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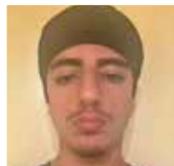
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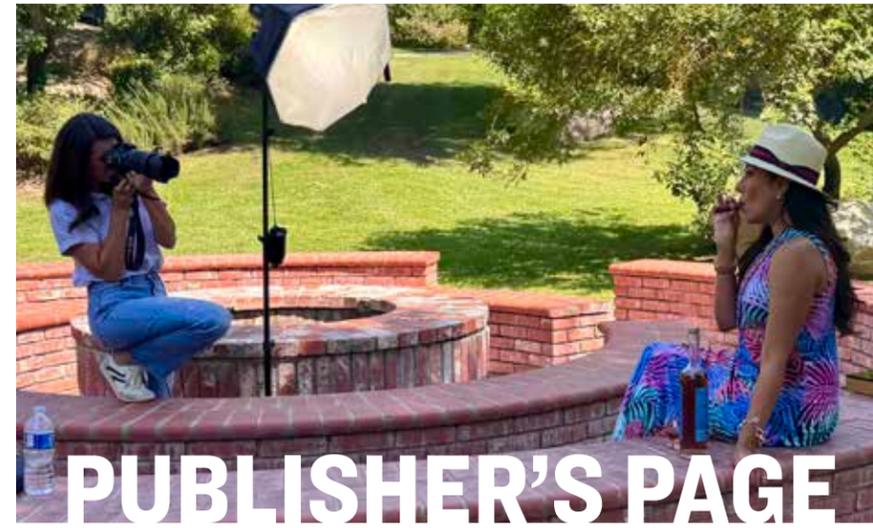
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PUBLISHER'S PAGE



But words alone don't carry this magazine. Our talented photographers – absolute professionals in their own right – play a huge role in telling each story. Their work takes time – scheduling shoots, finding the right light, framing the moment, and later cleaning it all up for print. Sometimes, the best moments are the unplanned ones – like young Markus sneaking a noodle from the pasta dish during this month's cover shoot, while his parents enjoyed a quiet glance at each other ... a photo so fun that we *almost* used it for the cover shot.

Other times, it means going the extra mile – literally. For Carolina's story, we took a 30-minute drive out to Riverfront Manor on Round Mountain Road to capture her in the perfect setting ... a beautiful outdoor location where she will be part of a great holiday food & shopping event this November.

This magazine is the result of many hands and hearts. I'm grateful for our contributors, our photographers, and for you – our readers – who make it all worthwhile.

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Markus, Marl, & Karla

HIGHGATE, *Heartbeats,* & **Homemade Banana Bread**

From the Philippines to Bakersfield, Karla and Marl built a life of love, purpose, and community.

BY ELIZABETH MCCABE, PHOTOGRAPHY BY VALDOPHYE PHOTOGRAPHY, ON LOCATION AT THE STORYBOOK HOUSE ON 18TH STREET

DREAM IT. DO IT.

Seven Oaks residents Karla Gutierrez and Marl Masacote crossed continents, chased careers, and conquered long-distance love—all to build the life they dreamed of. Now they're raising their son, healing hearts as Nurse Practitioners, and living the American dream one joyful, grateful day at a time.

Today, the Masacote-Gutierrez family is thriving in Highgate, where karaoke nights meet cardiac surgery, banana bread meets biking marathons, and love always leads the way. It's been a life of adventure, fueled by dreams of a happier tomorrow. And Karla and Marl will both tell you that dreams do come true.

Their life began miles away from Bakersfield in the Philippines. They never would have guessed they have the life of opportunity that they have today.

FILIPINO PROUD

"We were both born in the Philippines," Karla shares, "then we moved to Dubai and lived there for five years. My husband and I got married in 2014, and in 2017, we moved to the U.S." After landing at LAX, Bakersfield became their new home base, thanks to a visa application that had been sitting patiently in the pipeline since 2009. The global recession put their dreams on hold until eight years later. They saved up their money to make the move halfway across the globe.

Was it worth the wait? Without a doubt.

"When we arrived and saw the American flag, I cried. After nine years of hard work and waiting, we were so thankful," she recalls. "America is where we wanted our child to grow up."

Their son Markus, now nine and entering fourth grade at Highgate Elementary, was born in Dubai but has embraced American life with joy and energy. "He loves sports and says he wants to become a nurse or a surgeon," Karla smiles. "He even has a kit at home to practice suturing, and I teach him how to listen to heart sounds with a stethoscope!"

It's no wonder—both Karla and Marl are Nurse Practitioners, with a shared foundation in nursing that stretches back to their 2006 graduation. Karla works in primary care at Omni Family Medicine, while Marl specializes

in cardiothoracic surgery at Memorial Hospital. "We were long distance before we got married—he was in Kuwait, and I was in the UAE," Karla recalls. "Once we reunited, we did our master's programs and became NPs together."

AT HOME IN HIGHGATE

Their journey brought them to Highgate in 2019, when they purchased their first home. "We saw the future" **CONTINUED ►**



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Afternoon sailing in Los Cabos



Disneyland Paris 2016



Marl, after participating in the 2025 Bakersfield Marathon



Markus fishing in the Philippines



Christmas with the family in 2024



Highgate Christmas Holiday event 2024



Christmas with Santa at Highgate Seven Oaks



Enjoying the snow at Yosemite

of Highgate—the school, the community, the events—it was perfect for us,” says Karla. “Moving to Highgate was one of the best decisions we ever made. It’s quiet here and we feel safe.” They also love the park and the basketball clinic for Markus.

When they’re not working, the family makes the most of their time together. Fridays are sacred family nights, and weekends are filled with food, fun, and a little well-deserved rest. “We cook and bake a lot—banana bread and traditional Filipino dishes. My husband is the better cook, though!” Karla laughs. “He loves to barbecue and experiment with different recipes.”

They also unwind by visiting the clubhouse, relaxing in the jacuzzi, and watching kid-friendly movies with Markus. They love their pet fish, Nemo. “Markus is allergic to cats,” says Karla, “so a fish was the perfect compromise.”

While Karla loves music and performs at concerts—including a Highgate holiday event—Marl prefers the great outdoors. He’s a marathoner and avid cyclist. Although they have different hobbies, they are united by their values, their work in the medical field, and their love for family. “We also like to travel to different places together,” says Karla.

Karla recently launched an entertainment company and hopes to continue growing it here in Bakersfield. “God has guided our journey since the beginning,” she says. “We’ve lived in different countries, saved money, and made sacrifices to get here. But America as the land of opportunity is really true—we are so grateful. We have good health, a wonderful community, and we’re living the life we prayed for.”

They couldn’t be happier here in Bakersfield, living the American Dream — one beat, one blessing, and one beautifully baked banana bread at a time.



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Carolina Oehler Breaks Barriers in the Cigar Industry and Ignites a New Flame

BY ELIZABETH MCCABE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY APRIL MCGILL PHOTOGRAPHER

“There’s something about smoking a cigar that feels like a celebration. It’s like a fine wine. There’s a quality, a workmanship, a passion that goes into the smoking of a fine cigar.” – Demi Moore

Times are changing. Cigars aren’t just for men any longer. After all, it’s not the ‘80s anymore with big hair bands and cassette tapes. It’s 2025. Women are lighting up as well, celebrating events, birthdays, fundraisers, and corporate events with style, sophistication, and a perfectly rolled cigar in hand.

Resident Carolina Oehler (Carol-eena Ay-ler) is on a mission: to bring the luxury, culture, and sheer joy of fine cigars to private events across California—one perfectly curated puff at a time.

As the founder of Habana Cabana Events, she doesn’t just bring cigars. Think bigger. She brings a mobile cigar lounge that transforms weddings, fundraisers, and corporate gatherings into immersive, Instagram-worthy experiences. Think of it as a slice of Little Havana, a splash of Miami flair, and a little magic rolled into one—minus the mojitos.

Carolina personally oversees every detail, from the cigars to the cutters, ashtrays, and tropical-inspired ambiance. Want guests to learn how to hold, cut, and light a cigar without looking like they’re burning a stick of wood? She’s got you. Fancy a whiskey or rum pairing that turns your event into a James Bond moment without the espionage? She’s got that too. Her motto: slow down, enjoy the moment, and leave the ordinary behind.

A WOMAN’S JOURNEY IN A MAN’S WORLD

Stepping into the cigar world wasn’t easy—it’s historically a men’s club—but Carolina never let that intimidate her. Her story begins in 2014, with her YouTube channel, website, and cigar culture group *Hoochly*, a passion project pairing cigars

with whiskey and sharing the experience online. She hosted tastings, educated guests, and promoted brands, slowly earning respect and building a loyal following.

Carolina also worked as a brand ambassador for several cigar brands. “They would hire me to work their table,” she shares. “I would educate guests about cigars, their strengths, their construction – everything.”

Her adventures took her straight to Nicaragua, the beating heart of premium cigar production. Carolina learned from master blenders, crafted her own cigars, and studied every step of the process—from seed to harvest to hand-rolled perfection.

“With the temperature, soil, and climate in Nicaragua, they produce amazing cigars,” she comments. She witnessed the process for herself. But it was more than growing her knowledge, this trip ignited a passion to create an immersive, bespoke cigar experience like none other.

“Smoking a cigar forces you to be in the moment – to sit and enjoy it,” she reflects. “It’s grounding.” She wanted people to experience that same feeling for themselves.

FROM MIAMI TO BAKERSFIELD

Carolina was born in Bogotá, raised in Florida, and her travels eventually brought her to California after meeting her husband, Geoff, through cigar culture groups they both belonged to.

In 2016, she relocated from Florida to Bakersfield to be with her future husband, stepping back from her cigar ventures while exploring new career opportunities. But cigars never left her life. Even while pursuing other paths, she and Geoff continued sharing their passion daily.

Then came October 2024. A friend’s wedding in Bakersfield needed advice on sourcing cigars for their celebration. Carolina recognized an opportunity to elevate their experience. She didn’t just curate a fine selection of premium cigars; she created a full experience. She transformed the space into a mini-Havana, complete with cigar cutters, ashtrays, and the full education of cigar etiquette. The event was a hit. Guests raved. Habana Cabana Events was born.

“The overwhelming success of this impromptu service ignited the spark for a full-fledged business venture,” says Carolina. “My wheels started spinning. I had ideas in mind and wanted to get the ball rolling.”

With her background in hospitality marketing, she knew how to translate the concept into something that would stand out. Soon after, Habana Cabana Events was born, complete with its own website, habanacabanaevents.com.

THE HABANA CABANA EXPERIENCE

Carolina’s vision is simple yet bold: every event should be curated to deliver unforgettable moments that transport guests to the vibrant heart of Little Havana. She curates cigars, guides guests through tastings, shares cigar education, culture, and etiquette, and offers optional pairings that elevate an event from memorable to unforgettable.

HER PACKAGES INCLUDE:

- **The Habana Breeze** – A small, intimate experience perfect for backyard parties or birthdays. Guests enjoy hand-selected cigars, vibrant tropical décor, and the guidance

of a personal cigar sommelier, turning even casual gatherings into something memorable and exclusive.

- **The Habana Social** – Weddings, milestone birthdays, and private soirées get the full Little Havana vibe with boutique cigars, optional custom bands, and spirit pairings. Carolina entertains, educates, and delivers a crash course in cigar culture, making the host look like the ultimate VIP.
- **The Grand Habana** – Designed for galas, corporate events, golf tournaments, fundraisers, or large weddings, this package makes a lasting impression. Premium cigars, curated spirits, and personalized touches create an atmosphere rich in sophistication and connection, where every detail is crafted to wow guests.

