconceptions.

Administrator of the Year

The winner for administrator of the year was Alfred Guerrero, principal of Reef-Sunset Middle School. Guerrero has worked in education for 14 years, and has been principal at Reef-Sunset Middle School for the past three.

Guerrero previously told the Sentinel there are certain communities where someone feels like they belong, and for him, it's in Avenal. He said he loves being an administrator because he affects hundreds of students every year on a daily basis.

"The beauty of being at Reef-Sunset Unified School District is they allow me to be me," Guerrero said in his video package. "Very rarely do you get an opportunity to work for a community like that; and for that I'm indebted, and I'm grateful to be a part of this team and a part of this family."

When Guerrero received his award on stage, he said nothing had prepared him for the honoring and humbling experience. The Stratford-born principal said he was honored to be nominated in Kings County

because for him, this is home. He thanked his school's staff, his family and the Reef-Sunset School District for taking a chance on him.

"Friends, colleagues and family—all of you have influenced me in my journey as an educator," Guerrero said.

Head groundsman at Corcoran Unified School District, Mark Burden, was named the employee of the year. Burden started his career at the district 35 years ago and takes care of the outside maintenance of all the school district's sites and sports fields.

Solizropoulos described Burden as someone who makes time for anyone who needs his help, goes above and beyond in his work, and is the go-to person to get the job done well.

Burden previously told the Sentinel he enjoys seeing the happy faces of the students when their sports fields look nice, and

he feels good when they have a nice lawn during graduation. He said his proudest moments have been watching his four children go from kindergarten to graduation at the schools he maintains.

"If your school is beautified, if a student walks on campus, I feel the student feels good about going to school," Burden said in his video package. "Hopefully that reflects [in] classroom time."

The tables of Corcoran Unified School District employees cheered wildly as Burden's name was called to receive the award. Burden thanked his wife, children, the school district employees and staff, and his fellow groundsmen.

"If it wasn't for the grounds guys that I have, I couldn't do what I do today," Burden said. "So thank them a lot."

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AccuWeather.com Forecast for Hanford

Today	Tonight	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Brief showers this morning	A moonlit sky and chilly	Mostly sunny and cool	Partly sunny and pleasant	Partly sunny and pleasant	Partly sunny and pleasant
62°	38°	66°/39°	70°/45°	70°/43°	76°/50°

Regional Forecast

Eureka 54/39	Red Bluff 57/37	Quincy 44/24	Reno 67/25	Fallon 52/24	Lovelock 50/19
San Jose 60/35	San Francisco 59/46	Madera 61/41	Merced 62/39	Fresno 61/41	Hanford 62/38
Delano 65/32	San Luis Obispo 62/44	Santa Barbara 67/47	Los Angeles 68/50	Bakersfield 67/42	

Almanac

Statistics for Hanford through 2 p.m. yesterday

Temperature	69°/54°
High/low	69°/54°
Normal high/low	72°/46°
Record high	92° in 1989
Record low	31° in 1975

Precipitation

24 hours through 2 p.m. yesterday: 0.23"
 Month to date: 0.23"
 Normal month to date: 0.23"
 Season to date: 9.85"
 Normal season to date: 7.86"

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Regional Cities

City	Today	Sun.
Anahim	70/49/pc	72/49s
Bakersfield	67/42/pc	67/41s
Bekeley	56/43/pc	59/49pc
Bodega Bay	53/44/pc	55/48/pc
Chico	57/39/pc	62/45/pc
Cheateak	55/34/pc	61/45/pc
Concord	59/37/pc	64/47/pc
Death Valley	86/16/pc	78/8/pc
Elk Grove	58/39/pc	64/44/pc
Eureka	54/39/pc	59/45/pc
Fairfield	56/39/pc	61/44/pc
Folsom	55/36/pc	62/48/pc
Fort Bragg	61/41/pc	56/47/pc
Fresno	59/37/pc	67/42/pc
Gall	58/39/pc	63/43/pc
Jackson	50/32/pc	59/36/pc
Los Angeles	66/36/pc	65/40/pc
Mammoth L.	31/17/pc	42/18/pc
Modesto	56/44/pc	58/44/pc
Moro Bay	58/46/pc	61/46/pc
Napa	59/37/pc	61/45/pc
Nevada City	45/29/pc	54/38/pc
Oakland	60/43/pc	63/48/pc
Palo Alto	62/33/pc	63/55/pc
Paso Robles	62/34/pc	68/36/pc
Red Bluff	57/37/pc	63/43/pc
San Diego	69/56/pc	68/55/pc
San Jose	62/44/pc	68/44/pc
San Luis Obispo	60/44/pc	62/44/pc
Santa Cruz	58/44/pc	62/44/pc
Santa Rosa	60/55/pc	61/43/pc
Stockton	61/39/pc	64/42/pc
Suzanneville	43/22/pc	51/22/pc
Tahoe Valley	31/13/pc	43/24/pc
Tucson	32/12/pc	45/22/pc
Ukiah	57/32/pc	62/41/pc
Ukiah	31/17/pc	42/18/pc
Vacaville	66/36/pc	61/21/pc
Visalia	62/38/pc	64/43/pc
Woodland	60/39/pc	63/45/pc
Yuba	48/25/pc	54/32/pc

