

SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS

Heat wave brings increased fire risk

By PK Hattis

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SANTA CRUZ » With Santa Cruz County and the Bay Area bracing for the first major heat wave of the year, local officials are urging the public to be cool when it comes to both body temperature and some of the high fire risk activities typically associated with America's Independence Day.

The National Weather Service issued an excessive heat warning Monday that includes the Santa Cruz Mountains and surrounding inland areas as the slow-moving airmass approaches.

FORECAST

Tuesday: Highs in the 90s. Northwest winds 5 to 10 mph. Lows in the mid 60s to lower 80s.

Wednesday: Highs in the lower 90s. South winds 5 to 10 mph and turning into southwest winds in the afternoon.

Thursday (Independence Day): Highs near 90.

*For the Santa Cruz Mountains area. Coastal regions will be slightly cooler.

The advisory, in effect from 11 a.m. Tuesday to 8 p.m. Saturday, includes a recommenda-

tion to drink plenty of fluids, limit strenuous activities to the early morning or evening hours and to avoid prolonged exposure to the sun.

"Excessive heat poses a significant health risk, particularly to the elderly, young children, pregnant women and those with chronic diseases," Santa Cruz County Health Officer Lisa Hernandez said in a Monday release. "Avoid prolonged exposure to the heat, especially direct sunlight. Hydrate well, check in on others and never leave children or pets in vehicles."

HEAT » PAGE 5



The Santa Cruz Mountains are expected to hit triple-digit temperatures this week with arrival of the region's first major heat wave of the year.

ARIC CRABB — BAY AREA NEWS GROUP FILE

RIO THEATRE

UKULELE LIFE



PHOTOS BY SHMUEL THALER — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Top, ukulele virtuoso Jake Shimabukuro plays Sunday night to a sold-out house at the Rio Theatre in Santa Cruz. Shimabukuro, a Santa Cruz favorite appeared with bassist Jackson Waldhoff, at left, as well as with Slack Key guitarist Jeff Peterson and keyboard player Michael Grande. Shimabukuro became famous internationally in 2006, when a video of him playing a virtuosic rendition of George Harrison's "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" was posted on YouTube without his knowledge and became one of the first viral videos on that site. The ukulele player joked gratefully about that experience as he finished the first set at the Rio with the song. Right, the Rio Theatre is filled for Sunday night's show.



ELECTION 2024

Top California Democrats announce ballot measure targeting retail theft

By Trân Nguyen

The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO » Top California Democrats announced Sunday they will ask voters to approve a plan cracking down on retail theft.

The plan, led by Gov. Gavin Newsom, is an effort to compete with another crime-focused measure backed by a coalition of business groups that lawmakers said would result in more people being put behind bars. Newsom and lawmakers negotiated the plan behind closed doors over the weekend after failing to convince the coalition to withdraw its effort from the ballot.

Both proposals would include make shoplifting a felony for repeat offenders and increase penalties for fentanyl dealers.

Under the retailers' plan, any prior theft-related convictions, even if they happened years ago, would count toward a three-strike policy for increased sentences. Lawmakers also are proposing harsher punishment for



RYAN SUN — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Tubby, the dog of former state Sen. Gloria Romero, D-Los Angeles, sits during a news conference April 18 organized by the Californians for Safer Communities Coalition in Culver City.

repeat thieves, but the convictions would have to happen within three years of each other.

Prosecutors could aggregate the amount of all stolen goods within three years to charge harsher offenses under the Dem-

ocrats' plan.

Lawmakers will vote to advance the plan and deliver it to Newsom for his signature before the deadline Wednesday.

They hope to place the measure as the first item on the bal-

lot in November. With two competing measures on the ballot, the one with more votes would prevail.

Republican lawmakers blasted the Democrats' plan, with one calling it "a sham" to confuse voters.

The last-minute plan is an attempt by top California Democrats to override another initiative cracking down on shoplifters and drug dealers, backed by a broad coalition of businesses, district attorneys and local officials. The coalition and state leaders have clashed over how to crack down retail theft crimes.