EXPERTISE WITH HEART

Carolina is a tobacconist—essentially a cigar sommelier—trained to personalize every experience. She educates guests on proper cigar etiquette: how to hold, cut, toast, light, smoke, and savor without a hint of awkwardness. Pairings, tastings, and curated flights add a sophisticated flair, tailored for each event.

“I personalize every aspect of my business from setup to breakdown and everything in between,” she says.

Carolina doesn’t sell cigars or alcohol; she provides a luxury experience where cigars are included as part of her curated event service. Her goal is simple: to create connection, culture, and celebration—helping guests slow down, savor the moment, and make memories that last long after the final puff.

Carolina draws inspiration from Miami’s Little Havana, where she spent years absorbing the culture, music, and traditions of cigar-making communities. Habana Cabana Events brings that vibe to California, infusing every gathering with warmth, elegance, and a touch of playful charm.

Her company name reflects that vision: Habana nods to historic cigar culture, while Cabana evokes exclusivity, leisure, and celebration. Tropical décor and curated setups complete the immersive experience—essentially a mini-vacation for your event.

CRAFTING MOMENTS

Carolina’s mission is to create magic at every gathering. Whether a small tasting or a grand celebration, she crafts moments, weaves stories, and builds connections that last long after the event ends.

With Habana Cabana Events, every cigar is more than smoke—it’s a celebration. Every event is more than a gathering—it’s an experience. And Carolina Oehler? She’s just getting started, one perfectly curated puff at a time.



Want to learn more? Check out habanacabanaevents.com.



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David Brust & Russell Johnson

Back to the Honky Tonk: How Rooster's is Reviving the Bakersfield Sound

BY ELIZABETH MCCABE • PHOTOGRAPHY BY APRIL MCGILL PHOTOGRAPHER

Downtown Bakersfield has a new heartbeat—a place where neon lights flicker, guitars wail, and the legacy of country music comes alive night after night.

Welcome to Rooster's Honky Tonk—a labor of love, a tribute to Bakersfield's musical soul, and a symbol of revival brought to life by two longtime friends: Seven Oaks resident Russell Johnson and David Brust.

"Russell is one of my dearest friends," says David. "I was in his wedding 19 years ago." They crossed paths at a men's charity called the Active 20-30 Club, similar to Rotary for those under 40.

"We became really good friends and have been friends ever since," shares David. Russell chimes in, "David and I used to work together as well. At one point, he was my boss," he laughs. "I love him like my brother." Over the years, their friendship has been strengthened by a shared love for country music—an appreciation that spans decades and has helped lay the foundation for Rooster's Honky Tonk.

BAKERSFIELD SOUND, REBORN

Bakersfield was once the epicenter of a musical revolution. Buck Owens and Merle Haggard, along with a circle of local legends, crafted the unmistakable "Bakersfield Sound," a raw, twangy counterpoint to Nashville's polish. That sound echoed through oil fields, cotton farms, and dusty honky tonks. But with time, the music began to fade, and the venues disappeared.

David, who had spent years championing Kern County tourism, couldn't let that happen. "Outside of the Crystal Palace, we didn't have a consistent place to catch live country music," he says. David, who worked as the sales manager at KUZZ for 7 years, knows country music and its potential. "Bakersfield had the opportunity to be the Nashville of California—and we let it go."

It took a trip to Nashville to reignite the dream. Walking down Broadway, surrounded by live music pouring from every bar, David saw what Bakersfield could be. He returned home with a fire in his soul. He brought the idea to his old friend Russell Johnson. Russell didn't hesitate: "I'm in, dude."

Russell recalls what he was feeling when David brought him the idea. "I remember listening to country music in my dad's car as a kid. Later, when I worked for County Supervisor Mike Maggard during the Oildale Centennial, I felt that passion all over again. That celebration put an exclamation point on what Buck and Merle meant to Bakersfield."

During the Centennial, Merle Haggard returned to town with Marty Stuart and gave a special presentation at Cal State Bakersfield. "He told stories about growing up in Oildale, what it was like writing his songs, and being part of the Bakersfield country music scene.

Then he and Marty started playing music live. It was electric—every person in the room felt it, from students to folks who grew up listening to Merle."

That memory was still alive when David sat in Russell's office and pitched his idea. "I didn't even hesitate," Russell says. "That identity—what makes Bakersfield Bakersfield—we needed to take that and run with it. Rooster's became a way to bring that living history back every night in downtown."

DESTINY IN A DOWNTOWN BAR

In launching Rooster's, they had to find the perfect fit. They searched high and low for the right location—some places would have taken a year or more

to renovate. Then, fate stepped in. A downtown bar called Gatsby's was ready to sell. On June 15, 2023—coincidentally, 615 is Nashville's area code—they signed the lease. That date marked the birth of Rooster's Honky Tonk.

The building, originally Wickersham Jewelers, dating back to 1910, needed some work. But within 19 days, the friends opened the Eye Street Pub on July 5, followed by Rooster's Honky Tonk on September 13. The transformation was fast, furious, and full of grit—just like the Bakersfield Sound.

A PLACE WHERE MUSIC LIVES

Rooster's is more than a bar. It's a temple of twang. With over 30



tequilas and whiskeys, local beers, and signature cocktails like the Cock-a-Doodle-Rita, the drinks flow freely—but the music is the heartbeat.

Live country music fills the air, from local legends to international acts. A massive photo of Buck Owens performing at the Blackboard Café in 1955, gifted by his nephew Mel Owens, hangs proudly on the wall—a tribute to where it all began.

"Country music is Bakersfield's true identity," David says. "It's what makes us different. It's who we are."

Rooster's isn't just for country purists. It's for everyone. The crowd is diverse, and the atmosphere is welcoming. People who never thought they liked country music come for the live experience—and stay for the community.

Musicians are treated like royalty, with a top-tier sound system, green room, and warm hospitality. David himself runs the soundboard most nights. "We wanted a place where artists would love to play," he says. And they do. Acts traveling from Texas, Arizona, Nashville—even Italy—now make Rooster's a regular stop.

Opening night featured local talent Joe Peters, and the energy was electric. In fact, even actor Ethan Hawke chose Rooster's as a filming location for a Merle Haggard documentary.

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Rooster's has become more than a destination—it's a spark. Russell and David recently purchased Cask Strength Bar and Kitchen, a whiskey bar with a food menu, just around the corner. By the time you're reading this, Cask Strength will have been transformed into their newest venture, **Rooster's Cantina**—a lively blend of Mexican-inspired cuisine, talented mixologists, live music, and nonstop energy. Their dream? A fully walkable downtown scene where music pours out of every door.

"We're trying to walk the line between honoring the legends and staying relevant," Russell says. "So far, I think we're doing a pretty good job."

They're not just reviving a sound—they're reviving a city. "We love Bakersfield," David adds. "It's in our bones. The people here are kind, warm, and real. That's what makes this place special."

LOOKING AHEAD

Russell remembers one night standing in the green room, looking down at the crowd as a young woman belted out "Neon Moon." The room was alive. The moment was magic.

David dreams of the day one of Rooster's regulars goes on to sell out the Rabobank Arena. "That would mean we did our part," he says. "That we kept country music alive in Bakersfield."

In a town still known for oil and agriculture, the music is rising again. Thanks to Rooster's Honky Tonk, the Bakersfield Sound has a home—and a bright future. And every twang of a guitar string, every stomp of a boot, and every note sung on that stage keeps the story going. One night at a time.

Want to learn more? Check out their website, roostershonkytonk.com. Or stop in for yourself at 1531 19th Street in Bakersfield.



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(661) 427-2222
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Dipalee and some of her artwork

CREATING MORE THAN ART— CREATING SPACE

Through KalaKari, Dipalee offers not lessons, but liberation: a studio for expression, exploration, and community.

BY CASEY DEE

26 October 2025

As I stepped up to the Pandya family's front door in Seven Oaks, I was immediately drawn to a beautiful hand-painted design at my feet, just before the welcome mat. Above it, a small sign asked visitors to kindly remove their shoes. The message was clear: you're entering a space that blends cultural tradition with personal warmth.

The intricate artwork is Rangoli, a centuries-old Indian tradition that uses vivid patterns to welcome guests and invoke blessings. Created annually in October for Diwali, India's Festival of Lights, Dipalee Pandya paints her Rangoli with reverence and joy. "It's part of my heritage," she shared. "We do it to invite prosperity and good fortune into the home. For me, it's also a grounding ritual, one that connects my past with my present."

Each year, during Diwali, she refreshes the design, allowing it to evolve while still honoring the symbolism. It's a moment that reflects the essence of her journey: colorful, rooted, and reimagined.

Much like the Rangoli at her door, Dipalee's story is one of blending tradition with transformation. Originally from Ahmedabad, a culturally rich city in Gujarat, India, a vibrant Indian city known for its rich culture, textiles, and as the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi. Dipalee moved to the U.S. in 2003 after getting married. She first lived near Chicago, then relocated to Bakersfield, a city she initially struggled to connect with.

"I came from a place full of art, textile markets, and rich history. Here, it felt quiet. But over time, I started to see the beauty in the simplicity," she said. "It's an easier life in many ways, especially for raising a family."

A trained graphic designer with roots in fine art, Dipalee always had a creative spirit. But like many in traditional Indian families, she was encouraged to pursue a more "practical" path. "I was painting at 14," she said, "but I studied a bachelor's in commerce, because that's what was expected."

Eventually, she returned to art school at Columbia College in Chicago and worked in animation and advertising. But motherhood pressed pause on her career. For nearly a decade, art became something private,

"I'd go months without touching a brush, and then suddenly, I'd be painting for two days straight, lost in it. It's how I process emotions; it's therapeutic."



Dipalee's Rangoli design at the entrance to her home

stolen moments between raising children and managing a household.

"I'd go months without touching a brush," she said. "And then suddenly, I'd be painting for two days straight, lost in it. It's how I process emotions, it's therapeutic."

Inside her home, that emotional depth is visible in every corner. One of the most striking visuals is a beautiful painting of Ganesha, a Hindu deity known as the remover of obstacles. His form is brought to life through colorful, fluid brushstrokes and a palette that seems to pulse with energy. The moment I saw it, I was instinctively drawn in, not just by the sheer beauty of the colors but by the quiet strength and serenity

it exudes. It felt less like a painting and more like a presence, protective, joyful, and deeply personal.

"Ganesha represents beginnings," she said. "We always start anything important by invoking him." At the base of the painting is a small mouse, Ganesha's unlikely companion. "The mouse symbolizes desire and ego," she explained. "The idea is to ride them, not be ruled by them."

Now that her children are older, Dipalee is channeling her full energy into something new: KalaKari.

"Kala' means art in Sanskrit. 'Kari' means the one who creates," she said. "So KalaKari is about becoming the creator through art."

Dipalee is not setting up a traditional art school. Her vision is something deeper: an intimate space where people can reconnect with creativity, emotion, and community. "I don't want to teach step-by-step lessons," she said. "I want to offer an environment where people feel free to express, explore, and heal through art."

These small-group sessions will be held in her newly carved-out home studio, focusing on mixed media techniques, intuitive creativity, and mindful expression. She is also hoping to find the perfect studio space. A space to create, to grow, and to connect with one another in a place where they can be with like-minded souls.

"Everyone has an artist within them," Dipalee said. "You just need the space to discover it. You don't need to be 'wounded' to heal through art. We all benefit from it, it's human."

This fall, Dipalee's work will also be featured in the Art2Heal4Hue coloring book, a community art project celebrating healing through creativity. You can find the fall edition and more information at Art2Heal4Hue.com, or follow the project on Facebook and Instagram @Art2Heal4Hue. The newest location to purchase books is at Covenant Coffee on N. Chester and The Stockdale Tower. Follow Dipalee @KalaKariTheArtStudio.

