

WORTH NOTING

American Legion hosting pick-up dinner fundraiser

THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN

The Bakersfield American Legion will be hosting a public dinner fundraiser Friday at its Post 26, located at 220 H St. The drive-thru meal service will feature enchiladas, rice, beans and cheese for \$10. No reservation is needed for the 5:30 p.m. event.

Local law firm Chain | Cohn | Stiles has awarded 11 drivers education scholarships to local high school students in an attempt to help families pay for drivers training with safety as the top priority.

In a news release, the law firm said driving safety takes on even greater significance during the "100 Deadliest Days" — the period between Memorial Day and Labor Day. During that time, between 2008 and 2018, more than 8,300 people have died in crashes involving teen drivers, the news release stated.

It added that car accidents are the No. 1 killer of teenagers in the United States, citing national statistics. Distracted driving, excessive speed and not wearing a seat belt are all safety issues concerning teen driving, release said.

Also, the release cited the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, which stated the number of teen drivers is declining nationally with high costs associated with driving being a primary factor.

Here are the scholarship winners. They were chosen based on grades, essay impact and financial need:

- Roger Alvarado, Wonderful College Prep Academy
- Jennifer Cazarez, South High
- Fatima Garcia, Golden Valley High
- Jessica Gamino, West High
- Mayeli Gutierrez Ibarra, Foothill High
- Allan Morales, South High
- Leslie Cholico Navarro, Arvin High
- Emily Ortiz, Foothill High
- Martin Tellez, Highland High
- Tiffany Wright, Highland High
- Heidi Vega, Mira Monte High

Small businesses can learn about federal provisions for forgiving Paycheck Protection Program loans by participating in a free, one-hour webinar set to start at noon today.

Hosted by Kelly Beardon, director of Cal State Bakersfield's Small Business Development Center, the

online event will examine different scenarios facing PPP recipients.

The webinar is expected to include updates on the Kern Recovery and Economic Injury Disaster Loan programs, as well as insights on the possibility of an additional federal stimulus under discussion in Washington, D.C.

To register in advance, go online at www.tinyurl.com/BusinessRelief22.

Traffic control has been scheduled Thursday and Friday on Wible Road between Brundage Lane and Belle Terrace.

Traffic control units will be present in the area between 8 a.m. and noon each day, according to the city of Bakersfield. Traffic could be stopped for up to 10 minutes at a time, the city said in a news release. The stoppages are expected to impact both directions of traffic.

Construction crews will be removing falsework overhangs and installing electrical brackets on the newly widened bridge crossing the roadway, the city said. Motorists are encouraged to use alternate routes or allow extra time when traveling through the area.

The city said construction schedules may be changed

without notice due to unforeseen circumstances.

Sean C. Hancock has been named the next president of Cerro Coso Community College, according to a news release.

Kern Community College District Chancellor Thomas Burke will officially recommend Hancock to the KCCD Governing Board at its Aug. 13 meeting. He'll begin his term at the end of September.

Hancock succeeds Jill Board, who's been president since 2010.

"Dr. Hancock brings extensive experience in higher education administration, instruction, and student learning support services that will ensure Cerro Coso Community College's continued emphasis on improved student outcomes, building on the outstanding leadership of his predecessor, President Jill Board," Burke said. "Additionally, Dr. Hancock will have a keen focus on navigating through the current COVID-19 crisis with a long-term

vision for transitioning to a more stable environment in the future."

A nationwide search process included several candidates, on-campus forums and several rounds of interviews prior to Hancock's appointment for the position.

Hancock most recently served as vice chancellor for student and institutional success at Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District in El Cajon. His primary responsibilities included providing vision and leadership for the district-wide academic and student services, community and workforce development, integrated strategic planning, institutional research and information technologies. He has more than 20 years of experience in community college administration and leadership in California.