The retailers' proposal would roll back parts of Proposition 47, the progressive ballot measure approved by 60% of state voters in 2014 that reduced certain theft and drug possession offenses from felonies to misdemeanors to help address overcrowding in jails. In recent years, Proposition 47 has become the focus of critics who say California is too lax on crime.

MEASURE » PAGE 4

WATSONVILLE

Commission to consider duplex near high school

By Nick Sestanovich

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WATSONVILLE » A special use permit for a duplex on an existing property on Elm Street, just down the block from Watsonville High School's football stadium, will go before the Watsonville Planning Commission at its Tuesday meeting.

According to a staff report by Community Development Director Suzi Merriam and Associate Planner Ivan Carmona, the project consists of an attached one-story, one-bedroom, 406 square foot unit at 225 Elm St. The project would also seek to demolish two existing detached garages and construct two new garages, one 322 square feet and intended to park one car and another 446 square feet and intended to park up to two cars.

The parcel was developed in 1930 and is located across the street from Linscott Charter School and down the street from Watsonville High School. On Nov. 14, Soufyane Zatlaf of Oakland-based architecture firm Inspired ADUs, which specializes in accessory dwelling units, submitted a special use permit on behalf of property owner Juan Ortega to construct a new accessory dwelling unit in addition to two detached garages.

The parcel is currently designated in the General Plan as "residential high density," which emphasizes multi-story apartment and condominium-type housing at densities equal to 14, up to and including 36.99 dwelling units per net acre.

DUPLEX » PAGE 5

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Food Bank makes commitment to inclusion

By Tara Fatemi Walker

While this year's Pride Month just ended, Second Harvest Food Bank says its sticks to its principle of inclusion year-round.

Cameron Haste, executive vice president/COO at Bay Federal Credit Union, became Second Harvest Board chair in February. He is a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

"I understand the importance of seeing oneself represented and the impact that inclusivity can have on a person's sense of belonging and dignity," says Haste. "This drives my efforts to ensure that our programs and services are accessible and welcoming to all, regardless of their background or identity."

Haste said he hopes to contribute to a culture of acceptance and understanding.

"It's important for others to see that leaders in their community come from diverse backgrounds and that their experiences and perspectives are valued and essential in driving positive change," he says.

FOOD BANK » PAGE 4

Coast Lines

APTOS
Hot Rods on the Green car show set July 6

The 17th annual Hot Rods on the Green will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at Twin Lakes Church, 2701 Cabrillo College Drive, Aptos.

The event features classic and custom cars from around Santa Cruz County and beyond.

In addition to the cars, the event features a DJ, activities for the kids, various vendors, a Red Cross blood drive and a hula hoop contest.

The awards ceremony begins at 2:45 p.m. with a raffle at 3:15 p.m.

The event supports the Kingsmen Car Club's Industrial Arts Scholarship Program. For registration or information, visit tlc.org/kingsmen.

SANTA CRUZ
'EmpowHer Sound' live workshop set for July 11

Join the EmpowHer Sound live workshop Introduction to Music Production for Women, a transformative experience tailored for beginners from 6-9 p.m. July 11 at Theater Arts Second Stage on the campus of UC Santa Cruz.

The three-hour workshop is designed to equip women with the skills and confidence to start producing their own music and to unleash creativity by learning practical skills in beatmaking, synthesis and audio effects.

The Music Department at UCSC presents this free event and it is open to the public. Registration is required.

For information and to register, musicproductionforwomen.com.

WATSONVILLE
Holiday parade to close Main Street

The city of Watsonville is holding a Fourth of Jily parade on Thursday. The parade will result in a closure from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. of Main Street from Clifford Avenue/Ohlone Parkway to West Lake Avenue and East Lake Avenue, according to a release from Caltrans.

Drivers can expect a slow flow of traffic with delays of up to 20 minutes via the posted detours. Parade attendees should be aware of increased pedestrian/bicycle traffic and the staging of parade participants including equestrian units.