With her warm, grounded presence and rich creative history, Dipalee Pandya has transformed her home into more than a place of residence. It's a space of meaning. Her Rangoli isn't just decoration, it's a declaration of welcome. Her Ganesha isn't just symbolic; it's a spiritual compass. And KalaKari isn't just a name, it's her mission.

What started as a quiet chapter in Bakersfield has grown into something expansive, beautiful, and entirely her own. "This is my Ahmedabad now," she said. "When I go back to India, it feels new. Because this is home, here in Seven Oaks."

And from the moment you step onto her painted threshold, you can feel it too.

From Dublin to Bakersfield

The Enduring Legacy of the Sisters of Mercy and Mercy Hospital

BY TONI HARPER, PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF MERCY HOSPITAL ARCHIVES



Nursing Class and Sisters circa 1937



Mercy Hospital Downtown Wing circa 1927

The Sisters of Mercy, a Catholic religious congregation, trace their beginnings to Dublin, Ireland, where the compassionate and visionary Catherine McAuley changed countless lives. In 1822, Catherine inherited what would now be a fortune—about \$500,000—from a couple she had served loyally for nearly two decades. Rather than seeking comfort or luxury, she took a bold step: Catherine used her inheritance to build the very first House of Mercy on Baggot Street in 1827. This sanctuary quickly became a lifeline and a beacon of hope for poor women and girls, offering them safety, education, and a chance at a brighter future.

The Archbishop of Dublin, deeply moved by Catherine's tireless efforts, urged her to form a new religious congregation. At that time, it was unheard of for religious women to step outside the cloistered walls of a convent. But Catherine was determined to break the mold—as she wanted to “walk among the sick and the poor.” Thus, the Sisters of Mercy were born, quickly earning the nickname “the walking nuns.” Unlike other congregations, the Sisters of Mercy embraced a unique fourth vow: service to others. This commitment set them apart, fueling their mission to bring mercy and compassion directly to those who needed it most.

The Sisters of Mercy wasted no time in expanding their reach, dedicating themselves to caring for the sick and educating the underserved. By the time Catherine McAuley passed away in 1841, nearly 15 vibrant communities had sprung up across Ireland and England. Their spirit of service was contagious—the congregation's influence soon stretched across the globe, leaving a trail of hope wherever the Sisters went.



William Howell and son circa 1910



Groundbreaking at Mercy Hospital Downtown circa 1950s



Family entering Mercy Hospital Downtown, 1950s



Architect Orville L. Clarke

Renowned for their pioneering spirit, the Sisters of Mercy established hospitals and schools in the areas of most desperate need. When they arrived in San Francisco in 1854, the city was in crisis—outbreaks of cholera, typhoid, and influenza threatened countless lives. Without hesitation, the Sisters rolled up their sleeves, nursing the sick and comforting the fearful. Their efforts led to the founding of St. Mary's Hospital, which proudly stands as San Francisco's oldest continuously operating hospital—a living testament to the Sisters' quick action, compassion, and lasting impact on healthcare in the city.

Bakersfield's Mercy Hospital owes its existence to the unwavering commitment and compassion of the Sisters of Mercy. The dream began when parishioners from Saint Francis Church—led by the determined William Howell—petitioned the Archbishop of Los Angeles for help to bring a Catholic hospital to their thriving agricultural community. On a chilly February morning in 1910, four brave young Sisters of Mercy stepped off the train and made their way to the humble St. Clair House at H and 16th Streets. With them, they carried not only medical skill and nursing knowledge, but also an unshakable philosophy of dignity, respect,

and holistic healing. It didn't take long for the Sisters to realize that the little house could not keep pace with Bakersfield's rapid growth. Undaunted, they resolved to build a modern hospital that would truly serve the needs of their community.

Their dreams received an extraordinary boost from an act of remarkable generosity. William de Gana, a devoted St. Francis Church parishioner, stepped forward with a gift that made it possible for the Sisters to build an “up-to-date hospital worthy of the best interests of Bakersfield.” His only request: anonymity until after his passing. With this gift, the **CONTINUED ►**



Dignity Health Mercy Hospital Southwest



Groundbreaking at Mercy Hospital Southwest in 1991

original hospital moved to the Truxtun site, and construction began on the new Mercy Hospital—a \$41,000 endeavor that still stands today as Mercy Hospital Downtown, a monument to faith and community spirit.

Local architect Orville Lee Clark poured his heart into designing Mercy Hospital. According to historical records, he spent two months traveling across the United States, seeking out the most innovative hospital designs. When Mercy Hospital opened its doors, it was a marvel: the city's first passenger elevator, illuminated signal lights above every doorway, and two of the most

advanced operating rooms in California. The Bakersfield Californian gushed in April 1914 that it was “unquestionably one of the finest buildings in Bakersfield and is a great moment to the city as well as to the gentle Sisters and Catholic church.” Towering above it all was a stunning 70-foot dome, crowned by a gold-leaf cross that glowed from within—a “beacon of light” visible for ten miles, symbolizing hope and healing for all who saw it.

Disaster struck in 1952 when a massive earthquake centered in Tehachapi devastated much of the Mercy Hospital campus. As the dust settled, the Greater Bakersfield Memorial Committee was already fundraising for a new hospital, but the need became even more urgent. Community leaders, galvanized by Ralph Smith and joined by the Sisters of Mercy, launched a spirited campaign to secure matching federal funds. During this time of uncertainty and hope, Sister Mary Petra, the hospital's administrator, offered words of faith

and encouragement: “The Sisters have been united in prayer for the success of the Mercy-Memorial Drive and its benefactors and promoters. We shall continue to pray that God will bless our united efforts to give the people of this area hospitals in which prodigies of modern medical science can be realized.”

As Bakersfield expanded, Mercy Hospital grew right along with it. The downtown facility expanded to accommodate 144 beds, ensuring more families could receive care close to home.



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The author and her son Zack, enjoying the 2023 Whale Rock Music and Arts Festival in Paso Robles.

Ties That Bind: Music Connects Us with Friends, Family, and Memories

BY CHERYL SCOTT

DURING A RECENT OVERNIGHT VISIT to my son's place in Paso Robles, he and his girlfriend pulled out a new game they were excited to share. I don't typically love trying new games, and I'm just competitive enough to prefer ones that play to my strengths. Word games like Bananagrams or Scattergories? I'm in! Trivia? Sure. But games that demand knowledge of musical artists, song names, and eras... not so much.

And that's exactly what the evening held.

At first glance, I thought this wouldn't be my kind of game. But I reminded myself that the real

reason I was there was to enjoy time together. So, with a smile, I said, "Let's play!" What unfolded was a reminder of how music bridges generations, breaks down inhibitions, and connects us in unexpected ways (which, I suppose, is why even we "introverts" find ourselves on the dance floor after just a few bars of Rock Lobster or some other irresistible tune).

The game was called *Hitster*—a modern spin on the old TV show Name That Tune. Each player listens to a random song by scanning a QR code on a card, then places that card in chronological order

on their personal timeline. The goal is to line up 10 cards correctly. Bonus points come if you can also name the song and artist.

Initially, I assumed my limited musical knowledge would put me at a disadvantage. Instead, I found myself swept into memory. Some songs carried me back to high school, others to moments Zack and I had shared. The music became less about facts and more about "Where were you when...?" I could still hear Poker Face blaring as I drove Zack and his junior high friends to the movies, even though Lady Gaga wasn't exactly my favorite at the time.

Music has always been a recurring theme in my family's story. I grew up a California girl with Oklahoma roots, which meant the kitchen radio played all country music, all the time. Sometimes I longed to wrestle control and turn on Casey Kasem's *American Top 40* or, my favorite, The Beatles. But no, that music stayed mostly in my bedroom.

One afternoon in the mid-1980's, I did have complete control of the kitchen radio. Home alone as a college freshman, feeling the weight of new responsibilities, I sat in the kitchen doing homework and listening to "my own" music.

With my parents away on their first vacation without me (international, no less), I felt a pang of

loneliness. I got up and switched the dial from my own favorite station to my parents' familiar country station. Surprisingly, hearing their music brought me comfort, connection, and—unexpectedly—enjoyment. That was the day I discovered how music can weave together family, tradition, and belonging.

Years later, it was fun to watch my sons as they developed their own repertoire of favorite genres of music. When Zack was a young teen, he and his pals developed some quirky observances: Well-Dressed Wednesday, Polo Shirt Thursday, and yes—Country Music Sunday. To my surprise, they, too, were making room for country in their playlists.

Now, with one son living in Germany and the other two hours away, I'm more grateful than ever for the way music keeps us close. We've shared unforgettable concerts over the years—Bruno Mars, Carrie Underwood, and more—and we've nearly blown out the windows of a 2000 Suburban singing *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Whether we're around a game table, on a driving vacation, or separated by oceans, music remains one of the ties that binds us—to each other, to our past, and even to the loved ones who came before us.

Cheryl can be reached at cherylscttwrites@gmail.com

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LA DOLCE VITA: Why Italy Will Always Have My Heart

BY FIONA HAMILTON, PHOTOS PROVIDED BY FIONA HAMILTON



Cinque Terre



Florence, Italy



St. Mark's Square, Venice



Gondolas in Venice canals



Colosseum in Rome

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A COUNTRY FOR EVERY TRAVELER

- **For the history lover** - Rome is an open-air museum where every cobblestone has a story. Whether you are standing in the Colosseum or wandering the Roman Forum, or watching the sunset from the Spanish Steps, you can feel the heartbeat of centuries past. The Pantheon is a wonder with its well-preserved architecture and giant dome; you turn every corner and watch history unfold before you. It is easy to make the short trip to Pompeii and see a snapshot of Roman Life frozen in time when Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD, covering the town in volcanic ash.
- **For the romantic** – Although it can be argued that anywhere in Italy can be romantic, Venice is a living watercolor. You can glide down the canals at dusk and explore hidden piazzas, after the tourists have left for the day and listen to the church bells echo across the water. It is a city that teaches you to slow down and just enjoy life.
- **For the foodie** – Bologna, Florence, and Naples will steal your heart one bite at a time. Hand-rolled pasta, fresh buffalo mozzarella, wood-fired pizza, and velvety gelato – it’s impossible to leave hungry. I love arranging private and group cooking classes or food tours, so my

clients get to experience food the way the locals do, shopping at local markets to get the freshest produce.

- **For the dreamer** – The Amalfi Coast clings to the cliffs, the lemon groves scent the air, and the pastel villages spill toward the turquoise seas, Capri, Positano, Ravello – each is like stepping into a postcard.
- **For the adventurer** – The Dolomites offer alpine hikes, ski slopes, and mountain lodges with some of the best wood fired pizza and hot chocolate. Fun fact: my first trip to Italy was on a ski trip, as a poor student, France and Switzerland were too expensive, but Italy was in my budget, and both the skiing and Apre-ski were amazing! Another beautiful hike is Cinque Terre, where you can spend a day hiking between the famous villages. If that is too active, you can always take the train or a boat to further explore.



Positano on the Amalfi Coast

THE JOY OF PLANNING ITALY

What I adore about planning Italian getaways is how personal they become. One client might want a week of wine tasting in Tuscany, while another dreams of island-hopping off the coast of Sicily. Some prefer a fast-paced grand tour of the highlights, others want a slow, relaxing stay in a countryside villa.