He earned an associate's degree from College of the Sequoias in Visalia, a bachelor's in management and organization development from Fresno Pacific University, an MBA from TUI University in Cypress and holds an Ed.D. in educational administration and leadership with emphasis in higher education/community colleges from University of the Pacific in Stockton.



Hancock

Firefighter dies during Stagecoach Fire battle

THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN

The Kern County Fire Department announced Tuesday evening on Twitter that a firefighter had died while battling the Stagecoach Fire in the Lake Isabella area.

KCFD said the firefighter was working in a support role at the Incident Command Post and was not a member of the Kern County Fire Department. In a

news release, KCFD said the firefighter suffered an acute medical emergency and died from complications.

"The Incident Management Team and all personnel working at the Stagecoach Fire extend their deepest sympathies and their thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of the firefighter," the news release stated.



In this March 2020 file photo, lights left on in vacant hotel rooms spell the word "HOPE" at the Bakersfield Marriott at the Convention Center.

12 deaths, 555 new virus cases reported Tuesday

THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN

The Kern County Public Health Services Department reported 12 new deaths and 555 additional COVID-19 cases Tuesday morning.

There have now been 183 coronavirus-related local fatalities during the pandemic. Kern County has seen a total of 25,095 cases since the first

was announced March 13.

Of those cases, 7,437 individuals have recovered from virus while 17,125 are recuperating at home, according to county data.

State records show 219 patients are being treated at local hospitals for COVID-19, 74 of which are in the ICU.



BOOKINGS

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COVID-19 crisis. Now it's down between 10 percent and 15 percent, he said. There have been financial implications for the city as well as the hotel industry. Revenue from the city's hotel bed tax came in 21 percent below projections to end fiscal 2019-20 at \$7.8 million.

UP TO 80%

Ramirez said occupancy at the Hilton Garden Inn fell to about 10 percent during the early part of the quarantine. But July averaged more than 60 percent, she said, and during the week occu-

pancy sometimes hits 80 percent lately.

Andrea Moore, general manager of the Four Points by Sheraton Bakersfield on California Avenue, said she saw occupancy rates rise 15 percent to 20 percent in about the last three weeks, partly because of last-minute leisure travel.

The Four Points had to lay off about 70 percent of its staff in the spring and only recently has

been able to bring some former employees back, Moore said by email. She emphasized the hotel is hiring.

"This is a great time to get into the hospitality industry," she wrote. "We are currently seeing a total reshaping of how people travel and what is needed to take

care of those travelers. It's like getting in on the ground floor. We're all on the same learning curve."

ESSENTIAL TRAVELERS

Cynthia Garcia, director of sales at the Hyatt Place Bakersfield on Coffee Road, said she's seen a lot of what she termed essential travel from construction workers and others performing vital jobs.

"I think a lot of the market here in Bakersfield has seen a lot of essential travelers," she said.

But she's also seeing more families traveling to an outdoors destination such as Sequoia National Park.

"A lot of travelers are just traveling," she said.

Local educator to run for BCSD board area 5 seat

THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN

Homegrown educator Brooke Malley Ault is running for Bakersfield City School District Area Five trustee, according to a news release.

"I had the good fortune of attending wonderful Bakersfield City Schools, and I want to make sure that all the children in the district, including my son, have that same opportunity," says Ault.

Ault also attended Foothill and Highland high schools, Bakersfield College and Cal State Bakersfield. In addition to her time spent in the traditional classroom, Ault has been a coach for We the People, an

on-campus intervention teacher and is currently a high school counselor.

"I want to use my knowledge as a teacher and school counselor to fight for all children who attend BCSD schools so they have the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential. We need another experienced educator to fill Dr. Fred Haynes' vacant seat," says Ault.

For more information, visit brookieforbcسد.com.



Ault

PISTACHIOS

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been added to the original list. A USDA website says more than 40 specialty crops were put on the list July 9 and almost 60 more were added Tuesday. Table grapes went on Tuesday's combined list.

