

LOCAL / STATE

WORTH NOTING

Local law firm providing grants to Kern County students through education video program

THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN

A local law firm is looking to help students in need of school supplies as the COVID-19 pandemic approaches the one-year mark.

According to a news release from Chain | Cohn | Stiles, the law firm has rolled out a new grant and educational video program open to all Kern County students. The initiative aims to give away 10 educational grants of \$500 each.

Students can apply by going online to chainlaw.com and clicking on the "Chats with Chain | Cohn | Stiles" bar at the top of the website, the news release states. They will then fill out an application and ask the law firm's attorneys a question pertaining to anything in the legal field that the student is curious about.

Over the next 10 months, Chain | Cohn | Stiles will choose some of those questions and students will get to pose them to lawyers on video at Scope Studios in Bakersfield. The news release added that questions and answers will be posted on the Chain | Cohn | Stiles YouTube page.

"We are especially mindful of the challenges students have faced during the pandemic," said Matt Clark, senior partner and personal injury attorney at the law firm. "This is our way of recognizing these challenges, and hopefully providing students with a little help, encouragement, and education."

The news release said that scholarship program questions can be directed to chatwithccs@gmail.com.

Just last year, eight babies were safely surrendered in Kern County.

That's according to the Kern County Department of Human Services, which said the Safely Surrendered Baby Coalition plans an awareness campaign through social media during February to bring attention to the Safely Surrendered Baby Law.

Eighty-four babies have been safely surrendered in Kern County since the coalition began tracking those babies in 2006, a Human Services news release said.

The law is meant to prevent newborn infant deaths due to abandonment in unsafe locations by allowing parents or people with lawful custody of the newborn to safely surrender the infant within 72 hours of birth with no questions asked. In Kern County, a newborn can be safely surrendered into the hands of any hospital emergency room or fire station staff, the news release said.

"The law exists so that these infants will not be harmed because the mother abandons them, or fails to provide them with care, sometimes leaving them to die," the news release said.

First signed into law in January 2001, the Safely Surrendered Baby Law became permanent in January 2006.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY BAKERSFIELD COLLEGE

Registered nursing students from Bakersfield College helped with vaccination efforts at Adventist Health Tehachapi Valley on Sunday.

CASA of Kern County is unveiling a new dedicated child and advocate visiting center called the CASA Clubhouse.

The CASA Clubhouse is meant to support advocates and the children for whom they advocate, according to a CASA news release.

"With this next season of growth, we are committed to reducing the gap in abused and neglected children unrepresented by a CASA volunteer," a CASA news release said.

The Clubhouse will be unveiled during an open house set for 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, March 4 at its location, 1705 Columbus St., next to the CASA office.

The cost to attend is \$50 per person in person, with capacity limits in place to follow social distancing requirements. Virtual attendance is also offered. Those interested are asked to RSVP at kerncasa.org.

CASA of Kern County is a nonprofit that provides a voice to children in foster care through highly trained volunteers that advise judges and others on the child's needs and the best permanent home for the child, the CASA news release said.

In continued collaboration between Bakersfield's higher-education institutions and local healthcare providers, 14 registered nursing students at Bakersfield College helped assist in a vaccine rollout at Adventist Health Tehachapi Valley on Sunday.

According to a news release from the college, 400 vaccines were administered during the drive-thru clinic. Other organizations that helped in the effort were the

Tehachapi Police Department, Kern County Fire Department, Kern County Fire Explorers and Station Springs CERT.

"We are so proud to be doing our part for the community, as Renegades and as a vital part of the healthcare system to assist with this important vaccine rollout," Alisha Loken, BC's Nursing Department chair and professor of nursing, said in the news release.

"Throughout this entire pandemic, I have been impressed with the dedication and heart that each of our student nurses have displayed. They have been so professional and kind, and at the end of each day, our students are still asking what more can they do for this community."

To learn more about how Bakersfield College has helped with the community's COVID-19 response efforts, visit www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/covid19.

Bakersfield College's first President's Virtual Forum of the spring semester will feature a doctor answering questions about the COVID-19 vaccine.

Dr. Michael Saag from the University of Alabama at Birmingham will address his Washington Post article titled "Even With a Vaccine, This Virus will Take Time to Conquer."

It will take place at 3:30 p.m. today. The forum is open to the public. Register online at <https://oconfer.zoom.us/j/8f0k0rQ>. Saag is a physician, educator and prominent HIV/AIDS researcher at the University

of Alabama at Birmingham. BC's professor of public health, Dr. Charles Daramola, will moderate the Q&A session.

Wear a mask, or don't expect a ride.

GET bus drivers will decline to board anyone not wearing a mask that completely covers the mouth and nose, GET said in a news release issued Monday.

It said riders must wear a mask the entire period of travel, and if a passenger refuses, the bus operator can disembark the person at the earliest safe opportunity.

This follows a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention mandate on Jan. 29 requiring anyone riding public transportation or at any bus stop or terminal to wear a mask during the pandemic.

GET went on to say it cleans and disinfects all vehicles daily and between runs. Social distancing on buses is also required.

City of Bakersfield Animal Control will hold a dog vaccine clinic from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday at Jefferson Park, at 801 Bernard St. with safeguards in place due to the pandemic.

You can have your pet vaccinated, licensed and microchipped during the drive-thru clinic.