My role is to take all those dreams – the must-sees, and the hidden gems, the once-in-a-lifetime moments – and weave them into a seamless journey. From private drivers along winding Amalfi roads to VIP early entry into St Peter’s and the Sistine Chapel and skip-the-line museum entry in Florence, I make sure my clients experience Italy in a way that feels effortless and unforgettable. It’s nice to plan Italy using tried and true suppliers who I know will look after my clients well and will make sure they have an amazing time.

WHY ITALY STAYS WITH YOU

There is something about Italy that lingers long after you return home. Maybe it’s the memory of a sunset over the Arno in Florence, or the taste of a perfect espresso in a Roman café. Maybe it’s the warmth of a shopkeeper who insisted you try “just one more” biscotti.

Whatever it is, Italy isn’t just a destination. It’s a feeling. I will never grow tired of helping travelers discover.

THINKING OF ITALY?

Whether it’s your first trip or your fifth, there’s always more to see, taste, and fall in love with. I can help you plan an Italian adventure that’s crafted around your version of la dolce vita – because in Italy every journey is a masterpiece.

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Why Does Loneliness Show Up Even When Life Seems Full?

BY DR. ANNA MARIE FRANK

Lately, I've been feeling episodes of loneliness.

And I'll be honest with you — I hesitated to even write that. Because from the outside looking in, it probably doesn't make sense. I'm surrounded by people. I go to events, run a business, lead wellness programs, and talk with clients every day. On paper, it looks like my life is full.

And most of the time, it is.

But sometimes, something inside still feels... quiet. Empty. Hollow.

Maybe you've felt that way, too? What is going on? I've been sitting with this question a lot lately. And here's what I've realized:

- When you've spent years doing the inner work — healing, evolving, growing — surface-level conversations no longer satisfy your soul.
- You begin to crave something deeper.
- You want presence. Real presence. Conversations that nourish your soul, not ones that just fill the air.

It's not enough anymore to talk about the weather, who wore what, or how bad traffic was on the way in. You want to know what someone is afraid of. What they're dreaming of. What they wrestle with in the quiet corners of their mind.

Have you ever been in a crowded room and still felt utterly alone? Looking around, smiling, nodding — while inside wondering, *Who are these people really? And who am I to them? Who are they to me?*

I have. And I don't think I'm alone in that experience.

I've also asked myself: *Why am I noticing this more now than ever? Why does it feel heavier in this second half of life?*

And I think I know.

As we move through our 40s, 50s, and beyond, life changes. The kids grow up. The pace shifts. All the energy we once funneled into carpool lines, sports practices, late-night homework checks, and endless snack prep... slows down. Or stops.

And then the silence sets in.

We look around and wonder:

- Where am I needed now?
- Who am I outside of being a caregiver or provider?
- What relationships have I nurtured beyond the walls of family and work?

Sometimes, those answers feel heavy.

Even the people who seem to "have it all" can feel profoundly alone. Celebrities, athletes, leaders — we've all seen stories of people surrounded by fans, friends, and success... who still struggle with deep loneliness. Some even lose their battles in tragic ways.

That tells us something important:

Loneliness isn't about proximity. It's about connection. It's about being seen, known, and emotionally met.

Let's normalize this conversation:

- It's OK to say: "I'm lonely."
- It's OK to crave deep, soul-stirring conversations.
- It's OK to outgrow small talk.
- It's OK to feel this way, even when your life looks "full."

Busyness does not equal belonging. You can fill your calendar and still feel empty. You can succeed wildly and still ache quietly. You can be surrounded and still feel unseen.

You've probably heard the saying: "We are born alone, and we die alone." But I don't believe the space in between has to be done alone.

So, what do we do with this loneliness? Maybe instead of pushing through it, we sit with it.

We ask ourselves:

- Who have I been meaning to reach out to?
- Where can I create more space for real connection?
- When was the last time I let someone really see me?

Because loneliness, as painful as it feels, can also be a teacher. It's pointing us back to the connections we crave and reminding us that we're wired to do life together.

If you've been feeling this too, please know you're not the only one. Not by a long shot.

So here I am, sitting with my own loneliness, and inviting you into the conversation. Let's stop pretending that having a full schedule means having a full heart. Let's choose presence over performance. Let's remember that what we really need is each other.

With an open heart,

Dr. Anna Marie | @HappyWholeYou
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HH at HH

Happy Hour at Harrington House just got a flavorful makeover—come hungry, stay late, and discover your new favorite apps.

BY DAVID PERKINS

I do a fair share of my meetings with prospects, clients, and residents at Harrington House on the corner of Buena Vista and Stockdale Hwy. It's a familiar place that allows us to hear each other during our meetings, while offering a great selection of coffees, drinks, appetizers and full meals over which we can discuss business.

Often, I will discover owner, Karen, and executive chef, Nic, deep in discussion about what food & drinks to serve for an upcoming holiday or special function. And time after time, they simply knock it out of the park with their fusion of American dishes and signature drinks, sprinkled with a little Indian love and spices.

Well, if you're also a fan of HH, as we call it, you'll be thrilled to know that Nic has been busy tinkering in the kitchen and has come up with several ridiculously delicious items for their new Happy Hour menu that runs from 2-7pm Monday-Thursday. Yep, until 7pm!

Hold on to your taste buds, while I introduce you to a few of your new favorite appetizers, the kind of creations that will have you coming back again and again.

Let's start with my new favorite. I happen to love Butter Chicken ... a flavorful curry made from chicken cooked in a spiced tomato and butter-based "gravy." It's like comfort food for the tummy. And HH is now offering this dish as Butter Chicken Tacos ... tender grilled chicken laid on fresh Naan bread, covered with the butter chicken curry, pickled onions, and finished with fresh cilantro. It's light and oh-so-delicious. One bite and I was hooked. I tried to stop eating this, but it was beyond my self-control. Pair it with a pale ale beer or light white wine, and you've got a hit that you'll be telling your friends about (trust me, I've already told tons of friends). I can easily say that this appetizer has made it to my list of top ten apps I've ever tried.

I asked about the app called Nacho Problem ... a clever play on words ... as well as a play on the standard nacho concept ... with HH's typical twist. Nic just seems to magically know how to pair the right ingredients into the right dish to create hit after tasty hit. The crunchy tortilla chips were covered with HH's own seasoned house cheese sauce, seared, smoked tender Tri Tip strips, pickled red onions, and cilantro. It's the perfect app to share (if you dare) over a good beer and some football on one of the big screens.

When I asked what was next, I heard that chicken strips were on their way. I am not a fan of chicken "strips", since in my mind it brings up the vision of boring strips out of a box



Butter Chicken Tacos

or something. Thankfully, everything that Harrington House serves is scratch made in their own kitchen. When the app came out, I begged them to call it something else ... anything else other than strips. These bad boys were anything but boring ... perfectly dredged in a seasoned flour coating, then fried to perfection and served up with their seasoned house fries and a trio of their own house-made ranch and BBQ sauces for the chicken and their own ketchup for the fries. They just might show up on the menu as chicken bites, the name I think we landed on after several rounds of ideas. Look for them on the menu and then thank me later.

I was already getting full from taste-testing the previous three apps when the last one of the day came out, called Bacon Dip. This one might fool you, because you might want to think of it more along the lines of their version of "grilled cheese and tomato soup." This plate consists of a grilled sandwich with the perfect combination of smoked Gouda, pepper jack, cheddar and American cheeses – and bacon, with a side of masala dipping sauce, enhanced with a little crema and cilantro. I could almost envision a Campbell's soup commercial using this appetizer to warm someone up during the coming winter season.



Bacon Dip



Chicken Bites and Seasoned Fries



Nacho Problem

We never got to the sliders & fries, wings, Tandoori, or Tri Tip tacos, which is fine by me. It gives me plenty of room to explore something new on future visits. With prices for these apps under \$15 and another \$3 off draft beers, house wines, and well spirits, their new Happy Hour is shaping up to offer a serious departure from some fairly boring and overpriced happy hour choices elsewhere.

If you happen to come in one evening while I am chowing down on the Butter Chicken Tacos, grab a barstool next to me and join me. Happy Hour is all about good food with good friends. See you at HH.

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Laser Envy: The Secret to That “How Does Their Skin Look So Good?” Glow

BY APRIL COOPER



HAVE YOU EVER CAUGHT YOURSELF side-eyeing someone’s flawless skin, wondering what kind of sorcery they’re using? Maybe it’s a filter, maybe it’s good genes ... or maybe, just maybe, they’ve discovered the magic of BBL + MOXI. If you’ve never heard of this powerhouse laser duo, it’s time to lean in, because these two treatments are the secret behind some of the most radiant, age-defying complexions out there.

BBL (BroadBand Light) is like an Instagram filter for real life, targeting sun damage, redness, and pigmentation to give you a smoother, more even skin tone. It works by using pulses of light energy to break down unwanted discoloration while stimulating fresh, new skin cell growth. Think of it as a skin refresh button that erases years of UV sins and leaves you glowing.

MOXI, on the other hand, is BBL’s cool younger sibling, designed to refine texture, soften fine lines, and boost collagen production. It’s a gentle, non-ablative laser, meaning it works beneath the surface to improve skin without any scary downtime. If you want to hit pause on aging and keep your skin looking youthful for years to come, MOXI is the treatment you didn’t know you needed.

What makes this combo so next-level is that BBL + MOXI don’t just fix one problem—they work together to brighten, smooth, and tighten all at once. And the best part? No major downtime. You might be a little pink afterward (hello, post-facial glow), but you can still go about your day while your skin works behind the scenes to reveal a more radiant, youthful version of itself.

So, if you’ve ever had a case of “laser envy” after seeing someone with impossibly good skin, the secret is out. BBL + MOXI is the glow-up you’ve been waiting for.

Why admire flawless skin from afar when you can have it? BBL + MOXI is the ultimate skin-refreshing duo, and at Skinsation Medical Aesthetics, we’re here to make sure your glow is nothing short of show-stopping. Say goodbye to sun damage, uneven texture, and fine lines—your skin’s best days are just an appointment away. Let’s get you glowing—call us today to book your consultation!

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For CXO Monique Rogers, giving back isn’t just a business value—it’s personal. “Technology is what we do, but people are who we serve,” she says. That’s why ARRC commits not only to protecting businesses across Kern County and beyond, but also to uplifting the community it calls home.

Whether it’s delivering top-tier cybersecurity or helping a family grow, ARRC believes the best solutions are always rooted in compassion.



Dr. Monique Rogers, Co-Founder and Chief Experience Officer, with Ashley, Mike, and little Collins, of Amelia Molloy’s Angels



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Fall is a Time for Fun in Highgate at Seven Oaks

BY ERIN HENDERSON

Kids are already back in school, the leaves are getting ready to change color (at least in some parts of the country!), and soon there will be a welcome nip in the air. All that of course means it's time again for the Highgate at Seven Oaks annual Fall Festival. Residents from all four of the Highgate communities kicked off the season by mingling with neighbors and enjoying an afternoon of autumn foods, activities, and more in the big central park adjacent to the Highgate Swim & Fitness Clubhouse. With fun for the whole family the Fall Festival included a petting zoo, pumpkin patch, fall crafts and activities, face painting, bounce houses, and exciting games like toy archery. And no party would be complete without snacks, so residents enjoyed some tasty fall chili, a popcorn station, and other fun treats.

Highgate at Seven Oaks hosts lots of events throughout the year that you won't want to miss. And you won't want to miss all the great social and recreational amenities that Highgate at Seven Oaks provides residents; like the resort-style swimming pools at the Highgate Swim & Fitness Clubhouse and the Parkshire Pool & Pavilion, the landscaped parks, children's playgrounds, Highgate Dog Park, community fire pit, pickle ball courts, basketball courts, walking paths...the list is pretty long! Now is the time to visit all four of these unique gated communities and start planning your move to Highgate at Seven Oaks. Visit a sales center or call 661-664-6039 today to learn more.