CFAP was intended to help farmers who lost money as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Growers stand to receive direct payments of up to \$250,000 each, while dairies, ranchers and some

processing companies can get up to \$750,000.

"As (growers), we know and feel the effects directly when prices decline. This program provides the support needed by farmers during this difficult time we are all currently experiencing," said Brian Witte, chairman of American Pistachio Growers, said in a news release Tuesday.

APG attributed the USDA's reversal to the lobbying of its Washington, D.C. buying firm as well as conference calls the trade groups representatives placed with officials within the federal agency.

"We're pleased that USDA took the effort to review all sales data on pistachios, particularly exports (that) have seen declines as a result of the coronavirus pandemic experienced on a global basis," APG President Richard Matola said in Tuesday's release.

The trade group urged pistachio growers to fill out forms posted online at www.farms.gov/CFAP and to call the USDA at 877-508-8364.

Follow John Cox on Twitter: @TheThirdCnf

BROWNOUS

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the brownouts, the meeting was called off. Still, the fire union was alarmed by the plan, going so far as to organize a community campaign to keep all stations open.

"We will see an increase in life loss, we will see an increase in property loss with delay in response times," union President Dave Nelson said of the potential for fire station closures. "We do have a minimum staffing that's required. (The county's) goal for many years has been one firefighter for 2,500 people and now we're sitting at one for 3,200 each day."

With 62 vacancies, firefighters on staff have been taxed heavily with mandatory overtime this summer. The county's plan had called for 34 stations across the county to be eligible for brownouts based on a variety of factors, including response times, geography and weather. Vacancies would have also played into the decision. A station with three vacancies would have equated to a certain closure, according to a draft of the plan obtained by The Californian.



In this file photo, the Kern County Fire Department responds to a vacant house fire in Taft.

said it planned to notify stations up to six days in advance of the brownouts, but admitted the decision to close could be made at the start of a shift based on last-minute vacancies.

"I can't cut certain areas any-

more," Chief Witt said, referring to the maintenance and equipment purchases that have been deferred for years. "We've reached the point where if something major happens, we really need to look at the reduction of our work-

force. So I have to be prepared for that if that happens." The county dipped into its reserves in order to avoid the brownouts. Combined with one-time funding designations from the state, the county's plan will allow the stations to be open for the next fiscal year, but doesn't address long-term financial worries.

"It's the equivalent of using the savings account for your kid's college for your mortgage," Chief Administrative Officer Ryan Alsop said. "You want to try to get into a place where your operational costs are sustained by ongoing revenue sources."

The Fire Department is funded through its own fund, which has developed a roughly \$10 million structural deficit as costs overran revenue. The county has instituted a variety of measures to address the deficit, including cutting back overtime and initiating a plan to increase payments from cities that contract with the Fire Department for services.

The brownouts have created yet another rift between the supervisors and firefighters, with Nelson calling comments made by supervisors and Alsop in interviews and during public meetings attacks against the union.

Nelson said Alsop denied a plan

was in place to brownout stations during a supervisors meeting last week.

"The CAO then went on to denounce that there was ever any plan in place or proposal to close any stations, to brownout any stations, and that we were creating misinformation," Nelson said, referring to Alsop's statement during a budget meeting last week. "It was a pretty solid attack."

Alsop said the CAO's Office develops many plans for a variety of circumstances, many of which never get before the Board of Supervisors.

"If the fire union decides that they want to get way out in front of the board, and way out in front of their own leader, on any number of things, those are calls that they make," he said. "And I think it's kind of irresponsible because I think it whips up a whole bunch of unnecessary anxiety and fear over things that aren't necessarily going to happen."

Supervisors are scheduled to approve the final budget for this fiscal year on Aug. 25, when questions on brownouts could be settled for the next 12 months.

You can reach Sam Morgen at 661-395-7415. You may also follow him on Twitter @smorgenTBC.