People are asked to stay in their vehicle, where they will be contacted by staff to fill out forms, receive directions and hear when to return at a designated time for services.

Masks are required. For more information, call 326-3436.

The Kern County Public Works Department will hold a free bulky waste collection event from 8 a.m. to noon Saturday, Feb. 20, in Lamont. It will be held at the David Head Center, 10300 San Diego St.

Bulky waste can include refrigerators, appliances, mattresses and furniture and make up a significant amount of the waste found at illegal dumpsites throughout the county. Public Works puts on the collection events to try to prevent illegal dumping.

Items not accepted at the event include construction waste, demolition and remodeling waste, tires, household trash, green waste, hazardous waste and commercial waste. It is for residential waste only.

Volunteers are reminded to tarp or secure their load before driving.

Can't make it to the event? Public Works says residents in unincorporated metro Bakersfield can call 322-6863 for up to two items per month. Those in the metro Bakersfield area can schedule a curbside bulky waste pickup. Those in city of Bakersfield limits can call 326-3114 for up to two items every three months.

Taking a bike ride on a warm day



ALEX HORWATH / THE CALIFORNIAN

Cyclists enjoy the mild temperatures that reached above 70 degrees on the bike path at The Park at River Walk Monday afternoon.

California governor and unions clash over school reopenings

BY JOCELYN KECCKER

The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO—An effort to reopen California schools is foundering, stoking frustrations across America's most populous state from parents eager to get their children back in classrooms and a governor who wants them there.

Parents and behavioral experts say many schoolchildren are feeling helpless or depressed and need a classroom setting to improve their mental health. An exasperated Gov. Gavin Newsom told school officials last week to "pack it up" if they fail to resume in-person classes soon.

Teacher unions say they won't send their members into an unsafe environment. They want all teachers vaccinated before returning to the classroom.

As most of the state's 6 million public school students approach a one-year anniversary of distance learning, parents are grappling more

than ever with the toll of isolation and intense screen time on their kids' well-being.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a recent study that there is little evidence of spreading the infection at schools

when proper precautions are taken, such as masks, physical distancing and proper ventilation.

Like elsewhere in the country, many California families have abandoned public schools if they can afford private schools that are running regular classes. Among them is Susan Ortega, a mother of two and a Democrat who voted for Newsom but is so fed up with his handling of the pandemic school situation that she has joined an effort to recall him.

"It's been horrendous," she said about distance learning. "These kids have given up hope. They can't get out of bed. They see no point in anything because there is nothing to strive for."

The resident of the Northern California city of Folsom sent her son to private school last spring but kept her 14-year-old daughter in public school until last week. The girl's emotional state had deteriorated but after just a few days back in the classroom at a private school she was "almost who she was before all this," said Ortega, who hopes to eventually return her children to public school.

Newsom has said he will not force public schools to reopen but instead wants to "incentivize" them and has proposed a \$2 billion plan that has met criticism from superintendents, unions and lawmakers. Clearly frustrated, Newsom last week implored them to find a solution to reopen.

"If we wait for the perfect, we might as well just pack it up," Newsom said during a video meeting of the Association of California School Administrators.

The plan Newsom unveiled Dec. 30 would give schools extra funding for COVID-19 testing and other safety measures if they reopen.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Two victims identified in suspected fatal DUI crash that occurred Sunday morning

THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN

Two victims were identified in a suspected fatal DUI car crash early Sunday morning at the intersection of Union Avenue and Brundage Lane.

Guadalupe Aguilar Monreal, 46, and Saul Chavez Muniz, 52, were killed when their vehicle was struck by another vehicle at around 2:17 a.m., according to a report from the Kern County coroner's office.

Monreal was the driver of the car while Muniz was the passenger.

Two other adults involved in the accident were taken to local hospitals in critical condition, according to a news release from the Bakersfield Police Department.

Jesus Moran Mendoza, 35, of Bakersfield was arrested on suspicion of two counts of gross vehicular manslaughter and two counts of driving under the influence causing serious bodily injury, the BPD reported.

Police ask that anyone with further information to call the Major Collision Investigation Team at 326-3967 or BPD at 327-7111.

The Kern County coroner's office has identified the victim in a shooting Friday evening in a grocery store parking lot in east Bakersfield.

Chad Tyler Reeves, 31, was shot at 4:52 p.m. in the Foods Co. parking lot at 2505 Haley St.

He was pronounced dead less than an hour later at Kern Medical, the coroner's report said.

The Bakersfield Police Department said Sunday that Adrian Sanchez, 31, of Bakersfield, was a suspect



PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE BPD

Police say this suspect is wanted in an alleged armed robbery at a Dollar Tree store located at 2505 South H St.

in the shooting and was arrested on suspicion of murder.

Police ask anyone with information to contact Detective Frank McIntyre at 326-3921 or the BPD at 327-7111.

Police are asking for community assistance identifying an armed robbery suspect during a Jan. 13 incident.

According to a Bakersfield Police Department news release, the robbery occurred at 7:25 p.m. at a Dollar Tree store located at 2505 S. H St.

BPD described the suspect as Black man in his mid-30s, standing about 5-foot-9 and weighing about 210 pounds.

He was wearing a black knit cap, plaid blue jacket, grey sweatpants, black shoes with white soles and was armed with a black and silver pistol, police said.

Anyone with information is asked to call Detective Woods at 326-3919 or the BPD at 327-7111.