Breast Cancer Awareness: Early Detection, Treatable, and Curable.

A breast cancer diagnosis can stop you in your tracks. It can feel overwhelming to know where to begin, but learning about your diagnosis and treatment options can bring a greater feeling of control during such an uncertain time. Breast cancer is the second most common cancer across the globe, and the number one cancer in women. Dr. Amudhan Pugalenthi, General Surgeon and Surgical Oncologist with Dignity Health Medical Group—Bakersfield says despite those concerning numbers, research and resulting advancements in treatment have made the disease highly treatable.

"Many women believe that if they get diagnosed with breast cancer it means they are going to die, and that is usually not the case. Breast cancer is highly treatable and curable, if caught early."

Women are often their own strongest allies in the fight against breast cancer. After receiving a breast cancer diagnosis, it's crucial to take proactive steps to understand your situation and begin treatment. Cancer treatment typically falls into three categories: surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. Many times a combination of breast cancer therapies is used to stall the growth of the cancer and stop it from coming back.

"Surgery can be the right option for early stage operable breast cancer and can often offer a cure. However, for other patients we might wait and perform surgery after they have been treated with chemotherapy or radiation in an effort to shrink the tumor."

While most women with breast cancer



have surgery as part of their treatment plan the type of surgery depends on the situation. The most common surgery for breast cancer is breast-conserving surgery, also known as a lumpectomy or partial mastectomy. This procedure involves removing the cancerous tumor and a small area of surrounding tissue, leaving the majority of the breast intact.

"Breast cancer surgery is a very safe procedure. Most patients are able to go home the same day and recover well. The majority of patients are fully recovered after a week."

After breast cancer treatment, Dr. Pugalenthi recommends that patients attend regular check-ups and stay connected with support systems. Patients are also encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyle changes that can potentially reduce the risk of recurrence. For people without cancer, these changes can also help decrease the risk.

"While nothing can eliminate the risk of cancer entirely, many lifestyle factors can help decrease the risk of breast cancer. Limiting things like alcohol consumption and smoking, as well as maintaining a healthy weight are a few

things that women can help control."

Women can also take charge of their health by getting annual check-ups and preventative screenings. Mammograms can detect a tumor before it's big enough to feel or cause symptoms. Early-stage breast cancer can often be treated with less invasive options and can be easier to cure. Most common guidelines recommend that women have a mammogram every year beginning at age 40 and continue as long as they remain in good health.

"Early detection is key. When it comes to cancer, prevention is always the best option. We can cure breast cancer if it's caught early."

Take Charge of Your Health.

Talk to your doctor about scheduling a mammogram and following preventive breast care to prioritize your health.

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The Alzheimer's Battle Kern County Can't Afford to Lose

BY TAMARA BAKER, PHOTOS COURTESY OF ADAKC

Alzheimer's disease is often seen as a deeply personal diagnosis—something that happens to someone else or to someone else's family. But in Kern County, the numbers tell a broader and more urgent story. Alzheimer's isn't just a personal crisis. It's a community crisis. And it's growing.

According to the 2025 Dignity Health Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), *Alzheimer's disease is now one of the top five leading causes of death in Kern County*—ranking higher here than in most other California counties. Kern's Alzheimer's death rate is nearly double the national average and significantly higher than the state's.

Behind every statistic is a person: a mother who no longer remembers her daughter's name. A husband struggling to care for the love of his life. A daughter navigating medical systems, medications, and sleepless nights. As the Baby Boomer generation ages, their children—Millennials and Gen Xers—are stepping into caregiving roles with little warning and even less support.

While Alzheimer's directly affects those living with memory loss, its reach extends far beyond the individual. For every one person diagnosed, there's an entire network of people whose lives are changed: spouses, children, neighbors, coworkers, church friends. In Kern County, nearly 12,000 residents aged 65 and older live with Alzheimer's—a number expected to double by 2060. That means twice as many families navigating caregiving challenges, strained relationships, and a healthcare system already stretched thin.

The effects go beyond homes and hospitals. Alzheimer's impacts our economy, workforce, and public services. Caregivers often cut back work hours or leave jobs entirely. Local businesses feel the loss when employees are overwhelmed or burned

out. Hospitals and emergency rooms see more dementia-related visits, while public assistance programs absorb rising costs as families turn to Medi-Cal, Medicare, or disability services for help.

Even if you're not a caregiver now—even if no one in your life has Alzheimer's—this crisis will affect our community. The question is not if, but when.

For caregivers, the journey is long, emotionally draining, and isolating. Many are middle-aged adults—working full-time, raising children, and caring for aging parents. Depression, anxiety, and health issues are common, and without support, burnout comes quickly.

That's where the Alzheimer's Disease Association of Kern County, Inc. (ADAKC) comes in. As the only community-based nonprofit in Kern focused solely on dementia care, ADAKC is more than a program—it's a lifeline. You don't have to be enrolled in our adult day program to receive help. We offer resources, guidance, and compassion



Celebrating "Senior Prom" with their clients



Amazing what a little "goat love" will do

to any Kern County resident affected by Alzheimer's—whether living with the disease or caring for someone who is.

Every week, our phones ring with calls from people desperate for help. Some need advice on managing difficult behaviors like aggression. Others are at the end of their rope—burned out, exhausted, and unsure they can go on. We even receive calls from caregivers who say the stress has pushed them to thoughts of ending their own life—25 to 30 such calls each month. When someone reaches this level of despair, it's hard to recover. Our mission is to step in long before that point—to offer resources, relief, and hope to keep families going.

One of the most powerful ways we help is through respite care in our adult day program—giving caregivers a much-needed break while ensuring their loved one is safe, engaged, and cared for. Respite can mean the difference between a caregiver holding on or reaching a breaking point. But because ADAKC (and all adult day programs) are considered social models, not medical care, our services are not covered by insurance—only Long Term Care policies and Veterans Benefits.

We charge \$20 per hour—affordable compared to many care options—but it adds up quickly, especially for families in lower income brackets. We work hard to keep rates low through grants and fundraising, but every

DEMENTIA 101

Dementia is not a specific disease, but a group of symptoms that affect the brain. Think of it as an umbrella term. There are various forms of dementia.

- Alzheimer's
- Vascular
- Dementia Due to
- Parkinson's
- Lewy Bodies
- Frontotemporal
- Mixed Dementia

How Dementia Develops in the Brain
Dementia is when plaques block cell communication and tangles disrupt the nutrient flow. Think of your brain like a city where the power lines are cut, the roads are blocked, and buildings fall apart—communication breaks down, and systems fail. That's what happens in the brain over time.



Cognitive therapy



Dance therapy



Bee and Beverly gardening

dollar matters. Donations help ease the financial burden for local families, allowing us to provide sponsored hours of care so caregivers can rest without worrying about cost. Every contribution directly translates into hours of relief for a caregiver and quality care for someone living with dementia.

For over 40 years, ADAKC has served thousands of families with an adult day program that provides safe, enriching activities for those with dementia; support groups and counseling that give caregivers understanding and encouragement; and community education that helps families and professionals better

CONTINUED ►



Caring for the Caregiver resources

navigate dementia with compassion. Our work is built on kindness, dignity, and a deep understanding of the challenges Alzheimer's brings—not only to the person diagnosed but to the entire circle of people who love them.

The time to act is now.

If we do nothing, numbers will rise, the burden will grow, and more families will face crisis without help. But if we come together—as a community, as neighbors, as people who care—we can change the story. We can ensure families aren't left to navigate dementia alone. We can support caregivers before burnout. We can provide safe, dignified spaces for those living with memory loss. And we can prepare for what's ahead.

Even if Alzheimer's hasn't touched your family yet, chances are it will. And even if it doesn't, you'll still feel the effects—in healthcare costs, workforce challenges, and increased demand for public services. *Alzheimer's is not just a medical issue—it's a community issue. And it will take all of us to meet it with compassion, resources, and action.*

Alzheimer's may take memories—but it cannot take our humanity, our compassion, or our ability to stand together. Let's make sure that as this disease grows, so does our commitment to those it affects.

Let Kern County be a place where no one walks the dementia journey alone.



More goat therapy

“Our mission is to step in long before that point—to offer resources, relief, and hope to keep families going.”



Exercise time

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Beth Hoffmann & Mary Vasinda, two icons of healthcare



David Perkins and Mary Vasinda, standing by a poster-size cover of Greet magazine, featuring Mary's story

Honoring Milestones in Care

BY DAVID PERKINS

Greet magazine was thrilled to be on hand recently when two Bakersfield icons in healthcare recently came together to celebrate remarkable milestones. Hoffmann Hospice, founded by Beth Hoffmann and now celebrating 30 years of service, joined in honoring Around the Clock's 40 years of trusted in-home healthcare, led by founder Mary Vasinda.

To mark the occasion, the Hoffmann Hospice team brought lunch and a celebratory cake to the staff at Around the Clock, sharing stories of inspiration, plenty of laughter, and a great deal of appreciation.

Both Beth and Mary reflected on their journeys as women entrepreneurs in healthcare – building organizations rooted in compassion, perseverance, and a deep commitment to families during life's most meaningful moments.

Though their missions may differ – Around the Clock offering in-home care and Hoffmann Hospice providing end-of-life support – together they represent 70 years of dedication to the Bakersfield community. Their shared celebration highlights not just business milestones but the power of compassion and leadership in shaping care for generations.

Congratulations to you both!



The beautiful recognition given to Mary Vasinda by Beth Hoffmann

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Two Seasons. One Store. Endless Inspiration.

Save big on premium outdoor living, then step into a holiday wonderland — all under one roof.

BY DAVID PERKINS, PHOTOGRAPHY BY APRIL MCGILL PHOTOGRAPHER



For most of the year, Patio Spaces is Bakersfield's go-to destination for creating beautiful, comfortable outdoor living spaces. Their showroom on White Lane is filled with some of the finest collections of premium outdoor furniture you'll find anywhere – dining sets, lounge pieces, fire pits, custom cushions, and more – all crafted to last and designed to make your backyard feel like a resort.

But right about the time you are reading this story, things start to change in the store. Patio Spaces

begins its much-anticipated annual transition into Santa's Christmas Shoppe. This is when prices on their outdoor decor are reduced to sell quickly. It's the ideal time to grab those high-quality pieces you've been eyeing before they disappear. Savvy shoppers know the best selection goes fast during this window.

And then, almost overnight, the store transforms into a Christmas wonderland. Imagine rows of beautifully decorated trees ready to take home as-is, aisles filled with ornaments, garlands, and festive décor of every style. Everything to get you into the Christmas spirit now.

But wait ... there's more. Bunny and her team don't stop at the showroom either – they'll bring the magic to your home, office, or business with professional decorating services that make the holidays effortless. For that matter, ask about their fully decorated "rental Christmas trees" ... perfect for that holiday party at home, or for the entire season at your business.

Whether you're looking for a great deal on outdoor living or diving headfirst into the holiday spirit, Patio Spaces/Santa's Christmas Shoppe is the place where everything comes perfectly together.

Stop by soon—the best treasures never last long.

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Stockdale travel group walking in Edinburgh, courtesy of Sarah Bell Frank



Big Ben in London



Stockdale travel group during Jack the Ripper tour in London, courtesy of Sarah Bell Frank



The London Eye

LEARNING BEYOND BORDERS

What happens when 22 students and a teacher explore medicine, culture, and history in the UK? Memories for a lifetime.