RealFeel Temperature

70°

Pollen and Mold

Pollen: Very High
 Mold: Moderate

Sun and Moon

Time	Sunrise	Sunset
Today	6:35 a.m.	7:27 p.m.
Sun.	6:33 a.m.	7:27 p.m.
Mon.	6:29 a.m.	7:28 p.m.

Rivers and Lakes

Delta: 7.7 m. yesterday
 Stage: 2.34 ft change
 Kings River at Crescent Vale: 12.36 ft. +0.06 ft.
 Kings River at Meadowbrook: 12.36 ft. +0.06 ft.
 North Fork of Kings & Cliff Camp: 5.02 ft. +0.08 ft.
 North Fork of Kings R. at Dinkey Creek: 7.51 ft. +0.11 ft.

National Forecast for Saturday, Apr. 8, 2017

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

City	Today	Sun.
Albuquerque	78/47/pc	68/41/pc
Anchorage	43/29/pc	43/31/pc
Atlanta	69/47/pc	77/51/pc
Baltimore	60/38/pc	68/48/pc
Bilings	60/38/pc	68/48/pc
Boise	49/35/pc	51/38/pc
Boston	52/37/pc	58/47/pc
Buffalo	46/36/pc	65/54/pc
Chicago	70/56/pc	77/61/pc
Cincinnati	63/45/pc	75/58/pc
Cleveland	57/44/pc	73/58/pc
Dallas	85/64/pc	85/66/pc
Denver	75/38/pc	76/29/pc
Des Moines	74/61/pc	74/53/pc
Detroit	60/44/pc	73/59/pc
Houston	83/62/pc	84/67/pc
Honolulu	84/68/pc	84/71/pc
Indianapolis	64/30/pc	74/48/pc
Juneau	46/35/pc	47/54/pc
Kansas City	75/46/pc	74/54/pc
Las Vegas	73/30/pc	71/51/pc
Lincoln	80/57/pc	81/27/pc
Memphis	74/57/pc	80/49/pc
Minneapolis	75/53/pc	77/53/pc
Nashville	71/48/pc	81/55/pc
Orlando	77/52/pc	81/58/pc
Philadelphia	58/39/pc	67/48/pc
Phoenix	87/39/pc	80/56/pc
Pittsburgh	56/41/pc	70/54/pc
Raleigh	64/40/pc	74/48/pc
Reno	46/25/pc	55/33/pc
Richmond	65/40/pc	71/50/pc
St. Louis	75/59/pc	81/65/pc
San Antonio	82/65/pc	82/69/pc
San Jose	75/40/pc	62/29/pc
St. Pete Beach	84/64/pc	84/64/pc
Spokane	47/32/pc	49/32/pc
Syracuse	45/32/pc	65/50/pc
Tallahassee	74/44/pc	80/50/pc
Tampa	75/57/pc	82/62/pc
Tucson	69/54/pc	79/49/pc
Utah	81/64/pc	81/64/pc
Wash. D.C.	63/43/pc	70/53/pc
Wichita	80/63/pc	78/51/pc
Yuma	85/55/pc	81/54/pc

Weather (W)

W: sunny, pc: partly cloudy, c: cloudy, sh: showers, th: thunderstorms, H: high, L: low, S: snow, M: mist.