CAPITOLA
Dog training club holds obedience classes

The 58-year-old nonprofit Monterey Bay Dog Training Club Inc. is offering dog obedience training classes starting July 9 at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds in Watsonville, and July 11 in Capitola at the Mid-County Senior Center.

We have current openings at both Watsonville and Capitola.

For detailed descriptions of classes, location details and to register, visit montereybaydog.org. Classes cost \$120.

SANTA CRUZ
Festa celebration slated for July 6, July 7

The 96th C.P.D.E.S. of Santa Cruz Festa celebration is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday in downtown Santa Cruz.

The event starts at 8 p.m. Saturday with a dancing with music by Acides Machado followed by the grand march, presentation of the queens and crown exchange between the outgoing and incoming queens at the Portuguese Hall, 216 Evergreen St., Santa Cruz.

On Sunday, the Holy Ghost Parade will start with other California societies holding banners and flags at 9:30 a.m. on Cedar Street and Pacific Avenue. From there, the procession will walk along Pacific Avenue to Holy Cross Church for the 10:30 a.m. Mass to celebrate the crowning of the Santa Cruz Queens.

After Mass, the procession proceeds to C.P.D.E.S. Portuguese Hall for the traditional Portuguese sopas meal.

The Festa is open to the public, donations are greatly appreciated. For information, call 831-423-7753 or email inforscportuguesehall@gmail.com.

SANTA CRUZ
City seeks energy efficient renovations ordinance

The city of Santa Cruz is developing a new energy efficient renovations ordinance as part of its Climate Action Plan 2030. The city will hold a virtual community meeting from 5:30-7 p.m. July 10 to discuss the proposed ordinance and provide feedback.

This ordinance targets energy improvements during major alterations or additions to residential buildings.

Community input is crucial in shaping this initiative to enhance energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions in the community.

For details and to join the meeting, visit tinyurl.com/energy-efficient-reno.

CAPITOLA
Capitola Historical Museum seeks volunteers

The Capitola Historical Museum is recruiting for volunteer docents. The museum preserves and promotes the history of Capitola through exhibitions, a collection of historic photographs and artifacts, conducting oral histories and participating in special events.

Volunteer docents are the museum's ambassadors to the community and help support the operation of the museum and promote museum activities. Museum volunteers can contribute in several ways including greeting visitors during two-hour museum desk shifts and/or assisting with special community events and museum projects.

The museum, at 410 Capitola Ave., Capitola, is open from noon to 4 p.m. Friday through Sunday through the end of December. Personalized training on museum operations will be provided. To obtain an application and for questions, call 831-464-0322 or email capitola-museum@gmail.com.

Holiday closings

Some area offices will be closed Thursday for Independence Day.

- County: County offices are closed.
- Santa Cruz: City offices are closed Thursday.
- Capitola: City offices are closed Thursday and Friday.
- Scotts Valley: City offices are closed.
- Watsonville: City offices are closed Thursday.
- Libraries: All branches of the Santa Cruz library are closed Thursday. All branches of the Watsonville Public Library are closed Thursday.
- Schools: Pajaro Valley schools are not in session. Santa Cruz City Schools are not in session.
- Post office: Post offices are closed Thursday.
- Santa Cruz Metro: No local bus service on Thursday. No Metro Paracruz service on Thursday. Amtrak Highway 17 on weekend schedule.
- The Sentinel: The Sentinel will publish. Automated customer service options are available by phone and online. Our 24/7 auto attendant can be reached at 831-706-3201. Online service is just one click away at myaccount.santacruzsentinel.com.

SANTA CRUZ

Math teacher faces child sex crime charges

By Jessica A. York
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SANTA CRUZ » A 42-year-old high school math teacher is facing arraignment this week on allegations of “grooming” a 17-year-old student with alleged intention of child sexual exploitation, police said Monday.

Santa Cruz Police Department detectives arrested Trung Minh Lai on Friday after he allegedly arranged to meet with a student off campus to engage in lewd acts, according to a department press release.

The Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office filed amended charges Monday including felonies dated June 6 related to communicating with a minor for a lewd act and attempted unlawful sexual intercourse. An additional felony count, dated Friday, related to meeting a minor for lewd purposes. Lai also faces a June 6 misdemeanor charge for child molestation. Lai, who posted \$30,000 bail and was released over the weekend, according to court documents, is set to

appear before Santa Cruz County Superior Court Judge Denine Guy at 8:15 a.m. Wednesday.

According to his LinkedIn resume, past Sentinel reporting and a biography on the public charter school's website, Lai began teaching math at Pacific Collegiate School in 2013. The former video game programmer and Vietnam native grew up in the Bay Area and attended Stanford University for a bachelor's in computer science, according to the posted information. Lai was listed as hav-

ing served as a faculty adviser for the school's math club, badminton club and student government, according to the school's site.

Detectives notified Pacific Collegiate School and officials reportedly have been cooperating with investigators to assist with this investigation, police said. A message left for Pacific College School Head of School Maria Reitano was not immediately returned Monday. An automated email response indicated she would be out of the office through July 21.

Measure

FROM PAGE 3

It would also make possession of fentanyl a felony and authorize judges to order those with multiple drug charges to get treatment. Proponents said the initiative is necessary to close legal loopholes in existing laws that has made it challenging to prosecute shoplifting and drug-related charges.

But lawmakers said the retailers' proposal is too broad. They worry those changes would disproportionately incarcerate low-income people and those with substance use issues rather than target ring-leaders who hire large groups of people to steal goods for resale online.

State leaders, including Newsom, had repeatedly rejected calls to unravel Proposition 47 or to go back to voters for crime reforms.

Democratic lawmakers were fast-tracking a legislative package of 13 bills that would go after organized online reseller schemes and auto thieves and provide funding for drug addiction counselors. State leaders planned to enact the proposals into laws as soon as this month and void the package if voters approve the business groups' proposal in November. They abandoned that plan Saturday night.

Democrats also are concerned the retailers' tough-on-crime proposal would drive more Republicans and conservative voters to



RICH PEDRONCELLI — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE
California Gov. Gavin Newsom speaks May 10 during a news conference in Sacramento.

the polls in contested U.S. House races that could determine control of Congress.

Crime is shaping up to be the major political issue in California's November's election. San Fran-

cisco Mayor London Breed and Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascón face tough reelection bids against challengers who have criticized their approaches to crime and punishment.

Food Bank

FROM PAGE 3

Second Harvest created Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) initiatives, a cornerstone of its strategic plan that is designed to create a thriving community where everyone has access to nutritious food to support health and well-being. This involves efforts including developing strategies to serve everyone experiencing food insecurity in Santa Cruz County, ensuring the agency and program food distributions eliminate stigma and respond to the community's diverse needs, and engaging in public policies and community collaborations to address systemic root causes of food insecurity — such as racism and poverty.

The board and staff DEIB Working Group, led by Second Harvest CEO Erica Padilla-Chavez, is building a framework to integrate multiple perspectives into its mission and vision.

“Listening to the community helps us tailor our services to be more effective and impactful,” says Padilla-Chavez.

“Hunger affects individuals and families from all walks of life,” says Haste. “It’s my honor to lead a talented and devoted Board of Directors. Their diverse perspectives and shared commitment continually inspire me.”

Haste became a board member in 2021 after a shift as a Bay Federal volunteer at a Second Harvest food distribution. “Witnessing the profound gratitude of families receiving vital nourishment was a deeply impactful experience highlighting Second Harvest’s critical role in our community.” Through employee volunteerism, Bay Federal has partnered with The Food Bank for many years.

Second Harvest works hard to reach those in need, including low-income families, seniors, farmworkers, immigrants and veterans. There are people of different sexual orientations and socio-economic statuses, and residents from throughout the county. Outreach includes drive-through community distributions, and programs for senior brown bags, disaster relief and emergency food assistance.