BY MAILYN VIANZON



Stockdale travel group on the flight to Edinburgh, courtesy of Sarah Bell Frank



Stockdale students working on a case, courtesy of Sarah Bell Frank



Mailyn and her friend, before leaving Bakersfield



A statue of a plague doctor at Mary King's Close in Edinburgh, courtesy of Sarah Bell Frank



Watching Wicked, The Musical

Most summers pass by in a blur, and it can be easy to forget the days spent under the sun, but this summer was an exception. From July 14 to July 22, I traveled to Edinburgh and London with some of my schoolmates, with the purpose of learning about English and Scottish medical culture and history.

Once we arrived in Edinburgh, the day was spent roaming around the city, adjusting to our surroundings, and getting ready to explore the deep and narrow street network of Mary King's Close. These streets were known for their cramped living conditions, where illness rapidly spread during the Great Plague of 1645. This was our introduction to the city's medical heritage. Did you know that Edinburgh has a history of grave-robbing? Snatchers would sell them to anatomy schools, which was crucial in advancing medical knowledge.

Our last day in Edinburgh was spent in the treasure troves of history. We paid a visit to the National Museum of Scotland, home to an immersive collection of art, history, and science. In one of the exhibits, you can find a display of the first cloned sheep, named Dolly. We walked to the Surgeons' Hall Museums, where anatomical artifacts were displayed along the walls. Dental tools from the 1600s were crafted from wood, if you can believe it.

After a short train ride to London, we set off on a long walk around the capital, passing by Buckingham Palace and Big Ben before crossing over the River Thames and riding on the London Eye. Once in the capsules, you're provided with a wonderful 360 view of England;

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A view of London from the London Eye



Stockdale travel group at Mary King's Close in Edinburgh, courtesy of Sarah Bell Frank



Airport group photo

you can even have lunch and take some lovely photos too. Did you know that the London Eye was meant to stay up for only five years before becoming a permanent attraction? Its popularity with tourists granted it permanent residence in 2002.

The next morning commenced with a forensics workshop where we learned skills specific to criminal investigation, like fingerprint analysis and crime scene assessment. Some of us even acted out the interrogations of the suspects. After wrapping up our investigation, we strolled over to the Florence Nightingale Museum, dedicated to the famous nurse known for her compassionate care of patients during the 1850s Crimean War. The night ended with an enjoyable theatre performance of Wicked The Musical.

Our guided tour continued around the Royal London Hospital and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry, known as Barts. Plants and herbs were researched for medicinal use, commonly stored in apothecaries, before modern medicine was discovered. Some of these apothecaries carried plants like chamomile, sage, garlic, and willow. If you look closely, what appears to be a normal fenced-in garden was in fact a garden showcasing the history of London's medicinal plants.

The 9-day adventure in Europe would not have been possible without my teacher, Sarah Bell Frank, our chaperones, and our EF tour guide. It's safe to say it was the best school trip that the 22 of us had experienced. Getting to travel to distant countries and learning about them as a ninth-grade student was one for the books and will stay with me forever.

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Iconic rainbow tunnel

Twinkle by the Sea

Holiday lights and coastal nights come together for a festive experience you'll never forget.

BY DAVID PERKINS, PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAMBRIA CHRISTMAS MARKET AND BRITTANY APP PHOTOGRAPHY

I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH during one December several years ago to cruise the Danube River and visit several European countries, including the many Christmas Markets along the way. I remember the smell, the flavors, the ambiance. It was magical. I've longed to go back ever since.

Thankfully, there is a bit of that magic nearby in the seaside village of Cambria. Most of us know this town well. Enjoying the smell of the ocean while walking along the wooden walkway on Moonstone Beach, enjoying food and drinks with friends and family at the Sea Chest, wandering through your favorite shops along Main Street in town, while stopping to sip some coffee, sample wines at Moonstone Cellars, or trying craft beer at The Coastal Tap Room. When it's time for a bite to eat, Robin's on Burton Drive or Linn's on Main Street will satisfy pretty much anyone in your party. On my last trip, I lingered over a bowl of creamy clam chowder at Linn's, paired with a glass of local Chardonnay. I had to leave room

for "something Olallieberry" – Linn's signature dessert fruit.

Cambria is charming year-round, but if you haven't visited during the holidays, maybe it's time to discover the magic that happens every year in late November – December. Those same shops in the historic East and West Villages overflow with twinkling lights, greenery, and holiday displays that invite you to slow down and linger just a little longer. The boutiques here aren't the cookie-cutter variety — they're brimming with one-of-a-kind finds,



Fireside Lounge at Cambria Pines Lodge courtesy of Brittany App Photography

artisan creations, and seasonal décor that would make even the Grinch want to redecorate.

Each night, beginning on November 28th, as the sun dips below the ocean's horizon the excitement of the holidays can be found at Cambria Pines Lodge for their enchanted Cambria Christmas Market. Imagine more than three million holiday lights draped through the gardens and walkways, forming tunnels of color, glowing archways, and whimsical displays that are pure joy to wander through — with plenty of photo ops to show off to your friends.

The market itself is inspired by the traditional Christmas markets of Germany — rows of boutique booths offering everything from handcrafted ornaments and home décor to gourmet treats and unique holiday gifts. You can shop with a cup of hot cocoa in hand, or perhaps a mug of mulled wine, and snack on seasonal bites that feel like they've been plucked straight from a storybook. There's live music in the beer garden, performers scattered throughout the evening, and Santa making his rounds for photos and wish lists. If you're traveling with kids (or just a kid at heart), the train ride through the light displays is a must.

One of my favorite parts of the experience is that it doesn't end at the lodge. The festivities extend next door to their sister property, Cambria Nursery, which transforms into a winter wonderland all its own. Their Christmas Shoppe could easily keep you busy for hours — aisle after aisle of ornaments, décor, and gifts, all surrounded by gardens strung with lights.

Built nearly 100 years ago, Cambria Pines Lodge is a cozy, tranquil, and relaxing boutique hotel nestled in the



Authentic German goods courtesy of Brittany App Photography



Thousands of lights



Market shopping courtesy of Brittany App Photography



Biergarten courtesy of Brittany App Photography

hills just above the village surrounded by a magical landscape of gardens and Monterey Pines. They offer a wide variety of accommodations that include private cottages or family and pet friendly options that are perfect for family reunions, nicely appointed with cozy fireplaces, farmhouse style furnishings, free Wi-Fi, sleep worthy mattresses and flat-screen televisions. Options abound on their website cambriapineslodge.com.

Staying at Cambria Pines Lodge for this event is the ultimate way to do it. After all, the holiday season is supposed to be joyful — not stressful. Guests who book the Lodge's Christmas Market package get guaranteed onsite parking (a serious perk, since general parking is off-site, in the Village, with long lines for shuttles), along with breakfast in their Cambria Pines Lodge Restaurant. After an evening wandering the grounds, you might want to slip into the inviting Fireside Lounge for a hot toddy and some nightly entertainment.

The best part of staying at the Lodge is your room is just a short, easy walk across the property to the Market and the Lights. You can wander as long as you like without glancing at your watch, knowing your bed and a flickering fireplace is just steps away.

And it's not just the convenience — the lodge itself feels like part of the



The Linn's of Cambria booths at the Market

experience. Rooms are warm and inviting, the lobby is decorated for the season, and there's a sense of being tucked away in a peaceful retreat, even with all the festivities nearby. For those who prefer a quieter pace, the Lodge also offers "Lights at Cambria Pines" nights on select dates in December (Dec. 1-2, 8-9, & 24-25), where you can enjoy the illuminated displays without the market bustle (no vendors, train, Santa, music, or food on these nights) — perfect for photographers, couples, or families with little ones.

Whether you spend the day wandering Cambria's charming boutiques, sampling local wines, or strolling along the Moonstone Beach Boardwalk, ending the night under millions of twinkling lights is an experience that's hard to match. Cambria in December is everything you want the holidays to be — joyful, cozy, and just a little bit magical.

If you go, do yourself a favor: stay at the Lodge, slow down, and let the season wrap around you like cozying up on the couch with a warm blanket while watching holiday movies.

Explore the details, then book your visit and your stay now. Tickets and rooms sell out fast!

cambriachristmasmarket.com
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Cambria Pines Lodge Hotel room courtesy of Brittany App Photography



Santa



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12 NOON – 7:00PM
BELCOURT VILLAGE, BUENA VISTA & WHITE LANE

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

12pm – 7pm

- Pumpkin Patch with Cherry Acres
- Kids Craft Station sponsored by Flower Bar
- Photo Booth with The Photo Booth Corner sponsored by Pilates Barre
- Family Friendly Games – Pumpkin Toss, Cornhole, Jenga, Connect 4

- Raffle prizes awarded throughout the day from Apricot Lane, 19th Hole Bar & Grill, Sonder, Toastique, Drybar, & Radiant Waxing
- \$10 braids available at Drybar

12pm – 3pm

- LIVE BAND – “Happy Five Little German Band”
- Happy Twistings balloon twister sponsored by Toastique
- Face Painter sponsored by Sonder
- Artisan Vendors: Penny Gems | Linx & Co. | Mommy Made by Maria
- Other Pop-ups: Radiant Waxing | Toastique | Woodbridge Pacific

Group | Greet Seven Oaks & LINQride | Hard Rock Casino Tejon

3pm

\$500 Disneyland Gift Card Giveaway from LINQride Executive Car Service

3pm – 4pm

Floral Arrangement Workshop with Flower Bar

4pm – 7pm

LIVE BAND – “Last Call”

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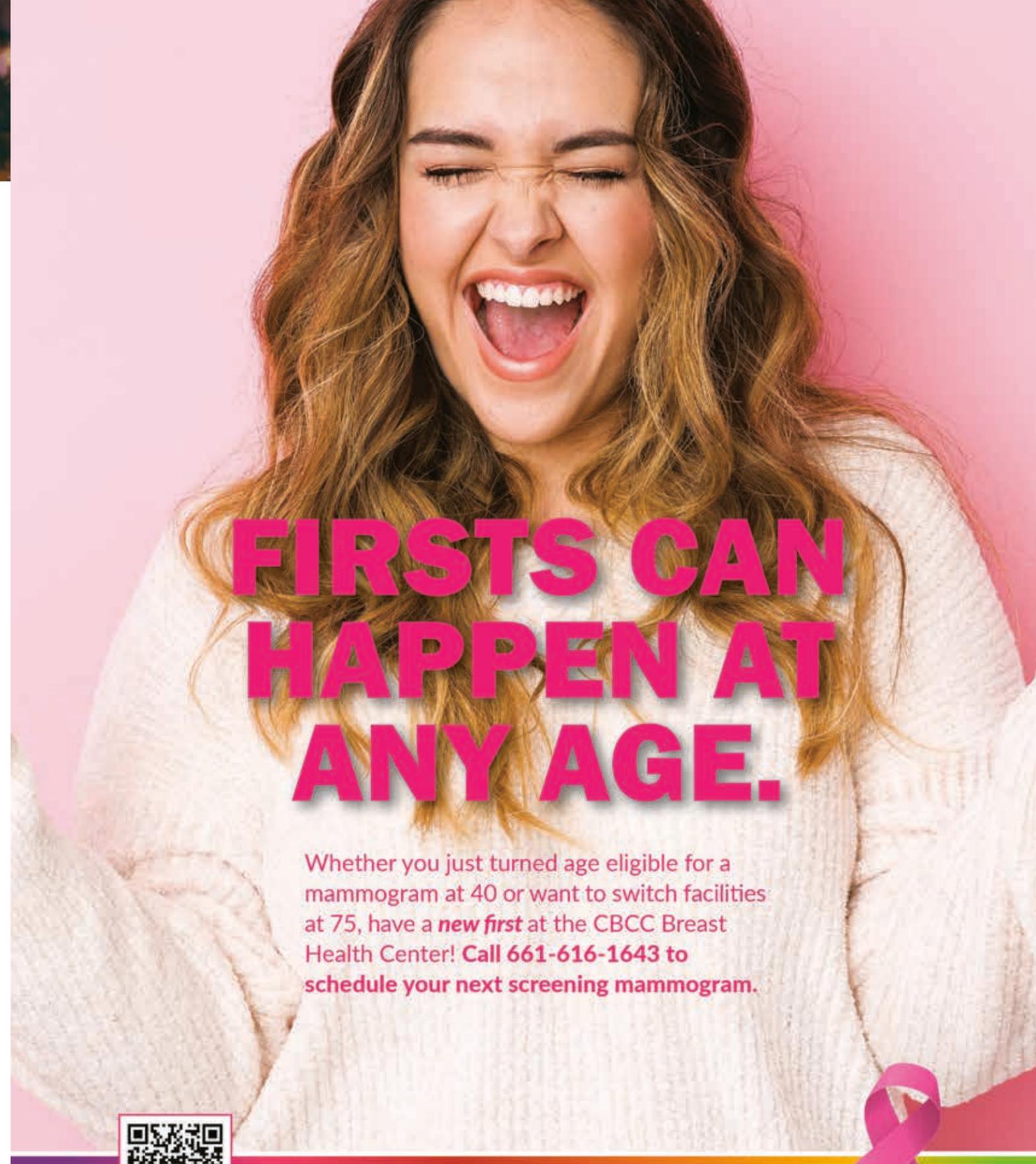
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Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Tidings & Tastings: Holiday Cheer for a Cause

Your neighbor, Priya Saha – owner of Little Guide Bakersfield – is teaming up with Bakersfield ARC to present **Tidings & Tastings**, a festive holiday food, drink, and shopping experience you won't want to miss.

For more than 70 years, Bakersfield ARC has provided job training, employment, and support services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Their mission is to promote independence, well-being, and a true sense of belonging in our community.

Recently, the organization purchased a 23-acre property along the Kern River, which now hosts events like weddings, reunions, corporate gatherings, and fundraisers such as Tidings & Tastings. Even better, their own clients are hired to help clean and maintain the space—a win-win that directly supports their mission. So, grab your friends, family, or even your spouse and kids, and come celebrate the season while supporting a great cause!

- Live Music, line dancing lessons, and a photo booth!
- Delicious food from Charcuterie by M, Centro Cali Brewing, Harris BBQ, My Happy Baker, Aunt Mae's, Grace & Grain Bakery, Sweet Fix Creamery & more!
- Coffee & Hot chocolate from 502 Café, wine, beer, and spirits from Rooster's Cantina, Centro Cali Brewing, Howie's Micheladas & more!
- Gifts, jewelry, floral, and clothing from I Love Shop, Penny's Gems, Jamz Creation, Great Heritage, Dearly Beloved, Scentsy, Santa's Christmas Shoppe, Patio Spaces & More!
- Oh... and cigars by Habana Cabana Events!



Tracy & Priya invite the guys to check out the saloon



And authentic saloon ... to keep the guys happy



The beautiful grounds of Riverfront Manor



Scan here for tickets

Saturday, November 15, 2025;
11am – 3pm
Riverfront Manor, 10421 Round Mountain Rd, Bakersfield CA 93308

- Tickets are just:
- Adults (13 and up): \$20 per person
 - Adult EARLYBIRD tickets: \$15 per person, available now through Oct. 20th
 - Children (12 and under): \$5 per person

Proceeds from the event will help support the mission of Bakersfield ARC. Scan the QR Code to find out more and grab your tickets today!

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SAVE THE DATE

Got the Dot Leadership Program



Grillin' & Brewin'



Bourbon sampling



Great BBQ



Joe Peters

Dust off those cowboy boots and get ready—JJ's Legacy's 10th Annual Grillin' & Brewin' is here! This unforgettable evening brings together mouthwatering competition BBQ from Curtis Triguero & Ridge Route Boys, all the fixins', dessert, and live entertainment from country music star Joe Peters and his band.

But beyond the fun, your attendance fuels a mission with heart. JJ's Legacy has long been a beacon of hope, educating and inspiring our community about the life-saving impact of organ, eye, and tissue donation. Through your support, the Got the Dot Leadership Club empowers high school students to champion donor awareness, touching

countless lives of donor families and recipients alike.

This year, 26 remarkable GTD Fellows are carrying that mission forward—leading awareness campaigns, hosting the 5th Annual GTD Walk-A-Thon at CSU Bakersfield, and sharing the importance of donation across our community. At year's end, their dedication is honored through scholarships that open doors to their futures—made possible by generous supporters like you.

Join us for an evening of food, music, and community that celebrates life, honors donors, and invests in tomorrow's leaders. Together, we can make an impact that truly lasts.

Saturday, November 8th @ 5:00 PM
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SAVE THE DATE



Attendees stretch before the 2024 Kern County Heart and Stroke Walk.



Siren, the Saint Bernard, and Ticker, the American Heart Association mascot, pose together during last year's event.



Steve Matejka, a member of the local American Heart Association board, smiles during the 2024 Kern County Heart and Stroke Walk.



Bakersfield pageant title holders pose for a photo during the 2024 Kern County Heart and Stroke Walk.

KERN COUNTY HEART AND STROKE WALK

Join the American Heart Association for the 2025 Kern County Heart and Stroke Walk.

It's more than just a walk. It's a celebration of life, community and the power of coming together to make a difference.

Expect a morning filled with energy, connection and purpose. Bring the whole family – well-behaved dogs are welcome, too! The Kern County Heart and Stroke Walk is a chance to have fun, get active and support your Bakersfield community.

I walk to save lives and so can you!

Whether you're signing up solo or bringing a team of friends, family or coworkers, register today and be part of something meaningful. Every step you take and dollar you raise helps the American Heart Association fund scientific research, improve hospital care and teach more people the lifesaving skill of CPR. Together, we're fighting back against heart disease and stroke, the #1 and #5 causes of death in the nation.

Saturday, Oct. 11

8:00 a.m. - event opens

9:00 a.m. - walk begins

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VETERANS THRIVE WORKSHOP SERIES

Your neighbor, Edward Robinson, Founder, President, & CEO of **Kern County Veterans Chamber of Commerce** is partnering with **Kern Family Health Systems** to offer a series of workshops to help veterans thrive on so many levels.

Why Veterans Thrive?

Transitioning from military service into civilian life can be overwhelming. From financial challenges to legal issues, employment barriers to mental health struggles — veterans often face hurdles that can hold them back from fully thriving. That's why they've created the Veterans Thrive Workshop Series: practical, high-impact sessions that give Kern County veterans the tools, connections, and confidence to succeed in every area of life. Each 90-minute in-person session delivers expert insight, community connections, and real-world strategies — all free for veterans and their families.

Who Should Attend?

- Veterans from every branch of service, regardless of age or discharge date
- Military spouses & family members supporting their veteran's journey

- Community leaders and employers who want to connect with veteran talent
- Anyone passionate about empowering our veteran community
- All workshops are free and open to Kern County veterans. Light refreshments provided.

Workshop Schedule

October 22 | 5:00–6:30 PM

Veterans Legal Literacy: Protecting Yourself & Your Business

Knowledge is power, especially in the legal arena. Judge Keenan Perkins & David Zulfa will break down the essentials every veteran should know about legal rights, contracts, business protections, and navigating common challenges. This isn't theory — it's the insider knowledge veterans need to safeguard their families and futures.

November 12 | 5:00–6:30 PM

Workforce Development: Career Pathways for Veterans

The skills you learned in uniform are in demand — but translating them into civilian careers takes strategy. The Bakersfield Launchpad (NaTasha Johnson) will share resources, training,



and real-world advice on how to build a career or launch a new path. Veterans will learn how to leverage their strengths, stand out to employers, and connect with opportunities right here in Kern County.

December 10 | 5:00–6:30 PM

Health & Wellness: Thriving Beyond Service

Service doesn't end when the uniform comes off — but neither should self-care. Led by Centric Health & Psychiatric Wellness, this session focuses on practical ways to prioritize mental health, manage stress, and strengthen overall wellness. From emotional resilience to physical health, veterans will walk away with tools to not just survive but thrive.

Location: Kern Family Health Systems; 2900 Buck Owens Blvd, Bakersfield CA 93308

Cost: Free | Open to All Veterans in Kern County

Light refreshments will be served.

How can you register?

Find our more info and register for these workshops at www.kcvcc.org



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SAVE THE DATE



The Pink Event in Wonderland

Don't Be Late ... for a Very Important Date!

NOT KNOWING IS NOT THE ANSWER

When it comes to breast cancer, early detection saves lives. Yet too often, the fear of finding something keeps women from getting screened. The truth is, not knowing is not the answer. The American Cancer Society reports that survival rates continue to improve thanks to early detection and treatment. This October, during National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, women are encouraged to keep up with monthly self-exams and yearly mammograms starting at age 40—or earlier if there's a family history or symptoms. Because you are important, and prevention is powerful.

To bring awareness and encouragement to our community, Comprehensive Blood & Cancer Center (CBCC) and Dignity Health invite you

to **The Pink Event in Wonderland**—an evening celebrating womanhood, individuality, and cancer prevention.

**Thursday, October 9; 5:30–8:30 PM
CBCC 6501 Truxtun Ave 93309**

Enjoy whimsical shopping, music, signature cocktails, raffle prizes, and inspiring conversations with experts and survivors. Learn the facts, ask questions, and even schedule your screening mammogram.

This free event is open to all—so gather your girlfriends, wear your best pink, and join us in Wonderland as we come together to #OutsmartCancer.

Reserve your spot today by scanning the QR Code.



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Old friends, new friends...it's how we roll at our events



Oh, the buffet!



I am still dreaming about these burnt ends



Dan is always enthusiastic about our events



Pitmaster Pat loves sharing about the love he pours into Harris BBQ



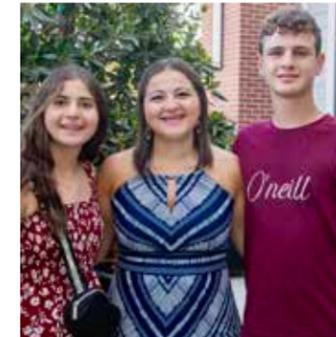
Girls – Gracie, Nayeli, Leticia, Priya, Giselle, Janet, and Myrna – just wanna have fun ... and maybe a little BBQ



Gordy Guillen and Matt Molina



Veronica, Cecilia, and Giselle



Janet Yakoub with her kids, Juliana & Mark



New neighbors, discovering Harris BBQ



The Pelle's take each other on at Ping Pong



Jeff Perkins (right) from Harris Ranch, handling Robert Espinoza his winning crate

Seven Oaks Gets a Taste of Texas at HARRIS BBQ'S NEIGHBORHOOD EVENT

BY DAVID PERKINS, PHOTOGRAPHY BY VALDOPHYE PHOTOGRAPHY

SEVEN OAKS NEIGHBORS CAME HUNGRY and left happy after an unforgettable evening at Harris BBQ, Bakersfield's newest dining destination built on the legendary name of Harris Ranch Beef Company. With nearly a century of ranching history in the valley, Harris BBQ carries forward that same commitment to hospitality and unforgettable food—right here in our very own Shopped at Seven Oaks.