In 2023, Second Harvest distributed 11 million

pounds of food to Santa Cruz County individuals and families. The Food Bank isn't just a food resource; it nourishes the local community in other ways. “To meet people's changing needs and to help foster inclusion and equitable access for all, we have shifted our frame of reference and innovated in our work,” says Josue Barajas, Second Harvest chief programs officer. “We provide more than food; we provide community, wraparound services, and a sense of belonging.”

Over the past four years, The Food Bank says it has taken considerable steps forward in inclusion. “We translated our mission, vision, and values into Spanish for the first time,” says Barajas. “Recognizing that a large population we served was Spanish-speaking, we wanted to ensure they felt included and represented.” It also launched annual participant satisfaction surveys to learn clients' likes and dislikes. In 2023, Second Harvest hosted roundtable discussions with legislators and CalFresh recipients to discuss safety net programs and what it would mean if they were cut. “This helped bridge learning gaps as we invited recipients to tell their stories. For many, this was their first meeting with a legislator. They felt empowered — their voices were being heard.”

Another recent project, Handy Access Packs, supports the unhoused community. Each bag has protein, veggies, fruit, and healthy snacks with pop-tops and pouches. People without kitchen access can eat them.

The Food Bank's Farmworker/Campesinos Initiative Program started as an effort to help enroll people in CalFresh by visiting them in the fields. “After a few visits, we learned it would be more impactful if we took food to distribute,” says Barajas. “It became a wraparound service. Now, we partner with local farmers; they can come pick up food and take it back.”

The Food Bank's success stems from a combination of factors including local, state and federal advocacy efforts; cooking clubs where families learn about nutritious food; more than 3,000 volunteers; and 100-plus community distribution sites and partner agencies.

One community partner-

ship is the Santa Cruz Bible Church food pantry. Miguel Aznar is pantry co-director for the popular Thursday farmers market-style food distribution, where clients select what they want. Everyone is welcome.

“It draws people who want to help and do not need food. It draws people who want to help and also need food for themselves or their neighbors,” says Aznar. “Some unload cases of food from pallets onto tables, others need a chair to sit in line waiting for the distribution to start, all are respected.”

Coffee and snacks are available before the distribution begins; guests and volunteers can help themselves. “Many volunteers have been guests and still need food, but now contribute their muscle and creativity to improve how we operate,” says Aznar. In fact, Aznar first came to the distribution when he himself needed food assistance and has unique insights into clients' experiences. Recently, a young man volunteered to help move heavy boxes during setup. “At the end of our long day, I learned he's unhoused when he balanced a box of food on the handlebars of his bicycle,” says Aznar. “It made sense of his being able to connect, earlier, with a woman camped behind the church, explaining where she could find better shelter and why she couldn't stay there. It made sense of the foods he took and those he declined.”

The pantry offers dozens of foods across 14 tables.

Guests feel comfortable because they choose what they need and what they want. “Vegetarian? With children? Without refrigeration or a can opener? With a hungry shut-in neighbor? We balance getting everyone as much food as we can without running out before the end of the line,” adds Aznar. The food distributed every Thursday feeds 450-500 people weekly.

Aznar cherishes the partnership with Second Harvest. “The Food Bank provides most of our food, thousands of pounds delivered by truck every Thursday morning, spanning dry lentils to fresh lettuce, cans of salmon, boxes of milk and frozen cherries. Second Harvest representatives are passionate about the same thing we are: nourishing people. When we have challenges, they work with us, even visiting on-site to understand needs and imagine new ways to create the community we all want.”

Second Harvest Food Bank and its staff, partners and volunteers are committed to alleviating food insecurity and are excited to continue accomplishing this while focusing on DEIB. One more example of this: the nonprofit's new advisory council includes eight representatives: two from South County, two from Mid-County, two from Santa Cruz, and two from San Lorenzo Valley. This council will be tasked with giving input on programming and food purchases and will support the development of the Food Bank's newest strategic plan.



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