Pitmaster Pat dazzled everyone with his expertise in perfectly smoked meats, setting the tone with hand-passed trays of burnt end appetizers, so tender they practically melted on the tongue, whetting appetites for the feast ahead. Guests piled their plates high with Texas-style smoked tri-tip, juicy pulled pork, fall-off-the-bone ribs, and brisket that carried the perfect balance of smoke and spice. The sides were every bit as

indulgent—Pat's creamy mac & cheese, tangy slaw, and other house-made favorites that paired perfectly with the meats. Well over 100 of your neighbors braved the heat, filling up both the indoor dining area and the expansive patio, where cornhole, ping pong, "hatchet" throwing, and even a putting green kept the energy lively. Ice-cold Harris Pale Ale, Double

Pale Ale, and bottles of Harris wine helped everyone cool down in the summer heat.

The night wrapped with giveaways of Harris gift crates (ain't no simple gift baskets here) packed with sauces, rubs, and treats. The crowd cheered as a very excited Nayeli Lyons won the grand prize—a \$250 gift card—earning instant popularity among her well-fed neighbors.



The team from Hardt Construction Services was there to enjoy the evening



Ready for Cornhole Masters



Pat, Robert, Randy, Bunny, and Jeff



Ping pong!



Our neighborhood events ... where friends embrace friends



Fiona Hamilton, Sandy & Dave Muth



Hamid Khosravi, Emily Massoumi, DDS, with Susie, Stacie, and Ericka from Around the Clock



Great friends always know where to gather...at our neighborhood events



Testing out the great smoked meats



Laurie & Dan Bowden



Jeff, Nayeli - winner of the \$250 Harris BBQ gift card - with David & Matt



All smiles that she made it to our event for the first time



Libations anyone?



Someone was getting into the "hatchet" throwing



A very nice greeting for our neighborhood by Harris BBQ

For those of you who missed out on this event, drop by and check their menu out for yourselves. They are open for both lunch and dinner, with family-style dinners available so that you don't have to labor over your own smoker for hours. Oh ... and they cater parties and events as well.

So, what are you waiting for? Visit them at the corner of Buena Vista and Bolthouse Drive. You can thank me later.

Still missing out on our neighborhood events? Want to join us? Just send us an email and we'll add your name to our email list for event notifications! David.perkins@n2co.com

Radiant Waxing Arrives in Belcourt Village, Redefining Self-Care in Bakersfield

BY ERIN TENTER

Later this year, Belcourt Village, Southwest Bakersfield's curated retail enclave, will welcome a new addition: Radiant Waxing, a full-service salon devoted to one simple mission: helping people feel confident in their own skin. But the salon, locally owned by Pritesh and Mira Patel, represents something beyond hair removal. It's a study in how small businesses shape community, culture, and the very way a city sees itself.

Part of the WellBiz Brands family, which also includes Drybar, Radiant Waxing offers a comprehensive menu of waxing services for all genders, along with specialty brow and lash treatments, set to arrive in early 2026. Its interiors are sleek but approachable: clean lines, soft lighting, and a modern boutique aesthetic that signals both comfort and professionalism. The space, the Patels say, is a "come as you are" environment, an antidote to the judgment many associate with personal grooming.

"Just like the moon, we all go through phases," said Mira Patel, explaining the salon's ethos.

"Hair is natural; there's no reason to hide from being human. We're here to celebrate every phase you're in." That philosophy informs everything from the



Your neighbors, the Patel family



salon's design to the way staff interact with clients, emphasizing body positivity, self-expression, and personal care.

Radiant Waxing will employ

speed-waxing techniques designed to combine precision with comfort, offering services from full-body waxing to brow lamination, brow tinting, and lash lifts. Each appointment is intended to be personalized, creating a boutique experience in which the ritual of grooming becomes one of empowerment rather than obligation.

For the Patels, opening the salon in Belcourt Village was both strategic and personal. The couple previously brought Drybar to the location in early 2024, establishing a reputation for meticulous service and local engagement. Growing up in families that ran small businesses, they saw firsthand how entrepreneurship could cultivate community. "Bakersfield is what you

make it," Mira notes. "If you give back to Bakersfield, it gives back to you."

The choice of Belcourt Village also reflects an ongoing collaboration with Bolthouse Properties, whose commitment to walkable, community-oriented spaces has created a supportive ecosystem for independent businesses. "We wanted a location where people could linger, explore, and feel part of something larger than themselves," the Patels said.

To mark the opening, Radiant Waxing will offer introductory promotions, including 50 percent off unlimited Brazilian or Manzanilian monthly memberships and select buy-one-get-one deals. But beyond promotions, the salon carries a broader ambition: to cultivate confidence, self-care, and a sense of belonging in a city increasingly defined by its independent businesses.

Scan to the QR Code learn more.



VALLEY FEVER IS REAL, and I Learned the Hard Way

BY HUNAR SINGH

Valley Fever is serious, I would know. From the moment the *Coccidioides* fungus takes advantage of the arid Bakersfield weather, the illness can infiltrate the body. Those very fungal spores that rest beneath our feet are the same ones that can quickly turn airborne through activities like farming, construction, digging, or strong winds. When these spores are inhaled, they functionally lodge in the lungs, leading to a range of symptoms.

For some people, they only develop flu-like symptoms like fever, cough, fatigue, and muscle aches. However, in a certain few, like the elderly, infants, or individuals of a certain racial and ethnic backgrounds, the disease can turn into a more severe form that can affect the skin, bones, joints, and even the brain, resulting in long-term complications or death.

California's Central Valley is one of the regions most affected by Valley Fever, mostly due to its dry air, dry climate, immense agricultural activity, and naturally dusty soil. All being ideal conditions for the *Coccidioides* fungus to thrive and spread. According to the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, the number of reported Valley Fever cases has been rising steadily in the region, with thousands of residents diagnosed each year. Despite this, much of the public is unfamiliar with it, and many people are also unfamiliar with the symptoms or dismiss them as seasonal allergies or other respiratory illnesses.

The infection itself is often misdiagnosed, which delays treatment



fade, and the chest pain returned from time to time. Noticing this, my parents scheduled a follow-up checkup. This time, with the help of blood tests, I was able to be rightfully diagnosed. The results came out and showed that I had Valley Fever.

Until then, I hadn't heard much about the disease itself. The doctor told

and increases the risk of complications. I learned this the hard way, with my unfortunate firsthand experience. What began for me as a small chest pain turned into a months-long battle with a disease I had never even heard of, and one that could have had devastating consequences if I had left it untreated.

While going about my day, I felt a sharp, unfamiliar pain in my chest. It wasn't severe enough to raise my immediate concern, so I dismissed it as a muscle strain or a small cramp. That night, however, I found myself unusually restless, and as I woke up the next morning, I found red, hive-like bumps scattered across my legs. They were painful and clearly



abnormal. Rightfully concerned, my parents took me to a doctor. After a quick check-up up the doctor diagnosed the issue as an allergic reaction and prescribed me antihistamines.

Despite taking the medication regularly, the symptoms stayed and even got worse. The bumps did not

me that, unknowingly, I had inhaled the spores, which guaranteed my fate. My initial symptoms included exhaustion, chest pain, and hive-like bumps, which were all consistent with the infection, yet it had initially been mistaken for a far less serious allergic reaction.

Upon being redirected to a hospital, an infectious disease specialist confirmed the diagnosis and emphasized how fortunate I was to have returned for another checkup. Had I waited much longer, the infection could have spread, potentially causing serious or even life-threatening complications.

Treatment involved a lengthy course of antifungal medication. Over the following six months, I was closely monitored, and my condition improved. Slowly, I regained my health, but the mental effects were everlasting.

Sharing my story is not only a reflection of my personal experience but also a call to raise awareness. If you live in or travel through the Central Valley, it is essential to be informed about Valley Fever. Recognizing the risks, understanding the symptoms, and seeking medical attention can make all the difference.

Because this disease is prevalent in Kern County, there are resources available. Learn more by scanning the QR Code.



October Is Breast Cancer Awareness Month Early Detection Saves Lives

At Synchrony Medical Group, we are committed to your health. Breast cancer is most treatable when found early. Regular screenings can make all the difference.

Who should be screened?

- Women ages 40 and older (or earlier if high risk)
- Anyone with a family history of breast or ovarian cancer
- Those with personal health risk factors

Talk with your provider today about the right screening to schedule for you.



Together, we can make a difference.

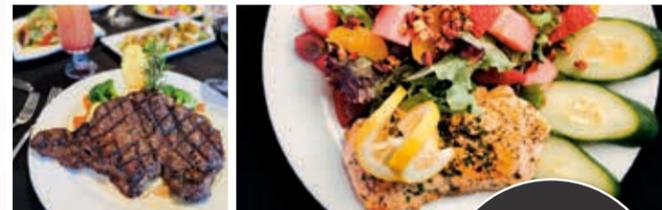
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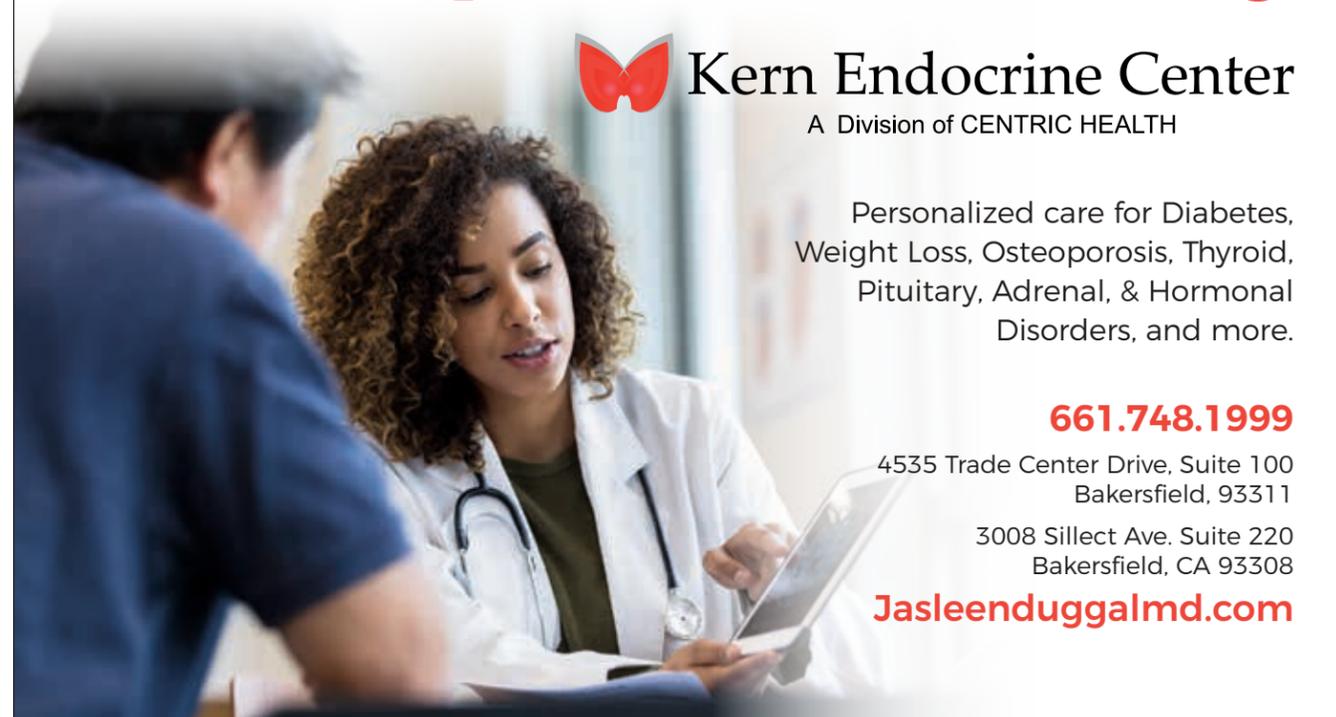
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